



General Conference of the
Seventh-Day Adventist Church
WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION

IMPACT WEEK OF **PRAYER**

• **APRIL 9 – 16, 2022** •



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IMPACT WEEK OF PRAYER

APRIL 9-16, 2022

INTRODUCTION

You are welcome to annual **IMPACT WEEK OF PRAYER**. This week is also for preparation towards World Church Impact Day coming up on **April 16, 2022**. The rationale for this is that you need to receive the blessings in this material first before sharing with others because you cannot give what you do not have. The taste of the pudding is in the eating. All hands should be on deck. All departments of the church are to use this week for in-reach and out-reach. Speakers are to be carefully and specially selected. Let us revive our hope in Christ and His second coming once again.

PREFACE

The truth about the present world is that it will not remain forever. However, the Bible presents hope for all the Universe including Earth. God has loved us with unfailing love, that He gave His only son to die on the cross to fulfill the plan of Salvation. In return, God has given us the freedom to choose to love Him.

Just as the **Three Angels** bearing the end-time message, we are enjoined to become human messengers, preaching to the world. We are to bear the everlasting Gospel: Fear God, bear many fruits, worship and glorify God who made the heavens and the earth.

While the hour of God's judgment is upon us, it is going to be a reality. But to be free from the judgment of God, we are to remain faithful to God, worship God the Creator who made the heavens and earth and not the creation, who has changed times and laws.

METHODOLOGY

We are suggesting that you use various methods for conducting this week of prayer in order to accommodate all classes of church members and special guests.

1. Traditional method—all members come together in their local church.
2. Small Group—Action Unit, or House Fellowship.
3. Office Group—Two or more members within office proximity.
4. Business Group—Two or more members within business proximity.

5. WhatsApp/Face Book Group—Some church members can connect through WhatsApp/Face Book/Phone to conduct the week of prayer. Share your daily reading experience with someone who you are committed/responsible to.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Reserve some minutes for group discussion on suggested questions following the reading or any related question in line with the topic of the day.

SUGGESTED OBJECTIVES OF EACH GROUP LEADER

1. Each group member gets the material—hard or soft copy.
2. Each group member reads the material.
3. Share testimonies and prayer requests.
4. Pray for one another and pray for requests from other sources.
5. Encourage each member to donate books for distribution during impact day.
6. Encourage each member to participate in the mass distribution of Missionary Book on the IMPACT Day.
7. Encourage members to continue to share Missionary Book to their friends, neighbours, work mates e.t.c. after IMPACT Day.
8. Write reports and inspiring testimonies about the week of prayer and IMPACT Day.
9. Encourage each group member to participate in the exercises.
10. Discuss how best to improve on the prayer program and Missionary Book distribution.
11. Encourage each participant to be personally prepared and ready for Christ's second coming and personally proclaim the three angels' messages.

NOTE

Each group leader is encouraged to read the entire book *The Final Hope*, from where the week of prayer reading was extracted. This will give him/her deeper insight and additional information to share with the group.

PRAYER

Church leaders are praying for you that this week of prayer will bring abundant blessings to all families. There are suggested prayer requests for each day. Solicit for prayers from group members.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

1. You can distribute the Missionary Book both in hard and soft copy. Kindly note that all copies shared should be reported through a denominational channel, whether soft or hard copy.
2. To have access to the past Missionary Books and some other resources; download the 'Sharing Hope App' from: [Sharing Hope Website - Publishing](https://publishing.adventist.org/mission-365/sharing-hope-app)
<https://publishing.adventist.org/mission-365/sharing-hope-app>

IMPACT WEEK OF PRAYER

SECTION 1 PART 1

The Big Freeze, Crunch, Rip

Film has a uniquely powerful ubiquity within human culture. Film can affect society in both positive and negative ways. Filmmakers have mastered the art of using film to affect the manner in which the society (people) should think and act – behaviourally. No wonder for years, Hollywood has cranked out film after film about the end of the world, or at least the end of the world, as we now know it. This has been masterfully done using science fiction.

Science and Scientists say—not just the earth, but the universe will end. To some, the universe might tear itself apart (the Big Rip). To others, it might collapse in on itself (the Big Crunch); and most popular scenario is that it might burn out (the Big Freeze). And the film in all these years is used to propagate these theories, and humanity is presented with little or no hope at all.

However, the Bible depicts the end of this world as well, just quite differently than either Hollywood or science do. A few biblical excerpts about our long-term prospects: “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind” (Isaiah 65:17). “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13). “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also, there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:1, 2). Or this, one of the most hopeful: “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (verse 4).

The truth about this present world is that it will not remain forever. This is a convergence between the bible and science. However, science presents an obscure future for humanity, in contrast the Bible present’s promises of a new heaven and a new earth. The old heavens, the old earth, are going to be swept away, replaced by a new heaven and a new earth, which will be inhabited by people for eternity in an existence without sin, suffering, sickness, and death.

However, Scripture says that before all this happens, a terrible crisis will be unleashed upon the world—a crisis that will make some of these Hollywood end-of-the-world flicks look tame. The Old Testament prophet Daniel warned: “And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time” (Daniel 12:1). And the good news, however, is that God, who “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16)—this same God has not left us without a hope, without a warning, without a way of escape, if not from the trials, at least from the hopeless despair and destruction these last-day trials will bring for way too many.

Throughout the history of the bible, patriarchs and the believers have themselves faced everything—sickness, depression, war, natural disasters, prison, exile, torture, and even unto death. But the love and goodness of God never ceases, as noted by Prophet Isaiah ‘Though the

mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,' says the Lord, who has compassion on you" (Isaiah 54:10, NIV). The psalmist sings of the goodness and love of God: "Give thanks to the God of heaven. His love endures forever" (Psalm 136:26, NIV). Apostle Paul, also noted that "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8, NIV). God's love endures forever in that He (God) always reminds us as warming the last day's events just as found in book of Revelation 14, the last book of the bible, to give us a chance to be prepared for what is coming.

Principalities and Powers

According to NASA about 4,000 exoplanets have been discovered. It is also estimated that there could be as many as 2 trillion galaxies hurling through the creation. This means that the odds that we are not alone in the universe and that other life exists apart from us, on earth. Bible, written thousands of years ago, not only talks about the existence of "extraterrestrial" life but also gives us some insights into the moral character of that life, at least some of it. That is, the Bible tells us what common sense tells us: in all this vast universe, we are not alone.

. "His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 3:10, NIV). Another text: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens" (Ephesians 6:12, NET). The spiritual forces of evil in the heavens, that's whom. The implications of this verse, along with the others, are stunning. Not only does other life in the universe exist, but some of it is evil. And that evil is working against us on earth.

"For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him" (Colossians 1:16, NIV). Here the Bible is talking about Jesus as the Creator of all things (see John 1:1-3) in both the heavens and the earth, "visible and invisible," including "thrones or powers or rulers or authorities."

The bible makes us to understand that "...war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. . . . Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time" (Revelation 12:7-12).

Therefore, it is important to note that we are not alone in the universe. There are other scores of life inhabiting other planets. Second, some of this life is hostile, is evil, and has brought their evil to this earth. If "war broke out in heaven," and some of the combatants are here, any wonder that there's so much strife on earth as well? What these verses, and others like them, reveal is what has been called the great controversy theme, a controversy between good and evil that, though beginning in another part of the creation, is being played out here on earth.

What is a *theodicy*? It's an attempt to answer the question that everyone who believed in a loving God asks: Why, if God is so good, and so loving, and so powerful, is there so much evil in the world? And, as we will see, the three angels' messages are central to answering that question, perhaps the most important one that anyone could ask.

The Risk of Love

What is love? What does to love mean to you? Do you love and expect love in return? Do you seem to love and command obedience when you love? The manner in which humanity loves is so different from the manner in which God loves us, though we are created in His (Gods) image and likeness. Genesis 1-2 revealed God creating life on earth, which concluded with Adam and Eve, both made in God's image. "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27). And when the creation was done, God Himself declared it "very good" (verse 31). Instead of creating beings (either in the heavens, such as angels, or on the earth, such as humans) like robots, God created them with the ability to love. Rather than robots, He created us as moral beings with the capacity to love both Him and others, and this moral capacity included freedom, the freedom inherent in the kind of love that only a free being could give. Love that is forced is not love; if God wanted beings who could love, He had to create them free, truly free.

And freedom, true freedom, entails risks. Bible talks about the abuse of this freedom by an angel called Lucifer. It says:

"You were the anointed cherub who covers;

I established you;

You were on the holy mountain of God;

You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you" (Ezekiel 28:14, 15).

