

Studies in Revelation 14

David H. Linden, University Presbyterian Church, Las Cruces, NM USA May, 2013

One must remember that the bloodbath of Revelation 13 immediately precedes the present passage. Revelation 14 is not an elaboration of chapter 13, but a divine response to it. The early prayer in this book was: "*O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?*" (6:10). Chapter 8 makes clear that that prayer was being taken seriously and answered with the judgment for which the martyrs pleaded. Their souls were under that altar. This altar reappears in 16:7 when the voice from the altar agrees with God's unrestrained judgment in that chapter. Judgment ordered from the altar appears in this chapter.

In the first paragraph of chapter 14, there is no indication of vengeance. In chapter 16 it is unmitigated. This is unusual in light of the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, about which God announced in Psalm 2 that it would be the center of Messiah's uncontested rule over the entire earth. That psalm also says that God "*will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury.*" The dragon, beast, and false prophet cannot get away with their attempt to have what is rightfully Christ's. The Father has promised Him all nations and all territory (Psalm 2:8). Chapter 14 issues a gospel call to repentance and life.

Revelation approaches the climax of human history from different angles. Within chapters 11,12 & 13 we find Satan's efforts to consolidate a rule he knows he cannot maintain. His actions are irrational and wicked. But there is more, they also backfire and will bring about the loss of his kingdom. In chapter 14 the Lord takes home His huge harvest from all the earth, and He crushes His opponents.

14:1 We have a looking and hearing similar to the hearing and seeing of 5:5,6 and 7:4 & 9. Here it is reversed. First John looked, and then he heard. These two receptions are linked, because he saw the 144,000 stand (v.1) and heard the same 144,000 sing (v.3). The scene on Mount Zion is on earth and the ardent singing is in heaven. The redeemed from the earth are safe in heaven in vv.2-5, though slain on earth. Now they sing the high praises of God's redemption before the throne of the Redeemer, with angels listening in silence.

Military features This unique army of the Lamb is before us in vv.1-5. They have been mustered. The purpose of the military census in chapter 7 was to assemble an army. That is what we have here in chapter 14. They stand on Mount Zion in battle readiness. Zion is the Messiah's capital and will not be surrendered. His troops are ready to respond whenever and however the Lamb chooses to crush the wickedness in chapter 13. The beast was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them (13:7). The false prophet was allowed to work his deceitful signs (13:14). God had a purpose in allowing such a thing, and chapter 14 is in large measure His answer to that attack. The Lamb's army is ready. They will follow the Lamb wherever he goes (14:4).

Foreheads Earlier the 144,000 were sealed on their foreheads (7:3). That seal with the Name of the Lamb and the Father indicates that they are the Lord's. In 3:12 such a seal was promised to all of the Lord's loyal people. In the new Jerusalem this identification with the Lord is the treasured possession of all true believers: "*They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads*" (22:3,4). On the other hand, the deceived subjects of the kingdom of evil have a mark on their foreheads. About this terrible choice, the third angel in this chapter will give stern warning. One may accept God's gracious seal or Satan's vicious mark. It is not possible to have opposite

Studies in Revelation 14

allegiances. That the 144,000 and all the Lord's people from the seven churches to the eternal state shows that the 144,000 is another view of the saints, all of them.

14:2,3 The sound of thunderous music in heaven was accompanied by instruments. Heaven was the audience; former sinners from earth were the singers. The Lord was hearing the grateful praise of His redeemed creatures. He has only one kind of redeemed creatures; only humans may become forgiven sinners. The angels are hearing our praise, but they cannot enter into it for no angel has ever received the saving grace of God. All angels who sinned are banished and will face pure justice. The fact that the redeemed sing and that the 24 elders are among those who listen indicates that the 24 elders are angels not humans. They have not learned the song of the redeemed as those who have experienced salvation. When angels sang a *new song* in 5:9, they sang *about* our salvation; we sing as its recipients. Elect angels have never known the alienation that was once the bitter condition of sinners. When justified, we receive peace with God (Romans 5:1), a joy the loyal angels have always known. They had peace and kept it; we lost ours in Adam but gained it in Christ.

