

Revelation 14 - John's Vision of Judgment at the End of the Great Tribulation

IV. After These Things (Rev 4:1—22:21)

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- (d) The Third Angel (14:18a)
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5 Non-Chronological Parenthetical Insertions

1. 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Rev 7:1-17)
2. Announcement of no more delay; Two Witnesses (Rev 10:1—11:14)
- 3. Israel's Flight (12); Two Beasts (13); Six Scenes of Hope (14) (Rev 12:1—14:20)**
4. Gathering of the nations to Armageddon (Rev 16:13-16)
5. Babylon's fall (Rev 17:1—19:6)

Six Scenes of Hope in Rev 14

If you stop reading Revelation now, after Rev 13, it appears much like Satan is winning. Because God knows us, and He knows that without hope we will lose motivation, and when things get desperate, people get despondent. In Rev 14, God gives us six scenes of hope. The hope of Rev 14 is that at the darkest time in human history, God is still in control. Everything happening is being orchestrated by Him, according to His perfect predetermined plan.

Six Scenes of Hope (Rev 14:1-20)

1. Destiny of the 144,000 (v1-5)
2. The Proclamation of the Eternal Gospel (v6-7)
3. The Prediction of the Destruction of Babylon (v8)
4. The Doom of the Beast's Worshipers (v9-12)
5. The Blessing Upon the Tribulation's Martyrs (v13)
6. The Judgment Harvest of Armageddon (v14-20)

Many of the scenes described in this chapter are proleptic or forward-looking. They have not yet transpired in the chronology of events in Revelation, but the description reads as if the events have already happened. They eventually will come to pass because God is in complete control of history.

Revelation 14

- (J) Six Scenes of Hope (14:1-20)
 - (a) Destiny of the 144,000 (14:1-5)
 - (i) Their Appearance (14:1)

1 Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb **was standing on Mount Zion**, and with Him **144,000** who had His name and the name of His Father **written on their foreheads**.

1 Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

1 Then I looked, and there was the lamb, standing on Mount Zion! With him were 144,000 people who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.

1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

- "Then I looked" - *Kai eidon*, introduces each of the three scenes in this chapter (as it did for both scenes in Rev 13. The three scenes consist of:

- The Lamb on Mount Zion with the 144,000 (v1-5)
- Four climactic announcements about the coming prophesied period (v6-13)
- The harvest and the vintage (v14-20)

— After the two scenes of doom in Rev 13, these scenes picture an opposite viewpoint, a victorious stance of the Lamb and His followers after their temporary setbacks portrayed in Rev 13

- The whole of Rev 14 is proleptic (futuristic)...

- "...standing on Mount Zion" - two views:

1. Mount Zion during the millennial kingdom - during the kingdom reign of Christ, the Law of the Lord will go forth from Mount Zion (Cf. Is 2:3); Jerusalem is a synonym of Mount Zion

2. Heavenly Mount Zion - in Revelation, whenever there is an earthly entity (a temple, a tabernacle, Mount Zion, etc.), it is a replica of the original in heaven (Cf. Heb 12:22)

— It's likely, based on v2-3, that v1 is referring to the heavenly Mount Zion. The 144,000 are with the Lamb, who is in heaven during the events of Revelation (Cf. 3:21).

— However, the text doesn't state that the singers are in the same location as the 144,000, just that the 144,000 can hear their song

— At some point, the 144,000 will have finished the work that God commissioned, and they will be standing with Him on Mount Zion in heaven

— How did they get to heaven? They were likely martyred for their faith and their ministry.

- "...144,000" - the Jewish evangelists, 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel, who were sealed by God with the mark of the Holy Spirit (Cf. 7:2-8), and were used by God to spread the Gospel throughout the world during the Tribulation

— These are the same 144,000 as in Rev 7, and they are also the same as the rest of the woman's seed in 12:17, the witnesses to whom the dragon has access through the beast and who will experience martyrdom because of their refusal to worship the beast (13:15).

- "...written on their foreheads"- their emblem of recognition distinguishes them from the worshipers of the beast (13:16)

— They bear the name of the Lamb and His Father because it is to Them they belong, not to the dragon or the beast. This is the same seal mentioned in 7:3.

— don't worry about the mark of the beast; God has His own marking system. For Church Age believers, that mark is the seal of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13); that mark can never be removed because we are sealed until the day of redemption (Eph 4:30).

[OT reference: Ps 2:6; Ezek 9:4]

Contrasts

- The gentleness of the Lamb (here) in contrast to the ferocity of the "dragon" and the "beasts" (Rev 13)
- The beasts arise from the sea or the earth (13:1,11), but He has His feet firmly planted on Mount Zion (v1), as the perfect tense (*hestos*, "standing") suggests
- He also contrasts with the dragon who "stood" on the sands of the sea in 12:18. He is on the rock of Mount Zion instead of the unstable sand.
- His pose is no longer that of a slain Lamb, but now that of a militant victor with His feet solidly fixed on the Mount of Olives (Cf. Zech 14:3-4).

(ii) Their Song (14:2-3)

2 And I heard a **voice** from heaven, **like** the sound of **many waters** and **like** the sound of **loud thunder**, and the voice which I heard *was like the sound* of harpists playing on their harps.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard *was like the sound* of harpists playing on their harps.

