

Visions & Voices of Victory

Text: Revelation 14:1-20

Introduction: A few introductory observations.

1. Revelation 14 presents a contrast to the dismal scene of chapters 12-13 and sets the tone and the scene for the outpouring of the final seven vial judgments on the earth. It reveals that though it may seem that the beast's kingdom is in control (Rev. 12-13), in reality, God is still on the throne and will bring His diabolical kingdom to a speedy end.
2. There are three scenes or visions introduced in this chapter introduced by the words "I looked" (Vs. 1), "I saw" (Vs. 6) and "I looked" (Vs. 14). The word 'voices' is also a key word in the chapter appearing eight times. Six angels are involved in this chapter, each with a message to proclaim.
3. Thomas writes, "the chapter is a sort of intermezzo to provide encouragement by telling the ultimate triumph for those who refuse the beast's mark and to predict the doom of those who receive it."
4. Walvoord writes, "Chapter 14 brings to a conclusion the material found in chapters 12 through 14. Chapter 12 deals with the important characters of the period, chapter 13 with the evil rulers of the period, and chapter 14 with the ultimate triumph of Christ. This material is not chronological, but prepares the way for the climax that begins in chapter 15. Chapter 14 is a series of pronouncements and visions assuring the reader of Christ's ultimate triumph and the judgment of evil. Much of the chapter is prophetic of events that have not yet taken place, but that in the context are now impending."

I. VISIONS & VOICES OF WORSHIP (VS. 1-5)

A. The Position of the 144,000 (Vs. 1)

1. With the Heavenly Man (Vs. 1a)
 - a. "a Lamb" = what a refreshing vision in contrast to the dragon and the beasts of the chapter 12-13.
 - b. 'stood' = Christ stands in a position of victory and authority. The beast will fall but Christ stands forever.
2. On the Heavenly Mount (Vs. 1b)
 - a. "mount Sion" = the heavenly Mount Zion/Jerusalem. This is clear as Vs. 3 says they sung "before the throne".
 - b. Heb. 12:22 *"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,"*
3. With the Heavenly Mark (Vs. 1c)
 - a. This is a clear contrast to those who take the mark of the beast (13:16).
 - b. This is the "seal of the living God" mentioned in Rev. 7:2-4.

B. The Praise of the 144,000 (Vs. 2-3)

1. The Sound of their Worship (Vs. 2)
 - a. A loud sound (Vs. 2a). It is powerful and thrilling. Our singing is a read out on our spiritual temperature.
 - b. An orchestral sound (Vs. 2b). The use of musical instruments as an accompaniment to praise and worship is biblical.
2. The Song of their Worship (Vs. 3)

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- a. The freshness of the song (3a).
 - i. “new song” = the phrase appears 9 times in the Bible. For example, the “new song” of salvation (Ps. 40:3). New songs of praise to God are entirely biblical. We have no problem with “new songs” so long as they conform to God’s laws both in the music and lyrics and are not tainted by evil associations.
 - ii. This new song comes at a unique time in history to a unique group of people who have had a very unique experience as God’s Ambassadors on earth during the Tribulation period.
- b. The focus of the song (3b)
 - i. “before the throne” = the praise is directed to God. The throne is the focus of the praise! “Bring the Lamb into the picture, and immediately there is a song!” (Phillips)
 - ii. ‘redeemed’ = redemption the general theme in focus and in particular, their deliverance from the ugly scene on earth.

C. The Purity of the 144,000 (Vs. 4-5)

- 1. They are Separated (Vs. 4a)
 - a. “not defiled with women” = they are pure and distinct from the immoral culture that surrounds them (Rev. 9:21).
 - b. “for they are virgins” = they are unmarried men. This will be a unique part of their calling for this unique period of history. Not teaching that marriage is sinful (See Heb. 13:4).
- 2. They are Single-minded (Vs. 4b) There are completely devoted and surrendered to Christ.
- 3. They are Saved (Vs. 4c)
 - a. ‘redeemed’ = purchased by God
 - b. ‘firstfruits’ = “each year the farmer went into his fields of swiftly ripening grain and cut one sheaf. This sheaf was then presented to God. It was not the whole harvest, but it represented the whole.” (Phillips) They make up the first fruits of the tribulation harvest of souls, particularly the first fruits of the conversion of Israel.
- 4. They are Sincere (Vs. 5a)
 - a. ‘guile’ means “Craft; cunning; artifice; duplicity; deceit; usually in a bad sense.” (Webster). They use no lies, falsehood, trickery or deceit.
 - b. These men will speak the truth in a world full of Antichrist’s lies and deceptions. Their character is in direct contrast to the devil and his program on earth which is a lie.
- 5. They are Spotless (Vs. 5b)
 - a. “without fault” = without spot or blemish. They are now glorified saints.
 - b. One day our salvation will be fully realized when we stand faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy (Jude 1:24).

