

INTRODUCTORY NOTES:

- In our last session we reviewed the unholy Trinity: the dragon, the beast from the sea, and the beast from the earth. These are identified as Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet. Together these three are a counterfeit of God's holy triune nature. They work very hard at taking what is most precious to God, His people.
- We heard also about the well-researched and well-speculated upon "mark of the beast." We will hear more about this mark, and its consequences, in chapter 14.
- There are several key events in this chapter, and it seems to serve as a sort of overview, or "table of contents" for the rest of the book, and the course of events to follow.
- This chapter presents many CONTRASTS to chapter 13. Watch for them.
- Chapter 14 contains three distinct "scenes." The first is the 144,000 redeemed of God, the second scene shows three angels with good news and dire warnings, followed by the divine harvest.

SCENE 1: THE 144,000 REDEEMED ON MT. ZION

¹ 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. ² 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. ³ They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

- We could spend weeks **just trying to determine answers to the obvious questions** raised by these verses:

- 1) **Where is this Mt. Zion?** Is it in heaven, or on earth? (*this is the only mention of Zion in Revelation.*)
- 2) **Who are these 144,000?** Are they the same ones in chapter 7, others, Christians, Jews?
- 3) **What is the identification of the voice from heaven?** Is this God (Jesus), or someone else?
- 4) **What do these "firstfruits" mean? (v. 4)**
- 5) **What is the timeline here?** Where are we in the Tribulation here? Pre, mid, or end?



- Many have speculated on the answers to these questions. For example, it seems logical that these are the same 144,000 that we saw sealed by God in chapter 7. In other words, they are 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes. But we really don't know. In chapter 7 we read: *"...Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed..."* (7:3-4) In chapter 13 we saw the 666 mark of the beast. Here we are reminded that those who love God are also sealed, but with the mark of God. These servants have "their Father's name written on their foreheads." This is a marked (no pun intended!) contrast to the last chapter's mark, which is a mark of doom (we will hear that later in this chapter). Chapter 14 is a chapter of obvious contrasts to chapter 13.
- The endless speculations that surround this book of unveiling (literal meaning of *Apokalupsis*, "Revelation") remind us that **we need to revisit our ultimate purpose in studying this book.** **Why do we study it?** Obviously, it is the only book that promises a blessing to the reader. That should be reason enough. But we have plenty more. Our purpose is not necessarily to uncover the specific meanings of details, some of which really don't concern us now. The grand purposes for this book, and our reasons for studying it are:

- 1) **Hope for the believer**
- 2) **Warning for unbelievers**
- 3) **To know completion of God's plan, and reminder of His covenant with the Jews (no replacement theology)**
- 4) **To reveal the ultimate wrath and demise of the unbeliever**
- 5) **To reveal the ultimate victory for the believer**
- 6) **To stand as prophetic markers**
- 7) **To prepare for what is coming**

Some of the information provided in this book will not be fully known or revealed until it is actually happening in real time, or even past. Those living on earth during this time will most likely understand a great deal more than we do now. They will need this book to guide them through those terrible 7 years. We need this book to give us hope, to provide a blessing, inform us so we can inform others, be assured of the majestic plan of God, and to discern the entire Bible rightly. We do not expect to know the answers to every question...yet.

- *"...behold, a Lamb..."* This Lamb is in direct contrast to the beasts of the previous chapter. This is the same Lamb as seen in chapter 5, and chapter 7. This is the Lamb of God, our Savior Jesus. The word "behold" emphasizes the importance of this statement. Pay attention, it says.
- *"And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder."* This voice from heaven, obviously very loud (like many waters, i.e., a rushing waterfall, loud thunder) indicates this scene we see may be on earth. We are not told what this voice says, but John hears another thunderous sound that may have eclipsed this voice. We are also not told whose voice it is.
- *"...sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song..."* John hears the sound of harps and singing now. It is also most likely a very loud noise. Again, we are not told the identity of these harpists and singers, but we have seen harps before (Revelation 5) and will see them again in the next chapter (15). Those with harps in chapter 5 are the collected Church in heaven. Those in chapter 15 are the tribulation saints, those who are the redeemed out of this terrible time. Together, they represent all the redeemed of God.