2 Then I heard a sound from heaven like that of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The sound I heard was like harpists playing on their harps.

2 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:

- "...voice" - a multitude of angelic beings who spoke with one "voice." We know this because "they sang" [*adousin*] in v3 is plural (Cf. 5:11; 7:11).

- "...like" [3x] - John uses similes to describe what he heard

- "...many waters...loud thunder" - comparable to the voices from heaven (Cf. 10:4,8; 14:13; 18:4), but has characteristics of the voice of Christ (Cf. 1:10,15). The singers are probably a loud angelic chorus such as the one in 5:11.

[OT reference: Ezek 1:24; 43:2]

3 And **they** *sang a **newsong** before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one was able to learn the song except the 144,000 who had been **purchased from the earth**.

3 And they *sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth.

3 They were singing a new song in front of the throne, the four living creatures, and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.

3 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.

- "...they" - the multitude of angelic voices (v2)

- "...new song" - new songs celebrate great new acts of God, exalting His majesty and power to redeem (Cf. Ps 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Is 42:10; Rev 5:9; 15:2-4)

- It's a song that, because of some new mighty deeds of God, comes from a new impulse of gratitude in the heart

- Only the 144,000 "could learn" this new song; this probably means that only these 144,000, of all God's creatures, could appreciate what the song expressed (Cf. 15:2)

- "...purchased from the earth" - the reason why the 144,000 are singing is because they they had been purchased/redeemed by the blood of the Lamb

- Worship is a response to truth; you read a truth in the Bible that is so profound and life-changing that your only response is to sing to the Lord

- Their response to the truth of redemption will be to sing praise/worship the Lord
[OT reference: Ps 144:9]

(iii) Their Sanctification (14:4-5)

- (a) Their virginity (14:4a)

- (b) Their loyalty (14:4b)

- (c) Their redemption (14:4c)

4 **These** are the ones who have **not defiled** themselves with women, for they are celibate.

These are the ones who **follow the Lamb** wherever He goes. **These** have been **purchased from mankind** as **firstfruits** to God and to the Lamb.

4 These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These *are* the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb.

4 They have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins, and they follow the lamb wherever he goes. They have been redeemed from among humanity as the first fruits

for God and the lamb.

4 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.

- "These" [3x] - *houtoi*, identifies the 144,000 as worthy of special honor for maintaining high moral standards in the face of a corrupt religious, social, and cultural environment

- "...not defiled" - *emolynthēsan*, not been defiled (see NASB95); the aorist tense looks back to their lives as a thing of the past; also not the aorist tense of *heurethē*, "found" (v5)

- "...follow the Lamb" - they receive special commendation because they follow the Lord during their lives. This was especially difficult considering the time in which they lived.

- The repeated admonition of Christ was for people to follow Him (e.g., Matt. 9:9; 10:38; 16:24; 19:21; Mark 8:34; 9:38; 10:21; Luke 5:27; 9:23; John 8:12; 10:4, 5, 27; 12:26; 21:22)

- They followed Him wherever His leading took them, even to the point of giving of their lives just as He did

- "...purchased from mankind" - redeemed by the blood of the Lamb (Eph 1:3-7,12-14; 1 Peter 1:18-19)

- "...first fruits" - in Israel's harvest cycle, the first fruits of the harvest guaranteed that the general harvest would also come in (Cf. Rom 8:23; 16:15; 1 Cor 15:20,23; 16:15; James 1:18)

- In the same way, the conversion of these 144,000 Jews guarantees that the rest of the Jewish Remnant will also be converted (Zech 12:10; 13:8-9)

- The 144,000 are "first fruits" because God wants to use them to save other people; He wants to use their testimony of the Gospel to minister and evangelize others

- The 144,000 were redeemed by God (7:2-8) to be a blessing to the world (7:9-17). The innumerable multitude from all nations would not be converted and saved out of the Tribulation without the first fruits of the 144,000.

- God lavishes His grace on certain people, planting seeds early in their lives, because He has a plan to use them to bless others; they are a type of first fruits

(d) Their integrity (14:5a)

(e) Their innocence (14:5b)

5 And no lie was found in their mouths; they are **blameless**.

5 And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.

5 In their mouth no lie was found. They are blameless.

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

- They were not taken by "The Lie" (2 Thess 2:11); they overcame the prevailing pressure to worship the image of the beast, and because of that, gave up their lives

- "...blameless" - not sinless; they were without blemish because they are clothed with the righteousness of the Lamb
- They spoke the truth, even though deception abounded (13:14). They were blameless, perfectly acceptable to God as first fruit sacrifices (Cf. Phil 2:15; Heb 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19; Jude 24).

The remainder of the chapter furnishes a proleptic outline of the catastrophes and the bliss that receives a chronological and more detailed treatment in 16:17—22:5. In this fashion, the chapter is a sort of *intermezzo* to provide encouragement by telling the ultimate triumph for those who refuse the beast's mark and to predict the doom of those who do receive it.

(b) The Proclamation of the Eternal Gospel (14:6-7)

(i) Its Proclamation (14:6)

(a) Its Eternality (14:6a)

(b) Its Proclaimer and Audience (14:6b)

(c) It's Universality (14:6c)

6 And I saw **another angel** flying in **midheaven** with an **eternal gospel** to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation, tribe, language, and people;

6 And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people;

6 Then I saw another angel flying overhead with the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on earth—to every nation, tribe, language, and people.

