

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 384
Revelation 14
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Episode Summary

Revelation 14 looks back at the 144,000 (see episodes 372, 373), the sealed counterparts to those who bear the name and mark of the Beast (Rev 13). The chapter includes messages from various angels who initiate the judgment of the wicked nations and their gods at the Day of the Lord. In this episode we discuss the Old Testament imagery used to describe this judgment, including the Fall of “Babylon,” the winepress of God’s wrath, and the harvest of the earth with the sickle.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 384: Revelation 14. I’m the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he’s the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! What’s going on?

MH: Not a whole lot new, although Norman fell in the pool again. [laughs]

TS: With or without a life jacket?

MH: Without. But I was taking him out for a walk. It was at night. You know, he likes to walk on the edge, doing his tightrope imitation. And he just got a little lazy. So I fished him out. [crosstalk]

TS: So did you have to go into the pool to get him, or did you just fish him out?

MH: No, he was right at the side, so I just grabbed him.

TS: Okay, because I was going to say...

MH: I think he just did it for attention.

TS: Yeah. I was going to say, that doesn’t count towards you being in the pool for one.

MH: No.

TS: Yeah. If you have to fish out a pug, that doesn't count.

MH: Yeah. You're not telling him to do that to try to get me in, are you?

TS: No, no! I have the "under," so I don't want you to get in. [MH laughs] So I am not... Somebody else is doing that. They're trying to throw this.

MH: Maybe Norman has the "over." [laughs]

TS: [laughs] Norman has the "over." There you go.

MH: "Come on in here and get me." [laughs]

TS: That's awesome. That's funny. Anything else going on? Anything good?

MH: No, just working on projects and stuff. I mean, we're trying to get ready for the fall semester, the last of the two-year certificate program. So New Testament apologetics stuff. Lots of Jesus Seminar stuff and Jesus Mythicist stuff. So if people want to hear my take on that, then they need to sign up for the class at SchoolOfTheology.com. That's about all I know. I don't really know when the early bird enrollment is, or ends, or what's going on. So my head's out of that. But I'm just getting ready for that, prepping for that. And doing some writing.

TS: And now that we're over the halfway point of Revelation, also in the fall we're probably going to be wrapping up this book. So be sending me your questions about the book of Revelation that we've covered here, at TreyStricklin@gmail.com. Because as always, we'll be doing a Q&A of just the book that we've covered.

MH: And Trey told me he wants you to also send him your prophecy timeline charts, so he can display them in his office. He collects those. So you might want to do that, too. [crosstalk]

TS: Yeah, I love that! That's a great idea! Yeah, if you have any timeline on where we are in the tribulation...

MH: [laughs] Put those on Instagram. [laughs]

TS: People would get so mad at me if I did that, Mike. They really believe that their timeline is true.

MH: Nobody would create one if they didn't think they were right. So they're all right, and they all compete. You know?

TS: That's alright. At least they're trying. I don't want to knock them. Because bless their hearts, they're trying, Mike. They're trying to understand it.

MH: You know, I have on my bookshelf here (and I have not consulted this for this series, but I have it more or less as a keepsake) a book by the old dispensationalist, Clarence Larkin. And it's actually called *The Greatest Book on Dispensational Truth Ever Written*. Like, could you imagine writing a book and titling it something like that (*The Greatest Book on _____ (whatever) Ever Written*)?

TS: Yeah, that's awesome.

MH: And inside of it it's just filled with charts. So it's just sort of a fond little thing that I have on my bookshelf. It's kind of an odd curiosity.

TS: Send those to me. I'll post some of those, if you want, if you find a good one.

MH: [laughs] Take some pictures. [laughs]

TS: Scan it in. Yeah, take a picture of it and send it to me. I'll post that stuff. I'm sure people would get a kick out of it.

MH: Well, maybe I'll do that. I'll send you a couple. Because it's very detailed, let's just put it that way.

TS: Well, Mike, Revelation 14. We're in the thick of it here. You've got some good stuff for us today?

MH: Yeah, we're going to get through the chapter, in part because the first five verses we've essentially already covered before. So we might as well just jump in here so that we can get through the whole chapter. The first five verses are the 144,000. And so we're not going to repeat that material. You can go back and listen to episodes 372 and 373 for all of that. So we're going to jump in at verse 6. So Revelation 14:6. And I'm going to read to about verse 13. So Revelation 14:6, we're going to get three angels here that have messages. So verse 6 says:

⁶Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. ⁷And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."

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⁸ Another angel, a second, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality.”

⁹ And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.”

¹² Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

¹³ And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”

So that's Revelation 14:6-13. And a couple of comments on a few things in here. First, the reference to the angel “flying” isn't proof that angels have wings. I thought I would throw this in here because of what I've said and written in the past. You know, in other contexts where non-bird things fly (like the woman of Revelation 12) they are given wings, but we don't get that detail here. So if we look up the terminology in LSJ (which is the Liddell, Scott... Greek lexicon), elsewhere in classical Greek this same term (that's used in Revelation 14:6) is used of flight that does not require wings. For example, the flight of the soul, the flight of horses and chariots, the flight of javelins, the flight of dancers. It's really used of any quick motion. If you're looking for a specific textual reference, the *Iliad* 22.362, would be one. But LSJ has all these sorts of things laid out. So this doesn't prove that angels have wings. And Aune, in his Revelation commentary, actually bothers to comment about this, which I thought was kind of interesting. He says:

It is of interest that this is the earliest reference in Jewish or Christian literature to an angel (apart from cherubim and seraphim) *flying*. While cherubim and seraphim are described as having wings and as flying, angels in general are not (1 Chr 21:16 merely states that the angel of the Lord was seen standing between heaven and earth, not that he had wings or was flying). Even in Rev 14:6, however, the flying angel is not necessarily described as winged.

