

REVELATION

Chapter 14

The Lamb and the 144,000

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.

14:1–5† The Lamb and the 144,000. Another representation of the final triumph of the church over all her enemies. (CSB)

14:1 *Lamb.* John sees “the Lamb standing on Mount Zion” (14:1). This is John’s second vision of the Lamb in Revelation. In the throne scene of God’s heavenly glory in 5:6, John saw the Lamb for the first time. There he viewed the exaltation and coronation of the Lamb, portrayed by the Lamb receiving the seven-sealed scroll. (CC)

Mount Zion.† In the OT it was first the fortress of the pre-Israelite city of Jerusalem (2Sa 5:7), captured by David and established as his capital. Later it became a virtual synonym for Jerusalem. In Revelation, as in Heb 12:22–24, it is the heavenly Jerusalem, the eternal dwelling place of God and his people (cf. Gal 4:26). Here we are dealing with the church triumphant. It comes down to the new earth in 21:2–3. (CSB)

Given the similarities to the scene occurring in 7:1–17, this scene is best understood as set in heaven. (TLSB)

Now John sees the Lamb on Mt. Zion leading the 144,000. How fitting it is that after the horrifying warfare of the dragon and his two beasts depicted in Revelation 12–13 John now sees the host of God’s saints in the church militant accompanied by a song of victory. Though they were conquered in the earthly warfare by the beasts (13:7, 15), they are still victorious. This victory is now demonstrated by them following the Lamb on Mt. Zion and about to join the church triumphant, which sings “a new song” (14:3) before the throne of God in heaven. (CC)

144,000. Only here in Revelation does John speak of Mt. Zion (see the textual note on it in 14:1), and it is quite appropriate that it is the holy place where the Lamb stands together with the 144,000. The Lamb who was slain stands where the temple with its sacrificial altar once stood. As Mounce says, “It is fitting that the Lamb should be standing on Mt. Zion, for this sacred place had long been associated with divine deliverance.” And now the Lamb has come to deliver God’s people from the horrifying warfare waged by the unholy trinity of the dragon and the two beasts (Revelation 12–13). This scene of the Lamb and the 144,000 on Mt. Zion signals the beginning of the end of this present world, which is pictured in 14:14–20 as a harvest. (CC)

Rev 14:1–5 is the second and final time that the 144,000 are mentioned. In Rev 7:1–8 they represented the church militant, the Christians on earth, who were sealed by God in preparation for the conflict before them. In 14:1 they accompany the Lamb, who, as the Son of Man, is about to execute the judgment of God in the harvest of the earth at the End (14:14–20). They have completed their mission, and though they were in deadly conflict with the two beasts of the dragon (Revelation 13), they now stand victorious because of the Lamb’s own victory on their behalf (see 5:6–10; 7:9–17). They are, for the moment, still the church militant on earth (on Mt. Zion), but now their warfare is over and they are about to join the church triumphant in heaven. The seal of God that the 144,000 bore when in warfare (7:1–3) is now identified as “his [the Lamb’s] name and the name of his Father” (14:1). The repetition of the identical number (144,000) here in 14:1 suggests that God has preserved his church through the intervening warfare. And now the 144,000 stand beside the Lamb as he delivers them and as he, as the “Son of Man” (14:14), is about to judge their enemies. As the church militant (as pictured in 7:1–8) they had been waiting in hope to join that heavenly multitude of God’s saints who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb (7:9–17). The prayers of those saints beneath the incense altar before God’s heavenly throne are now about to be answered (6:9–11); they prayed for the deliverance of the church militant in tribulation and that the saints on earth would join the church triumphant. (CC)

name. Contrast 13:16–18. (CSB)

14:2 voice – Gk *phone*, “sound.” John clarifies that this sound is actually a multitude of harpists playing and singing. (TLSB)

harpist.† Harps are mentioned three times in Revelation, always to accompany singing around the throne of God (here; 5:8–9; 15:2, 3). (CSB)

The new song is introduced, and most likely also accompanied, by “celestial music” that sounds like “harps” (14:2). The sound of the harps was of such a volume that it was like the roaring of rushing waters and like loud thunder crashes. In 5:9–14 the twenty-four elders each have a harp as they sing the new song, together with the four winged creatures and all the angelic host. In 14:1–3 all the saints in heaven, and the 144,000 on earth in anticipation, sing the new song. The angelic hosts also join in as they did in 5:9–14, and in 14:1–3 perhaps it is the twenty-four elders who are playing their harps to accompany the singing. (CC)

14:3 new song.† The theme is deliverance. A song of praise, gratitude and joy over their salvation, which only the redeemed can sing. (CSB)

This “new song” is beyond the comprehension of earthbound souls, esp unbelievers. They neither hear it nor participate in it. (TLSB)

The 144,000 standing on Mt. Zion with the Lamb hear a loud “voice” (14:2) breaking out in the singing of “a new song” (14:3). Because the “new song” is being voiced in heaven before God’s “throne and before the four winged creatures and the elders” (14:3), it is the voice of the church triumphant, the heavenly multitude of the saints of God standing before him clothed in white garments (7:9–17). As the church triumphant sings this “new song,” the 144,000, who represent the church still on earth standing with the Lamb of God on Mt. Zion, hear the song and learn it (14:3). And momentarily they too will be in heaven, singing that song with the glorified saints, as they are even now learning to sing it on earth, in the heart and in the hope born of faith. For only those who “had been purchased from the earth” (14:3) by the blood of the Lamb are able to learn

and sing the hymn. For as Paul says in 1 Cor 6:20, they “had been purchased at a price” (cf. 1 Cor 7:23), and that price was the blood of the Lamb (1 Pet 1:19). (CC)

There is a profound message here about the church’s worship. Even now, here on earth, the church learns the hymns sung by our glorified brothers and sisters in Christ. The church on earth joins the church in heaven to form *one* holy church, united in faith expressed through hymns sung in unison. In worship the church on earth raises her voice to participate in the heavenly worship. This truth is articulated in the Preface: “With angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify your glorious name, evermore praising you and saying...” (CC)

