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**A0613 – March 26, 2006 – Rev 14:9-20 – The Destruction Of The Ungodly**

Last week we saw the victory of the 144,000. It's my understanding that these are the same 144,000 Jews sealed in Rev 7, 12,000 from each tribe. They stand on Mt Zion with the Lamb. This is the victory ascent, the culmination of the Second Coming of Christ. So, this victory stance is revealed in advance of its actual occurrence but tells us the ultimate destiny of the 144,000 at the hands of the beast and his economic, political, and religious empire. They will be victorious. The only question is whether they stand victorious in natural bodies or resurrected bodies. Some commentators think that because they have the seal of God they will survive the Tribulation and stand victorious in natural bodies to re-populate the millennial kingdom. However, I think the language here is sacrificial, especially in verses 4-5 (first fruits...blameless), so I think they will all be martyred by the beast. Besides, the seal of God protects them from God's wrath in the trumpet judgments but it does not protect them from Satan's wrath through the beast and false prophet (cf 12:11, 17; 13:7, 9-10). So, even though they went through the stiffest persecution of the beast and were beheaded they will ultimately stand victorious in resurrected bodies in the millennial kingdom on Mt Zion.

At the victory ascent they will learn a song from an angelic chorus in heaven. They and they alone can learn this song. This song must have great significance to the 144,000 who suffered the most terrible torture at the hands of the beast.

Verse 4 signifies they are all men. The male constitution is fit for this role since it will involve imprisonment and brutal death. They are chaste or virgins. Some say this means they will not fornicate by worshipping false idols such as the beast and his image but I take this as a literal reference to the fact that they are not married and have never had sexual intercourse. Paul said the unmarried state was desirable in especially intense periods of persecution and this will be the most intense time of persecution the world has ever seen (Jer 30:7; Matt 24:21). They will follow the Lamb wherever He goes. A true disciple follows the Lamb no matter the cost. These are true disciples, those who do not

love their lives even to death. They have also been purchased or redeemed from the earth as first fruits to God and the Lamb. Sometimes, first fruits means that there are more to follow. For example, Christ is the first fruits of resurrection guaranteeing that many more will be resurrected later. However, in 2/3 of the uses of first fruits none will come later. Such is the case in this text. The 144,000 are unique. None will follow exactly in their footsteps. In verse 5 we find that they are the truth-tellers in distinction from the beast and the false prophet which are the deceptive liars. Finally, they are blameless and this is an OT sacrificial word, it means they are perfectly fit as sacrifices to God and to the Lamb. The Lamb was sacrificed for them, they were sacrificed because of the Lamb. They have followed fully in His footsteps undergoing martyrdom.

In verses 6-7 an angel evangelizes the whole world. This is their last chance to turn from worshipping and giving glory to the beast to the Lamb of God. The bowls are swiftly coming and the destruction of the central headquarters of this filth is announced last in verse 8. Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great. This is a rebuilt eschatological Babylon. Many of the prophecies in Isa 13-14 and Jer 50-51 have yet to be fulfilled and I believe they correspond to the passages about Babylon here and in Rev 17-18 prophesying of the ultimate doom of this city which influences the world politically, economically, and religiously. She has led the world astray, made them drunk with their immorality so that they stumble about in the darkness being fully deceived. Now, in verse 9 the story continues and warnings are issued once more.

***Revelation 14:9 And another angel, a third, followed them saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his statue and takes a mark upon his forehead or upon his hand, 10 even (kai ascensive) he himself will drink of the wine of the wrath (thumos) of God having been mixed full strength in the cup of His anger (orge) and will be tormented in fire and sulphur in the presence of holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.***

Last week we saw two angels (14:6, 8), here is a third angel, distinct, but of the same kind (*allos*). It says he ***followed*** the other two angels so these announcements are sequential showing that each announcement builds on the prior announcements. The first angel announced the eternal gospel. If one rejects the eternal gospel the second angel announces the certain doom of their city, Babylon, who made them drunk with immorality. Here, the third angel announces the eternal punishment of all who refuse to believe the eternal gospel. So, these are stiff warnings to the unregenerate. “The goal of the warning is to frighten potential beast worshipers into believing and to encourage the faithful to remain faithful” (Moffat, Mounce, Thomas, 209). One may avoid temporal

suffering by aligning himself with the beast but the eternal consequences of such a choice are infinitely greater.

