

## Revelation 14

### The Lamb and the 144,000

14 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.

### The Messages of the Three Angels

6 Then 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. 7 And 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."

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."

9 And 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, 10 he 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. 11 And 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."

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!"

### The Harvest of the Earth

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.

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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.

## The Harvest

In Revelation 14 we see the reappearance of the 144,000 sealed saints from Revelation 14.

We must remember that Revelation is not a chronology, but a picture meant to strengthen the church to endure. Therefore, when we see images from prior scenes repeated we need to immediately be drawn to the underlying truth which is necessary for our encouragement in the faith. It is so necessary that the Holy Spirit through John saw fit to underline it for us in the text of Revelation.

I do not hold to the common assertion that the 144,000 are necessarily post-Rapture Jewish believers. Nothing in the text of Revelation 14 indicates this. This is especially true if we do not hold Revelation to be a rigid chronology of future events.

The 144,000 is probably not even meant to be taken as a literal number. Remember that numbers have symbolic meaning in Revelation. 144,000 is  $12 \times 12 \times 1,000$ , which represents the total number of God's people.

Twelve is the number of the people of God. In the Old Testament there were twelve tribes of Israel. In the New Testament there are twelve apostles.

These 144,000 represent the multitude of God's elect who have been redeemed to live a pure life in the midst of a world that is totally opposed to the Lordship of Christ. My interpretation is that we who are in Christ today should count ourselves among the 144,000.

Redeemed Christ-followers have a night and day contrast with the rest of those on planet earth who are marked with the number of man. While the rest of the world has followed the beast and engaged in sexual immorality (v.8), the 144,000 have kept themselves chaste.

Sexual immorality is a common sin used in the Bible as a representative for all sorts of idolatry. The way we treat our sexuality says everything about the reverence we have for God, who created us as sexual beings. The sexual intimacy of a husband and wife within the covenant of marriage is God's right and proper plan for sex.

While the rest of the world worships the beast, the 144,000 sing a new song (v.2). While the rest of the world follows after the lies of the beast, the 144,000 go forward as the firstfruits of God's first harvest (v. 4-5).

This means that they are the ones who proclaim the Gospel to a condemned world and that God uses their preaching to redeem many from the clutch of the beast. Even if it costs the 144,000 their lives, the effort will reap a harvest of even greater eternal value.

The first harvest of grain ought to call our attention to John 4:35. In the sovereignty of God's plan there is a full number of elect who will be redeemed from the earth by grace through faith.

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Our proclaiming the Gospel is part of God's plan to bring about the coming of Christ. When you share your faith at home, at school, and at work you are part of coming harvest of Jesus.

The second harvest comes about in Rev. 14:17-20. This is a harvest of judgement upon the earth.

One important aspect to note is that it is a harvest of the grapes of wrath that have already been planted by the world and its system.

Have you ever heard the saying "he who lives by the sword will die by the sword?" Hosea prophesied of those who "sow the wind and reap the whirlwind" (Hosea 8:7). This is a pretty good summary of what the judgement of God will look like.

All of the vileness of sinful hearts, self-worship, immorality, and violence will be harvested, poured into a vat, and then spewed out over the earth in the same measure that the earth has been a party to it.

There is no such thing as undeserved judgement when it comes to God. Those who do not submit themselves to the umbrella of Christ's mercy will reap the full natural consequences and judgement for the sin in which they have participated.

### Discussion Questions

- How do you feel that you relate to the 144,000?
- What role does worship play in the life of the redeemed?
- Do we play too great or too small of an emphasis on worship in our own lives?
- Why is the sexual purity of the 144,000 such a big deal?
- Why does the beast use sex to lead hearts into idolatry?
- Do you ever get discouraged into wondering if living a pure life and proclaiming the Gospel is worth the effort?
- Does this text encourage you?
- How does the angels' message of judgement fly in the face of much preaching today?
- Do you think it is valid to say that the second harvest of the grapes of wrath are the deeds of the wicked being poured back on the wicked?
- How do you see this playing out in the world today?