It is “a new song” (Rev 14:3) that is sung. It is part of the ongoing chorus that extends throughout Revelation (see the excursus “The Great Te Deum of Praise in Revelation”). However, the words and content are not given here. The textually disputed ὡς, “as, like,” preceding ᾠδὴν καινὴν, “a new song,” suggests a relationship to the “new song” in 5:9 which was being sung by the four winged creatures and the twenty-four elders (representing the church) before the Lamb when he received the seven-sealed scroll from God on his heavenly throne. If ὡς here were understood as “something like,” then the “new song” in 14:3 would be similar to the one in 5:9, but not necessarily identical in wording. However, if ὡς is understood in the sense of “as if it were,” then “the new song” is most likely identical to the “new song” in 5:9. *Thus the song is “new” to the 144,000 (the Christians on earth who will soon be glorified), since it is the song of the new creation in Christ, but it is the same “new song” that has been sung by the saints and angels in heaven ever since the victory and ascension of the Lamb.* While being sung by the saints in heaven, it is also ever “new” to them as well since it celebrates Christ’s work of redemption and renewal. This “new song” is mentioned only twice in Revelation (5:9 and 14:3), but it is certainly being voiced continually as a part of the heavenly worship and praise of the victorious Lamb. (CC)

The words of the new song are given in 5:9–14. It contains three stanzas. The first voices the truth that the Lamb is worthy to receive the scroll because he “ransomed for God with [his] blood” a people from all the nations and thus made them “a kingdom and priests” to God (5:9–10). In the second stanza the Lamb is praised and lauded as worthy of receiving all honor and glory because he was slain (5:12). And in the third stanza both God and the Lamb are given honor and glory (5:13). This is the new song that the 144,000 learn as they await their deliverance; they will shout it when they are brought to the heavenly throne. One is reminded of the “new song” in Ps 96:1–2, which is a song celebrating the salvation of Yahweh (cf. Pss 98:1; 144:9–11). In Ps 33:2–3 this “new song” is accompanied with the playing of the harp, and in Ps 40:3 (MT 40:4) the psalmist says that God put the “new song” into his mouth. (CC)

REDEEMED FROM THE EARTH – In contrast to 7:4, the 144,000 described here represent the saints who have been delivered from their earthly sojourn and received into heaven. Their new glorified existence includes the learning and singing of the new song. (TLSB)

14:4 *have not defiled themselves with women.* Probably a symbolic description of believers who kept themselves from defiling relationships with the pagan world system. (CSB)

virgins. When Paul describes the Church as Christ’s Bride, “holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:25–27), he means that she maintains purity by staying faithful to God and keeping His commandments. Hus: “Christ is the bridegroom of virginity, who, as he lives forever, cannot allow the bride to desert him and fornicate spiritually. Thus it is said of the multitude of the heavenly denizens that they are virgins and follow the Lamb where-so-ever he goes” (*The Church*, p 13). (TLSB)

A curious expression, since the Bible does not consider sexual relationships within the bonds of marriage to be defiling. Therefore, a figurative meaning must be intended. Taking into account the surrounding context, one suspects that these 144,000 are those that were slain for refusing to worship the beast (13:15) and receive his mark (13:16–17). (TLSB)

The 144,000 are identified as “[male] virgins” (the Greek word is masculine) who “were not made unclean with women” (14:4). Scripture often portrays the church on earth as a pure virgin or bride. (E.g., John 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:21-33; Rev. 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22 :17) The church is not yet exalted to heaven—though she will be soon. She is the bride of Christ, and since she is washed and cleansed by him (Eph 5:25–27), she is a virgin and holy to her Lord. In the OT God’s people, Israel, are described as a virgin bride. (E.g., 2 Kings 19:21; Is. 61:10; 62:5; Jer. 18:13; 31:3; Amos 5:2) One also finds the custom that when men would partake of anything that had been consecrated to God, they would for that period of time be separated sexually from women (1 Sam 21:5; cf. 2 Sam 11:9–13). When Moses and the children of Israel prepared to meet God at Mt. Sinai, they had to prepare themselves by not having sexual relations (Ex 19:15). The NT nowhere commands such abstinence but does refer to voluntary and temporary abstinence for the sake of prayer (1 Cor 7:5). Spiritually speaking, Paul says that those who had been converted through his ministry had been pledged to Christ as a virgin bride is betrothed to her husband (2 Cor 11:2; cf. Eph 5:25–27). Therefore, when the 144,000 are described as “virgins” in Rev 14:4, this signifies that through faith in the redemption of Christ, the church on earth is pure and holy in God’s sight. Though torn and hunted by the dragon (12:13), though tempted and besmirched with sin and impurity, nevertheless through Christ’s blood and righteousness she is holy and without blemish (see Rom 3:21–26; 5:1–11; 7:7–25). (CC)

But why are these virgins in Rev 14:4 male? Certainly this does not mean that only males make up the church militant on earth, for the 144,000 stand for the entire church in mission. Often throughout the Scriptures the female gender is used for God’s people on earth, pictured either collectively as his bride or as an individual woman representing his church on earth. (E.g., Is. 54:1; Jer. 3:14; Hos. 3:1; Rev. 12:1; 19:7) Yet the Scriptures can also portray the people of God or the church on earth as an individual or group with the male gender. For example, Israel, Jacob, and Judah are names that can designate God’s OT people, whom he also calls “my son” (Hos 11:1). In some of Jesus’ parables, a male figure or figures can represent the church (and also individual Christians), such as the prodigal son (Lk 15:11–32) or the workers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1–16). Because the 144,000 both in Rev 7:1–8 and here in 14:1–5 is used to depict the church militant as God’s army in warfare, the male gender is appropriate, for in the ancient world armies were almost always composed of men. Virgin men would be men wholly consecrated to the battle. (CC)

follow the Lamb.† As his disciples (see Mt 19:21; Mk 8:34; Jn 10:27, 28). (CSB)

The 144,000, as if in marching order, follow “the Lamb wherever he goes” (14:4). Throughout the time period from Christ’s ascension to the End, the church on earth follows after her Lord in faith, in the mission Christ has given to her, and finally in hope to eternal glory. Following the Lord Christ begins at his invitation (Mt 4:18–22; 11:28; Jn 15:16). Throughout life the Christian follows the Lord, no matter when he calls and where he goes. And finally the follower of Christ is called to the presence of God (Jn 14:1–4), even though the way leads through “the valley of the shadow of death” (Ps 23:4 KJV). (CC)

firstfruits.† See Lev 23:9–14. The word is used figuratively in the NT for the first converts in an area (Ro 16:5) and the first to rise from the dead (1Co 15:20). In Revelation believers are

considered as a choice offering to God and the Lamb. It signifies the entire invisible church, the full number of the elect. (CSB)

