

The Lamb, 144,000, and the Three Angels **Revelation 14:1-20**

The third interval – between the seven key personalities and the seven bowl judgments.

1. The reappearance of the 144,000. (14:1-5)

- First revealed in Revelation 7: 12,000 from each of the 12 tribal clans of Israel. Survivors of the chaos at the beginning of the Tribulation – saved and sealed for a special assignment – Jewish evangelists.
- Seal of God on their foreheads (14:1) = a mark of ownership and a mark of protection.
- The sound of cascading waters like the rumbling of loud thunder and the sound of harpists announce the assignment of the 144,000. (14:2)
- They sang a new song = a song that nobody else can sing. (14:3)
- They have not defiled themselves with women = virgins – spiritually pure (14:4)
- They follow the Lamb wherever he goes = loyalty – steadfast commitment (14:4)
- They were redeemed from humanity as the firstfruits for God and the Lamb = the first of many (7:9 – multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number) who will be saved during the tribulation and millennium. (14:4)
- They are blameless – no lie was found in their mouths = know the truth, believe the truth, tell the truth, speak the truth, and live the truth (14:5)

2. The Announcement of the Fall of Babylon (14:6-13)

- The first angel – announcing the eternal gospel to the inhabitants of the earth, every nation, tribe, language, and people. One final gospel call – the hour of judgment has come. (6-7)
- The second angel – announcing the fall of Babylon the Great. She made all the nations drink the wine of her sexual immorality, which brings wrath. (8)

Babylon = one of the oldest cities in the ancient world. Second most influential city on earth, founded by Nimrod in Genesis 10-11 (Tower of Babel – Babel became Babylon – the fountainhead of all false religion and idolatry, the symbol of evil and sin). Located 50 miles south of modern-day Baghdad, Iraq. Mentioned 280 times in the Bible, second only to Jerusalem (300 times). By 600 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar built Babylon into the pagan empire of Babylonia. God allowed the Babylonian captivity as punishment for the Israelites worshipping idols. Through the prophet Daniel, God taught the world that “there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets.” Israel’s captivity in Babylon cured them of their bent toward idolatry. Many of the Old Testament prophecies about Babylon are not yet fulfilled. In the Tribulation, the Antichrist will rule the world from his headquarters in the literal, rebuild city of Babylon – modern-day Iraq. (More to come on the Fall of Babylon the Great in Revelation 17-18)

- The third angel – announcing the destiny of those branded by the beast. (9-11) They will drink the wine of God’s wrath – poured full strength into the cup of his anger. They will be tormented with fire and sulfur and the smoke of their torment will go up forever and forever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast. Another graphic picture of the eternity of hell = torment forever and ever. (Jesus parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke 16).
- This calls for endurance from the saints, who keep God’s commands and their faith in Jesus. (12)
- Another apocalyptic beatitude: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on – they will rest from their labors, since their works follow them.” (13) “Rest” in heaven not a passive “cloud-potato”, but an end to the difficulties associated with life and labor on earth

and a new kind of kingdom work. Labor (*kopos*) refers to diligent and difficult work. A clue that we are saved by God's grace and not our works. However, we are saved for work, and our rewards in heaven are based on our works.

3. Reaping the Earth's harvest (14-20)

- One like the Son of Man seated on a white cloud, with a golden crown on his head and sharp sickle in his hand. (14)
- "Use your sickle and reap, for the time to reap has come, since the harvest is ripe. (15)
- The sickle was swung, and the earth was harvested. (16)
- Another angel appears with a sharp sickle. Grapes from the earth's vineyard are harvested. Thrown into the great winepress of God's wrath. (17-19)
- "Then the press was trampled outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press up to the horses' bridles for about 180 miles." A foretaste of the Battle of Armageddon in Revelation 16. Blood like juice overflowing a winepress spattered everywhere even as high as horses' bridles. Armageddon will be the bloodiest in the history of the world and cover a wide range of territory. (20)

Closing thoughts:

1. There is a God to serve. The inhabitants of heaven are not sitting on a fluffy cloud wearing a robe and halo, plucking a harp. Our rewards in heaven are the result of our earthly "works following us", and they lead to more service in heaven.
2. There is a hell to shun. Hell is real and those who reside there have no chance of escape.
3. There is heaven to gain. In the midst of all the Tribulation chaos and judgments, heaven waits for those who believe and trust in Jesus.
4. There is an eternity to live. If a person decides *not* to decide – not to decide is to decide. We are free to choose, but we are not free *not* to choose. We are also not free to choose the consequences of our choices. If you died today, where would you be – in the Lord or outside of the Lord? If you get to where you are headed, where will you be? (See Rogers, *Unveiling the End Times in our Time*, pp. 172-173)