

The Three Angels' Messages

The Final Gospel Invitation

In Matthew 24:14, Jesus pictures the final proclamation of the gospel to the world but according to Matthew 24:21, 22 opposition and tribulation go hand in hand with the preaching of the gospel. That such opposition will also be characteristic of the end time is clear from the “anti-Christian powers at work in Revelation 13.

These anti-Christian powers at work in Revelation 13, enforce the worship of the beast and its image. In Old Testament language, image worship was an abomination to the people of God.

When civil powers join with apostate religious powers to enforce worship, they are forming an image to the beast. When they try to enforce worship, they are trampling on conscience.

The penalty for not conforming is depicted by the death of the two witnesses, who are following in the footsteps of Jesus as they head towards their Calvary.

In the previous session our study of Revelation has contained a lot of bad news—but Revelation 14 changes the tune. Earlier still, in Revelation 8:13, we saw an eagle flying in mid-air carrying a message of three woes. By contrast, we now see an angel flying in mid-air, bringing a message of good news.

What has the church been doing besides experiencing a hard time? Revelation 14 answers this question in three sections:

- Revelation 14:1-5 is a description of those who remain faithful to Christ.
- In Revelation 14:6-13, the message they deliver to the world is symbolised by the cry of three angels, flying in the midst of heaven. When this message is preached, it is easy to see why the anti-Christian powers are stirred against them.

The Big Picture

Revelation 10 reveals an open book associated with the Church finishing the gospel being preached worldwide. Its contents bring both sweetness and sourness to those who share it.

The Church will be invited to follow in the footsteps of her Lord. Revelation 13 revealed the abominable powers that will try to coerce the Church into a false form of worship. Now in Revelation 14 we have the message to be shared with the world by Jesus' loyal followers.

Just before the end, people are called to worship the Creator and solemn warnings are given against the counterfeit. Preaching these messages will divide the world as some respond positively while others not only reject them but try to enforce a false form of worship.



Depiction of The Three Angels | Oxygen Multimedia

- Revelation 14:14-20 portrays two great harvests produced as a result of the preaching of the three messages.

God's End-Time People

▷ Read Revelation 14:1-5

God's people at the end-time are pictured as gathered together on Mount Zion. In contrast to those mentioned at the end of Revelation 13 as having the mark of the beast in their forehead or right hand, these people stand with the Lamb and they have the Lamb's name and His Father's name written in their foreheads.

These are the same people seen in Revelation 7, who are also called "the 144,000." In Revelation 7, they were sealed in their foreheads to give them protection to stand on the day of God's wrath. Later they are seen standing before the throne of God.

In Revelation 14:1-5, they are now seen

as standing on Mount Zion. They are the survivors or remnant, or the rest of the offspring of the woman pictured in Revelation 12:17.

Mount Zion is an Old Testament concept associated with deliverance coming from God. The picture is given of ancient Israel huddled on Mount Zion awaiting an attack from her enemies; but they are delivered by God (see Joel 2:32). These people are God's end-time Israel who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

The chief characteristic of the 144,000 in this passage is that they are a people in close contact with Jesus. They follow Him wherever He goes and have His name written on their foreheads, which means they align their characters with His. In every way possible, they seek to follow Him.

Step-by-step, their experience (as they have faced the wrath of the anti-Christian powers) has been similar to the last days Jesus spent on earth before His crucifixion. That's why they can sing a new song that no-one else can learn. They have lived through the final tribulation and as such can sing the song of Moses. This was a song sung after the Red



Although pictured symbolically as standing on Mount Zion, in reality those found faithful to Jesus will come from many nations and races | Hande Guleryuz Yuce | Getty Images

Sea deliverance by Israel. It will also be sung by those who gain the victory over the beast (see Revelation 15:2, 3).

The Special Companions of Christ

People who have suffered together have a special bonding. We see this in the front lines of battle, where the experience creates bonds that last for the rest of life. Like Jesus, the 144,000 have:

- Faced the full wrath of the dragon.
- Faced a coalition of anti-Christian forces when the state united with religious powers against them.
- Answered the call to preach the true gospel and also denounce the counterfeit.

They are virgins in the sense that they have resisted the defiling relationships with the great harlot Babylon (by contrast, see Revelation 17:2). They are warriors for Christ, about to go into battle for their Lord. David's troops would not go near women prior to battle; so these warriors of Christ are symbolically pictured as not defiling themselves with women. They are

pictured here in battle formation and have determined, no matter what the cost, that they will be faithful to Christ (see Revelation 19:7, 8).

