

"Visions of Blessing & Judgment"

Revelation 14:1-20

Three Visions With Special Announcements: (14:1-20)

Remember that we are still in the midst of the third interlude. It is in this interlude that we have been introduced to various individuals who play a major role during the Tribulation Period. In chapter 12 we were introduced to the Woman (Israel) and the Great Red Dragon (Satan). In chapter 13 we were introduced to The Beast from the Sea (Antichrist) and The Beast from the Earth (The False Prophet). Now this third interlude concludes with three additional visions with various special announcements. Chapter 14 is in great contrast to the two preceding chapters of this interlude. In chapters 12 and 13 we have seen the temporary victories of those opposed to God and His program, but in Chapter 14 we are given a picture of the other side of the story. "John turns to dispel the doubts and fears of the faithful. He first gives us a future glimpse of what will happen after the time of tribulation (14:1-5) and then by way of contrast provides sketches of the doom of those who have opposed God (14:6-20). As chapter 14 begins, instead of the beast it is the Lamb; instead of the beast's followers and their mark, it is the Lamb's followers with His name and His Father's name. The purpose of chapter 14 is to encourage the faithful to endure as they face impending martyrdom by giving them a preview of their future blessedness and of the coming doom of their oppressors."
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Vision #1: Concerning the 144,000: (vv. 1-5)

John now introduces this vision in a similar way as other visions in Revelation (4:1; 6:2, 5; 7:9; 14:14). He includes the term "Behold," which is a term used to grab the attention.

What John Saw: First John gives us a picture of what he saw in this vision. First he saw *the Lamb*. This is a reference back to the Lamb of 5:6, who was identified as none other than Christ. It is a designation of the resurrected and victorious Lamb of God and pictures His sacrificial death. He saw Christ standing on Mount Zion. Mount Zion is a reference to the city of Jerusalem and is understood as such throughout the Old Testament (i.e. Joel 2:32; Isaiah 11:9-12). The verb for "I looked" is a proleptic aorist, which if you remember speaks of a future event as if it has already happened. Christ's future appearance in the city of Jerusalem could only speak of an event following His Second Coming to the earth. John is getting a glimpse of the Millennium, when Christ will reign on the earth for 1,000 years from Jerusalem. This is a picture of victory, which John is providing as a contrast to chapters 12 and 13. John is receiving this vision and providing it at this point as an element of hope and victory.

Not only does John see a vision of Jesus standing in Jerusalem, but he also sees the 144,000 thousand there. These are the same 144,000 as mentioned in Revelation 7. Remember in Revelation 7 we are told that these 144,000 are from the 12 tribes of Israel, so they are literal Jews (12,000 from each tribe), they were mentioned as bond-servants of God, and they were given a seal of protection upon their foreheads. Here in chapter 14 they are described as having *His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads*. These 144,000 have the name of Christ the Son and God the Father written on their foreheads.

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This is a reference to the seal of Revelation 7:3. There seems to be an element of contrast being made here between the people of God and those of the beast. The seal of these 144,000 is the name of God, just as the mark of the beast's people is his name or the number of his name. This seal with the name of God on their foreheads signifies two things: 1) They are under God's ownership. They belong to God. They are His servants. 2) They have had the guarantee of God's protection and security through the last half of the Tribulation.

What John Heard: John heard a voice from heaven. Although John's vision of Christ and the 144,000 is identified upon the earth, this voice, which he hears is a voice from heaven. John provides three descriptive phrases for this voice.

1) It sounds *like the sound of many waters*. Remembering that John is upon the Island of Patmos, he is quite familiar with the sound of water, especially much ocean water crashing against the shore of the Island. Any of you who have been to the Ocean or underneath a huge waterfall, are likely aware of exactly how deafening a great amount of water can be. This description is to indicate the intensity of the voice, which he heard.

2) The second description of this voice is that it sounded *like the sound of loud thunder*. Notice that John goes to the extreme of indicating that it doesn't just sound like thunder but **loud** thunder. Now we don't get much thunder here in the Antelope Valley. The thunder that we do get is not impressive enough to describe as loud thunder. If you are from a different part of the country such as Texas, where I was raised, then you might be more familiar with the type of thunder that John is comparing this voice to. It is frighteningly loud. It is a thunder that is deafening. It is a thunder that is so loud that it shakes the earth. Once again John is indicating the intensity of this voice.

3) Lastly John describes this voice as sounding like the sound of harpists playing their harps. The picture here is likely of many harpists playing their harps at once and is just another way John is able to describe the intensity of this voice.

