

INTRODUCTION:

Biblical Terms for the Tribulation

Terms from the Old Testament	
The Tribulation	Deuteronomy 4:30
The day of Israel's calamity	Deuteronomy 32:35; Obad. 1:12-14
The indignation	Isaiah 26:20; Dan. 11:36
The overflowing scourge	Isaiah 28:15, 18
The Lord's strange work	Isaiah 28:21
The year of recompence	Isaiah 34:8
The day of vengeance	Isaiah 34:8; 35:4; 61:2
The time of Jacob's Trouble	Jeremiah 30:7
The seventieth week of Daniel	Daniel 9:27
The time of trouble	Daniel 12:1; Zephaniah 1:15
The day of darkness	Joel 2:2; Amos 5:18, 20; Zephaniah 1:15
The day of wrath	Zephaniah 1:15
The day of distress	Zephaniah 1:15
The day of wasteness and desolation	Zephaniah 1:15
The day of gloominess	Zephaniah 1:15; Joel 2:2
The day of clouds and thick darkness	Zephaniah 1:15; Joel 2:2
The day of the trumpet and alarm	Zephaniah 1:16

Terms from the New Testament	
The great Tribulation	Matthew 24:21; Revelation 2:22; 7:14
The Tribulation	Matthew 24:29
The wrath to come	1 Thessalonians 1:10
The day of the Lord	1 Thessalonians 5:2
The wrath	1 Thessalonians 5:9; Revelation 11:18
The hour of trial	Revelation 3:10
The great day of the wrath of the Lamb of God	Revelation 6:16-17
The hour of judgment	Revelation 14:7
The wrath of God	Revelation 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1

So far, in the book of Revelation we have looked at and studied two of the three groups of events, or two of the three groups of judgments, which will take place during the Tribulation following the Rapture of Church Age believers. We also studied the breaking of the seven seals that sealed the scroll. You will remember that the scroll is the title deed to this old world which rightfully belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ and which will soon be in His full possession again as it is wrenched by force from the grasp of the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, that old dragon, Satan.

We then studied the blasting of the seven trumpets, which told of even harsher wrath to fall from heaven upon rebellious humanity. That took us through chapter 11. Chapters 12-14 comprise another interlude before the last group of judgments, the seven bowls of wrath, beginning in chapter 15. Therefore, our study begins the third chapter of the interlude formed by chapters 12-14 before the seven bowls of wrath.

In chapters 12 and 13, we saw seven performers on the world scene. The woman, which was Israel; the red dragon, which was Satan; the child of the woman, which was Jesus Christ; Michael, the archangel; the remnant of Israel; and finally, the first and second beasts, which are the antichrist and the false prophet, respectively. All through chapter 13, we saw nothing but bad news. The blasphemous beasts and the idolatry that they will promote dominate everything.

In chapter 14, God begins to show us what happens to His people while all this is happening. Remember that chapter 14 is not chronological. That is to say; it is a summation of the events that occur near the end of the Great Tribulation.

(14.1) And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

1. When John wrote, "And I looked, and, lo," he showed us that he was still the seer, the observer of future history that unfolded before his eyes. The only way such a thing could have happened is for God to simply hold the future in His hands and pass it before John's eyes. The hymn writer was right. "I know Who holds the future."
2. Verses 1-5 seem to be a vision shown to John of a scene that takes place shortly after the millennium begins. It may be a kind of flash ahead. I say that because the 144,000 witnesses, the young, male, virgin Jews, which we first see in Revelation chapter 7, are standing with the Lord Jesus Christ on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. Why would such a scene suggest a millennial time frame? Because the Lord Jesus Christ never stood amid 144,000 Jewish male virgins during His first advent, leading me to conclude that this must occur during His second advent.
3. Notice that of the 144,000 who were sealed at the beginning of the Tribulation, in Revelation chapter 7; all 144,000 make it into the Lord's presence. Perhaps they did not all survive the Great Tribulation, but they will survive eternally and end up with the Lamb of God. It is a comfort to know that what God purposes to do in an individual's life will be done in that person's life. Philippians 1.6: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ." He wanted these men to go through the Tribulation for Him, so He sealed them for their soul's safety. The result? Complete preservation. What God started God completed.
4. Again, this does not necessarily mean that none of the 144,000 did not experience physical death along the way. But what is physical death to the child of God? It is a promotion to the presence of God. It is the realization of the hope referred to in Romans 5.1-2:
 - 1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:
 - 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."
5. This also suggests Ephesians 1.13-14:
 - ¹³ In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

- 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

We who know Christ are also sealed, ready to be delivered to heaven at the appropriate time.

