

In one of the “Peanuts” comic strips, Charlie Brown is sitting in his bean bag chair in front of the television when his little sister Sally enters the room and says, “I memorized the Bible verse we were supposed to learn for Sunday,” to which Charlie Brown asked, “What verse?”

Sally thinks for a moment and then replies, “I don’t know – now you made me forget. Maybe it was something Moses said or maybe it something from the Book of Re-evaluation.”

Of course, Sally meant the Book of Revelation, but in some ways the “Book of Re-evaluation” is a good description of the book that we’ve been studying, for in some ways, as we will see this morning, it may cause us to re-evaluate just how serious we consider our walk with the Lord.

When we finished with **Revelation 13** last week, the world looked pretty dismal and depressing. If you remember, Satan, and his Antichrist, and the False Prophet – the unholy trinity, all in cahoots together, seemed to have the upper hand during the Tribulation period. They greatly deceived the people of the world, they cruelly persecuted countless numbers of Christians, and they religiously compelled all people take the mark of the beast in devotion to the Antichrist – or else.

It was a terrible picture of the future, and if the story were to end there, we would think that the villains had won, and that God had forgotten His promises and had forsaken His people – but thank God, the story does not end there as we will see in this next chapter, for through the doom and the gloom, the Apostle John is given a preview – a sneak peek of what happens at the end of the Tribulation period when the hero, Jesus Christ returns, shares His victory with His followers, and renders judgment on those who have rejected Him.

So, if you have your Bible, turn to **Revelation 14** and we will start with **verse 1** where the Apostle John tells us,

Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

In this preview of the end, John sees a vision of Jesus – **the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion**, the hill where Jerusalem sits – the place where Jesus will plant His feet at His Second Coming following the Tribulation period. The hero has returned in victory, and He’s not alone for He stands with a group of faithful followers identified as the **144,000**. If you recall back in **Chapter 7**, we were first

introduced to this group of godly Jewish men, comprised of twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. In total they are a force of 144,000 strong – men who are wholly devoted and obedient to the Lord, faithful and courageous, and they would be tasked with preaching the Gospel during the Tribulation period – and this underscores what I have said to you on a few occasions. The Tribulation period is primarily about the Jews – bringing the Jews to Jesus, their true Messiah.

While the Antichrist and the False Prophet are spreading their terrible lies, these 144,000 Jewish evangelists will be spreading the truth until the very end, and here's something we don't want to overlook. They started with 144,000, they went through a horrible period of unimaginable death and disaster – all of them were most likely on the Antichrist's "Most Wanted" list, and yet with God's protection, not a single one was lost. They started with 144,000 and they finished with 144,000.

So, John has been given a sneak peek where Jesus has returned in victory at the end of the Tribulation period and is being welcomed by the 144,000 who are more than ready to go with Him into His earthly kingdom. This is what John sees, but then his attention is drawn to some activity in heaven, and this is what he says beginning with **verse 2**.

² And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. ³ And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. ⁴ These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb. ⁵ And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.

After seeing the Lord's victorious return to the earth and the gathering of the 144,000 around Him, John hears a booming sound from Heaven – **like the sound of loud thunder**, and as he continues to listen, the sound becomes something **like the sound of harpists playing**, and so it would appear, that a party has broken out in Heaven with praise music and a chorus. If you recall back in **Chapter 5**, the twenty-four elders seated around the throne of God had harps, so maybe they decided to cut loose with some music, playing with a chorus that is singing a **new song** – a song where the only ones on the earth who can **learn** it are the 144,000.

Now, why is that? We are not told why, but the 144,000 will share a mission like no other – a mission of witnessing during the Tribulation period, and so, this song could be their story. If you think about it, it's not uncommon to have a song that reminds you of something or someone. If you recall, when the Israelites passed through the Red Sea, they sang a new song on the other side. It was their song – a song they could relate to because it was a song of their personal redemption. So, these 144,000 have a new song to learn.

So, after giving us a preview of Jesus standing on Mount Zion at His Second Coming and the celebration that ensues, we come to a section where in light of the Lord's certain victory at the end – knowing what will happen, knowing that good will ultimately triumph over evil, several announcements are made by angels to the lost inhabitants of the earth. So, let's pick up with **verse 6**.

⁶ And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; ⁷ and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."

