

## Revelation Chapter 14 - 15 Handout

*Chapter 14 brings us to another set of pronouncements. In the previous chapter the beast and his partners have been moving over the earth tricking people into following them and not God. They have made it appear that no one can defeat them and so humanity better get on board with them. Those who try to stay faithful face great persecution, though they have God's promise that he will never abandon them.*

*In the face of the power of the beast John offers us a word from heaven that judgment has finally come. God has been saving the best for last... he will judge the beast and all who follow him. This becomes another word of encouragement not to give in to God's enemies even in the face of severe persecution because God will win in the end.*

1 Then I looked, and there was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion! And with him were one hundred forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.

*Lamb - once again the Lamb is at the center of the action. He has been missing for a chapter or two while the action has been elsewhere, but now he is about to enter into the fray.*

*144,000 - again we have the perfect number of persons. They have all been stamped with both the name of the lamb and of God... probably meaning baptism. This is a reminder that God has claimed his own*

2 And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, 3 and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the one hundred forty-four thousand who have been redeemed from the earth. 4 It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins; these follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been redeemed from humankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, 5 and in their mouth no lie was found; they are blameless.

*Voice from heaven - on the one hand the voice is loud... you cannot miss it (thunder) yet on the other hand it is sweet and melodic (harp). It is bringing good news.*

*Sing a new song - there is something unexpected here... something the world has not nor cannot know on its own. This is a song a liberation, much like that of Miriam when Moses led the people out of Egypt. Heaven knows that liberation is at hand.*

*144,000 - again we have the perfect number who have been redeemed because they kept themselves pure... notice it is only men... they are the new priests.*

*First fruits - God will not stop with the 144,000. They are merely the down payment for what God has in store. Though some commentators argue that "first fruits" means the complete gift to God... and not merely the first of*

*many... the perfect number of 144,000 in and of itself also represents the perfect number of people who would come in... thus representing those who have come in and those who will come in later. What this also means is that other believers who have been marked are still on the earth during the tribulation.*

6 Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth--to every nation and tribe and language and people. 7 He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."

*Eternal gospel - this is the promise of God that those who believe, even at this late date will be saved. There is still some grace left.*

*Fear God - they are to fear God because the judgment is coming. This is the God who made everything and will judge everything, including the beast and his friends.*

8 Then another angel, a second, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

*Fallen, fallen - this is an interesting phrase in that Babylon will not fall for a while either in history or in the Book. However once God says something is going to happen... it is as good as done. Thus it can be proclaimed that it is already accomplished.*

9 Then another angel, a third, followed them, crying with a loud voice, "Those who worship the beast and its image, and receive a mark on their foreheads or on their hands, 10 they will also drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and they will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image and for anyone who receives the mark of its name." 12 Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus.

*Those who worship the beast - the punishment will not merely be for the leaders. It will also be for those who follow. There are consequences to our choices. Whom we choose to follow has eternal consequences.*

*Tormented - the future of those who oppose God will not be pleasant. To be burned has always been the most terrible of punishments. It is a dire warning and it will not happen in private but will take place in full view of God's servants. This is first century fire and brimstone preaching. The issue we have to ask ourselves here however is what does this mean in light of all the other apocalyptic images.*

*No rest - there is no place for the evil doers to sit and recoup their strength. The punishment is night and day for those who have received the mark of the beast... who have played on his team.*

*Call for endurance - the saints are to learn from this that it is better to die for Christ than it is to burn forever.*

13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them."

*Blessed are the dead... in the Lord - these are those who die with the mark of the Lamb and not the beast. Their lives will not be ones of pain and suffering but of rest and reward. There is a clear delineation here between the two groups. This becomes another encouragement to remain faithful to the end.*

*Deeds will follow them - here we are once again faced with the understanding that deeds have a place in judgment. It is not merely saying one believes in Jesus, it is also living ones life as if that confession is true.*

14 Then I looked, and there was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like the Son of Man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand! 15 Another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to the one who sat on the cloud, "Use your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is fully ripe." 16 So the one who sat on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.

