

Tribulation Gospel

Chapter 14

- I. A short review.
 - A. Chapters 1-3, the letters to the seven churches—a message for us today.
 - 1. The churches are not mentioned again—rapture?
 - B. The seven-year tribulation—God’s judgement.
 - 1. The seven seal judgements—Chapters 5-8a.
 - a. A reprieve after the sixth seal.
 - 2. The seven trumpet judgements—Chapters 8-11.
 - a. A pause in the trumpet judgments—Chapters 12-15
 - b. Chapter 12 introduces the main players in the tribulation period: Israel/Jews, Jesus Christ, the dragon (Satan), the antichrist and the prophet beast.
- II. Chapter 14—A reprieve for believers.
 - A. The 144,000 (Vs. 1-5)—Jews who received the gospel of Jesus Christ and are saved evangelists.
 - 1. Jesus standing on Zion—literal Jerusalem (?).
 - 2. The 144,000 have the name of God and Jesus written on their foreheads—protection.
 - 3. A “new song”—a song just for the 144,000.
 - 4. “First fruits...”—many more will come after them.
 - 5. Exemplary lives (Vs 4-5).
 - B. Three angels.
 - 1. Angel #1—The worldwide announcement of the gospel (Vs 6-7).
 - a. Message—“Fear God...give Him glory... worship Him...”
 - 2. Angel #2—Fall of sinners (V.8).
 - a. Babylon—A literal city? A system? A codeword for Rome?

b. Babylon will fall!

III. The final judgement (Vs.14-20).

- A. Jesus Christ wields a “sharp sickle”—The “Lamb” and a “Lion”.
- B. The earth is “ripe” (V.15) and the grapes are “ripe” (V.18) = TIMES UP!
- C. (V.14) White cloud—The glory of God. Son of man—Jesus Christ. Sharp sickle in his hand—judgment.
- D. The harvest is ripe *xeraino* = over-ripe. Judgement now!
 - 1. 2 Peter 3:9 - 3:10

9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some consider slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be found out.

- 2. Jesus judges the earth (V.16).
- E. Two more angels wield sickles of judgement (Vs. 17-18).
- F. The picture of grape harvesting (Vs 19-20).
 - 1. Two large containers: one for the grapes, one for the juice connected by a stone trough. The grapes are “pressed” in the large container and the juice flows to the other container.
 - 2. The enemies of God will be put into the great “wine press” and their blood will flow.
- G. The great battle of Armageddon (V.20).
 - 1. The prophecies—Joel 3, Zechariah 14, Ezekiel 38.39.
 - 2. Blood of the dead will flow for 1600 stadia = 200 miles.
 - a. Blood up to the horses bridles = approx.. 4 feet .

IV. Application.

- A. God’s justice holds all of us accountable.
- B. God’s grace and mercy offer all of us freedom from all these things in chapter 14.

Tribulation Gospel

Chapter 14

Interesting how on an occasion a tune of a song can take on many lives... an old Methodist hymn "Say Brothers Will You Meet Us?"...remember it?...of course you don't... but you might have heard of the song "John Brown's Body"...which took the same tune... a popular song during the civil war between the states...but chances are, most of you have not heard that one either.

In 1861, the first year of that bloody civil war... Julia Ward Howe, the daughter of a rich New York City banker, was touring Union army camps near Washington, D.C...that had already been ravaged by the horrible bloody war...

During the course of a camp visit, walking through the camp, the group she was with including her husband began singing some of the currently popular war songs, among them "John Brown's Body." In one of those rare flashes of inspiration that leave their mark on the history of a nation, a minister, Reverend Clarke was moved to suggest that Mrs. Howe pen new lyrics to the familiar tune.

