

NOON BIBLE STUDY: REVELATION 14 (PART 4)

REVELATION 14:9-13 - ANNOUNCEMENTS 3 & 4

THERE HAS ALREADY BEEN A CALL TO THE EARTH TO REPENT/FEAR GOD (V. 7) AND THAT THE FAILED AND EVIL SYSTEM OF HUMANITY (SYMBOLIZED IN BABYLON) HAS FALLEN. NOW THE ANNOUNCEMENT RELATES TO THE FACT THAT THOSE THAT "WORSHIP THE BEAST" AND RECEIVE THE BEAST'S MARK ARE UNDER THE JUDGMENT OF GOD'S WRATH (WHICH IS GOING TO BE DESCRIBED STARTING IN CHAPTER 16).

THESE ANNOUNCEMENTS ARE IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS. THE FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT OF THIS SECTION (TECHNICALLY THE 3RD ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE CHAPTER) DECLARES THE SURE PUNISHMENT ON THOSE WHO WORSHIP THE BEAST IS NOT TEMPORARY BUT FINAL AND ETERNAL. THEY WILL FACE GOD'S WRATH/ANGER AND BE GIVEN THE DEATH PENALTY IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD'S DIVINE COURT (V. 10). REVELATION USES POWERFUL DESCRIPTORS OF THIS PUNISHMENT SO AS TO REMOVE ANY THOUGHT THAT THOSE WHO REJECT GOD AND WORSHIP THE BEAST WILL GET AWAY WITH THEIR CRIMES OR DIE OF OLD AGE.

THE SECOND MESSAGE OF THIS SECTION (4TH OF REVELATION 14) IS TO THOSE WHO ARE GOD'S PEOPLE. ESSENTIALLY IT SAYS THIS: "THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO GIVE UP. THIS IS THE TIME TO PERSEVERE AND KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS AND KEEP YOUR FAITH IN JESUS" (V. 13).

IN ADDITION, THOSE WHO DIE IN THE LORD IN THESE DAYS CAN BE COMFORTED THAT IT WILL NOT BE LONG TILL THEY ARE AT REST.

I THINK OF PAUL WRITING TO THE CHURCH OF PHILIPPI WHERE HE EXPRESSED HIS INTERNAL CONFLICT TO STAY ALIVE TO SERVE AND BLESS THE CHURCH, BUT HIS AWARENESS THAT IF HE DIES, HIS NEXT WAKING MOMENT WILL BE IN GLORY WITH HIS GOD AND SAVIOR. BUT HE CONCLUDES THAT ITS BETTER TO STAY ALIVE FOR THE SAKE OF GOD'S PEOPLE AND THE MINISTRY THAT REMAINS.

PHILIPPIANS 1:20-25 (NLT) - FOR I FULLY EXPECT AND HOPE THAT I WILL NEVER BE ASHAMED, BUT THAT I WILL CONTINUE TO BE BOLD FOR CHRIST, AS I HAVE BEEN IN THE PAST. AND I TRUST THAT MY LIFE WILL BRING HONOR TO CHRIST, WHETHER I LIVE OR DIE. 21 FOR TO ME, LIVING MEANS LIVING FOR CHRIST, AND DYING IS EVEN BETTER. 22 BUT IF I LIVE, I CAN DO MORE FRUITFUL WORK FOR CHRIST. SO I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHICH IS BETTER. 23 I'M TORN BETWEEN TWO DESIRES: I LONG TO GO AND BE WITH CHRIST, WHICH WOULD BE FAR BETTER FOR ME. 24 BUT FOR YOUR SAKES, IT IS BETTER THAT I CONTINUE TO LIVE. 25 KNOWING THIS, I AM CONVINCED THAT I WILL REMAIN ALIVE SO I CAN CONTINUE TO HELP ALL OF YOU GROW AND EXPERIENCE THE JOY OF YOUR FAITH.

AT THE POINT WE ARE READING OF IN THE FUTURE, DESCRIBED IN REVELATION 14, THERE IS NO SUCH CONFLICT. THE WORK OF GOSPEL MINISTRY AND REACHING THE LOST IS OVER AND DYING AS A FAITHFUL FOLLOWER OF JESUS IS WELCOMED.

