

THE APOCALYPSE – A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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The SURE JUDGEMENT OF GOD

(Rev 14:1-15:8)

1. The Lamb on Mount Zion and His Followers – 14:1-5

Revelation 14:1, *“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.”*

14:1 -- The attention shifts to the Lamb of God and His followers. The contrast is clear. In direct opposition to what the two beasts will do on the behalf of Satan, the apostle John saw the Lamb standing on the mount Zion. The book of Revelation depicts the Lamb as slain (5:6; 13:8), glorified (5:8, 12-13), exalted (7:9-10), the Redeemer (7:14) and Shepherd (7:17) of His people, and the Lord of lords and King of kings (17:4). The battle lines are clearly drawn. The followers of the antichrist will have their seal, the number 666.

The lamb standing on Zion is surely a fulfillment of Psalm 2. **Psalms 2:1-12**, *“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”*

Where is the location of mount Sion? Is it on earth or in heaven? **Hebrews 12:22-24** refers to a heavenly Sion, "*But ye are come unto mount Sion, 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.*" Or is this a reference to **Isaiah 24:23**, "*Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.*"

The context of Rev 14:1 refers to the 144,000 who have the seal of the father's Name written on their foreheads. This is a reference to the 144,000 mentioned in Rev. 7:1-8. Unless we say that these 144,000 have died then the reference cannot be to heaven because they were with the Lamb even as the Lamb stood on mount Sion. Then Mount Sion has to refer to a place on earth. If these were the same ones whom God protected by taking them to the wilderness in Revelation 12:14 then the protection from God would include the LORD standing on Mount Sion with His people.

The act of standing on the mount Sion with the 144,000 Israelites refers to the final victory and conquest of the Lamb over the antichrist and his followers.

The seal is the assurance of ownership. These 144,000 who do not have the seal of the antichrist will have the seal of the heavenly Father. They belong to God the Father. Whatever Satan and his unholy twins plan to do, they will have no influence on God's peculiar people. They are permanently sealed by God Himself with His own "mark." No one will be able to hurt or touch them without God's sovereign permission. The assurance is clear. No matter powerful the enemies of God may appear, they are nothing compared to the power of the Almighty God.

Revelation 14:2-3, "*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.*"

14:2-3 – The heavens will sing when they see the victory of Christ and His people standing on Mount Sion. The voice from heaven was like the voice of many waters and a great thunder. It means that the voices will be deep and will resonate loudly as they sing in praise of the Lamb.

The voices all sang in tune like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. It was not thunderous judgement at this juncture as the Lamb was already standing on mount Sion. Playing of the harp implies a soothing sound like the time when David played his harp to soothe the evil king Saul. This would be a joyous refrain (cf. 2 Sam. :5; 1 Chron. 13:8; 15:16, 28; 2 Chron. 5:12-13; Neh. 12:27 Pss. 33:2; 71:22; 144:9; 150:3) from heaven in praise of the second coming of the Lamb and the defeat of the antichrist. The time of God's judgement and justice had come and the will of God in heaven has now come upon the earth.

Does the voice from heaven include the raptured saints?

They sang was a new (*kainen*—*new in terms of freshness or quality rather than time*) song. Who does the “they” refer to here? Does it include angels, and all the raptured saints? They sang a new song before the throne in the presence of the four beasts (living creatures of 4:6-9) and the elders (4:10-11). If the elders here refer to the 24 elders then it would be in front of the raptured saints as well. If the angels are not the ones singing and neither are the raptured saints then who will be singing the song?

I believe that the voice from heaven refers to **the raptured saints who died during the Great Tribulation**. They were not part of the 24 elders (refers to the earlier raptured saints BEFORE the Great Tribulation) who sang the new song in 5:9. These would be the saints who will sing together with the saints who are alive on earth at the end of the Great tribulation, the 144,000. These raptured tribulation saints are the same ones singing hymns in heaven in white robes and serving God (cf. 7:12-14). Now that the justice of God had finally come upon the earth and the victory of the LORD is here they sing a new song i.e. they sung as it were a new song. This might refer to the same “new” song that the 24 elders sang earlier in 5:9.

Macarthur says that “the angels will join the Old Testament saints, the raptured church, and the redeemed Tribulation martyrs in praising God for salvation [Macarthur, vol. 2, 75].”

What is your view on Macarthur’s observation? This view is highly unlikely as the text does not say that the angels and the elders were singing but that someone else sang the new song BEFORE (in front of) the throne and the angels and the elders.

This is a song only the 144,000 saints on earth can learn and no one else. Unbelievers will not be able to learn this song. They are called the ones who “are redeemed from the earth.” The protection of God over His people cannot be underestimated. No matter how great the devastation will be on the earth the LORD will take care of His very own. NOTE: 12:14-17.

Revelation 14:4-5, “*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.*”

14:4-5 – The spiritual condition of the 144,000 is described for us. What does this phrase “they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins” mean?

Does it mean that the 144,000 are all men only?

Macarthur says, “The worship of Antichrist during the Tribulation will be unspeakably vile and perverse. As it did in the fertility cults of ancient times, sexual sin will apparently run rampant. Even in the current grossly immoral day, we can hardly imagine what the deviant sexual perversion of the Tribulation will be like. With all the divine restraint removed (2 Thess. 2:6-7) and the

unbelieving world judgmentally abandoned by God (cf. Rom. 1:24, 26, 28), sin will be released like a flood, inundating the world. And fanning hellish flames of wickedness will be Satan and his demon hosts—both those cast from heaven with him (12:9) and those vile demons newly released from imprisonment (9:1-11, 14-19).”

Do you agree with MacArthur?

The moral and spiritual condition of the world in the time of the Great Tribulation will be unimaginable if what we see in our world today is a faint reflection of the time of the antichrist. These 144,000 will not allow themselves, by the grace of God, to fall into the sin of immorality. They will keep themselves chaste. They may declare in their hearts the words of young Daniel in **Daniel 1:8**, “*But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.*”

MacArthur says, “That the specific sin that they will avoid involves women indicates that sexual purity is in view here, not detachment from the corrupt system. That the 144,000 will be separate from the Antichrist’s empire has already been made clear; they bear God’s mark, not the beast’s (7:3-4). Nor does this passage teach that they will all be unmarried, since sex within marriage does not defile anyone (Heb. 13:4). What it means is that they will stand apart from the sin of their culture; 144,000 morally pure preachers amid the defilement that surrounds them.”

Any comment? Whether they will be morally pure preachers is reading too much into the texts. But MacArthur’s explanation does not actually explain the text. The reference to “sexual purity” by MacArthur and then said that they are married seems to contradict the sense of the passage. If they are married then how are they virgins? Unless he is saying that they are married but they did not consummate their marriage. But sexual relationship within the bonds of marriage has always been viewed and taught by Scripture as pleasing and acceptable in the eyes of God. Why sudden switch to single it out and seem to portray it as sinful?

