

The Glory of Christ Coming on the Clouds (Revelation 14)

Please turn to Rev 14. We've been studying through this book and I remind you our focus isn't on man's speculations; or focus is on the glorification of Christ and the application to His people. The last 2 chapters will make His glory shine brighter against the backdrop of the prince of darkness, the anti-Christ and false prophet. Like a dark velvet background in a jewelry display makes the diamond shine more brightly in contrast, the dark vile evil in the background of Rev 12-13 makes the multi-faceted glory of Christ shine all the more brightly and brilliantly, in sparkling contrast. The ugliness of the beast in Rev 13 makes the beauty of Christ more attractive and refreshing in Rev 14. The wickedness of the devil in Rev 12 makes the righteousness of the divine Lamb stand out in Rev 14 as He stands in sovereignty and victory like Ps 2 where God says '*I installed my king upon Zion, my holy mountain*'

John writes: *Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.* ² *And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps,* ³ *and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.* ⁴ *It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb,* ⁵ *and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.*

Our outline will be 3 points: 1) The Glory to the Lord (v. 1-5)
 2) The Gospel of the Lord (v. 6-13)
 3) The Gathering by the Lord (v. 14-20)

In point #1 we'll see Christ's glory in 3 ways ...

First, the glory to the Lord in v. 1 is seen in His Place

John looks and sees the Lamb, who he first saw in chapter 5 when the angel told him to behold the lion of the tribe of Judah who has conquered and who is worthy to open the scroll of history. John looked and saw the lion is also the lamb who was slain, standing w/ 7 horns=perfect authority, sovereignty. The lamb is the lion and the king of beasts is the King of the mountain here. In 14:1 John sees the lamb again standing, just like chapter 5, meaning He's conquered, He's sovereign. He's not pacing nervously because of the beast or dragon. He's not fearfully frantically running around, not sure what to do

Behold with John that the Lamb is standing. Look to the Lamb who stands. At the end of chapter 13, with antichrist's power and persecuting, we might wonder whether anyone can withstand antichrist. 14:1 sees the Lamb stands victorious and glorious. The Lamb isn't bowing in worship to the beast like so many in chapter 13. Jesus is standing. And notice the place He's standing

Look at v. 1: *'Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb...'* To John this would bring up rich OT images of God's covenant promises to His people, and would remind John that Jesus hasn't forgotten His people. Mount Zion was originally called Mount Moriah, the place where Abraham offered up Isaac. Isaac had asked his dad *'where is the lamb...?'* Abraham's reply: *'God Himself will provide the lamb...'* That day God provided a ram, not a lamb, he *"called the name of that place, 'The LORD will provide'; as it is said to this day, 'On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided...'* Gen 22
[beyond that day they looked for the lamb on the mount]

The lamb wasn't provided in OT days, but Abraham believed on that place, on that mount (later called Zion) the Lord would provide the lamb someday. Abraham looked forward in faith to when the Lord *'will provide,'* now John looks and sees the Lamb on the mount provided, a substitute savior standing

Isaac's substitution pointed forward to a greater future redemption in Zion:

- Isa 1:27 *'Zion shall be redeemed ... and those in her who repent ...'*
- Isa 16:1 *'Send the lamb...to the mount of...Zion [compare to Isa 53:7].'*
- 51:2, 11 *Look to Abraham your father and Sarah who bore you [through Isaac] ... the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion ...'*
- 52:8-10 *'When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. Burst into songs ... for the LORD has ... redeemed Jerusalem ... and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.'* (NIV)
- 59:20 *'And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,' declares the LORD.²¹ 'And as for me, this is my covenant with them,' says the LORD... 'this time forth and forevermore.'*

John Calvin's commentary on Isa 59:20 says this promises a future 'hope among the Jews; although from their unconquerable obstinacy it might be inferred that they were altogether cast off and doomed ... [as Luther, others did infer, but Calvin wrote] But because God is continually mindful of his covenant...the Jews must at length be collected along with the Gentiles...'¹

[long before Calvin, Rom 11 quoted Isa 59:20 for Israel's future salvation]

Rev 14:1 has roots in dozens of OT passages about Zion and its future for God's glory. 46:13: *I will put my salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory ...*

