THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Week 10 – TRIUMPH! Continued Intermission (Rev. 14 through Rev.15) November 14, 2017

REVELATION 14:1-5

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. ² And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. ³ They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. ⁴ These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. ⁵ And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God. ("before the throne of God" is not in the MT – the "Majority Text" which is based on the majority of the Greek manuscripts that we have from the NT)

Why were the 144,000 sealed? To minister as God's servants, His witnesses (Rev. 7). Is this the 144,000 in heaven with the Lamb? If this is a totally heavenly scene, then shouldn't we be asking, "Did God's sealing them for protection during the Tribulation result in their death?" And, do we care? WE MUST!! Can we trust God's work in our lives? If this is a heavenly scene, how do we then explain the failure of the sealing of the 144,000 for protection (Rev. 7:1-3) which has now apparently resulted in their death?

In Rev. 12 we read that the faithful remnant/Jewish believers will be protected through the Tribulation by fleeing to the wilderness (Rev. 12:6). The 144,000 might very well NOT have a part in fleeing to the wilderness because of their GLOBAL evangelistic ministry. If they did participate in the flight and the subsequent hiding in the wilderness, how could they evangelize among the Gentiles and Jews not protected in the wilderness?

We discussed last week that those who take on the mark of the beast are no longer privy to salvation. However, there might be those non-believers who have not yet taken the mark. Look at the warnings proclaimed by the angels.

<u>Rev. 14:7</u> - Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.

Rev. 14:9-10 - If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength

It appears that those who don't take on the mark of the beast and who are not yet believers can be evangelized.

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ADVANCED DIGGING: Some say that nowhere is it said that the seal will protect the 144,000 against death throughout the Tribulation and from all causes. Scripture only tells us they are to be protected from the direct effects of God's judgments poured upon the earth (Rev. 7:1-3) – judgments upon the earth, the sea, and the trees. BUT Scripture tells

us that they are ALSO to be protected from the demonic locust judgment - Rev. 9:4 - the demon locusts are not to harm the 144,000. Does this necessarily mean that the 144,000 are completely invincible for the entire duration of the Tribulation? Some say that the example of the two powerful witnesses of God is an example, then perhaps not. The witnesses were killed. The two witnesses, however, are not seen as being sealed! God has set apart the 144,000 to minister as evangelists. Might this alone – their role during the Tribulation - speak to their being invincible during the Tribulation?

Rev. 14:1-5, I'm suggesting, is an earthly scene and a heavenly scene. John is given a preview of the Lamb and the 144,000 on the earthly Mount Zion at the introduction of the Millennial Kingdom. And, they are accompanied by thunderous praise **from heaven**. Such a view understands Rev. 14:1-5 teaching that the 144,000 will be upon the earth in the Millennial Kingdom having survived the Tribulation due to God's special protection. The text does not say that the 144,000 are in the same place as the singers, only that they hear the singers. It's the heavenly chorus playing harps which sing the song in heaven. The 144,000, however, will be able to learn the song of the redeemed (v. 3) because of their credentials noted in vv. 4-5. The 144,000 will be redeemed from the earth (no harm to them even while on earth). And, they are "firstfruits" (Rev. 14:4) – The firstfruits was the first portion of a harvest, dedicated to God, thereby dedicating the entire harvest. The Jewish mindset based on the OT – the result of the firstfruits would be a greater yield. The 144,000 are sealed and LOOK at the MULTITUDE of the Tribulation saints – as a result of the witness of the 144,000 (Rev. 7:9ff). The 144,000 are indeed the firstfruits sealed by God – dedicated to God, resulting in a MASSIVE yield from the harvest – the harvest of souls saved!

If John is shown a prophetic/future scene with the 144,000 and the Lamb on the earthly Mount Zion in the Millennial Kingdom and the rest of the scene is the heavenly reaction above, then the sealed of Israel would have avoided death to enter the kingdom and now stand as evidence of God's promise to protect a faithful remnant.

Revelation 14:1-5 is a PICTURE OF TRIUMPH! This is a graphic display proclaiming that Satan's attempt at total Jewish destruction that we read in Rev. 12 and Satan's

attempt to persecute the Gentile believers in Rev. 12 and Satan's attempt at forcing the

world to take the mark of the beast...will fail!