Not only were the 144,000 “purchased from the earth” (Rev 14:3), but also they “were purchased from among men as a firstfruit for God and for the Lamb” (14:4). By etymology ἀπαρχή means “that which is from [ἀπό] the first [ἀρχή] or from the beginning.” In the OT the firstfruits were the firstfruits of the harvest, which were offered to God in thanksgiving. To call the saints on earth “the firstfruit” suggests that they are an offering to God for the sake of the mission of Christ. As Paul puts it in Rom 12:1, Christians are exhorted to offer, through the mercies (τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν, that is, deep compassion) of God, their “bodies as a living, holy sacrifice [θυσίαν] acceptable to God.” This offering is an act of “worship” (λατρείαν) which honors God and Christ. It is an act of offering which places at God’s disposal in Christ one’s whole being and existence and production—all of one’s talents and members and faculties of body and mind—as slaves of Christ and his righteousness, all for God’s honor (see Rom 6:15–23) (CC)

14:5 *No lie.* † Contrast Ro 1:25; see Isa 53:9. Symbolic of the blamelessness that is a gift of God through the atoning blood of his Son (cf. 5:9; 7:14; Jn 1:29) (CSB)

They refused to join in the worship of the beast (13:15). They resisted the lie that this beast was divine (13:13) and worthy of devotion. (TLSB)

A final description and identification of the 144,000 is given in these words: “and in their mouth a lie was not found; they are unblemished ones.” As Swete states, “After purity truthfulness was perhaps the most distinctive mark of the followers of Christ, when contrasted with their heathen neighbours; cf. Eph. 4:20–25.” In the OT speaking the truth and not lying were important characteristics of God’s prophets and people, by which the truthfulness of Yahweh, the only true and faithful God, was demonstrated. For example, Zeph 3:13 says that the restored remnant of Israel “would not speak a lie” and that “a tongue of deceit would not be found in their mouth.” This description pertains to the remnant of Israel because “Yahweh, your God, is in your midst as a warrior who saves” (Zeph 3:17; cf. Ps 15:1–2; Prov 16:13). God himself and his Word are truthful and blameless (Ps. 18:30; cf. John 17:17; Heb. 6:18). Also the Suffering Servant, depicted as a silent lamb led to slaughter, was distinguished by the fact that “there was not deceit in his mouth” (Is 53:7–9; cf. Jn 8:40, 45–46). In the NT it is the devil who lies and is the sponsor of all lies, and all who are liars are children of this father of lies (see Jn 8:44; cf. 1 Jn 2:21, 27; 3:8). In contrast, those who are of God’s truth in Christ do not lie but speak the truth. (CC)

they are blameless – The 144,000 are described as having “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (7:14).

As ones who speak the truth, the 144,000 are blameless or “unblemished ones” (Rev 14:5). They are not tainted or polluted by lies and liars (cf. Rom 16:17–20) but rather are dressed in the righteousness and truth of God. Their “unblemished” status as witnesses to the truth stands in sharp contrast to the “perverse” and “depraved” people of this sinful world (Phil 2:15). They stand with God in a blameless state of purity and holiness because they have been presented to him by Christ, the “unblemished Lamb” (1 Pet 1:19; cf. Ex 12:5) who was sacrificed for us. By his blood Christians too are rendered “unblemished” (ἄμωμος) (Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Phil 2:15; Col. 1:22; Heb. 9:14; Jude 24; Rev. 14:5) (CC)

14:1–5 John relates a vision in which those who have been delivered by the Lamb stand gathered around God’s throne, singing a heavenly song of praise. This group, which is described as blameless, differs from the earthly people of God, who still slip into sin by defiling themselves in

countless ways. Yet God remains faithful. He forgives when we fail to remain true to Him, and that gives us every reason to rejoin the saints in praising Him. • Heavenly Father, remind me that You have chosen me to be Your own child through the death and resurrection of the unblemished Lamb. Grant my heart joy as I join in singing a new song before Your throne. Amen.

The Messages of the Three Angels

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.”

8 Another angel, a second, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion[a] of her sexual immorality.” 9 And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 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, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.” 12 Here is a call for the endurance 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!”

14:6–13† The three angels. A message of comfort after the warning (13:11–18) against false teachings. The vision assures the church that false teachers will never silence the preaching of the gospel. (CSB)

Three angels in succession (14:6, 8, 9) now announce the judgment of God on the two beasts conjured up by the dragon. Each angel is introduced as “another [ἄλλο] angel.” This indicates that they are not from among the seven trumpet-angels. They are among the many angels who appear throughout Revelation who are not part of the seven (e.g., the angels in 5:2; 7:1, 2; 10:1; 18:1; 19:17). (CC)

14:6 eternal gospel.† The content of this “good news” is not found in v. 7, which is a summary of the purpose for which the gospel is proclaimed. The gospel is the good news of our redemption through the blood of the Lamb. It is eternal in that it will be preached to the end of time (Mt 24:14). (CSB)

Not a new Gospel, since there is only one (Gal 1:6–8). The messenger proclaims the enduring message of deliverance from evil, just as the new song (v 3) proclaims redemption anew. (TLSB)

The first angel, “flying in mid-heaven” has “the eternal Gospel to proclaim” to all the inhabitants of the earth (14:6). At first glance “Gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον) and the verb “to proclaim [Good News, the Gospel]” (εὐαγγελίζω) seem to be incongruous in this context, for they usually involve “Good News” that brings joy, specifically the forgiveness of sins through faith in the work of Christ (e.g., Rom 1:16–17). But here they include somber news of judgment, for the angel’s loud cry calls for all to “fear God ... because the moment of his judgment has come” (Rev 14:7). However, since this “eternal Gospel” includes also the purpose of moving people to “worship” God as the Creator of all life, this eternal news includes then not only the announcement of judgment (Law) but also the gracious call and invitation to such worship (the Gospel). The

surrounding context is explicitly Christological, with 14:1–5 depicting the victorious Lamb and the victory song of the saints. In particular John most likely had in mind the concluding content of the “eternal Gospel”: the announcement of the judgment in view of the Lord Christ’s second coming at the End. For this return of the Lord would also be the final deliverance of God’s people from the dragon, his two beasts, and their hosts (19:1–16). This aspect of the “eternal Gospel” is pointedly suggested in 14:13 when a *blessing* is pronounced upon those who have died and are dying “in the Lord.” In addition, even when the “eternal Gospel” is proclaimed to all the nations for the initial purpose of moving people to “fear God” (14:7) because of their sins and his coming judgment, such proclamation has as its *goal* the repentance and salvation of all through the announcement of Christ’s forgiveness (See Mt. 28:19-20; Lk. 24:44-48; cf. Rev. 15:3-4; 16:8-11). Thus the “eternal Gospel” is the eternal message of God—of both judgment and grace—based on the person and saving work of Jesus Christ. And this eternal message has as a reference point (its end point, the τέλος, Mk 13:7, 13) the second coming of Christ, when he will both judge the unbelievers and deliver his believing followers. (CC)