An important sequence appears in Revelation. Before John saw the seals opened, he observed a resonating worship in chapters 4 & 5 which eventually involved every creature in heaven and earth. Likewise, before the trumpets there was the offering of incense and prayers to God in 8:3,4. Here in chapters 14 & 15 we have another worship scene just prior to the outpouring of the seven bowls.

14:4,5 Portrayals which best fit the 144,000 as the Lord's army follow. Men preparing for battle were to abstain from sexual relations with women. Another duty called, so focusing on their military duty was paramount. In that sense they did not defile themselves by being less than fully ready for their calling to go into battle. When Uriah refused to go home to his wife while his fellow soldiers were engaged in battle, he was acting on this principle (2 Samuel 11:8-11). The same cultural practice is evident in 1 Samuel 21:5. A committed soldier has strict priorities (2 Timothy 2:1-4). Since the 144,000 are the entire body of Christ, the real number is not limited to males, let alone virgin males. If this verse is not understood in the light of a holy war under the Lamb as a Warrior King, it can lead to the denigration of women, marriage, and even Scripture itself because the Word of God enjoins and defends every aspect of marriage. (Note Hebrews 13:4.)

The Lord's army fights on God's terms and principles. Deceit is the ever-present tool of Satan (13:14). In contrast, the followers of the Lamb do not lie and murder. The Lord Jesus did not come to condemn but to save (John 3:17). He, unlike Satan, did not come to be served but to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). Those for whom He died were His enemies (Romans 5:10). Now God's love has been poured into our hearts, so just as Christ died for the ungodly still in their sin (Romans 5:5-10), we have in Christ a model to follow. By loving our enemies (Matthew 5:44), even those who kill us, we are to conquer in His way.

The 144,000 are described as blameless. I take this to mean *without blemish*. This is a common word with many examples to describe the suitable condition of an animal for sacrifice. (The Greek word appears in Exodus 29:1; Leviticus 1:3; 14:10 to point out a few). So we conclude that the Lord's soldiers will lay down their lives not merely in resistance to the devil, but as an offering without blemish to God, and fruitful in the salvation of those who hate them. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes. The Lamb has already been to the cross. We follow Him there.

The Message of the Three Angels It is surprising that some read this and believe it is literal, that an angel will proclaim the gospel to the entire world. Revelation 14 is apocalyptic. A message is delivered in this literary genre. Revelation is not predicting the appearance of angels in the heavens. Likewise in an historical sense, seals were not opened; trumpets did not sound, and no angel cast a container filled with fire on the earth (8:5). That is all vision like a dream. Further, in this chapter the gathering of God's people is *pictured* as harvesting with a sickle, and the judgment on the ungodly is pictured as being crushed in a winepress. It is not that here and there in this book we have metaphors; rather, from Revelation 1:10 on to chapter 22 we have one overarching vision. It deals with reality. It clarifies issues, but it is not a report of what a video camera could capture or what our eyes will see. Only John saw the three angels; we only read of his God-given vision to have it grip our attention and imagination so deeply we understand better the conflict between God and the devil, with the world as the battleground.

14:6,7 The First Angel flew overhead above the earth and under heaven (mid-heaven). Satan has been cast down from heaven (12:9-13), so his warfare here on earth comes with great wrath (12:17). The great question is whether those who dwell on earth will remain in his custody. There is a way out. The proper response is to fear God. This is what is explicitly called for in 14:7. To fear God is to fear the real Lord God. This cannot be done while giving recognition to idols or the beast (another idol). No man can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). Therefore the angel's call is to forsake the false deity and give to God the respect He deserves. No one understands "give him glory" unless there is an emphasis on the "him". They have been giving high praise to the beast when, in the language of worship they said, "*Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?*" (13:4). Glory must be given to God. This is not a careless use of good words. To grasp "giving glory" one needs only the way *glory* is used throughout Revelation. In the 17 times glory appears in Revelation, it does not allow in any example for half-hearted recognition of the Lord. This is strong support for the conclusion that 11:13 asserts genuine repentance and faith. Giving glory there was not a coercion of the unwilling.

