

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Revelation, Lecture 20, Revelation 14, Salvation of the Saints, and Judgment on the Wicked

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This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his course on the book of Revelation. This is session 20 on Revelation 14, Salvation of the Saints, and Judgment on the Wicked.

In chapters 12 and 13, we looked at the uncovering or description or unveiling of the true nature of the church's conflict at the hand of Satan and the beasts who deceive the entire world into worshipping them and the call then for the church to persevere and endure in the midst of this by refusing to compromise.

Now, in chapters 14 and 15, we approach a series of images that describe both the victory of the saints and the reward of the saints who were faithful and who persevered through chapters 12 and 13 but also then the judgment that comes upon the beast and the unbelieving world and the beast and its followers, those who followed the beast and gave him allegiance and now we find their judgment. So we find reward in chapters 14 and 15, which appears to be rather disjointed; we find the reward of the saints and the punishment of the wicked and unbelievers alternated throughout this section. This section once more explores the meaning of final judgment and the meaning of salvation as the author will alternate visions between judgment and salvation.

This section, chapter 14, all the way through the first four verses of chapter 15, then can be divided into a series of sections that are introduced by John saying I looked or I saw. That little phrase I looked at, or I saw in your English translations, often functions to mark off distinct units or sections, and here I looked, or I saw marks off at least four different sections in chapters 14 and 15. First of all, the first section is found in chapter 14 and verses 1 through 5, where we see a vision of the Lamb and the 144,000 standing on Mount Zion and celebrating their victory.

The second section is found in chapter 14 and verses 6 to 13, and this is the image of three angels who proclaim a gospel and end-time salvation or end-time judgment. The third is we find a vision in chapter 14 and verses 14 through 20 of the son of man coming to harvest the earth. We actually find two images of harvest: one is a grain harvest, and the other is a harvest of grapes. Then, finally, in chapter 15 and verses 1 through 4, we find the saints standing victorious by the sea and singing a song of victory, demonstrating that they have overcome. So those are the four main sections that will sort of follow, but let me read chapter 14, and I want you to note those three sections are divided by what I looked at or then saw.

Chapter 14, 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 in direct contrast to chapter 13, and I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters, and like a loud peel 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 and no one could learn this song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. These are those who did not defile themselves with women for they kept themselves pure they follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as first fruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths. They are blameless.

Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who are 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 to worship him, who made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and the springs of water. A second angel also followed and said, fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries, and then a third angel followed them and said in a loud voice, if anyone worships the beast in his image and receives his mark on their forehead or on their hand he too will drink of the wine of God's fury which has been poured out full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb, and the smoke of their torment rises forever and ever.

There is no rest for them day or night, for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name. This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. Then I heard a voice from heaven say right 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. Then I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the white cloud was one like a son of man with a crown of gold in his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to the one seated 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 charged the fire came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle take your sickle and gather the cluster of grapes from the earth of vine because its grapes are ripe.

The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes, and threw them into the great wine press of God's wrath. They were trampled in the wine press outside the

city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horse's bridles for a distance of 1600 stadia.

This section begins, I think, well, to back up what I think is going on in chapter 14. As we've noted, it's a series of alternating scenes between salvation and judgment, and what it does it portrays the salvation and reward of the faithful who endured in chapters 12 and 13, but now it portrays the judgment of those who worship the beast in his image who received the mark of the beast and who basically refused to those who compromised and refused to resist and instead engaged in the entire ideology of Rome in its claims.

And so 14 now will portray scenes of salvation and judgment, depicting the two different responses of the people in chapters 12 and 13. So 14 begins with a picture of the Lamb, which is meant, I think, to be an intentional contrast to the beast in chapter 13. Beast number one, who, like the Lamb, was slain and now appears to have risen.

Jesus is portrayed as the one who died and was slain but now is alive. Now, the beast also imitated that by appearing to have died, and he, in fact, did die because of the death and resurrection of Christ but now appears to be alive. So, the first beast is a parody of Jesus Christ, but the second beast is also described as one in chapter 13, and verse 11 is described as one that has two horns like a lamb.

