

SINGING PREACHERS AND PREACHING ANGELS

Revelation 14:1-20

THE 144,000 SING A NEW SONG. Revelation 14:1-5

Chapter 14 continues with this parenthetical section and John now sees 144,000 Jews who are earlier mentioned in Revelation 7:4 in heaven. They are made up of twelve thousand of each of the twelve tribes of Israel making a total of 144,000. They are not Gentiles, but Jews saved after the Rapture at the beginning of the Tribulation and are pictured with Christ on Mount Zion. Mount Zion or "Zion" is used in the Bible to refer to Mount Zion on earth (2 Kings 19:21, Psa. 48, 69:35, 133:3, Isa. 1:8) or to the heavenly Mount Zion (Heb. 12:22-23). Various commentators differ as to which one it is. Mount Zion is first mentioned in the Bible in 2 Samuel 5:6-9. Verse 7, explains that Zion is the city of David, which is Jerusalem and the mountain is one of the hills on which Jerusalem stands. David brought the Ark to Zion (2 Sam. 6:10-12) and the place became sacred. When Solomon later removed the Ark to the temple on nearby Mount Moriah, the name Zion was extended to include Solomon's temple. In time the name Zion became to mean all of Jerusalem.

Several things should be considered in trying to determine whether this is a heavenly or earthly scene. Christ, the Lamb, is shown standing on Mt. Zion and the 144,000 are with him. If this is an earthly scene with Christ standing Jerusalem then this has to be a future event in the chronology of the Tribulation because the Second Coming has not occurred.

If it is a heavenly scene it means the 144,000 have been killed during the Tribulation and are in heaven with the Lord. This seems to be the case because in Revelation 14:6-7 God now uses an angel to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to all that remain on earth and warns every person on earth to "*Fear God, and give glory to Him. . .*" Revelation 13:7 says that God has given power is given to the Antichrist to make war against the saints and overcome them. The context of the statement presents it in the middle of the Tribulation. Although the 144,000 were initially protected from being killed it seems that now their work of evangelism on earth is finished and their deaths free them from going through the worse period of the Tribulation that is following. Therefore they are now in heaven and there is no further mention of them.

Revelation 14:2 states in John's vision he hears a voice from heaven. He describes the voice as sounding like many waters. Anyone who has ever stood on the ocean's shores and heard the sound of large breaking waves can understand the almost deafening magnitude of the sound. John further describes it as coming suddenly as rolling thunder. The voice is accompanied with the music of many harpers playing on their harps.

Revelation 14:3 says the 144,000 sing a new song before the throne. This new song reflects their status now are having been martyred and are in heaven with the Lord. This throne could be the throne of God in heaven or Christ's throne on earth when the Kingdom is set up. John hears a voice from "heaven" and the voice of many harpists

playing. The 144,000 were sealed as recorded in Revelation 7:4 and the sealing included protection from death.

Revelation 14:4 describes the 144,000 as being undefiled who had remained celibate in their complete dedication to Christ. These are devout and committed disciples who followed the Lord Jesus where ever He led. They are referred to as being the first fruits which means they were the first saved in the Tribulation. Many people will be saved during the first half and the middle of the Tribulation, but as the Tribulation progresses man's rebellion against God increases and fewer people are saved.

The reference to the 144,000 being first fruits means they were the first saved at the beginning of the seven year Tribulation. They are not the first fruits of all saved during the present Church Age. It is significant to understand that the first people saved during Daniel's 70th Week will be Jews who will represent each of the twelve tribes of Israel. This is but another evidence that the Tribulation is the completion of the Old Testament dispensation and related to Israel and not to the Church Age. Gentiles will certainly be saved in the Tribulation, but the first to be saved will be from God's chosen people including the 144,000 of Revelation 7.

Revelation 14:5 explains the 144,000 spoke with no guile. The word "guile" means the spoke without deceit, or subtlety. In other words they spoke God's truth without error, compromise the word being watered down. The power of God's word is in its truth. The effect of their preaching will be that millions of people will hear a clear and power Gospel message and be saved.

