

Revelation Chapter 14 - John Karmelich

1. This lesson is called, "Who's Saved, Who's Not and Who Cares". ☺
 - a) Chapter 14 is the third chapter in a series that I am calling "who's who in Revelation". These three chapters give brief overviews of all the key characters or group of characters that make up "The Great Tribulation".
 - i) In Chapter 12, the focus was on Satan himself as he was kicked out of heaven. The rest of the chapter focused on who was impacted by Satan being kicked out.
 - ii) In Chapter 13, the focus is on the rest of the "satanic trinity", which are two men commonly referred to as the antichrist and the "false-worship leader".
 - iii) In Chapter 14, the focus is on three things: 1) the "144,000" that were mentioned in chapter seven; 2) three angels that make proclamations to the world, and 3) two "harvests", one (presumably) of saved people and a judgment on unsaved people.
 - iv) None of this makes much sense together unless you understand it in context of all of Revelation. These three chapters are a break from the "earth judgment" process in order to describe the main characters for the remainder of Revelation, other than God and Jesus themselves.
2. Chapter 14 focuses on: 1) who is saved and 2) who is not.
 - a) I added the title "who cares" for our sake: The purpose of studying one's bible is not just to learn about the past or future, but to understand how it applies to our lives today.
 - b) Let me summarize the chapter and then I'll get back to the title:
 - i) First, there is a discussion of the 144,000 "saved" Jewish people that were first mentioned back in Chapter 7. Essentially, what is said in Chapter 14 is these 144,000 people are still saved and they sing a unique praise song to God.
 - ii) Next, we have three angels telling the whole world in effect, "OK, everyone, time's just about up. Either trust God and not the antichrist or you're going down!" ☺
 - iii) Finally, we have two "harvestings" of people on earth. Presumably, one harvest is of saved people and the other harvest (more of a condemnation) is for specific group of unsaved people. They are collected and sent to either heaven or hell.
 - iv) Much of Chapter 14 is a "prelude" to things to come in future chapters. Part of this chapter summarizes events described in more detail in the next few chapters.
 - c) The key is not to read this chapter and think, "Oh that's interesting, some people are saved and some are not. Hooray for the good guys." ☺ In this chapter, God is reaching out to the unsaved. We have three different angels telling the world in effect, "Come on, everyone, last chance before it's too late!" In the next two chapters, we will have the final phase of the "destruction judgment process" of the world. Before that happens, God is doing everything possible to get people to repent, without violating their free will!
 - i) This leads back to the "who cares" aspect of the title of this lesson! God cares! God is making every effort possible to save people before it is too late.
 - ii) Remember the key to Christianity is to go along with God's game plan. God never wants us to just sit there say, "Well, I'm saved. Your salvation is your problem!" A command given by Jesus is for us to preach the Gospel. (See: Matthew 28:19-20.)
 - d) Does that mean we have to quit our jobs and be full-time missionaries? For some people that is true. God usually makes it obvious for those who choose that route.
 - i) For the rest of us, we "are" in the full time missionary business whether we realize it or not. It might be to witness to our neighbors, our family, those we work with. My point is as Christians, we are "living" witnesses for Jesus. God is taking the time and trouble to warn as many people as possible as much as possible that the end is coming and it's not pretty. ☺

- ii) There are many around us that are going to hell for eternity. If we love them, we need to tell them that truth. It doesn't mean we force them at gunpoint. It has to be a free-will decision on everyone's part.
 - iii) I should add we don't get "points" for every person we save. Our job is simply to preach the Gospel message, effectively and clearly. The results are God's problem.
 - iv) The point is when you study Chapter 14 think about "our part" in dealing with salvation. We will read of God going through all sorts of efforts to lead people to salvation. God's will for our lives is for us to get involved with His plan.
3. Chapter 14, Verse 1: Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.
- a) First, let's think about this verse in context of the last two chapters:
 - i) Chapter 12 was about a vision where "Satan fell from heaven". Satan was (or will be) kicked out of heaven. Since his time on earth is now limited, he focuses on attacking as many believers as he could in order to stall Jesus Second Coming as long as possible.
 - ii) Chapter 13 focused on Satan's "unholy trinity", for a lack of a better term. It described the antichrist and a false worship leader. This chapter gives more details of end time Satan's plan. Somehow, Satan influences these two people to lead a worldwide empire that turns people away from God.
 - b) This leads to a question for Chapter 14: Is anyone saved through this time period? One gets the impression in Chapter 13 that people are so swayed by this world leader (the antichrist), that there is no hope for those living in that time frame. Chapter 14 is the answer to that question. It describes groups that are saved during this time period.
 - i) It also describes the fact that God is still warning people during this time frame about what is still to come.
 - c) With all of that in mind, we can now talk about Verse 1: In this verse, we have a lamb standing on Mount Zion. With this lamb are 144,000 people. On the forehead of the 144,000 people is the name of the "Lamb's Father".