So, the Lamb here is meant to be in direct contrast to the two beasts from chapter 13. Now, what we find is Jesus Christ and his followers. In other words, in chapter 13, we found the two beasts and their followers, and then those who refuse to follow are persecuted, but now those who refuse to follow in chapter 13 who have followed the Lamb now stand with the Lamb victorious on Zion.

The 144,000 we've already been introduced to in chapter 7. We said there they represented a mighty army that is the church in fulfillment of Old Testament images of Israel as an army. Now the church that was as an army went out to do battle yet they did so through their suffering witness. Now in chapter 12 and 13 we see that the beast did battle.

It waged war with the saints, but now the saints emerge victorious because of their suffering witness. Now they stand with their leader, Jesus Christ, celebrating their victory on Mount Zion. We already noted, too, that the fact that they are called virgins or those who did not defile themselves with women probably has a two-fold emphasis.

Number one, it probably reflects from Deuteronomy for example the stipulation in the Old Testament that those during times of battle the male warriors would abstain from sexual relationships. But also it's probably simply a symbol of purity that they

have not defiled themselves with the idolatrous practices of Rome in chapter 12 and especially chapter 13. Instead now they stand victorious because they resisted.

They refused to defile themselves. So, this may not be a literal reference to sexual purity, although that could be included. But I think it's more of a reference to the idolatrous practices and the allegiance and worship of Rome back in chapter 13 that were being enforced, but they refused to participate in it and suffered the consequences of it.

Now, they stand victorious because they resisted and refused to compromise. I also want you to notice that these verses in chapter 14 further confirm that these 144,000 probably represent the people of God more broadly. They're not just ethnic Israelites.

They're not just a segment of the broader people of God. But note how they are described. They're described as purchased from among men and they are described as redeemed from the earth.

The language that comes out of Revelation 1 and 5 of Jesus redeeming people from the earth from people from every tribe and language and nation purchasing them to make them a kingdom of priests. So I take it that the 144,000 again is an image for those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ the Lamb, who have been redeemed from all the earth to now constitute his people and those who are the people of the Lamb. So this is the international people of God from Jew and Gentile, the true people of God now portrayed as an army, the 144,000 who stand victorious with the Lamb, their leader on Mount Zion.

This probably contrasts too with chapters 11, 12, and 13 from the standpoint that, although in chapter 11, the two witnesses end up being vindicated at the end, in chapter 11, the two witnesses appear to suffer defeat. In chapters 12 and 13, they also appear to suffer defeat in that the dragon and his two offspring, the beast, are allowed to wage war on the people of God, and they apparently suffer defeat at the hands of the beast, the two beasts, and the dragon himself. But now they are shown in chapter 14 to be a mighty army that stands victorious and has won the victory of war in chapters 12 and 13, and now they stand victorious with their leader, Jesus Christ.

Verse 4 of chapter 14 is probably my favorite verse in the entirety of the book of Revelation, and I think it encapsulates one of, if not the most important theme in Revelation, and that is the 144,000 are described as those who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. The main theme of the book is that God's people are those who follow the Lamb wherever he goes, even if it means following him to the point of death. God's people are those who refuse to compromise; they refuse to conform to this world. Instead, they follow the Lamb wherever he goes.

Here, they follow him to victory, and they are portrayed as remaining unpolluted from the world. Notice this verse: They follow the Lamb wherever they go, occurring right at the end of the description of them as those who did not defile themselves through idolatrous practices. So following the Lamb wherever he goes means following him by being pure, by refusing to compromise with the idolatrous evil world, but also clearly, in the broader context of Revelation, means to do so even in the face of suffering and death, just as Jesus Christ did.

Two further important images in this section to draw your attention to is note the image of Mount Zion. Without going into a lot of detail, Mount Zion also has Old Testament background. Mount Zion is an image for the place where God rules, a place of protection and security.