In his vision, John tells us he saw an **angel flying in midheaven** beyond the reach of Satan and his demons who were cast down to the earth, and this angel appears to be making one last attempt to share the Gospel – giving one last invitation to come to Christ and to worship the One true God before the end comes.

This Gospel presentation is a last-ditch effort given to lost people by God to avoid His judgment. It's a call for a re-evaluation – a call to repentance. It's a plea to those *riding the fence* so to speak, to resist the pull of the Antichrist and turn to God because He is the One who made the **heaven and the earth and sea and springs** – something only God could do. In essence, the angel is saying what the Apostle Paul has already explained in **Romans 1:18-21**.

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. ²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Creation testifies of the truth, and there is no excuse. People have a choice – they can worship the false Christ, the Antichrist, Satan’s man who represents evil in the world, or they can worship God. It’s that black and white, and there is no middle ground. There is no riding the fence here.

Now we come to **verse 8**, where John sees another angel, and he says,

And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.”

The second angel has a message – and the message is this: *it’s a done deal. Babylon has fallen – it’s all coming down.* In the Bible, **Babylon** is symbolic of the ungodly worldly system set up against God. If you recall way back in **Genesis**, the people of Babel attempted to reach Heaven on their own – apart from God, and using that as our backdrop, Babylon represents man’s attempt to attain glory for himself. Babylon represents the political, the economic, and the false religious system of the Antichrist that will intoxicate the whole world with its **immorality** – and the angel is saying, *it’s all coming down, so get out while you can before it’s too late.* That’s what the Tribulation period is all about. God does everything He can to turn people back to Himself.

Now there is more about Babylon and her judgment, but we will have to wait until we get to **Chapter 17** to explore that, so for now, let’s move on to a third announcement beginning with **verse 9**.

⁹ Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will 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 goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

The third angel pronounces judgment on all those who fail to believe the Gospel and refuse enter into a right relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. In this passage, those who reject Christ are presented with some very hard truth, and it is this – *with sin comes the cup of God’s anger and wrath, and you want no part of it.* This might be the strongest warning in the Bible to those who reject Jesus

Christ – the Savior who already took the **cup** on our behalf. Jesus willingly drank the cup of God’s anger and wrath and went to the cross for us; but here, for those who reject Him, they have no choice – that cup will be forced on them to drink.

Now, if you noticed in this passage, we can see that there is a clear connection between worshipping the Antichrist and his **image** and receiving the **mark** of the beast. As I said last week, no one will casually or accidentally or innocently take the mark. Those who take it are intentionally pledging their allegiance and devotion to the Antichrist and to his government, and as a consequence, it would appear their fate will be sealed.

This passage also teaches several terrible truths about Hell. In the Bible there are over 150 references to Hell, so no one can deny the existence of Hell using the Bible, in fact, Jesus spoke more about Hell than He did about Heaven. Here, Hell is described as a place where those who have rejected Christ **will be tormented with fire and brimstone**. This shows that the suffering in Hell is very real, as that word “**tormented**” speaks to the reality of the ceaseless infliction of unbearable searing pain – as in being burned alive pain – a pain that is unrelenting, never lessened, and never diminished.

We are told this torment **will be in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb**. This may mean either that the angels and the Lord will be present at their punishment in Hell – which is an interesting idea, or that the punishment – being cast into Hell will be witnessed by the angels and the Lord – which seems more likely. The Greek word used for “**presence**” literally means, “*in the eye of God,*” and it is used to describe how all things happen under His watch. We know the Lamb of God is the final judge, so the punishment will be under His eye – the eye of the One they rejected as Savior and Lord.

John tells us **the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night**. Those who reject Christ, those who worship the Antichrist and receive his mark will endure this wrath for eternity. They will have all eternity in torment to regret their rejection of Jesus. Here, the fact of eternal torment, like it or not, is plainly stated because **forever and ever** means “forever and ever.”

Imagine the horror of knowing that you will never, never get any comfort or rest again. It is a place of no hope. Some like to think that the damnation of the wicked ultimately includes their annihilation, but the language here does not support that idea. Those who have chosen to reject Christ and follow the Antichrist will have all eternity to regret it.

