

Revelation

*Part Forty-Two
Babylon is Fallen
(Revelation 14:6-13)*

With Study Questions

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Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth – to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people –⁷ saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”⁸ And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”⁹ Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand,¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”¹² Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.¹³ Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: ‘Blessed *are* the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’” (Revelation 14:6-13).

Introduction

Chapter thirteen had presented the great and powerful enemy of the advancement of the truth. And the falsehoods by which we are surrounded desire company. And they will seek to win that company through enticement (worship-see Revelation 13:8) or coercion (Revelation 13:17).

In context, the mouth of the dark fountain flowing against the first century church, included the “**dragon**” (Revelation 13:4), who is the devil, the “**beast...of the sea**” (Revelation 13:1), who was Rome and its Caesars,

and another “**beast...of the earth**” (**Revelation 13:11**), who was likely the emperor cult promoting the lie of the deity of the first beast.

Truth is an undervalued commodity. It is sadly marvelous how easily it can be dispensed with. “Truth” without propositional substance (actual authoritative words) is an untethered feather in the wind. Truth loves a definition-it demands a definition. We can so easily call something truth because it accommodates our flesh or promises us ease. It is not uncommon these days to hear people speak of “their truth” or “your truth” as if truth is some personal, malleable possession.

Let us be wise enough to recognize the short-lived, ephemeral nature of falsehoods and their promises.

The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a snare of death (Proverbs 21:6).

Rome was promising temporary ease if the citizens would bow to its primacy and the “truth” of its deity. History is laden with similar tyrants and governments, but this danger is not restricted to the Caesars of history. We must ever be on the watch for the next glittery object or promise that would seek to win our hearts.

For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever (1 John 2:16, 17).

God, in His great love would not allow mankind to be ever engulfed, overtaken, and ruled by deceitful human hearts. Jesus announced, both of Himself and of His word (John 14:6; 17:17) that there is eternal truth to be apprehended by fallen man. And with that truth, comes redemption.

Chapter fourteen opened with that beautiful picture of the superiority of the true Lamb of God on Mount Zion. He is superior over all this world has to offer and powerful to deliver whatever this world has to threaten.

With the great words of redemption and celestial worship (to which we are ever called in our own time of worship) found in verses three

through five, as it were, hovering in the background, we are now introduced to the great promise of the Great Commission. God's truth poured out into all the earth.

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth – to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people⁷ saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.” (Revelation 14:6, 7).

The Everlasting Gospel

In this chapter we will read of six angels along with the Son of Man all performing specific actions. Similar to the breaking of the seals, these are preludes to the actual events. This first angel is making a proclamation. Being in the “**midst of heaven**” (or mid-heaven) which shows that he will be seen by all.

And what is this angel preaching?

It is the universal application of the “**everlasting gospel.**” Not to be overly polemical, but this is yet another weight on the scale against a premillennial, futurist understanding of Revelation (or that the Revelation is primarily about the end of the world). If this is the end of history, it hardly makes sense that the gospel is now going to be proclaimed.

Not to get into the weeds here, but theologians holding this futurist view cannot, and do not, interpret this passage as the proclamation of the gospel at all! Some say it's a summons to worship in general, others that it is somehow the good news “**of judgment and condemnation.**”¹ I respectfully disagree and believe this to be the gospel. The Old Covenant is ending. The “**hour of His judgment**” upon Jerusalem and Rome has come. The New, international, globally redeeming message will go forth “**to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.**”

Once again, we see that the Revelation is not presenting something inconsistent with the rest of Scripture. God's promises all the way back in

¹ Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 964). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Genesis, and through all of His word, of victory over darkness is being fulfilled in Christ.

And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (Revelation 14:8).

Babylon is Fallen

Clearly, the actual nation of Babylon is not being referenced here, having become insignificant as a world power. Babylon had become a symbol of the enemies of God (Isaiah 21:9; Jeremiah 51:7). There is some debate regarding who John is referencing here. Some say Jerusalem, others Rome. Both positions have merit, and I don't think taking one over the other alters, terribly, the outcome, which is the way being paved for the gospel to go forth.

I favor the view that John is writing of Rome for a few reasons: First, Peter concludes his first epistle (which he wrote from Rome) with the words **“She who is in Babylon...greet you” (1 Peter 5:13)**. Second, the context which speaks of the beasts is quite clearly a reference to Rome and its Caesars. Third, chapter seventeen, which also speaks of Babylon, speaks of **“seven mountains on which the woman (the harlot) sits” (Revelation 17:9)**, “seven mountains” being a clear reference to Rome. Fourth, we are now in the prophecy of the **“little book”** which was a larger, and more international prophecy than just Jerusalem (Revelation 10:10, 11).

