

“A New Song”

In the previous chapter we saw that the antichrist will wreak havoc on the earth, but under God's allowance. Here we see a 'new song', one that gives hope. On many occasions, especially when under attack from some quarter or other, and if such attacks are constant, there might be a withdrawal of hope. This ought not to be, for in Christ we have the victory! With the Christian, battle upon battle may come like waves, but the truth is, if we are in the midst of that battle with sword drawn and prepared to die for the Lord, He will overcome for us, and instead of becoming weaker, we gain in strength. I have known this myself and know that my strength is given by God.

We must never look upon trials as weakening factors, for the only way we can weaken, is if we see it that way. Yes, we may experience temporary setbacks of faith or understanding. We may think all the world is against us (and it may well be!), but these should be spurs to rely only on God, not hindrances to drag us down. Even if all around us scorn our fellowship and cause us great dismay, this is a sign of Satan's pleasure in seeing shattered lives, not of God's plan.

Satan says, "Look how awful life is. See how much is against you! Let your life collapse, and give in!" (The basis for all neuroses). God says something altogether different; "Look, my child. See how I allow trials and temptations, to bring you closer to myself! When you cling to me and not to the circumstances, you will gain in strength and holiness, for I am with you. But, give in, and you will know sadness and loss of my presence."

So, sing a new song! As the battles and 'circumstances' rage around you, bringing knocks and bruises, remember that Christ has already won the victory! Each battle can take its toll, but it is we who will win the whole war. Run to hide behind the baggage and you will have given over to fear and sadness. Stand and fight with honour and you will gain your reward, even in the middle of the fight. God only tests with trials men and women He wishes to know peace. By standing firm we show our faith and God gives us strength. So, what we might see as a blow is actually an act of God's love.

Verses 1-5

1.

"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

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2.

And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

3.

And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

4.

These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

5.

And in their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault before the throne of God.”

John looked and saw Christ (represented as a lamb) standing on mount Zion. Is this earthly Jerusalem? No. It is the Heavenly Jerusalem, as the context proves. It is where Christ is.

With Jesus Christ were 144,000 people. Some make this out to mean a fixed number who will live with Christ in Jerusalem the earthly city, but there is no real warrant for this idea (particularly as there will be no ‘millennium reign’). The 144,000 are from the tribes of Israel, sealed unto God; this is the primary meaning of the term when we use Formal Equivalence (genuine translation). We may apply a secondary meaning, of a ‘remnant’ from all peoples, the number being symbolic of a small figure; this latter meaning is a reasonable theological assumption, not a translation.

The 144,000 all had God’s mark on their foreheads. As we have already seen, this mark need not be physical, though, in this verse, it is a literal mark. It means (mainly or wholly) that each

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man and woman who is saved will be known in his or her spirit by God. Is the literal mark only a graphic sign used to show John an inner truth (that we are known to the Lord by our spiritual state), or is it actual? We cannot say from the text. At the least it means God knows who belong to Him.

John then heard a voice from heaven, again 'as many waters' sounding like thunder. He also heard many harps playing. And the harpists sang a new song as they played. The song was of a new kind, not heard before, and superior to any other songs. The harpists sang before the elders, the four beasts and the throne of God. But, only the 144,000 could learn the words. That is, only the saved will be able to understand and use the words of God. All others will remain ignorant.

The saved in this instance "were not defiled with women". This is symbolic for being free from the stains on the soul that come from committing sin, though its primary meaning refers to those who were free of the sins of spiritual adultery and fornication. Such are virgins – clean and chaste, having never worshipped idols. (Again, it can secondarily refer to being clean of sexual misbehaviour, though, in this case, it is more likely to refer to idolatry and spiritual sins, which are often depicted in the same way as sexual sins).

They are characterised by their walk with God, as they follow the Lamb, Jesus Christ, in their lives, no matter where He leads them, or whatever happens to them. These are the redeemed, bought by Christ with His blood and so free from the punishment due for sin. They are the 'firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb'. If 'firstfruits' is taken to mean the very first to be saved under the new testament or promises, then it could possibly refer to the saved from the 12 tribes. The word can also mean those who are more excellent than others. This kind of epithet can be used to describe Christians, so the word can also mean, simply, those who are saved.

