

# 64. The Book of Revelation—14:12-14

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(12-15-21)

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As we continue in Chapter 14 which is a “*table of contents*” highlighting the things that will take place in Chapters 15-19.

We have ‘camped’ on verses 9 through 11—so let’s read them one more time:

## Revelation 14:9-11 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> 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, <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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."

As we have said already, this language is talking about the final judgments of God poured out in the final months (possibly the last 18 to 24 months) of the Great Tribulation.

As we have pointed out, they are called “**the cup of His indignation**” and likened to **wine** that is undiluted and unstrained (containing the dregs) which represents judgments that will be full-strength—i.e., “*without being mixed with any mercy*”.

So, what’s in view is ‘*full strength*’ judgment starting on the earth but resulting in everlasting judgment in the Lake of Fire (Hell). The full fury of God’s wrath, so long restrained, will finally be unleashed on the inhabitants of the world full strength.

However, as we said last time—believers will never drink from this cup of God’s indignation because—Jesus already drank it for us on Calvary’s Cross. (Matthew 26:36, 39; John 18:11)

## Revelation 14:10b (NKJV)

<sup>10</sup> 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...** <sup>11</sup> **And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night...**

The idea of a literal place called **Hell** where there will be *eternal* torment is not a very popular concept with unbelievers.

- The main reason that people have such a hard time dealing with the reality of Hell is because they can’t reconcile it with the concept of a loving God.
- They reason that, “*If God does exist and if He is a God of love then Hell cannot exist because a loving God would never create a place like Hell much less send people there forever.*”

So, because the people who do believe in God believe that He *is* a loving God—therefore they conclude that Hell doesn't exist. But as we pointed out last time, Jesus talked about Hell more than anyone else; in fact, He talked about it more than He talked about Heaven or even love—and I believe He did that because He didn't want anyone to go there!

Not only did Jesus teach on the *reality* of Hell—He also taught on the *eternality* of Hell! He spoke of Hell as the place of “*eternal fire*” (Matthew 18:8; 25:41), of “*unquenchable fire*” (Mark 9:43), where “*the fire is not quenched*” (Mark 9:48).

In Matthew 25:46, Jesus clearly taught that the torment of the lost in Hell will last as long as the blessedness of the redeemed in Heaven—i.e., ‘forever’!

*“Yes, but I still can't get me mind around how a God of love could send people to a place like Hell.”*

**Remember one thing—Hell wasn't even made for man  
but for the devil and his angels. (Matthew 25:41)**

But the Bible says that those who refuse to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, whose blood alone can pay their debt—they will spend eternity in Hell paying for their crimes against God.

- Now this causes most people to ask, “*Why does a person have to spend eternity in Hell for sins they committed during their lifetime? It doesn't seem fair that the sins committed over the course of 70 or 80 years on earth would bring a sentence of eternity in Hell.*”

Okay, that's a fair question—let me try to answer it the best way I know how.

Let's say a man broke into a house one night and brutally raped and beat a woman repeatedly over the next 4 hours. If convicted, should he only get 4 hours in prison since that was the *duration* of the crime?—Of course not! A crime like that could possibly bring with it a sentence of many years in prison because we don't punish people based on the *length* of their crime—we punish them based on the *heinousness* and *severity* of their crime.

God is infinitely holy and just—therefore any crime (sin) against Him is infinitely heinous and therefore carries with it an infinite penalty—eternity in Hell.

**Now you don't have to like it or even agree with it—but you'd better not ignore it.**

You would be wise to accept it and do something about it right now while there's still time. By that I mean—repent of your sins and receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Here's the problem with most people today—they just don't understand the holiness of God or the severity of their situation as a violator of His laws (think of the Ten Commandments).

Here's how most people think—

- “*I know I'm not perfect, but I believe I'm good enough to get into heaven because I believe I've done more good things in my life than bad. And so, because of it I believe my good deeds will outweigh and therefore cancel out the bad things I have done and God will let me into Heaven.*”

That folks is a very common way of looking at the problem of sin today—let's examine that reasoning for a moment.

First of all, that logic wouldn't even work in a court of law on earth with a flawed human judge presiding.