6 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,

- The first of four climactic announcements, all of which provide incentives for remaining faithful to God and resisting the beasts

- Angels will make the first three announcements (v7,8,9); a voice from heaven will give the fourth (v13)

- "...another angel" - interesting that God is using an angel to preach the Gospel during this time; God typically works through people to preach the Gospel message

- Angels don't usually preach the Gospel because the possibility of salvation is not available to them, thus they are not "saved"

- God is so eager and desirous for the earth dwellers to come to the knowledge of salvation that He sets aside His normal ways of doing things (preaching the Gospel) and allows an angel to get into the act. God is pulling out all the stops to get the Gospel into the hearts and minds of the sinful world.

- "...midheaven" - the angel was flying in mid-heaven, so nothing hindered people on earth from hearing his words; this is a fulfillment of Matt 24:14
- "...eternal gospel" - some try to make this some "other" gospel, but it is clearly not; the gospel is eternal

Timing

This is the last warning to every earth dweller about the consequences of rejecting the Lamb and taking the mark of the beast. This is likely just before the midpoint of the Tribulation period, marked by the Abomination of Desolation. After this event, the beast will require the mark. This message is the ultimate test for the earth dwellers (Rev 3:10), and every single earth dweller will reject the gospel. Because of their rejection, God will be vindicated as One who gave every person a real opportunity to believe the gospel, yet so many will reject it.

(ii) Its Emphasis (14:7)

7 and he said with a **loud voice**, "**Fear God** and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment **has come**; **worship Him** who made the heaven and the earth, and sea and springs of waters."

7 and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."

7 He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the time for him to judge has arrived. Worship the one who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

7 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.

- "...loud voice" - revealing his urgency and concern; everyone on earth will hear his message. He calls for the earth dwellers to do two things:

1. "...Fear God" - understanding the fear of the Lord is critical to the Christian life
 - Prov 1:7: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Knowledge starts with a healthy, respectful fear of God.
2. Acknowledge their accountability to Him (Rom 1:32) because He is worthy of worship. He is the Creator and He has the right to judge what He has created (Cf. Neh 9:6; Ps 33:6-9; 146:6).

- "...has come" - *ēlthen*, aorist tense expressing a state that is at the point of being realized — The hour of His judgment has come. This is the last chance these non-believers will have to change their allegiance from Satan to God before the final judgments of the Tribulation begin (Eccl 12:13; Luke 12:5).

- "...worship Him" - the number one priority of every believer should be the worship and praise of Almighty God
- We are created to worship the God who made us
- The reason why God deserves worship is because He is the Author of creation (4:11) [OT reference: Ex 20:11]

(c) The Prediction of the Destruction of Babylon (14:8)

8 And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality."

8 And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality."

8 Then another angel, a second one, followed him, saying, "Fallen! Babylon the Great has fallen! She has made all nations drink the wine, the wrath earned for her sexual sins."

8 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.

- The fact that separate and successive angels make these announcements stresses their importance and their sequential relationship

- A second angel followed the first, with the message that Babylon had fallen. This is another anticipatory message, given before the reality actually occurs (Cf Rev 17-18).

- "...Fallen, fallen" - aorist tense: "It's history" as we might say (Cf. Jer 51:6-9; Gen 41:32; Rev 18:2)

- Babylon will fall as a result of the 7th Bowl judgment (16:19); the details of that destruction is outlined in Rev 17-18

- Stating it twice implies it will be brought to pass quickly, or shortly—describing the pace at which it will happen, not the timing

- Babylon is yet to be destroyed as the Bible predicts; thus, yet to emerge again (Jer 25:15-26; 51:7; Is 13:11,19)

- "...is" - prophetic present (proleptic) tense; something so sure to happen that the Bible speaks of a future event in the past tense, as if it has already taken place

- "...Babylon" - epitomizes ungodliness and idolatry in the world during the Tribulation, as it has throughout human history; used over 300x in Scripture, and each time refers to the literal city of Babylon

- Some interpreters view as a code word for Rome; it was used to disguise references to Rome during John's day, especially when Rome was persecuting Christians (see note on 1 Peter 5:13), but it's better interpreted in Revelation as the literal city of Babylon (Cf. 17:9-10)

- "...the great" - Nebuchadnezzar's description of literal Babylon (Cf. Dan 4:30) always modifies the literal Babylon when referenced in Revelation
 - "...she who has made all the nations" - a reference to 17:2; Babylon is personified as a temptress who gives wine to a man to seduce him to commit fornication (Cf. 17:2,4)
 - The man ("all nations") would not choose to drink this wine without her influence; she exercised coercive power over the earth's inhabitants to cause them to choose a path that they would not have chosen without her influence.
 - "...the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality" - the description of what the nations drink contains two distinct ideas:
 1. the wine that the courtesan gives to intoxicate in seducing someone to fornication (Cf. 17:2,4)
 2. the cup of God's wrath that He gives to those whom He will severely punish (Cf. 14:10)
 - It's a BOGO...those who indulge in (1) get (2) for free!
 - This "wine" leads all who drink it to commit sexual sins and every kind of excess that expresses unfaithfulness to God (Cf. 17:1,2,5,15,16;18:3,9; 19:2)
 - The drinking of Babylon's wine of fornication entails the drinking of God's wine of wrath. They are inseparable.
- [OT reference: Is 21:9; Jer 51:7-8]

(d) The Doom of the Beast's Worshippers (14:9-12)

In Rev 13, we learn that those who do not take the mark of the beast will be unable to participate in the economy or buy/sell goods. They are shut out of society. But what a tremendous scene of hope we see in v9-12, that those shut out from the system and from society have literally saved themselves because those who have taken the mark of the beast have damned themselves eternally to hell.

