

MIDTRIBULATION PRONOUNCEMENTS

Revelation 14:6-13

Revelation 14 contains three sections each of which begins with the phrase *kai eidon* (*then I looked, 14:1; then I saw, 14:6; then I looked, 14:14*). This study is of the second section (14:6-13) which contains three angelic pronouncements and an affirmation of the Holy Spirit. These pronouncements will be made mid-tribulation; the time at which the Antichrist will achieve world domination. Supported by the False Prophet, he will declare himself god and demand the world worship him. His image will be set up in the Temple; those refusing to worship it will be killed (13:15). The worldwide campaign of “the mark” will force people to worship; without the mark, one will not be able to buy food (13:16-17). Jews and Jesus followers will be hunted, imprisoned and many murdered.

As this nightmare begins to unfold, God will send angelic preachers to warn the world's people not to worship the beast nor take his mark, but to worship the one true God. It will be yet another manifestation of God's love and grace.

The first angelic preacher will warn the citizens of the earth to worship the true God because His judgment is imminent.

THE FIRST ANGELIC PREACHER (14:6-7)

Revelation 14:6–7 (ESV)

⁶ *Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead,*

The previous angel mentioned is the angel who blew the seventh trumpet recorded in Revelation 11:15, nevertheless, John records he saw another (of the same kind) angel flying *directly overhead*. The Greek text reads “mid-heaven” which, in this context, most likely refers to the sky surrounding the earth. Try as they might, the Antichrist and False Prophet will not be able to stifle the preaching of God's Word. The verb *flying* is a present active indicating continuous action; this angel and those following will circle the globe preaching their messages to all the world.

What is the message of this first angel?

The message of the first angel is *an eternal gospel*.

⁶ *Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people.*

The Greek text reads *an eternal gospel* not *the eternal gospel*. The word *gospel* means *good news*, but context determines the content of the *good news*. For instance, Jesus spoke about the gospel of the Kingdom, that is, the good news of the kingdom of God (Luke 4:43, 8:1, 16:16). The Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians of the gospel he preached to them, namely, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that He was buried and that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures (I Cor. 15:3-4). This is what we usually think of when we read the words *gospel* or *good news*. But here in Revelation 14:6 the message of the first angel is *an eternal gospel*. The content of this *gospel* is given in verse 7.

⁷ *And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.”*

The eternal gospel will be a summons to fear and honor God the Creator.

Warren Wiersbe explains:

While the nations will fear “the beast” and give honor to him, this heavenly messenger will summon them to fear and honor God alone. It is a reminder that God is the Creator and He alone deserves worship. This is not the Gospel message as we know it (1 Cor. 15:1–4); rather, it is a return to the message of Romans 1:18ff, what theologians call “natural theology.”

All creation bears witness to God's existence as well as to His power and wisdom. Nonetheless, "the beast" will convince men that he is in charge of the world, and that their destinies are in his hands. The message of the angel calls men back to basics: God is Creator—worship and serve Him.¹

Much to the frustration of the Antichrist, this first angelic preacher will call the nations to fear and worship the true God of Creation especially in light of the impending Bowl Judgments (Rev. 15-16).

The first angel preacher will call on the world to fear God rather than fear the Antichrist. I love how Dr. Willard expresses the idea of fearing God.

One begins to get smart when he or she fears being crosswise of God: fear of not doing what he wants and not being as he requires.

Fear is the anticipation of harm. The intelligent person recognizes that his or her well-being lies in being in harmony with God and what God is doing in the "kingdom". God is not mean, but he is dangerous. It is the same with other great forces he has placed in reality. Electricity and nuclear power, for example, are not mean, but they are dangerous. One who does not, in a certain sense, "worry" about God, simply isn't smart.²

The "harm" God can and will do to the sinner is far greater than the harm of the Antichrist. That is why Jesus warns us

Luke 12:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ *"I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. ⁵ But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!"*

The first angel preacher will call on the world to worship God because He is the Creator. There is no more basic truth about God, but that He is the Creator of the heavens and earth and all that is in them. Each one of us is accountable to God to know and accept at least this much truth about Him from the witness of His creation (Rom. 1:18-32).

