

The Twitter Commentary on Revelation
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Revelation Chapter 14

Rev 14 (Introduction)–

Chapters 13 and 14 elaborate on the nutshell summary of the final battle in Rev 12:17.

Chapter 14 elaborates on the remnant's side of the final conflict, their identity, message and final outcome.

T Rev 14:1-5 (Introduction)–

The 144,000 here are the same group as the remnant of Rev 12:17, two ways of describing the end-time people of God.

A structural allusion to Exodus 19 is very possible here.

The 144,000 of Rev 7:4-8 is elaborated in chapter 14 in terms of its identity, mission and destiny.

Rev 14:1–

Mount Zion is often just another name for Jerusalem in the OT (2 Sam 5:7; 1 Kings 8:1; 1 Chr 11:5; 2 Chr 5:2; Isa 10:32).

A remnant standing on Mount Zion and names on the forehead recall Joel 2:32.

The names of God and the Lamb on the forehead are in contrast to the mark of the beast (13:16-17).

T Rev 14:1– (spiritual lesson)

While some follow the beast only for economic reasons, the followers of the Lamb are all fully committed.

Rev 14:2-3–

These verses contain a strong allusion to Rev 4-5. They build also on the “song of Moses” in Exodus 15.

The word “redeemed” here is grounded in both the Exodus and the cross.

The singing of verse 3 is in present tense in the Greek, not past as generally translated.

The location of the scene is heavenly, yet these heaven dwellers are God's faithful end-time people on earth.

Rev 14:1-3 Summary–

The scene shifts from the actions of the unholy trinity (Rev 13) to end-time remnant's role in the final crisis of Rev 12:17.

Rev 14:4–

The 144,000 are virgins in the sense of spiritual preparation for the “wedding” at the Second Coming of Christ.

“Virgin” here does not mean absolute purity but can also refer to one’s restoration to sexual purity.

The plural “women” probably refers to Babylon and her daughters in 17:4-5.

In the NT, Israel is counted not in terms of ethnicity or geography, but rather in relation to Christ (Gal 3:28-29).

“First fruits” here represents the people of God in contrast with those who follow the beast.

Rev 14:5–

In the context of deception, discerning truth from lies is a critical character quality.

The word “blameless” described animal sacrifices in the OT that were “without defect” (Num 28:19, 31; 29:, 13).

All believers in all generations are exhorted to be “blameless,” this was not unique to the 144,000 (Gen 17:1; Eph 1:4, etc.).

Rev 14:1-5 (conclusion)–

The remnant of Revelation can be named by many names: 144,000, great multitude, saints, etc.

The character of the end-time remnant: they are like Jesus, loyal and authentic.

Rev 14:6-13– (Introduction)

This passage is the climax of the message of Revelation, the center of the center.

This message presumes the entire picture of God’s end-time people given through chapters 10-14.

The three angels of this passage have a demonic counterpart in the three frogs of Rev 16:13-14.

Rev 14:6–

The word “gospel” here is used without the article, which is unusual in the NT.

The positive use of gospel here connects this verse with similar proclamations in Matt 24:14 and parallels.

There is an allusion to Psalm 96 in this “eternal gospel.” It points to the cosmic battle between good and evil.

“Gospel” here concerns more than human salvation, it is about God’s standing in the universe.

The story of the gospel begins with the war in heaven described in 12:7-11.

The “everlasting gospel” is grounded in the “everlasting covenant” of the OT.

The everlasting covenant was first expressed as a promise to never again destroy the world by a flood (Gen 9:9-17).

The everlasting covenant was narrowed with Abraham and David but still had all humanity in view (Gen 12:1-3; Isa 24:5).

In the NT the everlasting covenant is focused on the person and work of Jesus Christ, particularly the cross (Matt 26:28; Acts 3:25).

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the successor and fulfillment of the everlasting covenant.

That the end-time gospel is “everlasting” shows it is not something new or different in the final crisis.

That the everlasting gospel is end-time shows that it will be uniquely contextualized to the final situation of the world.

