

**The Revelation to John**  
**Chapter Fourteen**  
**Eternal Safety of God's People**  
**Eternal Damnation of God's Enemies**

Leon Combs, M.A., M.Div., Ph.D., originally written in 2008

**The Lamb on Mount Zion**

The scene of the visions now turns from evil to good before there will be a time of reaping. Interpretation of this chapter is hindered unless one understands that this chapter is depicting a time in the future rather than following a strict time line with the previous chapter. The first five verses depict Jesus in heaven with His saved people. From "chapter 13" we had just read about Satan's mark as being required for participation in the world's economy. Now God shows John that His people are marked in a much better way so that they will be taken care of by Him forever! What a comparison! This would have been so comforting and encouraging for the first century church and it continues to be so for us today. As usual with John's writings, he gives symbolic significance to numbers such as 144,000 and 666. Most respected commentators take 666 as a symbolic number referring to the unholy trinity of evil or to the human imperfect imitation of God. We continue to let the 144,000 be symbolic in this "chapter". This chapter briefly answers two questions. One is "what happens to those who refuse to receive the mark of the beast and are killed?" The second question is "what happens to the beast and his servants?"

**Rev 14:1 "And 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."**

There is no doubt whom John saw! The Lamb is Jesus and He had the bondservants with Him. Remember previously we saw that they were all sealed for protection (7:3, 4) and now we see that they have the name of Jesus and the name of the Father written on their foreheads. This marking is certainly in contrast to the marking of the beast in 13:16. The dispensationalists say that this is an earthly Mount Zion but this is probably a heavenly site. There was no comment about Jesus transitioning to earth from heaven for this particular scene and the scene concerns a **final triumph** rather than an intermediate victory. The Scripture also alludes to those who trust in the Lord being as Mount Zion and a heavenly Mount Zion:

- *Psa 125:1 "(A Song of Ascents.) Those who trust in the Lord are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever."*
- *Heb 12:22 "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the **heavenly Jerusalem**, and to myriads of angels,"*

It therefore seems preferable to say that this scene depicts Jesus standing on a heavenly Mount Zion with all the saved people in heaven with Him. We will also be consistent and say that this number represents the entire church of Jesus Christ and we see that all of

them are now in heaven with Him. The point being that not a single person who was marked as His bondservant has been lost. I am reminded of the promise made by Jesus: *“And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.”* (John 6:39)

There is also a contrast between the Lamb standing on Mount Zion and the dragon standing on **shifting sands** of the seashore (12:1). God’s people are especially marked by the seal of the Holy Spirit as previously discussed. The battle continues as Satan has been cast out of Heaven with his angels but they are still involved in battle with the woman’s offspring (the church) until the Parousia.

**Rev 14:2 “And 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.**

**Rev 14:3 And 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.”**

Obviously this voice impressed John as he described it in three different ways: many waters, loud thunder and harpists playing on their harps. He does not identify the voice but it must have been a magnificent, soothing sound. The voice is singular but then he says that many people were singing a song. The people singing were undoubtedly the entire choir of the saved bondservants of Jesus singing in such perfect unison that it sounded like one voice. I am reminded of two Scripture verses regarding this unison. The first is the model of earthly marriage that the two become one: *“Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”* (Matt 19:5) The second verse is from the wonderful seventeenth chapter of John promising that all of God’s people will be one, just as is the Son and the Father: *“And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one;”* (John 17:22)

John does not identify the song but says that only these people of God could learn the song. To say that these are purchased people certainly means those purchased with the blood of Jesus: *“and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood,”* (Rev 1:5) The new song must be related to the new song in Rev 5:9. There is one more reference to redeemed singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb (15:3) and that may be related to this new song of 14:3 and 5:9. Remembering that Paul also visited heaven may help explain his references to songs inspired by the Holy Spirit and sung in first-century congregations:

- Eph 5:18-19 *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, (19) speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;*
- Col 3:16 *Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

There are also OT references to a “new song” (Psalm 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa 42:10). The ability to learn the song is probably related to the fact that only God’s people can really learn spiritual matters (1 Cor 2:14; John 6:45). These “144,000” must be only those who have been redeemed from the earth and whose garments have been washed in the blood of the Lamb (7:14).

