

## Week 34—Feel the Compassion of Jesus

(Revelation 14)

As the end of days approaches, you can find hope as you feel the compassion of Jesus!



### SUNDAY: The Tide Turns in the War for Planet Earth

*Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him **one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.** And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps (Revelation 14:1–2, emphasis added).*

The tide of the war for planet Earth turns in Revelation 14. In this chapter, Jesus, in His glorified presence, is standing on His holy hill, Zion, and around Him stand His servants. Beneath Zion, the beast from the abyss, empowered by Satan, has crawled ashore. On the earth, death is stalking all who refuse Satan and turn to Jesus.

In Revelation 14, right in the middle of all hell breaking loose across this planet, what do we find? One of the most touching chapters in the Bible—a chapter exposing Christ's great compassion. For those chosen servants, the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, we find that this chapter sets forth the delights of life with Jesus.

In the first half of Revelation 14 we see that Jesus offers: **security** in the face of dangers (vv. 1–2); **joy** in the midst of desolation (v. 3); **purity** in the sea of filth (v. 4a); **truth** in a world of lies (v. 5); and **hope** in the land of doom (vv. 6–7).

In the second half of Revelation 14, we find that there is: **doom** without Jesus (vv. 8–11); **compassion** in the time of judgment (vv. 12–13); and **understanding** in a time of wrath (vv. 14–20).

Although these words in chapter 14 are directed to this special group called the 144,000, the whole book of Revelation was written to encourage the saints of all ages. So today we, too, can enjoy Jesus' security, joy, purity, truth, and hope! But side by side with all the love and compassion

of Christ is the result of choosing to ignore and reject His love. Apart from Jesus there is only hopeless and indescribable torment—torment without rest.

In Revelation 14:12–13, the Holy Spirit speaks for the first time, and a note of hope sounds. As He looks down at the multitudes on earth, the Holy Spirit expresses compassion for those saints who patiently endure.

When Jesus walked on earth as a human and a servant, there were only 250 million people on the planet. Presently, there are over six billion people, but by this point in Revelation, many will have died in the Tribulation. However, as He looks at an even greater multitude than those He saw in His earthly ministry, He is moved with sympathy and will encourage His servants before sending them back out. And if they still need help, He will send an angel to preach the gospel. What a compassionate heart!

In the midst of His children’s martyrdom and pain, Jesus will offer His patience, obedience, faith, and hope of blessings. God’s Word is so precise and inspired that it gives understanding in the time of wrath, for apart from Jesus there is only senseless and immeasurable bloodshed.

Ray Stedman noted that before this book of Revelation is over, we will look beyond these scenes of judgment, beyond the slaughter, beyond the misery that is to come upon the earth. There is a new day of the “winepress.” When “Jacob’s trouble” is finally over, Israel will blossom and spread its branches throughout the whole earth like a vine; and Israel’s Messiah will reign. It will be the long awaited Utopia.<sup>1</sup> But before that morning dawns, the long night of the human race will grow darker, much darker.

**My Prayer for You This Week:** *Father, as we reflect upon what is coming in this chapter, we feel the sober nature of this passage—that Your judgment falls upon the earth after Your patience and mercy come to an end. It grieves our hearts to realize that so many will reject You and turn their hearts and souls away from Your mercy and grace. We see the harvest, the judgment, and that the harvester is the Lord of the harvest. You put Your messengers on this planet, and You send an angel to preach the everlasting gospel. You stand among Your servants calling all to come to You. Oh Christ, how we thank You for Your love and compassion! It strengthens our hearts to think of how merciful and gracious You are. How we pray that each of Your saints would be touched by Your compassion—that they would see as You see and have a heart of compassion as You have. Oh, that each one of us would give You our hands to serve You in the lives of others! Since people are all that can be taken to heaven with us, we want to take some with us. We want to be among those who point many to You, Lord Jesus. Touch our hearts with Your compassion and help us to see the horror of lostness and hardness. As the apostle Paul said, “knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” That is what You have left us to do. Help us to do it with all our hearts. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.*

## MONDAY: Jesus Offers Security and Joy

*... One hundred and forty-four thousand [have] His Father's name written on their foreheads. ... And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. **They sang ... a new song before the throne ... and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth** (Revelation 14:1b-3, emphasis added).*

As the world plunges into desolation and destruction, God gives us living proof of His care! With Jesus are the blameless, unstoppable witnesses—all who have security because their Father's name is written on their foreheads. God is saying, "You are mine." God has named all the stars, which are merely inanimate objects, and He calls them each by name—but God's servants have the *Father's name* written on their foreheads.