14:7 *give him glory* – The stated purpose of proclaiming the “eternal Gospel” is to move people to “fear God” and “give to him glory” and “worship him,” all in view of his coming judgment (14:7). Here is a clear definition of the purpose of proclaiming the eternal message of God. The “fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom” (Ps 111:10; cf. Job 28:28). Such fear comes from learning about God through hearing his Word (Deut 4:10). Fear of God is an essential part of contrition over sin and repentance (Acts 2:37) and is also a part of one’s faithfulness to God (Acts 9:31; Rev 11:18). Glory (δόξα) is given to God in and through Jesus Christ (Jn 17:5, 22–24; cf. 13:31–32). In particular, God is glorified (δοξάζω) when people come to him in Jesus’ name (Jn 14:13–14; 15:7–8) and when they thank him for what has been done to them by Jesus (Acts 4:21–22; 11:17–18). And it is God’s purpose that he himself thus be glorified through Jesus Christ (1 Pet 4:11), for his Son in exaltation is God’s glory (Acts 7:55). To worship God as the Creator is the end result of fearful repentance and giving glory to God through the redemption wrought by Christ. The heavenly hosts worship God as their Creator (Rev 4:8–11). The saints now join in this worship of God because of the victory of the Lamb on their behalf (5:9–14), the Lamb who by his blood has restored God’s people to their rightful place in worship of him as their Creator and Lord (1:5–6; 4:11). For the end purpose of God’s redemption is the restoration of his creatures so that they recognize and worship him as their God and Creator (Rev. 3:14; 11:15; 21:1, 5-7; cf. Rom. 8:18-25). (CC)

At first blush, this announcement does not sound much like the Gospel. However, it is indeed good news for the faithful, since the saints are repeatedly depicted as suffering at the hand of evildoers in Rv. (TLSB)

14:8 *Babylon the Great.* † Ancient Babylon in Mesopotamia was the political, commercial and religious center of a world empire. It was noted for its luxury and moral decadence. The title “Babylon the Great” is taken from Da 4:30. According to some, it is used in Revelation (e.g., here and in 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21) for Rome as the center of opposition to God and his people. But essentially it represents all the enemies of the church at all times. The angel here assures the church of final victory. Babylon’s fall is proclaimed in Isa 21:9; Jer 51:8. (CSB)

First mention of a figure that subsequently plays a large role. Not the ancient Mesopotamian city, but rather the imperial capital of John’s time, Rome. Because her caesars demand the kind of divine honors that the Christians will not render, she retaliates by oppressing the faithful (see notes, 13:1, 3, 8). Note how clearly “Babylon” is shown to be working with the two beasts (cf 17:3–17). (TLSB)

The second angel announces the judgment of Babylon, “she who has made all the nations drink ... of her sexual immorality” (14:8). This is the first time that Babylon is mentioned in Revelation. (It will be mentioned again in 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21.) Its appearance is somewhat sudden and unexplained. Evidently John assumes that his audience will recognize to what or to whom he is referring. Up to now humanity’s enemies have been spoken of as the angel of the abyss and his evil demons (9:1–11), the dragon (12:3–4, 13–18), and the two beasts (13:1–18). But now suddenly another designation appears, “Babylon the great” (14:8). In Revelation Babylon is always a name for the evil enemies of Christ’s church on earth; it is the name of the harlot as she sits on the beast (17:3–17).

14:9 In 13:18 the number 666 is, narrowly speaking, the number of the second beast (the religious beast, which is from the earth), but the number also applies to the first beast and to the dragon, especially to whichever one of these three is most active and influential at any given time. Thus the number symbolizes the two beasts (both the political one and the religious one) under the influence and control of the dragon, and these three—the dragon and the two beasts—are the unholy trinity. In Revelation 17–18 Babylon is the symbol of these same two beasts *but now presented as the harlot and a single beast, both of whom carry out the plan masterminded by Satan.* (CC)

The number 666 (13:18) is the number of the second beast—the religious one. Therefore 666 serves to symbolize the *religious* dimension of the two dragon-directed enemies of God’s saints, and thus it also symbolizes the unholy trinity. Babylon, however, symbolizes the *sociopolitical* dimension of these same two dragon-directed enemies. That is why the first beast—the political and societal one—is still present as the beast upon which sits the harlot. (She is the new form of the religious enemy.) Therefore Babylon is a symbol of these two enemies in their most deadly form: *when the harlot sits on the beast, that is, when the false religious entities, and in particular apostate Christianity, attempt to use or work with the existing political and social powers to destroy the church of Christ.* For John, Rome epitomized and was that historical enemy of the church. Under the name of “Babylon,” Rome would also serve as a typological model for all future enemies of God’s people, enemies both within and outside the church—enemies who, like Rome, may be called “Babylon.” (CC)

14:10 *wine of God’s wrath ... cup of his anger.* † In the OT God’s wrath is commonly pictured as a cup of wine to be drunk (Ps 75:8; Isa 51:17; Jer 25:15). It is not the outworking of impersonal laws of retribution, but the response of a righteous God to those who refuse his love and grace. (CSB)

Underscores that the final judgment will be public, for all to see (cf Mt 25:31–46). (TLSB)

The third angel announces the judgment of God on anyone who “worships the beast and its image” and who demonstrates allegiance to them by bearing “the mark upon his forehead or upon his hand” (14:9). In 13:14–17 the beast from the earth (the second, religious beast) symbolizes all false spirituality, and in particular pseudo-Christianity (see 13:11). That beast motivates the human race to make an image for the beast from the sea (13:1, the first, political beast) and thus to worship and serve the political beast. In addition, the religious beast marks or brands all those who belong to it so that only those who obey its religious mandate to worship the political beast can engage in the economic and social activities regulated by the ruling powers. Now here in 14:9–11 all the followers and adherents of the political beast and its image (the people who are motivated by the religious beast to be such adherents) are to be judged. This judgment will finally and completely be executed at the End when Christ returns, after which these adherents “will be tormented in fire and brimstone” (14:10). (CC)

full strength.† Lit. “unmixed” (with water). God’s wrath will strike them with full force, and will no longer be tempered with mercy. (CSB)

