

72. God's People Delivered

In striking contrast to the vision of the church's final conflict, what glorious scene was now shown to John?

"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with Him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads." Revelation 14: 1.

The vision of the previous chapter closed with the remnant church in dire peril. The beast had attained its final peak of apostate power. The "lamb" turned dragon had caused the "image to the beast" to be set up and was demanding that all should do obeisance either to the beast or to his image. "Worship or die," were the grim alternatives facing the people of God. When the curtain rises again, the scene has changed from the raging tumult of earth's last crisis to the calm and peace of heaven.

Upon the "hill of the Lord" John's eyes rest first upon "a lamb," or as many manuscripts have it "the Lamb," no longer "as it were slain," as it appeared in the fourth chapter, but exalted and triumphant, a symbol of the victorious Christ.

From the Lamb, the prophet's gaze moves to the surrounding multitude, a hundred and forty-four thousand, with the "Father's name written in their foreheads." He had seen this company before and recognized them at once as the last remnant, the living righteous who will see Jesus coming in glory. The last time they were shown to him, they were receiving the seal of God in token of their loyalty in the last dread hours of earth's history. Now he beholds them rejoicing in their reward.

What sounds of celestial music fell upon his ears? For what was it the accompaniment?

"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. 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!" Revelation 14:2, 3.

As John gazed at the glittering throng, the sound of celestial music broke upon his ears. When the opening chords of the celestial accompaniment died away, the vast throng of the, redeemed burst forth in rapturous song. In essence, their song was the age-old song which has ever welled up in the hearts of the people of God. It was "new," however, because the stanzas they now sang were a song of deliverance from the church's last tribulation. And just because it was a song of experience, none but those who had passed through the tribulation could sing it.

How are the hundred and forty-four thousand described?

"These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins." Revelation 14:4.

In the seventh chapter the character of the scaled ones was not stated, but here the reason for their selection is indicated. Virginity appropriately describes those who have kept themselves in undeviating loyalty to Christ. Adulterers, by contrast, are those who have, for the sake of pleasure or gain, entered into sinful liaison with the world.

What characterized the speech of the sealed remnant?

"And in their mouth was found no guile." Revelation 14: 5.

The rendering in the Revised Version, "No lie" is "in their mouth" is significant, for Paul specifically designates the two classes of people in the last days as those who receive "the love of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:10) and those who believe "a lie," or literally "the lie." Verse 11. Only those who "speak the truth" in their hearts, as the fifteenth psalm tells us, will be privileged to "ascend into the hill of the Lord." Psalm 24:3; 15:1. Those who harbor the great "lie" will perish with it.

In what does the description of their perfection culminate?

"They are without fault before the throne of God." Revelation 14:5.

They have, in fact, attained by grace to the perfection of character of the "Lamb," who is Himself "without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter 1:19. None unaided can reach this perfection of holiness, but in Christ is the power whereby we may be sanctified "wholly" and "preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Faithful," says the apostle Paul, "is He that calls you, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24), if we will let Him.

What will be the high privilege of this special company?

"These are they which follow the Lamb whither so ever He goes." Revelation 14:4.

Wonderful is the revelation that those who stand for God as the vials of God's wrath are poured out, will be nearest to their Lord through the eternal years. They will be His special companions for ever, accompanying Him on all His journeys, not only upon earth, but to all of the unfallen worlds of His vast stellar domain.

How are they further designated?

"These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb." Revelation 14:4.

It may seem strange that the hundred and forty-four thousand should be called the "first fruits" unto the Lamb when in reality they are the very last of the remnant church to receive deliverance. But this is an instance where the last will literally become the first.

Just who will have a place and a part among this privileged company of course, none can certainly say, for we cannot know who will sleep and who will "tarry till He comes." But even if it be not our privilege to be among the 144,000, there will be room for all among great multitude" of the redeemed who will rise to join the last remnant around the throne of God. God grant that in one or other of victorious companies all who read these words may have a part.