**Jesus offers security in the face of dangers.** Because of His seal, the saints don't have to worry about getting the mark of the beast; they are impervious to it, and will not be tricked into wanting or taking it. As we step back and look at this scene, here is the blessing: all these servants have been deployed like commandos behind enemy lines; they are the ones who are risking their health and lives to give the gospel out during the Tribulation—and Jesus is right there in the middle of them!

Sometimes people quote Matthew 18:20 to me: "*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.*" But the context of Matthew 18 is church discipline where two or three witnesses are needed to turn someone over to the Lord for discipline. So I tell them that I have something even better—Jesus promised to come for just *one*: "*Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*" (Matthew 28:20).

Stedman says that heaven, as it is pictured in the Bible, is actually another dimension of existence, just beyond the reach of our five senses. You can be in heaven at the same time that you are on earth. As I read these prophetic passages of Scripture, I am more and more convinced that this is clearly the case: the church will be with the Lord, yet the Lord will be on the earth throughout those seven turbulent years. Amazingly, although the church will be with the Lord ministering to this select group of 144,000 Jews, it will be invisible to the rest of the world.

During this time, Jesus will periodically appear to these living Jews—standing with them and empowering them for their mission. If this is true, then Jesus will be in exactly the same condition with them as He was with the eleven disciples after His Resurrection, when for a period of forty days He appeared to them from time to time. And then He ascended out of sight into heaven in a cloud. As you examine the gospel accounts of the time between the Lord's Resurrection and Ascension, you find that He was often with them in various times, various places, and then suddenly He would not be with them. It was as if He would step back into the realm of invisibility after appearing for a while in their midst.<sup>2</sup>

In a very real sense, we are sitting in front of God's throne right now. While we are here on earth, we are in the presence of Jesus; He is here in the spiritual realm. When He comes again, He will just step between the dimensions of spiritual heaven and physical earth. In chapter 14,

we find Him standing on the earth prior to the Second Coming, for He has not yet come in the clouds of glory to reconquer the earth; He is just with His saints.

**Jesus offers joy in the midst of desolation.** People sing when they are happy, sad, and sometimes when they are scared—but most often when they have joy. These secure saints, the 144,000 servants of the Lord, have joy in the midst of the desolation of the planet. Everything has gone berserk: the sun is too hot; the waters are polluted; meteorites are crashing onto the earth; demons are running rampant, and yet these saints are singing a beautiful new song that rises above the screams of anguish and hatred.

Like Jeremiah in the smoking ruins of Jerusalem (see the book of Lamentations), God's faithfulness is seen anywhere and at any time. These saints express their intimacy with Jesus by a new song that no one knows but them. This is the second of three new treasures God gives His servants: (1) a new name (v.1); (2) a new song (v. 3a); and (3) a new destination (v. 3b).

When we are redeemed by the substitutionary work of Jesus on our behalf, we receive a *new name* to show that we are His new creations in Christ. We then get to live full of the Holy Spirit and experience that *new song*, which we sing all through life. (The Word of God describes nine new songs: Psalm 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isaiah 42:10; Revelation 5:9; 14:3.)

If you get a report that your company is downsizing and you are out of a job, or your body is sick and is “downsizing” you right into heaven, or you have a financial crisis or some emotional tragedy, you can still have joy. How is that possible? Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. If you don't have joy in your life, you are quenching the Spirit through coupling your life to your circumstances rather than letting Him produce His fruit of joy in your spirit. Joy is not to be attached to circumstances: joy is produced internally by the welling up of the Holy Spirit within us. So these 144,000 servants have joy in the midst of desolation.

You, too, can have joy today. Ask the Spirit of God to rule in your heart, to help you detach your life from circumstances and to attach to Him.