"Every nation and tribe and language and people" is Revelation's fourfold phrase to show the scope of salvation in 5:9 & 7:9. (It is never repeated in the same order.) This phrase can show the scope of human bondage (as in 13:7 and 17:15). In other words, Satan has them briefly, but God is going to take back His humanity eternally. Here in chapter 14 the gospel is proclaimed. If the peoples of earth will fear God, turn from their false gods and give glory to the true and living God, then the warnings of imminent judgment have succeeded. Judgment will not fall on those who repent. They shall be accepted and forever welcomed into the body of all the redeemed who give glory to God. God's warnings do not express sadistic desires; instead His warnings are kind; they beckon to salvation. Because of this, the angelic message is rightly called the "eternal gospel".

Because the hour of God's judgment has come, this is the final warning. Because the angel speaks a word from God, it is sincere. Because the time is the hour of His judgment, the message is urgent. Ever since the fall, false gods have received credit for the works of God. The first angel with a loud voice called for universal recognition of the Creator.

14:8 The Second Angel embellished the previous message. Trust in Babylon is futile, because God has announced its fall. Here we run into a recurring feature of Revelation. The fall of Babylon will occupy chapters 17, 18 and some of 19. In the larger narrative Babylon has not fallen yet, but 14:8 anticipates that certainty. Likewise, in 11:7 the beast kills the witnesses, though the beast is really introduced later in chapter 13. This kind of anticipation stated as current reality in Revelation shows up in some portrayals of the Judgment Day before the larger narrative gets to

that point. Examples are: the sixth seal (6:12-17), the seventh trumpet (11:15-19), the two harvests here in chapter 14, and the multiple ways that chapters 17-19 depict the destruction of Babylon.

The mention of Babylon shows God's *corporate* judgment. The entire system will fall. Only one worldwide corporate bond of humans will survive the judgment announced. That is the people of God, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Babylon made people drink to bring them into bondage. God responds by forcing the cup of His wrath on His enemies. The Lord would have the world to see that its confident unified structure is doomed. Babylon is the world's anti-God system.

Sexual Sin The prophets often used the image of sexual sin for adulterous deviation from Israel's covenant with God to His competitors. These alternatives to God, craving and receiving the devoted worship of God's creatures, are demons sometimes represented by physical idols. Giving the love promised to one's covenantal partner to any other recipient is a kind of adultery. Where we need to be cautious in interpreting Scripture is that we must not consider every mention of sexual sin as metaphor so routinely that we miss places where it is actually speaking of *literal* fornication or adultery. This is clearly the case in Revelation 2:14,20-22; 9:21, and 21:8, and possibly 17:4. Admittedly, here in 14:8 there is no clear indication to exclude either kind of adultery. The overt violation of the seventh commandment is a pervasive feature of the world's sin. It is one of the key reasons for the economic decline of western society. It is so treasured as a sin of choice that a multitude of evil policies have been developed to keep promiscuity safe, active, and respected. It is a wine Babylon forces on all nations. (Other Babylonian passions will appear in chapters 17 & 18.) And so the nations stagger in drunkenness because the key component of covenantal life among human beings (marriage to one partner of the other gender) is being destroyed. The letters in chapter 2 to Pergamum and Thyatira deal with this threat to the life of the church. Sexual sin is a constant issue to reveal whether we belong in Babylon or the New Jerusalem.

But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, *the sexually immoral*, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death (21:8).

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and *the sexually immoral* and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood (22:14,15).

