

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Sixteen

CHAPTER 14

INTRODUCTION:

After having seen the great dragon and his two beasts, as they were described in chapters 12 and 13, we now have a much better understanding of the trio of enemies that Christians face every day and the tactics they use to try and undermine our faith. I'm sure you recall the hardship and persecution that was depicted back in chapter 6 when we saw what occurred as each of the seven seals were opened and removed from the book that the Creator gave to the Lamb. After the sixth seal was opened we saw the great earthquake where the sun became black as sackcloth and the moon became as blood. The stars of heaven fell to the earth and the mountains moved out of their places. We saw all the men of earth, regardless of stature; try to hide in order to escape the consequences of the wrath of God on that last great day. Then, when all that was left was the final destruction, we were shown in chapter 7 that there had always been a way of escape. We saw the sealing of the 144,000, which represented all of the righteous – those that were obedient to God's word. All those 144,000 were sealed and escaped the terror of the last day.

Once again, here in chapter 14, we are going to see this same 144,000 representing all the righteous – those who were obedient to God's word – be delivered from the ultimate destruction that will come. This is not a new vision that John sees, but is a reminder that there is a way of escape! The timeframe is the same. The period we are looking at is from the establishment of the church until the end of the world, which is the same time period we saw with the opening of the seven seals in chapter 6. The only difference between chapters 7 and 14 lies in the perspective. In this chapter we will be looking at the consequences of the decisions mankind makes in regard to where they dwell! We saw back in chapter 13, verse 8, that the second beast's mission on earth was to *"make war with the saints and overcome them"* so that, *"...all that dwell upon the*

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earth shall worship him [the beast]” and therefore, their names are not written in the “book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

I want us to focus on the word “dwell” that is used in this sentence. It may interest you to learn that John, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, uses the word “**dwell**” fifteen times in the book of Revelation. It would be good for us to look a little closer into what it means to “dwell” on the earth before getting into this new chapter.

Interestingly, that term is used more often in the Old Testament than in the New. The Hebrew language includes nine different words that translate into the English word “dwell,” and those nine words occur over 400 times in the Old Testament! It should be obvious that if a subject is addressed that many times, it is for good reason! The most common meaning applied to the term in the Old Testament is “*to sit down*” but the others are similar: “*to sit*,” “*to abide*,” “*to inhabit*,” “*to remain*,” or “*to settle down*.”

In the New Testament, however, the most common rendering is “*to abide*,” which seems to hold a stronger meaning than to simply “exist,” “live” or “dwell.” Of course, we all “live” on the earth. We “exist,” we “inhabit,” or we “abide” on the earth. We understand that. But the truth of the matter is the meaning as it is used in the New Testament goes deeper than that! It is more than just where we live physically – it is where we live mentally! It is where our “heart” is. It is the place we desire to live, even though we may physically live somewhere else. It is also interesting that the best example I can cite to describe the New Testament meaning for the word “abide” comes from the Old Testament: Lot’s wife. In the book of Genesis we learn that when God first told Abram (later called Abraham) to leave his birthplace in Ur of the Chaldees and go to a land God would show him, he was actually told to leave his father’s family behind because they were idol worshippers even though it is possible that Terah may have turned away from idols late in his life.

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But Abram did not immediately comply with God's instructions. It was much later, after they had moved to Haran and Abram was 75 years old, that God again tells him to leave and go into Canaan. (Genesis 12:1ff) This time Abram does leave, taking his wife and his nephew Lot and Lot's wife with him. Lot, of course, was the son of Abram's older brother Haran. Once settled in Canaan, Abram (now having been renamed Abraham) and Lot decided to separate. Lot chose to live in the valley near Sodom and Gomorrah. When God saw it necessary to destroy those two cities because of their evil lifestyles, Abraham pleaded for Lot and God sent an angel to escort Lot's family out of the area when they were reluctant to leave. They were told not to look back, but after they were safely away Lot's wife looked back, and was turned into "a pillar of salt." Although we are not told why she looked back, many have taken the position that she "longed" for that way of life and that city. That is, her "heart" was still there even though she had physically escaped the destruction.