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II. VISIONS & VOICES OF WARNING (VS. 6-12)

Three angels pronounce messages of warning to the earth:

A. A Warning for Decision (Vs. 6-7)

1. An eternal Gospel (Vs. 6a)
 - a. 'angel' = with the 144,000 Jewish Evangelists removed from the earth, God uses an angel to call men to repentance.
 - b. "midst of heaven" = the sky (Gen. 1:20).
 - c. 'everlasting' = the Gospel is eternal and timeless. It finds its source in the heart of the eternal God in eternity past and its truth will endure into eternity future.
2. A universal Gospel (Vs. 6b)
 - a. "every nation, kindred, tongue and people" = the Gospel is for all men of every country, tribe and language.
 - b. 2 Peter 3:9 – God is not willing that any should perish.
3. A dispensational Gospel (Vs. 7)
 - a. The angel preaches a facet of the Gospel that is most appropriate for the dispensation of the tribulation.
 - b. It contains key Gospel themes that are applicable in any age, namely, the fear of God, repentance and submission to God the Creator. It is a gospel of repentance toward God.
 - c. "heaven, earth, sea and fountains of waters" = the entirety of God's creation. All things were made by Him!

B. A Warning of Doom (Vs. 8)

1. The proclamation of this angel anticipates the destruction of Babylon that is fully recorded in Revelation 18. "It anticipates the complete collapse of the political, economic, and religious system of the Beast." (Phillips)
2. 'Babylon' = "Prophetically, Babylon sometimes refers to a physical city, sometimes to a religious system, sometimes to a political system, all stemming from the evil character of historic Babylon." (Walvoord) "It is God's name for the world system of the beast, the entire economic and political organization by which he rules. "The harlot" (Rev. 17) is the religious system that the beast uses to help build his organization." (Wiersbe)
3. "wine of the wrath of her fornication" = those who partake of her idolatries and associated immoralities will come under the wrath of God.

C. A Warning of Damnation (Vs. 9-13)

"Men are caught between the voice of Satan and the voice of God. Satan is urging men to receive the mark of the beast, while God is warning them not to do it." (Cloud) "Worship me," cries the Beast, "or be doomed!" "Worship me," cries the Lamb, "or be damned!" (Phillips) "...choose you this day whom ye will serve." (Josh. 24:15)

1. The Destiny of the Beast Worshipers (Vs. 9-11)

Those who worship the beast and receive his mark will experience the wrath of God. Observe three features of this wrath:

 - a. Undiluted wrath (Vs. 10a)
 - i. "without mixture" = means full strength; it means the wrath of God will not be tempered with any mercy and grace. It will be pure, undiluted, Divine wrath. What an

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- awesome and fearful thing; sinners in the hands of an angry God. Hebrews 10:31 *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*
- ii. "cup of his indignation" = "God's final judgments on mankind will be "vials of wrath" poured out from heaven. God will not mix mercy with this judgment, but will pour out His undiluted indignation on a rebellious world." (Wiersbe) "He will unleash the white heat of His wrath that has been restrained for so long." (Robertson)
- b. Unbearable wrath (Vs. 10b)
- i. "fire and brimstone" = hell is a place of fiery torment
 - ii. Rev. 21:8 *"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."*
 - iii. "in the presence of" = makes the judgment all the more awesome. Imagine standing before the sinless Son of God as the perfect Judge of the universe, his holy angels standing by ready to escort you to the lake of fire as soon as the sentence is passed.
- c. Unending Wrath (Vs. 11)
- i. "for ever and ever" = this is the "strongest expression of eternity of which the Greek is capable." (Walvoord) The Bible plainly teaches that the unsaved suffer in hell for eternity. If you die without Christ and go to hell, when you have spent a trillion years there, you haven't even so much as reduced your sentence by a single second! No where does the Bible teach the annihilation of the wicked or that hell is a temporary place.
 - ii. Matthew 25:46 *"And these shall go away into **everlasting punishment**: but the righteous into life eternal."*
 - iii. 2 Thess. 1:8-9 *"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with **everlasting destruction** from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;"*
2. The Destiny of the Lamb Worshippers (Vs. 12-13)
Set over against the eternal damnation of the unsaved, we have the contrast of the eternal bliss of the saved.
- a. The patience of the saints (Vs.12). "The stern warning to the beast worshippers is also an encouragement to those who put their trust in Christ in the time of the great tribulation. Though some will face martyrdom and others will need to go into hiding, they are assured that their lot is far preferable to that of those who accept the easy way out and worship the beast." (Walvoord) Much better to endure the temporary wrath of the beast than the eternal wrath of the Lamb!
 - b. The privilege of the saints (Vs. 13)
 - i. Rejoicing (13a)