(i) The Plea (14:9)

- 9** Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, **"If** anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand,
- 9** Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, **"If** anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand,
- 9** Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying in a loud voice, **"Whoever** worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or his hand
- 9** 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,
- These verses (v9-11) warn the earth dwellers who worship the beast that the full strength of God's wrath is about to come on them and the eternal consequence along with it.
- The full strength of God's wrath points to the seven Bowl judgments

- "...if" - the warning has the earth dwellers as its object
- The plea is to the earth dwellers not to take the mark of the beast; it's a warning and a plea to the earth dwellers who will be tempted to yield to the threats of the False Prophet regarding boycott and death (13:11-17)
- The goal of this warning/plea is to frighten potential beast worshipers into believing and to encourage the faithful to remain faithful
- The warning to believers is: Waverer, beware! The suffering you may avoid under the rule of the Antichrist is insignificant compared to the eternal punishment you would otherwise incur if you decide to take the beast's mark (Cf. Matt 10:28).
- Those who worship the beast and his mark will make an irrevocable decision to say the Antichrist is god and Jesus is not
- By doing this, these people will eternally condemn themselves... there is no option for forgiveness and reconciliation with God
- They will suffer the punishment (hell) outlined in v10-11

(ii) The Punishment (14:10-11)

10 **he also will drink** of the wine of the **wrath** of God, which is mixed in **fullstrength** in the cup of His **anger**; and **he will be tormented** with fire and brimstone **in the presence of the holy angels** and in the presence of the **Lamb**.

10 he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

10 will drink the wine of God's wrath, which has been poured undiluted into the cup of his anger. He will be tortured with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and the lamb.

10 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 in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

- Verses 10-11 are one of the most graphic descriptions in Scripture of an eternal hell for unbelievers
- The Antichrist will kill those who don't follow him, but those who do will receive a worse judgment from God
- "...he also will drink...he will be tormented" - the third angel uses the future tense to predict the lasting anguish of those who are wavering regarding whom to worship
- Eternal torment will be the fate of the beast worshipers, a far cry from what the future of those who are redeemed (Cf. v1-5)
- "...wrath" - *orgēs*, settled indignation

- "...full strength" - undiluted; people used to add water to wine to dilute it, but God will not weaken His punishment of those who worship the Antichrist. God will not mix in mercy with his indignation.

- "...anger" - *thymos*, vehement fury

— Both His wrath and indignation stress the reality and severity of God's hostility

- Their torment "with fire and brimstone" as part of the Bowl judgments, will be excruciating (Cf. Gen 19:24; Is 34:8-10)

- "...in the presence of the holy angels...Lamb" - this is not a reference to their eternal torment. Their final torment will be in the Lake of Fire, *removed* from the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb (19:20; 20:10; 21:8,27; 22:14-15; Cf. Matt 25:41; Mark 9:43; 2 Thess 1:8-9).

[OT reference: Gen 19:24; Ps 75:8; Is 51:17]

11 And the smoke of their **torment** ascends **forever and ever**; they have no rest day and night, **those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.**"

11 And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

11 The smoke from their torture goes up forever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image or for anyone who receives the mark of its name."

11 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.

- "...torment" - *basanismou*, the 5th Trumpet unleashed demon locusts, who tormented the earth dwellers for 5 months (150 days)

— This is child's play compared to torment in the Lake of Fire for eternity. During that short five-month period, the earth dwellers vehemently desired death, but would not find it. They wanted to die, but could not. Just a small sampling on earth of what the Lake of Fire will be forever.

- "...forever and ever" - *aiōn eis aiōn*, the punishment for unbelievers in hell is eternal; its eternality is referenced 12x in Rev: 8x, glory of Father & Christ; 3x duration of punishment of Devil and his; 1x (here) people who insist on following him

— The endless trail of ascending smoke is the constant reminder of the permanent misery of beast worshippers. The temporary judgments give way to eternal judgment.

— If the ceaseless praise of the Lamb by the living creatures is eternal (4:5), so must be the punishment of these unbelievers since the same phrase "forever and ever" describes

both

- "...those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name" - to avoid any confusion about the identity of those who are under God's wrath here, the angel repeats who will be affected from v9
[OT reference: Is 34:10; 66:24]

(iii) The Perseverance (14:12)

12 Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

12 Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

12 Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to their faithfulness in Jesus:

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

- This is another plea or exhortation for the perseverance for those who do not take the mark of the beast or worship him, but instead seek to live for God (Tribulation Saints)...because they will need as much encouragement and exhortation as possible during this time period (Cf. 13:10)

— It also serves as a warning to the weak who may contemplate defecting to beast worship, to not do so because the short-term gain will be nothing, but the eternal payment will never end

— The verses immediately prior to v12 talk about a person who accepts the mark of the beast. That person will be damned to hell for eternity, so instead put up with the economic depravation and tyranny and persevere through it. Don't take the easy way out.