The word for “preaching” is the verb form of the word for “gospel.” This is the end-time gospel mission (Matt 24:14; Mark 13:10).

“Those who live on the earth” normally represent the wicked in the book of Revelation (see 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:7).

The grouping of nation, tribe, language and people represents the larger body of humanity in need of the gospel (5:9; 7:9; 11:9; 13:7).

Rev 14:7 (Introduction)–

This verse contains three commands and the context in which those commands will be given (judgment).

The commands are aorist imperatives, they are given at a specific time in the future.

Rev 14:7–

The “fear of God” in the OT has to do with avoiding evil, knowing and obeying God, and taking Him seriously.

“Giving glory to God” is an outward focus. We can do this verbally and also in our actions.

One way to give glory to God is in the way we treat our own body temples (1 Cor 6:19-20; 10:31).

The “has come” indicates that judgment begins in the context of the final proclamation of the gospel.

The final judgment ratifies the decisions each person has made in preparation for the resurrection and the Second Coming.

The word “judgment” here is from the Greek word *krisis*, which expresses the process of judgment rather than the outcome.

There are three phases of judgment in the NT: At the cross, in the preaching of the gospel, and at the End.

Revelation focuses on the judgment at the End, but that judgment begins before the Second Coming.

The great end-time judgment is a pre-advent judgment in the context of world-wide preaching of the gospel.

The doctrines of end-time judgment and resurrection imply that final outcomes do not occur at the time people die.

Rev 14 is the final judgment of the world, while Matt 25 expresses the final judgment of the church.

This call to worship God contrasts seven references to worship of the forces of evil (Rev 13: 4 (twice), 8, 12, 15; 14:9, 11).

The final phrase of this verse recalls the four regions of the cosmos in the trumpets and bowls (Rev 8:7-12; 16:2-9).

The call to worship uses the language of the fourth commandment (Exod 20:11).

The allusion to the fourth commandment is blended here with the phrase “springs of water.”

Concepts such as sea, rain, waters, rivers, and springs, therefore, are often invested with theological meaning.

Rain and springs are theologically positive in the Bible, sea and floods are usually negative.

In Rev “springs” are positive fresh-water sources that are subject to the judgments of God (Rev 7:17; 8:10; 16:4).

“Springs of water” seems to be an intentional allusion to the Flood story (Gen 7:11; 8:2).

To refuse worship of the Creator (by worshiping the unholy trinity) is to ultimately bring about ones’ own destruction.

Rev 14:7 (Conclusion)–

The text as a whole is an affirmation of Jewish monotheism, God is the sole ruler, creator and one worthy of worship.

Rev 14:7– (spiritual lesson)

Living in the light of the judgment provides accountability for every day living.

Knowing that every small deed is remembered in the judgment gives meaning and purpose to ordinary life.

Rev 14:7 (Excursis on the Sabbath allusion)–

There is an unusually strong collection of verbal parallels between 14:7 and Exod 20:11.

The verbal parallel to Psalm 146:6 is even closer than the one to Exodus 20:11.

Rev 14:6-7 contains the themes of salvation, judgment and creation.

Themes of salvation, judgment and creation are also found in both Exodus 20 and Psalm 146.

Based on verbal and thematic parallels it is not clear if John was alluding to Exod 20 or Psa 146.

The most convincing parallels for determining the presence of intentional allusions are structural parallels.

At the beginning and end of Rev 12-14 are multiple references to the commandments (11:19; 15:5-8).

There are multiple allusions to the first four commandments in Rev 13.

Exod 20 and not Deut 5 is the clear focus of the commandment references in Rev.

There is no evidence in Rev that Psalm 146 had the kind of importance to John that Exod 20 did.

According to Rev, the Sabbath command will play a crucial role in the final conflict of earth's history.

There are seven references to worship of the dragon and his allies in Rev 13-14 (13:4 [2x], 8, 12, 15; 14:9, 11).

The call to worship the creator is the central text of Rev 13-14.

