

Revelation 14: 2 and 3; "They Sang a New Song", Sermon # 100 in the series - The Faithful and True Witness", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 5th, 2009, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

We have now come to a turning point in the book of Revelation. The visions thus far, have given to us a very bleak view of the Church of Jesus Christ triumphing upon the earth, but here in Chapter 14, there comes a change. Christ comes to stand on Mt. Zion; He takes the field, spiritually, to enable His Church to triumph. It is only when Christ takes the field that His own cause really goes forward. It is true that there are men who will be faithful in every generation. And Christ is with His people always even to the end of the age. But there are also times in the history of the Church when, by His Spirit, Christ must come and bring revival to God's people so that His cause and kingdom can advance. The Church came to know the presence and power of God in a greater sense at the Reformation. They needed this power in order to do battle with the false doctrine and false worship of the Roman Catholic Church. It was Stephen who was the first martyr of the New Testament Church, and he needed power to do that very same thing. He was filled with the Holy Spirit of God and boldly declared to Christ's enemies the truth that they needed to receive in order to be saved. They rejected that truth and stoned Stephen, but Christ's kingdom was going forward. And at that time when Stephen laid down his life, the Lord Jesus who is normally pictured as seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; stood up to welcome Him to Himself. Stephen was more than a conqueror through Him who loved Him. Here, in the 14th Chapter of Revelation, is seen the beginning of the Reformation of the Church away from false Babylon. And at the beginning of the Reformation Christ is seen standing on (in a good sense), and with, His Church so that she would be able to go forward in the spiritual battle to conquer the New Testament Babylon. Christ is standing on Mt. Zion to show forth the fact that He is her King. He is standing with her to show that He is her husband and friend. Christ's cause stands on the witness of the Church, and the true worship of the Church. And for that cause and kingdom to go forward, the Church had to come to the place where many people who were valiant for truth would speak boldly, and if necessary lay their lives down too.

The last time that I spoke to you from verse 1, I told you that it is the voice of Christ speaking through His true Church which will eventually cause the walls of the city of the New Testament Babylon to fall. People who are deceived by Rome must come to hear the voice of God's true worshipers. They must hear Christ's true brethren speaking of their adoption by God the Father. They must, secondly, hear the voice of the sound of the preaching of Law and grace being distinguished. We looked at those first two points the last time. This afternoon we will look at the third of these last two points. 3rdly - People who are deceived by Rome must hear the voice of the Church singing praises to God for the gift of Christ. Then, next time we will look at the Fourth, which is: - They must hear the voice of the Church's sincere spiritual purity which comes to them because of Christ's redeeming work. I pray that

these truths may become a part of our witness to people around us who we would like to see come to Christ and out of Rome.

The 3rd Point - People who are deceived by Rome must hear the voice of the Church singing praises to God for the gift of Christ. (Verses 2 and 3)

"And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder." "And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps." "They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth." The voice from heaven is actually a voice coming from the true Church herself. Heaven, often in this book, is a word representing not only the heaven where God dwells and the kind of worship which goes on there. In the context of this passage it more aptly is symbolically representing the kind of worship and service God is pleased with in relation to the churches which now exist upon the earth. The Church of Jesus Christ should have a heavenly worship. It should not be a worldly entertainment session or rock concert. When we think of the heaven where God dwells and where righteous people go, we know that they are worshipping Him there, and praising Him there, around the throne of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our worship here is meant to prepare us for worship there. There are many people who have died, of course, and have gone to heaven. And I am fully persuaded that those dear people are, even now, around the throne of God, as the spirits of just men made perfect. Their united spiritual voices may indeed be like the sound of many waters, if indeed disembodied spirits have a voice and sing, not having a body. I am not saying that they cannot praise God. The angels are spirits and yet they, no doubt, praise God. But having studied the many symbolic pictures and representations of heavenly and Jewish things really representing the worship of the true Church here upon the earth; this passage is no different. Psalm 115, verse 16 says, "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth He has given to the children of men." "The dead do not praise the Lord, nor any who go down into silence." "But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore." So Christians, whether they are in the body or out of the body after they die, shall still be praising the Lord, "from this time forth and forevermore." But the pertinence of this passage is related to how people should worship God while they are here upon the earth. This passage is very much like the one that we studied back in Chapters 4 and 5. And there I said to you that the four living creatures were a hieroglyphic representation of ministers of the gospel. The 24 elders represented the true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ; those persons who worship God in truth and spirit, and who worship the God of heaven in a wise, true, and holy way here upon the earth.

