

The Lamb and the 144,000

Chapter 14: Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred *and* forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. ² And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. ³ They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred *and* forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. ⁴ These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from *among* men, *being* first fruits to God and to the Lamb. ⁵ And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Here, again we see the 144,000. Remember, before the opening of the 7th Seal, before the 7 Trumpets and 3 woes, an Angel with the Seal of God told the 4 Angels who were about to begin the judgments of the 7 Trumpets to wait until the 144,000 were sealed, 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. These 144,000 went out as evangelists and soon thereafter we saw a great crowd of souls in Heaven, martyred for their faith.

Now, after the Tribulation's midpoint, after the death of the 2 witnesses, we see these 144,000, with the Lamb, Jesus Christ, before Gods' throne. Not only did they remain faithful unto death, like the other great crowd we saw, but these are actually described as having been amazingly faithful to their calling and to the Lord Jesus Christ... chaste, without sexual sin, faithful in following the Lord Jesus Christ at all times and being completely honest, without deceit... actually, without fault before God. That is an amazing statement... how is that possible? We haven't known many men or women throughout Scripture who would have measured up to this group... maybe Daniel or Joseph and a few others... but just imagine... 144,000 of them sent out into the World to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom... 'Jesus Christ will return soon... be ready... or be afraid!'

To us, the Church, the Bride of Jesus Christ, the righteousness of Christ has been imputed and we stand before God righteous, holy and faultless but even so... we all know that in reality, we are not faultless... at least not from our own point of view... not in our thoughts, motives and actions... but God performed ***the great trade*** for us... a great tradeoff between each of us and the Lord Jesus Christ. He traded our sinfulness for Jesus Christ's righteousness. He traded our guilt for His innocence. He traded our death for His life. He applied Jesus Christ's righteousness to us and He applied our guilt and sinfulness to Him. He who knew no sin became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Cor 5:21

Billy Graham is not faultless... Paul is not faultless in actuality... but John says these 144,000 are ***faultless before the throne of God.***

These aren't just 144,000 regular citizens hiding out from the Antichrist's forces. These are 144,000 supercharged perfect Billy Graham type evangelists, only better... imagine the impact... the huge numbers of people converted during that first 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation... killed and taken to Heaven... these are some of the harvest of sheep vs. goats and wheat vs. tares.

This is God glorifying Himself by calling to Himself multiplied millions... right under Satan's nose, in his face.

Finally, Satan has control of the whole world and yet all these millions just slip right through his fingers as God calls them and draws them to Himself and then keeps and preserves them safe through death or until Jesus Christ's return.

The truth is... even though they must stay strong in their faith to be saved... every one that God chose and will have called to Himself... He will have kept and preserved them as His own... throughout the Tribulation or until the moment of their death.

All during the first half of the Tribulation God has been harvesting. His great end time Harvest began with the Rapture... everyone God had chosen as the bride of His Son, everyone from Stephen onward... were all resurrected from physical death or 'taken up' alive at the Rapture. After that He continued harvesting His elect, the Tribulation Saints. In addition, He has been harvesting the billions destined eventually for the Lake of Fire. One group... a harvest of righteousness and glory. The other group... a harvest of shame and damnation.

Verse 6: Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—⁷ saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”

The Grace and Mercy of God displayed again... even now He continues to pour it out, drawing His elect to Himself and warning the lost. First with the dedication and fervor of 144,000 mighty evangelists fanning out across the globe for 3 1/2 years then with the prophecy and judgments of the 2 witnesses sending out supernatural plagues... all to prove the truth of God and His Word... now He has even sent an angel flying above... preaching the Gospel to those still alive on the Earth... to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people... calling and drawing some... leaving the rest with absolutely no excuse for their rejection of Him and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have the mistaken notion that God can only be glorified when He is able to somehow convince a lost person to 'accept Jesus'... as if Jesus is the last kid chosen to play ball... He is raising His hand and hopping up and down... calling out, 'I'm here, I'm here... choose me... choose me'... or His Father is glaring at the coach... 'You'd better choose my son... or else!'

No one is hopping or glaring... God knows exactly who He has chosen and exactly how He will call and draw them to Himself at the exact planned moment... and He knows exactly how He will preserve them and keep them until He brings each and every one of them safely home to Glory.

Remember... God's audience, before whom He has determined to glorify Himself, is all angels and all humans. He is not glorified by what we can do for Him... He is glorified by being able to hold us up as a testimony of what He was able to do in us, in spite of us... that He could take a fallen, lost derelict human and remake and reform it into a glorious trophy of His Grace, Mercy and Love.