God is holy and just, and He does not damn people to this kind of judgment on a whim. People are damned because they reject the truth they hear even after repeated warnings and opportunities to repent. People are damned because they reject the Lord Jesus Christ, they reject His love, they reject His mercy, they reject His grace, and they reject His forgiveness, and that's why they're without excuse.

In his book "The Great Divorce", C.S. Lewis wrote that in the end there are only two kinds of people, "*...those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.'*" All that are in Hell, choose to be there by committing the unforgivable sin – they've rejected a relationship with God, and so, they get what they asked for. If a person wants to live like there's no God, they are free to do so, but they will also spend eternity without Him.

These three warnings from these three angels are as serious as serious can be, but on the heels of these warnings, there comes a contrasting ray of hope and encouragement. Let's continue on beginning with **verse 12**.

¹² Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. ¹³ And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."

This passage appears to be for those who put their trust in Jesus Christ during the Tribulation period. Though some will be imprisoned, many will be killed, and others will go into hiding – all must persevere, for all can be assured that in the end they will be eternally **blessed** and rewarded, as their good **deeds follow them**, and just for clarification – our good deeds do not get us into Heaven, but once in Heaven, we will be rewarded for our good deeds.

Now before we move on, I want to take special notice of what is said here – **Blessed are the dead in the Lord from now on**. That's an interesting statement – maybe even kind of surprising, but it's so relevant for us especially in light of Dave's recent passing. Here we have God's thoughts about those who die in a right relationship with Him. In the eyes of God, from His perspective, they are blessed, they are happy, they are satisfied, they are fulfilled, and they are content as they enter into God's perfect **rest**. In Christ, we pass from this life to an unimaginable, indescribable life – a life everlasting – a life that is abundantly blessed. Yes, we experience sorrow and grief with Dave's passing, but that sorrow and grief is mixed with hope – a hope that enables us to carry on in this life.

So, after the three warnings and after the encouragement given to believers to persevere, it's time for a preview of the final reaping. Let's continue beginning with **verse 14**.

¹⁴ Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. ¹⁵ And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe." ¹⁶ Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped. ¹⁷ And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. ¹⁸ Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe." ¹⁹ So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. ²⁰ And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

"The Battle Hymn of the Republic" was written by Julia Ward Howe in 1861 and it reads like this:

*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible, swift sword;
His truth is marching on.
He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never sound retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before the judgment seat;
O, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! Be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.*

I suspect that most who sing this hymn do not know that she took her inspiration partly from this passage in **Revelation 14** – a passage that appears to speak about the future reaping of the unrepentant people on the earth at the end.

Now, I will admit, I struggled to understand this passage, at least the first portion of it, as I could not tell if the first portion, identified as the **harvest of the earth**, was a reaping of the *righteous* or the *unrighteous*, but after a lot of study, and a lot of waffling back and forth – and I still could be wrong here, it seems that both pictures involve judgment of the unrighteous who have lived through the Tribulation period but have not repented. If you noticed in the harvest of the earth,

described like a reaping of a grain field using a **sharp sickle**, we are told the field is **ripe**, but that word in the Greek actually means *overripe, withered, and rotten*. God in His mercy has delayed judgment, patiently waiting for people to repent, but now beyond the point of no return, He says *enough is enough, and it's time to reap*. Now, the second portion of our passage is really clear as the harvest of grapes are thrown into the **winepress of the wrath of God**.

So, in these two pictures, the grain harvest shows God's judgment as being sudden and swift just like the upcoming bowl judgments will be, while the grape harvest depicts judgment that is severe and crushing – a description of the bloody battle of Armageddon – the war to end all wars, and we will talk about these bowl judgments and the battle of Armageddon later in our study of this book.

So, at the end of **Revelation 13**, it seemed like Satan, his Antichrist, and the False Prophet had the upper hand, but this sneak peek of the end given to us in **Revelation 14** reveals who ultimately wins in the end.

I entitled this message the “Book of Re-evaluation” as it was my hope that the contents of this chapter would prompt each of us to re-evaluate just how serious we consider our walk with the Lord. Jesus said, “*He who is not with Me is against Me.*” That's a serious statement from Jesus, and from His point of view – there is no middle ground for us to take – there is no riding the fence. We need to be serious about our relationship with God, no playing church games, for as we read this morning, it is literally a matter of life and death – or more accurately, eternal life or eternal damnation.

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