

Revelation 14

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Who did John see standing on Mount Zion?2) Who was with the Lamb?3) Is this Mount Zion on earth or in Heaven? 4) In verse 4, who are the ones who did not defile themselves with women?5) Are the 144,000 men or female or both? 6) In verse 6, what did angel this angel have and proclaim? 7) In verse 8, what did this angel proclaim?8) What is Babylon?9) In verse 9, a third angel followed, and what did he proclaim?	<p>Revelation 14 (NKJV)</p> <p><i>The Lamb and the 144,000</i></p> <p>¹ Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred <i>and</i> forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads.</p> <p>² 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.</p> <p>³ 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 <i>and</i> forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.</p> <p>⁴ 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 <i>among</i> men, <i>being</i> firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.</p> <p>⁵ And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.</p> <p><i>The Proclamations of Three Angels</i></p> <p>⁶ 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—</p> <p>⁷ 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.”</p> <p>⁸ 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.”</p> <p>⁹ Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives <i>his</i> mark on his forehead or on his hand,</p> <p>¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the</p>
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	city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.
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One of the themes that links Revelation 14–16 together is expressed by the word *voice*, which is used eleven times. In the events recorded, God speaks to His people or to the lost world, or His creatures speak out in praise of the Lord or in warning to the world. As the world moves into the last half of the Tribulation, heaven is not silent.

The Voice of the 144,000 (Rev. 14:1–5)

This special group of Jewish men was sealed by God before the seventh seal was opened (Rev. 7), and now they are seen on Mount Zion with the Lord Jesus Christ. Contrast this picture to the one described in Revelation 13: the followers of “the beast” whose mark is on their foreheads (Rev. 13:16). God always has His faithful people, no matter how wicked the world may become.

The 144,000 are *standing* with Christ on Mount Zion, but which Mount Zion: the heavenly one (Heb. 12:22–24) or the earthly one? I personally believe that this is the heavenly Mount Zion, and that the scene anticipates Christ’s coronation and the establishment of His kingdom when He returns to earth (Zech. 14:4ff). Christ today is enthroned in the heavenly Zion (Ps. 2:6), and we are enthroned with Him (Eph. 2:6). The scene in Revelation 14 is the assurance to God’s people that He cares for His own and finally will take them to glory.

Not only are the 144,000 standing, but they are also *singing* (Rev. 14:2–3). Because of the special experiences they had during the Tribulation, they have a new song to sing that others cannot share (see Pss. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1). They are accompanied by heavenly harps and other heavenly voices. It is encouraging to know that one day our sorrows will be transformed into songs!

John also pointed out their *separation* (Rev. 14:4–5). The 144,000 did not belong *to* the earth because they had been redeemed *out of* the earth. They were not earth-dwellers, but citizens of heaven. Believers today do not belong to this very special group but, like them, we have been redeemed and are not part of this world system (see John 17:14–19; Phil. 3:17–21).

The phrase “defiled with women” does not imply that sex within marriage is evil, because it is not (Heb. 13:4). It merely indicates that these 144,000 Jewish men were unmarried. In the Bible, fornication and adultery are pictures of idolatry (Ex. 34:15; James 4:4). While most of the world bowed down to the image of “the beast,” the 144,000 were faithful to the true God. While others lied to get what they needed, the 144,000 were without guile and blemish.

The term *firstfruits* means “the very finest.” But it also carries the idea of an expected harvest. On the Feast of Firstfruits, the priest waved the sheaf before the Lord as a sign that the entire harvest belonged to Him (Lev. 23:9–14). The 144,000 may be the firstfruits of the harvest yet to come; they may be the nucleus of the coming kingdom. However, it would seem difficult for a *heavenly* company such as this to establish an earthly kingdom.

The Voices of the Angels (Rev. 14:6–20)

At least six different angels are involved in this scene, each with a particular message to proclaim.

“Judgment is come!” (vv. 6–7) During the present age, the angels are not privileged to preach the Gospel. That responsibility has been given to God’s people. While the nations will fear “the beast” and give honor to him, this heavenly messenger will summon them to fear and honor God alone. It is a reminder that God is the Creator and He alone deserves worship. This is

not the Gospel message as we know it (1 Cor. 15:1–4); rather, it is a return to the message of Romans 1:18ff, what theologians call “natural theology.”

