

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Angelic Messengers**

Scripture: Revelation 14:6-11

Code: 66-51

Let's open our Bibles now quickly to Revelation chapter 14. We are going to be examining verses 6 through 11 of Revelation 14. This is a profound and startling portion of Scripture in some respects...at the same time a gracious and encouraging portion in other respects.

You know, people in the world are hoping for a better day. You hear it all the time, The President would like to be able to promise and deliver on a better day for our nation, Congress, people who rule our states and our cities. World leaders across the globe are endeavoring to meet together and find a platform for common peace and harmony. Everybody would like to see a better day. We would like to eliminate poverty and disease and crime and all of those things that blight our culture.

And I hate to be a prophet of doom, but to speak the truth I must and the truth is there's not going to be a better day but a worse one. A better day is not coming. In fact, what is coming is terrible, eternal tragedy. And the society of the future is a society that will feel the judgment fury of God like no other has ever felt it. Things are not going to get better, they're going to get infinitely worse.

And as we turn to Revelation, the book of Revelation, this becomes clear to us because of the number of passages here that record the judgment of God to come. Coming into chapter 14 and arriving at verse 6, we come face-to-face with three angels. And while the primary message that they deliver is a message of judgment, there is a note of grace, there is a note of hope, there is even a note of salvation. But the doom of the world is clear.

Just as a footnote, angels are very involved in the economy of God. They were involved in the giving of the law, that is the Mosaic law. They have been involved in the care of believers. In fact, in Hebrews 1 it says they minister to the saints. And the time of the end, at the time of God's final judgment, angels are very involved in that as well. The role of angels will be a major, major factor in God's judgment. We see, for example, in the gospel of Matthew in the parables of Jesus Christ that angels will be the reapers who will gather people at the end for judgment, as well as gathering the elect into the kingdom. Angels are involved in many, many of the aspects of the end time.

Now as we come to this passage, we find the angels involved not so much in judgment or in gathering the elect, we find angels involved in speaking. Three particular angels in verses 6 through 11 and each of them has a message to deliver. Occasionally we see angels praising God in the book of Revelation. Occasionally we see them ministering His will. We see them fighting demons. We see them enacting judgments. We see them bringing messages from God. And that's the role they have here.

Just to give you a little bit of perspective. In the book of Revelation, angels are involved in every chapter from chapter 4 to 14, with the exception of chapter 13. So they are very, very involved in the activities and the messages of the end time.

There are three angels that we're going to see in verses 6 through 11 and there will be more angels as this chapter plays out to the very end. But beginning in verse 6 is a series of angelic messengers who bring astounding proclamations about the consummation of the age, or the end of the world. Before the chapter is over we'll see as many as seven of them, but the first three are linked closely together. And the role they play here is, as I said, not the role of judgment but the role of warning. Before they are the instruments of judgment, they are the instruments of warning.

Let's look at verses 6 through 11, you follow as I read. "I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people. 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 the heaven and the earth and springs of waters.' And another angel, a second one followed saying, 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.' And another angel, a third one followed them saying with a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is mixed in full strength in the cup of his anger. And he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever and they have no rest, day and night, those who worship the beast and his image and whoever receives the mark of his name.'"

Just to keep in mind, these are not sequential angels, they are not necessarily given in some kind of chronological order. In fact, all the way through the end of the chapter here you have an assortment of angelic messengers which direct their attention to giving certain messages to the world. They're not necessarily in a proper sequence, but they address certain issues and events which stretch clear across the time that we know as the Tribulation.

Now the three messengers which we have just read anticipate the judgment of the seventh trumpet. You remember the seventh trumpet judgment was announced in chapter 11. And then we've had a little bit of a respite or an interlude, and discussed some other issues. And now these three angels anticipate the seventh trumpet will be blown and when it's blown, the seven bowls will be poured out as will be described, chapter 15 and 16. So just before the final outpouring of the last seven judgments on the earth which come in rapid fire at the end of the Great Tribulation, we meet these powerful proclaiming angels.

And what is their role? Their role is to make a last final effort to produce a remedial fear, a saving faith so that people can avoid the holocaust of the day of the Lord and the devastation of judgment and eternal hell. Some of the most terrifying language of judgment I just read you. This is the terror of the Lord.

And there is a gracious element here because before the final judgment hits, the last seven bowls which are the seventh trumpet, they telescope out of that seventh trumpet, before that last series of judgments, before the terrors of the Lord fall in their final form as the day of the Lord reaches its fever pitch, the Lord gives these warnings. And here, as I said, we sense the heart of God in one final last effort that men might hear.

