

# The 14th Chapter of Revelation

***This Revealing Chapter steps aside from the Book's sequential narrative to present an Oblique Look at the three Main Segments of Humanity, as it Relates to being awarded their Just and Due Rewards. Has Religion fully appreciated its Comprehensiveness? Encapsulated within this one Chapter is a Message Profoundly Revealing with respect to God's Plan for the Salvation of ALL the World's Un-evangelized Masses.***

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Many aspects of the Book of Revelation remain an enigma to most of the religious world. To most, it is a mystery without clear comprehension. Of the multitudes who have made attempts to explain its mysteries, wide variations exist in what they perceive its messages to be.

To some degree, Chapter 14 is not as profoundly unfathomable as are many other chapters.

Breaking away from the prophetic story-flow, this chapter pauses to focus on a subject largely misidentified in traditional theology. The picture we get from commonly accepted religious teachings is rather bleak as they attempt to explain the situation involving the uncountable and 'hopelessly lost' masses of humanity, as they're so often described. A degree of Calvinistic thought is incorporated into the outlook of more of our churches' teachings than they'd like to admit.

## **What Hope for the Masses?**

Uncountable billions have gone to their graves ignorant of God's Salvation Message since the time of Adam. World over, and especially throughout non-Christian lands, infants and children have died and continue to die without even the least awareness of salvation, let alone having had opportunity to have pursued it. It isn't much better with their elders. The thought of their being instantly consigned to an ever burning hell at death is patently objectionable to most sensitive thinking people, causing some to incorporate a non-biblical 'age of accountability' idea into their explanations, which at least provides them a more comforting answer as it regards at least those little ones! But, what about

the vast numbers who never had a real opportunity for salvation? Why are so few among us able to provide good answers?

It is the rejection of certain fundamental Biblical teachings that has caused this perceptual blind spot. Clear fundamental doctrines, such as the (plural) **resurrections** from the dead (particularly the one mentioned in Rev. 20:5) and the purpose for Christ's **Millennial Kingdom** on Earth, have no explainable purpose among the traditional 'heaven or hell' persuasion. Despite numerous Biblical passages devoted to these teachings, few denominations have a clear understanding of their essential place in the overall Plan of God for mankind. With the result of that being that the subject isn't a part of their theologies.

Revelation 14, when correctly understood, presents a scene which contains a picture of hope that accepted religiosity can not offer. But in order to see that hope, we must correctly identify the intent and message of this insightful chapter.

## **The Harvests of the World**

My Nelson NKJ Bible sub-titles verses 14 to 16 as "*Reaping the Earth's Harvest*". Above verses 17 to 20, it has "*Reaping the Grapes of Wrath*". My old Oxford KJV sub-titles the second half of the chapter "*The Harvest of the World*", both of them indicating at least a general awareness of what is being presented.

## **An Inset Chapter**

Revelation 14 is recognized as what is known as an 'inset' chapter, in which the writer breaks away

from the overall chronological story flow to pause and focus-in on a particular subject. In pursuing the message of this chapter, we need to remain attentive to these **key questions**: Does the chapter subject present a comprehensive whole, and is it internally chronological? With those two answers, we can better grasp its real message.

Before we look into the message of Revelation, chapter 14 analytically, it is presented below, in its entirety without comment.

### Scene One – The 144,000 Firstfruits

[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.***”

[2] *And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:*

[3] *And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but **the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.***

[4] *These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were **redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits** unto God and to the Lamb.*

[5] *And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault **before the throne of God.***

### Scene Two – Angelic Messages

[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.*

[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.*

[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.*

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

[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.*

### Scene Three – White Cloud Harvest

[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.*”

[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.***

### Scene Four – Winepress of God’s Wrath

[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.***

[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.” (King James Version)*

Apparent from the text is the fact that there are four distinct presentations: The 144 thousand (which are further explained in Chapter 7), then we see the messages to that segment of humanity who survives the Great Tribulation and the fall of Babylon, then at some undetermined later time, a harvest scene involving one group, reaped by one like the Son of Man, followed shortly thereafter by a second group, assigned to wrath, reaped by two collaborating death angels.

Above, it was asked, Does the chapter subject present a comprehensive whole, and is it internally chronological? Let's consider the chronology issue first.

### Internally Chronological?

First, we're presented a time-referenced scene with the Lamb standing on Mount Zion together with His 144,000 Saints. We know when that is. It's shortly after the Second Coming! These, we are told, are redeemed from among men, being *the firstfruits* unto God and the Lamb.