The term *phonei* here is likely a collective noun. It is singular in form, but as a collective noun the voice is likely a singular sound of many voices. In fact *phonei* can be translated "sound, voice, or noise."

So whose voice is this? It is likely the voice of the heavenly host. This is understood as John goes on to describe the content of this voice. It is a new song that is being sung from heaven. John is likely recalling the events of Revelation 5 as the heavenly host broke into song. In fact in Revelation 5:11-12 we see a multitude of the heavenly host saying with a singular loud voice: "*And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.'*" Perhaps at the institution of the Millennial Kingdom, the heavenly host breaks into a new song again. The actual content of this new song is not given, but the only ones who could learn this new song are the *144,000 who had been purchased from the earth*.

Who John Describes: As John once again mentions the 144,000 in verse 3, he moves into a graphic description of these individuals in verses 4-5. This description is looking back over their lives during the Tribulation period on earth. John gives four descriptive statements of the 144,000.

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"*These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste.*" Remember that during the Tribulation period there will be widespread immorality (c.f. 9:21). Not only will these 144,000 be able to resist the perverse system of Antichrist, but they will also be capable of resisting the temptation of sexual immorality. Marriage is not in the picture here for these individuals and there is **not** a negative comment being made against marriage! They will be single individuals completely devoted in service to God. They will have survived this terrible time having remained chaste, keeping themselves pure from any kind of sexual defilement.

"*These [are] the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.*" These are men who were completely dedicated to Christ. "They were loyal to Christ, willing to follow Him wherever He led them."⁴¹⁹ They were willing to count the cost and follow Him.

"*These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb.*" "Like the Old Testament firstfruits offerings, these men will be set apart for special service to God (cf. Deut. 26:1-11). Some see firstfruits as the first large group of redeemed Israel, saved much earlier, and representative of more converts to follow (cf. Romans 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:15), the firstfruits of redeemed Israel (Romans 11:1-5, 11-15, 25-27)."⁴²⁰ Whatever the case it does seem evident that they had been set apart in service to God and had successfully completed their ministry during the Tribulation period.

"*And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless*" "Next to purity, truthfulness was probably the most notable mark of Christ's followers. Purity and truth receive special mention probably because of the prevalence of impurity and untruth in the surrounding society during the Tribulation period."⁴²¹ "The 144,000 speak God's truth accurately with no exaggeration or understatement (cf. Zeph. 3:13)."⁴²² The mention of these individuals as being blameless is not a reference to their own sinlessness, but a reference to their being sanctified (Eph. 1:4,; 5:27; Col. 1:22).

Vision #2: Three Angelic Announcements: (vv. 6-13)

In this next section of verses, John moves on to share a second vision with three angelic announcements. He begins with the first announcement by saying that he saw *another* angel. The term *another* likely refers back to Revelation 8:3; 10:1; and 11:15. It is another of the same kind of these angels.

The Announcement of the First Angel: (vv. 6-7) This first angel mentioned is flying in mid-heaven. "The term *mid-heaven* denotes the point in the noonday sky where the sun reaches its zenith. This is the highest and brightest point, where all can see and hear."⁴²³ The point being made here is that all on the earth will be able to both see and hear this flying angel and his message. The recipients of this message are *those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people*. In other words all who are upon the earth (with the primary focus being on unbelievers). The message that this angel is preaching is called *an eternal gospel* (vs. 6). The content of this eternal gospel is revealed in verse 7: "*Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.*" This angel is announcing the impending judgment of God. In fact the announcement says that the judgment of God indeed has come. God's judgment has come in the form of the seal and trumpet judgments and the bowl judgments are coming shortly.

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This announcement is likely made late in the Tribulation period just prior to the pouring out of the bowl judgments. However one must admit that it is quite difficult to attach any specific time to this announcement since none is directly given. This announcement is a last ditch effort to arrest the attention of the people and call them to repentance. It is a call to fear God, and worship Him only. It is a call for the people of the earth to worship their Creator.

The Announcement of the Second Angel: (vs. 8) At this time a second angel followed the first making a second announcement. The second announcement is: "*Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality*" "Lack of response to the first angel's message causes a second angel to pronounce this judgment. Babylon refers to the entire worldwide political, economic, and religious kingdom of Antichrist (cf. 16:17-19 for details of this fall). The original city of Babylon was the birthplace of idolatry where the residents built the Tower of Babel, an monument to rebelliousness and false religion."⁴²⁴ This world-wide system of Antichrist has made all the nations drink of the passion of her immorality. "This pictures Babylon causing the world to become intoxicated with her pleasure and enter an orgy of rebellion, hatred, and idolatry toward God. Fornication is spiritual prostitution to Antichrist's false system, which will fall for such iniquity."⁴²⁵ This is an announcement of judgment against Antichrist and his kingdom.

