

## **Lesson Three**

(14:1-20)

### **THE LAMB AND THE SPIRITUAL CONFRONTATION**

Once again John is given a vision of the protection and blessedness of God's saints before a vision of judgment upon the Roman empire is given. This follows the pattern of chapters 4 and 5, 7, and 10 and 11, (see the Climactic Parallelism Chart at the beginning of Vol. I). Chapter 14 also provides a vision of victory to follow the vision of the war upon the saints by the devil and his cohorts, the two beasts.

While all the Roman empire trembles at the apparent invincibility of the beast and prostitutes itself to a lifestyle like that of the beast, Christians may rejoice and sing the song of redemption for they are secure in the citadel (Zion) of God. The scene which just closed in chapter 13 did not give much hope, from an earthly perspective, for those who would refuse to worship the beast. Refusal to worship the beast was going to bring war, captivity, starvation and death. Would refusal be worth it? Would faithfulness to death be vindicated? The answer is in chapter 14.

The theme of this chapter is the same as that of chapters 4 and 5—Throne perspective. The great tribulation of the Roman empire must be seen by Christians through the perspective of heaven. Heaven is in control. The Lamb is the Victor, not Domitian. The persecuted saints of earth are in

direct contact with heaven—they are just a breath away from final and complete victory. If they die “in the Lord” they will be ushered immediately into rest and reward. Some may be terrified by the first beast, some may be seduced by the second beast, but not the Christian.

### The Blessed (14:1-20)

**14** Then I looked, and lo, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. <sup>2</sup>And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpers playing on their harps, <sup>3</sup>and they sing a new song before the throne and before the living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth. <sup>4</sup>It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste; it is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes; these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, <sup>5</sup>and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are spotless.

<sup>6</sup> Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; <sup>7</sup>and he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water.”

<sup>8</sup> Another angel, a second, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of her impure passion.”

<sup>9</sup> And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If any one worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his fore head or on his hand, <sup>10</sup>he also shall drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and he shall be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. <sup>11</sup>And the smoke of their torment goes up for ever 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.”

<sup>12</sup> Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

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

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14 Then I looked, and lo, 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. <sup>15</sup>And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat upon the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe." <sup>16</sup>So he who sat upon the cloud swung his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

17 And another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. <sup>18</sup>Then another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has power over fire, and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." <sup>19</sup>So the angel swung his sickle on the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God; <sup>20</sup>and the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia.

**vv. 1-5 . . . on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand . . .** — The 144,000 with the Lamb on Mount Zion are the same 144,000 as those in 7:1-8. They are the redeemed still on the earth, numbered and sealed (marked) by God, with Christ in their midst as he was portrayed walking among the seven lampstands (1:13; 2:1).

First, Mt. Zion is without question symbolic of the church on earth. It is plainly taught in the Old Testament prophets that Zion is the church of Christ to be established at the first advent of the Messiah (cf. Ps. 2:6; 110:2, 6; Isa. 2:2ff.; 35:10; 61:3; 66:7-9; Joel 2:32; Micah 4:7—5:2, etc.). Jesus and the apostles confirmed that the church was the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning Zion (cf. Zech. 9:9 with Mt. 21:5; Jn. 12:15; Isa. 62:11; cf. Isa. 28:16 with Rom. 9:33; I Pet. 2:6; Isa. 59:20; Rom. 11:26). But the most significant confirmation of this is found in Hebrews 12:22-28. There the apostle Paul informs Hebrew Christians that they should not be tempted to return to Judaism (which is symbolized by Mt. Sinai Heb. 12:18-21) *because* they had, by becoming Christians, arrived at the Zion predicted in the Old Testament prophets. Paul uses the perfect tense verb in Heb. 12:22 which would be interpreted, "But you have come and are coming to Mount Zion . . ." indicating that Mount Zion was not future but *present* in the first century A.D.

The Father's name "written on their foreheads" is the same name written on those of the church of Philadelphia who kept the faith (Rev. 3:12); it is the seal of God upon the foreheads of the "new Israel" (Rev. 7:3) the church on earth; it is the mark in contrast to the mark of the beast (cf. Rev. 13:16-18; 14:9-11; 19:20-21; 20:4). It is not a literal mark or name. It has to do with character, spiritual kinship. The Jews Jesus called sons of the

devil had no literal mark on their foreheads but their spiritual kinship was recognizable in their character and their deeds (cf. Jn. 8:44-47)—they did not have to have 666 tattooed with a laser beam literally on their flesh. Christians do not have to wear gold or wooden crosses around their necks to be recognized as belonging to Jesus. The world will know them as citizens of Zion by their character and deeds (cf. Jn. 13:35; Acts 4:13).