Now this stretches over a period of time that may exceed just the moment of the seventh trumpet blowing, but it certainly goes all the way up to that point so that people right to the very end are able to hear the truth. And if they will, to believe.

Let's look at the first angel. The first angel is preaching the gospel. The first angel is preaching the gospel. Verse 6, "And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people." Here, as I said, is the proclamation of God's last message of warning, calling the world to faith, calling the world to salvation in Christ at the climax of the period of time we call human history, namely that period of the Great Tribulation. And you'll notice at the beginning of verse 6 he says, "I saw another angel." There have been many already. In fact, I just told you that in every chapter from chapter 4 through 14, angels appear except chapter 13, here is another one of them. And there are surely millions of them. Back in chapter 5 and verse 11 it says the number of the angels gathered around the throne of God was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, murion times murion is ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands. And it's a way to describe the indescribable or to count the uncountable. One of those millions of holy angels is here selected for a very unique purpose. It shows him flying in mid heaven. Mid heaven is a Greek term that refers to the apex of the sun at noonday, to the point in the sky when the sun has reached its meridian, its high point, the very highest point in heaven where the greatest visibility will occur across the face of the earth, this angel will fly. And apparently from the indication of the text, he will fly there continually in the sight of everybody, flying at the highest point in heaven, the maximum point where the greatest amount of visibility is provided from the vantage point of earth. His pulpit at that juncture will be beyond the control of Antichrist. It will be even beyond the control of demons, who by then, of course, have been cast down to the earth, as Revelation 12 says, along with Satan. This preaching angel is going to be unobstructed and there have been holy angels, as you remember, from the book of Daniel obstructed in their heavenly mission. There has been a battle going on and goes on even today in the heavenlies between holy angels and demons, but not at this time. This angel will have absolute liberty and freedom because all the demons of the air have been cast down to the earth and he flies in mid heaven. Over a period of time, we don't know, but surely it stretches over this period of the end. Now remember, the world will have already experienced incredible devastation, indescribable judgment by God, inconceivable and relentless holocausts will have spread themselves across the globe. The sky will have been shredded, as it were, and the earth as well. All of that described from chapter 6 right on through. The people of the world will have heard the preaching of the hundred and forty-four thousand Jews mentioned in verses 1 through 5 of chapter 14, who have been proclaiming the gospel surely since the midpoint, at least, of the time of Tribulation. They will have heard the testimony of the two witnesses. The whole world will know about them as it tells us in chapter 11. But in spite of all of this and additionally, all the other people who come to Christ out of Israel and out of the nations who are witnessing everywhere and many of whom are martyred, in spite of all of those preachers, be they men or angels, they will not believe. And here in one great dominating role, God identifies one angel to just fly back and forth in the mid heaven as the earth rotates so that the whole

globe can hear him preach.

And what does he preach? It says in verse 6, "Having an eternal gospel to preach." The word "preach," euangelizo, from which we get "to evangelize." The gospel, euangelion, that's the good news. Eternal...in what sense is it eternal? This is very important. It is eternal in the sense that it provides the means to eternal life. It is eternal in the sense that it provides the means to eternal life. It is good news that relates to eternity.

Some people have suggested that the eternal gospel is one gospel and the gospel of grace is another gospel and the gospel of Christ is another, and then there's the gospel of God, and the gospel of peace and the glorious gospel. All of those terms are used in the New Testament. May I suggest to you that they all refer to the very same thing, they simply look at it from different viewpoints. The eternal gospel is the gospel that provides eternal life. It is the gospel of grace. It is the gospel of Christ. It is the gospel of God. It is the gospel of peace. And it is the glorious gospel. There's only one gospel. The same gospel of salvation has all of those elements. It is from God, it is about Christ, it is through grace, it provides peace, it is also, by the way the gospel of the kingdom. It is the good news that tells men and women how they can enter in to the eternal kingdom of God, the kingdom that has been opened by Christ and all who believe can enter.