**Matthew 10:28** "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

The *if* statement of v 9 is very important. It is a warning to a person who is *thinking about* worshipping the beast and taking the mark at this time. The pressure to worship the beast will be tremendous by this time. Food and water will be very difficult to come by since no one can buy or sell without the mark. If the mark is refused they will face concentration camps or death. It is much easier to take the mark. But if they do so the results of v 10 are disastrous. If they take the mark and worship the beast then they will ***drink of the wine of the wrath of God having been mixed full strength in the cup of His anger AND will be tormented in fire and sulphur in the presence of holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.***

This is the most horrifying description of eternal punishment in the entire Book of Revelation. These descriptions have one intention; to scare the hell out of you, quite literally. Verse 10 should be translated ***even he himself will drink.*** This is middle voice meaning the person who chooses to take the mark of the beast is choosing to ***drink of the wine of the wrath of God.*** *wrath* is *thumos* and refers to God's intense rage. *anger* is *orge* and refers to settled retribution. Together these words express the white heat of His anger released on those who revel in their sin and refuse to believe in His only begotten Son (Thomas, 210). ***the wrath of God has been mixed full strength (unmixed;*** a powerful oxymoron) ***in the cup of His anger.*** A common practice was to dilute wine so it was not ***full strength.*** But this *wine* is not diluted. Rather spices are added to concentrate it (cf Ps 75:8). Therefore, its intoxicating effect is greater. The wrath poured out will be so great that the earthdwellers will become drunk and stumble to their ultimate destruction. This "judgment will be without any mercy or grace" (Thomas, 210). It will be an awful bloodbath. As terrible as this sounds, the parallel in Rev 16:5-6 says God is righteous to judge them, "They deserve it." Lastly, if that were not terrible enough, to choose to take the mark is to choose to drink of this cup and suffer eternal torment in fire and brimstone.

***Revelation 14: 11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever, and they do not have rest (anapausis) day and night the ones worshipping the beast and his statue and if he takes the mark of his name.***

Verse 11 says the *smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever*. There are two important things here. First, *smoke* is a sign of God's punishment. Smoke rose from Sodom and Gomorrah and will rise from the future Babylon. Second, as the *smoke ascends forever and ever* so *their torment* lasts *forever and ever*. It is eternal *torment*, unending *torture*. This thought is one of the most horrifying to human thought. As a result, some Christians have taught a doctrine of Annihilationism. This is the idea that the punishment for those who refuse to believe is total destruction/extinction of the individual. Nevertheless, it stands as the final word throughout Scripture that their punishment is eternal.

**Matthew 25:46** "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

**2 Thessalonians 1:6-9** For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,<sup>7</sup> and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,<sup>8</sup> dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.<sup>9</sup> These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

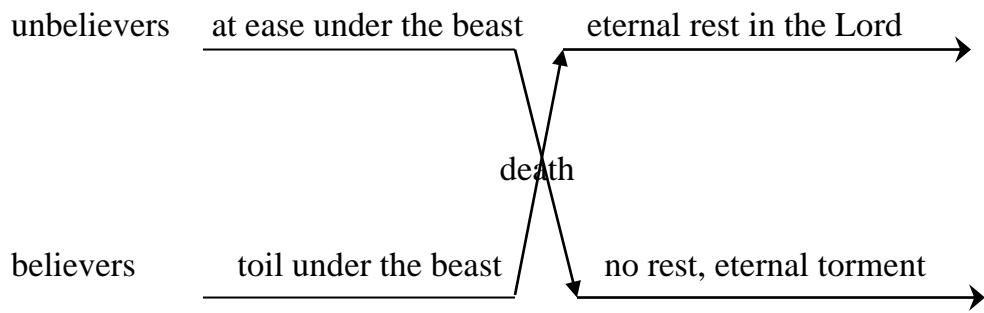
I know we don't like this thought but it is sobering and ought to stimulate us to evangelism. The last characteristic of eternal torment in verse 11 is that *they do not have rest day and night*. Believers step into eternal rest, unbelievers step into eternal toil. This is a terrible, terrible destiny. This is not just a figure of speech or an idea. It's a place and the torment there is real. So, this is a warning to those who are unsure whether they want to worship the beast or worship God. It is very important to choose God even though the times will be difficult.

