

Revelation Fourteen

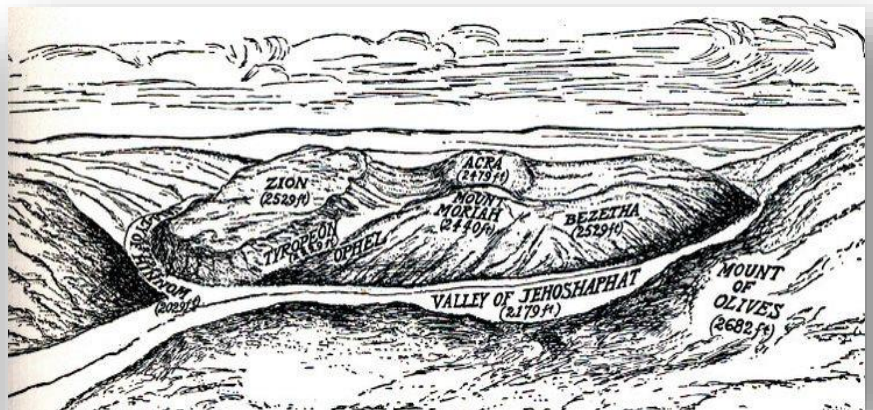
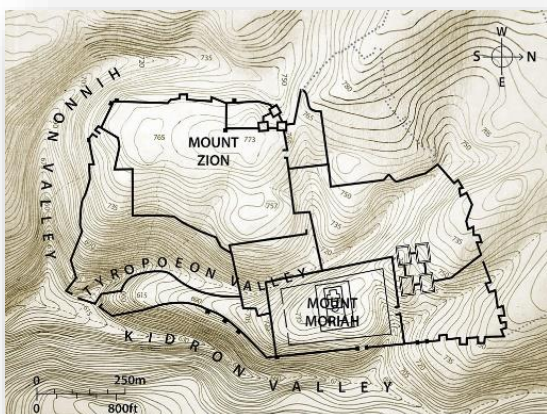
- Revelation 13 ends on a dark note. The counterfeit trinity appears to be in the ascendancy, holding supreme authority over the earth and hellbent on persecuting and eradicating the saints.
- Thankfully, Revelation 14 gives a proleptic glimpse of the future. Ultimately, victory is assured for the saints because of the redeeming Lamb (14.1) and the reigning Son of man (14.14). The chapter contains seven declarations from heaven (14.2, 7, 8, 9, 13, 15, 18). For the saints, there are comforting words of encouragement and assurance. For the satanic trinity, there is the announcement of destruction and the failure of all that is evil.
- “As a summary of the Millennium (20.4-6), the first five verses feature the Lamb in place of the beast, the Lamb’s followers with a divine seal in place of the beast’s followers with the mark of the beast, and the divinely controlled Mount Zion in place of the pagan-controlled earth. The remainder of the chapter furnishes a proleptic outline of the catastrophes and the bliss that receives a chronological and more detailed treatment in later chapters. In this fashion, the chapter is a sort of intermezzo to provide encouragement by telling the ultimate triumph for those who refuse the beast’s mark and to predict the doom of those who do receive it.” **R L Thomas**

The Reward of the Saints [vv.1-5]

v.1. This is a millennial scene which will be developed in 19.11-20.6. The 144,000 (cf. 7.1-8) are seen standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion at the end of the tribulation, a clear declaration that Satan’s attempt to annihilate the Jews will fail. **I looked** (a phrase used in Revelation to introduce a startling, dramatic event, cf. 4.1; 6.2; 7.9; 19.11) and ‘here was’ [*kai idou*] the **Lamb** [*arnion*] – this is the word for a young lamb (cp. John 1.29 [*amnos*], the lamb for a burnt offering), standing in the resurrection power of an endless life. The gentleness of the Lamb is set in contrast to the ferocity of the dragon and the wild beasts of the previous chapter (13.1-2, 11).