All creation bears witness to God’s existence as well as to His power and wisdom. Nonetheless, “the beast” will convince men that he is in charge of the world, and that their destinies are in his hands. The message of the angel calls men back to basics: God is Creator—worship and serve Him. The fear of the Lord, not the fear of “the beast,” is the source of wisdom (Prov. 9:10).

“Babylon is fallen!” (v. 8) This proclamation anticipates the events of Revelation 18 (see also Rev. 16:18–19). We will consider it in detail then. “Babylon” is God’s name for the world system of “the beast,” the entire economic and political organization by which he rules. “The harlot” (Rev. 17) is the religious system that “the beast” uses to help build his organization. When Antichrist establishes his own religion (Rev. 13:11–15), he will destroy the “harlot”; but it is God who will destroy Babylon.

“Escape God’s wrath!” (vv. 9–13) The third message is directed especially to those who are deciding about following “the beast.” It is a warning that “the easy way” is really the hard way, that to “go along with the world” means to go away from God. The Greek text reads, “If any man continues to worship the beast,” suggesting that there is still opportunity for repentance and salvation.

“Drinking the cup” is sometimes used as an image of judgment (Jer. 25:15ff; 51:7ff; note also Rev. 14:8). God’s final judgments on mankind will be “vials of wrath” poured out from heaven (Rev. 16). God will not mix mercy with this judgment (Ps. 75:8; Hab. 3:2), but will pour out His undiluted indignation on a rebellious world.

Images like “fire and brimstone” (Rev. 14:10) and “smoke” (Rev. 14:11) upset some people. They ask, “How can a God of love actually permit His creatures to suffer eternal torment?” But we must keep in mind that God’s love is a *holy* love, not one based on sentimentality, and therefore He *must* justly deal with sin. We may not like the word *torment*, but it is here just the same (Rev. 14:10; see also 9:5; 11:10; 20:10).

We must also keep in mind that God has repeatedly warned sinners and given them opportunity to repent. The first angel in this series invited sinners to turn to God, and the second one warned that the whole “Babylonian” system would be destroyed. If people persist in their sins even after God sends judgments and warnings, then they have only themselves to blame.

John intended for his readers to see the contrast between Revelation 14:11 and 13: no rest for the wicked, but eternal rest for the saints (see 2 Thes. 1:3–12). Better to reign with Christ forever than with Antichrist for a few short years! Better to endure persecution patiently now than to escape it and suffer throughout eternity!

“The harvest is ripe!” (vv. 14–20) The Person pictured here on the white cloud is undoubtedly our Lord Jesus Christ (see Dan. 7:13–14; Rev. 1:13). We have had the image of the cup, and now we have the image of the harvest, both of the grain (Rev. 14:14–16) and of the grape (Rev. 14:17–20). Again, this anticipates the final judgment of the world.

While winning lost souls to Christ is sometimes pictured as a harvest (John 4:34–38), this image is also used of God’s judgment (Matt. 13:24–30, 36–43; Luke 3:8–17). God permits the seeds of iniquity to grow until they are ripe, and then He judges (Gen. 15:16).

The grape harvest is often a picture of judgment (see Joel 3:13ff, which anticipates the Day of the Lord). In actuality, Scripture portrays three different “vines.” Israel was God’s vine, planted in the land to bear fruit for God’s glory; but the nation failed God and had to be cut down (Ps. 80:8–16; Isa. 5:1–7; see also Matt. 21:33–46). Today, Christ is the Vine and believers are

branches in Him (John 15). But the world system is also a vine, “the vine of the earth” in contrast to Christ, the heavenly Vine; and it is ripening for judgment. The wicked system—Babylon—that intoxicates people and controls them, will one day be cut down and destroyed in “the winepress of the wrath of God.”

Some see in this image an anticipation of the “battle of Armageddon,” when the armies of the world will gather against Jerusalem (Zech. 14:1–4; Rev. 16:16). Certainly, John is using hyperbole when he describes a river of blood four feet deep and 200 miles long (see also Isa. 63:1–6). Today, God is speaking to the world in grace, and men will not listen. One day hence, He must speak in wrath. The bitter cup will be drunk, the harvest of sin reaped, and the vine of the earth cut down and cast into the winepress.¹

14:1. The **Lamb** is Christ, and **mount Zion** is the location of Jerusalem. It may refer either to the New Jerusalem (cf. Heb. 12:22–24) or to the earthly Jerusalem during the Millennium. The 144,000 are the same as in chapter 7. Chapter 14 is designed to give encouragement concerning the certainty of Christ’s victory over the Beast.