- A new song in the Old Testament was not necessarily a “new song” but a song of **yet another new deliverance by God**. A “new song” marks a new act of divine deliverance or blessing. We see that this new song marks the deliverance of these 144,000 through the tribulation. The “new song” proclaims “Look what new thing God is doing!” The Church has already been redeemed and resides in heaven. Now these 144,000 are also redeemed. These are Jews, and God is doing a new thing with them; they are different than the “Church.” We must note that *only the redeemed of God can sing these praises*. To others it is a meaningless song.
- Since this song is sung before the throne, the 4 living creatures and the elders, and no one else could learn this song except the 144,000, it is being sung in heaven (the 144,000 having been redeemed). **This song is exclusive to the 144,000**. Every redeemed group of God has its own, very unique new song of redemption. God works to the same end (redemption) for everyone, but sometimes that plan differs from group to group.
- **“... redeemed from the earth.”** Many people believe that these are the same 144,000 of chapter 7, and that they are here again in a later part of the Tribulation, having been safely delivered through this difficult time. This anticipates the Millennial Kingdom and reign of Christ with His saints.
- **“...Mount Zion...”** Is this in the traditional place on earth, namely Jerusalem, OR is this in heaven?? It could be either. In Hebrews, the writer makes reference to the heavenly Zion: *“For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: “And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.”) And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.”) But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.”* (Hebrews 12:18-24) Mt. Sinai (the mountain of fire) is representative of the Law, and the just expectations of God. Mt. Zion is representative of God’s Grace, and the gift of His Son to cover us from wrath. There is a literal Mt. Zion on earth, and there is one in heaven.
- Some people will argue that this group is another elite (very select) group of believers, not necessarily the same 144,000 from chapter 7. There is no real evidence to support this idea.

⁴ *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. ⁵ And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.*

- **“...were not defiled with women, for they are virgins.”** Is this literal, or symbolic? It could be both. Perhaps these sealed believers are so dedicated to the Lamb that they literally have no time or inclination for personal pleasure outside of following Him. More likely, however, it is symbolic for the fact that these 144,000 are most likely Jews, and in the Old Testament, God likened the unfaithfulness of the Jews to adultery. They were the “wife of God” and committed adultery by “fornicating” themselves and prostituting themselves with other gods. Adultery was a metaphor for infidelity to the Jew’s real husband...God.

- Whenever Israel was faithful, she was called a “virgin.” When she was unfaithful, she was called a “harlot.” (See 2 Kings 19:21, Isaiah 54:5, Hosea 2:5) Likewise, in the New Testament, after the birth of the Church, this body of believers is called the virgin bride of Christ. “*...I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*” (2 Corinthians 11:2a) These are faithful believers, hence the term “virgin.” Women in scripture are generally a symbol of seduction and unfaithfulness (sorry gals!). Some argue that these could also be physically chaste, such as Jeremiah, who was forbidden to marry (Jeremiah 16:1-4).
- These believers follow the Lamb everywhere. Where He leads, they follow. This is another contrast to the “*inhabitants of the earth*” who follow the unholy trinity (dragon and 2 beasts). Notice also that a believer follows the Lamb. Too often we head out in front of Him!
- These are “*redeemed from among men...*” – they are of the human race, and have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, just as all other believers are redeemed. Being “*firstfruits*” may indicate that they are the first of many to come, or are representative of the many redeemed. Firstfruits are generally the best, and the first of an expected harvest. They may also be firstfruits of the populated Millennial Kingdom.
- “*And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.*” The deceit spoken of here is most likely “the Lie” of the enemy. The original lie is that we can be like God, or gods ourselves, and do not need the Almighty or His gift. That is the first lie told and the one that the enemy continues to tell. These redeemed had no such lie. They know the truth, and have not embraced the lie. And having done this, they “*are without fault*” (or blemish) before God. What is the ONLY way we can be without fault before God? To receive the gift of life from Him, the blood of Jesus.

SCENE 2: 3 ANGELS WITH GOOD NEWS AND DIRE WARNINGS

The First Angel: “Fear God...Or Else”

⁶ Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—⁷ 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.”



- We are now **entering into a warning stage**, which previews judgment. Time is running out. It is a “**do this...or else,**” message. Receive the gift and good news of Jesus, or face God’s judgment. Everyone on earth will have adequate warning. No one will be able to stand at the Great White Throne judgment (chapter 20) and say “*I never heard...*” Apparently here there is still some chance that people will receive the good news and believe, and be saved from the coming judgment.

