
THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Lesson #8 (4 March 2016): Revelation 14-15 Judgment and Praise: “Here is the patience of the saints”

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INTRODUCTION: JUDGMENT AND PRAISE (14:1 – 15:8)

With the commentary on chapter 12, we identified seven “signs of the end” in chapters 12-14. That list then concludes in these chapters. We saw six of them in chapters 12-13: the woman and the dragon, the war in heaven and the war on earth, and the beast from the sea and the beast from the earth.

In chapter 15 we will see the beginning of the seventh sign, the judgment by the angels. But before this last sign, we see how God counteracts the things shown in the other chapters in the acts of the dragon and his beasts. Saints can take hope that the seeming control that this evil trinity has over the earth comes to an end, as declared by the angels.

OUTLINE

There are many ways to outline any book, and Revelation is no exception. Below are the eleven lessons in this series with chapter summaries. For the lesson in these notes, the chapter is broken down into more detailed sections and bolded.

1. The Majesty of Christ (1:1-20)
2. The Messages to the Seven Churches (2:1 – 3:22)
3. God and the Lamb
 - a. The Vision of Heaven (4:1-11)
 - b. The Sealed Book and the Worthy Lamb (5:1-14)
4. The Scroll Begins to Open
 - a. The Six Seals (6:1-17)
 - b. The Seal of the Living God (7:1-17)
5. The Opening of the Seventh Seal
 - a. The Seventh Seal and the First Four Trumpets (8:1-13)
 - b. Two Trumpets and the Great War (9:1-21)
6. John’s Mission; Two Prophets
 - a. The Little Scroll (10:1-11)
 - b. The Seventh Trumpet (11:1-19)
7. The Woman, the Child, and the Dragon
 - d.
- a. The Church and the Devil (12:1-17)
- b. The Beasts of Revelation (13:1-18)
- 8. Judgment and Praise**
 - a. The Winepress of the Wrath of God (14:1-20)**
 - i. The new song (14:1-5)**
 - ii. Six angels and a voice from heaven (14:6-20)**
 - b. The Seven Angels (15:1-8)**
 - i. Sing the song of Moses (15:1-4)**
 - ii. Angels prepare to go forth (15:5-8)**
9. Seven Last Plagues and Babylon the Great
 - a. The Seven Bowls (16:1-21)
 - b. Babylon the Great (17:1-18)
10. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb
 - a. The Fall of Babylon (18:1-24)
 - b. The King of Kings (19:1-21)
11. Heirs of the Celestial Glory
 - a. The Thousand Years (20:1-15)
 - b. The New Jerusalem (21:1-27)
 - c. Blessed Are They That Do His Commandments (22:1-21)

THE WINEPRESS OF THE WRATH OF GOD (14:1-20)

John calls on us to choose, and we each have to decide. Will we choose Christ or Satan; the heavenly Jerusalem or Babylon; the seal of God or the mark of the beast? God, Christ, angels, John and other prophets, and saints in all ages pray we'll choose well.

THE NEW SONG (14:1-5)

We've seen the dragon, his beasts, and their mark. Now we are returned to the heavenly image of those sealed/marked by the Father. Sometimes we may look around and think we're outnumbered, even all alone, in trying to obey God. But like Elijah, who felt that way (see 1 Kings 19:14-18), the Lord reassures us that is simply not true.

14:1 **And I looked.** Three times this phrase is used in chapter 14, indicating a shift in what John sees. This first one is looking away from the evil that is happening on earth with the dragon and his beasts and their mark to the Father's throne and the events taking place there at the same time.

14:1 **a Lamb stood on the mount Zion.** The first beast stood on the shifting and unstable sand (13:1); Christ in contrast stands on the rock of Zion.¹ Mount Zion is symbolically "the center place or capital of God's eschatological kingdom."² Used 155 times in the OT, Zion refers "to God's dwelling in the temple" or it can "be a symbol for the people of God." The specific use of "mount Zion" is only found nineteen times, typically used with the idea of God saving a remnant of his covenant people.³

To Latter-day Saints, the term has particular meaning having to do with a place of gathering and safety for the saints in the last days, even the New Jerusalem, a concept developed through 187 references to the term in the Doctrine and Covenants and 14 in the Pearl of Great Price.⁴

14:1 **an hundred forty and four thousand.** This returns the group sealed up in 7:4 to our view, but must

also take in the huge multitude also mentioned in that chapter that enjoy the same status. In other words, the 144,000 represent all those saved by God.⁵ They have been patiently waiting upon the Lord and are now ready to sing the praises of God and his Lamb.