Early church writers saw Zion in Rev 14 symbolizing future grace to Israel.² The 144,000 here were described in chapter 7 as being from the 12 tribes of Israel and some in the Puritan and Reformed tradition³ saw that represented a remnant of Israel or maybe a symbolic number for 'all Israel' to be saved vs. the fullness of the Gentiles later in Rev 7, Rom 11:25-26. But in Rev 14 it's not their physical ancestry that's emphasized, v. 4 calls them *firstfruits*, end of v. 4 *these have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God...*

[implication: first of more to come in faith, like 1 Cor 16:15]

Firstfruits is the word used in Rom 11 of first ones in contrast to a fullness of the Gentiles later coming in (v. 16, 25). It's a harvest term for a first fruit or first part of a fuller harvest to come in, and that's where Rev 14:15 ends. So I think the scope of Rev 14 includes Zion but goes further to the world. Some think v. 1 is just a symbol for every Christian of every age, but in v. 4 it calls them firstfruits. Whether Jew or not, there's a bigger harvest in v. 15. The redeemed remnant in v. 1-4 is firstfruit of ripe harvest fields at the end. When Jesus saved Samaritans He said to look to the fields ripe for harvest.⁴ Zion symbolized God's people or promises, v. 15 the fuller harvest to come. Even the OT image of Zion wasn't just for 1 nation, it's grace for all nations.

Many nations will be gathered to worship Zion's King (Zech 2, 8), and that reality begins in the church. Heb 12:22 says to us '*you have come to Mount Zion...the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...Therefore, let us be grateful...and...offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe*'

The Glory of the Lord is seen in His place, and also in His praise (v. 2-3):

And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.

This is going to be the biggest choir ever and the biggest orchestra ever and loudest worship time ever! Remember this is a vision, not a video of a little sheep on top of Jerusalem in the middle of a choir practice for a new song. It's an image of Mt. Zion John would recognize and it would remind him of OT prophecies like in Isaiah: '*the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing...Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the [Lord] among you...Sing to the LORD a new song...praise from the end of the earth...let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory to the LORD, and declare his praise*' (35:10, 12:6 NIV, 42:10-12).

Those prophecies were about worship that's to begin on earth but v. 2 lifts up from earth to heaven, to heavenly worship when Jesus comes in v. 14. In context there's a contrast with chapter 13 where so many worshipped the beast and took his mark on their forehead. The end of Rev 14:1 shows many with the Lamb's name on their forehead instead, worshippers of Jesus alone
[and it points beyond earthly Zion to heaven]

In v. 2 the heavenly praise John hears is overpowering like Niagara Falls, if you've been there as I have. Last Sunday after this service there was loud thunder, and I jumped, maybe I was nervous from preaching on Revelation, I don't know. But that's what John describes as the volume and intensity of praise as the consummation comes, and he also describes it as beautiful like harps. Worship will erupt at the end in ways we can't comprehend fully and in ways we're not yet capable of (the noise of heaven's worship would burst our ears and the intensity and fervency our unredeemed flesh can't sustain).

I don't know if these *firstfruits* are martyrs who learn this song to sing to the rest of the harvest of Christians on earth when Jesus comes on the clouds in v. 14-16. But it seems from v. 2 a bigger multitude in heaven is teaching the redeemed in v. 14, perhaps this represents all the redeemed in heaven are in this choir that will sing this new song, the song of the redeemed, in Rev 19. And it seems the Lamb, the Redeemer will be leading, singing with, over us as Zeph 3 says when the Lord comes '*He will rejoice over you with singing*' (v. 17, context of day of gathering nations for wrath in v. 8 like Rev 14:19). Rev 14 is a fulfillment of Zeph 3: *Sing aloud, O...Zion; shout...Rejoice and exult with all your heart...the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil. On that day it shall be said...Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love...*'

Those promises in context apply to all God's people of all nations (v. 9), the Lord is standing with us. He is in our midst so we don't need to fear evil. If we know Christ as the mighty one, our weary hands don't need to be weak. Our troubled anxious hearts can be quieted by His sovereign love. The Lord who calls us to rejoice in song, amazingly, it says He sings, rejoices over us