Well, it *isn't* described as winged.

The first clear reference to angels (and demons) with wings is found in Tertullian [MH: in his] *Apol[ogia]*. 22.8.

So it's the early Church Fathers where you first get the winged description applied specifically to angels. So there you go. This is church tradition. It's just something that... It is what it is. It's nothing sinister or evil or anything like that. But I thought I should mention this because of the *Angels* book and things we've said on the podcast before. I just thought it was interesting too that Aune even bothered to comment on it. But he did.

Now there's a cosmological note to be made here. We've commented a little bit on this language in an earlier episode, about this spatial area, the midst of heaven, or "midheaven." And Aune notes here of... You go back to Revelation 14:6. He sees the angel flying directly overhead. "Directly overhead," this phrase is the same terminology that we saw earlier that denotes midheaven. So Aune writes this:

The phrase *petomenon ev mesouranēmati*, "flying in midheaven", means that the angel appeared in the place where he could be seen and heard by everyone on earth, since his message was directed to all human beings [MH: now here's the interesting part]. This of course presupposes a world shaped like a flat disk rather than a sphere. While Aristotle thought the earth was spherical (*Cael.* 2.14; 298a), it was more commonly thought to be flat and circular with Delphi at the center and surrounded by Ocean (Herodotus 5.49) or flat and rectangular (Ephorus of Cyme according to Strabo 1.2.28). This conception of a flat, circular earth survived into Hellenistic and Roman times (*Anth. Graec.* 9.778 [Gow-Page, *Greek Anthology* 1:300–301])

10:00

So this, again, denotes this sort of what I would call this prescientific, premodern cosmology. And it does make sense of the phrase "flying in midheaven." If that means "in a place above the middle of the earth" (think of the earth as a round disc), then the description has meaning, because this is where you would go to make sure everybody hears you. You're at a central location, as opposed to going to one end or the other, or the edge of the circle, or whatever. So there's actually a point to the language here. But the point is communicated by means of language that denotes this premodern cosmology. The first angel's message (in Revelation 14) is referred to as... The Greek term is actually the term for "gospel" (*euangelion*). So in Revelation 14:6, ESV translates that the angel had "an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people." So this is the normal word for what you get in the New Testament for referring to Jesus' work on the cross and the resurrection and so on and so forth. Here it seems better to translate it just as a "good news"

or “good message,” since the content of what this “gospel” is is defined in verse 7, which says (and this is the angel talking now):

“Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

You say, “Well, how is that good news?” Well, it’s good news to the righteous, because they are about to be vindicated. Babylon is about to fall. The Lord is going to step in now into history and judge the wicked. He’s going to put an end to the chaos system. So you go to verse 8 and you get the second angel. That angel’s message is “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality.” Now that phrase (“fallen, fallen is Babylon the great”) derives from Isaiah 21:9. So I’m going to read that. And it says here:

**⁹ And behold, here come riders,
horsemen in pairs!”
And he answered,
“Fallen, fallen is Babylon;
and all the carved images of her gods
he has shattered to the ground.”**

So again, this is a judgment passage. The Lord is judging Babylon in Isaiah 21, and so that’s the context for what John has written here. Now if you tie that into the earlier verse, about proclaiming to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation, tribe, language, and people... “Fear God...” Here’s the content of the good news before we hear that Babylon is fallen. “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him. All of you out there, and all nations, all tribes, all languages and people, worship him—worship Yahweh—who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.” Again, this combination of things in these verses... You can probably already tell. This is the Psalm 82 judgment. This is the reversal of the Deuteronomy 32 problem. It’s the judgment. This is Day of the Lord language—Babylon, the whole chaos system. Of course, Babylon is the place from which this sprang—the fragmentation of the nations. So Beale and McDonough write:

The phrase “fallen, fallen is Babylon” derives from Isa. 21:9, and it is equivalent to the ensuing statement there that the idols of Babylon are destroyed. The destruction of the idolatrous system of the world is also in mind here, as chapter 13 and the immediately following verses 14:9, 11 bear out. The Isaiah allusion is merged with another OT reference.

So they're saying there's also another passage we could look at here.

The title "Babylon the Great" is based on the identical name of the city in Dan. 4:30 [MH: specifically reading with the Septuagint (the Greek) there to match John's Greek] (LXX/Theodotion [4:27 MT]). In Dan. 4 the name forms part of an expression of the king's self-glorification, for which he is about to be judged. Now in Rev. 14:8 the latter-day Babylon meets its end.

