

## **Revelation Ch. 14: The Lamb and The Wine-Press**

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Here we have a picture of those who had not bowed down to the beast, the first generation of Christians standing triumphantly with Christ as He prepares to execute judgment on Jerusalem (14:6-8). As already mentioned, all who would obey the gospel prior to this event had done so (cf. 6:11; 7:1-17; 22:11). It was time to judge this wicked generation (Matt. 12:34-45; 23:33, 36; Acts 2:40).

### ***The Lamb and the 144,000***

#### **Verse 1**

**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.**

The identity of the 144,000 has been discussed previously (Ch. 7). Mount Zion was the location of a Jebusite stronghold which was taken by David and called by his name, the City of David (2 Sam. 5:7; 1 Chr. 11:5). He later brought the ark there (2 Sam. 6:12), from which Solomon brought it into the temple (1 Kings 8:1; 2 Chr. 5:2). As a symbol it came to refer to Jerusalem as a whole, either physical or spiritual (Ps. 9:14; 48:2; 50:2; 74:2; 78:68; 102:21; 135:21; 147:12; Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:5). In this case it refers to the New Jerusalem, the earthly part of which is the church (Heb. 12:22).

Since mountains symbolize governments or kingdoms (cf. Jer. 51:25), we have a picture of Christ's spiritual kingdom. Just as the old law went forth from Mount Sinai, the new law went forth from Mount Zion (Heb. 12:18-29; cf. Isa. 2:3; 28:16; Ps. 2:6; Mic. 4:2). This happened when the church was established in Jerusalem in 30 AD (Matt. 16:18, 19; Acts 2; 1 Pet. 2:6).

The spiritual kingdom, the church, has been depicted with various symbols, all of which represent different aspects. It may be beneficial to approach these symbols as follows:

- 1) Kingdom – Ruled by a King (Matt. 16:18, 19; Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:6, 9; 5:10; 12:10; 17:14)
- 2) Mount Zion – Law and government (Heb. 12:18-29; Isa. 2:3; Mic. 4:2; cf. Rom. 8:2; Jas. 1:25)
- 3) New Jerusalem – Citizenship (Phi. 3:20; Heb. 11:16; 12:22; Rev. 3:12; 21:2)
- 4) Temple – Presence of God and service to Him (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:19-21; Rev. 3:12; 7:15; 21:3, 22; Ezek. 37:27)

#### **Verse 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.**

The voice from heaven could refer to the loud voices of the saints (1:15; cf. 17:15), blending with the sound of the harps to symbolize praise in song (14:3). We have seen previously that the elders and living creatures had harps that symbolized music in praise to God (5:8).

The fact that harps were heard does not indicate that instrumental music is acceptable in Christian worship. They simply represent the fact that God hears our singing from the heart (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) as that which is as beautiful as the sound of harps. "Although Josephus tells of the wonderful effects produced in the Temple by the use of instruments, the first Christians were of too spiritual a fibre to substitute lifeless instruments for or to use them to accompany the human voice" (Catholic

Encyclopedia, Ecclesiastical Music, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10648a.htm>).

### **Verse 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.**

Isaiah prophesied of a new song to be sung in connection with the new covenant (Isa. 42:6-10), referring to the establishment of the church (cf. Isa. 42:6; 49:6; Acts 13:47; 26:23). No one could sing this song except those who have agreed to the new covenant, and have become members of the church. The fact that only the 144,000 could learn the song may point to the fact that they are the same as the great multitude mentioned previously (7:9). This song is one of praise for what God has accomplished, along the lines of what is said elsewhere (5:9; 7:10-12; 15:3, 4).

### **Verse 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 the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.**

Since the church is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:25; Rev. 21:9), the fact that they were virgins symbolizes spiritual purity (2 Cor. 11:2). These would not “defile themselves with women” in the sense that servants of God are supposed to keep themselves unspotted from the world, and live a life of righteous conduct (Jas. 1:27; Phi. 2:15; 2 Pet. 3:14; Rev. 3:4).

They are firstfruits because they are the very best of God's creation (Jas. 1:18; Pr. 3:9), and also the first Christians (Rom. 1:16; 16:5). True Christians follow Jesus wherever He leads them (Matt. 16:24; Jn. 12:26).

### **Verse 5**

**And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.**

Though all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), His servants are those who have good hearts, and speak no evil nor deceive others (Matt. 15:18; 1 Thes. 2:3; Tit. 3:2; Jas. 3; 1 Pet. 3:10). They speak and teach the truth (Eph. 4:15, 25; cf. Jn. 17:17). For this, the blood of Christ continually cleanses His people from sin (Rom. 5; 1 Jn. 1:7), through which they have access to the throne of God (7:9; Heb. 4:16).

### **Verses 6-7**

**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 – 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.”**

This symbolizes the great commission (Mk. 16:15, 16; Matt. 28:19-20) that was preached to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people during the first century (Matt. 24:14; Col. 1:23). The time for repentance was up (2 Pet. 3:9), and His judgment has come (6:17).