The following morning, as Mrs. Howe later described it...being very disturbed by the amount of bloodshed and destruction she "awoke...*in the gray of the early dawn, and to my astonishment found that the wished-for lines were arranging themselves in my brain. I lay quite still until the last verse had completed itself in my thoughts, then hastily arose, saying to myself, 'I shall lose this if I don't write it down immediately.'*"

What hit Julia was a connection she made between Revelation chapters 14 and 19... and what she saw in this civil war... she had become convinced that the civil war was the fulfillment of what John was prophetically describing when he wrote these chapters in his apocalyptic book.

I'm sure you know this song... the tune borrowed from the other two pervious songs... *The Battle Hymn of the Republic...*

*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword,
His truth is marching on...glory, glory Hallelujah..*

In the midst of the desecration of many men... it seemed as though the entire world was being judged for the sin of slavery...so God comes in His glory and judges the wickedness and ultimately sets things right... after unleashing His just wrath over the earth...this is what we will see by the time we finish chapter 14.

We have been in chapters 12 and 13 for many weeks and it hasn't been fun...we have been between the trumpet judgements and the bowls judgments... In case this is your first Sunday with us...a quick update... maybe you need this if you have been here the entire time!

All of Revelation is showing us what must take place at the end of time... the wrap up of the world as we know it... the first three chapters were letters to the church, timeless instructions even for the church today... But there is no more mention of the church after the conclusion of chapter three.... I believe the church has been taken away by Jesus Christ...removed from the seven year period of God's judgement over the earth.

A series of judgements unravels...1st, 7 seals of seven scrolls are broken and God's judgement is revealed (chapters 5-8a)...during this time of tribulation... people will come to Christ... 144,000 Jews will come to Christ...

[All this is like an expanding telescope...we see deeper into the same period of time... the seven years... we've left chronological order]

So then there are the seven trumpet judgements... at the end of the sixth of each of these judgements... after seeing the horrific events of the future tribulation period being presented to us through John... it is like God gives us a breather... a break... a respite.

And then the seventh comes and we're back in it...the intensity increases... after the 6th seal.... A pause...then the seven trumpet judgements...the sixth trumpet has sounded and now we have been in a pause ...where we have been for several weeks.. chapters 12-14 we are nearing the 7th trumpet which will usher in the final judgement... the bowl judgements...the most severe of the judgements... the final three and a half years of the tribulation.

We've been in a pause since the end of chapter 11...Ch. 12 is an interlude after the sixth trumpet...it is the longest interlude in the book...we met all of God's characters in God's future plan for the earth...(Israel, the Jews, Jesus, the dragon Satan, the two beasts...angels...etc.)

Chapter 13 zoomed in first to the beast that came out of the sea...the antichrist... the coming political and economic ruler of the world... then the beast that came out of the land...the religious leader of the world... the prophet...the promoter of the antichrist...both impact the entire world.

By the end of chapter 13... we see that these two apparently take control of the whole world.. a mark is placed on the forehead or hand of everyone who are the faithful followers of these two beasts...those who refuse the mark are killed.

By the end of chapter 13 you almost wonder where is God?... this "unholy trinity"... the antichrist... the false prophet and their power source... their commander the dragon... Satan himself seem to have complete control over the entire world.

It really seems like this is the worst of times for the earth... but we know there is more to come... another series of seven judgements... the seven bowl judgements...the most intense of the three judgments...the telescope is fully extended and we wonder who is winning in all this?... if the judgements are this bad, this severe...and if the beast and false prophet are this powerful... what hope is there?

This is why God gave John chapter 14 to then give it to us... It is like God is saying... *“calm down, it’s all going to be ok,... better than ok...relax... I take full responsibility... I’ve got it all under control...”*

Chapter fourteen is a collection of four vignettes...including a final preview of the wrath of Jesus Christ... these four vignettes are not in any chronological order... much of Revelation has been like this... but each of these four give us a reminder that **God does in fact have this all in His plan and in His control...**

[I’m going to attempt moving through this entire chapter this morning...this chapter really is a preview to what is ahead, so we will see more details of these events in the coming weeks.... hold on to your seats!]

