

Chapter 14

This chapter, like chapter seven (7), records the portion of John's vision that deals with the restoration of the Gospel in the last days. John again sees the great missionary force that is referred to as the one-hundred and forty-four-thousand. He see the joy of the righteous that embrace the gospel, and the torment of the wicked that reject it. A great call is given to all those that have the gospel, to preach it to every nation, kindred and tongue. All mankind is to be made aware of the fact that salvation is through Jesus Christ, and it is available to all that are willing to partake of it.

Verse 1: *"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads".* The Joseph Smith Translation changes *"an hundred forty and four thousand"* to *"a hundred forty and four thousand"*. The Lamb spoken of is the symbolic term used for the Savior of the World, he who offered himself as the great and final sacrifice, ending the sacrifice of the lamb in similitude of Him.

John sees the Savior standing on mount Sion (also spelled Zion). Just what is Mount Sion? Depending on the use of the word, it could mean several different things. Enoch's city was called Zion, as the Lord said, *"I am the same which have taken the Zion of Enoch into mine own bosom.....(Doctrine and Covenants 38:4)"*. In the Old Testament, we read of another Sion, *"From Aroer, which is by the bank of the river Arnon, even unto mount Sion, which is Hermon (Deuteronomy 4:48)"*. Mount Hermon is the name given to the a 9,400 foot high mountain Northeast of the Holy land, that is the probable sight of the Lord's transfiguration. It too, is referred to as Mount Sion. The temple mount in Jerusalem is often referred to as the mount of Sion, and quite possibly any temple of the Lord could be referred as the same. Did not Isaiah speak of the mountain of the Lord's house (Isaiah 2:2)? Zechariah said, *"Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain (Zechariah 8:3)"*. Ancient Jerusalem can also be referred to as Sion. *"Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David (2 Samuel 5:7)"*. Under the same light, the city of New Jerusalem is referred to as mount Zion. We read, *"And the graves of the saints shall be opened; and they shall come forth and stand on the right hand of the Lamb, when he shall stand upon Mount Zion, and upon the holy city, the New Jerusalem; and they shall sing the song of the Lamb, day and night forever and ever (Doctrine and Covenants 133:56)"*. Finally, Zion could be any where that the pure in heart dwell. *"Therefore,*

verily, thus saith the Lord, let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion--**THE PURE IN HEART**; therefore, let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked shall mourn (*Doctrine and Covenants 97:21*)". Sion seems to be locations the Lord considers holy, and locations where the Lord's people dwell.

Sion could be a number of things; however, at this point, we are interested in knowing what Sion John is speaking of. Modern day revelation depicting the same event that John spoke of, says, "*When the Lamb shall stand upon Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having his Father's name written on their foreheads (Doctrine and Covenants 133:18)*". It goes on to suggest that the Sion spoken of is this, the American continent, being as it is to be the location of the New Jerusalem.

Verse 2: *"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".* The Harp is a symbol of praise and thanks to God. One might note that many other translations of the bible translate, "*I heard the voice of harpers **harping** with their harps:"* as, "*I heard the voice of harpers **playing** with their harps".*



The term waters often symbolizes people, thus we might conclude that the voice we hear from heaven is actually many voices, even the host of heaven, praising god for His wonderful gifts to mankind. The fact that a harp is heard playing might be symbolic, since, as we have already said, it represents praises and thanks to God; however, it is possible that it might literally be the case. The psalmist almost commands the righteous to praise God with song and instruments. He says, "*Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright. Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise (Psalms 33:1-3)*". At the time in which ancient Israel built the temple of the Lord, the Israelites sang praises and played instruments to give thanks unto God. We read, "*And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel.*

And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid (Ezra 3:10-11)".

Songs are pleasing unto the Lord. They truly offer praise and thanks unto the Lord. The Lord told David, *"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God (Psalms 50:23)".*

Verse 3:

"And they", the hundred forty and four thousand, "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". The Doctrine and Covenants speaks of a new song that shall be sung in the last day. we are not told if it is the same song spoke of by John; however, judging from the words of the song, and the fact that there is no melody, as of yet, it quite possible could be the song of the hundred and forty and four thousand. The Doctrine Covenants reads as follows; *"Until all shall know me, who remain, even from the least unto the greatest, and shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and shall see eye to eye, and shall lift up their voice, and with the voice together sing this new song, saying:*



*The Lord hath brought again Zion;
The Lord hath redeemed his people, Israel,
According to the election of grace,
Which was brought to pass by the faith
And covenant of their fathers.*