6. What does the phrase “having his Father's name written in their foreheads” mean? The antecedent of “his” is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb referred to in this verse. It will be His Father’s name, God the Father’s name, written on the foreheads of the 144,000. Will the Father’s name be visible or seen only by the angels? We do not know.

(14.2) And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps

1. I do not know what John heard unless God, with the accompaniment of a heavenly orchestra, is teaching these men the song they sing in verse 3.
2. From the description of the voice, it may very well be the Lord Jesus Christ Who teaches them this song. That would make the Lord Jesus Christ the great music director, leading His Own in glorifying the Father through song.

(14.3) And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

1. Do you remember the new song the 24 elders sang in Revelation 5.9? “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” This is probably a different song.
2. We know that a different group of people sings “as it were a new song” because they sing it before the 24 elders, the beasts, and the throne. This makes it rather difficult to assert that the 144,000 symbolize the Church and that the 24 elders symbolize the Church since both groups are unlikely to represent Church Age Christians.
3. The last half of the verse shows conclusively that this is a different song than the elders sang. Maybe their lyrics are different because their experiences were different. After all, they had endured the most terrible period of human history.
4. I am sure that through such troubled times, only God’s grace provided the strength for them to persevere. Notice verses 4 and 5, which show how grace became available.

- (14.4-5) ⁴ These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, *being* the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.
⁵ And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

1. These verses are sometimes misapplied to teach the Romish doctrine that a celibate state is more holy than a married state. But try to understand why these men will remain virgins unto God.

2. Jeremiah 16.1-4 gives some insight as to why these young men will not marry:

- ¹ The word of the LORD came also unto me, saying,
² Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place.
³ For thus saith the LORD concerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land;
⁴ They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; *but* they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.

God spared Jeremiah great grief and heartache in this passage by forbidding marriage. This is because God knew Jerusalem would fall and be sacked by the Babylonians.

Note: Why do people always think God wrongs them when He seeks to protect them? I wonder if any of these Jewish men will complain because God has spared them the pain and suffering of perhaps watching their wives and children slaughtered or betray them. As with Jeremiah and these 144,000, consider that God is good and that His will for our lives, no matter how difficult to comprehend, is always for the best.

3. Consider First Corinthians 7.25-28:

- ²⁵ Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.
²⁶ I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, *I say*, that *it is* good for a man so to be.
²⁷ Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.
²⁸ But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

Here Paul gives some advice, not a command. He suggests that folks consider remaining single. Why? Verse 26, this present distress. Paul only wanted to protect Christians from the heartache that would be inevitable in the persecution, seeing their loved ones, husbands, wives, and children, slain for the cause of Christ.

4. If these situations warranted celibacy in the past, how much more needful will it be for the choice servants of God to remain unmarried through the most horrible time in human history, which will be the Great Tribulation? You see, these young virgins will remain so to avoid every possible hindrance to serving God. They will be devoted to and consecrated to their Lord Jesus Christ.
 5. So, having followed their Lord Jesus, in spirit, during the Tribulation, we see that they are given the privilege of following Him in person during the millennium.
 6. These 144,000 are called the first fruits because they are just the first of many to be converted in the seventieth week of Daniel, the seven years of the Tribulation after all the Christians are removed by the Rapture. This probably refers to the fact that they were the first of many millions to be saved during the Tribulation. This is because the first fruits refer to the initial portion of the crop that is harvested.
 7. “And in their mouth was found no guile.” This refers to the absence of lies in their speech. These boys will be preachers of the truths of God’s Word, not tellers of the antichrist’s lies.
 8. Finally, “they are without fault before the throne of God.” This does not refer to their sinlessness during their life on earth but to the fact that their sins are cleansed by the blood of Christ, which left them blameless in God’s sight.
 9. So, after the dismal record of the antichrist and the false prophet, we see the saints of God preserved through it all.
- (14.6-7) ⁶ And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,
- ⁷ Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.
1. There is great diversity of thought among commentators who interpret this passage. To ensure we do not err, we need to make our way cautiously.
 2. “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven” This is the first of a series of angels referred to in this chapter, and this is the second vision that John sees in this chapter. What is meant by the phrase “in the midst of heaven”? “From

a Gr. term (“mid-heaven”) denoting the point in the noonday sky where the sun reaches its zenith. This is the highest point where all can see and hear.”¹

3. “having the everlasting gospel to preach” Two questions: First, what is “the everlasting gospel”? Is this the Gospel like what we usually think of as the Gospel, or is this some other good news? Second, are angels allowed to preach the Gospel?