SIDE NOTE: *"SMOKE OF THEIR TORMENT GOING UP FOREVER AND EVER...NO REST DAY AND NIGHT..."* THIS IS A PICTURE OF THE EFFECTS OF THE JUDGMENT, NOT THE DURATION OF THE JUDGMENT. THERE ARE A FEW REASONS THAT INTERPRETING THIS AS THE *DURATION* BEING FOREVER AND EVER IS PROBLEMATIC. (1) IF SINNERS OR SPECIFICALLY THE PEOPLE WHO WORSHIP AND RECEIVE THE MARK OF THE BEAST ARE GOING TO BE LITERALLY TORMENTED FOREVER AND EVER, THEY WOULD ESSENTIALLY BE GRANTED ETERNAL LIFE TO ENSURE THIS HAPPENS, WHICH WE KNOW IS A GIFT GIVEN ONLY TO THOSE WHO HAVE FAITH IN CHRIST (ROMANS 6:23). (2) IT WOULD ALSO REQUIRE A LOCATION RESERVED IN THE AGE TO COME/KINGDOM OF GOD THAT IS FULLY OF EVIL PEOPLE - AND YET WE KNOW THAT THE NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH WILL BE FREE FROM EVIL AND

RIGHTEOUSNESS (2 PETER 3:13, ETC). (3) THE TRADITIONAL PICTURE OF "HEAVEN & HELL" AS TWO SEPARATE REALMS OF GOD/BAD ALSO INCLUDES THE IDEA THAT THE DEVIL IS THE OVERLORD OF THE BAD PLACE. THAT'S QUITE THE PROMOTION FOR THE ARCH ENEMY OF GOD - TO BE RULER AND PUNISHER OF THE EVIL PEOPLE WHILE GOD RULES OVER THE "GOOD PEOPLE" IN A CLOUDY, SUN-SHINING PLACE. THE DEVIL IS AN ENEMY AND HIMSELF IS GOING TO BE DESTROYED AND THE LAST ENEMY, DEATH, IS GOING TO BE DESTROYED.

AND FINALLY, THIS PHRASE "SMOKE OF THEIR TORMENT GOING UP FOREVER AND EVER", LIKE SO MANY OTHER ELEMENTS OF REVELATION, IS A REFERENCE TO PREVIOUS INCIDENTS OF JUDGMENT ON GOD'S ENEMIES. FIRE AND BRIMSTONE FELL UPON AND DESTROYED SODOM AND GOMORRAH. FIRE AND BRIMSTONE FELL IN EGYPT. AND IN ISAIAH'S VISION OF THE DESTRUCTION OF EDM, HE RECORDS:

ISAIAH 34:8-10 (NLT) - FOR IT IS THE DAY OF THE LORD'S REVENGE, THE YEAR WHEN EDM WILL BE PAID BACK FOR ALL IT DID TO ISRAEL. 9 THE STREAMS OF EDM WILL BE FILLED WITH BURNING PITCH, AND THE GROUND WILL BE COVERED WITH FIRE. **10 THIS JUDGMENT ON EDM WILL NEVER END; THE SMOKE OF ITS BURNING WILL RISE FOREVER.** THE LAND WILL LIE DESERTED FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION. NO ONE WILL LIVE THERE ANYMORE.

THE POINT ISN'T THAT THERE IS SOMEWHERE ON THE EARTH RIGHT NOW WHERE THE FIRES OF SODOM OR EDM ARE STILL BURNING, THE POINT IS THE JUDGMENT AND DESTRUCTION WILL BE SO COMPLETE THAT IT WILL BE LIKE THIS FOREVER. FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS OF JESUS WILL BE ALIVE FOREVER AND REBELLIOUS, UNREPENTANT SINNERS WILL BE DEAD FOREVER.

REVELATION 14:14-20 - THE TWO HARVESTS

TWO PICTURES OF HARVEST. THOUGH WE DON'T SEE IT AS WELL IN THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION, THIS PASSAGE IS DESCRIBING TWO VERY DIFFERENT HARVESTS.

V. 14-16 - THE FIRST IS THE HARVESTING OF THE RIGHTEOUS. (WHEAT - HARVEST OF THE EARTH)

V. 17-20 - THE SECOND IS THE HARVESTING OF THE UNRIGHTEOUS (GRAPES - HARVEST OF THE VINE)

WE KNOW THAT THE FIRST HARVEST IS WHEAT FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS - FIRST IT IS A CROP OF THE EARTH/SOIL AND IT IS READY TO BE HARVESTED/REAPED WHEN IT IS DRY. THE WORD USED IN 14:15 FOR "RIPE" IS ξηραίνω *XERAINO* WHICH MEANS DRY. THE WORD USED FOR "RIPE" IN 14:18, SPECIFICALLY CONNECTED TO GRAPES IS A TOTALLY DIFFERENT GREEK WORD, ἀκμάζω *AKMAZO* WHICH MEANS "TO BE AT THE PRIME" OR RIPE.

