

THE LAMB OUR LEADER

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A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*"These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."
Revelation 14:4*

YOU, dear friends who belong to the Tabernacle, are well acquainted with our venerable friend, George Rogers. It was a great joy to me to find him alive when I came home from the Continent, he said that he must keep on living till he had seen me once more, and then he hoped that he should go home. That was a month ago, but yesterday I saw him again, and he seemed to be greatly revived and refreshed. He has attained an extremely advanced age, and it is only natural that he should soon go to his rest and reward.

He remarked to me, yesterday, that he had bidden farewell to the world entirely, and he did not wish to renew the acquaintance, he did not know why he should linger here any longer, for everything was finished, and he was ready to depart, and then he said to me, in his cheery way, "I wonder whether I shall see that new Baptist Chapel completed." You know that he is not a Baptist, but a Congregationalist, yet he has been with us so many years that we always claim him.

He added, "When it is built, I hope they will send a regular old-fashioned Baptist to preach in it." I asked him, "What sort of old-fashioned Baptist do you mean?" "Why," he replied, "the oldest-fashioned Baptist was the man that cried, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' That is the old-fashioned sort of Baptist I mean—John the Baptist, and that is the sort I hope will come there." "Yes," I said, "and I wish that was the sort of preacher who would go everywhere, for that is the truth which still needs to be preached." "Ah, yes!" said Mr. Rogers, "there is nothing like the doctrine of the atoning sacrifice, it is the doctrine for this world, and it is the doctrine for the next." "Do you not think," said he, "that this passage would make you a good text for tomorrow, 'These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth'?" "Yes," I answered, "that will make me a good text, may God send me the sermon!"

That is why I have taken this text, it really comes to you from that venerable man who is so far advanced in years, and so close to the border of the eternal state. He feels that the old-fashioned Baptist doctrine that ought to be continually preached is this, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and that the best character that can be ascribed to Christians in any age is this, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Upon that theme I am now going to speak to you as the Holy Spirit shall enable me.

I. And, first, I would make this observation, that THIS IS CHARACTERISTIC OF SAINTS, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

This has always been the way of the saints, this is the way the holy prophets went, the way of the martyrs, the way of the reformers and confessors, the way of all who shall meet above around the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Begin at the beginning. When do you see Abel at his best? It is when he brings of the firstlings of his flock, and stands beside the altar of sacrifice whereon lies the God-accepted lamb. The first of the martyrs is a martyr to the doctrine of sacrifice by Blood, he, being dead, yet speaks, bearing his testimony that there is no way of access to God except by the sacrifice of a lamb.

Pass on to Abraham. What is one of the most memorable sayings of the father of the faithful? “My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.” Did not Abraham then, by faith, see Christ’s day? Yea, he saw it afar off, and was glad, he knew that the great JEHOVAH-JIREH would provide a wondrous Substitute, who would die in the place of His people, even as the ram took the place of Isaac, and Abraham saw in his own offering of his son whom he so dearly loved, a faint image of that greater offering of the Eternal Father when He would give His only-begotten and well-beloved Son to die that His people might live.

Again I say that it is always characteristic of God’s people that they follow the Lamb, for look at Israel in Egypt. They are slaves at the brick kilns. They are building treasure cities and pyramids, but they cannot stir out of Egypt till first of all they have slain and eaten the paschal lamb, and sprinkled his blood upon their dwelling places. Then they go out singing the song of Moses the servant of God and of the Lamb.

All through their marching in the wilderness, there was the offering of the morning lamb and the evening lamb. The people of God were known by their trust in a great sacrifice, that sacrifice being prefigured by “the blood of bulls and of goats, and the sprinkling of the ashes of an heifer,” and especially by the passover lamb and the morning and the evening lamb.

I do not know any clearer characteristic of the saints throughout the ages that are past than this, “These are they which follow the Lamb.” Think of the prophet Isaiah, and as you remember him, and his prophecy, does not the thought of the Lamb of God rise up to your mind at once? “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”

Then, when the new saints come into the world in the brighter day, the clearer dispensation of the Gospel, does not John the Baptist point all who hear him to the Lamb of God? That morning star of the Christian solar system throws its bright beams upon Jesus, the one great sacrifice. John cried, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” and that other John, who heard Him speak, started following the Lamb, and all through his life he kept close company with that blessed Lamb of God till, in his extreme old age, on the island of Patmos, he saw visions of God, and wrote that wonderful Book of the Revelation out of which we were reading just now, and one of the noteworthy points in that Book is that John continually speaks of the Lord Jesus as the Lamb.