*The Lord hath redeemed his people;
And Satan is bound and time is no longer.
The Lord hath gathered all things in one.
The Lord hath brought down Zion from above.
The Lord hath brought up Zion from beneath.*

*The earth hath travailed and brought forth her strength;
And truth is established in her bowels;
And the heavens have smiled upon her;
And she is clothed with the glory of her God;
For he stands in the midst of his people.*

*Glory, and honor, and power, and might,
Be ascribed to our God; for he is full of mercy,
Justice, grace and truth, and peace,
Forever and ever, Amen (Doctrine and Covenants 84:98-102)."*

I find it interesting that the song of the righteous is called a new song. The word new has significant meaning to the righteous. We will find that the righteous will inherit a new heaven and a new earth. We also know that the righteous are those that enter into the new and everlasting covenant with the Lord. The Lord spoke of this covenant in the Doctrine and Covenants and said, "*Behold, I say unto you that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing; and this is a new and an everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning (Doctrine and Covenants 22:1)*". He further explained that "*in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage] (Doctrine and Covenants 131:2)*". Symbolically, the word new represents exaltation. The fact that the righteous will praise the Lord with a new song represents praise for such a gift. The Lord told the saints, "*my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads (Doctrine and Covenants 25:12)*".

Verses 4-5: As in Chapter seven (7) of the Book of Revelation, John speaks of an elite missionary force that he refers to as the hundred and forty four thousand. He previously described them as;

- Sealed High Priest
- Ordained to the Holy Order of God to Administer the Everlasting Gospel (Missionaries)
- Ordained from every Nation, Kindred, and People by the angel given power over the Nations of the earth to bring many into the church
- Twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel

Now he adds, "***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***". To the previous list we might add;

- They are Virgins, not defiled of woman. Virgins are defined as individuals who have not experienced sexual intercourse. The term virgin could also refer to one that is in a pure or natural state; unsullied (American Heritage Dictionary, third edition).
- Follow the Lamb, who is Jesus Christ
- Redeemed of Men
- Firstfruits, or the most righteous before the Lord

- They are without guile. Guile is to be treacherously cunning; full of skillful deceit. These men will be honest men, of high integrity.
- Without fault, or those that have made themselves perfect through the atonement.



Verses 6-7:

John foresaw the great missionary effort in the last days. He records, ***"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"***. The restoration of the gospel in the latter days was brought to pass by an angel of God, sent to earth to restore the Gospel. It is most probable that this angel, the angel flying in the midst of heaven, was Moroni, who was sent to Joseph Smith, Jr. to deliver the history of the Nephite people. This history contained the gospel of Jesus Christ and restored many of the plain and precious truths lost during the period of apostasy.

Bruce R. McConkie suggest that the angel spoken of by John was in reality many angels (Millennial Messiah, page 435). We know that Moroni was just the first in a series of visitors to visit the prophet and restore the gospel. After Moroni gave Joseph Smith the Book of Mormon, Joseph was visited by John the Baptist who restored the priesthood of Aaron. He was visited by Peter, James, and John who restored the Melchizedek priesthood. Joseph was also visited by Moses and Elijah. All of these messengers from Father were sent to restore the necessary elements for the everlasting gospel to be preached to all the earth. The gospel wasn't restored so that just the prophet Joseph could enjoy it's divine blessings, but so that every man, women and child on earth would have an opportunity to embrace the gospel. Note that John does not say that all will accept the gospel, but rather that all will be preached unto.

What are we commanded to preach to all mankind? John says to teach mankind to ***"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"***. As members of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, it is our stewardship to preach the gospel of repentance, that man might learn to fear God. We must take up the warning voice that warns all men that they will be accountable for their actions, and only through humility and submission to the creator of all can we possible expect to return to him. We must preach to man that the worship of worldly things, such

as money, social status, property, and other forms of wealth are an abomination to God. We must preach by word and example that true worship of the Lord is following after his word.



