

Revelation

Escape the Coming Wrath!

Lesson 14

Chapter 14

The Last Call to Repentance!

1. Read verses 1-5.

One of the themes that links Revelation 14-16 together is expressed by the word *voice*, which is used eleven times. In the events recorded, God speaks to His people or to the lost world, or His creatures speak out in praise of the Lord or in warning to the world. As the world moves into the last half of the Tribulation, heaven is not silent.²⁰

The opening verses of Revelation 14 introduce the most triumphant group of men the world will ever know. Scripture describes other faithful, godly, uncompromising, committed men, such as Joseph, Daniel, and Paul. But never will there be such a large group at one time. They will emerge from the worst holocaust in history, the Tribulation, battle weary but triumphant; they will be like 144,000 Daniels.

Chapter 7 introduced this remarkable group of men. After the horrific events of the sixth seal (6:12-17), the terror-stricken people of the earth will cry out “to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’” (6:16-17). By that point in the Tribulation, the world will have experienced the unimaginable horrors of the first six seals. There will have been widespread wars, severe famines, deadly plagues, and terrible earthquakes and other natural disasters, all of which will result in millions of deaths. Sin will run rampant and unchecked over the earth, fueled by Satan and his demon hosts—both those cast from heaven with him (12:9) and those formerly bound demons who will be released (9:1-11, 14-19). Antichrist will unleash the most terrible persecution the world has ever known, and countless thousands of Christians and Jews will be slaughtered.

In light of that horrifying, unimaginable situation, and the devastating trumpet and bowl judgments to follow, it will seem impossible for anyone to survive.

It is against that backdrop that the 144,000 are introduced. They will survive both Satan’s wrath and persecution and God’s judgments on the sinful world. Nothing will be able to harm them, because God will seal them (7:3-4)...

The 144,000 will not be the only ones redeemed during the Tribulation. A great host of others, both Jews ...and Gentiles...will be saved. Many, perhaps most, of them will die as martyrs during the savage persecution unleashed by Antichrist. The rest, however, who will live through the horrors of the Tribulation will enter the millennial kingdom (Isa. 65:20-23; Matt. 25:31-36). But the 144,000 Jewish evangelists are unique because all of them will survive. When Christ returns and stands on Mount Zion, they will stand with Him in triumph.

A brief overview sets the stage for the vision of the 144,000. The reader should recall that chapters 12-14 of Revelation form an interlude in the saga of God's final judgments on the sinful world. The unfolding of those judgments is described in chapters 6-11, as God will begin to take back the earth from the usurper, Satan. Chapter 11, verse 15, records the sounding of the seventh trumpet, though the judgments associated with it will not begin to unfold until chapter 15. Chapters 12 and 13 recapitulate the events of the Tribulation, this time giving them from Satan's perspective. They expose Satan's efforts to destroy Israel (chap. 12) and detail the careers of Antichrist and the final false prophet (chap. 13). Chapter 14 returns to what God is doing. It contains three visions that give a general preview of the judgments yet to come that culminate in Christ's return.²¹

- (a) What does John see in verse 1?

- (b) Where is Mount Zion (II Samuel 5:7; Psalm 2:6; 43:3; Hebrews 12:22)?

- (c) What does John hear coming from the throne of God in verses 2-3?

Not only are the 144,000 standing, but they are also singing (Rev. 14:2-3). Because of the special experiences they had during the Tribulation, they have a new song to sing that others cannot share (see Pss. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1). They are accompanied by heavenly harps and other heavenly voices. It is encouraging to know that one day out sorrow will be transformed into songs!²²

- (d) How will the holiness of these 144,000 men stand out in an evil world (List three traits)?

- (e) Read Exodus 20:16; Matthew 16:24; John 14:21; I Corinthians 6:18; Romans 12:1-2. In I Peter 1:15-16, Peter wrote, "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'" A Christian cannot live a sinless life, nevertheless, how should his life be different from the life of one who does not know the Lord?

- (f) What do you think it means that "they were **purchased** from among men and offered as **firstfruits** to God and the Lamb" (Leviticus 23:9-14; I Corinthians 6:20; 7:23; I Peter 1:18-19)?

