

Sermon – 14/10/2007 am

Warnings from Three Angels

Study Text: Revelation 14:6–13

At the end of WW2 the United Nations was formed. A new world order was declared. The UN would ensure that the world would not go to war again. But what do we see today? We not only see war at every turn, but we see corruption is rife within the UN itself.

When the Berlin wall came down the cold war came to an end and a new world order was declared. We were assured of an era of unparalleled peace and prosperity. Within a few years the World Trade Towers came tumbling town and war on terrorism was declared.

Mankind is forever declaring the arrival of a new age or new world order – especially when elections come around. But what do we see? We see regimes come and go. We see continuing corruption, continuing wars, and continuing poverty. Man's gospel is not worth the paper it is written on. The gospel of Jesus Christ on the other hand is an unchanging gospel. It is an eternal gospel.

John's visions continue in the passage before us. After seeing the Lamb on Mt Zion and the 144000 engaged in worship in heaven, the focus shifts back to earth. In the bigger picture we are in the extended interlude between the seven trumpet judgments and the seven bowl judgments. Some see a pattern of seven in these chapters, chapter 12-14, but it is not at all clear. What we have seen so far is the dragon, a symbol of Satan, the beast of the sea, a symbol of antichristian governments, and the beast of the earth, a symbol of antichristian religion.

For the preacher this passage is automatically subdivided with three angels bringing messages or warnings to those who dwell on the earth or those who worship the beast. It concludes with a word of encouragement to the saints, to those who keep the faith of Jesus.

First Angel

I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven having the eternal gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth – to every nation, tribe, tongue and people (14:6). This angel reminds us of the one that proclaimed the three woes of last three trumpets (8:13). Torment and death came upon earth dwellers when these trumpets sounded. This first angel preached the gospel to all earth dwellers.

What was this gospel, and what was its power? It was a call to worship the Creator, to *fear God and give him all the glory, for the hour of his judgment had come (14:7)*. This was the final call. Was it a call to repentance or more of a warning of the judgment to come? Commentators are divided but most see it as a last minute call to repentance. Yet there is no mention of repentance here. It is more like a warning – 'acknowledge the sovereignty of God or else suffer his wrath'.

To fear God and give him the glory does not necessarily mean conversion as we concluded with reference to Revelation 11:13. With the book of Daniel in mind, and particularly king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, we see a person can be left with no alternative but to worship Almighty God. *At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10, 11)*. This does not mean universal conversion.

The true gospel, the eternal gospel, is not good news to all people. What do we see in the New Testament preaching of the gospel? Firstly we see that along with cross and the resurrection was preached the judgment of God (Acts 17:31). Secondly, not all who heard the gospel saw it as good news. Many rejected the gospel as bad news; they attacked Paul and other preachers.

We have reason to question some gospel preaching today. Is the true gospel being preached if the consequences of rejecting this gospel are not made clear? Preaching of the gospel will bring division. A preacher must expect that some will not like the gospel and will leave. If no one leaves his church he has cause to be concerned.

In the hour of judgment there will be no doubt as to where people stand. There will be no confusion surrounding the gospel that is preached by the angel – unlike a lot of preaching today. It will not of course be a different gospel. We have the same gospel in our hands. The confusion comes from man's handling of this word and the desire to please the hearers. Let us be clear – outside of Christ there is no salvation – without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin.

Second Angel

This angel announces the fall of the great city of Babylon. Babylon is introduced here – it is dealt with in detail in chapters 17-18. Briefly, what do we understand by this name? The name Babylon is derived from the name Babel, the place when men exalted themselves against God by building a tall tower (Genesis 11). Daniel lived in the literal city of Babylon in the 6th century BC. There he was confronted by kings who called themselves gods, and by rampant idol worship.

In New Testament times 'Babylon' became a metaphor. Christians referred to Rome as Babylon. Rome was the capital of the world. It was the seat of great political and economic power. From Rome came emperor worship and gross idolatry. Christians suffered under the rule and power of Rome. In Revelation, Babylon carries this same symbolic meaning. Babylon is much the same as the beast of the sea.

The second angel announces the fall of Babylon as if it had already occurred – in the prophetic perfect tense (14:8 the same announcement is made in 18:2). Isaiah prophesied the fall of the literal Babylon (Isaiah 21:9) while John prophesied the fall of the symbolic Babylon, the Babylon that represents all earthly rule and power.

Babylon is personified as a prostitute, as a woman who attracts men and leads them to destruction. She has made the nations drunk on *the wine of the wrath of her fornication*, or in other words the wine of her passion for adultery (14:8). The picture of drinking wine will come up again in verse 10. Wine is pleasant to drink, but it is intoxicating.

Earth dwellers get intoxicated by the things of this world. They can never get enough of what money can buy – just look at the credit card debt we have! People get sucked in to getting more and more of what the world offers. They are never satisfied. In the end they will find they have been duped; they will find they have been lured by a great lie. *Babylon is fallen, is fallen*. 'Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'.

Third Angel

This angel also had a message for unbelievers, for those who worship the beast and have the mark of the beast (14:9). The mark of the beast enables them to buy and sell in this world. They may prosper in this world, but this world is coming to an end. The Day of Judgment will come and then the tables will be turned. Those who worship the beast will find themselves suffering great torment as the wrath of God is poured out upon them.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in their unrighteousness (Romans 1:18). Those who love Babylon's wine of adultery will be given to drink the full cup of the wine of God's wrath (14:10, Psalm 75:8). The punishment fits the crime. The wicked fall into the pit they have dug.

Men often like to brew their own liquor. They can make it stronger and in India they could make it cheaper. It is easy to get drunk on this cheap liquor. But sometimes things went wrong. Sometimes we would get news of men who died from drinking this home brew. What seemed like a harmless pleasure killed them.

In another picture divine judgment is seen as fire and brimstone (14:10). Followers of the beast will be cast into the lake of fire (as will the two beasts and the dragon – 19:20). They will have no rest day or night, but will suffer torment forever and ever (14:11). Just as the followers of the Lamb will worship God and sing his praises day and night, so these, his enemies will suffer torment day and night forever and ever.

This is not a picture of annihilation as many foolishly think will be the case when they die. This is one of the greatest deceptions of the devil today – the idea that there is no hell. Some people think they will go to heaven when they die, while others think they will just cease to exist – and some Christians say nothing to against this view. Few today believe in the reality of hell.

Jesus spoke very clearly about the horrors of hell. He spoke of everlasting punishment for the wicked (Mat 25:46). He spoke of the fire of hell that cannot be quenched (Mark 9:43). He spoke of the rich man being in torment in the flames after he died (Luke 16:24).

Asaph was a godly man who started to envy the wicked. 'Their life is so easy; they never have any troubles; they have so much more than I do' – this is what he said. Then he went to the house of the Lord and remembered their end, the judgment of God (Psalm 73:17).

John's first readers were like many Christians today. They were tempted by envy for the wicked. Life was so much easier for those who prostituted themselves to Babylon. They did not suffer persecution like those in the church. John called upon the saints to persevere in the *faith of Jesus*, or faith from Jesus. Jesus was the source of their faith, not just the object of faith. Faithfulness to Jesus and obedience to God's commands was needed. Keep in mind the end of the wicked. Their time is short. They are on the slippery slope to destruction.

Keep in mind also the reward that is yours in Christ Jesus as you run the race set before you. A blessed rest awaits those who are faithful in serving Jesus to the end. *Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour in the Lord is not in vain (I Corinthians 15:58).*

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