

WORSHIP SERVICE - 2.6.2022

THE ETERNAL GOSPEL AND JUDGMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

MAIN POINT: God's mercy is displayed in the ongoing proclamation of the gospel to the whole world, calling sinners to repentance, and warning them of the coming judgment.

Revelation 14:6-13

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."

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."

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.

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!"

II. THE THREE ANGELIC MESSENGERS

FIRST ANGEL - THE ETERNAL GOSPEL PROCLAIMED

- "Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead..."
- The implication is that this is a message from heaven that has bearing on the entire world.
- This messenger is bringing words of warning and judgment.

- "...with an eternal gospel to proclaim..."
 - What is meant by an eternal gospel?
 - Gospel means good news, but this doesn't sound like good news.
 - What this angel is proclaiming is the judicial side of the gospel message.
 - As we preach the gospel, part of that message is that a rejection of the gospel has severe and dire consequences.
 - This is NOT a different gospel than we read about in the NT. It's an eternal gospel, an everlasting gospel.
- In what sense is it eternal?
 - First, there has been and always will be, one gospel message.
 - Second, it is eternal in that the plan of God to save sinners was decreed from before the foundation of the world to display his glory in the salvation of sinners.
 - Third, there are eternal consequences in the acceptance or rejection of the gospel.
 - Fourth, the gospel message of God's glorious salvation results in the eternal praises from God's people in heaven, as reflected in the various songs of the saints throughout Revelation.
- "to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people."
 - To whom is this gospel proclaimed?
 - All who dwell on earth. The whole world. Every nation, tribe and language and people.
 - It reminds us that the gospel is to be heralded everywhere.
 - **Matthew 24:14** And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.
 - The one gospel message is to go to all the nations.
 - **Romans 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
 - There is only one saving message!
- "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."
 - What is the content of the gospel proclaimed? "Fear God, give him glory, and worship the Creator."
 - **Romans 1: 21-22** 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.
 - The first angel's message is a call for repentance—turn to fear God, glorify God, and worship God.
- Why is this good news?
 - It is good news for believers. There is judgment coming on all those who persecute and cause the suffering of God's people.
 - It is also good news for unbelievers. The grace and mercy of God is displayed.
 - "*The hour of judgment has come.*" The clock is about to strike midnight, but there's still time to repent.
 - The countdown clock is reaching its appointed time and the message is still going out to the world — repent, turn to God, fear God, worship him, trust Christ.
 - Proclaiming the gospel involves telling people to repent and turn to God because the time is short, judgment is coming.

- **Acts 2:37-40** Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” 38 And Peter said to them, “**Repent** and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” 40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “**Save yourselves from this crooked generation.**”
- **Acts 17:3-31** The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now **he commands all people everywhere to repent**, 31 **because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness** by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”
- **Mark 1:14-15** Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, **proclaiming the gospel of God**, 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent and believe in the gospel.**”
- We must call people to repent and turn to Christ and warn them that judgment is coming.
- Judgment is part of the gospel message.
- The only appropriate response to the gospel is what this angel proclaims, "Fear God, give him glory, worship Him."

SECOND ANGEL - THE FALL OF BABYLON PRONOUNCED

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.”

- Babylon is going to get a full treatment in chapters 17-18, but these first century Christians knew what John was referring to.
- Babylon was the empire that took God’s people into captivity and exile because Israel had broken covenant with the Lord.
- Babylon was the first great kingdom symbolized by the first of the four beasts in Daniel’s vision. (Daniel 7)
- “*Babylon the great*” was Nebuchadnezzar’s prideful boast. (Daniel 4:30)
- What is Babylon? is another symbol of the beast that rises out of the sea. (Rev. 13:1)
- Babylon symbolizes the world system and its rulers in rebellion against God and which opposes God's people.
- Rome, in the first century, was the epitome of Babylon.
- Peter in his first epistle uses Babylon as a code word for Rome.
- **1 Peter 5:13** She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings,...
- The ungodly social, political, and economic systems dominated by the Roman Empire placed believers in the same position as Israel under ancient Babylon.
- That is why this symbolic name applies to them and all wicked world systems that do the same.
- Babylon is the great city of man that opposes the city of God.
- Babylon has a repeated fulfillment throughout human history. (Starting with the Tower of Babel / Genesis 11)
- Babylon is the world in rebellion, the kingdom of antichrist, which relentlessly persecutes the people of God.
- John is recording an event as if it has already occurred even though it is yet to take place.
- John speaks of the fall of Babylon in the past tense, because prophetically, it is as good as done.

