

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

JROC – TRIUMPH! Rev. 14 – The 144,000! The Harvest!

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REVELATION 14:1-5

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 firstfruits 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. ("before the throne of God" is not in the MT – the "Majority Text" which is based on the majority of the Greek manuscripts that we have from the NT)

Why were the 144,000 sealed? To minister as God's servants, His witnesses (Rev. 7). Is this the 144,000 in heaven with the Lamb? If this is a totally heavenly scene, then shouldn't we be asking, "Did God's sealing them for protection during the Tribulation result in their death?" And, do we care? WE MUST!! Can we trust God's work in our lives? If this is a heavenly scene, how do we then explain the failure of the sealing of the 144,000 for protection (Rev. 7:1-3) which has now apparently resulted in their death?

In Rev. 12 we read that the faithful remnant/Jewish believers will be protected through the Tribulation by fleeing to the wilderness (Rev. 12:6). The 144,000 might very well NOT have a part in fleeing to the wilderness because of their GLOBAL evangelistic ministry. If they did participate in the flight and the subsequent hiding in the wilderness, how could they evangelize among the Gentiles and Jews not protected in the wilderness?

We discussed last week that those who take on the mark of the beast are no longer privy to salvation. However, there might be those non-believers who have not yet taken the mark. Look at the warnings proclaimed by the angels.

Rev. 14:7 - *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.*

Rev. 14:9-10 - *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*

It appears that those who don't take on the mark of the beast and who are not yet believers can be evangelized.

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ADVANCED DIGGING: Some say that nowhere is it said that the seal will protect the 144,000 against death throughout the Tribulation and from all causes. Scripture only tells us they are to be protected from the direct effects of God's judgments poured upon the earth (Rev. 7:1-3) – judgments upon the earth, the sea, and the trees. BUT Scripture tells

us that they are ALSO to be protected from the demonic locust judgment - Rev. 9:4 - the demon locusts are not to harm the 144,000. Does this necessarily mean that the 144,000 are completely invincible for the entire duration of the Tribulation? Some say that the example of the two powerful witnesses of God is an example, then perhaps not. The witnesses were killed. The two witnesses, however, are not seen as being sealed! God has set apart the 144,000 to minister as evangelists. Might this alone – their role during the Tribulation - speak to their being invincible during the Tribulation?

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Rev. 14:1-5, I'm suggesting, is an earthly scene and a heavenly scene. John is given a preview of the Lamb and the 144,000 on the **earthly Mount Zion** at the introduction of the Millennial Kingdom. And, they are accompanied by thunderous praise **from heaven**. Such a view understands Rev. 14:1-5 teaching that the 144,000 will be upon the earth in the Millennial Kingdom having survived the Tribulation due to God's special protection. The text does not say that the 144,000 are in the same place as the singers, only that they **hear** the singers. It's the heavenly chorus playing harps which sing the song in heaven. The 144,000, however, will be able to learn the song of the redeemed (v. 3) because of their credentials noted in vv. 4-5. The 144,000 will be redeemed from the earth (no harm to them even while on earth). And, they are "firstfruits" (Rev. 14:4) – The firstfruits was the first portion of a harvest, dedicated to God, thereby dedicating the entire harvest. The Jewish mindset based on the OT – the result of the firstfruits would be a greater yield. The 144,000 are sealed and LOOK at the MULTITUDE of the Tribulation saints – as a result of the witness of the 144,000 (Rev. 7:9ff). The 144,000 are indeed the firstfruits sealed by God – dedicated to God, resulting in a MASSIVE yield from the harvest – the harvest of souls saved!

If John is shown a prophetic/future scene with the 144,000 and the Lamb on the earthly Mount Zion in the Millennial Kingdom and the rest of the scene is the heavenly reaction above, then the sealed of Israel would have avoided death to enter the kingdom and now stand as evidence of God's promise to protect a faithful remnant.

Revelation 14:1-5 is a PICTURE OF TRIUMPH! This is a graphic display proclaiming that Satan's attempt at total Jewish destruction that we read in Rev. 12 and Satan's attempt to persecute the Gentile believers in Rev. 12 and Satan's attempt at forcing the world to take the mark of the beast...will fail!

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.

