

Chapter 14 pictures the 144,000 standing triumphantly on Mt. Zion with Christ at His coming, and then describes three angels preaching the gospel to the inhabitants of the earth and warning them of God's impending judgment as they are given a final chance to repent. Time runs out, however, as the chapter concludes with God's wrath reaping a harvest of judgment on the unrepentant.

¹ And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

Immediately after describing the terrible oppression of the world by the Antichrist and false prophet, John now sees the triumph of the 144,000 Jews that we were introduced to in chapter 7. He sees the name of God the Father written in their foreheads with which they were sealed in chapter 7 and which also protected them during the tribulation. They are able to stand with "a Lamb" (Jesus Christ) on Mt. Zion, sharing in His victory over the armies of the Antichrist and the world. The scene seems to be after Christ's return and the defeat of the Antichrist.

Verses 2-5: The 144,000 will be able to sing a unique song in celebration of their redemption that no one else will be able to learn. John also describes their faithfulness to Christ along with the fact that they will be the first fruits of those who will be redeemed during the tribulation. In chapter 7 John saw "a great multitude which no man could number" that represent the rest of the saints who will be redeemed during the tribulation (Rev. 7:9-17).

⁶ And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, ⁷ Saying with a loud voice, 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.

The Greek word translated "the midst of heaven" refers to the highest point in the sky where the sun would be at noon. John sees the angel flying where he can be seen by all people in every corner of the earth. He begins to preach the gospel and call the inhabitants of the earth to repentance with the warning that God's judgment is about to fall on them. God is giving the inhabitants of the earth a final chance to turn to Him before Christ returns. For so long atheists have denied God as the Creator, claiming that everything in the universe came about through evolutionary processes, but notice that this angel calls on the inhabitants of the earth to "worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

⁸ And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

The first angel is followed by another one who continues the call to repent by proclaiming the imminent destruction of Babylon. This destruction is described in chapters 17 (Babylon as a religious center) and 18 (Babylon as an economic center), but here the angel is informing the world not to look to Babylon for spiritual, political or economic guidance and help because her doom has been sealed because of her sins in leading the world into sin and idolatry. Babylon has made all nations partakers of God's wrath on her because of her spiritual adultery – leading men away from the worship of their creator.

⁹ And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, ¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall 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 ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

A third angel completes the final appeal to the inhabitants of the earth by declaring that anyone who worships the Antichrist by receiving of his mark in their hand or forehead will incur the wrath of God. They are pictured as drinking from the cup of God's indignation that is full of His wrath that has been poured undiluted into it. The strong language continues as an eternity of torment in the lake of fire is described as the future for the Antichrist and those who follow him. **Rev. 19:20** "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." **Rev. 20:15** "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." The descriptions of eternal torment in v. 11 and later in chapters 19 and 20 contradict the assertions of annihilationists who believe that those who are cast into the lake of fire do not suffer eternally but are destroyed and cease to exist.

¹² Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Although this statement is true for those who suffer for Christ in all ages, here it is apparently intended as encouragement for those who turn to Christ during the tribulation and are suffering under the oppression of the Antichrist. It describes the "patience" [steadfastness; endurance] of the saints, or encouragement to help them endure the oppression of the Antichrist. It will be worth it for those who have faith in Jesus Christ and keep the commandments of God for verses 9-11 describe the future of those who don't.

¹³ And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, 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.

Additionally, verse 13 describes a statement that a voice from heaven (perhaps God) makes sure that John writes down for the encouragement of future saints. The statement is that those who die in Christ from henceforth (during the tribulation) will be blessed because their labors will be complete and their faithfulness while on earth will be rewarded. The Greek word for “labours” means “weariness from intense toil and grief.” All the grief and weariness they have suffered at the hands of the Antichrist and his servants will be over and God will reward them for being faithful to Him through it all. This is the “patience [endurance] of the saints.”

¹⁴ And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

Now John sees a figure that most commentators view as being Jesus Christ sitting on a cloud. The cloud seems to represent the cloud of God’s *shekinah* glory. John describes this person as being like the “Son of man,” a term Jesus frequently used for Himself. This person is also wearing a golden crown, indicative of Christ being the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is also holding sharp sickle, a curved bladed tool used for harvesting grapes by cutting the clusters loose from the vine at the stem.

¹⁵ And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. ¹⁶ And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

Another angel appears, this time coming out of the temple which suggests that he has just come from the presence of God. Apparently he has a message for the One sitting on the cloud from God the Father. The angel cries out to Him with a loud voice saying that the time has come for reaping because the harvest is ready. In fact, the Greek word used for “ripe” means “to dry up or wither,” implying that the harvest is overdue for reaping. Having His Father’s approval, the Son of man thrusts in His sickle of judgment and reaps a harvest. The picture seems to come from **Joel 3:11-14**, which describes the Day of the LORD: *“¹¹ Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.”* This reaping will be described in literal detail in chapter 19 as Christ returns and destroys the armies that have gathered at Armageddon.

¹⁷ And 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, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

John sees yet another angel coming out of the temple and presumably from the presence of God. He also has a sharp sickle and has apparently been given instructions to take part in the reaping. Then an angel comes out of the altar which had power over fire. This may be the same angel that John saw in Rev. 8:3-5 who was offering the prayers of the saints with incense before the throne of God. After the angel had completed the offering he gathered fire in his censer and cast it to the earth, symbolizing judgment. If this was the angel that was offering the prayers of the saints, which included those under the altar who were asking God when He would avenge their deaths (Rev. 6:9-11), he may be now proclaiming that the time has come for God’s vengeance and wrath as he calls out to the angel to begin reaping.

¹⁹ And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. ²⁰ And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

The angel gathers the grapes of the earth (the inhabitants targeted for judgment) and casts them into the winepress of God’s wrath. This metaphorical language uses the image of making wine by using a winepress where harvested grapes are placed and then the juice is squeezed out by treading on the grapes with bare feet. Wine is still produced this way in many parts of the world. In this graphic illustration the winepress represents God’s wrath and the enemies of God are placed there to be trodden underfoot until their blood flows freely. In fulfillment of Zech. 12, Christ will destroy the armies of the Antichrist and the other enemies of God and Israel outside “the city” (Jerusalem). So great will be the literal bloodbath that the blood will reach the height of a horse’s bridles (about 4 feet) in some places over a stretch of 1,600 furlongs (about 200 miles). It is hard to imagine the volume of blood described here if intended literally but it might be a greater challenge to try to imagine a figurative interpretation of the scenario described. The size and number of the armies that will be gathered at the battle of Armageddon and will be destroyed by Christ could very well make this volume of blood possible.