I. The 144,000

We’ve already met these special people back in chapter 7... remember who they are... they are converted Jews... 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel... these are the people who will be left on the earth...after the rapture... after the church is removed.... Lifted up and gone with Jesus.

Only unbelievers are left on the earth...can you imagine what this will be like?... confusion, dismay, shock, calamity... there will be 144,000 Jews who will realize they had it wrong about the Messiah... He really was Jesus Christ...

Now they believe... they become “earthly evangelists”... Once they **“disclaimed”** the name of Christ... but now they **“proclaim”** the name of Christ!...Chapter 14 gives us greater insight into these 144,000.

V1. **Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb...**notice Lamb is capitalized in your Bibles... that confirms this Lamb is referring to Jesus Christ... Jesus Christ is **standing on Mt. Zion...**John is in the first century and he has been given the privilege from God to see at least all the way to the 21 century...and he sees Jesus standing on Mt. Zion....last time he saw Jesus there he was being crucified....two views

- Mt Zion refers to heaven...
- Mt Zion refers to literal Jerusalem... I think it refers to Jerusalem.

The place where Jesus will return after the seven-year tribulation...His second coming...**Then I looked and behold the Lamb standing on Mt. Zion and with Him 144,000, having His name and His Father written on their foreheads...** We just saw in chapter thirteen that the followers of the Beasts have the mark of the beast on their foreheads or hand... 666.... We were told back in chapter seven and here... that these faithful believers will have the name of the Father and Son on their foreheads...

This mark marks them as the Father's and the Son's possession and the beast cannot kill these Jews... Satan himself can't touch these people...

Revelation 9:1-3 says that during the last half of the tribulation when the fifth trumpet sounds demons will be released from the bottomless pit of the Abyss. They will be released to torture people on the earth. These demons will be allowed to kill people on the earth, but not those who have the seal of God on their foreheads.

While they are being protected... they will be boldly proclaiming Christ to the lost... While the world is following the Beasts... they will be preaching to them... *"judgement is coming... you need Jesus!*

Most will ignore their message...

Read verse 2

Who is this "**loud voice**?... who's voice was like a harp... it doesn't say... But I'll join the many who think they are angels... if fact... this is where we get the idea that angels play harps...

Read verse 3

And notice that no one will be able to understand this new song except for the 144,000...who **have been purchased from the earth**... another way of saying who have been preserved from God's wrath...

I find it interesting that a new song... obviously a glorious song comes out of this period of time... remember what is going on!?. tribulation...A word about a "new song"... we've already heard these words:

In Revelation 5:9, "a new song" is sung by heavenly beings and the redeemed, celebrating Christ's worthiness to open the scroll because He was slain and purchased people for God from every tribe and nation.

This song is unique because it proclaims the victory and redemption accomplished through Jesus' sacrifice, marking a new phase in God's plan for humanity...Here in Revelation 14:3, "a new song" is again mentioned, this time sung by the 144,000 who have been redeemed from the earth.

The song is exclusive to them... that's why it is a new song... symbolizing their special relationship with God and their triumph over adversity during the tribulation.

These 144000 are very, very special people... many theories as to the meaning of the next couple verses... a picture of their impeccable character...

Read verses 4-5

First fruits of God... more fruit is on the way......I'm not going to get into speculation about whether or not this should be taken literally or symbolically... 144000 virgin men who never have lied and are blameless...pretty incredible..

I'll just leave it that these people *walk the talk* so to speak... their lives match their actions... they are committed to Christ not just in words but in everything they do.

There is a vital connection between living a godly, Christlike life and being His witness?... If you and I are corrupt like the world we have no message to those who are corrupt in the world... if our mouths are filled with lies... if we are seen as individuals who compromise in morality and integrity... no one will listen.

