

SALVATION IN SYMBOLS & SIGNS

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Corresponds to Program 62

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the NKJV and KJV.

THE SECOND ANGEL'S MESSAGE STUDY GUIDE

THE FIRST ANGEL'S MESSAGE CONCLUDED

Revelation 14:6-7

Before we move past the Everlasting Gospel to the second angel's message, we have two more phrases that belong to the message of the first angel: the hour of God's judgment and the call to "worship Him who made heaven and earth" (Revelation 14:7). This first phrase may seem to be out of place in a Gospel setting, yet the truth of the judgment in the context of the Everlasting Gospel is the best news ever. Any misapprehensions we may have about the idea of a judgment can be categorically wiped away by the understanding of the Everlasting Gospel. This is because the judgment is a crucial component of the Gospel (1 Peter 4:17).

THREE BIBLICAL REASONS FOR THE JUDGMENT

The Bible gives a number of reasons for the judgment. One of the most important is that we would refrain from passing judgment on our fellow human beings. We cannot judge one another because we cannot read the heart; only God can. This is why judgment is His alone.

Romans 14:10-13

Stop judging one another! That's the message of these verses. God has a record of all good and evil. He is infinite in mercy, yet at the same time He will by no means clear those who have not availed themselves of His mercy (Exodus 33:5-7). Leave every soul in the hands of Jesus. He died for us, and is our Savior. He has borne our sins, paying that terrible price in our place. Instead of judging others, strive to not be a stumbling block to your neighbor. Don't allow a judgmental attitude to

spring up in your heart, causing others to reject the Gospel of God's love. This is super good news when you think about it. We have been relieved of judging people's hearts, and have now been tasked with doing our best not to be a stumbling block to their salvation. This leads us to a second reason for the judgment.



"And another angel followed, saying, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city...'"

REVELATION 14:8

Matthew 7:21-23

Apparently, many who profess faith in Christ are only professors. They do not know Jesus, and He does not know them. They may take His name, calling themselves Christians and even do wonderful works, yet they are workers of iniquity and violators of God's law of love. Now remember, we are not to judge. God will have His day of accounts. No one who seems to be getting away with falsehood now, will then (Galatians 6:7). These people offer their works, rather than the righteousness of Jesus, as a reason they should be saved. The bottom line: in the judgment we are not saved by our works.

A third reason for the judgment, and one that is even more important than the first two, is found in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 12:10

The Bible teaches that we have an accuser who opposes the work of Christ and the salvation of the lost. His name is Satan and he is accusing all sinners of being unworthy of the favor of God.

The devil's full-time occupation is to defiantly oppose the salvation of every soul for whom Christ died. Day and night, he hurls scathing accusations against God's ransomed people: twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, no vacations, no lunch breaks.

KEY SCRIPTURES

Revelation 14:7 FEAR GOD AND GIVE GLORY TO HIM

1 John 2:1 IF ANYONE SINS, WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE

Mat. 7:21 NOT EVERYONE WHO SAYS TO ME, "LORD, LORD"

Rev. 14:12 HERE'S THE PATIENCE OF THE SAINTS

The Old Testament gives us another look at the work of our adversary.

Zechariah 3:1-5

The devil points to our failures, our sins, our defects—to the fact that we are just plain sinners. He makes his case that none deserve to be saved or even protected from the consequence of sin, and he has a point: Paul says, “As it is written, ‘There is none righteous, no, not one’” (Romans 3:10). Yet as unworthy and unrighteous as we are, we have One who loves us enough to clothe us with His robe of righteousness. He places a redemption crown upon our heads. He is the One who speaks to the Father in our defense.

1 John 2:1-2

Note this point with care: Christ speaks to the Father in our defense, not because the Father is against us and Christ is for us, but because Satan is the accuser of the brethren, not God. The devil is bent on our destruction; God is solely focused on our salvation. “For,” said Jesus, “the Father Himself loveth you...” (John 16:27).