Verse 8:

It would seem that after the great missionary effort, the end for the wicked is a hand. ***"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"***. John says that Babylon is fallen. Literally, Babylon had fallen long before John's writing. Babylon was a city located in present day Iraq. It was originally founded by a man named Nimrod, who was a grandson of Ham, the son of Noah. Ham's line age was cursed due to the breaking of a covenant that Ham had with the Lord. Through his posterity came much wickedness. The city of Babylon became the capital of Babylonia and the supposed cite of the Tower of Babel. Under the wicked Assyrian Empire, Babylon was captured and was assimilated to worship Assyrian Gods and Idols. Eventually King Nebuchadnezzar came to power in the great Babylonian Empire and retook the city to be his capital. It was during his rule that Babylon took on it worldly greatness. Babylon was adorned with such beautiful gardens and temples that it has been called one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Babylon was a fortress that represented the might of man. It contained vast varieties of temples built to worship idols and Gods that were foreign to the God of Israel. The great Euphrates river ran through the city, supplying the city with the life supporting elements it needed. This created a stronghold that was self supporting. Enemies found it useless to attempt penetrating it enormous walls, and futile to wait their enemy out, since the Babylonians needed never leave their fortress. Eventually the city did fall; however, the thing it represented lived on. The Babylon of John's time was the great city of Rome, while in our time there are many cities and nations that could be labeled Babylon. The Bible Dictionary defines the symbolic term, "Babylon" as they that oppose the Lord's Kingdom.

As we read John's writing, I think it is important that we remember that John is writing to two audiences. He is writing to us in our time and to the saints in his time. We will see what appear to be many references to Rome or symbols of his time, that have a dual application and translation for our time. Truly, the great city of Babylon fell, and truly the symbolic Babylon of John's time fell. Likewise, the Babylons of the latter days will fall. There will come a day, after the restoration of which has come to pass, when Babylon

will fall. Babylon will fall, quite simply, *"because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication"*.



Verses 9-10:

"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". This particular passage is full of symbolism. What actually occurs is, a servant or messenger of the Lord (quite possible more than one) proclaims a warning to the earth. That warning is, if any man follows after the things of this world, and all that it stands for, and commits his life unto it, that man shall partake of the judgments of God and pay the price for his sins. He shall be cleansed from the earth and feel the torment of eternal damnation, with all of the host of heaven as a witness to God's judgments. The following table is offered to aid in the understanding of the symbolism included in this verse;

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Possible Symbolic meaning</i>
<i>The Beast</i>	The wicked nations of the world
<i>The Image of the Beast</i>	The things in which the world stands for
<i>The Cup</i>	Abundance, fullness
<i>Drink</i>	to partake of
<i>Fire</i>	cleansing, purification, destruction
<i>Brimstone</i>	wrath of God, judgment, destruction
<i>Wine</i>	vital sap of the grape vine; blood; atonement
<i>without mixture</i>	not diluted; no reprieve; nothing held back
<i>Indignation</i>	Anger aroused by something unjust, mean or unworthy
<i>Mark on the Forehead</i>	Allegiance to the person or thing that the mark symbolizes, in this case the beast
<i>Mark on the Hand</i>	The hand represents covenants and oaths. The mark in the hand indicates that one has made certain covenants with the person or thing symbolized by the mark, in this case the beast.
<i>The Lamb</i>	The Savior, Jesus Christ

The Lord explained to Isaiah that *"the wicked are like the troubles sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked (Isaiah 57:20-21)"*.

The last days shall be an end to the reign of the wicked here on earth. *"The whole system of worldly worship that now prevails on earth - in which there is no salvation - will come to an end. The worship of the beast and of his image and of every false god will cease (Millennial Messiah, Bruce R. McConkie, page 662)".* The Lord will establish his kingdom on the earth, which is in direct opposition to the kingdom of the adversary. Since *"there is and can be only one true church and kingdom of God on earth, all the churches of men and of devils will go out of existence (Millennial Messiah, Bruce R. McConkie, page 662)".*

Verses 11-12: John continues with the warning proclaimed by the angel in the previous verses. He says that *"the smoke of" the "torment"* of those that followed after the things of the world *"ascendeth up for ever and ever"*. Such imagery is symbolic of the fact that an eternal testimony will stand as to the punishment of the wicked. *"They have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name"*. Smoke is usually used to represent the prayers of the righteous, and the glory of God. In this case the smoke represents the answer to the prayers of the righteous, and the fulfillment of Father's plan. Through the centuries, prophets have warned of this day. King Benjamin taught his people that if a *"man repenteth not, and remaineth and dieth an enemy to God, the demands of divine justice do awaken his immortal soul to a lively sense of his own guilt, which doth cause him to shrink from the presence of the Lord, and doth fill his breast with guilt, and pain, and anguish, which is like an unquenchable fire, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever. And now I say unto you, that mercy hath no claim on that man; therefore his final doom is to endure a never-ending torment (Mosiah 2:38-39)".* Moroni spoke of the same endless torment when he said, *"Wo unto such, for they are in danger of death, hell, and an endless torment. I speak it boldly; God hath commanded me. Listen unto them and give heed, or they stand against you at the judgment-seat of Christ (Moroni 8:21)".*