The Lord is glorified in His place, in His Praise, and in His People (v. 4-5)
It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb,⁵ and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless. [also matches Zeph 3:9, 13]

Will these redeemed in the last days be perfect, never lying, never had sex? Some think these are new converts in the final 3 ½ years but were somehow all without exception virgins before Christ, all sexually pure their whole life ...or maybe it's not *physical history*, it's symbolic of fidelity, *spiritual purity*

In the next paragraph v. 8 says Babylon makes nations drink the wine of *her immorality* and most everyone agrees the image there is or includes spiritual adultery like idolatry, spiritual harlotry (Rev 17 will make that clearer later). The woman of Rev 17 defiles spiritually, but if 14:4 is physical, it's saying *women are defiling, even sex in marriage is defiling* (contrary to Heb 13:4).

[men who marry women aren't defiled by them in Scripture]

Paul talks about the advantages of singleness, but even he says any teaching that forbids marriage or calls all to abstain from God's good gifts, that's a demonic teaching (1 Tim 4:1-5). Rev 14:4 wouldn't contradict Paul or say to marry instead of staying celibate is physically defiling. v. 4 is not glorifying monks, or requiring the 144000 saved are all *men, blameless their whole life*

Paul actually explains this best in 2 Cor 11, his desire for the church was to '*present you as a pure virgin to Christ.*' Most in that church were married in a physical sense, but the church is to be a pure virgin to Christ in a spiritual sense. Paul explains it in the next verse as '*pure devotion to Christ*' (v. 2-3).

Rev 14:4 uses the same word then explains what purity of devotion looks like '*...they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes.*' That's what purity in devotion to Christ looks like: faithfully following Him where He goes. It's contrast to the unfaithful in Rev 13 following the beast or lies of the false prophet. In v. 5 these redeemed won't lie like the beast.

Blameless doesn't mean they're sinless, it means they're sanctified, purified

[not perfection before Christ, a new direction following Christ]

Application questions: Are you a part of His purified people? Do we follow Christ wherever He goes? Am I longing to join Zion's worshippers? This is a vision for us all, the Lamb standing, with His name written on His people: '*Behold Him there the risen Lamb ... my name is written on His hands, I know that while in heaven He stands, no tongue can bid me thence depart.*'⁵

Our difficulties may be different than John's original readers, but what they needed to see is what we need to see. The Lord isn't pacing back and forth in heaven wringing His hands or running around have strategy sessions with His cabinet to try to figure out what to do in this war and in this world. He's standing as the Lamb who conquered. He's saving, and in sovereign control

John takes us from the glory to the Lord to **the gospel of the Lord (v. 6-13)**

⁶ *Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people.* ⁷ *And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."*

When Jesus first came to earth in Bethlehem, it was heralded first by angels 'We bring good news of great joy which shall be for all people...unto you is born...a Savior who is Christ the Lord...Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men on whom God's favor rests.' Here John sees before Jesus comes to earth again, it's heralded by an angel announcing good news, the gospel, for all people, every nation, tribe and language. This time glory to God in the highest is the highest duty of man to give glory to God. The first time to shepherds in the fields the angel began '*fear not,*' but this second time come the angel begins '*Fear God.*' And it's not all tidings of great joy before the 2nd coming, it's news of judgment about to come, too
[this message is from heaven but God uses human gospel messengers]

In Rev 2-3 the letters to churches are addressed to angels which seem to be representatives of the churches so it could be 14:6 symbolizes the church's witness to the world before the end, which Jesus promised. The word means 'messenger' (human or divine) but the message is *fear God, give Him glory.*
[it's a heaven-sent message, a final gracious warning from God]

The eternal gospel isn't summarized as only 'God loves you,' it's 'God will judge you if you don't fear God and give Him glory.' An hour of judgment is coming, we can't leave that out. This may not be part of the evangelical gospel often preached today, but this is part of the eternal gospel, the true full biblical gospel. Paul said if an angel from heaven were to come preach another gospel than what Paul preached, it's not the gospel (Gal. 1:8). This is *the eternal* gospel, no less than a call to recognize your sin against God so you fear God because of His hour of judgment and you glorify Him in faith. Creation is connected to the gospel, this calls for worship of God as Creator. It calls us join the worship in v. 2-4, those who follow Jesus where He goes.
[and yes, God is love, that's why He calls us to fear and follow]

Is it the same gospel the gospel writers gave? The most repeated command by Jesus in the gospels is '*follow Me.*' Jesus said '*I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who...has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!*' (God alone can, fear God, Jesus said, Lk 12:5). Jesus spoke of the leper who worshipped Him as giving glory to God, showing saving faith (Lk 17:18-19, NASB note). How does John, the author of Revelation, begin his gospel?