Revelation 14:4 describes how these people are offered as first- fruits to God, just as in the festivals of Israel where the first fruits were always the best fruits offered to God. They are to be harvested when Jesus returns; and event which is described as a grain harvest (see Revelation 14:14-16).

According to Revelation 14:5, no lie is found in their mouths. This is an expression used to contrast them with the dragon's end-time deceptions. These are people who receive the love of the truth in order that they might be saved (see 2 Thessalonians 2:11).

There are two gatherings pictured at the end-time in Revelation:

1. The gathering of God's people to Mt Zion where God delivers them. They are harvested in Revelation 14:14-16.
2. The gathering of the wicked to a place called Armageddon, which literally means "mountain of Megiddo." They are harvested in Revelation 14:17-20.

Three Angels Proclaim an Invitation and a Warning

▷ Read Revelation 14:6-11

The preaching messages of the church are given in the symbolism of the proclamation being made by three angels. It is not angels who are doing this; it is the church. The word for 'angel' is the same word used to describe the work of John the Baptist when he prepared the way for the first coming of Christ (see Mark 1:2).

The word 'angel' means messenger. Here are three mighty messages being proclaimed by the church to offset the work being done by the three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet (see Revelation 16:13, 14).

Notes:

Fearing an Awesome God

In Revelation 14:6, the gospel is being proclaimed to the world as Jesus said it would in Matthew 24:14. This is the finishing of the mystery of God, which is the gospel (see Revelation 10:6-11).

The gospel is God's final call to the inhabitants of the earth—all are forced to make a decision for or against the cross, to receive pardon or judgment.

“Fear God” does not mean to run away and hide from Him. Here the concept of fear is that of having respect and awe for Him. Fearing God is a biblical expression to denote someone who is in a right relationship to God (see, for example, Genesis 22:12; Psalm 111:10).

Fear separates the holy from the profane—the very special from the common, the ordinary, the every-day.

Our fear of God often also includes keeping

His commandments (see, for example, Ecclesiastes 12:13). At the end-time, God's people are pictured as fearing God (see Revelation 11:18, 15:4, 19:5) and keeping His commandments (see Revelation 12:17, 14:12) "Give Him glory" goes along with fearing God, the result of being in a right relationship with God.

Our decision decides our reward

Included in the end-time preaching of the gospel is the announcement that God's judgment has come.

Judgment comes when the gospel is preached at the end-time, in the sense that people are both accepting or rejecting God's offer of forgiveness.

In this setting we see the announcement of a pre-advent judgment. Before Jesus returns, decisions are made as to who is in a right relationship with God and who is not. Then when He comes, He brings His rewards with Him (see Revelation 22:11, 12).

This implies all judgment decisions as to what sort of rewards people will get have been made before the second coming of Jesus.

There are no opportunities to accept God's offer after Jesus returns.

Phases in God's judgment

We will see in the last part of this chapter that there will be two harvests: one for God's people and one for those who have rejected Jesus.

There are three main phases of the final judgment of God:

1. A judgment before Jesus returns to decide who is in a right relationship with God and who is not. As a result of this, Jesus brings His rewards with Him when He returns (see Revelation 22:12).
2. A judgment during the 1,000 years after Jesus returns when the redeemed will be able to sit on thrones and give their

judgment regarding what has happened (see Revelation 20:4).

3. A judgment after the 1,000 years, called the executive judgment, carries out the execution determined by the pre-advent judgment (see Revelation 20:11-14).

Jesus said that those who trust in Him do not have part in the final judgment for they have already received eternal life (see John 5:24).

The teaching of the judgment shows we are accountable for how we live. It is a warning against lax Christian living and "cheap grace"—the preaching of "just believe and that's all there is to it."

Although we are saved by grace alone, which is a free gift, when we accept this offer of pardon, we ask God to help us live a life that is pleasing to Him. This is outward evidence that we have genuine faith. Because of this we will one day be judged by the way our lives conform to God's law, the Ten Commandments (see James 2:10-12).

Judgment is also a positive teaching in the sense that God now steps into human affairs to put things right.

Rightly understood, the judgment is good news for the believer. It is something God's people have been looking for down through the ages (see Revelation 6:10). They do this because they have confidence in Jesus as the One who is to do the judging (see John 5:22, 30).

Justice is finally being done in a world currently sadly lacking in it. At last there is accountability for the un-numbered times when tyrants have not been held accountable.

The first angel also cries out: *"Worship Him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."*

The idea of worship is central to the end-time conflict and many of these words are taken out of the Fourth Commandment, which tells us to keep the Sabbath day holy. The Sabbath has been seen in the Old Testament as a sign



The need to worship something or someone is strong in every person | Jon Green—Mission Media | Lightstock

between God and His people (see Exodus 31:13-17; Ezekiel 20:12, 20).