Eternal suffering is a result of God’s anger, meted out as undiluted wine (14:10), that is, anger that is not tempered with any mercy. At the conclusion of this world’s history, God will show no mercy in his judgment against those who are adherents of the beasts. Wine in its full strength is undiluted with water. Wine was an intoxicant and is often used as a metaphor for the judgment of God. For example, in Jer 25:15–16 the prophet is told to take from Yahweh “this cup of the wine, the wrath” and make the nations drink it so that they are intoxicated and drunkenly stagger about (cf. also Is 24:1–23, in particular 24:20). In Ps 75:7–8 (MT 75:8–9), as God judges, he makes the wicked drink the cup of such intoxicating wine, “even its dregs.” In Rev 16:19 Babylon is given to drink “the cup of the wine of the fury of his [God’s] wrath.” (CC)

fire and sulfur. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by a rain of burning sulfur (Ge 19:24). Ps 11:6 speaks of a similar fate for the wicked. The figure occurs elsewhere in the OT and the Apocrypha. It is used several times in the final chapters of Revelation (19:20; 20:10; 21:8). (CSB)

14:11 *torment ... for ever and ever.* Revelation offers no support for the doctrine of the annihilation of the wicked (also compare 19:20 with 20:10).). (CSB)

Just as God provides eternal joy and security for His saints (Ps 23:6), so also eternal shame and torment await those who reject Him (Mt 25:41). Luther: “*Smoke went up*, that is, their anger and disdain with which they fight and speak even against God; and the wrathful pride of those who hate Christ always goes up and increases more and more” (AE 10:118). (TLSB)

And this torment of “fire and brimstone” (14:10) will last forever; there will be no relief “day and night” (14:11; cf. Lk 16:22–24). Similarly, the beast and the false prophet and the devil will be forever tormented in the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev 19:20; 20:10). This judgment will be witnessed by “holy angels” as it is carried out “in the presence of the Lamb” (14:10). Because of his redemptive victory on behalf of God’s saints, the exalted Christ will oversee this judgment of God, and he will do so in the presence of the heavenly host of angels (as partially described in 14:14–20; see also Mk 13:24–27; Rev 19:11–16; cf. Jn 5:22–27). (CC)

14:12 *endurance.*† A willingness to bear patiently the burden of fierce persecution which the Lord places on them at times. (CSB)

The saints of God still in the warfare (and its suffering) hear the announcement of this promised judgment upon their enemies. A godly characteristic of the saints is their patient endurance in their deference to God’s judgment and his timetable of executing it. In Rev 13:9–10, they wait for God to avenge their blood (cf. 6:9–11) and to strike down those who have blasphemed the Gospel and God’s holy name (11:7–13; 13:6; 16:9–21). They do not take into their own hands the execution of this judgment, though they participate in its announcement (Heb 10:30–31; Rev 10:11; cf. Lk 9:51–55). Elsewhere in Revelation this patient endurance in faith is related to and/or equated with *wisdom*, a wisdom that only God can give (Rev 13:18; 17:9). Through such wisdom God gives the Christian the ability to interpret events *in view of and in relation to God’s end-time judgment* (James 1:2–5). This wisdom, by which Christians wait in faithful patience, enables them to know that, even though now they are being defeated on the human plane by the beasts (Rev 13:7), they are and will be victorious as they follow the Lamb (15:2–4; cf. 1 Jn 5:4–5). Thus their patience is a victorious and certain hope in the promise of God (cf. Rom 5:3–5). (CC)

who keep God's commandments.† Not synergism. Those cleansed by holy baptism love the Lord who first loved them (1Jn 4:19), and that love is the first step to obedience to God's commandments. (CSB)

The saints are described as “those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Rev 14:12). In Jn 10:17–18 Jesus states that it was the commandment (ἐντολή) of the Father that he should lay down his life and take it up again. Christ's whole life and ministry were thus under the will of his heavenly Father expressed in this commandment. Jesus knew that for him to carry out the will of God would result in “eternal life” (ζωὴ αἰώνιος) for those who followed him (Jn 12:50). The *faithfulness of Jesus* is the cause of the believer's salvation, and “the faith of Jesus” in Rev 14:12 (and in Rom 3:22, 26, which have genitive constructions similar to that in Rev 14:12) refers first of all to *his* faithfulness, then also to the believers' faith in Jesus. By faith the saints cling tenaciously to Christ amid temptations and persecutions which pressure them to worship the beast. Moreover, they persist in Christian love, for the new “commandment” that Jesus speaks of in Jn 13:34 is that the Christians should love one another as he has loved them (cf. Jn 14:15; 1 Jn 4:21). 1 Jn 2:7–11 states that the commandment (ἐντολή) which is both ancient and new is to love one another because “the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining” (1 Jn 2:8). (CC)

14:13 *Blessed.*† The second beatitude. A word of comfort. (CSB)

At the conclusion of the three announcements of God's judgment by the three angels (14:6–12), John hears “a voice from heaven” which speaks a beatitude or blessing on all “who are dying in the Lord” (14:13). Though the source of the voice is unidentified, it emanates from heaven on behalf of God, for it speaks *his* blessing on *his* people. It also receives the divine Spirit's affirmation (14:13b). While faithfulness to God and Christ results in suffering and martyrdom for the Christians, they have the blessed hope and certainty of an eternal rest and victorious peace. This is the second of the seven beatitudes announced in Revelation. The first (1:3) is spoken to those who read and hear “the words of this prophecy” of Revelation “and who keep the things written in it.” The sixth (22:7) is similarly addressed. The other five beatitudes are spoken in view of the eschaton after the end of this present world at Christ's return. Here in 14:13, in contrast to the *eternal* torment for unbelievers (14:9–12), this beatitude is a spoken comfort to those who are dying and who are going to die in the Lord. They are blessed *because* they are dying in the Lord, dying in their hope in him and in his saving care. Death cannot rob them of life and peace, for they are in the hands of the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:27–28). And this great consolation for the dying is also a solace and balm for the grieving Christians they leave behind (temporarily!) in this world. (CC)

die in the Lord.† To die as a believing child of God. (CSB)

The blessing comes at a decisive moment, as the final judgment is about to be revealed. Bern: “Not those alone who die for the Lord, like the martyrs, but without doubt those also who die in the Lord as confessors are blessed. There are two things, as it seems to me, which make death precious, the life which precedes it and the cause for which it is endured.... By the mercy of God, you are beginning to live again, not to sin, but to righteousness, not to the world, but to Christ, knowing that to live to the world is death, and even to die in Christ is life” (*SLSB*, pp 176–77, 224–25). Luth: “Christ is nothing other than sheer life, as his saints are likewise. The more profoundly you impress that image upon your heart and gaze upon it, the more the image of death will pale and vanish of itself without struggle or battle. Thus your heart will be at peace and you

will be able to die calmly in Christ and with Christ, as we read in Revelation [14:13], ‘Blessed are they who die in the Lord Christ’ ” (AE 42:104). (TLSB)