WORSHIP HIM

This is the fourth and final phrase of the first angel’s message and in the context of the Everlasting Gospel, it is a call to rest in Christ for salvation. Let’s dig in.

Revelation 14:7

Of all the commandments God could have quoted in His final message to the world, He quotes from the Sabbath commandment. But why? Why is the God of heaven calling the world back to Sabbath worship? And how does this call fit into the Everlasting Gospel message?

The Sabbath is the day of worship set aside by God from the very beginning to remind us of His work of creation. In the context of the Gospel, the Sabbath is significant for three specific reasons. The first reason cites God’s finished work.

Let’s review the creation account in the book of Genesis. In the beginning, God said, “‘Let there be light:’ and there was light” (Genesis 1:3). God made the firmament, called the earth to bring forth living creatures, the waters to teem with fish and other life, and the skies to be filled with birds of every kind. All creation came into being at the utterance of His spoken word (Psalm 33:9).

After creation was accomplished, God said, “Let us make man in Our image” (Genesis 1:26). It is important to notice that man was made on the sixth day, not the first, or second, or third. Man was nowhere to be found when God created the world, and did not have a hand in God’s creation. There was nothing of which man could say, “There, do you see that? God and I did that together.” All of the credit, all the glory of creation, is God’s alone. Then, after God created mankind on the

sixth day, He was done. With the creation of man, God’s work was finished. Then what did God do?

Genesis 2:1-3

God then set aside the seventh day and blessed and sanctified it. The first action that God called mankind to do, was to rest in all that God alone had created for him. This is what the Sabbath is all about: a continual reminder, a weekly call to rest in what God has done for us, without the slightest involvement of man. This is why it is a vital part of the clarion call of the three angels’ messages that carries the Everlasting Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

The Sabbath is an unchanging reminder that our salvation is totally—one hundred percent—in the doing and dying of Jesus Christ. We rest from our labors “as God did from His” (Hebrews 4:10). How did God rest from His labors? In the first work of creation, He rested on the Sabbath. In His work of re-creation or salvation, He rested in the tomb on the Sabbath (Luke 23:46-56). Why do we then keep the Sabbath? We keep it as a sign that we, by faith, believe in the completed work of Jesus Christ for our salvation, and we are not trusting in creature merit to make it to heaven. We are trusting in the power of the Gospel of God.

Our song will be of salvation to the Lamb—not to our works, our obedience or our righteousness—but unto God and to the Lamb we will sing, “Salvation to our God” (Revelation 7:10). It is the beauty of the fourth commandment that the Sabbath is a reminder of the whole plan of salvation because it contains a principle found in no other commandment: resting in Jesus—accepting what God has accomplished for us, without us—ceasing from our labors and resting in His finished work.

THE SECOND ANGEL’S MESSAGE

Revelation 14:8

The Gospel brings Babylon down. The very word “Babylon” means “confusion.” It is the truth of salvation that brings an end to “Babylon,” the confusion about God and salvation. This is why the announcement of the fall of Babylon follows the proclamation of the Everlasting Gospel. The fall cannot precede the proclamation. The second angel cannot go before the first angel. Babylon can only fall by the power of the Gospel. To identify Babylon is one thing, but to bring it down is another altogether. Our only hope for Babylon’s fall is the Gospel; for in contrast to the Gospel’s bright beams, the wine of Babylon is left in groping darkness.

The second angel’s message presents an illustration and warning in sharp contrast to the Everlasting Gospel, calling our attention to the wine of the wrath of Babylon’s fornication, of which all nations have drunk. There are three points here to ponder:

1. **All nations drink**—meaning that Babylon’s teachings are universal.
2. **Wine**—in prophetic symbolism wine is doctrine or teaching.
3. **Her fornication**—fornication represents illicit relationships or spiritual idolatry.