The message captures what was said earlier (4:11), that God should be worshiped for who He is and what He has done (cf. 11:13, 16-18; Ecc. 12:13). All men should fear and give glory to God for what He has done, and also what He will do (Acts 17:30, 31). The fear of God can be of reverence (Pr. 1:7; Eph. 5:21; Heb. 12:28; 1 Pet. 2:17) or terror (Acts 24:25; Heb. 10:31), depending on what side one is

on.

While this is specifically dealing with the judgment on Jerusalem (6:17), the same applies to the final judgment (Acts 17:30, 31; 24:25; Rom. 14:10).

### **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.”**

This is the first mention of Babylon, later called Babylon The Great (17:5; 18:2). Though the language is identical to prophecies against literal Babylon (Isa. 21:9; Jer. 51:7), it symbolizes another city. Her identity has already been discussed in the introductory notes. She is Jerusalem, that great city which became a spiritual Sodom, Egypt, and Babylon (11:8), the faithful city that became a harlot (cf. Isa. 1:21). See the introductory notes and handout titled “Babylon The Great” for a detailed description of this city and why it matches best with Jerusalem.

Babylon was an enemy of Israel, and responsible for Jerusalem's first destruction (2 Kings 25; Jer. 21:10). Just as the calamities brought forth by the trumpeting angels paralleled those brought upon the Egyptians, the oppressors of God's people, how fitting it is to now describe Jerusalem as Babylon, the enemy of God's people contrasted with His New Jerusalem. Just as all wicked nations suffer the wrath of God, so also would this generation of Jews (Matt. 23-24; 1 Thes. 2:16).

This wicked city had been an evil influence on the entire world (18:3; Matt. 23:15; cf. Jer. 51:7; Rev. 11:18), an example of those who put tradition, wealth, and power above justice and righteousness (cf. Matt. 15:3; 23:23; Mk. 7:13; 10:17-25; Lk. 18:10-13). They sealed their fate in rejecting the Son of God (Matt. 21:37-40; Heb. 10:29-31).

### **Verses 9-10**

**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, 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.**

Not only was Jerusalem to feel the wrath of God (17:4; cf. Matt. 23:32), but also those who worshiped Rome. Those who bowed to the Roman gods and gave in to the imperial cult would also be punished, and would not escape some of the trials that ensued during this time.

After Jerusalem was destroyed, major persecution by the Jews toward Christians ceased, yet the friction between the Roman Empire and Christianity continued to grow. While these are primarily first century events being depicted, the promise of wrath on those who paid allegiance to Roman gods over the one true God can extend beyond this time period (cf. 19:20).

**He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.**

This ties in with what happens later (19:20), the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death, a spiritual separation from God (21:8). While this certainly refers to eternal punishment that awaits those who do not obey the gospel (cf. Matt. 25:46; Rom. 2:8, 9; 2 Thes. 1:8), it likely applies to present defeat as well. Those living in sin are separated from God while they live (Isa. 59:2; cf. Rom. 6:23).

The persecutions by the beast would soon cease (cf. 13:7-10), and those who had given in to the imperial demands would feel the effects of a life apart from God. This happens to all impenitent sinners (Lk. 13:3), if not in this life, then definitely the next (cf. 20:15).

The presence of the holy angels and the Lamb does not indicate that they will be present throughout the duration of this torment, for if such were the case then they would reside in hell, or the torment would be in heaven. This cannot be so. It likely represents the ever present victory of the Lamb over His foes (19:11-21; 1 Cor. 15:25). As Judge of the world, He will seal the fate of the wicked (Matt. 10:33; 25:41; Lk. 12:8, 9; Acts 17:30, 31; Rev. 20:11-15).

### **Verse 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.”**

While the servants of God voluntarily serve Him day and night (7:15), those who choose not to do so in this life have no peace (Phi. 4:7). They do not rest because they fear death (cf. Heb. 2:15), and will have no rest when death comes (Lk. 16:24). This is a picture of the present mental torment, and eventual eternal torment of the wicked (Matt. 25:46). This applies not only to those who submitted to the false religions of the empire, but also to anyone who chooses to serve a false god (cf. Matt. 4:10; 6:24; Lk. 16:13; Col. 3:5).

Isaiah describes a similar picture as the complete and utter defeat of a wicked nation, of which all would see and remember its ruin (Isa. 34:8-10).

### **Verse 12**

**Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.**

The NASB omits the second “here are,” having this passage say that true patience and endurance is found in those who keep the commandments of God (Jn. 14:15; Heb. 5:9; Rev. 12:17; 22:14) in the face of temptation, persecution, and tribulation (2:10, 11; cf. 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Tim. 3:12). The people of God are those who keep themselves separate from the world (Jas. 1:27; 1 Pet. 2:9; 1 Jn. 2:15), and do not give in to things that seem like “no big deal,” such as worshiping the Roman gods and the emperor at that time (cf. Matt. 16:26).