14:1 **his Father's name written in their foreheads.** We know this from 7:3-4 but this emphasizes the contrast clear with those who worship the beast and have evil's name written on their foreheads and hands. The link to Ezekiel 9:3-11 that we discussed in that chapter applies here as well. In the conclusion of Revelation, we will see this mark again (22:4).

All early Greek manuscripts add that they have the Lamb's name also written in their foreheads.⁶

14:2 **I heard a voice from heaven.** Or, "I heard a sound from heaven" (NIV, NAB, NJB, NLT). John records no words of the sound at first but rather a loud sound that is like many waters, thunder, or a great collection of harpists. Shortly it becomes a song.

14:3 **they sung as it were a new song.** Given by way of a victory celebration, the new song sung by the four beasts, the twenty-four elders, and the 144,000 may be what is given in D&C 84:98-102. It echoes back to the new song in 5:9.⁷

14:3 **were redeemed from the earth.** To be redeemed is to be purchased and freed from slavery or prison. The atonement of Christ redeems us from the earth by purchasing us for God and freeing us from the prison of sin that we have gotten ourselves into, by his grace and love.

14:4 **not defiled with women, for they are virgins.** The term used for "virgins" (*parthenoi*) has both the connotation of abstaining from sexual activity and someone who may or may not be married but is chaste,⁸ the implication being that they have not defiled

¹ Smalley, 353.

² Draper and Rhodes, 922; they reference Joel 2:32; Isaiah 24:23; 31:4; Micah 4:7; Zechariah 14:4-5 as OT scriptures where this is illustrated.

³ Beale and Carson, 1131.

⁴ For example, D&C 45:68, 71; 84:2; 115:6; 124:36; and Moses 7:62.

⁵ Mounce, 264.

⁶ Draper and Rhodes, 923.

⁷ Osborne, 527.

⁸ Danker, 776-777.

themselves with the worship of other gods.⁹ Culturally, many warriors prepared themselves for battle by abstaining from sexual relations for a time, the implication here that the 144,000 are prepared to do battle for God.¹⁰ The third concept is that the church has often been portrayed as the bride of Christ, prepared for the wedding (2 Corinthians 11:2). As such, she would be a virgin.¹¹ It does not imply anything about sex per se, but that the 144,000 are worthy and prepared for the Lord's assigned tasks.

14:4 **follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.** To "follow" means to be a disciple. These people are Christ's disciples "at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Mosiah 18:9).

14:4 **redeemed from among men.** Or, 'purchased from humanity.'¹² We are purchased by the blood of Christ (5:9) and presented to the Father as worthy because of the Atonement.

14:4 **the firstfruits unto God.** The Greek term *aparchē*, translated here "firstfruits," was used of food offerings given to the gods. John clearly associates it with people, implying that they are thus the offerings made to God. The sense is these 144,000 stand ready to serve God, just as Jesus was "the firstfruits unto God" in Jacob's sermon to the Nephites, meaning he was prepared to "make intercession for all the children of men" (2 Nephi 2:9).¹³ Later in the chapter, the righteous are the first ones 'harvested' before the end of the world.

14:5 **no guile.** The always speak the truth. Compare to Isaiah 53:9, Zephaniah 3:13, and Psalm 15:1-3. But more than that, they always bear true witness and testimony to God's love and Jesus' sacrifice, which gift motivates them to be willing to similarly sacrifice.¹⁴

14:5 **they are without fault.** They keep their covenants and the Lord's law perfectly.

SIX ANGELS AND A VOICE FROM HEAVEN (14:6-20)

This pericope introduces six angels and a voice from heaven (in the middle of the angels and to make the total seven). They each relate something concerning those who have wholly given themselves to the dragon

and his beasts. Their roles or messages can be summarized as follows, with the first three giving warnings and the last three executing on those warnings:

- Angel 1 (vv. 6-7): the everlasting gospel
- Angel 2 (v. 8): Babylon is fallen
- Angel 3 (vv. 9-12): those with the mark drink of the wrath of God
 - Voice from heaven (vv. 13-14): blessed are the dead which die in the Lord
- Angel 4 (vv. 15-16): the time is come to reap
- Angel 5 (v. 17): has a sharp sickle
- Angel 6 (vv. 18-20): tells Angel 5 to gather the grapes

14:6 **another angel.** Another in the sense that there have been other angels in the book, but this is the first angel of this section of the text (referred to as a pericope). The phrase "another angel" occurs five times in this chapter (vv. 6, 8, 15, 17, and 18), once for each angel viewed except the third which is called, unsurprisingly, "the third angel" (v. 9).