 - i) The "Lamb" is a title for Jesus. This is presumed based on the fact "His (lamb's) father's name is on their forehead. We've read earlier in Revelation that a title of Jesus is "The lamb that had been slain" (Rev. 5:6, 5:12, 13:8).
 - ii) So why doesn't the text just say Jesus? Why use the "lamb" title? The idea is to teach how this group of 144,000 was saved! We are not saved because God is impressed with our lives. We are saved because we trust in the shed blood of Jesus, our sacrificial lamb, for our sins. The same applies to this group of 144,000. They stand next to the "lamb who was slain" (Rev. 13:8) as that is their hope and our hope for our salvation!
 - d) The text says this group of 144,000 has God ("the Father") name written on their forehead.
 - i) In the last chapter, we had the antichrist putting "His seal" on those who belong to him. That was the idea of the antichrist's number ("666") or the antichrist's name (whatever that is) is put on either the forehead or the right hand of those who are his. The idea here is "contrast": God is showing that while Satan is sealing "his" followers, God has already sealed those who follow Him.
 - ii) Whether or not this is some sort of literal seal is irrelevant to me. The important fact is, "If God says you are saved, you are saved."
 - e) This leads to a discussion of who are these 144,000 people anyway?
 - i) Back in Chapter 7, this same group was mentioned. The Nation of Israel was once divided into twelve separate tribes. That tribal division no longer exists in the sense that we no longer have any records of who belongs to what tribe (based on ones father's lineage). Since "God is God", he still knows each Jewish person and what is their tribal origin. God "chooses" 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes.

- ii) The purpose of this is to fulfill unconditional promises made to the Nation of Israel. God said this nation would inherit the Promised Land forever. That means God is going to need a specific group of saved-Jewish people to fulfill that role, and thus, 144,000 are chosen. Revelation Chapter 7 specifies that 12,000 come from each tribe. I can argue with a handful of bible verses that there are actually more Jewish people saved in the end, but these 144,000 are singled out as "starters".
 - f) Another point made in this verse is this group is standing on Mount Zion.
 - i) This is a mountain (technically a large hill) in Jerusalem. This is the specific location where the original temple stood. The first permanent structure temple was built by King Solomon on this spot. Mount Zion is mentioned over a hundred times in the Old Testament.
 - ii) The point is when Jesus comes back, it won't be to say, a small suburb in Ohio. ☺ He returns to Jerusalem and specifically to the central point of worship for the Jewish nation. The idea is this group of 144,000 survive this Great Tribulation period and at one point is gathered with Jesus at Mount Zion.
 - a) "Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion." (Psalm 2:6 NIV)
 - g) Let's back to my title of this lesson: "Who's saved, who's not and who cares".
 - i) Among the group that is saved is this group of 144,000. The relevance to us is to comprehend that if God picks you and me, we are definitely sealed for all of eternity. Although some scholars disagree with this view, I'll argue that we can't mess that up if we tried. In other words, if we still continue to trust in Jesus for the payment of our sins, we can't "sin enough" to lose that salvation. That doesn't mean we should try to "out sin" God. ☺ If we truly love God, we desire to obey His commandments. The point is we can have peace of knowing that how much we mess up, we, like this group of 144,000 are still saved.
4. Verse 2: And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps.
- a) From Verse 2 to 5 is more information about this group of 144,000. Verse 2 focuses on different "sounds" that John hears at this moment.
 - b) Whatever John heard, you get the impression it was loud. Remember when John wrote Revelation he was banished on an island used as a Roman penal colony. (Ref. Rev. 1:9). John would understand what the "roar of rushing waters" was like. The same would apply to a "peal of thunder". The idea is a single blast of thunder.
 - c) The third sound description is that of "harpists playing their harps".
 - i) Whatever this sound was, it was distinguishable. It wasn't just a loud blast of sound, it had the distinguished sound of harps playing.
 - ii) Back in Chapter 5 Verse 8, we had a description of 24 elders in heaven. Each had a harp and sang a song of praise to God.
 - d) Let me add Verse 3 and then put this all together:
5. Verse 3: And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders.
- a) The "they" in Verse 3 is the 144,000. Remember this group of 144,000 is standing on earth. Specifically they are standing on Mt. Zion, which is in Jerusalem.
 - b) This group of 144,000 is singing a "new song" (more on that in a moment) before the "four living creatures and the (24) elders".
 - c) A point of these verses is the location between heaven and earth is blurred.
 - i) Here are these 144,000 on earth singing a praise song.
 - ii) When this group of 144,000 started singing, John didn't hear sounds from earth, but John heard sounds coming out of heaven. This is the four living creatures and the "24 elders" of Chapter 4 who are in heaven are mentioned.
 - iii) It is as if heaven is saying, "They're singing our song, let's listen!"

- d) One has to understand heaven is not a location somewhere in outer space. Heaven is a literal place that exists in dimensions that we as humans cannot perceive. Just as "God is everywhere" in that physical sense "Heaven is everywhere" in that it is a world we cannot perceive, but somehow, it is all around us.
- i) One gets the impression nothing bridges and unites the gap between the world as we know it and the world as we cannot see it like praising God.
