

Revelation 14:1-13—The 144,000 Jewish witnesses and the Three messages from the Three Angels.

This week we come to the section that tells us about The 144,000 Jewish witnesses, the Three messages from the Three Angels, and Judgment of the Earth.

Revision—The antichrist and the false prophet

Let's start with a quiz to see what we can remember from last week:

What happens to those who worship the image of the antichrist and take the mark of the Beast? *Seal their fate for eternity in the Lake of Fire.*

List the three ways that God warned the people of the earth, every single person, not to follow or worship the antichrist, nor take his mark. *The two witnesses, the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, and the three angels.*

What happens to the antichrist at the midpoint of the tribulation? *He is assassinated and then rises from the dead.*

Why is this important? *The false prophet will use this miracle to deceive the people who dwell on the earth to worship the antichrist as the false messiah, as god, and to worship his image.*

What one decision will determine the fate of every person who ever lived? *Will I repent and believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins.*

John 16:8-9 NLT paraphrase

And when He [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment. 9 The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in Me.

What is the Holy Spirit convicting the world of? *Only one thing, the sin, singular, the sin of not believing in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins.*

When we evangelise, what should we start with? *The ten commandments.*

Why start with the 10 commandments? *Because they show people their sinfulness in the light of God's perfection.*

Why do people need to know their sinfulness, that is, just how sinful and wretched they are compared to God perfect holiness? *Because only then will they will see their need for the Saviour. It's like having medicine available that will heal you from a deadly disease, but you don't take it because you don't realise that you are sick, and as a result you died.)*

Similarly, preaching the gospel to an unbeliever without showing them their sinfulness and then getting them to say the sinners prayer is like giving a cancer patient Panadol to disguise their symptoms and telling them that they will be fine. If a doctor did that, they would be guilty of gross negligence and wilful deceit at the bare minimum, and

worst case they would be up for murder. They would most definitely lose their licence to practice medicine. How much worse is it for the Christian to **not** work with the Holy Spirit and convict people of their sin using the 10 commandments, therefore not giving them the chance to repent of their sins and turn to God and so be saved from eternity separated from God in the Lake of Fire.

Revelation 14—Images of God’s Victory and the Beast’s Defeat

Overview

Revelation 14 is another one of those amazing parenthetical chapters, just like chapter 13 which described the antichrist and the false prophet. These parenthetical chapters explain the main characters, events and organisations present during the tribulation.

Chapter 14 focuses on the 144,000 Jewish evangelists sealed by the Holy Spirit that we studied in chapter 7. It also describes some great miracles. Jesus said in Matthew 24:14, *“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached unto all the world, and then the end will come.”* Most people think that before the church can leave, we must do that. But Jesus wasn’t addressing the church in Matthew 24. Jesus was addressing the believing Israelites of the Tribulation. The church has basically already preached the gospel to all the world several times throughout its history, and we are doing it especially well today because of technology. We have radio, TV, the internet, social media etc as well as missionaries in many countries.

During the 7 year Tribulation the world will be evangelised in three different ways

1. The 2 witnesses (Moses and Elijah?) who will preach from Jerusalem

They will most likely have full coverage from the news media as they perform miracles, cause plagues, withhold rain from the nation of Israel for the entire 3 1/2 years of their prophecy, and destroy those who try to destroy them by fire that comes from their mouths (See Revelation 11). At the half way point God removes his protection from them and they are killed by the antichrist, but 3 1/2 days later they will rise again and ascend to heaven. The bible makes it clear that their death and resurrection and ascension to heaven will most definitely be on world TV (again, it’s all in Revelation 11).

2. The 144,000 Jewish Evangelists

The second evangelisation tool will be the 144,000 Jewish evangelists—12,000 from each of the 12 tribes except the tribe of Dan. They will be sealed by the Holy Spirit before any harm comes to the world (Revelation 7:2-4) and will not be harmed during the Tribulation.