14:9-11 The Third Angel The appeal for a response worthy of God has been made by the first angel, and the certainty that Babylon is doomed has been announced by the second. Both announcements include a warning. In the third message, the consequences of rejecting Christ by accepting the mark of the beast is laid out in graphic terms. The second angel spoke of the *corporate* anti-God conspiracy, and now the third dwells on the choice to be made by the *individual*. Note the singular pronouns in vv.9 & 10 switching to a plural in v.11 with "*their* torment".

The element of warning is greatly magnified in this message. The issue is the worship of the beast which is demonstrated by accepting his mark. To do so is to deny Christ His rightful honor. Taking that mark is the opposite of glorifying God. The great divide is not on some peripheral matter. Evangelicals should notice that in light of the weighty challenge coming, many other things that demand our attention are comparatively petty and in our circles are elevated beyond what they deserve.

Baptism The mark of the beast is a parody on Christian baptism. Satan knows the value of God's visible sacraments. He has centuries of experience seeking to belittle, obfuscate, ignore, and destroy them. In Revelation 13 he replaces the divine sign of baptism with his ugly mark. If we in a Christian tradition do not grasp the crucial role of sacraments, pagans do get the point. A confession of Christ in words is to many just talk, but to adopt openly a physical sign, identifying the one baptized with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is sensed as really crossing the line into an embrace of the Christian faith. They know it means all other views are rejected, and that we are really saying that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9). "... *No one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says 'Jesus is accursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit*" (1 Corinthians 12:3). We proclaim Christ in action as well as words (1 Corinthians 11:26). No one bending to the devil's pressure should ever think that that mark does not mean anything.

The penalty for rejecting Christ is not one of half measures. Anyone worshipping the beast will drink the wine of God's wrath; it is inevitable. The cup of divine anger is undiluted; there is no restraint or mercy. The suffering is intense; it is tormenting. It is personal and direct; it happens in the very presence of the Lamb. It is forever and ever; it is not annihilation or extinction. Sinners will have no rest; they cannot get used to it. It is nothing less than the deserved horror of unyielding divine justice when one chooses to face God without Christ, the only Mediator.

For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:26-31).

There are two ways, and two ways only, in which the justice of God concerning our sins can be satisfied. One is by Christ: Out of obedience to His Father and love for us, our Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself the full measure of divine wrath deserved by us for our sin. That was a reconciling death, by which God could forgive those He draws to Himself. Peace with our offended God was accomplished. His holy wrath will never descend upon us because it fell on Christ in our place. The other atonement is by the sinner: God's justice is applied eternally and thereby satisfies God that He has neither overlooked nor held back from the sinner what human sins have merited from Him. His justice is holy. Justice is an essential attribute of the divine nature. It may be delayed by His mercy, but it must eventually find full application to the sinner directly, if not on the Holy One Who became sin for His people (2 Corinthians 5:21). God is not embarrassed at any of His attributes. His justice is not a mere abstraction; it has been expressed already or will be in the case of every good and every evil without exception. The demons know this and tremble (James 2:19).

In our day some evangelicals deny the doctrine of eternal punishment. The fires of hell will burn out only when God stops hating sin, or when He is reconciled to giving His glory to a wicked angel. This, of course, cannot happen. God is immutable as well as holy and just. He cannot tire of rejecting sin or punishing it. After all the warnings of the three angels, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God for preferring the beast and rejecting His Son. Up until the seven bowls with which the wrath of God is finished, wrath has been restrained and much warning has been given in mercy. Such things have sat in the Word of God for more than 1900 years. God has not been hasty, but the final judgment is coming.

14:12,13 The Exhortation The messages to the churches in chapters 2 & 3 were filled with exhortation. In this part of Revelation there is not much explicit application of truth, promise, or warning for the readers. Thus when these cryptic exhortations appear, they seize our attention. When the book ends in chapter 22, it will take on a greater degree of exhortation.

