



## **“Immortal Horrors” or “Everlasting Splendors” Revelation 14**

It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations.<sup>1</sup>

### **The eternal celebration of heaven’s citizens (vv. 1-5)**

It is these two destinations that the Apostle John makes known in Revelation 14. This chapter is a study in contrasts. Mount Zion is another term for the new heavens and the new earth. It stands in contrast with “Babylon.” The mark or tattoo of the beast “666” (that which symbolizes counterfeit completeness) is in contrast with the perfect seal or mark of God the Father & God the Son (14:1). The Lamb stands on Zion, as opposed to the dragon who stands on the shore of the sea. Jesus is the authentic and true Lamb, not the land beast pretender of 13:11. The lies of the beast are in contrast with the truth of God’s redeemed. The joyful celebration of God with His people is in contrast to the horrific torment of God’s enemies in vv. 14-20.

v. 1—*144,000* is a familiar image from chapter 7. It is a complete and perfect type of number (12 x 12 X 1000) which symbolizes the community of the redeemed.

v. 2—*Harpists playing their harps and singing a new song* = the harp was not the kind we think of today in concert at Krannert. Back then, the harp was more like a banjo! Yes! There will be country music in heaven!

v. 4—A military word picture; it signifies a soldier who was focused and totally committed to the task. Think about the dedication, commitment, and ceremonial purity of Uriah the Hittite in 2 Samuel 11:11. See also Deuteronomy 23:9-10.

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*.

## **The eternal ordeal of God's enemies (vv. 14-20)**

*Swing the sickle,  
for the harvest is ripe.  
Come, trample the grapes,  
for the winepress is full  
and the vats overflow—  
so great is their wickedness!" (Joel 3:13)*

This gory and graphic scene drawn from the OT prophet Joel depicts Jesus himself as overseeing the harvest of all evil from the earth. Jesus, who first came as the sower (Matthew 13:37), now comes as the reaper. To emphasize the certainty of coming judgment, the image is repeated through a grape harvest. Tim Keller wrote:

What is hell, then? It is God actively giving us up to what we have freely chosen—to go our own way, be our own "the master of our fate, the captain of our soul," to get away from him and his control. It is God banishing us to regions we have desperately tried to get into all our lives.

J.I.Packer said: "Scripture sees hell as self-chosen . . . [H]ell appears as God's gesture of respect for human choice. All receive what they actually chose, either to be with God forever, worshipping him, or without God forever, worshipping themselves."

If the thing you most want is to worship God in the beauty of his holiness, then that is what you will get (Ps 96:9-13.) If the thing you most want is to be your own master, then the holiness of God will become an agony, and the presence of God a terror you will flee forever (Rev 6:16; cf. Is 6:1-6.)

## **Between these two groups: a final call to follow the Lamb! (vv. 6-13)**

The three angels progressively announce: (1) a last opportunity to repent; (2) the imminent fall of Babylon the Great—a symbol for all that opposes God; (3) and the eternal torment awaiting those who follow the beast. This is a real offer from God, a final call for repentance to the earth-dwellers, their last chance to avoid the "hour of judgment" that "has arrived." (Osborne 2002, 533)

One day God will invade. When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks on to the stage, the play is over. God is going to invade, all right: but what is the good of saying you are on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else—something it never entered your head to conceive comes crashing in; something so beautiful to some of us and so terrible to others that none of us will have any choice left? (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*)