

REVELATION – SERMON 55

A VISION OF THE VICTORIOUS

Revelation 14:1-5

INTRODUCTION

- What does it mean to be successful? What does it mean to be a winner?
- It depends on whether you view things with reference to this temporal world, or whether you view things with reference to eternity.
- Many who are now regarded as being successful here and now, will be utterly forgotten in eternity.
- And many who are presently despised and seen as being failures in this world, will be exalted as kings in the next world.
- Perhaps the greatest example of this is Jesus Christ
- “A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15)
- God has chosen weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty (1 Corinthians 1:25-29)
- Today in Revelation 14 we see a group of people who show what *true* success looks like
- The visions of chapters 12-13 concerning some of the main characters and events on earth during the tribulation now make way for a new section of the Apocalypse in which the ultimate triumph of God over Satan predominates

- A key word that is repeatedly used in chapters 14-16 is “voice” (11 times), showing that even while Satan’s diabolic work rises on the earth, the heavens are not silent
- The seventh trumpet, containing the seven vial judgments sounded in 11:15, but the vials have not yet been poured out; they are announced in chapter 15, and poured out in chapter 16
- Chapter 14 then is transitional and preparatory
- It answers the questions that arise from the previous chapter – what becomes of the beast and those who receive his mark? (vv.9-11), and what becomes of those who are martyred for refusing it? (v.13)
- It is a chapter of encouragement, particularly for those saints who will suffer under the beast’s reign, assuring them that their *“light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh... a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;”* (2 Corinthians 4:17)
- Chapter 14 is a perfect contrast to chapter 13

CHAPTER 13	CHAPTER 14
The beast reigns	The Lamb reigns
The mark of the beast	The seal of the Father
The deceiving False Prophet	The guileless servants of God
The saints overcome	The saints exalted
The beast worshipped	God worshipped
Earth dwellers	The redeemed from the earth
The false lamb	The true Lamb

- The chapter is best understood proleptically – surveying the final judgments and blessings that will take place at the end of the tribulation, including the preaching of the everlasting gospel (6-7); the fall of Babylon (8); the judgment of those who take the mark (9-11); the defeat of the beast and his armies at Armageddon (14-20)

- Here we are considering the re-appearance of the 144,000 who first appeared in chapter 7 at the beginning of the tribulation as the sealed servants of God out of the twelve tribes of Israel
- They are shown now at the end of the tribulation as victors through Christ

I. THEY ARE RECEIVED IN SION (1)

A. The Lamb

1. This is the preferred name for Christ in Revelation, used 26 times
2. It emphasises his redemptive work (see vv.4-5)

B. Mount Sion

1. One view is that this is the heavenly Sion (Hebrews 12:22-23)
 - a. This sees the scene taking place at the mid-point of the tribulation
 - b. The Scripture does not reveal how they came to be in heaven
 - c. Some have suggested that they are raptured and taken straight to heaven after their work is done
 - d. The more commonly held view is that they were all killed by the beast and their souls went to heaven
2. The other view is that this is the earthly Sion

- a. This sees these servants as being miraculously preserved by God through the tribulation as their seal of protection would indicate (Revelation 7:3)
- b. Zion/Sion in Scripture most commonly refers to the earthly Jerusalem, particularly when used in connection with the Messiah and his kingdom (Psalm 2:6; 48:2; Isaiah 2:3; 24:23; Joel 2:32; Zechariah 14:4; Micah 4:1-2)
- c. The 144,000 will be a part of the believing remnant of Israel that will enter alive into the Millennial Kingdom, to populate the Promised Land, being a “firstfruits” (v.4) of Israel
- d. To understand this not chronologically but proleptically is consistent with other events in this chapter, such as the fall of Babylon, which does not occur until the seventh vial (Revelation 16:19)