"You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created." *Perfect*? And yet, what happened to this perfect being? "Iniquity was found in you." Iniquity found in a being made "perfect" by God? How could this be? It's easy: this perfection included freedom, moral freedom, and Lucifer violated that freedom.

God first loved us unconditionally, which we all know as Agape love. God's love is unconditional and does not request anything in return or in exchange for His love. The Scripture teaches that God is a God of love, and He operates out of love, not fear. "And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16). When asked what the most important commandment was, Jesus answered, "'And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment" (Mark 12:30). God can command us to love Him; He just can't force us to. To love Him, we have to do it freely.

God wanted a relationship of love between Him and humans, and had He made us like robots, there would have been none. We couldn't love Him back any more than a toaster can love its owner; any relationship would have been no deeper than one has with a toaster.

The revelation of the character of God, the self-denying, self-renouncing character of God, as revealed at the cross—here is the foundation of three angels' messages, messages of hope, of promise, and of eternal life offered to a world that's heading toward dissolution. The promise is there for all of us, and each one of us—having the freedom inherent in love—has to choose to claim what has been so graciously offered in Jesus.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the bible promise life and hope for us and our loved ones in the long-term?
2. Why will God permit so much evil to exist side-by-side with good, thereby putting His own (the church) in such harm ways?
3. Scripture teaches that God is a God of love. He also operates out of love, not fear. Why is there the word “fear” in many verses that relates with God and worship? What should human be fearful for?

Prayer

1. Pray that God will help us to understand why we must love Him in return and not exhibit an attitude of fear when we need to come to Him.
2. Let us pray that while we are in the world, we will not be overcome by evil and that God will help us not to be tempted beyond our spiritual capacities. Amen

IMPACT WEEK OF PRAYER

SECTION 1 PART 2

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The bible teaches that Jesus Christ has been in existence from creation. The bible also teaches that before the creation, the plan of salvation has been made. This plan was to be fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Revelation, the last book of the Bible, deals with last events in it, leading up to the end of this world and the creation of a new one, “a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1).

The “revelation of Jesus Christ.” That is, the book teaches us about Jesus, about who He is: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” (Revelation 1:8), the eternal God; and yet it also depicts Him as “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8), the crucified Savior, the one who died on the cross, slain for the sins of the world. This point becomes very important in seeking to understand the meaning of Revelation, including the three angels’ messages. Many of its words and phrases—i.e., “Babylon,” “the beast,” “the commandments of God,” “the wine of wrath,” “forever and ever”—cannot be properly understood apart from how they are used in the Old Testament.

The highpoint of the book of Revelation is the three Angels messages. The three angels’ messages are expressions of truths that God had established, not just “before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4), but “before time began” (2 Timothy 1:9)—a long time ago! Embedded in these texts about specific, earthly things—i.e., nations, people, springs of water, and the beast—are eternal truths that existed before even time did and will remain throughout eternity.

These highpoint states that “Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.’ And another angel followed, saying, ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall 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 ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.’ Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:6-12).

One will notice the frequent use of nouns and verbs and prepositions which are “mysteries” (1 Corinthians 4:1), deep things that “angels desire to look into” (1 Peter 1:12) but have now been

revealed to us. This is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which the bible has made known to humanity through His word.

A Bit of Context, Please (Part One)

Symbolism is the idea that things represent other things, and the book of Revelation is written with so much symbolism. All through the Bible God's church has been symbolized by a woman, or even a pure bride (2 Corinthians 11:2; Jeremiah 2:2). After the cross, Satan is depicted in Revelation 12 as persecuting God's church, symbolized by a woman:

"Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth" (verses 13-16).

"Wilderness" is an allusion to ancient Israel living in the wilderness, during which God protected it from its enemies and from destruction (see Psalm 78:52). However, the great controversy continues, as seen in the last verse of the chapter: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17, KJV).

The dragon, Satan, "enraged" with the woman, God's church, whom he failed to destroy, now "went to make war with the remnant of her seed." That is, even after the centuries of persecution, God still has people, faithful people, who are the subject of Satan's wrath—and they are depicted as those who "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

To best understand the messages in the book of Revelation, one needs a bit of the context in which they appear. This is to deconstruct the symbolic representations in it. A quick summary of the two preceding chapters, 12 and 13, creates that context.

Revelation 12, like much of Revelation, doesn't appear in a strict chronological order. It jumps back and forth between events, even though a basic flow, a progression, of Christian history does unfold all through the book of Revelation

We read earlier from Revelation 12, with the depiction of the war in heaven (verse 7) and the casting to the earth of Satan and his angels. In other words, central to everything is the great controversy scenario, which appears all through the chapter. Satan and his angels failed and were cast down to earth. Reaching earth, Satan sought after the life of the infant, Jesus, just so to kill him, and truncate the salvation plan. This happened when Satan, using King Herod, tried to have the infant Jesus killed.

However, just as Satan and his angels failed in their war in heaven—they were, after all, cast out (Revelation 9)—they failed also in trying to destroy the infant Jesus. Eventually Jesus,

while on earth, defeated Satan at the cross. Having “disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” (Colossians 2:15). In fact, Jesus rose from death, so that “through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). In fact, Revelation 12 depicts Christ’s next victory over Satan like this. “And her Child was caught up to God and His throne” (verse 5). That is, after the cross, Jesus ascended to heaven, where He ministers in our behalf in heaven (see Hebrews 7-10).

A Bit of Context, Please (Part Two)

Revelation 13, like Revelation 12, continues the great controversy motif. Even without understanding the precise meaning of the symbols, one can see the dragon (Revelation 13:2, 4, 11), Satan, attempt to wreak havoc here on earth.

A key theme that appears to be the cause of the conflict in these verses is *worship*. Five times (Revelation 13:4 [twice], 8, 12, 15) worship is shown to be a major factor behind the turmoil and conflict depicted in the last days. According to these verses, the dragon, Satan, will attempt to enforce a certain kind of worship upon the world. In one sense this shouldn’t be surprising, because, from the beginning of the great controversy, Satan has wanted to usurp the authority and place of God Himself.

“For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High’” (Isaiah 14:13, 14). This point that about worship and whom people worship, becomes paramount in understanding the three angels’ messages. Revelation 13 depicts what is coming like this: “All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. . . . He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Revelation 13:8-17).

Revelation 12-13 provides the context for the three angels’ messages, which follow. Unfortunately, the context that of worldwide religious persecution, is not a pretty one, not a hopeful one, in and of itself. However, the great news of the three angels’ messages is that they reveal where our hope is, where our promise is.

And though the context of the following verse is different, the sentiment behind them remains an eternal principle, one that each one of us can draw comfort from. “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11). And the Lord has proved the truthfulness of that sentiment by the death of Jesus, which offers everyone who claims it “a future and a hope.” And that future, and that hope, are revealed in the three angels’ messages.

The early verses, using imagery from Daniel 7 (again, more evidence of how the book of Revelation is heavily tied to the Old Testament), recount the history of church persecution through the Dark Ages. A point worth remembering, especially amid the depiction of persecution and suffering that follows, is that by now in the great controversy, Satan (the dragon, the serpent) has already been beaten three times. Christ defeated in heaven (Revelation 12:8), defeated at the cross (Colossians 2:15), and finally, defeated in his attempts to destroy Christ's church, because a remnant of His people have survived (Revelation 12:17). In short, as long as one stays connected to Christ, one is always on the winning side in the great controversy.

While God seeks worship and obedience only by love and the freedom inherent in love, the forces of evil will use violence, as well as economic pressure, to enforce worship and this is a stark contrast between God and the forces of evil. However, God has a plan of eternal life for us.

Discussion Questions

1. If Jesus has been revealed to us as in the book of Revelation, what is the plan that God has in stock for humanity as presented in the Revelation of Jesus Christ?
2. What has been the great controversy motif?
3. How should Christ followers accept the promise of hope as presented in the bible?
4. Do you think this controversy will at any point, soon be brought to an end? Why do you think so?

Prayer

1. As humans, we are constantly blinded by the cares of this world that we forget the plan of salvation as revealed in the book of Revelation. Let us pray that God will help us to reduce our concerns and cares we have been so attached to in the world, so that we can fix our gaze on the things above and the plans of salvation, fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Amen.
2. Worship is the motif behind the great controversy through history. God does not seek to force us to love Him, rather we are to do so in total freedom. Let us pray for God to help us to love Him and choose to worship Him, rather than the devil who does not have a plan of salvation for us.