**Revelation 14:12** *Here (wde) the perseverance of the saints is, the ones keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*

This is an encouragement to steadfastly endure to the bitter end. No event on earth under the beast and the false prophet is as terrible as eternal torment. Therefore, the only right response is to *keep the commandments of God*. Obedience to God and not the Antichrist. Second, to *keep the faith of Jesus*. This means one must have a living faith in Jesus in order to be obedient. Obedience to God's commandments is a faith response. Those living in this time are going to have to have a living faith in Jesus if they are going to be able to endure the intense persecution.

**Revelation 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write, blessed the ones dying the ones in the Lord dying from now." "Yes," says the Spirit, "that (hina) they will be given rest from their labors, for their works follow with them."**

**And I heard a voice.** John hears another **voice from heaven**. Usually the **voice from heaven** is the Father. John is told to **Write**. John is most likely already writing but this is very important so the command to write is repeated. A special blessing is promised for those **dying in the Lord from now**. This is the second of seven blessings in Revelation (cf 1:3). This promise of special blessing will help motivate the believers' in the future great tribulation to be faithful to the commandment of God until bitter death. There will be many martyrs under the beast's rule of terror. Martyrdom is a major theme in Revelation. One who is martyred for Christ demonstrates that he has attained the highest level of discipleship. He has not loved his life even unto death. His loyalty is to Christ and Christ alone. Thus, there will be a future blessing for all who die in the Lord from this point forward. The Spirit of God affirms this by saying **Yes...that they will be given rest from their labors, for their works follow with them.**" **rest** is what all these martyrs will immediately enjoy when they die. They **will be given rest from all their labors**. This is the exact opposite of what the worshippers of the beast will be given when they die. "The saints will rest from their troubles and harsh treatment, but at death, the troubles of their antagonists will begin and never end" (Thomas, 216).



What does it mean that **their works follow with them**. It means that their faithfulness will not be forgotten but rewarded. Their will be rewards for the faithfulness of the Tribulation saints. All the harsh treatment and torment that they put up with during this time will be worth it because the Lord will reward them with immeasurable blessings.

**Revelation 14:14 And I saw (kai eidon), and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sitting like a Son of Man, having upon His head a crown (stephanos) golden and in His hand a sharp sickle.**

Verses 14-20 mark the final aspect of the vision in chapter 14. It outlines the final defeat of those who do take the mark of the beast. It describes what the wrath of God mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger looks like when unleashed. This is the white heat of God's furious judgment against every soul who has refused the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ.

It begins with the words *And I saw* (*kai eidon*) which marks the third scene of the vision in chapter 14. **and behold** marks the importance of the vision. It means "Look, Listen". *a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sitting like a Son of Man*. This is the the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; the theme of the entire Book of Revelation (cf 1:7).

**Revelation 1:7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS,** and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

and alludes to Daniel 7:13.

**Daniel 7:13** "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him.

When He ascended He went into the clouds and when He comes again He comes with the clouds. This description is in advance of His actual coming which is described in detail in chapter 19. He is called by His title *Son of Man* which emphasizes Christ in His humanity and in His Kingdom. He *wears upon His head a golden crown*. This is a *stephanos* crown. *Stephanos* crowns symbolized victory over one's enemies. The *Son of Man* wears a *golden* victory *crown* symbolizing His royal victory over His enemies and the beginning of His earthly Kingdom.

