

Revelation 14 Harvest chapter. First fruits. Wicked.

Rev. 14:1 And I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. 3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. 4 These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb. 5 And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.

6 And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; 7 and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."

8 And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality."

9 And another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand, 10 he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 "And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." 12 Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."

14 And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head, and a sharp sickle in His hand. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, because the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe." 16 And He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth; and the earth was reaped.

17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. 18 And another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe." 19 And the angel swung his sickle to the earth, and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. 20 And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

I've been struggling somewhat with how to interpret this chapter.

Chapter 14 is obviously an interlude like 13 was, but it instead shifts back to looking at the events from God's perspective, not from Satan's.

And the 144,000 are most interesting here.

We first meet this very special group of elect saints in Ch. 7. And immediately after we meet them we see a flood of tribulation saints in heaven. Those that have lost their lives because of the testimony of the lamb.

Ch.7:3*"Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the*

***bond-servants** of our God on their foreheads.”*

4And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel

Bond servants is a mis-translation. These are slaves who have been bought by a master.

That is normative, although it's so discounted and has been for 1600 years that the concept is lost to us.

Paul and John and Peter all see themselves as slaves. Their master is Jesus. They follow Him and do His bidding.

You say, what does that look like in the 21st century? And I'll say, we're so far removed from this that I struggle with this too.

I wouldn't want me for a slave. Instead of getting up every morning and saying, thanks for the great rest, master, what's on the docket for today? Most of the time, I don't even report in. I just go about my business. Let's see, firewood, new tires for the antique cars, maybe go somewhere and play with the cameras, darkroom work, yard work, paint the house, work for my employer a few hours each week, eat too much, oh, and see you on Sunday for a couple of hours Jesus.

And then I get in the pulpet last Sunday and preach about how weak the church is. Hello! Of course it is. It's full of people like me. All I can say is, it's a good thing you can't fire a slave!

You can beat slaves, but our Master is mostly too gracious for that. He prefers to love us until we finally wake up and say, the only place I really want to be is near Him working with Him at what He's doing.

We first see these 144,000 elect as slaves. Then we see numberless thousands from every nation glorifying God in heaven.

And here we see them as first fruits of a great harvest that is about to happen.

When I was a little bitty guy, my great grandmother had a fig tree downstairs from her apartment in Burbank. And I remember going out with her to see if we could find one that was ripe. Most of them were still green. Hundreds, maybe thousands of green figs. And we would look and look and then we would find one that was purple, and ripe, and ready to eat. What a treat.

First fruit. God made me a fruit lover. I understand this concept of first fruits.

It pleased God to call 144,000 young men out of every tribe of Israel, as first fruits. A day is coming when all Israel will look on Him whom they have pierced and be saved. But these 144,000 are first fruits from God's people Israel.

I think these young men are scattered amongst every nation on earth. Turn with me to Amos 9, and I'll show you why.

Amos 9:8 "Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom, And I will destroy it from the face of the earth; Nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob," Declares the LORD. 9"For behold, I am commanding, And I will shake the house of Israel among all nations As grain is shaken in a sieve, But not a kernel will fall to the ground.

We don't know where those kernels are at, but God does.

Think about this very literally. If the rapture were to come tomorrow, and God's time clock of 7 remaining years spoken of in Daniel 9 were to begin, tomorrow, these young men may already be alive. 11, 12, 13, 14 years old perhaps. That would make them prime young men seven years from now.

So let's take a look at them in total and there are a couple of interesting things to note;

1Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with

Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

2And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. 3And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. 4These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb. 5And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.

The first thing I want to ponder a bit is where they're at.

Easy, right, Mount Zion. Jerusalem. With Jesus.

1Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

Quickly note the reference about the names written on their foreheads. This is like a slap in Satan's face. Satan is busy having the whole earth write his name on their foreheads. Here are 144,000 real first fruits and they've got the right name written on their foreheads.

So they're standing on Mount Zion with Jesus.

I've been to Mt. Zion. So has Jeff and Donna. It isn't that big. 144,000 is going to be a large presence on Mt. Zion.

