

Revelation 14 • The Perseverance of the Saints

Introduction

Yes, many things contained in Revelation can be “scary” if you focus on the individual events. However, in the end, there is very good news for those who faithfully follow the Lamb: They will succeed; they will be triumphant. Chapter 14 is a reinforcement for us that our trust in Him—exhibited by our never failing to follow and obey Him—is not in vain and, in fact, the only route to success.

¹Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. ²And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. ³And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. ⁴These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb. ⁵And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.

⁶And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; ⁷and he said with a loud voice, “Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.”

[Read v.1-5]

Q: How have the 144,000 sealed fared since being first introduced in chapter 7? How would you characterize this scene?

A: They have successfully come through their trials and appear to be triumphant. They are an example to us of overcoming tribulation—of being redeemed by Christ and celebrating the joy of His faithfulness.

Q: What are the chief characteristics of the redeemed according to v.4-5?

1. **“...they have kept themselves chaste...”** They are free of the sexual immorality that is a chief characteristic of the beast and his followers.
2. **“...follow the Lamb wherever He goes...”** They are not interested in pursuing their own path but only the Master’s will.
3. **“...no lie was found in their mouth...”** They cling to the Truth and nothing but the Truth.
4. **“...they are blameless.”** They have forsaken sin and its influences to such an advanced degree that their natural inclination is to shun and avoid it; in other words, they embrace and live according to His righteousness.

Point: When you get down to it, these are not “super-Christians” with abilities and attitudes vastly superior to our own—they are examples of consistently doing well the basic things **all** Christians should do: Remain faithful, seek His will, cling to His truth, amend our behavior to shun sin and practice righteousness.

[Read v.6-7]

Q: What is the purpose of the message of this first of three angelic messengers?

A: To establish first and foremost that regardless of conditions, the only correct thing to do is to “fear God”, “give Him glory”, and “worship Him”.

Q: How do you see this message as being part of the overall context of Revelation?

A: It is the proper application of all that is being revealed, what John admonished at the beginning of this book as the correct way to interpret and apply Revelation to our life:

*Blessed is he who **reads** and those who **hear** the words of the prophecy, and **heed** the things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

—Revelation 1:3

It shows that first and foremost, the Gospel is preached in parallel with all of God’s judgments. It’s an affirmation that the right response to these signs and judgments is not just to acknowledge God’s existence, but to return to Him from the heart.

⁸And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.”

[Read v.8]

Q: What is the purpose and meaning of the second angel’s message?

A: Leading up to, and even in the course of executing, His judgments, God makes known exactly why. No one has an excuse that they somehow didn’t know what they were doing or were influenced beyond their own choice. First the church leading into these End Times, and then the 144,000 throughout, preach clearly God’s intention and meaning of all that happens and why.

⁹Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

[Read v.9-11]

Q: What is the meaning of this third and final message? How is it different from that of the second angel’s concerning Babylon?

A: This is a specific warning against following and worshiping the beast. Babylon represents the world system of values that has always existed and tried to entice all men away from God. The beast is something unique that exists only for the duration of these last few years. So everyone is warned specifically about the consequences of following the beast in addition to the siren call of Babylon promoting sin.

Q: What is revealing about the conditional statement “If anyone worships...” in v.9? What would the opposite mean?

A: It means that to take the mark and worship the beast is done out of choice and that it’s possible **NOT** to choose to take the mark and/or follow him. It shows that even at this late date in history it’s still possible to choose and follow God.

¹²Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

[Read v.12]

Q: What is the key word that tells us it’s possible to choose and follow God even under these most extremely difficult of circumstances?

A: “Perseverance”. It means that it is something that must be endured and striven for—there will be resistance and neither will it be easy.

Q: What is the first key behavior that allows the saints to successfully persevere?

A: “...keep the commandments of God...” Essentially this is obedience to His Word rather than to our personal desires.

Q: What is the other key behavior?

A: “...keep...their faith in Jesus...” This is keeping an eye on the end result regardless of the present circumstances, knowing that because Jesus said He would redeem us it will happen just as sure as if it already has.

Overall Point

Apply the 3 messages not just to those who will be living during the Last Days but to your self personally:

1. *Fear and worship the One True God. (v.6-7)*
2. *Resist the enticements of the world to sacrifice eternity for temporary gratification. (v.8)*
3. *Refuse the mark of the beast, to follow him. (v.9-11)*
4. *Trust Christ, keep His Word, and persevere through all that is to come. (v.12)*

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¹³And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, “Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’”

“Yes,” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.”

¹⁴Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. ¹⁵And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.” ¹⁶Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.

¹⁷And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. ¹⁸Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.” ¹⁹So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. ²⁰And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

Application: How does this apply to your pre-End Times life today?

[Read v.13]

Q: How does this fit with the teaching so far?

A: First, it shows the extreme limits attached to “the perseverance of the saints”; we must endure everything even to the point of death. Second, it affirms that it is possible to fulfill all the qualities of v.12 as evidenced by “so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them”. This is the end result of worshiping God alone, resisting the world, refusing the advances of the beast, and keeping our faith in Christ and the commandments of God. Our success is in direct proportion to the quality of our obedience, which become our “labors” and “deeds”.

[Read v.14-16]

Q: Who is being “reaped”?

A: Believers. Just as in a real harvest, the good stuff is removed first before the cleanup and pruning and burning of the refuse takes place.

[Read v.17-20]

Q: How is this different from v.14-16? How do we know?

A: This is final judgment for non-believers. It’s revealed in v.19 that the angel “threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God”. The wrath of God is experienced only by those that reject Him.

Point: This is the ultimate result of how one responds to the 3 angels’ messages in v.6-12—to heed their words is to be reaped by God, to dismiss them is to experience His wrath.

Consider John the Baptist’s message concerning the role and mission of Christ:

John answered and said to them all, “As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

—Luke 3:16-17



Overall Application

- *Regardless of your belief of when/if the rapture will occur, do you see that there are repeated opportunities to choose God? Have visions of these times seemed “impossible” to you? Do you see now that they will be difficult, but not impossible?*
- *What is the best way to prepare for these times? [Hint: Begin now to daily practice v.12.]*
- *In spite of all the circumstances and events, what happens to the redeemed in the end? They are triumphant.*

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