## TUESDAY: Jesus Offers Purity in the Sea of Filth

*They sang ... a new song before the throne. ... These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb* (Revelation 14:3a, 4, emphasis added).

In the verse above, John further explains who the servants are that sing that new song. At this time the world is intoxicated with fornication, the wine of passion (14:8), for the earth dwellers *did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts* (9:21). So in the midst of such wickedness all over the planet, this group of servants stands out in their purity.

What does “*not defiled with women*” mean in verse 4? This phrase has been erroneously used to found all kinds of celibate cults throughout the years. It certainly means no fornication, uncleanness, or any other sexual immorality. It can also mean that they are literally like Jesus—

unmarried and kept for God's glory alone, and as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7, "undistracted" by marriage. However, this is a spiritual scene: *For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ* (2 Corinthians 11:2). Does this mean that none of Paul's converts were married? No. Paul has gone from the physical realm of adultery, fornication, and immorality to the realm of spiritual adultery, fornication, and immorality—just as John does in verse 4.

When we become Christians, we are engaged to Jesus Christ, so we should keep ourselves from other suitors. Who are those suitors? We find the answer in James 4:4–5: *Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?"* You and I can commit sin by loving the world.

The world is the earth-dwelling system in which a person only lives for the moment (the pleasure, the thrill, the stuff, the toys, and the entertainment) instead of being a pilgrim and stranger on the earth and looking for heaven. Since you are engaged to Jesus, and He is preparing a home for you to dwell in forever with Him, if another suitor comes to you and says, "He is gone, so spend some time with me," you must firmly say NO. That is what the Christian life is like. Spiritual fornication is loving something that distracts us from our love for Christ. If you are attracted to the world more than to Christ, you are lusting after the world.

Our world is getting so vile: ... *It is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret* (Ephesians 5:12). I cannot tell you how many times I have been in the car listening to the news and had to turn it off to keep from hearing about the filth going on in our culture in the highest places of society. In our world there is a constant redefinition of sin. Sodomy has become "gay"; fornication and adultery have become "an affair." But God says fornication is any mental or physical sexual contact with someone who is not your husband or wife. He would thus consider sexual pictures, sensual phone conversations, and fantasy thoughts as adultery and fornication.

Those things destroy spiritual sensitivity, so God tells us clearly: *Do not love the world* [all the lust, immorality, godlessness] *or the things in the world* [toys, trinkets, and distractions]. *If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh* [desires and pleasure], *the lust of the eyes* [chasing after stuff we see], *and the pride of life* [status and power]—*is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever* (1 John 2:15–17).

I meet people all the time who want to know the will of God, and I tell them to stay pure. You will not know the will of God if you are living in impurity. You will not know the will of God if you are not a holy, chaste bride seeking out Christ alone. If you love the world and the stuff in the world you will not know the will of God because it is enmity with God to do so. What is the world? It is the whole system that draws us away from a holy walk with God. Television is a classic example: TV has conditioned us to act superficially. The end result is that many of God's children have become only "*hearers of the Word*" rather than "*doers of the Word*" (James

1:22–25). This, in turn, causes desensitization to the compassion of Christ. The world's system promotes our pride, assertiveness, and aggressiveness. And our busyness prevents us from having time for people.

In contrast, those who do not defile themselves, who stay pure with Jesus Christ and seek Him, *These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes* (Revelation 14:4). The Scriptures say that compassion is a universal language that does not require translation. People saw Christ's compassion in His eyes and His life; He did not have to declare it. A true servant of the Lamb will have His spiritual sensitivity; they can follow the Lamb and do His will because they will be pure. So then, if you want to know God's will, stay pure. Deny sin!

### **WEDNESDAY: Jesus Offers Truth in a World of Lies**

*And in their mouth was found no deceit, for **they are without fault** before the throne of God* (Revelation 14:5, emphasis added).

In the company of the Lamb are those who rest in the absolute delights of His security, joy, purity, and truth. They are like Jesus of whom it was said: “[He] *committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth ...*” (1 Peter 2:22).

What is so marvelous is that the Holy Spirit presents these martyrs as the heroes of the book of Revelation. In our world it is popular to lie. People generally believe it is only a lie if you are under oath and there is a transcript, but the God of truth says: ... *Do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No,” lest you fall into judgment* (James 5:12).