Just to confuse you more, now look at vs. 2,3 *2And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. 3And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living*

creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth.

This is the same living creatures and elders and throne that we've seen in earlier visions of heaven. So, now where are we?

Yeah, I don't know either. Maybe this is a scene at the New Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven? Is this then a celebration in heaven of these 144,000 victors, first fruits to God of the thousands upon thousands who will be worshipping Him there?

Jesus will rule from Mt. Zion in His temple, on this earth, for a thousand years. Is this a first fruits picture in heaven of that event on earth?

That's my guess.

Notice this though. We seem to have this picture of floating in the clouds namelessly with harps. Stupid devil pictures. Not so.

These 144,000 are no different in heaven before the throne, than they were on earth. OK, maybe a little different. But totally physical. Totally themselves.

I think this first fruits picture is also a picture of us. How we'll be. We're going to be in physical bodies, worshipping and following the lamb, just like these first fruits are in this picture.

Maybe this is both. They're in heaven for a celebration, and then they follow the Lamb out of heaven to work with Him in this harvest. Look with me at a very interesting section of scripture in Zechariah Ch. 12

1 The burden of the word of the LORD concerning Israel.

Thus declares the LORD who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him,

2 "Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be

against Judah. 3 "It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it. 4 "In that day," declares the LORD, "I will strike every horse with bewilderment and his rider with madness. But I will watch over the house of Judah, while I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. 5 "Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, 'A strong support for us are the inhabitants of Jerusalem through the LORD of hosts, **their God.**'

6 "In that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves, so they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem. 7 "The LORD also will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be magnified above Judah. 8 "In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the **angel of the LORD** before them. 9 "And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

This interesting section occurs just before the more famous verses about 'they will look on Him whom they pierced and mourn for Him as for an only son.

So what I'm seeing here is a group of Israelites, at Jerusalem, surrounded by all the nations of the world, and fighting against those nations with super powers. And another group of Israelites, looking on, saying to themselves "a strong support is here through the Lord of Armies!"

These warriors have powers over the nations "like God", and "like the Angel of the Lord".

We remember when Syria showed up to embattle Hezekiah that one angel slew 185,000 men. And that was an ordinary angel. These have power like God. Like the Angel of the Lord.

I would at least submit to you the possibility that the scene in heaven is a

celebration of these first fruits, the 144,000 from every tribe, and then next scene, we're in Jerusalem, and it's harvest time for the nations.

4These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb. 5And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.

This is all very physical. They aren't ethereal spirits floating around.

(just a note of God's version of heaven vss. Satan's. If you're a moslem, and you blow yourself up murdering christians, you supposedly go to a heaven where "*He [Muhammad] said (in a Hadith, Islamic tradition):*

‘[There is] a palace of pearls in Paradise and in it seventy courts of ruby... And in each court [there are] seventy houses of green emerald stone. In every house, seventy beds. On every bed, seventy mattresses of every color and on every mattress a woman.’)(70 dark eyed virgins await the muslims. murderers.)

Is that all ya got Satan? Really?

In our timeline here, this is an interlude. A heavenly celebration. A comparison of the best of the best, to the worst of the worst. Glorious chaste perfect young men worshipping the God who purchased them out of the world. A perfect scene. What a comparison of darkness and light. Chaos, and Chorus.

Unfortunately, our interlude is over, and we have to return to the chaos that Satan has caused on this earth. The first fruit picture will come to this earth. We got a glimpse. We tasted the one sweet ripe fig. There's a whole tree full of them. More than we could ever eat. We just have to wait a while. First fruits.

The earth is about to be reaped. We're just a few verses away from an angel who will put in his sickel and harvest the earth. The grapes are about to be

crushed. But first, a final warning;

6And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; 7and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."

Last call:

Can people still be saved? Yes, I think so. Joel the prophet speaks perhaps of this moment; Joel 2:31,32 *"The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. 32" And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the LORD has said, Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.*

Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Peter repeats this verse to the Jews at pentecost. And Paul repeats it in Romans 10.