We find in the Old Testament prophetic text Zion is the place where God would deliver his people; Isaiah chapter 2 and verse 2, Psalm chapter 48, all texts that refer to God's deliverance of his people and their coming to Mount Zion. For example, and I'll just read one of those in Isaiah chapter 2, at the very beginning of the book, in a scene that anticipates the final judgment of God and his people, the final salvation of God, the judgment of God and his enemies, but now the final salvation that God will bring to his people that interestingly will also include the nations, Isaiah says this, this is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains. It will be raised among the hills, and all the nations will stream to it.

Many people will come and say, come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways so that we may walk in his paths. The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

So Zion there seems to signify the entire city of Jerusalem, the place where God's throne is, the place where the temple is, the place where God rules, the place of protection, the place now where God brings salvation to his people. Zion is probably to be identified with the end time New Jerusalem in Revelation chapters 21 and 22. So, in one sense, this scene is another scene that is simply preparing for further exposition and further unpacking and divulging, which occurs in Revelation 21 and 22.

So now God's people stand in Zion, the place of God's presence, the place of protection, and the place of salvation. The other interesting piece of terminology here is in verse 4, they are also described as offered as first fruits. Now, the first fruit is in the Old Testament, but you also find it used this way in the New Testament.

First fruits literally was an agricultural term or a term of harvest referring to the first part of a harvest that was a guarantee of more to come. In fact it wasn't just

separate from everything else to come, it was actually part of the harvest itself. It was the initial part of the fuller harvest that had yet to come.

And we find this in the New Testament usage. Paul, for example, in 1 Corinthians 15 and elsewhere in Colossians chapter 1, can refer to Jesus' resurrection as the first fruit; that is, Christ's resurrection is the first installment of more resurrections to come. That is, it's not that Christ's resurrection is one thing, and it kind of provides a model for more; Christ's resurrection is actually the inauguration of the end-time resurrection that his people will also experience.

But Jesus' own physical resurrection is the first fruit of, or that is, the first installment of, the rest of the resurrections that are yet to come. Now, here, the understanding should possibly be that the 144,000 are a group that anticipates more to come. That would certainly be consistent with the imagery of a first fruit.

Some have understood that the 144,000 here are a special group, but they are the first fruits of a larger group that is yet to come. The difficulty with that is when you look at the text here, it seems that here, as back in chapter 7, where the 144,000 sort of morphed into, in symbolic language, an innumerable multitude that stood in God's presence before the throne enjoying their inheritance. It appears to me that here in chapter 14, standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb and victorious, especially if it anticipates Revelation 21 and 22, you have not an anticipatory scene of more to come.

You have the final salvation, the final outcome of the battle, and the final salvation of the people, the complete number of God's people at the end of the age following the battle. So here you have the final people at the end of history, not a group indicating more to come. But intriguingly, in the Old Testament, we do find first fruits utilized in terms of the entire nation of Israel being the first fruit, not in terms of more to come, but the entire nation themselves being viewed as an offering or as first fruits.

For example, we find this language of harvest or first fruits in Jeremiah chapter 2, verses 2 and 3, where Israel is called the first of the harvest. The entire nation of Israel is called the first of the harvest. So, Jeremiah chapter 2, again at the very beginning of the book, and 2 and 3. Let's see, Jeremiah chapter 2, verses 2 and 3. Are those the ones I want? The word of the Lord came to him in the 16th year reign of Josiah, son of Amon, son of Judah.

For some reason, that's not the text I want. Perhaps it's 22. I'll try to locate that later.

Jeremiah uses first fruits language to refer to the entire nation of Israel, not part of them. You see similar language in Ezekiel chapters 20 and 40 through 41 of Israel, interestingly, on the mountain being associated with first fruits. In the New Testament, in James chapter 118, you find the people of God, the entirety of the

people of God, described as first fruits, not of more to come, but the entire people of God.

So in Revelation 14, along with the Old Testament, at least a couple of Old Testament uses of first fruits; the first fruits here present the 144,000, not as a group anticipating more to come, but the word first fruit here is portraying the entire end-time people of God at the end of history, now being portrayed as a first fruit, as an offering to God. So, in contrast to chapter 13, I want to return to that. I think that the concept of these 144,000 here, emblematic of the entire end-time people of God as a first fruit, will be important for helping us to understand another image that comes later on in chapter 14.

