

Revelation 14

The last two chapters have been dark, depressing and discouraging. We have been talking about the Devil, the Antichrist and the False Prophet. We have witnessed the depths of depravity as mankind abandons his Creator to worship the devil through his false Christ.

Now, the scene changes! Chapter 14 is like a beautiful rainbow after a storm. God gives us a breath of heavenly air in these verses. Only God can do that! Only God can take that which is horrible beyond words and turn it into a thing of glory. In this passage we are allowed to get a little glimpse of heavenly glory again (Rev. 4-5). We are allowed to see the Lamb of God. He is center stage in these verses.

Also, in these verses we meet the 144,000 Jewish evangelists again who were selected and sealed in chapter 7. These men have preached the Gospel of the Kingdom during the darkest days of the Tribulation. They were persecuted by the Antichrist, but they were preserved by God. At some point during the Tribulation, when they have served their purpose, God will allow the 144,000 to be killed by Antichrist (Just as the two witnesses in Rev. 11:2). These men will then join their Redeemer, the Lamb of God, in His glory in Heaven. They have weathered a terrible storm here on the earth. Now, for them the storm is over and they are home with the Lamb.

The Lamb and the 144,000

1 Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.

When we first met this group of men, it was in Rev. 7:3-4. There the Bible says, that they are protected and sealed by God. These men have been protected by God through the darkest days of the Tribulation. Hundreds of millions, perhaps even billions of people have died, but these men have been protected through it all because they have been sealed by God. The earth will be stained red with the blood of martyrs, but these men will be protected through it all! Satan will hunt them and harass them, but he will be powerless to kill them because they have been sealed by God. They have His Name in their foreheads and they are untouchable! Satan marked His people (Rev. 13:16) and they are headed to Hell, God sealed His servants, and they are bound for Heaven! There are not 143,999; there are 144,000. He brought in just as many as He called out!

The same is true for you and me. According to His Word, we have been "*sealed unto the day of redemption*", Eph. 4:30. We are also told that Jesus will not lose a single one of those given to Him by His Father, (John 6:37-40). Those who are saved are as sure for Heaven as if they were already there. Jesus gives eternal life and eternal security to every single person who trusts Him for their salvation. When the roll is called up yonder, not a single person will be missing. When the family gathers for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, there will not be an empty seat at the table! God will bring ALL His children home! Can I hear an AMEN?!!

We are told that these men meet the Lamb on "**Mt. Zion**". This is an ancient name for the city of Jerusalem, (2 Sam. 5:7; Psalm 48:2). Jerusalem is referred to as Mount Zion at least 21 times in the Word of God. Some commentators believe that John is referring to the earthly city of Jerusalem of the coming Millennium, when Jesus will rule on the earth for 1,000 years. We are seeing a heavenly scene,

no doubt. Verse 3 talks about heavenly singing. Verse 5 shows them standing before the throne of God in glory. One day, these eyes will see Heaven and all its glory! These feet will walk its endless streets of gold. These ears will hear the sweet songs of Zion and they will hear the sweetest sound to ever fall upon them. They will hear the Savior say, "Enter into the joy of the Lord, my good and faithful servant!" Praise God! One day, we are going home!

2 And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. 3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.

These men have been rescued from the terrors of the Tribulation. They have witnessed death and destruction on an unprecedented level. They have watched the world turn its back on God and embrace the devil as their new god. They have seen this world fall at the feet of the Antichrist and worship him as god. They have seen things more horrible than anything you and I could ever imagine. But, this verse finds them home, in Heaven, in the presence of the Lord Jesus. They are home! And Heaven is filled with the sounds of their joy/worship and their praises. Heaven is filled with joy because of the presence of the Lamb.

This world is a world filled with pain sorrow and tears and is marred by disease and death. It is in the grip of sin and Satan. One day, we will take our last steps in this wicked, harsh world. We will leave here and we will fly away to be with the One Who died for us on the Cross. We will see the Lamb of God who loves us so much He took our place on the Cross. We will see Jesus and we will be Heaven! We are headed to a city, and one day we will be home!

The 144,000 are overcome with joy because they are in the presence of God and the Lamb. They are overwhelmed and they burst into song. They sing a song that is unique to them. It is a new song that no one is qualified to sing it but them! The word "**learn**" means "**to understand**". No one can understand their song because no one has had their experiences. A new song is mentioned some seven times in the Old Testament. It is always used to praise the Lord for some great, amazing thing He has done, (Ps. 98:1).