- **“...in the midst of heaven.”** This literally means “mid-heaven.” Some speculate that this could mean a TV satellite bringing the gospel message around the world. Maybe, but until now the task of taking the good news around the globe has been man’s (as a satellite would be). Some think that now God takes over, sending an indestructible, trustworthy angel, literally, to bring the good news to the entire earth. We can’t imagine what form this will take, or what it will look like on earth.
- The Gospel will be preached to the entire earth. Everyone will hear. Even now, God’s grace is still available, but not for long, according to these angels. The “loud” voice insures that all will hear. They warn the earth dwellers to give glory to God, not the beast, because He is the One who should be feared most. God’s grace is available, but soon His judgment comes. Worship God, not the beast (don’t take the beast’s mark!). This is a severe warning to a world not willing to listen. God is graceful even here.
- **“...for the hour of His judgment has come.”** This is good news to the believers who are struggling through this terrible time. Deliverance, and judgment, is around the corner. This message is BAD news to the unbelievers who don’t heed it.
- The reference to **“springs of water”** is interesting, especially considering what is coming in the last 7 plague judgments. The 2nd and 3rd plagues turn the waters into blood, first in the seas, then in the springs of water. This is a warning of what is to come. God is the Almighty, all powerful One, who controls these things, not the beast.

The Second Angel: “Babylon is Fallen”

⁸ *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.”*

- This is the **first mention** of Babylon in the book of Revelation, but two entire chapters are dedicated to her fall later.
- We do not actually “see” the fall of Babylon until chapters 17 and 18. But here the angel is announcing its destiny, before the fact.
- Babylon has been the **enemy’s headquarters from the very beginning of time** (Genesis 11, Nimrod, Tower of Babel, etc.) It is the origin of all false religions. Babylon is a real place, about 62 miles south of Baghdad in Iraq. But Babylon is also a highly developed spiritual symbol in scripture. It represents everything that is in opposition to God.
- We could call the Bible the **“Tale of Two Cities:”** Babylon, the city of man and the enemy AND Jerusalem, the city of God and His people. Other scriptural allusions to Babylon are Babel, Shinar and Chaldea. We will have a much more detailed discussion regarding Babylon when we come to chapters 17 and 18.



- We are told in this verse that all nations will fall under the judgment of Babylon, called a “she” here. **She is the Harlot of chapter 17**, who has enticed the entire world with her seductive, violent and anti-God ways. All nations will be judged, and experience “the wrath of her fornication” (this is the cup of God’s wrath). This is a reference to Jeremiah 51:7, one of six classic chapters in scripture that deal with the destruction and ultimate judgment of Babylon. Those are Isaiah 13 and 14, Jeremiah 50 and 51, and Rev. 17 and 18).
- God’s wrath is seen as a “cup” and a “cup of wine” in Psalm 75:8: *“For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, And the wine is red; It is fully mixed, and He pours it out; Surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth Drain and drink down.”*
- Babylon still exists physically, and has never been completely destroyed. It has undergone extensive rebuilding by various people, notably Saddam Hussein. It was occupied by US Coalition forces during the Iraq war, and is now of interest to the world community to rebuild as a tourist attraction. Stay tuned on this one!

The Third Angel: “Don’t take the Mark!”

⁹ Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

- The message here is **pretty plain and bluntly simple**: Don’t worship the beast, and don’t take the beast’s mark, or you will die and be tormented forever in the place of eternal horror. All of the judgments in this book, as well as the eternal separation from God, will be given to anyone who does the opposite of worshiping and fearing God Almighty. It is becoming clearer and clearer that there are only two kinds of people in the world, especially at this point. Those who believe and love God and have received His gift of salvation and eternal life with Him (Saved, believers) AND those who do not believe, love the beast, and have rejected God’s gift, and will therefore spend an eternal existence apart from God in torment (UNSAVED, unbelievers). Fence-sitting is not possible.
- *“...poured out full strength...”* This is a last call so to speak. After this warning, there will be no more mercy. Today, God’s wrath is diluted with mercy and grace. Not here. It will be poured out full strength.
- *“...in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.”* We don’t like this part. We hate to hear of suffering “in the presence” whether ours or God’s. One commentator (Barclay) said: *“A feature of the last days will be ‘the spectacle of righteous judgment in the presence of the righteous.’”* (from the apocryphal book of Enoch 27:2-3)



