

Session 16 **Worship, Proclamation, and Judgement** Revelation 14:1-8

Chapters 12 and 13 described **the war between the dragon and his servants and the woman and her seed**, and the paradoxical **victory of the saints by means of their apparent defeat**.

14:1 -20 completes the “interlude” between the cycles of the trumpets and the bowls of wrath.

The structure of these chapters is a series of six visions that John saw:

- a) **Events mainly on earth**
 - The dragon and the woman and her seed, 12:1-18
 - The (political) beast from the sea,13:1-10
 - The (religious) beast from the earth,13:11-18

- b) **Events as seen from heaven**
 - The new song, 14:1-5
 - Three angels make solemn proclamations, 14:6-13
 - Two harvests, 14:14-20

The overall pattern of Revelation continues, switching between scenes on earth and events in the “heavenlies”.

The purpose of this section is to reveal the nature of the visible conflict on earth in the light of the invisible spiritual forces ranged on both sides. It stretches through the whole period between the first and second comings of Jesus, climaxing towards the end.

The church needs to remain faithful in the heat of the battle knowing that, despite appearances, God is in control and the choice that the saints have made will be vindicated.

The new song v1-5

The Lamb is standing on Mount Zion, (contrast the dragon, 13:1).

This is difficult to interpret. It is possible that John is seeing them in the millennium kingdom, centred in **earthly Zion**, Isaiah 2:2-4, Zech. 14:16. Alternatively it is in the **heavenly Zion**, Heb. 12:22.

On the one hand **the Lamb and the 144,000** seem to be hearing a sound from Heaven (i.e. they are elsewhere – on earth), but they are also stated to be before the throne of God, v5 (not in all manuscripts). The Lamb is in Heaven until His return to earth in glory, 5:6, 7:17.

John sees the whole company of the redeemed at the end of the age – **all who were sealed, have been preserved and have come to their reward**, 7:4, 14:1, in contrast to those who have received the mark of the beast, 13:16-17, 14:9-11.

Now John heard something

- **First of all a very loud voice from Heaven** – like the voice of God, 1:15 c.f. PSALM, and of the heavenly choir, 19:6.
- **Then the sound of harps** - “harpists harping their harps” (sweet, harmonious), c.f. 5:8, 15:2.
- **Then the song.** It is described as a new song – but perhaps similar to 5:9. It is in the context of redemption and preservation. Only those with the experience can really understand the meaning, Psalm 40:1-3, 144:1-2, 9-10, . Psalms 96, 98 and 149 describe a new song in the setting of harps and loud celebration. The theme is salvation/deliverance, as is the victory song in Rev. 15:2-4, echoing Exodus 15:1-21.

Who are these 144,000?

- **Undefiled/virgins.** This has nothing to do with celibacy; it is a spiritual quality personified by the bride, 19:7-8, 21:2, c.f. Isaiah 37:22, Amos 5:2, 2Cor. 11:2. It also echoes ritual purity, Lev. 15:19-24, 1Sam. 21:1-6, 2Sam. 11:4.

They follow the Lamb wherever He goes; the central definition of discipleship is, “Follow Me”.
This may involve laying down their lives, Mark 8:34.

- **Redeemed from men**, c.f. v3 – they have been purchased by the Lamb and belong exclusively to Him. This again is an echo of Exodus. God claimed the first born sons, redeemed by the blood of the lambs, as His own, Exodus 13:11-16, 1Cor. 6:20, 1Peter 1:18-19, 22.
First fruits – these belong exclusively to God and are in the context of sacrifice, Lev. 23:21.
- **No deceitful speech. Jesus had no deceit in His mouth**, Isaiah 53:9; His people must be the same, 1Peter 2:1, Eph. 4:22-25. **They do not resemble the dragon**, 12:9, or his servants, 13:14, 19:20, or false prophets, 2:20.
Blameless. This denotes **moral character** as symbolized by the requirement that **a sacrificial animal be without blemish**, 1Peter 1:19. A blameless life is one lived before God, with the desire to please Him, Gen. 17:1, Eph. 1:4.
God's purpose is to remove the blemishes en route to the wedding feast, Eph. 5:25-27, Phil. 2:14-16, Rev. 21:2, 19:7-9.

The three angels and their proclamations v6-13

- **V6-7. The “Everlasting Gospel”.**

This angel is proclaiming his message to the whole world, as symbolized by his flight above the earth and the designation of his target audience. His message is the counterpart to the other “flying angel” who proclaimed the “three woes”, 8:13, and of the messages of the next two angels, v8-11.

What is that he is preaching? The “preliminary” judgements of the trumpets, 8:7-12, struck the same elements of creation as in 14:7 and were designed to convince the “earth dwellers” of their creaturely vulnerability, and lead to repentance before their Creator God. Failure to fear God, give Him glory, and worship Him, constitute the one great sin that encompasses all the rest, Rom. 1:18-32.

The angel is calling them, with a loud and insistent voice, to respond to the message of the trumpet judgements before it is too late.

Jesus proclaimed the Gospel in these terms – “Repent ... the Kingdom of God is at hand” Mark 1:14-15. Then the preface was “The time is fulfilled”; now the preface is “For the hour of His judgement has come”. When Jesus read Isaiah 61 in the synagogue in Nazareth, Luke 4:18-19, He did not complete the quotation in v2 “And the day of the vengeance of our God”. Now that time is near.

This is the last possible opportunity to take action, for the other two angels pronounce imminent judgement.

- **V8. The fall of Babylon.**
- This is the first mention in Revelation of Babylon but it is obviously a name for the “great city”, 11:8. Here it is introduced only to announce its destruction, a scene repeated in the seventh and last of the bowls of wrath, 16:19. The relationship between Babylon and the political beast is described in chapter 17 and her wicked character and judgement in chapter 18, and the consequent rejoicing in Heaven, in 19:1-4.

In John's day Babylon was a code name for Rome, 1Peter 5:13.

The Babylon theme begins in Genesis 11 and extends through the Scriptures. It finds expression in various civilizations – e.g. Sodom, Egypt, Tyre and ultimately Babylon itself, characterised by ungodliness, wealth, oppression, immorality, cruelty and violence, pride, and persecution of God's people.

In Revelation it is the world city – human society organized without reference to God, now with a worldwide unified culture of ungodliness; “all nations” are infected with its spiritual immorality and subject to the wine of God's wrath.