There was a day when the Lord saved my soul. When He did, He placed a "new song" within my heart! Prior to that the only songs my soul knew were the songs of the world. All my soul knew were the laments and sorrows of a life of sin and sorrow. But, when He saved me, He gave me a brand-new song, (Ps. 40:1-3). If you are saved, you know exactly what I am talking about! I used to sing the blues, but now I sing "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see." Now, I can sing of His faithfulness, His blessings, His glory, His goodness, His grace, His mercy, His presence, His love, and His provisions. I can sing because He has changed my life and given me a new song. I can't put every word of my heart into a song down here, but when I get home, I will have the vocabulary and the means with which to praise Him in Heaven!

4 These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they remained virgins. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among mankind and offered as first fruits to God and the Lamb. 5 No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.

These 144,000 are a special group of people. These next two verses describe these men. We are told that these men have maintained their physical purity. Despite the rampant sexual sin that surrounds them, they have not fallen prey to the sins of the flesh that will mark the last days. They have not succumbed to the spiritual fornication that will run rampant in the world during the Tribulation days. The world will go after sexually immorality as in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah (Jude 1:7) (2 Tim. 3:1-4), but these men will stay separated and holy during an apostate age. Just look at how immoral the world is today: the divorce rate, polygamy, homosexuality, adultery, etc. These men will stand apart from their culture. In the midst of darkness their sexual purity will shine forth like beacons of light. God expects the same from His children. His command is for us to stay separate from this wicked world, 2 Cor. 6:17, and remain sexually pure in a world that has been given over to sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6:9-11) (Rom.1:24-28).

These 144,000 preachers had followed the Lord Jesus wherever He led them. They did not turn back through fear. They did not turn away from their task, even though it was dangerous and costly. They stayed the course. They followed the Lamb. The word ***“follow”*** means “to be in the same way as”. These men walked in the ways of the Lord. They made His way their way and they stayed the course for the glory of God.

Again, this is just what God expects from each one of us. He saved us to walk in His will and to follow His ways. He wants us to be obedient, surrendered followers. He wants us to make His way our way!

William Borden was born into wealth as an heir to the Borden dairy fortune, but he soon recognized true wealth was to be found in a different inheritance—being a child of God and an heir with Christ. Borden lived a short but high-impact life. He graduated high school at age 16 and quickly decided to become a missionary after seeing the global need for Christ on a trip through Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. He memorialized this decision by writing “no reserves” in the back of his Bible. After revolutionizing the campus of Yale University by starting a weekly prayer and Bible study group attended by three-fourths of the student body, Borden could have started his career with any corporation he desired. Rather, he stood firm in his decision to become a missionary and enrolled at Princeton Seminary. Once again, he made a record of his decision in the back of his Bible: “no retreats” was his entry. After finishing Princeton Seminary, Borden studied Arabic in Egypt to reach Muslims in China. He died from spinal meningitis shortly thereafter. Though he never reached his intended mission field, Borden impacted many people during his life. The last entry in the back of his Bible was “no regrets.”

God wants all of His children to live lives of great impact, and He gave us the example of William Borden as inspiration. No reserves—Sacrifice yourself, Rom. 12:1. Offer your entire being (body, mind, and soul) to God as a living sacrifice. Allow Him to use you as He desires and discover His perfect will for your life.

No retreats—Press on Phil. 3:14. After totally surrendering to God, you will face distraction and discouragement that will make you want to revoke your sacrifice and not follow God’s will. Stay focused on God and rely on His resurrection power to reach forward for what lies ahead.

No regrets—Finish the course 2 Tim. 4:7. Offering yourself fully and unrelentingly requires great faith. But God honors your faith, and He will help you fight the good fight so that you can live without regrets and hear Him say: “*Well done, thou good and faithful servant*”, (Matt. 25:21).

These 144,000 were chosen, saved and sealed at the beginning of the Tribulation. They went out and preached the Gospel to the ends of the earth. I cannot imagine how hard the ministry of these men was. It is hard in these days, but it will be far harder then. What a comfort it is to know that God is going to use them to reap a vast harvest of souls during the Tribulation. Only in Heaven will they know the impact of their ministry. The same is true of us! We will not know until we arrive home in glory just how the Lord has used our lives HERE ON Earth. Therefore, let us stay the course for His glory and allow Him to use us when and where He sees fit. Until He calls us home, may we “do the will of God from the heart”, (Eph. 6:6.).