— These believers do not want to go to hell, so they do not subscribe to the beast's system (described in 13:16-18)

— They will be completely shut out of the economy without the mark, without the ability to be employed, invest, buy or sell, etc. Thus, they will not be able to provide for their family, or in some cases eat at all.

— You can see how a choice of this magnitude, which will likely result in their deaths, is going to require a special exhortation of patience and encouragement for them

— Those who die for their faith will be blessed, because their nightmare will be over

— It is better to experience the beast's punishment, even martyrdom, than God's punishment

— This is an encouragement to persevere, not a guarantee that the saints *will* persevere

— A parallel passage is Matt 24:13 (Cf. 13:10): **But the one who endures to the end is the one who will be saved.**

(e) The Blessing Upon the Tribulation's Martyrs (14:13)

(i) Their Beatitude (14:13a)

(ii) Their Rest (14:13b)

(iii) Their Reward (14:13c)

13 And I heard **a voice from heaven**, saying, "Write: '**Blessed** are **thedead** who die **in the Lord from now on!**'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."

13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."

13 I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: How blessed are the dead, that is, those who die in the Lord from now on!" "Yes," says the Spirit. "Let them rest from their labors, for their actions follow them."

13 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.

- Loyalty to Christ and rejection of the beast's reign will mean inevitable death for many (13:15), so John moves immediately from his exhortation for perseverance to speak of the blessedness for those who are martyred for their faith

- "...a voice from heaven" - a divine pronouncement, without the use of an intermediary angel

— Heard 4x earlier (10:4,8; 11:12; 14:2) and 2x later (18:4; 21:3)

- "...Blessed" - *makarios*, the second of seven Beatitudes in Revelation (see note: **Seven Beatitudes of Revelation** below)

— The voice told John to record an encouragement that those believers who are martyred during the Tribulation will receive a unique blessing reserved for no one else. It assures a future reward for present obedience to God.

— The "blessing" is that these martyrs, by their death, will escape the intense persecution of the Antichrist, escape the horrific Bowl judgments, be at "rest" beyond the grave, and will be rewarded for their faithful deeds (Cf. 1 Tim 5:24-25; Heb 6:10).

— When violent treatment and cruelty resulting in execution are the consequences for living the truth, the sooner one dies the better off he is

— In contrast, those who worship the Antichrist will have no rest (v11), receive punishment ("tormented with fire and brimstone") for their unfaithfulness to God (v10)

- "...the dead" - those who were martyred by the Antichrist for their faith in Christ and refusal to take the mark

- "...in the Lord" - they died as the Lord did, for His faithfulness to God

- The word order in the Greek text makes this interpretation preferable to taking “in the Lord” as simply meaning “believers”
- “...from now on” - from this time forward, referring to the rest of the Tribulation (the Bowl judgments) from the midpoint to the Second Coming
- This reassurance is only relevant *if they feel they have missed the resurrection!* It only makes sense if the Rapture has already taken place.
- This was the anxiety of the Thessalonians when the Roman persecutions under Nero began, and led to Paul’s disclosures in 1 Thess 4:13ff (Cf. Phil 1:23-26)

(f) The Judgment Harvest of Armageddon (14:14-20)

(i) The Judge (14:14-18a)

(a) The Son of Man (14:14)

14 Then I looked, and behold, a **whitecloud**, and sitting on the cloud was one like a **sonofman**, with a **golden crown** on His head and a **sharpsickle** in His hand.

14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.

14 Then I looked, and there was a white cloud! On the cloud sat someone who was like the Son of Man, with a gold victor’s crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.

14 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.

- This is the final scene that provides background information before the seven Bowl judgments are revealed. What John saw here was mainly on the earth.

— The following verses depict two scenes (v15-16; v17-20) of the same judgment (19:11-21):

1. Pictures the Son of Man sitting on a white cloud with a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand, is an allusion to Joel 3:13, which pictures future judgment as a harvest (v15-16); analogized to the harvesting of wheat
2. The second scene pictures an angel holding a sharp sickle, who is instructed by another angel. This angel gathered the ripe grapes and threw them into the great winepress of the wrath of God (v17-20); analogized to a vintage

- “...white cloud” - the glory of God; the *Shekinah*. The description of the scene in this verse is similar to Daniel’s prophecy of the Messiah’s Second Coming (Dan 7:13-14).

- “...son of man” - a messianic title for Jesus Christ throughout Scripture (Cf. 1:13; Dan 7:13-14; Matt 8:20; 24:30; 26:64; John 5:27)

— During His earthly ministry, Jesus most often referred to Himself as the Son of Man (Cf. Matt 9:20; 9:6; a total of over 75x)

- “...golden crown” - *stephanos*, victor’s crown, emblematic of His coming conquest over His enemies; once He has prevailed, He will wear a *diadēma* (19:12) as a sign of His royalty

- "...sharp sickle" - *drepanon oxy*, a tool of harvest (Mark 4:29); the sharpness allows the Reaper to do His work swiftly and completely (Cf. Matt 26:63-64; Dan 7:9-14)
- In this context, however, this isn't a harvest of salvation, agriculture, or of farming, it's a harvest of judgment
- Harvest imagery is frequently associated with Babylon (Jer 51:33)
- [OT reference: Dan 7:13]

(b) The First Angel (14:15-16)

15 And **another angel** came out of the **temple**, calling out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "**Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.**"

15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe."

