

My Eyes Have Seen the Coming of the Glory of the Lord

Revelation 14:1-20

Introduction: 1) The song is called “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.” It begins with words that reflect the text before us, “Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord; He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored.” The idea of God trampling out sinners in wrath is not a popular concept or idea in our culture. A recent denomination refused to include the popular hymn “In Christ Alone” because it found offensive the line, “When on the cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied.” They preferred to change the latter phrase to “the love of God was magnified.” The idea of wrath offends modern sensibilities. However, the wrath of God is a thoroughly biblical concept that we neglect or deny at our peril.

2) In Psalm 94:1-2 we read, “LORD, God of vengeance—God of vengeance, appear. Rise up, Judge of the earth; repay the proud what they deserve.” The prayer of the Psalmist is answered in Revelation 14, a text that stands in amazing contrast to chapter 13. There the beast, the Antichrist, rises to power. He wars against the saints and overcomes them (v.7), takes authority over the whole earth (v.7), and puts to death those who will not worship him or bear his mark (vs. 15-

18). Now, in 3 separate visions (notice the phrase, “I looked” or “I saw in v. 1, 6, 14) we see the Warrior Lamb standing on Mount Zion with his army of saints (v.1). They sing the song of redemption (v. 2-3) and follow after the Lamb in holiness and purity (vs. 4-5). They have the promise of heaven and glory whereas the followers of the beast have the certainty of judgment and hell (vs. 6-20). This chapter is a preview of coming attractions. The one you follow is crucial. The one you worship is decisive.

I. Faithful follower of Jesus have a glorious Future 14:1-5

Warren Wiersbe is certainly correct, “better to reign with Christ forever, than to reign with Antichrist for a few years” (p. 112). To this I would add, “better to worship the Lamb who redeems and rewards than the Beast who deceives and destroys.” John begins this chapter with his attention turned to the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, and his followers. Three glorious promises are ours to enjoy forever and ever.

1) The redeemed will stand with Him securely 14:1

- The Lamb is now standing on Mount Zion and with him 144,000. This is the same 144,000 of Revelation 7:1-8. As there, I believe these are Jewish believers who belong to God and are protected by God. Both his name and the Father’s name is written (W.A.R), permanently inscribed, on their foreheads. These followers of Christ

are dependent on God, loyal to God, owned by God, safe and secure in God.

- They stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion. Some believe this is heavenly Zion based upon Hebrews 12:22-24. That is certainly possible. However, I believe it is better to see this as earthly Jerusalem and a reflection of the beautiful Messianic hymn of Psalm 2. There is v. 6 we read, “I have consecrated My King on Zion, My holy mountain.” Psalm 48:2 says, “rising splendidly, is the joy of the whole earth. Mount Zion on the slopes of the north is the city of the great King.” Isaiah 24:33 adds, “The moon will be put to shame and the sun disgraced, because the LORD of Hosts will reign as king on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, and He will display His glory in the presence of His elders.” This is the mountain of the great King, and there He stands in triumphant victory. By glorious grace, those who follow Him stand with Him.

The reign of terror of the dragon, antichrist and the false prophet is already passing away. Its doom is certain. There is a new King on the scene! The beast is going down as the Lamb stand up (cf. 5:6-7; see also Psalm 76).

2) The redeemed will sing to Him loudly 14:2-3

- In v. 1 John sees the glory of God. Now he hears singing to the glory of God. Once more he hears “a voice from heaven” (cf. 4:1; 10:4, 8; 11:12; 12:10, 13; 18:14; 19:1). This recalls the vision of 1:15 (cf. Ezk. 43:2). Here the voice is not one but many. Duvall says John hears, “a resounding heavenly anthem. The sounds is both booming and beautiful” (p. 191). Indeed, the sound of the waters and thunders are impressive and powerful. The song John says, is “like harpists harping with their harps” (my translation).
- To these instruments is added “a new song,” the song of the redeemed (cf. 5:9). They sing before 1) the throne, 2) angels (“the four living creatures”) and 3) the representatives of the redeemed (“the elders”). Only the redeemed (the 144,000) can learn and sing this song. If I am correct that the 144,000 represent Jewish believers, it may also be correct that here they represent all believers as they sing the song of redemption and salvation. Such joy and celebration is the natural response of all who have been purchased for God by the blood of the Lamb. Saved by a salvation we do not deserve or could ever earn, we rejoice in the Lamb who slain but is now standing (5:6). Christianity has always been a singing faith. It will remain so for all eternity!