In His *hand* he holds *a sharp sickle*. This instrument introduces the tool of harvest and hints at what the Son is about to do to the world. He is about to harvest those who worship the beast and have taken his mark with great swiftness and to completion.

**Revelation 14:15** *And another (allos) angel came out of the temple (naos) calling out with a loud voice to the one sitting down upon the cloud, "Send (aorist of pempw) your sickle and reap, because the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth has become ripe."*

**And another angel** refers to the fourth **angel** in this chapter. The first three announced what is to come. This angel announces the command to execute the judgments. He comes **out of the temple** showing that he has received this command from God the Father and is conveying it to the Son. He **calls out with a loud voice** to the **Son of Man** who is seated **upon the cloud** of His Second Coming. The command from the heavenly temple, **Send your sickle and reap**. Both **send** and **reap** are aorist imperatives meaning “**send your sickle** down into the earth and **reap** the unregenerate; slaughter them and “do it now without delay”. This begins the recollection of the sickle/harvest motif in Joel 3:13 which happens in the context of “the day of the Lord”.

**Joel 3:13** 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.

Jesus said, “But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come” (Mark 4:29). God has shown His longsuffering patience in waiting so long to judge. He has given them every chance to believe the eternal gospel. But the time for mercy and grace is over and the **hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth has become ripe**. The earth’s unregenerate inhabitants have become dried out (*xeraino*) and are ready to **harvest**.<sup>i</sup> The judgment is death though not explicitly stated in verse 15 or 16. In the OT, those influenced by Babylon suffer the same fate.

**Jeremiah 51:33** For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor At the time it is stamped firm; Yet in a little while the time of harvest will come for her."

**Revelation 14:16 And the one sitting upon the cloud cast His sickle upon the earth and the earth was reaped.**

The **Son of Man** follows the command immediately and His judgment is completely successful. Verses 17-20 reveal a similar occurrence except at the hands of an **angel** rather than the **Son of Man**.<sup>ii</sup>

**Revelation 14:17 And another (allos) angel came out of the temple (naos) in heaven also (kai) having his sharp sickle.**

This is the fifth **angel** in chapter 14. He comes **out of the temple in heaven** just as the previous angel came out of the heavenly **temple** (cf 14:15). He carries with him a **sharp**

*sickle* as Christ carried a *sharp sickle*. He has the same intent. Why two descriptions of a harvest are given I do not know.

***Revelation 14:18 And another angel [came] from the altar [the one] having authority over the fire, and he called out loud voice to the one having the sharp sickle saying, "Send your sharp sickle and gather (trugaw) the clusters (botrus) of grapes from the vineyard of the earth, for her bunches (staphulh) of grapes are ripe.***

The sixth and final *angel* in this chapter comes forth *from the altar* in the heavenly temple. This is the same *angel* mentioned in 8:3-5. He has *authority over the fire* that burns on that *altar* which stands at the entrance to the Holy of Holies, the presence of God. This is the *angel* who adds incense to the prayers of the saints so that they go up before the presence of God. Probably, this is the answer to the martyrs prayers of vengeance in Rev 6:9-10. They cried out, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Apparently the length of time has now expired. He calls out with a loud voice, obviously conveying the Father’s directives *saying, "Send your sharp sickle and gather (trugaw) the clusters (botrus) of grapes from the vineyard of the earth, for her bunches (staphulh) of grapes are ripe."*

Throughout the entire age evil is growing. By the end of the age evil will reach the point of ripeness and the time for harvest will have come. Matt 13:39ff either speaks of this narrow event or of all the bowl judgments or even all the trumpets and bowls which angels play a peculiar role (8:1-6; 15:1).

