

PART 9: THE TRIBULATION, CONT'D

CHAPTERS 14-15



MAIN IDEA

Chapter 14 focuses on the most victorious group of men the world has ever known, the 144,000. They will have survived the worst period of all history, the Tribulation Period. Three angels then bring three profound messages followed by two harvests on earth.

Chapter 15 describes seven angels which bring seven horrible plagues, representing the final outpouring of God's wrath before Jesus Christ's return. To these seven angels are given seven bowls full of God's wrath to be poured on the earth.

COMMENTS

The Lamb and the 144,000 (14:1-5)

The 144,000. Bible scholars differ on the exact identity of this group of 144,000. Walvoord and MacArthur believe they are the same 144,000 depicted in chapter 7,



but that they are now on earth with Jesus Christ (Lamb) at his second coming. They believe the Mount Zion here is the earthly Mount Zion.¹ Tim LaHaye proposes the idea that they are not the same group of 144,000 described in chapter 7 since they are on the “heavenly Mount Zion” a term used in Hebrews 12:22-24.²

Their description They are born-again believers since they have the name of Jesus and God the Father on their foreheads. They were singing a song which no other group could learn. This is an indication of the reward this special group will enjoy. They are offered as “first fruits” to God and the Lamb, possibly suggesting that they were the first believers after the Rapture, or first martyrs to die in the Tribulation.

- They are morally pure (“did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure”).
- They are obedient and follow the Lamb wherever he goes.
- They tell the truth for “no lie was found in their mouths.”
- They are blameless. (This does not mean they are sinless but that they have been redeemed; cp: 1 Thess. 2:10).

Three Angels, Three Profound Proclamations (14:6-13)



The 1st angel proclaims the gospel (14:6-7). The preaching of the gospel has been commissioned to man, yet now in this extremely critical time it is also commissioned to an angel. Angels are intensely interested in the whole process of redemption (I Peter 1:10-12). No doubt, they have wanted to participate in getting the good news out for a long time.

The 2nd angel proclaims the fall of Babylon (14:8). The 2nd angel follows the 1st angel and proclaims “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.” “Babylon the Great” in the book of Revelation refers to two Babylons.

- First, it is a *false religious system* which emphasizes idolatry. The word “adulteries” is describing a religion which is unfaithful to the truth of God’s Word. It may also be describing a prostitute-like religion and will be again revealed in chapters 17 and 18.
- Second, it is also a reference to a *literal city*. This is seen in Revelation 16:18-19

¹ (Walvoord, *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*); (MacArthur, *Because the Time is Near 227*)

² (LaHaye 231).

and 17:18. From other scriptures such as Isaiah chapters 13 and 14, and Jeremiah chapters 50 through 51, LaHaye sees this city as the commercial center of the world during the Tribulation.³ This city is seen as the home for demons and every evil spirit (Revelation 18:1-3) and could very well be the capital city of a one world government. Some speculate that this could be the city of Rome.

The 3rd angel warns against following the Antichrist (14:9-13). The message of the 3rd angel is that anyone who worships the Antichrist and his image and receives his mark of allegiance will “drink of the wine of God’s fury.” They will spend eternity in hell. There will be no fence-sitting at this time because everyone must choose between the Antichrist and Jesus Christ. Time is running out.

The Harvest of the Earth (14:14-20)

The 4th angel initiates the separation of believers from unbelievers (14-16). The



vision of the harvest is similar to the parable of the weeds in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43. The harvest is the final separation of believers (wheat) and unbelievers (tares or weeds) at the end of the Tribulation. The one “like a son of man with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand” is describing Jesus Christ who “harvests the earth.” The image is one like a farmer harvesting his crops.