3) The redeemed will be sanctified through Him completely 14:4-5

Verse 4 can be a bit tricky if we forget Revelation is apocalyptic, symbolic language. We are introduced to virgins who have not defiled themselves with women. This, without question, is symbolic of their fidelity and allegiance to the Lamb whom they follow wherever He goes. In other words they are spiritually faithful to their God in a world awash in idolatry and immorality (cf. 9:20-21; see also Jam. 4:5). They have remained morally and spiritually pure in their devotion of and love for the Lamb. No other God would they consider. No other lover would they entertain. They follow (pre. tense) Christ and only Christ! Why? Because He redeemed them. He set them free from slavery to sin. He purchased them from the enslavement and bondage to sin. They continually follow the Lamb as first fruits. This could indicate they are the beginning or first of a greater harvest to follow. Based on Revelation 7:9-14, we know that many will come to Christ during the Great Tribulation even as God pours out His judgment, and wrath on unrepentant humanity.

Verse 5 informs us that as they follow the Lamb, there is no lie in their mouth and they are blameless. “They are ambassadors of truth and enemies of falsehood in what they say and how they live” (Duvall, 192).

Believers hold fast to Christ (vs. 4-5) because he holds fast to them (v. 1). He is truly glorified in us because we are fully and totally satisfied in Him. He is all we could ever want and more! Hallelujah. Praise the Lamb.

II. God will be just in his treatment of all persons 14:6-13

- Beginning with verse 6 we are introduced to 6 angelic messengers who appear in the remainder of the chapter (v. 6, 8, 9, 15, 17, 18). Their messages contain both blessing and cursing. There are words of gospel (v. 6). There are also words of judgment. What is made crystal clear is there is no place in a biblical, orthodox theology for universalism (eventually all persons will be saved). A biblical portrait of hell and eternal torment is painted for us in verses 10-11 that are simply too plain to be denied. Revelation 14:6-20 could not be more politically incorrect for an age that tolerates anything and everything. However, one thing is certain: the God of all the earth will do right (Gen. 18:25). There is coming a day of reckoning for all of us. We will not all be treated the same though we will all be treated justly and righteously. No one will stand before God at judgment and say, “You did me wrong. You were unfair.” Such a day will never come.

1) All peoples are called to fear, glorify and worship their creator God

14:6-7

Flying in the midst of heaven (ESV, “directly overhead”) is actually mid-heaven. It refers to that point in the sky where the sun reaches its apex or highest point. This angel will be at the highest point and verse 7 informs us that he will speak with the loudest voice. All will see him and all will hear him.

He preaches the everlasting gospel. This is the only time an angel is said to preach the gospel! This is our assignment and task. The everlasting gospel is the same gospel proclaimed throughout all of history. It is the good news of forgiveness and eternal life made possible through the death of Jesus Christ for sinners. Old Testament saints looked forward to this day. All New Testament believers look back to what Christ accomplished. It is interesting to note that the gospel is called in the Bible “the gospel of the kingdom” (Matt. 4:23), “the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Mark 1:1), “the gospel of God” (Mark 1:14), “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24), “the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:4), “the gospel of salvation” (Eph. 1:13), “the gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:15), and “the glorious gospel” (1 Tim. 1:11). (MacArthur, vol. 2, 86). It is a “great gospel.”

Jesus promised that this gospel would be preached throughout the whole world before the end (Matt. 24:14). The preaching of this angel will in some sense assure that this promise is indeed fulfilled. (Ibid).

The audience of this message is said again to be “those who dwell on the earth.” This is the phrase used throughout Revelation which refers to unbelievers. Furthermore, they are described as “every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.” The nature of this angel’s ministry is comprehensive and worldwide in the truest sense. He will indeed preach the gospel to all creation. To preach the gospel to all creation was the last command our Lord gave to His disciples (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). We are never more faithful to the heart and will of our Lord than when we, like this faithful angel, preach the gospel to all creation. There is still time, but it will not last forever.