Notice both sides of the coin that is election in this verse in Joel.

Who-so-ever! Universal! Whoever calls on the name of the Lord. No one left out. then notice the end of the same verse. Even among the survivors Whom The Lord Calls.

Jesus said: Matt. 24:14 *"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

I think that's exactly where we're at in this verse. Last Call:

The commentators fuss that there's no atonement explained in this gospel. I think God can work that out. I think folks who respond to this gospel with faith in the creator God and who worship Him instead of the Anti-Christ, will

be saved. They'll work out the mechanics of atonement later when they meet their saviour, face to face.

8And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality."

If you were here last Sunday morning for our trip through Habakkuk you'll recognize how familiar this sounds to Habakkuk 2:15,16

15“Woe to you who make your neighbors drink,
Who mix in your venom even to make them drunk
So as to look on their nakedness!

16“You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor.
Now you yourself drink and expose your own nakedness.
The cup in the LORD’S right hand will come around to you,
And utter disgrace will come upon your glory.

We see those same elements of this final world kingdom and rule. Immorality, drunkenness. The world drunk with riches, power, false worship, goods, trade, everything they've ever dreamed of.

In Revelation 17 and 18 we get a zoomed in view of this verse. In 17, the spiritual component, the great whore of false worship, and in 18, the physical riches, the power, the wealth. All lost! Fallen. Fallen, is Babylon the great.

This time, there's no one to put Humpty Dumpty back together. This time, panic and chaos and war and the bowls of wrath all ensue together.

This is an important warning. If you had your hopes set on Anti-Christ and his kingdom, it's gone. Fallen. Over. Babylon is fallen. Satan's kingdom, fallen. Satan's authority on this earth, Over.

Now, a third angel, a third warning comes;

9 Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 "And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

If you ignore the first 2 warnings, and worship the beast, and take his mark...

You will drink of the wine of the wrath of God. You will be tormented with fire and brimstone . . . forever.

Modern so-called christianity makes light of hell. This angel who flies through heaven Does Not.

I discovered just this week that there's a big controversy raging about this.

Is taking the 'mark of the beast' the unforgivable sin?

Look at those verses again. It says, if you do this, you will go to hell. That's pretty clear. But I don't see where it says this sin is different from all of the sins mentioned in 1 Cor. 6:9,10.

9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

But such were some of you.....

All of those things, without repentance, will get you just as much to hell as taking the mark of the beast. Don't mis-understand me, taking the mark is a

damnable sin. But every sin is damnable. They all result in hell. Taking the mark is not unpardonable.

Take a look with me at Matthew 12:31 *Therefore I say to you, **any** sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven.*

The pharisees had witnessed the Word as flesh, seen the miracles, listened to the teaching, and all they could come up with is Satan made this happen. There's no hope for them. There's no further revelation of proof possible at that point. It's over for them. The unpardonable sin. See Jesus, see the miracles, hear the teaching, and relegate it to Satan. Put in the thermometer. You're cooked.

I believe God may grant repentance to some who have even gone so far as taking the mark. Grace is vast! Huge! Our God is big enough to do even this.

The scenario here would have to be someone who never heard or understood and rejected the gospel I think. They take the mark in ignorance, not fully grasping what they're doing.

12Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

Here is a different scenario. What does this mean. What about professing believers who buckle under the massive pressure of the stigma of not taking the mark because you're a christian.

You can't buy, you can't sell, you can't work, you are sentenced to starvation and death. Your wife and babies are sentenced to starvation and death. The pressure is too much and you give in and take the mark. I'm not saying those folks will be able to repent later on. I think they, by not persevering, have given evidence that their faith was not real.

The perseverance of the saints is where, for the sake of confessing Jesus as

Master and Lord, you get in line and march to a concentration camp and maybe never see your wife and little ones again. That is what the saints do.

13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."

Vs. 13 becomes self evident in a situation like I just described. You say your farewells to your babies, and your beloved, and you get in line to march to your death.