The Lamb **stood on the mount Zion**, a solid foundation in contrast to the dragon who stood on the shifting sands of the seashore (13.1). Though Zion is used as a symbol for heaven (Hebrews 12.22), the physical Zion on earth is in view here. First, the definite article suggests ‘the’ well-known Zion in Jerusalem. Second, John hears a voice coming from heaven (v.2), so this is not a scene in heaven. Third, if this is a heavenly Zion, then the reassurance and comfort of the chapter is lost because that would mean the 144,000 had died! This scene, then, is a preview of the great fulfilment of many OT scriptures which expect a gathering of the faithful remnant on Mount Zion at the return of Christ (Psalm 48.1-2; Isaiah 2.2-4; 24.23; Zechariah 14.4). This is the crowning day of Psalm 2.6, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.”

The history of Zion is full of interest. **Nelson’s Bible Dictionary** says, “The first mention of Zion in the Bible is in 2 Samuel 5.7: ‘David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David).’ Zion, therefore, was the name of the ancient Jebusite fortress situated on the southeast hill of Jerusalem at the junction of the Kidron Valley and the Tyropoeon Valley. The name came to stand not only for the fortress but also for the hill on which the fortress stood. After David captured the stronghold of Zion by defeating the Jebusites, he called Zion ‘the City of David’ (1 Kings 8.1; 1 Chronicles 11.5; 2 Chronicles 5.2). When Solomon built the Temple on Mount Moriah (a hill distinct and separate from Mount Zion), and moved the ark of the covenant there, the word ‘Zion’ expanded in meaning to include also the Temple and the Temple area (Psalm 2.6; 48.2, 11-12; 132.13). It was only a short step until Zion was used as a name for the city of Jerusalem, the land of Judah, and the people of Israel as a whole (Isaiah 40.9; Jeremiah 31.12). The prophet Zechariah spoke of the sons of Zion (9.13). By this time the word ‘Zion’ had come to mean the entire nation of Israel.” Zion was therefore the centre point of kingdom rule in the days of David and beyond. Thus, here, the Lamb is about to assert His royal prerogative and take His place on the throne of David (Jim Allen).



The Lamb stands with the **144,000**, the sealed of the twelve tribes of Israel (Jews), and likely the same company as in 7.1-8. Revelation 7 views this company as sealed ones going in to the tribulation. Revelation 14 views them as preserved ones coming out of the tribulation and entering the kingdom. Though a literal 144,000, their number is also symbolic of a complete regathering (not one has been lost!) and the perfect administration about to be established on earth. As in 7.3, they are sealed having **his Father's name written in their foreheads**, or "having his name (i.e. the Lamb's name) and the name of his Father written upon their foreheads" [JND]. The 144,000 belong both to the Lamb, for they are redeemed by blood, and the Father, indicating their part in the family of God by new birth. They are therefore clearly distinguished from the worshippers of the beast (13.16).

v.2. At this point John hears a **voice** [*phōnē*], better translated 'sound' in this context [NET], coming out **from heaven**. This is the sound of a song sung in heaven, the music of which is heard on earth by the company gathered on Mount Zion. Newberry says, "The music of heaven's orchestra comes wafted down to earth, like the melody of a military band celebrating the victory of the Lamb and his followers." Likely John is hearing a heavenly company of martyred saints which remains out of sight until 15.2-4. The sound has three elements, marked by the repetition of the word **as**. The **voice of many waters** suggests majesty, with all other voices being drowned (cf. 1.15). The **voice of a great thunder** implies authority and power – no other voice can compete. The **voice of harpers harping** indicates this is not a mere noise, but a sound with musical quality – the gentle soothing sound of joy, gladness and worship (cf. 5.8-9; 15.2-4). The **harp** or lyre was an instrument with 8-10 strings of equal length used in temple worship to accompany the singing of psalms.

v.3. And **they sung** or "they sing" (present tense) likely refers to the harpers of v.2 (cf. 15.2) rather than the 144,000. The song sung **before the throne** is shared on earth and sung on mount Zion. Heaven and earth are in full harmony and communication at the advent of Christ. The singers are singing **as it were a new song**, that is, what sounded like a song never heard before. This appears to be the song of redemption (cf. 15.3). In the OT, a "new song" was composed to celebrate a mighty deed of God on every fresh occasion of His mercy or deliverance (cf. Psalm 40.1-3; 98.1-3). So, these saints are rejoicing in their ultimate deliverance (redemption) and celebrating the new age about to dawn. **No man could learn** the song except the 144,000 because only they are intelligent (by experience) as to the full significance of the song. Indeed, they have been **redeemed from the earth** or 'bought' (purchased) with the precious blood of Christ (cf. 5.9).