Those who are blessed because of their death in the Lord Christ now “receive rest from their labors” (14:13). In their life on earth they heard the gracious invitation spoken by Jesus (Mt 11:28), “Come unto me all who are laboring and who are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest.” Burdensome toil and the burden of the grief caused by sin were results of the judgment of God on the sin of Adam (Gen 3:17–19). And even though the Christians all their earthly life suffer this anguish, aggravated by the dragon and the two beasts, they know in faith’s hope (1 Pet 5:7), having heeded the invitation of Jesus, that they will finally be delivered. Now as they are dying in their Lord, they come at last into that eternal rest and peace which the Spirit of God alone can give (1 Pet 4:14). The followers of Christ have this eternal rest, in stark contrast to those who worshiped the beast, who never have any rest from their eternal torment (Rev 14:11). (CC)

their deeds will follow them.† As evidence of the faith by which they were justified. (CSB)

Because their deeds give evidence of faith in Jesus, those who persevere in serving Jesus—even in the midst of intense persecution—receive eternal rest, the ultimate blessing from God. (TLSB)

Those in eternal torment who persecuted them are never separated from their sins and guilt (cf. Mt. 25:41-46). In contrast, the saints are separated from their guilt and shame but are not separated from their godly works, for they follow them. “God will not forget all they have endured in loyalty to the faith.” But also this means more. While the Christians lived on earth, their works – by which they adorned the Gospel – honored Christ and glorified God the Father (Titus 2:10; cf. Mt. 5:16). And such works will be cited by God at the final judgment (Mt. 25:31-40). (CC)

14:6–13 John relates a vision of three angels warning the world against the disaster that will come upon those worshiping the beast. Despite a multitude of such admonitions, people, including those who know better, still chase after false gods. Those who remain faithful to God and His Word will be blessed, however, entering into eternal rest when they pass out of this world. • God, I praise You for keeping me united to Your Son. Continue giving me strength to withstand all enticements to abandon the faith. Keep me patient while I await my eternal rest in You. Amen.

The Harvest of the Earth

14 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. **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.

14:14–20† The harvest of the earth, a representation of the day of judgment. (CSB)

14:14 The scene of the harvest at the End is introduced by the awesome sight of the Son of Man on a cloud. This scene of the parousia is the conclusion to the interregnum (12:1–14:20) depicting the startling and breathtaking war between God and the dragon, and between the beasts and the church. It culminates in the great harvest, which is the judgment of God. The phrase “like the Son of Man” (14:14) identifies the same person who first appeared in 1:13, when John was commissioned to write Revelation. And, as in 1:13, the phrase also recalls the glorious appearance of the Lord Christ at the transfiguration (Mt 17:2; cf. Rev 1:16). (CC)

white cloud – Here in Rev 14:14 the cloud is “white” (λευκή). It is not a dark cloud, which might have suggested “the inscrutable mystery of unrevealed Deity.” In MT/ET Ps 97:2 a cloud and deep darkness (νεφέλη καὶ γνόφος, LXX Ps 96:2) surround God in his majesty. If the *whiteness* of the cloud is to be emphasized, it could signify the righteousness of God in judgment (Rev 20:11), and in particular the righteousness of Christ. The white cloud would then suggest that, in the majesty of God, the Lord Christ will execute the judgment *in his righteousness*. For example, Is 11:4–5 states that the Branch, the shoot from the stump of Jesse (Is 11:1), will judge the needy and the poor “with righteousness,” and “righteousness” will be girded about him when he strikes down the wicked. In Rev 19:11, in Revelation’s second vision of the parousia, the Son of Man “in righteousness judges and wages war” (ἐν δικαιοσύνη κρίνει καὶ πολεμεῖ), and so he is pictured riding a “white horse.” (CC)

seated on a cloud – In Dan 7:13, the Son of Man came “with clouds of heaven.” Similarly in Rev 14:14, he comes into the scene “on the cloud.” In Mt 24:30 Jesus himself said that at the End everyone would see him as “the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven,” and he would come “with power and great glory.” Jesus testified to this same truth also when standing before the high priest at his trial (Mt 26:64). The clouds are an identifying mark of his entrance into his heavenly glory at his ascension (Acts 1:9–10), and now at the End, the “white cloud” (Rev 14:14) is also such a mark at his return to the earth. In the OT the cloud was a visible sign of God’s majestic presence with his people, in particular when he spoke his word (Ex 19:9; 24:15–18; 34:5–7). It was through a cloud that God spoke on the mount of transfiguration (Mt 17:5). In Rev 10:1 the “mighty angel” is clothed with a cloud when he comes to John to speak the word of God which instructed John to proclaim the Gospel to all peoples (10:8–11). In the prologue of Revelation (1:1–8) is the promise that Jesus Christ will come “with the clouds” (μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν, 1:7). (CC)

son of man. Another depiction of the glorified Jesus (cf 1:13–15). This time, however, the Lord is described as holding a sharp sickle. (TLSB)

crown of gold. A victory wreath of gold. (CSB)

Upon his head is “a golden crown” (στέφανον χρυσοῦν, 14:14). Once before the Son of Man had worn a crown: a “thorny crown” (ἀκάνθινον στέφανον), a crown of mockery in his suffering (Mk 15:17). That crown has been replaced by a “golden crown” (Rev 14:14), a crown denoting victory. So now in bearing the crown he comes as the victor. In the second vision of the parousia in Revelation (19:11–16), he will wear “many diadems” (διαδήματα πολλά, 19:12), for there he is pictured coming as the “Kings of kings and Lord of lords” (19:16). (CC)

sickle. The Israelite sickle used for cutting grain was normally a flint or iron blade attached to a curved shaft of wood or bone. (CSB)

The “sharp sickle” (14:14) in his hand depicts the victorious Christ coming at the end of time to reap and gather the harvest in “righteous retribution.” The purpose of wielding the sickle at the harvest is to cut the grain so that it can then be gathered and placed in the granary. As the grain is cut, weeds and tares among the grain are also cut, but then the grain is separated, and the weeds are put to the fire (see Mt 13:24–30). The imagery in 14:14–16 is of a harvest of *grain*, which takes place after the green and growing plants have matured. The statement that the harvest had fully ripened (had dried out, 14:15) may mean that the rainy growing season was over and the hot, dry summer had come. The picture in 14:17–20 also includes a “sharp sickle” (14:17), but there the sickle is employed to cut the ripe grape clusters from the vine. (CC)