Next John's attention is directed away from Zion (the church on earth) to heaven. From heaven he hears a sound like the sound of many waters and like loud thunder. The sound he heard was like harpers playing on their harps. It was a sound like that of a roaring, crashing orchestra of musical instruments (harps). He hears from heaven majesty, power, sovereignty and praise. "They" sing a new song. "They" cannot be the 144,000 of "new Israel" on earth; "they" cannot be the four living creatures and 24 elders because "they" sing this new song *before* (to an audience of) the creatures and elders; "they" cannot be angels because angels cannot learn this song (cf. I Pet. 1:12; Heb. 2:16); "they" must be the innumerable multitude which had, at the time John was writing, come out of the great tribulation and were before the throne in heaven (cf. notes on 7:9-17).

Now John's attention is directed back to earth, to the 144,000. They are learning that song of redemption by presently going through the great tribulation. They were in the process of redemption. They were being purchased (Gr. *egorasmēnoi*, perfect participle) from the world. It is through tribulation that people become Christians and enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:21-23; Heb. 10:32-39; etc.). These Christians, the 144,000 safe in the citadel of Zion, had not defiled (Gr. *emolunthesan*, besmeared, filthied, fouled) themselves with the filthy woman (Rome). The 144,000 are spiritually pure and chaste (Gr. *parthenoi*, virginal). This probably refers primarily to the fact that the 144,000 have not committed spiritual adultery by worshiping idols. They have not bowed to emperor worship. The Old Testament constantly symbolizes idolatry as spiritual adultery (cf. Hosea 1:2; 2:1, 5; Ezek. 16:1-63; etc.). The idea of spiritual harlotry is emphatic in Revelation 17:1, 2, 4, 5; 18:3, 9; 19:2. That the church of Christ on earth should keep herself pure and undefiled from "fornication" with Rome is also emphatic in Revelation 18:4, 20; 19:6-6. These scriptures portray economic, political and religious intercourse with Rome as "fornication" with her because such intercourse demanded emperor-worship (idolatry). Complicity in any form of idolatry is spiritual whoremongering. Christians are to keep themselves pure from all forms of idolatry (I Cor. 10:14-22; II Cor. 11:2-3; I Jn. 5:21). Covetousness is idolatry; worship of political systems of potentates is idolatry; trust in non-Biblical religious systems is idolatry. Anything or anyone, other than God the Father and God the Son, to whom man gives first loyalty and love is idolatry. Being a Christian is being *married* to Christ (Eph. 5:21-33). Unfaithfulness to Christ's standards is spiritual adultery.

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The 144,000 were learning the new song (the song of Moses and the Lamb, Rev. 15:3-4) as they went through the great tribulation, because that is the song Moses and the Lamb both had to sing themselves. Both Moses and the Lamb were redeemed or purchased out of the earth *through* tribulation by *faith*. It is a song learned by experience. The 144,000 (the church on earth in the Roman empire) followed the Lamb wherever he went. Jesus told his disciples when he was on earth, "If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also. . . ." (Jn. 12:26). Jesus said that in a context of talking about his death on the cross. The 144,000 followed Jesus in "hating his life in this world" (cf. Rev. 12:11). Whatever Jesus did when he was in the world—whatever "road" walked—his "marked ones" expected to follow. If Jesus was persecuted, His disciples must be willing to follow (Jn. 15:18-27); if Jesus was willing to lay down his life for the word of God and for the sheep of God's flock, His 144,000 must follow; if Jesus was willing to renounce all the world's fame, fortune and pleasure for the kingdom's sake, so must those who wish to sing his song! Wherever Jesus goes (I Pet. 2:21) and wherever Jesus calls (Jn. 10:27-28) the citizens of Zion will go.

