

## Chapter 14

### The Lamb and the 144,000

**14** Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred *and* forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. <sup>2</sup> And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. <sup>3</sup> They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred *and* forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

John again connects this chapter to the last near the centre of a chain spanning from Chapter 10 to 20. That's not to say its chronologically in order, but that the discussions within these chapters are all connected. He looks and sees "a Lamb" which, of course, can only relate to one person; Jesus, standing on a hill just outside of Jerusalem's city walls. Mount Zion has been identified with a number of different locations around Jerusalem and most people today simply generally use the name to refer to the Temple Mount, but at this time it was a hill just outside the city. Yes, this is an important point that we will discuss shortly.

The lamb is standing there surrounded with those that we identified in Chapter 7 as being his chosen ones. John puts a connection here to the previous chapter. Where the Image of the Beast commanded that all the receive his mark, these wear God's mark. They have made that free choice, they have stood in the eyes of the Devil and told him they had no intention of choosing his way. These are God's people.

The voice John hears echoes that he could not tell us about in Chapter 10, and like Chapter 10, he does not record what it says. He simply describes its sound. The voice, combined with the harpers playing taught these 144,000 a "new song" that they sang standing before the throne of heaven, before all the glory demonstrated in Chapter 4 and 5. Imagine a song that they alone could sing, and that they have the privilege to sing in Heaven before the most powerful creatures in the universe that those creatures could not learn themselves. Their privilege is unique, for they are "redeemed from the earth". These are a special group.

This song, often called the 'song of Moses and the Lamb' is explained better in Chapter 15, but its importance here is that these group alone could sing the song. And they are alive in Chapter 7 before the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming as they stand alive outside the city here in Chapter 14.

<sup>4</sup> These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from *among* men, *being* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. <sup>5</sup> And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

The description of their quality here is a little misleading; "(t)hese are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins." At first, this would make them appear a young, innocent group – yet a group that is able to make universe changing choices. That seems contradictory, a group of young people who are experienced and wise enough to choose the right way, but we must remember what we learned in Chapter 12. The church – both Jewish and later non-Roman Christian - was there defined as a 'woman', and this establishes a precedent the same as any other symbol in scripture. A woman represents a spiritual movement, a religious structure and belief system. To ally or associate oneself with it is easy to be seen in the language of marriage, which naturally removes the purity of virginity from an individual.

The youth of this group is, however, somewhat apt as we read back in Chapter 12 that "<sup>17</sup> And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." These descendants had obviously learned from their mother, but they were separate from her. She had been nourished and saved in the wilderness, but her other children were also who the Dragon tried to make war with, and it is these descendants that "have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

When we look at the changes in events after 1798, and indeed at modern practises in all protestant Christian churches, we find strong Roman influences no matter how much we might want to ignore them. There is no way that any modern church can be entirely as the church Christ, Peter, Paul and James established was; too much has been lost from that time. Indeed, even in the Adventist Church – as much as we want to hold ourselves separate from the Roman – the 'authority' we give to Ministers has a certain Popeish quality to it... as does how some laud it over their congregations. The symbolism and language being brought into the Adventist Church is growing more and more toward the Roman style, with Crucifixes and celebrations of Christmas and Easter being widely conducted throughout the Adventist world.

This group are those who have kept to the closest that they could to their original convictions in the circumstances that they had, and did not compromise what they had come to believe as true. John explains more about these convictions in the next section of the study.

These 144,000 are said to be “redeemed from *among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb*” meaning they were alive at the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming – which again fits with our analysis of Chapter 7. But more than that, the use of the phrase “*firstfruits to God and to the Lamb*” is a demonstration of their place of importance as the ‘first fruits’ in most ancient religious groups – including the Jewish – were the first of their crop to become ripe and, often, had the strongest and best flavours. They were the best of the pick, offered to God, which is why these individuals are so important. And Jesus knows this, which is why “(t)hese are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.” These are Christ’s Retinue and we deduce from this phrase that, when Jesus goes to visit his universe, these come with him to share stories of what they experienced and how he saved them. These represent the saving grace of God, not his power but his mercy. These drew on His strength to choose God’s mark over the Beast’s and they happily serve Jesus however they can.