This angel is not preaching anything different than anybody who ever preached the gospel preached. This angel is preaching that good news that God has provided a kingdom, He has provided grace, He has provided peace, He has provided glory, He has provided it in Christ. God has provided entrance into His eternal kingdom. Obviously, the implication here is that they will have understood that this is the gospel which they've heard. They've heard the truth about Christ. They've heard the truth about grace and forgiveness. They've heard the truth about peace and salvation. They have heard the truth about a coming kingdom and that there is a way to enter that kingdom. All of that has been being preached by a hundred and forty-four thousand evangelists all across the globe, by two witnesses, by many other believers who have been saved out of Israel and the nations. They have heard this all through this time period. They have heard about the death of Christ. They have heard about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the gospel which is so clearly defined in 1 Corinthians 15:1 to 10.

According to Matthew 24:14 which is a verse that you should note in this context because it relates so specifically to this, tells us the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations and then the end shall come. Before the end comes, the whole world will hear the gospel of the kingdom. And what better way to make sure that everybody on the face of the earth hears it than to set an angel in mid heaven flying back and forth day after day after day after day proclaiming this eternal gospel of the kingdom?

Good news, the door to the kingdom is still open. There is still grace. There is still peace in the provision of Christ. There is still the possibility of glory. It is not too late. The angel then is calling the people of the world to change their allegiance from the beast to the Lamb. There is still time to repent. There is still time to believe. The message, back to verse 6, is to those who live on the earth. That is to say the people here living on this very earth still alive who have not yet repented and come to Christ. They are further described in verse 6 as "every nation and tribe and tongue and people." God

is so gracious. To the very end He is calling people to salvation. He's doing it by men and He's doing it by angels. This is new because in our day, in our time, angels do not proclaim. In the Old Testament economy, they often came with a message from God. And in the future they'll come again with a message from God and the message is to turn from the Antichrist to the Christ.

Now notice how directly this message comes in verse 7. "The angel speaks with a loud voice." That would be obvious. In fact, he shouts. The shouting indicates that he will be heard and it also is an indication of the urgency of the message. And what is it that he shouts? This is most important. He shouts with a loud voice, "Fear God and give Him glory." The message is so clear. The point is this, don't fear reverence, be afraid of, concern yourself with what Antichrist says, or Satan, but fear God. God is sovereign. God is in control. God alone has the right to be revered. God is the one to fear. "Fear not," Jesus said, "those who destroy the body, but fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Fear Him.

This assumes, by the way, the knowledge of the gospel of grace, the knowledge of the gospel of Christ, the gospel of peace, the glorious gospel of entrance into the kingdom through faith in the Lord Jesus who died and rose again. That...that will be clear to everybody. I believe that message will be across the globe.

And now this angel is simply calling day after day to the world, "Turn from Antichrist to Christ, turn from following Satan to following God, fear God." That is the great theme of Scripture. Proverbs 9:10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Proverbs 23:17, "Live in the fear of the Lord always." First Peter 2:17, "Fear God." It's another way of saying, "Worship God, the God who seeks true worshipers." Fearing God means living in the reality of His holiness, living in the reality of His sovereignty, living in the reality of His judgment of sin. Honor God, respect God, hold Him in awe, reverence Him, adore Him, worship Him.

Then the angel adds, "And give Him glory." Fear God would be the negative side, give Him glory would be the positive side. Fear God means to live in the light of His sovereign holy judgment. You say, "Is this angel trying to frighten people into faith?" Yes, no question about it.

But on the other hand, he is also inviting them to recognize the glory of God. This is the very heart of the problem of unregenerate people. When they knew God, Romans 1 says, they glorified Him not as God. Romans 1 says because of the knowledge of God that is in them and the knowledge of God that is around them, men are without excuse and they have known God through conscience and they have known God through reason. Conscience demands a moral lawgiver, reason demands a creator. There is enough of the knowledge of God to make men inexcusable, if they do not believe in Him. If they do not come to the place where they know Him, that is man's great sin, when he knows God he refuses to glorify Him as God. And here the angel, for the last time, calls on men to fear God, that is to live in healthy fear of His coming judgment, and that is to glorify Him, that is to honor Him because of who He is. And the reason is given in verse 7, "Because the hour of His judgment has come." The hour means the fixed moment for judgment has arrived. The seventh trumpet is blown. The seven bowls are to be poured out. Now is the last moment to believe.

The word "judgment," by the way, for a note, is used here for the first time in the book of Revelation. You'll find it again in 16, 18 and 19, but here it is used for the first time. It has the same meaning as another word that's used earlier in the books starting in chapter 6, and that is the word wrath. God's wrath and God's judgment is the same. Here are the righteous judgments that are the result of the wrath of holy God against a stubborn and obstinate world.