Finally, the day in which the wicked are removed has arrived. John explains that this, *"is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus"*. Many do not realize it, but the saints have been commanded to be patient with the trial and wickedness that are upon the earth. Paul taught the saints in Rome to be happy for the trials they endure, and be patient. He said, *"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience (Romans 5:3)".* Likewise, he wrote to the Hebrews and said that those who *"be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises (Hebrews 6:12)".* To the saints that have patience and keep the commandment

in these trying times, the Lord has promised *"bear it patiently, your reward shall be doubled unto you four-fold (Doctrine and Covenants 98:26)."* Where is the patience of the saints? If they hold on to that which they believe, even in times of adversity, they will see the wicked destroyed and be crowned with glory.

Verse 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"*. This passage is offered as comfort to the saints who shall endure great persecutions from the wicked prior to the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Likewise Nephi counseled that *"the righteous need not fear, for they are those who shall not be confounded. But it is the kingdom of the devil, which shall be built up among the children of men, which kingdom is established among them which are in the flesh-- (1 Nephi 22:22)"* it is they who should fear.

The Lord does not seem to look upon the physical death in quite the same manner as we do. Because of our weak testimonies and lack of understanding, we often fear death. The Lord views physical death as but another step in our progression. He teaches us that even if the righteous shall die *"they also shall rise again, a spiritual body. They who are of a celestial spirit shall receive the same body which was a natural body; even ye shall receive your bodies, and your glory shall be that glory by which your bodies are quickened. Ye who are quickened by a portion of the celestial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness (Doctrine and Covenants 88:27-29)"*.

Those that die righteous, have great blessings stored in heaven. *"Behold, blessed, saith the Lord, are they who have come up unto this land with an eye single to my glory, according to my commandments. For those that live shall inherit the earth, and those that die shall rest from all their labors, and their works shall follow them; and they shall receive a crown in the mansions of my Father, which I have prepared for them. Yea, blessed are they whose feet stand upon the land of Zion, who have obeyed my gospel; for they shall receive for their reward the good things of the earth, and it shall bring forth in its strength. And they shall also be crowned with blessings from above, yea, and with commandments not a few, and with revelations in their time--they that are faithful and diligent before me (Doctrine and Covenants 59:1-4)"*. To insure that we can obtain the rest that the Lords' promises, we must make our works here upon the earth worthy of such blessings. If our works are those of the Lord, we need not fear what judgments the world places upon us. Even if those judgments be death, for the Lord shall restore all that the earth shall take away, and add unto it more than our minds can understand at this time.

Verse 14:

John is now allowed to see another angel, or servant of God. He records, **"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"**. This part of John's vision is remarkably similar to one that the prophet Daniel was shown. Daniel wrote, *"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (Daniel 7:13-14)"*. Like Daniel, John did not see just another angel, He saw the Savior of the world.

The significance of this vision of the Savior lies in the symbols that are associated with Him. The white cloud symbolizes the purity and glory of heaven that accompany Him, and His golden crown symbolizes his dominion and exaltation, but it is the sickle that symbolizes the focus of this verse. The sickle is a symbol of Hope, Renewal, and Rebirth. It is a tool typically used in the harvest of grain. It is made of a handle connected with a long curved blade, designed for the ease of harvesting.



The Savior of the world has come to this earth in the latter days to gather His elect and prepare for His second coming. This is often referred to as the time of the harvest. It commenced in a garden grove, as the young boy, Joseph Smith, prayed to the Father and he *"saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above" him "in the air. One of them spake unto" him, " calling" him "by name and said, pointing to the other-- This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him (Joseph Smith History 1:17)"!* It was that day that the Lord began the great harvest. The Savior later explained to the church that *"I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant*

Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments; And also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophets-- The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that man should not counsel his fellow man, neither trust in the arm of flesh-- But that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world; That faith also might increase in the earth; That mine everlasting covenant might be established; That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers. Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding (Doctrine and Covenants 1:17-24)". The Lord began His great harvest, or gathering of the righteous, with the prophet Joseph Smith. He continues that very same work today. For this reason, John symbolizes the Savior with a sharp sickle.