- a. What is “the everlasting gospel”? There are two views:

- i. John MacArthur represents one school of thought when he writes on this phrase, “The angel is preaching the good news concerning everlasting life and entrance into the kingdom of God (cf. Matt. 24:14; 1 Cor. 15:1-10). He is urging the people of the world to change their allegiance from the beast to the Lamb. It is also called in the NT the gospel of God, the gospel of grace, the gospel of Christ, the gospel of peace, the glorious gospel, and the gospel of the kingdom. It is good news that God saves by the forgiveness of sin and opens His kingdom to all who will repent and believe. The whole world will hear this preaching by the angel as God graciously calls all to salvation.”²

- ii. Lehman Strauss and John Walvoord represent the other school of thought. Strauss’ comments follow first:

The angel’s message is “the everlasting gospel.” There is nothing in the message about grace, the blood, redemption, or forgiveness. This is the burden of ‘the gospel of the grace of God’ (Acts 20:24), which is “the gospel of Christ” (Romans 1: 16). The message of the everlasting gospel is essentially that which has been proclaimed since God’s earliest dealings with man, namely, God is sovereign, and true happiness comes to those who recognize His sovereign right in the earth. The Creator only, and not the creature, must be worshiped. During the Great Tribulation, when false worship will prevail, God will once again state His claim to the worship of men. The everlasting gospel is a warning of impending judgment against the Antichrist and all who worship him. This is God’s last call to a wicked and apostate world, for the hour of judgment has come. The Creator has a claim upon His creature. Presently He attempts to woo men by the Holy Spirit on the ground of Christ’s death. Then He summons men by an angel to recognize and reverence Him as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe.³

Walvoord’s comments run along a similar line of thinking:

The expression “the everlasting gospel,” actually without the article (“everlasting gospel”) is an arresting phrase. It is everlasting in the sense that it is

¹ See footnote for Revelation 14.6 from John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 2011.

² Ibid.

³ Lehman Strauss, *The Book Of The Revelation*, (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1963), pages 265-266.

ageless, not for any specific period. Ordinarily, one would expect this to refer to the gospel of salvation. In verse 7, however, the content of the message is quite otherwise, for it is an announcement of the hour of judgment of God and the command to worship Him.

Some expositors use the term “gospel” to include all the revelation God has given in Christ and hence conclude that there is only one gospel with various phases of truth belonging to this gospel. There are others who prefer to distinguish various messages in the Bible as gospel or “good news” even though they contain only one aspect of divine revelation, hence, the expression “gospel of grace,” referring to the goodness of grace, or to the gospel of the kingdom, dealing with the good news of the kingdom of God. The everlasting gospel seems to be neither the gospel of grace nor the gospel of the kingdom, but rather the good news that God at last is about to deal with the world in righteousness and establish His sovereignty over the world. This is an ageless gospel in the sense that God’s righteousness is ageless. Throughout eternity God will continue to manifest Himself in grace toward the saints and in punishment toward the wicked. To refer to the gospel of grace as an everlasting gospel is to ignore the context and usage of the term.⁴

I think Walvoord and Strauss are likely correct on this point.

- b. Next, are angels allowed to preach the Gospel? I certainly do not think angels can preach the Gospel during our current dispensation. But what about the past? What about the future? Resorting to Strauss again: “An angel told Cornelius to send for Peter in order that Peter might preach the gospel to him, but the angel made no attempt to explain the way of salvation (Acts 10). But in the tribulation the wickedness of man and the power of Satan necessitates a change in the divine method, God will then resort to a method He used before Christ came to earth the first time (cf. Hebrews 2:2).”⁵
4. “unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people”
 - a. We are dealing with God’s last call to the unsaved of the Tribulation era. This is the eighth time that the phrase “them that dwell on the earth” or “the inhabitants of the earth” is used in John’s Revelation.
 - b. We know that “the everlasting gospel” is preached to unsaved people. Who else would the gospel be preached to? However, using the phrase “them that dwell on the earth” might suggest that there will be no response to this presentation of the Gospel ... even though it will be presented “to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”

⁴ John Walvoord, *The Revelation Of Jesus Christ*, (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1966), page 217.