Exhortations:

- ***13:9,10**, a call for realistic expectations and sober perseverance
- ***13:18**, a call for wisdom, and a mandate to discern the identity of the beast
- ***14:12,13**, a blessing for those who die in the Lord; promised rest, and works to follow
16:15, a reminder of the coming of Christ, coupled with an appeal for vigilance
- ***17:9**, a challenge to diligence in interpretation
18:20, a command to rejoice in the vindicating judgment of God

* Four of these exhortations begin with “here”. Some translations for clarity add the words “calls for”. Repetitions like this are never a coincidence in Revelation. These concise appeals call for a response. In 14:12,13 it is a call for steadiness, similar to 1 Corinthians 15:58. The conflict between God and Satan is coming to a head. God has extended mercy, information, and warning. A deadly encounter is coming. These exhortations urge us to be alert, assured, and faithful, because severe temptation to desert the Lord will engulf us.

The beast is allowed to kill the saints (13:7), but his success is part of the divine strategy to undo the devil’s grip. Brothers will die (6:11); those to be slain will indeed be slain (13:10); out of the great tribulation they will come (7:14), which shows that they were in it. *“Blessed are those who die in the Lord”*, because their death brings immediate blessing to the martyrs: the sheltering of God from further distress, the shepherding care of the Lamb, all tears wiped away by the Father (7:15-17), and the immediate privilege to reign with Christ (20:4-6). But there is more; not only are they supremely cared for personally, they have the satisfaction that their deaths accomplished something of lasting value. Their deeds follow, because their dying accomplished eternal fruit which does not cease with their death. Their deaths were used to defeat the beast. By the power of God before the eyes of the world (11:11-13), they are vindicated. They had obediently laid down their lives in sacrifice which had great accomplishments. Revelation encourages us to expect from God deaths that are fruitful for His glory and for the conversion of the nations. They rest from labors confined to this life. Only in this brief moment is the privilege to suffer for Christ extended to us. The Holy Spirit wants us to know that our deeds follow us. Death cannot frustrate our work.

Defining Christians Frequently in our day we define Christians in terms of believing for justification, as recipients of the gift of eternal life, or as accepted as a child of God. Each of those features is Biblical. It is also Biblical to define Christians as saints, that is, in terms of holiness of life. The objective standard to define holiness is God’s law. If obedience to it is lacking, so is the Holy Spirit, the new birth He causes, and the faith He engenders to receive forgiveness. These things are inseparable. No Christian lives an ungodly life (Hebrews 12:14).

14:14-16 The Grain Harvest The vision now turns to Christ harvesting His own, i.e., gathering His people. This is beautifully placed after the three angels who were messengers of grace for those who would turn, and harbingers of horror for those whose allegiance is the beast. The somber angelic messages were followed by a word of blessing for those who die in the Lord, agreed to by the Holy Spirit. The polarity increases. There are those who will fear God and give Him glory. There are those who receive the mark of the beast and die without the Lord. Eternal punishment awaits them. The harvest of those who fear and glorify is ripe. The hour to reap has come. No further appeal will come in this segment of Revelation. We simply proceed to the End.

Studies in Revelation 14

The exact wording in Daniel 7:13 is used here in 14:14 and 1:13, “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.” Therefore the “one like a son of man” is the Lord Jesus. When 14:14 mentions a white cloud it intensifies the connection to Daniel 7. Sitting on a white cloud communicates the aura of majesty. Within Revelation anything *white* often carries with it an association with victory. The instruction to reap in 14:15 was a message carried by an angel from God the Father to the Son.

It is important to be certain that there are two harvests in 14:14-20. If we think this is one kind of harvest only, then we would have to say it is one of judgment upon sinners. Treading the winepress of the wrath of God is most clear as the undoubted imagery of wrath. How may we know that 14:14-16 is a different kind of harvest with a purpose which is the very opposite of crushing grapes in the winepress?