But at this point, in contrast to chapter 13, where the beast deceives the entire world, he deludes them into giving them the allegiance, giving the beast the allegiance that he demands and requires, and also where he makes war with the people of God. Now you find God's faithful people standing victorious, having engaged in battle with the dragon and with the beast of chapters 12 and 13. Now they stand with their leader, the Lamb, and with the mark of God on their forehead, not the mark of the beast from chapter 13.

And now they stand impure and unstained from the world, and they sing a song celebrating their victory with the Lamb on Mount Zion. So this first part of the vision is clearly meant to be sort of an interpretation of, a demonstration of the outcome of the conflict narrated in chapters 12 and 13. But now in the next section, verses 6 through 13 demonstrate what happens to those who sided with the beast.

What happens to those who were brought into the deceptive activity of the beast, who took upon themselves the mark of the beast that is a symbol of identifying with, showing their allegiance, showing their worship to the beast, perhaps to avoid persecution or to avoid economic sanctions at the end of chapter 13. What happened to those who took upon themselves the mark of the beast, identified with the beast, and gave him worship and allegiance? Chapters 6 and 13 narrate the failure of those to resist, those who refused to resist, and those who compromised.

And it's structured around the speech of three different angels. Angel number one comes to proclaim an eternal gospel. Now, it's interesting that the content that he proclaims is to fear God and give him glory.

Interestingly, the same language we saw back in chapters 11 and 13 to 14, where some of the survivors of the judgment feared God and gave him glory, suggesting that both here and there in chapter 11, you may have a reference to repentance. So what you have here then is this angel calls for repentance, and the implication is for those who refuse instead of those who choose to follow the beast; now they will receive judgment. This would also include those in the church who were

compromising and who chose to throw their lot in with Rome and its idolatrous, godless system of worship.

So, angel number one proclaims a gospel, and those who refuse will, therefore, find themselves facing final judgment in the speech of the first angel. That's next to it, and probably we should not see these three separately. Maybe the next two describe more clearly what's going to happen to those who refuse the message of angel number one.

Those who refuse to fear God and give glory will face judgment, and now here is exactly what it is they face in verses eight and following in the form of the next two angels. Angel number two declares judgment upon Babylon. This probably has its background in the Old Testament, Daniel chapter four and verse 30, and other Old Testament texts that portray the judgment of Babylon itself.

But what we have here is the first anticipation in 14.8, a fallen fallen is Babylon the great which make all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries. Here we see the first anticipation of something that will get developed in more detail in chapter 17 and 18 where we find a description of Babylon and then a detailed description of its downfall and of its judgment and destruction. Probably, here we're to take Babylon as a code for Rome.

That is Babylon going all the way back to the Old Testament. Babylon is almost becoming. We'll talk more about this in 8, 17, and 18, but Babylon is almost becoming an image or a symbol for an anti-godly, arrogant, idolatrous, oppressive, oppressive nation or empire. Babylon almost becomes a symbol for that.

Now, that label applies appropriately to the Roman Empire, which is another godless, arrogant, violent, oppressive, and idolatrous empire. Babylon is a fitting designation so that you have the same features embodied in ancient Babylon now surface and emerge again and are embodied in the first-century city of Rome in the first-century Roman Empire that John is addressing. We'll find this repeated in the moment in chapter 16 and verse 19, a couple of chapters later, and then, as we said, it gets narrated in more detail in chapters 17 and 18.

So the idea here is if Babylon is to fall, then those who belong to her and compromise with her will fall also. So it's not just so much destruction of a physical city, but those who belong to her will suffer the same fate if they do not fear God and repent, the message of angel chapter 1 if they refuse to resist, and if they compromise, they will suffer the fate of Babylon, which now the angel pronounces is about the fall in judgment. The third angel also proclaims a message, and this message clearly indicates the consequences of allegiance to the beast, as seen in chapter 13.