IMPACT WEEK OF PRAYER

SECTION 2 PART 1

Human Angels

Helen Keller was an American woman born in 1880, who through a very early illness, lost her sight and hearing. Nevertheless, she graduated college, wrote books, and travelled the world advocating for the rights of those with disabilities like hers. Though two crucial avenues for communication were lost, she was still able to communicate with others and others with her.

The civilization of human is built on communication —life is communication. We need to talk, to listen, to speak, to hear, and even those who cannot speak or hear can and do still communicate. In the day and age of smartphones, which provide a means of communication, our existence today, perhaps more than ever, is built upon communication. We live in what has been called the information age. What good is information if it is not communicated, not shared?

The three angels' messages imply something to be communicated, to be taught, to be revealed, and because they come from the Bible, we can trust what they say as true. Not all that's taught and communicated is truth. For every truth out there, only God knows how many lies circle it like vultures. Amid all the misinformation, the book of Revelation early on tells us, "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near" (Revelation 1:3). God is communicating with us through His Word, and we're blessed not just to hear and read His Word, but to "keep those things which are written in it."

The first message begins with these words: "Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven" (Revelation 14:6). The word "angel" means a "messenger," someone with something to communicate with others. Though angels are supernatural beings from other parts of the cosmos, often coming with messages, information, to relay to God's people (see Daniel 9:20-23; Luke 1:11-38), the Bible at times applies the term to humans who come bearing messages as well. Talking about John in Matthew 11:9, 10, Jesus Himself, after giving a quick description of John and calling him not only a prophet but "more than a prophet," quoted the Old Testament (Malachi 3:1), saying: "For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.'" Angels bring messages from heaven to earth. In other words, both humans and angels are messengers from God.

In the context of the first angel—that of preaching to the world—the "angel" here is clearly referring to human messengers a message from heaven. After all, throughout the Bible it is people whom God uses to witness to the world about Him. In the famous Great Commission, Jesus said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19, 20). He addressed these words to His people, His followers, His church. The spread of

the gospel around the world has been accomplished almost exclusively by human **angels**. What, then, these human messengers with a message from heaven, have to say that's so important, that can offer us hope in a world that, day by day, seems to offer us less and less?

The Thief on the Cross

What happened in A.D. 31? Jesus of Nazareth, after a three-and-a-half-year ministry in the

Holy Land, mostly Galilee in the north and Judea in the south, angered the religious establishment, who, fearing for its authority, wanted to have this Jesus killed. The high priest for that year, Caiaphas said: "You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish" (John 11:49, 50). That one man was Jesus, and "from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death" (verse 53). Their plotting succeeded, and they had Jesus crucified on a cross. "There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. When they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left" (Luke 23:32, 33). The Gospel of Mark, recounting the same events, gave more information. "With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And He was numbered with the transgressors'" (Mark 15:27, 28).

Crucifixion was, generally, for the worst offenders, especially those who threatened Roman authority. Mark quoted from verse 12 of Isaiah chapter 53, said that "He was numbered with the transgressors." Mark saw the "transgressors" as the two robbers crucified with Jesus. They were criminals deemed worthy not just of death but of the harshest kind of death, crucifixion. One of the two even admitted that "we receive the due reward of our deeds." "And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, 'He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.' The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, and saying, 'If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself'" (Luke 23:35-37).

Luke focuses on the two criminals crucified with Jesus. "Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.' But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong'" (Luke 23:39-41).

Mark, in depicting the two thieves crucified with Christ, had them both attacking Jesus at first. "Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him" (Mark 15:32). This second thief, however, watching what was happening—perhaps even hearing Jesus pray, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34)—had a change of heart, obviously. Somehow, amid the pain, the suffering, the turmoil, he was able to see Jesus as the crucified Savior. At that moment, besides Jesus, this dying criminal was the only human being in the world who knew who Jesus was and what was happening there, at the cross. This explains the

thief's next words to Jesus: "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (verse 42). What did Jesus say to this dying man, a criminal, a robber, someone who admitted his own guilt?

Jesus, without any hesitation, waffling, or fine print, declared to him, "You will be with Me in paradise" (verse 43). In other words: Well, friend, despite your cursing Me, despite your sinful past, despite your crimes, your sins, your thievery, and despite pretty much everything about you and your character—because of your faith in Me I am telling you, right now, that you have the promise of eternal life.

How could this be? How could Jesus justly and fairly give such assurance to a man who had nothing to commend him to God, a man who by about any standard, even a worldly standard, had nothing righteous or holy about him? What did that man do to deserve what Jesus had so clearly and boldly offered him? The answer is found in the first angel's message of Revelation 14. It is captured with the phrase "the everlasting gospel."

The Good News

"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (Revelation 14:6). When someone says "It's the gospel truth" about anything, even something secular, the idea is that it's a certain truth, a sure truth, something reliable.

One great example of the "gospel" is found in the feedback given by Jesus to John the Baptist when he was in prison, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receives their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them" (verses 4, 5, ESV). The gospel, the good and hopeful news, is the good and hopeful news about Jesus Christ and His coming to the earth. If there ever were a time that everyone needed some good news, it would be now, what is the good news of the gospel, the "everlasting gospel," of the first angel's message?

Discussion Questions

1. How important is human communication to the plan of Salvation as proclaimed in the Three Angels Messages?
2. What are the lessons we have to learn about the encounter of Jesus and the thief on the cross, who does not have anything to offer to God and humans?
3. What is the good news that the bible talks about?

Prayer

1. God desires to use humans to preach the everlasting gospel to the universe. Let us pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on each of us, to enable us answer the call as human messengers' worthy of use by God.

2. Let us pray that God will help us to bring others to Christ just as Jesus did with the thief on the cross.

IMPACT WEEK OF PRAYER

SECTION 2 PART 2

The Gospel in Less Than 200 Words

A young atheist sat in a car with a friend and he started struggling with his belief—that God, some God or another, had to exist. After all, nothing created itself. To create yourself, you would have to have already existed, and so anything that once didn't exist but came into existence had to have originated from something other than itself. The car that they sat in, for instance, didn't come from itself, didn't create itself. The air that he breathed didn't come from itself; something prior to the air had to have created it. The solar system didn't create itself either. Even the universe, didn't start itself. Something had to have made it—and who or what would that be but God?

"Tell me," the atheist said to his Christian friend, "in less than 200 words, what your God is like." "OK," his friend said. "The God whom I worship created the entire universe. Every atom in every star in every one of the 2 trillion galaxies was not only created by this God but is sustained every moment by Him as well. This same God, the Creator, 2,000 years ago, 'shrank down,' and became a human infant in the womb of a Jewish peasant woman in the land of ancient Israel. That infant was born as the baby Jesus, and though human like us, He nevertheless lived a sinless life, a perfect life. And then this Jesus, God in the flesh, freely offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin, for the sin and evil of the whole human race. In other words, the punishment that each human being deserved for the evil that each human being has done, Jesus, God Himself, bore that punishment in Himself so that none of us have to face it ourselves. You want to know what God is like. Look at Jesus dying on the cross so that, in a sense, you don't have to. That is what God is like—in under 200 words." The atheist was astonished, saying, "Wow! That sure is incredibly hopeful, isn't it? It sure gives you some encouragement about life." "Yeah," the Christian said. "That's why they call it the 'good news.'"

The Sin Problem

No wonder the atheist was astonished. God, the Creator, not only coming to this earth but offering Himself as a sacrifice for the humans on it? What was the situation here that was so dire, so bad, that it took this, the self-sacrifice of the Creator, to solve it?

Years ago a well-known atheist biologist, W. D. Hamilton, who loved to study Amazonian beetles, passed away. At the funeral in England his wife's eulogy went, in part, like this: "Bill, now your body is lying in the Wytham woods, but from here you will reach again

your beloved forests. You will live not only in a beetle, but in billions of spores of fungi and algae. Brought by the wind higher up in the troposphere, all of you will form the clouds and, wandering across oceans, will fall down and fly up again and again, till eventually a drop of rain will join you to the water of the flooded forest of the Amazon.”

“I stare,” wrote Japanese author Haruki Murakami, “at this ceaseless... In a hundred years everybody here—me included—will have disappeared from the face of the earth and turned into ashes or dust. The whole purpose of Jesus Christ coming to the earth, of God in the flesh “shrinking down” and becoming one of us, to die for us—the whole purpose was to give every human being the opportunity for eternal life, the life that we had originally been created to have from the start.