These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

Considerations:

- The 144,000 display a consuming obedience to God's will...they follow the Lamb wherever He goes. In their complete dedication to the service of the Lamb, they voluntarily chose to forgo relations with women in order to focus completely on their unique God-given task during the Tribulation.
- Perhaps these 144,000 minister at a time when the institution of marriage has all but fallen by the wayside. The Tribulation is a time characterized by fornication (Rev. 9:20-21).

- Virgins Jesus explained ... there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake (Matt. 19:12). Not only is there purity of life, but there is also undivided love undivided heart affection for the Lamb. These are eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. They were enabled to give their full focus to ministry during the Tribulation.
- They were the first who were redeemed (*bought out of the marketplace*) during the Tribulation.
 - They were firstfruits (previously defined in the notes).
- Rev. 14:6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people. Just when Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet think they are about to take over the world, God will send angels to warn and to remind the people of God's eternal plan. This is the grace of God! The "Everlasting gospel" Gospel "good news"; everlasting the good news is ETERNAL!
- Rev. 14:7 saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.' In the midst of being offered the mark of the beast, this angel presents fearing God alone which encompasses escape from the coming judgment.
- Rev. 14:8 And another angel followed, saying, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.' Babylon is the birthplace of rebellion against God! (Gen. 11 the Tower of Babel) Babylon was conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire (539 BC). In the 1980's and 1990's, Saddam Hussein began to rebuild the city of Babylon. This city will become a great center of religion and trade during the Tribulation. "Fallen" it has been suggested that this word is repeated twice in reference to Babylon as it indicates two separate falls or judgments. The false religious system will fall first when the antichrist sets himself up to be worshipped at the mid-point of the Tribulation. Commerce/trade will continue in this center; however, Babylon will be burned to the ground in one hour near the end of the Tribulation.
- Rev. 14:9 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand. The first angel will preach the Gospel and plead with people to worship God. The second angel will announce the fall of Babylon. This third angel will warn people not to worship the antichrist or take the mark of the beast.
- Rev. 14:10 he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. The ramifications of taking the mark of the beast: receiving the wrath of God in full strength. The contents of the cup of wine are not diluted, they are fully intense. Anyone taking the mark of the beast will be tormented with fire and brimstone which indicates their ultimate

destination (Rev. 20:10 - they will be "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone...and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.") *In the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb* – somehow these who are "cast into outer darkness" (Matt. 8:12; Matt. 22:13; Matt. 25:30) are visible to the redeemed throughout eternity (Isa. 66:24). It appears that the non-believers will also see those who enter the Kingdom. Luke 13:28 - There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. Perhaps awareness of the alternative will contribute to their torment.

Rev. 14:11 - And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name. This is eternal judgment. Some believe that God will burn up the wicked and they will not experience eternal torment – that the wicked will be annihilated. Why, then, do we read that the smoke of their torment is forever and ever? Individual non-believers are noted in vv. 9-10.

Rev. 14:12 - Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Patience - endurance for the believer is always found in our acceptance of God's sovereign control over our lives.

Rev. 14:13 - Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me 'Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.' Those presently dying receive a special blessing in recognition of the severe conditions they are undergoing. This is a unique time of incomparable persecution of those who are believers in Jesus. The Holy Spirit is specifically noted as joining in bestowing this special blessing of the martyred Tribulation saints. Consider: it is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that those who are martyred are able to hold their testimony to the end.

Rev. 14:14 - Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.

One like the Son of Man – cross reference to Dan. 7:13 –

I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And Jesus receives the Kingdom. Jesus will return in the clouds (Matt. 24:30; Matt. 26:64; Acts 1:9-10.

Son of Man – He is God!!! Dan. 7:14 - Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed. Only God will have dominion (Jesus will rule over the earth) and glory – honor and esteem. GOD has promised a kingdom! All peoples, nations, and languages are going to serve GOD! If Jesus' kingdom is everlasting and He'll be ruling – He is everlasting. He is God. The "Son of Man" title speaks of Jesus' deity! It also speaks to Jesus' being given the authority by God to execute judgment.

<u>John 5:27</u> – GOD ...has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.

AND, the "Son of Man" is wearing a golden crown depicting royalty. *Crown* in the Gk, is *stephanos* which is a wreath or garland which was given as a prize to <u>victors</u> in public games. This pictures the Son of Man coming to conquer.

Jesus has in His hand a sharp sickle. What does this mean? Again, it's been given to the Son the authority to execute judgment (John 5:27).

The harvest is pictured in Rev. 14 in two motifs/ways/themes. There is first the grain harvest in Rev. 14:14, 16, and then the grape harvest. There are two final judgments that we're moving toward in Rev. 14 and 15.... There are the seven bowl judgments in Rev. 16, and then the Battle of Armageddon. In both we see the sickle. We see the direct intervention of Jesus in the Battle of Armageddon.