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1. “blessed are the dead which die in the Lord” = those who die in Christ are blessed. All the glories of heaven await them on the other side of death.
 2. 2 Cor. 5:8 *“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”*
 3. Php. 1:23 *“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:”*
 4. “from henceforth” = particular application within the context of the tribulation period. Death for the tribulation saints will deliver them from the evil world of antichrist.
 5. “‘I’ll make you suffer!’ screams the Beast. ‘You’ll make us saints!’ reply the overcomers. ‘I’ll persecute you to the grave,’ roars the Beast, ‘You’ll promote us to glory!’ reply the overcomers. ‘I’ll blast you!’ snarls the Beast. ‘You’ll bless us!’ Reply the overcomers. The Beast’s rage against these noble martyrs will all be in vain.” (Phillips)
- ii. Rest (13b)
1. “yea saith the Spirit” = the Holy Spirit adds His word of affirmation to the blessing pronounced on the saints.
 2. “they may rest from their labors” = heaven is a place of true rest.
- iii. Reward (13c)
1. “their works do follow them” = you take nothing with you from this life into eternity **except** your service as a Christian. Your works as a Christian form the basis of your rewards at the judgment seat of Christ.
 2. J. Vernoon McGee: “For their works follow them” reveals that they will be rewarded for their faithfulness, patience, and works in this period. God does not save anyone for his works, but He does reward us for our works. Our works (good or bad) are like tin cans tied to a dog’s tail; we cannot get away from them.”
 3. Challenge: Your service for Christ now lasts for eternity! What good works are you taking with you to glory? Or will you arrive saved but empty handed, a life wasted on the cares and misplaced priorities of this world system?

III. VISIONS & VOICES OF WOE (VS. 14-20)

This is the third scene/vision in the chapter and it provides two powerful pictures of God’s judgment. Christ is pictured as harvesting the earth and an angel is depicted as reaping the vine.

A. The Son’s Sharp Sickle (Vs. 14-16)

1. The Portrayal of the Son (Vs. 14)
 - a. Pictured as King and Sovereign – seated and crowned

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- b. Pictured as Judge – sharp sickle in hand. The sharp sickle speaks of the severity of the judgment.
 2. The Proclamation to the Son (Vs. 15)
 - a. “out of the temple” = the judgment proceeds from the throne room of heaven.
 - b. “the time is come” = the time of judgment has arrived. Pictures the impending judgment of the vials about to be poured out on the earth.
 - c. “harvest of the earth is ripe” = means the earth is ripe for judgment on account of man’s sin. “The word ‘ripe’ refers to something that is overripe and rotting and withering on the vine.” (Cloud)
 3. The Performance of the Son (Vs. 16)
- B. The Seraph’s Sharp Sickle (Vs. 17-20)**
1. The proclamation to the angel (Vs. 18)
 - a. “out from the altar” = this is the altar of incense where the prayers of the saints are offered. Brings into focus the relationship between the prayers of the saints and God’s judgment on the earth.
 - b. Could be the same angel who cast fire from the alter previously
 2. The performance of the angel (Vs. 19-20)
 - a. ‘winepress’ = “The winepress in ancient times consisted of two basins hewn out of solid rock. One was higher than the other and contained the grapes which someone walked on to squeeze the juice from them. The juice flowed through a duct into the lower basin where it collected until being removed for consumption. The redness of the juice and the staining of the feet and garments of the treaders made this an apt picture of divine judgment.” (Thomas)
 - b. “Today, Christ is the Vine and believers are branches in Him (John 15). But the world system is also a vine, ‘the vine of the earth’ in contrast to Christ, the heavenly Vine; and it is ripening for judgment. The wicked system – Babylon – that intoxicates people and controls them, will one day be cut down and destroyed in ‘the winepress of the wrath of God’”.
 - c. “without the city” = a reference to Jerusalem
 - d. The scene depicts the final battle of Armageddon at Christ’s return which is described in Joel 3:9-16 and Revelation 19:11-21. Takes place in the valley of Jehoshaphat, also called the valley of Jezreel which is located in the area of the Kidron valley.
 - e. “unto the horse bridles” = the picture seems to indicate there will be so much blood flowing it will splash up to the height of the horse’s bridle. See Isaiah 63:3.
 - f. “a thousand and six hundred furlongs” = approx. 175 miles which is roughly the distance of the entire length of Israel from North to South.

Conclusion:

1. Believer, are you seeking to win the lost for Christ?
2. Friend, are you saved? Will you repent today and receive Christ?