Revelation 7:2-4 NKJV

Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, ³ saying, “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” ⁴ 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:

This would indicate that these 144,000 are raised up supernaturally in the short period of time between the rapture of the church and the beginning of the Tribulation when the antichrist signs the peace treaty with Israel. Their conversions will most likely be similar to Paul the Apostle's conversion, when God knocked him off his horse and supernaturally got his attention. Also like Paul, they will be fearless evangelists. Imagine 144,000 apostle Paul's travelling and preaching all around the globe! Always remember this important principle:

Romans 5:20b NKJV

But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, ...

Isn't God just so awesome. The world does not deserve all this evangelism, this grace, in fact, it doesn't even want it. But God reaches out anyway. This is God's heart. God doesn't want anyone to perish. Consider God's heart for His creation despite their rejection of Him:

Ezekiel 18:32 NKJV

For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord God. "Therefore turn and live!"

Jeremiah 7:25 NKJV

Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them.

God has always gone to great lengths to reach out to people, to give them the opportunity to repent, and He continues to do so, even in the Tribulation, a time of judgement. Again and again, God shows mercy, even in times of judgement.

3. Three angles fly around the world preaching the gospel

The third way that God reaches out to the world is through the three angels that fly around the world warning people and preaching the everlasting gospel. We will learn about them today.

Again, this week we come to the section that tells us about The 144,000 Jewish witnesses, the Three messages from the Three Angels, and Judgment of the Earth.

Revelation 14 will answer two important questions raised by Revelation 13. The beast of Revelation 13 was terrifying and awesome; he even can make war against the saints and overcome them (Revelation 13:7). So it is fair to ask, "Is the beast completely victorious over all God's people?" The presence of the 144,000 on Mount Zion with the Lamb emphatically says "No!" The second question has to do with this Satanic dictator himself: "What happens to the beast and his followers?" The rest of Revelation 14 will answer that question. We'll get to that next week.

Revelation 14:1-13

Revelation 14:1-13 NKJV

The 144,000

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.

The Proclamations of Three Angels

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 labours, and their works follow them.”

The Lamb and the 144,000 on Mount Zion

Revelation 14:1-3 NKJV

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.

v **1 Standing on Mount Zion:** What is **Mount Zion**? **Mount Zion** is the ancient name for the hills that make up Jerusalem. **Mount Zion** or Jerusalem is the place where the Messiah gathers His redeemed and reigns over the earth (Psalm 48, Isaiah 24:23, Joel 2:32, Obadiah 17 and 21, Micah 4:1, 4:7). It’s where the new Millennial temple will be built. We’ll come back to this when we cover the second coming.

v 1 **A Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand:** As we mentioned earlier, these 144,000 were last seen in Revelation 7, where they were identified as a group of Jewish believers who minister during the great tribulation and are given a seal of protection throughout that period. Since they stand **on Mount Zion** with the **Lamb**, it shows that they emerge victorious from the Great Tribulation. The beast or antichrist of Revelation 13 certainly has not defeated the 144,000; here they are triumphant, worshipping, and standing firm with Jesus. Again, how do we know? In Revelation 7, the 144,000 are seen at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. In Revelation 14, it shows them in triumph at the end of the Great Tribulation. I like to think of the 144,000 as being like the three young Jewish men who survived the fiery furnace in Daniel 3:19–25. They prove God’s ability to preserve His people.

v 2 **Having His Father’s name written on their foreheads:** The followers of Satan and the beast may have a mark on their hand or forehead (Revelation 13:16–17). But this mark is just a copy of the idea behind the identifying mark on the foreheads of each one of the 144,000, showing that they belong to the Father. But the two marks also show that there are only two sides that you can take. God’s side or Satan’s side. There is no middle ground. You either belong to God or you belong to Satan. You are a child of God or a son of the Devil.

v 2 **The voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder:** This is the voice of God (Revelation 1:15 and 4:5). Perhaps God spoke here to proclaim His approval of these 144,000 faithful servants in the spirit of Matthew 25:21: *Well done, good and faithful servant.* I would love to know what God said, but we will have to wait to find out when the time comes.