They are praised by God for being without guile... having no deceit or evil in their hearts and minds. Such are 'without fault before the throne of God'. Some say that our faith cannot be worth much if God overlooks our obvious sins. This is to misunderstand God and salvation. We are viewed as being without fault *not* because of our own nature, but because God only sees Christ. Our salvation is *in Him*, as is our righteousness and holiness. Christ surrounds us with

His

perfection, and this is the perfection that God sees when He looks upon us. If He saw just us alone, He would have to reject us. But, because His Son was our sacrifice, Jesus is our shield before God and we are safe.

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Verses 6&7

1.

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

2.

Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgement is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”

John then saw ‘another’ angel. Some think this angel was Christ. (‘Another’ indicates another of the same kind, e.g. a created angelic being. Therefore, I do not think it was Christ). This angel flew about in heaven. It was his job to bring the Gospel to the whole world just before God brings the created order to an end. He will loudly proclaim God’s word, telling people to ‘Fear God and give Him glory’. Modern preachers prefer not to preach about hell, so as not to offend listeners! Many prefer not to speak of God’s wrath, but only of His love. But, God is truly to be feared, for what He can do with our souls! We should quake in fear at His thunder and majesty, for He is Almighty God, Creator of all things and Sustainer of all life. He can give life, and take it away.

Therefore, He deserves and must get all glory and praise. We must give it *now*, for the ‘hour of His judgement is come’. So, just before His coming will be a time of worldwide gospel preaching. Will this coincide with the mantle of evangelism being given back to the saved Jews, as prophesied? This judgment “is come”: the verb

erchomai

is used here metaphorically to mean to arise, to be established. God’s judgment has

already

taken place in His mind, though, for us, it still has to come about in history.

Verses 8-12

1.

“And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

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2.

And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand.

3.

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

4.

And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

5.

Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”

John saw yet another angel. This one called out that Babylon had fallen, though it had been a great city. It fell as a judgement of God, because it made the world join it in its evil. What or who is Babylon? The popular conception is that of Rome and Catholicism, but this may not be fully accurate or sufficient. Note that this Babylon ‘made’ people drink of the same errors. This does not necessarily mean they were forced, but it does mean to saturate their minds with a poisoned drink. This meaning is very consistent with what is now happening, where instead of being forced, people are willingly being seduced by false prophets, both Romish and ‘other’ (though Rome is an umbrella, an unifying organisation for them all), and by all manner of wickedness.

We should also note the sudden change in world affairs, and the beginning of a One World government and religion, as all join hands in the name of ‘peace’. Thus, ‘Babylon’ may be a single religion, but it is more likely to mean all major influences will bear the mark of Satan, whether religious, political, cultural or social, even though the head, Satan, is already vanquished by God.

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So, 'Babylon' is cast down in judgement and condemnation. Beware charismatics, ecumenists and Romish followers, and all who follow falsity, thereby having the mark of Satan on them!

A third angel then appeared, and shouted out a warning – if anyone has the mark of the beast in his soul, and worships him, he shall be made to 'drink of the wine of the wrath of God'. So much for the 'God of love' so fervently espoused by pagans and false prophets today! God is indeed love, but only for those who obey. Those found guilty, who bear the mark of Satan, will know God's wrath, not just momentarily, but forever. God's wrath is 'without mixture'; pure. It comes from His very being as holy and just, from His law and not from mere emotion or humanised anger. Can YOU tell the difference between the mark of God and the mark of Satan?

His anger is pure, undefiled and just. It is reserved for all who reject Him and turn against His commands. Whilst we can properly say God predestines, we have no idea how this fits with His rejection of people He predestines to hell. We may *not* take the attitude that if God elects them to hell, they cannot be punished because God 'does not give them a chance': we do not know what God's inner mind is on the matter, but we Do know it is perfect and just.

Those who know God's wrath will be tormented by fire and brimstone. Is this fire real? It may well be, for the word means fire or fiery. The allusion to brimstone means that God will prevent further contagion by applying the fire. Thus, the fire will be the point at which all further taint of sin stops and punishment begins, a permanent barrier barring the unsaved from Heaven.

To 'torment' means to test the purity or not of metals. It also means to apply grievous pain of body or mind, or distress. It also means actual torture which elicits the truth. Thus, the action of showing wrath will prove that the person being tormented is worthy of wrath. This judgement and casting into the fire will take place before countless witnesses, the holy angels and Christ Himself.

