

The Synopsis

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1 THE REVELATION

1.1 Chapter 14

In chapter 14 we have the dealings of God with the evil, only first owning and setting apart the remnant. The remnant belongs entirely to the renewed earth: they are seen on that which is the centre of dominion and glory in it—Mount Zion, where the Lamb shall reign. They had His and His Father's name on their foreheads; that is, by their open confession of God and the Lamb they had been witnesses of it, and suffered as Christ had suffered in His life in owning God His Father: only they had not suffered death. It was a new beginning, not the assembly, not heavenly, but the blessing of a delivered earth in its firstfruits in those who had suffered for the testimony to it. Heaven celebrates it with a voice of many waters, and as of thunder, but with joy. This voice was the voice of harps. A new song is sung before the throne and beasts and elders. Here the fact is the important thing. There had been song in and of heaven, in chapter 5, in connection with redemption; but those who were redeemed there were made kings and priests. Here it was redemption in connection with earthly blessings, not with the kingdom and priesthood on high; and it is sung before the heavenly company and throne. Heaven however is directly connected with the song. It was connected with triumph over the power of evil by patient endurance of suffering.

What specially characterised them was purity from the contamination that surrounded them. This passing through sorrow and overcoming connects them directly with the heavenly conquerors. It was not the new song of heavenly redemption; still it was victory when down at the gates of death, though not actually in it. It was "as it were a new song." This none could learn but those who had shared the earthly sufferings of the Lamb, and would now be His companions in His earthly royalty; they had followed Him, they would follow Him whithersoever He went. They are the firstfruits of the new scene. They had not corrupted themselves where all did. They were not of those who loved or made a lie, or gave in to it. Corruption and falsehood they had been kept free from, openly confessing the truth. They had not the heavenly place, but they are without fault, and they share the Lamb's earthly place and glory, accompanying Him whithersoever He goes, in the manifestation of that glory.

All that led to these privileges had no place when once the kingdom was set up. It was then too late to shew faithfulness in this way. There is a connection with the heavenly saints which is not in chapter 7. The white-robed multitude stood before the throne and the Lamb. They are before the throne of God, they worship in His temple, and the Lamb comforts them. Here there is special association with the Lamb on earth, in their path and in their consequent place. It is the remnant of the Psalms (especially Ps. 1 to 41). But, though on earth with the King, they are redeemed from among men before Christ comes to earth; and the song they learn to sing is sung before the elders and living creatures. They are not with them, but they sing the song sung before them; that is, the Gentile multitude are admitted to special privileges before God and the Lamb; the Jewish remnant are associated with the Lamb on earth, and, in a certain sense, with heaven. The progress of God's ways follows-warning to the earth to leave idolatry; for the hour of God's judgment was come. The everlasting gospel is the testimony of Christ's power, from paradise onward, as in contrast with the special announcement of the assembly, and glad tidings connected with it. Babylon is announced to be fallen; threats and warnings to any that should own the beast; but the time is now come when dying in the Lord was to cease; only their blessedness remained henceforth. Dying and tribulation were over. They are looked at as one whole body; and while any remained yet to die, they were diers in the Lord, not rested and blessed. Now their rest is come, and their reward.

Christ then reaps the earth-separating, gathering, and judgment; and treads the winepress, exercises unmingled vengeance on the wicked. Hence in this last judgment it is the angel who had the power over fire who calls for it; it was full divine judgment. This judgment was not within the limits of Babylon-was not in the sphere in which man had formed and ordered his organisation in opposition to God. This closes the whole scene of that which the history had begun by the catching up of the Man-child to heaven. He had returned in vengeance.

An interesting question here arises-What is the vine of the earth? It is that which is the fruit-bearing organisation, or what should be so (that is the idea of it), in professed connection with God, as His planting in the earth. Israel was the vine brought out of Egypt. Christ on earth was the true vine. It is not connection with Him in heaven. There we are looked at as perfect, not to bear fruit and be pruned. But analogously it went on after He had ascended on high, and professing Christians are the branches. But here it is the vine of the earth, that which has its character and growth therein, but with the pretension to take the religious place by succession on the earth. The true saints are gone on high, or are a persecuted individual remnant. I have no doubt the Jews will be the centre of that system then, but they will be mixed up with Gentiles, have turned to idolatry, and have seven spirits worse than that; and the apostate Gentiles will be fully associated with it all (see Isaiah 34, 63, 65, 66).