- Verse 7 contains the rightful response of every person to the God who made them and the gospel that can redeem them. This particular verse is steeped both in imperatives and in natural revelation. The words “fear,” “give,” and “worship” are all imperatives of command. God is the sovereign Lord, therefore we should fear Him. Complete awe and reverence is His rightful due.

- God is the awesome judge, therefore we should give Him glory. Note that the text says, “the hour of His judgment has come.” The time for salvation is almost gone. The opportunity to receive Christ is fading quickly. The bowl judgments of chapter 16 are fast approaching. Armageddon is just around the corner. The second coming (19:11-21) could happen at any moment.
- God is the marvelous Creator, therefore we should worship Him. Our text emphasizes the magnitude of God’s creative work. He is the one who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water. God has revealed Himself both in nature and in Scripture. Romans 1 and 2 remind us that no one is without excuse, for God has made himself known to all persons both in creation and in conscience.

Application

When Paul evangelized Jews he almost always started with the Old Testament Scriptures, a common starting point with them. However, when he evangelized Greeks and Pagan Gentiles, his starting point was almost always creation (see Acts 14 & 17). (MacArthur, vol. 2, 89). In secular America today, creation is often the best, even a necessary, starting point for us when it comes to evangelizing those who need to know Jesus. Before you introduce someone to the Redeemer, you must

first help them to understand there is a Creator. As Creator, God made everything. That means as Creator, God made you and God made me. Understanding such a truth is a starting point for my understanding that I have a responsibility to rightly relate to that one who made me. This is the heart of Paul's theology in Romans 1. This is the heart of John's argument here in Revelation 14:7.

2) Unbelievers can anticipate defeat, wrath and eternal torment 14:8-11

Verses 8-13 reveal a tremendous contrast between those who follow the Lamb and those who follow the beast, between the saved and the lost. We see first the destiny of the unsaved. Their end can only be described as heartbreaking, sorrowful and tragic. Their future is unimaginably dark and hopeless.

“Another angel, a second” appears announcing the fall of “Babylon the great.” Babylon is introduced here for the 1st time in Revelation, though a more full description will be provided in chapters 17 and 18. Babylon the Great is referenced 6 times (14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21; see also Dan. 4:30). Ancient Babylon in Mesopotamia, modern day Iraq, had been a political, commercial and religious powerhouse. It was once a great empire and known for its moral decadence (gross immorality and idolatry).

In Revelation, Babylon stands for that system religiously, politically and economically which stands in opposition to all that is of God. It is Antichrist's worldwide political, economic, and religious empire. Founded by Nimrod (Genesis 10:9) it was the sight of the first organized system of idolatrous and false worship (Genesis 11:1-4). The tower of Babel was its most pronounced expression. So certain is its demise that the word fallen is repeated. It is certain to be destroyed. (MacArthur, vol. 2, 90).

All nations have been intoxicated, deceived, and seduced by this false system headed by Antichrist. Like a seductive prostitute, the Babylonian system leads men into passionate maddening adultery with a god who is no god at all.

Those who drink her wine and experience her passion will also drink another wine and experience another passion. Tragically it will be the wine of the wrath of God. As the 144,000 follow the Lamb, so those on the earth follow Babylon and the Beast (verse 9). The result is that they will now drink of the wine of the wrath of God in full strength or in full measure.

In the Old Testament God's wrath is often pictured as a cup of wine to be drunk (Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51:17; Jeremiah 25:15). Such wrath is the

personal and proper response of a holy and righteous God to rebellious sinners who have said no to His love and grace revealed in Jesus Christ.

Verse 10 and 11 provide a terrifying picture of hell and eternal damnation. It is impossible to read these verses and come up with any kind of doctrine of universalism, annihilationism or conditional immortality. The picture is one of conscious, eternal and everlasting torment before the angels and the Lamb. Those in hell will have a constant awareness and knowledge of the God they rejected. This will only enhance the horror and torment that they will experience. Fire and brimstone are often used in Scripture with respect to divine judgment. God used it to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24-25; Luke 17:29). (MacArthur, vol. 2, 91). Our Lord spoke of hell as a place of “eternal fire” (Matt. 18:8; 25:41), “unquenchable fire” (Mark 9:43) and the place where “the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48). In Matthew 25:41 Jesus taught that the everlasting fire or hell was “prepared for the devil and his angels.” God does not desire that anyone would go to hell, but that all would come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Those who go to hell choose their destiny, saying “no” to the grace of God made available to all through His Son, the Lamb, Jesus Christ.

