

Revelation: A Study of End-Time Events

Lesson Eight: Chapters 14-15-16

Overview:

We will see that Chapters 14 and 15 provide a preview of the end: the final judgments of God that fall upon the earth. We first see a preview of the 144,000 born again Jews from the 12 tribes of Israel standing with Jesus on Mount Zion, which is Jerusalem, after His return to earth to set up His Kingdom. Then, John's attention is drawn to a scene in heaven, where a special group of the redeemed sing a new song. We will see the identity of this group in Chapter 15.

We next learn that three angels will be released from heaven, each carrying a proclamation for the world. The first is a proclamation of the eternal gospel; the second, a proclamation of judgment on Babylon the Great, which we will study in detail in Chapters 17 and 18; and third, a proclamation of judgment on all who worship, and take the mark of, the beast. Believers are encouraged to endure patiently, since most will be beheaded for not taking the mark of the beast, but "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them." Chapter 14 closes with the call to harvest the earth, for its deeds are ripe for judgment.

Chapter 15 shows us that the special group of the redeemed we saw before the throne in heaven in Chapter 14 includes those martyred for their faith because they refused to worship the beast or take his mark. Then, the final seven plagues, which are the bowls of God's wrath, are released upon the earth. Chapter 16, then, is the carrying out of those judgments. This brings us to the close of human history at the battle of Armageddon, as Christ returns in glory.

Chapter 14: A Preview of The End of the Great Tribulation

14:1-3

- 1) (v.1) This is the seal of God in Rev.7:3, placed on them as a physical protection, in contrast to the mark of the beast, which will seal the destruction of all who take it. The 144,000 will live through the Tribulation, just as the remnant of national Israel will be preserved (Rev.12:6).

- 2) "Zion" (*sion*) is "the hill on which the higher and most ancient part of Jerusalem was built; because the temple stood there, it was called the dwelling place of God."

- 3) The first scene is of that of Christ with the 144,000 on Mount Zion, which is Jerusalem. After this, John heard a sound from Heaven, which drew his attention there. The second scene is obviously in heaven because the four living creatures and the elders (church) are there. Those singing the “new song” are the “harpists.”
- 4) We saw in Rev.5:8, that each of the 24 elders, representing the church, held a harp. These are another group of harpists, not the elders (because they sang before the elders), and not the 144,000.
- 5) Read Rev.15:1-3 The harpists are those Tribulation Saints who will lose their lives rather than take the mark of the Beast. Most will receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior through the preaching of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists during the Tribulation period (Ch.7).

14:4-5

- 1) The 144,000 will be not defile themselves. They will not be “soiled by fornication and adultery.” Neither will they commit spiritual adultery (idolatry) by worshiping the beast or taking his mark.
- 2) They will be virgins. “Pure” (*parthenos*) denotes “virgin.” It is the same Greek word used for the prophecy that the Christ would be virgin-born (Matthew 1:22-23).
- 3) The 144,000 may be seen as the first fruits of the saved remnant of Israel.

14:6-7

- 1) The gospel (*Euaggelion*) is the “proclamation of the grace of God, manifest and pledged in Christ.” Read Matt. 24:14
- 2) Only those who have not taken the mark of the beast will repent and worship the true God. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 and Rev. 16:2, 9-11.

14:8

- 1) Another proclamation: The destruction of Babylon. Is it a literal city or is it symbolic of the world’s (pagan) religious system, or is it both? We’ll study the symbolism of Babylon in depth in Chapters 17 & 18.
- 2) To “drink” (*potizo*) the wine of her adulteries, is “metaphorically, to saturate one’s mind.”

- 4) The NIV uses the word “maddening” and is translated “passion” in the NASB. From the Greek (*thumos*), it is the same word used for the “wrath” of God.
- 5) “Immorality” (*porneia*) is defined as “fornication; metaphorically, of the association of pagan idolatry with the doctrines of, and professed adherence to, the Christian faith.”¹

NOTE: This sheds light on the symbolism of “Babylon.” While the true Church (believers) will be removed at the Rapture, the religious structure of *unsaved* church members will not (Laodicean Church, Rev. 3:15-18). Therefore, religious “Babylon” of the Tribulation period will include the false church, left behind after the Rapture of the true Church.

