



The Beginning of the End

Revelation 14

Revelation 14:1-5

Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. ² And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, ³ and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. ⁴ It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb, ⁵ and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.

Revelation 13 ended with the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet waging war against the church. However, their efforts, while terrifying, are ultimately fruitless and are thwarted.

In Revelation 7, after the seals were opened, we see the 144,000 sealed and secured.

In Revelation 14, after the dragon, beast, and false prophet wage their war, we see the 144,000 sealed and secured.

In both places, this is included for the encouragement of the church. A call to remain faithful to the end and you will not suffer loss.

Revelation 14 and the 144,000

1. The 144,000 refers to the same group in Revelation 7: Jewish Christians who escaped the destruction of Jerusalem.
2. The Lamb standing on Mount Zion (v. 1) is reminiscent of Psalm 2:6. Despite all the efforts of the dragon, Christ and his believers stand secure in victory.
3. These believers add to the worship in heaven (vv. 2-3; cf. Rev 4). The angels longed to look into but have no experience of redemption.
4. These “virgins” have remained faithful to Christ (vv. 4-5).
5. The “firstfruits” argue against the futurist position (v. 4).

#4. Virgins are not referring to single Christians. But those who have not committed adultery with the harlot that is Jerusalem and its false ways. They have not wed themselves to the cult of the emperor. They have remained faithful to Christ.

#5. The biggest disagreement is always timing. Here we see that these 144,000 are called, “These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb” (v. 4). In the futurist scheme, these are the lastfruits, the last believers to be saved. But in fact, these are the first from mankind to be redeemed by the Lamb.

Who could this be referring to except those early disciples and the first converts in Jerusalem? They were the firstfruits and now they have been redeemed.

This is one of the best arguments for a 1st century fulfillment (along with 1:1, 3).

#6. There is a parallel here with Hebrews 12:22-24, “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, **23** and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the

righteous made perfect, **24** and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”

This was also written to Jewish believers to encourage them to remain faithful to Christ.

Revelation 14:6-7 (The First Angel)

⁶Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. ⁷And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."

The word angel can also mean messenger. Most conclude that the eternal gospel is not proclaimed by a heavenly messenger (i.e., an angel) but the earthly messenger (i.e., the church).

Next slide has parallel to preaching the gospel, then the end will come.

Matthew 24:1-2

Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. ² But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

Jesus said in Matthew 24:1-14, "Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. **2** But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

3 As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" **4** And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. **5** For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. **6** And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. **7** For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. **8** All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

Matthew 24:9-14

⁹“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. ¹⁰ And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹² And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

The destruction of the temple would not come until there was first a proclamation of the gospel through the world. 40 years transpired. The gospel went throughout the Roman Empire and beyond, and yet Jerusalem still resisted and increased in lawlessness and idolatry.

And so his hour of judgment has now come...

Apostolic Gospel Preaching

Acts 14:15, “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.”

Acts 17:24-31, “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth... now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

This gospel preaching did reach the Gentile “world” through Paul and other apostles.

There are parallels in this language and what we see in Revelation 14:6-7

Revelation 14:8 (The Second Angel)

⁸ Another angel, a second, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality.”

Who is Babylon? Rome? Jerusalem? Literal Babylon in Iraq?

We’ll get to a full description of Babylon in Revelation 17. I believe this is a reference to Jerusalem, but we’ll leave her identity until later.

After the gospel is preached to the world, we see the destruction of this adulterous city who had led others astray and to commit the same harlotry she has committed.

Revelation 14:9-12 (The Third Angel)

⁹And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

Babylon is described as committing adultery with the beast (Rev 17) and for this (and other reasons) she will be destroyed.

Likewise, those who partake in her sins and become an adulterous like her, they also will face God's judgment and wrath.

The worship of the beast and receiving its mark was covered in Chapter 13. It refers to aligning oneself with Rome and its cult of the emperor rather than remaining faithful and loyal to Jesus Christ.

When Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, it says in Genesis 19:28, "And he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley, and he looked and, behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace." That judgment is "eternal" according to Jude, "just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire."

The judgment will be severe and permanent.

Revelation 14:12-13

¹² Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

¹³ And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”

In light of God’s judgment of Babylon and those who sin like her, the saints are called to endure.

Endurance is not just faith, but remaining loyal to Christ by doing what he says.

We see this call repeatedly in Revelation. We catch glimpses of God’s people being safe in the midst of judgment and reminders to endure, do not take the mark, remain faithful and you will be saved from this great calamity and judgment.

Verse 13,

David S. Clark writes: “Yes, though you are thrown to the lions in the amphitheatre, though you are daubed with pitch and burned for a torchlight at a garden party, though your head rolls from the block at the stroke of the executioner’s axe,—yes even thus you are blessed a thousand times above your persecutors.” [Thomas Nelson. Revelation: Four Views, Revised and Updated (p. 390). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.]

Verse 13 could also refer to the arrangement in the New Covenant as compared with the old that those in die now go into the presence of Christ, where previously they would have gone to Sheol, to Abraham’s side.

But it is likely that it refers to the blessings after death that await a believer (to

Revelation 14:14-16

¹⁴ Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. ¹⁵ And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe." ¹⁶ So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped.

Verse 14 is another reference to Christ.

Here is is "seated on the cloud" a reference to glory and deity (Daniel 7).

Revelation 14:17-20

¹⁷ Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. ¹⁸ And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." ¹⁹ So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. ²⁰ And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia.

Revelation 14 and the Harvest

1. There seems to be two harvests (v. 16, 19).
2. The first harvest is gathered personally by Christ (vv. 14-15).
3. The second harvest is gathered by an angel and is to be devoted to destruction (vv. 18-20).
4. The “grapes” were taken outside the city (v. 20) like a sin-offering was burned outside the camp, and as the criminal was executed outside the gate, being accursed.
5. Israel is called God’s vineyard or vine (Isaiah 5:1-7).
6. Language parallels Jerusalem’s destruction in 586 BC. Lamentations 1:15, “the Lord has trodden as in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah.”

#2. This could be a reference to the 144,000 who are safe and secure. Or it could be those throughout the world that heard the gospel preaching mentioned in verse 6-7.

Matthew 13 speaks about God’s judgment and says in verse 30, “Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, “Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.””

It seems likely then that these are the ones gathered into Jesus’ barn.

Matthew 24:31-34, “**31** And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32 “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. **33** So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. **34** Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place”

#3. This is likely the same judgment as the judgment on Babylon (Jerusalem) also called Sodom and Egypt in Revelation 11:8.

#4. Hebrews 13:11-13, “**11** For the bodies of those animals whose blood is

brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. **12** So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. **13** Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.”

#6. The 1,600 stadia is 184 miles (ESV footnote). This is the length from Dan to Beersheba, from northern Israel to the south. It could be a reference to the entire land of Israel.

The number does show up like the other numbers. Eg., 12, 1000, etc.

It is obviously not literal that blood is as high as the horses bridge (5') for 184 miles.

Significance of Revelation 14

1. In judgment, God faithfully preserves his people (vv. 1ff, 13).
2. In times of distress, God's people must:
 - Avoid defilement (v. 4)
 - Follow the Lamb (v. 4)
 - Avoid lies (v. 5)
 - Be blameless (v. 5)
 - Fear God and give him glory (v. 6)
 - Worship the Creator (v. 6)
 - Don't take the "mark" and worship the "beast" (v. 9)
 - Endure and keep the commandments and faith in Jesus (v. 12)
3. There is a harvest of the righteous and the unrighteous, the "wheat" and the "tares."

#3. Remember judgment. There is a reckoning. Remain faithful until the end.

God is in control.