Considerations:

- The 144,000 display a consuming obedience to God's will...*they follow the Lamb wherever He goes*. In their complete dedication to the service of the Lamb, they voluntarily chose to forgo relations with women in order to focus completely on their unique God-given task during the Tribulation.
- Perhaps these 144,000 minister at a time when the institution of marriage has all but fallen by the wayside. The Tribulation is a time characterized by fornication (Rev. 9:20-21).

- *Virgins* – Jesus explained ... *there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake* (Matt. 19:12). Not only is there purity of life, but there is also undivided love – undivided heart affection for the Lamb. These are eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. They were enabled to give their full focus to ministry during the Tribulation.
- They were the first who were redeemed (*bought out of the marketplace*) during the Tribulation.
- They were firstfruits (previously defined in the notes).

Rev. 14:6 - *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.* Just when Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet think they are about to take over the world, God will send angels to warn and to remind the people of God's eternal plan. This is the grace of God! The "Everlasting gospel" – Gospel – "good news"; everlasting – the good news is ETERNAL!

Rev. 14:7 - *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.'* In the midst of being offered the mark of the beast, this angel presents fearing God alone which encompasses escape from the coming judgment.

Rev. 14:8 - *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.'* Babylon is the birthplace of rebellion against God! (Gen. 11 – the Tower of Babel) Babylon was conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire (539 BC). In the 1980's and 1990's, Saddam Hussein began to rebuild the city of Babylon. This city will become a great center of religion and trade during the Tribulation. "Fallen" – it has been suggested that this word is repeated twice in reference to Babylon as it indicates two separate falls or judgments. The false religious system will fall first when the antichrist sets himself up to be worshipped at the mid-point of the Tribulation. Commerce/trade will continue in this center; however, Babylon will be burned to the ground in one hour near the end of the Tribulation.

Rev. 14:9 - *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.* The first angel will preach the Gospel and plead with people to worship God. The second angel will announce the fall of Babylon. This third angel will warn people not to worship the antichrist or take the mark of the beast.

Rev. 14:10 - *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.* The ramifications of taking the mark of the beast: receiving the wrath of God in full strength. The contents of the cup of wine are not diluted, they are fully intense. Anyone taking the

mark of the beast will be tormented with fire and brimstone which indicates their ultimate destination (Rev. 20:10 - they will be “cast into the lake of fire and brimstone...and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”) *In the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb* – somehow these who are “cast into outer darkness” (Matt. 8:12; Matt. 22:13; Matt. 25:30) are visible to the redeemed throughout eternity (Isa. 66:24). It appears that the non-believers will also see those who enter the Kingdom. Luke 13:28 - *There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.* Perhaps awareness of the alternative will contribute to their torment.

Rev. 14:11 - *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 eternal judgment. Some believe that God will burn up the wicked and they will not experience eternal torment – that the wicked will be annihilated. Why, then, do we read that the smoke of their torment is forever and ever? Individual non-believers are noted in vv. 9-10.

Rev. 14:12 - *Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.* Patience - endurance for the believer is always found in our acceptance of God’s sovereign control over our lives.

Rev. 14:13 - *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.’* Those presently dying receive a special blessing in recognition of the severe conditions they are undergoing. This is a unique time of incomparable persecution of those who are believers in Jesus. The Holy Spirit is specifically noted as joining in bestowing this special blessing of the martyred Tribulation saints. Consider: it is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that those who are martyred are able to hold their testimony to the end.

Rev. 14:14 - *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.*

One like the Son of Man – cross reference to Dan. 7:13 –

I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And Jesus receives the Kingdom. Jesus will return in the clouds (Matt. 24:30; Matt. 26:64; Acts 1:9-10).

Son of Man – He is God!!! Dan. 7:14 - *Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.* Only God will have dominion (Jesus will rule over the earth) and glory – honor and esteem. GOD has promised a kingdom! All peoples, nations, and languages are going to serve GOD! If Jesus’ kingdom is everlasting and He’ll be ruling – He is everlasting. He is God. The “Son of Man” title speaks of Jesus’

deity! It also speaks to Jesus' being given the authority by God to execute judgment. John 5:22-27 – GOD ...has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man (. v. 27).

AND, the "Son of Man" is wearing a golden crown depicting royalty. Crown in the Gk, is *stephanos* which is a wreath or garland which was given as a prize to victors in public games. This pictures the Son of Man coming to conquer.