Several years ago, someone wrote a book in which the author speculated as to what would happen if everyone told the truth—the government, the military, salesmen, financial markets, and married couples. What this ungodly writer had to say only points out the fact that worldly people know that they are lying.

These servants of the Lord in Revelation 14:5 have Truth in a world of lies, for they know the Christ who says: *“I am the way, the truth, and the life”* (John 14:6). The world, however, is so much like their father the devil: *“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer ... and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him ...”* (John 8:44).

How will these servants of the Lamb keep from becoming entrapped in the world's web of deceit? They will believe what God has revealed to them: *“If you abide in My word, ... you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:31–32).

Modern history testifies to what will happen to those who hear the Truth of the Bible preached. To illustrate, go back with me to 1931—to a living legend named C. T. Studd. After serving fifteen years in China and six in India, he invested his final twenty-one in the heart of Africa's vast, dark jungles among the fierce, cannibal, head-hunting pygmies.

Once a lean and fit professional athlete, C.T. is now gaunt and emaciated. He is hunched over, halting with each step. But in July 1931 he is surrounded by thousands of glistening black bodies wearing banana leaves. The pygmies of the heart of Africa's jungles have come to hear their beloved Bwana for the last time. He speaks to them only after over two hours of singing the songs he had so lovingly taught them: "Wounded for me, wounded for me, there on the cross He was wounded for me, gone my transgressions and now I can sing, all because Jesus was wounded for me!"<sup>3</sup>

There in front of his cot sit 5,000 former headhunters. Once their bodies were the habitation of dark, foul fiends from the pit, but now they are temples of the living God. Once they were naked and grossly immoral lovers of darkness, but now they are not only clothed in Christ but also modestly clothed in banana leaves. Once they lived as a continuation of generations of murderers, years of darkness, and lives of savagery, but now, before their beloved father in the faith, they sit in an immense sea of white-toothed smiles. Once they were all mortal enemies, never without the weapons of war, but now no weapons of war are left, only the bond of love. With faces turned heavenward, these former enemies sit shoulder-to-shoulder, singing of the sweet by-and-by and that beautiful shore they will see some day.

Those saints were converted and transformed by the Lord through the simple passionate preaching of the Truth of God's Word in the Bible—and that Truth had set them free! Why have believers all through the ages seen lives transformed by the preaching of the gospel? Because they simply obeyed what Jesus left them and us to do—and soon the 144,000 Tribulation servants will be doing it as well.

This company around the Lamb are thus secure, joyful, pure, and truthful; they are like Jesus, "*Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth*" (1 Peter 2:22).

On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate your truthfulness? Who are you following—the father of lies or the Father of truth?

## THURSDAY: Jesus Offers Hope in the Land of Doom

*Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth ... saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (Revelation 14:6–7, emphasis added).*

I do not think we are going to turn the world around. We are not going to save the planet, and the ecology is not going to get better. But I still have great hope, knowing that those I lead to Christ will not be sealed by the Antichrist because they will already be sealed by the Spirit of God. They *will* have a future and a hope! That is why we can have hope in a world of doom; we

do not simply hide out, sitting on a mountaintop to wait for the end of the world. No, we rescue as many people as we can by telling them about Jesus.

These servants standing with Jesus in verses 6–7 are witnesses of the endless, unchangeable gospel. Mankind’s only hope is to bow to their Creator and reach out to their Redeemer—or face Him as judge. All who have been saved in any age (law, church, or kingdom) were only saved by the sovereign grace of God, on the basis of the work that was accomplished by our Lord’s atoning death. The eternal gospel is a proclamation to all who dwell upon the earth: every nation, tribe, tongue, and people. It is the good news that the judgment of God, so long awaited, is about to be consummated; and that the groaning earth will be brought back from the reign of the rebel prince, and put under the sway of the Son of God.