WIN! YES!! says the Spirit. You win.

Even when times were normal, the great apostle says, *'for me to live is Christ, and to die is GAIN!'* How much more so during the tribulation period. *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.*

It's going to get so ugly from this point on, Happy are the dead.

14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe." 16 Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.

I'm seeing 2 phases to this final harvest. First phase in 14-16, and second phase in 17 - 20.

Let me show you an interesting possibility in Matt. 24.

36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. 37 "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. 38 "For as in those days before the flood they

were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40“Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. 41“Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.

This time frame here in what Jesus describes is exactly where we're at in Revelation 14. Harvest time.

Could it be that the reason we see 2 phases to this final harvest is because God in His infinite mercy has granted repentance to some who heard this final call?

We could make a strong case for that. Joel's prophecy 2:32"*And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the LORD has said, Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls*

These angels with their warnings that go to every tribe on the face of the earth, are not without result. I believe that right at the end, just before the earth is reaped for judgement, perhaps this first phase removes those who have heard the warning and cried out to the God of creation to save them.

I've never believed the scenario Jesus is talking about in the Olivet discourse was the rapture.

You'll have to be like the Bereans and go digging if you think I'm way too far out on a limb here. A 2 phase reaping makes too much sense here. Otherwise, this is sort of redundant.

The second phase goes into the wine vat of the wrath of God to be crushed. Where did the first phase go?

Firstfruits, lastfruits.

Even the words used are full of interesting possibilities.

In our english translations you'll see the word 'ripe' in vs. 15, and also in vs. 18. We don't think much about it. But if you look at the greek, the 2 words and the ideas behind them are completely different. Really interesting.

In Vs. 15 the word translated 'ripe' is xérainó. Zeh-rah-eeno. It is the same word sometimes translated 'withered'. Means dried up. Watch this, now, we've had first fruits. This is last fruits.

When we were kids, 10, 11, 12 years old, and we cruised all over town on our bikes, up and down alleys in So. Cal. we knew where every back yard was that had a pomegranite bush or tree. We loved pomegranites. And if sins weren't forgiven, I could bust hell wide open for stealing pomegranites before I ever even saw my teens.

Pomegranites are an interesting fruit. At the end of their season in the fall, when they are no longer getting any juice from the branches, they can actually get a skin that is the consistency of leather. Very dry. But the fruit inside is still delicious. That's one example from real life of this word. Last fruits. Dried up on the stalks. Withered.

I think that's what is being harvested here. The final final of anything that is still useful to the harvest. It's withered but hanging on. It'd be gone tomorrow.

That's what the word is, and it fits well with what I'm submitting to you.

Then in vs. 18, in our last section, we're talking about grapes that are just about to burst they're so perfectly ripe.

If you're going to crush them, they couldn't be any more ripe. They're perfect for the crush. That's the word in this next section.

17And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. 18Then another angel, the one who has power over fire,

came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe."

We've been pretty consistent in our literal translation until now. This next section is pretty graphic. A river of blood 4 foot deep for 180 miles??!

Even the most staunch of commentators raise their collective eyebrows at this one.

The translation is obvious. Whatever this means, avoid it! Right?

I still see no reason to not consider this a literal account. The word gather that the angel is told to do is the same idea as what Jesus relayed in Matt. 24. Taken. Is there some reason God can't harvest His enemies from the earth and throw them quite literally into this wine press of His wrath outside of Jerusalem?

19 So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. 20 And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

The thought of this is almost beyond what human minds can fathom. Probably IS beyond what we can imagine.

This is the kind of stuff that makes the politically correct do-gooders of our generation relegate folks like me to the 'probably dangerous' category.

If I had a nickel for every time I've heard someone say "I could never worship a God like that", I could make a house payment.

A God like what? One who crushed His own Son on a cross so you would not have to be at this event getting thrown into this wine press.

These enemies of our Righteous God have chosen this for themselves.
Frightening, but true.

OK, let's see if we can end this section on a positive note. Nope.

19 So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. 20 And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.