Jesus spoke about the harvest.

- Matt. 13:24-30, 37-42 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; 25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. ²⁶ But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. ²⁷ So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' 28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my <u>barn.'</u>... He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.³⁸ The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. 39 The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. ⁴⁰ Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. 41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
- Matt. 3:11-12 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Rev. 14:15-16 - And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." ¹⁶ So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped. This angel comes from the heavenly temple. Loud voice – voice of authority. Directions coming from God! We see this other angel telling Jesus to thrust in His sickle and reap – for the EARTH is ripe. "Earth" – the inhabited earth as opposed to heaven. "Ripe" – the harvest is overripe to the point of being withered. Could speak to God continually extending mercy and grace in His

warnings throughout the Tribulation. And now the earth is beyond readiness for judgment!

Thrust in Your sickle - A sickle was a long curved sharpened blade with a long wooden handle. In ancient Israel sickles were made out of iron or steel. They were sharpened like a razor to sweep through the grain. The workers would sweep the sickle and the blade would cut the grain at ground level..

Joel speaks of reaping the grapes of wrath associated with the final judgment at Armageddon.

<u>Joel 3:12-13</u> - Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow—for their wickedness is great.

Rev. 14:17-20 - Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. ¹⁸ And another angel came out <u>from the altar</u>, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are <u>fully ripe</u>." ¹⁹ So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. ²⁰ And the winepress was trampled <u>outside the city</u>, and <u>blood came out of the winepress</u>, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs. Another angel from the heavenly temple. Another angel from the altar who had power over fire. The altar is most likely connected to the souls of the martyrs (Rev. 6:9-11) under the altar crying out to God and asking how long until their blood will be avenged. The fire is connected to how the priests in the OT would ignite the incense on the altar of incense from fire in their censers.

<u>Rev. 8:3</u> - Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the <u>prayers of all the saints</u> upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

The prayers of the saints, crying out to God to judge those who took their lives – these prayers are being answered. Now it is time. It is time for the grape harvest. Prayers are being answered – their prayers of God's judgment upon those who took their lives.

- *fully ripe* different Gk. word used in this passage (re: the grape harvest) meaning to come to maturity. These grapes are bursting with juice.
- *outside the city* outside Jerusalem. Jesus was crucified outside "the camp," outside Jerusalem (Heb. 13:11-13). The Lord protects Jerusalem as seen in Zech. 12, Zech. 14, Joel 3.
- blood <u>came out of the winepress</u>, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs

How many people will engage in the Battle of Armageddon? It's not unrealistic to assume there will be millions.

winepress—consisted of two rectangular or circular "excavations" hewn (Isa. 5:2) in the solid rock to a depth of 2 or 3 feet. Where possible, one was always higher than the other and they were connected by a pipe or channel. The upper vat was always wider and shallower than the lower and was the press proper, into which the grapes were thrown, to be crushed by the feet of the treaders (Isa 63:1-3, etc.). As the treaders would

stomp and crush the grapes so full of juice, the grapes would burst and the juice would flow downward into the lower vat through the pipe.

The battle will stretch from Armageddon in the north, Har Megiddo (Mount of Slaughter), 25 miles west-southwest of the southern tip of the Sea of Galilee in the plain of Esdraelon (Valley of Jezreel which divides Galilee from Samaria. It may stretch south through the middle of Israel, through the valley of Jehoshaphat, and then go east to Bozrah in Edom, south of the Dead Sea based on Isa. 63:1ff. The distance equates to 200 miles from Har Megiddo to Bozrah.

How will the blood come up to the height of a horses bridle for 200 miles? It could mean the blood would splatter that high. Think of the carnage. Millions in the Valley of Slaughter. Joel 3:14 - Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! It may mean that the blood flows that high in a trough four feet deep that runs through the central valley of Israel. It may refer to blood flowing through the Siq, the entrance to Petra. Isa. 63:1-3 - Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?— "I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? "I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes.

