

Text: Rev 14.1-20

Outline of Revelation (1.19):

1. The things you have seen (the vision of Christ) Rev 1
2. The things which are (the letters to the churches) Rev 2-3
3. The things which must come after these things (Rev 4-22)
 - a. The overture: the scene in heaven (Rev 4-5)
 - b. The seal judgements begin (Rev 6)
 - c. (Parenthesis): the believers of the Tribulation (Rev 7)
 - d. The seventh seal which reveals the seven trumpets (four in chapter 8)
 - e. The fifth and sixth trumpets (Rev 9)
 - f. (Parenthesis): Voices in heaven (Rev 10)
 - g. (Parenthesis): The Two Witnesses | the seventh trumpet (Rev 11)
 - h. (Parenthesis): The Long War Against God¹ (Rev 12)
 - i. (Parenthesis): The Beasts (Rev 13)
 - j. (Parenthesis): Triumph of the Saints foreseen (Rev 14)**

Revelation 12-13 “paint a picture of the Great Tribulation in which there is finally one government, one religion, and one economic system for the whole world.”²

The purpose of this chapter is to give reassurance to those who refuse the mark of the beast – their faithfulness is not in vain.

I. The triumph of the 144,000 (1-5)

- A. A structural note: “then I looked,” “and I saw” [Καὶ εἶδον] (1, 6, 14)
- B. What John saw (1)
 1. The Lamb standing on Mt. Zion
 2. The 144,000 standing with him
 - a. These are first mentioned in ch. 7
 - b. They are sealed against wrath in ch. 7.3

¹ I borrow the title of Henry Morris' book of this same name for our chapter heading here.

² Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Rev 13.18.

3. The scene must be on earth (“Zion”) so it must be a ‘proleptic’ vision: seeing something as happening that is yet future, sort of a ‘preview’ of the second coming
 - a. The presence of the Lamb on Mt Zion doesn’t come chronologically until Rev 19
 - b. The 144,000 standing with Him indicate the success of their sealing in 7.3, many other saints died martyr’s deaths, they survived
 - c. Note: Others will also survive to the end

C. What John heard (2-3)

1. A voice from heaven (2)
 - a. Like the sound of many waters: melodious
 - b. Like the sound of thunder: mighty
 - c. Like the sound of harpists: beautiful
2. A new song (3)
 - a. “They” sang a new song — ambiguous reference
 - 1) The ones who compose the voice from heaven? (Angels?)
 - 2) The 144,000?
 - b. It is sung before the 24 elders and the four living creatures in heaven
 - c. Only the 144,000 could learn it:
 - 1) “in the sense that they were the only ones who could appreciate what it expressed (cf. 15:2).”³
 - 2) Or they are an echoing chorus on earth⁴
 - d. These are purchased from the earth, not simply for salvation, but for their special tribulation ministry

³ Constable, Rev 14.3.

⁴ John F. Walvoord, “Revelation,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 964.

D. How the 144,000 are described (4-5)

1. These are 'undefiled' with women – *i.e.*, pure followers of the Lamb
 - a. Could be figurative for their religious devotion
 - b. Literal meaning should not be dismissed, however
2. They are faithful followers of the Lamb as well – despite the challenges of the Great Tribulation
3. They are 'first fruits' unto God, the first Jews of those who turn to God in great repentance at his coming (Zech 12.10, Rm 11.15, 26-27)
4. They are truth tellers – blameless servants of God (5)

"The passage as a whole is a prophetic foreview of the triumph of the 144,000 when Christ returns."⁵

II. Four encouragements of faithfulness (6-13)

A. The call of the everlasting gospel (6-7)

1. Issued by 'another angel' (see 12.7)
2. Note: Six angels mentioned in this chapter (6, 8, 9, 15, 17, 18)
3. His gospel is good news with eternal significance
4. The loud voice is heard over all the earth
 - a. Fear God, give him glory: a call to submission
 - b. The hour of judgement: A reminder of accountability
 - c. Worship: establishes God's right to man's worship and his authority to hold them to account

B. The announcement of the fall of Babylon (8)

1. This next announcement is also proleptic, written about something yet to happen (see ch. 18) as if it has happened
2. The fall of Babylon is because of her temptations to men

This is a reference to the government of the last days, possibly headquartered literally in Babylon.

⁵ Walvoord, 964.

- C. The announcement of doom for beast worshippers (9-12)
 - 1. The warning to those who receive the mark of the beast (9-10)
 - a. The warning is of judgement for their deed
 - b. The 'unmixed' judgement is strong judgement indeed: language emphasizes certainty and severity and ferocity
 - 2. The consequence to the beast worshippers is eternal judgement (11)
 - 3. Those who respond to the warning, refuse the mark, are those who persevere in obedience to the Lord (12)
- D. A voice from heaven: blessedness to those who die in Christ (13)
 - 1. Possibly the voice of the Lamb himself (13a)
 - a. Pronounces blessing on those who die in the Lord 'from now on' – *i.e.*, from this point of tribulation on
 - b. This blessing is a unique blessing only available to these martyrs
 - 2. Answered by the voice of the Spirit (13b)
 - a. They are blessed because they rest from their labours [miss out on final persecution by the beast]
 - b. They are blessed because their deeds will receive the proper reward

III. The reaping of the harvest (14-20)

- A. A final scene prior to the revelation of the last bowl judgements
- B. The reaping by the Son of man (14-16)
 - 1. This is probably Christ himself (some think it is an angel)
 - 2. Son of man apparently resting on the Shekinah glory
 - 3. A fourth angel calls to him, "the harvest is ripe"
 - a. The angel is a herald (presumably from the Father)
 - b. The angel announces the harvest is due: "ripe" = "over-ripe"
 - 4. The son of man puts in his sickle to reap the earth: this is the final judgement, proleptically seen ahead of time (19.17-21)

C. The reaping by the angels (17-20)

1. A fifth angel appears, also bearing a sharp sickle (17)
2. A sixth angel also appears, the one over the fire on the altar (where the prayers of the saints are heard) (18a, see 8.3)
 - a. He appears to be responding to the prayers of the saints (6.9-10)
 - b. He calls the fifth angel to plunge his sickle into the crop (18b)
3. The harvest is taken and pressed into the winepress of the wrath of God (19)
4. The extent of the harvest: a river of blood: likely a reference of the battle of Armageddon [and elsewhere] (20)

“The whole of chapter 14 is proleptic. As a summary of the Millennium (20:4–6), the first five verses feature the Lamb in place of the beast, the Lamb’s followers with His and the Father’s seal in place of the beast’s followers with the mark of the beast, and the divinely controlled Mount Zion in place of the pagan-controlled earth ... The remainder of the chapter furnishes a proleptic outline of the catastrophes and the bliss that receives a chronological and more detailed treatment in 16:17–22:5. In this fashion, the chapter is a sort of *intermezzo* to provide encouragement by telling the ultimate triumph for those who refuse the beast’s mark and to predict the doom of those who do receive it.”⁶

⁶ Thomas, Revelation 8–22, pp. 188–89, quoted by Constable, *Expository Notes*, Rev 13.18.