Verse 15:

"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". The Doctrine and Covenants speak of this time as a time when God will establish great things upon the earth. We read, *"Now behold, a marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men (Doctrine and Covenants 4:1)".* How will God bring about this great work? Through faithful servants here upon the earth. John symbolically relates this message as he says that an angel came out of the temple of God. Servants of the Lord are often referred to as angels, while coming out of the temple represents coming from, or of, the Lord. The Lord teaches that, *"ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day. Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work (Doctrine and Covenants 7:2-3)".* As faithful latter-day saints, we are called to the work. The work being that of bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. Of which only the knowledge of the everlasting gospel can bring. Then we might ask, why is it so important that it be done now? The Lord answers, *"For behold the field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul (Doctrine and Covenants 7:4)".*

The Lord uses the analogy of the harvest to convey the idea of urgency. As a farmer plants a field of wheat, he nourishes and cares for the field. As the wheat develops it is green in color. As it matures the plant naturally lightens in color by a process called "senescence"; Hence, we find that as the field whitens it is ready for harvest. The harvest represents the biblical symbolism of the last judgment and fulfillment. Symbolically, we must harvest the field so all the good substance is removed before the field is plowed under.

Verse 16: *"And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped"*. After the great missionary effort to gather the elect of the earth, the Savior will declare the earth reaped. The American Heritage Dictionary defines the word reaped as, "to cut for harvest". John is saying that the harvest is complete, all that is good has been removed from the field. In other words, the gospel has been preached to every soul upon the face of the earth. The elect have been gathered, and the saints have completed the Lord's work for this dispensation.



Verse 17: John sees yet *"another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle"*. Having already harvested all that was good from the field, which is symbolically the earth; this verse might seem rather puzzling. What is there yet to be harvested? There is but the useless and bad left in the field. Only that which does not qualify to receive that which the Father has. It too must be harvested, but not unto salvation, unto damnation.

After a farmer had harvested the good from a field, it was common practice to gather that which was left, and burn it. Likewise, the Lord will gather the wicked and burn them, that His field might be used again for another purpose.

It is suggested that this angel is Michael, even Adam, who was given power and authority over the earth in the beginning. It is he who fought Satan and his army prior to this life, and it will be Michael who will prepare the earth for it's deliverance to the Savior.



Verse 18: The angel that is to harvest the wicked is associated with *"another angel"* who, we are told, *"came out from the altar"*. The altar is a familiar object to the Lord's people. It is often used to symbolize the great and final sacrifice of the Savior on behalf of mankind. For the righteous the altar represents salvation and the

redemption of their sins, and to the wicked it represents the judgment and wrath of God. Since, at this point in John's vision, the righteous have been gathered and the wicked remain, it is appropriate that the symbolic meaning for the altar is that of judgment and wrath. The angel at the altar, whose identity remains a mystery at this point, is said to have "**power over fire**". Again symbolic reference is made to the destruction of the wicked. Fire is used as a symbol of cleansing, purification, removal of the wicked, and destruction.

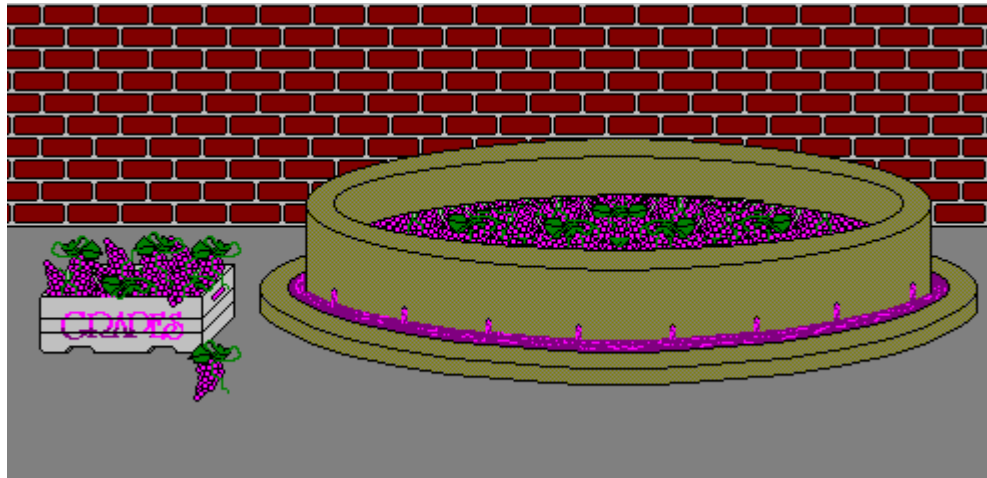
The symbolism of the great harvest continues in this verse; however, it is changed from a harvest of wheat to a harvest of grapes. The angel, who came from behind the altar "**cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe**". The grapevine is used as a symbol of abundance and life. The Lord's vineyard is used to represent his chosen people. He is often referred to as the vine and we are compared to the clusters of grapes. This vine is not represented as the vine of the Lord, but rather the vine of the earth. It is the people and organizations that choose to follow the ways of the world rather than those of the Lord. The Lord Himself explained how one might differentiate between those that are of the vine of the world and those that are of His vine. He said, "*Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them (Matthew 7:16-20)*". The righteous will grow towards the Lord. They will in a sense ripen unto perfection, but "*the world is ripening in iniquity (Doctrine and Covenants 18:6)*".