The smoke mentioned in verse 11 also suggests that the fire may indeed be real, for it has only one literal meaning – smoke. We are told that this torment will last for ever and ever. Those who say they are Believers and who teach that hell will not last forever are heretical. Those who are tormented will have no rest from their torments, day or night. This is their reward for following Satan (the form of this following does not matter – every form of rejection is evil in God's eyes).

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This following can be just not being saved, to actively worshipping Satan or his many paganised religions, from charismaticism, to Romanism, to spiritualism, to voodoo. All are hated equally by God. This also goes for those who follow the 'image' of evil... hence the warning to Believers to avoid even the slightest suggestion (image) of sin.

On that day the patience or struggling perseverance of Christians will be rewarded, for their keeping of God's word in purity and their faith in Christ. When that day comes they will see that being wronged is but a slight burden to bear in the light of heaven forever and God's favour.

Verses 13-20

1.

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

2.

And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

3.

And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

4.

And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

5.

And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

6.

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And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

7.

And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

8.

And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.”

John then heard another voice from heaven telling him to write ‘Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth’. Does this mean from the time of John writing it, or from the time that the wicked are judged? I am not sure, but I do know that all who die in Christ are blessed.

The ‘voice’ may well have been that of the Holy Spirit as verse 13 suggests, for He then tells John that the faithful will rest from their toiling and tears and they will be rewarded for their faithfulness and good works (‘their works do follow them’). Then, a white (‘dazzling, bright, brilliant’) cloud appeared and in the cloud was Christ, the Son of man. He wore a golden crown, the symbol of His kingship and rule over all creation, and carried a sharp sickle. Sharp also means ‘swift’ and the sickle was the pruning hook used by reapers.

Christ was, then, about to prune something, in His capacity as Lord of all. As He sat there, another angel arrived and called to Christ: ‘The time has arrived for you to thrust your sickle into the world, to prune away!’ Note that He had to reap the earth, which was ‘ripe’. This is speaking of the world in general and has no reference to the harvest of souls for salvation. The earth was ‘ripe’ for judgement. So, Christ thrust the sickle into the earth and ‘the earth was reaped’.

Another angel then arrived, this time out of the temple of God in Heaven. He, too, had a sharp sickle. A second angel joined him and he had power or authority over fire. He shouted to the previous angel to thrust his sickle into the earth because the grapes were ripe. The angel did so

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and 'gathered the vine of the earth'. The word for 'vine' may itself be rooted in the meaning of the threshing floor where grain is thoroughly threshed out. At this time God will execute vengeance.

This angel also pruned the wicked, as the text (verse 19) indicates – the vine was cast into the 'great winepress of the wrath of God'. That is, they will be completely crushed underfoot by God's righteous anger. This activity took place 'outside the city' (of God: though some think it means Babylon) because nothing evil can stand in His presence.

There was so much blood (of the wicked) that it came up to the bridles of the horses for an area of 1,600 furlongs... about 980,000 square feet. We do not know the significance, if any, of the actual measurement, but we do know that it means a very great slaughter. Some think this refers to the battle of Armageddon but, frankly, we cannot determine such a meaning from this text. Sufficient to say that the text is telling us that God will bring judgement upon all the wicked of the earth and that the faithful will know that their sufferings are not in vain.

Notes:

144,000. We first see this number in Revelation 7:4. This is the number of all who were 'sealed' "of the children of Israel". In reality it speaks of a 'large number' who are saved (though the actual number will be very small compared to the number of humans who have ever lived). It would appear, then, that those who appeared on mount Sion with the Lamb are those saved out of the tribes... there is far too much idle speculation on this number.

"Name written on their foreheads". This refers to the same 144,000 spoken of in 7:4 who were 'sealed'. Satan identifies those who follow him by the mark on their foreheads. God does the same thing, hence it can be assumed that Satan uses the same method so as to confuse people and to mimic God. Thus, 'sealed' (7:4) and God's name written on the forehead equal the same thing. "Sealed", *sphragizō*, means to have a mark or seal; in this text it means a mark given by God to protect against Satan. When Satan uses a seal it is to shackle victims to himself, keeping them from God. Everyone who has God's name on their foreheads thereby prove their authentic relationship to the Saviour, but further prove their salvation by their obedience to His command and word. As the 'name' includes everything that the Person is, it follows that Christians who have His mark must reflect the very same total nature of God, or risk the accusation of 'liar'.