⁵ Strauss, page 265.

5. “Saying with a loud voice” Since this angel is flying “in the midst of heaven” and is preaching “the everlasting gospel” in a loud voice, imagine how loudly he is speaking. God is making sure that even when lost humanity does not want to hear this good news during that end time, he will have to listen to it.
6. “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”
 - a. Expressed in Tribulation terminology, the message is this, paraphrased: Fear God. Give glory to God. For these reasons. #1, the hour of His judgment has come, and #2, because He is the Creator of heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of waters. By the way, this is the first verse in which the word judgment is used in Revelation.⁶
 - b. How could this message be “the everlasting gospel”, since the word Gospel means good news? To remind you, it is good when God expresses His righteous nature. It is good when God does what needs to be done. It is good when sinners get what is coming to them, even if it is grace when we, who are Christians, do not get what is coming to us. So, it has always been that God will righteously judge sin. That is why it is “the everlasting gospel.”

(14.8) And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

1. You might want to make a notation that this is the first reference to Babylon in John’s Revelation, though it is mentioned in five other verses after this one.⁷ John Walvoord rightly observes that “Prophetically, ‘Babylon’ sometimes refers to a literal city, sometimes to a religious system, sometimes to a political system, all stemming from the evil character of historic Babylon ... Inasmuch as the context here seems to deal primarily with the end of the great tribulation and the beginning of the millennial kingdom, the reference seems to be to the literal city.”⁸
2. When Walvoord’s comments were published in 1966, they might have seemed wildly speculative to some. Still, events have so dramatically turned in the Middle East, where ancient Babylon was located, and Russia and Ukraine, related to God and Magog, that the literal fulfillment of this prediction no longer seems far-fetched.
3. Here, a second angel is flying around crying out loudly. “Lack of response to the first angel’s message causes a second angel to pronounce this judgment.”⁹ Once

⁶ See footnote for Revelation 14.7 from John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 2011.

⁷ Albert Barnes, *Albert Barnes’ NT Commentary*, (Bronson, MI: Online Publishing, Inc., 2002), bible@mail.com

⁸ Walvoord, page 218.

⁹ See footnote for Revelation 14.8 from John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 2011.

again, we look to the Old Testament to see what the implications of this verse are. Isaiah 13.19-22:

- ¹⁹ And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.
- ²⁰ It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.
- ²¹ But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there.
- ²² And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.

4. There are two ways in which this passage can be understood. If you take this passage as a suggestion, Babylon will be destroyed in the same manner as Sodom was destroyed, which was fire and brimstone, which rained down from above. Babylon has not yet experienced this type of destruction. Thus, this passage indicates that the antichrist will rebuild Babylon during the Tribulation, at which time it will be destroyed by fire.
5. If this line of reasoning is correct, then this angel is predicting the downfall of the city of Babylon, using the prophetic aorist tense of πίπτω, which is translated "fallen."¹⁰ That is how the Greeks predicted something in the future as if it had already occurred. Moreover, with God, such figures of speech are very reasonable. If God's Word predicts an event will happen, mark it down as if it already has happened since nothing will keep it from happening.
6. Romans 8.29-30 is an example of this same type of prophecy. Those who are the objects of God's electing purpose have not yet been glorified, though they are spoken of in this passage as though it has already happened. How can this be? Simple. Nothing on earth or in heaven will prevent it from happening.
- ²⁹ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.
- ³⁰ Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.
7. What will precipitate this destruction of Babylon? "... because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

¹⁰ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In The New Testament, Vol VI*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1930), page 411.