These men stand in the presence of God complete and perfect. The Bible says that there was no lie or deceit found in them. These men claimed to be the servants of Almighty God and their walk matched their words. They were not fakes or hypocrites but were the real deal. These men had no flaws in their lives that could be pointed out by others. They were sealed by the Lord, and it is through Jesus Christ that they are declared faultless.

We should live out before the world what we claim to know about God, (1 John 2:6). We should live lives that are without blemish so that we might stand in His presence unashamed one day, (1 John 2:28). In this world we are still in the flesh, and we still fall short of the glory of God down here. There is coming a day when this evil flesh will drop away forever, and we will stand perfect and without fault in His presence! What a day that will be!

The Three Angels

6 Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. 7 He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

This passage speaks about the future that awaits two distinct classes of people. Verses 6-11 deal with the future of the lost sinner, while verses 12-13 speak to the future of the faithful saint. While these verses speak about future events, they are still relevant to us today. Every person in this room will reach the end of your earthly journey someday. There will be an end of the road for each of us! We do not like to think about it, but we need to know what is coming so that we can be properly prepared for that hour. When the end comes, you and I need to be ready! When the end comes, there will be no more time to prepare. When the end comes, how we leave this world will be how we enter eternity. In Eccl. 11:3, Solomon said, “*...if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it shall be.*” The same is true about your life and mine. However we are at the end, saved or lost, is how it will be for eternity. We must be ready!

These verses show an angelic messenger flying above the earth, proclaiming “*the everlasting Gospel*”. This angel declares the same message preached by Paul, Peter, John and the rest of the Apostles. It is the same message preached by the true church for the last 2,000 years. The message this angel delivers is the message of salvation through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God’s Word tells us that the Gospel is in 1 Cor. 15:3-4. The Gospel is a message of love(John 3:16); of hope, (John 6:37); of eternal salvation, (John 6:47); John 10:28; and of peace with God, (Rom. 5:10). It is the only message that will save the human soul from the wrath of God and an eternity in Hell,(John 14:1-6; Acts 4:12). Yet it is a message that has been, is, rejected by sinners until the end of time! This message has been preached for 2,000 years. It has been ignored by most of those that have heard it. It is still being ignored in this day. It will also be ignored during the dark days of the Tribulation.

Many people will be saved, thank God for that, but many, many more will be lost. The people in the Tribulation will refuse to hear the 144,000 evangelists. They will refuse the preaching of the two witnesses, Rev. 11. The world will even rejoice when they are dead and gone. The world will be unmoved by God’s love for them, and the testimony of God’s witnesses, and the blood they shed when they are martyred for their failure to worship the Beast.

The world has, and will turn a deaf ear to all human efforts to bring them to Jesus. In a final effort to reach them, God will entrust the Gospel to an angel. He will preach the message to a universal audience. He will call all people, everywhere, to flee the wrath to come. He will invite all people to come to Jesus for salvation. He will call them to refuse the Antichrist and to embrace the true Christ. It will be a powerful proclamation by a powerful preacher, but, the world will remain defiant in their rejection of the Gospel, and the salvation offered through the blood of Jesus Christ. The Bible says that if Jesus is rejected then there is no other sacrifice for sins (Heb. 10:26). When the end comes, it will be too late to believe the Gospel. Today is the day of salvation, (2 Cor. 6:2). If you have never believed the Gospel and received Jesus as your Savior, you need to do that today. One day it will be forever too late.

8 A second angel followed and said, “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.”

A second angel appears and pronounces God’s final judgment on Babylon. You may notice that the angel says “is fallen” twice. This indicates that Babylon’s judgment is absolutely certain! (Rev. 17-18). This city, above all others, is singled out for a special pronouncement of judgment. Babylon is more than a city, Babylon is a philosophy! Babylon represents everything the world is. Babylon represents everything that stands opposed to God and His perfect will. Babylon represents a system of unbelief.