In the beginning ... John starts with how Jesus the Word was with God and was God, how He is the creator of all. Romans presents the gospel starting with creation and how we should fear and worship God but sin is a lack of fearing God, it's falling short of the glory of God. But by grace alone, faith alone in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone, He saves those who confess and trust in our hear He's the risen Lord (Rom 1:20-21, 3:19, 23, 4:20, 10:9)

[Have you done that? If not, fear, give glory in faith today, worship Him]

Those who reject the eternal gospel will fall like Babylon in v. 8. We'll look at v. 8-9 more when we get to chapter 17 in a future message, because it's really describing what happens then, but for now just notice this introduces the tale of two cities: the city of God and the city of man. Look at a sinner's end in v. 10: *he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur 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, and they have no rest ...*

[You won't find a bestselling book Hell is for Real, but it is for real]

Lest you think this is only talking about certain unbelievers at the very end, Rev 20 makes clear this is the destiny of every person who rejects Christ's gospel. Yes, the devil and his beast and false prophet and their followers in the end of the book will be cast here, but the end of the book makes clear all who die rejecting the eternal gospel will face this eternal judgment. This is one of several biblical descriptions of hell, also called the lake of fire. The fire never goes out in v. 11, it's an eternal torment, forever and ever. It's a place of fire, sulfur, punishment to never end. Day or night, they never rest. If you've never turned from your sins to fear and glorify and worship God, I pray you will not rest until you find your rest in Christ, trusting Christ alone

[and may none of us rest easy if we never share this gospel]

It says in v. 10 God's wrath will be poured in His cup like wine unmixed or undiluted. In Bible times they diluted daily wine heavily so it was weak, but God will not dilute or mix in anything with His final wrath. It's full strength and even Jesus in Gethsemane asked if it was possible to take that cup away from Him, knowing the horrors of this cup of wrath. Jesus 'drank the bitter cup reserved for me...the Father's wrath completely satisfied.' In the gospel on the cross Jesus took the cup of wrath and drank it all for all who trust His work for them as their only hope to escape that wrath. He suffered torment at Calvary so we don't have to suffer torment eternally. He rested His head in death for our sins and rose from the dead to give life to all who come to Him weary of sin, He says '*Come to me and you will find rest for your soul*'

[if you're heavy-laden, wanting to be free of sin's burden, come in faith]

There is no rest for the wicked day or night but in Christ there's eternal rest.

¹² *Here is a call for the endurance of the saints* [NASB 'the perseverance of the saints], *those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.* ¹³ *And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"*

Part of the gospel is the doctrine of grace called 'the perseverance of the saints,' a phrase right out of v. 12 in some translations. God uses warnings and encouragements so that His saints endure to the end and are saved, not because we're so good at keeping God's Word and keeping the faith on our own, but because God is so good at keeping His own. Rev 1:3 begins with '*Blessed are those who hear and keep*' and now there's another beatitude for those who God keeps. 13: '*Blessed are those who die in the Lord...*' Dying in Christ, dying as a Christian leads to rest and reward for deeds done for Jesus

I think Jim Hamilton applies this best: 'Do you need motivation to keep the commandments of God and to keep believing in Jesus? Brand your brain with the images of the redemption of the faithful and the punishment of the wicked in 14:1-11. Do you need help fighting the temptations of the world? Ask God to bring to mind the fall of Babylon and the wine of God's wrath that those who worship the beast will drink. When [the city of man] tempts you, think of how she will fare on the Day of Judgment. When the beast calls for your worship, think of the torment his worshippers will experience in the presence of the Lamb. Think of the fact that they will never rest, day or night. Think of the fact that the smoke will rise forever. Endure in keeping the commands of God and believing in Jesus by seeing the outcome of the things that would tempt you to disobedience and unbelief.'⁶

We've seen the glory to the Lord in v. 1-5, the gospel of the Lord in v. 6-13, in conclusion, last but not at all least: **The Gathering by the Lord, v. 14-20** *Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand.* ¹⁵ *And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe."* ¹⁶ *So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped.*

Verse 14 is from Dan 7:13 where he '*looked and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven...*' That's the 2nd coming that Christ applied to Himself and said even those who reject Him will see (Mt 26:64).