14:2–5. The 144,000 sing a **new song** of worship and redemption. The **four beasts** and **elders** are the same as in chapter 4. That the 144,000 were **virgins** and **not defiled with women** may indicate either (literally) celibacy and sexual purity (cf. 1 Cor. 7:25–38) or (figuratively) moral and religious purity (refusal to submit to the false religious system of the False Prophet). They **follow the Lamb** and reign with Him. As the **first fruits** of the **redeemed**, they are the first to be saved during the Tribulation period (following the Rapture of the church—cf. 7:1–4). A characteristic of the redeemed is that they are without **guile** or falsehood (cf. 21:27; 22:15; Zeph. 3:13; John 1:47). This may refer to their rejection of the false claims of the Antichrist concerning himself (cf. Rom. 1:25; 2 Thess. 2:4, 11). That they are **without fault** or blemish means that they are ethically blameless (cf. Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:22; 1 Pet. 1:19; Jude 24).

14:6–8. The **everlasting gospel** is the “Good News” that Christ will win and the Beast will be judged. Positively, it focuses on redemption through Christ and the coming of His kingdom. Negatively, it has three parts: (1) **the hour of ... judgment is come** (v. 7); (2) **Babylon is fallen** (v. 8); and (3) those who “worship the beast” will be punished “for ever” (vv. 9–11). The whole world is commanded to **fear** and **worship** God and to **give glory to him**. The identity and destruction of “Babylon” is described in chapters 17 and 18. The announcement here anticipates later events.

14:9–11. Unbelievers during the Tribulation will receive the **mark** of the **beast** and **worship** him. They will all receive God’s eternal punishment in the lake of **fire** (cf. Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:15). The **wine of the wrath of God** is God’s righteous anger (cf. Job 21:20; Ps. 75:8; Is. 51:17; Jer. 25:15–38) **poured out** in full strength (**without mixture** or undiluted) on those who reject Him. The **cup of his indignation** symbolizes the place of God’s punishment of sinners. The fact that this **torment** will take place **in the presence** of Christ and His **angels** makes the punishment even more intense and shameful. They will pay the eternal price of having chosen Satan and evil over God and righteousness.

¹Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Re 14:1

14:12, 13. Patience here is perseverance or endurance. The assurance of the judgment of God’s enemies is a basis for the perseverance of the Tribulation believers to continue following Christ. The perseverance of genuine believers in the **faith** and in the **commandments of God** is assumed and guaranteed. **The dead which die in the Lord from henceforth** are Tribulation martyrs; they will be **blessed** through rest, resurrection, and reigning with Christ during the Millennium (cf. 20:4–6). They will receive a reward for their **works** of obedience.

14:14–16. The **Son of man** is Christ, the Messiah (cf. 1:13; Dan. 7:13; Matt. 26:63, 64). The **cloud** relates to Christ’s second coming (cf. Dan. 7:13; Matt. 24:30; Acts 1:9–11). The **crown** pictures Him as the ruler of the earth, and the **sickle** symbolizes judgment as an instrument of the **harvest** (cf. John 5:27). **The time is come** to finish the judgment of the **earth**. The second coming of Christ includes more judgment. To **reap** and harvest **the earth** is to judge and punish its people (cf. Jer. 51:33; Hos. 6:11; Matt. 13:30, 40–42).

14:17–20. Whereas verses 14–16 picture Christ’s judgment as a grain harvest, verses 17–20 symbolize the wrath of God as a grape harvest with the treading of the grape **clusters** in an immense **winepress**. Again the **sickle** depicts judgment. **The clusters of the vine of the earth** represent the unbelievers of the earth, those who have followed and worshiped the Beast (vv. 8–11). **Her grapes are fully ripe** (Gr. *akmazō*, “at the prime”) in that the time for God’s judgment of the earth is now! The **great winepress of the wrath of God** pictures the violence and intensity of God’s coming judgment on the earth (cf. 19:15; Is. 63:2–6; Lam. 1:15; Joel 3:12–14). The **city** is probably Jerusalem (cf. Joel 3:12–14; Zech. 14:1–4; John 19:20; Heb. 13:12), and if so, the greatest intensity of the judgment may be centered in Palestine. Perhaps the reference is to the coming Battle of Armageddon (16:14–16). The **blood** may be either the red juice of the grapes (cf. Gen. 49:11; Deut. 32:14) or literal human blood resulting from the final battle. The amount of “blood” that results from the winepress emphasizes the severity of the judgment. **A thousand and six hundred furlongs** are approximately 184 miles, the full length of Palestine. The height of the **horse bridles** may be about four feet. The winepress may be an anticipation of the vial or bowl judgments of chapter 16.²