- This passage refutes the false teaching that the wicked will merely be destroyed, with no future existence. This is not true. They do have a future, and eternal existence. They will live in torment forever with no rest. Many people think there is nothing beyond physical death. They will be terribly surprised.
- **This is a double, underscored warning not to take the mark of the beast.** It is a mark of doom. Those who take this mark are choosing eternal separation from God. Although God is merciful, He does not mix mercy with this judgment. It is a cup of final wrath.
- The fire and smoke references here **relate to the Lake of Fire** referenced first in Revelation 19. This place is the ultimate destination of all those who oppose God or refuse His gift of eternal life through His Son. It is another indicator that what we call “hell” is a literal place. Jesus refers to it as the “furnace of fire” in Matthew 13, and His words indicate the reality of this place. Hell is not symbolic, it is real.

¹² Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. ¹³ Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”

- **The followers of the beast and the followers of the Lamb are two different groups, headed to two different destinations.** In the previous verses, the warning is to those who follow the beast, and tells of their ultimate destination. Here, the word is to the saints, those who follow the Lamb, and is meant to encourage them to stay true to the end. And if they do, even in death they are blessed because their ultimate destination is with God, and eternal rest. This is addressed to the tribulation saints, not to the Church. It is another underscore to choose *temporary death* **by** the beast rather than *eternal death* **with** the beast during this “time of Jacob’s trouble.”
- In the Greek, this statement could also be translated **“Blessed from the moment of their death are those who die in the Lord.”** They will be swept into the presence of the Lamb. These verses also reinforce the fact that many, if not most, will be martyred for their “patience” and steadfastness with the Lord.
- **“...voice from heaven...”** It is interesting to note that there are seven such voices from heaven (unidentified) and also seven blessings. The heptadic (7’s) structure of this book is remarkable.
- **“...rest from their labors...”** Death brings rest to those who know the source of their salvation. We don’t have to work at life anymore. The work has been completed for us.
- **“...their works follow them.”** This is NOT an indication that salvation is by works. It is merely a statement that says the works, or lives, of these saints are evidence of their faith.

SCENE 3: DIVINE HARVEST

¹⁴ 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.

- We now have a complete scene change, different action and different characters. This scene is a **preview of the final judgment.**

- We stated earlier that chapter 14 reads like an overview of what is yet to come in this book. Just as chapter 6 was like an outline of the conditions present during the tribulation, so **this chapter is a synopsis of the unraveling of the entire plan of God to the end of this time of judgment.** The timeline of the tribulation is advanced to the end here. We will be given more detail in the coming chapters, but this chapter serves as the high overview.
- In particular, this overview can be seen as a summary of the entire book, as it relates to the final disposition of believers and unbelievers.
- **“...behold...”** Whenever this word is used in scripture it means to pay attention, something important is coming. Indeed, here, some One important is coming.
- **“One like the Son of Man,...”** We know who this is. This comes from Daniel 7:13: **“I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.”** This can be no one but Jesus. “Son of Man” was Jesus’ favorite title for Himself.
- **This One is sitting on a white cloud.** When Jesus ascended into heaven following His resurrection, he disappeared into the clouds. **“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ..This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”** (Acts 1:9, 11). He will return in the clouds as well. Luke 21:27 also states: **“Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”**
- **Some interpret this cloud as the Shekinah (“glory in the tent”) glory.** The presence of God is often represented by a cloud.