If that is the reason she looked back, we have an excellent example of what it means to "abide" or "dwell" in the world. Of course, the two beasts are diligently working together presenting enticing promises and false reasons to get us to reject God and "abide" in the world along with all the worldly. They entice us with worldly pleasure, riches, and many other things to accomplish that purpose. So, when John wrote in Revelation 13:14 that the second beast deceives ***"those dwelling on the earth by his miracles,"*** I believe that means, in many instances, the beast has little trouble because those who "dwell on the earth" are the ones who already like that sort of life and are much more easily enticed.

On the other hand, those who "dwell in Heaven" are able to see the deception and can turn away from the enticements. With those things being said, let's read the text and let the scene form in our minds:

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“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. 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: 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. 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. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.”

“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, 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.’ 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. 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, 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: 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. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.’ 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

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them.”

“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. 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.’ And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. 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.’ 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. 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.”

John says he looked, and lo, ***“a Lamb stood on mount Zion.”*** It is thought by some that this is a new vision John is having, but as I said earlier, I disagree with that assumption. Remember the time frame for the events of chapter 13 is from the establishment of the church until the end of the world – that is, they are taking place right now, while we live. Also keep in mind that this time frame is the same as the time frame we saw with the opening of the seven seals back in chapter 6, so the beasts, along with the persecution and hardships, are in the world now and will remain in the world until the end of time. The two beasts are working hard spreading their lies, half-truths, and enticements at the same time all of the events depicted in chapter 6, the constant persecution and hardships, are taking place. The beasts are successful in convincing many to follow Satan and doing their best to undermine the church.

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It may appear that no one can resist the temptation being offered, but that is not true! Right now, in the midst of the apparent success of the beasts, John says he looks and sees a lamb standing on mount Zion with 144,000 faithful standing with him! Again, this is the same 144,000 we saw sealed in chapter 7 (remember, we are in the same time frame – between the establishment of the church and the end of the world) and one more time: Do not take the figure literally, and do not overlook the symbolism contained in this number. The 144,000 represents ALL the faithful, whatever the literal number may be, none will be overlooked!

You may also recall from chapter 4, in the first throne scene, there was a lamb that stood as slain and later, in chapter 5, that lamb took the scroll with the seven seals from the hand of God and begins to remove the seals. The lamb that John sees is this same lamb – Jesus Christ – and where does John say the lamb is standing? ***“On mount Zion!”*** The Hebrew writer describes it this way: ***“But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”*** (Hebrews 12:22-24)

It should go without saying that Mount Zion is another Old Testament term that is applied to Jerusalem, which throughout the book of Revelation, refers to the kingdom (the church) that Jesus established! The seeing of those 144,000, representative of all the righteous souls that were sealed in chapter 7, points directly to the business of where our priorities lie. Where do we dwell? If we dwell in Heaven, then we should be encouraged because the promise of Victory was made to those righteous! The 144,000 represent those who have overcome the stress and temptation of the Devil and proved to be acceptable to God! Here in chapter 14 we are once again being shown the blessedness

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that is reserved for the faithful Christian!

John says in verse 2 he *“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...”* the joining together, in harmony, of a countless number of voices. The phrases *“of many waters,” “of a great thunder,”* and *“the voice of harpers,”* are all expressions that show the greatness, the majesty and the harmony of those voices, and they are singing a new song... and look where they were singing: Before the throne of God and before the four living beings and the 24 elders... They were in God’s presence! There is much speculation in regard to the “new song” the righteous ones were singing and the fact that no one but them could sing this new song, but I doubt the song they were singing appears in any of our song books. I do believe, however, it is a song of victory for the redeemed and praise directed toward the Lamb and to God, the Father! Notice that it is said of these redeemed that they:

1. Were not defiled with women...
2. Followed the Lamb wherever he went...
3. Were redeemed from among men...
4. Were the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb...
5. Had no guile in their mouths...
6. Were without fault, and...
7. Were before the throne of God!

While at first it might appear, from the listed traits of those singing this song of victory, that the redeemed were not guilty of carnal traits. But it seems more likely that John is listing the positive spiritual traits of Christians rather than carnal wrongs. Notice that all could be summed up by the statement in the latter part of verse 5: *“They were without fault before the throne of God!”*

We are told the source of the rejoicing! Looking back at chapter 5 we saw God – the One sitting on the throne in Heaven. We also saw that He has in His right hand a book with seven seals, and the question was asked, *“Who is worthy to take it and break the seals and open the book?”* The only one that was worthy was the Lamb – standing as if slain! Why was He

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worthy? Verse 9 of that chapter says, “... **for thou was slain, and did purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and made them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon earth.**” It is these righteous, those who are in His Kingdom – Christians – that are the ones singing! They are the ones without fault before the throne of God!