15 Another angel came out of the Temple, crying out in a loud voice to the one who sat on the cloud, "Swing your sickle, and gather the harvest, for the hour has come to gather it, because the harvest of the earth is fully ripe."

15 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.

- "...another angel" - *allos*, refers back to v9 and marks this as the fourth angel in a series of six angels in this chapter

- Three previous angels (v6,7,9) had announced that judgment was coming, now the fourth angel conveyed the command to execute it, without delay

- The fact that Christ will receive and follow the instructions of an angel does not imply His inferiority, it only indicates that an angel will signal God's proper time for judgment, then the Son will proceed to judge

- Jesus does not respond to angelic authority in thrusting His sickle, but receives divine notification through the angel that the proper time to do so has arrived.

- "...temple" - *naos*, the heavenly tabernacle, the origin of this 4th angel who came out with notification that it was time to cleanse the earth of unholiness

- It is the dwelling place of God, which the earthly tabernacle and temple were patterned

- By this time it is open (Cf. 11:19; 15:5) to allow the angels with the seven last plagues (Bowls) to exit and perform their assigned tasks

- "...Put in" - *Pempō*, to send (thrust or insert) a thing into another; aorist imperative, stressing the urgency of the directive

- This is the harvest of the condemned (Cf. 19:11-21); following the pattern of Joel 3:13, the scene furnishes two pictures of the same judgment for the same reason that Joel does

(to emphasize the terror of it)

- "...the harvest of the earth is ripe" - the earth is ready to be judged; the day of grace is over. Humanity has received her opportunity for repentance, and repentance for the most part will not be forthcoming.

— At this point the earth is good for nothing, but is ripe for the judgment that is about to come up it

— Jesus also likens the final judgment to the harvest of the earth (Matt 13:30,39)

— "ripe" - *exeranthē*, really means "overripe" or withered (James 1:11; Cf. Matt 21:19-20; Mark 3:1,3; John 15:6)

— Indicates that the time for harvest is late; it's high-time to harvest
[Joel 3:13]

Joel 3:13: Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread *the grapes*, for the wine press is full; The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great.

16 Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the **earth**, and the **earth** was reaped.

16 Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.

16 The one who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was harvested.

16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

- Responding to the angelic notification (v15), the Son of Man cast His sickle into the earth and reaped it

— As the duly authorized Judge (John 5:27), He pronounces His verdict in setting His sickle to work

- "...earth" [2x] - *gē*, emphasizes the beings with whom the judgment will deal (the "earth dwellers")

(c) The Second Angel (14:17)

17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle.

17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle.

17 Then another angel came out of the Temple in heaven. He, too, had a sharp sickle.

17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

- As if the judgment of Christ wasn't enough, a second angel (the fifth in a series of six in this chapter) came out of the temple in heaven and had a sharp sickle
- This angel came from the heavenly temple, like the fourth angel (v15)
- This angel comes to gather the vintage as Christ did to gather the harvest (v15-16)
- This angel also had a sharp sickle, just like the one wielded by the Son of Man (v14); pruning the vine required the same tool as gathering the harvest

(d) The Third Angel (14:18a)

(ii) The Judged (14:18b)

18 Then another angel, the one who has **power over fire, came out from the altar**; and he **called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle**, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the **clusters from the vine of the earth**, because her grapes are **ripe**."

18 Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe."

18 From the altar came another angel who had authority over fire. He called out in a loud voice to the angel who had the sharp sickle, "Swing your sharp sickle, and gather the bunches of grapes from the vine of the earth, because those grapes are ripe."

18 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.

- "...power over fire" - the authority of this particular angel over fire is an allusion to 8:3ff where the angel took a censer full of fire and threw it to the earth

— This is a picture of a minister of wrath (an angel) responding to the prayers of the saints

- "...came out from the altar" - this angel came out from the golden altar of incense in heaven (8:3), with power over nature

— This altar is where the judgments against the earth have proceeded from throughout Revelation (Cf. 6:9; 8:3; 16:17)

— In 6:9-11, the 5th Seal judgment, the martyred souls underneath the altar in heaven cried out to the Lord for vengeance on the earth dwellers, who killed them through violence

— Their prayer request is not denied, it's just delayed for a season; they were told to rest for "a little while longer" (6:11) until all the martyrs have come home

- "...called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle" - this angel is addressing the angel with the sickle (v17), not Jesus Christ (v14)

- John saw a different crop here ready for harvest. The two reapings: wheat (v14-16); grapes (v17-20). The two reapings describe a single judgment at the end of the Great Tribulation (19:15,17-21).