And I would just remind you that here you see the heart of God. How much warning does a world need? How many holocausts does it take before they wake up? A fourth of the population of the world dies, a third of the population of the world dies, a fourth of the seas are polluted. The fresh water is polluted. People die from famines and plagues and earthquakes and wars. The sky rolls up. The stars fall. The earth is pelted with fiery bodies falling out of the sky. The crops die. The green grass across the face of the earth dies. Two hundred million demons go across the globe with devastation and destruction. People are given diseases and ultimately even death. A world being massacred under the wrath of God and deceived under the guile of Satan and Antichrist. And with all of that going around, God is still calling, and still calling and asking men to fear Him and give Him glory because the last judgment is about to fall.

Then the angel, as if saying, "Fear God and glorify Him," isn't enough, adds at the end of verse 7, "Worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters." Worship, *proskuneo*, very interesting word in the Greek. It means to do homage by kissing the hand. It means to bow in adoration. It means to prostrate oneself which people did before the throne of a monarch. Fear God, have a holy sense of fear, be afraid of His terrible judgment, glorify Him because He is a holy and glorious God. Fall on your face. Bow in adoration. Prostrate yourself before Him.

And what is the angel saying? He's asking them to do for God precisely what they're doing for the Antichrist. They're doing all of this to the Antichrist. They're worshipping Him. They're bowing down to him. They're prostrating themselves. And they're in fear of him and his great powerful killing machine. The angel says turn from him and turn to God. Why? Because God, verse 7, is the one who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and the springs of waters.

Here again we meet this continual approach to the pagans of the world. Whenever the preachers of Scripture approach unbelieving pagan people, they approach them from the viewpoint of creation because that is the great unanswerable question, that is the great proof of God, that for this great effect known as creation there must be a cause. The Antichrist didn't create the universe, Satan didn't create the universe, God did. This is always the ground for worship, always the ground for glory, always the ground for fear and reverence, always the ground for faith. In Acts 14, in Acts 17 when Paul preached to the pagans, whether they were just the people on the street or the elite philosophers, he said the God you must worship is the God who made the heavens and the earth because the creator, my friend, is the judge. Whoever started it will end it. Whoever created it is in charge of it. The Maker is the executioner, the One who brought it into existence is the One who will put it out of existence. He is the One to fear.

And so this stern warning comes from a heavenly angel, hoping as Jude put it, to snatch some out of the fire. So the message of the angel then is the eternal gospel, the foundation of which is to worship

God, to glorify Him and fear Him by acknowledging Him as Creator and Savior through the Lord Jesus Christ. What a gracious God we have with an earth that is literally burning and smoldering, across its face is death in every dimension from the plants to man. And the frightening, smoldering devastated universe gasping its last breath is still the object of God's gracious warning. And God is calling people even then from the kingdom of darkness that is really dark into the kingdom of light. Then in verse 8 we meet a second angel. "And another angel, a second one, followed saying, `Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.'" Now here is an angel not preaching the gospel, here is an angel pronouncing judgment. Here is an angel pronouncing judgment.

This sadly implies the rejection of the first angel's message. If everybody in the world responded to the preaching of the first angel, the second angel wouldn't have to say this. It implies the rejection of the message of the first angel, so in that sense there's a certain...there's a certain flow here. In fact, it almost feels as if the second angel interrupts the first angel because nobody is really responding to the first angel or at least there's no great worldwide response, and so angel number two moves in and pronounces judgment. "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great."

Babylon, what is it? Babylon refers to the worldwide kingdom of the Antichrist. It's just the name for the whole Antigod system of idolatry that is the worship of the Antichrist. And you remember they erect an idol that supposedly comes to life in the city of Jerusalem and the whole world worships the Antichrist in the form of that idol. But in the very end time there's no reason to assume that the very kingdom of the Antichrist finds its capital in the actual city of Babylon. Babylon, of course, in our life time in recent years because of the war in the mideast became very prominent. And numbers of books were written dealing with the prophetic significance of Babylon. We won't go into all of that now, we'll look more at it in chapter 17 and 18 where we get the details of this.

But Babylon is being rebuilt, as you know, by Saddam Huessin(?) as a ceremonial city. It is very possible that the rebuilding of the ancient city of Babylon may serve to be the capital city of the Antichrist in the final kingdom. His image will be at Jerusalem. There will be a certain focal point there but the system will be called Babylon in its totality and it may well be that its capital city is a restored Babylon. Back to the fertile crescent, back to the very place where Eden was. And, by the way, back to the location where the two hundred million demons had been bound and were finally released. It's almost as if that part of the earth became the seat of Satan because it was there that he corrupted the human race and established his kingdom.