In verse 3 John says the 144,000 had been and were continuing to be purchased from the world; he uses the perfect tense participle *egorasmēnoi*. In verse 4 John says the 144,000 had been purchased from mankind; he uses the aorist tense verb *egorasthesan*. John emphatically declares this 144,000 had been purchased at some point in the past and was continuing in the redemption process. This 144,000 was not, therefore, in heaven when John wrote; this 144,000 was not to be redeemed 2000 years after John wrote Revelation. John further indicates this 144,000 was of the first century A.D. by calling them "first fruits" for God and the Lamb. John uses the Greek word *aparche* which is related to the word *aparchomai*, meaning, "to make a beginning." Paul applies the word *aparche* to his first converts in Asia and Achai (Rom. 16:5; I Cor. 16:15). This 144,000 was abiding in the truth. In their mouth no deceit or falsehood (Gr. *dolos*) was to be found. They would not say the Roman emperor was a god because that would be to acknowledge deception and falsehood. They would not renounce Christ as the Son of God, even at the sacrifice of their lives, because that would be to lie. Truth is more important than physical life. This 144,000 had been purified and purged of all deceitfulness and compromising of the truth by declaring their loyalty to Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. In Christ by faith they had their past sin forgiven and had present power to overcome the temptation to live in sin. They were spotless (Gr. *amomoi*); the word literally means, "unmarked, without blemish." This 144,000 had no mark of having been deceived by the devil or beguiled by the beast on them. It was apparent to all they did not belong to the kingdom of darkness and falsehood. They could not be carried about by the

cunning of men (Eph. 4:14ff.) but spoke the truth in love (Eph. 4:15, 25, 29, 30, 31).

**vv. 6-7 . . . another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth . . .** — Still another angel (cf. 7:2; 8:3; 10:1) comes with a vision. This angel was flying in midheaven (Gr. *mesouranema*)—the point at which the sun reaches its apex or directly overhead. This gives the angel maximum visibility by all on earth. This angel had a gospel-everlasting (Gr. *euaggelion aionion*) with which he evangelized (Gr. *euaggelisaî*) those dwelling on the earth. What is this gospel? Some commentators have speculated that this was different than the gospel of salvation by grace through faith proclaimed by Jesus and the apostles elsewhere in the New Testament. They think it is a special announcement of judgment for the “end times.” But, as Homer Hailey points out succinctly in his commentary on Revelation, this must be the very same gospel preached by Jesus and the apostles elsewhere for the New Testament says plainly there is only one gospel to be preached for all time. The faith was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3) and any one (even an angel) preaching any other gospel than that which was first delivered was to be anathema (Gal. 1:8). The gospel Christ accomplished and commissioned to be preached was to be proclaimed to every creature in the whole creation (Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15f.). Besides, it is doubtful that God would literally send heavenly beings to preach the gospel to human beings. In the first place, the gospel was a treasure deposited in “earthen vessels” (II Cor. 4:7); in the second place, the gospel of human redemption is something in which angels have only limited knowledge (cf. Heb. 2:16; I Pet. 1:10-12). This angel symbolizes human messengers much the same way the angels of the seven churches symbolized preachers or elders who were messengers for the seven churches of Asia.

What is interesting about this gospel (“good news”) is the terminology by which it is capsulated. One would not ordinarily think of “fearing God” and “judgment to come” as “good news”! Yet, reverence for God, obeying God (giving God glory), worshiping God, and preparing for judgment by trusting in Christ’s atonement is the very essence of the good news. This gospel of God was to be proclaimed to every nation and tribe and tongue and people—to the whole civilization of the Roman world. All who willingly follow the Lamb wherever he goes will be redeemed out of a lost and doomed Roman civilization. In the process of their redemption they will be numbered among the “144,000” and be protected by the Lamb in God’s citadel, Zion. They will learn the new song of Moses and the Lamb which those already finished with their redemption are singing around the throne.

**v. 8 Another angel, a second, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great. . . .”** — The Greek verbs, *epesen epesen*, are aorist tense and signify something that has happened. It seems strange that John

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would not use the future tense *pesoumai* and say, "Shall fall, shall fall, Babylon the great." But when God declares something shall be, it is as good as done already (cf. Isa. 46:10; 48:3). God decreed the fall of ancient Babylon and its king in the Old Testament decades before it happened as if it had already happened (cf. Isa. 13:1—14:21; Jer. 51:8; etc.). There is no question in the mind of heaven that the "Babylon" of John's day will fall. This is part of the good news to be proclaimed. The "judgment" announced in 14:7 is not the final judgment but "Babylon's" justment. The question is: Who is "Babylon"? That is settled in chapters 17 and 18 of this Revelation. It can be none other than ancient Rome. Rome is symbolized by the first beast (political opposition), the second beast (idolatrous emperor-worship), and Babylon, the mistress or harlot (carnal materialism and sensualism). These are the three main pressures (tribulations) brought to bear on Christians and others during the age of the Roman empire.