The one sacrifice has been offered, the redemption price has been fully paid, the sins of the redeemed have been all put away, and now one might have thought that the Lord Jesus would assume some other form, for instance, that of the Lion of the tribe of Judah would always be predominant in the apocalyptic vision, yet it is not so. John says, “I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion.”

Sacrifice is ever first—first before the angels, first before the elders who represent the church, first in the very center of the throne of God Himself, for it is the throne of God, and of Him who offered Himself as the sacrifice, that is, the Lamb. This, then, is the emblem on the escutcheon of the church triumphant as well as the church militant, “a lamb as it had been slain.” For the wilderness and for Canaan, for the battlefield and for the palace, for the cross and for the throne, it is ever the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain, and that lives again, and lives to die no more. God forbid that this matchless figure should ever be dim to our eyes, but may we gaze upon it with ever-increasing delight!

Saints in all ages have followed the Lamb, and I do not wonder that they have done so, for *it was the Lamb that made them saints*. They have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Sainthood begins at Calvary. There is no possibility of being holy till first there has been remission of sin, and there is no remission of sin without the shedding of the blood of the Lamb. No, dear friends, we have no hope of being clean in God’s sight unless we have been washed, and there is no fountain of cleansing for the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but that which was opened when Christ hung on the cross. Well may they follow Christ who have been made saints by Him.

They follow the Lamb, again, because *it is He who keeps them saints*. “He keepeth the feet of his saints.” If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, and so have fellowship one with another, it is still “the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son,” which, “cleanseth us from all sin.” We need perpetual cleansing,

and we get that perpetual cleansing in the ever-flowing stream from the wounds of Christ which, in effect, perpetually do bleed for those who put their trust in Him. Well may the saints follow the Lamb, for to Him they owe, not only the beginning, but the continuance of their spiritual life and saintship.

And brothers and sisters, *what other leader could they follow?* What model, except Christ, is there for a saint to copy? How can we attain to holiness if we work not after this pattern? Where shall any manhood be seen as fit for imitation, except where it is linked with the Godhead, in the Divine Son of God? Where shall we see the law written out in living characters, but in the life of this glorious Man, this blessed Son of God? Beloved, it is not possible for saints, in all respects, to follow any other leader, and it is characteristic of them that they follow the Lamb. Ask yourselves, my dear hearers, whether you are among these followers of the Lamb.

II. The second part of our subject shows us that THIS EXPRESSION IS INSTRUCTIVE TO THOSE WHO DESIRE TO BE SAINTS. Those of us who have already the commencement of sanctification, should remember that we can only be saints in the fullest sense by following the Lamb whithersoever He goes.

First, then, *we are to follow the Lamb.* Some men spurn the idea of following anybody, they have very capacious brains, and they like to think and to excogitate. They will have nothing but what is beaten out on their own anvils. To accept the Word of God as a little child receives it, is altogether beneath their dignity. They think that the Word of God itself is mistaken when it says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

They fancy that their thoughts are even a little higher than the thoughts of God. They are followers of nobody, they are leaders, or at any rate, they are "self-contained." They have their own revelation, and each man of them is a god to himself. Very well, you may stand there by yourselves, you learned people, you may have your degrees, M.A., D.D., or whatever else you like, for you are those who follow nobody, but of the true people of God, it is written, "These are they which follow the Lamb."

These are not they who follow their own leading, striking out a path of their own, these are not the great eccentrics, or the wonderful originals, but these are they which follow, they are content to be merely followers, they do not aspire to be anything more than followers, but they are glad, however, to add that they are followers of the Lamb, "These are they which follow the Lamb."

There are other persons in the world who follow some one of their fellow men. Whatever he says is Gospel to them, whatever he has written is, of course, infallible. "Be ye followers of me," says the apostle Paul, but then he adds directly, "even as I also am of Christ." While we are children, we are necessarily under instructors, but we must take heed, as we grow in grace, that we never follow an instructor so blindly as to follow him where he goes wrong.

