

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST: THE REBELLION

The Lamb and Judgment
Revelation 14

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Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless. Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water." Another angel, a second, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality." And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name." Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe." So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped. Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia (Rev. 14, ESV).

“And behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb.”

That’s how Revelation 14 begins. If you’ve been tracking with our study of Revelation, that statement may have gotten your attention. The Lamb is standing on Mount Zion. Do you remember the last “standing” scene?

I started last week’s sermon on the two beasts with the final verse in chapter 12, “And he (the dragon) stood on the sand of the sea” (12:17). Once again, we see a great contrast drawn in the vision of Revelation. The dragon stands on the shore of the sea, and out of the chaos and disorder emerges the Antichrist. He’s a political ruler who uses the government to do the devil’s bidding and persecute God’s people. From the earth, the devil calls forth the False Prophet who uses religion to deceive the world into worshiping the beast. It’s a terrifying and overwhelming strategy.

Yet believers are called to endurance, faith, and wisdom. I hope that helped you in your walk with the Lord this week.

Revelation 14 begins with another standing moment. He stands not on the sea or the earth, but on Mount Zion. And he’s not alone! The Lamb is standing with the 144,000. It’s another picture of a great conflict between good and evil.

It’s a picture of what is yet to come.

The rest of the chapter provides further information on this conflict with an implied exhortation to live with this end in mind. Or maybe I could summarize it this way for us: **Let’s live for judgment day.** Now, to understand this exhortation, let’s see how this plays out in Revelation as we learn about (1) the Lamb’s people, (2) the heavenly message, and (3) the judgment.

Revelation 14 invites us to consider what we’re living for and where our motivation comes from. There are multiple things in this text that are designed to grab your attention and fuel endurance.

The Lamb’s People

Verse 1 is a dramatic shift. Remember the foreboding feeling of last week’s message. I heard from many of you this week how the themes of Revelation 13 are showing up in your jobs, relationships, and conversations. Sometimes it feels overwhelming and deeply discouraging.

That’s why the dramatic statement is so important. Don’t miss the word “behold.” It’s like John says, “Wait a minute! Look what else I’m seeing!” There’s the Lamb again, and he’s standing on Mt. Zion.

The reference to Mt. Zion is more than just a location. You might think of this like someone saying, “Have you heard what happened on Capitol Hill today?” The words “Capitol Hill” are representative of Washington D.C., the Congress, and the seat of representative power. That’s what Mt. Zion is like. It’s a term connected to a place of salvation and deliverance related to God’s rule. It’s more than just the city of Jerusalem. Mt. Zion is where God lives and dwells. In Revelation 21 we’ll see a New Jerusalem. That’s the idea, but we find it pictured here as Mt. Zion.

The focus, however, is not on the location but on who is with the Lamb. It's the 144,000 from chapter 7. Some take this to be literally 12,000 people from each of the tribes of Israel, and some a more symbolic number for the church since chapter 7 also includes a multitude from every nation, tribe, peoples, and languages (7:9). For our purposes today, let's focus on the point that God's people are with the Lamb.

Notice what's on their foreheads! Rather than the mark of the Beast, these people have the name of the Lamb and the Father's name written on their foreheads. It's also what we read in Revelation 7, where the name was connected to God's protective seal. Consider that for a moment.

It reminds me of the first question and answer of the Heidelberg Catechism:

1.Q. What is your only comfort in life and death?

A. That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil.

This is an identity marker. God's people belong to him. I'm not sure how significant it is, but this is a mark that you can't see on your own. It's helpful to be reminded that it's there.

Verse 2 identifies that there's a loud voice from heaven like the roar of many waters along with the sound of loud thunder. But then John realizes that it's not just noise. The voice included the sounds of harps, and there's singing! In the same place as chapters 4-5, the throne room, we hear a new song being sung. James Hamilton in his commentary says, "New acts of conquest call for new songs of praise."¹ But notice what else is unique about this song.

Verse 3b tells us that no one could learn the song except for God's people. Take note that their redemption makes it possible to sing. Christians aren't singers who worship. They are worshippers who sing. Melody follows identity. We sing because of who we are!