THERE ARE ALSO TWO TEAMS INVOLVED IN THIS HARVESTING. THE FIRST TEAM, HARVESTING THE WHEAT, IS LED BY "ONE LIKE A SON OF MAN", A COMMON PHRASE DESCRIBING THE MESSIAH. THOUGH AN ANGEL ANNOUNCES THAT IT IS TIME TO HARVEST THE WHEAT (V. 15), THE ONE WHO ACTUALLY DOES THE HARVESTING OF THIS CROP IS THE SON OF MAN. (V. 16 - "THEN HE WHO SAT ON THE CLOUD SWUNG HIS SICKLE...")

THE SECOND TEAM IS COMPOSED OF TWO ANGELS: ONE WHO HAS "POWER OVER FIRE" (MAYBE THE FIRE OF THE ALTAR? OR SIMILAR TO THE ANGEL WILL BE PART OF THE POURING OUT OF THE WRATH OF GOD IN REVELATION 16:8?) WHO ANNOUNCES THAT IT IS TIME TO GATHER THE GRAPES, AND ANOTHER ANGEL WHO COMES OUT OF HEAVEN'S TEMPLE WITH A SHARP SICKLE. THEY COLLECT THE GRAPES, THROW THEM INTO A WINEPRESS - LEADING TO BLOOD, NOT WINE, TO POUR FORTH NEARLY 200 MILES LONG AND ABOUT 4-5 FEET HIGH (THE APPROX. MEASUREMENT UP TO A HORSE'S BRIDLE, SEE V. 20), ALL HAPPENING IN THE PLACE OF JUDGMENT, OUTSIDE OF THE CITY.

"THE FLOW OF BLOOD IS INCREDIBLE...(THE GREEK IS 1600 STADIA), WHICH IS A DISTANCE OF ABOUT 184 MILES - THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF PALESTINE. THE ENTIRE LAND IS PICTURED AS BEING INUNDATED IN BLOOD TO A DEPTH OF ABOUT FOUR FEET. THE THOUGHT IS CLEAR: A RADICAL JUDGMENT THAT CRUSHES EVERY VESTIGE OF EVIL AND HOSTILITY TO THE REIGN OF GOD." (GEORGE LADD, "A COMMENTARY ON THE REVELATION OF JOHN" PAGE 202)

THE AGRARIAN PICTURE OF REAPING IS THAT THERE HAS BEEN A PROCESS OF PLANTING, CULTIVATING, AND WAITING FOR THE CROP TO COME TO MATURITY. ALONG THE WAY THE FARMER HAS DEALT WITH THREATS TO HIS CROP/VINEYARD AND ALSO HAS WAITED FOR THE TIME WHEN THE FRUIT IS MATURE AND READY TO BE ENJOYED. MANY SCRIPTURAL PARALLELS ABOUT THIS (SEE JOEL 3:12-14), BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT IS PROBABLY JESUS' OWN TEACHING ON THE PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND THE TARES:

MATTHEW 13:24-30 - JESUS PRESENTED ANOTHER PARABLE TO THEM, SAYING, "THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN MAY BE COMPARED TO A MAN WHO SOWED GOOD SEED IN HIS FIELD. 25 "BUT WHILE HIS MEN WERE SLEEPING, HIS ENEMY CAME AND SOWED TARES AMONG THE WHEAT, AND WENT AWAY. 26 "BUT WHEN THE WHEAT SPROUTED AND BORE GRAIN, THEN THE TARES BECAME EVIDENT ALSO. 27 "THE SLAVES OF THE LANDOWNER CAME AND SAID TO HIM, 'SIR, DID YOU NOT SOW GOOD SEED IN YOUR FIELD? HOW THEN DOES IT HAVE TARES?' 28 "AND HE SAID TO THEM, 'AN ENEMY HAS DONE THIS!' THE SLAVES SAID TO HIM, 'DO YOU WANT US, THEN, TO GO AND GATHER THEM UP?' 29 "BUT HE SAID, 'NO; FOR WHILE YOU ARE GATHERING UP THE TARES, YOU MAY UPROOT THE WHEAT WITH THEM. 30 'ALLOW BOTH TO GROW TOGETHER UNTIL THE HARVEST; AND IN THE TIME OF THE HARVEST I WILL SAY TO THE REAPERS, "FIRST GATHER UP THE TARES AND BIND THEM IN BUNDLES TO BURN THEM UP; BUT GATHER THE WHEAT INTO MY BARN."'"