v.4. The 144,000 are further described in four ways, being commended for maintaining high moral and spiritual standards in the midst of a corrupt religious, social, and cultural environment:

- **Purity.** They were **not defiled with women; for they are virgins**. In the context of Revelation, this language could be figurative and refer to spiritual purity – these saints not having engaged in any kind of defiling spiritual infidelity with either religious or commercial Babylon (17.4; 18.3). Alternatively, the language could be physical and describe refraining from all sexual relations – being separated from the rampant sexual immorality of the last days.
- This does not imply that sexual relations within marriage are sinful or impure but represents the kind of extraordinary consecration to God that is called for in this unique situation (cf. Exodus 19.14-15). The use of the word "women" indicates that physical sexual purity is in view here rather than detachment from the corrupt world system.
- **Persistence.** They **follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth**. The remarkable devotion of these saints in such difficult days is due to their affection for the Lamb. The tense refers to a past habit of life that has led to their privilege of close association to Him in His day of exaltation. All through their lives they listened to, obeyed and heeded the voice of the Shepherd. They surrendered their lives to and for Him.
- **Pledge.** They are **firstfruits unto God**. The earth is ripe for harvest, producing much that is fit for the great winepress of the wrath of God (14.19). But much will also be harvested for God's glory. "First fruits" describes the first crops of any harvest, which are the pledge of a greater harvest to follow. These 144,000 Jews therefore stand as the first fruits of a great national reaping that will be harvested when "all Israel" will be saved (Romans 11.26-27).
- **Piety.** **v.5.** In **their mouth was found no guile**, or "no lie was found on their lips; they are blameless," [NET]. This could refer to their honest, plain talking without deceit or treachery, after all they represent One who is truth (John 14.6). But the primary thought is probably that of separation from idolatry (described as 'lies', cf. Isaiah 44.20), especially 'the lie' of the man of sin (2 Thessalonians 2.9-11).
- They are also **without fault** [*amōmoi*], a word that describes the perfection of the internal organs of a sacrificial victim (cf. Hebrews 9.14; 1 Peter 1.19). When used of NT believers it indicates those who are ethically blameless and above reproach (Colossians 1.22). Their conduct and character are such that the presentation of themselves as living sacrifices to God is wholly acceptable to Him (cf. Romans 12.1).

The Recompense of the Wicked [vv.6-11]

The tone of the remainder of the chapter is solemn being full of warning, retribution and recompense. There is a final call to repent, change allegiance and worship God as the hour of final judgment arrives. The structure of the remainder of the chapter involves six angels arranged around the appearance of the Son of man (v.14). Three appear *before* His introduction (vv.6, 8, 9) and three *follow* His introduction (vv.15, 17, 18). This symmetry is designed to give Christ the central place.

Angel One – A Call to Repentance [vv.6-7]

v.6. The first **angel** is flying **in the midst of heaven** or “directly overhead” [NET]. This refers to the highest point in the sky (like the sun at noon) making him visible to all and his announcement audible to all. The angel has the **everlasting** [*aiōnios*] **gospel** to **preach** to them that **dwell on the earth**. The word *aiōnios* refers to an ageless (timeless) message that is permanently valid, the substance of which is given in v.7 – to God and God alone belongs the glory and worship of mankind. Man must have no other gods beside Him and are accountable to Him alone. Enoch (Jude v.14, 15) and Noah were early preachers of the same message (2 Peter 2.5). **WE Vine** comments, “*Worship God* is an eternal gospel. It suits all periods. At the time when it will be proclaimed throughout the earth the world at large will be worshipping the Man of Sin. Hence the command to worship God. Thus the world will be divided, not as it is now into three divisions, the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God, but into those, on the one hand, who worship God and are waiting for the appearing of Christ in glory as the Son of man, and those, on the other hand, who worship the Beast, and who must suffer punishment in consequence.” It is possible, but unlikely, that an angel literally preaches the gospel to the nations before the end (cf. Matthew 28.5-7; Luke 1.19). More probable is that the angel represents divinely commissioned messengers like those mentioned by the Lord (Matthew 24.14). The gospel is announced to **them that dwell on the earth** – that is, every **nation, kindred** (tribe), **tongue** (language) and **people**. The message is universally applicable.

