

FLYING PREACHERS

Revelation 14:6-13

Midway through the 7 year Tribulation, the Antichrist will achieve his ultimate goal of world domination. 3½ years into the 7 year treaty which he will sign with the nation of Israel, the Antichrist will violate the security treaty, invade Israel, Jerusalem and the Jewish temple (Dan. 9:27). He will seat himself in the temple and declare himself god (2 Thess. 2:4). A second entity, the second beast of Revelation 13, the False Prophet, will command an image of the Antichrist be fashioned and set up in the temple (Matt. 24:15; Rev. 13:14). Empowered to animate the image, the False Prophet will coerce mankind to worship the image; those refusing will be killed (Rev. 13:15). The False Prophet will also inaugurate operation “Mark” requiring citizens of the world to take the mark of the beast (Antichrist) on their right hand or forehead as an act of worship. Those refusing will be barred from buying or selling (Rev. 13:16-18). In his drive to be worshipped exclusively, the Antichrist and False Prophet will undoubtedly ban all religions and suppress the teaching of all sacred texts; especially the preaching of the Word of God.

But they will be thwarted.

Revelation 14 reveals that during the second half of the Tribulation God will mobilize three angelic preachers who will circle the globe proclaiming God’s Word. Antichrist will be powerless to stop them. I believe people will be saved through the ministry of these “flying preachers”. They will be yet another manifestation of God’s great love for mankind as will be the 144,000 Evangelists (Rev. 7).

The first “flying preacher” will call the nations to fear God Who’s judgments are imminent (the Bowl Judgments) and to worship the true God because He is Creator.

THE FIRST “FLYING PREACHER” (14:6-7)

Revelation 14:6-7 (ESV)

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. 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 previous angel mentioned is the angel who blew the seventh trumpet recorded in Revelation 11:15, nevertheless, John records he saw another angel flying *directly overhead*. The Greek text reads “mid-heaven” which, in this context, most likely refers to the sky surrounding the earth. 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 peoples of the world.

The message of the first angel is twofold; he will call the nations to 1) fear God and 2) worship God.

The imminence of the Bowl Judgments should provoke a greater fear of God than of the Antichrist. And worship is the only reasonable creaturely response to its Creator.

In our previous study we considered that both summons are relevant to us today. With regard to fearing God, we, too, should fear God because of the judgment He will inflict upon sinners in the form of the Lake of Fire. This is an appropriate fear that should drive us to accept His gift of salvation by confessing our sin and placing our complete confidence in the blood sacrifice of Jesus as the full payment of our sin debt (1 Cor. 15:3-6; Col. 2:8-15).

Fear should also characterize our Christian lives. I was blessed to be raised by a loving father and mother, but as a child I feared getting my Dad or my Mom mad at me. Similarly, we have a loving heavenly Father with Whom we do not want to get “crosswise”. He disciplines those whom He loves (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 11:27-32; Heb. 12:3-11; 1 John 5:16-17). As we read in Hebrews 10:26-27

Hebrews 10:26-27 (ESV)

²⁶ For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

For a Christian there no longer remains a sacrifice for their deliberate sin because Jesus was the once-for-all sacrifice that paid the price for that deliberate sin (Heb. 10:11-18). A Christian cannot lose their salvation, but we can lose our inheritance and our purification at the Judgment Seat of Christ can be very painful. I appreciate the way Ian Hollingsworth expressed this in the Discussion Guide for last weeks' study:

We WILL be purified, but how much pain do we want that purification to include?

The message of the first "flying preacher" will be to fear God AND to worship God because He is the Creator. We see this clearly as we reread Revelation 14:6-7.

Revelation 14:6-7 (ESV)

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There is no more basic truth about God, but that He is Creator of all things. We are accountable to acknowledge this truth and worship Him.

Romans 1:18-25 (ESV)

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

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.¹

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 deny this possibility.

It reminds me of this exchange between Ben Stein and Richard Dawkins in the documentary "Expelled".

BEN STEIN: "What do you think is the possibility that Intelligent Design might turn out to be the answer to some issues in genetics or in evolution?"

RICHARD DAWKINS: "Well, it could come about in the following way. It could be that at some earlier time, somewhere in the universe, a civilization evolved, probably by some kind of Darwinian means, probably to a very high level of technology, and designed a form of life that they seeded onto perhaps this planet. Now, um, now that is a possibility, and an intriguing possibility. And I suppose it's possible that you might find evidence for that if you look at the details of biochemistry, molecular biology, you might find a signature of some sort of designer."

How did the civilization that "seeded" the earth originate? Dawkins cannot answer that question. Though he recognizes design in nature, he would rather attribute it to an advanced civilization in outer space for which there is no evidence rather than attribute the design to God.

¹ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, (Colorado Springs, CO, NavPress), 2002, pg. 52-53.

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.

For questions in the area of the sciences, consult these resources:

- *Institute for Creation Research* (icr.org)
- *Answers in Genesis* (answersingenesis.org)
- *Logos Research Associates* (<http://www.logosresearchassociates.org>)
- *The Creation Museum in Santee* (creationmuseum.org)

There are also powerful philosophical arguments for the existence of God; consult these resources:

- *Reasonable Faith* (<http://www.reasonablefaith.org>)
- *Stand to Reason* (www.str.org)

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 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 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 follow the first two.

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 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!

So 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.