And so here, the judgment is proclaimed on those from chapter 13. Notice those in verse 10, those who worshiped his image, those who received, in verse 9, those who received the mark on the forehead or on their hand; those two descriptions go right back to chapter 13. So those in chapter 13 who received the mark of the beast worshiped that image and gave their allegiance to idolatrous, godless Rome; now this is the judgment that will befall him.

And what we find in this description is actually language that anticipates the final judgment that one will find in chapters 18 through 20. So already, this is a kind of a fast-forward glimpse, an anticipation of the final judgment that will get more fully developed in latter chapters, though much of that language already occurs here to describe the fate of those who have thrown in their lot with Babylon Rome, who have given their allegiance and worship to the beast, to the idolatrous, godless, oppressive empire. And notice the language that is used.

First of all, it's described as drinking the cup of God's wrath. In the Old Testament, God's wrath as a cup of wine was a common metaphor for God's judgment, as was mixing that wine in a way that was undiluted with water but instead was of full strength. So God's wrath then will be given in full strength.

In Jeremiah chapter 25, which may provide the backdrop for this language among other Old Testament texts, but this one seems to be an important one; in Jeremiah chapter 5 and verses 15 through 18, we read this: This is what the Lord, the God of Israel said to me, take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. When they drink it, they will stagger and go mad because of the sword I will send among you. So I took the cup from the Lord's hand, and I made all the nations to whom he sent me drink it, Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, its kings, and officials, to make them a ruin and the object of horror and scorn and cursing as they are today.

Pharaoh, king of Egypt, his attendants, etc., etc. So Jeremiah chapter 25 is one of the most important texts that provides the background for the notion of a cup of unmixed wine, of wine of full strength, undiluted wine, signifying God's wrath and causing the nations to drink of it and become drunk, then become symbolic of God pouring out his judgment on wicked humanity. So, the nations are portrayed as intoxicated, interestingly, with the wrath of God.

Later on, we will see, and actually, we see this back up in verse 8 to again show these messages are connected. In verse 8, Babylon is fallen. Why? Because it has made all the nations drink the wine of her adulteries.

So all the nations are drunk because of the immorality, because of the idolatry, because of the oppressive nation and the evil and wickedness of the Roman Empire.

That's why it's going to be destroyed; it has made the nations drink from that. The nations have become intoxicated with Rome's rule.

Now the author seems to invoke the notion of the punishment will fit the crime. That is, Babylon, Rome has made the nations drunk with its wine. Now God is going to make them drunk with his wine that is the wine of God's wrath.

So, the punishment will fit the crime. Not only Babylon, but all those who associate with Babylon, all those who participate in Babylon, Rome's idolatrous evil practices will now become drunk on the wrath of God, on the wine of his wrath. The second thing is to note the language of eternal judgment, where you have this language of smoke and sulfur going up forever and ever.

Probably, this language of smoke and sulfur is another image or symbolism that comes out of the Old Testament and also apocalyptic language. It simply represents intense and severe suffering from the divine judgment that now comes upon the people. And the smoke is described as going up forever and ever.

Interestingly, when you get to chapter 17 or chapter 18 of Revelation, that is how Babylon's destruction is described as smoke going up forever and ever. So already this text is giving you a glimpse of a fuller picture of judgment, not a separate or different judgment. It's the same judgment, but it will just be developed more fully and in more detail in later chapters.

This language again appears to reflect, for example, Isaiah chapter 34. If you go back to Isaiah chapter 34 and verses 9 and 10, I think you will find similar language in the context of judgment in chapter 34 and verses 9 and 10. For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution to uphold Zion's cause.

Interestingly, notice the name Zion in connection with Zion mentioned at the beginning of 14. Eden streams will be turned into pitch, her dust into burning sulfur. Her land will become blazing or fiery pitch.

It will not be distinguished day and night, its smoke will rise forever. From generation to generation, it will lie desolate. No one will ever pass through it again.