I've noticed, even if one has a horribly sinful life... and is even proud of it.... When they see a professing Christian doing the same things... they will judge them... *you call yourself a Christian?... Don't you like being judged by the heathen?*

I think the whole reason God showed and told John these 144,000 are (apparently men) of "blameless" character is to show us these are people who LIVE the gospel.. LIVE the truth of God's Word...

Saved, sanctified, sealed. Spotless men and women who live for Christ...spotless because they are in Christ!

2. Three angels

V. 6 **Then I saw another angel...**

V.8 **And another angel...**

V.9 **Then another angel...**

Three angels are going to make announcements for the entire world to hear... towards the end of the tribulation period... God being in complete control over these seven years... send three angel messengers with three messages.

One a message of the gospel... (Vs 6,7,8)

Next a message of judgement on the lifestyle of the time—Babylon. (V.8)

Then... a message of doom and damnation for those who follow the beast...(Vs. 9-13).

These are all previews of coming attractions... (that is why we won't spend too much time in the details.... We will be seeing these later... in great detail during the seven bowl judgement.

1. The announcement of the gospel. Angel 1

Read verse 6

Notice how extensive this message is... the gospel message will reach EVERY nation, tribe and tongue... the entire world will hear the gospel!...(even the guy on the island!)This angels flies literally around the entire earth... every bit of it... making the gospel known in all the tongues of the people on earth!....amazing!

[why is an angel doing this?... The job of the church is/was to spread the gospel... the Great Commission...the church is gone!]

Notice what the angel preaches... I think this is important... **Read verse 7**

Fear God... Give Him the glory... Worship Him... I highlighted those words in my Bible...remember the message of the beast?... *fear me! Give me the glory! Worship me! My image!* No... fear and worship the one and only living God... give Him the glory!

In the midst of the darkest time the world has ever experienced and gone through... the Holy Spirit driven 144,000 will be a great light in the world!... no one will be without excuse...rejecting the true God of this world...unfortunately... not many will listen.

2. Fall of sinners, Angel 2

Like I said... We will talk more about this Babylon when we get to chapters 17-18... but here's a preview

Read verse 8

Babylon?... Much is made about who/what is Babylon in this context... is it the literal city Babylon? Is it a system?...is it a codeword for Rome?... In the Bible it has been used in all three of those contexts...

Whatever it is... it is definitely a highly influential entity that has greatly influenced the world for the worst...the whole world will be influenced by Babylon's immense immorality...decadence... sexual immorality.... But the word announced by this angel is...

Babylon will fall!...it's great influence over the world will collapse... crash... come to a decisive end.

These next few verses are not preached on much these days...even within evangelical churches... the idea of a literal hell...*How can a loving God send anyone into eternal torment?...*

perhaps you've been listening to the chatter about Kirk Cameron (Growing Pains?) a long time professing Christian...announced he now is embracing the idea of *Annihilation*...popular today.

Annihilation is the belief that when the unrepentant person dies, they go to hell for a period of time (punishment) then are "annihilated" into nothingness... "*A blending of God's mercy (love) and wrath*"

The announcement of the third angels really messes this idea up!... listen to this:

Read verses 9-12...13

3. The final judgement

The whole world must face the complete truth about Jesus Christ...just as they must the reality of hell... Jesus carried a cross on our behalf... but now he wields a sickle.

a sharp sickle... mentioned seven times in these concluding verses of chapter 14...what we see here is every bit Jesus Christ as the Christ who healed lepers, the blind and raised the dead... The same Jesus who was the perfect lamb, slain on the cross for sinners... this same Jesus is now wielding *His terrible swift sharp sickle*..

If you try to separate the two pictures of Jesus... the Man of Sorrows over here and the King of Kings over all humanity who judges the unrighteous... if you try to separate the two... discard the one you are uncomfortable with... you do not know Jesus!

One of my commentaries had this chart...

Imagine two columns... this column has the heading "**The First Coming**" and the other column "**The Second Coming**"... I think this will help us get the picture. (Chuck Swindoll)

The first: He came as a servant

The second: He will come as judge

The first: There was humility and gentleness

The second: There will be majesty and splendor

The first: He was a helpless baby in a manger

The second: He will be the victorious king.