But if it is to be understood in the figurative sense that it refers to their spiritual purity then there would be no problem. As it was in the OT and NT times, idolatry is always accompanied by sexual sins. Therefore to use “purity of sex” to depict spiritual purity is most acceptable. What they did after that as revealed in 5b collaborate this interpretation.

Taking sexual purity lightly has grave consequences. One of the main marks of the empire of the antichrist is that of sexual sin.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-5, *"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God."*

2 Timothy 2:20-22, *"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto*

honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

1 Corinthians 6:12-20, "*All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."*

Followers of the Lamb – The 144,000 are also described as the ones who would follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. They will be partisans to the party of the Lamb. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a partisan as “one who takes part or sides with another; an adherent or supporter of a party, person, or cause . . . devoted or zealous supporter One who supports his party ‘through thick and thin’; a blind, prejudiced, unreasoning, or fanatical adherent.” The 144,000 will be one hundred percent obedient to the Lamb and will follow Him even unto death, no question asked.

John Phillips says, “They allow no rivals, no refusals, and no restraint to mar their dedication to Him. Does He need someone to stand upon the steps of the Vatican and cry out against the marriage of Christendom to the Beast? There are 144,000 ready to go! Does the Lord need someone to beard the Beast at some high function of state and roundly denounce him, his policy, his statecraft his religion, his economic boycott, his mark, his ministers, his alliance with Satan? There are 144,000 eager to go! Does the Lamb need evangelists to proclaim to the untold millions the gospel of the coming kingdom of God? To climb the highest Himalayas, to cross the desert sands, to blaze evangelistic trails through steaming jungles, to mush huskies across wide arctic wastes? There are 144,000 ready to go! And though the Beast’s Gestapo dog their footsteps and wreak upon their converts his direct vengeance, yet on they go undaunted and undeterred. That was the very spirit of their consecration as they followed the Lamb whithersoever He led them on earth, and their reward is in kind [**Exploring Revelation**, 180-81].”

Any comment?

Can we say that when we know that God would protect the 144,000 of course all of them will be able to do all these things?

Luke 9:23, "*And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."*

1 John 2:6, "*He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."*

Redeemed From among Men – These 144,000 are known as the ones who were redeemed from among men. They represent the first fruits unto God and the Lamb.

MacArthur says, ““But while all believers have been purchased by God (cf. Acts 20:28; 1Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 1 Pet. 1:18-19), the 144,000 were purchased for a special purpose. They will be redeemed as **first fruits to God and to the Lamb**. In the Old Testament the first fruits, the first part of the crop to be harvested, were offered to God (Deu. 26:1-11) to be used in His service (Deu. 18:3-5). The 144,000, like the first fruits offering, will be set apart for divine service. As previously noted, the number 144,000 does not symbolize all the Tribulation saints, but rather designates a group of Jewish evangelists. The purpose of their lives will be to serve the Lord by proclaiming the gospel to the lost, perishing, Christ-rejecting world. It is also possible to view the 144,000 as first fruits in the sense that they represent the first of many others who will be saved. Paul used the term in that sense when he noted that “the household of Stephanas . . . were the first fruits of Achaia” (1 Cor. 16:15). The 144,000 may legitimately be viewed as the first fruits of redeemed Israel, foreshadowing the nation’s salvation when Christ returns. In that day “they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn” Zech, 12:10).” [MacArthur, vol. 2, 79]

What do you think of MacArthur’s commentary? To say that they are evangelists is not correct for this was not what the text says. But the understanding of the first fruits is right. The point that the 144,000 are the first fruits of redeemed Israel is also right in that they represent the Israel that will enter the millennium.

The 144,000 Israelites as the first fruits of God and of the Lamb refers to the group that represents “all” Israel as they enter the Millennium. They will represent the first part of a larger “crop” that will follow as believers who will enter the Millennium.

When will these 144,000 be saved? At the beginning or middle or the end of the Great Tribulation period will they be saved?

No Guile – They will not speak lies or deception. They are truthful in all they speak even if it means death. They will not be intimidated or cowered into submission. They will not be enticed, induced, entrapped into lying too. In their mouth there will not found any guile. No matter how long one look they will be one hundred percent truthful.

They will be without fault before the throne of God. The word “without fault” means “unblemished (literally or figuratively):-- without blame (blemish, fault, spot), faultless, unblamable”. This is used in Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Col. 1:22; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19; and Jude 24. As they will possess the mortal and sinful nature present body as they enter the millennium, they would therefore not be without sin. This word “without fault” would have to mean that they are without and beyond reproach. They will lead godly lives before all who would see them.

Only the redeemed can be described in this manner. They will stand before God’s throne as the redeemed and hence without fault. This is the positional perfection which every redeemed possess.

This is what God expects of every believer today too. There must be no guile but truthfulness in what we say. Our yea be yea and our nay, nay anything more than this is evil.

Parenthesis: The Angelic Announcements – 14:6-20

A series of six angels will announce the impending final outpouring of the wrath of God. The beginning of Rev. 15 will usher in the end of mankind.

Revelation 14:6-7, *"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."*

14:6-7 (The first angel) – The closest antecedent is 12:7. These are the good angels who each bore a special message for mankind at the end of time. He flies in the midst of heaven announcing his message. He has with him the everlasting gospel to preach to them who dwell on the earth. These would include every nation, and kindred and tongue and people. The message announced by the angel is in Revelation 14:7, *"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."*

For the first time in man's history, an angelic being will be the bearer of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The message is the same for all eternity.

Fear God because of sin. Give God the glory and turn from following the antichrist. Do not fear Satan and the antichrist but God only. Mt 10:28, *"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."*

Do you think that many Charismatics would be included here? The reason this is asked is because of their great number and their theology of wealth and health and seldom do they talk about fearing God and sin and hell.

Fear is a very crippling emotion. It came about because of sin and wrong doing. As sinners we need to fear God for this is the beginning of wisdom. God's judgement is about to come. Sinful man is running out of time. He must repent and turn back to God in fear and worship.

God is all powerful and the Creator of the universe. He is the only one worthy of our worship, no one else.

Revelation 14:8, *“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.”*

14:8 (The second angel) – Babylon is fallen is the cry of the second angel. What is the identity of this Babylon? Is it a reference to the Babylon of the Old Testament i.e. present day Iraq? Or is it a reference to the Babylon of Genesis where Nimrod was the leader and they wanted to build a tower that reached heaven? God thwarted their plan when He confused their tongue and they were forced to disperse (cf. Gen. 11). Or does it refer to a figurative Babylon which represents the kingdom of the antichrist?

Whichever view one subscribes to, the view of the city of Babylon from her inception till today is that it was an evil city, a city of idolatry, destruction and death.

Why is Babylon used instead of other great cities like Rome, or Nineveh or Damascus? These are just as wicked and idolatrous as Babylon if not more?

The answer lies in the history of the city. It was spawned out of rebellion. It was not just any rebellion but one on a global scale. So too is the rebellion of the end time empire of the antichrist. The parallel is clear. Both of them are global in nature and their desire was to bring heaven onto the earth where God is not worshipped but Satan.