Since Rev 13-14 is at the center of the book, the call to worship in this verse is the central theme of the whole book.

Worship on the Sabbath day is the ideal response to the gospel.

The Sabbath is not only the memorial of creation, it is also a memorial of the cross.

The Sabbath is the ideal test of loyalty to God in the final crisis of earth's history.

In keeping the Sabbath we are following the practice of both Jesus and the apostles.

Jesus' own Sabbath keeping is part of the perfect righteousness He imputes to us by faith.

T Rev 14:1-7 (Spiritual lessons)–

1) In the final gospel message the remnant will practice what they preach.

2) The final remnant will live their lives in light of the judgment and the end of the world.

3) If there is no final judgment, there will never be justice in this world. It is our great hope.

Rev 14:8–

The first angel calls the world to worship the true God, the second urges people to avoid the consequences of unbelief.

“Fallen, fallen” expresses the Hebrew prophetic perfect, the future is described as if it has already occurred.

“Babylon the Great” and “the great city” are one and the same in Revelation (16:19; 17:18).

The concept of “Babylon” in Revelation is rooted in the OT descriptions of Babylon and its fall.

First mention of Babylon in the Bible is in Gen 11, the Tower of Babel story (verses 1-9).

The good news about end-time Babylon is that its world dominance is very brief.

Babylon comes to power through confusion of belief (wine), force (wrath) and mutual self-interest (fornication).

God does not generally intervene to undo the consequences of foolish human choices.

At the End worldwide institutional religion will serve, not the true God, but the end-time counterfeit.

Many faithful people remain in religious institutions that have sold out for worldly wealth, power and prestige.

SDAs have understood this verse to have a fulfillment in Protestant opposition to the

Millerite movement in the 1840s.

Rev 14:9-13 (Introduction)–

The language of “followed” ties the three angels of 6-13 together, uniting their messages.

The third angel’s message includes verses 12 and 13, so it is not entirely negative.

T Rev 14:9–

The message of the third angel individualizes the worldwide focus of the first and second.

Two different Greek words intensify the expression of wrath in this text.

God’s wrath here anticipates 15:1 which introduces the seven last plagues of chapters 15 and 16.

The wrath of God in Hebrew is not irrational anger, it is a measured and judicial response to oppressive human action.

In the OT, God’s wrath is not essential to His nature, but is a reactive response to evil, abuse and oppression.

There is a clear allusion to Isa 51:17-23 in this verse. God will intervene in behalf of His people against end-time Babylon.

The scene of 14:10-11 anticipates the scene at the end of the millennium (20:9-15).

Rev 14:11–

This verse is an individualization of the fate reserved for the systems represented by the beast and Babylon.

There is a strong allusion here to Isa 34:8-10. In Hebrew “forever” is not eternal, but long enough to accomplish God’s purpose.

Rev 14:10-11– (Thoughts on Violence)

Truly good government must at times exercise restraint and even violence in order to overcome evil.

Evil does not give way voluntarily. The greater the evil the greater the divine violence that may be necessary.

Rev 14:12–

“Patience” (KJV) here means “remaining under,” enduring suffering as the will of God for the end-time situation.

The term “saints” is one of many names in Revelation for the end-time church of God.

The “patience of the saints” recalls 6:9-10 and introduces the final answer to their question in chaps. 14-20.

“Keeping the commandments” recalls 12:17 and 11:19, it is one way that the “patient endurance” is exercised.

“The faith of Jesus” can be understood as subjective (Jesus’ faithfulness) or objective

(our faith in Jesus).

“Keeping” the faith of Jesus suggests an objective genitive, the saints keep their faith in Jesus.

A number of reasons suggest that the “faith of Jesus” represents His faithfulness to God while on earth.

“Commandments of God” is clearly a subjective genitive, so “faith of Jesus” should be also.

While John often uses ambiguous genitives to highlight both options, that is less likely with regard to “the faith of Jesus” here.

