

CHAPTER 14

***"So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth,
and the earth was reaped."
(14:16)***

Frost has an excellent introduction to chapter 14 concerning the time of the resurrection and translation of the saints.

As 10:7 is the pivotal verse in the book as related to the time of the resurrection and translation of the saints, so 14:1-20 is the pivotal chapter as related to the same. This chapter has to do with the seventh trumpet, and describes the transference of the church from earth to heaven (14:1-5, 14-16). If then, we may locate the chapter in the prophetic plan, we shall be able to understand when the church will be completed and the resurrection and translation will take place, not, of course, as to time--which is hidden in the counsels of the Father (Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7)--but as to its relationship to other events. Nor is this locating so difficult as it appears, provided we keep in view the position in the Analysis¹ which the chapter occupies.

First then, it is to be observed that the chapter is divided into three parts, which may be described, in the phraseology of Leviticus, as follows: first, the first-fruits (14:1-5); second, the harvest (14:14-16); and third, the vintage (14:17-20). Second, it is to be observed that the chapter's general presentation is the coming of Christ for and with His saints, because, however the first-fruits part is to be explained, the harvest part is certainly to be interpreted as describing the coming for, and the vintage part, the coming with. Third, it is to be observed that the vintage part is the scriptural equivalent of the judgment of the nations recorded in the nineteenth chapter (19:11-20), and, therefore, does not find its fulfillment in the fourteenth chapter, this being a prophetic view of what takes place in the nineteenth. Fourth and lastly it is to be observed, the vintage part being a foreview of the nineteenth chapter that it follows that the harvest and first-fruits parts are also foreviews of the same chapter. In other words, the fourteenth chapter is, as the Analysis indicates, an introduction to the vial and judgment periods (see the Analysis), being the prophetic portrayal of events which do not actually occur in the fourteenth chapter but at a later period, namely, at the time indicated by the nineteenth. This view of the fourteenth chapter as related to the nineteenth explains why there is a duplication of events in the two chapters, the one being the foreview and the other its fulfillment. It also makes clear several important facts, as follows: first, that the nineteenth chapter is under the seventh trumpet; second, that it is there that the Lord comes for His saints (10:7; 14:14; 19:1-9); third, that it is there that He comes with His saints (19:1-16); and fourth and lastly, that the second coming of Christ is not disjointed--as if seven or more years were between the coming for and coming with--but rather, is one continuous event.²

1 We remind our readers that Frost's book can be found on this website in the first menu item "Classic Reprints."

2 Frost, *Matthew Twenty-Four and The Revelation*, pp. 231-232.

Turning now to verse 1 of this chapter, *"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."* Although some might argue for two different groups of 144,000, it seems to me that this group cannot possibly be any other than the 144,000 Jews--those sealed servants of God--of whom John wrote in chapter seven. They are now standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb, and they sing a new song before the throne, the four living creatures, and the elders. Johnson notes,

The two previous chapters have prepared Christians for the reality that as the end draws near they will be harassed and sacrificed like sheep. This section shows that their sacrifice is not meaningless. A glance back at chapter 7 reminds us that there the 144,000 were merely sealed; here, however, they are seen as already delivered. When the floods have passed, Mount Zion appears high above the waters; the Lamb is on the throne of glory, surrounded by the triumphant songs of his own; the gracious presence of God fills the universe.³

Let us now look at verse 4: *"These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes."*

Some of us are willing, it may be, to follow the Lamb a certain way or in a certain direction. There are some things which He requires of us which we are willing to give. A gentle temper is ready to offer meekness; a vigorous frame is ready to give diligence. But try the gentle temper by proposing to it some work of courage; try the vigorous frame by laying upon it not something to be done but something to be suffered, some task of irksome charity, or some season of wasting sickness; and perhaps you will find that the word *wheresoever* has applied a test fatal to many professions and severely trying to all. If we would know whether we have upon us this mark of the redeemed in heaven, we must look not at those parts of our Christian duty which suit our natural taste or fall in with our natural temper, but rather at those which run counter to inclination, and which but for Christ we should certainly not perform. Irksome duties, difficult duties, uncongenial duties, are the real tests of our state.⁴

Verse 5 reads, *"And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God."* In verses 1-5 we have given to us a brief summary, taking us all the way to the Second Advent; verses 6-20 will fill in some details.