Also it was the first city where the desire to begin a one world system with a one world government was first initiated. It is therefore a most appropriate title. The first ecumenical city of Satan was called Babylon and so is the last capital city of Satan.

MacArthur says, “Babylon has from its inception symbolized evil and rebellion against God. It was founded by Nimrod (Gen. 10:9), a proud, powerful, God-rejecting ruler. Babel (Babylon) was the site of the first organized system of idolatrous false religion (Gen. 11:1-4). The Tower of Babel, the expression of that false religion, was a ziggurat; an edifice designed to facilitate idolatrous worship. . . . the seed of idolatry and false religion spread around the world from Babylon, to take root wherever these proud rebels and their descendants settled.” [MacArthur, vol. 2, 90]

The repetition of the word “is fallen” [2 Aorist tense] is to emphasize the definiteness of the state of Babylon in the last day. It will definitely fall. The aorist tense focuses on the act of falling. The future Babylon is a great city just as the Babylon of old was a great city. The world’s leaders and united nations will gather there for all their deliberations. The kingdom of the antichrist will be ruled from this Babylon. It is the nerve centre of all economic and political power. The world would look toward it for direction and guidance. The world would be utterly and completely dependence upon here for its survival. The world would do anything and everything she demands without question. Anyone who goes against her would be punished immediately with either economic sanction or death. Remember the black horse of the third seal which brought great global famine in Rev. 6:5-6?

This city would make "... all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Because the world would become totally dependant upon her for survival, they would worship her and obey her even if it means killing millions of Christians and persecuting the Jews. What is happening in Israel today is a foretaste of what will be a global onslaught against Israel. Look at the world's unanimous reaction (except for USA) to the building of the wall in Israel that is encircling the entire West bank because of the suicide bombers. Israel is condemned whereas not a word is mentioned against the suicide bombers from many world leaders.

The deliberate use of the word "wine of the wrath" points to an intoxicated stupor that the world would be thrust into. Her seduction would be so powerful that nations including Singapore would succumb to her ploy and powerful deception. No one would be able to withstand her. They would fall and soon soak in her filth and wickedness. Every nation's conscience would be completely seared to do the will of the antichrist without any compunction. This is what drunkenness does to a person. What more the world! Without her economic green light every city and nation would die and economic death.

14:9-13 (The third angel) – The warning from the third angel is stern and very uncompromising. **Revelation 14:9-11** warns, *"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."* [emphasis added]

Anyone who worships the beast and his image would be severely dealt with. Any marking of the beast on the body of anyone would be severely dealt with. The exact parallel in the words of verse 8 "drink of the wine of the wrath" and "verse 10 "drink of the wine of the wrath" cannot be missed. The major difference is that in verse 8 it is the wrath of Babylon's fornication whereas in verse 10 it is the wrath of God. The emphasis is a direct challenge between God and Satan, Jesus Christ and the antichrist.

The full fury of God would be poured down on these followers of Satan. No one would be able to escape God's wrath. The punishment would be eternal damnation.

How is it possible for someone to be "**tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb**"? The meaning of the word tormented refers to a ceaseless infliction of excruciating and unbearable pain. The spiritual realm is beyond our finite minds at this time. We live and exist in time and space.

"To suffer in the presence of the hosts of heaven is not to lessen the fierceness of the judgement but to make it more grievous. Christians had borne the shame of public derision and opposition; soon their antagonists will suffer before a more august gathering" [Robert H. Mounce, **The Book of Revelation, The New International Commentary on the New Testament** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 276].

Do you agree with Mounce? Remember the punishment of the rich man in Luke 16:23-25, "*And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*" Mounce made the right observation when he states that the affliction is intensified when one is constantly reminded of the fact that I could have been in heaven, if only I have received Christ into my heart as my Lord and Saviour.

Revelation 14:11, "*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.*" This is a reference to an eternal punishment where the specific place is not mentioned. They will have no intermission in their punishment and torment. It will be a never ending, continuous day and night torment. They are the ones who worship the beast and his image and have received the mark of the beast.

If they are in Hell and ultimately in the Lake of Fire forever, how would they be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the angels and the Lamb?

Why is this identification mentioned? Why is the punishment so severe, for they simply worshipped the beast and his image and received the mark of his name?

The encouragement to the believers is awe inspiring. Right in the middle of this great judgement God has a word for the faithful believers. The word "blessed" is used. This word is used to describe the believers who would remain true to his God and Christ. **Revelation 14:12**, "*Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*" The patience of the saints points to their loyalty, and an uncompromising endurance and perseverance never to succumb to the wiles of the Devil no matter what the consequence might be.

This "patience" is defined for us. It refers to those who "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ."

Is there a difference between the two? The Commandments of God is the Holy and perfect Word of God. The faith of Jesus Christ is the faith that we have in believe in Christ. We will not denounce or recant Christ no matter what is done to us. This is similar to the saints of Rev 6:9 who were slain for the Word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ.

To keep means to hold fast. They would not let go i.e. disobey the Word of God no matter what the consequence might be. They would not be untrue to Chris but remain devoted and loyal to Him no mater what. They would not desecrate His Holy Name by their lives and motives.

In what way are they considered blessed here?

Does it mean that they would have to die? **Revelation 14:13**, *"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 them."* They would have to die. Their fight is over. Their race is run. They have completed the course that Christ has set for them. They fought valiantly even if it means death for they died in the LORD and now they can rest from their labours. The contrast is also clear between those who are tormented with no "rest" at all and the children of God who died in the LORD. They will find rest (same word as in verse 11 – "to refresh") from their labours. The word "labours" refers "to hard toiling work."

Their works would also follow them.

What does it mean to have your works follow you? It means that your Christ honouring work here on earth will be remembered in heaven.

Revelation 14:14-16, *"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."*

14:14-16 (The fourth angel) – The white cloud symbolizes purity and dignity. With One like the Son of Man sitting on it, it points to the glory and majesty of the One who sits on the white cloud. At the first Coming of Christ, he came unnoticed and ignored by the wicked world. He came to save and the world knew it not. Instead of receiving Him with open arms we crucified Him. He was rejected of man and despised by all. Is this not a perfect demonstration of the sinful state that man is in?

The contrast of the Second Coming of Christ is made starkly clear for all to see. He comes to be noticed by the world as the JUDGE of all judges. The title of "the Son of Man" is deliberately chosen here to remind us of His first Coming. Not only that, it points sinners back to the time of the crucifixion. It reminds man of what He has done when He came to save them and how they have rejected Him time and time again. Christ's entire life and ministry is brought to the forefront for man to see as evidence of man's guilt and condemnation. The first coming of Christ was the apex of man's existence and hope. It was also the bridge between the Old and New Testaments. A lot is meant by this term the Son of Man.