The “faith of Jesus” is the faith that Jesus exercised toward God, not our faith in Him.

Three marks of the remnant: patient endurance, obedience to all God’s commandments, and the faith of Jesus.

Rev 14:13–

“Voice from heaven” occurs frequently in Revelation and twice in the OT (2 Sam 22:14; Dan 4:31).

In the NT generally, the voice from heaven commends Jesus on His character and mission.

In Judaism the voice from heaven (*bath kol*) replaced prophecy as a revelation from God between the testaments.

In Judaism the voice from heaven expressed God’s approval of a person’s character, particularly the martyrs.

This is the only place in Revelation that uses the voice from heaven in the way of John’s day.

The voice from heaven commends the martyrs for good deeds and for dying in the Lord.

This is one of seven blessing pronounced in the Book of Revelation.

The martyrs have labored in the gospel to the point of weariness and exhaustion. They now get to rest.

The “works” mentioned here are the keeping of the commandments and the faith of Jesus in verse 12.

Rev 14:9-13 (Spiritual lesson)--

The accelerating events of the End call for a special kind of “patient endurance.”

Rev 14:14-20 (Introduction)–

Two groups of three angels (14:6-9, 15-18) flank the central character in the chapter, the son of man (14:14).

There is a major structural parallel between this passage and Joel 2:28 - 3:21.

This passage builds on Joel’s picture of God’s people huddled against enemies in the city of Jerusalem.

The literal and local things of Israel in the OT are expanded to spiritual and worldwide in Rev.

In the NT warfare is a major metaphor for Christian spiritual life (see 2 Cor 10:3-5).

The passage portrays a great division between the righteous (14:15-16) and the wicked (14:18-20) at the end.

Jesus uses the language of harvest with reference to the end (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43; 9:37-38; Luke 10:2; John 4:35-38).

The OT also associates harvest with eschatological judgment (Jer 51:33; Hos 6:11; Isa 63:2-3; Joel 3:1-13).

Rev 14:14–

The cloud emphasizes the divine nature of the son of man and serves as his “chariot” (see Dan 7:13; Psa 68:4; Ezek 1:7).

Jesus appears in Rev 12-14 as Michael (12:7), Christ (12:10), Lamb (12:11; 13:8) and Son of Man.

The crown worn by the son of man is the same kind as that offered to the overcomer (2:10) and the 24 elders (4:4).

The sickle is a harvesting instrument that is used her harvest the “grain” (14:14-16) at the end of history.

Rev 14:15–

The word for “temple” is concentrated in chapters 14-16, although it also appears in other places in Rev.

In God’s world worship and rule are intimately related. The way he rules the universe is worthy of worship.

The “sending” of the sickle (Greek) recalls Jesus sending the angels to separate the righteous and the wicked at the End.

The words of the angel here recall Joel 3:13, but the literal scene in Joel is now spiritual and worldwide.

Rev 14:16–

The language of verses 14 and 15 is completed here with the harvest of the righteous.

Rev 14:17-18–

The two harvests in 14:15-19 represent the fate of the two sides in the final crisis of earth’s history.

If the altar of verse 18 is the Altar of Incense, this act is parallel to the close of probation (8:3-5).

If the altar of verse 18 is the Altar of Burnt Offering, this act is the vindication of the martyrs in 6:9-11.

This passage is based on the realities of the Palestinian climate.

In Palestine winter grains are harvested in the Spring and fruits are harvested in the Fall.

Rev 14:19–

Ancient winepresses consisted of parallel troughs, one higher than the other, with a

narrow channel in between.

Rev 14:19-20–

The crushing of grapes here is metaphorical for the destruction of the wicked at the end of time.

In Rev the literal and local things of Israel and its enemies are expanded into the worldwide realities of the End.

Blood up to the horse's bridles is an example of biblical hyperbole. See also Deut 1:28; Matt 23:24 and John 12:19.

1600 stadia may represent the length of Palestine or the worldwide nature of the final judgment.

Rev 14:14-20– (Summary and Conclusion)

The people of the world are here divided into two groups, for and against God.