Next, we shift to a three-angel address to those who are living on the earth AFTER the Second Coming. It involves all of humanity. The message to them begins with: *Fear God, give glory to Him, and worship the Creator*. It also announces to them that **their** judgment period has begun. Do we know when that is? There we have another time reference: Judgment is extended upon all the world at this time, where previously it had been upon only the ecclesia (those called 'the house of God').<sup>1</sup> So in this detail also, we have a time marker.

The second messenger (an angel) announces that modern Babylon has fallen (its second fall). This too is a positive time marker, which is further explained in another inset chapter, chapter 18, when the running narrative continues.

Then the third messenger pronounces a prohibition against any further worship under the Beast's

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<sup>1</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:17 We need to understand 'judgment' in its evaluative sense, not its condemnative sense. The first to be judged toward salvation are those **called** of God. The rest of humanity is destined to be called **later**. May we call it Post-destination? ( Would such a consideration shed light on the meaning of what is called 'predestination'?)

worship system (and that system had existed long before the Beast Power became manifest in the end time), and a dire warning of what the punishment will be of those who defy the prohibition. This too indicates a time reference, that of the age beyond the Second Coming. It shows that mankind will be worshipping God in the coming era, and that all the former forms of man made worship will be strongly prohibited. Verses 10 & 11 describe the punishment imposed upon any who disregard the warning, which we see imposed in verses 19 & 20.

( Those who identify verses 17 to 20 of chapter 14 with the defeat of the Beast's armies impose a break into the internal chronology of the chapter and impose that severest of penalties BEFORE the warning is issued to them! )

### The White Cloud Harvest

Next we move to the third scene: The "*White Cloud*" harvest. In this scene, we see Christ Himself wielding the harvest instrument to "reap" the earth's harvest, for **it IS ripe!** Commentaries, such as the respected Jamieson Fausset & Brown<sup>2</sup> identify these as being *the righteous!* Halley's Bible Handbook<sup>3</sup> presents a similar assessment, that these in verses 14 to 16 are the righteous, making a further point that these are referred to as '*the harvest*', while those reaped later in verses 17 to 20 are referred to as '*the vintage*'.

Considering this scene for its chronological aspect, we need to ask ourselves, when will this harvest of the earth's Saints occur? It can't be at Christ's return, because we've seen that contingent identified in the opening verses of the chapter, with the 144,000, His 'firstfruits', standing with Him on Mount Zion. That 'harvest' is past already, and as we've seen in verses 6-11, we have moved beyond the fall of Babylon and into the millennial age.

So, **who are these** righteous individuals harvested by Christ sitting upon the White Cloud? That answer is provided in part by the drastic contrast with the next scene.

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<sup>2</sup> JF&B Bible Commentary, Hendrickson Publishers, March 1997, Volume 3, page 704.

<sup>3</sup> Halley's Bible Handbook, Zondervan Publishers, 1965, 24<sup>th</sup> edition, page 728.

With that distinction clearly in mind, we are now ready to move on to the final scene of this chapter. Using angelic representatives, this order also goes out from the Temple in Heaven to gather the vintage destined for the Wrath of God. In this reaping, *'fully ripened'* grapes are gathered by two angels. These represent the wicked of all time, who had opportunity for salvation, and who rejected it, many choosing to perpetuate prohibited forms of worship or not worship at all. One thing apparent in this scene is its finality. These are assigned to God's Wrath. This completes the harvest of all of the earth's humanity for all time.

Some may notice, and may think to ask, that IF this is THE harvest at the absolute end of time,<sup>4</sup> what is there that suggests such a **lengthy time gap** in the narrative? Such an event will be only after the millennial age and the second resurrection era is past. Where scholars have assigned verses 17-20 at least to the battle of the Day of the Lord, (not that that phrase is in the narrative), their assignment requires a set-back in time placement. That being similarly 'problematical'!

Well, actually there is such a consideration. If we notice the continuing narrative after the three angels' messages, we see the Saints addressed. Verses 12 & 13 address them, third party: [12] *"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.* [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."* Now, which Saints are these? They can't be the 144,000, as their 'patience' is already rewarded in the fact of their being made immortal Spirit Beings at the Last Trump. Is this speaking to present day Saints? If so, we have to break away from the internal chapter sequence to a time before Christ's return. If not either of them, then it must be those who are **becoming** Saints in

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<sup>4</sup> The 'end of time' as it relates to the end of the existence of mankind in **physical** form. Not the 'end of the age', as we typically refer to the Second Coming to be, but that Judgment and Sentencing event that occurs **AT** the third resurrection. There is to be a great indeterminate age after the 'last man' is made Spirit in the immortal Family of God, which is another subject for another day. (see 1<sup>st</sup>. Corinthians 15:24-28)

the millennial age. And, that's where they are addressed: after the three-angels' messages, at the onset and duration of the 1,000 years. It indicates that they will live out their lives and die, but await a sure reward for their faithfulness to the Commandments (yes, they're still quite relevant and applicable). Verses 12 & 13 take us sequentially through the millennial age, from the beginning of it clear to the time of the White Cloud Judgment. This then provides us another increment in a chronological progression, applying to that interval between the start of the millennial age and the end of the Great White Throne Judgment period in which those who never had an opportunity for salvation will be afforded one at last!