The genitival connection between the son and the man defines the meaning of the word "son". To be called the Son of Man means that Jesus was in bodily form when John saw the vision. More than that is the fact that He possessed all the characteristics of man except his sinful nature as Jesus was born of the virgin Mary and conceived not of man but of the Holy Spirit.

On His head He had on a golden crown. This time Jesus comes not as a servant and slave but as the King of kings and Lord of lords. The crown definitely signifies kingship. But this is not the crown normally worn by a king for the word used in "stephanos." If it simply points to his kingship alone then the word used would have been "diadema." The former refers to the crown worn by the victor after a conquest in war or by an athlete after a race like in the Olympics. In other words this is a crown of victory (cf. 2:10; 1Cor. 9:25; 1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4).

The “gold” points to the glory and richness of His everlasting Kingdom as well as the glorious victory over all His enemies including Satan and the antichrist and the false prophet. It pictures Christ not so much as the King who inherits His kingdom which is His due based upon what he has done and every knee must bow and tongue must confess Him as Lord but rather of His great and glorious conquest and victory over all His enemies.

In His omnipotent hand was a sharp sickle which signifies the time of the judgement of God has come. The world is ripe for harvesting. “A sickle was a long, curved, razor sharp iron blade attached to a long, broomstick like wooden handle. Sickles were used to harvest grain; as they were held with both hands spread apart and swept back and forth, their sharp blades would cut off the grain stalks at ground level.” [Macarthur, vol. 2, 113.]

The sins of the wicked are full and ripe, ready for punishment. The long suffering of God is not infinite. It has a limit and man must never take it for granted as if he has all the time in the world to repent. This was the case in God’s dealing with the Canaanites (cf. Gen. 15:16). When their sins were full God sent Joshua to be His instrument of punishment to conquer the Land. Likewise when Israel sinned against God and said that they cannot enter the Promised Land because the enemies were like giants and they were like helpless grasshoppers, God said that since you do not wish to go in, all the young men from 20 years and upward will die in the wilderness except for Joshua and Caleb who said they could (cf. Numbers 13 and 14). God is no respecter of persons. When His mercy and grace are not appreciated but taken for granted then sinful man will have to pay the price. The price can be very, very costly as seen in the case of the Canaanites who lost their land and the Israelites who perished in the wilderness instead of entering the Promised Land.

This picture of Christ here is the prelude to the final destruction of mankind. The calm before the great and final storm has come.

Verse 15 -- The fourth angel came out of the temple. The first three angels were said to have spoken from the midst of heaven but the last three angels are said to have come out of the temple. The final sixth angel came out of the altar itself (cf. v. 18). Which temple is referred to here? There is only one temple they could have come out from, and that is the heavenly Temple (specifically mentioned for us in verse 17). The Temple is a symbol of the dwelling place of God and it is also where God’s people receive God’s grace and mercies. From within this Temple the angel came with his declaration.

The declaration is one of judgement and the end of God’s mercy. **Revelation 14:15** says, *"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."* This was an urgent cry from the fourth angel as seen in the use of the phrase “crying with a loud voice.” The finality of sinful man is in the tone of the cry and the urgency is seen in the message itself.

The cry was directed to God and not to man. There was no vote or consultation but a straight forward and direct statement of judgement without any mercy. The time for the end of man’s rule on earth has come. Man has been weighed by God and have been found wanting. He will now pay the ultimate price for all that he has done against God’s children and God Himself. The use of the aorist imperative emphasized the authority behind the loud cry for judgement.

Was the angel commanding the Son of Man? If so how can an angel command the Son to act?

Could it be that the angel was bringing the message from God the Father to the Son? This is the more acceptable position and from the biblical context God is the only One who can and has the right to command His only begotten Son.

No one not even Satan can escape the wrath and judgement of the Almighty God. The Christian's longing for justice is about to come upon the earth. Their cry will soon be answered. When the time is up, everyone will receive their just reward and due. There is no escape for anyone.

What did the Son of Man do? **Revelation 14:16** explains, "*And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.*" The final pouring of the seven vial judgement is the final result of this harvest by the Son of Man.

Revelation 14:17, "*And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.*"

14:17 (The fifth angel) – This fifth angel also came out of the temple like the fourth. He also has a sharp sickle. This picture reminds us of the parable of the Sower and the Tares spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43. The angels will be the ones who will actually do the separation of the wheat and the tares. In Matthew 13:47-50 where the parable of the net points us to angels as the ones whom God would use to separate the good fish from the bad.

How can there be any mistake when we have the perfect angels and the thrice Holy Son of Man and Son of God doing the "harvesting"?

Revelation 14:18-20, "*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.*"

14:18-20 (The sixth angel) – This sixth and final angel came out of the altar rather than from the Temple itself. This heavenly altar was mentioned earlier in the book of Revelation. It is found in none other than Rev. 6:9-11 referring to the opening of seal number five. Another reference to the altar is found in Rev. 8:3-5.

What are the contents of the fifth seal and the altar of 8:3-5?

This sixth angel cried to the fifth angel commanding it to perform the act of harvesting and to do so immediately and with conviction. This is seen in the same word and same aorist and imperative as used in verse 5. The repetition of the judgement from God the Father to the Son and then the angels is a clear indication that the judgement cannot be averted and sinful men will receive the great condemnation from God for his sins.

“The word ripe is not the same Greek word used in verse 15. This word refers to something fully ripe and in its prime. It pictures earth’s wicked, unregenerate people as bursting with the juice of wickedness and ready for the harvest of righteousness.” [Macarthur, vol. 2, 116].

The agricultural picture of what God would do the sinners is vividly pictured for the Christian’s encouragement in that the justice of God come in its proper and exact measure. There will be no over punishment or under punishment. This is part of the very nature and character of God. What did the fifth angel do but to accede to the cry of the sixth angel and begin the harvest? This was how the harvest took place. **Revelation 14:19** says, *"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."* The use of the polysyndeton in both verses 19 and 20 marks a concentrated reading on the part of the reader and a deliberate action on the part of the actor. Here the actor is the fifth angel.

The sinners are on earth which they call home and they tried to make it into heaven. It became their final placed of judgement and condemnation. They are called the vine of the earth. The use of the earth is significant. It points to the earth bound perspective of sinful men and their futile rebellious efforts in idolatrous worship which has now not only turned into disaster but consequentially result in great punishment.

The first gathering will be out of rebellion where the followers of Satan will march to Armageddon believing in the lie of Satan that they could fight against the Son of Man. Instead they will be wiped out like God would wipe a dish and turn it upside down. This is reminiscent of what Pharaoh did when he rushed headlong together with his 300 chariots into the parted Red Sea and were drowned.

Then this is followed by the separation of the sheep and the goats or the good fish and bad fish or the wheat and the tares as depicted by the Lord in His many parables. This gathering will be final and eternal. For only the believers will be allowed to enter and enjoy the new heaven and new earth which will commence the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ. He will rule for 1,000 years on earth. This will be the final reign of this world as we know it. At the end of this period will come the Great White Throne Judgement and the earth and heaven as we know it now would be destroyed forever. A brand new heaven and earth would begin and then eternity would start with all believers possessing the glorified body. We will enjoy God in the presence with all the saints from Adam to the last saint.