PREACHING ANGELS: Rev. 14:6-8

The terrible events of the last "Bowl (Vial) Judgments" are about to rapidly be brought about as the Tribulation is coming to a close. At this point in the Tribulation those that are left on earth are the most hardened of sinners having over and over rejected the message of the grace of God. Still God in loving His creation, sends yet another messenger, an angel from heaven to warn men of coming judgment and destruction. (Rev. 14:6)

This is God's last call to salvation to those on earth. This time the message is carried not by saved men, but by an angel from God. Men thus have no excuse for there can be no question of the truth of the Gospel when it comes from God himself by a special angel. Israel, had many times in their history, been brought the word of God by angels. In this final plea, God sends this angel to remove any doubt that Christ the Messiah is about to come to earth and establish His Kingdom. The love of God clearly shown in that no one on earth is excluded as all nations; kindreds (tribes) tongues (language) and people will hear God's final call.

John in Revelation 14:6 states he sees another angel who proclaims that "Babylon is fallen." This is the first of six different angels revealed in Chapter 14, each having a

different task in the final events of the Tribulation which ends with the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Babylon is used in Scripture as a symbol of rebellion and rejection of God. With the appearance of this angel, described as being “another” the parenthetical section is concluded and John is seeing the scene on earth as the Tribulation progresses. It is a significance announcement Babylon is fallen as Babylon was the place of the birth of false religion and rebellion against God. The first religion established there was astrology or the worship of the stars. Down through the centuries, Babylon which was once the greatest city of the East was a center of the worship of idols and all types of pagan deities. One of the worst was the worship of the idol Murduk, to whom parents sacrificed their living babies on hot searing altars without any outward show of emotion. In Revelation 17:1-7 John makes further mention of the fall of Babylon.

Revelation 14:7 - The message to the world is clear, *“Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”* It should be noted that the unsaved that are still rejecting the Lord have always had before them the testimony of God existence. Romans 1:18-23 clearly states that all men on earth have had the testimony of creation to direct them to God. In this passage God says He has showed and revealed Himself to all men and therefore they are without excuse. How foolish is man to look around himself at the magnificence and magnitude of God’s creation and yet deny His existence or their responsibility to Him. Psalm 8:4 makes the point, *“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?”* (Psalms 8:4) It is hard for those who have been redeemed and spiritually changed to fathom the extent that human pride will drive a man.

God extends His mercy once more and sends another angel giving forth His warning and offer of salvation. This angel warns the inhabitants of earth that Babylon, to whom the world has followed and worshiped, is about to be destroyed. It is again a warning to turn from rebellion to worship the true and living God. At this point in time the 144,000 have been killed and are in heaven with the Lord and the rest of the Jewish Tribulation saints are in hiding protected by God.

THE WORSHIPERS OF THE BEAST FURTHER WARNED. Revelation 14:9-11

John now sees a third angel appear with a chilling message for mankind. His message is a warning that if any man worships the beast or receives his mark in their forehead or hand they will be eternally doomed. God clearly identifies the beast as the enemy of God and of mankind. Having received the warning the man who received the mark of the beast is without excuse. In the following chapters of 15-18, the Bowl (Vial) Judgments are poured upon the earth without the mercy. (See Hab. 3:2) God has sent the 144,000 followed by the angel to preach the saving Gospel to men. Those that have rejected the message of God’s offer of salvation now have are offered a final warning and opportunity to received God’s forgiveness and salvation. However, the warning is clear that if they do not turn to the Lord, the wrath of God will fall on them. This angel, does as

the previous two angels, and warns men on earth of God's impending wrath. The angel proclaims God's message with a loud voice which indicates that the message is delivered in such a way that all will hear. The angel warns that those who receive the mark of the beast and worship him will feel the wrath of God and be condemned in torment forever and ever, having not rest day or night. The time is come that all men on earth will have to make a decision. They can serve God and be saved, or reject Him and be eternally condemned.

Revelation 14:11 is a clear warning of the eternality of the Lake of Fire (Hell). Throughout God's world Hell is repeatedly stated as everlasting. Yet, some misguided teachers and churches teach that Hell is temporary and that it is not a place of torment. Jesus in Luke 16:24 stated that the rich man in Hell was tormented in the flames. He begged for the relief of drop water on his tongue. Jesus in Matthew 25:46 stated that Hell was everlasting punishment. In Mark 9:43-46 Jesus repeatedly says that the fires of Hell "*never shall be quenched.*" In spite of the warning, the testimony of God's creation, prideful and evil men will continue to eject God's grace and mercy and willingly choose everlasting punishment instead of the eternal life in heaven.

