

Events of the Great Tribulation Period

Revelation 14

Revelation 14 - *"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. 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.*

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." 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." 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."

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." 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. 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.

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." 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."

Background Notes

Revelation 13 gave us descriptions of the “two beasts” that will come on the scene during the Tribulation Period of the future. One of the beasts will be the notorious leader of the revived Roman Empire whose identifying number will be 666. The other beast is known as the “False Prophet.” The False Prophet will make an image of the Roman Beast, and he will direct worship to this world leader. He will also cause everyone to receive “the mark of the Beast.”

That was Revelation 13. In Revelation 16 we will read of seven angels who will pour out seven bowls of God’s judgment on this earth. Revelation 14 and 15 are an introduction or prelude to these “Bowl Judgments.” Revelation 14 gives us a number of details about events that will take place during, and at the end of, the Tribulation Period. A discussion of these details follows under our doctrinal points.

Doctrinal Points

1. “The 144,000” are the first fruits from the Tribulation Period.

In Revelation 14:1-5 we see the 144,000 Jewish believers once again. Remember that these 144,000 people were first mentioned back in Revelation 7? We saw there that the 144,000 will be Jewish believers of the Tribulation period (1200 from each tribe of Israel), and they will be special servants of the Lord during the Tribulation Period. They will probably be evangelists who will spread the gospel of the kingdom worldwide. Remember -- they are **not** the Church! The Church will be in heaven during the Tribulation Period. In Revelation 7 we learned that the 144,000 evangelists will be sealed and protected from death during their time of service.

Here in Revelation 14 we see the 144,000 standing with the Lord on Mount Zion. Verse 4 refers to them as “first fruits to God and to the Lamb.” This scene anticipates the 144,000 entering alive into the millennial kingdom of Christ at the end of the Tribulation. They will be the “first fruits” of all believers who will be part of that kingdom -- including the Church, who will return to the earth with Christ at that time.

In chapter 14, the 144,000 are seen being praised for their moral purity and integrity. On earth they will sing a new song. In his vision, John heard this song being sung in heaven -- probably being sung by the martyred believers that we saw back in Revelation 6, under the fifth seal. Other Jewish and Gentile believers will also live through the Tribulation period to enter alive into the millennial kingdom of Christ, but the 144,000 will be the “first fruits” from the Tribulation Period.

2. The eternal gospel will be preached during the Tribulation Period.

Verse 6-7: *“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.”*

The preaching of the gospel has always required a faith response to the one true God. That was true in the Old Testament; Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6). A faith response is required today, when we respond in faith to God by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior. And a faith response will be required during the Tribulation Period, when people will acknowledge that God the Creator is rightly judging this world. At that future time, people will respond to the gospel of the kingdom -- that Christ is coming back to set up His kingdom on this earth. The eternal gospel will be preached during the Tribulation period.

3. The fall of Babylon will take place at the end of the Tribulation Period.

Verse 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.”*

End-time Babylon will be the center of the one world religion and one world government of the last days. In Revelation 17 and 18 we will learn about the judgment of Babylon near of the end of the Tribulation Period. Here in Revelation 14 that judgment is anticipated. The fall of Babylon will take place at the end of the Tribulation period.

4. The eternal punishment of hell will be the destiny of those who worship the beast in the Tribulation Period.

Verses 9-11: *“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 doctrine of hell is not a pleasant doctrine and many Christians try to avoid it. Ultimately, however, it's what is true that counts -- not what we'd like to be true. The Bible teaches that there is a place called hell, and it is a place of eternal punishment for the damned. It is not annihilation of the damned. There is no escape from hell. Here in Revelation 14 we see that the unbelievers of the Tribulation Period who worship the beast and receive his mark will eventually be in hell. The eternal punishment of hell will be the destiny of those who worship the beast in the Tribulation Period.

5. The final harvest and vintage will conclude the Tribulation Period.

In verses 14-20, what is the difference between the “harvest of grain” and the “vintage of grapes”? Not everyone is agreed, but we can build a pretty good case that the “harvest of grain” here is the same as the “harvest” of Matthew 13:30, when the wheat and the tares (weeds) are separated at the end of the age. At that time, the Lord as the Son of Man (v14) will direct His angels to reap the earth and separate the wheat from the tares.

The vintage of grapes has to do with the vine of the earth. In Scripture, the vine is associated with the nation of Israel. We know that in the last days, a great number of Jewish people will turn to the Lord, according to Romans 11. How

many? One third of the nation, according to Zechariah 13:9 - *"I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; and each one will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"*

What about the other two-thirds of the nation who will continue to reject Jesus as the Messiah of Israel? According to Zechariah 13:8, *"it shall come to pass in all the land," says the LORD, "that two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die..."* This judgment of apostate Judaism may be what's in view here in Revelation 14:20, *"outside the city."*

The *"blood coming up to the horses' bridles..."* (v20) is not easy to interpret. Is the phrase symbolic for a lot of bloodshed, or will the armies of the last days have to resort to the horses because fossil fuels run out? And does the blood just splatter on horses' bridles, or will the bridles drag on blood-soaked ground, or will there be actual pools of blood four and a half feet deep scattered along the 200-mile length of Israel? We simply don't know at this point, and it would be foolish to be dogmatic in our interpretation. However, we do know that the final harvest and vintage will conclude the Tribulation Period.

Practical Application

Will you rest from your labors?

Verses 12-13: *"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."*

In the context of chapter 14, these verses refer to those people who are faithful during the Tribulation Period -- who refuse to bow to the Roman Beast, who refuse to receive his mark. As a result, they will be martyred for their faith.

There can also be an application for all Christians today. Will you rest from your labors when you meet the Lord? Think about it -- you can't "rest from your labors" if you have never labored! And your works can't follow you for reward if you have never worked, if you have never done anything for the Lord!

It's a wonderful blessing for a believer to die in the Lord. All believers will be with the Lord forever in heaven and will be present in His 1000-year kingdom on this earth. But can it be said of you that you will rest from your labors?