These enemies of Christ will be cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God. "A wine press consisted of two stone basins connected by a trough. Grapes would be trampled in the upper basin, and the juice would be collected in the lower one. The splattering of the juice as the grapes are stomped vividly pictures the splattered blood of those who will be destroyed (cf. Isa. 63:3; Lam. 1:15; Joel 3:13)." [MacArthur, vol. 2, 117.].

This will take place outside the city of Jerusalem so that the city would not be tarnished by the destruction. It will be located in the valley of Megiddo. "That battle will take place in the north of Israel on the plain of Esdraelon near Mount Megiddo (about sixty miles (100 km) north of Jerusalem). It will rage the entire length of Israel as far south as Bozrah in Edom (cf. Isa. 63:1). Jerusalem will be spared to become the capital of Christ's kingdom." [MacArthur, vol. 2, 117.].

The horrifying nature of the carnage and destruction is described by the blood that would be spilled in the valley of Megiddo. Revelation 14:20 says, "*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.*"

The depth of the blood would be about five feet (1.5 m) deep (the bridle of the horse) and it will spread over an area of 1,600 furlongs i.e. 200 miles (about 333 km) distance. There is no battle against the Lord, only a great slaughter. Rev. 19:11-18 reveals to us that all the LORD had to do was to speak and all His enemies were destroyed.

How can mere mortals ever think that they could fight against God Almighty? Yet they have tried to do so all these years in their self-deception and delusion. The foolishness and the sinfulness of man are measured by the degree of judgement meted out to them by God. The extent of it and the depth of it is seen here by these last few verses of Rev. 14:15-20.

1. Pouring of the Seven Vials – 15:1-16:21

Revelation 15:1-4, "*And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest!*"

a. The Singing Saints – 15:1-4

Saw another sign (15:1a) – John saw another sign of exactly the same quality i.e. from God. The location was in heaven.

This describe for the reader where the source of the seven vials judgement will come from. The sign was great and marvellous. This was the final sign before the destruction of all human governments, only that of Christ's will remain forever. The book of Daniel describes it as a stone made without hands crushing all the kingdoms of the world into powder and a wind came and blew them away. Then the kingdom of Christ will rule and reign over the entire world.

Daniel 2:34-35 prophesied, *"Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."*

The greatness refers to the size and strength and power of the kingdom and marvellous refers to grandeur and beauty and glory of the kingdom. This millennium kingdom of Christ will last for 1,000 years. During this period there will global peace where swords will be turned into plough shears.

Isaiah 2:1-4 prophesied concerning the millennial kingdom, *"The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."*

Isaiah 2:4 is the motto of the United Nations. This is the vain hope of humanity after 2 World Wars. But this will be to naught. Man cannot bring peace because peace must first come from within. It is the peace he must make with his God first before he can talk of peace with one another. Man needs to have God's unconditional sacrificial agape love residing in his heart before he can have peace. He is powerless to bring any form of genuine peace. What man has achieved thus far is basically truce. This is the absence of war not peace. Christ can bring genuine peace into the world. Sin is dealt with and cleansed and a new heart is planted into every genuinely forgiven and saved person.

The content of the sign was "**seven angels having seven last plagues.**" The word "last" means "final in terms of time." This will be the ultimate judgement that will usher in the total and complete destruction of the world as we know it today. Everything that we are familiar with from the world's map and topography and terrain will be transformed forever. All our economic system of trade and practices will recede to a very distant memory. The skyline of the world will be altered forever by the Master Builder and Sculptor. The joy, marrying and giving in marriage, eating and drinking and all that pertains to what we spend most of our time in and regard as of utmost importance would be forever destroyed. It will be consumed by the judgement of God's fire.

The wrath of God (15:1b) – The seven last plagues is not merely the wrath of God. The Bible says that "**in them is filled up the wrath of God.**" The literally meaning of "filled up" is "to make and end or to complete." These seven last plagues is not just the final plagues in term of time but also in terms of the climax of the wrath of God, the completion of

the great judgement of God since the first global judgement of God by water in the days of Noah as recorded in Genesis 6-9.

“The word “wrath” is a word for “rage or passionate outburst of anger.” It is a strong word deliberately chosen by the Holy Spirit to impress upon sinful men the fullness of his sins and the time of his punishment is at hand. No man will ever get away with his sins and escape the all seeing eye of God Almighty.

Zephaniah 3:8 has prophesied, "*Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.*"

By the demonstration of His wrath does it mean that He is not a God of love? This passage clearly exposes the errors of those who say that the OT God is a God of war and the NT God is a God of love.

How can the Christian balance all the many different attributes of God in our relationship and walk with Him? He can by studying and obeying the whole counsel of God. To begin he must have the highest reverence for God's Word. He must never criticize it and say that it contains mistakes by employing the evil tool of textual criticism. He must receive all of God's Word by faith.

A sea of glass (15:2a) – Note that John said he saw something “as it were” i.e. like a sea of glass. What does it mean?

MacArthur says, “The sea was not an actual ocean, because in 21:1 he ‘saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.’ What John saw was a transparent crystal platform before God's throne shimmering and glistening like a tranquil sunlit sea. John saw this same sealike crystal platform in 4:6: ‘Before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal.’ Moses also had a vision of it when he and the elders of Israel ‘saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself’ (*Ex. 24:10*).”

Revelation 4:6 says, “*And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.*”

Rev 15:2 reveals to us that the resurrected and raptured saints were standing before the throne of God where the four beasts (living creatures) stood. As MacArthur suggested, the sea of glass is probably a clear shimmering crystal-like platform before God's throne in which angels and believers with the glorified body of flesh and bones are able to stand.

This picture is different from that of 4:6 because in this present description the sea of glass was “mingled with fire.” The tranquil picture was mixed with the fire which must definitely represent the wrath of God due to the immediate context of the seven vials of plagues as the last judgement. The impending judgement will be in the presence of God’s saints who gave their lives for the defense of God’s Holy Word and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Victory over the beast (15:2b) – In what way are they deemed to have victory over the beast? What is mentioned next is revealing. The saints are also said to have victory over the image of the beast and the mark of the beast (the number 666). These saints have died for their faith and yet here God says that they have the victory. How could they have victory if they had died? Do we not equate death with ultimate punishment and defeat?

The answer is that when the children of God held on to their faith and not waver to the very end even when they have to pay for it with their lives, they would be considered from God’s perspective to have the REAL victory. “They did not bow to the idol of the beast and they died for the testimony of Jesus Christ,” they have the victory says the LORD. “They did not receive the mark of the beast, and they died,” they have victory says the LORD. This is precisely what Christianity is all about. It is not living on earth as long as you can or to not be found in prison at any cost but to simply live by faith till the very end of life’s journey.