Imagine this line of defense coming from a person that had been arrested for stealing a car—

- *“Your honor, you shouldn't punish me for this crime seeing as this is the first time I've ever broken the law—surely all the good things I've done in keeping the law over the course of my life should cancel out this one violation...”*

That defense wouldn't work in a human court with a human judge—how much less would it work in the Supreme Court of the universe with the Righteous Judge of all the earth presiding!?

And yet that is the very defense many are planning to use when they stand before God someday—

*“I know I'm a good person and when I stand before God I'll plead my case and show Him all the 'good things' I've done. I believe He'll be fair and let me into Heaven.”*

J. Vernon McGee—

*“Yes, my friend, you will be able to get a fair trial there. Your life is on tape, and Jesus Christ, the Judge happens to have the tape. I think He will have it on a television screen so that you can watch it, too (“This Was Your Life”). Do you think your life can stand the test? Are you willing to stand before God and have Him play the tape of your life? I do not know about you, but I could not make it. Thank God for His grace—“For by grace you are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).”*

But besides that, you need to understand—your 'case' has already been decided—the verdict was pronounced in the Garden of Eden—Adam and all his descendants are guilty.

*“In Adam all die”*—because all bear Adam's guilt and thus we are born with original sin. Then everyday people add to that guilt by continuing to break the commandments of God.

At the Great White Throne Judgment (the Supreme Court of the universe) people won't plead their case—their case has already been decided and the verdict has been rendered—GUILTY!

Jesus came to pardon those who were already condemned—already pronounced guilty by God.

**John 3:17-18**

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

**Romans 3:23 (NKJV)**

<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

**Romans 6:23 (NKJV)**

<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ray Stedman—

*“I submit to you that there is no contradiction in the Scriptures or in God's character in the matter of wrath and grace. Throughout the Bible, we see that God's love is freely available to men and women everywhere, and at all times, over and over, we see God pleading with mankind to accept the escape from judgment that He has made available by the sacrifice of His Son.*

*'Do not allow yourself to come to such an end,' is the continual urging of God. 'I love you and I can provide everything you need. Love me and find the fulfillment your heart longs for.' Yet many men and women respond, 'No, God, I do not want to love you. I will take the life you give me and all the good things you provide, but I do not want you. I will run my own life, serve my own ends, rule my own kingdom...'*

In other words, it isn't a God of love that sends people to Hell according to His Own capricious will—it is the will of each individual that causes them to spend eternity in Hell—it's their own choice (fault) not God's!

*"Oh, you preachers make me sick!" a fellow said to a witnessing Christian on the train one day. The Christian assured him he was not a preacher. "I don't care what you are. You Christians are always talking about a man going to hell because Adam sinned." "No," the Christian said, "you need not go to hell because Adam sinned. You will go to hell because you refuse the remedy provided for Adam's sin. Don't keep complaining about something that has absolutely been taken care of. If you go to hell, you will go over the broken body of Jesus Christ, who died to keep you out."*

***"Today is the day of salvation, if you hear His voice do not harden your hearts..."***

**John 3:19 (NKJV)**

<sup>19</sup> And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

**Revelation 14:12-13 (NKJV)**

<sup>12</sup> Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. <sup>13</sup> 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."

If you reverse the order, it becomes clearer:

Verse 13—**"Blessed** ("O how happy") **are the dead**" (the dead in Christ—those who are martyred)—**"those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus"** (verse 12).

John Walvoord—

*"The stern warning addressed to all worshipers of the beast is also an encouragement to those who put their trust in Christ in the time of great tribulation. Though some of them will face martyrdom and others will need to go into hiding, they are assured that their lot is far preferable to those who accept the easy way out and worship the beast."*

**Psalms 116:15 (NKJV)**

<sup>15</sup> Precious in the sight of the Lord *is* the death of His saints.

Because all their tears are done, all hardships, heartaches, trials and persecutions are over and they shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever—and in His presence is fullness of joy forevermore.

**Revelation 14:13 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup> 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.**"

First, the Spirit declares them blessed because—**"they may [finally] rest from their labors."**

The Greek word here is *Kopos* describes “hard, difficult, exhausting toil”—it can also refer to “trouble”.

