

Celebrating Victory: Three Warnings and a Blessing (Revelation 14:6–13)

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Introduction

1. The first vision of chapter 14 presents the saints in heaven fully realizing the victory won for them by the Lamb, with whom they stand on Mount Zion (vv. 1–5).
 - a. As they were sealed on earth (7:1–8), the same number sealed now stand with the Lamb in glory.
 - b. They sing a *new song*, having experienced redemption, something no other creature has, praising God and the Lamb for their goodness and mercy.
 - c. Their relationship to the Lamb is evidenced in three ways: (1) they turn away from the world, refusing to compromise with it what it values. (2) They follow the Lamb wherever He goes, even to suffering and martyrdom. (3) They manifest likeness to Christ, being faithful (true) and pure, morally and spiritually.
2. The next two visions form a stark contrast.
 - a. The first is gracious, warning the earth-dwellers of impending judgment.
 - b. The second shows the nature of that judgment, the harvest of earth—gathering of the wheat (saved) and the treading of the grapes (unsaved).
 - c. This message deals with the three warnings of impending judgment on the lost, but it is also aimed at encouraging believers to endure to the end.
 - d. Unlike much of the material that covers the whole period of this gospel age, the warnings immediately precede the final judgment.

I. The Concern

1. The first angel warns that judgment is near to those that dwell on earth (literally, *sit* on earth).
 - a. These who sit are not in direct conflict with the sovereign Lord nor are outright hating Him.
 - b. They are simply unconcerned about their spiritual plight—at ease, indifferent, unconcerned, and careless (Luke 17:26–30; Amos 6:1).
 - c. Carelessness stems from a deceived heart full of prideful self-indulgence and idolatry.
2. The first angel’s message is the “eternal gospel.”
 - a. *Gospel* (good news) is often taken as the message of salvation, offering hope to sinners.
 - b. However, the gospel message in this text clearly refers to impending judgment.
 - c. Thus, it is better to understand gospel to mean that God is being vindicated through the upholding of His righteousness, either by saving or judging the unrighteous (Rom. 2:16; Mark 16:15).

3. The first angel's challenge: "*Fear God and give him glory . . . worship him who made heaven and earth.*" (See Ecc. 12:13).
 - a. There is hope, for judgment is only near. God could call someone to salvation, even in the final hour.
 - b. To fear God is to own that He alone should be our concern. Even in judgment, one's attitude toward the judge may bring some mercy.
 - c. He is Creator, and all creation must own Him in worship and adoration.

II. The Cause

1. The second angel presents an unexpected announcement: "*Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great*" (Isa. 21:9a).
 - a. Here is the first mention of Babylon, the great whore that is detailed in chapters 17 and 18.
 - b. Babylon, the first of the pagan Gentile empires that dominated the world and oppressed the people of God, is the code name for all godless pagan power. It requires the unquestioning loyalty of its followers.
 - c. "Babylon the Great" was Nebuchadnezzar's prideful self-evaluation of his empire in Shinar.
 - d. As we will see, Babylon came to stand for the seducing power of the world, beguiling the soul and luring it away from obedience to God.
2. The means that Babylon employs is "*the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality.*"
 - a. Here is the *cause* of the first angel's warning. Those at ease are so because they are drunk on Babylon's wine (Jer. 51:7, 8).
 - b. This wine is self-indulgence—the error that happiness can be found in the things God has made but apart from Him.
 - c. Self-indulgence leads to lust for security, leading to idolatry and spiritual blindness (Hos. 4:11, 12; Isa. 29:9).

III. The Consequences

1. Those who refuse to worship and obey the true God will worship the beast and comply with his demands.
2. Those who drank the whore's wine of passion must now drink the wine of God's wrath.
 - a. God's wrath is unmixed—full strength (no mercy).
 - b. It is served from the cup of His anger and, since His anger is not a passion, it is definitive and severe, based on His infinite and holy righteousness.
3. The consequence of God's wrath on the unrighteous is unmitigated torment—suffering unimaginable.
 - a. Those who refused the Lamb must now be forced to acknowledge Him in His presence (Phil. 2:9–11).

- b. Based on Isaiah 34:9, 10, John paints a dismal future for those refusing to submit to the first angel's message.
- c. This text settles most of the theological controversies over the nature of eternal torment. Is hell fire real? Are unbelievers annihilated?

IV. The Blessing

1. On the basis of this declaration (that judgment is near), the saints are exhorted to perseverance.
 - a. Their trials will soon be over, and eternal blessedness and Sabbath rest awaits them.
 - b. The saints are defined as those who "keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus." It is a call to patient and persistent watchfulness.
2. The blessing of eternal rest and reward is based on the condition of loyally and faithfully following the Lamb, even in the midst of suffering and persecution.
 - a. Justification is unconditional, but entrance into heaven is conditional. The justified, however, will meet the condition (Rom. 8:29).
 - b. Thus, the warnings noted above are directed to the saints in order to encourage perseverance.

Application

1. Worship is one duty and privilege that we do here and will continue to do in eternity. Oh, let us perfect and expand our worship!
Is He not worthy?
Are we to love His creation and His gifts more than the Creator?
2. Does Jesus ask too much of us when He requires us to give Him our all, even our being willing to die for Him?
Do our carnal natures find Christ not lovely?
Does this evil and temporary life mean more to us than the glory of standing with the Lamb and singing His praises through all eternity?