

Revelation 14: The Lamb, the Three Angels, and the Harvest

From the devil and his two beasts, the vision turns toward the beginning of the consummation of God's mystery. The vision shows the Lamb with the first fruits purchased from among men, the three angels forecast the events about to transpire in the revelation, and the Lord oversees the reapers.

The Lamb and the First Fruits Purchased from among Men (Revelation 14:1-5)

Revelation 14:1

14 And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads.

John sees the Lamb standing on Mount Zion. In the Old Testament, Zion was first a fortress and then the city of David. The account in 2 Samuel 5:6-9 tells of the transition:

6 And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who spoke unto David, saying, "Except you take away the blind and the lame, you shall not come in here;" thinking, David cannot come in here. 7 Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion; the same is the city of David. 8 And David said on that day, "Whosoever smites the Jebusites, let him get up to the watercourse, and (smite) the lame and the blind, that are hated of David's soul." Wherefore they say, "There are the blind and the lame; he cannot come into the house."

9 And David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the city of David. And David built roundabout from Millo and inward. [c.1000 B.C.]

The prophets used Zion in a symbolic way to refer to the coming city of God. Micah wrote in Micah 4:6-7:

6 "In that day," says Jehovah, "will I assemble that which is lame, and I will gather that which is driven away, and that which I have afflicted; 7 and I will make that which was lame a remnant, and that which was cast far off a strong nation: and Jehovah will reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth even for ever.

That it is the holy city still to come is clear, for it will last for ever. In the New Testament, Zion becomes synonymous with the holy city, the New Jerusalem. Peter connected Zion to the holy city of the New Testament in Acts 2. As he began his sermon in Acts 2:16-21, he preached,

16 but this is that which has been spoken through the prophet Joel: "17 And it shall be in the last days," says God, "I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh: And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams: 18 Yes and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days will I pour forth of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. 19 And I will show wonders in the heaven above, And signs on the earth beneath; Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the day of the Lord come, That great and notable (day).

21 And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

In Joel 2:32, the deliverance was to be “on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem:

32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered; for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape, as Jehovah has said, and among the remnant those whom Jehovah doth call.

The Hebrew writer explained exactly what the spiritual Zion is in Hebrews 12:22-24:

22 but you are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better than (that of) Abel.

This 144,000 (*with him a hundred and forty and four thousand*) must be same as those sealed in Revelation 7:4, after which is added an enumerable multitude in Revelation 7:9-10:

9 After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of (all) tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; 10 and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God who sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb.

The clause—*having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads*—is a sealing. Paul explains how all Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 1:13-14:

13 in whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, — in whom, having also believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of (God's) own possession, unto the praise of his glory.

To this, in 2 Timothy 2:19, Paul tells the exact words of the sealing:

19 Howbeit [nevertheless] the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, “The Lord knows them that are his.” and, “Let every one that names the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness.”

The name of the Father is in direct contrast with the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16-17) which is the name of the beast. In neither case are these literal marks, but figuratively, they describe whose servants we are in Romans 6:17-18:

17 But thanks be to God, that, whereas you were servants of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto you were delivered; 18 and being made free from sin, you became servants of righteousness.

The term *his name* has as its antecedent the Lamb. The name of the Lamb and the name of the Father tell us the ownership of the 144,000. As discussed in chapter 13, in Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 9:3-6), the Lord had put a mark on the foreheads of those who “grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in” Jerusalem. When the judgment came, the order was given: “but come not near any man upon whom is the mark.”

Revelation 14:2

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard (was) as (the voice) of harpers harping with their harps:

The metaphors—clearly marked by *as*—express the nature of the sound John heard and describe the power and the suddenness and the beauty of this heavenly sound. They occur elsewhere in Revelation:

Revelation 1:15: The voice of Christ was like the voice of many waters.

Revelation 19:6: And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters

Revelation 6:1-2: And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, “Come.”

Revelation 15:2-3:2 standing by the sea of glass, having harps of God. 3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and marvelous are your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are your ways, King of the ages.”

Today some advocates of instrumental music say that there were harps in heaven using this passage as support: “**as** (the voice) of harpers harping with their harps.” However, *as* signals a simile, a comparison of two things essentially unlike. *A voice from heaven* is described as harping in its sound. No harps in heaven there. The same metaphor in used of harps in Revelation 15:2.

Revelation 14:3

3 and they sing as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders: and no man could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand, (even) they that had been purchased out of the earth.

This is not the first time a new song appears in the text. In Revelation 5:8-10, the elders and the four living creatures sang a new song when the lamb took the scroll with the seven seals. However, in this former passage, the words of the song appear right in the text. There is no doubt about the meaning of the first new song. In the present passage, no one except the 144,000 could learn the new song. We learn specifically that the 144,000 singers are they that had been purchased of the earth.