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The word 'written' means what it says – letters formed on a surface. The word 'forehead' in this particular form (*metōpon*) only occurs in The Revelation and means the space between the eyes. Thus, it seems that this name is literally on the foreheads of persons. We might understand this to mean an obvious identity as belonging to God, shown by actions, words, thoughts and heart.

Lamb. (Technical point). Unbelievers/heretics would argue that “a Lamb” could refer to ANY 'lamb'. This is not so! The term 'a' is qualified by 'Lamb' with a capital letter (though it does not need it because the subject of the word is obviously Christ). In the KJAV this infers 'the' rather than 'a', because there is no indefinite article in Greek. Indeed, Green's interlinear, for example, therefore inserts 'the' in italics before 'Lamb', in place of 'a', this being a more apt direct translation.

In this particular text I see no real difference in force between 'a' and 'the' because the subject has an implied definite article (the), especially when a capital is used (by the translator) to identify the subject as important, e.g. as God. Thus, the phrase including the word 'Lamb' is printed as **Καὶ εἶδον καὶ ἰδοῦ, ἀρνίον**, where there is no 'a' because it does not exist, whereas the definite article is implied by the importance of the word 'Lamb'. (The implied definite article is used regularly in koine Greek).

So, though not included in the original Greek, the 'the' is implied, as per normal practice. In this text 'a Lamb' would merely speak of Christ's position rather than of His whole nature. 'Lamb', *arnion*

, a neuter noun, is a diminutive of the masculine noun,

ar

ēn

... same meaning but different grammatical structure. Both words, then, are equivalents

(because

arnion

replaced

arēn

in the early Church). We see that the Lamb's 'Father' is the Father-God, making the 'Lamb' Jesus Christ the Son.

One reason the KJAV translators put 'a' before 'lamb' is that the original sources do not have the capital 'L' for Lamb, and, the word itself, *arnion*, literally means a lamb. Hence the indefinite

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article, whilst not found in koine Greek, is considered apt, because the Lamb was a literal lamb (as in sacrificial animal). But, to emphasise that this lamb *represents*

the Saviour, the capital 'L' is inserted: 'Lamb', and this takes the place of 'The'. Thus, 'a' is an interpretation (theology), while 'the', though implied, is part of the word itself by reason of koine Greek usage and can legitimately be inserted (translation). In other words, both words have a place, for different reasons.

“not defiled with women”. The 144,000 are further identified and qualified as those from the tribes who did not indulge in sexual sin such as fornication and adultery (

mōlyn

ō –

primary meaning; the secondary meaning is not enjoining idolatry). Note that the word means to be smeared as with mud or filth, and that these sins include homosexuality. They are 'virgins'. In men this meant abstaining from whoredom, whether in a pagan temple or otherwise. It is not made clear if they had also abstained from women generally, though it certainly refers to someone who is chaste (which one can be if married). These men were the 'firstfruits', or those who first responded to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, starting with when He was on this earth. It is generally possible (as a secondary meaning) to view these chaste men as any who follow the Lord, but not in this text, because the chaste are specified to be of the tribes of Israel.

Guile. The 144,000 had “no guile”; that is, they did not try to deceive and were not two-faced, but were (to use modern parlance) transparent in all their dealings. Sadly, today, many Christians are guilty of this sin, as they pretend to be of Christ when their lives and beliefs say otherwise. The 144,000, then, were “without fault” before God – morally blameless. Note that repentance is a key function in our lives, returning us to our Lord in purity.

Another Angel. As in Revelation 7 and 8, 'another angel' implies that this is not Christ. The word 'another' means 'another of the same kind', which itself tells us this angel is one of a number (*allos* has a numerical value). As there is no other like Christ, *allos* cannot apply to Him as 'another angel'.

Beast and his image. What is the 'image' of the beast? Note that the image is separate from the beast, and yet connected by his/its relationship with him/it. Image, *eikōn*

, means a likeness to the beast, and a man. Thus

, a man who is so vile as to be the very representation of Satan and his closest envoy, the beast, as the root verb,

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eikō

, implies. Note that anyone who follows the dragon, his envoy, the beast, or those who are like them, will share the same fate – eternal damnation.