14:6 **fly.** This is the only reference in Revelation to an angel flying. Other characters that fly are the eagle (8:13), creatures (4:7), or birds (19:17), plus the woman/church (12:14).

14:6 **in the midst of heaven.** In Jewish cosmology, there are three 'heavens' or levels to the sky—the immediate sky above us; the area where the sun, moon, and stars were; and the dwelling place of God. This angel is in the middle heaven, near the heavenly bodies so that all can see him declare his message.

14:6 **having the everlasting gospel.** We quote this scripture relating to Moroni and see it fulfilled in his coming, which is a great application. But in John's context it can apply to more revelations of the gospel and more messengers than Moroni. The message of this angel that is the everlasting gospel is in the next verse. See D&C 133:36-39 where the angel is "flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel." He appears to some and commits it to them, and that gospel is then preached throughout the world by "the servants of God." Thus the missionary force going

⁹ Beale and Carson, 1131.

¹⁰ Arnold, 332.

¹¹ Mounce, 267.

¹² Osborne, 530.

¹³ Draper and Rhodes, 930-931.

¹⁴ Smalley, 359-360.

throughout the world are the fulfillment of this scripture.¹⁵

14:7 **Fear God.** To fear God is both to fear and revere him;¹⁶ it entirely depends on your position. The wicked on the earth will truly fear him while the 144,000 and all those sealed up with his name will reverence him.

14:7 **give glory to him.** Once God and his plan are properly understood and fear/reverence comes into our lives, the only option left to us is to give him glory for all he has done for our salvation and eternal joy.¹⁷

14:7 **the hour of his judgment is come.** Or said another way, 'Last chance to repent before it's too late.'

14:8 **another angel.** This is the second messenger declaring the destruction of Babylon.

14:8 **Babylon is fallen, is fallen.** It isn't yet chronologically (that happens in chapter 18), but it assuredly will happen, so it is pronounced here. The angel quoted Isaiah 21:9 ("Babylon is fallen, is fallen") and Jeremiah 51:7-8 ("drunken of her wine" and "Babylon is suddenly fallen"). This is the first mention of Babylon in Revelation, which returns five more times (16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21). Babylon is symbolic for evil, having conquered Jerusalem in 587 B.C. and destroyed its temple. In John's day, Rome was equated with Babylon for the same reason.¹⁸

14:8 **drink the wine of the wrath of her fornication.** "Wrath" should be translated 'passion', thus the phrase is better rendered, "drink the wine of her passionate immorality" (NLT).

14:9 **third angel.** The only one numbered in the list.

14:10 **wrath of God.** Previous chapters showed God's patient call to repentance and the many chances he gave mankind. Now the time was up (D&C 43:25-26).

14:10 **without mixture.** Or, undiluted; people typically mixed three parts water with wine for normal consumption.¹⁹ This wine is not mixed with water and of the strongest character to have the maximum effect on those who consume it.

14:10 **tormented with fire and brimstone.**

"Brimstone" is sulfur, a substance that burns easily. When combined with pitch and fire, it would cling to the skin of its victims while it burned, greatly increasing their suffering.²⁰ It reminds the reader of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:28).

14:11 **the smoke of their torment.** The brimstone and fire burning their bodies produces a rancid-smelling smoke that lasts forever. Such is the symbolic torment of the those "who worship the beast and his image." This harkens back to events such as Abraham seeing the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah from a distance by the smoke that rose up (Genesis 19:28).²¹

14:11 **they have no rest day nor night.** This should be compared to 4:8, where the four beasts around the throne "rest not day and night" saying praises to God.

14:12 **the patience of the saints.** "Patience" is "steadfast endurance" (BYU). The pressure from the world to conform is extreme but those who belong to the Father and the Son will continue to be true to his commandments regardless.

14:13 **I heard a voice from heaven.** The specific voice is not identified but its source is, making it divine or at least divinely sanctioned.

14:13 **Write.** Thirteen times John is commanded in Revelation to write something. Only one time is he told not to write something he saw (10:4).

14:13 **Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.** The voice from heaven speaks the second of seven beatitudes in Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). In this case, it is a promise of blessedness to those patiently waiting on the Lord and enduring the things of the world, even unto their deaths. "Faithfulness to Christ may issue in martyrdom, but the faithful dead are blessed in that they have entered victoriously into their rest."²²

14:14 **I looked.** An indication of a new focus after the declaration of blessedness in vv. 12-13.