Revelation 14:4-5

4 These are they that were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These (are) they that follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were purchased from among men, (to be) the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb.5 And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish.

Verse four and verse five offer further descriptions of who the 144,000 are. The use of the present tense places the 144,000 in the here and now. That they did not defile themselves with women and that they without blemish describes their moral and spiritual faithfulness to the Lamb. The church, the bride of Christ, is to be presented in Ephesians 5:27: “A glorious (church), not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

In 2 Corinthians 11:2-3, she is to be “a pure virgin to Christ” with “the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ.”

They *follow the Lamb wherever he goes* alludes to the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 16:24-25:

24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25 For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it.”

The Christian's service, as we follow the Lamb, will require that we follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness (1 Timothy 6:11). The losing one's life is losing the fleshly existence and being raised to walk in newness of life (Rom 3:3-6).

These were purchased from among men, (to be) the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb.

Both God and the Lamb receive the firstfruits of the harvest (Exodus 23:16). The offering of firstfruits is continuous, with the fruit of the harvest offered year after year. The 144,000 are a continuing and reoccurring group of followers still on earth offered up to God and the Lamb. These are the same firstfruits as those sealed in Revelation 7. James 1:18 identifies the followers as a kind of the firstfruits: "18 Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

Jeremiah gives exact meaning to the symbolic use of the word *firstfruit* in Jeremiah 2:2-3:

2 Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, "Thus says Jehovah, 'I remember for you the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals; how you went after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. 3 Israel (was) holiness unto Jehovah, the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall be held guilty; evil shall come upon them, says Jehovah.'"

The 144,000 are those still in the desert and are the woman, the church of chapter 12. They continually offer themselves as a sacrifice in the war against the dragon.

And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish tells that the truth is the defining characteristic. In the struggle between the church and the dragon, the truth is a differentiating element. From the beginning, "You will not surely die." to the man of sin, truth and lie separate good from evil. The very work of the man of sin is a lie described in 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12:

11 And for this cause God sends them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: 12 that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

In 1 John 2:21-23, John was more specific in describing the antichrist pinpointing the fact that religious lies are his work:

21 I have not written unto you because you know not the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is the liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, (even) he that denies the Father and the Son.

Lying is one of those willful sins that leads one to the fiery lake of fire and brimstone in Revelation 21:8:

8 But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and **all liars**, their part (shall be) in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

The firstfruits cannot be liars, but the children of the devil are liars in John 8:44:

44 You are of (your) father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stands not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: **for he is a liar, and the father thereof.**

It is the church that is without blemish, and therefore it is the church that is the firstfruits, renewed though all the generation of man. Ephesians 5:25-27 teaches:

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; 26 that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, 27

that he might present the church to himself a glorious (church), not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Three Angels Forecasting the Events about to Transpire in the Revelation (Revelation 14:6-13)

Revelation 14:6

6 And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having eternal good tidings to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people;

In the first five verses, the firstfruits, the 144,000, stood with the Lamb on Mount Zion, the church, the heavenly Jerusalem. Now the vision turns toward the disposition of the enemy. The angel had the eternal good tidings (gospel) to proclaim. The announcement of these good tidings were forecast in Revelation 10:7:

7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets.

The seventh angel sounded and the kingdom of men became the kingdom of God in Revelation 11:15:

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, "The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever."

However, the announcement here, with the addition of the word *eternal* to *good tidings*, is more in keeping with the proclamation of the angels at the birth of Christ in Luke 2:10. The present participle is used in both passages indicating action continuing into the future. As the firstfruits are continuing, so is the harvest.

10 And the angel said unto them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you **good tidings** of great joy which shall be to all the people: 11 for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

The phrase, *to all the people*, is similar to the phrase in our text, *to every nation, tribe, language and people*. As *eternal good tidings*, they cannot change—no additions and no subtractions and no human interpretations.

Revelation 14:7

7 and he said with a great voice, "Fear God, and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters."

God's judgment is come! By the angel's pronouncement, the eternal gospel receives its meaning: fear God, give him glory, and worship him. The first, *fear God*, is reminiscent of Solomon's final word as the teacher in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14:

13 (This is) the end of the matter; all has been heard: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole (duty) of man. 14 For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Both angel and Solomon connect their commands to the hour of the last judgment. Peter, in 1 Peter 1:17, likewise connects fear and the judgment of God:

17 And if you call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judges according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear.

Give him glory expresses the second part of the angel's pronouncement. Paul places this glory in the context of Christ and the church in Ephesians 3:21:

21 unto Him (be) the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen.

Worship him is the final phase of obligation in this angel's proclamation. The angel describes God as having made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water, all of which are evidence of his everlasting power and divinity. Paul wrote in Romans 1:20:

20 For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, (even) his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse:

All of us are able to comprehend the Lord God through the things that he has made and so worship him.