v.7. The angel’s **loud voice** ensures that all will hear and denotes urgency and concern. The command to **fear God** requires self-humiliation and is the call to recognise one’s accountability to Him (Romans 1.21, 32). To **give glory to Him** is an idiom of repentance, and means to acknowledge God as the only, true and living God (Acts 14.15-17). Revelation makes clear that a person cannot fear God or give him glory unless they worship and honour the Lamb – in fact, fearing God and giving Him glory are code words for repentance and conversion (cf. 15.4; 16.9; 19.5, 7). The urgency and necessity of repentance is indicated in the phrase **the hour of his judgment is come**. The **hour** [*hōra*] points to a *fixed* moment (as compared to a *fit* moment) and the verb **has come** (or ‘has already arrived’) to a state that is on the verge of being realised. This is the very last chance to change allegiance to the God of heaven. The righteous judgment of a holy God is about to break on an unrepentant world. Thus, individuals must **worship** God in clear contrast to the worship of the dragon and the beast (13.4, 8, 12). God is worthy of worship because He is the Creator who **made heaven and earth**, and the **sea and fountains of waters** (all fresh water supplies such as rivers, lakes and streams). All of creation is encompassed in these four statements.

Angel Two – A Cry of Destruction [v.8]

v.8. The dramatic announcement of the second **angel** concerns the fall and destruction of Babylon, a subject to be treated in detail in Revelation 17 and 18. This second angel **followed** the first. This is not just sequential but also suggests a connection between the messages. In this instance, the declaration of the fall of Babylon by the second angel intimates the everlasting gospel preached by the first angel has been rejected. The content of the message is, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great,” [RV]. This is the first of six references to **Babylon** in the book of Revelation (16.19; 17.5; 18.2, 10, 21). The name reaches back to the historical Babel founded by Nimrod (Genesis 10.8-9), a mighty hunter who set himself in opposition against Jehovah. Nimrod was the founder of a great political, religious and economic empire (system) opposed to God and His people – the crowning glory of which was a Ziggurat dedicated to the gods of heaven. Jim Allen says, “In Scripture it is viewed as the very citadel of idolatry, and thus, as the satanic capital on earth.” Consequently, Babylon has, from its inception, symbolised evil and rebellion against God – this is now judged in its final form under the guise of the empire of the Antichrist, both its religious (Revelation 17) and commercial aspects (Revelation 18). **Is fallen, is fallen** (cf. Isaiah 21.9) translates two aorist verbs which portray Babylon’s future destruction as so certain as to be complete (having already been accomplished), and comprehensive.

The cause of such divine wrath is explained as **she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication**. The metaphor personifies Babylon as a harlot (cf. 17.1-5) intoxicating her victims (the nations) with fine wine and seducing them into committing spiritual fornication (idolatry). This is God’s view of the world having been deceived by the final form of Babylonian false religion manifested in the empire of the Beast. The clause **she made all nations** is another way of saying she exercised coercive power over earth’s inhabitants in causing them to choose a path that they in no way would have chosen without her influence (R L Thomas). To **drink of the wine** is to participate in the spiritual immorality (idolatry) of the Antichrist and his empire. This, in turn, will lead to God’s **wrath** [*thymos*] against her (spiritual) **fornication**. In Revelation, wrath [*thymos*] consistently refers to the ‘intense anger’ (wrath) of God against sin. The wine of immoral

behaviour with which Babylon makes the nations drunk becomes the wine of God's wrath for her. See 16.19, "and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath."

Angel Three – The Cup of Indignation [vv.9-11]

v.9. The **third angel** unpacks the judgment proclaimed by the second – to drink of Babylon's wine in these last tribulation days is synonymous with **worshipping the beast** and **his image** and **receiving his mark** in the forehead or hand. The phrase **if any man** suggests individuals are free to make their own decision, but a person's choice to worship the Beast and receive his mark seals their eternal destiny under the judgment of God (cf. v.10). Once that mark is received it can never be repudiated or erased. Osborne says, "The false prophet forces this worship on penalty of economic sanctions and death, but here the penalty for obeying the demand to worship the antichrist is far more severe – eternal torment."