**Matthew 13:39** and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.<sup>40</sup> "So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age.<sup>41</sup> "The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,

***Revelation 14:19 And the angel cast his sickle into the earth and gathered the vineyard of the earth and cast into the great wine press of the wrath of the God.***

Both those Christ harvested with His sharp sickle and those this angel harvested with his sharp sickle are all *cast into the great wine press of the wrath of God*. Israel is often represented as a vineyard (Isa 5:1-7) and may refer to them here. Thus, this would be a mixed wine composed of unbelieving Jews and Gentiles.

The winepress in ancient times consisted of two bowls hewn out of solid rock. One was higher than the other and contained the grapes which someone walked on to squeeze the juice from them. The juice flowed through a duct into the lower basis where it collected until being removed for consumption. The redness of the juice and the staining of the feet and garments of the treaders made this an apt picture of divine judgment (cf. Gen. 49:11).<sup>iii</sup>

After all the rebels are gathered they will be *cast into the great wine press of the wrath of God* in order to be trampled.

**Revelation 14:20** *And the wine press was trampled outside (exothen) the city and blood came forth out of the wine press as far as (axri) the bit/bridle (xalinos) of the horses for a thousands six hundred stadia (200 yards) (which equals 181.8 miles).*

Here is the bloody outcome of this future judgment. Christ will be the one who tramples the **wine press**. **Blood** will pour *forth out of the wine press* located *outside the city*.

**Isaiah 63:2** Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press? <sup>3</sup>"I have trodden the wine trough alone, And from the peoples there was no man with Me. I also trod them in My anger And trampled them in My wrath; And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, And I stained all My raiment. <sup>4</sup>"For the day of vengeance was in My heart, And My year of redemption has come. <sup>5</sup>"I looked, and there was no one to help, And I was astonished and there was no one to uphold; So My own arm brought salvation to Me, And My wrath upheld Me. <sup>6</sup>"I trod down the peoples in My anger And made them drunk in My wrath, And I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."

This is the most horrifying picture of the destruction of human life in the entire Bible. The blood of those who once had life and time to believe in Christ and be saved will be four feet deep, up to the **bridle of the horses** and will run for **a thousand six hundred stadia**.<sup>iv</sup> This is a distance of 191 miles. This is a lake of blood the length of the land of Israel.<sup>v</sup> The day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming is the day of the greatest judgment of God. This is the final result of the campaign of Armageddon after Christ annihilates His enemies. Joel says, "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision" (3:14).

The location of this great blood bath will be *outside the city*. The **city** is no doubt Jerusalem. So, the final battle will take place *outside the city* of Jerusalem in the valley of

Jehoshaphat. “Let the nations be aroused And come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, For there I will sit to judge All the surrounding nations. <sup>13</sup> 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 3:12-13). So, this terrible picture of the final doom of those who refuse to believe in Christ sets the tone for what follows in chapters 15-20 where these events are described in detail.

## CONCLUSION

There is only one response in light of these terrifying predictions. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. While there is still mercy and grace believe and be saved. The Bible predicts that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking saying, “where is the promise of His coming, for ever since the fathers fell asleep everything continues just as it has from the beginning”. When they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water, <sup>6</sup>through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. <sup>7</sup>But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

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<sup>i</sup> The **harvesting** here is equivalent to judging (cf 14:7).

<sup>ii</sup> The terminology “vineyard of the earth” in verse 18 may refer to unbelieving Israelites. Thus, the judgment described in verse 16, and carried out by the **Son of Man** may deal be for unbelieving Gentiles while the judgment described in verses 17-20 and carried out by an **angel** may be of unbelieving Israel (possibly cf Matt 24:28). After these two harvests they will all be thrown into the wine press of the wrath of God and Christ will trample them (14:19-20)

<sup>iii</sup> Robert Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*.

<sup>iv</sup> A *stadios* ranged from 600-630 feet depending on the locale. It was the distance of a foot race in the ancient world, similar to our 200m dash. Most estimates hold to 192 meters which equals 629.9 feet. When we have 1,600 of these the distance is 191 miles.

<sup>v</sup> An adult human body has ~5 liters of blood. The number of humans that must die to equal this volume of blood (114,227,894 liters) is 22,845,579.

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