But Babylon, by the time you get to the end of the Great Tribulation, is not just the city, it is a whole complete, political, economic and religious world empire being operated by the Antichrist. And the angel is simply predicting its entire collapse. Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great.

Now just a brief history. The first Babylon was a city founded by Nimrod. Nimrod was a God-hater. He was a rebel. You can read about him in Genesis 10 and 11. And Nimrod founded this Antigod city early in the book of Genesis. And it became the first...the first place where idolatry was introduced. And the first indication of idolatry we know as the Tower of...what?...of Babel. That was the birthplace of idolatry.

The Tower of Babel was what would be called in ancient times a ziggurat. It was an edifice attempting to reach high into the sky, not to climb physically up to God, but it was a monument to false deity. There the first world power of idolatry was designed and built. And the first Babel united men around a false god, a false system of religion, unspeakable idolatry, unspeakable spiritual adultery. And you remember what happened, don't you? God came down, Genesis 11, confounded their languages in judgment so they couldn't understand each other, there never had been any other than just one language until then, and then scattered them all over the globe.

And what did they take with them? Idolatry. Their false religion, their rebellious hearts. And so Babel then spawned all worldwide false religion. All the idols of the world were the children of Mother Babylon when the people were scattered.

So the source of idolatry, it all came from Babel. That's where it all originated. And in the end, it will all be reconstituted back in a final Babylon which will again become the container of one world idolatry that marks the last form of what began in Babel.

So history goes full circle, doesn't it? All of humanity was united in the first Babylon, and it will be reunited in false religion and idolatry in the last Babylon.

To show you how encompassing the influence of the final Babylon is, it says in verse 8 that Babylon is this woman, pictured as a woman, a harlot actually, as we'll see later. She has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality. It literally intoxicates and deceives the whole world. This is the final Antichrist system and it literally engulfs the whole world. We've already seen that the Antichrist is going to rule the whole world. Everybody is going to come from all over the globe and bow to him.

But the angel says, "Fallen, fallen," that's the end, divine destruction. The repetition serves to make the statement with great finality and great force. It shows the intense nature of the judgment, the comprehensive and complete nature of the judgment and the tragedy of it all. Fallen, fallen...by the way...is treated as if it were a future tense, although it is not because it's so certain that it's going to happen it can be spoken of as if it's already taken place.

Notice what else it says. "This evil system has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality." What does that mean? Immorality in the spiritual sense, please. Certainly there will be sexual sin like the world has never known. But the real issue here is what you could call whoring fornication on a spiritual level, that would be unfaithfulness to God. The people of the world get involved in the system and they imbibe the wine of the passion of spiritual immorality. The word "passion," thumoo, anything inflammatory, exciting or passionate, out of control with desire. It pictures an orgy of rebellion, an orgy of idolatry, an orgy of animosity and hatred toward God and the whole world will drink the wine of the passion of this spiritual defection from the true God. When we get to chapter 17 and chapter 18 you're going to see that in detail.

So angel number one comes and preaches the gospel and offers people an opportunity to respond. Those who won't believe, who won't be saved will fall with the system of which they are a part. So angel number one preaching the gospel. Angel number two, proclaiming the judgment. Let's look now at angel number three.



Angel number three is pronouncing the damnation--pronouncing the damnation. Here is another angel, not preaching the gospel, not proclaiming the judgment, but pronouncing the character of damnation. "And another angel, a third one followed them, saying with a loud voice, `If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand..." Stop there for a moment.

Here again we see that each angel is successive. Each one reinforces the previous one and advances the truth to the next logical step. The gospel being rejected results in the pronouncement of judgment, which comes to pass in damnation. But God is just and God is gracious and He does not damn people to judgment by whim, or by decree, He damns people to judgment because they reject the truth they know, the truth they hear. That's why they're without excuse.