### **Verse 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.”**

Contrasting with those who die outside the Lord, those who die in the Lord, that is, those who have reconciled their relationship with Him, are blessed (Rom. 5:10; cf. Eph. 1:3). This blessing is described as a rest from our labors, which will be for eternity (Heb. 4:9-11).

Their works follow them, rather than go before, because we are not saved by our own merits (Eph. 2:8). They follow as evidence of a life spent in service to God, and proof of a living faith (Jas. 2:26). The Bible makes a distinction between works of merit and works of faith (Lk. 17:10; Heb. 5:9).

This idea refutes any beliefs, held by the Gnostics of that day, that what is done in the flesh cannot affect the immortal spirit of a man, perpetuated still today as the doctrine of “perseverance of the

saints” or “once saved, always saved.” Everyone will be judged according to how they have used the time given them (2 Cor. 5:10).

Additionally, this we have here an indication of remembrance in heaven (Gen. 25:8; 2 Sam. 12:23; Matt. 8:11). Those who die in the Lord can rest and reflect on the fruits of their journey through this life, while those outside have no rest for all eternity, as they think about “what could have been” (cf. 14:11).

It is not the case that those who died in the Lord before this time would not be so blessed. This is merely stated to emphasize and magnify how much better life is for those in the church. They can live in this life looking forward to what awaits them in the next (Col. 3:2; 1 Tim. 4:8; 2 Tim. 4:7, 8; 1 Pet. 1:4). Unlike those who will suffer torment, they do not have to fear death (Heb. 2:14, 15).

## ***The Harvest and Wine-Press***

### **Verses 14-16**

**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. 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.” So He who sat on the cloud thrust His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.**

The vision of the Lamb and the 144,000 in triumph over those who worship the beast has passed, and a new scene appears, which will transition to the primary focus of the book. While some may see in this vision of reaping the end of time, it ties in nicely with the language concerning the destruction of Jerusalem.

The white cloud does not identify with the dark storm clouds (cf. 1:7), because the reaping is one of peace (cf. Matt. 24:31). The One like the Son of Man is Jesus (1:13), the crowned ruler of the Universe (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 19:16; cf. Matt. 28:18).

The angel comes from the very presence of God, symbolized by the temple, with instructions to reap the earth. This ties in with the sealing of the 144,000 (7:1-3) as a notification that all who would obey the gospel in that generation had done so, and had become members of the church (cf. 6:11). The church was fully built up and ready to be gathered for protection (cf. 15:8).

The sickle is the means by which he gathers His people for deliverance and provides them with vengeance (Lk. 21:28; Rev. 7:14; 18:20; 19:2). It is also the means by which He gathers the wicked for punishment (14:17-20). During this time, He “rewarded” every man in one of these ways (Rev. 2:23; 11:18; 22:12).

The harvest scene here is much like the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24-43), which seems to apply to the end of time (Matt. 13:41, 42), though it fits these events as well (cf. “end of the age”; Matt. 24:14; 1 Cor. 10:11; Heb. 9:26). Whatever the primary application of the harvest in Matthew, it is a symbol of Christ gathering His people and separating out the wicked for punishment. This happened in 70 AD, and will happen at the end of time.

### **Verses 17-18**

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

Another angel comes out from the presence of God having a sickle. Notice that Christ is depicted as having the sickle previously, while here we have another angel. Passages elsewhere indicate that Christ will send his angels to gather His elect (Matt. 24:31), so perhaps the distinction is made here to emphasize that those gathered previously belonged to Christ, whereas these did not.

Yet another angel comes from the altar and notifies the first that it is time to reap. The significance of the altar likely has to do with the cries for vengeance being answered (6:9-11; 8:3-6). This angel is mentioned as having power over fire, perhaps for this reason (8:5).

The previous sickle was to reap the harvest of the earth, the good fruit (cf. Matt. 7:17-19; 9:37; Lk. 10:2; Jn. 15:1-8), while this was to reap the vine of the earth, the wicked nation of Israel (cf. Ps. 80:8-19; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:20-21; Joel 3:13).

#### **Verse 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.**

This wicked generation was gathered and punished by God, symbolized by a great wine-press (19:15; Joel 3:13; Lam. 1:15; Isa. 63:1-6; Jer. 25:29-33; Lk. 19:41-44). Just as the grapes are trapped within a wall of rock as they are pressed, so also was blood pressed from wicked Israel, trapped by the Romans within their own city (cf. 16:6; Josephus, Wars 6.9.3, 4).

#### **Verse 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.**

Normally, a wine-press is trodden from within the walls, however, this pictures the Romans laying siege to the city and bombarding it from the outside until it was weakened enough to break down the walls and finish the job. The amount of blood shed symbolized here is a large quantity, harmonizing with the descriptions of Josephus (Wars 6.8.5; cf. Isa. 34:3).

The 1,600 furlongs, or stadia (1 stadia is approx. 600 ft.), are approximately 184 miles, about the length of the land of Palestine. This simply refers to the widespread bloodshed during this war that would cover the land.

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