14:1 Mount Zion is a synonym for the earthly Jerusalem, focusing on the hill where the temple was built. There is some difficulty in deciding whether this is a reference to the earthly or to the heavenly Mount Zion (see Heb. 12:22). The **one hundred and forty-four thousand** have God’s **name written on their foreheads**, instead of the name of the beast (13:17). In 7:2–4 the protection for this group is referred to as a seal on their foreheads. This is intended to be a contrast to the mark of the beast (13:16, 17), or it may be a sign visible only in heaven and in the new earth and heaven (3:12; 22:4).

14:3 The **new song** is probably the one sung **before** God’s **throne** in 5:9, 10. Since that song is about redemption and victory in Christ, apparently only those already in heaven and those **redeemed from the earth**, like the **hundred and forty-four thousand**, are allowed to **learn** it.

² *King James Version Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1988, S. Re 13:16

14:4 The **virgins** are symbolic of spiritual purity (see 2 Cor. 11:2). Redeemed believers will not compromise with evil. They will reject false doctrine and refuse to worship the beast. In the New Testament, the **firstfruits** are the first part of a crop to be gathered, implying a much larger harvest to come later (see 1 Cor. 16:15). At times, the term emphasizes only the sanctified nature of a sacrifice (see James 1:18). Certainly the commitment of the 144,000 to God emphasizes that they are holy ones, set apart to God. However, the continuing offer of the gospel (v. 6) and the harvest imagery (v. 15) also implies that many others will come to faith in Jesus Christ (vv. 12, 13).

14:5 The 144,000 were not sinless in their earthly lives (see Rom. 3:23), but they were without **deceit** and **fault** with regard to their testimony for Christ. In particular, they did not participate in falsehood, because they rejected the lie of the Antichrist (see 2 Thess. 2). They were without fault or blemish because they refused the mark of the beast.

14:6, 7 The **angel** who preaches the **gospel to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people** helps to fulfill God's promise that the gospel "will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations" (Matt. 24:14) before Christ returns. The word *gospel*, which literally means "Good News," is used here only in Revelation. Even at this late stage in God's judgment He continues to offer **everlasting** life to the world (see John 3:16). The gospel message at this point beseeches unbelievers to **fear God and give glory to Him** and to escape **the hour of His judgment**. Earlier, some people had responded in this manner after the miracle of the two witnesses' resurrection (11:11–13). The activity of this angel may be behind the scenes, prompting a worldwide proclamation of the gospel by those who will declare the truth even at the cost of their lives.

14:8 **Another angel** proclaims part of the bad news of judgment to those among **all nations** (see Matt. 28:19) who will not receive the good news of the gospel (see v. 6). **Babylon** is first mentioned in Revelation here, and it becomes the focus of God's judgment in the following section (chs. 16—18). The **great city** here is Babylon; earlier the phrase was used to describe the city where "our Lord was crucified" (11:8), perhaps meaning Jerusalem in that reference.

14:9–11 **A third angel** announces with a **loud voice** the tragic eternal destiny of the one who rejects the offer of the gospel (vv. 6, 7) and **worships the beast** (ch. 13). In Romans, Paul speaks of the **wrath of God** as being revealed from heaven (Rom. 1:18) against unbelievers, as God allows them to receive the just consequences of their own ungodly behavior. In 6:17, "the great day of His wrath" was announced (see also 11:18). Now it will be experienced in its **full strength** by those who follow the beast. In the just outworking of God's wrath, unbelievers who worship the beast will **be tormented . . . forever and ever, with no rest day or night**.

14:12 **The patience of the saints** echoes 13:10, as well as John's place as a partner with his readers in the "patience of Jesus Christ" (1:9). Those who patiently **keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus**, even in very difficult times (ch. 13), will receive a special divine blessing (v. 13).