No, "to the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." Every true instructor will beg you to see that, when he errs, you are not to err with him, but to keep a conscience and an understanding of your own, so that it will not be said, "These are they who follow this or that eminent preacher or divine," but "These are they which follow the Lamb." Mind that, dear friends, for it is most important.

I know another company of people who follow "the church." That is a wonderful thing, you know, "the historic church." This is the great door of entrance into the church of Rome, and many have been attracted to it, and have gone through it down into the abyss. There are certain persons who think that "the church" cannot err, but I do not know a more erring community than that which is commonly called "the church." Yet there are certain people who must follow the church whithersoever she goes, and as she has gone to Rome, there they will also go. Or if they think she has gone to Oxford, there they will abide, or if she has gone to Canterbury, there they will dwell.

Well, I have great respect for these brethren, but I prefer to be numbered with those of whom it is written, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Whether He goes to Rome, or

to Geneva, or to Wittenberg, or to Canterbury, or to Smithfield amidst the martyrs' burning stakes, or among the misnamed Anabaptists, or the Methodists, follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

I have been sometimes called to book for saying—yet I will venture to say it again—that if I lived in a village, or if I lived in any other place where I knew there was a Baptist or other Dissenting Chapel, before I decided to attend it, I would want to know, first, “Is the Gospel preached there?” I am not so blindly wedded to any denomination whatever that I should cling to the denomination if it did not cling to Christ. “Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” If you can hear sound doctrine concerning Christ preached anywhere, go and hear it, if it is in connection with those who also follow the Lamb in the waters of baptism, show your preference for that form of worship, but do not cling merely to an old name and an old flag when Christ has gone from them.

The first thing for your soul is to get near to Christ, to feed upon His truth, and so to let it be said of you, dear friends, “‘These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,’ and if they do not hear the Gospel in one place, they will go to another, for they are not going to listen to false doctrine. They have, as sheep of Christ, received a taste by which they know what is truth and what is error. ‘A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers,’ but when they hear their Shepherd’s voice, they will follow that. ‘These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.’”

The church is all very well in its place, but the church has often lost her Lord. In the Song of Solomon we read how she went about the streets seeking Him, so I should not like to have to follow her whithersoever she goes, but it is safe and right to follow the Bridegroom wherever He goes. So let us keep to that, and be amongst those that “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”

A further instruction is this. *We may always follow the lead of the Lamb of the atoning sacrifice.* We can never follow it too closely in our thought. You know that you may get some one thought into your head, and it may rule your whole being till you hardly know where it may lead you. Few men know the consequences of introducing any single doctrine into their minds, for it is pretty sure to bring another and another in its train. This is especially true about the doctrine of the atonement offered by Christ the Lamb of God, yet you may accept it without fear, whatever its consequences may be, and never be at all afraid to follow it whithersoever it goes.

For instance, when you think of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, dying in unutterable pain to redeem men, it gives you the true idea of the terrible blackness of sin. Well, follow out that thought, and if you begin to be greatly depressed under a sense of sin, if conscience should sting and scourge your heart, if it should almost drive you to despair to think that sin could not be put away except by the death of the Son of God, still follow out the thought, for the process will not hurt you. “Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” Though He should lead you into a very trying experience, and a very humbling sense of your own guilt, go on still further with Him, for He who leads you into that gloom will lead you out of it in the most efficient manner, and you need not be afraid to “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”

“If it be so,” says one, “that the Son of God must die before sin can be put away, then it follows that there is no salvation out of Christ.” Just so, follow up that thought. Go on with it to its ultimate issues, do not be afraid, even though the consequences should startle you. Rest assured that, where the doctrine of the cross may lead you, you may follow it quite safely.

One thing I know, the doctrine of the cross will never make you trifle with sin, it will never let you imagine that the death of the wicked is a slight matter, it will never make you indifferent as to the state of men when they pass into another world. “Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,” and you will hate sin more and more, you will love souls more and more, you will have an intense awe of the law of God, and you will have an intense love for the person of your Redeemer. You cannot push this thought too far, it is a truth about which you can never go to an extreme. Nay, I wish that you would go to any extreme that lies along this route, “These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,” as a matter of thought.