One commentator put it this way—

*“Certainly, the Tribulation saints will experience the whole gamut of the word’s meanings. They will be filled with deep sorrow as they watch those they love—children, parents, spouses, and friends suffer torment and death. Their lives will be a hard, difficult, dangerous struggle for survival. Not having the mark of the beast, they will be excluded from society, be unable to buy or sell, and will live lives on the run as hunted fugitives. Death (granting rest from all the difficulties and sorrows of their lives)—will come as a welcome relief. In stark contrast are the damned, who will know not a moment’s rest throughout all eternity (14:11).”*

The Holy Spirit also pronounces the Tribulation martyrs **blessed** because—**“their works follow them.”**

The Greek word is ‘*Erga*’ (**deeds**) refers to their “service to the Lord.”

When these believers go to heaven, the record of their diligent labor will **‘follow (along) with them.’**

The Bible teaches that God will reward believers in heaven for their earthly service to Him.

#### **Hebrews 6:10 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, *in that* you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Facing imminent execution, Paul triumphantly declared,

#### **2 Timothy 4:7-8 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup> Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

One author commented—

*“The dead who have lived in obedience and trust will be blessed with rest and reward after they die. Those who live now for wanton pleasure are dead even while they live (1 Tim. 5:6). Being “dead in [their] trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1), they face the horror of eternal damnation in hell. The sobering truth is that the choices people make in this life will irreversibly chart the course of their eternal destinies. A Christless eternity of unrelieved torment or the blissful rest and reward of heaven: that is the choice faced by every person.”*

So, let’s recap briefly.

So far in Chapter 14 we have seen:

- *The 144,000 standing on the heavenly Mt. Zion after having completed their ministry*
- *An angel preaching the everlasting gospel to all the people of the earth*
- *Another angel warning that if anyone receives the mark of the Beast, they will spend eternity in hell.*

Verses 12 and 13 form a brief interlude to encourage the Tribulation saints living on the earth at this time—and then in verses 14-20 the theme of God’s wrath resumes.

This will literally be the “*beginning of the end*” for those left on the earth who have refused to repent and receive Jesus Christ as Savior and King. This passage (verses 14-20) pictures the final harvest of God’s wrath in two agricultural motifs: the grain harvest (verses 14–16) and the grape harvest (verses 17–20).

Why did John record two visions of the same event using similar but different agricultural imagery?

Some have suggested that as the Tribulation nears its climax, two main aspects of God’s eschatological wrath remain to be poured out on the sinful world:

1. The first aspect involves the seven bowl judgments (16:1–21), a rapid-fire sequence of frightening and deadly worldwide judgments that will destroy the final Babylon—the Antichrist’s empire.
2. The second aspect is the Battle of Armageddon, at which point Jesus Christ returns to judge and destroy His enemies (19:11–21).

So, the *grain* harvest symbolizes the seven bowl judgments; the *grape* harvest symbolizes the judgment of Armageddon.

**Revelation 14:14 (NKJV)**

<sup>14</sup> 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.

The One sitting on the white cloud is obviously a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The cloud is a mark of identification:

**Matthew 24:30 (NKJV)**

<sup>30</sup> Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

I think that the “**clouds**” are the *Shekinah* cloud, which is “*the sign*” in heaven.

“...having on His head a golden crown...”

This **crown** is not the *diadēma* worn by a king (cf. 19:12), but the *stephanos* worn by victors in war or athletic events—it is the crown of triumph and pictures the Son of Man not in His identity as the sovereign ruler, but as the triumphant conqueror victorious over all His enemies (cf. Matthew 24:30).

Also, Jesus is pictured as having “**a sharp sickle in His hand.**”

A **sickle** was a long, curved, razor-sharp iron blade attached to a long, broomstick-like wooden handle.

Sickles were used to harvest grain; as they were held with both hands spread apart and swept back and forth, their sharp blades would cut off the grain stalks at ground level.

The picture is that of the Lord Jesus Christ mowing down His enemies like a harvester cutting grain.

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