Death was never supposed to be part of our equation, never. Death is an alien; an intruder who one day will be eradicated. How, then, did death, (1 Corinthians 15:26) get here? The apostle Paul makes it plain: “Therefore, just as through one-man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). Adam brought sin, sin leads to death, and because we all have been infected by sin and corrupted by sin, we all suffer the death that sin brings. After Adam and Eve sinned, everything changed, not only their own physical nature but nature itself (see Genesis 3:16-19), and death, suffering, corruption has been the lot of all humanity since.

In fact, it took the death of Jesus, of the Creator Himself, to solve the problem of sin. That is, only the self-sacrifice of the Creator—the one who made the heavens and the earth—*could atone for human evil.* The severity of the sin problem, of the death problem, of the evil problem, is best revealed by the severity of what it cost to solve it: Jesus crucified. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5-8).

Jesus the Son of God, “through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power” (Hebrews 1:2, 3)—that is the solution. Only God, only someone greater than the creation, outside of the creation, transcendent to the creation—only His own self-sacrifice could atone for the creation. And that’s what we have with Jesus. And what He did for us is known as the “everlasting gospel.”

The Everlasting Gospel

The word “everlasting” (aiōnios), a term that John uses in other places with the word “life”; that is, in reference to the “eternal life” that we can have in Jesus. Such as: “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life” (John 6:47). The gospel is eternal because it was formulated by God in eternity, and it remained hidden until made

*manifest in Jesus. In fact, the gospel, the hope of eternal life for us all, had been formulated even **before** the world began. Look at these words, from Paul: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Ephesians 1:3, 4).*

God’s plan was for all of us to have salvation in Him. God’s plan, even before the world began, was for everyone to have eternal life in His Son. “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9, KJV).

Why die for every “man” if it weren’t planned for every man to be saved, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6, KJV). Why take the iniquity “of us all” if the intention wasn’t to pardon “us all”? People not availing themselves of the provision doesn’t limit the provision any more than people starving themselves to death in a rich marketplace.

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Peter 1:18-20, KJV). There is only one gospel, and it first formulated in eternity past, and its fruits will last for eternity future. Paul warned, that “even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8, 9).

This gospel was first proclaimed to Adam and Eve in Eden (Genesis 3:15), after they fell and brought sin and death to our world. This same gospel was preached to Abraham. “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed’” (Galatians 3:8; see also Genesis 22:18). It was the same gospel preached to ancient Israel amid their wilderness wanderings (Hebrews 4:2). This same message, was what heaven had preached to shepherds outside Bethlehem about the birth of Jesus: “I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10, 11). It was the same gospel that Jesus preached: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). It was the same gospel that saved the thief on the cross, to whom Jesus had promised eternal life (Luke 23:43). And it was the same gospel that Jesus told the disciples to preach until the very end: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14). It is the same gospel, the “everlasting gospel,” that the first angel proclaims to the world.

The eternal life that we were originally supposed to have, is found only by faith in Jesus. Only by claiming the perfect righteousness of Jesus by faith, by leaning totally on His merits

and not on ourselves or our good works, can we regain the eternal life that was supposed to have been ours from the start. “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Timothy 1:8, 9, KJV). If we were called to be saved before the world began, before time itself began, then salvation can’t be based on our works, because we were called in Him before we even existed in order to have any works! Being promised something before you existed, before you could possibly have done anything to deserve it—if that is not grace, what is?

Jesus, the one who created all that had been made (John 1:1-3), “shrinks down” and becomes a human baby who grew into adulthood, who lived a sinless life, who then offered that life as a sacrifice for us. *God Himself, dying for us?* One Christian writer expressed it like this: “If you would gather together everything that is good and holy and noble and lovely in man and then present the subject to the angels of God as acting a part in the salvation of the human soul or in merit, the proposition would be rejected as treason. Standing in the presence of their Creator and looking upon the unsurpassed glory which enshrouds His person, they are looking upon the Lamb of God given from the foundation of the world to a life of humiliation, to be rejected of sinful men, to be despised, to be crucified. Who can measure the infinity of the sacrifice!”

The “everlasting gospel,” is the foundation of the three angels’ messages, because without it, we’d be back to nothing more—*than what?* Than floating around as spores in the atmosphere or being lowered into a hole and becoming nothing but ashes and dust? the “everlasting gospel,” is God’s way of restoring normalcy, sanity, and life to a world suffused in the abnormality and insanity of death.

From Heaven to Earth

“Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water’” (Revelation 14:6, 7). The first angel’s message, though being physically delivered by humans, comes from heaven. It’s of divine, not human, origin. It is revealed truth, truth that is told to us by God through His human messengers. These messengers, such as Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Matthew, John, Paul, and Peter, had writings in the Bible; or they didn’t, such as Nathan the prophet (2 Samuel 7:1, 2) or John the Baptist” (Luke 7:28).

All scripture is “given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). “Inspiration” means “God-breathed.” The first angel’s message will be proclaimed worldwide; no one will be able to claim ignorance. (This book you’re reading right now is part of that prophetic truth being

fulfilled.) The universality of this message is also found in whom it is being directed to: “to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.” The phrase “who dwell on the earth” is also used in Revelation to depict people who have chosen not to follow and obey God (see Revelation 13:8, 14). However, because the first angel’s message is a call to faithfulness, this phrase in this context must be referring to a time when people still have the opportunity to choose whom they will worship and obey.

Thousands of years ago the Lord told Abram (later Abraham) that in him “all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). The destroying fires of hell were originally prepared only for the devil and his angels, not for humans and their offspring (Matthew 25:41). The plan of salvation is, ultimately, a restoration: re-creating what has been ruined by sin and death. The first angel’s message, proclaiming “the everlasting gospel,” is for all humanity. Christ died for all people, with no one left out. The tragedy of the lost is that no one should be lost, not when such a steep price, the crucifixion of the Creator, has been paid for them to be saved.

Finally, in a world racked by ethnic, racial, and gender conflicts, the universality of the gospel message should say something about the essential equality of humanity: we’re all wretches, all in need of God’s grace. Death cares nothing about race, gender, social standing, or wealth. It’s an equal-opportunity destroyer.

Mi-Yittan

Biblical Hebrew has idioms; one is **mi-yittan**, which literally means “Who will give?” However, it’s used idiomatically to express something else. After their escape from Egypt, the children of Israel, facing challenges in the wilderness, exclaimed, “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt!” (Exodus 16:3). **Mi-yittan** expresses the idea of frailty and weakness in the face of events that the people cannot control as they would wish. Overcome by the sufferings that had so quickly choked but not strangled him, Job wished, “Oh, that I might have my request”; which is that God would have “cut me off” (Job 6:9); that is, let him die and be free from his trials.

Mi-yittan? *Here is the Lord—here is the Sovereign God Himself uttering a phrase associated with the weaknesses and limitations of humanity? Talk about the reality of free will. Talk about the limits of what God can do in the midst of the great controversy. This use of mi-yittan reveals that even God can’t trample on free will. “Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days” (Hosea 3:5). “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7). “The eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him” (Psalm 33:18). “There is no want to those who fear Him” (Psalm 34:9). “He will bless those who fear the Lord” (Psalm 115:13). “He fulfills the desires of those who fear Him” (Psalm 145:19, NIV). The first angel declares, “Fear God and give glory to Him...” (Revelation 14:7). If that does not mean to be scared of Him, as you might be scared of a machine gun-toting, deranged psychotic rampaging through your neighborhood, what does it mean? And why would the first words spoken by an*

angel proclaiming the great news of Christ's death for us, the everlasting gospel—why would those first words be to “fear God”?

Discussion Questions

1. In less than 200 words, what is the gospel about your God?
2. Why was it so significant for God to give His life for the plan of Salvation to be complete?
3. What is the relationship between the everlasting gospel and everlasting life? Why is this significant in the plan of Salvation?

Prayer

1. It is important to personalise our relationship with God. Let us pray that God will help us understand why we are in this relationship with Him, so that others might see God through us.
2. We are born into sin and only through the grace and atoning blood of the Lamb Jesus that we can be saved. Let us pray that God will through Christ accept us, just as the thief on the cross, so that we can stand before His presence bold and without blemish.

IMPACT WEEK OF PRAYER

SECTION 3

Fear God

God created humans with the ability to love. Rather than robots, He created us as moral beings with the capacity to love both Him and others, and this moral capacity included freedom, the freedom inherent in the kind of love that only a free being could give. Love that is forced is not love; if God wanted beings who could love, He had to create them free, truly free.