WHEAT: before it is fully ripe.

TARES: *Lolium Temulentum*

WHAT IS THE PARABLE DESCRIBING?

BEFORE WE MOVE TO JESUS' SPIRITUAL EXPLANATION OF THIS PARABLE, IT'S HELPFUL TO KNOW THAT "TARES" ARE ESSENTIALLY WEEDS THAT LOOK VERY SIMILAR TO WHEAT AS THEY GROW TOGETHER - HARD TO DISTINGUISH WHICH IS WHICH - UNTIL THE WHEAT PLANTS BEGIN TO PRODUCE THE WHEAT

MATTHEW 13:36-39 - THEN HE LEFT THE CROWDS AND WENT INTO THE HOUSE. AND HIS DISCIPLES CAME TO HIM AND SAID, "EXPLAIN TO US

THE PARABLE OF THE TARES OF THE FIELD." 37 AND HE SAID, "THE ONE WHO SOWS THE GOOD SEED IS THE SON OF MAN, 38 AND THE FIELD IS THE WORLD; AND AS FOR THE GOOD SEED, THESE ARE THE SONS OF THE KINGDOM; AND THE TARES ARE THE SONS OF THE EVIL ONE; 39 AND THE ENEMY WHO SOWED THEM IS THE DEVIL, AND THE HARVEST IS THE END OF THE AGE; AND THE REAPERS ARE ANGELS.

MATTHEW 13:40-43 - "SO JUST AS THE TARES ARE GATHERED UP AND BURNED WITH FIRE, SO SHALL IT BE AT THE END OF THE AGE. 41 "THE SON OF MAN WILL SEND FORTH HIS ANGELS, AND THEY WILL GATHER OUT OF HIS KINGDOM ALL STUMBLING BLOCKS, AND THOSE WHO COMMIT LAWLESSNESS, 42 AND WILL THROW THEM INTO THE FURNACE OF FIRE; IN THAT PLACE THERE WILL BE WEeping AND GNASHING OF TEETH. 43 "THEN THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN IN THE KINGDOM OF THEIR FATHER. HE WHO HAS EARS, LET HIM HEAR.

JESUS SPOKE AT ANOTHER TIME ABOUT THIS HARVEST/JUDGMENT EVENT. IN MATTHEW 24, A PASSAGE WE HAVE REVISITED MULTIPLE TIMES IN OUR STUDY OF REVELATION, JESUS DESCRIBES THE GENERAL TROUBLES THE WORLD IS GOING TO SEE AFTER HIS ASCENSION AS WELL AS THE SPECIFIC AND HEIGHTENED TROUBLE THAT THE WORLD AND SPECIFICALLY GOD'S PEOPLE WILL EXPERIENCE AS WE GET CLOSER TO THE RETURN OF JESUS. THIS HAS PARALLEL THE SEALS BEING OPENED (**REVELATION 6-7**) AND THE TRUMPETS BEING SOUNDED (**REVELATION 8-9, 11**). THESE TWO PERIODS IN

HISTORY ARE CALLED "THE PRESENT, EVIL AGE" WE CURRENTLY LIVE IN AND THE "GREAT TRIBULATION" WHICH WILL OCCUR BEFORE JESUS' RETURN. THE CHRISTIAN IS NOT AVOIDING THESE EVENTS. IN OUR READING OF JESUS' TEACHING AND OUR STUDY OF REVELATION, JESUS CHRIST HAS NOT RETURNED TO THE EARTH YET - THE RESURRECTION HAS NOT OCCURRED...CHRISTIANS/THE CHURCH/SAINTS/FOLLOWERS OF JESUS ARE GOING TO GROW AMONGST THE EVIL LIKE WHEAT AND TARES GROWING TOGETHER - UNTIL THE HARVEST TIME.