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- a. It is clear from this statement that Babylon will be destroyed because of something collectively done. There is corporate responsibility born here that God will judge. The city's whole will be judged for what the city collectively does. However, what, precisely, will Babylon do?
- b. Making all nations drink of her wine sounds hauntingly similar to Jeremiah 51.7, where the prophet writes, "Babylon *hath been* a golden cup in the LORD's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad." Wine is an intoxicant. Thus, the picture shows the nations becoming intoxicated by Babylon's influence.
- c. Fornication has to do with sexual infidelity, promiscuity, and illicit behavior. However, sexual sin is very frequently used in the Bible as a picture of spiritual wickedness. So, Babylon is pictured here as a wanton woman, guilty of gross immorality and enticing others to sin with her. Is not this decadence characteristic of the United States and the West? When President Richard Nixon opened China to the West, it was with the knowledge that our materialism and conspicuous consumption would entice China. When the Berlin wall was torn down, it resulted from the East Berliners craving the living standards, possessions, and wealth they saw on television and heard about on the radio in the West. In addition, is this not what outrages the fanatical Muslims about the United States and the West? It is our decadence, immodesty, promiscuity, and what they see as the West's religion. What is done by the West will be done to the West and the rest of the world.
- d. But there are consequences to sin. And the idolatry that was spawned in Babylon centuries ago, and which will be promoted by Babylon during the Great Tribulation, will provoke God's wrath against Babylon and against all those who yield to Babylon's temptations. What will Babylon entice the nations to do and intoxicate them with? Whatever the precise form of the enticement, it will lure people away from the real Savior, the true Gospel, and the genuine God. Thus, God's wrath will be enflamed on those who succumb to counterfeit religion and worship the counterfeit god and his counterfeit savior.

(14.9-10) ⁹ And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb

1. Two incidental issues to address before we dive into the meaning and implications of these two verses: First, a comment about the "beast." Second, a word about "worship."
 - a. I have not mentioned it before, but two entirely different Greek words are used to describe the creatures we first read about in Revelation 4.6-8 and the words used to describe the antichrist and the false prophet. Those "beasts" are defined

using the Greek word ζῶον, from which we get the word “zoo” and “zoological.” The word simply refers to living creatures of some kind. But the word that is used to describe the antichrist here is the Greek word θηρίον, which is synonymous with ζῷον, but stresses more the aspect of wildness than the aspect of living.

- b. About this word “worship.” The Greek word προσκυνέω, a compound word that derives from the Greek word κυνέω to kiss, “... used to designate the custom of prostrating oneself before persons and kissing their feet or the hem of their garment, the ground, etc. the Persians did this in the presence of their deified king, and the Greeks before a divinity or someth. holy.) **to express an attitude or gesture one’s complete dependence on or submission to a high authority figure, (fall down and) worship, do obeisance to, prostrate oneself before, do reverence to, welcome respectfully.**”¹¹ This attitude and expression is due to God only, which is proper Christian conduct. Yet not only will God not be worshiped during the Great Tribulation by the unsaved, the antichrist will be worshiped. Satan will achieve what he has always sought, if only temporarily, the worship of God’s creatures, what God’s commandments expressly forbid:

- ¹ And God spake all these words, saying,
- ² I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
- ³ Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
- ⁴ Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth:
- ⁵ Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me;
- ⁶ And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

2. Consider the thrust of the passage. Does it look like there will be any wiggle room during the Great Tribulation? No. People will either take the mark of the beast on their forehead or the back of their hand and irreversibly side with the antichrist against the Lord Jesus Christ or refuse the mark of the beast because they are Christians. There is no in-between. As the Savior said in Matthew 12.30, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”
3. What does this third angel say in so loud a voice? He tells the earth dwellers that it will be the Lamb of God, Himself, Who will inflict punishment upon everyone who has worshipped the beast and received his mark. Does this not fly in the face of most people’s conception of Who Jesus Christ is and what He is like?

¹¹ Bauer, Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), page 882.