15:00

So you know, the judgment of the Babel chaos. It's a judgment of the gods of the nations, in a more final sort of sense, because of John's harkening back to Isaiah 21. He loops that into this Day of the Lord judgment here to communicate the idea that not only are the gods of the nations going to be judged, but all of the nations should worship Yahweh. So there's this notion of, really, the Great Commission being accomplished. This is the fullness of the Gentiles content. These are concepts that you would associate with the fullness of the Gentiles—that those among the nations who are going to follow the Lord are being brought back into the family. Everything's wrapping up. The wicked are going to be judged. Babylon, the whole system, is going to be judged. And that's why it's good news. But interestingly enough, John does use *euangelion*, which elsewhere in the New Testament is the gospel. So it's like the gospel gets its culmination in terms of the nations when the Day of the Lord happens and the gods are judged, the nations are judged, and the righteous are vindicated. Again, this is all... These are parts of a coherent whole, and John is dipping into the Old Testament to articulate this.

Now John in his own context is almost certainly using "Babylon" (the name Babylon) as a cipher for Rome. Because that's where the chaos system in his day is being run through. Rome is the fourth kingdom of Daniel. Rome is the great world empire that has inherited dominion from the original Babylon of Daniel's own day, his personal day when he actually lived. So they become the latest iteration for what the problem is—what this whole system is. And again, it's not a coincidence that when you have... When you go back to Daniel 2, for instance, when the kingdom made without hands rolls into the image and shatters the image and, of course, strikes the feet, which is the fourth kingdom... And this kingdom made without hands is the kingdom of God. Well, it's during the inauguration of the kingdom of God, i.e., the time of the New Testament, i.e., the time of Jesus and his work, that the kingdom is begun. And so the shattering of the Babel system is not completely taken care of, but its demise is now in progress. Again, this is the "already, but not yet" sort of thing that you see going on in the New Testament.

And so in John's vision of the future, this is the way it's going to play out. This is the way it's going to end. The system as it is is going to be completely done away with. The gods are going to be judged, and so on and so forth. But in John's day, the representative earthly power for the older Babylonian chaos system is Rome.

And this is why you get Babel or Babylon used in (not just the New Testament but in other literature) as a reference to Rome. I mean, this does happen in other writers. So Beale and McDonough note in this regard:

Just as Babylon destroyed the first temple [MH: Solomon’s temple] and sent Israel into exile, so Rome came to be called Babylon in some sectors of Judaism because it also destroyed the temple in Jerusalem and exiled Israel [MH: again, all over again, and they note a few references in the Midrash] (cf. *Midr. Rab.* Num. 7:10; *Midr. Ps.* 137:8; see Hunzinger 1965). In fact, contemporary and later Jewish sources equated the name “Babylon” with Rome [MH: explicitly, and there’s a whole string of references here] (see *2 Bar.* 11:1; 33:2; 67:7; 79:1; *Sib. Or.* 5:140–143, 158–61, 434; 1 Pet. 5:13 [MH: in the New Testament]; *Midr. Rab.* Lev. 6:6; *Midr. Rab.* Song 1:6, 4; cf. [MH: even some Dead Sea Scrolls] 1QpHab II, 11–12 [MH: the Habakkuk Peshier does the same thing, uses “Babylon” for “Rome”]; *b. Sanh.* 21b). “Babylon” is a symbolic name for Rome [MH: just generally] also in *4 Ezra* 3:2, 31, especially in relation to *4 Ezra* 12:10–39, where the metaphor of the eagle for Babylon [MH: specifically] from Dan. 7:4 is applied to Rome as the “fourth kingdom.”

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So Jews in the first century context (Second Temple Jewish context) were using Babylon very specifically for Rome. And some of them even go as far as to name Rome as the fourth kingdom of Daniel 7. We’re sort of used to that, because we look in hindsight at the flow of ancient history at Babylon, the Medo-Persians, the Greeks, and then the Romans. So they were thinking along the same lines way back then. Aune in his commentary has something to note here as well. He says:

As a cipher for Rome, the term “Babylon” occurs occasionally in Jewish apocalyptic literature, though the fact that all the references occur in literature that postdates A.D. 70, the year when Jerusalem fell to Titus, has suggested to many scholars that the equation Babylon = Rome was not made until after that date [MH: after 70 A.D.] and suggests that Revelation must have been written after that date...

In other words, after 70 A.D. And he cites some familiar names to this podcast. Adela Yarbro Collins, for instance, notes this and takes this view. And this is common. This is one of the prooftexts, or the arguments, for the late date of Revelation, which anybody who’s not a preterist, either a full or a partial preterist, this is what they prefer—that Revelation is written in the 90s or something like that. So this is one of the big arguments. Aune continues:

There were other symbolic names for Rome in use by early Judaism, including Edom...

That makes sense because Edom assisted Babylon. Remember our series on Obadiah. That's really what Obadiah's about. Back to Aune, we have Edom...

Kittim (Aramaic כְּתִימִים *kittîm*, in Dan 11:30 is translated [MH: this is interesting, in the Septuagint *kittim* (which means westerners), in Daniel 11:30, the Septuagint actually translates that as “Romans,” so it's a very clear equivalence] [laughs] Ῥωμαῖοι in LXX Dan 11:30), and Egypt [MH: is also used as a cipher for Rome].

So there are these other names that sort of are used for Rome, but they harken back to this—who the mega-oppressor was and is and so on and so forth. So there's a lot of this kind of thing going on. But it's very common, again, to use Babylon itself instead of Edom or Kittim or Egypt for Rome. Really, the concept is kind of the same no matter what you're really looking at. Aune, though, is honest. And he says, “Look, this isn't a slam dunk for a post-70 A.D. authorship though. So he writes:

[The argument that] “Babylon” as a code word for Rome pointed to a date after A.D. 70 for the composition of Revelation... is vulnerable, since the name “Babylon” is used to interpret “Assyria” in Isa 10:13–19 (part of an oracle against Assyria in Isa 10:5–19) in the pesher commentary 4QpIsa^c 6–7 ii 4...