 - ii) That is the key point of these verses. These 144,000 are praising God and those who are in heaven are aware of their praise song.
 - iii) Now we can get back to the "voice of many waters and the peal of thunder". This voice or voices are coming from heaven. It could be the sound of those in heaven reacting to the praise coming from this group of 144,000. My view (it is just that) is the voice from heaven is that of God giving His approval to this 144,000.
6. Verse 3 (second sentence): No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.
- a) The first sentence of Verse 3 said this was a "new song".
 - b) The second sentence here says that no one could learn this song other than the 144,000.
 - c) So, whatever this song is, it is not in our hymnal. ☺ It is unique to the 144,000.
 - d) I'm speculating here, but I suspect that their "new song" tells the story of how they were redeemed. What is not told in Revelation is how they were picked, the story of their salvation or exactly what they do on earth during this Great Tribulation. Songs in the bible are often stories recalling events. I suspect that is their song of the redeemed.
 - i) When the Israelites were first saved out of Egypt, Moses wrote a song that describes the event. (Ref.: Exodus 15). I wonder if that is the same idea here. Just as the Israelites sang their song of redemption, so do the "144,000".
 - e) When you or I look back at our lives as Christians, we can recall how God has "called us". We can see how our lives were changed for the better. My point is each of us has a "unique song" in that how I was saved is a different story than how you were saved.
 - f) This gets back to the application of these verses. It is not just a history lesson about the 144,000. The idea is this group was saved for a purpose, and that was to give glory to God in all that they do. They take time off to sing praises to God.
 - g) So is that what Christians are supposed to do? Quit our jobs and sing praises to God all day long? ☺ God still calls us to "live a life" here on earth. One extreme mistake is to never take the time to praise God for our redemption. The other extreme mistake is to ignore what God has called us to do in order to spend all of our time praising God.
 - i) To take time to praise God puts our lives in perspective. We all have problems. Taking the time to praise God for our eternal salvation gets our minds off the problem and reminds us that we are saved forever.
 - ii) What if I'm not a bad singer or don't know any praise songs? ☺ This goes back to the Christian tag line of "God is not looking for ability but availability. It isn't our singing ability God is impressed with. God desires we simply take the time to praise Him, (individually and collectively) for what He has done for us.
7. Verse 4: These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb.
- a) Here we have a further description of the 144,000.
 - b) First, let me talk about what is not said about this group: Their purpose on earth.
 - i) When you read through bible commentaries, one will read that this group of 144,000 is "Jewish Evangelists" that preach to the whole world. While that sounds wonderful, there is only one problem with that theory: It's not in this text. It may be true. The point is we don't know what they do. All we do know is this group is picked by God as being saved. Here in Verses 4-5 we get a few more details.

- c) The first thing said about this group is "they did not defile themselves with women".
- i) The literal interpretation is they were virgins all of their life.
 - ii) It is important to emphasize that God is not "anti-marriage". You and I would not be around today if it weren't for marriage and sexual relationships.
 - iii) God called this specific group to be single, not all Christians.
 - iv) Paul brings up the topic of celibacy and marriage in 1st Corinthians Chapter 7. The basic idea is that marriage is a good thing, but that God does call some people to be single and only focus their lives on God alone. Protestants and Roman Catholics disagree on the issue of whether their priests/pastors should marry. The text only states that God calls "some" to celibacy, but the text is never more specific on that point.
- d) In the bible, the term "adultery" and "idolatry" are often used as synonyms.
- i) When one commits adultery, one is being unfaithful to their spouse.
 - ii) When one commits idolatry, one is being unfaithful to God.
 - iii) I bring this point up here as the idea of "virgins" has another word picture: The basic idea is these 144,000 are always loyal to God and did not commit the sin of "unfaithfulness" to which they were called.
 - iv) This verse is not a call for all Christians to remain single. The idea is we are loyal to God in all of our lives. That is a word-picture for "purity".
- e) The next sentence says, "They (144,000) follow the lamb wherever he goes".
- i) There is a term in the entertainment industry called a "posse" or sometimes an "entourage". You will see a celebrity enter a room followed by some group that goes wherever the famous person goes. If the famous person turns left, the "posse" or "entourage" turns left. It makes you wonder what these people do anyway! I make this point as I don't think the 144,000 is a big "posse" that literal turns left when Jesus turns left. ☺
 - ii) Again, we have this 144,000 follow Jesus wherever he goes. I believe this is a word-picture and not an "entourage". The idea is they are loyal to Jesus during the Great Tribulation. If Jesus orders them to do something, they do it.
 - iii) Hopefully, this tag line of "follow the lamb wherever he goes" is something that can be applied to you and me. If Jesus tells us to do something, hopefully we obey. In that sense, we are following Jesus wherever he goes.
 - iv) Could this verse be more literal? I wouldn't rule that out. Remember in the opening verse of this chapter Jesus is standing on Mt. Zion with this group. Maybe they are His "posse". ☺
- f) The next sentence says, "They (144,000) were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb.