In Genesis 10:8-10, we are introduced to the descendants of a man named Cush. One of his sons was named Nimrod. Nimrod founded the city of Babel, (v. 10). It was here that mankind rebelled against the Lord and attempted to build the Tower of Babel, (Gen. 11). This tower was a place dedicated to the worship of the heavenly bodies. Babel was one of the first centers of false, idolatrous worship in this world and Nimrod was the ringleader. when they built their tower and dedicated it to the worship of idols and heavenly bodies, God intervened and confused their languages. But, that did not destroy the seeds of false religion that had been planted in the hearts of men. People left Babel and carried their false doctrines with them around the world. Babel later became Babylon.

It was a city that was the capital of false religion and idolatry. It represents everything in this world that stands opposed to God. In the Tribulation, it speaks of the economic and religious kingdom of the Antichrist. Babylon is pictured as a harlot. She is seen seducing the foolish sinners of this world. She has led them away from God with her lies and she is about to pay a terrible price. The judgment of God is coming upon her and her heresies and none can now change God's hand of judgment. The philosophy behind all of mankind's religious heresies and rebellion against God will be destroyed. Their foundation will be shattered by the wrath of God.

9 A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, 10 they, too, will drink the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name."

A third angel appears. He preaches a message of judgment to all those who receive the mark of the Beast and who worship the Beast. This angel reveals what will happen to all those who refuse to receive the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. This angel preaches a fearful message, but it is one that we need to take note of today.

We are told in verse 10 that ***They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night.*** What a horrible picture. We are given a glimpse of the horrors that await the lost sinner in the flames of Hell. Verse 11 is very clear; Hell is a place of unending, unimaginable torment for the lost sinner. When they die without Jesus, they will go to Hell. Once there, they will never know a second of rest or relief. They will go to a place where they will never die! They will suffer throughout eternity as they endure the wrath of God in Hell.

The word "**wrath**" translates the word "**thumos**". It is a word that pictures "**an explosion of wrath; a sudden outburst; a passionate display of anger.**" When God's wrath is poured out on this world, it will be a time of sudden judgment from which there will be no escape. It is the picture of water rising behind a dam, until the pressure of the water becomes too great and the dam bursts. It is the image of a person holding back their anger, becoming red-faced, until they finally explode in wrath. One day the dam of God's wrath will burst and all those who are outside of a relationship with Jesus are going to be doomed. When the wrath of God comes on this world, it will be pure and undiluted. Sinners and Satan have never experienced the undiluted fury of an offended God, but they will one day, (Heb. 10:31; 12:29).

In the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb of God will stand as a constant reminder to the lost sinner that they did not have to arrive at this horrible place. They would have been saved if they would have turned to Jesus Christ by faith. It did not have to end this way for these people. It does not have to end that way for you! When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He bore our sins in His body, (1 Pet. 2:24). Jesus literally became our sins on the cross, (2 Cor. 5:21). During that time on the cross, God judged Jesus as if He were you or me. He poured out His wrath upon the body of His Son.

The judgment was so complete that Jesus even cried out in His anguish that He had been forsaken by the Lord, (Matt. 27:46). Jesus experienced the undiluted wrath of God on the cross.

He suffered on that cross because you and I are sinners. He took our place on the cross and suffered the wrath of God so that we would not have to, (Isa. 53:4-6). Now, the only hope of salvation is Jesus Christ. Those who believe on Him by faith will be saved and they will spend eternity in Heaven. Those who reject Him will spend eternity in Hell. Verse 11 will be their future. Where will you be five seconds after death? It all depends on what you do with Jesus, now (John 3:18, 36; 1 John 5:12)

12 This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus. 13 Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."

These verses show us what will happen to the saints of God when they leave this world. We have seen the hellish side of death; now let's examine the heavenly side of death.

The word "patience" literally means "steadfast endurance". It is the picture of a person who cannot be swayed from his simple faith in and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. In spite of the horrors of the Tribulations Period and the threats of the Antichrist, these believers have remained faithful to their Lord. They refused to bow to this world/Anti-Christ. They refused to give their worship to the Devil. They have endured every attack and every affliction with the confident knowledge that their God was executing an eternal plan. They were faithful even unto the death, knowing that, in the end, their faith would be vindicated, and Satan and his kingdom would be judged. They knew that they were part of the victorious plan of God, even while they suffered!