So in English, whoever wrote the pesher among the Dead Sea Scrolls... And a pesher is a commentary. So the people at Qumran were writing commentaries. We call them peshers because they use the phrase *pishro* (“this means”) in their commentary of whatever biblical book we're talking about here. So in one of the commentaries (one of the peshers) to Isaiah found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, “Babylon” is also used to talk about Assyria. So there's not... It's not a consistent usage. So you can't really say that “Babylon” is only used for Rome. It could be used for other things. And so since this is in a Dead Sea Scroll, the use of Babylon as a code word just generally, period... The use of Babylon as a code word (the technique) can be dated before 70 A.D. So those who would favor preterism (full or partial)... Preterists would use examples like this and say, “Look, you can't argue that Babylon is only used as a code term after 70 A.D. It's used as a code term before 70 A.D.” Here you have this one example. Of course, the rebuttal to this is that, “Well, that early one isn't used of Rome, is it?” No, well, back in 100 B.C., Rome wouldn't have been the issue. So this is how the argument goes, back and forth. And we're not doing eschatological systems arguments here. But since this verse and its reference to Babylon and the whole Rome issue is so commonly known by students who study prophecy and Revelation, I thought I'd mention it. But it's not a slam-dunk either way.

25:00

Let's move on to Revelation 14:10-11. Let me read those real quickly again. The one who takes the mark of the beast...

10 he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

So you look at that description. The suffering of the beast and those loyal to the beast are characterized as drinking the wine of God's wrath and the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. So Beale and McDonough have a few comments on this, and they say:

The picture of pouring out wine resulting in intoxication indicates the unleashing of God's wrath at the final judgment [MH: and they give a string of Old Testament verses for that] (Ps. 60:3; 75:8; Isa. 51:17, 21–23; 63:6; Jer. 25:15–18; 51:7; cf. Job 21:20; Obad. 16)... This imagery is inspired especially by the wording of Ps. 75:8; Jer. 25:15; 51:7 [MH: in particular], all three of which are grouped together and applied by Jewish exegetical tradition to the wicked who will "drink in the time to come" (*Midr[ash] Rab[bah]* Gen. 88:5; *Midr. Ps.* 11:5; 75:4; cf. *Midr. Rab. Gen.* 16:4)... The apocalyptic belief was that the wicked would be punished, often by fire, in the presence of the righteous (*1 En.* 48:9; 62:12; 108:14–15; *Wis[dom of Solomon]* 5:1–14; *4 Ezra* 7:93; *Tg. Isa.* 33:17)...

So this was a common idea. And part of it comes from Isaiah 66:22-24. And how do we handle this? On the one instance, you could look at the passage and say, "Well, this is just for the followers of the beast. These are these people that are going to live in the future that follow the beast." And so on and so forth. Remember when we talked about the beast, the mark, whether it's physical or not... And we don't really know. I mean, the wording suggests something going on like this, but there's no precedent really for this branding idea. We talked about how believers (Jews and then believers) bear the name metaphorically, and how this same language is used of the beast. Those who follow the beast "bear the name" because the mark is the name of the beast. So whatever this number is, whatever the mark is, it's the name of the beast. And they bear it. They take it. Just like in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, the idea of bearing the name isn't literal, it's metaphorical. This language conveys alignment. Whose side are you on? Who do you follow? Where is your allegiance? And so those who are in allegiance with the beast, those who reject Christ... You could expand it and say, "Well, it's not just these people in the future, because they're going to be punished" and so on and so forth.

So obviously this goes into the hell-versus-annihilation discussion. If you want to be real technical about it, the language would pertain to people in the future because it's tied in with the beast. It's tied in with the time of these apocalyptic

events happening. So that would be an argument that the annihilationist would make and say, “Look, this is all... It’s not literal anyway, just like the mark’s not literal, so annihilation’s okay. And even if it wasn’t, it’s a special subset group. You know, the people who are allied with the antichrist at the time of the end, that’s not just lost people now” and blah, blah, blah. I mean, you can see how the other side would just say, “Well, it’s anybody who’s not belonging to Christ, and that’s the end of the story.” So this is how the two sides of *that* debate (the hell debate) will take Revelation 14:11. So you’ve got a metaphorical versus literal argument. You’ve got a “this is all future language” versus “no it’s not” argument in relation to that debate. But the language itself comes from these other texts, both Second Temple texts and some Old Testament texts as well that are prophecies—that are looking forward into what to us is still future as far as the ultimate judgment, the Day of the Lord, and so on and so forth.

30:00

So the verse really isn’t that much help to nail down the everlasting torment-versus-annihilation question, because it is put in an apocalyptic setting. So you could make an argument either way, but it’s not as clear-cut as you would think, is the point I’m trying to make, because it does have these Old Testament contexts.