*One like the Son of Man - this is a reference from Daniel and Rev. 1:13 about the messiah. Though some have debated whether this is or is not Jesus it would seem only appropriate as the one who will judge all of humanity that it be he who puts in the sickle of judgment.*

*The earth is fully ripe - the time has come and Jesus will act*

*The one who sat... swung - Jesus does the judging... though he will have help later on. It is ultimately his duty alone to judge the earth*

17 Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. 18 Then another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over fire, and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Use your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." 19 So the angel swung his sickle over the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and he threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God. 20 And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for a distance of about two hundred miles.

*Another angel - the judgment will be conducted by heavenly beings and not by humans. This is important because it says to the powerless that they do not have to kill others, but God will avenge them.*

*Wine press of the wrath of God - this is an allusion to OT texts such as Isa 63:1-6; Lam 1:25; Joel 3:13 in which God's wrath is compared to a wine press where his anger is lived out.*

*Blood flowed - this will be a large scale punishment. This is not a few people here or there... this is an epic slaughter. The people have come to know this kind of destruction. History is replete with instances of this kind of death. The crusaders caused this kind of destruction when they took Jerusalem.*

*Two hundred miles - this is about 1600 stadia or 4 (corners of the earth) time 4 times 100 (multiplier) meaning all the over the earth*

## Revelation Chapter 15

1 Then I saw another portent in heaven, great and amazing: seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is ended.

*Seven angels: once again we have a portent, a sign that is a complete number of angels with a complete number of plagues in order to complete the wrath of God*  
*Wrath of God is ended: there is an end. The wrath of God will not be forever, it has a beginning and an end*

2 And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. 3 And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb:

*Glass mixed with fire: this is a vivid image of God's glory and God's wrath (fire) being reflected in the glass.*

*Who conquered the beast: these are the people who have stood firm in their testimony even to the point of death (defeated the beast through dying... interesting thought); they are the 144,000 who have been marked.*

*Its image and the number of its name: this is referring to 666 which comes from the image... these 144,000 have followed God and not the image and are marked with God's seal and not 666*

*Sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb: this is a single song based on the Song of Moses in Exodus 15:1-8. In the ancient synagogue the people would sing the song of Moses as a reminder that God is ruler of the universe and sets his people free. This idea ties in with the plagues which God is visiting on the world in order to set his people free from the beast. It is another song of liberation. The words are not exact from Exodus but most lines and ideas can be found somewhere in the OT.*

“Great and amazing are your deeds, (Psalm 139:14)

Lord God the Almighty! (Amos 4:13)

Just and true are your ways, (Deut. 32:4)

King of the nations! (Jer.10:7)

4 Lord, who will not fear

and glorify your name? (Psalm 86:9)

For you alone are holy.

All nations will come

and worship before you, (Isaiah 56:6-8)

for your judgments have been revealed.” (Isaiah 24:21)

*Great and amazing: the words used here stand in stark contrast to the praise given the beast. It is a reaffirmation that God alone is the one who holds all power. The others are merely imposters.*

*All nations will come: this is the end result. It is an affirmation of the OT claims and gives hope to the church that in the end God alone will reign.*

5 After this I looked, and the temple of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, 6 and out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues, robed in pure bright linen, with golden sashes across their chests. 7 Then one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever; 8 and the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were ended.

*Temple of the tent of witness: before the temple was built the people housed the ark and altar in a tent while they traveled. It is almost as if God is once again on the move... thus carrying forward the Exodus theme which is contained in Chapters 15 and 16.*

*Seven angels: this forms an enclusio which is a form of writing in which a section begins and ends with the same theme (we begin and end with angels and plagues).*

*Smoke of the Glory of God: this is the shekaina glory of God who came in a cloud when the people came close to him in the wilderness*

*Plagues: Exodus theme again... let my people go*

*No one could enter: this may be because God is present in a very real way and his anger is set to finish what he has begun*