But God did not intend the Sabbath to be just for the Jews. It was made before there were any Jews on earth (see Genesis 2:1-3). Even after He called Israel to be His covenant people, the Sabbath was still in His mind for the Gentiles (see Isaiah 56:1-7) because Jesus said the Sabbath was made for humanity (see Mark 2:27).

The Lord's Day is not Sunday

Some people maintain that there is no special day for Christians to observe as holy. A study of Revelation makes it clear that when John was writing his book towards the end of the first century AD there was a special day for Christians: "On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet" (Revelation 1:10).

What did John mean by the "Lord's Day"? When did the prophet receive his vision?

The day we call Saturday is the seventh day of the week on the Hebrew calendar, known to the Jews as the Sabbath. Scripture frequently refers to the Sabbath as "the Lord's Day." In Isaiah 58:13, God speaks of the Sabbath as "my holy day." And in Mark 2:27, 28, Jesus declares that He is the "Lord of the Sabbath."

A strong biblical option for understanding John is that he was alluding to these earlier texts in order to identify the Sabbath as the day on which the vision appeared. Since he shows a great deal of interest in the Sabbath commandment in Revelation 14:7, we can feel confident that John had this day in mind when he wrote regarding when he had his vision in Revelation 1:10.

The end-time test is not about a denial of worship but rather who is to be worshipped, plus how and when that worship will take place.

At the sunset hour of earth's history, the message of Genesis will be heard again for people to worship the Creator who made heaven and earth. The message being preached by the church at this time is given to counter the deceptions being practiced by the dragon, sea beast and land beast in Revelation 13.

The first angel's message is a positive message. It is an invitation to accept the true gospel.

The second message is also a positive message for the people of God. It signifies deliverance. At the same time it is a warning against the false gospel in Revelation 14:8.

The message is repeated in Revelation 18:1-4.

Babel = Babylon

Babylon is a symbol depicting the amalgamation of religious powers at the end-time who oppose God and His people. Babylon represents the corrupt religious powers taken over by evil spirits who will at the end time unite with political powers to enforce worship and take away freedom.

This is the first time the word Babylon is used in Revelation. But the words Babel (see Genesis 11:1-9) and Babylon (see Daniel 4:30-32) are used in the Old Testament in association with human pride and rebellion against God.



In Revelation, grapes and wine portray God's judgments | Jennifer Yount Photography—JYountPhoto | Lightstock

Revelation describes all nations as drunk with the wine of Babylon. This statement echoes Jeremiah's oracle against ancient Babylon which declares that the nations have drunk her wine and have gone mad (see Jeremiah 51:7, 25:15).

In Revelation 13, we have seen how the satanic trinity seduces and deceives the world into worshipping the beast and its image. Because of this, those who associate with Babylon for the purpose of economic security and personal gain will drink God's wine of wrath.

The Third Angel's Message

▷ Read Revelation 14:9-11

So far we have had an invitation to accept the everlasting gospel. Then there is a warning against the counterfeit, human-made and human-centred religion. Now we have a prophecy of what will happen if the true gospel is not received and acted on.

Here we have the strongest language anywhere in the Bible concerning punishment, telling us that what is at stake here is really important. This is a test of true religion: a warning not to be found on the wrong side of the end-time contest. There are fearful consequences.

The ancients often diluted wine with water—but not this wine. This is the undiluted wine of God's fury being poured out on those who worship the beast and its image and receive its mark.

Can this be the God that Jesus revealed? It sounds so severe.

This is not the punishment for the sin of those who are struggling; it is for those who not only rejected the last gospel plea but also persecuted those who would accept it. In spite of all the evidence that God was working, they chose to oppose God and those who want to be faithful to Him.

What is God's wrath will be seen more clearly when we study Revelation 15-16, describing God's undiluted wrath in the form of seven last plagues.

The language of Revelation 14:9-11 comes from Isaiah 34:8-10, which deals with the punishment God brought on the land of Edom. (Edom was located in the land we now call Jordan.) But no fire burns today in Edom. Travellers pass through the land and Petra is a major tourist attraction.

Obviously, this language is from the Bible culture of the day in which it was written and has a different meaning to how we would use it literally today.

Forever is “For Keeps”

The word *forever* can have a more limited concept than “never ending.” As with the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the fire burns until it has completed the destruction of cities and everything in them. The wording of the destruction of these cities is also close to the punishment mentioned in the third angel’s call.

Yet we can see these cities are no longer burning even though they are said to be destroyed by eternal fire (see Jude 7).