Babylon's (Rome's) judgment from God was the result of her wickedness and making the whole Roman world "drink the wine of her impure passion." The term wine is not to be limited to literal alcoholic beverage but is symbolic of everything that intoxicated Rome to attempt the usurpation of the sovereignty of God and the Lamb. Political, religious and economic power is intoxicating. Most men become drunk with power. They lose all reason and perspective with power. They are incapable of facing the reality that the power does not really belong to them. That is the way a drunkard sees things—irrationally and unrealistically. The drunkard, to control others, must entice them to become drunk with the same "wine." Rome enticed the whole world (except faithful Christians) to indulge in political oppression of Christ's church, emperor-worship and suppression of the truth of Christianity, and abandonment to carnal, fleshly, materialistic life-style.

The words *impure passion* are a translation of the Greek word *porneias* which is usually translated *evil* or *wickedness*; sometimes it is translated *fornication*. It is a word related to *ponos* which means, *labor, toil, pain* or *sorrow*; thus *porneias* denotes evil that causes pain, labor or sorrow and is therefore *worthless* and *grievous*.

The imagery of drinking the wine of wickedness is undoubtedly taken from the Old Testament (cf. Jer. 51:7). Rome is pictured again intoxicated with the wine of her wickedness (Rev. 17:2, 6; 18:3). God does not allow those drunk on the wine of wickedness to escape reality long. Soon the "piper must be paid."

**vv. 9-11 If anyone worship the beast . . . he also shall drink the wine of God's wrath . . . for ever and ever** — A third angel had a message for the whole Roman world also, so he cried with a loud voice announcing the judgment upon all who worshiped the beast and its image (see comments on chapter 13 for emperor-worship).

God has a cup of wine for all who intoxicate themselves with wickedness. God's cup is filled with divine wrath *unmixed* (Gr. *akratou*, untempered,

undiluted). In ancient times (as well as modern) The juice of the grape (wine) was often mixed with water and spices for taste and economic reasons. Diluted wine would not have full effect, but undiluted would cause those who drank it to stagger and reel and become incapacitated. God's undiluted and untempered wrath incapacitated his enemies. The imagery of God's cup of wrath is taken from the Old Testament prophets (cf. Psa. 75:8; Isa. 51:22; Jer. 25:15, 27; 49:12; Ezek. 23:31-32; Obadiah 16; Hab. 2:15-16). When God decides to make an enemy drink His cup of wrath the enemy cannot refuse it! When Rome's time came, she inexorably drank the cup of God's wrath (cf. Rev. 17:17; 18:6-10).

The warning is that all who have worshiped the beast and its image and have not repented are to be *tormented* (Gr. *basanisthesetai*, rubbed, abraded, chaffed torturously—tortured) in fire and brimstone while they must cringe in guilt in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb. Brimstone (Gr. *theion*, sulphurous, explosive, lightning) and fire as an agent of God's wrath and torture upon the wicked is as old as Genesis 19:24 and Sodom and Gomorrah. It is also referred to in the prophets (cf. Isa. 30:27-33; 34:9; Ezek. 38:22). John is trying to picture the doom of the impenitent in the most terrifying terms available in the human language. But even human language is incapable of communicating the excruciating torture of eternal punishment by an infinitely just, holy and powerful God. The rich man who died and went to Hades experienced the torments of the wrath of God (cf. Lk. 16:19-31). And the punishment of those who have the mark of the beast and do not repent will be eternal. The Greek phrase here is *aionas aionon* which literally means, "for ages of ages," or "ages without end." Matthew used the same word for *eternal* punishment as he did for *eternal* life (Gr. *aionion*) in reporting Jesus' statement in Matthew 25:46. In the statement of Jesus, recorded by Mark (9:43-48), we understand also that the punishment of the wicked will be without end (eternal). Mark says Jesus described the fires of hell as *unquenchable* (Gr. *asbeston*, asbestos) where the "worm" (Gr. *skolex*, used metaphorically of the devouring process) has *no end* (Gr. *ou teleuta*, no finish, no completion). Jesus told the account of Lazarus and the rich man (Lk. 16:19-31) and said there was an impassable chasm between the place of torment and the place of blessedness. None can pass from one to the other. Man's destiny is *eternally* fixed after death! The impenitent and unbelieving are forever tormented!