In other words, Babylon is a universal, religious power teaching doctrine that is unfaithful to God, and to His Gospel of Salvation. The result? Spiritual idolatry. If we follow the lead of the second angel, we will see a sharp contrast between the Gospel and the basic universal teachings of Babylon that are followed by millions today.

Revelation 17:1

Unlike the woman in white, the woman of Revelation 17 represents a church that has been unfaithful to the Bible and the Gospel. The Gospel call is a wedding call (Revelation 19:7-9). The wedding vows are God’s commandments, and the harlot does not keep wedding vows. The cross is Christ’s proposal to the marriage, the Gospel of God’s love, forgiveness, and faithfulness. True marriage comes after the wedding vows.

Christ asks, “Do you promise to have no other gods before me? We respond, “I do.”

Christ asks, “Do you cherish me only and bow down before no idols?”

We respond, “I will.”

Anyone who disregards the commandments of God is going against the wedding vows.

Now some may suggest that this is legalism and a heavy burden. Yet when there is true love, marriage vows are not a burden.

1 John 5:3

You will not hear a bride say at her wedding, “What, no other man before you?” Or the groom saying, “What, I have to be true to you only? That’s legalism! That’s too much to ask! What a burden!” And why would any woman or man consider marriage vows to be anything but a burden? The reason is love.

John 14:15

Love makes all the difference. God loves us (John 3:16). His love for us produces love in our hearts for Him (1 John 4:19). And this love leads us to the wedding vows: God’s promises to us and our promises to Him. That’s why Jesus said that all the law is summed up by love: love to God and love to man (Matthew 22:36-40).

THE THIRD ANGEL’S MESSAGE

Revelation 14:9-12

A basic outline of the three angels’ messages is:

First angel = truth

Second angel = error

Third angel = choose

The third angel’s message points to the choices we make either for truth or for error. Those who choose truth, keep the wedding vows: the commandments of God. And, in spite of keeping God’s commandments, they keep their focus on the “faith of Jesus” for salvation (more on the faith of Jesus in our next study).

Those who choose error are unfaithful to the wedding vows: God’s ten-commandment law of love. They follow the powers of this earth and reap the consequences of playing the harlot with God’s love. Like anyone who has been unfaithful, when they find themselves in the “presence of the Lamb and the holy angels,” they feel extreme discomfort. Revelation 14:11 describes it as torment that ascends forever and ever. However—and this is a vital point about God’s character of love—“forever” is a statement of speech that we often use to describe an uncomfortable event. It is not meant, either in our use of the word today, nor in the biblical sense, to suggest an unending state. And how could it? For one, the word is used in the Bible to describe events that were very uncomfortable, rather than of long duration. Jonah describes his awful three days in the belly of the fish in the same language, “the earth with her bars was about me for ever” (Jonah 2:6).

In addition, the “forever and ever” torment of those who reject the Everlasting Gospel takes place in the presence of the Lamb and the holy angels. This means in heaven or paradise restored. None of us would believe that the lost will be tormented in the presence of the Lamb and holy angels for all eternity. In fact, the Bible describes the same destruction of the wicked, and says that they will consume away (Psalm 37:20). And again, the wicked will be consumed to ashes (Malachi 4:3). We will spend some more time on this subject when we get to Revelation chapter 20.

Summary

The three angels’ messages of Revelation 14 direct the entire world to the Everlasting Gospel of Jesus Christ. In this context, we find the judgment-hour message that will bring an end to Satan’s accusations. It will bring final and complete vindication to undeserving sinners, through faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We also find a call to worship the

God who made heaven and earth, which clearly points the world to God's creation week and the seventh-day Sabbath. The Sabbath, in turn, points us to the Gospel and resting in all that God has done for us, without us, in creation and

salvation. The final message of the three angels is a clarion call to choose between truth or error, between marriage to the Lamb or acting the harlot. Please choose wisely in Jesus' name. Amen. ★