Why then should we have to fear God? We should fear Him, not as in being scared but as in being awed and utterly reverent and utterly astonished that He would care so much for us, even at such a cost to Himself. God so humbled Himself, so lowered Himself, that He purposely, of His own choice and out of love for us, allowed Himself to become one of us. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5-8).

God is so powerful; we are so weak, we are so filthy, we are so sinful before Him that He could have justifiably wiped us out. But instead He humbled Himself and, reaching across the cold, dead inhospitable void of space, became one of us. And by His wilful self-sacrifice, Jesus linked us to Himself with ties that will never be broken.

“Before time began” (2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2) each of us had been chosen in Him to have the eternal life that was supposed to have been ours from the start. And to secure this life for us, even before we existed, Christ covenanted with the Father and the Holy Spirit to sacrifice Himself for us as the only means of any of us having eternal life.

The bible teaches us that - the first thing we are told to do, after to fear God—is to “give glory to Him” (Revelation 14:7). Therefore it is important to fear God and always give Him glory.

Think of the Amoeba

Heaven and earth is closely connected. The book of Job, presents a powerful example of the close link between heaven and earth, and shows that what we do here matters, even greatly, to God. Though the story begins on earth, with a man named Job, it quickly shifts to some cosmic realm (heaven, perhaps), where Satan and other angels (sometimes referred to as the “sons of God”), are meeting. God Himself points to the person of Job, saying, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?” (Job 1:8). Satan then responds, basically saying, Sure, God, no wonder he serves You. Look at how good his life is. Let Job’s life go bad and see what happens. See if he really loves You after all! (see Job 1:9-2:7). God then allows Satan to destroy Job’s

property, family, and health, and yet, amid it all, Job stayed faithful to God, proving Satan wrong. God used Job to refute the charges of Satan.

God, the Creator, was in a sense “glorified” by Job’s actions. Job proved that his love for God and his trust in God’s goodness was so strong that despite all that happened, Job remained faithful

This idea, that of fallen sinful humanity being able to glorify God and to give God glory, however initially counterintuitive (think of that amoeba), is biblical. What does it mean, especially in the context of the three angels’ messages? Why, after being told about “the everlasting gospel,” and being told to “fear God,” are we told to “give glory to Him” as well? How do we do that—and why?

The theme of humans bringing glory to God pervades the Bible. Jesus Himself said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). “I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever” (Psalm 86:12, ESV). “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31, ESV). “For you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:20, ESV). “Let them give glory to the Lord and declare His praise in the coastlands” (Isaiah 42:12). “There is no one like You among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like Yours. All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and they shall glorify Your name” (Psalm 86:8-10, NASB). “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples” (John 15:8, NASB).

Paul wrote that “God’s purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 3:10, NLT). The idea in this text (and as seen in the ones above about glorifying God) is similar: that our actions here matter, and that we can, indeed, bring glory to God. We can bring glory to God before men (Matthew 5:16), and, it seems, before “unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” as well. Again, the universe is more tightly linked, at least spiritually, than what appears to our immediate senses.

The principle behind the amoeba is anchored in Jesus’ words: “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples” (John 15:8, NASB).

In short, we as human beings, by staying faithful to God, by bearing much fruit, by “letting our lights shine,” glorify God, as we have been told to do in the first angel’s message.

Give Glory to God

Yet the theme of humans bringing glory to God pervades the Bible. Jesus Himself said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). “I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever” (Psalm 86:12, ESV). “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever

you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31, ESV). “For you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:20, ESV). “Let them give glory to the Lord and declare His praise in the coastlands” (Isaiah 42:12). “There is no one like You among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like Yours. All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and they shall glorify Your name” (Psalm 86:8-10, NASB). “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples” (John 15:8, NASB).

However common the idea of God being glorified in and by His people, the actual phrase, to “give glory” to God, is not common in the Bible. But its use is instructive.

Worship to God is all-encompassing; in what we drink, in what we eat, where we go, what we do, and even unto how we worship. The bible teaches in the Old Testament in the time of Joshua and the children of Israel “And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord” (Joshua 6:18, 19).

The idea of mixing pagan things with their own symbolized what ultimately would lead to the nation’s demise (a practice that, as we will see, has also plagued Christianity), and not long after they had entered the land, this contamination was already happening. This is a stark contrast to what the bible teaches about giving glory to God. While addressing Achan, Joshua first confronts Achan and he said, “My son, I beg you, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me”(Joshua 7:19). *Give glory to God*, just like the phrase in Revelation 14:7. In the context of judgment, of being called to admit his guilt, Achan is told to give glory to God. “Why hast thou troubled us?” said Joshua. “The Lord shall trouble thee this day” (verse 25, KJV). To give glory to God is to admit, in the context of judgment, that God’s judgment is just and fair

However, when instead, it has to admit that God is just in not only pointing out Achan’s overt act of greed, selfishness, and defiance, but also in the penalty that will come. Achan deserved the punishment that he is about to face, and he is expected to recognize this fact. In short.

Considering the great controversy, and God’s intention to deal with sin and rebellion and evil in a manner harmonious with the principles of love, and not force—how important not only that God’s judgment be just but that others, including “the principalities and powers in heavenly places” (Ephesians 3:10), acknowledge that justice. In fact, Revelation 19:1, 2 depicts some of these “principalities and powers” in heavenly places shouting: “Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments.”

Which is why this specific phrase, to “give glory” to God, appears in other settings of divine judgment as well (1 Samuel 6:5; Jeremiah 13:15, 16; Malachi 2:2). But, no question, the most dramatic, consequential, and powerful example occurs in the heart of the first angel’s message itself: “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come.” Why “fear God”? Why “give glory to Him”? Because the hour, the time, of His judgment, God’s judgment, has come.

An all-knowing, all-seeing God who knows your every thought, your every secret deed, your everything including the things that you have long ago forgotten, will in love and fairness judge us when we fail to give Him the glory truly deserving of His Majesty

Stop Worrying?

As human beings, we are susceptible to worry. Our entire being has been conditioned to worry that we forget there is God. God first loved us, that He gave us His only begotten son God is concerned about us, He cares for us and above His thoughts for us are thoughts of good.

The sin problem has created so much worry in us that we often forget there is God. The Ten Commandments are but guides to follow Jesus Christ and not live in our selfish lust. Its moral standards are but a guide and not a condemnation. So, stop worrying about having to answer to this God for the evil things that they have done to others, or even to children, and that they have gotten away with, at least so far. The mere idea of this God implies a sense of moral obligation, of moral accountability. And rightly so, considering that the Bible itself depicts human depravity—“that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Romans 3:19)—in stark terms (see “The Sin Problem”).

An all-knowing, all-seeing God who knows your every thought, your every secret deed, your everything including the things that you have long ago forgotten, will in love and fairness judge us when we fail to give Him the glory truly deserving of His Majesty. For some, all they want is no judgment for their betrayals, greed, cowardice, and all the other evils humans have been guilty of but have never had to answer for.

If the Bible teaches anything, *anything*, it teaches, again and again—Old Testament, New Testament, from Moses to Paul, from parables, to poetry, to flat-out in-your-face warnings—that God is a God of justice and a God of judgment, and that human beings will be made to answer for all their deeds here, all the deeds and evil that they think that they have gotten away with.

Just a smattering of the Bible promises that awaits the evil so far unpunished:

“Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds” (Revelation 22:12, NLT).

“God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad” (Ecclesiastes 12:14, NLT).

“But the Lord reigns forever, executing judgment from his throne. He will judge the world with justice and rule the nations with fairness” (Psalm 9:7, 8, NLT).

“And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?” (Romans 2:3).

“But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:7).

“Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Revelation 14:7).

Questions

1. Should we really fear God?
2. What are the assurances and blessing that come with the fear of God?
3. What are the lesson in the temptation of Job as Christians when it comes to giving glory to God?
4. What are the lessons in the principle of giving glory to God with everything and not just in single praises?
5. Do you think God is fair and loving in His judgement?
6. For the hour of His judgment *has come*. What does that mean?
7. What hope can we, as sinners, as people who also have done things that have gone unpunished—what hope can we have in this judgment as well?