So note the language of fire and sulfur in the context of judgment. Notice the language of smoke going up forever and ever as a sign of God's judgment that John seems to draw on here. But again, interestingly in Isaiah 34, in the context of the protection of Zion, which you find also at the beginning of chapter 14.

So John is drawing; he's simply gathering language from the Old Testament scenes of judgment to describe God's judgment on another wicked, evil, oppressive, idolatrous empire and those who belong to it. So once more, we should not take this language

literally as describing necessarily some literal physical torment that people suffer because they're inhaling the smoke or because of the sulfur. And certainly, we should not take this as some reference to an end-time nuclear war or anything like that.

But John is drawing on rather stock symbolism from the Old Testament to portray the meaning of and the certainty of God's judgment in the same way he judged wicked empires in the past. So, God's people in the first century can be certain that he will judge Rome as well as any other evil empire that would play that same role. So the angelic proclamation in these three sections, in the entirety of these three sections, is meant probably to go together.

It's a call for repentance, to fear God and give him glory. A refusal to do so will involve them in the fate of Babylon, which is to fall, and also will make them recipients of God's wrath in terms of an eternal smoke or burning sulfur using Old Testament imagery, but also using the imagery of being drunk with wine, the symbol or imagery of a bowl full of undiluted wine being a symbol of God's wrath. So these verses then are meant to oppose chapter 14, verses 1 through 5, now that indicate what happens to God's people who faithfully endure and resist in their conflict with Satan and the beast in chapters 12 and 13.

Now, the message of these three angels indicates what happens to Rome and the beast and those who collude with them, those who are deceived and render worship and allegiance and take upon themselves the mark of the beast and worship the beast and his image in chapter 13. Verses 12 and 13 then of this chapter, chapter 14, are meant to demonstrate that this judgment, verse 12, calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints. In other words, this judgment is meant to motivate God's people to persevere.

The confidence that God is indeed going to come back and judge and vindicate his people should encourage God's people then to persevere. Furthermore, it should also be a warning for them, for those who want to compromise, for those who become complacent in the context of Roman rule, for those who want to compromise and think it's okay to worship the beast, to worship Rome and be involved in its idolatrous practices, perhaps to avoid persecution or whatever, then these texts remind us that if they fail to persevere, they will find themselves as the recipients of the judgments spelled out in the message of these three angels. So, it's meant to motivate Christians to persevere if God is going to come and judge due to the gravity of that judgment and situation.

Those who are tempted to compromise must realize that refusal to compromise, or refusal to resist will involve them as recipients of these judgments. But those who are being persecuted can now have a motivation to continue because as the souls cried out unto the altar, how long, O Lord until you avenge our blood? Now we see in the messages of the three angels that God is avenging the blood of his saints, God

vindicating the faithful witness and suffering and death of his saints. The next section in chapter 14 is an interesting one, beginning with the, I looked, or I saw marking off another segment.

The way we should treat this, to make an initial comment on the way we should treat this section and the rest of chapter 14, is that these are not portraying events that take place after chapter 14, verses 1 through 13. But I think as we're going to see these events in chapter 14, verses 14 to the end, these two further scenes, this scene in the form of a grain harvest and the scene in the form of a grape harvest, these further describe the events taking place in the earlier part of the chapter. So, these are not two separate events.

It's another set of images, another way of depicting or describing what has happened in the first part of chapter 14. And we've seen that all through Revelation. John does not primarily give us a chronological sequence of events leading up to the end.

He describes the present and the future of his readers, but he explores the meaning of that by using different images and different language, most of which are drawn from the Old Testament. Now, John is going to draw language from the Old Testament, and I think from Jesus' teaching as well, as apocalyptic literature, draw language to further describe the nature of God's judgment that he has already described in different languages in chapter 14, verses 1 through 13. Now, the question about these two scenes, as we said, the two scenes are apparently judgment scenes.

They're different, though, in that the first scene is a grain harvest scene where you have the picture of the Son of Man with a sickle, and he goes out and harvests the earth. The second scene is a scene of an angel who also holds a sickle, but this angel swings a sickle and gathers a grape harvest, gathers the vine of grapes, where he will tread them to make wine, basically is kind of the literal depiction behind this. So you have two scenes, a grain harvest, and a grape harvest.

