

The Mark!

Revelation 14

Some have asked why I had Mike preach last week when I was here. Well, if you look at chapter 13 verse 3 you see a very difficult passage to interpret. It says that the anti-Christ received what appeared to be a fatal wound to the head, but it was healed. Well, this close to the election I didn't want to touch that one with a 10-foot poll.

Thanks for covering that passage Mike!

One thing I really enjoy is going to a good movie. Barb gets popcorn and I get Raisinets. We share a large cherry coke and then settle in for the movie.

As we wait, we watch the commercials, turn our phones down and then it happens... The previews!

After each preview we say to each other whether we think it is worth seeing or not. Sometimes we feel like we just saw everything worth seeing in the preview.

Occasionally you see a preview of an upcoming blockbuster you are really excited to see, and you feel like you got a bonus just for seeing that preview.

Today are the previews! As we open to Revelation 14, we find a number of previews of upcoming blockbusters in Revelation. Imagine that God is giving us a preview to future events in a book about the future. Prophecies within the prophecy!

As a reminder, we are in the section of Revelation about the Tribulation which is found in chapters 6-18. We are in the second section of this portion of Revelation which deals with prophecies in chapters 12-14. So that brings us to today as we look at the next 3 points of this section. Today we are at:

f. The 144,000 Revelation 14:1-5

Revelation 14:1-5, "Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. 3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before

the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. 4 These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they remained virgins. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among mankind and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. 5 No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.”

The last time we saw the 144,000 was in chapter 7 where it also talks about the mark on their foreheads.

Revelation 7:3-4, “Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.” 4 Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.”

Now we find them with Jesus on Mt. Zion. The question is which Mt. Zion, the one on earth or the one in heaven. If on earth they are still alive. If in heaven, then they have been killed. We know that they had God’s protection on them just like the 2 witnesses. But even like the 2 witnesses, once their work is complete that protection can be removed.

Revelation 11:7, “Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them.”

This was said about the 2 witnesses and we can assume the same for the 144,000 once their work is complete.

I believe this to be the case for the 144,000 because as we move along in this passage, we see them joining the group around the throne and they begin to sing a new song. It says that they are the only ones able to sing this new song.

The song they are singing is the song of the redeemed and that is why they can only sing it. Those who haven’t been redeemed can’t sing a song of redemption.

Now the tough part, see in verse 4 where it says, “defiled by women?” This doesn’t mean that being with a woman defiles you. Now I know, some of you are thinking “oh yes it does.” That is a whole different issue for you to deal with.

What this means in Scripture is that the 144,000 remained sexually pure. Sexual impurity walks in lock step with people not walking with God.

1 Thes. 4:3, "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality;"

2 Timothy 2:22, "Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

1 Corinthians 6:13, "You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body."

Why? Why is it so important to keep the body pure? The body, your body, is the home of the Holy Spirit.

We are then told that the 144,000 followed Jesus wherever He went. Do we follow Him wherever He leads us?

The 144,000 lived so well that they became the firstfruits in the offering to the Lord. The firstfruits of the Biblical offering was always the best part of what was being offered. The best wheat, the best lambs, the best bulls. It was the firstfruits.

Now, we may think it is too high a standard that is being set. Who wants to be compared to the 144,000? Look at:

1 Peter 1:15-16, "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

I remember reading that passage for the first time as a 15-year-old kid. All I could think of was how in the world is that possible.

How can we live a holy life? How can you live a holy life? Here's the secret...you can't. But the Holy Spirit, who lives in you, can. We have to surrender our lives to the Spirit's leading and become obedient to the Word of God and the leading of the Spirit. That is the only way you can be holy. You can't do it on your own, never on your own, only with the Spirit.

Then we learn to become transparent, sharing our struggles with one another. Confessing to one another, holding each other accountable to living a life of faith.

