

REFLECTIONS FROM THIS MORNING

- HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN THE CONCEPT OF THE “MARK” OR “CHARAGMA”?
- HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN THE FIRST BEAST FROM CHAPTER 13?
- WHAT FORMS MIGHT THE MARK OF THE BEAST TAKE?

The Lamb and the 144,000 Revelation 14:1-5

Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads. And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they remained virgins. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among mankind and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.

The symbolism that has already been established still fits. **The 144,000 is 12 of 12, or tribe of tribes.** New or Old Testament, it symbolizes the totality of God’s true followers.

It’s important that we realize that they too, have a mark. The forehead is an obvious place for a “charagma” as we discussed this morning. However, it goes deeper than that. The battle of our spiritual faith is anchored to how we actively think. Our thinking is always marked by something.

Some scholars state that the sound heard is a description of God’s voice, but it seems to be more than that, it relates to the new song before the throne. It is melodious, yet thunderous, like a large throng of people singing in unison.

No one else can learn this song. The word “learn” (*manthano*) also means understand. The song is unintelligible to all who are not true followers for the possibility of a few reasons:

- They lack the **experience** of the relationship with God.
- They lack the **authority** that the relationship brings.
- They lack the presence of God within that **empowers** our understanding.
- They lack the **reward**, which the song is, because they have not followed God’s path.

The idea that these individuals were qualified, simply because of abstinence doesn’t fit the rest of Scripture.

What does fit is the image of God’s people, Old and New Testament being “the bride”, or more precisely, in covenant with God. They do not commit spiritual adultery.

- WHY DO YOU THINK GOD GAVE JOHN AN IMAGE OF THE SEXUALLY ABSTINANT?
- WHY IS THE SONG LIMITED TO THESE PEOPLE?

The First Three Angels of the Seven Angels Revelation 14:6-13

Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

A second angel followed and said, “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great,” which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.”

A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, they, too, will drink the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the

Lamb. And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be **no rest day or night** for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name." This **calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus.**

Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."

The vision stays true to its formula and mentions a total of seven angels; this passage is the message of the first three. This is the **only time the word "gospel" appears** in all of Revelation. The use of the term is part of a powerful contrast made between those with the two different "marks." For those who accept, the "good news" (Gospel) is truly good. That stands in stark contrast to the eternal torment envisioned for those with the beast's mark.

Babylon is repeatedly referred to as "that great city" or "Babylon the Great." It is the great accomplishment and size of, not a city, but the global organization of humanity. It is humanity organized into its own system. Using modern day terms, we've referred to it as "humanism."

In this passage, it is assumed that the reader knows the identity of Babylon, the emphasis is not on the "city", but what has happened to it. So the word "fallen" is repeated. The time of this world system has come to an abrupt and absolute end.

The theme of using sexual immorality as a symbol of spiritual unfaithfulness is used again here, speaking of Babylon's "adulteries." The English is a little misleading here when it says "made all the nations drink." It gives the impression that the world was force-fed her ways. The original word (*potizo*) really means to "furnish drink." It fits more into Satan's theme of deception and seduction.

Another term that is interesting is **God's wrath "poured full strength"** since "pour" in the Greek actually means "mix." The word for word translation would be "having been mixed undiluted." This is God's wrath in concentrated form. It stands in stark contrast to those with the "other mark", God's mark.

And as we've covered earlier, the idea of **burning sulfur is that it melts before it burns**, so we are talking a kind of "napalm" that doesn't come off. It is torment without relief. So we have a second contrast, for God's people, day and night they are in ecstasy before God, while day and night, those of the beast are in torment. The people of God enjoy the reward of God's presence. Those of the beast are also in God's presence, but in torment.

Because of the stark contrast of the two "marks", it is meant to **encourage the saints to be patient** and stay the course. They are called, not to make a path, but to find the path God has put before us.

- HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN THE USE OF BABYLON AS AN IMAGE IN REVELATION? (REASON & MEANING)
- WHY DO YOU THINK SEXUAL IMMORALITY IS SO OFTEN USED TO ILLUSTRATE SPIRITUAL FAITHFULNESS?
- WHAT KIND OF SUFFERING DO YOU THINK THE BURNING SULFUR SYMBOLIZES (OR IS IT LITERAL)?

Harvesting the Earth and Trampling the Winepress Revelation 14:14-20

I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was **one like a son of man with a crown of gold on his head** and a sharp **sickle** in his hand. Then **another angel** came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "**Take your sickle and reap**, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." So he who was seated on the cloud swung his **sickle over the earth**, and the earth was harvested.

Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp **sickle**. **Still another angel**, who had **charge of the fire, came from the altar** and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the **clusters of grapes from the earth's vine**, because its grapes are ripe." The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the **great winepress of God's wrath**. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a **distance of 1,600 stadia**.

It is unclear whether the "son of man" here, is actually Christ, or an angel. One thing is certain, it is a direct reference to Daniel's vision (**Dan. 7:13**). The crown he is wearing is not a royal crown, but a **victory laurel**. His harvesting of the earth seems to be the harvesting of the faithful. He begins the final harvesting at the pronouncement that it is now the time.

The next angel with a sickle is harvesting to judgment. It is something to note that the angel that announces for this reaper is in charge of **the fire of the altar**. We've come across that imagery before, **Revelation 8:5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth.**

It is very possible that the vision is giving us another vantage of the same event. In chapter 8, this involved the seventh seal. Here, it involves the seventh angel. The imagery is the wrath of God like a fire, but the same fire that is the wrath is also the holiest illustration of God's nature. And one of the holiest parts of the Temple as the Jews would imagine it. It gives the picture of irrefutable but horrific justice.

The flow of blood represents the scope of human death. Measurements are given. 1,600 is a square number. Stadia is a Roman unit of measurement, it converts to roughly 176 square miles. Different sites of Israel have been suggested, but none quite fit these dimensions.

Instead, Leon Morris approaches this as symbolism. He says:

But John's interest is rather in the number than in the precise distance it represents. Of the explanations suggested perhaps best is that which sees it as the product of sixteen (the **square of four, the number of the earth which is the abode of the wicked**) and one hundred (the **square of ten, the number of completeness**). It is also the square of **forty, a number associated with punishment**. Blood stretching for 1,600 stadia thus stands for the **complete judgment of the whole earth and the destruction of all the wicked**.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Again, the chapter serves as a summary of the whole vision, with its own particular slant.

We all carry a mark of someone, regardless of what we may think.

There are only two marks, even if there are many variations, and those two marks come to very different ends.

In knowing this, the true followers of Christ are called to two things: patience, and endurance.

- THIS IS THE SECOND TIME WE SEE THE INCENSE BOWL OF THE ALTAR HURLED AT THE EARTH, HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN THIS IMAGERY?
- HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN THE MEASUREMENTS AND THE BLOOD UP TO THE HORSE'S BRIDAL?