- i) It's important at this point to define "firstfruits". Imagine if one owns a large fruit farm. Let's say its harvest time and one plans on picking all the fruit. The first day of picking would get the first (group of) fruits or "first fruits". The idea is that this is not all the fruit, just the one picked on the first day of harvesting.
 - ii) That word picture "first-fruits" is used in the bible to represent the "first" of a group that was picked. For example, Jesus was the "firstfruits" of those who are saved. (Ref.: 1st Corinthians 15:20). It means that Jesus was the first to go to heaven from among those who are saved, and then everyone else.
 - iii) The word "firstfruits" as it is used here in Revelation is that the 144,000 were the "firstfruits" picked in the Great Tribulation.
 - iv) What is implied (here's the important part!) is that if the 144,000 are firstfruits, they are not the only fruit! The point is they are not the only ones saved during the Great Tribulation. The point is they were "only" picked first.

- v) Remember the implied question of Chapter 13 is, "Is anyone saved during this Great Tribulation Period? The answer is yes. It starts with the 144,000 and then many others are saved. That is why some commentators speculate the 144,000 are some sort of Jewish Evangelists during this time frame.
 - g) This leads back to you and me. We may not have been picked first, but we were picked. We are sealed to God just as these 144,000. We are called to live in loyalty to God just as this group is called to live in loyalty. We are called to not defile ourselves with sin just as this group was. I'm not saying that the church is symbolically this group of 144,000. My point is we are called to live the same way this group is called to live: Our devotion is to God first. From His power, we then minister to those around us.
8. Verse 5: No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.
- a) Verse 5 is the final description of the 144,000. Nothing else is said about them in the bible.
 - b) Remember that this is "The Great Tribulation" period when the 144,000 are around.
 - i) Look what else is said about this time frame: "For this reason God sends them (unbelievers) powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness." (2nd Thessalonians 2:11 NIV)
 - ii) Something significant happens during the Great Tribulation so that "the lie" is prevalent. Whatever "the lie" is, it has something to do with what the antichrist preaches. My point here is as to the 144,000, "no lie was found in their mouths".
 - iii) Do I think these 144,000 are "perfect people" with no sin? That would be a first in human history. ☺ What I do see is God gives them the power to be loyal to God the Father and Jesus the Son all during this time frame. They never lie to save their lives despite the persecution.
 - c) If these 144,000 are "blameless" in their loyalty to Jesus, does that mean we are not saved if we have moments of doubt? No. All people have a desire to be liked and loved. It is easy to keep quiet about our faith and not offend people. I don't think that is the issue. The issue is when the moment of truth comes and we have to declare our loyalty to God or something else, the Christian bluntly states their loyalty to God, even at the point of death. With that understood, God does desire we have the boldness to speak for Him when the moment presents itself.
 - d) The verse also says these 144,000 are "blameless". Again, I don't see that as being perfect as no human is ever perfect. There is another expression in Christianity that "God sees us through cross-filtered glasses". The idea is that God has forgiven all of our sins, past, present and future and sees us in our future, "perfectly forgiven" state. These 144,000 are blameless in that the "sacrificial Lamb of God" has paid the price for their sins.
 - e) With that said, we can actually move on to the next topic!
9. Verse 6: Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth--to every nation, tribe, language and people.
- a) We are now switching topics. The scene switches from this 144,000 singing a praise song to a vision of three angels. Verse 6 is the first of three angels that speak.
 - i) Each of these three angels give a specific message.
 - ii) Each of the three angels follow each other. The second angel gives a message that specifically follows the first angel. The third angel's message follows the second.
 - b) The first thing to notice is "another" angel. When was the first angel?
 - i) The last angel mentioned was back in Chapter 8. This was the angel that said in effect, "woe, woe woe" to those on earth. (Ref.: Rev. 8:13). The woe's themselves were specific judgments that were already described in previous chapters.
 - ii) The point here is just as the angel of Chapter 8 announced the "woe's" to the world, here is another angel announcing "something" to the world.

- c) Notice Verse 6 says this angel spoke to "every nation, tribe, language and people".
 - i) I have to admit I wondered how this practically was going to happen. In our world of satellite television, this is easy to visualize. Maybe the angel just flew over Jerusalem, and the event was televised over the world. Maybe the angel was visible to the whole world in every language. If "God is God", He can do anything and somehow it will happen.
 - d) Let's get back to the title of this lesson: "Who's saved, who's not and who cares".
 - i) The answer to "who cares" is God cares. If God didn't care about unsaved people, He never would have bothered sending these angels in the first place.
 - ii) God is going to make the Gospel message more obvious one day as to not give people an excuse that they didn't know better.
 - iii) In other words, one cannot tell God in judgment day, "You never told me You were God. I never knew better". Here we read of God sending an angel to proclaim the truth. Ignorance will not be allowed as an excuse. Obviously, God will judge all people fairly and I'm positive God makes exceptions for say, small children. The general idea is the world will know God's truth.