### Seven Distinct Increments

So we have these seven chronological benchmarks: 1) Christ standing on Mount Zion with His first-fruits, 2) Announcements to the survivors of the Great Tribulation at the onset of the millennium, 3) The second (final) fall of the Great Babylon, 4) A warning at the onset of the millennium against employing old worship forms, 5) A message of hope to those who successfully attain salvation during the millennial age, 6) The Harvest of the righteous, and 7) The extinction of the wicked at the end. The entire chapter maintains and presents a chronological order within itself, though aside from but set into the running narrative of the overall Book.

Is the chapter internally chronological? YES! (But, if we pull verses 12 & 13 out to apply them to present day individuals, and if we assign verse 20 to the battle of Armageddon, then, NO, it isn't!)

### Comprehensively Whole?

Now, as to the narrative being comprehensive within itself, and I mean by that, does it address one single topic? Does everything within it relate to that topic? We need to consider what it is picturing. It begins with a picture of the righteous standing with Christ at His Triumphal Return. It ends with the 'harvest' of those righteous of a later timeframe into the God Family, and then the utter destruction of those who **would not** have Christ to rule over them. If we consider the chapter's message to be the **"harvests of the world"**, then,

YES, it's also internally comprehensive. But again, if we make those same assignments as described in the paragraph above, we lose its comprehensiveness as well as its chronological order.

### A Vital Answer

The beauty of this chapter is that it places and describes the event that we read of in Matthew 25:32-46.<sup>5</sup> We can see in Revelation 14 when and how this 'final sentencing' (either to a good or bad sentence) will be brought upon those who have had their opportunity to come to know the Truth and to avail themselves of True Salvation.

It shows the absolute necessity of understanding the three resurrections. Without that, we can never come to understand how this final sentencing will come to pass in its proper time context and in its full inclusiveness. The *resurrections of the dead* is a fundamental Christian Doctrine. (Hebrews 6:1-2)

The first resurrection is of the Saints, living and dead, whose names are in the Book of Life at the time of Christ's Return. (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 15:50-58, 1<sup>st</sup> Thess 4:13-18). The second resurrection adds all those who died without a real opportunity for salvation onto the end of the millennial age to be provided with their first opportunity. (e.g. Ezek. 37) The third resurrection brings up **all** the dead from their graves to stand conscious before God for final sentencing. The general outline of these all being evident in Revelation Chapter 20 and John 5:24-29.

The millennial age begins with the first resurrection and ends with the second. The second resurrection era begins with the second resurrection and ends with the third. The third resurrection brings to the human experience the finality of sentence to eternal Life or the **second death**, after which there is no consciousness and no prospect of ever being brought back to any kind of a living state.

In the second resurrection, those who died prior to the time of Christ's Return, without having had opportunity for salvation, will be raised (as Rev. 20:5 indicates). They will live on into the post-millennial age, within the same Satan-free culture

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<sup>5</sup> Related passages being: Luke 19:27, Matthew 25:31-46, Matthew 13:47-50.

as those who lived in the millennium had, and then in the 'last day' stand before the Judgment Seat for sentencing to either Eternal Life or Death, according to their responses. (Their 'works'!) This is the scene we see set in Revelation 14:14-20.

### How Long IS the Post-Millennial Age?

Among the 'mysteries' we enjoy speculating about, we have this one. How long will it last? I feel it safe to conclude that it will afford sufficient time for those raised in it to become fully converted. In an age with the whole world full of the knowledge of God, and with no Satanic influence (Rev. 20:10), perhaps as much as one full lifetime. We aren't told specifically how long the post-millennial age will be, but we do see the 'final sentencing' scene time-set, located and described in detail!

### The Harvest of the WORLD!

But, what this chapter DOES give us is a comprehensive answer to the enigmatic question that God's Church has struggled with for decades: **Those converted** during the millennium and the relatively short opportunity period after it, will be made immortal Spirit Beings, (as were those at Christ's Return), in a great Harvest at the White Cloud Judgment. This is the clarity that Chapter 14 provides us.

Those who willfully do not repent and do not avail themselves of true conversion will pay the penalty for their sins with **their own blood**, as Hebrews 9:22 so clearly requires. The wages of sin is death! The picture we see in Revelation 14:20 illustrates that fact very graphically. 

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