The 5th angel initiates God’s final wrath (17-20). The symbol here is that of a reaping



for a vintage of wrath. All the clusters of grapes that are gathered in the harvest are cast into “the great winepress of God’s wrath.” This indicates that there’s no separation to be done here – all are unbelievers destined for destruction.⁴ The same “winepress” is found in Revelation 19:15 where it is used in connection with the final battle against the Antichrist, the False Prophet, and their followers. This is the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16) which occurs at Christ’s 2nd Coming and takes place in the Valley of Megiddo, also called the Plain of Esdraelon, just north of Jerusalem. The same final battle is described in Zechariah 14:1-2 “*A day of the Lord is coming when your plunder will be divided among you. I will gather all nations to Jerusalem to fight against it...*” The phrase “*outside the city*” in Revelation 14:20 is probably referring to the city of Jerusalem. The blood from this final battle on earth will rise as high as a horse’s bridle and will cover the length of 1,600 stadia (about 180 miles).

³ (LaHaye 238).

⁴ (Lindsey 205).

The Seven Angels with Seven Plagues (15:1-8)

Seven angels (15:1). These angels are apparently a different group than any mentioned previously. “Seven” is referring to fulfillment or completion since the next seven judgments complete God’s wrath on the wicked. The pending seven judgments are more extensive and more final than anything preceding.

Sea of glass (15:2). Several meanings can be associated with this sea of glass. First, it could be the same sea depicted in Revelation 4:6 representing the sanctifying power of the Word of God.⁵ Second, it could also be referring to many people so it may then be symbolic of the raptured believers at rest before God. Third, it may also be symbolic of a transparent pavement surrounding God’s throne.⁶

If the sea represents the raptured Church, then “fire” may suggest the outrage of these believers in heaven toward those who have made unspeakable atrocities against the family of God.⁷ If the sea represents the Word of God, then “fire” would probably be referring to divine judgment.⁸ Who are those standing beside the sea? These could be people who accepted Christ after the Rapture, who have been victorious over the Antichrist and the False Prophet.

Song of Moses and the Lamb (15:3-4). The Song of Moses is often linked with the song sung by Moses in Exodus 15 when the children of Israel were triumphant over Pharaoh. It may also be the song in Deuteronomy 32 describing God’s faithfulness to Israel and the assurance of victory of their enemies.⁹ The song of the Lamb is given here and describes God’s ultimate victory over Satan and where *all* nations will come and worship Him.



⁵ The expression “like a sea of glass” (4:6) is possibly representing the sanctifying power of the Word of God symbolized by the water. This is based on 1 Kings 7:23-25 where the laver, or bronze basin in the Tabernacle was filled with water (Sea) for the purpose of cleansing the priests before offering sacrifices to God.

⁶ (ESV Crossway Bibles 2484; Exodus 24:10)

⁷ (Lindsey 208)

⁸ (Walvoord, The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook 594)

⁹ (Walvoord 595)

The Temple in Heaven (15:5-8).



The idea of a temple in heaven may be overlooked by some believers. It is important to remember that when God gave Moses the specifications for building the tabernacle in the wilderness, He told him that they were derived from the same pattern as the tabernacle in heaven (Hebrews 8:5; 9:24). The temple (Gr., *naos*) indicates that the angels came out of the inner holy place. Though access by the priest was limited, good angels, because they are holy (14:10), are able to enter the holy place. What John has seen is, of course, symbolic of what is about to happen.

The angels are each given a bowl of the wrath of God which will be poured out in Revelation 16.¹⁰ During the seven bowl judgments no one is permitted to enter the temple in heaven. This may be because God's mercy is suspended until His full wrath is unleashed against those who rejected God's Lamb, Jesus Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Revelation 14:7 (NIV) states, "*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.*" How would you describe worship to an unbeliever? Why is worship so important in a believer's life?
2. What do you think is the meaning of each of the proclamations given by the four angels in 14:6-13?
3. What role does music and singing play in Chapters 14 and 15?
4. What one truth from Chapters 14 and 15 would you like to concentrate on for application this week?

¹⁰ Walvoord, p. 595.