Jesus has in His hand a sharp sickle. What does this mean? Again, it's been given to the Son the authority to execute judgment (John 5:22-27).

The harvest is pictured in Rev. 14 in two motifs/ways/themes. There is first the grain harvest in Rev. 14:14, 16, and then the grape harvest. There are two final judgments that we're moving toward in Rev. 14 and 15.... In both we see the sickle. There are the seven bowl judgments in Rev. 16, and then the Battle of Armageddon. We see the direct intervention of Jesus in the Battle of Armageddon.

Jesus spoke about the harvest.

- Matt. 13:24-30, 38-42 - Another parable He put forth to them, saying: *The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field;*²⁵ *but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.*²⁶ *But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.*²⁷ *So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'*²⁸ *He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.'* *The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?'*²⁹ *But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.'*³⁰ *Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'*... *He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.*³⁸ *The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.*³⁹ *The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.*⁴⁰ *Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.*⁴¹ *The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness,*⁴² *and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

- Matt. 3:11-12 - *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*¹² *His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."*

Rev. 14:15-16 - *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.* This angel comes from the heavenly temple. Loud voice – voice of authority. Directions coming from God! We see this other angel telling Jesus to thrust in His sickle and reap – for the EARTH is ripe. "Earth"

– the inhabited earth as opposed to heaven. “Ripe” – the harvest is overripe to the point of being withered. Could speak to God continually extending mercy and grace in His warnings throughout the Tribulation. And now the earth is beyond readiness for judgment! (reread Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43 re: the tares)

Thrust in Your sickle - A sickle was a long curved sharpened blade with a long wooden handle. In ancient Israel sickles were made out of iron or steel. They were sharpened like a razor to sweep through the grain. The workers would sweep the sickle and the blade would cut the grain at ground level.

Joel speaks of reaping the grapes of wrath associated with the final judgment at Armageddon.

Joel 3:12-13 - Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow—for their wickedness is great.

Rev. 14:17-20 - 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. Another angel from the heavenly temple.

Another angel from the altar who had power over fire. The altar is most likely connected to the souls of the martyrs (Rev. 6:9-11) under the altar crying out to God and asking how long until their blood will be avenged. The fire is connected to how the priests in the OT would ignite the incense on the altar of incense from fire in their censers.

Rev. 8:3 - Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

The prayers of the saints, crying out to God to judge those who took their lives – these prayers are being answered. Now it is time. It is time for the grape harvest. Prayers are being answered – their prayers of God’s judgment upon those who took their lives.

- *fully ripe* – different Gk. word used in this passage (re: the grape harvest) meaning to come to maturity. These grapes are bursting with juice.
- *outside the city* – outside Jerusalem. Jesus was crucified outside “the camp,” outside Jerusalem (Heb. 13:11-13). The Lord protects Jerusalem as seen in Zech. 12, Zech. 14, Joel 3.
- *blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses’ bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs*

How many people will engage in the Battle of Armageddon? It’s not unrealistic to assume there will be millions.

winepress –consisted of two rectangular or circular “excavations” hewn (Isa. 5:2) in the solid rock to a depth of 2 or 3 feet. Where possible, one was always higher than

the other and they were connected by a pipe or channel. The upper vat was always wider and shallower than the lower and was the press proper, into which the grapes were thrown, to be crushed by the feet of the treaders ([Isa 63:1-3](#), etc.). As the treaders would stomp and crush the grapes so full of juice, the grapes would burst and the juice would flow downward into the lower vat through the pipe.

The battle will stretch from Armageddon in the north, Har Megiddo (Mount of Slaughter), 25 miles west-southwest of the southern tip of the Sea of Galilee in the plain of Esdraelon (Valley of Jezreel which divides Galilee from Samaria. It may stretch south through the middle of Israel, through the valley of Jehoshaphat, and then go east to Bozrah in Edom, south of the Dead Sea based on Isa. 63:1ff. The distance equates to 200 miles from Har Megiddo to Bozrah.

How will the blood come up to the height of a horses bridle for 200 miles? It could mean the blood would splatter that high. Think of the carnage. Millions in the Valley of Slaughter. Joel 3:14 - *Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!* It may mean that the blood flows that high in a trough four feet deep that runs through the central valley of Israel. It may refer to blood flowing through the Siq, the entrance to Petra. Isa. 63:1-3 - *Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?— “I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.”*² *Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?*³ *“I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes.*