14:9-11

- 1) If anyone takes the mark of the beast, he has sealed his own fate: judgment and condemnation. This refers back to v. 8: he will drink the wine of God’s fury because he has drunk the maddening wine of “Babylon’s” adulteries; worshiping the beast and taking his mark.
- 2) Rather than suffer briefly on this earth, as the believers will do for their faith in Christ, they will suffer torment on earth *and* in eternity - forever.

14:12-13

Read Rev. 20:4 These will be beheaded for not taking the mark.

14:14-16

- 1) Symbolism of the cloud and the reference to “the son of man” most likely signifies Jesus Christ. Read Daniel 7:13-14.
- 2) A “sickle” (*drepanon*) is “a pruning hook, a hooked vine knife, such as reapers and vine dressers use.”
- 3) (v.15) “The angel does not command the “Son of man” (Revelation 14:14), but is the mere messenger announcing to the Son the will of *God the Father*, in whose hands are kept *the times and the seasons.*”²

¹ Vine, W. E., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1966), p. 252.

² Jamieson, Faussett, Brown, A. R., A.M., *Commentary on Revelation*. “Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the holeBible”. <<http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/JamiesonFaussetBrown/jfb.cgi?book=re&chapter=003>>.

- 4) To “reap” (*therizo*) means “to reap, harvest; cut off as crops are cut off with a sickle.”
- 5) This harvest refers to people. “Ripe” (*xeraino*) means over-ripe: “to become dry, withered.” The same word is used in John 15:6 of those separated from the True Vine, Jesus Christ.

Read John 15:1-6

14:17-18

- 1) Here it speaks of the earth’s vine, which is opposed to Christ, as the True Vine.
- 2) Here the word for ‘ripe’ is *akmazo*, which means “to flourish, come to maturity.” Only used here, in Rev. 14:18; it is not the same word used in v.15 (withered). The wicked are ripe for punishment.

14:19-20

- 1) “A “winepress” (*lenos*) “consisted of two vats or receptacles:
 - a trough into which the grapes were thrown and where they were trodden upon and bruised;
 - a trough or vat into which the juice ran from the trough above.³
- 3) Read Joel 3:12-13 “Jehoshaphat” means “Jehovah has judged; symbolic name of a valley near Jerusalem which is the place of ultimate judgment; the deep ravine which separates Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives.” Notice the same language used as here, in Rev. 14.
- 4) Read Zechariah 14 Jesus will stand on the Mount of Olives at his return, the same location from which he left.

Read Acts 1:11-12.

³Easton, Matthew George, *Entry for Revelation, Book of.* "Easton's Bible Dictionary"<http://www.biblestudytools.net/Dictionaries/EastonBibleDictionary/ebd.cgi?number=T3120>>. Public Domain.

Chapter 15: Heavenly Preparation for Final Judgment on Earth

15:1

- 1) These plagues are actually poured out of the seven bowls (or vials) of God's wrath (16:1). Remember, there are 21 judgments: 7 seals, and out of the 7th seal come the 7 trumpets, and out of the 7th trumpet comes the 7 bowls (or vials). Read Rev. 16:1
- 2) These judgments may be referred to here as plagues, since they will duplicate the Egyptian plagues in Exodus.

15:2-4

- 1) "Victorious" (*nikao*) is used "of Christians who hold fast their faith even unto death against the power of their foes, and temptations and persecutions."
- 2) This passage shows that the group of harpists in 14:2-3 are the martyrs who have overcome the beast, by refusing to take his mark.
- 3) There are two different songs spoken of here: (1) the song of Moses (reminiscent of Deut. 32); (2) the song of the Lamb.
- 4) "Beast" (*therion*) is "metaphorically, a brutal, bestial man, savage, ferocious."
 - a) "over his image" (*eikon*) is "image, figure, likeness."
 - b) The KJV includes the phrase "and over his mark" (*charagma*), which means "a stamp, an imprinted mark, of the mark stamped on the forehead or the right hand as badge of the followers of the Antichrist."
- 5) "plague" (*plege*) is "public calamity, heavy affliction, plague."

15:5-8

- 1) The tabernacle of the testimony used in O.T. worship was only a replica of this heavenly tabernacle.