The first: a Sower of seed

The second: Almighty reaper of the harvest

The first: Emphasis on grace and mercy

The second: Justice, righteousness, wrath.

The final section pictures the final judgment as the final harvest... an agricultural motif through these verses...

The first three verses of these final seven show the first harvest... representing the "bowl judgements" which we will see in the next two chapters. We could call this first harvest "The grain harvest"...all this is coming. This is a preview.

The last four verses depict the second harvest...the harvesting of the grapes...notice both the grain and the grapes are ripe...15b **The earth is ripe...**18b **The grapes are ripe....** Both of these, the ripe grain and the ripe grapes are saying "**TIME'S UP!**"...

The era of grace...mercy... a longsuffering, patient, very patient God has reached the end... it is time for judgement... there is no escape from it... **time is up!**... I want us all to stop and let this sink in.

We spend so much of our time and so much of our thinking power on the amazing grace of Jesus Christ... His amazing love... it gets us through our days...this is the Jesus that sustains us in His love... His forgiveness... His sweet promises...

There is coming a day when all this will come to a head... and His great judgement will fall... We seldom think about the wrath of Jesus... that's His Father's job... We must understand and know the complete Jesus.

(V.14) So here John sees a great white cloud...some have suggested this white cloud represents the glory of God... the shekinah glory of God...purity....sitting on the cloud is one **like the son of man...** a messianic title of Jesus Christ... He **has a golden crown on His head...** a *stephanos*

Not the royal crown of a king or ruler... but a "victor's crown... the crown given to an athlete who won the race or a military leader who just won a war...Jesus is THE victor over ALL His enemies...this son of man has **a sharp sickle in his hand...** mentioned seven times in these last seven verses. 14,15, 16, 17, (2) 18, 19.

This must be important!... a sickle... an iron blade attached to a long handle used to harvest...used to cut down the grain... here it is used for and represents judgement... so... here is the son of man... sitting on a white cloud, holding a harvesting sickle in his hand...he seems to be waiting for something...or someone.

The someone arrives in verse 15:

Read verse 15

This angel comes out of the sanctuary which is most likely the throne room of God in heaven... the angels tell the son of man what to do! **Put in your sickle and reap...the hour to reap has come... because the harvest of the earth is ripe...**

It really should be translated more like...**because the harvest of the earth is "over-ripe"** "over ripe"... what happens to over-ripe fruit?... it begins to get mushy and begins to dry out and wither away...shrivel up...the rules of harvesting for the farmer is to harvest when the fruit is just ripe...

This really is a bit profound... the angel is I think a bit anxious and frustrated... **Put your sickle in and reap!...Come on!...come on!!! Judge these people... you've waited long enough!** the reason Jesus hasn't returned... the reason the church hasn't yet been raptured is because of the amazing patience of God to put up with all the mess of the world a little longer so that more may come to Him...

He would have been just.... Would have been right to put His sickle in and reap... judge.... Centuries ago! Millenniums ago...and yet... He holds off his harvest of judgement!... Even in this seven year tribulation period... He is making sure the Word... the gospel of Jesus Christ is taken throughout the entire world... and people.... Even under the oppression and persecution of the beast.... **Come to the Lord.**

He is so very patient!... but what this passage is showing us... and we need to listen!... His patience will come to an end...

2 Peter 3:9 - 3:10

9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some consider slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be found out.

He has been very...very patient...patient with our failures.... Our sinning... our shortcomings... our lack of our dedication to our walk with Him... failure put Him on the throne of our lives... our lies, our compromises... our fickleness... our gossiping, selfishness, our petty crisis's...He...our rejection of Him...He has been so very patient

but His patience will come to an abrupt end.

Read verse 16

This is not a war... this is not a conflict... notice Satan is nowhere around that we know of... he's not going to stick his nose in this!... He simply plunges His sickle to and through and reaps the earth!