Without mixture. God's wrath will be poured out 'without mixture', *akratos* – pure, at full strength, undiluted (as in strong wine without water), without mercy.

Summary

John saw Jesus standing on mount Sion, the Heavenly Jerusalem. With Him were 144,000 saved Jews. He heard a great voice speaking and this was followed by countless harpists, who sang a 'new song'; that is, they proclaimed something never heard before. Nobody understood the words, apart from the 144,000. This appears to speak indirectly of all who are saved; only they can understand what God says.

The 144,000 saved Jews, the first Jews to be saved through the Gospel, had never indulged in immorality, whether sexual or spiritual. They were not duplicitous and did not deceive and act fraudulently, as so many do... churches are filled with liars and deceivers, those who are within the walls of churches but not part of the true Church of Jesus Christ. They are liars. The saved are the only ones to be accepted by God.

As he watched these Jews praising God, John saw another angel flying in Heaven. He ensured the Gospel was preached to every nation in every age, as God saw fit, and only in His own time. Man cannot further the Gospel by either stealth, cleverness, or might, by fast movement or by laxity. The Gospel is spread only because God prompts true preachers to preach. False preachers, the many who fill the pulpits, are useless, and worthless in the promoting of the Gospel, and effect nothing, for the Holy Spirit is not with them, and has not prompted them to speak. Thus, only those who are elect will ever be saved in any age, at the right time and right place. If they are not elect, whether individually or as nations, they will not be saved, no matter how active preachers are.

The angel sent to bring this about warned that God's judgment was very close, so everyone must worship God. This literally applies to 'everyone', regardless of election or salvation. Even Satan will be forced to bend the knee to God, before he and his demons are despatched to hell forever. Notice the confirmation in verse 7 – that God is the creator of all things, not 'evolution'!

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Another angel soon followed the first, informing John that Babylon had fallen. This is likely (but not finally proved) to be Roman Catholicism, for the angel says it is a great city whose leaders caused many to follow its falsity and idolatry. Overall, it means that Satan's hold on people through false religion (or other means) was now finished.

Quickly, a third angel appeared, declaring that anyone who had followed Satan or any of his guises, would know the wrath of God, and would be judged to hell. This residence in hell would not simply be the absence of God and peace, but it would be filled with fiery torments, so that the unsaved would know forever that their rejection of Christ has dire consequences that can never die. The reason for this is that God is eternal, and His judgments are never ending. Therefore, when He judges a man to hell, the man will experience God's wrath forever, such is the vileness of sin.

The saved, who have been harmed continually by unsaved men and their father, the devil, will at last be vindicated and will see the results of their fervent prayers for help. We are told that those condemned will suffer in the presence of Christ and His angels. This 'presence', *enōpion*, does not mean Jesus will be in hell with them; it means they are in the 'opposite place', but He can see them. We will not, but He can, because He is God.

A voice told John to write that those who died because of their faith would be blessed. John looked up and saw a white cloud, with Christ sitting on it. The wording in the KJAV says "like unto", which might suggest it was not Christ, but someone who looked like Him. But, *homoios* means both 'resembling' and 'the same as' (depending on context). The golden crown confirms who He was. This speaks of the time Jesus will return to divide the inhabitants of the earth, into saved and unsaved, symbolised by the sickle in His hand. It is a sharp sickle that cuts asunder even the hair on the head, so there will be no mistakes. Jesus did the deed, and separated the saved from the unsaved. There will be no indefinites and no second chance.

After that yet another angel came out of the temple in Heaven. He also had a sharp sickle. Another angel came from the altar of God, and instructed the angel with the sickle to catch up all the unsaved with the sharp blade, to be judged by God in His wrath. The unsaved were crushed without mercy, not in Heaven but outside it, so that Heaven did not bear any blood or anger. And so the unsaved who rebelled against God and rejected Christ would at last receive the reward of their sin. The final verse tells us that there would be many souls dealt with in this way. But, God will have no mercy and no regrets over His judgment of these people to hell; He does not suffer the turmoil of human emotions and so always judges wisely and in holiness!

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