That is a lesson that we would do well to learn today. This world and the devil are always trying to get us to compromise. There is a constant barrage of attacks designed to cause us to abandon God and the way of righteousness. The devil would love nothing better than for us to get our eyes off Jesus and His will for our lives and our church. He would love for us to lower our standards, relax our hold on our convictions and abandon the way of righteousness in these days. After all, it would be easier! It would cause the church to be more accepted in the community. It would take some of the pressure off of us. The only problem is that it would offend God! It would cause Him to remove His power from our midst. It would cause Him to write "Ichabod" above our door, like He has in countless other churches. The best course of action in this day is the same course of action chosen by the saints in these verses. It is the course of action articulated by the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 15:58, "*Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*" We are to stay the course for the glory of God! The world might not appreciate your efforts for the Lord, but God does! He sees every sacrifice for His name, and He will reward His people in due time, (Matt. 10:41-42; 1 Cor. 3:10-15).

These people demonstrated their faithfulness to the Lord in two ways. They kept His commandments, and they kept the faith. When we do as He tells us in His Word, we prove that we love Him, (John 14:15). Our obedience to the Lord is irrefutable evidence that we have experienced the new birth, (1 John 2:3-5). By keeping the faith, these people had refused to deny Jesus. They had maintained their faith in Him even when doing so was costly. Many in the Tribulation will go to their deaths rather than deny the Lord Jesus. How much easier would it be for them to deny Him with their lips, even as they embrace Him in their hearts? But, they are not hypocrites! They will not deny Him even though it will cost them everything. By refusing to worship Antichrist, they will suffer greatly. However, the suffering can't be compared to those who reject Christ and go along with the Anti-Christ.

Yes, they will not be able to buy or sell. They will be hunted and hounded and executed for their allegiance to Jesus, but they will remain faithful to Jesus because they trust in God's Divine plan beyond the immediate circumstances.

These suffering saints set a great example for those of us living in these days! As we know, the trend in churches and among church people in our day is to become more like the world. That is the easy path to follow. It gains you favor with the world and it helps you grow in numbers. However, when you compromise the Word of God and water down the Gospel message, you forfeit the presence and power of God. You might have a full house, huge crowds and mountains of cash, but if there is no power and touch of God, those things amount to less than nothing! Dung! Rubbish! I would rather have Jesus!

From a worldly point of view these people gave up a lot for their faith in Jesus Christ. They suffered, they starved, and they endured hardships that we cannot even begin to imagine. Men watched their wives and children starve to death. Mothers watched their children suffer. What did it profit them? What payoff was there in such suffering and pain? This verse tells us about their future. If you are saved it tells about your future too. First, we are told that these people who will die in and for Jesus are "**blessed**". This word means to be happy, fortunate; well off. The idea here is that those who die in the Lord leave a harsh, unfriendly world for a better place. For the believer this is as close to Hell he/she will ever experience. For the unbeliever, this world is as close to Heaven that he/she will ever experience. For the believer, death is nothing more than a doorway that allows us to step out of time and into eternity! It is a portal that allows us to leave this land of death and step into that land of life. Death, for the child of God, is not a bad thing, but a good thing. We go home into the waiting arms of our Savior!

There is no comparison between what we have in this world and what will be ours when we get home to glory! This verse touches on two of the blessings that will hold special importance for those saints living through the horrors of the Tribulation.

1. ***They Will Rest From Their Labors*** – These people have labored for Jesus in a difficult day, now they are going home to rest. The idea here is of the soldier who has fought in the campaigns and battles and has grown weary. He needs some R&R. It pictures the sailor who has helped guide the ship through many terrible storms. He needs to have a shore leave. These saints gave their all for Jesus here on the earth and all they got in return was weariness of the flesh, grief and sorrow. Now, they can go into the presence of the Lord to rest. (Rev. 21:4)

Many of you are weary in the battle today. It gets hard to live for Jesus in a world that does not care about Him! It is hard to be holy in a godless world. It makes you weary. Let me encourage you, there is coming a day of rest! One day, we will step out of this world and we will enter His presence. When we arrive there, we will lay aside the burdens, cares and labor of this life. We will be able to find refreshment in His presence. May God help us to look beyond this hard life and see a day when we will stand complete in His presence!

2. ***They Will Be Rewarded For Their Labors*** – We are told that "their works do follow them." In other words, their labor for the Lord in that dark day was not in vain! God saw everything they did for His glory and He rewards them for it all.