The fate of the two sides at the end is described in terms of harvest imagery.

Rev 14:14-20 (Spiritual lessons)--

Negative motivations are sometimes necessary to get human beings to act.

God provides dark details in advance to motivate people to take spiritual things seriously.

Rev 14 (Conclusion)–

In this chapter the final battle of earth's history (12:17) is viewed from the standpoint of the remnant.

The role of angels indicates that the completion of the gospel is God's work much more than our own.

Rev 14 (Spiritual Lesson)–

In this chapter we see the climax of the gospel message in the Second Coming of Jesus.

Rev 14 (Excursis on the Remnant)–

A central Adventist belief is self-identification with the remnant of Rev 12:17.

Adventist self-identification as the remnant of Rev has recently been challenged both in and outside the church.

A better understanding of remnant requires a fresh look at its use in the entire Bible.

The end-time people of God are named by many names in Rev; remnant, 144,000, saints, great multitude, etc.

The end-time remnant of Rev are identified by their keeping of the commandments and a visionary gift like John's.

In Rev 10:5-7 God's end-time people (the remnant) give the final proclamation of the gospel.

The final proclamation of the gospel is given through the lens found in the books of

Daniel and Revelation (Rev 10:5-11).

Rev 11:1-2 tell us that the end-time gospel will include a focus on the heavenly sanctuary.

The end-time gospel will include a strong emphasis on obedience to all of God's commandments.

The context of the end-time gospel is deception on earth and judgment in heaven.

The remnant of Revelation offers a unique combination of truths to the world.

The best way to understand the remnant of Revelation is to understand its entire context throughout Scripture.

The root concept behind the Hebrew and Greek words for remnant is survival in the context of a disaster.

If a remnant of a tribe survives a disaster or an attempted genocide, that tribe can reconstitute itself over time.

In the OT there are three types of remnant; historical, faithful and eschatological.

Noah, Jacob and Abraham are examples of historical remnants with a spiritual dimension.

The remnant idea in the bible is not limited to the use of specific remnant words.

The root concept of remnant has to do with survivors of a disaster. It need have no spiritual component.

Historical remnants are the literal descendants of a historical response to the actions of God in the world.

In the spiritual sense, historical remnants are a mixture of faithful and unfaithful people.

Faithful remnants are that portion of the historical remnant that is faithful to the original mission and values.

The best example of a faithful remnant in the OT is found in the story of Elijah (1 Kings 19:14-18).

Israel is the historical remnant in 1 Kings 19, Elijah and the 7000 are the faithful remnant.

Faithful remnants cannot be known and counted in human terms, they are known only to God (2 Tim 2:19).

The prophets anticipate faithful remnants that God will provide in the future.

The third type of remnant is eschatological. It was to be bigger and more faithful than previous remnants.

Isa 66 shows that the eschatological remnant includes many non-Israelites. It is a surprise.

The eschatological remnant of the OT is bigger and more international than previous remnants.

In Isa 19 the promise to Abraham's descendants now includes Assyria and Egypt!

The eschatological remnant of the prophets transcends all past experience, it is a surprise.

The eschatological remnant of the OT comes in two phases: 1) A renewed Israel, and 2) outreach to the nations.

In conclusion, there are three types of remnant in the OT, historical, faithful and eschatological.

The ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah's eschatological remnant is in the followers of Jesus. It is through the church that the promise (Gen 12:3) that Abraham would bless the world is fulfilled (Gal 3:6-16).

The church of the NT is a remnant that fulfills the national promises made to Israel (Exod 19:5-6).

The clearest remnant passage in the NT outside Revelation is Romans 11:1-5.

The followers of Jesus were a faithful remnant of OT Israel, their historical remnant.

In Paul's day the historical remnant was OT Israel.

For Paul's day the faithful remnant consisted of Jews who followed the Messiah, Jesus.

For Paul the future remnant would include a massive movement of Jews back to their Messiah.