- “Fallen Fallen...” the double repetition underscores the inevitability of her eventual demise.
- **Isaiah 21:9** And behold, here come riders, horsemen in pairs!” And he answered, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon; and all the carved images of her gods he has shattered to the ground.”
- Her time will come to a devastating end.
- End-time idolatrous Babylon will fall just like ancient Babylon.
- “She made all the nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality.”
- In Rev. 17:2, Babylon is portrayed as a prostitute whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.
- The metaphors of drunkenness and sexual immorality are used repeatedly in Scripture of idolatry and infidelity.
- Babylon is a seductress, seducing one away from devotion to Christ.
- Everything about this world, that is under the domain of Satan, is meant to allure, seduce, and tempt you to spiritual adultery, to compromise your faithfulness to Christ.
- **James 4:4** You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
- We cannot deny or ignore the repeated exhortations to guard our heart, to be careful what we fill our lives with, and to live holy and undefiled lives, because in a sense, we are living in Babylon.
- We are like the Israelites in exile in Babylon. (Psalm 137)
- “She made to drink...” don’t underestimate the power of Babylon to entice and ensnare you. She will force you to comply in order to prosper. Once intoxicated, you stop resisting Babylon’s influence, and become numb to any fear of a coming judgment.
- **Joel Beeke** writes this, “*Some of us can’t sing the songs of Zion because our ears are ringing with the songs of Babylon. How can we sing the songs of Zion if our minds have been marinated and steeped in the world?*”
- Worldliness will choke out your devotion to Christ, and Babylon’s wine will stupefy you, corrupt and defile you.
- Are you drunk on Babylon’s wine believing her lies or are you a sober-minded follower of the Lamb who stands on Mount Zion?
- However great Babylon may be right now, she will fall—that’s the message of this angel and the warning for all those who are being seduced by the world.
- Are you living with the certainty that Babylon’s fall is assured?
- We need to live as if Babylon has fallen. We must repent of our worldliness and resist the temptations of this world.

THIRD ANGEL - THE WRATH OF GOD POURED OUT

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.”

- This third angel pronounces the fate of all those who worship the beast and bear his mark.
- Notice the same metaphor of wine is used here.

- Those who drink from Babylon’s wine will also drink of the wine of God’s wrath when it is unleashed.
- Who will drink of the wine of His wrath? All those who refuse to acknowledge him as Creator, worship him, fear him, and give him glory.
- God’s wrath is poured full strength into the cup of his anger.
- **Psalm 75:8** For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.
- What a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God and be under his judgment (Heb. 10:31)
- Those who worship the beast will drink the undiluted, inexhaustible fury of God’s righteous wrath and judgment.
- Those under God’s wrath will be tormented with fire and sulfur. These symbols represent the terrifying reality of the never ending spiritual and psychological torment that will be inflicted on the wicked. (Sodom and Gomorrah / Gen. 19)
- The spiritual reality of hell will be far worse than any earthly fire.