And if we went back and looked at Enoch... *1 Enoch* 27:2–3 is another reference where you get this language. *1 Enoch* 48. These references even in Enoch, which is where you get “the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels,” that New Testament comment in Matthew 25, that comes from the book of Enoch... It’s not found anywhere else. Even in that text—that book... *1 Enoch* is an apocalypse. It’s a vision of the future. So even that’s not really helpful. Even though it was written before Revelation, it’s still... It’s an apocalypse. It’s just like the book of Revelation is, “the end is coming, the wicked are doomed, the messiah is going to come and judge everybody.” That’s what *1 Enoch* is. That’s what the whole book is about. It spends time on the Watchers because, “this is why we deserve condemnation, because we’re depraved and corrupt and we have our own selves to blame for this, and we especially have the Watchers to blame for this—the proliferation of depravity thing.” Basically, it explains why God would bother judging the world. And the answer is, “Because it’s a terrible place, and we have only ourselves and the supernatural beings that hate us to blame.”

So that’s it. That’s *1 Enoch*. It’s an apocalyptic text. And again, just wanted to rabbit trail a little bit off into that, because this is a common verse that lots of people know. But it does have a specific Old Testament apocalyptic context. It has Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic context. And of course, we’re in the book of Revelation, which is an apocalypse. So how much does it really help address a full-orbed theology of personal eschatology? It could go either way, just like all this other stuff. And again, in Q&A sessions I’ve been asked a couple times about hell and annihilation. To me, both views are on the table, and this is

another reason why. The language can lead you in different directions—the very same language.

So let's go to Revelation 14:14-20, and let's read that real quickly. This is to the end of the chapter.

14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe." 16 So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped.

17 Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. 18 And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." 19 So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20 And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia.

Which my little ESV note says is about 184 miles. A stadion (singular) was about 607 feet or 185 meters. So it's quite a distance. Now what about this? So while verse 14 we have this description of "one like a son of man..." So right away that grabs your attention. And it raises the question, "Should the one like a son of man here in this verse (Revelation 14:14) be identified with Christ or an angel, and does the harvest represent judgment or salvation?" You know, obviously "one like a son of man" could be a reference to *the* son of man. But since angels also appear as men in the Old Testament (for instance, Genesis 18-19, specifically Genesis 19:1; Daniel 10:16), maybe the "one like a son of man" refers to an angel. So is it *the* son of man or is it just an angel? Now Aune chimes in on the issue here. He says:

The unusual image of the "one like the son of man" *sitting* on a cloud in this verse may preserve allusions to the earlier combination of Ps 110:1 with Dan 7:13, such as that found in Mark 14:62 (cf. Matt 26:64)...

I'm going to read Mark 14:62, just so you know what he's angling for here. This is part of the scene where Jesus is on trial before Caiaphas.

35:00

**Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”
⁶² And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right
 hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”**

So there you have a “seated” element, and then you have the “coming with the clouds of heaven” element. Well, how can you be “seated” and “coming” at the same time? Well, it’s not meant to describe something that you could draw and, I guess, sort of make a cartoon out of it or something. The language here denotes two separate things, both of which are messianic. And you caught it in Aune’s quotation. So Aune is saying, the seating element (“sitting on a cloud”) here in Revelation 14:14 combines sitting in the clouds, just like Mark 14:62 combines sitting in the clouds. And Matthew 26:64 does it too. Why? Because it’s merging Psalm 110:1 with Daniel 7:13. Now Daniel 7:13 we already know about (the son of man coming with or upon the clouds). Let’s read Psalm 110:1. It’s Psalm 110. It’s a very overtly messianic psalm.

**The LORD says to my Lord:
 “Sit at my right hand,
 until I make your enemies your footstool.”**

So this is the messiah sitting, essentially, on the throne of power—the right hand of the throne of power. And that’s what Jesus actually alludes to when he quotes this in front of Caiaphas. So it’s not just Daniel 7:13. There’s a Psalm 110 element in here, too. So this very well could be *the* son of man, i.e., Christ, the messiah.

And you say, “Why are we spending time on this?” Well, just hang on a second and I’ll let you know. I mean, you probably already... You get a sense of it if you just read through the passage or remember the passage. There’s also, part of the debate revolves around the word “another.” So in verse 15... Let’s go back to Revelation 14:15. So we’re trying to identify who the “one like a son of man” is in verse 14. Is it Christ or is it an angel? And then we get in verse 15, “and another angel,” so that makes it sound like we should take “one like a son of man” and think it’s an angel. In verse 15 we get another one. So Aune says, you know, there’s also this word here that’s part of what’s going on. And he writes:

The adjective *allos* “another,” suggests that the figure just referred to in v 14 as “a son of man” is an *angelic* figure and therefore reflects a Jewish perspective... but it is hardly likely [MH: he’s going to object to this now] that the final editor of Revelation would have demoted the Son of man in v 14 to an angel.

Because of all the ways he’s talked about the son of man earlier. Chapter 1, it’s very clear Ancient of Days imagery is merged into the son of man imagery and

used of Christ. So Aune is saying, “Would John really demote him to angelic status here?” And he writes:

That this [other] angel emerges from the heavenly temple implies the divine authorization of his command to the “one sitting on the cloud” to begin the harvest.

So in other words, if you go back to verses 14-15, what Aune is suggesting is we have two figures. We have this “one like a son of man with a golden crown on his head, sharp sickle in his hand,” and then an angel (“another angel”) comes out of the temple. Well, we’ve already had angels in this chapter and in previous chapters. So we get another one coming out of heaven, and specifically the temple in heaven. Okay? And so this other angel comes to the son of man and then calls with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, the son of man, “Put in your sickle and reap.” Now this raises another issue. Do we have an angel commanding Jesus? Well, Aune says, “No, this really isn’t the case.”