**Rev 14:4 “These 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. Rev 14:5 And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.”**

Certainly verse four is speaking symbolically and refers to those true bondservants who have never been defiled with spiritual adultery. The New Testament never refers to sexual relations as defiling and the Bible does refer to deeds against God as harlotry:

- Hos 5:4 *“Their deeds will not allow them To return to their God. For a spirit of harlotry is within them, And they do not know the Lord.”*
- 2Peter 2:14 *“having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children;”*

These true bondservants have never committed intercourse with the evil world system, they follow Jesus completely, they are first fruits to God and to Jesus, they do not lie, and they are blameless. What a description! First fruits were of the first harvest and had a special use:

- Exodus 23:19 *“You shall bring the choice first fruits of your soil into the house of the Lord your God. You are not to boil a kid in the milk of its mother.”*
- Nehemiah 10:35 *“and in order that they might bring the first fruits of our ground and the first fruits of all the fruit of every tree to the house of the Lord annually,”*
- Proverbs 3:9 *“Honor the Lord from your wealth, And from the first of all your produce;”*

The thought of Christians being first fruits then means those belonging totally to God. Not only did these people not lie, they also rejected the lie of the Antichrist. Of course our purity is not of ourselves but is imputed to us at our justification. Because we have been made pure before God, we will also practice our purity before men. Regardless of the consequences we will not cease to follow and proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord. In the usual OT and NT use of the Greek word *aparche* that is translated “first fruits” the concept is of being separated to Him and sanctified. Paul also uses the language of purity: 2Cor 11:2-3 *For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. (3) But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.*

The “lie” refers to the blasphemy of the beast worshipers who deny the Father and the Son and give validity to the beast by believing his heresies and worshipping his image (John 8:44-45; Rom 1:25; 2 Thess 2:9-11; 1 John 2:4, 21-22, 27).

## Three Angels Declare Judgment

The scene now shifts toward earth as a **future judgment** of God will be declared. This event is an **interlude** between the sixth and seventh signs.

**Rev 14:6** “And 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;

**Rev 14:7** 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 the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.””

This first angel is preaching the eternal gospel to all people remaining on earth. This is the only occasion in this book with the word “gospel” is explicitly used. Judgment is certainly part of the gospel message: “*on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.*” (Rom 2:16)

The gospel is certainly eternal as it was formulated before the foundation of the world and will always exist. Jesus previously told the people to repent because the kingdom of God was at hand: *and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."* (Mark 1:15)

Now God is giving one final warning as the time of judgment has now come. The people are told to fear God and to give Him glory. Those who have not been purchased with the blood of Jesus certainly have a lot to fear! When people truly fear God they will give Him the glory that is due Him who made all that exists.

- *Psa 115:15* “May you be blessed of the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth.”
- *Col 1:16-17* “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created by Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup>And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

**Rev 14:8** “And 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.””

Now another angel proclaims the fall of the cities of mankind. Babylon is used as a symbol of all evil cities of the world. We know that the city will not exist as a real metropolitan center again because God said so:

*Isa 13:19-22* “And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride, Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. <sup>20</sup>It will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation; Nor will the Arab pitch his tent there, Nor will shepherds make their flocks lie down there. <sup>21</sup>But desert creatures will lie down there, And their houses will be full of owls, Ostriches also

*will live there, and shaggy goats will frolic there. <sup>22</sup>And hyenas will howl in their fortified towers And jackals in their luxurious palaces. Her fateful time also will soon come And her days will not be prolonged.”*

It was at this real city that mankind tried to build a tower to heaven and thus has long been Biblically representative of the evil communities of mankind. To drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality means to make the evil teachings of Satan an integral part of their conscience. Since they have partaken of that wine, the wine of the wrath of God will consume them: *“For thus the Lord, the God of Israel, says to me, “Take this cup of the wine of wrath from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it.”* (Jer 25:15) An extended description of the fall of Babylon will be given in chapters 17 and 18.