Prayer

1. Giving glory to God is Worship to God and it is all-encompassing; in what we drink, in what we eat, where we go, what we do, and even how we worship. Pray that God will help us to learn to give glory to Him in everything and in every way we find ourselves.
2. No doubt, we all will be judged for all our evil deeds, even those we have forgotten. We should pray to God for mercy and the remission of our sins and to help us never to go back to our previous sins, so that heaven will be our portion and we will escape the judgement meant for unrepentant sinners.

IMPACT WEEK OF PRAYER

SECTION 4

The Hour of His Judgment

“For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17, ESV). “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:36, 37, ESV). “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” (Acts 17:31, ESV).

The concept of God’s judgments permeates the Scriptures. God’s judgments have been ongoing events depending upon the time and place and circumstances, and from His judgments in the past we can learn about the judgment now and to come. From God bringing judgment to Adam and Eve after the Fall (Genesis 3:14-19), to the worldwide flood (Genesis 7), to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19), to the fall of ancient Babylon (Daniel 5), to the declaration of judgment in the first angel’s message today, to the final judgment at the very end of time (Revelation 20)—the Bible reveals the reality of God’s judgments.

A distinctive and relevant depiction of judgment is found in the book of Daniel chapter 7. The prophet Daniel had a prophetic dream of four beasts arising out of the sea (verse 3), each one symbolic of a world empire (verse 17) that would arise and then vanish into ancient history until a massive judgment in heaven (verses 9, 10, 22, 26) leads to God’s eternal kingdom (verses 14, 22, 27). The main point of prophetic dream is to show that these four earthly and transient kingdoms are followed, ultimately, by God’s eternal one: “Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever” (verses 17, 18).

These four earthly kingdoms, have long been identified as Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and then Rome, the final empire, which remains until the end of this present world. Rome, the Rome of the republic and then the Caesars, was the phase of Rome that arose right after ancient Greece. However, Rome, this fourth power, still exists today (just as the prophecy predicted, because it remains until the end of the world), but now in the papal phase. In fact, the fourth beast had been described with certain characteristics that fit medieval Rome very well, which included, unfortunately, great persecution (verses 21, 24, 25).

Different times in this chapter (verses 9, 10, 22, 26) an end-time heavenly judgment is depicted as leading to God’s eternal kingdom, what the Bible calls “a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1; see also Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13). Firstly, we find in Daniel 7:9, 10: “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand

thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened".

The "Ancient of Days" (a name for God), thrones, books open, judgment set. Clearly some kind of cosmic courtroom scene is unfolding before all these other heavenly beings, which—given what we have seen about the great controversy and the interest of "the principalities and powers in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 3:10)—should not be surprising. This same judgment is later shown like this: "I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13, 14). Here, we see the Ancient of Days, now with "the Son of Man"—a term used over and over in the New Testament by Jesus to refer to Himself (Matthew 17:22; 20:18; 24:30; Mark 2:10; 10:33; Luke 6:22; 11:30; 12:10; 17:22; John 6:53; 12:34; 13:31)—in some sort of heavenly event, another depiction of the judgment that leads directly to God's eternal kingdom.

Another picture of this same judgment, though first talking about events on the earth here, reads: "until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom"(Daniel 7:22; see also verses 26, 27). Notice: judgment made in favor of God's people. We tend to think of judgment as something bad, something that leads to punishment, which in many cases is true. But in this case, at least for the "saints" (a biblical term for God's people that has nothing to do with the Roman Catholic "sainthood"), judgment is made in their behalf.

How could that be, though? Have we not all been deemed sinners? Have we not already been told about how bad we are? How, then, would any of us, even the "saints" in judgment, with the books opened, be able to stand before God, who, again, knows our every wrong thought, our every hidden deed, every single thing that we might have done in secret, things that we'd never want revealed (see Ecclesiastes 12:14)? The everlasting gospel. That's how!

It's no coincidence that the gospel and judgment appear together. However good the news of the gospel, it doesn't get any better than when linked with judgment. Why? Because our only hope in judgment is the gospel, is Christ's righteousness, which is accepted by the Father as our own the moment that we claim it by faith—and also in the judgment, when we need it the most. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). No condemnation now and certainly not in the judgment. Is it because we are sinless? No, it's because Jesus was, and His record is credited to us as our own. That's why the judgment in Daniel 7 "was made in favor of the saints" (Daniel 7:22).

Central to the sanctuary service were the sacrifices of the animals, the lambs, bulls, goats—each one a symbol, a type, a mini-prophecy of Jesus' death on the cross, as well as His work as our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary (see below). That's why, when first introducing Jesus, John the Baptist cried out, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Instead of the sinner dying for his or her sin, the lamb, a symbol of Jesus,

died in the sinner's place. Instead of us, ultimately, dying for our sins, Jesus on the cross did it for us. And this great truth had been proclaimed, in symbols and types, through the Hebrew temple. "Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man" (Hebrews 8:1, 2). And just as the earthly priest interceded for the sinners by bringing the blood into the sanctuary, Jesus as our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary intercedes for us as well. "For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Hebrews 9:24).

Notice the theme here: Christ is in heaven, in the heavenly sanctuary, interceding for us. He is in the presence of God for us. He is an advocate for us. Which is why, now, in the time of this judgment ("for the hour of his judgment has come"), we have the assurance of salvation because of what Christ has done for us on the cross, as our sacrifice, and what He does for us now, in the heavenly sanctuary, as our high priest. Again: "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us" (Romans 8:34), and because of that intercession for us, "there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (verse 1)—no condemnation now and, certainly, not in judgment.

According to the vegan version of "the chicken-and-egg paradox: which came first, the chicken or the egg," a question was asked, "which came first, the grapefruit seed, the grapefruit, or the grapefruit tree?"

This is a false question. It assumes what it sets out to answer, which is that one of them, the tree, the seed, the fruit, had to come first. But that's not what the Bible teaches. "Then God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.' And it was so" (Genesis 1:11, NIV). No one could answer which came first, because none did.

According to the Bible, they were created at the same time, the only logical option to the dilemma. God created the grapefruit "with seed in it." And the same with peaches, plums, apples, avocados, broccoli, lemons, tomatoes, coconuts, wheat, barley, rice, kiwi, cucumbers, apricots, bananas, blueberries, breadfruit, cherries, and on and on. Any one of these food sources, much more all of them together—beautiful, tasty, healthy, growing, literally, out of the dirt, should scream to us about our Creator God, a God who loves us. Which leads, indeed, to what might be deemed the climax of the first angel's message. Yes, the first angel proclaims to us "the everlasting gospel." Yes, the first angel tells us to "fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come." And finally, the first angel tells us to do one last thing: "Worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (Revelation 14:7).

What does this mean, to worship the Creator, the one who put the grapefruit tree in the seed, and the seed in the grapefruit tree—and why is it such an important message for us now?

Discussion Questions

1. How real and significant is the judgment of God to the plan of Salvation?
2. When will this Judgment begin?
3. As the elect of God, are we exempted from this Judgment of God?

Prayer

1. The earth and its universe is a transient abode, as but temporal. The distractions abound too, but we need to pray at all time. Pray that the Judgment of God will not come to us unprepared and unaware. Amen

IMPACT WEEK OF PRAYER

SECTION FIVE

“For in Six Days . . .”

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). And that’s because all these other teachings, the death of Jesus, the great controversy, human sinfulness, the fall of humanity, judgment—all these teachings make sense only if, yes, God created our world.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:8-11).

Exodus 20:11 reads: “For in six days the Lord *made the heavens and the earth, the sea*”; the first angel’s message reads: “Worship *Him who made heaven and earth, the sea*.” Revelation 14:7 is a direct reference to the fourth commandment, which is itself a direct reference to the creation. The final words of the fourth commandment—“For in six days the Lord made heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord *blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy*” (Exodus 20:11, NIV)—come directly from the Genesis creation: “So *God blessed the seventh day and made it holy*, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation” (Genesis 2:3, ESV).

A key theme that appears to be the cause of the conflict in these verses is worship. Five times (Revelation 13:4 [twice], 8, 12, 15) worship is shown to be a major factor behind the turmoil and conflict depicted in the last days.

The first angel (Revelation 14:6) takes us back to the fourth commandment (Exodus 20:8-11), which takes us back to the six days of Creation (Genesis 1-2). And embedded in the six days of Creation is the specific emphasis on the seventh day. “Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made” (Genesis 2:1-3).

A point worth remembering, too: When God blessed the seventh day, when He made it holy, and when He rested on it—only Adam and Eve existed.

“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (Hebrews 11:3).