## The Proclamations of Three Angels – AKA The Three Angels Message

<sup>6</sup> Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people— <sup>7</sup> saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”

John hears 3 Angels issue messages and clear statements to the world, which explain how those 144,000 got to be who they are. The Adventist Church has adopted this collection as its voice. The Adventist Church always considered ‘The Three Angels Message’ as its mission to spread to the world, with the Health Message being our Right arm and education our Left.

2098 [e]

euangelion

εὐαγγέλιον

[the] glad tidings

N-ANS

166 [e]

aiōnion

αἰώνιον

everlasting

Adj-ANS

The First Angel is said to be holding “the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth”. This is a slight misunderstanding of the Greek that has been translated to be the actual bible, but as John is writing a part of that book here, it naturally does not actually exist.

What the angel is holding is an authority from God to spread Good News that will never fail. An ‘everlasting glad tidings’ so-to-speak.

The First Angel’s message is a simple one. “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the

sea and springs of water.” You must recognise who God is; the creator of all things who, by that authority, is entitled to reverence, worship and respect.

When the bible says ‘Fear’ it does not, usually, mean ‘be afraid of’. It means, ‘respect’, ‘revere’ or ‘worship’. Give it its due entitlement, which is what this Angel is saying. God, who created everything, is entitled to respect and reverence because he created everything, and you as well.

The Angel adds that “the hour of His judgment has come” indicating that it is time for the divisions to be made between those who have rendered unto God what is owed to him and those who have not. That this Angel stipulates that the hour has come for this judgement, indicating that this is most likely the very last chance given, the last message before the Judgement.

<sup>8</sup> And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”

This is the first time in John’s book that Babylon is invoked. Babylon the city was, by this time, a conquered and reconquered city, and it was little more than rubble by this point. The Romans captured the city under at least 4 Emperors; Trajan, Severus, Carus, Galerius, and each time left it more and more decimated. Babylon, that great city, was truly fallen by this time.

But that’s not the point of this Angel’s message. This Angel says that “she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” which, if we remember from above, translates to a corruption of the beliefs and systems of the religious power.

Again, this should need no revision – it has been the constant theme of John’s book, and this is the first time he sees a need to state it openly. The Babylonian influences bled into the Persian, Greek, Roman and then Papal Church, where they remain today. This, being the last set of messages given to the world, its natural then that the Angel adds to this time frame. The Angel is saying “You saw the Papacy be inflicted with its mortal wound, you watched it happen. She received this because of her evil, now recognise that evil”.

This is a message about recognition; action should be automatic.

<sup>9</sup> Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, <sup>10</sup> he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. <sup>11</sup> And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

John spent the last chapter establishing that the Image of the Beast and his mark are evil. They are oppose God's commandments and they stand against God's will. We discussed in the last chapter how the Mark of the Beast will have some relation to contradicting at least the 4<sup>th</sup> and probably also the first 3 commandments. John goes to the next step here, stipulating that those who make the choice to oppose God will reap the whirlwind of torment and destruction. Their torment will also not be secret, but rather will be done in the "[presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb](#)." This torment, which John glosses over here, is better explained in the next 2 chapters, when the "[16:1 bowls of the wrath of God](#)" are poured out, and we'll leave the analysis to then.

The point of this angel is, like the 1<sup>st</sup> Angel, choices have consequences. Recognise and choose to pay proper homage to God who created you, and follow his commandments; do not choose to receive the Mark of the Beast.

## What, really are the 3 Angel's Messages?

The Three angels messages, like most biblical messages, are progressive and evolving. In this case, however, they are also extremely timely.

1 – God created everything, and by virtue of his being the creator, he has the authority to Judge everything and everyone. This is not something to be afraid of, quite the opposite; the message is to join God's side; follow his commandments and worship him who – **literally** – gave us **everything**, even his life for our salvation.

2 – Recognise when and where you are standing and who you worship. Recognise that Babylon fell and nothing can bring her back!

3 – Trust God, don't trust in Man. Recognise God's commandments and follow them, do not follow what you know to be wrong.