And I think even in this second angel and third angel's warnings there is still being given the effort to frighten men into faith...if we can simplify it to that degree, and you can't really, but to cause them to have enough panic to do some soul searching and pursue the truth. We are reminded then in verse 9, "Anyone who worships the beast and his image and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand is the one that needs to listen to this message." Back in chapter 13, you remember, we discussed all of that in detail, how that the Antichrist will mark out his people on the forehead or on the hand with his number. And the whole world will worship the beast and the image that the false prophet sets up. As we noted at the time, pagans were often marked, tattooed, if you will, by the name of their god...with the name of their god. Kings often marked out their own soldiers. And the people of the world will take some mark on their hand or their forehead which indicates their loyalty to the beast, as we saw back in chapter 13.

And what this angel is doing is saying...Look, here we are at the very end, you have heard the hundred and forty-four thousand, you've heard the two witnesses, you've heard all of the people who have proclaimed their faith in Christ, Jew and Gentile, and some of them were martyred. And certainly in the very martyrdom itself they gave testimony of the grace of God in Christ. You have heard an angel flying in mid-heaven. You've been warned by another angel who has pronounced doom. And here is one last note for you, if you still will worship the beast, if you still will worship his image, if you are still going to maintain your identification clear on out through all of this, verse 10, "You also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God." You will not just drink of the wine of the passion of the immorality of the system, you'll get another cup and it will be a cup filled with the wrath of God. You who have drunk the first cup, the passionate immoralities of the system Babylon, you're going to drink the wine of the wrath of God.

There's only one human being in the history of the world who ever drank that cup and survived. Who was that? Jesus Christ who said in the garden, fearing the very moment which He had to experience, "Father, let this cup pass from Me, but nevertheless, Thy will be done." And then He drank it to the dregs.

They have voluntarily drank the cup of the passion of the immorality of Antichrist, and now God will force this cup down their throats. The cup of God's wrath. This, by the way, is a term that you find in several occasions in the Old Testament, the wine of God's wrath, or the cup of God's wrath. Psalm 75

verse 8, for example, says, "For a cup is in the hand of the Lord, and the wine foams. It is well mixed and He pours out of this. Surely all the wicked of the earth must drain and drink down its dregs." God is going to pour wine down the throats of the ungodly.

Isaiah saw that same very dramatic and vivid reality, "Rouse yourself, rouse yourself," he cries in Isaiah 51:17, "you who have drunk from the Lord's hand the cup of His anger, the chalice of reeling you have drained to the dregs." Jeremiah, several occasions, makes reference to that same cup, Jeremiah 25:15 and 16, 51:7.

Now would you notice further what it says in verse 10? "This wine of the wrath of the God which is mixed in full strength." It's an interesting phrase. Sometimes when you read about wine being mixed, it's mixed with water. Not in this case because it is not mixed to be diluted, it is mixed in full strength, or literally, it is mixed unmixed.

What does this mean? Strong wine, unmixed with any water was made even stronger by spices that made it more pungent, more potent. And that's what you have here. The unmixed wine of God is made stronger, given full strength in the cup of His anger. Unmitigated vengeance. And the person who drinks this will be tormented with fire and brimstone. What a statement. Will be tormented with fire and brimstone.

Tormented refers to the ceaseless infliction of unbearable pain. Tormented, no relief, pain that is unrelenting and unmitigated, never lessened, never diminished and no split second of respite or rest. It says in the words of our Lord in Luke 16, "The rich man in Hades lifted up his eyes, being in torment." Unrelieved, unmitigated infliction of unbearable pain.

And it tells us that the torment will come with fire and brimstone. Those two things are often associated, by the way, with divine judgment in Scripture. I wish we had the time to see that. The prophet Isaiah makes reference to that in Isaiah chapter 34, verses 8 to 10. We find the same kind of reference made in the New Testament, Luke 17, just pointing out to you verse 29. "On the day that Lot went out from Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all." And that takes us back to that monumental experience of Sodom and Gomorrah back in Genesis when fire and brimstone rained on the earth and destroyed those cities in the judgment of God.

It also says in Revelation 19:20 that the lake of fire burns with brimstone. And in chapter 20 verse 10 it says the lake of fire and brimstone, chapter 21 of Revelation verse 8, the lake that burns with fire and brimstone again. Hell, the final resting place of unregenerate people is a place of ceaseless, unbearable, unrelenting, unrelieved torment that is brought on by fire and brimstone. Brimstone being something like a hot molten burning lava, belching out of the fire of a volcano.