IN FACT, THE 4TH ANGELIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF THIS CHAPTER IS CALLING THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS WHO WILL BE ALIVE AT THIS PERIOD IN HISTORY TO PERSEVERE BY KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS AND THEIR FAITH IN JESUS. AND THOSE THAT ARE GOING TO DIE OR BE KILLED IN THESE DAYS ARE COMFORTED THAT THEIR REST AND THE ACCOUNTING FOR THEIR WORK IS COMING (REVELATION 14:12-13) IN THESE DAYS, JESUS PROMISES THIS:

MATTHEW 24:29-31 - "BUT IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE TRIBULATION OF THOSE DAYS THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL FROM THE SKY, AND THE POWERS OF THE HEAVENS WILL BE SHAKEN. 30 "AND THEN THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN WILL APPEAR IN THE SKY, AND THEN ALL THE TRIBES OF THE EARTH WILL MOURN, AND THEY WILL SEE THE SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY WITH POWER AND GREAT GLORY.

AND WHAT WILL HE DO?

31 "AND HE WILL SEND FORTH HIS ANGELS WITH A GREAT TRUMPET AND THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER HIS ELECT FROM THE FOUR WINDS, FROM ONE END OF THE SKY TO THE OTHER.

WE ARE ALL WAITING FOR THIS DAY...AND ONLY THE FARMER AND THE HARVESTER KNOW THE TIME WHEN THINGS ARE RIPE FOR THE HARVEST. BUT GOD KNOWS WHO ARE HIS AND IS FAITHFUL TO RESCUE HIS PEOPLE IN THE END AND BE PRESENT AND STRONG TODAY.

WHATEVER DIFFICULTY GOD'S PEOPLE WILL FACE IN THE FUTURE - BABYLON CORRUPTION AND EVIL, DECEIVING SPIRITS, PRESSURE TO WORSHIP THE BEAST'S SYSTEM, AND THE CRITICAL NEED TO AVOID AND REJECT THE MARK OF THE BEAST, WE NEED TO REMEMBER THAT THERE WILL BE AN END TO THE TROUBLES AND THAT THE TROUBLES OF THIS LIFE ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED TO THE GLORY TO COME. AND, WITH SOBRIETY WE MUST REMEMBER, THAT THOUGH IN THIS LIFE WE WILL SUFFER PERSECUTION AND ENDURE TRIBULATION, AS BORN AGAIN CHILDREN OF GOD WHO HAVE PLACED THEIR FAITH IN CHRIST, WE ARE SAVED FROM THE WRATH TO COME.

IF THE TROUBLES WE HAVE READ ABOUT STARTLE YOU, IT WOULD BE GOOD TO BUCKLE UP, BECAUSE WE'RE TURNING OUR ATTENTION SOON TO THE "WRATH OF GOD", THE FINAL JUDGMENT THAT WILL BE POURED OUT UPON THOSE WHO HAVE REJECTED GOD & HIS SON. IT WILL BE UNIVERSAL, IT WILL BE TERRIBLE & IT WILL BE ETERNAL. BUT IT IS JUSTICE BEING SERVED ON A CREATION THAT REBELLED AGAINST THEIR CREATOR AND REJECTED HIS WAY. THIS IS NOT GOD BEING TEMPERAMENTAL. BLASPHEMY! HE HAS BEEN LONGSSUFFERING - GOD HAS BEEN WARNING & WAITING AND CALLING AND MANY HAVE RESPONDED (& SOME STILL WILL). BUT THERE IS A DAY WHEN THE WINDOW FOR REPENTANCE & SALVATION WILL CLOSE.

REVELATION 14 TEACHES THESE THINGS BY TELLING US THAT HARVEST TIME IS COMING: THE WHEAT WILL BE GATHERED UP AND TAKEN INTO THE BARN - THE DAY OF SALVATION. THE GRAPES WILL BE GATHERED AND PRESSED - THE DAY OF JUDGMENT. HE WHO HAS EARS LET THEM HEAR.

*MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE GLORY OF THE COMING OF THE LORD;
HE IS TRAMPLING OUT THE VINTAGE WHERE THE GRAPES OF WRATH ARE STORED;
HE HATH LOOSED THE FATEFUL LIGHTNING OF HIS TERRIBLE SWIFT SWORD:
HIS TRUTH IS MARCHING ON.
GLORY, GLORY, HALLELUJAH.*