

Pastor Grady Covin
The Mission
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Revelation 14-15

Tonight we're going to be in Revelation chapter 14 and 15. And so if have your Bible and want to join with me there. I'm going to try and get through both of these chapters tonight.

Now, you've probably heard the expression, "The darkest hour is just before dawn." Well, that statement has been used for centuries as a way of saying that even during the worst of circumstances there is still hope. And though it may appear to be as dark as it's ever been, there's still hope, because the dawning of a new day is about to begin.

Well, that saying and that truth will no doubt be true for those who choose to follow Christ and especially for those who come to faith in Christ during the tribulation period. And those who will be forced to endure the bloodthirsty reign of the Antichrist, which will be powered by non other than Satan himself.

This Beast, as he is called here in Revelation, who represents the antichrist like we learned last week will partner with the False Prophet, who is also empowered by Satan and who is of course Satan's imitation of God's Holy Spirit.

And for believers living, on earth through this terrible time, it will be an extremely dark time.

But here in Revelation chapters 14 & 15, the apostle John gives us an encouraging vision of Christ's ultimate triumph.

And that vision begins **Revelation 14:1:**

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.

Now, we first met these 144,000 Jewish evangelists back in chapter 7. That's when they were converted to Christ not long after the Rapture and uniquely sealed by God to be His special ambassadors. And John sees them appearing here with the Lamb, Jesus Christ, on Mount Zion. And of course Mount Zion is just another reference for Jerusalem and the temple.

So, this is a prophetic preview of Christ's return. And guess what we find? When Christ returns, these 144,000 Jewish evangelists are still alive and they're still preaching. In other words, they have survived the tribulation just as God had promised.

Now, at this point also, John hears music coming from before the throne of God. And then he describes that music in verses 2-3. He says,

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.

And so this a song that "no one could learn except the 144,000 who had been redeemed." It'll be a song that is totally unique to them, because no-one else will have experienced and survived what they did during the tribulation.

These Jewish evangelists are further described in verse 4 as men who have never been defiled with a woman.

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.

Now, this not meant to be demeaning in any way toward women; but a compliment toward these men because they had stayed single and focused on their assignment; and while traveling the world over to spread the gospel, they had had no time for a relationship with a woman.

That they were redeemed from among men indicates that they were actually saved and regenerated by the Holy Spirit just like all men are saved. And since they were from among the Jews, we can assume that they were probably the first group to receive Christ as the true Messiah. But they wouldn't be the last, because many other Jews would follow them.

And then we have three angels who appear one after the other; each making an announcement. And these announcements are going to give us a preview and a summary of what is about to follow during the remaining days of the tribulation period.

In verse 6 the first angel appears, and he's flying overhead and he proclaims this message in verse 7:

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."

Here we see that the Great Commission that Jesus gave to the church just before He ascended to heaven, it's not going to be completed by the church. It is going to be completed by this angel, who proclaims the gospel to "every nation and tribe and language and people".

The gospel will be delivered to every person and in every language, warning the human race of God's judgment and one last time inviting them to believe. And so this will remove any excuse from those who reject the gospel, which will unfortunately be most of the world.

And then a second angel follows in verse 8 and announces, **“Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great.”** And this is looking ahead to chapters 17–18 as he predicts the collapse of the Antichrist's religious, political, and economic systems.

And then finally, a third angel makes his announcement:

“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.”

In other words, if you choose to worship Satan, that great enemy of God, then you will experience the wrath of God. And this of course is not only meant to be warning to those who would reject Christ, but also an encouragement for the new believers; to stand fast and to endure the persecution of the Antichrist.

Verse 12 says 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.’

And then the remainder of chapter 14 describes two coming harvests. And this previews what’s about to unfold from chapter 15 all the way to chapter 19.

The first harvest is a harvest of grain in verses 14-16.

14 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. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on 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.” 16 So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

This first harvest is carried out by none other than Christ Himself. And this harvest is a metaphor for the coming judgment, which will be the bowl judgments of God which are about to come upon the earth in the very end. And these are even more intense and more severe and more horrific than any we’ve seen before.

And then the second harvest follows in verse 17.

17 Then another angel came out of the temple, which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

He also has a sharp sickle, and he harvests the ripened grapes of the earth. And this harvest we know is symbolic of the battle of Armageddon which will come at the very end of the tribulation and will culminate with the final return of Christ.

The enemies of Christ will be crushed like grapes in a winepress.

18 And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.”

19 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.

And then in verse 20 John writes, 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.

This means blood will flow like a river for some 200 miles! And the irony, as terrible as it is; is that those who continue to reject the shed blood of Christ, will now shed their own blood as God’s wrath falls.

And so that brings us to chapter 15 where God’s wrath is about to enter a final stage of horrifying devastation.

If you remember, the last trumpet judgment was introduced all the way back in chapter 11 and what follows is going to be the bowl judgments, which will be the final series of judgments.

But before we get to the blood and gore and judgment and death, John sees something in verses 2-4 that are meant to be encouraging to those who will hold on to their faith:

2 And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. 3 They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying:

“Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! 4 Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested.”

And so what John sees is a vision of heaven, and there’s rejoicing and singing. And this of course a great choir, whose members are made up of all those who were martyred for their faith in Christ during the tribulation.

And of course they’re not viewed as failures, but rather as victors who have conquered the beast and its image. In other words, they will be the true winners and the victors in this final battle.

And then chapter 15 closes with a vision of these seven angels who are getting ready to pour out the final bowls “full of the wrath of God” against the world that hates Christ and wants to kill anyone who loves Him.

5 After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. 6 And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands. 7 Then one of the four living creatures (those are the four high ranking angels who we were introduced to back in chapter 4 that surround God’s throne) and here they give to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever.

And so this is the beginning of the end.

And then the last verse of this chapter adds this detail:

8 The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

And what this means of course is that nobody can stop the hand of God. Nobody can push a pause button on these judgments He is about to unleash. And so this is a tragic message for those who have rejected God's pardon through Christ, because when it gets to this point, there's no turning back. The judgment of God will be unstoppable. And those who have rejected Christ will be lost forever with no more hope and no other chance to repent. What a sad day that's going to be!