Therefore, do as Peter instructs, be holy!

g. The Announcements of the Angels Revelation 14:6-13

Revelation 14:6-7, “Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. 7 He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

The first angel is proclaiming the gospel once again during the outpouring of judgement we see the mercy of God. At every turn God is offering salvation, but the angel also says the hour of judgement has come so the window of salvation is closing.

Why wait? Even in our age things are getting worse, we see it everyday and just as people are waiting today. People are still holding off on making the decision to follow Christ in the last days.

Revelation 14:8, “A second angel followed and said, “‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great,’ which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.”

The word “fallen” is repeated twice for emphasis. Who or what is “Babylon?” In history Babylon was a city in Persia. This is where Nebuchadnezzar was king. He was the king who took Israel into captivity and destroyed the temple built by Solomon.

Babylon here in Revelation refers to the religious and economic system during the tribulation. The religion was set up to worship the beast and the economic system refused to let anyone refusing to worship the beast to have the right to buy and sell.

The next angel talks about this economic system.

Revelation 14:9-12, “A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, 10 they, too, will drink the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name.” 12 This calls for patient endurance on the part of the

people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus.”

Bottom line here is DON'T GET THE MARK OF THE BEAST! Whatever it is, microchip, tattoo, credit card duct taped to your forehead. Don't get it!

The description of the punishment for those who receive the mark should scare everyone. Burning sulfur and the smoke rising up forever, not pleasant. Here is the thing church, hell is a real place. Let that sink in.

Revelation 14:13, “Then I heard a voice from heaven say, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”

“Yes,” says the Spirit, “they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.”

What? Blessed are the dead? This isn't the Grateful Dead. If I'm dead how is that a blessing?

Psalms 116:15, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants.”

John MacArthur in his commentary on Revelation describes the 7 beatitudes in Revelation. The first one was blessed is anyone who reads this book in 1:3.

Here in chapter 14 we have the second, blessed are the dead.

The blessing comes from how these saints lived their lives and how they died. The important thing to see here is the difference between those who take the loyalty mark in following the beast from those who remain faithful to God. One is doomed to burning sulfur and the other is blessed in death. Which will you be?

h. The Harvest Judgement Revelation 14:14-20

Here we will see 2 harvests described.

Revelation 14:14-16, “I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. 15 Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, “Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” 16 So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.”

This first harvest is done by Jesus, and it is called the grain harvest. When Jesus first came, he sowed the

seed and now He has come to harvest. He first came as a servant, now He returns as Sovereign King. The first time He came was to seek and to save the lost and the 2nd time it is to judge the living and the dead.

Remember that this chapter is a preview, and the grain harvest is a preview of the 7 bowl judgements.

John uses a couple of interesting words here. The first is the word he uses for crown. The Greek word for a king's crown is diadem but John uses the word stephanos which is the crown of the victor like one would see in athletic competitions. He returns as the victor.

The word John uses for ripe doesn't mean that the grain is ripe and ready to eat but rather that it is over ripe, even spoiled or simply rotten.

Finally, this reaping is the 7 bowl judgements.

Revelation 14:17-20, "Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. 18 Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe." 19 The angel swung his

sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. 20 They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia."

This 2nd harvest is the grape harvest. Here the grapes represent the unrepentant sinners. They will be put in the press and crushed.

This harvest represents the battle of Armageddon. So, the blood coming from the press is said to rise to the horses' bridle which is about 4 feet and for a distance of 1,600 stadia or about 200 miles.

I don't believe that this is a literal river of blood, but that this is a hyperbole. What I believe this battlefield will look like will be blood splattered all over for the length of the battlefield which is 200 miles. As we will see there are 200 million soldiers coming to fight against Jesus at Armageddon. This is the blood of 200 million people!

So, what does this mean to you? Are you going to heaven or to burning sulfur? Are your children going to heaven or to burning sulfur? Are your neighbors going to heaven or to burning sulfur?

Are your co-workers going to heaven or to burning sulfur? Do you need to get right with the Lord, or do you need to get serious about praying for someone?