Whether it is Rome or Jerusalem, or for our purposes, any other nation or power or influence that arrives on the scene, her function was to make **“all the nations drink the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”** These are very strong words issuing a warning against those forces which would seek to subdue the hearts of a people. **“Fornication”** here being a metaphor for religious adultery/idolatry.

That a severe judgment will come against those who take rank against the truth of Christ and the hope of His gospel, seems antiquated and mythical to the culture in which we live, but we are not alone in that. Even in John's day, the people will delude themselves with the words, **“Peace and safety! Then sudden destruction comes” (1 Thessalonians 5:3).**

But God's judgment of nations throughout history (the one in question here being His judgment of Rome) moves into the background. John now moves from the judgment of the nation to something much more personal and eternally tragic.

Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name" (Revelation 14:9-11).

The Wrath of God

In one debate with an atheist, the question-and-answer time moved to the subject of hell. I forget, in detail, how I described hell, but I noticed in the comment section, when the debate was posted, that one listener said something I found almost shocking. He said something to the effect, "Pastor Viggiano's description of hell is dreadful." I was shocked that he didn't realize that hell is dreadful.

Hell is dreadful.

There are evil powers which seek our hearts. These evil powers (whether nations or other types of man-made, creaturely influencers) will meet their end. But those who take their mark on their forehead or hand (that is, those who trust in man and serve man over God) **"shall drink the wine of the wrath of God."**

Dr. Greg Bahnsen called this **"one of the most terrible paragraphs in all of Scripture."** The indignation of God **"poured out full strength"** is beyond dreadful. **"Fire and brimstone"** reminds us of the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24). And this torment **"in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb"** confronts us with the sad reality that the hope of this blessing was willfully rejected along with the just nature of this wrath.

Adding to this agony is the everlasting nature of it. **“the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night.”** The Scriptures, and often Jesus Himself, uses the most horrifying language available to describe hell. But as R.C. Sproul indicated, these are all metaphors, and we should not necessarily think things like **“fire and brimstone...smoke of torment...where the worm never dies...etc.”** to be literal. But before we take a breath of relief, he also points out that, as is the case with most metaphors, the reality is worse than the metaphor used to describe it.

Two points before we finish the passage: First, I pray that by the grace of God, hell is not that which awaits any of you when your time here is done. **“Seek the Lord”** Isaiah writes, **“while he may be found” (Isaiah 55:6)**. Second, let us appreciate that in order for us to escape this wrath, it had to be paid for by another, who is Christ our Savior. Every Lord’s Day when we come to His table, we hear the words of Scripture, saying **“For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.”** Let us be mindful that included in that death which we proclaim in that meal is His becoming a curse for us that we may have a way of escape (Galatians 3:13; 2 Peter 2:24).

And though, as we ever labor to teach (especially in Reformed churches), that salvation is found through faith in Christ and in Christ alone, John will not so carve up the Christian faith as to have that salvation apart from the necessary fruit of obedience.

Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. ¹³ Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, **“Write: ‘Blessed *are* the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’”** (Revelation 14:12, 13).

Perseverance

There is a very dangerous trend among evangelicals that the mere saying of a prayer is sufficient for salvation. We come forward, pray a prayer at a crusade, tuck that prayer away in our hearts, live as we please, then call upon that bagged prayer when the moment requires.

The fruit of obedience (it is called fruit because it is produced by a true tree, i.e., saving faith) is a necessary aspect of a believer's life. The Confession puts it nicely:

These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith: and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto, that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end, eternal life (WCF, 16, 2).

The good works of those receiving this letter were going to cost them dearly. For this reason, they are given the glorious benediction, **"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on."** And in contrast to the damned who **"have no rest day or night"** the faithful will **"rest from their labors"** and **"their works follow them."** There is something eternally significant about our labor in the Lord, for which reason Paul writes,

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Questions for Study

1. Discuss 'truth'. What is necessary for truth to mean anything? How is truth often attacked (pages 2, 3)?
2. Can you identify the glittery objects which seek your devotion? What are they (pages 3, 4)?
3. What is that "everlasting gospel" proclaimed by the angel in verse six? What are some options given on what this means (page 4)?
4. Who or what is Babylon and what kind of effect did it have on its citizens? Can you identify this type of thing happening today (page 5)?
5. Is hell a reality? What is it like and what must happen in order to avoid it (pages 6, 7)?
6. What role does obedience have in the life of a true Christian (pages 7, 8)?