Where	Scripture reference
In the wilderness, guiding and protecting the Israelites	Exodus 13:21, 22; 14:19-24
Manna, provision of food	Exodus 16:10
Giving of the Law (the 1 st time)	Exodus 10:9, 16, 18; 24:15-18
Giving of the Law (the 2 nd time)	Exodus 34:1-5
In the Tabernacle at its initial completion	Exodus 40:34, 35
On the Mercy Seat (atonement cover of the Ark)	Numbers 9:16-22
When 70 elders of Israel chosen	Numbers 11:25
With Solomon and the Ark of the Covenant	1 Kings 8:10, 11
Prophecy regarding destruction of Egypt	Isaiah 19:1
In Jerusalem, as glory leaves Temple, before destruction	Ezekiel (1:4; ch 10; 11:22, 23)
The Transfiguration of Jesus	Matthew 17:5; 1 Peter 1:17-19
Ascension of Jesus	Acts 1:9
At the gathering (rapture) of the Church	1 Thessalonians 4:17
When Jesus returns	Matt 24:30, 26:64; Rev 1:7, 14:14; Luke 21:27

- **“...a golden crown...”** It is interesting to note that this crown is not the expected *diadema*, the crown of kingly authority. It is instead the “stephanos” crown, which was the victor’s crown. Jesus is indeed the King of Kings, and wears many crowns, including the crown of victory. This crown is also golden, which was not the normal crown of laurel leaves for the athletic victor. This is a permanent crown of victory. Jesus wears many crowns: **“His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns....”** (19:12a) He has won the victory for us. He once wore a crown of thorns, but now it is a crown of victory.

We will also wear the victor’s crown: **“O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** (1 Corinthians 15:55, 57)

“And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.” (Revelation 15:2)

- Although this is the victor’s crown, the One on the clouds here also wear’s the crown of authority. He is in charge now.

¹⁵ **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.”**¹⁶ **So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.**

- In the next verse we will hear of another angel with another sickle that will be doing a harvest. Most think that **these are two different harvests**. This first by the One like the Son of Man (obviously Jesus) is the harvest of the believers. There are differences in these two harvests that lead us to believe that this first is a harvest of believers (*more on this in a moment*). Some think this may even reference the rapture, while others believe it is the final harvest of believers before the Millennium. Because of its timing in this book (after the mid-point of the tribulation) some even point to this as a reference for a mid-tribulation rapture. However, since chapter 14 is an overview of sorts, these harvests more than likely point to the end of the tribulation, and the final disposition of believers and unbelievers. As such, it may not reference a particular group of believers at a particular time in the tribulation. It may represent the ultimate harvest of all believers. (*It should be noted that still others believe that both of these harvests are in fact the same one, and involves only the unbeliever, not believers.*)
- It is important to note here that this **angel is not giving Jesus a command**. Angels do not command God. This angel is speaking a proclamation of this harvest. He is relaying a message, “now is the time!”



- No other details are given to us regarding how this harvest is accomplished, or even what kind of harvest it is. Many commentators assume (*can be dangerous!*) that it is a wheat or grain harvest, due to the nature of some of the words used here. The word for “ripe” used here implies over ripe, or dry. The word literally means “to desiccate.” Hence, the interpretation that it is a grain harvest. We do not really know what kind of harvest it is, but many speculate it is the wheat of Jesus’ parable of the wheat and tares (weeds). This harvest appears to be different than the one next by the angel (who is harvesting the vine, or grapes). Luke 3:17 states *“His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.”* The wheat would then represent the believers.

¹⁷ Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. ¹⁸ And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.”

- Notice how **active angels are in this book**, and in the unfolding of the plan of God. In this chapter alone we are shown six angels (*it is likely this number is deliberate, since we’ve just been shown the mark of the beast, 666, which is the number of man, “incomplete.” Man without God is incomplete for eternity, and that is what the angels facilitate or announce here: judgment for all eternity.*)
 1. First angel (v. 6) having the everlasting gospel, bringing a warning of coming judgment
 2. Second angel (v. 8) announcing that Babylon is fallen, doomed
 3. Third angel (v. 9) warning not to take the mark of the beast, or worship him, or they will be eternally separated from God into a place of torment
 4. Fourth angel (v. 15) proclaiming that the time of the harvest by Jesus has arrived
 5. Fifth angel (v. 17) from the temple in heaven, carries a sharp sickle, harvests the vine
 6. Sixth angel (v. 17) from the altar, announcing the time of harvest for the “vine of the earth”
- The words of Jesus in Matthew 13:39-43 help us understand this harvest: *“The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”* Again, the tares (weeds) are the unbelievers (wheat=believers). Notice here that those who reap the unbelievers are angels, not Jesus. Jesus has just been seen reaping one harvest, but not this one. Another indicator this is the harvest of unbelievers. We have more information about this in a minute.
- In verse 18 there is yet **another angel, one who comes from the altar and has “power over fire.”** This is the same angel we saw in chapter 8. The altar of incense, and the burning coals (fire) thereon, represent the prayers of the saints. This culminating harvest is most likely a direct answer to those prayers *“Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”*