- Additionally, the pattern of Joel 3:13 shows two pictures of the same judgment, to emphasize the terror of it
- The vine may represent Israel and the wheat may represent Gentiles
- "...clusters from the vine of the earth" - just as God's people are His vineyard to produce the fruits of righteousness, the earth's people are another vineyard that produces evil fruit
- The evil fruit has now reached the point of ripeness, the time for the harvest has come
- "...ripe" - these grapes are not good for anything but to crush in order to get the juice; they are ripe for the winepress, nothing else
- God was patient for 400 years to allow the Amorites time to repent, but they didn't (Cf. Gen 15:16); the iniquities of the Amorites are described in Lev 18:24-30; 20:22-27; Deut 18:9-14
- God's Spirit will not strive with man forever (Gen 6:3); in Noah's day, that time was 120 years
- The predicament of the earth dwellers during the Tribulation is described by Paul in Rom 2:5: But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

The prayer of these martyrs in 6:9-10 was not unanswered, the answer was just delayed. Often when there is a delay in an answer, we confuse that with a denial. Often we pray for someone or some thing for a long period of time, you believe you're in God's will and are praying according to His will, and no answer comes. No movement in a positive direction. It's easy to become depressed or despondent when this occurs, feeling like you're wasting your time and God's not listening, but we can never confuse delay with denial. This is likely how the martyred souls under the altar felt, until in the providence of God an angel, from that very altar, was dispatched by God to answer their prayer request. Because of impatience, we often discount the power of prayer. God hears our prayers, in fact they surround God's throne in golden bowl of incense.

There are some things in our lives that God is only going to do through our prayers to Him. He's not going to do it any other way. If we don't pray for it, it will never happen.

(iii) The Judgment (14:19-20)

19 So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered *the clusters from* the vine of the earth, and threw *them* into **the great wine press** of the **wrath of God**.

19 So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered *the clusters from* the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God.

19 So the angel swung his sickle in the earth, gathered the grapes from the earth, and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath.

19 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.

- An allegorical statement of the judgment...

— The forthcoming judgment on the earth dwellers is figuratively described as clusters from a vine, which are good for nothing; the dominant image are the over-ripe grapes

— The vineyard of the earth has produced the wrong kind of fruit and must be trodden in the great winepress, which is the anger of God

— These grapes are not good for anything other than to be crushed and used for wine

— The divine description of what is coming is that sinners and the unrepentant will be crushed like over-ripe grapes in a winepress

— Note this harvest of v17-20 is of grapes, not wheat, as in v14-16. There, the angels separate the tares from the wheat, etc.

— Gathering of the unrighteous (Lam 1:15; Joel 3:1,2,9-17; Is 34:1-3,6; 63:1-6; Zech 14:1-3)

- "...the great wine press" - symbolizes the anger of God at sin and unrighteousness

- "...wrath of God" - God is metaphorically described as barefoot (feet of burnished bronze, 1:15) trampling down these over-ripe grapes

[OT reference: Is 63:1-6]

Is 63:1-6:

1 Who is this who comes from Edom, With garments of glowing colors from Bozrah, This One who is majestic in His apparel, Marching in the greatness of His strength? "It is I, the One who speaks in righteousness, mighty to save."

2 Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like one who treads in the wine press?

3 "I have trodden the wine trough alone, And from the peoples there was no one with Me. I also trod them in My anger And trampled them in My wrath; And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, And I stained all My clothes.

4 "For the day of vengeance was in My heart, And My year of redemption has come.

5 "I looked, but there was no one to help, And I was astonished and there was no one to uphold; So My own arm brought salvation to Me, And My wrath upheld Me.

6 "I trampled down the peoples in My anger And made them drunk with My wrath, And I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."

Jer 25:30: "Therefore you shall prophesy against them all these words, and you shall say to them, 'The LORD will roar from on high And raise His voice from His holy dwelling; He will roar forcefully against His fold. He will shout like those who tread *the grapes*, Against all the inhabitants of the earth.

20 And the wine press was trampled outside **the city**, and **blood** came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of **1,600 stadia**.

20 And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

20 The wine press was trampled outside the city, and blood flowed from the wine press as high as a horse's bridle for about 1,600 stadia.

20 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.

- A literal statement of the judgment...a proleptic statement of an event that is coming at the very end of the Tribulation (Cf. 16:16; 19:17-18)

- "...the city" - Jerusalem; cannot be Babylon because Babylon does not escape judgment like this city does

- "...blood" - the wine that came from the grapes at the winepress is described as blood

- "...1,600 stadia" - ~181 miles; 1 stadia = ~600 feet

— This is the distance from Megiddo (Armageddon) to Bozrah, which is 20 miles SE of the Dead Sea

— The OT predicted that a final battle would take place near Jerusalem, in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (i.e., the Kidron Valley just to the east of Jerusalem, Joel 3:12-14; Zech 14:4; Cf. Rev 11:2)