Verse 19: The prophet Joel wrote of the wickedness of the earth and said, "*Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great (Joel 3:13)*". In this symbolic accounting, we see that the wickedness of the earth is so great that when the grapes, or people of the earth are harvested, their sins and wickedness overflow the wine vats. Using similar symbols John describes this part of his vision. He says that the "**angel**", who we assume to be Michael, "**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 winepress is a symbol used to represent the great and final judgment of God. A winepress is a vat (large tub or barrel shaped container) in which the juice is pressed from grapes. Winepresses ranged from small hand operated devices to ones so large that horses were used to press the grapes.

The wicked are condemned to the great winepress of God. They will face the reality of the fact that they must answer for their works.

Historically, the juice of the grapes is used for wine. Symbolically, it is usually used to represent the atonement and redemption of man; however in relation to this verse, I would suggest that it is a representation of that which is in us. The grapes represent man. The juice represents our works, and desires. In this case, it represents the wickedness and iniquity of the vine of the earth, or the people of the earth.

The Great Winepress of God



Verse 20: After the wicked are placed in the winepress of God, *"the winepress was trodden without the city"*. The word trodden is the past participle of the word tread, meaning to press beneath the feet, or trample. Such symbolism might represent the destruction of the wicked. The city could be used to represent or symbolize protection. Those that have not followed after the Savior, have no protection. They have no right to the divine graces of the atonement. The Savior likens the great atonement to the winepress, which he walked alone and paid the price of sin. Those that do not partake of the great atonement must likewise walk the great winepress. It was Isaiah who wrote of the Savior and said, *"Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none*

with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth (Isaiah 63:2-6)".

John says that as the wicked were trampled in the great winepress, "**blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs**". The blood symbolizes the atonement that the wicked must pay on behalf of their own sins. As Christ comes, for what is called the second coming, "*it shall be said: Who is this that cometh down from God in heaven with dyed garments; yea, from the regions which are not known, clothed in his glorious apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? And he shall say: I am he who spake in righteousness, mighty to save. And the Lord shall be red in his apparel, and his garments like him that treadeth in the wine-vat. And so great shall be the glory of his presence that the sun shall hide his face in shame, and the moon shall withhold its light, and the stars shall be hurled from their places. And his voice shall be heard: I have trodden the winepress alone, and have brought judgment upon all people; and none were with me; And I have trampled them in my fury, and I did tread upon them in mine anger, and their blood have I sprinkled upon my garments, and stained all my raiment; for this was the day of vengeance which was in my heart (Doctrine and Covenants 133:46-51)*". For the righteous the dyed garments of the Savior represent their salvation, the redemption of their sins, while to the wicked it will represent judgment, and wrath as they realize that they must atone for their own sins.

In an interesting passage of symbolism, John describes the blood that issues from the winepress as being as high as a "**horse's bridle**" and filling "**the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs**". A furlong is an ancient unit of measure that is equivalent to approximately two-hundred and twenty (220) yards. Such a length would represent three-hundred and fifty-two thousand (352,000) yards or approximately two-hundred (200) miles. The size and depth of the blood that issues from this winepress is enormous. I believe that John is trying to illustrate the amount of wickedness and iniquity that the earth contains.

One other theory says that the wrath and judgments of God will come from war, and the blood symbolizes the greatness and location of this war. Richard D. Draper said, "*In graphic and*

appalling terms, John symbolizes the slaughter", of this great war with "blood flowing for 1,600 furlongs (about 184 miles). Geographically, this is about the maximum length of Palestine. Symbolically, the number is the square of four denoting geographical completeness, multiplied by the square of ten, the number denoting all of a part. Taken together, the number suggest that God's judgment actually involves all John's world, not just those who are around Jerusalem, and that all those who belong to that portion outside the protecting power of God will be directly affected (Opening the Seven Seals, Richard D. Draper, page 164)".