Beyond their singing, this is a righteous group. Notice the following in verse 4:

- They are described with sexual purity language.
- They follow the Lamb wherever he goes.
- They are redemption's firstfruits.
- They are not liars.
- They are blameless.

¹ James M. Hamilton Jr., [*Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches*](#), ed. R. Kent Hughes (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 282.

We need to carefully consider this list. The point is that this is a group marked by righteousness and obedience. But John uses symbolic language. Take, for instance, the reference to virgins. If you were to take this literally, it would mean that this is a male-only group. What's more, they'd have to be single. What's more, if we take blamelessness or not lying literally, no one would be included.

At the same time, I don't want to diminish the exhortation of this description. John sees a people who are different—so different!—than the rest of the world. Revelation 17 will describe siding with the Beast as being drunk with sexual immorality (see 14:8, 17:2). Paul used similar language in 2 Corinthians:

For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2-3).

This text is a good reminder of what it means to be sealed with the name of God. If you are a Christian, God has marked you as "his" since the foundation of the world. Obedience isn't just what you do; it's what you were made for. Righteousness is our standing before Jesus, and it's also how we live right now.

The vision of the Lamb and the 144,000 is a reminder to live for judgment day. Be reminded today who you really are: "not my own . . . belong body and soul to Jesus Christ." That will be unbelievably clear at judgment day, and you need to live with that reality in mind today.

Christian, you are part of the Lamb's people, marked by the name of Jesus, and made to be righteous.

The Heavenly Message

What follows in verses 6-13 are three angels who carry a heavenly message. They make three announcements related to (1) the coming judgment, (2) the fall of Babylon, and (3) specific judgment related to the Beast's followers.

The first angel proclaims the gospel. According to verse 6, the angel flies overhead and proclaims the good news to "every nation and tribe and language and people." Notice that part of the gospel message is a warning: "Fear God and give him glory because the hour of his judgment has come." This seems to be an urgent message because the end is near.

The second angel makes a statement that we'll hear again: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality" (v. 8). The city of Babylon has a long history with God's people. It's where God confused the languages of the people in Genesis 11 after they desired to make a name for themselves. It's the nation that dealt the final blow to Judah, sacking Jerusalem, and taking the people of Israel into captivity. Babylon represents more than the city itself and the location. It's a kingdom that opposes God. It's representative of a system that leads people away

from faithfulness to God's kingdom with the allure of material prosperity and pleasure.² We'll see more about Babylon in Revelation 17 and 18. For now, just take note of what Babylon represents.

The third and final message is a sober warning about divine judgment. Let me just read the text to you:

If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name (Rev. 14:9-11).

If you are listening to this message today and you are not yet a Christian, please consider what I just read. This fearful warning is designed to invite you to turn to Jesus while there's still time. You do not want to be on the wrong side of God's righteousness. You don't want to be under God's judgment.

For those who are Christians, this text should serve as a deep motivator as we think about our theme of impact this year. Consider the really nice people at work, at your school, and in your neighborhood. They need Jesus to be on the gracious side of God's judgment. Live for judgment day.

But I also want you to take note of verses 12-14. They reinforce what we learned last week about endurance and faith. This is a major theme of the book of Revelation. The winning strategy is to outlast the devil's schemes.

Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" (Rev. 14:12-13).

Throughout church history, God's people have very rarely been able to prevent or stop persecution. Our heroes are not those who "stormed the castle." Rather, our heroes are those who refused to stop believing and refused to renounce their faith when the world crushed or killed them. The strategy was patient endurance while holding on to what they believed. That's not only true in times of persecution, but it's also true for most of the Christian life. Look, the forces of evil are enormous. The brokenness of the world is pervasive. In ourselves, we are usually powerless. God often calls his people to wait on him, to keep trusting and believing. The calling here is not to give into anger, anxiety, or apathy.

When following Jesus is painful, it's tempting to use anger to "do something." Or it's tempting to overthink something and become anxious. And it's tempting to just quietly quit on God out of a fear of being disappointed or hurt again. Revelation 14 invites us, in the middle of the text, to endure.

² Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2483.

We endure as we live for judgment day.

The Judgment

The third and final aspect of this exhortation is found in verses 14-20. It highlights two judgments and two reapers. But they are not the same. One is redemptive. The other is punitive. Both are judgments.

The first judgment begins with the appearance (v. 14) of a white cloud and one seated on the cloud like a son of man. He has a golden crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Given that this figure is described with “son of man” language and that he has a crown on his head, this is likely an image of Jesus.

It’s important to note that Jesus has a sharp sickle. You probably know that this is a long curved instrument used to harvest wheat. You may know this image because of the concept of the “grim reaper.” More on that in a moment. Before the days of combines, these sickles were used at harvest time to cut the grain so that it could be gathered up. In this case, the reaper is not grim but gracious. The harvest/final judgment has come, and God is gathering up those who belong to him.

This seems to be a harvest of righteousness. This is a great day when Jesus claims those who truly belong to him. In Matthew 13 Jesus told a parable about the wheat and the tares (weeds). His disciples learned that the weeds are allowed to grow among the wheat until the final day of harvest. Which means that right among professing Christians are fake Christians. Every church has both. And it isn’t until the final day that we learn who truly is real and who is not. So, we need to live for judgment day!

The second judgment begins in verse 17. However, this time it’s an angel who comes out of the temple in heaven. This statement is designed to help us know about his authority. He’s sent from God. This divine messenger also has a sharp sickle for reaping. This is not a reaping of righteousness. This will be divine punishment for rebellion.

We learn that another angel also appears (v. 18). This angel proceeds from the altar. He has authority over the fire which is probably connected to the theme of judgment. Interestingly, the angel issues a command to the other angel to reap from the vine of the earth. This may be connected to a statement in Joel 3:13, “Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the winepress is full. The vats overflow, for their evil is great.”

From there, the image gets graphic. It’s meant to be shocking as a warning. In verse 19 the angel gathers the clusters of grapes and puts them into a winepress. But not just any winepress. It’s the winepress of the wrath of God. It’s outside the city. It’s a bloody scene.

James Hamilton offers this helpful but harrowing statement: “Revelation 14:19 describes the moment when the bubble is burst. All the deceptive power of the sins that look romantic and appealing, all the false promises and untrue enticements, and all the whispering wishes will be exposed for what they are

by the outcomes they produce. The weeds and barren trees will be reaped. There will be no fruit on them for God's glory, no nourishing and refreshing yield, but only grapes for the winepress of wrath."³

The sins of mankind have reached their zenith. Year after year God was patient as human beings sinned and rebelled. But finally, the time arrived when divine justice said, "Enough." The time for redemption passed, and all that was left was judgment over sin.

Why is this in the Bible? Like so much of the book of Revelation, it's here so that we can know how to live right now.

Applications

What does it mean to live for judgment day?

1. It means my identity is fixed by God's grace, not my goodness.

I'm compelled by the thought of my name being written in the Lamb's Book of Life and his name being written on my forehead. I'm encouraged when I think that who I really am is deeply connected to what Jesus has done for me.

2. It means my hope is in Jesus, not myself.

Judgment day will come, and my only hope on the great day is what I know the Bible says about those who put their trust in Christ. My only hope on judgment day is that God keeps his promises: "He who has the Son has life" (1 John 5:12).

3. It means my endurance is strengthened by this future day of reckoning.

I can live with the assurance of what God knows is true about me, not what others think of me. I can live by knowing that there's a coming day when he'll make everything right. I can live knowing that God's going to take care of it.

4. It means that if you don't know Jesus, time's running out.

Without being overly dramatic, there's coming a day when God says, "Stop." He's already determined the number of the beats of your heart. And one day, you reach the end. God has also determined a day when history will end. While we don't know that date, we do know that we're one day closer each day.

Some of you need to live for judgment day by running to Jesus today. Our prayer for you is that when Jesus stands on Mt. Zion with his people by his side, that you'll be there too.

Live for judgment day!

³ James M. Hamilton Jr., [*Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches*](#), ed. R. Kent Hughes (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 299.

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