That is how it will be for the children of God one day! We will stand in His presence, and He will reward us for the things He allowed us to do for His glory, (1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10). He is going to reward us!

Isn't that amazing?! But, I know what we will do with those rewards. We will cast them at His feet, and we will praise Him for His grace in salvation and in service, Rev. 4:9-11. We sing a New Song on that glorious day when we leave this world to go to our reward!

The contrast in the destinations of the lost and the saved could not be more different! Those who reject Jesus Christ will spend eternity apart from His presence in Hell. Those who receive Him will enjoy an eternity spent in His presence in Heaven. One second after you die you will be where you are going to spend eternity. Look at your heart right now. Where would you go if you died within the hour? Would you go to Heaven? Would you go to Hell? Are you content with the place you are headed right now? Are you saved? If so, you should praise Him for what you have here and for what you will enjoy there, and you should be faithfully serving Jesus right now.

Harvesting the Earth and Trampling the Winepress

I just want to remind you that the Book of Revelation was not written in chronological order, but cyclical. The first three chapters tell of our Lord's letters to seven actual churches that existed in John's day, but are just as applicable to us today. Those chapters paint a clear portrait of the church all the way from Pentecost to the Rapture. Chapters 4-11 tell us about the chronology of the Tribulation Period. They take us all the way from the beginning to the end of that terrible seven-year period of time. In chapters 12-14, we are taken back to the beginning. These chapters give us the same time period from a different perspective. We are now confronted with the characters of the book. Through a series of seven visions, John takes us once again through the days of the Tribulation.

In our study of this book, we have arrived at the seventh of these visions. These verses close out the pause in the action we have been in since chapter 12-1. When this chapter ends, we are going to be thrown back into the heat and the horrors of the final days of the Tribulation. Before we deal with those things, John gives us a vision of our Lord when He comes again in power and glory.

When Jesus came the first time, He came as a Savior. He came to give His life on the cross so that sin might be paid for, and sinners might be set free. When He comes the second time, He is coming as a Judge. He is coming to destroy sin, Satan and all those who stand in defiance to God. When Jesus returns, He will come in the fullness of His power, glory and judgment and no one will be able to withstand Him! There will be no cross for Him to hang upon; but there will be a throne for Him to sit upon. There will be no crown of thorns, but a real crown for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Let's look at the Judge, as He calls His Court to Order.

14 I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.

"The Son of Man". As you may remember, this was one of the titles given to the Lord Jesus when He came to this earth the first time. Jesus used this title to refer to Himself some 84 times in the Gospels. This title identifies Jesus with mankind. John is giving us a preview of that glorious day when Jesus Christ will return in glory and power. When John sees Jesus, he sees Him wearing a "golden crown". The word "crown" translates the word for "a victor's crown". It refers to the laurel wreaths that were given out to victors in the ancient Olympic Games. The fact that this crown is "golden" identifies the wearer as a King.

John sees the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He sees the One Who walked victoriously out of that tomb on the third day. John sees the King Who has come to take possession of His domain. He will rule by His right as Creator, Lord, Savior and King!

When John sees the King, He has "a sharp sickle in his hand". A sickle is an instrument used to harvest wheat. When Jesus returns, He is coming to both gather His people into His barn as a farmer gathers his wheat. He is also coming to cut down the wicked like a farmer cuts down his wheat. Jesus can either be your Savior or He can be your Judge. If you receive Him in these days of grace, He will save you and take you to Heaven. If you reject Him, He will stand in judgment of your life one day. He will either be your Savior, or He will be your Judge. The choice is yours!

15 Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." 16 So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested. 17 Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. 18 Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe." 19 The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath.

These next four verses unfold our Lord's plan to bring judgment to this earth. When He came the first time, He came as the Sower. He moved through this world sowing the seeds of the Gospel of grace. When He returns, He will come as the Reaper. He will separate the saint from the sinner. He will take the saints home to Heaven and the sinner will be cast into hell.