Here in Chapter 14, a voice is coming from the true Church of Jesus Christ as to the kind of praise that she conducted in her worship of God, at the outset of the Reformation, which was the sound of harpists playing their harps. The harp is a beautiful instrument that puts out a beautiful sound. This kind of music in worship and praise was far different from the music of the Antichristian visible church of

Rome. If you will remember, the harp was one of the most pre-eminent instruments, in the worship of the Old Testament times. In fact it was in many respects symbolic of the whole musical worship of the people of God. In Psalm 108: 1 and 2 David says, "O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory." "Awake, lute and harp!" "I will awaken the dawn." "I will praise You, O Lord, among the people, and I will sing praises to You among the nations." King David, who wrote most of the Psalms that were sung by Old and New Testament Israel, "was a cunning player on the harp." (1st Samuel 16: 16) The words of Psalm 71: 19-24 are very appropriate at this point. "O God, who is like You?" "You who have shown me great and severe troubles, shall revive me again, and bring me up again from the depths of the earth." "You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side." "Also with the lute I will praise You--and Your faithfulness, O my God!" "To You I will sing with the harp, O Holy One of Israel." The true Church of Jesus Christ had been shown great and severe trials in the hundreds of years before the Reformation. Now she was being brought up out of the depths of the earth. Her greatness would be increased and she would be comforted on every side with her progress in the next several hundred years. Christ was on the move with His Church.

This resulted in a real change in music. It resulted in a New Song. The music of the Roman Catholic Church was an outgrowth of her attempts to promote a mystery religion. Listen to Edward Dickinson on this. In his book, *Music in the History of the Western Church* says, "This secret of association and artistic setting must always be taken into account if we would measure the peculiar power of the music of the Catholic Church. We must observe that music is only one of many means of impression, and is made to act not alone, but in union with reinforcing agencies. These agencies which include all the elements of the ceremony that affect the eye and the imagination are intended to supplement and enhance each other; and in analyzing the attractive force which the Catholic Church has always exercised upon minds vastly diverse in culture, we cannot fail to admire the consummate skill with which she has made her appeal to the universal susceptibility to ideas of beauty and grandeur and mystery as embodied in sound and form. The union of the arts for the sake of an immediate and undivided effect, of which we have heard so much in recent years, was achieved by the Catholic Church centuries ago. She rears the most sumptuous edifices, decorates their walls with masterpieces of painting, fills every sightly nook with sculptures in wood and stone, devises a ritual of ingenious variety and lavish splendor, pours over this ritual music that alternately subdues and excites, adjusts all these means so that each shall heighten the effect of the others and seize upon the perceptions at the same moment. In employing these artistic agencies the Church has taken cognizance of every degree of enlightenment and variety of temper. For the vulgar she has garish display, for the superstitious wonder and concealment; for the refined and reflective she clothes her doctrines in the fairest guise and makes worship an aesthetic delight. Her worship centers in a mystery-- the Real Presence--and this mystery she embellishes with every allurement that can startle, delight, and enthrall." In other words, the Roman Catholic Church

tries to create a spiritual experience for the person coming to their churches which will captivate them, but not with the word of God. But that experience is culminated in the taking of the Mass. Music was a big part of creating the right impression of spirituality.

He goes on to say, "It is a striking fact that only within the last six hundred or seven hundred years, and only within the bounds of Christendom, has an artificial form of worship music arisen in which musical forms have become emancipated from subjection to the rhetorical laws of speech, and been built up under the shaping force of inherent musical laws, gaining a more or less free play for the creative impulses of an independent art. The conception which is realized in the Gregorian chant, and which exclusively prevailed until the rise of the modern polyphonic system, (the system of parts of harmony) is that of music in subjection to rite and liturgy, its own charms merged and, so far as conscious intention goes, lost in the paramount significance of text and action. It is for this reason, together with the historic relation of chant and liturgy, that the rulers of the Catholic Church have always labored so strenuously for uniformity in the liturgic chant as well as for its perpetuity. There are even (Roman Catholic) churchmen at the present time who urge the abandonment of all the modern forms of harmonized music and the restoration of the unison chant to every detail of the service. A notion so ascetic and monastic can never prevail, but one who has fully entered into the spirit of the Plain Song melodies can at least sympathize with the reverence which such a reactionary attitude implies. There is a solemn unearthly sweetness in these tones which appeals irresistibly to those who have become habituated to them. They have maintained for centuries the inevitable comparison with every other form of melody, religious and secular, and there is reason to believe that they will continue to sustain all possible rivalry, until they at last outlive every other form of music now existing." (This was written about the year 1900)