Forever and ever... we will know, and everyone who sees us will know we are there only because of what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us... and that He is the only One Who deserves to be there... we are only there because God chose to love us and call us to Himself. We are there only because He chose us for Himself.

The same is true regarding every lost one who rejects Him... each one that ultimately spends eternity in Hell is a testimony and trophy to God's Righteousness, Holiness and Perfection and the satisfaction of His Holy Wrath toward sin. Even though He sent His Son to die on a cross... even though He sent the 144,000... even though He sent the 2 witnesses... even though He sent all of the Pauls, Johns, Peters, Billy Grahams and countless missionaries, Pastors and Sunday School teachers... every one of the billions in Hell will always know they are there because they chose to reject God's Grace, Mercy and Love... they chose to reject the Lord Jesus Christ... they will always know they are there, forever, because they deserve it.

Every human will ultimately be a trophy to one or the other... either to His Grace, Mercy and Love... or to His Righteousness, Holiness, Perfection and Wrath toward sin.

Verse 8: And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”

Here, in announcing the fall of Babylon, the destruction is 3-fold.

First, it is the actual city... God foretold the destruction of Babylon through Jeremiah. It was destroyed because of its sin and its treatment of Israel but when the Bible refers to Babylon, it means much more than

just a geographical place. By the name, Babylon, it means... the entire world system... political, commercial and religious... Babylon is the kingdom of darkness ruled by the god of this world, Lucifer... Satan.

In Isaiah 14 where we read of the fall of Lucifer, it is addressed to the king of Babylon. Lucifer is spiritually the king of Babylon... the prince of darkness over the kingdom of darkness... the entire fallen world system.

God tells Isaiah, 'Take up this taunt against the king of Babylon...'

"How you are fallen from heaven,

Lucifer, son of the morning!

How you are cut down to the ground,

you who laid the nations low!

¹³ You said in your heart,

'I will ascend to heaven;

above the stars of God

I will set my throne on high;

I will sit on the mount of assembly

in the far reaches of the north;

¹⁴ ***I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;***

I will make myself like the Most High.'

The name Babylon is derived from *bav-il* or *bav-ilim* which, in that Akkadian language, meant 'Gate of God' or 'Gate of the Gods.' The name 'Babylon' is from the Greek. The city was founded by Nimrod and was first famous because of the building of the Tower of Babel. From there, God confused the languages and scattered the peoples out over the Earth... the Hebrew word *bavel* means 'confusion'.

The building of the tower of Babel is not long after the flood... people remained concentrated in one general geographical area... around Mt. Ararat in Turkey where Noah's Ark came to rest when the flood waters receded. God caused the flood, in part, because fallen angels had 'come down' engaging sexually with human women, producing giants, the 'mighty men of old.' The same happened after the flood... perhaps this is where it began again... in the plains of Shinar... at the site of the Tower of Babel... Babylon... the gate of the gods... the place where the 'gods' entered the physical realm to meet and mate with humans.

The book of Enoch tells that fallen angels taught humans things forbidden by God... like metal working for weapons, cutting of roots and plants for drugs and sorcery, producing colors and dyes for makeup... painting of faces and eyes, enticing to sexual immorality. These would have been many of the things which strengthened the fallen world system... political, commercial and religious.

The people worshipped these fallen angels... they were the gods described and taught in all the 'mythologies' from around the world... the Greek pantheon... Zeus, Apollo, Hermes etc., (pantheon means many gods) the Roman pantheon... Jupiter, Neptune, Mars, Venus etc., the Norse pantheon... Odin, Thor, Loki etc.

All around the world... as the different families and language groups spread out from Babel, going south to Africa, East to China, North to Europe and Russia, farther East to the Americas... they continued to worship the same fallen angels as they had at Babel and before the flood... they just used different names from their different languages... but the source was always the same... the gate of the gods... physically and spiritually... Babylon.

Babylon was destroyed physically thousands of years ago. Now, here during the Tribulation, it is destroyed spiritually... as a commercial, political world system and as a world religious system.