But now, once more, you may also very safely follow the Lord Jesus Christ, as the atoning sacrifice, in matters of fact, that is to say, you may be in this world, as far as you can in your measure, as Christ was. The man who believes in the doctrine of the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, will feel that sin is bitter, and he will become very intolerant of it. He will seek to put it down, he will try to purge it out of his own conduct, and he will not endure it in his own family. Go on with that line of conduct, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. How can you tolerate that which cost the Son of God the bloody sweat of Gethsemane? How can you play with the dagger which pierced His heart? No, you must practically, in your life, hate the sins that made Him mourn, and nailed Him to the tree.

Alas! nowadays, I see many who are trifling with sin. We Puritans, they say, are much too precise and too strict. Ah, sirs! it is that preciseness and that strictness that are wanted more and more, and we shall never know how to live thus except we abide hard by the cross of Christ. Unless we believe that sin cost Christ His life, we shall never have that holy enmity towards sin which we ought to have, that blessed intolerance of sin which ought to take possession of every Christian's heart and mind.

"Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." If you do, you will have to go outside the camp, just as He did, bearing His cross. He went forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem, you will have to do the same, you will find people saying of you that they cannot endure you, you have become too religious, too strait-laced, and so on. Blessed are they who are not afraid of hard names, who indeed feel that, if it be wrong in the judgment of the world to follow Christ so closely, they intend to be more wrong, even as David said to Michal, "I will yet be more vile." God help us so to do! "Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," into the place of separation without the camp.

If you follow the Lamb, you may be called to suffer, you may have to lose friends, you may come under the cruel lash of slander, you may, perhaps, have to lose this world's gains, for righteousness' sake and holiness' sake, but whatever the cost may be, follow the Lamb, say to yourself—

***"Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,
I'll follow where He goes."***

"The blood-bespattered footprints of my Master shall receive mine. Not with equal strides, but still with gladsome footsteps, I will follow in His track, let that track lead where it may. What He did, I will do, after my measure." This is what we ought to do, brothers and sisters. How different our lives would be if we always wrought them out by this rule—"What would Christ do in such a case?" I have sometimes got into a great fix of conscience when I have put to myself the question, "What would Christ do in such a case as this?" And once or twice I have not been able to answer. And then I have had to hark back a little, and say, "Would Christ ever have been in circumstances similar to mine just now? Is there not some mistake farther back, and had I not better go right back, and begin again, somewhere or other, rather than keep on a track in which I cannot suppose my Lord to be?" Oh, that we might feel, henceforth, that we will follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, whatever the consequences may be!

Young Christian, I should recommend you, in starting out in the Christian life, to aim at obeying your Lord's commands in every particular. If you have believed in Him, the first thing that you ought to do is to be baptized. "Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," and I am sure that He went down into the waters of Jordan, and was baptized by John, and then the Holy Spirit rested upon Him, and His Father said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

When you have done that, go and give yourself to the Church of Christ, for the Lord Jesus Christ, from the very first, began to gather round about Him those who feared God, and He had a company of disciples who constituted His church. Still keep on following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and if you do, you will be a very amiable, loving, generous, hearty, self-denying, laborious Christian. If you follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, you will go about doing good, you will lay yourself out in service for the Master. Perhaps you will teach little children, for He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." Perhaps you will stand and preach in the streets, for He, by the

hillside, and on the mountain, and by the sea, spoke ever the things of God. But if you follow Him, you will do good in one way or another, and not be a lazy lie-a-bed in the kingdom of Christ, expecting to be honored and rewarded for doing nothing at all.

“These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” Brothers and sisters, *are we not happy that we may follow Him?* His track leads to rest, for He sits at the right hand of God. His track leads to victory, for the Lamb is enthroned, and He will give us to overcome, and to sit with Him upon His throne, even as He has overcome, and sits with the Father upon His throne. Oh! then, by that sweet ending, let us make a good beginning, and a blessed, persevering continuance, in following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

III. I close with this remark—our text IS SUGGESTIVE TO ALL WHO WOULD BE SAINTS.

You perceive that if you are to be true saints, first of all, *you must trust Christ*. A man does not follow another unless he has faith in him. Brethren, your way to heaven lies in trusting yourself with Christ as a sacrifice for sin—as the Lamb of God. Trust yourself with Him, and you have begun the new life, you have started as a saint.