THE PROMISE AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE SAINTS. Revelation 14:12-13

This is the second time this statement is made. (See Rev. 12:10) With the warning message directed to those who are rejecting Christ, comes a message of encouragement given to the Tribulation saints who believe and are still alive on earth. God tells them to have patience and to endure the hardships ahead of them by keeping the commandments of God and having faith in Jesus Christ. Their strength comes from God's word and their faith in His promises. The patience that the saints have is in knowing that they soon will be delivered. God promises that their present hardships and persecution will soon come to an end. Many will experience death, but death is actually a blessing that ushers them into the presence of God. God certainly gives what is referred to as dying grace when the end comes. This grace is based in the fact that the believer trusts God and knows that heaven is but a moment away. Others not killed during this time will be alive when Christ returns and will go into the Millennium Kingdom in their natural bodies. These Jews and Gentiles will be the ones who populate the world during the one thousand year millennial reign of Christ.

John then hears a voice from heaven telling him to write: "*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*" Those that are killed in the Tribulation are said to be given rest and reward. Paul proclaims the wonderful truth that death wins no victory over the child of God. "*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*" (1 Corinthians 15:55)

James 1:12 states, "*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*" God has a special reward, referred to as a crown of life, for those who endure temptation. The persecution by the Satan, through his dupe the Antichrist, in which

believers are brutally attacked and beheaded in reality, becomes a blessing. (See Rev. 20:4) Paul encouraged those in his day who were suffering the onslaughts of Satan's attacks saying, *"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."* (Romans 8:18) The truth of Romans 8:28 is profoundly demonstrated in that Satan's persecution of God's children only works to honor the Lord and bring them reward. *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."* (Romans 8:28)

THE HARVESTING OF THE EARTH. Rev. 14:14-20

Verse 14, is the last time in the Bible uses the title for Christ, as the "Son of Man." Christ now is about to come to the earth as God and Creator. He comes in all His power as the King of Kings wearing the golden crown and with a sharp sickle in his hand. He has come to harvest. As recorded in Acts 1:9 Jesus descended into heaven on a cloud and the two angels who appeared told the disciple that Jesus would likewise as they saw Him leave return. (Acts 1:10-11)

John now sees a wonderful and much longed for scene. Before John unfolds a preview of Armageddon in which Jesus Christ destroys the armies of Antichrist and Satan.

Jeremiah predicted this event in which Babylon would be destroyed *saying "For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; The daughter of Babylon is like a threshingfloor, it is time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come."* (Jeremiah 51:33) God also spoke of this event through the prophet Joel, *"Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel."* (Joel 3:11-16)

In earthly terms this final reaping has been a long time in coming. But now in God's perfect timing those who have repeatedly rejected God's warnings and offer of grace who hate God will face the result of their decision. God will now begin to reap the tares, which are the unsaved, from the earth. These tares are the false religions, churches, cults and individuals who have deceptively used God's name to worship and serve Satan. (Matt. 13:25-39, 24:41-42) The false religious systems of the world and the Antichrist will be forever destroyed.

Verse 15, reveals that another angel comes from the temple, and cries to the Lord who is sitting on the cloud to *"thrust in His sickle and reap, for the time for the harvest of the earth is ripe."* There can be no mistake as to the extent of sin and evil on the earth at this time. Satan's rebellion has now fully matured and mankind is willingly following him in

opposition to all that is righteous and good. Sin and rebellion have reached their pinnacle and God will not allow it to grow further.

Now another angel comes from the temple of God. Some believe that this may be referring to the earthly temple has been defiled by the Antichrist which begs that justice being done. (Matt. 24:14-15) The earth is referred to as ripe, meaning past due for judgment.

It is a chilling scene as Jesus, sitting on the cloud, thrust His sickle into the hordes of mankind and reaps His harvest. The tragedy of this is that Jesus Christ suffered and died for the sins of all these who are destroyed, but they refused to accept His mercy and grace. (See John 3:15-16, 1 John 2:2) For those will spend eternity in the fires of hell, will be the awful realization that they had the opportunity to accept God's free offer of salvation, but refused.

Now a second angel comes from the temple which is in heaven and has a sharp sickle. The first angel from the temple on earth cries for judgment because the temple is defiled and now the angel from the temple in heaven, which cannot be defiled, comes with a sharp sickle and brings judgment.

In Matthew 13:24-31 Jesus gave the parable of the wheat and tares. He explained that after the farmer had planted his seed his enemy came and sowed tares in the same field. When the farmers servants discovered the tares they asked should they pull them up, but the owner of the field replied they were to let them grow together and that the wheat and tares would be separated in the harvest. Jesus in Matthew 13:38-41 explained that the good seed is the Son of Man and the enemy who sowed the tares was the devil. He told the disciples that at the end of the world (age) He would send His angels to gather the tares in the harvest and they would be burned in fire.