All of this, most interestingly, in verse 10 is in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. This is quite interesting. This casting of those who reject the gospel into the fire and brimstone will be in the presence of the holy angels. They're going to view this torture. This is a most devastating blow to the wicked, by the way. It certainly will add to their suffering that they must suffer while utter holiness and absolute purity is watching. How embarrassing, how shaming. And it says, not only in the presence of the holy angels, but in the presence of the Lamb. Even though we often would assume that the ungodly are cast out of the presence of God, and certainly 2 Thessalonians

1:9 says they will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power. There it says they'll be away from His presence. Here it says they'll be in the presence of the Lamb.

The point is this, they will be away from His presence in the term...in terms of any kind of care, any kind of relationship, any kind of comfort, any kind of mercy, any kind of pity, any kind of compassion. But they will not be away from His presence in terms of His omnipresence. After all, as I said earlier, Matthew 10:28, "Fear not Him who destroys the body, but fear Him who destroys both body and soul in hell." It is still God, the sovereign God of glory who is doing the destruction in hell throughout eternity. It is never out from under His control. The lake of fire, in a sense, is outside the presence of God. Revelation 21 verse 27, "Nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying shall ever come into it," and that's the holy city. The ungodly are outside that where the Lamb lives and where God lives. Chapter 22, it says again that the people inside are the righteous and outside, verse 15, are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral and the murderers and the idolaters and everybody who loves and practices lying.

The ungodly are outside the holy city and they're outside the eternal new heaven and new earth. But what they are not really outside the pervasive omnipresence of God and Christ. For in fact it is God and Christ effecting their eternal punishment.

As if that's not enough, this angel has something else to say. In verse 11 he wraps up his message, saying, "The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever." Some people would try to argue that hell is not forever. This angel wouldn't be on their side. This angel would like to debate those who believe in annihilationism, who believe in universalism, who believe in any form of conditional immortality. This angel would debate any of that.

There are people who say, "Well, nobody is ever going to go to hell." That's not what this angel said. There are others who would say, "Well they're going to go to hell for a little while and after a little punishment they'll be released." That's not what this angel said. Some others would say, "They're going to go to hell and they're going to suffer a while and then they're going to be annihilated." That's not what this angel said.

What this angel will proclaim is that the smoke of their torment will go up...how long? Forever and ever. Hell is forever...forever. It has no end. In Matthew 9:48...in Mark 9:48, I'm sorry, we find some very supportive words to this truth. It says, "In hell the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched." There's no end to it. It goes on forever. You remember John the Baptist in Matthew chapter 3, talking about the judge who would come and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire? That is a fire that cannot ever be put out. "Depart from Me," says the Lord in Matthew 25:41, "accursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

And so sad, tragic, unthinkable, unimaginable fate of those who continue to reject Christ right to the end, along with all others who reject Him, their smoke from the burning torment will go up forever and ever. As if that's not enough, you think, "Well maybe there will be some times of rest, some times of solace." No, they have no rest day and night, it is relentless, absolutely relentless.

Look at verse 13 in comparison. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes...says the Spirit...that they may...what?...rest." Unending torment for those who reject Christ forever and ever and ever, without any rest. That's why it says, the words of Jesus, Matthew 13:42, "They will be cast into the furnace of fire, in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, no relief." And those are the indicators of the unrelieved agony.

This, he says, end of verse 11, for those who worship the beast and his image and whoever receives the mark of his name. Simply, those who will not turn their allegiance from Antichrist to Christ. What a warning.

Madonna has a song. It repeats one line over and over again. I happened to hear it, and it just made me shake, it made me tremble. This is the line, "I don't give a damn if I go to hell." And that is a hit song. Frankly, that's going to be the attitude of a whole lot of people in this society and in the society in the time of the end. It seems to me we're already programming people, doesn't it? For this kind of mentality who can endure all of this gospel preaching and still say, "I don't give a damn if I go to hell." Well I hope you do. There's no joy that heaven ever knows greater than when a sinner repents.

Father, what a compelling and powerful text of Scripture. What is said by these angels to the generations to come is the very thing being preached now. Preachers today and Christians today are saying fear God, fear God, give Him glory, worship Him, come to Christ, because this whole human system is going to fall, it's going to collapse into judgment, and ultimately it's going to end up in an eternal place of fire and brimstone where there is no rest but only unrelieved torment forever and ever. A place prepared for the devil and his angels, but to be occupied by millions of people who don't give a damn if they go to hell. How frightening, how obstinate. God, be merciful, to sinners as You are to us. And may they reach out while the message of salvation is still offered, for Your glory we pray in Christ's name. Amen.



Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).