To deny God has serious consequences. Dr. Dallas Willard explains:

Now when the light of the fundamental truth and reality, God, is put out in the heart and the soul, the intellect becomes dysfunctional, trying to devise a "truth" that will be compatible with the basic falsehood that man is god and the affections (feelings, emotions, even sensations) soon follow along on the path to chaos.³

To deny God means we have to believe some things that are absurd. We have to believe that everything in the universe spontaneously popped into existence out of nothing. Or we have to believe that the material universe is eternal – without a beginning - even though the laws of physics denies this possibility. Man's thinking only goes down hill from there.

If you have honest questions about the origin of the universe and the processes involved in creation, God welcomes your questions and has, in these last days, made available an abundance of research and resources to answer your questions.⁴ But at the end of the day, each one of us is accountable to fear and worship God Who is the Creator of all things.

But having said that, once we get it straight that there is a God Who created the universe Whom we are to worship we discover we have a problem. God is holy and pure. Our sin and evil separates Him from us. The wages (consequences) of sinning against the Creator is death; separation from Him now and for all eternity. We need a savior. The eternal gospel that God is the Creator and that He judges sinners leads into the gospel of grace – God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty for our sins on the cross. By confessing our sin and placing our faith in the blood sacrifice of

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 607.

² Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 50-51.

³ Ibid., 52-53.

⁴ Institute for Creation Research (icr.org); Answers in Genesis (answersingenesis.org); the Creation Museum in Santee (creationmuseum.org).

Jesus as the complete payment for our sin, we are reconciled to God for all eternity. Are you trusting in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sin?

Even during the second half of the Tribulation, God will still be reaching out to the lost all around the world. This first angel will preach an eternal gospel; will he preach the gospel of grace? The Bible does not say, but I speculate he will or that the Holy Spirit will work in the lives of those who respond to the angel's message by making sure they receive the gospel of grace. God loves man and will pursue him to the end; everyone except those who take the mark of the beast. This we discover in the message of the third angel.

A second angel follows the first with another message for the world.

THE SECOND ANGELIC PREACHER (14:8)

Revelation 14:8 (ESV)

⁸ *Another angel, a second, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality."*

The second angel will proclaim the destruction of the Antichrist's regime.

The second angel will proclaim to the world the destruction of the Antichrist's regime. *Babylon* is God's name for the religious, economic and political organization by which the Antichrist will rule the world. There is evidence in the Bible that the ancient city of Babylon will be rebuilt and become the Antichrist's capital. The destruction of the physical city is most likely included in this proclamation. The destruction of religious Babylon and economic/political Babylon is detailed in Revelation chapters 17 & 18. We will cover these in greater detail when we reach those passages.

The message of this second angel will warn the world population not to put their faith in the Antichrist and his regime because it will ultimately be destroyed by God. This message will also strengthen persecuted believers to remain faithful knowing that the Antichrist's doom is certain.

A third angel will come forth declaring his message to the inhabitants of the earth.

THE THIRD ANGELIC PREACHER (14:9-12)

Revelation 14:9-12 (ESV)

⁹ *And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name." ¹² Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.*

The third angel will proclaim the doom of those taking the mark of the beast.

The third message is directed especially to those who are deciding about following "the beast." It is a warning that "the easy way" is really the hard way, that to "go along with the world" means to go away from God.

Those who take the mark of the beast will be crossing a threshold from which there will be no turning back. Those who take the mark of the beast will not be able to repent of their decision. They will experience the Bowl Judgments (God's wrath poured full strength) and they will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

The third message is meant to strengthen the resolve of suffering believers.

This message is meant to warn unbelievers not to follow the Antichrist and it is meant to strengthen the endurance of believers suffering under the Antichrist's regime. It will be far better to reign with Christ forever than with Antichrist for a few short years! It will be better to endure persecution and martyrdom patiently than to escape them and suffer throughout eternity!

This is exactly what the Holy Spirit affirms in verse 13:

Revelation 14:13 (ESV)

¹³ *And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"*

REFLECTION

There are a number of things from this passage relevant to us today. We are accountable to fear and worship God the Creator Who will judge sinners.

We should fear God Who has the power to cast us into the Lake of Fire for all eternity. That appropriate fear should drive us to accept the gracious gift of His Son Whom He gave to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.

Our trust and allegiance should be to Jesus and not to the things of this world. This world is passing away; it will all burn. Serve Jesus. Put your energy and time into things that will last for eternity.