Jesus revealed the plight of the tares in Matthew 13:41-42, *"The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."* (Matthew 13:41-42) This is the event that Revelation 14:17-20 is revealing.

However, what a contrast is the future for those who believed and by faith accepted the promises of God. *"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."* (Matthew 13:43) (See Luke 3:17)

This last angel comes from the altar, having power over fire and cries to the angel with the sickle to thrust it in and reap the vine of the earth. The significance of this angel having power over fire is seen in that the Lord predicted that the final judgment would be of fire. Fruit grows and comes from the vine. This statement defines the nature of this reaping. The vine refers to the false churches that claimed to be worshiping Jesus Christ, but in fact preached a false gospel and deceiving men. Jesus warned of these false prophets and foretold of their end in Matthew 7:15-23. Jesus explained that a corrupt tree

could only bring forth evil fruit (v17) and that it would be cut down and cast into the fire (v19). He gave the chilling warning, *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* (Matthew 7:21-23)

In Luke 17:29-30 Jesus spoke of this event in which the unsaved will be reaped with fire. *“But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.”* (Luke 17:29-30) This is the “rapture of the apostate unsaved” described in Matthew 24:40-41. Many have mistakenly referred to the catching up in Matthew 24:40-41 as being the rapture of believers. However, this is the second rapture or reaping in which all the unsaved are taken from the earth and cast into Hades, to await their final judgment revealed in Revelation 20:15-18. (Please read the article at <http://bible-truth.org/OlivetDiscourse.html>, *“Is the Church in the Olivet Discourse?”*)

The fifth angel then begins its grim task of reaping the earth and casting the rebellious earth dwellers that had willingly rejected Christ in to what is called the "wine press of the wrath of God". The Old Testament speaks of vines of grapes which are not of God and doomed to destruction. Deuteronomy 32:32-33 states, *“For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter: Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps”*

Verse 20 speaks of the greatest carnage of death that will ever fall on the earth. Chapters 16:16 and 19:17-19 are references to the great campaign called the Battle of Armageddon. This is often referred to as the “battle” of Armageddon, but this is a misrepresentation. These horrific events have a much longer duration and great scope than just one battle. Here the carnage is of such magnitude that the blood from those killed in the slaughter will flow for two hundred miles and be four and a half feet deep. It seems to be an impossible event that so many will be killed as to have blood flowing four and a half feet deep for two hundred miles. Palestine is only about 160 miles itself. Yet the event is revealed by John under inspiration of God Himself. It is fitting that this event end the age of Satan's rule on earth, and that the purging of rebellion from the earth must be a catastrophic event.

The valley where the battle will be fought is called the Valley of Jezreel and the Plain of Esdraelon at the foot of Mt. Megiddo. The Jezreel Valley is a flat plain twenty miles long and seven miles wide. Within the past 4000 years it has been a place where as many 34 major battles have been fought. Here the last battle is fought, the battle to end all battles.

Isaiah 63:3-6 predicts the fateful events when God's wrath is poured forth on man. Isaiah 63-64 address the time when God purge the earth of sinners and bring forth the Kingdom promised to Israel and those who love Him.

In September 2002, I stood on the top of Megiddo looking east across that vast and peaceful valley. Although I know what God has said will happen there, it was still hard for me to imagine the horrible events in which the valley will run red to the height of a horses bridle with the blood of rebellious men. Although the Jezreel valley is greatly involved in the conflict the fighting will not be limited to this valley. The Old Testament prophets include all of Palestine in the campaign:

Joel 3:2, 13 – The Valley of Jehoshaphat (area east of Jerusalem)
Ezekiel 39:11 – The valley of the passengers (area east of the Dead Sea)
Zechariah 12:2-11; 14:2 – Jerusalem is pictured as the center of the conflict.
Ezekiel 39:9, 16 – Those invading Israel would “cover” the land.¹

The invading armies that will be destroyed in the Armageddon campaign:

1. The ten kingdom federation under the Beast
2. The northern federation consisting of Russia and her allies
3. The kings of the East, the Asiatic peoples from beyond the Euphrates
4. The King of the South, a North African power.²

End Notes:

¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974, p341.

² Pentecost, p342