4. Think about the sequence of events. The first angel flies and shouts out the everlasting Gospel to them “that dwell on the earth.” Then the second angel chronicles the destruction of what I take to be the antichrist’s machine, political Babylon. Finally, the third angel predicts the wrath of God, poured out without mixture (that is without dilution) upon the beast worshipers, upon those who have worshiped him and received his mark.
5. “As they have drunk the intoxicating wine of idolatry or spiritual fornication, they shall now drink the wine of God’s wrath, which is poured out into the cup of his indignation. This is an allusion to the *poisoned cup*, which certain criminals were obliged to drink, on which ensued speedy death.”¹²
6. And where shall the lost person be tormented? “... in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.” Can the beginning torment of the damned commence when the dead who are damned are called to stand before Christ at the Great White Throne judgment? Can it be that merely being in the presence of His glory torments them? Our God is a consuming fire. Is He not?
7. In answer to that question, God is a consuming fire. Yes. But the torment referred to here *is not* the result of being in the presence of Christ. I suggest this because this torment is not passive. Some facts to keep in mind at this point:
 - a. In the phrase “... and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone,” the word “tormented,” translating the Greek word βασανίζω, refers to being tortured, to being tormented.¹³ Someone will torment these beast worshipers.
 - b. The noun form of the word is found in Luke 16.23: “And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.” The noun form of the word refers to severe pain caused by torture.¹⁴
 - c. I mention these things to point out that the future punishment of the damned will not merely be a matter of feeling bad because you are in a place of discomfort. No, the torment of the damned will be God visiting upon them the torment that is due their sins ... in the presence of the Lamb.
8. Finally, concerning the destiny of the wicked:
 - a. “Anyone disposed to discredit the Biblical teaching on the eternal destiny of the wicked should be reminded that Jesus and His beloved disciple said more in

¹² Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary, Vol VI*, (New York: Abingdon Press), page 1034.

¹³ Rogers, Jr., Cleon L. and Rogers III, Cleon L., *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key To The Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: ZondervanPublishingHouse, 1998), page 639.

¹⁴ Bauer, page 168.

regard to this doctrine than all the remaining contributors to the New Testament record.”¹⁵

- b. “This supported by the fact that Jesus referred to hell (*gehenna*) eleven out of the twelve occurrences, made twelve out of nineteen references to hell fire, and used other similar expressions more than any other person in the New Testament.”¹⁶

(14.11) And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

1. How long will the punishment of the unsaved last? For however long, forever, and ever is. This is a ceaseless and unending torment. Matthew 25.46 supports this: “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”
2. David wrote in Psalm 7.11, “God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry *with the wicked every day*.” Again, David wrote in Psalm 9.17, “The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and all the nations that forget God*.” Do you suppose this is what David referred to in Psalm 68.2? “As smoke is driven away, *so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God*.”
3. The Bible predicts an eternal rest for the child of God. Nevertheless, the verse before us tells me that the lost, those who will then worship the beast and his image, and everyone who receives the mark of the beast will be tormented day and night forever. Day and night! No break! No respite! No pause! Day and night for all eternity will their unceasing torment be.

(14.12) Here is the patience of the saints: here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

1. Notice the sharp contrast between the torment of the damned and the saints’ patience, the saints’ courageous endurance. As the disobedient writhe and scream in agony, the child of God is shown to be patient and obedient and keeping the faith. “Faith of Jesus” refers to faith in Jesus.
2. Look back at Revelation 13.10: “He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.” “The patience of the saints” is mentioned there, too. In Revelation 13.10, “the patience of the saints” is set amidst suffering and torture, with the promise of vengeance against their enemies. In Revelation 14.12, the vengeance happens.

¹⁵ J. B. Smith quoted in Walvoord, page 219.

¹⁶ Walvoord, page 219.

3. In Romans 12.19, Paul writes, “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” Paul is actually paraphrasing Deuteronomy 32.35, where the LORD said, “To me *belongeth* vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in *due* time: for the day of their calamity *is* at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.”
4. The Tribulation will be a terrible time of the most horrible persecution of God’s people by those who will receive the mark of the beast and worship him. Nevertheless, those who are God’s children will “keep the commands of God,” which is to say that they will obey God and retain “the faith of Jesus,” meaning they will not give up; they will persevere to the end.
5. And what will happen in the end? They will see God take up their cause. They will behold the vengeance of God on their behalf. Though they have been treated like sheep taken to the slaughter, God will avenge Himself upon those who have wronged them. In other words, the believers of that day will be vindicated. And you and I will be vindicated, as well. You and I do not have to get even for all the slights, for all the slings and arrows, for all the barbs, for all the injustices, for all the hurts and assaults. God will take care of business for us, both for those who live during the Tribulation (which is the situation this verse specifically speaks to) and those of us alive today (by applying this principle).