“For thus says the Lord,

Who created the heavens,

Who is God,

Who formed the earth and made it,

Who has established it,

Who did not create it in vain,

Who formed it to be inhabited:

‘I am the Lord, and there is no other’ ” (Isaiah 45:18).

“You are worthy, O Lord,

To receive glory and honor and power;

For You created all things,

And by Your will they exist and were created” (Revelation 4:11).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:1-3).

“By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,

And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth” (Psalm 33:6).

“But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?” (Job 12:7-9, ESV).

“For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water” (2 Peter 3:5).

“Thus says God the Lord,

Who created the heavens and stretched them out,
Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it,
Who gives breath to the people on it,
And spirit to those who walk on it” (Isaiah 42:5).
“You alone are the Lord;
You have made heaven,
The heaven of heavens, with all their host,
The earth and everything on it, The seas and all that is in them, And
You preserve them all.
The host of heaven worships You” (Nehemiah 9:6).

“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16, 17).

“Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made” (Genesis 2:3). The word “sanctified” here is translated from a Hebrew word often meaning “holiness,” and being “set apart for holy use.” Though Creation dealt with the heavens, the earth, the birds, the beasts, and humans, things in space—it was time, not space, that God first pronounced blessed and holy. And that’s because time is the dimension in which the things of space, i.e., the heavens, the earth, the birds, the beasts, humans, exist.

Finally, so important is this memorial to Creation that, instead of us going to it, the Sabbath comes to us. Once a week, at a thousand miles per hour (the approximate speed at which the earth rotates on its axis), the Sabbath circles the globe. “Arriving on one sundown, leaving on the next, the seventh day washes over the planet each week like a huge cleansing wave. We never have to seek it. The day always finds us.”¹

Here, then, in this warning message about the end of the world, the Word of God brings us back to the beginning of the world and, specifically, to the One who created it. And that is why we are told, not only to “fear” Him, and not only to “give glory” to Him, but also (and, perhaps, most important) to “worship” Him.

Worshipping the Image

Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship.” Self, fame, money, celebrities, sex, power— whatever. Worship is not just about religious reverence, adoration, or singing hymns of praise to the glory of the Lord. We worship whatever takes the place of God

in our lives; whatever takes the place of God in our lives we worship. Atheists worship too. The question then is whom do we worship? Because, in the end, we all worship something.

Whom do we worship, for we all worship something. It is either the Lord—the one who “in six days . . . made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them” (Exodus 20:11), and then “blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made” (Genesis 2:3)—or something else.

And to worship something else—anything else—other than the God who created us, who sustains us, the one in whom “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28) and who ultimately redeemed us (the “everlasting gospel”), is idolatry. Whether worshipping the golden image, or science, or self, or money, or sex, or whatever we make into gods, it is still idolatry, because only the Lord has created us, only the Lord sustains us, only the Lord gives us life, and so only He, and He alone, deserves our worship. It’s as simple as that

The three Hebrew boys (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego) faced death penalty for refusing to worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. To obey this decree, however, would mean violating one of the Ten Commandments, the law of God. Old Testament, New Testament—the law of God is the standard of righteousness that God’s people are called to obey. In the Old Testament, Moses tells God’s people to “keep His commandments” (Deuteronomy 30:10); in the New, James writes: “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder.’ Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law” (James 2:10, 11). Or, as expressed in Revelation: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12).

Isaiah showed how futile it was worshipping other gods:

“He cuts down cedars for himself,

And takes the cypress and the oak;

He secures it for himself among the trees of the forest.

He plants a pine, and the rain nourishes it.

Then it shall be for a man to burn,

For he will take some of it and warm himself;

Yes, he kindles it and bakes bread;

Indeed he makes a god and worships it;

He makes it a carved image, and falls down to it.

He burns half of it in the fire;

With this half he eats meat; He roasts a roast, and is satisfied.
He even warms himself and says,
‘Ah! I am warm,
I have seen the fire.’
And the rest of it he makes into a god,
His carved image.
He falls down before it and worships it,
Prays to it and says,
‘Deliver me, for you are my god!’ ” (Isaiah 44:14-17).

The principle of worship is the same: whatever takes the place of God in someone’s life is false worship. Sooner or later gravity is going put us all back in the dirt from which we first arose, and our only hope, our only salvation, is found in the Lord, in His “everlasting gospel.” God alone deserves to be worshipped. Fame, sex, power, science, technology, self—none of these potential idols can save us any more than the carved image in Isaiah saved the one who carved it.

In summary, the first angel’s message opens with the “everlasting gospel,” the amazingly good news of Jesus, our Creator and our Redeemer, whose righteousness alone gives us hope in “the hour of His judgment.” Besides calling us to “fear God and give glory to Him,” the first angel’s message climaxes, and ends, with a call to “worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water”—and who also established, in Eden, the seventh day as the memorial to that creation. This call to worship the Creator becomes, as we will see, more pointed when contrasted with the fierce warning in the third angel’s message about worshipping “the image,” at a time when the issue of worship will engulf the world.

We all worship. And, ultimately, we all worship one of two things: the creation or the Creator. One, the creation, this fallen creation, is what we need to be saved from; the other, the Creator, is the only one who can save us from it.

One-Tongue World

How important is the one-tongued world as though of by humans? The account opens with this line: “Now the whole earth had one language and one speech” (Genesis 11:1). Because all we have known, and for all recorded history too, is the reality of different languages (it’s estimated that today about 7,000 different ones are spoken), the concept sounds strange, but, given that it was still relatively early in the history of the world, the idea of “one language and one speech” makes sense. “This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and blessed them and

called them Mankind in the day they were created” (Genesis 5:1, 2). One God, one race, one language.

The Tower of Babel narrative reinforces that unfortunate truth:

“And the Lord said, ‘Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.’ So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city” (Genesis 11:6-8).

Though details remain unknown, humans were openly defying God, which is why He came down and confused their language. Imagine the bewilderment, the chaos, the confusion: hundreds, maybe thousands, of people, suddenly speaking to each other in languages that others didn’t understand? They must have been astonished, fearful, angry, and frustrated all at once by something that they had never experienced before. It worked, too: they ceased; the city and the tower remained unfinished; and these confused people dispersed over the earth. Surely those who spoke a common tongue united with each other as they all spread out from Babel. We have here, then, the origins of different human languages. The account ends with this verse: “Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth” (verse 9).

Babel, symbol of open rebellion and defiance against God, is the same word later used all through the Bible for “Babylon” (*babel* in Hebrew). The name “Babylon” appears hundreds of times in the Bible, from the days of the Judean monarchy, more than a half millennium before Christ, to the book of Revelation, where its first use is here: “And another angel followed, saying, ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication’ ” (Revelation 14:8).

Questions

1. In a godless universe, what does the idea of final judgment mean?
2. In what manner have we worshipped other gods (creation) instead of God the Creator?
3. What are the things that take the place of God in your daily life?
4. How have we been rebellious against God in our tongue (through teaching that are not biblical)?

Prayer

1. Worship Him who made the heavens and earth is once more presented to note how important it is to God. Worship God after the six days of creation. Sabbath worship is very important to God. Let us pray that God will in His infinite wisdom help us to recognise the significance of Sabbath worship and to in love strictly adhere to His instructions regarding the Sabbath.
2. God is a jealous God and does not take for granted His worship, as the Creator. Pray that the God of heaven will impress upon you the ability and zeal to worship Him and

Him alone, and not giving credence to any other god apart from the God who created the heavens and the earth and all things found in it.

3. Our tongue should serve the purposes of edification and worship of God. We should pray that God would help us to use our tongues for His worship and not for confusing biblical teachings and principles

IMPACT WEEK OF PRAYER

SECTION SIX

Babylon Is Fallen

The first angel's message is a proclamation about God: about His "everlasting gospel," about "His judgment," and about Him as Creator, the one "who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." It is also about what our response to these great truths should be: fear, give glory to, and worship Him.

The second angel's message, in contrast, is not about God, not directly, and the message says: "And another angel followed, saying, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication' " (Revelation 14:8). " 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.' And I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities' " (Revelation 18:2-5).

Babylon, Babel, even before the tower of that same name, symbolized opposition to God. In one biblical depiction of Satan—"O Lucifer, son of the morning! . . . For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will be like the Most High' " (Isaiah 14:12-14)—he is first referred to as "the king of Babylon" (verse 4), representing Babel itself.

And, just as ancient Babylon, a vast religious and political power, opposed God and persecuted His people, modern Babylon is and does the same, only it will get worse as we near the end.