I think I’ll quote Beale here, because I think Beale does a little bit more with this. But essentially the angel isn’t commanding Jesus. He’s coming out of the heavenly temple and he’s announcing that God has now authorized Christ’s return in judgment. Remember back in the Gospels when the disciples are asking Jesus about the day or hour, “When is all this stuff going to happen?” and Jesus says, “Well, it’s not for anybody to know the day or hour except the Father.” Here’s when the Father says, “It’s time. Go out, go back, and put in your sickle.” [laughs] You know? So he sends the angel to tell the son of man, “Now is the time.” That’s all we have here. We don’t have an angel commanding Jesus, like Jesus is waiting for the angel to order him. No, he’s waiting for God’s determination that now is the time. And so God sends forth an angel and says, “Go tell the son of man that, ‘Here we go. It’s time. It’s time to wrap this up.’” So Beale in his commentary says:

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Including the Son of man, there are seven heavenly beings in 14:6–20. On this basis some have concluded that the Son of man is an angel, since the other beings are called “angels,” and he performs the function performed by an angel in vv 17–18. While this is possible...

And again, before you wonder about that, remember in earlier episodes we’ve talked about angelomorphic Christology. So this is part of the Two Powers motif going on in ancient Judaism, that God can come as an angel. Remember the Old Testament? Yahweh is the Angel of the Lord, but the Angel of the Lord is but isn’t Yahweh. It’s the same thing going on here. So Beale says, “Okay, this is possible. But he says:

... it is not a necessary conclusion, since the Son of man is not identified as an angel, and [MH: in Revelation] 1:7, 13–20 [MH: those passages clearly] portrays

the Son of man from Dan. 7:13 as the divine Christ with precisely the same wording as here. Furthermore, the coming of the Son of man on clouds in the Synoptic eschatological discourses and elsewhere is always Christ (Matt. 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; also Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62; the Messiah in 4 Ezra 13:1ff.)...

Now catch that point. The son of man everywhere else, when it comes to the descriptions of returning in judgment, it's *always* Christ. So why would we say it's not Christ here? When there's a perfectly understandable way of taking the "another angel" basically to be another angel, yeah, other than the ones who've already shown up in this chapter and the earlier chapters, there's no reason to relegate Jesus to an angel here. But Beale says, "Look, if you want to do that, okay, but you've got to remember, hey, there's Old Testament precedent for Yahweh being an angel. Okay? Let's not forget that." And typically, people who want to make a Unitarian argument or Jehovah's Witnesses or somebody like this, they forget about all that stuff. And also, they're not really informed about how in Judaism God can show up as an angel, just in other Jewish texts. Because those other Jewish texts are well aware of the Old Testament (the Hebrew Bible)—the Angel of the Lord stuff in the Hebrew Bible. So Beale says, "Look, all the other places in the same eschatological context (Day of the Lord), they're all Christ." He writes later and says:

"Another angel" now appears and issues a command to the Son of man. If the Son of man in v 14 is the Messiah, then *allos* ("another") sets this angel alongside the three angels in vv 6–9, but if v 14 pictures an angelic being, *allos* places the angel also alongside the Son of man figure. The angel's command could suggest that he has authority over the Son of man, who is therefore subordinate to the angel. But probably only a functional subordination to God is in mind [MH: this is what we talked about earlier]...

So rather than having the angel command Jesus, what you have is the angel is sent by God to tell Jesus (the son of man), "Now is the time." That's the more consistent way to look at the language here.

Let's move on to verses 17-20. And we have this sickle imagery. That's part of the imagery here in verses 17-20. It's drawn from the Old Testament; specifically Joel 3:13 seems to be an important passage here. So let me quote that here. And again, this is Day of the Lord stuff. If you go up to verse 11, this is the showdown of Armageddon, when Jerusalem is surrounded by the nations:

**¹¹ Hasten and come,
all you surrounding nations,
and gather yourselves there.
Bring down your warriors, O LORD.**

Remember... We haven't gotten there yet, but you all know the passage in Revelation where the Lord returns with the heavenly host. So Joel says:

Bring down your warriors, O LORD.

**¹² Let the nations stir themselves up
and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;
for there I will sit to judge
all the surrounding nations.**

**¹³ 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.**

**¹⁴ Multitudes, multitudes,
in the valley of decision!**

**For the day of the LORD is near
in the valley of decision.**

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So this is very clearly Day of the Lord language. And it also helps us answer the question, "Is the sickle a harvest of redemption, or is it judgment of the wicked?" It's pretty clearly judgment of the wicked, fitting in with all this other Day of the Lord imagery. So Joel 3:13 is an important passage for this. You know, other than that passage, harvesting... That terminology can refer to judgment (Jeremiah 51:33; Micah 4:12-13; Matthew 3:12 and Luke 3:17 actually utilize those passages). And Aune notes:

The gathering of the vintage is itself a metaphor for eschatological judgment, while the emphasis on the winepress in v 19b is a second metaphor for judgment (cf. 19:15c). The vintage harvest and the winepress as metaphors for divine judgment are found in Joel 3:13...

Another little item from here in verses 17-20, we have reference to an angel having authority over fire. Let's go back to Revelation 14. And if we look here, it says... It refers to verse 18:

¹⁸ And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire...