v.10. The person who worships the Beast **shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God**, manifested initially in the seven vial judgments. The awful picture is that of a **cup of indignation** [*orgē*] into which the **wine of the wrath** [*thymos*] of God is poured **without mixture** (undiluted). In the OT, a cup represents a personal portion of either blessing or judgment (cf. Jeremiah 25.15). Here, the worshipper of the beast who has been freely drinking of the intoxicating wine of the Antichrist, will now find himself drinking a personal portion of the wrath of God – both His vehement fury [*thymos*] and His settled indignation [*orgē*]. This wine has not been mixed with water to weaken its concentration but is undiluted and bears full strength. Undiluted wine was considered sour, strong, and distastefully bitter. For centuries the wrath of God has been restrained and tempered by mercy, even at Sodom and Gomorrah. No longer! This is God's wrath in full measure – whether the fury of the vials, or the settled indignation of eternal judgment.

Eternal judgment is described as **torment** forever and ever. The word 'tormented' [*basanizō*] speaks of unrelieved pain (see the noun form in Luke 16.23) produced by eternal **fire and brimstone** (sulphur, a type of asphalt found in volcanoes that produced intense heat). Jim Allen says, "The ancient world used the combination of 'fire and brimstone' to convey the idea of a self-sustained furnace independent of external fuel. It is the equivalent of the phrase 'unquenchable fire' in the ministry of Christ," (Matthew 3.12; Luke 3.17). This is also the destiny of the beast and the false prophet (19.20) as well as the devil (20.10) and all lost sinners (21.8). **In the presence of the holy angels** and the **Lamb** does not suggest they are eternally watching the scene of judgment, but rather that the sentence has been passed in judicial proceedings at which the holy angels are present, and the Lamb is presiding (cf. 20.12).

v.11. This verse is a sober reminder that the righteous judgment of the unrepentant sinner is eternal and everlasting. The **smoke of their torment** will keep ascending **for ever and ever**. There are echoes of divine judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19.28) and Edom (Isaiah 34.9-10) – an endless trail of smoke (the evidence of fire and destruction) will be constant evidence of the permanence of their suffering. The judgment of the Lake of Fire is **for ever and ever** – the strongest possible language in Greek to express uninterrupted duration, "to ages of ages" [JND]. This judgment is as eternal as the existence of God (Revelation 4.9; 10.6) and the glory of the Lamb (5.13). Elsewhere, in the space of one verse, both judgment for the unrighteous and life for the righteous are described as eternal (Matthew 25.46). To limit the meaning of one must limit the meaning of the other! Those who **worship the beast** will have **no rest day nor night** – an eternal, uninterrupted restlessness (cf. Isaiah 34.9-10). The eternal rest offered by Christ was rejected (Matthew 11.29).

The Reassurance of the Saints [vv.12-13]

v.12. In light of expected intense persecution for the saints, and pressure to worship the beast and receive the mark of his name, John makes another appeal for perseverance (cf. 12.17; 13.10). The saints are those who exercise **patience** (steadfast endurance) which is further defined as **keeping** (obeying) **the commandments of God** and maintaining **faith** (confidence) in the Lord **Jesus**. Perhaps the personal name "Jesus" would remind the saints of the same pressures He faced during His sojourn on earth. A vital, living faith in Christ would keep them in the path of obedience and sustain them under the severe pressures of persecution. **v.13.** Again, John hears a sound or **voice from heaven**. He has heard such a voice four times before (10.4, 8; 11.12; 14.2) and will hear it twice more again (18.4; 21.3). This message is not communicated through an angel but is a direct divine promise – the persecution and pain of these saints has been noted by heaven. Those who faithfully maintain their allegiance to Christ will likely face martyrdom hence the sober word of reassurance which John is commanded to write, **Blessed** (the second of seven beatitudes in Revelation) **are the dead which die in the Lord** from henceforth. Those who are faithful unto death are "blessed" because they are assured of future reward – they "cannot, and do not, miss out on the bliss won by the Lamb" (Jim Allen). **From henceforth**, or "from this moment on" [NET] suggests this is a statement that particularly concerns those saints martyred during the Beast's reign of terror (the last 3.5 years of the tribulation) – this is a special assurance for them. They **die in the Lord** (cp. "the dead in Christ", 1 Thessalonians 4.16) because loyalty to Christ as Lord was the cause of their martyrdom. John Riddle says, "They bowed, not to the demands of the beast, but the Lordship of Christ." The promise of blessing is further affirmed by a personal interjection from **the Spirit** (as 22.17) with an emphatic **yea** (the equivalent of an 'amen'). The

