

VICTORY AND VENGEANCE

Revelation 14

Introduction:

We continue this morning in our study from the Book of Revelation. It has been over 9 months now since we began this series of messages. One of the most difficult things about this study for me is dealing with the issue that most of what we find in this book is still future. We have a common saying that hindsight is 20-20. It is one thing to read the historical accounts of the Bible and, with our 20-20 hindsight, see how people should have responded to the situation, or how they should have understood the teaching of Jesus or Paul.

But Revelation is a whole different ballgame. Now I know that there are those who believe that most of Revelation is history, describing the terrors of the Roman occupation and ultimate destruction of Jerusalem, and the persecution of the church over the centuries. However, when studied carefully and in the context of the rest of Scripture, including the Book of Daniel, one cannot help but realize that the majority of this book has yet to occur. And that makes it difficult to interpret in many places.

One of the things I have found as I study this revelation that God gave to John, and as I read commentaries and explanations of this book, is that there is no general consensus on all of the events and the timeline of the book. Even among futurists, who see the events of this book as describing the events of the end times, not everyone places the events in the same place on the timeline of the end.

Chapters 4-5 of Revelation describe events in heaven following the Rapture, but prior to the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation period. These events primarily involve worship around the throne of God and the Lamb, and the preparation for the unsealing of the scroll which will set in motion the events of the Tribulation.

Chapters 6-18 deal with the period of the Great Tribulation. This is where it starts to get complex, as it is not altogether clear as to the time

periods involved in each of the events described. Consequently there are certain events that some scholars would place in the first half of the Tribulation that others would put into the middle or the second half of the Tribulation. However, I don't think that is all that significant. The key thing to remember is that all of this will occur in a seven year period.

Chapters 19-22 focus on the events which will take place following the Great Tribulation – the Battle of Armageddon, the 1000 year reign and the eternal state. That is really what is exciting for the child of God, as we look forward to eternity in the presence of our God and Saviour.

In the meantime, we have come to chapter 14 this morning. This chapter is somewhat unique in this study of end-time events. It divides neatly into 3 sections. Most of your Bibles probably have it divided into these 3 parts: vv. 1-5 – The Lamb and the 144,000; vv. 6-13 – The Messages of the Three Angels; and vv. 14-20 – The Harvest of the Earth.

However, this chapter actually contains a series of seven visions or proclamations about what is still coming. These visions are stated as events already occurring, but are actually a preview of future events. They serve as a connecting link between the mid-tribulation events of chapters 10-13 and the events of the second half of the Tribulation that we find in chapters 15-18. In the previous chapters, we have seen the attempt of Satan and his counterfeit trinity to steal the authority of God and to destroy those who insist on worshipping God.

Now in chapter 14 we have seven proclamations from God which appear to have three main purposes: *first*, to predict that in the end, Satan's program will fail and he will be destroyed; *second*, to preview the results of the seven final judgments which are yet to come (the Bowl Judgments); *third*, to provide comfort and encouragement to the saints who are struggling through the second half of the Tribulation.

With these thoughts in mind, let us take a brief look at these seven proclamations or announcements in Revelation 14.

The First Proclamation – vv. 1-5

Read v. 1 – clearly a millennial picture as the Lamb is standing on Mount Zion – Jerusalem, along with the 144,000 Jews who had been

sealed – see chapter 7. In the previous two chapters, especially chapter 12, we have seen Satan and his attempt to destroy the Jews. Here we see the 144,000 Jews standing with the Messiah in victory on Mount Zion, with God’s protective seal on their foreheads prominently displayed. Throughout history every attempt by Satan to destroy God’s chosen people has failed and it will ultimately fail in the Tribulation as well. In vv. 2-3 we see the song of this 144,000. It is a new song that only they will know.

In vv. 4-5 there are four specific characteristics of these witnesses given:

1. They are male virgins – they are committed to the ministry of evangelizing the earth during the tribulation, unhindered by marital relationships.
2. They follow the Lamb, the Messiah, wherever he leads them.
3. They are the firstfruits, a term indicating that there is much more to follow. There will be many more than this 144,000 Jews saved out of the Tribulation.
4. They are blameless. They have been untainted by the false religious and political systems of the Antichrist.

As David Levy describes them, “They possess a sterling character and commitment to the Lord, giving them the needed strength to stand against the Antichrist’s demonic program.”