3) Believers will endure, obey, find rest and be rewarded 14:12-13

The destiny of those who know Christ is radically different than those who die without Him. In verse 12 we are called to endurance, patience, steadfastness, or perseverance. Duvall notes, “The term “endurance” (*hypomonē*), perhaps “the key ethical term in the Apocalypse,” appears seven times in Revelation (1:9; 2:2, 3, 19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12)” [p. 198]

While our salvation is a signed, sealed and settled issue rooted in the keeping power of God (Jude 24-25), we are indeed challenged to persevere and the means of our perseverance is noted here in verse 12: those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. Jesus reminded us in John 8:31, “If you abide in My Word then you are truly disciples of Mine.” John also wrote in his first epistle, “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (1 John 5:3). Those who follow the Lamb have faith in Jesus and those who have faith in Jesus follow the Lamb.

The two concepts cannot be separated from one another. In the midst of horrible tribulation and great wickedness, we cannot help but wonder: “is our devotion to the Lamb truly worth it?” Verse 13 provides a resounding “yes” to that question. John again hears a voice from heaven telling him to write and write words that will be permanent and lasting. Here we encounter the second of seven beatitudes in the book of Revelation (1:3;

16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord” is a remarkable statement. It can only be understood when taken as a whole. If we were to say blessed are the dead, that would certainly make no sense and seem blatantly absurd. However, when you add the phrase “who die in the Lord” everything takes on a new perspective. Paul taught us that, “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). He also said in Philippians 1:21, “for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” Psalm 116:15 teaches us that “precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” So certain is this truth that the Holy Spirit gives His hearty affirmation, “Blessed indeed.” This is the only time that the Holy Spirit is quoted in all of the Revelation except in 22:17. His emphatic “yes” reveals his absolute agreement with the voice from heaven that states that those who die in the Lord are indeed blessed.

Those who die in the Lord have their final rest. Sorrow and suffering are at an end. Those who die in the Lord find their works (“their deeds”) following them. In other words, rest and reward is the promise of eternity for those who have followed the Lamb and have kept their faith in Jesus.

III. Jesus will pour out His wrath on the earth in righteous judgment

14:14-20

I once heard a Jewish evangelist named Hyman Appleman say, “If I could scare you out of hell I would.” I have to agree with him knowing how terrible and eternal it will be. Revelation 14:9-11 have made this clear. Now verses 14-20 demonstrate its future horror by the images of 2 harvest: 1) grain in 14:14-16 and 2) grapes in 14:17-20. While some students of Scripture believe the first depicts the harvest of the righteous and the 2nd the unrighteous, it is best to see both as harvest of judgment on the wicked. The Old Testament background is Joel 3:12-13 where the Bible says, “Let the nations be roused and come to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit down to judge all the surrounding nations. Swing the sickle because the harvest is ripe. Come and trample the grapes because the winepress is full; the wine vats overflow because the wickedness of the nations is great.”

1) The judgment will be in glory and on time 14:14-16

- John looks (14:1, 6) and sees the Son of Man on a white cloud with a golden victor’s crown (Gr. *stephanos*) on His head. This is the Lord Jesus (cf. 1:13-16; Dan. 7:13-14). Here is our Lord in dazzling brilliance and majesty, awesome authority and power. Revelation 1:7 is coming to fruition.

- He has a sharp sickle in his hand (v. 14) and an angel coming out of the temple in heaven says the time to harvest the earth has come because “the earth is fully ripe” (v. 15). Jesus, Himself, “likens the final judgment to the harvest of the earth (Matt. 13:30; 39)” [Johnson, BSC, 143].
- Verse 16 is brief and simple. The One who “sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth and the earth was reaped.” The divine, heavenly “terminator” has come. Judgment Day has arrived and it cannot be delayed. God’s wrath comes via the Lamb. God’s wrath comes on time. The ministry of mercy is over. Sowing the seed of the gospel is at an end. Tomorrow is now today.