Six angels are now introduced, the first in verse 6. This angel was seen 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--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.'"* Do we here have an angel proclaiming the gospel of salvation? Walvoord writes:

The expression "the everlasting gospel". . . is an arresting phrase. It is everlasting in the sense that it is ageless, not for any specific period. Ordinarily, one would

3 Johnson, *Revelation*, pg. 537.

4 Vaughan, *Lectures*, pg. 353.

expect this to refer to the gospel of salvation. In verse 7, however, the content of the message is quite otherwise, for it is an announcement of the hour of judgment of God and the command to worship Him. . . . The everlasting gospel seems to be neither the gospel of grace nor the gospel of the kingdom, but rather the good news that God at last is about to deal with the world in righteousness and establish His sovereignty over the world.⁵

Milligan's view is somewhat similar:

This gospel is proclaimed, not "unto," but "over," those to whom it is addressed. Its hearers do not "dwell," as in both the Authorised and Revised Versions, but, as in the margin of the latter, "sit," on the earth, in the sinful world, in the carelessness of pride and self-confident security. Thus the great harlot "sitteth upon many waters;" and thus Babylon says in her heart, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning." There is no humiliation, no spirit of repentance, no preparation for the Gospel, here; while the mention of the "earth" and the fourfold division of its inhabitants lead us to think of men continuing in their sins, over whom a doom is to be pronounced. Still further, the words put into the mouth of him who speaks "with a great voice," and which appear to contain the substance of the gospel thus proclaimed, have in them no sound of mercy, no story of love, no mention of the name of Jesus. They speak of *fearing God and giving glory to Him*, as even the lost may do, of the *hour*, not even the "day," of *His judgment*; . . .

In the light of all these circumstances, we seem compelled to come to the conclusion that the "gospel" referred to is a proclamation of judgment, that it is that side of the Saviour's mission in which He appears as the winnowing fan by which His enemies are scattered as the chaff, while His disciples are gathered as the wheat.⁶

Archer takes the exact opposite view:

Now for the first time (and the last time too) the Gospel of eternal life is proclaimed directly by an angel, rather than by a human soul-winner: "Fear God" (a fear which leads to repentance for sin and surrender in submission and faith)--"And give Him glory" (which implies acknowledging Him as Lord, the purpose and goal of the believer's life)."⁷

What is Frost's view?

. . . the Holy Spirit makes it plain that the angel with the everlasting gospel--he being the heavenly token of what the saints are doing on earth--flies through the heaven at the time when men are being tempted to worship the beast and his image, and to receive his mark in their foreheads or in their hands (14:6-11), which is the same end-time to which the Lord refers, as recorded in Matthew (24:13-15).

5 Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pg. 217.

6 Milligan, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 247-248.

7 Archer, unpublished class notes.

The two scriptures set forth the fact, therefore, that there is to be a declaration of warning and grace in the days of the Antichrist, which will have special reference to the particular temptations then in force (14:9-11) and which will be a special preparation for entrance into the coming kingdom (Matt. 24:14).⁸

Another angel follows (vs. 8), 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 read more about Babylon in chapters 16, 17, and 18; thus we will wait before tackling who, or what, Babylon is.

In verse 9 the third angel is introduced with the warning that anyone who worships the beast and receives his mark shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God. Eternal torment awaits that person. Even at this point of the tribulation, it appears that mercy is still extended to mankind. But when this mercy is scorned and repudiated till the very end of one's life, then the judgment of God is necessarily irreversible: "*And it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of man. To those who eagerly wait for Him, He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation*" (Heb. 9:27,28).

Before the last three angels are introduced, a voice from heaven speaks to John: "*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.'*" Are we here reading of the Antichrist's final outrage against the saints--those who did not worship the beast or receive his mark?

I have elsewhere noticed the abstract force of the present participle. Οἱ ἀποθνήσκοντες does not mean those who *are* dying, or those who *have* died, but is used in an abstract and collective sense as denoting the whole class of those to whom "falling asleep in Christ" attaches as their characteristic. The Church *as a whole* is here spoken of. Individually each saint may be said to be blessed in a measure, and to rest from his labours when his spirit departs hence to be with Christ; but the whole Church does not receive its blessedness, nor rest from its labours, until the time comes for these words to be uttered, "*Blessed are they from henceforth.*"⁹

In the section encompassing verses 14-20, we have recorded John's vision of a great harvest, in which the last three angels make their appearance. We just finished reading that a proclamation had gone forth by the first angel that the hour of judgment was come, by the second angel that great Babylon was on the brink of her fall, and by the third angel that the damnation of every worshiper of the Beast was at hand. Now John finds himself face-to-face with the last great administrations of divine wrath. We will read more of the details in the succeeding chapters (16-18), but in these verses of chapter fourteen we first have a general summation presented. Verses 14-16 read as follows:

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

8 Frost, *Matthew Twenty-Four and the Revelation*, pg. 235.

9 B. W. Newton, *Thoughts on the Apocalypse*, pp. 237-238.

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

Some would take this harvest to be the harvest of the righteous (more on this below). If so, how does it relate to what Joel records in chapter 3, verses 9-16?