And now we see another angel flying in the midst of heaven. John says this angel carries the everlasting gospel and preaches it to every nation, kindred, tongue and people! Do you remember the angel flying like an eagle back in chapter 8? That angel was also flying in the midst of heaven, or as the New American Standard puts it, “in mid heaven.” Thayer says this is the point where the sun has reached the highest point in the heavens which it occupies at mid day (noon), which is when it can be seen and heard by everyone throughout the earth, and isn’t that what the last part of this verse says?

The symbolism is that it can be seen and heard (because of its position) by everyone throughout the earth! Do not overlook the symbolism in this verse in reference to the number four: It would be heard by every Nation, Kindred, Tongue, and People – that is everyone in the whole world! And the angel is 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.***” He is speaking to those who “dwell on the earth” – to those whose interest is “on the earth.” They are the unrighteous, those from whom the redeemed were purchased! And do you remember what the angel in chapter 8 was saying? It was “***Woe, Woe, Woe,***” and it was said because the last of the trumpets was about to sound!

Well, here in chapter 14, even though different words are used, that same message is being repeated. We often speak of the gospel containing the “glad tidings” – the “good news” – and rightly so, but it also contains the warnings that will befall those failing to heed its teaching! The warning is to everyone but especially to those who do not heed the warnings because, “... ***the hour of his judgment is come!***” Notice that here in verse 6 the gospel is called

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“everlasting” which means it is eternal. Another reason for it being called everlasting is because it contains truths that have always existed and will never be changed. The gospel comes from the creator of everything, the source of truth, and therefore His gospel does not fluctuate like the ideas and opinions of man... but don’t draw the wrong conclusion in regard to what is being said: The message contained in this verse is not “It’s too late to change because the judgment day is upon us!” Rather, the message is a warning to those who are about to make the decision to worship the Beast! We must keep the entire scene in mind: While the two beasts are desperately trying to convince everyone to follow them, to ultimately become a worshipper of the dragon, there are other messengers that provide an alternative to following the dragon into destruction! We have been shown the outcome of God’s judgment: Those who choose to worship the beasts (the dragon) are going to be everlastingly punished!

Then we see another angel in verse 8 saying *“Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”* Babylon is spoken of here in the symbolic sense, to represent a strong, afflicting government or world power such as Rome was at the time Revelation was written. But the Bible student will remember that Babylon is the symbol for more than just a civil power – it is the symbol of all that stands opposed to God! Babylon is to the world what Jerusalem is to the faithful, and it is used here to depict idolatry which, of course, is unfaithfulness to God. The term fornication is used to symbolize the unfaithfulness. We have repeatedly been shown in this book that God’s judgment is final and unwavering: Those who choose to be unfaithful to Him will be punished eternally! The phrase *“Babylon is fallen”* simply is saying that victory belongs to God and his faithful followers and the four verses that follow in this chapter depict the judgment that has already been made concerning those who choose to worship the beast and the dragon, and it is noteworthy that this warning is given while there is still time for all to do something about their destiny!

I am sure you understand that it would do no good at all to warn of our destiny if we could not do something about it. God’s view is simple to understand: **“If you worship the**

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beast or his image... You will drink of His wrath.” The warning has been given. As indicated earlier, the “fornication” of verse 8 is used to represent unfaithfulness to Jehovah and to the Lord and to His church! Symbolically, the church is the “Bride” of Christ, hence the allegory. ***“Shall drink the wrath of God”*** is the same as “shall take part in!” Have you heard the expression “you made the bed — now sleep in it!”?

As verse 10 indicates, the wrath of God that is poured out, it is not mixed or tempered, but is the pure, undiluted wrath of God! The wicked will feel the full force of His anger, and it isn't a short, temporary discomfort but it will be a constant torment that never ends! And by the way, contained in verse 10 is something teachers seldom talk about when they speak of the torment of Hell: It is ***“in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb!”*** But do not draw the wrong conclusion: This punishment will not happen in Heaven... nor will the holy angels and the Lamb be in Hell! We will speak more of this later in the book, but I believe the meaning is quite clear: Those who are cast into the lake of fire will be able to see into the New Jerusalem with its ***“wall of Jasper, like unto clear glass”*** (Rev. 21:18) and see those that were faithful while on the earth in Abraham's bosom. If so, that will be even further torment because they will be able to see the rewards of the faithful and realize just what they missed! However, since there is no sorrow in heaven, I believe God will in some manner protect those in heaven from being able to see those in torment.