martyrs are promised *two* things. First, there is **rest from their labours** (exhausting toil and/or trouble) – they will be given relief from the trials and tears of the tribulation and enjoy eternal rest in the presence of God. This is in stark contrast to the eternal ‘restlessness’ of the wicked (v.11). Second, there is reward for **their works**. Indeed, “their works follow with them” – not one thing these saints had done for the Lord would be forgotten for “God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love you have demonstrated for his name, in having served and continuing to serve the saints,” (Hebrews 6.10, NET). These works likely include not just deeds, but attitude, motive, obedience to the word of God and separation from the kingdom of the beast.

The Reaping of the Harvest [vv.14-20]

The final verses of the chapter return to the sober theme of the judgment of God. This judgment is pictured as both a *grain harvest* (vv.14-16) and a *grape harvest* (or vintage, vv.17-20). The grain harvest is linked to the *Son of man* (Daniel 7.13); the grape harvest is linked to an *angel* and Armageddon (14.20; 19.15). Both the grain harvest and the grape harvest therefore picture different aspects of the same judgment at the end of the age – the “harvest of the earth” (v.15) and the “vine of the earth” (v.18). These two scenes are the fulfilment of Joel 3.12-15 where Jehovah sits in judgment on the heathen at the time of His return to Zion. The judgment is described as both a harvest *and* a vintage. The vintage in Israel was relatively short compared with the harvest, so great activity was compressed into a few weeks at the end of the summer. In the vintage the “clusters” are gathered quickly and cast into the winepress.

The metaphor of *harvesting* is employed in Scripture to describe the ingathering of souls – whether for blessing or judgment. For example, souls during the day of grace are presented as a field white and ready for harvest (John 4.35). At the end of the tribulation, there is a discriminatory harvest of the *wheat* (children of the kingdom) and the *tares* (children of the wicked). The Lord Jesus says, “the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world,” (Matthew 13.39-40). The context of Revelation 14 and background of Joel 3 shows there is no gathering of the righteous here, only the wicked for judgment.

The Grain Harvest [vv.14-16]

v.14. I looked (cf. v.1, 6) introduces a startling and dramatic scene of judgment centred around the **Son of man** (cf. 1.13). “Son of man” is a title that links Christ to the earth. Here is the appointed representative of deity to whom has been given authority “to execute judgment” (John 5.27). In Revelation 1.13, His judgment is towards the churches; here it is towards the nations. The first mention of the Son of man in the NT is in Matthew 8.20. Then, He had nothing, not even a place to lay His head; now He is about to take possession of the entire earth – universal and everlasting dominion and glory belongs to Him (Daniel 7.13-14). The Son of man is seated on a **white cloud**, likely a literal cloud acting as a chariot (cf. Psalm 104.3; Matthew 24.30) and symbolising the glory and majesty of deity, as well as the purity of His judgments. His **golden crown** [*stephanos*] is a crown of triumph worn by victors in war or athletic events. The crown therefore pictures Christ as the triumphant conqueror victorious over all His enemies. He will yet wear multiple diadems as the King of kings (19.12). In his hand is a **sharp sickle**. The sickle was a tool with a long, curved blade mounted on a long handle for cutting stalks of grain. The image is of Christ as a divine reaper, cutting down rebellious humanity like stalks of grain at His coming. The sharpness of the sickle suggests the judgment will be swift and incisive.

v.15. Another angel is the *fourth* in the chapter, and the *first* of the second group of three. This angel carries instructions from **the temple to him that sat on the cloud**. This temple is the “temple of God that was opened in heaven” (11.19) – the inner sanctuary and intimate dwelling place of God. This symbolises that the instructions the angel carries are dictated by the throne of God and righteous in character. The Son can now exercise the right to judge that the Father has delegated to Him, thus He will **thrust** in the **sickle** and start to **reap** for the “**time** [*hōra*] **to reap** has **come**” [NET]. The use of the word *hora* (cf. v.7) suggests a fixed moment which introduces a season (or state) of reaping – the end of the age. Indeed, the **harvest of the earth is ripe** [*xērainō*], meaning to ‘become dried up’. Though the word can denote heads of grain that have reached maturity, in the NT, the word is only used in the negative sense of ‘withered’ or even ‘rotten’, indicating the utter corruption of the world at this time. Thus, the thought here is probably of grain that has passed the point of any usefulness and is fit only to be gathered and burned (Matthew 13.40). **v.16.** So, the **sickle** was **thrust** in, and the **earth was reaped** – the *aorist* summarising, in one sweeping statement, the judgments of the end of the age.