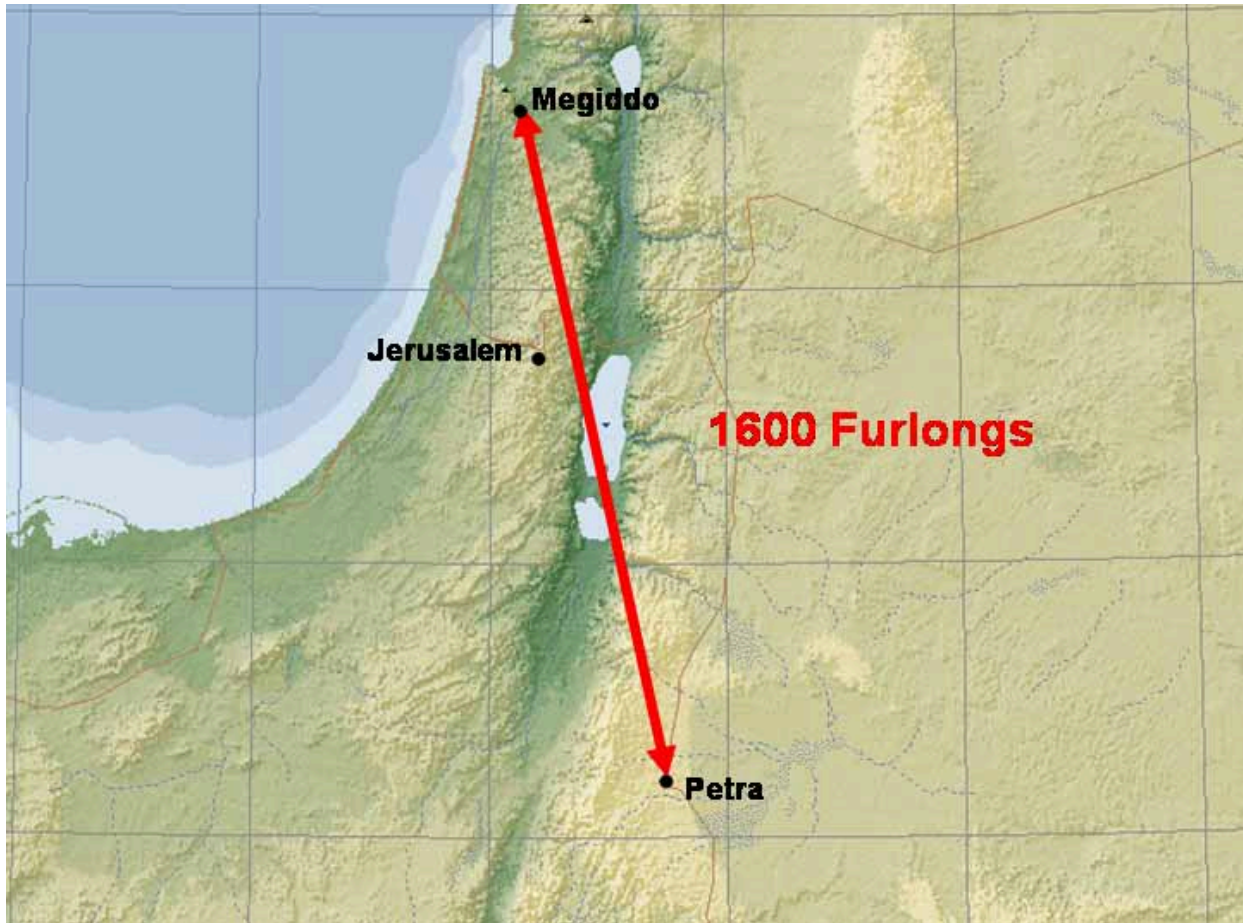
— It seems probable that "blood" will literally *flow* up to the height of the horses' bridle (about four and a half feet), in some places, in that valley. Obviously many people will have to die for this amount of blood to flow.

— Evidently this figure describes the judgment that will take place all over Palestine, not just in the Valley of Jehoshaphat near Jerusalem, at this time. Much of this action will take place in the Valley of Jezreel in northern Israel (i.e., the battle of Armageddon, 19:17-19).

— There, God will put vast numbers of people to death (Cf. Is 63:1-6). The blood will evidently drain out of the Jezreel Valley for a distance of 176 miles, probably flowing eastward down the Harod Valley to the Jordan Valley, and south all the way to the Dead Sea.

[OT reference: Joel 3:13]

Map: Megiddo —> Petra = 1,600 Furlongs/176 Miles



The Doctrine of Endless Punishment

Salvation supposes a prior damnation; in order to escape danger, one must believe in it. No error is more fatal than that of Universalism.

- It blots out the attribute of retributive justice
- It transmutes sin into misfortune
- It turns all suffering into chastisement
- It relegates the sacrifice of Christ into simply moral influence
- It makes it a debt due to man, instead of an unmerited boon from God
- Throughout the Bible, we see God's love and grace freely available to all who will accept it
 - It's the human race's rejection of that love and grace, and the preference for sin, that causes the problems
 - The entire Bible is a record of the extremes *He* has gone to in order to allow us to avoid the destiny of our fallen state
 - People's response: "No, God, I do not want to love you. I want to run things my own way."

God's Three Alternatives to Executing Judgment

1. He can indulge it and allow it to go on forever
 - But in that case all the cruelty, injustice, hatred, pain, and death that now prevails on the earth will go on forever, too
 - God does not want that and neither does man
2. He can force man into automata (a robot)
 - However, removing our free will would also take away our capacity to give our love to God freely
 - Love cannot be forced
3. He can withdraw Himself from those who refuse His love
 - He must let them have their own way forever
 - Since God is necessary for our very existence, the decision to reject God is a decision to plunge ourselves into the most terrible sense of loneliness and isolation a human being can know—and to endure this eternally, without any hope