C. The Father’s name written in their foreheads

1. In chapter 7 they were sealed in their foreheads, which was the earnest of their ultimate victory
2. As the beast branded his followers with his name, the Father writes his name on his chosen servants showing they belong to him
3. They know the Father because the Son revealed him to them (Matthew 11:27)
4. They do not only bear an outward mark of the Father’s name, but an inner imprint of the Father’s nature that concords with his mind and consecrates to his service (2 Peter 1:4; cf. Revelation 22:3-4)

II. THEY REJOICE IN SONG (2-3)

A. A voice from heaven

1. This voice may be God the Father or an angel
2. It originates “from heaven” and projects down to the earth where the Lamb and the 144,000 stand (cf. Revelation 11:12; 18:4)

B. The song from heaven

1. The harpers in 5:8 were the twenty-four elders, representing the church, while in 15:2 they are those who had gotten the victory over the beast
2. The choirs of heaven will erupt in a new song of praise to the Lamb that was slain as his redemptive work finds its consummation in the establishment of his earthly kingdom
3. The “new song” is associated with redemption and cannot be comprehended or truly sung by those who have not experienced it (Psalm 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Revelation 5:9)
4. Heaven and earth will be in harmony as the 144,000 will join those in heaven to sing a song that they only can learn

III. THEY ARE REDEEMED WITHOUT SPOT (4-5)

A. They are redeemed

1. This word means to be bought or purchased

2. Redemption from sin is only by the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 5:9)
3. From the earth – its corruptions, lusts and philosophies (1 John 2:16)
4. From among men – from human devices, religion, strength and hope (Isaiah 2:22)

B. They are virgins

1. They keep themselves pure from the gross idolatry and immorality that will overspread the earth in those days (Revelation 9:20-21)
2. Their abstaining from defilement with women does not negate God's approval of the institution of marriage (Hebrews 13:4)
3. Yet it seems that during the distress of the tribulation, they refrain from marriage in order to devote themselves fully to the service they are called to (1 Corinthians 7:26)

C. They follow the Lamb

1. They followed Christ by faith in a world that despised him
 - a. Following him means forsaking all for his sake (Matthew 19:21-22)
 - b. Following him means self-denial (Luke 9:57-62)
 - c. Following him means bearing his reproach (Hebrews 13:13)
2. Hence they have the privilege of following him in his glorious kingdom (cf. Revelation 3:21)

D. They are firstfruits

1. The firstfruits represent the very finest of the crop
2. The firstfruits belong to the Lord
3. The firstfruits are the promise of a coming harvest
4. "They are the first of the harvest of the tribulation period that will come into the millennium to populate the millennial earth." (J. Dwight Pentecost)
5. The firstfruits are a specimen of the rest of the harvest (Romans 11:16)

E. They are faultless

1. They have no guile in their mouths
 - a. They are without deceit or falsehood
 - b. Their holy lives accord with their gracious speech
 - c. This is a requirement for those who would dwell in God's holy hill of Zion (Psalm 15:1-3)
2. They are without fault before God's throne
 - a. All men are sinners and are with fault before God
 - b. As Christ's blood *redeems* sinners, so too his blood *cleanses* filthy sinners and makes them accepted before the Father (Colossians 1:22; Revelation 1:5)
 - c. Those who would stand faultless before a holy God may only come through Christ, who presents them

“faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24-25)

CONCLUSION

1. Success in God’s eyes is entirely different from success in the world’s eyes
2. As believers we must ensure that we measure all things, including what it means to be successful, by God’s standards
3. Though despised by the world, Christians are “more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:37)
4. The day will soon come when the believers will be glorified, and the sons of God will be manifest (Romans 8:17,19)
5. Many people have hopes of standing with the Lord on Mount Sion when this present life is over
6. Yet they are scarcely prepared to stand for him in this present godless world
7. Those who are ashamed of Christ now, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in glory (Mark 8:38)
8. The 144,000 were sealed in the early part of the tribulation
9. At the end of the tribulation, the same number are found standing with the Lamb – not one of them was lost
10. Every true believer is sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30); and every soul who comes to him, he will in no wise cast out (John 6:37)