

CHAPTER 14

After an account of the great trials and sufferings which the servants of God had endured, we have now a more pleasant scene opening; the day begins now to dawn, and here we have represented,

- I. The Lord Jesus at the head of his faithful followers (v. 1-5).
- II. Three angels sent successively to proclaim the fall of Babylon and the things antecedent and consequent to so great an event (v. 6-13).
- III. The vision of the harvest (v. 14, etc.).

REVELATION 14:1-5

THE LAMB AND HIS ATTENDANTS

Here we have one of the most pleasing sights that can be viewed in this world — the Lord Jesus Christ at the head of his faithful adherents and attendants. Here observe,

1. How Christ appears: as a Lamb standing upon *mount Zion*. Mount Zion is the gospel church. Christ is with his church and in the midst of her in all her troubles, and therefore she is not consumed. It is his presence that secures her perseverance; he appears as *a Lamb, a true Lamb, the Lamb of God*. A counterfeit lamb is mentioned as rising out of the earth in the last chapter, which was really a dragon; here Christ appears as the true paschal Lamb, to show that his mediatorial government is the fruit of his sufferings, and the cause of his people's safety and fidelity.

2. How his people appear: very honourably.

(1.) As to the numbers, they are many, even all who are sealed; not one of them lost in all the tribulations through which they have gone.

(2.) Their distinguishing badge: they had *the name of God written in their foreheads*; they made a bold and open profession of their faith in God and

Christ, and, this being followed by suitable actings, they are known and approved.

(3.) Their congratulations and songs of praise, which were peculiar to the redeemed (v. 3); their praises were loud as thunder, or *as the voice of many waters*; they were melodious, as *of harpers*; they were heavenly, *before the throne* of God. *The song was new*, suited to the new covenant, and unto that new and gracious dispensation of Providence under which they now were; and their song was a secret to others, *strangers intermeddled not with their joy*; others might repeat the words of the song, but they were strangers to the true sense and spirit of it.

(4.) Their character and description.

[1.] They are described by their chastity and purity: *They are virgins*. They had not defiled themselves either with corporal or spiritual adultery; they had kept themselves clean from the abominations of the antichristian generation.

[2.] By their loyalty and stedfast adherence to Christ: *They follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes*; they follow the conduct of his word, Spirit, and providence, leaving it to him to lead them into what duties and difficulties he pleases.

[3.] By their former designation to this honour: *These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits to God, and to the Lamb*, v. 4. Here is plain evidence of a special redemption: *They were redeemed from among men*. Some of the children of men are, by redeeming mercy, distinguished from others: *They were the first-fruits to God, and to the Lamb*, his choice ones, eminent in every grace, and the earnest of many more who should *be followers of them, as they were of Christ*.

[4.] By their universal integrity and conscientiousness: *There was no guile found in them, and they were without fault before the throne of God*. They were without any prevailing guile, any allowed fault; their hearts were right with God, and, as for their human infirmities, they were freely pardoned in Christ. This is the happy remnant who attend upon the Lord Jesus as their head and Lord; he is glorified in them, and they are glorified in him.

REVELATION 14:6-12

THE THREE ANGELS

In this part of the chapter we have three angels or messengers sent from heaven to give notice of the fall of Babylon, and of those things that were antecedent and consequent to that great event.

I. The first angel was sent on an errand antecedent to it, and that was *to preach the everlasting gospel*, v. 6, 7. Observe,

1. The gospel is an everlasting gospel; it is so in its nature, and it will be so in its consequences. Though all flesh be grass, the word of the Lord endureth for ever.

2. It is a work fit for an angel to preach this everlasting gospel; such is the dignity, and such is the difficulty of that work! And yet we have this treasure in earthen vessels.

3. The everlasting gospel is of great concern to all the world; and, as it is the concern of all, it is very much to be desired that it should be made known to all, even *to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people*.

4. The gospel is the great means whereby men are brought to fear God, and to give glory to him. Natural religion is not sufficient to keep up the fear of God, nor to secure to him glory from men; it is the gospel that revives the fear of God, and retrieves his glory in the world.

5. When idolatry creeps into the churches of God, it is by the preaching of the gospel, attended by the power of the Holy Spirit, that men are *turned from idols to serve the living God*, as the Creator of *the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters*, v. 7. To worship any God besides him who created the world is idolatry.

II. The second angel follows the other, and proclaims the actual fall of Babylon. The preaching of the everlasting gospel had shaken the foundations of antichristianism in the world, and hastened its downfall. By Babylon is generally understood Rome, which was before called *Sodom* and *Egypt*, for wickedness and cruelty, and is now first called *Babylon*, for pride and idolatry. Observe,

1. What God has fore-ordained and foretold shall be done as certainly as if it were done already.

2. The greatness of the papal Babylon will not be able to prevent her fall, but will make it more dreadful and remarkable.

3. The wickedness of Babylon, in corrupting, debauching, and intoxicating the nations round about her, will make her fall just and will declare the righteousness of God in her utter ruin, v. 8. Her crimes are recited as the just cause of her destruction.