Proclaim this among the nations: "Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, 'I am strong.'" Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together all around. Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O Yahweh. 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. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of Yahweh is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. Yahweh also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but Yahweh will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

Is John "seeing" that same harvest of which Joel was speaking? Mede makes the following observation:

The idea of harvest includes three things: the reaping of the corn, the gathering of it in, and the threshing of it, whence it is made a type in Scripture of two direct opposites--of *destruction*, when the reaping and the threshing are considered; of *restitution and salvation* when the ingathering is considered.¹⁰

John speaks here of reaping only. And since he specifically records that the angel (this fourth one) holds a "sharp" sickle, this would *appear* to lead to the conclusion that he is here seeing a scene of judgment. Before continuing with this thought, however, let us answer another question: Who is sitting on the white cloud? There is only one answer. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, coming to take vengeance upon his enemies in preparation for receiving the kingdom promised to him since the foundation of the world.

We must remember that although John is seeing what appears to be succeeding scenes of judgment (here in verses 14-20), it does not necessarily mean that a lengthy period of time intervenes between them. Rather, they all are taking place at the same period of time, that of Christ's second advent. Three actions are mentioned that take place at this time. The first was covered in verses 14-16, Christ coming on a cloud and thrusting in his sickle--"*and the earth was reaped.*" The second action is now described in verses 17-19:

Then another angel [the fifth] came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel [the sixth] came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle,

10 Cited by Seiss in his *Lectures on the Apocalypse*, vol. III, pg. 40.

saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe." 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.

Here we have the fifth and sixth angels taking part in the reaping, the same reaping which John recorded in verses 14-16. In Matthew 13, the "parable chapter," we read of the parable of the tares, and that the angels have a part in the reaping:

The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. 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 (Matt. 13:38-42).

The final action is given in verse 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." According to Archer, "This is undoubtedly the run-off from the great Battle of Armageddon (which will probably involve a widely extended battlefront, from the Plain of Jezreel to Jerusalem itself)."¹¹

Hear what Isaiah says:

Come near, you nations, to hear; and heed, you people! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, the world and all things that come forth from it. For the indignation of Yahweh is against all nations, and His fury against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to the slaughter. Also their slain shall be thrown out; their stench shall rise from their corpses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. . . . For it is the day of Yahweh's vengeance, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion (Isa. 34:1-3, 8).

Returning now to the question of whether this is a harvest of the righteous, I quote from Milligan:

One other point ought to be more particularly noticed before we close the consideration of this chapter [ch. 14]. The harvest of the good is gathered in by the Lord Himself, that of the wicked by His angel. The same lesson appears to be read in the parables of the tares and of the dragnet. In the former (although allusions in each parable may seem to imply that angels take part in both acts) it is said that "at the end of the world the Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity." In the latter we read, "So shall it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire." In like manner here. The Son of man Himself

¹¹ Archer, unpublished class notes.

gathers His own to their eternal rest. It is an angel, though commissioned by Him, who gathers the wicked to their fate. "And is there not a beauty and tenderness in this contrast?"¹² It is as though that Son of man and Son of God who is the Judge of quick and dead, the Judge alike of the righteous and of the wicked, loved one half of His office, and loved not the other. It is as though He cherished as His own prerogative the harvest of the earth, and were glad to delegate to other hands the vintage. It is as though the ministry of mercy were His chosen office, and the ministry of wrath His stern necessity. One like unto the Son of man puts forth the sickle of the ingathering; one of created, though it be of angelic, nature is employed to send forth the sickle of destruction."¹³

Chapter 14 has brought before us a dreadful scene of judgment for the unrepentant sinner. I close this discussion of it with these words from Joseph Seiss (written in 1865):

Child of Adam, hear, and be admonished now while salvation is so freely offered. Be not deceived, for God is not mocked. Those impieties of yours, those guilty sports and gayeties will yet have to be confronted before the judgment seat. Those gatherings in the gaming-halls and drinkshops of Satan, those sneers and witty jests at sacred things, those fiery lusts burning on the altars of carnal pleasure are all written down in the account books of eternity to be brought forth in the great day. That wicked profanation of your Maker's name, that broken pledge, that unfulfilled vow to God and man, that scene of riot, that hidden going to haunts of the profligate, all are noted for future settlement. The blood of wronged and murdered innocence will not always cry in vain. The wail of trampled helplessness will not be unheard forever. The mother who destroyed her babe, the clerk who dipped too deep in his employer's till, the enemy who set fire to his neighbor's goods or sought to blacken his good name, the boy who cursed his parents in secret, the spiteful slanderer and persecutor of God's ministers and people, and every despiser and neglecter of the great salvation must each answer at the tribunal of eternal justice. And if clean repentance out of these and all such sins be not speedy and complete, there is no hope or mercy more. Before us stands the Angel with the sharp sickle for all the enemies of God, and beside Him is the great winepress of destruction. Think, O man, O woman, how would you fare were He this night to strike! If not *in the city*, in reconciliation with the King, outside is only death and damnation, and nothing can make it different.¹⁴

12 This quotation comes from C. J. Vaughan, *Lectures on the Revelation of St John*, pg. 378.

13 Milligan, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 257-258.

14 Seiss, *Lectures*, vol. III. pp. 57-58.