“The rod which Satan has held over the earth has been heavy because it has been held by Satan. The rod which the Lord Jesus is about to hold over the earth is an iron rod, but it is held in the hand of the One who has said, *“My yoke is easy, and My burden is light”* (Matthew 11:30). Once more we repeat that men are saved only by the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus. We believe that Adam and Eve were saved through believing God’s Word concerning the Seed of the woman who would bruise the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15) and that in token of that salvation the Lord God made coats of skins (after having some sacrificial victim) and clothed them (Genesis 3:21). So much for the past. We believe that every blessing that will ever come to this earth or to any individual or group of individuals on it will come on the ground of Christ’s death on the cross. But the open preaching of salvation to all who will come on the simple basis of trusting God’s Word about the work that was accomplished on Calvary, is a phenomenon which begins with Pentecost.”<sup>4</sup>

I personally believe that the gospel has always been the same: substitutionary atonement. From the Garden of Eden, as soon as Adam and Eve fell into sin, God killed an animal and clothed Adam and Eve with the skins. He could have taken cotton fiber and spun it, but it took a blood sacrifice to atone. This is the first example of being clothed with the righteousness of a blood sacrifice. Right from the beginning it has always been substitutionary atonement. Abel’s offering on the altar was a lamb. God said that the Seed of the woman would crush the serpent’s head, and that the coming One would sacrifice Himself as Isaiah says in chapter 53. The gospel has always been the same: *“Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth ...”* (Revelation 14:7).

There are three elements of the eternal gospel, which are always present.

**Conviction—“Fear God”:** If we preach a gospel without conviction, it is not the gospel of God. That is why it bothers me so much today that people can hear the gospel and desire to get saved, but not be convicted of their sinfulness that separates them from God. I thought about that a lot as a little child, and in the fall of 1962, I came to my mother and told her that I did not want to be separated from God. I did not want to go to hell. Like a little child, you should fear God: His wrath, His judgment, and separation from Him eternally!

**Conversion—“give glory to Him”:** The person who truly fears God will turn from his or her old ways and give Him glory; that is conversion. If you have never been saved from sin, you have

never been saved from hell. When the Israelites came out of Egypt they wanted a savior, not a Lord. So God destroyed them. There are groups of people in churches across this nation and around the world that want a savior, but not a Lord, and God will destroy them as well. If there is no genuine and lasting repentance, there is no conversion. If there is no conviction of sin, there is no conversion that gives Him glory—that is what the Scriptures teach.

**Consecration—“worship Him”:** This is the fruit of redemption. When we genuinely fear God, we are convicted of our sin, turn to the Savior, and give Him glory. That is the necessary total change of our lives—no longer giving ourselves glory, but Him. Although we will imperfectly do this, and fail at times, this is the longing of the heart of one who fears God. Then, when we consecrate our lives to worshiping Him, out of that worship will flow fruitful service.

God, in His infinite grace, will thus send forth a mighty angel—flying back and forth across the skies during the Tribulation—loudly proclaiming the gospel from one place to another, covering every nation and tribe, speaking in every language, so that no one at the coming judgment would be able to say he or she hadn’t heard. What a compassionate Savior!

## FRIDAY: Jesus Offers Compassion in the Midst of Judgment

*And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” Then a third angel [said] ... with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he ... shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God .... He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone .... And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night ...” (Revelation 14:8–11, emphasis added).*

The passage above starts the second half of this chapter, in which we are confronted with what happens to those who exist without Jesus—eternal judgment and condemnation. But before I discuss the elements of doom that unbelievers will face, I want to further develop the first half of this fourteenth chapter, in which we see a revelation of Christ’s wonderful compassion.

In Revelation 14:1–7, we see Him standing with His servants trying to save those who will come to Him and listen to Him. The most often-noted emotion of Christ’s ministry was His compassion. Jesus was shown to be “*moved with compassion*” no less than thirteen times. (We all need a good dose of His compassion!) A great student of the life and ministry of Christ, the apostle Paul, said his ministry was motivated by Christ’s love. What did the compassion of Jesus look like? Let’s briefly examine the top ten groups of people who move Him to compassion:

- 1. Christ’s compassion is for the confused:** ... *He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd* (Matthew 9:36; see also Mark 6:34).