What does it mean to live by faith? It means to obey God’s Word implicitly and explicitly without any reservation. It is to defend God’s Word at any cost to self and family. There must not be anyone or anything that stands between the Christian and His LORD to the very end. Live for him according to Holy Scriptures.

No idols and no compromise! Hold on to the truth and never, never let it go no matter what the cost! There is no other way. The momentum and subtlety of attacks are frightening and overwhelming. The Da Vinci Code is a popular book that has sold millions of copies. The movie is being released soon. This book attacks the very heart of the Christian faith. The deity and humanity of Christ as well as the canonicity and preservation of the Bible have been placed on the chopping block to be excised and destroyed.

A young man who had once considered entering into the fulltime ministry is reported to have said, “Christianity is a sham!” He was in London for further studies and was taught legalism. Under no circumstance are you allowed to study on Sunday! He felt very guilty every time he opened his books. He came back to Singapore and was disillusioned by what happened in his home church where the founding pastor was summarily kicked out after 53 years of service. The last straw that broke the camel’s back or in this case the fragile paper thin faith of this young man was reading the Da Vinci Code. In this book the entire matter of the canonicity of the Bible was attacked openly and blatantly.

The latest attack is the lost Gospel of Judas!

The Doctrine of Canonicity deals with the identification of the 39 books of the OT and the 27 books of the NT. Why must there be only these 66 books in the Bible? Why do we not include the apocrypha and the pseudepigrapha into our Bible as Holy writ?

Below is a list of the works bandied about by today’s inclusive theology on the doctrine of canonicity. To date there are 27

pseudepigrapha, 18 OT Apocrypha and 63 NT Apocrypha. This list is taken from the web site: <http://www.hagiographa.com/>

- **Pseudepigrapha**

- The Books of Adam and Eve -- translation of the Latin version
- Life of Adam and Eve -- translation of the Slavonic version
- Life of Adam and Eve -- translation of the Greek version (a.k.a. The Apocalypse of Moses)
- The Apocalypse of Adam
- The Book of Adam
- The Second Treatise of the Great Seth
- 1 Enoch (Ethiopic Apocalypse of Enoch)
- 1 Enoch Composit (inc. Charles, Lawrence & others)
- 2 Enoch (Slavonic Book of the Secrets of Enoch)
- Enoch (another version)
- Gilgamesh The Flood Narrative From the Gilgamesh Epic
- Melchizedek
- The Book of Abraham
- The Testament of Abraham
- The Apocalypse of Abraham NEW July 18, 2004
- Joseph and Aseneth
- Revelation of Moses
- The Assumption of Moses (aka: The Testament of Moses)
- The Martyrdom of Isaiah
- The Ascension of Isaiah
- The Revelation of Esdras
- The Book of Jubilees
- Tales of the Patriarchs
- The Letter of Aristeas
- The Book of the Apocalypse of Baruch (aka: 2 Baruch)
- The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch (aka: 3 Baruch)
- Fragments of a Zadokite work (aka: The Damascus Document)

Old Testament Apocrypha

- 1 Esdras
- 2 Esdras
- 1 Maccabees
- 2 Maccabees
- 3 Maccabees
- 4 Maccabees
- Letter of Jeremiah
- The Prayer of Azariah
- Baruch
- Prayer of Manassas
- Bel and the Dragon
- Wisdom of Sirach
- Wisdom of Solomon
- Additions to Esther
- Tobit
- Judith
- Susanna
- Psalm 151

- **New Testament Apocrypha**

- Dead Sea Scrolls
 - Community Rule
 - The 'Zadokite' Document
- Narrative of Joseph of Arimathea
- Epistle of the Apostles
- Report of Pilate the Procurator
- History of Joseph the Carpenter
- Apocryphon of James (Another version)
- The Letter of Peter to Philip
- Book of John the Evangelist
- Ptolemy's Commentary on the Gospel of John Prologue
- Avenging of the Saviour
- The Apocryphon of John (Long Version)
- The Sentences of Sextus
- Book of Thomas the Contender
- Lost Books of the Bible
 - The GOSPEL of the BIRTH OF MARY
 - The PROTEVANGELION (Another version)
 - The first Gospel of the INFANCY of JESUS CHRIST
 - The Infancy Gospel of Thomas *Composit*
 - Greek (A)
 - Greek (B)
 - Latin
 - Infancy Compilation (all)
 - The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew
 - THE EPISTLES of JESUS CHRIST and ABGARUS KING of EDESSA (Another version)
 - The GOSPEL of NICODEMUS (or ACTS of PONTIUS PILATE) (Another Version)
 - Letters of HEROD and PILATE
 - The APOSTLES' CREED
 - THE EPISTLE of PAUL the APOSTLE to the LAODICEANS
 - The EPISTLES of PAUL the APOSTLE to SENECA (w/SENECA's to PAUL)
 - The ACTS of PAUL and THECLA
 - The FIRST EPISTLE of CLEMENT to the CORINTHIANS
 - The SECOND EPISTLE of CLEMENT to the CORINTHIANS
 - The GENERAL EPISTLE OF BARNABAS
 - The EPISTLE of IGNATIUS to the EPHESIANS
 - The EPISTLE of IGNATIUS to the MAGNESIANS
 - The EPISTLE of IGNATIUS to the TRALLIANS
 - The EPISTLE of IGNATIUS to the ROMANS
 - The EPISTLE of IGNATIUS to the PHILADELPHIANS
 - The EPISTLE of IGNATIUS to the SMYRNAEANS
 - The EPISTLE of IGNATIUS to POLYCARP
 - The EPISTLE of POLYCARP to the PHILIPPIANS
 - HERMAS
 - The First Book of HERMAS (or VISIONS)
 - The Second Book of HERMAS (or COMMANDS)
 - LETTERS OF HEROD AND PILATE
 - THE LOST GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PETER
 - *THE GOSPEL of PETER - LAST*
 - *The EPISTLE of IGNATIUS to the PHILIPPIANS*
 - *The MARTYRDOM of IGNATIUS*

- *The MARTYRDOM of POLYCARP*
- *TERTULLIAN on SPECTICALS*
- *TERTULLIAN on PRAYER*
- *TERTULLIAN on PATIENCE*
- *TERTULLIAN on MARTYRS*
- *The Report of Pilate to Caesar*
- *Gospel of Bartholomew*
- *Gospel of Thomas*
- *Gospel of Phillip*
- *Secret Gospel of Phillip*
- *Book of Marcion*
- *Excerpts from the Gospel of Mary*
- *The Letter of Aristeas*
- *The Didache*

The can of worms has been opened for these books to be included into the Holy Scripture. What do you say to this? This can of worms will not be closed. The beginning was the denial and death of the doctrine of preservation. Professing Christians have no problem accepting that the Bible has mistakes. Now they pay the price for more is demanded of them by this latest satanic attack which is not surprising. For the attack on the doctrine of preservation will inevitably and ultimately lead to this attack, on the doctrine of Canonicity. Those who subscribe to an erroneous Bible will also succumb to including all these books as lost canon! They have no way out based upon the argument that God did not preserve and their insistence that the doctrine of preservation is a theory.