Since the torment of the impenitent is in the *presence* (Gr. *enopoion*, in the face of, or, in the eye of) the holy angels and the Lamb, it will also be in the presence of the redeemed for the redeemed are in the presence of the Lamb. We may think of this idea as repugnant; but that is because we do not understand, and may not believe, the utter horridness of wickedness. We may not comprehend or believe the absoluteness of the Lord's justice and righteousness. Whatever we may think, it is definitely the teaching of



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scripture that in eternity the divine justice of heaven will *demonstrate* to the saints the vindication of their faith and suffering. Abraham went to see with his own eyes the holocaust which had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:27-28). Isaiah predicts that the progeny of the faithful remnant will witness with their own eyes the destruction of apostate Judaism and the birth of the Messianic kingdom (the church) (Isa. 66:1-24) as a vindication of the faith and suffering of the remnant. In torments the rich man saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom (Lk. 16:19-31) and we assume Lazarus saw the rich man in torments—Abraham certainly did. Christians were told to rejoice over the catastrophic judgment of the Lamb upon the Roman empire (Rev. 18:20). As Barclay puts it: "Many a time the heathen had looked down from the crowded seats of the tiers of the arena on the sufferings of the Christians, and the Christians looked for the day when the spectators would be the saints and the hosts of heaven, and when the victims would be the erstwhile persecutors, and when the roles on earth would be reversed in heaven." Our attitude about God's right to send impenitent people to be tormented forever, must be brought into conformity with God's revealed Word, no matter what our feelings may be. John's vision here revealed no cessation of the torment—not even for a moment in eternity. They have no rest day or night from the torment. If the saints are called to be aware of God's judgments here on earth as vindication of their faith, why not in eternity?

**v. 12 Here is a call for the endurance of the saints** — This is the second "call" for the endurance of the saints. The first "call" was in 13:10. Actually, the word "call" in the English version is a supplied word—it is not in the Greek text. The Greek text reads literally, "Here is the endurance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus." In 13:10 the endurance or perseverance of the saints is found in accepting death or captivity for their faith. In 14:12 their perseverance is found in trusting God's word that he will vindicate them by his wrath upon those who have the mark of the beast and by taking the saints through death to blessedness (14:13). The saint develops perseverance in two ways: (a) trusting God's promises; (b) experiencing godly trials and tribulations. This is the teaching of Hebrews 10:32-39 and I Peter 4:12-19. John is not just "calling" for perseverance, he is giving the formula for developing it.

**v. 13 . . . Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth . . .** — Everything in the Roman world of that day was manipulated by the devil in an attempt to separate Christians from Christ. The power of evil applied political persecution, false religious teaching and practice, and moral seduction to deceive believers into abandoning Christ and the church. John is told to *write* (permanency) the promise of God's Holy Spirit. Those saints who endure by keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus

will fly immediately to a state of blessedness at the time of their physical death. They must not allow themselves to be deceived by the beast or those who have the mark of the beast. They must not abandon Christ.

This is a promise of God as old as the Old Testament. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psa. 116:15). Dying in the Lord means going to the blessed presence of the Lord in the New Testament also (cf. I Cor. 15:18-23; I Thess. 4:13-18). Paul was so eager to "gain" Christ, he could hardly decide whether he preferred to stay alive or die (Phil. 1:21-23). Jesus told the believing thief on the cross, "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Lk. 23:43). The beggar Lazarus when he died, was carried by the angels immediately to the presence of Abraham where he was comforted, (Lk. 16:25).

Those who die *in* the Lord find rest from the tribulation (pressure and testing) they had to endure in the world. These do not shrink back from the pressures and tensions of trusting in Jesus, nor do they give up when tested. They love Christ and trust Him even to death. But when they die they are pressured no more, they are tested no more, they find their "Sabbath rest" (Heb. 4:1ff.) where they may serve the Lord and do good and enjoy God's joyful presence forever. And their works go with them. John does not mean to say, of course, that some sort of balance sheet of good works in such quantity or quality as to outweigh evil works will accompany us so that the Lord may justify us by our works. The New Testament is plain that "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:16). But it is by doing the works of Christ we develop the character or Spirit of Christ in us. John is really saying here that when the Christian dies he takes with him to the presence of Christ a character made over into the image of Christ by the works of Christ done in the body. This cannot be confined strictly to the idea that good deeds are left behind after the death of believers as testimonies to their goodness on earth. This promise is for the blessedness of the saints in heaven in direct connection to their deeds. What the believer does on earth in assimilating the will and character of Christ will follow him to the next life and enhance his happiness there.

