

Revelation 14 PART 5



(Rev 14:1-20) 1. Preliminary Considerations (DISCUSSED)

CHAPTER 14 DEPICTS THE RESCUE AND WRATH OF THE LAMB DURING THE JEWISH WAR.

2. Contextual Interpretation

(14-21) = A repeat of the former vision of rescue and wrath this time depicted in terms of a dual harvest: a theme popular within Jesus' teaching on the kingdom and the events surrounding 70AD. (Mat 3:12, 13:24-30; Mark 4:26-29; Mat 24:27-31).

(14) = Another allusion to Daniel 7 Christ whose kingdom (i.e. the Jerusalem church) and people (i.e. the saints at Jerusalem) will be rescued and prevail (Dan 7:13-27). Though "the sickle" is not mentioned as a part of Daniel's vision, it's meaning is revealed through the following angel's command and Christ's action w/ it in vv15-16.

(15-16) "another angel" = As discussed before, angels are representative of God's ordained events and their fulfillment. The words the angel therefore speaks are God's ordained will for the "Son of man" (i.e. Jesus). Understanding the words of the angel in this way also resolves the potential authority issue related to Christ (as somehow subordinate to the commanding angel). Christ is instead dependent on such words being conveyed on behalf of the Father by His heavenly messenger (who resides in "the Temple", a term used figuratively throughout the book to speak of God's presence -3:12, 7:15, 11:19, 21:22) since the hour of such actions were unknown to Him (Mar 13:32; also Joh 5:27-30); "put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come for the harvest of the earth/land is fully ripe. So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth/land and the earth/land was reaped." = the hour of salvation/redemption has come for the elect Jews still in Jerusalem, who in the final hour before the city's complete destruction by Titus and the Romans, turn to Christ (recall discussion on 12-13 from last week, also Rev 11:13; Rom 11:25-27). Salvation is couched in these terms in Scripture ("harvest", "ripe" - Isa 27:12; Hos 6:11; Mat 9:37-38; Luk 10:2; Joh 4:35-38). These then stand in contrast to those considered "firstfruits" in verse 4 (the Jerusalem church): these are not those gathered "first" but after as a second harvest (Consider Exo 23:16 regarding the idea of two harvests as well as Rom 16:5; 1Co 16:15; 2Th 2:13 which uses the idea of "firstfruits" as a way to communicate that there will be more to come).

"Indeed, angels in Revelation never announce a message that has its ultimate derivation from themselves but are always mere conveyors of messages representing the divine will." –GK Beale

"The mention of 'firstfruits' in Rev 14:4 could also anticipate an idea that more elect people will be gathered in later, namely in vv15-16..." –GK Beale

(17-21) = This time the "sickle" (17, 18, 19) and its actions are only for the purpose of wrath (Consider where the harvest is placed: "so the angel swung his sickle across the earth/land and gathered the grape harvest of the earth/land and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God" (19); this is also the exclusive metaphorical use of this word "winepress" when referring to people/nations –it always refers to God's judgment/vengeance— see Joe 3; Isa 63:1-6; Rev 19:15). These verses are therefore once again in reference to the final 5 month siege (APR/70AD – SEP/70AD) and utter destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans—God's ordained instrument of judgment (Mat 22:7). As additional support consider:

1. The word “sickle” also has been known Scripturally to carry this idea: imminent judgment against a nation or people (Joe 3; Jer 51:33; Zec 5:1-3).
2. “And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire...” (18) = This is reminiscent of (Rev 8:5), a text also dealing with the final 5 month siege. This is the way God instructed to destroy an apostate city (Deu 13:12-18). The only acceptable way to carry out such a mission was with God’s holy fire (Lev 9:24 w/Lev 6:12-13; 2Chr 7:1 –God starts the fire for his sacrifice and the priests keep it going for use in future sacrifices—including those things put under the ban—Deu 13;12-18).
3. “the vine of the earth/land” (19) = a common way of referring to Israel in Scripture –esp. in judgment (Psa 80:1-14; Jer 2:12-21, 6:9, 8:13; Lam 2:6; Eze 15:6, 17:6-10, 19:10-14; Joe 1:6-7, 12; Isa 7:23, 32:12 also consider: Isa 5:1-7; Mat 21:33-41).
4. The place where “the blood flowed from the winepress” is “outside the city” (20) which refers exclusively in Revelation to Jerusalem (Rev 11:8; 18:16, 19-20). “Outside the city” is also considered the place of judgment (Rev 20:8-9, 21:27, 22:15; Jo 4:2, 11-12, 14; Heb 13:12; Num 19:3).
5. “...blood as high as a horse’s bridle” (20) indicates great slaughter (Rev 19:17-18)—something also associated with the destruction of Jerusalem:

“Now the number of those that perished...eleven hundred thousand.” –Josephus (Wars, 6.9.3)

“(The Romans) went in numbers into the lanes of the city, with their swords drawn, they slew those they overtook, without mercy...they ran through everyone they met with...and made the city run down with blood to such a degree indeed that the fire of many a house was quenched by the blood.” –Josephus (Wars, 6.8.5)

“The calamities...overwhelmed the whole nation in every part of the world...the inhabitants of Judaea were driven to the limits of disaster; thousands upon thousands of men of every age with women and children perished by the sword...” –Eusebius

“ ‘Vespasian in the spring of AD 67, advanced against the rebels’ (Josephus). They had 60,000 foot soldiers. (The city of) Gadara was the first target, They took it. ‘ He came into it, and slew all the youth, the Romans having no mercy on any age whatsoever; and this was done out of the hatred they bore the nation’ (Josephus). Jotapata was next, then Japaha where 15,000 were (slaughtered) and 2,130 made captives. It took longer to take Jotapata. Then Mt. Gerizzim. 11,600 were slain. Taricheae was next. 6,500 were killed on land and in sea. Gamala was next. 4,000 were (slaughtered), while 5,000 killed themselves by throwing themselves over precipices. Then there was the small city of Gischala. There they slew 6,000 women and children when many of the men fled to Jerusalem. Vespasian and Titus also took other cities, and there were ‘disorders and civil wars in every city’ (Josephus)”. –John L. Bray

6. “...1,600 stadia” = 184 miles, the exact distance of Israel measuring north to south:

“the spreading of blood as far as ‘1,600 stadia’ may be an incidental number, though it corresponds with the approximate length of Palestine measured from Tyre to the border of Egypt...The perspective of measuring distance is from the farthest point to which the blood spread, in order to place emphasis on the extent of the carnage” –Gk Beale

7. These verses represent the sixth vision of the second half of the book (i.e. the second re-telling of the prophecy), representing the sixth seal from the first half of the book (Rev 6:12-17). Since the sixth seal was concerned with the final five month siege of Jerusalem (APR/70AD – SEPT/70AD), the same is true regarding this sixth vision:

“Verses 14-20 form the sixth of seven sections extending from 12:1 to 15:4. Like the sixth seal, this sixth vision describes the judgment...” –GK Beale