14:13 **Blessed** signals the second of seven beatitudes in Revelation (see also 1:3; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). Six of the seven are clustered in the latter third of the Book of Revelation, perhaps as promises to encourage exemplary Christian response in the extremely difficult circumstances of the end times. **From now on** may mean from the point in the tribulation John is referring to, or from the time John was writing to his original readers. Spiritual **rest** is available to anyone who comes to Jesus Christ in faith (see Matt. 11:28). The martyrs under the fifth seal had been told by the Lord to rest "a little while longer" (6:11), until God's plan was complete.

Here the believers who have died are also told to rest **from their labors**, in the knowledge that their good **works** will be remembered and rewarded (see 1 Tim. 5:25).

14:14, 15 The reference to the **Son of Man** with a **golden crown** on His head indicates that the figure is Jesus Christ (see 1:13; Dan. 7). Some, however, hesitate to make this identification, largely because **another angel** gives the first figure the command to **reap**, which seems improper if “One like the Son of Man” is Christ. Yet there is no impropriety in having a representative of God the Father entrust judgment to the Son of Man (see John 5:22). The Son will judge humankind as one who shares human nature. A **sharp** flint or iron **sickle** was the primary tool for an ancient grain **harvest**. Since the 144,000 have been received by God as the firstfruits (v. 4) of His harvest, the rest of the harvest **of the earth** is surely **ripe** for salvation (see Matt. 13:37–43), as well as judgment.

14:16 The power of the Son of Man (Jesus Christ) is shown in that, with one **thrust** of His **sickle**, the harvest of **the earth** is **reaped**. This pictures the events of chs. 16—19 as parts of one rapid succession of judgment. Thus this judgment is experienced by the inhabitants of the entire world.

14:17, 18 **Another angel** is placed in charge of the harvest of the **clusters** of **grapes** that are also **ripe**, meaning worthy of judgment. The other **angel**, referred to as having **power over fire**, may be the angel at **the altar** in 8:3–5. Perhaps the fire will burn the tares separated in the harvest (see Matt. 13:38–43).

14:19, 20 A **winepress** was a trough in which workers **trampled** grapes with their bare feet, causing the juice to flow down into a vat. This common Old Testament sign of God’s **wrath** and judgment (see Is. 63:3) apparently also explains how “the wine of the wrath of God” (v. 10) is produced. The image of the winepress is symbolic of an unbelievable quantity of shed **blood**. This description of the flow of blood indicates an unparalleled slaughter of life. **One thousand six hundred furlongs** is nearly two hundred miles. This great bloodshed is probably the result of Christ’s defeat of the collected human armies (19:17–19) as He returns before “the supper of the great God” (19:17), which some hold to be the Battle of Armageddon (16:16).³

³Radmacher, Earl D. ; Allen, Ronald Barclay ; House, H. Wayne: *The Nelson Study Bible : New King James Version*. Nashville : T. Nelson Publishers, 1997, S. Re 14:1

Babylon: A Symbol of Evil

In Revelation, Babylon (Rev. 14:8) probably represents, more than a city, an entire world system in rebellion against God. The OT prophets often prophesied the fall of Babylon, the capital of an empire that destroyed Jerusalem and carried away God's people into captivity. So here Babylon becomes a fitting image for a society that persecutes believers but which God will ultimately destroy.

In the first century, Babylon may have been a code word for Rome, built as it was on seven hills (17:9). Under the Roman emperor Domitian (A.D. 81–96), Christians were severely persecuted, especially for refusing to participate in the cult of emperor worship. Each mention of Babylon in Revelation shows that it is linked with evil and resistance to God.

Historically, Babylon oppressed and captured Judah. In the same way, John's figurative Babylon oppresses the people of God and holds them captive under its mighty grip. History is a war between two cities: "Babylon," the capital of idolatry and oppression, and "Jerusalem," the center of Christ's peace and justice.

John's buildup to the clash of these two titans is epic in scope and drama. The climax comes here in ch. 14, where judgment finally falls on Babylon, and the bowls, plagues, and intoxicating wine of God's wrath are poured out on her. A tremendous tidal wave of evil sloshes back and forth in the passage, like the last great battles of World War II. But the outcome is assured; Christ will prevail.⁴

⁴Radmacher, Earl D. ; Allen, Ronald Barclay ; House, H. Wayne: *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*. Nashville : T. Nelson Publishers, 1999, S. Re 14:6-7