v 2 **And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps:** Remember that the elders of Revelation 5:8 (the church) have harps. Not only will we be singing, but we will also be playing musical instruments. Heaven will be a place of beautiful music, as will the earth when Jesus is ruling and reigning on it.

v 3 **And they sang as it were a new song before the throne:** The throne is most likely the throne of God in Jerusalem. After Jesus comes back to earth, He will establish His throne in Jerusalem. Some say that it is the throne of God in Heaven. Either way, our praise takes us to the throne of God. This is why praise is so important.

v 3 **A new song:** Why a new song? And why could only the 144,000 sing it? Because their ministry was unique. They had a special relationship with God and a special role to play in God’s plan of salvation. But don’t forget that when the church goes to heaven, we too will have our own special song that no-one else will be able to sing—the song of redemption (Revelation 5:8-10).

Revelation 5:9-10 NKJV

You are worthy to take the scroll,
And to open its seals;
For You were slain,
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
10 And have made us kings and priests to our God;
And we shall reign on the earth.”

This is the song that only the church will be singing. Notice that we will never stop singing about or talking about our glorious salvation and redemption.

Revelation 14:4-5 NKJV

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.

v 4 **For they are virgins:** Many take the virginity of the 144,000 as simply a symbol of their general purity (as in 2 Corinthians 11:2). Nevertheless, Paul recommended celibacy in distressing times (1 Corinthians 7:25–35), and Jesus spoke of woes upon those with children and families in that day (Matthew 24:19–21). It isn't hard to see that God would call these 144,000 to a literal celibacy for the kingdom's sake during the great tribulation.

v 4 **These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes:** These 144,000 are of Jewish heritage (Revelation 7:4–8). Yet they are also clearly believers in Jesus, otherwise they would not stand with the Lamb, **follow the Lamb wherever He goes**, and could not be **without fault before the throne of God**.

Each of the vast multitude saved during the Tribulation will be saved in exactly the same manner as anyone today: by grace, through a personal faith in Jesus Christ unto salvation. Salvation has and will always be by grace, through faith in Jesus.

v 4 **These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb:** Because the 144,000 are the beginnings of a greater harvest they are **firstfruits**. What this means is that the 144,000 are only a small part of the national deliverance and salvation that God will bring to the nation of Israel.

v 5 **And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God:** This doesn't mean that they were perfect in life, but that they were blameless and that they faithfully and accurately shared the gospel, the whole gospel, and not just the good parts. They even told people that they were sinners and needed to repent. Wow, how politically incorrect and insensitive. I wonder if they realised that they were hurting people's feelings!

Also, like the 144,000 we will also stand without fault before the throne.

Jude 24 NKJV

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,
And to present you faultless
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

We are only faultless before the throne because we have been washed clean by the blood of Jesus.

Isaiah 1:18 NKJV

“Come now, and let us reason together,”
Says the Lord,
“Though your sins are like scarlet,
They shall be as white as snow;
Though they are red like crimson,
They shall be as wool.

The proclamations or messages of the three angels.

The First Angel—Preaching the Everlasting Gospel

Revelation 14:6-7 NKJV

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.”

v 7 This first angel preaches the gospel, but also announces judgment (**the hour of His judgment has come**).

v 7 **Fear God and give glory to Him:** This is what the angel will tell the whole world to do. They can do this and give glory to God and worship Him willingly in this life, or be compelled or forced to give glory to Him later.

It is certain that one day all will give glory to God. We must all “bow the knee.”

Philippians 2:9–11 NKJV

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God.

We either praise and submit to Him now, or we will be forced to submit and confess His Lordship and authority over us later, when it is too late.

v 6 **To every nation, tribe, tongue, and people:** This, in addition to the work of the 2 witnesses in Jerusalem and the 144,000, is the fulfilment of Jesus’ promise in Matthew 24:14 that the gospel would be preached to all the world before His second coming.