(14.13) And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

1. This is the first place in the Word of God where God shows that death is more suitable for Christians than life. So, there is never a case when suicide is not sinful. My personal opinion is that suicide is just about an automatic guarantee of demonic influence in the life of someone unconverted since the demonic influence of the lost is typically seen in self-destructive behavior.
2. “Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.” Those “blessed” are those who are saved and believers in Jesus Christ. Death was never preferable to life for anyone before this moment in human history. Even in the case of Job, who experienced such suffering that his wife begged him to curse God and die so he might escape his agony, life was more expedient than death.¹⁷
3. We remember from his Philippian letter that Paul longed for death, but he knew that it was better for the cause of Christ that he remain alive to complete his apostolic assignment for his master.¹⁸

¹⁷ Job 2.9

¹⁸ Philippians 1.21-24

4. But, according to this verse of Scripture, there will be a point in time, yet in the future, during the closing days of the Tribulation, when God will acknowledge that death is preferable to life ... but only for the child of God, only for the person for whom death in this life means heaven in the afterlife, only for those who are “blessed.”
5. What will the circumstances be when this is so? Probably, when these people will be slain en mass for their faith in Christ. When it boils down to life by denying Christ or death for faith in Christ, then it will be those who die who will be blessed. How will they be blessed? Look at the word “*that* they may rest from their labors.” That word means “in order that,” and it is your clue that you have a first-class conditional statement. If something is true, then something else follows. *If* someone in the Lord dies, he rests from his labors, and his works follow him.
6. Did you notice that their works follow them? Were you aware that your works follow you wherever you go? If you are lost your works will follow you into Hell, and you will be judged according to your works at the Great White Throne Judgment of Jesus Christ. If you are saved, on the other hand, your works will follow you to heaven and the Judgment Seat of Christ, where you will be rewarded for your good deeds done in the flesh since you were saved.

Notes: 1. Before we continue in our study of Revelation chapter 14, we all must understand what will be happening in the last throes of the Tribulation, the events that occur immediately before the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Matthew 24.1-3 is a good place to start:

¹ And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to *him* for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

² And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

³ And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

3. Understanding that what the Lord Jesus Christ says in Matthew chapters 24 and 25 is in answer to the single question found in verse 3, notice verses 30-41:

³⁰ And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall

see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer *is* nigh:

33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, *even* at the doors.

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

36 But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

37 But as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

41 Two *women shall be* grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

4. What is the Lord talking about in verses 40 and 41? Does this refer to the Rapture? This passage cannot refer to the Rapture. Why? Because this passage is part of Christ's answer, in which He tells the disciples about His Second Coming. That means the Rapture occurs seven years before the events described in these verses.
5. Want to hear another reason why this cannot be about the Rapture? Because the Rapture will occur without warning, this is a description of the signs that precede Christ's return and must happen before Christ comes again.
6. Finally, of the two women grinding at the mill, which of them will be taken, the saved or the lost? From verse 39, who was taken, the lost people or Noah and his family? According to the Lord Jesus Christ, it is the unsaved that will be the ones taken, just as it was the unsaved that were taken by the Flood, not Noah. He and his family survived.
7. This is final proof that this passage does not refer to the Rapture. In the Rapture, the saved are taken, while the lost are left. However, at the

Second Coming, the lost are taken, and the saved are left to enter the millennium.

8. We now turn to Revelation 14.14-20.

(14.14) And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud *one* sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

1. This appears to be the Lord Jesus Christ because Matthew 24.30 records Christ's prediction that He will come again in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.
2. But is it the Lord Jesus Christ, or is this a creature that is compared to Him somehow? Our answer begins to come from the golden crown that is worn. Two kinds of crowns are mentioned in Revelation, a στέφανος and a διαδήμα. The first kind of crown is the kind that is the victor's crown.¹⁹ The second type of crown is the kind kings wear.²⁰ The golden crown worn in this verse is the first kind, the victor's crown.
3. Another consideration comes from the phrase "like unto." This appears to be a simile, a literary device that compares that which is incomparable. Is this the Lord Jesus Christ referred to here? On the other hand, is this a created being like the Lord Jesus Christ only in the way he is seated?
4. Nowhere else in Scripture is the Lord Jesus Christ shown wearing this kind of crown. But this person is sitting upon a cloud, which typically refers to the glory of God in Scripture. Therefore, because the crown is golden, plus the fact that he is sitting on a cloud (which usually speaks of the glory of God), it is understandable why so many commentators think this person might be the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. As for His sickle, it is sharp. Sickles are instruments that are used to reap a harvest. It is also an instrument of judgment upon the wicked in God's Word. As we shall see as we continue, the time is now ripe for judgment to fall upon the damned. However, is the Lord Jesus Christ portrayed as wielding a sickle, or is it an instrument angels are shown to wield at the end of the age? The weapon the Lord Jesus Christ wields is the sharp sword that proceeds from His mouth, Revelation 19.15.