Like, what's going on with that? So Aune notes:

According to Jewish tradition, various angels had authority over various aspects of the world, including the four winds (Rev 7:1), the abyss [MH: we've already seen that dude] (Rev 9:11), and the waters (Rev 16:5)... according to *T[estament of] Abr[aham]* [Rec. A] 13:10 [MH: this is a pseudepigraphical text from the Second Temple Jewish period], Πυρουήλ ὁ [ἀρχ]ἄγγελος ὁ ἐπὶ τὸ πῦρ ἔχων τὴν ἐξουσίαν, “Purouel [MH: *pur* is the Greek word for fire] is the [arch]angel who has authority over fire” [MH: the fire of God] (this angel is referred to earlier as “the fiery angel who held the fire” in *T. Abr* [Rec. A] 12:14) and whose task it is to test the works of people by fire... The notion that angels were created out of fire was widespread in early Judaism, based on Ps 104:4.

I'll read that to you. This is where the psalmist says that:

**⁴ he makes his messengers winds,
his ministers a flaming fire.**

Now, the verse doesn't really say that they're made *out of* fire, but you could see how early Judaism would've taken that wording and come up with this idea. And it's actually a fairly ubiquitous idea. You've got Jubilees 2:2; 2 Apocalypse of Baruch 21:6; 48:8; 2 Enoch 39:5; Apocalypse of Abraham 19:6. I mean, there's a bunch of these. One of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QH 1:10-11)... This was a common idea.

But back earlier to what's actually in the verse (because we're not talking about the origin of angels here; that's not the context)... We have this angel who has authority over the fire. And what Aune is suggesting is, the way to understand this is that we've got an assistant here assisting the messiah—assisting Christ... When Christ lays the sickle into the earth and judges the wicked, we have an assistant standing nearby (the angel with authority over fire who's going to test their works by fire). So again, this is how that idea (which is common in the Old Testament) sort of works itself out in eschatological thought. And again, all of this is a way of saying, “God is going to know what your destiny is rightfully going to be. There will be no ambiguity. If you are... I mean, just think about it. If you've borne the mark of the beast (you've aligned yourself with the beast), guess what? Your works ain't doing you any good. [laughs] Don't claim that they're going to do you any good. Okay? They're just going to burn up. There's nothing there on which to resist the verdict that you have aligned yourself with evil, and your destiny now is destruction.

[About the] great winepress of the wrath of God, Aune writes this:

This clause [MH: this specific phrase or idea here] is an allusion to Isa 63:1–6, which depicts the Lord as the divine warrior coming with garments stained with the blood of his enemies, compared with the garments of one who treads grapes

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in the winepress... The identity of the one who treads the winepress is also not made clear... However, in [MH: Revelation] 19:15 it is the rider on the white horse (i.e., the exalted Christ returning with his heavenly armies in judgment) who treads the grapes in the winepress of God's wrath.

Now I'm going to go to Isaiah 63. This is sort of a well-known passage in Isaiah. We have Isaiah 63, and we'll start at the beginning.

**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."**

So again, this passage begins this way. And this is going to be a Day of the Lord passage. And Edom, of course, and Bozrah... I mean, Edom gets... It's not a code word, but when you see Edom in eschatological passages, it is an oblique reference to Babylon, because Edom and Babylon were partners in destroying Jerusalem. Again, back to our series on the book of Obadiah. So Isaiah continues and says:

**²Why is your apparel red,
and your garments like his who treads in the winepress?**

And the answer comes:

**³"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.**

**⁴For the day of vengeance was in my heart,
and my year of redemption had come.**

**⁵I 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.**

⁶I trampled down the peoples in my anger;

**I made them drunk in my wrath,
and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”**

Now even in that passage, we don't get a clear reference that the one treading the winepress is God himself. You know? So maybe this is sort of a messianic thing, because John certainly takes it that way. I mean, John's use of this in Revelation, he's going to attribute this to Christ—the one who has the sharp sickle. That's verse 18.

He called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle...

...which is the son of man. So I could... I'll just make this a reference because I think I've used this article before, and it's probably in the protected folder. But Tremper Longman, who is an Old Testament scholar of wide repute. He's well-known. We've interviewed him for the podcast before when we were at SBL. Tremper used to teach at Westminster, and he teaches at Westmont, CA. I think he's still active. He might be retired at this point. But he has a really nice article on Day of the Lord divine warrior imagery from the Old Testament used of Jesus. So we need to remember this: Jesus does not come back blowing kisses. When the messiah returns, all of the contexts are apocalyptic and cast in terms of divine warrior judgment stuff. And this is another one. So by virtue of John doing this, he's telling you who he thinks the wine-treader back in Isaiah 63 is. And if other people want to say he's God, well, John would be okay with that, because Jesus is God anyway. It's one of these things where there's an oblique reference to this character—this figure—in the Old Testament. And in John's mind, this is the Lord. The Lord *is* the divine warrior. And the divine warrior in the Old Testament, there's only one of those. It's God, or (surprise, surprise) the Angel of the Lord, the captain of the Lord's host. The captain of the Lord's host would be the Lord of the hosts, and so on and so forth.