I don't have time to cover all the different views and arguments for rapture gathering but if you want to understand more Rev 14 timing questions come back tonight at for Part 2: [The Glorious Gospel Outshines Rapture Views](#)

Whenever and whoever the harvest reaping will be, v. 17-20 is clear to all views, judgment is coming: ¹⁷ *Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle.* ¹⁸ *And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe."* ¹⁹ *So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.* ²⁰ *And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia [size of Israel].*

I don't think that demands blood 4-5 feet deep for hundreds of miles, it's a vivid way to say a blood-bath (like grapes or winepress aren't literal in v. 19 but are a symbol for humanity crushed under God's wrath). The clear image is that there will be a massive slaughter, the symbolic 'grim reaper' will slay the enemies of Christ who gather against Him. Turn to Rev 19 for a parallel. In Rev 19:19 the same word *gather* is used of armies *gathered* against God, but in Rev 19:15 Jesus comes: ¹⁵ *From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron.* ***He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.***

Many of us aren't familiar with how wine works, especially fundamentalist background Baptists, so I had to look this up! The harvest of 14:15 may be a wheat harvest, separating wheat and tare/chaff to be burned, but the grape harvest image of Rev 14:19 is where you gather vintage grapes to throw in a winepress, where people would tread on them, stomp on them, splattering on the robe like 19:12. The blood-red grape juice then flows out by troughs, and Rev 14:20 picks up on that image of blood flowing from crushing wrath

Isaiah 63 *'Who is this who comes...in crimsoned garments ... Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress? [the Lord answers] "I have trodden the winepress...I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel. For the day of vengeance...had come ... I trampled down the peoples in my anger...I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."*

But for God's people the rest of the chapter is about the love of God keeping His people, the goodness and compassion of God's abundant lovingkindness to them (v. 7), His lifting them up in tribulation (v. 9). Isa 63:14: *the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name.* The church is not destined to wrath, tribulation yes, but God is sufficient through tribulation, and lovingly lifts up so we don't experience His wrath. This is sobering but also encouraging to know the Lord will right all wrongs and will keep and lead all His people to make His name glorious.

This inspired 'My eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord, He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored [like Rev 14, and this is where Steinbeck got the name of his book *The Grapes of Wrath*] He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword [like Rev 19] His truth is marching on [even as His enemies march against it in Rev 19]...

I have read a fiery gospel writ in burnished rows of steel [written Civil war times, using that conflict, I think, as an analogy of spiritual warfare] 'As ye deal with my contemnners [those in contempt], so with you my grace shall deal'; Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel [Rev 12]

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat [Rev 11:15]; He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-seat [Rev 14 & 20]: [application?] Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet!

He is coming like the glory of the morning on the wave, He is Wisdom to the mighty, He is honor to the brave, So the world shall be His footstool, and the soul of wrong His slave, Our God is marching on. Glory, glory, hallelujah! [Rev 19:2 says that of His coming]...Our God is marching on.⁷

¹ *Calvin's Commentaries*, (Baker Books, 2003), volume 8, p. 269.

² 'Many Jews will come to faith. Victorinus of Petovium [in 200s AD wrote that Rev 14:1] is speaking of those from the Jews who at the end of time will come to faith...Jews will again become the Lord's possession. Oecumius [500s AD wrote]...that now the Lord is shown having come to Mount Zion represents the conversion of Israel by faith in the last days, when indeed the Lord will make them his own possession and bring them to himself.' *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Revelation*, William Weinrich, ed., p. 214-15

³ <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?sid=12114135925>

⁴ John 4:35-42.

⁵ Charitie Lees Bancroft, "Before the Throne of God Above."

⁶ James Hamilton, *Revelation*, p. 288-89.

⁷ Julia Ward Howe, "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory," written 1861.