Verse 9: Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their

torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

This is a final warning... anyone who worships the Antichrist and takes the Mark of the Beast, on their right hand or their forehead, will be condemned to Hell, forever, without any chance of repentance... and it will be a conscious, miserable punishment in Hell forever... no hope... no more chance... misery forever... and even with this supernatural, angelic warning... they will line up by the millions wanting to be the first to receive the Mark of the Beast... to prove their allegiance... just like now, as they line up to be the first to get the new iPhone or to see the new StarWars... to be movers and shakers, leaders of the 'in crowd.' Perhaps there will be an individual reference number associated with your Mark of the Beast... as in Nazi Germany in the early thirties... the greatest honor and influence came with the first, lowest registration numbers for Nazi Party Membership... it was the same in Soviet Russia, Maoist China, Castro's Cuba and every other Antichrist governmental system.

Verse 12: Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. ¹³ Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Write: Blessed *are* the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.'

Again, God gives encouragement to believers, those who are about to be killed for their faith... the encouragement and strength to remain strong until death... especially blessed are those who will die in the Lord after this... Just as God told Joshua... ***'Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go. 'Josh 1:9***

What have we seen so far in Chapter 14? We saw 3 angels... the first was preaching the Gospel saying, 'The hour of judgment has come.' The second angel announces the judgment of 'Babylon,' Satan's World System. The third angel warns against taking the Mark of the Beast... if you do, you'll drink the wine of God's wrath.

Then he encourages and strengthens believers... 'You will die physically, but be strong, I am with you.'

This chapter is another overview of the Tribulation period... now he gives an overview of the coming Harvest of God... Salvation for the chosen and terrible Judgment for the lost.

Reaping the Earth's Harvest

Verse 14: Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat *One* like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. ¹⁵ And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." ¹⁶ So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

Jesus Christ, to Whom all judgment has been entrusted, is the One doing the harvesting... He is in control over every soul... Satan has no control or ownership over any soul, he has no control over the moment of any person's death... only God Almighty controls and preserves every life.

As I live," declares the Lord God... 'Behold, every living soul belongs to Me.' Ezek 18:3

Here we see God reaping a great harvest and notice, with this part of the harvest... Jesus Christ Himself is doing the harvesting... He is the One sitting on the cloud, as if waiting for the exact moment determined by His Father, waiting for His order. This seems to be part of the harvesting of His own, His elect.

The next harvesting is different...

Remember... Revelation does not travel in a straight line... beginning to end. He gives John visions and then He will go back and give further illumination of certain aspects of the coming time of judgment.

God has been gathering tares and goats throughout the Tribulation to be cast into the fire and He has been gathering wheat and sheep throughout the Tribulation to be taken into His barn.

Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.²⁵ But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away.²⁶ But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also.²⁷ The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'²⁸ And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves *said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?'²⁹ But he *said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them.³⁰ Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."'

Matt 13 He taught in the same way concerning sheep and goats being separated at the end of the age.

Now we see a picture of His further removing of tares and goats before His final gathering of wheat and sheep into His coming Kingdom... remember... many of the saved will live through the Tribulation and remain alive as normal, mortal humans to repopulate the Earth during Jesus Christ's Kingdom on Earth, during the Millennium.

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

¹⁸ And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe."¹⁹ So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God.²⁰ And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

Now it's an angel who has the sickle and an angel who does the harvesting and then throws the harvest into the great winepress of the wrath of God... the angel harvests while the Lord Jesus Christ waits at the vat to crush the harvest in judgment.

Notice the extent of the judgment... this is referring to the Battle of Armageddon in the Valley of Megiddo in Northern Israel in the Jezreel Valley. Blood runs 4 feet deep over a huge area.

Our bodies contain about one and a half gallons of blood, so this involves millions or billions of gallons of blood pooling and running in streams from higher to lower ground... a very great slaughter.

Jezreel means, 'God will sow' and it is here that God will reap this great harvest at Armageddon.

Here is where, at Jesus' return, the final harvest to judgment will occur... when He returns, everyone left alive who has rejected Him, who has worshipped the Antichrist and taken his Mark, will be killed... not one will be left alive to enter the Millennial Kingdom.

But... all those who do go alive into the Kingdom will still be mortal humans, still having their own sin nature. Jesus Christ will be ruling and reigning on Earth with absolute authority, with a 'rod of iron.' Through the following centuries many will be born who reject the Lordship of the King, Jesus Christ; they will hold and hide rebellion in their hearts. With their mouths and actions they will obey but in their hearts they will turn away. Any of them or their descendants, throughout the coming 1000 years, will be free to rebel if they choose, but they will pay the ultimate price if they do.

We'll see all of that in later chapters.

Next up... God's final 7 plagues of Judgment... the bowl or vial judgments

Remember when we referenced a fourth of July fireworks show... the last 2 minutes, the grand finale... the last, sudden burst of nonstop fireworks.

We should read the next 2 chapters before next time.