²¹ MacArthur, 69-70.

²² Wiersbe, 607.

- (g) Jesus gave His life for us (Romans 5:8)! As you come to understand more fully the terrible price that He paid for your salvation, what should your response be to Him (Acts 3:19)?

2. Read verses 6-13.

People are constantly hoping for a better day. Politicians promise to bring in better times... World leaders strive to find common ground between nations...

But man's efforts to bring about a better world, however well intended, are ultimately doomed. They amount to little more than rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic to give everyone a better view as the ship sinks. The truth is that no a better day, but an unimaginably worse day lies ahead for man and his world. In the future, God will pour out His wrath and judgment on a scale never before seen. Only after the earth is utterly devastated and unbelievers judged will a better day come—the blessed earthly kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ...

Angels serve throughout Scripture as God's messengers; in fact, the Greek word *angelos* ("angel") means "messenger."...

Angels will play a major role in the end-time events. They will gather the nonelect for judgment (Matt. 13:41-42, 49-50), the elect for glory (Matt. 24:31), and accompany the Lord Jesus Christ when He returns to earth in triumph (Matt. 25:31; II Thess. 1:7). In Revelation, angels are involved in the outpouring of God's wrath (8:6ff.; 11:15ff.; 16:1ff.). Unlike those angels, however, the three angels described in verses 6-11 do not bring judgment. Instead, they bring astounding proclamations from God concerning the consummation of the age.²³

- (a) Three angels will deliver messages to the world. What message does this first angel bring?
- (b) The word gospel (*euangelion*) means "good news!" What is the good news that God has offered to the world since the beginning of time (John 3:16; I Corinthians 15:1-5)?
- (c) What three admonitions does this angel give in verse 7 and what does each mean?
- (d) Read Ecclesiastes 12:13-14. Solomon was the wealthiest man who ever lived. He discovered that pursuing material, worldly pleasures is "meaningless, a chasing after the wind" (Ecc. 2:11). Solomon searched like many of us for the meaning and purpose of life. What did he conclude? What does his conclusion mean to you?

Unbelievers will be called to fea and glorify God immediately because the hour of His judgment has come. Opportunity is fading fast; the bowl judgments are about to be poured out, to be followed shortly by the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to judge the unbelieving world (Matt. 25:31-46). This is the first occurrence of the word *krisis* (judgment) in Revelation. It will appear again in 16:7, 18:10, and 19:2... Up to this point in Revelation, the word *wrath* has been used to describe God's judgment (cf. 6:16-17; 11:18); the two terms will continue to be used interchangeably (cf. vv. 10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19; 19:15). God's righteous judgments are the outpouring of His wrath against the stubborn and unrepentant world.²⁴

(e) What is the message of the second angel? What do you think it means?

Babylon has from its inception symbolized evil and rebellion against God. It was founded by Nimrod (Gen. 10:9), a proud, powerful, God-rejecting ruler. Babel (Babylon) was the site of the first organized system of idolatrous false religion (Gen. 11:1-4). The Tower of Babel, the expression of that false religion, was a ziggurat; an edifice designed to facilitate idolatrous worship. God judged the people's idolatry and rebellion by confusing their language and scattering them over the globe (Gen. 11:5-9). Thus the seeds of idolatry and false religion spread around the world from Babylon, to take root wherever these proud rebels and their descendants settled.

As humanity was united in idolatrous false religion at Babel, so will it again be united in the end times under the aegis of the final Babylon. History will come full circle.²⁵

(f) Of what do you think this phrase "Babylon the Great" refers (Revelation 13:11-14; 18)?

(g) What does the phrase "drink the maddening wine" mean (Job 21:20; Psalm 75:8; Jeremiah 25:15)?

(h) What is the message of the third angel? What do you think it means?

(i) Read Daniel 12:2; Matthew 12:2; 18:8; 25:41, 46; Mark 9:43; 48; Revelation 20:10, 14-15. What is John describing in verses 10-11? Give a description of hell from these verses.

²⁴ Ibid. 87.

²⁵ Ibid. 90.