Notice all this happens in one short verse?... just 18 words... not lengthy description or details... I think that reveals just how suddenly, quickly and decisive his reaping will be... no time for a discussion... any comments... just WOOSH! WOOSH!

A little preview that is attached to what we are looking at right now... a couple chapters forward... chapter 16... three words that sum of the finality of this... verse 17... the last three words... **Read 16:17**

“It is done.”!!! That’s it! God has said “THAT IS ENOUGH!!!”

We have another harvest in chapter 14... a harvest of grapes...

Read 14:17

This is the fifth angel mention in chapter 14... (6,8,9,15... the fifth here in 17 and another one in 18)...this is not the Son of man... Jesus... this is another angel with a sickle...Jesus calls angels in to assist Him in His judgement...all we know is that this angel will be another reaper... a death angel.

Read verse 18

This angel has power over fire... fire is often used for judgement... this angel calls out to the previous angel and tells him to begin judging the earth... IT'S TIME!

Read verse 19

Diving into ancient harvesting of grapes... normally at harvest times there would be two large containers for the harvested grapes.. very large... one container held the grapes... the other the juice of the grapes... there was a trough made of stone connecting the two containers...

The grapes would be poured into the 1st container... people would tread on the grapes... pressing the grapes with their feet... the juice would run down out of the container...down the trough filling the other container...

*1 Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword;...sickle...
His truth is marching on.*

*3 He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of all before His judgment seat;
O be swift, my soul, to answer Him; be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on. That's for us!!*

Don't wait! Don't delay! Answer His salvation!... He's marching on!... He's coming!!!

I skipped verse 2...

*2 I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps; **JUDGMENT! His judgement... His wrath... goes marching on!***

Glory, glory hallelujah...His truth goes marching on...

These very final words in chapter 14 are sobering...

Read verse 20

When the angel swings his sickle to the earth... **all the enemies of God will be gathered like clusters of grapes on the vine**...and put into the **great wine press of the wrath of God**... a great battle will take place in the north of Israel...chapter 16:16 says **Read verse 16:16**

On the plain of Esdraelon near Mt. Megiddo...60 miles north of Jerusalem... (I ate a snitzel there!)...millions of people will be engaged in this great battle... one commentator says this will *be more of a slaughter than a battle...*

Later we will look at the prophesy of this great battle in Joel 3, Zechariah 14, Ezekiel 38.39.

Blood of the dead will flow for a distance of 1600 stadia—almost 200 miles, 4 feet deep... unimaginable if taken literally... some have suggested this is hyperbole... what I am sure of is will be a bloodbath like the world has never seen before...

All this coincides with the events of chapter 19 beginning at verse 11... let me just read it, we will expound on it in a few weeks...

Read verses 19:11-16

What do you do with all this?...

1. God's justice hold all of us accountable

If none of this happens for a thousand years... each one of us will eventually come to our own time of judgement.

Even if you live life day in and day out thinking you are in total control... you make your decisions and control the outcomes... if you think there are no consequences for your decisions, and actions... If you think this world will just continue on and on and on, and God is someone you pay attention to on Sundays... there are many other important things you have to think about during the week...

The fact is... there is a day coming...Our eyes will be pried open...we will see *real* reality... His perfect justice will hold us accountable...it is very clear... the unjustified... the unrighteous... those who have rejected Jesus Christ will be held accountable... eternity isn't annihilation...

God's truth marches on...going over all the entire earth!

One passage that should make you pay attention it is Hebrews 10:31... **It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**

2. God's grace and mercy offers all of us freedom from all these things in chapter 14.

You are free to accept it... you are free to reject this... you are free to ignore all this.... You are free to pay attention to all of this.... However... we are not free from the consequences of our decisions...

The final judgement is hell... eternal hell for those who reject the Savior... He is patient... He is still patient... but you do not know when your end will come on this earth...