14:14 **upon the cloud one sat.** The cloud coming from heaven represents the presence of God (e.g., Numbers

¹⁵ Draper and Rhodes, 953-954.

¹⁶ Smalley, 362.

¹⁷ Osborne, 537.

¹⁸ Smalley, 364.

¹⁹ Arnold, 334.

²⁰ Draper and Rhodes, 951.

²¹ Smalley, 366.

²² Mounce, 275.

10:34; Deuteronomy 31:15; Ezekiel 10:4; Acts 1:9), so the one sitting on it is divine or at least divinely sanctioned; compare to Daniel 7:13-14.

14:14 **Son of man**. This is Christ.

14:14 **in his hand a sharp sickle**. The sickle is used for the grain harvest; see D&C 4:4. These verses tell the story of two harvests, reminiscent of the parable of the wheat and the tares; see Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; D&C 86:1-7.

14:15 **another angel**. This is the fourth angel, declaring the time of the harvest has come.

14:15 **came out of the temple**. Unlike the first three angels which were in the heavens near the celestial bodies (v. 6 above), these last three are in God's temple in the highest heaven.

14:16 **thrust in his sickle on the earth**. The Lord's reaping action gathers the righteous as wheat ahead of the coming judgment.

14:17 **another angel**. This is the fifth angel, the angel of death, the grim reaper, from which we get the popular image of the creature carrying a scythe come to collect the dead. He is to collect the wicked tares left after the Lord's harvest of the righteous wheat.

In the wheat and the tares parable in Matthew, the tares are first gathered and burned, and then the wheat is brought into the barn. Joseph Smith corrected it in his translation so the wheat was first gathered and then the tares were harvested and burned. Likewise, D&C 86 reflects that same reversed order compared to Matthew. Revelation follows the same order as the JST and D&C 86, with the Lord gathering the righteous in the first harvest, followed by the grim reaper harvesting the wicked before the burning.

14:18 **another angel**. This is the sixth and final angel.

14:18 **from the altar**. The altar is associated with prayer, so the prayers of the faithful play a definite part

in bringing about God's judgment, as they did in 6;9 and 8:3-5.²³

14:18 **her grapes are fully ripe**. Meaning the wicked (as verses 10 and 19 show). The metaphor shifts from field crops to the vineyard. The only other place where this mix of grain and grapes occurs is Joel 3:13, which is likely influencing this view for John.²⁴

14:19 **the great winepress of the wrath of God**. A winepress was typically cut in rock. Grapes were dumped in from all the farms in the area, then were walked on to be crushed. Juice flowed out a channel into a large rock-cut cistern. Everyone from the area used the same winepress at harvest time, gathering grapes and bringing them there, then divided up the results.

The cross-reference is to Isaiah 63:2-6 where the grapes are crushed in the winepress by the Savior alone, and the wine is the blood of the wicked, staining his garments. (This is where the phrase "the grapes of wrath" originates.)

14:20 **winepress was trodden**. 19:15 shows that Christ himself does this, and Isaiah 63:3 where he does it alone.

14:20 **without the city**. Or, 'outside the city.' The city is not named but is probably Jerusalem,²⁵ given that Jesus was crucified outside the city walls (Matthew 27:33; Mark 15:22; Luke 23:33; John 19:17).

14:20 **blood**. The wicked paying the price of their sins.

14:20 **a thousand and six hundred furlongs**. This is 1,600 stadia or about 184 miles,²⁶ the approximate length of the country of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba; also 4 (the earth) squared times 10 squared (all of a part), and 4-5 feet deep, representing a vast amount of blood. This event is Armageddon, which will come back in chapter 16 with the bowl judgments. See 1 Nephi 14:15-16; 22:13-14 (those against Israel destroy each other) and Joel 3:9-14 (nations gather in the valley of decision).

²³ Mounce, 279.

²⁴ Beale and Carson, 1133.

²⁵ Mounce, 281.

²⁶ Draper and Rhodes, 977; Mounce, 281.

THE SEVEN ANGELS (15:1-8)

Seven more angels are going to inflict seven last plagues on the earth (the bowl judgments of the next chapter), but first John had another pause and look up into heaven, perhaps to help him and us keep seeing the big picture and God's constant care for the faithful.