14:15 *harvest of the earth*.† Symbolizes the coming judgment (see Mt 13:30, 40–42 and Joel 3:13). Verses 14–16 refer to the believers. Millennialists should note that this is the judgment of the whole earth (cf. vv. 15–16, 19). (CSB)

Imagery depicts the final judgment; first used by the OT prophets (cf Is 27:12). Significantly, Jesus Himself speaks similarly (Mt 13:30). The “grim reaper” figure has its origins in this imagery. (TLSB)

“The moment” (ἡ ὥρα) for the beginning of the harvest is signaled by the voice of “another angel.” The angel “in a loud voice” instructs “the One sitting on the cloud” to begin the task of harvesting (14:15). While at first glance it may seem strange that an angel should give a command to the exalted Lord Christ, “the angel is no more than a messenger”¹⁶ from God the Father. The command to begin the harvest comes from the Father, and the angel is merely relaying the command to the Lord Christ. The harvest and the judgment are executed by the exalted Christ because he won that right by his death and resurrection (see, e.g., Jn 5:19–23; 12:31–33), but they are done under the authority of God the Father. And the heavenly Father is the one who determines the exact hour or moment that it will be carried out (see Mk 13:32; cf. Acts 1:7). (CC)

put in your sickle and reap – The command to “send out [the] sickle” (Rev 14:15) may have reminded John of a similar command in Joel, where, in a graphically prophetic description of the Lord’s judgment at the End, the command is given to “send out the sickle” (ἐξαποστείλατε δρέπανα, LXX Joel 4:13; MT 4:13; ET 3:13) because the harvest is ripe. In Joel this sending out of the sickle initiated the harvest and the trampling of the grapes in the winepress as God was seated to judge all the nations (MT/LXX Joel 4:12-13 ET 3:12-13; cf. Jer. 51:33 LXX 28:33). (CC)

14:16 *swung his sickle* – “And the One sitting on the cloud cast his sickle onto the earth” (Rev 14:16) to execute the judgment of God, metaphorically pictured here as a harvest. Jesus may have attendants (see Mk 13:24–27), but only the Lord Christ as the exalted Son of Man is worthy to preside over the judgment. For he alone suffered the judgment of God pronounced on the sin of the entire human race. Having suffered that judgment on behalf of all mankind, he alone has the right to be the judge, by the authority of his Father (John 12:31-33; 16:7-11; Acts 10:40-42; cf. Rev. 19:13-16). (CC)

was reaped – In both the OT and the NT the picture of the harvest is used as a symbol of the judgment of God at the End. For example, in Joel the gathering of the nations before God for judgment is described as a harvest (Joel 3:2, 12-13 MT/LXX 4:2, 12-13; cf. also Is 17:4-5; Jer.

51:33). In the parable of the wheat and the tares (Mt 13:24–30, 36–43) both results of God’s judgment are pictured: condemnation and fire for the wicked but compassion and deliverance for the saints (cf. Mt 9:35–38; Mk 4:26–29). And the church is always to keep in mind that her mission on earth is intimately related to this harvest at the End. As Jesus himself sent out the seventy-two, he urged them to pray for workers in the harvest (Mt 9:37–38; Lk 10:2). So the church is always to pray as Christians are sent out to be servants working for Christ that his harvest may be more plentiful (Jn 4:34–38). The entire period from Christ’s first advent to his return in glory at the End is the season of the harvest. At no time may the church on earth consider her work to be done or imagine that all opportunities have been exhausted. Until that final call for Christ to send forth his sickle, there is much work that the church must do—and do soon (cf. Rev 10:6–7, 11)! (CC)

14:17-20 The picture of the grain harvest illustrating the ingathering of the human race for the judgment of God now changes and becomes a picture of the gathering of the vintage of the earth. While the grain harvest (14:14–16) symbolizes the ingathering of both the people of God and the wicked, the vintage of the earth (14:17–20) emphasizes the gathering and judgment of the *unbelievers*, that is, those who worshiped the beast and its image (14:9–11). An angel had announced that every worshiper of the beast “will drink from the wine of the fury of God which has been poured out full strength into the cup of his wrath” (14:9–10). “Now, by means of the more vivid figure of the vintage, John stresses the violent carnage of that judgment.” The trampling of the grapes extracts their blood, which provides the wine that is poured out into the cup of God’s wrath. Thus there is a slight shift in the imagery: in 14:9–10 the idolaters (unbelievers) will *drink* the cup of wrath, but in 14:17–20 the unbelievers are the trampled grapes whose blood *fills* the cup of wrath. (CC)

14:17-18 Continues the reaping metaphor begun in vv 15–16. One senses a mixed metaphor, however, since sickles are not typically used to harvest grapes. (TLSB)

14:17 *another angel* – John sees an angel executing this negative side of the judgment of God, for “another angel came out of the temple” of God in heaven with “a sharp sickle” (14:17). While Christ is the Lord over the entire ingathering for the judgment and in particular is present to mete out compassion and mercy to God’s own saints, and while angels attend him in the gathering of the saints (cf. Mt 13:24–27), he will delegate to an angel the task of separating the unbelievers from his followers and thus prepare the unbelievers for the terrifying judgment and punishment of God (cf. Mt 13:30). (CC)

14:18 *another angel, came out of the altar*. The angel of 8:3–5. Fire is commonly associated with judgment (see Mt 18:8; Lk 9:54; 2Th 1:7). (CSB)

The angel with the sickle came out of the heavenly temple. Still another angel in “a loud voice” tells the angel with the sickle to commence the reaping and gathering of “the grape clusters of the vineyard of the earth” (14:18). This second angel, who gives the command to the angel with the sickle, is identified as the angel “from the incense altar,” who has “authority over the fire” (14:18), that is, the fire of the incense altar, the fire that causes the incense to smolder and its sweet smell to rise.²¹ This may be the same angel who, in Rev 8:3–5, stood before the incense altar with a censer of smoldering incense, which represented the prayers of the saints. That angel took the censer and filled it with fire (πῦρ) from the incense altar and then poured it out on the earth. That action of the angel before the incense altar introduced the seven trumpet-angels of the second sevenfold vision of events on earth (8:6–11:19). If this identification is correct, then that angel of the incense altar, who signaled the seven trumpet-angels to begin the revelation of the

second earthly vision, now gives another signal for the angel of the sickle to commence the gathering of the vintage of the earth. (CC)