(14.15) And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

1. Harvest time means that the end of the age, or the end of the era, is in view. Most secular historians think that history is in some way cyclical. Karl Marx believed that history led, inextricably, toward an inevitable, predictable end. It may have

¹⁹ Bauer, pages 943-944.

²⁰ Ibid, page 227.

been the only correct view he held about history. History is not cyclical. History is marching toward an inevitable conclusion, just as the Bible teaches.

2. If we remember the parable of the wheat and tares used to describe believers and unbelievers in Matthew 13.24-30, we should not forget that tares bear no fruit. For that reason, when harvest time comes, wheat is bowed from the weight of the head of grain, but the fruitless tares continue to stand tall. The proud tares, then, will feel the blade of the sickle.
 3. Does it strike you as strange that “another angel” comes out of the temple and says to the one who “sat like unto the Son of Man,” issuing the command, “Thrust in thy sickle, and reap” (both verbs in the imperative mode by the way)? The fact that this is “another angel,” as in another of the same kind, and he issues a command to the one who is “like unto the Son of Man,” is puzzling to me if this is the Lord Jesus Christ.
 4. On one hand, I have difficulty with an angel issuing a directive to someone who may be the Lord Jesus Christ. But if this one is not the Lord Jesus Christ, why is he described as “like unto the Son of Man”? I do not know for sure. However, I know that angels do not issue orders to the Son of God. Again, perhaps the point of comparison between this angel and the Lord Jesus Christ has to do with his demeanor, posture, or some other aspect of his deportment.
 5. For now, I will assume that this is not the Lord Jesus Christ, considering that I may want to revisit this passage to revise my interpretation. I want to be very careful here because so many commentators believe this is the Lord Jesus Christ. Most commentators are not always right, but it is wise to be very cautious when you disagree with most conservative commentators.
- (14.16) And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.
1. Here the angel, who I think is not the Lord Jesus Christ, “who sat like unto the Son of Man,” begins his dreadful harvest of the lost. Remember, angels wield sickles in the Bible, not the Son of God. The Son of God wields a sharp sword from His mouth (probably symbolic of the Word of God).
 2. If you understand that the millennium kingdom is about to begin, you should understand why this holy angel takes the unsaved and leaves the saved. The saved will be left behind to enter the 1000-year kingdom reign of Christ. The lost are sent to Hell.
- (14.17) And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.
1. This seems to confirm what Matthew 13.49-50 teaches:

- ⁴⁹ So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,
⁵⁰ And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

2. Another holy angel will come to assist in this harvest. That this angel is described as “another angel” and “he also having a sharp sickle” gives further credence to the conclusion that the one in Revelation 14.14 is the created being we would generally think of as an angel and not the Lord Jesus Christ.

(14.18) And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

1. That altar, which had been the source of deliverance for those of us who are saved, has become, we are reminded again, the source of damnation for those who are lost.
2. The word “grapes” might remind you of Old Testament passages in Isaiah and Jeremiah that speak of the awful judgment of God. Armageddon is about to conclude.

(14.19-20) ¹⁹ And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

²⁰ And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand *and* six hundred furlongs.

1. From the heavenly perspective, this is Armageddon’s end, though it began as a war between three armies. Multiplied millions of people will be slain by the Lord Jesus Christ and His holy angels.
2. Some people maintain that the blood runs like a river bridle high. Others claim that it merely splashes up to the reins. The real point is this: The earth will be muddy and sloppy for 200 miles, which is the length of 1600 furlongs. Mind you, not muddy and sloppy from a mixture of earth and water. Muddy and sloppy from a mixture of earth and human blood.
3. Those who rejected the shed blood of Christ will have their blood shed as punishment for their rejection of Christ’s shed blood. And that will be only the beginning of their sorrows.