 - iv) In our world of modern communications, and the gospel preached constantly on radio, television and the internet, most people today cannot plead ignorance.
10. Verse 7: He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."
- a) In Verse 7, we have the actual message of the first (of three) angels.
 - b) Notice the words of Angel #1 never mention Jesus. It is a basic "fear the God that made heavens and the earth" type of message.
 - i) Before you can convince people of their need for Jesus, people need to understand that there is a single God to begin with. You can't preach Jesus to an atheist if they don't believe in a "God the Father" to begin with.
 - ii) The message of "Angel #1" is a real basic "there is a god" type of message.
 - c) Remember what is happening during this Great Tribulation: The antichrist is organizing a world-empire that is very "human based" as opposed to God-centered. The idea of this world empire has a "man can make it all by themselves" type of message. (At least that's how I envision it.) Here is Angel #1 giving a message of the opposite view, that there is a God and people should worship that God. In the next 4 verses, we have two more angels to give a more detailed message.
11. Verse 8: A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries."
- a) The second angel's message deals with the "Fall of Babylon", whatever that means.
 - b) As I stated in the introduction, this chapter gives some "introductions" to themes found later in Revelation. Chapters 17-18 focus on the fall of Babylon.
 - c) The term "Babylon" is both literal and figurative. It refers to a literal city and a literal historical empire. The famous "Tower of Babel" has the same root word as Babylon.
 - d) In Chapter 17, we'll get into much more detail on the topic of Babylon. In summary, it represents everything that is opposed to God. It represents the world empire set up by the antichrist. It is the "great equivalent" of the Tower of Babel where man organized a rebellion against God. It is much more than that, and we'll deal with it in Chapter 17.
 - e) Back to "Angel #2" this angel is making a future prediction as if it is a historical event.
 - i) It would be like proclaiming the winner of a major sports event five years from now, as if it already happened.
 - ii) As of Chapter 14, "Babylon" still exists. The angel is announcing it "is" fallen.
 - iii) Remember that the world at the time of the Great Tribulation follows the antichrist and his world-wide system. The angel is saying in effect, "This guy and this system will be toast! ☺ Follow God instead!"

- f) The text says Babylon, "Made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries".
 - i) One cannot take this too literal. It does not mean the antichrist forced everybody to drink wine, get drunk and go have adulterous affairs on their spouses.
 - ii) Again, "idolatry" and "adultery" are synonyms in the bible. Adultery is to be unfaithful to one's spouse. Idolatry is to be unfaithful to God himself. The antichrist leads to world to turn against God, therefore, the word picture is "maddening wine" (i.e., propaganda, false teaching) to turn the world against God.
 - g) Notice the word "drink" as used by "Angel #2".
 - i) With "Angel #3" God says people will "drink the wine of God's fury". (Verse 10).
 - ii) The idea is to connect the two "drinking" references. The point is God will punish people for the specific world-wide sin of idolatry on a massive scale.
12. Verse 9: A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand,¹⁰ he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath.
- a) The third angel is warning the word that whoever worships the beast (i.e., the antichrist) or takes his mark (on his forehead or hand) will get "God's wrath".
 - b) The wrath of God is described as the "wine of God's fury".
 - i) I'm not positive what God's wrath entails, but I do know I don't want to be around when it happens. ☹ The wrath of God is compared to a cup full of wine being poured out. This is an Old Testament idiom as if the God of Universe could put all of His wrath in a cup and then suddenly pour it all out at once.
 - ii) Jesus referenced this "cup of wrath" once. Jesus prayed in effect that if there was any other way for man to have salvation other than Him dying on the cross, let that "way" happen. This is the only recorded prayer where God the Father in effect said "no" to Jesus' prayer request. Jesus' specific words were "let this cup pass from me". (Matthew 26:39 KJV). Jesus was referring to the "cup of wrath".
 - iii) The idea is that Jesus took upon Himself the full wrath of God for the sins of mankind. For those who refuse to accept Jesus punishment, this same "cup of wrath" is poured on them.
 - iv) Does this literally mean God has a wine cup in His hand and then pours it on the world? I don't think so. It's a figure of speech. The idea is the wrath comes so suddenly, it is like a drink being spilled out of cup.
 - c) Let's put the message of the 3 angels together:
 - i) The first one said in effect, "Worship the God who made everything".
 - ii) The second one said in effect, "The antichrist and his system will fall, count on it".
 - iii) The third one said in effect, "Anyone who follows the antichrist is going to hell".
 - iv) Putting this together, this is God's "last ditch effort" to get people to follow Him. Remember my lesson title: "Who's saved, who's not and who cares". The answer is God cares, and He's doing everything possible without violating free will.
 - v) Looking at the rest of this chapter, one can see some get saved and some do not. The point is even if "flying angels in heaven" preach God and repentance; some people simply refuse to change. Some people are so content with their immoral lifestyle, that even miracles or angels are not enough to change them.
 - vi) Does God know who will be saved and who will not? Of course! Then why is He bothering to try save people in the first place? The answer is we don't know who is saved. That is why God calls Christians to get involved with the program. I get the impression these angels make a difference to some. If God is willing to show us that He goes to every effort possible to save people, so should we. If God cares about the unsaved, so should we.