The Announcement of the Third Angel: (vv. 9-13) This third angel brings in an announcement of further judgment. It is judgment announced against those who worship the beast (Antichrist). "Those who worship the beast or take his mark during the Tribulation will be sealed to damnation with no possibility of salvation. Such people will not be shown mercy."⁴²⁶ These individuals will receive a full strength cup of God's wrath. None will be spared and no mercy will be shown for their worship and commitment to Antichrist. They will be tormented with fire and brimstone. Brimstone here is a reference to a fiery sulfur. The description here in verses 10-11 is a direct literal and specific statement about the pain and suffering of eternal damnation. They will be tormented with fire and burning sulfur. They will be tormented in the presence of the angels and Christ. They will be tormented for all eternity. They will receive no rest or reprieve from their torment. Those who will be tormented are those who are unbelievers. Those who have not trusted Christ, but those who have attached themselves to and worshipped Antichrist and his evil world system. The Bible is clear that those who do not come to faith in Christ will suffer eternal damnation and punishment for all eternity. God's Word **does not** teach purgatory! God's Word **does not** teach annihilationism! **God's Word teaches an eternal punishment in suffering and agony for all who reject God!!!!!!!!!!!!**

Fortunately this announcement does not end on a note of eternal judgment, but on a note of eternal hope and comfort. While those who worship the beast during the time of the Tribulation can look forward to terrible eternal suffering, those who suffer during the brief time of tribulation, faithfully committed to Christ, worshipping only God, persevering during this time of trial, and keeping God's commandments (hence true believers), it is these believers, who will be blessed. It is the believers who will enter blessing, rest and reward. It appears that those who live during the second half of the Tribulation will be truly blessed to die for they will obtain their rest and reward.

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Vision #3: The Harvesting of the Earth: (vv. 14-20)

This third vision picks up the idea of judgment of the previous vision of the three angelic announcements. Here is a picture of Christ at His Second Coming. Once again John "looked" (a proleptic aorist in the Greek). This signifies that John is able to look into the future as if it had already happened. In this vision John sees *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.* "This is Christ poised to bring judgment. His crowned head symbolizes that He is victor over the earth. The sharp sickle in His hand indicates readiness to carry out His judicial role in pouring out the divine wrath and judgment on the ungodly at the end of the Tribulation."⁴²⁷ "The sickle was a harvesting tool with a razor sharp, curved steel or iron blade and a wooden handle, commonly used by ancient farmers to cut grain. It represents swift and devastating judgment."⁴²⁸ Another (a fourth angel) is mentioned and this angel requests that Christ would put in his sickle and reap. This request is made by the angel *because the harvest of the earth is ripe.* The harvest is the ungodly people of the world and the time has come for them to be gathered up and judged. Verse 16 is a general statement of Christ's response. Christ thrust in His sickle and the earth was reaped. In verse 17 another (a fifth angel) came out of the temple in heaven with a sharp sickle. This evidences the fact that Christ will use angels as He carries out judgment against the ungodly. In verse 18, a sixth angel exhorts the fifth angel to gather the clusters of the vine of the earth. This sixth angel is called the angel who has power over fire and came out from the altar. This is likely the same angel mentioned in Revelation 8:3. The altar is the golden altar of incense where the prayers of the saints were offered and divine judgment dispensed. The vine of the earth is another reference to the unbelievers of the earth. It is at this point that this fifth angel swings his sickle and gathers the vine of the earth (unbelievers) and throws them into the great winepress of God's wrath. It is at this point that John gives a graphic description of this great judgment at the Second Coming of Christ. He says in verse 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."* "The harvest mentioned here will take place at the Second Coming of Christ. With one word from His mouth, Christ will "smite the nations" (19:15) who have gathered in Israel for "the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (16:14), better known as Armageddon. The huge army that will be destroyed will look like grapes crushed in a winepress. The carnage will reach to "the horses bridles" (about five feet) and cover a distance of 200 miles."⁴²⁹ God's judgment against the unbelieving people of the world will be decisive and "the world will then be ruled by the victorious Christ, who will set up His glorious universal Kingdom of peace and justice."⁴³⁰