John is then instructed to write ***“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.”*** What more can be said about the rewards of the faithful! Back in chapter 6, verse 11 we are told each of the faithful will be given a white robe and told to rest for awhile until their fellow servants and their brethren that were to be killed as they were should be fulfilled. We are not told when that will be and the scene more-or-less “fast forwards” one more time to the end of the world and judgment.

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The next thing John sees is a white cloud and sitting on the cloud is ***“one like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.”*** This, of course, is Jesus the Christ. As John writes in his gospel (John 5:22) ***“For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.”*** Again, a little further down in verse 27 John writes, ***“And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.”*** And then in verses 28 & 29 John further writes: ***“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”*** The point being made is that God the Father has given all authority to His Son and it is by the Son’s words that man will be judged in that last day.

The white cloud John saw is the Christ coming in glory as it is recorded in Matthew’s gospel: ***“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. 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.”*** (Matt. 24:29-31) But that is not all... As we have seen in this book (Rev. 1:7) ***“Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.”***

And John further describes Jesus’ return to gather faithful and execute judgment on the unrighteous in the last four verses of our text. (Rev. 14:14-20) The crown on Jesus’ head is the “Stephanos,” the crown of victory, but I want you to notice the material out of which the crown is crafted: It is described as a Golden Crown, indicating He has obtained the ultimate Victory! First, when He overcame death, and again when He established His church and won followers, and now because he is the victor, He sits in Judgment! In His hand is a sharp sickle with which He will reap the harvest of the world! His angels accompany Him, and we are told that the time has come to reap the harvest because the harvest of the earth is ripe!

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One angel comes out from the throne of God bearing a message from the Father... “It’s Time”! I believe this is the angel that we saw back in Chapter 8, verses 3-5! Remember just before the 1st Trumpet sounded? He is the angel who had the golden censer and the prayers of all the saints were offered up to God! He is the angel that filled the censer with the fire of the altar and threw it down to earth!

Remember, no one – not even the Son of Man – knows the time of the end of the world except the Father – the God of Heaven... He knows when the time is right, and now that time has come. All that can be done to prepare the field has been done, the field is ready for harvest — there will be no other plants getting ripe! (Perhaps you remember me mentioning when I believe the end will come – I have been asked that question several times, and each time I answer it the same way: When no more of the unrighteous are repenting and turning to Jesus! Isn’t that what we just described?)

As described in chapter 8, it was immediately after the angel with the incense filled the censer with the fire of the altar and threw it down to earth that the other angels with the 7 Trumpets prepared themselves to sound. Don’t forget, the Trumpets were sounded to the unrighteous to give them one last chance to repent, and if they didn’t they would endure unending torment.

Also notice there are TWO gatherings when Jesus returns: First, one by the “Son of Man” sitting on the cloud, and another by an additional angel down in Verse 19. The first gathering, the one by the “Son of Man” is the gathering of the faithful by Christ and they will gather with Jesus in the clouds before the world is destroyed. These are those whose names are found in the Book of Life!

The second gathering is done by the angel that came out from before the altar, and this angel was gathering all of the unfaithful to destruction. It is said of these being gathered that the

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clusters of *“the vine of the earth are fully ripe.”* This indicates that the wicked are fully given over to the worldliness that the Dragon and the Beasts offer! According to verse 19 the wrath of God that was spoken of in verse 10 is illustrated as the winepress! *“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.”*

One might ask, “outside of which city?” The answer would be the “New Jerusalem” mentioned in verse 1. Why was the winepress “without” the city? Because of what the “new Jerusalem or Mt. Zion” represents – there is no unclean thing, wickedness or punishment in Heaven!

I don’t know how large the horses were, but notice the amount of blood that was shed by the wrath of God came up to the horses bridles --- maybe 4 or 5 feet deep? And it extended for 2600 furlongs — that is about 200 miles I think, and it represents the severity of the wrath of God and the extent of His punishment! Keep these things in mind because when we get closer to the end of the book we are told simply that the unrighteous were cast into the lake of fire... but more about that later.