Why must we allow the leaders of the church in the 17th century decide for us the doctrine of preservation? Now why must we allow the 4th Century church leaders in the Council of Calcedon to decide for us the doctrine of canonicity? The same arguments used to debunk the doctrine of preservation will also be used to debunk the canonicity of the Bible. It is happening and they will succeed in order for the ecumenical movement to become a reality.

What can Christians do? Hope in God and hold on to the truth – that there are no mistakes in the verbal plenary inspired and preserved Word of God. They are the Hebrew and Greek texts underlying the King James Bible.

Having the harps of God (15:2c) – The saints stand before the presence of God holding the harps of God. Harps are for singing and rejoicing. What is there to rejoice when the wrath of God is about to be filled? How can Christians be rejoicing when the followers of the beasts are being punished for their sins? Is this not cruel on our part to do such a thing?

They are rejoicing because the justice of God is about to be completed. It is not a personal vengeance with hatred and anger that brings about the rejoicing. It is the Christians' deep sense of justice which is God's justice that they are rejoicing. Christians are the ones on earth who possess the best understanding of justice because it is God's justice. God's justice is always fair and equitable. There is no over or under punishment on the part of God. The rejoicing is over the fact that sin and Satan will be vanquished forever from the earth which Satan had held captive all these millenniums.

Is it really possible that there is actually no vengeance on the part of the saints in heaven when they are rejoicing?

Yes. When they realize that they were being persecuted for Christ. In other words when evil men persecute Christians for their faith, they were actually persecuting Christ. This was how the LORD viewed the persecution of Christians by Saul in Acts 9:5; and 26:14. Therefore when the Christians rejoice in the presence of God with harps it is to indicate their right sense of justice with no vindictive heart. This is how Christian must always view justice.

Do not replace the love of God with sentimentalism. If that happens our sense of justice and God's love would be warped. It becomes subjective and crosses over the line into vengeance and vindictiveness. These were called harps of God telling us that they were harps belonging to God. The righteous act of the saints in heaven when they rejoice in His presence is attested by this genitival connection. It was not the harps of the saints but God's. Psalm 94 is an imprecatory psalm that rightly reflects the heart of every Christian in the face of being persecuted for Christ's sake. The victory is assured if the believer would persevere to the very end. With God's help he will succeed.

The song of Moses (15:3a) – The Song of Moses was the first song recorded for us in the OT. This was the song sung after the LORD delivered the people of Israel out of Egypt and having crossed the Red Sea and pharaoh and his charioteers were drowned. It was a song of victory over the slavery and persecution Israel endured for 430 years. See Exodus 15:1-19. The focus of this song is the LORD, not Moses or the people of Israel. It was the LORD who gave Moses and the people the deliverance and victory of their enemies. All glory was given to the LORD. It was also a song of praise. It is good to read this song to see that Christians have an all powerful God on their side to fight for them.

Moses is recorded here as the servant of God. This is a most noble title that has lost its significance today due to frequentative and indiscrete usage. Anybody is now called a servant of God as long as he goes up the pulpit or has the title of pastor or elder in front of his name. This has done a great injustice to people like Moses and Joshua who were true servants of God. They earned this title after they had served the LORD faithfully till the end of their lives. It was a title that God gave to them not man. If we really wish to be called a servant of God may we think very carefully whether we deserve to be called such or not. If we have been unfaithful to God and his Holy Word we have no right to bear the title. It is a most honourable title to be called a servant of God.

What makes a person worthy of becoming a servant of God? What makes you think that you are worthy to be identified with Go that He would want you to be His servant? We must use this term sparingly on a person. On the part of the person receiving the honour, do so only after there is a search of our own soul and ask ourselves if we have really been a "SERVANT OF GOD."

The song of the Lamb (15:3b) – The song was first recorded for us in 5:8-14. John Phillips made this contrast between the two songs.

"The song of Moses was sung at the Red Sea, the song of the Lamb is sung at the crystal sea; the song of Moses was a song of triumph over Egypt, the song of the Lamb is a song of triumph over Babylon; the song of Moses told how God brought His people out, the song of the lamb tells how God brings His people in; the song of Moses was the first song in Scripture, the song of the Lamb is the last. The song of Moses commemorated the execution of the foe, the expectation of the saints, and the exaltation of the Lord; the song of the Lamb deals with the same three themes. [**Exploring Revelation**, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1987),

What do you think of his view?

This is definitely a song of victory as the content of the song highlights the greatness and holiness of God. But the focus is not on the “song” but on “the Lamb.” It is called the song of the LAMB. Why? This title of the Lord Jesus Christ brings us all the way back to the incarnation of Christ. His life on earth including His obedience to God’s Holy Word, teachings, miracles, crucifixion and earth and resurrection becomes the basis of the song. Men crucified Him and now He comes to Judge. It is the “weak” Lamb that sinners have despised and rejected who now comes with a song for His victory is nigh!

The content of the song (15:3c-4) – Revelation 15:3-4 reads, *"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest."*

The works of God are great and marvellous (15:3c) – In this song of praise and worship, it is the works of God that is emphasized first. The works of God here refers to the judicial perfect punishment afflicting sinful men who chose the side of the beast and worship his image and bore his mark on their bodies. This work of God is described as “great and marvellous.” These two words combined together speak of the power and might and glory of the awesome nature of God work when He unleashed it upon sinful men who now come under His wrath. They will be severely judged by God in ways that the world has never seen before and yet perfectly fair for it will come from the God who never over or under punishes anyone.

Can punishment be regarded as “great and marvellous”? Does this description not belong only to the miraculous?

Lord God Almighty is His Name (15:3c) – The song address God as Lord God almighty! The covenantal Name of God is emphasized together with Elohim (God) which refers to His power. This reminds us of **Exodus 6:1-4**, *"Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land. And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers."* This was the first time where God combined His covenantal Name with God. Here we find in the judgement of the unbelievers this same combination. It is the God of God’s people who now judges and punishes the sinners. He is not another God but the God of Israel and every true Christian.

Do we know that we are worshipping the one living and true God the Creator of Heaven and Earth? What is the impact of this truth in every day lives?

Just and True are the ways of the King of saints (15:3c) – “Just and true” describe the justice of God that is always based upon truth. He makes no mistakes! He is perfect in His being and in all His Holy Ways. There is no error in His judgement. Every one whom He condemns to Hell deserves exactly what is due to him.

But by the grace of God and His mercy which is new every morning, believers are bound for heaven. He is the King of saints i.e. the saints are owned by Him. When they are persecuted, they have to answer to God. We are God’s subject and under His protection as citizens of His kingdom.

Why are Christians called saints here? The emphasis is on the nature of the saints. Their holiness is emphasized. This is in stark contrast to the unholy nature of the beast and false prophet and their followers. The reason they will be punished is that they are not holy. The reason Christians were punished by the beast and false prophet is that they are holy. The contrast is to demonstrate to sinful man the justice of God will ultimately prevail.