One of the images in the second angel's message is about Babylon's "fornication," an Old Testament image of unfaithfulness to God and His truth. Recall that symbolism is the idea that things represent other things, and the book of Revelation is written with so much symbolism. All through the Bible God's church has been symbolized by a woman, or even a pure bride (2 Corinthians 11:2; Jeremiah 2:2). After the cross, Satan is depicted in Revelation 12 as

persecuting God's church, symbolized by a woman. The prophets used the idea of a pure woman, sometimes a bride, as a symbol of ancient Israel when it was faithful to God (Jeremiah 6:2). However, when it was unfaithful, when it went into apostasy, another image was used: harlotry. Ezekiel accused Jerusalem of playing the harlot "with the Egyptians," "with the Assyrians," "as far as . . . Chaldea" (see Ezekiel 16:26-29). "Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot" (Jeremiah 3:6). Thus, the image there of "fornication" gives the same idea: false doctrine, along with unfaithfulness to God and His truth that false doctrine inevitably brings.

Thus, the cry "Babylon is fallen" is another way of letting people know that the corrupt systems of this world will not win, will not dominate, regardless of how things seem now. Ancient Babylon, with its false teaching, errors, and persecutions, once seemed invincible. Modern Babylon might now too. But thanks to Jesus and His victory on the cross, sin, evil, Satan, the great controversy, and end-time Babylon, along with its false doctrines and teaching, will be forever gone, and this shout will be heard across the cosmos: "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready" (Revelation 19:6, 7).

The Third Angel

The first angel's message calls people to worship the Creator, "who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (Revelation 14:7). This language comes directly from the Ten Commandments, specifically the fourth. "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Exodus 20:11, ESV), which comes directly from the Genesis creation: "So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation" (Genesis 2:3, ESV).

The proclamation of the second angel about *Babylon* being fallen (Revelation 14:8). What empire in the Old Testament forced the worship of an image? Babylon (Daniel 3:1).

The third Angel follows and says "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall 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 ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:9-12).

Notice the imagery: straight from the book of Daniel, in which (see "Worshipping the Image") people were forced to "worship the . . . image" (Daniel 3:5, 7, 10, 14, 15, 18) on the pain of death. The warning in the third angel's message in Revelation 14 echoes Revelation 13 as well,

in which people must, as in Daniel 3, worship an image or face death: “as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed” (Revelation 13:15).

Ancient Babylon, modern Babylon—the issue is worship.

The three angels’ messages, then, present the great issue facing the world in the end-days: do we worship the Creator, or do we worship “the beast and his image” (Revelation 14:9)? The answer should be obvious: we worship God because He is the Creator, and there’s no more foundational and basic symbol of Him as Creator than the seventh-day Sabbath, blessed and made holy in the first week, the Creation, and deemed by God important enough to be embedded in the Ten Commandments themselves!

This deep biblical truth, however, leads to an important question:

“Think to Change Times and Laws”

The prophecy of Daniel 2, in summary, goes like this: Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, Rome God’s eternal kingdom (where Jesus has prepared a “place” for us)

As shown already (see “The Hour of His Judgment”), in Daniel 7 this same sequence of empires was also prophesized: Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, Rome, God’s eternal kingdom (where Jesus has prepared a “place” for us)

Daniel 7, using different images, gave more details about these kingdoms than did Daniel 2, particularly regarding the last one, Rome, and particularly its papal phase, which included some unfortunate history, such as—it “shall persecute the saints of the Most High” (Daniel 7:25). Then, in the same verse about papal Rome’s persecution of God’s people, the prophecy also predicted that Rome would “think to change times and laws” (Daniel 7:25, KJV). Considering the quotes just looked at (see “The Third Angel”), in which Rome claimed to have established Sunday keeping—a day that both Protestants and Catholics admitted has no scriptural backing—this verse is significant.

Notice: this verse says that it will “think to change times and laws.” God’s law, including the fourth commandment, was written in stone by the finger of God Himself. “Then the Lord delivered to me two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words which the Lord had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly” (Deuteronomy 9:10; see also Exodus 31:18). No earthly power can change that! The New International Version reads that Rome will “try to change” times and the law. Trying is not the same as doing it!

This attempted change becomes of momentous importance when all the world will worship the beast—“as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed” (Revelation 13:15)—a worship that the third angel’s message specifically warns against (Revelation 14:9, 11). Or they will “worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (verse 7), an act memorialized in Eden in the seventh day—“God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done” (Genesis 2:3, NIV)—and then immortalized in the fourth commandment: “For in six days the Lord made

the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Exodus 20:11, NIV).

Though pagan Rome vanished 1,500 years ago, papal Rome remains—and will continue to until God’s kingdom at the end of this world.

“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2, 3). All that can keep us out is our own wrong choices.

The Mark of the Beast

Before the children of Israel were about to enter the Promised Land, Moses, having warned them many times about false worship, reminded them to keep God’s commandments, that is, His law. He then said: “Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes” (Deuteronomy 11:18).

Revelation 13 repeats a great deal of imagery directly from Daniel 7, including Rome’s past persecution of God’s people—it “shall persecute the saints” (Daniel 7:25); it will “make war with the saints” (Revelation 13:7). The same verse that depicts this persecution, Daniel 7:25, also tells of Rome’s attempt to change the law (it shall “think to change times and laws” [KJV]). Then, in the context of Rome (remember, in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, Rome is the final earthly power remaining until God establishes His eternal kingdom), which is identified in Revelation 13:1-9 as a beast, the issue of worshipping the image in the last days first appears in Revelation 13:8, 12-15.

This, in contrast to the three angels’ messages, which warn against worshipping “the beast and his image” (Revelation 14:9, 10), but not before calling people to “worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (verse 7)—language taken from the fourth commandment, which the beast power had attempted to change!

We worship God because, as the Creator (and also our Redeemer), He alone is worthy of worship (Revelation 5:9), and no more foundational symbol of Him as our Creator exists than the seventh-day Sabbath—blessed and made holy in Creation itself. For an earthly power, then, to seek to change, to usurp, the most basic sign, the seventh-day Sabbath, of the most basic doctrine, creation, is to attempt to usurp the Lord’s authority at the most basic level possible: Him as Creator. The only level more basic is God Himself. No power, in heaven or on earth, can get to Him, so instead they get as close as possible: to the foundational sign of Him as Creator.

And the good news of the “everlasting gospel” is that the same faith, “the faith of Jesus,” that takes hold of Christ’s righteousness, which covers our sin, is the same faith that takes hold of Christ’s righteousness, which also cleanses our sins and transforms us. “If anyone is in Christ,

he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

We are promised, repeatedly, the power to obey, to overcome, and to keep God’s commandments.

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4, ESV).

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

“We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin” (Romans 6:6, ESV).

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24, KJV).

As bad as this world has been, it’s going to get worse. Daniel warns of “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time” (Daniel 12:1). However, even though at first things will get worse, they will get better— better beyond anything that we could imagine. “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind” (Isaiah 65:17). “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13). “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away” (Revelation 21:1). “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (verse 4).

That’s what the “everlasting gospel,” formulated “before time began” (2 Timothy 1:9), promises. This new existence is what the three angels’ messages are, ultimately, pointing to. It’s what the prophets dreamed about, had visions about, preached and wrote about. And it’s what, ultimately, Jesus died for. “He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied” (Isaiah 53:11). And living in the times that we do, we can be the people of the prophet’s dreams, we who, by faith, the “faith of Jesus,” will one day proclaim:

“Behold, this is our God;

We have waited for Him, and He will save us.

This is the Lord;

We have waited for Him;

We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation” (Isaiah 25:9).

Questions

1. How fundamental is worship of the Creator to Christianity?
2. How does modern Babylon corrupt the system of this world?
3. How long do you think this corruption will last?
4. Do we worship God the creator of the Sabbath or do we worship the creation who sees the Sabbath rest as Sunday?
5. Would you rather choose to worship the Creator, gain eternal life or the creation, and lose your soul to eternal damnation? And Why?

Prayer

1. God is very interested in the Sabbath worship that is why it was proclaimed by the third angel and it comes with a penalty when we violate this instruction. Pray that God will impress upon us His spirit to always obey His instructions and to remain steadfast and faithful in observing the Sabbath Commandment.
2. Pray to the Lord to grant us the spirit of endurance and perseverance that we may not disappoint Him in the face of trials and persecution. Amen

APPRECIATION

Thank you for participating in this week of prayer. You can share the gospel by sharing some portions of this reading with your friends and colleagues and in your social media pages.