The Second Proclamation – vv. 6-7

These next four proclamations form the section which is labeled, The Messages of the Three Angels, in your Bibles. These announcements deal with various phases of God’s final judgment on the ungodly world system that has been set up and controlled by Satan.

Read vv. 6-7. This proclamation is really a proclamation of the gospel. It is a final call to the world to accept the gospel. It is a call to the inhabitants of the world to make the choice between the Messiah and the Antichrist. In light of the coming judgment they are urged to worship Him who made heaven and earth. (By the way, this is the first use of the word “judgment” in the book of Revelation.)

The Third Proclamation – v. 8

Read v. 8 – This proclamation announces the fall of political Babylon. More details regarding the destruction of Babylon will come up in chapter 18. What is important here is simply to note the prediction that the worldwide capital of the Antichrist is going to be destroyed.

The Fourth Proclamation – vv. 9-12

Read vv. 9-12 – this fourth pronouncement concerns those who accept the mark of the Beast. This is clearly the point of no return. Those who are left behind when the rapture occurs will still have the opportunity to turn to Christ in repentance and faith and be saved. But once they have accepted the mark, which signifies the acceptance of the Antichrist as the one true god, they will have forfeited any further opportunity to be saved. This text says they will drink the wine of God’s wrath—a reference to the Bowl judgments which are soon to be poured out, and they will be tormented forever in the lake of fire.

This is no small thing. But let me make it clear—no one will take the mark unknowingly. By this time there have been two worldwide proclamations of the gospel, during the Tribulation. The first is the 144,000 sealed Jews who proclaimed the gospel during the first half of the tribulation. The second is the angel in 14:6-7 who carries the gospel throughout the earth in the middle of the tribulation.

This proclamation ends with a word of encouragement and challenge to endurance for those who have trusted Jesus Christ – v. 12.

The Fifth Proclamation – v. 13

Read v. 13 – this announcement is very brief. But it is a further word of encouragement and comfort concerning the saints who will die during the second half of the Tribulation. There is a special blessing promised to them for their faithfulness.

The Sixth Proclamation – vv. 14-16

The sixth announcement takes us into the third section of this chapter – the harvest of the earth. This section leads us into the final battle. This is the war to end all wars – the Battle of Armageddon. There are

two proclamations included in this section. This sixth proclamation deals with reaping.

Read vv. 14-16 – the earlier proclamations predicted a coming judgment. Now this angel gives the command to carry out that judgment. “Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.” The word *ripe* indicates that this judgment is long past due. The phrase *the time is come* indicates that God has a specific appointed hour in which he will execute divine wrath. At the signal of the angel, the Son of Man “...swung his sickle...and the earth was reaped.” The saints are gathered in and the wicked are destroyed.

The Seventh Proclamation – vv. 17-20

Read vv. 17-20 – this proclamation speaks of the treading of the grapes. Treading is a common symbol of judgment. The grapes are gathered and cast into the winepress, where they will face the severity of God’s wrath. The coming Bowl judgments of chapters 15-16 are the final judgment of God toward sin and wickedness and those who practice such. The final defeat of Satan and his minions will take place “*outside the city*,” where the Kidron Valley is located. With the close of the Bowl judgments, there is to be a severe judgment, resulting in massive bloodletting – v. 20. (Reference to the Battle of Armageddon)

Conclusion

All of these proclamations are really a preview of what is to come in the latter part of the Tribulation period. We will see many of these things expanded as we go through the next few chapters of Revelation. But right now I want to make some application from what we have just looked at.

We are living in what is sometimes called the age of grace. It began with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and it will continue until the end of the Tribulation period. The only way to be set free from sin and have a relationship with God is through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Those who trust Christ during this period of the Church will be caught up in the Rapture to be forever with the Lord. Those left behind will still have the opportunity to trust Christ during the Tribulation.

However, there are a couple of things that are important to note. **First**, for anyone who is left behind, it will be much more difficult to be a believer during the Tribulation. It will most likely cost your very life. **Second**, there will come a time when the Lord will put in his sickle, the harvest will take place and there will be no more opportunity to believe. The age of grace will be over and your eternal destiny will be sealed.

One other thing to keep in mind is if you die without having put your faith in Christ, your opportunity is over. There is no second chance. My question to you today is this:

Have you made your decision for Jesus Christ?