

REVELATION - THE FINAL VICTORY

(Lesson 7)

Intro: What picture or scene comes to mind when you think of Judgment Day?

- resurrection of all the dead, all appearing before Christ's judgment throne, believers caught up with Christ in heaven, the destruction of the world by fire - or a different form of God's judgment which destroys all things

- The Fourth Vision: The Seven Visions

1. The Fourth Vision: The 144,000 With the Lamb (14:1-5)

- Who are the 144,000? - all true believers, the church (12 number of the church - squared, 10 number of completeness - cubed = the full number of all true believers); in chapter 7 the 144,000 come out of great tribulation; here they escape the damage done by the dragon and the two beasts
- Where are the 144,000? - with the Lamb, heaven; church triumphant in the heavenly Jerusalem
- What marks the 144,000? - the mark or seal of the Lamb and Father on their forehead - mark indicates ownership - they belong to God and the Lamb
- What is the content of the 144,000's "new song"? (Cf. Psalm 96:1,2; 98:1,2) - harps mentioned 3 times in Revelation each to accompany singing around the throne (5:8,9; 16:2,3), large number of saints = loud singing - sound of rushing waters and thunder (comfort for struggling church); new song in Bible is reference to the salvation God has prepared for his people - new song is believer's joy and gratitude for their salvation, only 144,000 could sing it - we can't learn it until we are in heaven
- What makes the 144,000 unique and special to God? - redeemed by Christ - believe it; didn't defile themselves with women - (adultery) figurative term for faithfulness to God, did not commit spiritual idolatry, church is bride of Christ, wife of the Lamb; follow the Lamb - sheep listen to his voice, he gives them eternal life; purchased and offered as firstfruits to God - part of harvest brought to temple as offering to the Lord - harvest brought to temple of heaven, their eternal redemption; no lie in their mouths, blameless - blamelessness is righteousness of Christ imputed to us through faith, no lie is proof of blamelessness - free of lying is being free of sin - Jesus, no deceit in his mouth (Is 53:9)

(Not defiling themselves with women is a figure of speech that is closely related to the common designation of idolatry as adultery. In his commentary on Hosea, Luther says that in the imagery of the Old Testament "committing harlotry means practicing adultery". These 144,000 refused to receive the mark of the beast. They rejected all idolatry and refused to be unfaithful to God and the Lamb. They remained faithful to the bridegroom who would come at the end of time to claim them as his bride.)

2. The Fifth Vision: The Three Angels (14:6-13)

- What promise of Jesus is being fulfilled in this vision, verse 6? - gospel preached until the end, everlasting gospel- Jesus' words will never pass away; text used for Reformation Sunday, Luther's work
- What is the message of the first angel? - fear God and give him glory, fear is childlike fear for believer understanding God's grace, slavish fear for unbeliever knowing only God's punishment (conscience); praising and worshiping God, the Creator of all things - gospel produces reverent fear and praise, worship
- How are we to understand the second angel's message? - Babylon - O.T. enemy of God's people, all the enemies of the church for all time, Babylon fallen - release of God's people to go home to heaven
- What does the third angel add to the message of the second angel? - those who drink the wine of God's enemies, commit spiritual adultery/idolatry will drink full strength of God's wrath, torment of hell, in presence of Lamb as Judge and holy angels for rejection of his grace
- What happens to those who "die in the Lord"? - again encouragement for patient endurance, die in faith will be blessed from moment of their death, don't need to wait for victory of the judgment
- In what sense do their deeds follow them? - works do not save, evidence of faith which saves; works highlighted in judgment as proof of faith in Jesus - "the evidence" in believer's case

3. The Sixth Vision: The Harvest (14:14-20)

- Who is the one seated on the cloud that John sees? - *the Lord Jesus, "Son of Man", crown of gold - royal authority; sharp sickle - instrument used by farmers to harvest grain field*
- What was the one sitting on the cloud commanded to do? Why? - *angel comes from temple (from God) telling Jesus to harvest the earth; harvest is ripe, literally dried - can't wait any longer*
 - Where did this command come from? - *from temple, from God himself*
- What is different about the rest of that which is harvested? - *compared to grape harvest, conducted by another angel (perhaps symbolizing that God has no pleasure in death of wicked), out from altar (temple); thrown into winepress of God's wrath, blood flowed for 1,660 stadia -180 miles*
- What is this sixth vision clearly describing? - *Judgment Day, some see the grain harvest as believers, grape harvest as unbelievers - punished; both could represent harvest of entire earth*
- What is the significance of 1600 stadia? (Hint: $1600 = 4 \times 4 \times 10 \times 10$) - *1600 is 4 squared times 10 squared - 4 number of earth, 10 completeness = judgment of all people*

4. The Seventh Vision: The Angels with the Seven Last Plagues (15:1-8)

- How are these plagues described in verse 1? - *(vision of judgment followed by seventh vision John sees church triumphant in heaven and alerted to seven bowls); these are last plagues bringing about the final destruction of the earth*
- Where is John's vision taking place? - *same glassy sea (perfect calm) in chapter 4 - throne in heaven; fire is presence of the Lord - pillar of fire in desert (glory of the Lord); victory over beast (sea? earth?)*
- Compare Moses' song of victory in Exodus 15: 1-21 to the song quoted here. - *song is directed to the Lamb, like Moses' song of the victory over Pharaoh's army at Red Sea - sung on Sabbath evenings in synagogue to celebrate Israel's deliverance (esp. Ex 15: 11- Rev. 15:4)*
- What happened when the seven angels came out of the temple? - *tabernacle is O.T. tent in the desert where sacrifices were offered; angels in shining linen- purity, golden sashes - Jesus wore in chapter I, symbolic of royal & priestly functions; angels given seven bowls of God's wrath by one of four living creatures - God's final punishments; smoke symbol of God's presence as in Holy of Holies above the ark*
- What is the significance of not being able to enter the temple? - *marks the end of all intercession for the people, the end of the time of grace and repentance, nothing but "fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God" - Hebrews 10:27*
- How does this vision prepare John's readers for the vision of the seven bowls? - *the wrath of God in God's final punishments prepares us for the pouring out of the seven bowls which predict God's impending judgment that is coming on the world, similar to seven trumpets*

Conclusion: Should we find joy and satisfaction in the punishment of the wicked? - *yes and no; we do not want the wicked to be punished forever in hell, we want to make good use of their time of grace to share the gospel with them, on the other hand we find joy in the destruction of God's enemies who hate him and seek our ruin and will rejoice in their final punishment as we do the devil's; we also hate sin and the flaunting display of it but we let God do the punishing in his own time and way even as God allows for their time of grace and reserves his judgment until its appointed time (we have 110 trouble with Israel slaughtering the people of Canaan - their time was up, it was God's judgment)*