**Rev 14:9 “And 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 upon his hand,”**

Now the third angel followed the proclamations of the first two angels and loudly proclaimed eternal destruction for those who worship the beast and his image. Having received a mark upon the hand was actually an action used to state that a person was a slave of someone. Here the mark may be actual or symbolic to mean that a person was a slave of Satan. We all were formerly slaves to sin: *“Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.”* (John 8:34)

**Rev 14:10 he 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.**

**Rev 14:11 “And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.””**

To say that something is mixed in full strength is rather like saying “mixed without mixing” but the meaning is clear. The wine of the wrath of God is not cut with any kindness. It will be poured forth as pure wrath. These slaves of Satan will be tormented before the holy angels and in the presence of Jesus so that purity will see the punishment of evil. These people may have rejoiced over their accomplishments of evil while on earth but they will pay severely for eternity. Such events have been previously prophesied and described:

- *Psa 11:6 “Upon the wicked He will rain snares; Fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup.”*
- *Ezek 38:22 “And with pestilence and with blood I shall enter into judgment with him; and I shall rain on him, and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire, and brimstone.”*
- *Luke 17:29 “but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.”*

Some smoke has been previously described: *“And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.”* (Rev 8:4)

The torment is horrible for these people but the smoke of that torment is pleasing to God because it is representative of His perfect justice upon the iniquity of mankind. An everlasting punishment seems repugnant to some but it is a clear teaching of Jesus and other NT writers (Matt 25:46; Rom 2:3-9; 2 Thess 1:6-9). C. S Lewis also admitted that it is a horrible concept and he would remove it if he could but it is a clear teaching of God in His Word and cannot be removed.

**Rev 14:12 “Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.”**

The above considerations of perfect justice is pleasing to the people of God as they have persevered throughout all tribulations and remained true to their confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

**Rev 14:13 “And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, “Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.””**

It may seem strange that there is blessedness in death but certainly that is true for there are infinite blessings waiting all Christians after death. The words “from now on” are a message for the first century church for they are in the time after the ascension of Jesus back to heaven. They then have the clear understanding that the Son of God has fulfilled His mission and those who trust in Him will be blessed in death. There are seven beatitudes in this book (not a surprise to learn of there being seven!):

- *Rev 1:3 “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.”*
- *Rev 14:13 “And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, “Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.””*
- *Rev 16:15 “( “Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame.””)*
- *Rev 19:9 “And he said to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.””*
- *Rev 20:6 “Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.”*
- *Rev 22:7 “And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.”*

- *Rev 22:14 “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.”*

We will discuss the other five blessings later. Since John tells us that the Holy Spirit agrees with the blessings adds weighty meaning to this comment. He then says that after death we will have rest and that our deeds for Jesus will not be forgotten. It is comforting to know that He knows all that we do for Him even though much of those deeds may not even be known by us while we live. Great dignity will be given to our works for Jesus here and that should encourage us as we labor in pain here. Except for 22:17 this is the only place in this book where the Holy Spirit speaks directly as also expressed in:

- *Acts 13:2 While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*
- *Heb 3:7 Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "today if you hear his voice,*
- *Heb 10:15-17 And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, (16) "this is the covenant that i will make with them after those days, says the lord: i will put my laws upon their heart, and on their mind i will write them," he then says, (17) "and their sins and their lawless deeds i will remember no more."*

### **The Reapers**

We now come to the climax of the first earth era. For farming mentality the fact that this is the end would be very apparent. Three angels have already pronounced the gospel and judgment and now the end has come as the reapers are prepared.

**Rev 14:14 “And 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.”**

To interpret this properly we have to note that this being was **like a** son of man. I bolded “like” and “a” for important reasons. Jesus liked the designation “son of man” as stated in the following and many other verses:

- *Matt 8:20 “And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."”*
- *Matt 11:19 “The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”*
- *Matt 12:8 “For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”*

In all the uses of this phrase by Jesus He said “the” Son of Man, but this label of Rev 14:14 has an “a” in front of it rather than “the”. When we combine that observation with the word “like”, I am led to interpret that this being was not Jesus but rather an angel with an appearance of a man. Also verse 15 states that an angel commanded the one on the cloud to reap the earth and an angel cannot order Jesus. The Greek word for “crown” is also *stephanos*, which we have already seen is like an Olympic crown for winning a race

or one particular victory so it is not a ruling crown. We also see in verse 15 that this being is given an order by an angel and I definitely know that angels do not order Jesus! Jesus did say that He did not know the time of the end while He was on earth and that only the Father knew that time:

- *Mark 13:32 "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."*
- *Acts 1:7 "He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;'"*

But Jesus is now in heaven in the center of the throne and it is not likely that He remains ignorant of that time. He certainly would not need an angel to now tell Him that the time was ripe for harvest. Jesus did tell us that there would be a time of harvest and then He would tell the reapers what to do. He also says in Matt 13:39 that the reapers are angels.

- *Matt 13:30 'Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn." " "*
- *Matt 13:37-39 And He answered and said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, <sup>38</sup>and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; <sup>39</sup>and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.*

The harvest is an OT concept used for divine judgment (Hos 6:11; Joel 3:13) and especially on Babylon (Jer 51:33). Jesus also refers to the final judgment as a type of harvest (Matt 13:30, 39). The context must refer to judgment and not to salvation.

**Rev 14:15 And 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, because the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe."**

**Rev 14:16 And He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth; and the earth was reaped."**

Another angel (meaning other than the one on the cloud) now gave the order to begin the harvest. Your Bibles, as does mine, had the Him and the He in the above verses capitalized so the translators thought that this person was Jesus. However, as stated above, I do not believe that is correct. Angels do not act on their own authority so he had to have been told by God that the time was now. He came out of the temple (from the presence of God) and then informed the angel with the sickle to begin the harvest. We are not told any details of the harvest. There is no mention of wheat and we have been focused on the evil in the world so it is not likely that the reaping is referring to God's bondservants who have already been depicted in heaven. However remember that the ~~verse~~ first few verses of this chapter refer to a future time when all of God's bondservants are safely in heaven with God. We do not know the time for this harvest but the likely meaning here is for the binding of the tares in bundles as stated in Matt 13:30 with the wheat already in His barn.



**Rev 14:17 “And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle.**

**Rev 14:18 And 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."**

**Rev 14:19 And 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.”**

The sixth angel now came from the presence of God with a sharp sickle. The meaning of having a sharp sickle is that it will cut properly. A seventh angel then came from the altar who had authority over fire (judgment). This scene may also be in concordance with: *“Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great.”* (Joel 3:13)

God is gathering all of wicked mankind for final judgment. The vision is very descriptive of the wicked being put into final destruction under the pressure of the wrathful judgment of God. The altar of verse 18 must be the incense altar with the fire being God’s vindication of His martyred people. John presents the eschatological judgment in three phases: the unmixed wine in the cup (v. 10), the grain harvest (vv. 14-16), and the vintage harvest (vv. 17-20). These are really three metaphors representing one reality, divine judgment with the OT giving us the background (Isa 63:1-6; Lam 1:15; Joel 3:13). Verse 19 provides clarity in that this is God’s judgment on the rebellious world and not the wrath of the beast on the followers of Christ (Rev 8:1; John 3:36).

**Rev 14:20 “And 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.”**

John does not tell us who trod the wine press nor does he tell us the identification of the city. The phrase “outside the city” may mean outside of the city gates where legal business was conducted. The location may be signifying that this final destruction of mankind was flaunted in front of man’s legal system. This is the final destruction of mankind and many people think that this vision is representative of the Battle of Armageddon. All of mankind is destroyed in the judgment of God. The distance given is literally 1600 *stadia* and it may be symbolic rather than literal. 1600 is 40 times 40, which is a number associated with punishment. Also four is the number of the earth as the living place of the wicked and ten is the number of perfection so four times four times ten times ten could mean perfect punishment. The symbols can then mean that the perfect judgment of God is complete and mankind has been destroyed. The source of this imagery is Isa 63:1-6 with John providing the hyperbole. We see that this final judgment is not human but done exclusively by Jesus and His angelic reapers (Rom 12:19-21). It would be pure speculation to try to locate some specific city. In this book there are only two cities: the city of God and the city of Satan (Babylon).