But this can never be a valid excuse for neglecting the urgency of missions. Today, God has not given the responsibility for spreading the Gospel to angels, but unto His people. We call it the Great Commission. I want to remind us of our calling, our purpose in life.

Matthew 28:18-20 NKJV

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

However, in saying that, there are still occurrences, even today, of God using angels or visions or dreams to reach people where missionaries cannot go. God is faithful in every age to give everyone a chance to repent and know Him as their Lord and Saviour.

The Second Angel—Announcing the Fall or Destruction of Babylon

Revelation 14:8 NKJV

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.”

We will learn more about **Babylon** in Revelation 17. For now, it is enough to see it representing mankind in organised rebellion against God.

“Prophetically, ‘Babylon’ sometimes refers to a literal city, sometimes to a religious system, sometimes to a political system, all stemming from the evil character of historic Babylon.” (Walvoord)

The Third Angel—Warning people on the earth not to take the mark of the beast

Revelation 14:9-11 NKJV

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.”

v 9 **If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand:** This reminds us that there is a connection between worshipping **the beast and his image** and receiving **his mark on his forehead or on his hand**. No one will casually or accidentally take the **mark**. The connection between worshipping the beast and taking the mark will be made abundantly clear in those times.

It was the same way in the first few centuries of Christianity, when to burn a pinch of incense to an image of Caesar, and to pledge “Caesar is Lord” was regarded as an innocent act of civic duty to the ancient pagans, but the Christians would not worship anyone as Lord except Jesus. They paid for their loyalty to Jesus with their lives.

The coming antichrist or Caesar will do the same thing. To worship the image is to acknowledge that the antichrist, and therefore Satan, is Lord or God. No believer will ever do this.

Application: There are other ways we can compromise though, other ways we can give in to and submit to the enemy. We need to be thinking about how we spend the short amount of time that God has given us down here on earth—pleasing God or pleasing ourselves.

Propitiation—God in Christ became the atoning sacrifice that averted God’s wrath from us

v 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:** Those who worship the Antichrist will be forced to drink **the wine of the wrath of God**. This cup of God’s wrath is like undiluted wine, mixed with spices to make it still stronger (**full strength**).

The idea that God holds a cup of wrath, which He makes those under judgment drink is expressed more than thirteen times in the Bible (Psalm 75:8 and Jeremiah 25:15 are two examples).

Psalm 75:8 NLT paraphrase

For the Lord holds a cup in his hand
that is full of foaming wine mixed with spices.
He pours out the wine in judgment,
and all the wicked must drink it,
draining it to the dregs.

Jeremiah 25:15 AMP

For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, to me: Take this cup of the wine of wrath from My hand and cause all the nations to whom I send you to drink it.

This is the idea behind the cup that Jesus wanted to avoid if it were possible:

Matthew 26:3 NKJV

He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

On the cross Jesus willingly took the cup of the Father’s wrath that we deserved, but, here, the enemies of Jesus have no choice—the cup is *forced* upon them. This is the sad fate of all who reject the work of salvation that Jesus accomplished on the cross. Remember the old hymn: “Jesus paid it all” that we sung this morning. The last two verses and chorus go like this:

****Verse 3**

For nothing good have I
Whereby Thy grace to claim
I’ll wash my garments white
In the blood of Calv’ry’s Lamb

Verse 4

And when before the throne
I stand in Him complete
Jesus died my soul to save
My lips shall still repeat

Chorus

Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe.
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.

You may be wondering or thinking; did Jesus paid the sin debt for the whole world, for all people? Because if He did, then why are there so many people who will also have to face God's wrath? The answer to the first question is "yes", Jesus did pay the sin debt for the whole world. He absorbed all the righteous anger of God, poured out on Him in full strength, which wrath was the penalty for all sins committed by all people for all time. Remember, that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Spiritual death is eternal separation from God, being tormented in the Lake of Fire forever and ever.