Joel 3:13 is alluded to in 14:15. The likeness to the first line in Joel’s words is unmistakable.

Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.
Go in, tread, for the winepress is full.
The vats overflow, for their evil is great. (Joel 3:13)

One could easily conclude that Joel 3:13 is about one kind of harvest, one for the winepress only. But Mark 4:29 also has Joel 3:13 in mind and uses it in the context of a grain harvest with no mention of grapes. Note the underlined likenesses: “*The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come” (Mark 4:28,29). Therefore Joel 3 can refer to more than one kind of harvest. It does not lock in to one possibility only. Thus we are free to consider other evidence.*

- The grain harvest is harvested by Christ, but an angel gathers grapes for the winepress.
- The grain harvest is one step only – reaping the grain! If judgment on sinners were intended, then it would have included threshing or winnowing. For examples of this specific imagery of judgment see Luke 3:17; Psalm 1:4; Jeremiah 51:33; Micah 4:12,13; and Habakkuk 3:12. In 14:17-20 grapes are gathered so that they will be trodden down.
- To “gather the wheat into my barn” (Matthew 13:30) is an example not of judgment but of being “*caught up together ... to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord*” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).
- A large harvest is the counterpart of the 144,000 being mentioned as “*firstfruits for God and the Lamb*” in 14:4. What follows the relatively small quantity of fruitfruits is the full harvest of plenty. “*You shall observe the Feast of Weeks, the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year’s end*” (Exodus 34:22).

Attention to this is worth the effort. This joyful harvest is reminiscent of the Lord’s petition in John 17:24: “*Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*” The 144,000 were a firstfruits sacrifice to God (as in Leviticus 23:10,11) conquering the beast by their sacrificial death. They were a sacrifice without blemish (14:5). They died a purposeful death, the proof of that being that their deeds follow them. This grain harvest is the fulfillment of their priestly ministry. (See 1:6 and 5:10.) The language is not hyperbole when it says “*the earth was reaped*”. This is a massive harvest produced by the magnanimous grace of God.

14:17-20 The Winepress There are only two responses to the messages of the three angels: fearing and glorifying God, or worshipping the beast. There are only two consequences: being gathered in like the grain, or being crushed in the winepress. An angel (not one of the three messengers) with a sharp sickle is sent from heaven and ordered by the angel from the altar (8:3-5) to use his sickle to gather grapes for the winepress. This same angel in 8:5 threw fire on the earth as an act of judgment in response to the martyrs' prayers. The imagery now is of the clusters from the vine being crushed. Here in chapter 14 we continue to see God answering the prayer of His murdered saints (6:10).

Just as the grain harvest corresponds to the fruitfruits mentioned in v.4, this winepress is the responsive counterpart to *"Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality"* (14:8). Whoever worships the beast *"will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger..."* (14:10).

The dreadful moment has arrived. The grapes are ripe. The iniquity of the world is full. In Abraham's day God declared that the iniquity of the Amorites would one day come to a head (Genesis 15:16), and His judgment would ensue. With the worldwide worship of the beast as the reason, it is time for God's response to their Christ-denying worship of the false messiah. That brings us in the narrative of Revelation to the seven bowls of unrestrained wrath. This potent response is vividly predicted in Isaiah:

Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress? "I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come. I looked, but there was no one to help; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me. I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth." (Isaiah 63:1-6)

The one treading the winepress is not identified in chapter 14. He certainly is in chapter 19. It is Christ.

From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. (Revelation 19:15,16)

The imagery continues. John saw that wine, portrayed as blood in v.20, was up to the bridle of the horses and flowed for a distance of about 300 kilometers (200 miles). This severe judgment is needed to cleanse the earth, to defend the glory of God, to satisfy His justice, to bring vengeance on the wicked, to remove false worship, and to make room for the worship of God without competition. For this severe judgment God makes no apology. In punishing the wicked He will not grow weary. In judgment He cleanses the earth to bring in its place a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13).