These are the qualities that make up the 144,000. They recognise God's authority, they have thrown off the Babylonian influence and tried to return to what God has taught them, and they follow God's commandments – choosing his way, not the way most convenient to them.

<sup>12</sup> Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

<sup>13</sup> Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed *are* the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' "

"Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

John reinforces these qualities of the 144,000 with the statement that the patience of the Saints are those who keep God's commandments and have the faith of Jesus. But a quiet voice also joins in to tell John that those who die from this point forward are blessed. They can rest from their labours and their works – the choices they make – will be with them. They will be remembered for those things that they did and inspired others to do.

If the dead are the lucky ones during this time, what on earth will the rest of us experience??

## **Reaping the Earth's Harvest**

<sup>14</sup> Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat *One* like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. <sup>15</sup> And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." <sup>16</sup> So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

As John is observing the angels moving around Heaven, he now sees a cloud with Jesus himself sitting on it. He is crowned in Glory as a conquering king. He holds a

sickle – an farming implement used to reap grain or hay, cutting the stalks at their base with its curved blade – in his hand and he is ready to take his fill. An Angel calls from out of the Temple, where God and his people interact, and calls to Jesus that the time is right. This is not an instruction, it is a recognition that the time was right for him to reap the harvest of his Salvation. And so he did.

John is using the language we have seen through Paul and other writers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Jesus. He is acknowledging that Jesus is their Saviour and he alone has the right to claim the harvest. God the Father does not, for it was Jesus that died on the Cross.

But the interesting thing here is the connection John has made to this moment immediately following the message that those who have fallen asleep in the Lord. Look at the language used here. The 144,000 are said to be the 'first fruits' and now the main harvest is to take place. As we connected to Chapter 7, the 144,000 are alive at the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming, while those who are in the bulk of the saved are dead.

This is why the 144,000 were outside the city standing on Mt Zion. They are waiting for the rest of the saved to join them. We see this mirrored in the language of the second coming throughout the bible, especially in Paul's writings. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul describes; ["16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."](#)

The Lord Himself is, naturally, Jesus Christ. The command is given by the ["voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God"](#) that the dead rise first, and then, separately – but at the same time – the living rise to meet them. These are 2 different events that happen at the same time, like lightening and thunder. They are separated by moments only and are united in purpose and action.

John here gives Jesus the wholesale authority to do any salvation, but notice that the Angel comes from the Temple, not from the Throne or anywhere else. Jesus said himself that even he does not know the time of his return in Matthew 24:36; ["But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."](#) God did not 'command' Jesus to go reap the harvest; he acknowledges the time is right, but also that Jesus was the only one that could even receive the saved people.

## **Reaping the Grapes of Wrath**

<sup>17</sup> Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

<sup>18</sup> And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe." <sup>19</sup> So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God. <sup>20</sup> And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

But, as we saw John outline above, a second harvest follows the first; although this time Jesus is not the one doing the reaping. An angel this time comes from the Temple and is instructed to reap grapes from the earth, as they were now ripe. When the angel does this, the grapes are thrown into a special winepress; the "[great winepress of the wrath of God](#)." The winepress where God's anger is taken out on those who are harvested. Clearly this winepress is not intended to be a part of the saved as the winepress is "[outside the city](#)" and produces blood... not wine. And lots of blood!

A furlong is roughly 660 feet, times 1600 is about 200miles; so the blood flow is up to a horse's neck 200 miles long. Someone online has made one calculation that if that flow was only 2cm deep, this would require the deaths of 7million people... and a horse is much closer to 1.4mtrs tall. That is a LOT of blood.

<https://divinecoders.wordpress.com/2013/08/21/a-thousand-and-six-hundred-furlongs/>

This part of the harvest is for those who have chosen to reject God's word, reject the 3 Angels message and turn their backs on their saviour. The harvest of God's wrath is combined with the Judgement that was mentioned earlier; what else is judgement for? The judgement mentioned in the 1<sup>st</sup> Angel's message separates those who will be saved from those who wont; those who choose God's commandments from those who reject them.

May we always have the strength and courage to choose God's side, and not Satans.