REVELATION 15

Rev. 15:1 - Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. Revelation 15 is the shortest chapter in the entire book, 8 verses in length. We remain in the "intermission" as we go through Rev. 15. The chronology is not advanced. Rev. 15 is a prelude to the seven bowl judgments that God will POUR out onto the earth. God is telling us He is not yet finished judging the wickedness of the earth. John sees another sign in heaven. This is the third of three great signs in heaven. The first was the sun-clothed woman (Israel); the second was the great red dragon (Satan); the third are the seven angels with seven last plagues. Job wrote that God "does great things, and unsearchable, marvelous things without number" (Job 5:9), "God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend" (Job 37:5). One of the marvelous things that God did was his division of the seas in the Exodus from Egypt (Ps. 78:12-13). Another is His creative work as manifest in marvels of the human body (Ps. 139:14-15). God told Israel, "Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the Lord" (Ex. 34:10).

These "seven plagues" complete or finish God's wrath. The verb "finished" means "reaches its goal" rather than "comes to an end." The seven bowl judgments represent God's final response to the world's unrepentant wickedness.

Rev. 15:2 - And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. We saw the sea of glass first in the throne room of God in Rev. 4:6. The sea which typically symbolizes agitation

because of its waves, was subdued in the throne room – in the presence of God. Here we see that the sea is mixed with fire which suggests that judgment is about to be poured out. The people standing on the sea are not identified. They might be the souls of the tribulation martyrs. These have the victory (some translations use *overcome*) the beast, his image, not having taken his mark. Believers are overcomers (I John 5:4) as we have overcome the world. Have you ever considered that the victory of the believer is often achieved by apparent defeat. We overcome by losing. Often those who have been persecuted the most worship the most. Why is this? Typically, it is because these saints arrive at the realization that they have nothing or no one but God.

Rev. 15:3 - They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! "They" are the ones who have victory over the beast. We read the Song of Moses in Exodus 15. The Song of Moses was a celebration of God's redemptive deliverance from bondage to slavery in Egypt. And, the children of Israel were also delivered from the wrath of the angel of death through the means of the blood of the lambs. It was also a celebration of God's deliverance from the Egyptian army as they passed through the Red Sea. The deliverance under Moses was a foreshadowing of the greater deliverance through the Lamb of God, Jesus. The Song of the Lamb praises the redemptive work – deliverance through Jesus' shed blood on the cross. Both songs praise God for His merciful deliverance.

Rev. 15:4 - Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested. Here's a recipe for worship – declaring Who He is – magnifying His person and His work. The songs conclude with three reasons for fearing/respecting and bringing glory to God. First, God is holy. Holiness means that God, by His very nature, demands that sin be punished. God cannot overlook sin. If He did, He would be violating His holiness. He is doing so through the judgments upon the rebellious world. The second reason to fear and glorify God's name is because all the nations will come and worship before the Lord. Psa. 46:10 - Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! Psa. 86:9 -All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and shall glorify Your name. Rev. 11:15 - Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" This is a fulfillment of God's plan! The third reason God should be feared and glorified is because His righteous acts will be revealed.

Rev. 15:5 - After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. The temple in heaven will be opened and the tabernacle of the testimony, the ark of the covenant/the ark of the testimony, will be seen. The ark contained the law. The law reveals sin. The temple is a manifestation of judgment for those who fall short of the testimony of the law. Rom. 4:15 - the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.

Believers are not under the law.

- Col. 2:13-14 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.
- Rom. 7:6 But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

Rev. 15:6 - And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands. The seven angels came from God's presence. They wore brightly shining garments (Luke 24:4 – the angels at Jesus' tomb wore the same)/ Bands – "belts" which Jesus word (Rev. 1:13)

<u>Rev. 15:7</u> - Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever. The seven bowls of the wrath of God are the culmination of God's wrath poured out on the earth during the Tribulation.

Rev. 15:8 - The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed. Here we have perhaps one of the most mysterious and wondrous verses in all of Scripture. It surely must indicate a period of great privacy and intensity in the mind of God attending the final outpouring of His wrath. Perhaps there is also great sadness in knowing that nothing further can be done, no more will turn. All that remains is the hand of judgment. Perhaps behind the smoke the heart of God is weeping even as Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Such intense judgment to come during the outpouring of the seven bowls! Such grief on the part of the Creator for the creature which refuses to acknowledge Him. Yet He *must* judge for His very holiness and justice require it!

OUESTIONS:

How does Rev. 14 honor and glory God? How does what you learned matter to God?

How does Rev. 15 honor and glory God?

Any V8 moments from Rev. 14 & Rev. 15?

How do these chapters impact you? How will you live differently?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:

Read through the handout and check out the references.

Share what you've been learning with someone.

Celebrate Christmas in light of Jesus' Second Coming!

A MIGHTY CHRISTMAS TO YOU!