2) The judgment will be universal and horrific 14:17-20

The vision shifts from the “grain harvest” to the “grape harvest.” I believe this is also our first glimpse of the battle or campaign of Armageddon (see 16:12-16; 19:17-21). The 5th and 6th angels of chapter 14 appear in verses 17-18. The 5th, like the 4th, comes from the temple. Like our Lord, he has a sharp sickle for reaping. The 6th angel comes from the altar, the altar of incense (6:9-11; 8:3-5). There is once more a connection between the prayers of the saints and judgment on earth. God hears and answers our

prayers. The 5th angel commands the 6th to harvest the grapes “from the vine of the earth for its grapes are ripe.” Fully ripe is the idea. The time is now.

The angel responds immediately and decisively (v.19). There is no delay, no hesitation. In the Ancient Near East, in the time of John, grapes were trampled or stomped by foot in a trough that had a duct leading to a lower trough or basin where the juice was collected. Treading grapes in a winepress was a familiar figure of divine wrath and judgment. “The splattering of the juice as the grapes are stomped vividly pictures the splattered blood of those who will be destroyed” (MacArthur, vol. 2, 117). Hear the words of Isaiah 63:3-4 – “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. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come.”

Hear the words of Lamentations 1:15 – “The Lord has trampled underfoot all my mighty men in my midst; He has called an assembly against me to crush my young men; the Lord trampled as in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah.”

Hear the words of Joel 3:13 – “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.”

And hear the words of Revelation 19:15 – “Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

- Jerusalem will be spared the terrible judgment at the 2nd Coming of Christ according to God’s Word. She will be damaged but not destroyed. This is in keeping with God’s prediction and promise in Zechariah 14:1-5. “Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city, then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle, and in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee through My

mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the Lord my God will come and all the saints with You.”

The war that will truly end all wars will no doubt be worldwide, yet its focal point will be on the Plain of Esdraelon near Mt. Megiddo (about 60 miles north of Jerusalem). This is what we know as Armageddon. Here will take place the most horrific and destructive battle the world will ever know.

- Armageddon is also noted in 16:12-16 and 19:17-21. Armageddon is more a slaughter than a battle. Blood will flow or be splattered up to a horse's bridle or about 4 feet. It will run for 1600 furlongs or stadia; 184 miles. This is hyperbole suggesting massive, unimaginable slaughter and destruction. (MacArthur, vol. 2, 117). Josephus tells us that when Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70 by the Roman general Titus, he killed so many Jews that the whole city ran with blood so much that the fire of many houses were quenched with their blood. In this battle, the blood will fill the troughs and streambeds throughout the valley of Megiddo and beyond. (*Wars of the Jews* 6.8.5). It will truly be a just and terrible day of vengeance and judgment.

Conclusion

The faithful Baptist preacher of London, England, Charles Spurgeon, understood the gravity of what it means to stand either with Jesus or against Jesus. He understood, as many do not, what was at stake. Bringing his own sermon from this chapter to a conclusion, he pled with conviction and passion in words I simply cannot ignore. I urge you to heed his warning and his counsel lest you are thrown into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

“I beseech you, do not risk that doom for yourselves. Escape for your lives; look not behind you but fly to the only refuge which God has provided. Whoever will entrust his soul to Jesus Christ shall be eternally saved. Look unto him who wore the thorn-crown, and repose your soul’s entire confidence in Him, and then, in that last great day, you shall see Him seated on the white cloud, wearing the golden crown, and you shall be gathered...But if you reject Him, do not think it wrong that you should be cast with the grapes into the winepress of the wrath of God, and be trodden with the rest of “the clusters of the vine of the earth.” I beg you to take Christ as your Saviour, this very hour lest this night you should die unsaved. Lay hold of Jesus, lest you never hear another gospel invitation or warning. If I have seemed to speak

terribly, God knoweth that I have done it out of love to your souls; and, believe me, that I do not speak as strongly as the truth might well permit me to do, for there is something far more terrible about the doom of the lost than language can ever express or thought conceive. God save all of you from ever suffering that doom, for Jesus Christ' sake! Amen.”

(“The Harvest And The Vintage,” preached in 1876 from Revelation 14:14-20).