Revelation 14:8

8 And another, a second angel, followed, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, that has made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Just as the first angel announced the eternal gospel, the second angel announces the fall of Babylon the Great, of which this is the first mention. All of six mentions of Babylon in Revelation designate it the great city or Babylon the great. In Revelation, there are eight mentions of the great city with six of those tying directly to Babylon. The first mention of the great city in Revelation 11:8 illustrates its metaphoric use:

8 And their dead bodies (lie) in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

Babylon, the great city, stands in marked contrast to the holy city, the New Jerusalem (Revelation 11:2; 21:2; 21:10; 22:19). The great and evil nature of this universal but metaphoric city shows in the city's ability to make all nations drink her wine. Later, in Revelation 18:2-3, the city's influence extends to the nations, the kings, and the merchants of the earth:

2 And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become a habitation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird. 3 For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen; and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness."

Pervasive is the great city's influence, but she is already fallen by the pronouncement of God's judgment by his angel.

Revelation 14:9-11

9 And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice, If any man worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, 10 he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger; and 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 goes up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image, and who receives the mark of his name.

There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who *receives the mark of his name*, as the third angel announced God's judgment. These are they who drink the maddening wine of her adulteries (14:8; 18:2-3). Now they must drink the wine of God's fury, poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. *Cup* here has the sense that the Christ prayed in Matthew 26:39: "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will". Metaphorically, the cup stands for the contents—the wrath of God.

The holy angels and the Lamb will witness their torment with fire and brimstone. The duration will be for ever and ever (into the ages of the ages) and day and night. There is no rest for those who receive the mark of the name of the beast. Let us not think: "Well, when I die, it will all be over." Death is just the beginning of eternity.

Revelation 14:12

12 Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

The pronouncements of the angels make the disposition of the faithful, of Babylon, and of those that receive the mark of the name of the beast, certain. However, the pronouncement does not mean it has come, and therefore, the saints must patiently endure in God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. Because the Lord has pronounced these things, according to Isaiah 46:9-10 they will be:

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; (I am) God, and there is none like me; 10 declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not (yet) done; saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

And further in Isaiah 48:2-3:

2 (for they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; Jehovah of hosts is his name): 3 I have declared the former things from of old; yes, they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them: suddenly I did them, and they came to pass.

Revelation 14:13

13 And I heard the voice from heaven saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yes, says the Spirit that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them.'"

This passage pronounces a detailed outcome for those in Revelation 2:10:

10 Fear not the things which you are about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

The Lord Overseeing the Reapers (Revelation 14:14-20)

Revelation 14:14-16

14 And I saw, and behold, a white cloud; and on the cloud (I saw) one sitting like unto a son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. 15 And another angel came out from the temple, crying with a great voice to him that sat on the cloud, Send forth your sickle, and reap: for the hour to reap is come; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. 16 And he that sat on the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth; and the earth was reaped.

The one setting on the cloud, like the son of man, and with a crown of gold is the Lamb (See notes on Revelation 1:9-18; 10:1-3). He now has a sharp sickle in hand fulfilling, as it were, the prophecy of Joel 3:12-13:

12 Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about. 13 Put you in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe: come, tread; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great.

The harvest that is about to occur is that one spoken of in the parable of the sower of Matthew 13:37-39

37 And he answered and said, “He that sows the good seed is the Son of man; 38 and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil (one); 39 and the enemy that sowed them is the devil: and the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are angels.”

The Lord swung his sickle to harvest the earth.

Revelation 14:17-20

17 Another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. 18 And another angel came out from the altar, he that had power over fire; and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, “Send forth your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.” 19 And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vintage of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great (winepress), of the wrath of God. 20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs [a furlong is about 220 yards].

The first harvest appears to have been a harvest of the faithful since those harvested received no consequences. In this passage, the angel in charge of fire called to the Lord that grapes from the earth’s vine were ripe. The grapes went into the wine press of God’s wrath and the grapes were trampled (compare Revelation 14:10). That grapes went in and blood flowed out shows the metaphoric nature of the passage. We know from the pronouncement of the first angel the judgment is upon those who received the mark of the name of the beast. Therefore, the grapes are the people who serve the beast. As the juice separates from its grape, their blood—the source of life itself—will separate from their flesh. Enough blood to rise as high as the horse’s bridle and spread for 1,600 furlongs [two hundred miles], shows the completeness and fullness of God’s judgment.

The timing of these two harvests is evident in 1 Cor 15:20-26:

20 But now has Christ been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep. 21 For since by man (came) death, by man (came) also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits; then they that are Christ’s, at his coming. 24 Then (comes) the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be abolished is death.