The thing that I want you to see, from this man's words, is that the Roman Catholic music was integrally related to their false doctrine of the Mass and to their attempts to meld a false spirituality with the arts. It becomes humanly pleasing in so many respects. And it fits together well with their theology, but really, a New Song was needed in 1517. It was the song of Christ's redemption which freed us from the bondage of the seeing the Law and our works as the means of our justification before God. It was the liberation of the true Christian, spiritually seeing Rome's attempt to weld Christ's righteousness to their own righteousness, and thereby seeing good works as something which could be added to His work to obtain their salvation. It was the putting away of all the ceremonial law of the Old Covenant with its priesthood as a means of justification. There has been a change in the Priesthood, the Bible teaches us. Christ is the High-Priest and each and every believer is now a priest unto our God. A true Christian offers the spiritual sacrifices of praise to God for Christ's freeing them from the bondage of their sin and the law. This was a New Song indeed; the sound of "the harpists playing their harps," in the days of Luther and Calvin. The reformers became those who encouraged congregational singing of

hymns and psalms, and spiritual songs. "They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the throne, before the four living creatures (other ministers), and the elders (those who would be wise and holy worshipers).

Edward Dickinson says this about Luther's reformation of music: "In connection with this work of reconstructing the ancient liturgy for use in the Wittenberg churches, Luther turned his attention to the need of suitable hymns and tunes. He took up this work not only out of his love of song, but also from necessity. He wrote to Nicholas Haussmann, pastor at Zwickau : " I would that we had many German songs which the people could sing during the Mass. But we lack German poets and musicians, or they are unknown to us, who are able to make Christian and spiritual songs, as Paul calls them, which are of such value that they can be used daily in the house of God. One can find but few that have the appropriate spirit." The reason for this complaint was short-lived; a crowd of hymnists sprang up as if by magic, and among them Luther was, as in all things, chief. His work as a hymn writer began soon after the completion of his translation of the New Testament, while he was engaged in translating the psalms. Then, as Koch says, " the spirit of the psalmists and prophets came over him." Several allusions in his letters show that he took the psalms as his model ; that is to say, he did not think of a hymn as designed for the teaching of dogma, but as the sincere, spontaneous outburst of love and reverence to God for his goodness. The first hymn-book of evangelical Germany was published in 1524 by Luther's friend and coadjutor, Johann Walther. It contained four hymns by Luther, three by Paul Speratus, and one by an unknown author. Another book appeared in the same year containing fourteen more hymns by Luther, in addition to the eight of the first book. Six more from Luther's pen appeared in a song-book edited by Walther in 1525. The remaining hymns of Luther (twelve in number) were printed in five song-books of different dates, ending with King's in 1543. Four hymn-books contain prefaces by Luther, the first written for Walther's book of 1525, and the last for one published by Papst in 1545. Luther's example was contagious. Other hymn writers at once sprang up, who were filled with Luther's spirit, and who took his songs as models. Printing presses were kept busy, song-books were multiplied, until at the time of Luther's death no less than sixty collections, counting the various editions, had been issued. There was reason for the sneering remark of a Catholic that the people were singing themselves into the Lutheran doctrine. The principles of worship promulgated by Luther and implied in his liturgic arrangements were adopted by all the Protestant communities ; whatever variations there might be in the external forms of worship, in all of them the congregational hymn held a prominent place, and it is to be noticed that almost without exception the chief hymn writers of the Lutheran time were theologians and preachers."

What should we say to these things brethren? We should say what it says in Psalm 126. "When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, we were like those who dream." "Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." Then they said among the nations, the Lord has done great things for them." "The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad." Whenever a child

of God is brought back from the spiritual captivity of the false religion of Antichrist, he or she will laugh for joy that they have gained their spiritual freedom. They will sing the songs of Zion. As the progress of truth during the time of the Reformation freed believers from the captivity of their New Testament Babylon to return and set up true services of worship, we find that the singing of psalms was set up by many Reformed congregations, to the glory of God. Listen to what Dickinson writes concerning the spiritual freedom and blessing that was brought to the hearts of the believers in Geneva in 1557 : "A visitor to Geneva in 1557 wrote as follows: "A most interesting sight is offered in the city on the week days, when the hour for the sermon approaches. As soon as the first sound of the bell is heard all shops are closed, all conversation ceases, all business is broken off, and from all sides the people hasten into the nearest meeting-house. There each one draws from his pocket a small book which contains the psalms with notes, and out of full hearts, in the native speech, the congregation sings before and after the sermon. Everyone testifies to me how great consolation and edification is derived from this custom." I would just say in closing; such spiritual freedom is to be regarded as a great blessing. Let us thank God for the gift of Christ and the gift of music. Let us thank Him for all the Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs which have become the rich spiritual heritage of the true Church of Jesus Christ. And let us not let them lay by us without our using them. Let us set up our family worship and our private worship, and open the hymnals and the psalm book and let's sing the New Song. Let us use our freedom to promote a greater devotion to our God in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.