

## New Features on Prewrathministries.org

I owe my readers a profound apology. My duties at my church have delayed my being able to get these newsletters out on time. My last newsletter was April 2008 and I have missed a June and August issue. So, I decided to do a September issue. I have decided that I probably need to go to a quarterly publication basis rather than bi-monthly. Therefore, my next issue will be a December (or winter) issue. I thank you for your patience and understanding and I will try to make the less frequent issues worth reading.

## Two Harvests?!?

I have had some questions raised about the two harvests mentioned in Rev. 14. Some have tried to suggest that these harvests could signify the rapture. The passage in question is...

Rev 14:14 (NIV) 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.** 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." 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 (emphasis added).

It has been suggested that the first harvest

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## Feature Article: The 144,000

By Elbert Charpie

I had someone recently write to me asking about the significance of the 144,000. As I began studying to reply, I found some interesting and unexpected insights. There are only two passages where the 144,000 are mentioned...

Rev 7:1 (NIV) After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. 2 Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: 3 "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." 4 Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. 5 From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000, 6 from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000, 7 from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000, 8 from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000, from the tribe of Joseph 12,000, from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.

The Pre-trib camp presumes that these 144,000 Jews become evangelists and that they initiate the greatest revival in history. Although there is a special significance to this 144,000 Jews, there is no scriptural indication that they are evangelists, nor that this revival takes place. On the contrary, the scripture seems to indicate that people will turn away from God rather than to Him. The only other passage where the 144,000 are mentioned is as follows:

Rev 14:1 (NIV) 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. 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. 3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. 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. 5 No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.

The 144,000 are described as being pure and as virgins. Some have suggested that this is a spiritual description rather than a physical one. I think that the significance here is that these are Jewish individuals who were not saved prior to the rapture, but they are dedicated and set apart to God in a more than normal way and God places a seal upon them. I do not believe that this seal signifies salvation, but protection. God's goal by the end of the 70th Week is the salvation of all Israel and this 144,000 are called the "firstfruits." So, they may come to salvation before the rest of Israel, but I do not think that the sealing is the salvation. This sealing happens right before the raptured multitude appears in heaven and yet they are excluded from the rapture.

Now, I have found myself and others interchanging the 144,000 for the woman symbolizing Israel. This passage is:

Rev 12:1 (NIV) A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with

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## **The 144,000** (Continued from page 1)

the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. 2 She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. 3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. 4 His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. 5 She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. 6 The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.

Almost all scholars agree that this woman symbolizes the nation of Israel, and her child is Jesus. The “rest of her offspring” whom the dragon makes war against are the church. We are told that the woman flees to the desert to a place of protection prepared for her for 1260 days—which is the second half of the 70th Week. The significance is that the 144,000 are only connected with the woman in as much as they appear again after the wilderness remnant returns with Jesus to Jerusalem at the end of the 70th Week. Then, we are told that Jesus stands on the Mount of Olives WITH the 144,000. In the book of Zechariah it describes a time after the Day of the Lord when Jesus will stand on the Mount of Olives and it will split to provide a place of protection for Israel...

Zech 14:4 (NIV) On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. 5 You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

Now the scripture does not explicitly prove that these passages are speaking of the exact same time, but there are several similarities that I believe DO connect these passages. First, both have to happen at the end of the 70th Week. Second, the “You” in Zechariah is 2nd person plural which applies to all of Israel. Third, “THEN,” it says, God will come and all the holy ones with Him. This is a clear allusion of Jesus returning with the angels at Armageddon. Therefore, I believe we can draw some important conclusions.

The 144,000 are a part of the “woman,” but not all of the “woman” are the 144,000. So, the wilderness remnant will, most likely, be much larger than 144,000. Also, the way this 144,000 are described is quite unique. They are virgins (in some manner of speaking) and are pure and completely dedicated to Jesus, AND they are uniquely Jewish. They are called “firstfruits.” This leads me to believe that they become believers that Jesus IS the true Messiah early, before all Israel is saved. It also says, that they follow Jesus “wherever He goes.” The significance to this is that I had assumed that those protected in the wilderness would number somewhere around 144,000, but I believe we could possibly be talking about millions.

## **Two harvests?!?** (Continued from page 1)

mentioned is the rapture before God’s judgment is poured out in the second harvest mentioned. The timing of this passage is after the seventh trumpet has sounded, and so this interpretation causes multiple problems when compared to other passages concerning the rapture. But, this passage in Revelation is a reflection of the prophet Joel where he said...

Joel 3:13 (NIV) Swing the sickle, for the *harvest is ripe*. Come, *trample the grapes*, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow-- so great is their wickedness! 14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision (emphasis added).

In both places there is a mention of a harvest followed by the trampling of the grapes in the winepress which clearly refers to God’s judgment. Both passages also allude to the battle of Armageddon - in Revelation it mentions the blood flowing up to the horses bridles and in Joel it speaks of the Day of the Lord in the valley of decision. In Revelation, this passage is followed by the seven last bowls of God’s judgment which culminate in the battle of Armageddon. Therefore, I see this “harvest” as a harvest of wrath leading up to judgment when God’s enemies will be defeated at Armageddon.

Posttribulationists have tried to infer that the first angel’s harvest in Rev 14:16 is the rapture. However, in this passage there is no indication of any positive aspect of this harvest. The entire context of this passage is one of judgment rather than redemption. It is a common Hebraism to repeat a concept twice for emphasis. So, because of the parallel in Joel, I find that these angels are participating in the same harvest and it is a harvest of the judgment of God upon the wickedness of the world. In addition, to assume that the first angel is harvesting the righteous in rapture means that the saints will have gone through the trumpet judgments which ARE the wrath of God—and this is contrary to scripture. Furthermore, it is impossible for this interpretation to coincide with the timing of events as portrayed in Matthew 24. My conclusion is that this passage is the segue from the trumpet judgments to the final devastating bowl judgments that are about to come. The rapture happens long before this when the sixth seal is opened and before the very first trumpet has sounded.