13. Verse 10 (cont.): He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.
- a) The word "He" at the start of this text refers to those who refuse to repent.
 - i) The word "He" refers to anyone who won't accept Jesus payment for their sins and refuses to change their lifestyle based on that belief.
 - b) This is one of the toughest things to accept about Christianity: Those who don't accept the Gospel message are sent to hell to suffer for eternity. Let that sink in for a moment.
 - c) Why do the condemned have to suffer for eternity? Since they only lived a "lifetime", wouldn't another equivalent of a lifetime be punishment enough? Why doesn't God just exterminate people so they no longer exist?
 - i) The answer is whether we like it or not, our soul lives for eternity. God set it up that way to motivate us to turn to Him.
 - d) Some people argue that hell is just the absence of God. My view of hell is that God is present. It is just that God's love and His grace are no longer present.
 - i) Another way to look at this is, "It's God's Universe. He created it. He makes the rules. If He says we exist forever in heaven or hell, we have to accept His rules.
 - e) The question is, "Is it fair of God to send someone to hell forever for refusing to turn to Him? Along the same lines, is it fair that God gives saved people an eternity of blessing for accepting Jesus for their salvation?
 - i) The answer is it would require an "eternity" to pay the price for all the sins we have committed. If we are going to live with a perfect God for eternity, we have to be perfectly forgiven. We can't do that with an eternity of time. A perfect substitute is needed on our behalf.
 - f) OK, enough theology, back to the text! ☺ The text also says hell involves torment with burning sulfur.
 - i) The question is, "Is God being literal when hell is eternal with burning sulfur?" It could be literal. Thank God we don't have to find out first hand! ☺ The non-literal argument is that God is using word-pictures that we can relate to for suffering. Either way, it's something to be avoided. God is dishing out the punishment mankind "deserves" for the sins of a lifetime.
 - ii) Imagine from God's perspective how insulting it is to turn down His free gift of salvation. God is saying in effect, "I've allowed My only Son to suffer for your sins and that's not good enough for you?" That is why the alternative is so horrid.
 - iii) If you've ever heard the expression, a "fire and brimstone" sermon, it is based on this text. That cliché is used when a preacher is emphasizing hell in the sermon.
 - iv) For what its worth, Jesus spent more time in the Gospels warning of going to hell than He does speaking of the glories of heaven.
14. Verse 12: This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. ¹³ Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."
- a) Verses 12 and 13 are best understood in context of the entire book of Revelation. Remember that the Great Tribulation is happening. God has granted the antichrist "victory" over the saints (Ref: Rev. 13: 7). People would wonder during that time frame, "What is going to happen to me? Is it too late for me to be saved?"
 - b) Those of us who believe the rapture happens prior to the Great Tribulation are also "fans" of this verse. Think of it this way: If the Christian church is "raptured" prior to this future time frame, then those who turn to Jesus during this time frame will wonder if it is too late to be saved. These verses give assurance of one's salvation to those living at that time.

- i) That is why (my opinion) the text says, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord for now on". If you think about it, that statement is silly all until itself. How can these (saved) dead be "more blessed" than other Christians? The answer is this verse is given as an assurance to those who suffer during the Great Tribulation.
 - c) This leads back to the title of this lesson, "Who's saved, who's not and who cares". During the Great Tribulation, God cares very much for those who are loyal to Him, despite the fact the antichrist is allowed a temporary "victory" over Christians.
 - i) The same principal applies today. Satan and his demonic forces are occasionally granted "temporary victories" over us, as God tests our faith during tough times. At the same time, we have to know we are blessed "from now on". In other words, Satan may win a victory, but not the war itself.
 - ii) By the way, this text is never a call for suicide. God and God-alone decides when our time is up and not us. If we live for God, we then live on His timing.
 - d) Back to the text, the idea is for "patience". God understands that Christians are suffering during this time frame. God is saying in effect, "This is terrible, but it's only for a set period of time. It will not continue forever. Have patience, your victory is guaranteed!"
15. Verse 14: I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. ¹⁵ Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." ¹⁶ So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.
- a) Verses 14 to the end of the chapter start a new topic. It is about the "harvesting" of the earth. It uses word pictures to describe taking people off the earth and sending them to either heaven or hell. What is not clear from the text is "where they are going".
 - b) Verses 14 to the end of the chapter describe two "harvests" of the earth. The first one is these three verses. Understand that Verses 17-20 describe a second harvest.
 - i) What is assumed is that one harvest is describing the taking from earth those that are saved. The second harvest is describing the judgment of sending some to hell. Just what "is" this harvest is debated among scholars. More on that in a moment.
 - c) Now let's go back to Verse 14. The key character in this verse is "the son of man". Whoever the "son of man" is, this character has a crown of gold on his head, he is sitting on a white cloud and has a sharp sickle in his hand.