**vv. 14-20 . . . Put in your sickle and reap . . .** — John's next vision is a prediction, in symbolic form, of the imminent judgment of the Lamb upon the Roman empire. The imagery of the Son of man coming on a cloud does not necessarily have to be restricted to the Second Coming (see comments on Rev. 1:7). In fact, what John sees here may not be Christ on a cloud at all. The one on the cloud was *like* a son of man. Furthermore, an angel shouted with a loud voice to the one on the cloud giving him orders—Christ would not be taking orders from an angel. Finally, the one having the sickle is said to be an *angel* (14:19). This angel had a crown. That is not unusual since the 24 elders also had crowns.

The imagery of God's judgment falling upon nations in the form of "reaping with a sickle" is from the Old Testament prophets (see Joel 3:13).

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Jesus told a parable about "reapers" at harvest time (Mt. 13:24-30; 13:36-43; Mk. 4:29).

The angel with the sickle is told to gather the *clusters* (Gr. *botruas*) of the *vine* (Gr. *ampelou*) of the earth because its *grapes* (Gr. *staphulai*) were *ripe* (Gr. *ekuasan*, aorist, "had ripened"). It appears the word *vine* is to be understood as *vintage* (a season's produce of grapes) and not as the whole vine. The *earth* is the whole vine, but *only* the clusters of the vine are to be gathered. In other words, God is not going to reap the whole earth in this context—only vintage of pagan Rome. The angel gathered pagan Rome and threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God. Wine presses (Gr. *lenos*, trough or vat) were usually dug out in the soil or excavated in a rock. Clusters of grapes were poured into these round or square excavations and men and women climbed into them bare-footed and squeezed the juice from the grapes by treading back and forth upon the ripened grapes (see Rev. 19:15).

This is apocalyptic hyperbole. It is figurative and exaggerated. The wine-press was trodden *outside the city*. The "city" of God is the church. They had the seal of God upon them and were protected (cf. 7:1ff.; 11:1-2; etc.). But those "outside" the church were to be trodden in God's wine-press of wrath. That which flows from the wine-press is blood, not grape juice. This is a figurative scene. It could never be literally fulfilled—certainly not in Palestine for there is no place for a river 200 miles long (1600 stadia) there, especially not in the plain of Meggido. If the river of blood is intended to be understood literally, so must the sickle and the winepress. This is the kind of apocalyptic imagery used by other prophets (cf. Isa. 34:5-7; Ezek. 38:19-23; 39:17-24; etc.). It describes the awful carnage which will attend the destruction of the Roman empire. Jesus used such apocalyptic language to describe the fall of Judaism in Matthew 24 and Luke 21. The essence of chapter fourteen is in its contrast to chapter thirteen. The forces of evil are strong. They seem invincible (13:4). But the forces of righteousness are stronger (14:17-20). Now that the persecuted saints are reassured of their relationship to the Lamb and their destiny of blessedness, it is time for the Lamb to unleash His wrath upon Babylon, the harlot (also known as the beast and false prophet) which is Rome.

### APPREHENSION AND APPLICATION:

1. How is the theme of chapter 14 the same as that of chapters 4 and 5? Do you think the Christians of those early centuries were strengthened by these words of John's revelation? Would you have been? Are you?
2. What is Mt. Zion? Why is Zion used by John in the Revelation? What kind of glorious picture is painted of Zion in the Old Testament prophets? Do you think of yourself as a resident of Zion?

3. What is the "new song"? Have you learned it? How does one learn it?
4. Who is following the Lamb? Where? Why do some not follow the Lamb? Will you follow the Lamb *wherever* He goes?
5. What is the eternal gospel the angel had to proclaim? Is God's wrath and judgment a part of the good news of Christ? Should it be preached that way today?
6. Who is Babylon? How could she be fallen before she fell? How did she make all nations drink of her wine?
7. Are unbelievers tormented by God in fire and brimstone *forever*? Are there other scriptures to substantiate this? Would Jesus say this? Will the saints be aware of the punishment of the wicked? Won't that make them sad?
8. What does the call for endurance and obedience and faith of the saints have to do with the preceding questions? With the following question?
9. What is the "rest" of the dead saint? How does his "works" follow after him? What sort of character (works) are you building up to take with you?
10. What "reaping" is being commanded here? Is it the end of the world? Why would the language be so gory if it is only the fall of Rome? Does the Bible use gory language about other empires falling?