The end-time remnant of Revelation proclaims an eight-fold message.

The remnant message in Revelation includes the gospel, Daniel and Rev, the heavenly sanctuary and the Sabbath.

The three-fold remnant pattern in the OT and Paul applies also to Revelation.

The historical remnant of Revelation is the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

To be a historical remnant is no basis for boasting and pride.

The faithful remnant of Revelation involves those SDAs who bear the original identity of the movement.

Today's eschatological remnant will be bigger and more diverse than we can now imagine.

Today's eschatological remnant will exceed the boundaries of Christianity.

Rev 14 (Excursus on the Remnant, Conclusion)–

In summary, there is more than one remnant in Scripture and history.

Historical remnants are always a mixture of faithful and unfaithful.

What counts today is faithfulness to the message and mission of the historical remnant.

Rev 14 (The Open Remnant)–

With God all things are possible, yet it seems difficult to imagine the divisions in this world healed by remnant theology.

Surprising recent historical research shows that the world needs remnant message of Revelation.

Historian James Dunn notes that early Christianity was not a new religion, but a branch of Judaism.

The earliest Christians and the Jews read the same Bible and worshiped the same God together.

Toward the end of the first Christian century Jews and Christians began parting ways.

The divide between Jews and Christians has been costly to both.

In parting ways with Judaism, Christianity lost its focus on Sabbath, law, and the value of

the OT for Christian faith.

Bart Ehrman notes that there were five or six versions of Christianity in the earliest centuries.

All the earliest versions of Christianity but one were suppressed by the fourth century.

The family of Jesus itself chose to follow a brand of Christianity that has not survived to this day.

Early Jewish Christianity kept Sabbath, ate kosher, and deeply appreciated the Law and the OT.

When Christianity settled into its “orthodox” form in the 4th Century, it had lost many things from its beginnings.

Orthodox Christianity today largely ignores the Sabbath and the OT, and uses the NT very selectively.

Standard Christianity is in great need of revival and reformation.

Mohammed didn’t come to start a new religion; the Qur’an builds on the earlier prophets (2:135-136; 4:150-152).

The Qur’an considers the Scriptures of Judaism and Christianity to be valid revelations (3:3-4; 10:94).

The Qur’an respected the religions of Judaism and Christianity (3:20; 16:125-128; 22:40).

In the partings of the ways, Christianity changed a great deal.

Each monotheistic faith retains important values that the other two generally reject.

Philip Jenkins notes the migration of early Christianity from the Middle East to Europe.

In recent years North America has become Christianity’s center of gravity.

In the last few decades Christianity as a whole is shifting south and east.

Christianity is returning to its roots in the East, offering the opportunity for a course correction.

The westernization of Christianity increased its distance from Judaism and Islam.

When Muslims approach the Bible, they read it unencumbered by centuries of Christian tradition.

The root meaning of “remnant” has to do with survivors of genocide or a natural disaster.

In a world where the survival of the human race is again at stake, the remnant theme has renewed relevance.

Christianity’s new easternization sets the context for a restoration of things western Christianity has lost.

The remnant message of Revelation is uniquely relevant to the times in which we live.

The remnant of Revelation seems uniquely designed as a meeting point for followers of the one true God.

Jew, Muslim and Christian can find common cause in the message and mission of Revelation’s remnant.

The God-ordained unity of the end-time is spiritual and relational rather than political or economic (John 17:20-23).

The eschatological remnant is the ultimate fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham

(Gen 12:1-3).

Secular westerners also have significant points of contact with the remnant message of Revelation.

Buddhists and Hindus will also find significant points of contact in Revelation's remnant.

Rev 14 (The Open Remnant Conclusion)–

Being a Seventh-day Adventist means to have a sense of a prophetic destiny.

Being a Seventh-day Adventist is no guarantee of salvation or faithfulness.

Even the best of religious institutions is flawed.

The best place to learn and grow in the remnant message is in the SDA Church.

While historical remnants are always flawed, they are the place where faithfulness can best occur.