Every Christian must not lose heart as they stand for truth and righteousness. Not to do so would be folly. It is more than just doing some measure of good works but rather a true reflection of our inward character based upon the great work of salvation done by God in our hearts.

Who shall not fear and glorify the LORD (15:4a) – This is a rhetorical question aimed at the power, might and glory of God. All will glorify God because all will fear Him. The children of God do so because of love and God is their heavenly Father. The enemies of God will bow their knee and worship Him because He is their Judge.

Isaiah 45:23, *"I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."*

Romans 14:11, *"For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."*

Philippians 2:10-11 says, *"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

The victory is assuredly God’s. There is not doubt that this will be the final conclusion in Christi’s battle. All immorality and sin and debauchery that we see in this world today will be removed and cleansed forever. All sinners will be dealt with accordingly and none will escape the wrath of God. This is the song of the saints!!!

What does it mean to fear God? Does it mean to be afraid of Him?

What does it mean to glorify God's name? Does it mean to say His Name like hallelujah after every deed is done or at worship?

God alone is holy (15:4b) – This is the theme of the song of angels in heaven when they praise the LORD.

Isaiah 6:2-3, *"Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."*

Revelation 4:8-11, *"And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."*

What is the holiness of God?

It has the idea of "perfection, and blameless." In relation to the Christian it refers to "set apart for holy use." This is the essence of God in His purity. He is perfection par excellence. The word "holy" comes from the Greek *hagios* (literally it means "an awful thing"); sacred (physically, pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremonially, consecrated):--(most) holy (one, thing), saint.

What does it mean when the Bible says that Christians are called holy ones (saints)?

Romans 1:7, *"To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."* [cf. 1 Cor. 1:2, 6:1 etc.]

The word is also used in the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 33:1-3, "*And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words.*"

Psalms 16:1-3, "*<Michtam of David.> Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust. O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.*"

Does it mean that Christians now possess actual holiness? If this is the case then how can the Bible say that God alone is holy?

All nations shall worship God (15:4c) -- Holiness seems to be the essence for receiving worship. The true, genuine and acceptable worship of the one living and true God is the highest form of service. How many kinds of worship are there? Is there a difference between the believer's worship and an unbeliever's worship?

If worship is so important why is it that we often drag our feet to church for worship? We sing hymns in praise of God with little or no understanding.

Is there a difference between worship and service or are they synonyms? Why do we call the Lord's Day a worship service? Is it possible for a Christian to worship God without serving Him?

The judgments of God are made manifest i.e. to make very plain and clear. The reason for this worship is the judgement of God that they see and experience. The word for judgement here has the idea of righteous judgment. What are these judgements that are referred to here?

Revelation 15:5-8, "*And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.*"

o. The Vial Judgments Begin – 15:5-16:21

The Beginning of the End has come (15:5-16:1) – After John had seen the sea of glass and the masses singing the song in praise of God almighty, he is given a very different picture. The temple (*naos*) of the tabernacle (*skene* – a tent like habitation) of the testimony in heaven was opened. What is this temple of the tabernacle? The temple refers to the Holy of Holies i.e. the holiest place. In the Old Testament, the phrase has been used to refer to the Tabernacle.

Exodus 38:21, *"This is the sum of the tabernacle, even of the tabernacle of testimony, as it was counted, according to the commandment of Moses, for the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar, son to Aaron the priest."*

Numbers 1:48-54, *"For the LORD had spoken unto Moses, saying, Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel: But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle. And when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down: and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts. But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony. And the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did they."*

Numbers 10:11, *"And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony."*

Acts 7:44, *"Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen."*

What is contained inside the Holiest place? It is the Ark of the Covenant and the mercy seat. Inside the Ark of the Covenant are the Ten Commandments (Deu. 10:5; 31:26; 1 Kings 8:9; 2 Chron. 5:10).

Exodus 25:16-21, *"And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee. And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee."*

Exodus 40:20, *"And he took and put the testimony into the ark, and set the staves on the ark, and put the mercy seat above upon the ark"*

2 Chronicles 5:10, "*There was nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put therein at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.*"

Other items inside the ark included Aaron's rod (Num. 17:10; Heb. 9:4; and the pot of manna (Exo. 16:33, 34; Heb. 9:4).

This temple was in heaven. This was probably the millennial temple that will come down onto the earth during the reign of Jesus Christ on earth. What kind of testimony does it have in heaven? The earth is God's footstool.

From the Holiest place came forth the final judgement of God. This indicates that the righteous judgement of God will be based upon God's Holy Word.

Psalms 11:4-5, "*The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.*"

Seven angels came out of the temple, having seven plagues (15:6) – The end is here. This is the final judgement of God upon sinful man. They were commissioned by God to pour out the wrath of God. Each of the angels will bring one plague.

They were clothed in pure and white linen. This signifies their personal purity and that their judgement will be fair and just. Their breasts girded with golden girdles to signify their authority is from Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Judge of all judges. The similarity to the picture of the Son of God is obvious. Revelation 1:13, "And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." These angels were carrying out the judgement with the authority of Christ.

One of the four living creatures gave (15:7) – The higher angel was commissioned to give to these seven lower rank angels, seven golden vials full of the wrath of God. The vials refer "to shallow saucers. The imagery is not that of a stream being poured gradually out of a pitcher, but of the whole contents of the shallow saucers being hurled down in an instant flood of judgement (MacArthur, vol. 2, 132)."

Vials or bowls were commonly found in the temple furnishings (1 Kings 7:50; 2 Kings 12:13; 25:15; 1 Chron. 28:17; Zech. 14:20). They were associated with the sacrifices (Exo. 27:3; 38:3). In **Psalms 116:13**, "*I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.*" Those who reject the cup of salvation will receive the cup of God's wrath to its fullest.

God lives forever and ever and He will put an end to sin. All those who indulge in sin will be punished. They will not escape the wrath of the omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God.

Smoke filled the temple (15:8) – Smoke is an emblem of God's majesty, glory and might. The mountain of Sinai was covered with smoke when the LORD descended to give Israel the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 19:16-19, "*And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.*"

God will finally reveal to sinful man who the one living and true God really is. Their worship of the antichrist and Satan and its image will be exposed as a great lie. Satan may pretend to be God but he will be punished for his deception. The antichrist will be exposed as the false Christ and the false prophet will be denounced as the fake Holy Spirit. The unholy Trinity will be categorically condemned by God on the last day.

No man was to enter the temple even though they were glorified men until the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled. Why?

The answer perhaps is that the temple which was meant to be the "home" of God on earth where sinful man may receive His mercy has now become a place judgement. Mercy is at an end. What lies ahead is judgement. The time for mercy is over. The saints who have received the mercies of God must step aside and see what would be their lot if they had not believed in Christ. This wrath of God will now be poured down upon sin-filled men.

At the end of the judgement they will be allowed to enter in again.