OBJECTIONS

1. It makes God out to be cruel and unloving.

- Love and justice are not opposed to one another. Justice by definition is not cruel.
- This concept is not based in God’s revelation of himself but on a caricature of God.
- The most exaggerated feature about God in most people’s theology is love—God is love.
- If God is Love, and that is all that someone really wants to think about God, then the concept of hell is inconceivable .
- A caricature of God that overemphasizes a perfection of God and underemphasizes all other perfections is idolatrous.
- Everyone cries out for justice. Everyone wants justice when they are wronged. They want evildoers punished when they are sinned against, but they are offended by the notion that God is to punish the wicked in hell.

2. If our sin is temporal and finite, why is hell’s punishment eternal and infinite.

- That doesn’t seem fair to a lot of people, and that’s because most people have a low view of God’s holiness and a low view of sin.
- When we sin we sin against the infinite and eternal majesty and glory of God, so our sins deserve infinite, eternal punishment. The punishment fits the crime.
- The magnitude of the punishment of sin is directly proportionate to the magnitude of the one sinned against.
- **James Hamilton** writes, “*Hell lasts forever because God is infinitely important. Hell is about the worth and majesty of God. If you understand what it means for God to be God, you will understand why hell lasts forever.*”
- This is why the teaching about hell and judgment offends many. They have no idea of the worth and majesty and glory of God, and his infinite significance.

MYTHS ABOUT HELL

1. Hell is not real

- No one spoke more about hell than Jesus.
- He likened hell to a fire at least twenty times, and compared hell to the smoldering, ever-burning trash heaps of Gehenna.

- The parable of Lazarus and the Rich Fool in Luke 16 shows us the reality of the judgment and punishment of those who reject God's provision of salvation through Jesus Christ.
- He spoke of the end-time harvest where the righteous and wicked are separated and the wicked will be thrown into the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 13:50).
- Describing the time of the ingathering of all people for final judgment, Jesus says to those who are not his sheep, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:31). Then he says, "And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. (Matt. 25:46"
- A common false teaching about hell is annihilationism. That teaches that those who die without Christ will simply cease to exist, their souls are extinguished in the Lake of Fire. But that is contrary to the overwhelming amount of Scriptural teaching regarding the everlasting punishment of the wicked.

2. Hell is just the absence of God's presence.

- v10 shows us that the torment happens in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.
- God is not going to hide the glory of his everlasting justice.
- Those who denied God, blasphemed God, worshiped the beast, and persecuted Christians, will be forced to acknowledge him as they are being punished in his very presence.
- Are you ready to face eternity?
- The only thing that will deliver you from the wrath of God is the eternal gospel of God.
- The good news is that on the cross, Jesus drank the cup of the whole fury of the wrath of God for us.
- If you trust in Christ you won't have to drink from that cup.

III. A BENEDICTION FOR THE FAITHFUL

12 Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

- The encouragement for the believer to endure and persevere is because God will judge the wicked.
- God's ultimate condemnation of the wicked is a source of encouragement and a continual motivation for us to obey God and keep our faith in Jesus.
- Babylon will fall! God's wrath on the wicked will be poured out full strength.

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!"

- This is a blessing upon those who remain faithful unto death.
- Jesus reminded the churches to be faithful unto death and he held out a promise of the crown of life for those who overcome (Rev. 2:20).
- There are two witnesses who confirm the blessing, the voice from heaven, which is likely the voice from the throne, and the Spirit who puts an exclamation point saying, "*Blessed indeed*".
- Look at the promise set before those who die in the Lord, having Christ as their Savior at the moment of death—Rest!

- With all of the suffering, trials, tests, persecution, those who worship the Lamb, those who have trusted Him, will find eternal rest in Christ.
- For the believer, death is deliverance from our labor in this world.
- That is in contrast to what is said about the wicked, v11, they have no rest day or night.
- What a difference between the believer and the unbeliever. In this life, the believer is at war with the dragon and his allies, but we are at peace with God.. The unbeliever is at peace with the dragon and his allies, but at war with God. That divide is even more profound at death.
- Notice our deeds don't precede us, we don't enter this rest based on our good works.
- Rather, they follow us, and we will be rewarded for those by our Lord.