2. **Christ's compassion is for the sick and suffering:** ... *He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick* (Matthew 14:14).
3. **Christ's compassion is for the weak:** ... *"I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way"* (Matthew 15:32).
4. **Christ's compassion is for the desperate:** *"Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt"* (Matthew 18:27).
5. **Christ's compassion is for the persistent:** *So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him* (Matthew 20:34).
6. **Christ's compassion is for the helpless:** *Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed"* (Mark 1:41; see also Mark 9:22).
7. **Christ's compassion is for the hopeless:** ... *Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you"* (Mark 5:19).
8. **Christ's compassion is for the bereaved:** *When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep"* (Luke 7:13).
9. **Christ's compassion is for the misfortunate:** *"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion"* (Luke 10:33).
10. **Christ's compassion is for the repentant:** *"... But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him"* (Luke 15:20).

Jesus was moved with compassion for the confused, the sick and suffering, the weak, the desperate, the persistent, the helpless, the hopeless, the bereaved, the misfortunate, and the repentant!

**The Doom of Life without Jesus:** When God speaks of Himself as being eternal (which He does eight times in Revelation), He uses the very same word for eternal that is used for the eternal duration of hell (three times in Revelation). So, according to God, it appears that hell lasts as long as He does—forever!

Apart from Jesus there is only hopeless and indescribable torment and judgment. The Word of God describes hell as a place of unending anguish. Jesus talked about hell more than heaven. Revelation 14:11 says that *“they have no rest day or night.”* Remember that Jesus talked about the bottomless pit and a lake of fire in which there is endless falling and no rest. There is no place to stand on to catch your breath—just endless torment.

It is not fashionable to talk about this today. A lot of the mainline denominations disavow hell; they say it is not Christian. It is more Christian than they understand, because Jesus is the One who describes it more than anyone else. The Word of God repeatedly describes hell as unending anguish: *“And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”* ... *His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire* (Isaiah 66:24; Matthew 3:12; see also Matthew 13:50; Mark 9:43–49; Jude 7).

But a note of hope sounds in verses 12–13 of Revelation 14 as the Holy Spirit speaks for the first time in Revelation; (the second and final time is in 22:17, with the last gospel invitation in God’s Word. *Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on’”* (Revelation 14:12–13).

*“The patience of the saints”* is a wonderful description of who Christians really are. *“The faith of Jesus”* means that if you have faith in Jesus Christ and keep His commands through the new birth (the regeneration of God who gives us the heart to obey Him), you are a saint. At the beginning of verse 13, John is commanded for the tenth time to write down the Word of God (see also 1:11, 19; chapters 2–3; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5). We see here the last call to the earth as the angel is saying to preach the gospel. *“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on”* is the second of the seven beatitudes in Revelation in which God bestows His blessings. Here is a summary of the Revelation beatitudes:

1. Blessed are readers, hearers, and keepers (1:3)—**this emphasizes the importance of the Word of God.**
2. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord (14:13)—**this emphasizes the blessings of eternal life.**
3. Blessed are those watching and keeping their garments white (16:15)—**this emphasizes the Lord’s return.**
4. Blessed are those invited to the Lamb’s supper (19:9)—**this emphasizes the joy of Christ’s presence.**
5. Blessed are the participants of the first Resurrection (20:6)—**this emphasizes deliverance from death.**
6. Blessed are those heeding this book (22:7)—**this emphasizes obedience to the Word of God.**

7. Blessed are those with a clean robe and access to the tree of life (22:14)—**this emphasizes eternal sustenance.**

It is sad that so many today are departing from the doctrine of eternal punishment. For if they refuse to accept the gift of His grace, they must remain in their lost condition—eternally deserving, provoking, and receiving the holy wrath of God. I pray that you are among the saints who rest securely in Jesus as their eternal refuge rather than aligning yourself with those who scoff at the horrors to come!

### **SATURDAY: Jesus Offers Understanding in the Time of Wrath**

*Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and **on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man**, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud. “Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe” (Revelation 14:14–15, emphasis added).*

The impenitent earth dwellers face only doom in their lives. They have told God to leave them alone, and so He will—forever: *These shall be punished with everlasting destruction **from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power ...*** (2 Thessalonians 1:9, emphasis added).