The story is probably not moving along in chronological order here, but rather is looking back at the efforts that result in the harvest of the followers of the dragon and his beasts and how that came about, through these seven bowl judgments.²⁷

SING THE SONG OF MOSES (15:1-4)

15:1 **sign**. The same word as in 12:1, these signs are likely a continuation of those, meaning signs of the authority of God.

15:1 **great and marvelous**. The sign in 12:1 was great; this one now is also marvelous, or amazing.

15:1 **seven angels**. Other angels have been mentioned but this is a new set of seven, however probably symbolic of all the angels of heaven.

15:1 **the seven last plagues**. We saw the trumpet plagues in chapters 8-11, and now these bowl plagues are the last ones before the transformation of the earth.

15:1 **filled up**. Concluded, completed, or discharged. In these last plagues, the wrath of God is concluded.

15:2 **sea of glass**. The celestial kingdom, as we've already learned from 4:6.

15:3 **sing the song of Moses**. Also mentioned is the "song of the Lamb" but these are not two songs. Moses' song is in Exodus 15:1-19, sung just after passing through the Red Sea and the Egyptians being drowned. Now it is completed by the atonement of Christ to bring it to John's (and our) day with verses 3-4. Both songs praise God's deliverance.

15:3 **King of saints**. Or, "King of the nations" (NIV, NASB, NAB). The best Greek manuscript do not have the phrase "saints" but rather "nations," which fits the context of other passages in Revelation better.

15:4 **Who shall not fear thee, O Lord**. The question is posed and answered in the same verse: "all nations" because they will see that he is "holy," that everyone will "come and worship," and that "thy judgments are made manifest."²⁸

ANGELS PREPARE TO GO FORTH (15:5-8)

15:5 **the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony**. Like Exodus 33:7, this is the "tent of witness" (see also Exodus 32:7 and Numbers 17:7). A better translation would be, 'the temple, that is, the tent of the Ten Commandments' because the tent held these witnesses of the covenant of the Lord with Israel.

15:6 **angels came out of the temple**. The seven angels were in God's presence and now exit the temple to prepare for their mission of judgment.

15:6 **clothed in pure and white linen**. Dressed like priests and prepared to offer sacrifice or otherwise officiate in God's presence.

15:7 **one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels**. Their receive their judgments from one of the four beasts who are in God's presence.

15:7 **seven golden vials**. Or, "seven golden bowls" (NIV, NASB, RSV, NJB). Such bowls were used by priests and Levites in temple worship to carry blood, coals, or incense. They were often shaped like cupped hands with long handles.

15:8 **the temple was filled with smoke**. Like Moses' experience in the wilderness (Exodus 40:34-35) or Solomon's when he dedicated his temple (1 Kings 8:11-12), smoke in the temple represents his presence.

15:8 **no man was able to enter into the temple**. Some possible reasons include: 1) No man can stand before the Lord in his full glory; 2) God's presence represents approval for what happens next, like when he accepted the tabernacle; and, 3) There was no more discussion—the final plagues will be poured out, no prayers will be heard—not because men *can't* repent but because they *won't* (compare Jeremiah 7:16 and Mormon 3:11-15).

²⁷ Draper and Rhodes, 991.

²⁸ Draper and Rhodes, 1002.

CONCLUSION

The world's influence can be overpowering. "We look around, and the mark of the beast appears to be on everyone's head."²⁹ We might feel very alone in trying to keep the standards of the Church and the commandments that are so quickly mocked by those in the large and spacious building, the members of the great and abominable church. John wants us to always remember that we are not alone but are joined with and supported by a symbolic 144,000, which stands for an innumerable company of saints who have stayed true and received their eternal inheritance. Keeping the

beast's mark and only have the marks of the Father and the Son allows us to be part of that massive effort and enjoy the same reward.

We have seen seven seals that announced God's plans for mankind, and seven trumpets that declared the coming judgment. In this section we are introduced to seven bowl judgments which are the fulfillment of the promises of the trumpets. We will examine those bowl judgments in the next lesson.

²⁹ Wilcox, 202.

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Bible versions cited (if no version is cited, it is the KJV; any translation or paraphrase in single quotes is the author's):

KJV – King James Version (Authorized Version)

JST – Joseph Smith Translation

BYU – BYU New Testament Rendition (from Draper and Rhodes)

CJB – Complete Jewish Bible
LXX – Septuagint (Greek Old Testament)
NAB – The New American Bible
NASB – New American Standard Bible
NIV – New International Version
NJB – New Jerusalem Bible
NLT – New Living Translation