- Notice repeatedly that we are told this is a **“sharp” sickle**. The sickle really is an unpleasant and nasty looking implement. It is designed for a tough job. This particular sickle, in the hands of the angel harvesting the unbelievers, will not fail its intended task. It is has been prepared, sharpened, for this harvest. No one will escape this harvest, who does not follow the Lamb. The details indicate this harvest has a certain “violence” to it, unlike the previous harvest.
- This angel is not gathering grain or wheat, but the *“clusters of the vine of the earth,”* or grapes. Some speculate that since “the vine” is often used to represent Israel, that this harvest is only directed at Israel’s unbelieving Jews. However, these grapes of the vine are more likely representing a **filling of God’s cup of wrath, complete to overflowing, for all wicked.**
- The word for *“ripe”* in this verse is different than the ripe used in v. 15. This ripe implies “fully mature.” The evil of the unbelievers is fully mature now, and ready to be cut off. This concept is used in scripture to sometimes describe when God takes ultimate destructive action against the wicked. For example, the two prophets to Nineveh had completely different results. First Jonah preached repentance and all of Nineveh repented, much to Jonah’s dismay. God spared them. But when Nahum preached to Nineveh, the result was final destruction. The fullness of their evil was not yet full under Jonah, but was complete when Nahum preached. It is the same here. The evil of mankind is complete, ready for final harvest and destruction.

19 So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20 And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses’ bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

- This passage of scripture makes an obvious allusion to the final battle, Armageddon, when the remaining unbelievers will be “harvested.” The prophet Joel warned of this: *“Assemble and come, all you nations, And gather together all around. Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O LORD. Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; For there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; For the winepress is full, The vats overflow— For their wickedness is great.”* (Joel 3:11-13) This word used here for “great” (wickedness) also implies “full.”
- *“...the winepress of the wrath of God.”* This is a well developed symbol in scripture of the wrath of God at the end of time. Not only does it appear in these verses in Revelation 14, and in Joel 3 above, but also in Isaiah 63, which speaks of the One who does this “trampling.”



- **“Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, This One who is glorious in His apparel, Traveling in the greatness of His strength?— “I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? “I have trodden the winepress alone, And from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, And trampled them in My fury; Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, And I have stained all My robes.”** (Isaiah 63:1-3)
- **“...trampled outside the city...”** Most believe that the battle of Armageddon will rage outside the city of Jerusalem, in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, also called the Valley of Megiddo (Har Megiddo in Hebrew, Armageddon in Greek). Jesus was crucified outside the city, and the battle for ultimate control and authority will be waged outside the city, and won by the One wearing the victor’s crown.
- **“...blood....up to the horses’ bridles....”** This seems to be a horrible sight, and for us may be difficult to take literally. This speaks of destruction, the slaughter of all those opposed to God, and it will be a literal battle. This picture may be literal, and it may be figurative. It may be both. It does not have to mean that the blood will literally be 4-5 feet deep. It means that this battle will result in much blood spilling and some spattering even as high as the horses’ bridles. As much as we dislike these images, sin is evil and must be removed before Jesus will take His throne on earth.
- **“...one thousand six hundred furlongs.”** This is a fairly precise measurement that is most likely literal. It equals approximately 180 miles, which is about the length of the Valley of Megiddo, the scene of many Biblical battles, and the scene of the final world battle.
- These verses clearly show us that this particular harvest is most definitely NOT the harvest of believers.

It is likely that this chapter serves as an outline summary of the events yet to happen in the tribulation. There seven such events listed here:

1. The presentation of the **believing remnant of Israel** (the 144,000 Godly Jews)
2. The preaching of the **good news of Jesus with an accompanying warning** of soon to come judgment
3. The advance notice of the **ultimate fall and destruction of Babylon**, literally, and all in opposition to God
4. The warning about the **fate of those who take the mark of the beast**
5. The **blessing of martyred saints**
6. The **harvest of believers** by Jesus
7. The **harvest of unbelievers**, and their destruction at the **battle of Armageddon**