But, next, *this trust must be of a practical kind*. It is not said in our text, “These are they which trust the Lamb,” merely, but “These are they which follow the Lamb.” You must do what He bids you, as He bids you, because He bids you, and because you trust Him. You must begin, from this day forth, to show by your lives that your faith in Christ is no mere sentiment, but a vital active principle within your minds. In that way you shall find eternal life in trusting the Lamb and following Him.

But, if you follow Him, recollect that *you must make no terms with Him*. “These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” “Lord,” say you, “I will follow You across the grassy lawn, or over the smoothly rolled road.” No, no, you must make no conditions, you must follow Him up the crags and down into the marshes, you must follow Christ everywhere, with no picking and choosing of the road. Where He bids you, you must go, where He leads you, you must follow. Will you do that? If so, you shall be His in the day of His appearing, but you must take that “whithersoever” into the contract. “These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”

O sir, will you follow Christ at this rate? If you will, you are Christ’s man, this is the sort of soldier that He would enlist in His army, the man who is ready to follow Him whithersoever He goes.

I heard of a young man who wanted to be an officer in Napoleon’s army, and he came to get a commission wearing a fine new hat, and a suit of clothes of the very neatest cut possible, and the officer asked him, “Sir, if you were in a defile, with mountains on either side of you which you could not ascend, and there was no possibility of going back, and the enemy in front was at least ten times your number, what would you do in such a case as that?” He answered, “I should resign my commission.” They did not make an officer of him, you may be sure, but there are plenty of that kind who, as soon as ever they come to a difficulty in the Christian faith, say, “Take my name off the roll, I did not bargain for this.” Now, if you mean to be a Christian, you must “follow the Lamb whithersoever—whithersoever—whithersoever he goeth.”

And if you do this, *you must be like Him*. Christ and His followers must be of one mind. Christ the Lamb is not to be followed by the devil’s lions. If you follow the Lamb, you must grow more and more lamb-like, and that means being more gentle, more meek, more self-sacrificing, more ready to submit to the divine will. The Lord make us so, and may we be among the blessed people who shall have this for their epitaph—nay, not for their epitaph, for they are not dead, but who shall have this for their motto, “These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth”!

Lastly, remember that Jesus came to the communion table, and His followers should be like Him in this respect also. If there is any child of God who has forgotten this truth hitherto, let him no longer forsake the assembling of himself with God’s people in the keeping of this sacred feast. God bless you all, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

REVELATION 14

The church of God had undergone a very great trial, there had arisen a cruel and wicked persecuting system, described by John in his vision as a beast—a terrible dragon, of which we read that “it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.” This was bad enough, but afterwards there arose another system of evil, which was even more dangerous, because it was an imitation of the truth. Another beast came up out of the earth, having two horns like a lamb, yet he spake as a dragon; and of him John writes, “He causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads.” I will not go into the symbolic meaning of these two beasts, it is sufficient to observe that they had very terrible power, and one might have thought that under their successive attacks the church of God would have been destroyed. Yet note how this chapter begins.

Verse 1. *And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion,—*

Jesus is not dead, He still lives. He is not defeated, “a Lamb stood on the mount Zion.” He is not disturbed or troubled, but He stands in the posture of quiet confidence. “A Lamb stood on the mount Zion,” Jesus is not driven out of His church, but He is still dwelling in the midst of His people.

That is something, yet unbelief says, “Well, I can understand that John saw the Lord there, but had He any people with Him? Had He any church? Listen, “I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion,”—

1. *And with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.*

They are all there, a vast number, a complete number, the exact number which in the seventh chapter of this Book had been described as sealed. They are all there without exception, not one of them is lost, but they all stand fast as a great army surrounding their glorious Leader. Yes, my brethren, in the darkest times, Christ has His church still around Him, it is with Him as it was when the Lord said to Elijah, “Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.” Be of good courage, if your eyes are but anointed with the heavenly eye salve, you may see, as John saw, the Lamb on mount Zion, surrounded by multitudes of faithful followers.