Those who receive this punishment have no rest, in contrast to those who follow Christ and do find rest (see Revelation 14:13).

The rest that God's people enter into is eternal. On the other hand, the unrest for unbelievers is eternal. This condition is irreversible; there is no recovery from it.

The cross shows the love and mercy of God. It also shows us how much God hates sin. The violation of His law has not been winked at. The end-time conflict will be fierce. The stakes are high.

In the end, God will not just give those who reject Him and His offer of pardon a pat on the hand and say "let bygones be bygones." This is for keeps.

Forever Faithful

The opening part of Revelation 14:12 also appears in Revelation 13:10: "This calls for

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[illegible]

patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.”

The saints of all ages have faced the fury of the dragon and its allies (see Revelation 12:17) yet they have successfully endured.

No matter what happens to those who follow Jesus, nothing can separate them from the love of God (Romans 8:38, 39).

They have remained faithful to Jesus and kept the commandments of the covenant under the most difficult circumstances.

The people often called the remnant, or the remaining ones, have these identifying marks:

- They have accepted the gospel (Revelation 14:7).
- They keep the commandments of the covenant including those dealing with worship (Revelation 12:17, 14:12).
- They have the gift of prophecy manifest among them (Revelation 19:10);
- They reflect the character of Jesus (Revelation 14:1-5);
- They preach the messages presented by the three angels (Revelation 14:6-11).

If we are living close to the end-time, we ought to see these messages being preached somewhere in our world today.

God's messages are always appropriate to needs of the times:

Before the flood, God used Noah to warn people.

At the time of the Exodus, God raised up Moses to lead His people out of Egypt.

At a time of great apostasy in Israel, God raised up Elijah.

Before Jesus came to earth the first time as a baby in Bethlehem, God gave a preparatory message through John the Baptist. John was described as an “angel” or “messenger” (see Mark 2:2, 3).

However, just before the end-time, God chooses to send three mighty angels, or messengers, to prepare people for the end-time testing.

If God has a message being preached today do not be surprised if it is opposed. Revelation 14:6-12 shows us that at the end-time God will send a message to prepare people for this religious contest.

The Bible also uses the word “angel” or “messenger” to describe the work of John the Baptist | Dallas Totra, Dallas Totra Photography | Lightstock



The Two Harvests

▷ Read Revelation 14:14-20

The outcome of the three messages will be to prepare the world for two harvests.

Another set of three angels appear in Revelation 14:15, 17 and 18. They have no message for the world: the world has heard the gospel and made their decisions. They are pictured as coming out of the temple, from the presence of God. They have a message from God to tell Jesus—the Son of man—to reap the harvests of the earth.

The “Son of man” sitting on a cloud (see Revelation 14:14) represents the second coming of Jesus.

Although the passage does not employ terms such as wheat or grain, the imagery implies a grain harvest. This represents the gathering of the righteous to be with Jesus. They are “the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth” (Revelation 14:3).

For the human race, the second coming of Jesus is the ultimate “way out” from its painful condition.

Jesus made it clear that the harvest comes at the end of earth’s history (see Matthew 13:39). Now is the time for the gathering of God’s people into the promised kingdom and to execute the wrath of God on those who have rejected God’s offer of mercy in Christ.

This language is commonly used to describe the second coming of Jesus (see Matthew 24:30, 31; 1 Corinthians 15:50-54; 1

Thessalonians 4:15-17).

In Revelation 14:17-20, one of these angels comes from the temple and has charge of the fire that comes from the altar. This would seem to link with Revelation 8:3-5 where we have an angel offering the prayers of God’s people. These prayers are the prayers of God’s oppressed people throughout history, for deliverance and judgment upon their enemies, as expressed in the sixth seal (see Revelation 6:9-11).

Consequently, the wicked are pictured as being gathered, cast into a wine press and crushed (see also Revelation 19:13). They are trampled outside the city—the saints of Christ or the church. This is the language of Joel 3:12-16 now applied to the church at the end-time. In Revelation 11:2, we have seen how the wicked trod the church underfoot for 42 months. Now *they* are trodden underfoot while the church is protected by God’s seal.

The blood rises out of the press to the height of a horse’s bridle and as long as 1600 stadia or 300 kilometres (180 miles). That distance is roughly the length of Palestine from north to south. The symbolism probably means that the whole earth is the battlefield.

Judgment and Deliverance

Revelation 14 makes it clear that just before God’s judgments are executed on the earth there will be a call from God for people to choose which side they are on. This message will be in the form of the proclamations of the three angels. It is a call for people to stop sitting on the fence.

In many respects, it echoes the call given by Elijah on Mount Carmel: “If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, follow him” (1 Kings 18:21).

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