Harvest time in the Bible is often used as a picture of souls coming to God for salvation, (John 4:34-35). In these verses, the harvest is used as a picture of judgment. In verses 15-16, the angels under the direction of the Lord are shown thrusting in their sickles to reap the earth. The world is pictured as a field of wheat that is ready to be harvested. What we are seeing in these verses share the fulfillment of a parable Jesus told in the Gospels, in Matthew 13:24-30. Jesus told the parable of "*The Wheat and the Tares*". It is a story of a farmer who sowed a wheat field expecting to reap a bountiful harvest, but, his enemy came and sowed tares among his wheat. The servants wanted to pull up the tares, but the farmer knew that doing so would destroy the wheat. His council was for both to grow together until the time of the harvest, then the tares could be gathered and burned, and the wheat could be gathered and placed in the farmer's barn. In the same chapter, (Matthew 13:36-43), Jesus told His disciples what this parable meant. The good seed represented genuine believers while the tares represented false believers. The good seed represents the saved and the tares represent the lost. The problem with the wheat and the tares is that the two cannot be told apart while they are growing. The tares, look just like wheat as it matures. The difference between the two plants becomes clear when they near harvest time. The head, or top, of the tare turns black and stands up straight. It is filled with tiny black seeds that can cause nausea, or even death. The wheat, on the other hand, has a head filled with heavy kernels of wheat. These kernels cause the head of the wheat plant to bend toward the earth. (The obvious contrast between the saved and the lost.) One day Jesus will gather His wheat, the genuine believers, unto Himself. The wicked will be cut down and "cast into a furnace of fire". The judgment of the Lord is coming and "the Lord knows those who are His," (2 Tim. 2:19).

In verses 17-19, now the scene changes and we move from the field to the vineyard. The lost are compared to a field of grapes that is “ripe for bursting”. They are ready to be harvested. When grapes are harvested, they are placed in a “winepress.” The grapes were placed in the winepress, and people would climb into the winepress and use their feet to crush the grapes. The juice would run out and into a vat where it would be collected for winemaking.

Again, we are given a picture of a world slated for judgment! This world has rejected Jesus the True Vine, (John 15:1-8). They have attached themselves to the vine of this world, and they have drunk deeply of the wine of sin. One day, He will come and they will face Him in judgment. He will crush this world system, and all those who hold to it, under His feet like a man crushes a grape (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 63:1-6; Rev. 1:15). The enemies of God will be thrown into “the winepress of the wrath of God” and they will be judged!

20 They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses’ bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.

This verse tells us that “***the winepress was trodden outside the city***”. It does not tell us where this event will take place. However, perhaps what we are seeing in these verses is a vision of a coming battle called “*Armageddon*” (Valley of Megiddo). It is here in this place that Napoleon described as “a natural battlefield.” According to Rev. 16:16, a terrible battle will take place here. Armageddon means “the hill or city of Megiddo”. Megiddo is the site of some famous biblical battles. It was here that Barak and Deborah defeated the Canaanites, (Judges. 4-5). It was here that Gideon defeated the Midianites, (Judges. 6-8). This same valley is the place that both King Saul and his son Jonathan were killed in battle, (1 Sam. 31). King Josiah also met his death in the valley of Megiddo, (2 Chron. 35). It will also be the same valley where the armies of the earth will come together to try to destroy the King of Kings. that the final battle of the earth will be fought. What we are witnessing here is total destruction of the enemies of the Lord. This is total annihilation of evil as far the physical man is concerned. We are told that the blood will run as high as the horses’ bridles, (between four and five feet deep). It will flow in a river some 1,600 furlongs long (about 200 miles). Can you imagine such carnage? Our minds cannot conceive of this amount of blood. The armies of the world will gather in a final attempt to defy God. Jesus will return and by His word He will destroy the enemies of God and tread them down in the winepress of His wrath! Hundreds of millions of soldiers will die in this catastrophic battle,(Rev. 19:11-21). The blood of the fallen will fill the valley of Megiddo from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south. We read of these events as we cannot comprehend such total devastation. Yet, the Bible says it is coming! In fact, some of the Old Testament prophets wrote about these very events, (Read Zech. 14:1-4, and Joel 3:11-14). This battle will take place and God will be victorious.

Thousands of years ago in Egypt, God saved His people by the blood of a lamb. They killed that lamb, placed its blood on the doorposts of their houses and went in. when they did, they were saved, safe and secure. They were under the blood. When the death angel passed through that night, they were spared because they were under the blood. What about you? Are you under the blood today? Has the blood of Jesus been applied to your heart? Have you trusted Jesus as your Savior? I hope so, for if you haven’t, you will face Him as your Judge one day.