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:*

As loud as thunder, and yet as musical as the choicest notes from a band of harps—such is the testimony of the saints, such is the expression of their exultant joy in their Lord.

3. *And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders:*

See brethren, how little the powers of darkness can do, not only are the saints all there, but they are singing. The devil cannot rob Christ of a single sonnet, the stanzas of our grateful praise shall continue to be poured forth though all the dragons howl as they may, “They sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders.”

3. *And no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.*

There is a special redemption, a “redemption from the earth.” For such redeemed men there is a special song, which no others can learn, and that song will be sung by them in the darkest of all days, in the roughest of all weathers. When the dragons seem to triumph, Christ shall still have His praise, blessed be His holy name.

4. *These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.*

This is the Scriptural metaphor for those who have not turned aside to idol gods, or to false opinions, or to unholy practices. You remember how Paul longed to present the Corinthian Christians “as a chaste

virgin” to Christ, he desired that Christ might have all their love. These servants of God are of this sort, wholly the Lord’s.

4. *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.*

Let no man deny, then, that there is a special and particular redemption of God’s people. All men are not redeemed as these were redeemed, else the expression would be untruthful, or without meaning, “These were redeemed from among men.” There is an elect company for whom Christ especially laid down His life, they are His, and they are made to know that they are His, and to take the position of a blood-bought people who belong not to themselves, but to Him who has bought them with His blood. These are the hundred and forty and four thousand who stand on the mount Zion with the Lamb in the midst of them.

5. *And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.*

Kept, by divine grace, pure in doctrine, holy in life, devout in heart, these are the bodyguard of the Lamb, the chosen companions of the King of kings, whose reward shall be unspeakably great for ever and ever.

6-7. *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, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.*

The old interpreters used to understand these two verses as referring to the great Protestant Reformation. When the old dragon had done his utmost against the church of God, and the thick darkness of the middle ages rested alike on the church and the world, then God sent the Reformers, like flying angels, to preach the everlasting Gospel, and their special message was, “Worship not saints, and angels, and relics, and crucifixes, but ‘worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.’”

8. *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.*

Babylon always goes down when the Gospel is preached, the very flight of the angelic preachers is sufficient to make old Rome totter to her fall. So our fathers used to explain this chapter, for so they understood it. I am not sure whether it refers to that or to any other particular form of anti-Christ, but whatever it may be, whenever the Gospel is exalted, down goes the devil, and down goes the whole Babylonian system.

9-10. *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, 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:*

How we ought to dread any collusion with deadly error, any fellowship with the hypocrisies and falsehoods of those who would deceive, for if we receive the mark of the beast either in our forehead, so as to have unbelieving thoughts, or in our hand, so as to do evil deeds, we shall have to suffer in company with Babylon, that great system of error which is only an imitation and a counterfeit of Christianity! What tremendously terrible words these are, “He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb”!

11-15. *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. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. 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 labors; and their works do follow them. 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. 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.

This is the ingathering of the people of God, you notice that this harvest of God is reaped by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, that Son of man, who sat upon the cloud, “having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.”

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

May you and I form a part of the great harvest! May we be found amongst those golden sheaves which are to be the reaping from Christ’s great sowing when He gave Himself for His people, and was cast into the earth as a grain of wheat to die, that He might not abide alone!

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

The reaper this time is an angel.

18. *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.*

This is the ingathering of the ungodly, they are not the Lord’s harvest, they are the vintage of His wrath. This vintage is not reaped by Him who wears the golden crown, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, but by one of His angels, who is bidden to thrust in his sharp sickle, and reap, for the hour of divine judgment has at last come.

19. *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.*

Shall any of us ever be cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God? We shall, if we continue growing upon the evil vine, and are not grafted into Christ, the true and living Vine.

20. *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.*

By which striking symbol the apostle describes the greatness and the terror of the overthrow which must happen to the ungodly when once God begins to deal with them in judgement. Oh, that the abounding mercy of God would give us a place in His great harvest, and not leave us to be gathered in the vintage of His wrath, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—410, 356, 412

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