That the unregenerate will be tormented in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb will add shame and embarrassment to their suffering. “To suffer in the presence of the hosts of heaven is not to lessen the fierceness of the judgment but to make it more grievous. Christians had borne the shame of public derision and opposition; soon their antagonists will suffer before a more august gathering” (Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977], 276). Unrepentant sinners will be banished from God’s presence relationally (cf. 21:27; 22:15; Matt. 7:23; 25:41; II Thess. 1:9); they will be forever barred from the loving fellowship with Him that believers will enjoy. They will not, however, be away from His presence in the sense of His sovereignty and omnipresence—even in hell. David wrote, “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there” (Ps. 139:7-8 NKJV). Those in hell will suffer eternal punishment at the hands of God, because He is the One who is “able to destroy both soul and body in hell?” (Matt. 10:28).²⁶

- (j) By warning the inhabitants of the earth of God’s coming wrath and judgment, what is God offering to the world once again (II Peter 3:9)?

- (k) The NASV translates verse 12 as follows: “Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.” What does the phrase “perseverance of the saints” mean? Who helps believers persevere in their faith (Psalm 37:23-24, 28, 31; John 6:37-40; Romans 11:29; and, Philippians 1:6)?

- (l) John was instructed to write: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” Why are those who die in the Lord blessed (v. 13b; 21:1-5)?

- (m) John also writes, “Their deeds will follow them.” What does this mean (I Corinthians 3:10-15; II Corinthians 5:10; II Timothy 4:7-8; Hebrews 6:10)?

3. Read verses 14-20.

Jesus’ first coming was one of humiliation, a time when He “although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:6-8).

²⁶ Ibid. 92.

Jesus came the first time as a servant; He will return as the sovereign King. In His first coming, He came in humility; in His second coming, He will come in majesty and splendor. The first time He came to earth, “the son of Man [came] to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10); when He returns, it will be to “judge the living and the dead” (II Tim. 4:1). Jesus came the first time as the sower; He will come again as the reaper.²⁷

- (a) Read Joel 3:12-13 along with Matthew 13:39-42. What is being described in these verses?
- (b) Who is this that John sees “seated on the cloud [who] was one ‘like a son of man’” (Daniel 7:13)?
- (c) Why is He carrying a sickle?

A sickle was a long, curved, razor-sharp iron blade attached to a long, broomsticklike wooden handle. Sickles were used to harvest grain; as they were held with both hands spread apart and swept back and forth, their sharp blades would cut off the grain stalks at ground level.²⁸

- (d) There are two harvests suggested in verses 14-20. The first is the “grain harvest.” The second is the “grape harvest.” In verse 15, MacArthur notes, “the verb translated *is ripe* actually means ‘dried up,’ ‘withered,’ ‘overripe,’ or ‘rotten.’ The grain (the earth) pictured here has passed the point of any usefulness and is fit only to be ‘gathered up and burned with fire’” (Matt. 13:40). Thus, when Jesus swings the sickle over the earth do you think this is the ingathering of His children or does it refer to coming judgment? Explain your reasoning.
- (e) Clearly the grape harvest mentioned in verses 17-20 refers to coming judgment. To what event might this refer (Joel 3:1-2, 11-13; Revelation 16:16; 19:11-21)?

All the enemies of God who survive the seven bowl judgments will be gathered like grape clusters from the vine of the earth and flung into the great wine press of the wrath of God. A wine press consisted of two stone basins connected by a trough. Grapes would be trampled in the upper basin, and the juice would collect in the lower one. The splattering of the juice as the grapes are stomped vividly pictures the splattered blood of those who will be destroyed (cf. Isa. 63:3; Lam. 1:15; Joel 3:13).

²⁷ Ibid. 108.

²⁸ Ibid. 113.

The wine press will be trodden outside the city, as the Lord protects Jerusalem from the carnage of the Battle of Armageddon (cf. 11:2; Dan. 11:45; Zech. 14:1-4). That battle will take place in the north of Israel on the Plain of Esdraelon near Mount Megiddo (about sixty miles north of Jerusalem). It will rage the entire length of Israel as far south as Bozrah in Edom (cf. Isa. 63:1). Jerusalem will be spared to become the capital of Christ's kingdom.²⁹

(f) Read I Thessalonians 1:10. How can you avoid the coming judgment?