All these ideas fit together. This is a matrix of ideas. And it's fundamentally understandable if you understand the two Yahwehs idea (Yahweh invisible and transcendent and Yahweh appearing as a man). And the key figure is going to be the angel, who is the captain of the Lord's host from Joshua 5, because the phrase “the drawn sword in his hand” occurs only two other places in the Old Testament (Numbers 22 and 1 Chronicles 21), and both of those *are* specifically and explicitly identified as The Angel of the Lord. So John is aware of all this. And he inserts Christ (it's Jesus to him)... All of this stuff is Christ. All of this imagery. And so it tells you something about John's Christology. He views Jesus—he views the son of man... I mean, for goodness' sake, in Revelation 1, he used Ancient of Days language to describe the son of man! The son of man is God in human form—Christ. Again, this tells you something theologically. It's not just icky stuff that makes us wonder about prophecy or wars or something like that. I mean, don't miss the Christology here.

55:00 In verse 20, to wrap up here, we have this line, “blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse’s bridle, for 1,600 stadia” (or as the ESV footnote said, 184 miles. Now Aune writes:

Bauckham has shown that this hyperbole [MH: he’s taking it as a hyperbole, and I would agree with that], consisting of an extraordinary amount of blood indicating a slaughter of exceptional proportions, is a *topos*...

That’s a literary term. It’s actually a term from rhetoric. A *topos* is a stock rhetorical formula or technique (examples would be puns or proverbs) to convey certain ideas very specifically. It’s a *topos* technique...

... frequently found in ancient literature (“Traditions,” 40–48). The earliest occurrence of this *topos* [MH: this particular rhetorical strategy] is found in *1 Enoch* 100:3 (tr. Knibb, *Enoch*) [MH: and this is from the Charlesworth Volume, the translation here of *Enoch*], “And the horse will walk up to its chest in the blood of sinners.”

So Aune is saying this is the earliest example of this kind of thing.

Josephus historicizes this *topos* [MH: this notion of not rivers of blood, but like a small ocean of blood; that’s the *topos*—that’s the technique] by referring to the many Jews killed by Romans when Jerusalem was captured in A.D. 70 (*J[ewish] W[ars]* 6.406): the number of corpses “deluged [MH: that’s a term for flooding] the whole city with blood to such an extent that many fires were extinguished by the gory stream.”

Now again, there’s no evidence from any other Jewish writer that this literally happened. It’s a way of expressing the magnitude of death. And in Revelation 14:20, it’s a way of expressing the magnitude of the judgment. That’s all it’s trying to do. So Aune says, to wrap up here:

The inclusion of the mention of the horses’ bridles in this apocalyptic hyperbole indicates that the author in 19:11–21 [MH: which is the Armageddon event] is alluding to a decisive eschatological battle...

Okay, that’s the whole point. It is decisive. It is comprehensive. The magnitude of it is hard to express. And so this *topos* (this rhetorical technique) is used about blood being as high as a horse’s bridle. You can find that phrase and that idea elsewhere, when it’s clearly not supposed to be literal but express this idea that you just can’t believe how huge—the magnitude of this event.

So that is going to take us to the end of Revelation 14. So next time, I believe we *might* be able to actually cover Revelation 15 and 16. I’m going to take a shot at

that. But we'll see. But again, no surprise here. This is another chapter in Revelation that the language specifically draws on Old Testament material, and of course Second Temple Jewish material, which is commenting on Old Testament material, because that's what writers in the Second Temple period are doing. Jewish writers are looking at their Old Testament, looking at the data points and saying, "Well, what should we do with that? How should we read that?" So that's why we look at these things. We look at the Hebrew Bible. We look at Second Temple Jewish material. Because *they're* looking at the Hebrew Bible. And we're trying to get John's contexts (what he has in mind, what he's shooting for, how he's repurposing his Old Testament) in our heads, so that we can read the text with a little more understanding.

TS: Alright, Mike. Before we get to chapter 15 and 16, we're going to have a couple of episodes with Dr. Mitchell. You want to give us a heads up about what we'll be discussing?

MH: Yeah. We're going to have David Mitchell on. He is overseas in Europe (Belgium, as I recall) and he's written some really unique stuff. We're going to have one conversation with him about the Josephite messiah tradition and how that is both different and yet dovetails with the Davidic messiah idea. This is a Jewish tradition that a lot of Jews really aren't even aware of. And it takes you in some interesting places, because there are texts that talk about the Josephite messiah dying on behalf of the nation. So that's really interesting when it comes to the Jewish discussion of messianic thought. So we're going to spend some time on that. And then he also has a book on the psalter (the book of Psalms), and how the Psalms telegraphs eschatology. And the angle for that is how the psalms are laid out in certain places and in certain ways to telegraph the idea of the messiah yet to come and what all that means, so that the very structure of the book is sort of designed to make you think certain thoughts about not only messiah, but what to expect when the messiah comes and when he's going to come and all that sort of thing.

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So these two books are both... This is scholarly publication. These aren't popular books, even though Dr. Mitchell has made a real effort... And we're going to talk about some of the stuff he has produced. He's made a real effort to take his scholarship and make it accessible to people who aren't in graduate schools. So I think you're going to find it really interesting. It's going to be different. But there's a lot of interesting stuff here that you're... Honestly, unless you're reading his stuff, you're not going to hear any of it anywhere else. So I figured this would be a good place to give him some exposure and learn some new things.

TS: Sounds great. We'll be looking forward to that. Alright, with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.