 - i) Jesus used the term "son of man" constantly (about 80 times!) to describe Himself (usually in the 3rd person). Remember that Jesus is "100% God and 100% human". The idea of the title of "Son of Man" reflects the fact that Jesus became human for our sake. In the Old Testament, that term "Son of Man" is used to refer to humanity as everyone is the children of Adam and Eve. The difference is Jesus is "the" Son of Man in that He is God who became human for our sakes.
 - a) Why this title here? Because Jesus, as a human is the one "qualified" to judge humanity as He understands what it is like to be a human.
 - ii) I've mentioned this in earlier lessons, but whenever God appears on earth, it is almost always with some sort of "cloud" reference. The word-picture is that clouds blur the vision (think of fog). The idea is we can't full comprehend God just as we can't see clearly through fog.
 - iii) The text says the Son of Man has a "crown of gold". The word crown in the Greek is a "victory crown" as if the Son of Man won a gold medal. The idea is He was victorious over sin and now wears the crown of His achievement.
 - iv) Finally, the Son of Man has a sharp sickle. This is a long stick with a sharp blade on the end used for harvesting wheat. People would swing at the wheat, near the ground to cut it up. The idea is a "harvest" of wheat.

- d) Now we can put the imagery of these verses all together:
 - i) It is Jesus coming back to "harvest" the world.
 - ii) Remember that Chapter 14 is not the end of Revelation. Chapters 12-14 describe the key characters and groups that are involved in the Great Tribulation. Much of Chapter 14 is sort of an "overview" chapter that describes the end time events.
 - iii) What's my point? Just as the three angels were describing future events as if they were a "done deal", so is this "harvest" describing a future gathering of people to either heaven or hell as if it is a done deal. The point is this is not "the end" here in Chapter 14. It is describing judgment at the end of the Great Tribulation.
 - e) My personal view is these three verses are describing those who are saved.
 - i) I can't prove that from the text, as it is not stated. I've read commentators who I respect who believe that both "harvests" describe condemnation judgment.
 - ii) The reason I believe this first harvest is of saved souls is because Jesus himself is "harvesting" in these three verses. In the next three verses "only" an angel comes and harvests some other group. Personally, I see Jesus coming back "for His own", i.e., those who are saved during the Great Tribulation. Then comes an angel to "deal with the mess" that is left. ☺
 - f) Let's finish Verses 15-16. The remainder of these verses is an angel telling "The Son of Man" to go reap the harvest.
 - i) Some people have a problem with an angel "commanding" Jesus to go start this harvest. Personally, I don't have a problem. Jesus is God and He can do whatever He wants. That announcement was for "us" so we know what is happening.
16. Verse 17: Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. ¹⁸ Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe."
- a) Here in Verse 17, we have two angels in view in this "second harvesting".
 - i) The first angel has a sharp sickle and comes to reap the earth.
 - ii) The second angel "who had charge of fire" told the first angel to go to the earth and harvest the grapes because the "grapes are ripe".
 - b) Whatever this second harvest is, it is not good.
 - i) Again, Jesus Himself did the "gathering" the first time in Verses 14-16. "Only" an angel did this gathering the second time here in Verses 17-18. This is why I believe the first gathering was of saved people. It is as if Jesus was "above" having to deal with the unsaved and sent an angel to do that job.
 - ii) Note that the next two chapters describe further judgment of the earth. These verses in Chapter 14 are an overview of what will be described later in Revelation.
 - c) Notice the word "earth" near the end of Verse 18. The grapes are from the "earth's vine".
 - i) There is a consistent word picture in the bible that Christians are to be "in the world" but not of the world. (See John 8:23 and 18:36). The idea of "belonging to the earth" is that people who care more about "human" things than God. It is about people who rebel against God in that they won't change their lifestyle to life in conformance with God's desire for their life.
 - d) When the text says the "grapes are ripe", this is a word picture. The idea is that the world is "ready" for the final harvest of those who are not saved.
 - e) One last issue and we'll wrap up this text. The second angel "had charge of the fire".
 - i) Remember that God's throne room is similar in design to the Tabernacle built in Exodus (Ref.: Hebrews 8:5). In that tabernacle there are three "fires": 1) there is the fire of on the sacrificial altar, 2) the fire of the oil lamp and 3) the fire that starts the incense lamp.

- ii) Of those three fires, the "incense fire" represents the prayers to God. That would best tie to this picture in the sense that when we pray "Thy Kingdom Come" we are praying for Jesus to come back and wrap things up. Part of that wrap up process is condemning to hell those who refuse to turn to God.
 - a) My point is the "angel who had the charge of the fire" refers to the incense fire in God's Tabernacle.
 - iii) This point may appear trivial. My point is, as terrible as it is to send people to hell for eternity, it is an answer to prayer. When we pray for God's will to be done, we have to accept it is God's will and not our will. Part of God's will is to gather together all who are saved (See Ephesians 1:10) and then God has to "dispose" of those who refuse that choice out of free will.
 - a) Again, Revelation doesn't end here at Chapter 14. We'll get far more details about this judgment process in future chapters.
