This chapter of Revelation defines the victims of the dragon’s rage. They are the 144,000 of Israel, the woman’s seed. Nevertheless, the focus of the paragraph is not on the dragon’s conquest of them but on their triumph with the Lamb. They stand (see 6:17) victorious with the Lamb on Mount Zion. They sing before the throne. They are the firstfruits of a harvest of saints who have overcome the dragon by following the Lamb. He has purchased them for himself (5:9). This paragraph is a harbinger of the dragon’s downfall and of the triumph of all of the Lamb’s followers.

**The Lamb and the 144,000 – Rev. 14:1-5**

**14:1 Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads.**

**2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. 3 They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. 4 These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. 5 And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.**

**14:1**-The 144,000 victims of the dragon’s rage are seen standing, not defeated, with the Lamb. Instead of the mark of the beast, it is the name of the Lamb and of the Father that are written on their foreheads.

**14:2**-A voice, one that sounds like music from a harp, roars from heaven.

**14:3**-The voice from heaven of the previous verse is apparently a choir: all 144,000 victims of the dragon’s rage singing a mysterious song (of praise for their redemption?).

**14:4–5**-The 144,000 victims of the dragon’s rage, who are standing with the Lamb and have his name on their foreheads, are described as pure and undefiled virgins who follow the Lamb everywhere and always tell the truth. They are said to be “redeemed,” and they are labeled with the resonant biblical imagery of “firstfruits,” the first of a harvest of many resurrected souls.

**The Proclamations of Three Angels – Rev 14:6-13**

Prior to the introduction of the final manifestation of God’s wrath in the bowl judgments, God gives notice to earth dwellers that his wrath is about to fall, and the end will certainly come on them. And John interprets these warnings with a rare direct address to his contemporary hearers, explaining that they are meant to produce endurance in those saints (14:12). This passage closes with terrifying images of angels with vast, sharp sickles who reap a “harvest” of wicked men, gathering them into “the great winepress of the wrath of God” and making their blood flow at incredible depth outside “the city” (14:19–20).

**6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—**

**7 saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”**

**8 And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”**

**9 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.**

**11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”**

**12 Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. 13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”**

John sees three angels, who appear in the atmospheric heavens in succession. Each has a message to proclaim. The three messages serve to warn earth dwellers that God’s judgment hastens, Babylon will fall, and those who worship the beast will suffer God’s eternal wrath.

**Babylon in the New Testament**

The New Testament refers to Babylon 12 times. “Matthew and Acts refer to Babylonian exile as a way of understanding Jesus in relation to Israel’s history, while 1 Peter and Revelation use Babylon as a symbol for Rome”. Matthew 1:17 highlights the importance of Israel’s time in Babylon by noting the generational symmetry between Abraham, David, Babylon, and Jesus; in this interpretation, Israel’s time in Babylon—cut off from the promised land—serves as a turning point in biblical salvation-history.

Some New Testament references to Babylon may be cryptic allusions to Rome (1 Pet 5:13; Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2). Like Babylon, Rome was an oppressive, imperial power that had besieged Jerusalem and desecrated the temple (Friesen, “Babylon, NT,” 379). The book of Revelation portrays “Babylon the great city” as “the mother of prostitutes and the abominations of the earth” (Rev 17:5), which will be cast down in end-time judgment. Revelation is replete with Old Testament imagery: “The historic city and empire of Babylon were always depicted by the prophets as the ungodly power par excellence”. The extent to which Rome fulfills the characteristics of Babylon in Revelation is still debated. It would have been natural for Christians to see Rome as a contemporary version of the Old Testament Babylon from which God delivered his people.

14:6–7-The first angel appears in order to proclaim an eternal gospel. His audience is the entire earth, and he admonishes earth dwellers to fear God and give him glory (something they will refuse to do to the end [16:9]). The reason they must fear God is that the time for his wrath to fall has come. He is the creator of heaven and earth, and he is worthy of worship and fear (as in Rev 4).

14:8-A second angel appears in order to proclaim the fall of Babylon, the great prostitute who forces all nations to fornicate with her.

14:9–10-A third of three angels appear in order to warn those who worship the beast. The angel warns earth dwellers that God will pour out his unmixed wrath on those who worship the beast and his image or receive his mark on their forehead or hand.

14:11-The third of three angels insists that the suffering of the ones who worship the beast will be intense and eternal—and certain.

14:12-These verses explain the conclusion the reader must draw from the three angelic warnings that have just been issued. At the conclusion of these warnings, John interjects an encouragement to the faithful to persevere and a warning to the faint-hearted who find compromising with the beast a viable alternative to the faithfulness to the Lamb.

14:13-Christ commands John to write that those who die in the Lord are blessed, and the Spirit adds his affirmation of and testimony to that message, adding that the blessed will “rest from their labors.”

**Reaping the Earth’s Harvest- Rev. 14:14-16**

**14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” 16 So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.**

John in his vision next saw seated on a white cloud one like a Son of Man wearing a crown of gold and holding a sharp sickle. Though some have identified “a Son of Man” as an angel, it is more probable that it is Christ Himself who is frequently called “the Son of Man” (cf. 1:13). In the Book of Matthew alone this title is ascribed to Christ more than 25 times (Matt. 8:20; 9:6; 11:19; 12:8, 32; 13:41; etc.). The sickle in His hand suggests judgment. And this is supported by the messages of the three angels (Rev. 14:15–20).

An angel called out to Christ to reap, because the harvest of the earth is ripe. The ripeness is in the sense of withered or overripe. What follows is judgment as the sickle is swung … over the earth. Some theologians suggest that verse 14 refers to the harvest of the saints, and that verses 15–16 describe judgment on the wicked (The Greek New Testament, 4: 691). But it is difficult to imagine a harvest of saints as being withered or overripe.

14:14-After the messages of the angels and the affirmations of Christ and the Spirit, John sees “one like a son of man” seated on a cloud prepared to reap the earth. He possesses a sharp sickle.

14:15-All that is required to commence the reaping of the “one like a son of man” is the command of God. The reaper is probably Christ himself (1:7; Dan 7:13–14), and his “sharp sickle” stands for the final judgment of God (Mark 4:29). A messenger comes to the reaper with a command from the temple in heaven to reap the earth.

14:16-Christ the reaper responds to the angel’s summons, and the earth is reaped. In other words, people fall like wheat under the blade of the reaper—they die.

**Reaping the Grapes of Wrath – Rev. 14:17-20**

**17 Then another angel came out of the temple, which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. 18 And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.” 19 So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20 And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses’ bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.**

The Grape Harvest (14:17–20)

A similar harvest scene follows the grain harvest. The imagery of a grape harvest is a fitting portrayal of the destruction of humanity. In both harvests, the earth is ripe, signifying to the reader that the climax and conclusion of Christ’s conquest of earth is at hand.

14:17-Unlike the first (grain) harvest, where the reaper was Christ himself, the reaper of this (grape) harvest is an angel from the temple in heaven.

14:18-A second angel appears in order to give command to the first to reap the ripe “grapes”—remaining wicked people—on earth.

14:19-The focus of this harvest is on its character and results. The harvest is the manifestation of God’s wrath depicted as a great winepress.

14:20-The blood of recalcitrant humanity runs deep from the winepress as God squeezes it out. Humanity’s blood flows in the same place where the Lamb’s blood once flowed: “outside the city.”