III. A third angel follows the other two, and gives warning to all of that divine vengeance which would overtake all those that obstinately adhered to the antichristian interest after God had thus proclaimed its downfall, v. 9, 10. If after this (this threatening denounced against Babylon, and in part already executed) any should persist in their idolatry, professing subjection to the beast and promoting his cause, they must expect *to drink deep of the wind of the wrath of God*; they shall be for ever miserable in soul and body; Jesus Christ will inflict this punishment upon them, and the holy angels will behold it and approve of it. Idolatry, both pagan and papal, is a damning sin in its own nature, and will prove fatal to those who persist in it, after fair warning given by the word of Providence; those who refuse to come out of Babylon, when thus called, and resolve to partake of her sins, must receive of her plagues; and the guilt and ruin of such incorrigible idolaters will serve to set forth the excellency of the patience and obedience of the saints. These graces shall be rewarded with salvation and glory. When the treachery and rebellion of others shall be punished with everlasting destruction, then it will be said, to the honour of the faithful (v. 12): *Here is the patience of the saints*; you have before seen their patience exercised, now you see it rewarded.

⌘ REVELATION 14:13-20

THE HARVEST AND THE VINTAGE

Here we have the vision of the harvest and vintage, introduced with a solemn preface. Observe,

I. The preface, v. 13. Here note,

1. Whence this prophecy about the harvest came: it came down from heaven, and not from men, and therefore it is of certain truth and great authority.

2. How it was to be preserved and published — by writing; it was to be a matter of record, that the people of God might have recourse to it for their support and comfort upon all occasions.

3. What it principally intended, and that is, to show the blessedness of all the faithful saints and servants of God, both in death and after death: *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth*, etc. Here observe,

(1.) The description of those that are and shall be blessed — such as die in the Lord, either die in the cause of Christ, or rather die in a state of vital union with Christ, such as are found in Christ when death comes.

(2.) The demonstration of this blessedness: *They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.*

[1.] They are blessed in their rest; they rest from all sin, temptation, sorrow, and persecution. *There the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary are at rest.*

[2.] They are blessed in their recompence: *Their works follow them*; they do not go before them as their title, or price of purchase, but follow them as their evidence of having lived and died in the Lord; and the memory of them will be pleasant, and the reward glorious, far above the merit of all their services and sufferings.

[3.] They are happy in the time of their dying, when they have lived to see the cause of God reviving, the peace of the church returning, and the wrath of God falling upon their idolatrous cruel enemies. Such times are good times to die in; they have Simeon's desire: *Now, Lord, let thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* And all this is ratified and confirmed by the testimony of the Spirit witnessing with their spirits and with the written word.

II. We have the vision itself, represented by a harvest and a vintage.

1. By a harvest (v. 14, 15), an emblem that sometimes signifies the cutting down of the wicked, when ripe for ruin, by the judgments of God, and sometimes the gathering in of the righteous, when ripe for heaven, by the

mercy of God. This seems rather to represent God's judgments against the wicked: and here observe,

(1.) The Lord of the harvest — one so *like unto the Son of man* that he was the same, even the Lord Jesus, who is described,

[1.] By the chariot in which he sat — *a white cloud*, a cloud that had a bright side turned to the church, how dark soever it might be to the wicked.

[2.] By the ensign of his power: *On his head was a golden crown*, authority to do all that he did and whatsoever he would do.

[3.] By the instrument of his providences: *In his hand a sharp sickle*.

[4.] By the solicitations he had from the temple to perform this great work. What he did, he was desired to do by his people; and, though he was resolved to do it, he would for this thing be sought unto by them, and so it should be in return to their prayers.

(2.) The harvest-work, which is, to thrust the sickle into the corn, and reap the field. The sickle is the sword of God's justice; the field is the world; reaping is cutting the inhabitants of the earth down and carrying them off.

(3.) The harvest-time; and this is when the corn is ripe, when the measure of the sin of men is filled up, and they are ripe for destruction. The most inveterate enemies of Christ and his church are not destroyed till by their sin they are ripe for ruin, and then he will spare them no longer; he will thrust in his sickle, and the earth shall be reaped.

2. By a vintage, v. 17. Some think that these two are only different emblems of the same judgment; others that they refer to distinct events of providence before the end of all things. Observe,

(1.) To whom this vintage-work was committed — to an angel, *another angel that came out from the altar*, that is, from the holiest of all in heaven.

(2.) At whose request this vintage-work was undertaken: it was, as before, at the cry of an *angel out of the temple*, the ministers and churches of God on earth.

(3.) The work of the vintage, which consists of two parts: —

[1.] The cutting off, and *gathering, the clusters of the vine*, which were now ripe and ready, *fully ripe*, v. 18.

[2.] Casting these grapes *into the wine-press* (v. 19); here we are told, *First*, What was the wine-press: it was *the wrath of God*, the fire of his indignation, some terrible calamity, very probably the sword, shedding the blood of the wicked. *Secondly*, Where was the place of the wine-press — *without the city*, where the army lay that came against Babylon. *Thirdly*, The quantity of the wine, that is, of the blood that was drawn forth by this judgment: it was, for depth, up *to the horses' bridles*, and, for breadth and length, *a thousand and six hundred furlongs* (v. 20); that is, say some, 200 Italian miles, which is thought to be the measure of the holy land, and may be meant of the patrimony of the holy see, encompassing the city of Rome. But here we are left of doubtful conjectures. Perhaps this great event has not yet had its accomplishment, but *the vision is for an appointed time*; and therefore, though it may seem to tarry, we are to wait for it. *But who shall live when the Lord does this?*