God responds to man’s impenitence. The greatest illustration of this is seen in the actions of Judas. He was next to Jesus Christ for three and one-half years, and yet his heart was unmoved to confess his sin and turn to Christ for salvation. Amazingly, Judas saw no beauty in Christ after all he had witnessed in Him. In the end, caring only for gain, dominated only by self, he was ready to sell the Lord for the price of a slave. Judas is a picture of what we see going on in the world in Revelation 14, and God has to do something about it. As Ray Stedman has pointed out, God has three choices in the face of human rebellion:

- **One:** He can indulge it and allow it to go on forever. But in that case all the cruelty, injustice, hatred, pain, and death that now prevail on the earth will go on forever, too. God does not want that—and neither does man.
- **Two:** God can force man to obey and control the human race as if it were a race of robots. But to take away our free will would be to take away our capacity to give our love to God freely. Love cannot be forced.
- **Three:** This is God’s only real choice. He must withdraw Himself from those who refuse His love. He must let them have their way forever. Since God is necessary to our existence, the decision to reject God is a decision to plunge ourselves into the most terrible sense of loneliness and isolation a human being can know.<sup>5</sup>

Ultimately, we choose whether God will judge us by deciding either to accept or refuse His grace, love, and forgiveness. As a result, we are choosing everlasting life or everlasting death.

Apart from Jesus there is no other future than verses 14–20 of Revelation 14—senseless and immeasurable warfare and bloodshed. In verse 20b, *the blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs*. To have blood for 1,600 furlongs (1 furlong = 607 feet) means 180 miles. From twenty miles beyond Armageddon, that would stretch to twenty miles past Bozrah, an ancient Edomite stronghold, that is twenty miles south-east of the bottom of the Dead Sea.

**How to Develop Compassion as Christ's Servants:** A good place to start is to follow the areas that John Ruskin, a famous poet and art critic, first pointed out as three keys to being a good artist. Enduring artists must possess: (1) **An eye to see** and appreciate all the beauty they wish to capture on the canvas; (2) **A heart to feel** and register within the picture the atmosphere and the beauty of the scene; and (3) **A hand to perform** by transforming a blank canvas into an image of what the eye has seen and the heart has felt. The skills that an enduring artist must follow are the same three skills a compassionate disciple of Jesus must learn.

This study of Revelation 14 will be meaningless if you don't see the compassion of Jesus. So prayerfully examine your life in light of the following challenges.

Do you have **an eye to see** how helpless our world is? There are six billion sheep, and most of them are without a true knowledge of the Good Shepherd. There were only 250 million in Christ's day. The population of our world is twenty-four times that today! What do *you* see in a crowd? A businessman sees a potential market, an educator sees a potential classroom, and a politician sees potential voters. Nearly everyone thinks in terms of personal benefit. But Jesus was moved with compassion at the sight of a crowd, and that compassion led Him to give His life on a cross of wood, writing a letter of love for the sins of the world.

Do you have **a heart to feel** how much the world needs Jesus? In the Bible, the word for compassion means "to suffer together with." This emotion of compassion constitutes a language that is understood universally. Compassion can be seen and felt by all because it is the language of the heart that needs no translation to be understood. In the twenty-first century, we have lost so much compassion in favor of instant gratification, and have a veneer-thin depth of commitment. The superficiality of emotional expression from TV has seeped into our spiritual lives. We are good actors, but often poor at feeling the pain of others. We need to ask God for a heart of compassion like Christ's—a heart that longs to see people come to Jesus!

Do you have **hands to perform** loving works in the name of Jesus? At the end of Revelation 14:13, it says, *"their works follow them."* Do you have good works that will follow you to heaven? What ministries are you involved in today that will touch the immortal souls of people for Jesus? Can you name one? Are your hands doing the work of Jesus? Do you share His Word? Do you reach out to point them to Christ? The fruits of such a ministry will follow you to heaven. Your house and car won't; your education and degrees won't; and your accomplishments and money won't. Are you investing your life with the compassion of Christ? If not, by His grace, start today!

**Make a choice to live in hope.** The most fulfilling and enduring hope you can ever have is to invest your life in others! Make a choice to live in hope by being a *vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work* (2 Timothy 2:21).