# A Parallel Comparison of the Seven Seals, Seven Trumpets and Seven Bowls

<b>1</b>	<p>White horse. Rider with bow and crown who went out conquering and to conquer.</p>	<p>Hail and fire mixed with blood fell on the earth and burnt up 1/3 of the earth, trees and grass.</p>	<p>Foul and evil sores came when men who bore the mark of the beast and worshipped its image. Poured on the earth.</p>
<b>2</b>	<p>Bright red horse. Rider with sword was permitted to take peace from the earth so that men should slay one another.</p>	<p>Something like a great fiery mountain into the sea, and 1/3 of the sea became blood, and 1/3 of the sea creatures died, and 1/3 of the ships were destroyed.</p>	<p>Poured on the sea which became like dead men's blood, and everything in the sea died.</p>
<b>3</b>	<p>Black horse. Rider with balance in hand. Voice apparently from midst of 4 living creatures, saying, "A qt. of wheat and 3 qts. of barley for a denarius but don't harm the oil and wine."</p>	<p>A great blazing star fell from heaven on 1/3 of the rivers and fountains of water. The star's name was Wormwood and a third of the waters became bitter and many died.</p>	<p>Poured on the rivers and fountains of water which became blood, and the angel of water says that God is just to give men who have shed blood blood to drink.</p>
<b>4</b>	<p>Pale horse. Rider named death with hades following given power over 1/4 of the earth to kill with sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts.</p>	<p>1/3 of the sun, moon and stars were struck so that a 1/3 of their light was darkened so that a 1/3 of the day and night was kept from shining.</p>	<p>Poured on the sun which is allowed to scorch men with a fierce heat, and they curse God's name but did not repent and give him glory.</p>
<b>5</b>	<p>Sons of slain for God's word and witness born under a star, asking when the Lord would judge and revenge their blood. Given white robes and told to rest until the others who were to be killed had been.</p>	<p>Star fell from heaven and given key to bottomless pit which he opened releasing smoke that darkened the sun. Locusts came from the smoke with scorpion-like power to harm all mankind not sealed of God, to torture them 5 months. Men will seek death but not find it. Locusts look like battle horses and make chariot-like noise. Their king is the angel Abaddon or Apollyon of the bottomless pit.</p>	<p>Poured on the throne of the beast and its throne was in darkness where men gnawed their tongues in anguish, cursed God for their pain and sores but did not repent of their deeds.</p>
<b>6</b>	<p>Earthquake, sun blackened, moon blood red, stars fall, sky rolled up, mountains and islands removed, all men seek to hide from the wrath of Him who is seated on the throne and the Lamb.</p>	<p>Voice from golden altar commands release of 4 angels bound at Euphrates river to kill 1/3 of man 200,000,000 man army with fire, smoke and sulphur coming from mouths to kill riding horses with tails like serpents who wound with their mouths. The rest of mankind did not repent of their idolatry and immorality.</p>	<p>Poured on Euphrates river which dried up to prepare way for eastern kings. From the mouths of the dragon, beast and false prophet frogs, lizards, scorpions and snakes are abundant, doing signs and assembling the world's kings for battle on the great day of God at Armageddon. (Christ is coming like a thief, so keep alert and ready.)</p>
<b>7</b>	<p>Silence in heaven for about 1/2 hour. 7 angels with 7 trumpets come forth.</p>	<p>A voice in heaven declares that the kingdom is the Lord's, and the 24 elders worship God. The heavenly temple is opened to reveal the Ark of the Covenant, lightning, loud noises, thunder, earthquake and heavy hail. Then came the war in heaven and the beast of the sea.</p>	<p>Poured into the air and a voice came out of the temple saying, "It is done." Great lightning, noises, thunder, earthquake follow causing Babylon to split in thirds, nations' cities to fall as God's wrath is fully vented. Every mountain and island is destroyed and 100 lb. hailstones fall on men till they curse God for the plague of hail.</p>
	<b>SEALS</b>	<b>TRUMPETS</b>	<b>BOWLS</b>