The Grape Harvest [vv.17-20]

v.17. The vision of the grain harvest is followed by the vision of the grape harvest, the imagery of the winepress being repeated in association with the events of Armageddon (14.20; 19.15). This judgment is associated with two angels, one that comes out from **the temple in heaven** (also **having a sharp sickle** like the Son of man), and one that comes out from the **altar** in heaven (**v.18**). The first angel awaits explicit instruction to commence the judgment, which is duly given by the second angel. The **altar** is the altar of incense, the *only* altar in heaven (cf. 8.3-5) and the place from which God’s judgments against the earth have proceeded all along in answer to the prayers of the saints for vengeance and vindication

(6.9-11). Thus, the second angel is described as having **power** (authority) **over fire** in the sense that his was the responsibility to tend the fire of the incense altar. Once again (cf. 8.5), the prayers of God's people are being answered in judgment on the earth. The second angel commands the first angel with a **loud cry** to **thrust** in the **sharp sickle** and **gather the clusters of the vine** (or *vineyard*, NET) **of the earth**. The earth is pictured as having produced fruit, but not the fruit of righteousness! This is the worthless fruit (cf. Isaiah 5.4) of an earthly vine which is **fully ripe** [*ēkmasan*], or grapes at 'bursting point', indicating the fully developed wickedness and rebellion of earth dwellers at the time of Armageddon.

v.19. So, the **angel thrust in his sickle** and **gathered** (harvested) **the vine of the earth**, likely anticipating the gathering of the nations at Armageddon (cf. 16.14, 16). The grapes are harvested to be **cast** into the **great winepress of the wrath of God**. In the OT, treading the winepress is an image of divine judgment (cf. Isaiah 63.1-3; Joel 3.13). A wine press consisted of two stone bowls (or basins) connected by a trough. Grapes would be trampled in the upper basin, and the juice would collect in the lower basin. The splattering and redness of the juice, as well as the staining of the feet and garments of those treading the winepress is a vivid image of divine judgment. The same image is used in Isaiah 63 to depict the Lord as a divine warrior acting in judgment. He says, "I have stomped grapes in the winepress all by myself; no one from the nations joined me. I stomped on them in my anger; I trampled them down in my rage. Their juice splashed on my garments. and stained all my clothes," [NET]. **v.20.** The somewhat gruesome metaphor is developed by describing the **winepress** being **trodden without the city** – an obvious reference to the city of Jerusalem. The exact place could be the valley of Jehoshaphat (meaning 'Jehovah judges') as identified by the prophet Joel (3.2, 12-14). According to Arnold Fruchtenbaum, "The valley of Jehoshaphat, also known as the Valley of Kidron, is on the east side of the city of Jerusalem and curves halfway to the south side where it meets the Valley of Hinnom. It is the valley that separates Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives." Armageddon is a place (part of the plain of Esdraelon about forty miles north of Jerusalem) where the armies "of the whole world" (16.14) will be gathered at the end of the age. They will cover the land of Palestine from Megiddo in the north, down the entire length of Israel as far south as Bozrah (Edom) in the south – a distance about 200 miles. As the Lord Jesus treads the **winepress** "of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (19.15), **blood** will flow "up to the height" [NET] of **the horse bridles** for a distance of **1,600 furlongs** (about 200 miles). The image is that of blood splattering into the air profusely (even as high as a horse's bridle, about 5ft) along the whole length of battle. Alternatively, it may be that the huge amount of blood shed around Jerusalem and Bozrah at this time (cf. Isaiah 63.1-6) will flow in rivers as far south as the Gulf of Aqaba where it will enter the sea (cf. Jeremiah 49.13-14, 20-22). This, too, is roughly 200 miles.