"The tabernacle of the testimony was the Holy of Holies. Into it none but the High Priest entered, and he only to make intercession for the forgiveness of sins. It is the type of the Holy of Holies above, the mercy seat in the heavens

where our High Priest [Jesus Christ] intercedes for us, and where the smoke of the incense of prayer arises to God.”⁴

- 2) Testimony is used in the legal sense: evidence in a court of law. It is also a reference to the Ten Commandments (Exodus 32:15), placed in the Ark of the Covenant: God’s law, which has been rejected on earth.

Read Daniel 7:7-14

- 3) “Glory” (*doxa*) is the “majesty of God; His magnificence, excellence, preeminence, dignity and grace; God’s manifest presence. Today, we are the temple of God!

Read Exodus 40:34-35 and 1 Kings 8:10-11

Chapter 16: Completion of God’s Wrath

16:1-2

Just as with the Egyptian plague of festering boils, where only Pharaoh and his people were affected, here only on those who had taken the “mark.” Believers will not be affected (Exodus 9:8-9)

Just as Egyptian plague of water turned to blood (Exodus 7:14-18).

16:5-7

- 1) “I heard the altar respond” is a reference to souls of the martyred saints *under the altar*. Read Rev. 6:
- 2) “Blood to drink” is a reference back to vv. 3-4, with water turned to blood.

16:8-11

- 1) Even believers will have to endure these conditions while on earth. Once in heaven, “never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat” (Rev. 7:16).
- 2) Same as the Egyptian plague of darkness in Exodus 10:23 (read). Believers in the Great Tribulation may also experience these “pockets of light.”

⁴ *People’s New Testament: Commentary on Revelation*. Johnson, Barton W. "Commentary on Revelation 15". "People's New Testament". <<http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/PeoplesNewTestament/pnt.cgi?book=re&chapter=015>>. 1891. Public Domain.

16:12-14

- 1) A coalition of kings will come from an area *East* of the Euphrates River. This is the same word used for the Magi from the *East*, spoken of in Matthew 2:1, who came to worship the newborn Christ. “But whether from Arabia, Persia, or Mesopotamia is uncertain.”⁵ Some view this army from the East as being from the Orient, since the Orient includes all the “countries of eastern Asia,”⁶ which are also east of the River Euphrates.

Reference back to Rev. 9:16.

- 2) The four (fallen) angels bound at the River Euphrates will be released for the very hour of the end: Armageddon. We see that the river will dry up, allowing this army to pass over dry land. This army will kill 1/3 of (the remaining population) of mankind.
- 3) v.13: Frogs are a symbol of “uncleanness,” and are one of the Egyptian plagues (Exodus 8:5).

16:15

Jesus is speaking here of the garments of salvation – Blessed is the believer!

Read Isaiah 61:10. Also Rev. 3:17-18 , where Jesus counsels unsaved church members to get saved.

16:16-19

- 1) “Armageddon is the ancient hill and valley of Megiddo, west of the Jordan in the plain of Jezreel between Samaria and Galilee. It is the appointed place where the armies of the beast and false prophet will be destroyed by Christ’s descending to earth in glory, as well as any other forces that will come against the beast.”⁷
- 2) The final judgment on the world has come because God must judge Babylon the Great. Is this occurring because of the sin and wickedness of only one city or only one empire (Rome, as many suppose)? More on Babylon in Chapters 17 & 18!

⁵Jamieson, Faussett, Brown, *Revelation*.

⁶ The Merriam-Webster Dictionary ©1997.

⁷ Scofield, C.I. (Ed.), *The New Scofield Reference Bible: Authorized King James Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), footnotes on Revelation 9:17, page 1372.

16:20-21

- 1) This cataclysmic judgment covers the entire earth; no city or mountain will be left standing, except Jerusalem, which will split in three parts. “Great city... where also their Lord was crucified” (Rev. 11:8). Jerusalem will survive (Zech.14:10-11), but Babylon, the great city of Rev. 18:10, will be utterly destroyed.

Read Luke 21:25-27 The tossing of the seas may be a reference to great tsunamis caused by this world-wide earthquake.

*Now what?
How will this lesson change the way you live?*

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