The prayers of God's martyrs in heaven are now answered in the final act of God's judgment and punishment of their enemies. Throughout the time period covered by the prophecy of Revelation, from Christ's ascension to his second coming, the martyred saints are continually praying that God avenge their blood by judging the inhabitants of the earth (6:9–11). And these prayers are symbolized by the incense that rises from the incense altar before God's heavenly throne (6:9–11; cf. 5:8). In the prophetic picture of the second vision of events on earth (8:6–11:19) those prayers are partially answered, so to speak, when John sees the seven trumpet-angels introducing natural and demonic plagues which afflict the human race, in particular those people who were not sealed by God as his own (9:4–6). And the commencement of those plagues was signaled by the angel of the incense altar (8:3–5). Now at the End John sees the completion of God's answer to the prayers of his saints in the gathering of the vintage of the earth for the judgment of his anger. The commencement of this judgment was signaled by the same angel—the angel of the incense altar (8:3–5)—here described as the angel who has authority over the fire upon the incense altar (14:18). (CC)

sharp sickle.† The context suggests (in contrast to the sickle of v. 14) the smaller grape-knife with which the farmer cut the clusters of grapes from the vine. Verses 17–20 refer to the judgment of the unbelievers (cf. God's wrath in v. 19). (CSB)

14:19 winepress. A rock-hewn trough about eight feet square with a channel leading to a lower and smaller trough. Grapes were thrown into the upper vat and tramped with bare feet. The juice was collected in the lower vat. At times mechanical pressure was added. The treading of grapes was a common OT figure for the execution of divine wrath (see Isa 63:3; La 1:15; Joel 3:13). (CSB)

Harvested grapes were put into vats and crushed in order to extract the juice. In the ancient world (and in many places today), this extraction was accomplished by trampling the fruit underfoot. Thus, John gives a vivid illustration of how God's wrath will come down upon the wicked on Judgment Day (cf. Jl 3:13). (TLSB)

The harvest of the vintage is completed and the judgment carried out when “the winepress was trampled underfoot” (14:20). This judgment and punishment of the worshipers of the beast and its image (14:10) takes place “outside the city” (14:20). Most likely the “city” is Jerusalem and thus to be identified symbolically with the “holy city” in 11:2. While the “holy city” (that is, God's church on earth) was trampled underfoot by the pagan nations (πατέω, “trample,” in 11:2 as in 14:20), now the pagan nations in turn are “trampled underfoot” in the winepress of God's fury and judgment (14:20). John would have remembered that it was outside the city (see Heb 13:12) where the judgment of God trampled underfoot (so to speak) his Son, when he suffered the judgment and punishment for the sins of the world. Jesus was trodden in this winepress as he endured God's anger alone and suffered in the stead of the human race. Isaiah saw, in a vision of the day of God's vengeance and redemption, one single person (Is 63:3) whose garments were red from treading alone the winepress of God's anger (63:1–6). In the vision it was in Edom and the Edomite city of Bozrah, enemies of Israel and thus outside the holy city, that the Messiah alone would tread in the winepress (Is 63:1). Edom had rejoiced in the plunder and destruction of Jerusalem (Obad 8–14). Now the tables are turned as Christ tramples underfoot the pagan nations in God's anger and judgment and makes Edom and the rest drink the cup of his wrath (Obad 15–16). (CC)

14:20 *outside the city.*† Bloodshed would defile the city (see Joel 3:12–14; Zec 14:1–4; cf. Heb 13:12). Since in Revelation “the city” is frequently a name for the church, the phrase may recall the separation of believers from unbelievers as in two parables—the weeds (Mt 13:24–30, 36–43) and the net (Mt 13:47–50). (CSB)

Jerusalem, symbol for God’s people. (TLSB)

This judgment of the nations would also take place “outside the city” (Rev 14:20). In Joel 3:2, 12 (MT 4:2, 12; cf. Zech 14:1–5), the judgment would be executed in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, “which tradition links with the Kidron valley lying between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives.” (CC)

So extensive and terrifying is the judgment of God that “blood came out of the winepress up to the bridles of the horses as far away as a thousand six hundred furlongs” (Rev. 14–20), that is, around 184 English miles. The OT sometimes refers to grape juice or wine as the “blood [דָּם] of grapes” (Gen 49:11; Deut 32:14), but αἷμα, “blood,” in Rev 14:20 refers to human blood. Such a flow of blood is beyond human experience and comprehension. (CC)

Various interpretations of the distance of 1,600 furlongs have been given. Does it refer to the length of Palestine? Swete believes the 1,600 furlongs are to be interpreted “more in accordance with Apocalyptic arithmetic,” with “1600 (= 4 × 4 × 100) as symbolical of completeness.”²⁶ Mounce says that 1,600 symbolically “squares the number four (the number of the earth: ‘four corners of the earth,’ [Rev 7]:1; 20:8; ‘four winds of the earth,’ 7:1) and multiplies it by the square of ten (the number of completeness; cf. 5:11; 20:6).” However the number is derived, it seems to refer to completeness and thus symbolizes the whole earth, especially if 1,600 is taken as the square of forty.²⁸ More importantly, the number, together with the depth of blood reaching the bridles of the horses, points symbolically to the completeness and totality of God’s judgment and the horror of its punishment. As prophesied by Isaiah (63:6), the blood of the pagan nations would be “poured out onto the ground” after God had trampled them underfoot in his wrath and judgment. 1 Enoch 100:1–13, which graphically portrays the final judgment of all sinners, says that a “horse shall walk through the blood of sinners up to his chest; and the chariot shall sink down up to its top” (1 Enoch 100:3). Thus the picture of the blood “up to the bridles of the horses” here in Rev 14:20 symbolizes the totality of God’s judgment from which no human person can escape, for it will sweep all into a terrible and fearful bloodbath. (CC)

blood ... as high as a horse’s bridle. The juice flowing out of the winepress is identified with the blood of those undergoing the judgment. (TLSB)

1,600 stadia.† It is approximately the length of Palestine from north to south. Since in Revelation the number four is associated with the earth and ten is the figure for completeness, the number 1600 is the multiplied squares of four and ten. Another reminder that this is the final judgment of the whole earth. (CSB)

Another symbol. A multiple of four, which typically represents the earth. John forcefully underlines the overwhelming nature of God’s judgment. (TLSB)

14:14–20 John describes the final judgment in terms of a harvest and treading of a winepress. Those in Christ need not worry over God’s wrath, for instead of your blood flowing from God’s winepress, Jesus’ blood was poured out from the cross for you. His sacrifice for your sin removes the penalty of eternal death from you. • Lord Jesus, I thank You for suffering the wrath that I

deserved. Though You were innocent and I was guilty, You shed Your blood for me, thus washing all my sins away. Amen.