On the cross, Jesus said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me." Jesus experienced the eternal separation and righteous anger of God for every person as He hung on the cross during those three hours of darkness. But then at the end, He cried out, "It is finished." The price is paid, the work is done. The sin debt for all mankind is paid in full, the wrath of God completely poured out on Jesus.

1 John 2:2 makes this abundantly clear:

1 John 2:2 AMP

And He [that same Jesus Himself] is the propitiation (the atoning sacrifice) for our sins, and not for ours alone but also for [the sins of] the whole world.

v 2 **And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins:** This means that Jesus is the one who atones for and takes away our sins, and not only our sins, but also the sins of the **whole world**.

v 2 **Propitiation:** has the idea of presenting a gift to the gods, so as to turn away the displeasure of the gods. The Greeks thought of this in the sense of man essentially bribing the gods into doing favours for man. But in the Christian idea of propitiation, God **Himself** presents **Himself** (in Jesus Christ) as that which will turn away His righteous wrath against our sin.

Alford on **propitiation**:

"The word implies that Christ has, as our sin-offering, reconciled God and us by nothing else but by His voluntary death as a sacrifice: has by this averted God's wrath from us."

v 2 **And not for ours only but also for the whole world:** Though Jesus made His propitiation **for the whole world**, yet the whole world is not saved and in fellowship with God. This is because *atonement* does not equal *forgiveness*.

"atonement does not equal forgiveness"

The Old Testament Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:34) demonstrates this. The sin of all Israel was atoned for every year at the Day of Atonement, yet not all of Israel was saved. The day of atonement was one sacrifice for the entire nation. The sins of every single person were atoned or paid for, symbolically, by the blood of a single sacrifice. This of course points to the work of Jesus on the cross when He died for the sins of the whole world.

The point is that the sins of all the Israelites and those who were joined to them were forgiven, but not all believed in and received that forgiveness. *The provision was made, but it had to be received by the individual to be effective.*

The words “**but also for the whole world**” announce to the world that God has taken care of the sin problem by the propitiation of Jesus Christ. Sin *need not* be a barrier between God and man, if man will only *receive* the propitiation (payment) God has provided in Jesus.

Quote from Martin Luther:

‘It is a patent fact that thou too are part of the whole world: so that thine heart cannot deceive itself and think, The Lord died for Peter and Paul, but not for me.’ ”

Again, notice that it says, “and not for ours alone, but for the sins of the whole world.” The “**ours alone**” is the believers, and “**the whole world**” represents the unbelievers. It’s quite clear. Concerning salvation, there are only two groups of people in this world, those who are saved, and those who are not saved.

But this brings us to our second question: Why then do unbelievers have to suffer God’s wrath and experience eternity suffering in the Lake of Fire if Jesus had already suffered in their place? We have already said that *atonement* does not equal *forgiveness*, but how does this work in practice. I’ll use the courtroom example to explain this:

Imagine that your son committed a serious crime and was given a \$500,000 fine or life in prison. You have compassion for your son and so you sell all your possessions, your house, your car, your clothes, everything you own so that you are left with nothing. It has cost you everything to raise the money to pay the fine for your son. In the end you manage to raise the \$500,000. You then go down to the court, enter the courtroom, place the money in front of the judge and explain to your son what you have done. “Son, I have given up everything I own so that I could pay your fine. I have made available \$500,000 to pay your fine so that you can be pardoned or declared not guilty—you can go free. The judge then turns to your son and asks, do you accept this gift? But your silly son says, “No, I don’t accept your gift. Go away, I don’t want your gift! If I want to spend life in prison, then I will. You can’t force me to be free and you can’t stop me from going to prison!”

So you see that you provided atonement for your son, but your atonement was not received, and therefore your son was not forgiven or pardoned. He must go to prison, not because he must, but because he wanted to. Again, your son must go to prison, not because he must, but because he wanted to. *The price was paid, but not received. It’s so important for us to understand that Jesus work on the cross provided the means of forgiveness, but that forgiveness must be received. It’s our love of sin that stops us from receiving the gift of pardon that leads to eternal life with God.*