The question in relation to that is, what are these two scenes specifically depicting, and how do they relate to each other? And how do they relate back to chapter 14, verses 1 through 13? Unless we want to say this is just an indiscriminate collection of images, might we be able to suggest how they relate back to the first 13 verses of chapter 14? And to emphasize again, these are not to be seen as chronologically happening after the events of chapter 14, 1 through 13. These are just further ways of depicting those events using the language of grain and grape harvest now. So, what does John see in the two scenes? What I want to do is take each of them and try to describe their background and what's happening, and then raise the question of the relationship to each other, which I think will be clear as we begin to describe them.

The first scene then is found in verses 14 through 17, and that is the grain harvest scene. And it begins by recalling Daniel chapter 7 in verse 13. It begins with the Son of Man seated on the cloud.

And by the way, John seems here, perhaps intentionally so, but is certainly consistent with other New Testament depictions of Christ coming on the cloud. First Thessalonians chapter 4 and verses 13 and following, Jesus' own teaching in Matthew 24 and elsewhere, but all perhaps going back to Daniel chapter 7 and this language of the Son of Man seated or coming on the clouds. Daniel 7 provides the background for the language of the Son of Man seated on a white cloud that John sees.

And what is interesting is, unlike the vision of chapter 1, where John sees the Son of Man in language drawn from Daniel chapter 7, again, the well-known Son of Man vision, unlike Revelation 1, where John sees the Son of Man, but having a sword proceeding from his mouth, now John sees the Son of Man coming on the clouds, but now he has a sharp sickle in his hand. The sickle probably suggests the theme of judgment. And so, we have this picture of the Son of Man now coming to judge, but it's intriguing that the Son of Man, if this is to be identified with Christ, which I think it clearly is in light of chapter 1 and elsewhere, if this is the Son of Man, it's intriguing that an angel comes and commands him to swing his sickle and harvest the earth.

For that reason, I've suggested that the Son of Man here is not Jesus Christ or must be some other angelic being. How could you have another angel having authority over the Son of Man, over Jesus, and telling him what to do? But I think the key is to know where the angel comes from. The angel comes from the temple, the very dwelling of God. So, I think the picture here is not just that the angel has the authority to tell the Son of Man what to do, but the angel is bringing a message from the temple, or the angel is bringing a message from God, now telling the Son of Man the harvest, it's time to reap the harvest.

The harvest is ripe, and it's time to reap the harvest. There are two possible Old Testament backgrounds. First of all, in Matthew chapter 13 and verses 24 through 30, we see Jesus using the image of a grain harvest to depict the final judgment and the harvest that will happen at the end of history, where the weeds are burned.

The world is seen as a field of weeds and wheat growing together. The weeds are taken out, they are burned, the grain, the weed is taken out, and it is put in the storeroom for safe keeping because it's good. It's the positive crop that Jesus sees harvested in Matthew chapter 13.

Later on, in John chapter 4, John chapter 4, and verses 34 through 38, Jesus refers to a ripe harvest and calls on his disciples to reap a harvest for eternal life. This may be one example or one place where John seems to be in contact with the teaching of

Jesus and the image of the grain harvest. But what I want you to note is that if John is drawing on the teaching of Jesus, it's interesting that in number one, in the first example, Matthew 13, the weeds are burned up and destroyed, but the grain is preserved.

And in John 4, the language of the harvest being ripe, as you in time to reap, because the harvest of the earth is here in verse 15 of Revelation 14. In John chapter 4, where we find the harvest being ripe, the harvest that they are told to reap is for eternal life. Now add to that that I think this scene of harvesting grain picks up the image of the 144,000 as the first fruits, the language of a grain harvest, first fruits for God.

So that is what I think is going on here; verses 14 through 16 are a positive harvest. It's not one of the judgment of unbelievers; it's not the judgment of the wicked. This is a positive harvest.