17. Verse 19: The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. ²⁰ They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.
- a) In the previous set of verses, an angel "harvested" the grapes of the earth. In these verses, the "grapes" were put in a winepress. Blood flowed out of the winepress and covered a distance of 1,600 stadia.
 - b) Verse 20 says, "The grapes are gathered in a wine press and blood flowed out of the press." One has to think of red grapes. The idea is red grape juice can be similar to blood in color. The obvious point is we are not talking about literal grapes, but it is a comparison to people being killed in this judgment and the blood is splattered.
 - c) If you're like me, you're first question is, "What is 1,600 stadia?" ☺
 - i) The word "stadia" is transliterated (not-translated) from the Greek. The King James calls it "furlongs". Those of you familiar with American horse racing know that horse races are measured in furlongs. In essence, it is about 180 miles.
 - ii) The point is the blood from this judgment splatters for a distance of 180 miles.
 - d) This "second harvest" is focusing on a specific judgment of a specific group of unbelievers. Let me explain further:
 - i) Let's start with the word "city" in Verse 20. Wherever this judgment is taking place, it is just outside of the "city", as if that is going to help us. ☺
 - ii) In the bible, when the word "city" appears, it is pretty safe to assume it is referring to Jerusalem if no other geographical location is mentioned. Jerusalem is the key bible location where the "action" of Revelation takes place.
 - a) So whatever is happening, it is happening just outside of Jerusalem.
 - b) Later in Revelation, we'll read of the gathering of a large army to fight against "God's people". This is the famous "Battle of Armageddon" that we'll get to in Chapter 16.
 - c) The text states that the blood is seen "as high as the horse's bridle" (i.e., a horse's head) and as far as 180 miles. My view is not that this is a river of blood say, 8 feet high and 180 miles long. My view is that this army dies on the battlefield and the blood of that army splatters as high as 8 feet off the ground and as far as 180 miles.
 - d) In terms of modern warfare, a battlefield of 180 miles is not that unusual. Army and tank formations can be spread over that distance as they attack a location. That great of a distance was unheard of in ancient times, but in modern warfare, it is not that unusual.

- e) I stated earlier that some commentators see the first "harvest" as a reference to Jesus judging all the damned people of the earth and this second "harvest" as to some specific judgment on a group of people that attack Israel. That is because this second judgment has to do with a specific event that will happen near Jerusalem.
 - i) My view is that the first "harvest" is a gathering of believers and the second "harvest" is the gathering of those who are condemning Israel. Remember that there is a view (I hold this view) that some unbelievers do survive the Great Tribulation. Jesus comes back to rule over those that survive.
 - ii) No matter how one looks at this text, remember that in the end, "some are saved and some are not". That is the more important point.
18. Once again, back to our title of "Who is saved, who is not and who cares":
- a) Chapter 14 speaks in word pictures about specific groups that are saved (i.e., the 144,000), warnings of judgment to those living on earth (the three angels and their proclamation) and finally of two great "judgment-harvests" that are assumedly, at or near the end of the Great Tribulation. What all of this text has in common is "some people get saved and some do not." The text goes out of its way to say those who are not saved will suffer for eternity with no letting up on that suffering.
 - b) The "who cares" part of the title applies to both God and you and me.
 - i) If God didn't care about those who are about to suffer for eternity, He never would even bother with the three angels sent in the middle of the chapter.
 - ii) The idea is for us to understand that "everyone" is sentenced to hell for not living up to God's standards, but God out of His love for us provided the solution to avoid what we deserve. If God the Father didn't care, Jesus would not have come.
 - iii) If you think about it, God could have made us robotic-like creatures that serve Him. The problem is then we would not choose God out of our own free will. That is why God never "forces" salvation on anyone. It must be our choice. God's "big game plan" is He wants to spend eternity to show His love to us.
 - iv) At the same time, God wants to show His love to those who desire that concept. Thus, God created free will. God is perfect. His standards for mankind must be perfect. That is why we must be "perfectly forgiven" to spend eternity with Him.
 - v) Is God being unloving by sending people to hell forever? In a sense, He is giving people what they want. They choose to turn from God and God responds by saying, "OK, if that's what you want, you will have that forever".
 - vi) Back to "who cares": The goal for Christians is to live a Christ-like life. Our prayer is for God's will to be done, not our will. God's will is to use us to spread His message of salvation and help other Christians grow in their faith. God wants us to be like those three angels telling the world of His salvation plan.
 - a) Notice the angels just spread the message and then lets God deal with the results. That is the same concept for us. Our job is to be living witnesses for Jesus. We then let God deal with the results.
19. Let's pray: Father, Sometimes we forget that we deserve to go to hell. We thank you for providing the means necessary. We live in gratitude for that fact and hopefully we will let Your love shine through us as we walk through this life. Help us to remember that hell is for eternity. Help us to have compassion for the lost and not be judgmental. Help us to see others and recall that we too, were once lost without You. Help us to be bold to tell people about You and may the Holy Spirit work through us to make a difference to in the lives of those who are around us. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.