This is the harvest of the first fruits, the 144,000, symbolizing the people of God. Now, the harvest on earth is ripe; that is God's people. So now the son of man comes to harvest, that is, to harvest people for their eternal reward, to be a first fruit for God.

So, in my opinion, verses 14 through 16 correspond to chapter 14, one through five, the 144,000, the first fruits to God who stand victorious because they've refused to compromise. Now, the second image, scene number two, is the grape harvest. And here you have another angel coming to be involved in a harvest.

And this one, I take, is meant to be the language of the harvest of unbelievers. In other words, verses 17 through the end of the chapter correspond to verses 8 through 13. I'm sorry, 12 and 13 is sort of the command to God's people to persevere and to resist.

But through verse 11, so eight through 11, the message of the angels that are judgment on unbelieving Babylon and unbelieving world, now this corresponds to that. So, to put it together, the grain harvest in 14 through 16 corresponds to the first part of chapter 14, the image of the 144,000 as the first fruits of God. Now they're being pictured as harvested at the end time judgment.

And now, 17 to the end of the chapter through verse 20 will correspond to eight through 11. That is the judgment of unbelievers. Now the judgment of unbelievers in eight through and following are depicted as a grape harvest in this second judgment scene in 14 through 20.

Intriguingly, what might further suggest this is that it's interesting in the first section; it's the Son of Man that comes to harvest. Now, it's another angel who comes to

harvest. And in the same way, an angel summoned the son of man to reap his harvest.

Now another angel summons the first angel, the one that comes with a sickle. He also has a sickle. Another angel comes out of the temple from the altar and also calls on him to now swing his sickle.

And this time, it will be for a grape harvest. Probably, the fact, too, that the angel comes from the altar may suggest that just like in chapters eight, one through five, where the saints are mingled, this prayer of the saints is mingled with the incense of the altar. We should understand this as a response to the prayer of the saints.

This is the vindication of the martyrs who cry out, how long, oh Lord. But now the harvest happens, and the angel gathers the vines with grapes because they are now to be trampled in the wine press. And the image here is probably that you would have a vat full of grapes, and the grapes would literally be trampled so that the juice is squeezed from them.

The juice flows out into another vat, which will be used for the wine. The background for this imagery is probably Joel chapter three and verse 13, for example. Also, elsewhere, we find grape harvest as a symbol of God's end-time judgment, for example, in Isaiah chapter 62.

In Isaiah chapter 62 and verses two and three, we find the language of trampling the grapes or the language of grapes as a symbol for harvest. Chapter 62 and the first couple of verses, for Zion's sake, I will not keep silent.

For Jerusalem's sake, I will not remain quiet till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. Notice the interesting connection with Zion again that you found back at the beginning of chapter 14. The nations will see your righteousness and all the kings your glory.

And you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow. You will be a crown of splendor in the Lord's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God. Verse six: I have placed watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem, they will never be silent day or night.

You will call on the Lord and give yourselves no rest. For some reason, I've gotten the wrong chapter again. I'm going to have to find exactly what that is.

Lamentations 1, verse 15, is the other one that uses the image of grapes as trampled upon as an image of end-time harvest. So, the picture is outside of the city of Zion, and it's interesting that in the prophets, you find, and here you find, the language of the outside of the city, the judgment taking place outside of the city, which probably

refers back to Zion at the beginning of chapter 14. So, now you find judgment portrayed in Old Testament terms taken from Joel, from Isaiah, taken from a book like Lamentations, and elsewhere of God's final judgment being pictured as God trampling a winepress, trampling grapes in a winepress.

But what is interesting in the judgment scene is the juice that comes out of the wine ends up being blood. That is, it ends up being the blood of the victims of the final judgment and of the final battle. In the next segment, I want to look a little bit at, in concluding this section, I want to look at the image that the author uses of blood going up to the horse's bridle and extending over a length of section consisting of 600 stadia.

I want to look a little bit at where John gets that image and also what that image signifies.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his course on the book of Revelation. This is session 20 on Revelation 14, Salvation of the Saints, and Judgment on the Wicked.