THREE COSMIC MESSAGES REVEALED

Hope in an Uncertain World
Making Sense out of the Chaos of Life

LESSON 1
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Hope in an Uncertain World
Making Sense Out of the Chaos of Life

Choose a single word to describe the mindset of this generation. What would it be? Many people might choose the word “uncertainty.” More of us are uncertain about the future than ever before. Our uncertainty leads to some major concerns—concerns that become a cancer of the soul eating away our joy. We are concerned about global warming and climate change; concerned about the rising tide of natural disasters; concerned about senseless, indiscriminate mass murders. This overanxious concern leads to the anxiety of uncertainty.

We are anxious and uncertain about whether some senseless terrorist attack will suddenly snuff out our lives. We are uncertain about whether we will suddenly be wiped off the face of the earth by some nuclear war or whether global warming will destroy us first. For millions of people this sense of uncertainty is extremely personal. They are uncertain where their next meal is coming from or where they will sleep tonight. People are uncertain about their health, their marriages, and their future. Deep within the fabric of our beings, down inside where it really counts, we are troubled about what might happen next. We have a sense of unease about what is coming in this world. We are seriously concerned about what kind of world our children will grow up in. Many have lost hope in a bright tomorrow and a positive future. Someone has said, “You can live days without food, hours without water, minutes without air, but no time at all without hope.”

The general angst in our society, this inner sense that something is not right and there is little that is certain, this fear about the future has created a sense of hopelessness. Hopelessness has contributed to the rise in drug abuse, over-medication with antidepressants, alcoholism, and suicide.

When we lose hope, dark clouds of despair hang over our heads. The future appears gloomy and everything about tomorrow is uncertain. But hope leads us from what is to what can be. It paints tomorrow in an array of bright colors. It lifts our spirits from the mud below to the heavens above.
Revelation Reveals God’s Ultimate Plan for Humanity

As we look around us, we sense that there is a cosmic conflict waging in the universe between good and evil, love and hate, righteousness and wickedness. Once we understand the issues in this cosmic conflict, this age-long controversy between good and evil, hope rises in our hearts. Anxiety gives way to peace, and certainty replaces doubt.

The Bible’s last book, the Revelation, unmasks the plans of Satan and reveals God’s plan for complete victory in the conflict between good and evil waging in the universe. It reveals, in detail, God’s strategy for victory in earth’s last war. Revelation 12 provides the backdrop for the great controversy between good and evil waging in the universe. Earth’s last great battle in the cosmic war is outlined in Revelation 12. This chapter presents four episodes—snapshots from the opening of the battle in heaven to the closing of the battle on earth.

Episode 1: The Battle for the Throne: Jesus Wins—Satan Loses

1. Read Revelation 12:7-9 and describe the cosmic conflict between good and evil. What stands out to you in this verse about eternal choices?

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It seems extremely strange that war would break out in heaven. This fact leads to some significant questions. Did a loving God create a demonic angel that initiated this war in heaven? Was there some fatal flaw in this angel that led him to rebel against God? If God knew that this angel would eventually rebel against Him, why did He create Him in the first place? The Bible clearly explains the origin of evil. It draws the curtain aside in this conflict between good and evil so we can understand the issues in this great controversy.

2. The ancient prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah describe what went on in the mind of this angelic being called Lucifer that led to his rebellion. Read Ezekiel 28:12-15 and Isaiah 14:12-14 to discover the answer.

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God did not create a devil. He created a being of dazzling brightness, an unfallen angel, named Lucifer. This angelic being was created perfect with no flaws or imperfections. He was created with the power of choice, the freedom to make moral decisions. If you take away the freedom of choice you take away the capacity to love, and if you cannot love you cannot experience true happiness. The freedom to choose is a fundamental principle of God’s government. Sin originated with Lucifer in heaven itself. There was no reason for his disobedience. There is no logical explanation for why Lucifer, this perfect angel, should have allowed pride and jealousy to take root in his heart and grow into rebellion against his Creator. Lucifer, a created being, desired the worship that belonged only to the Creator. He attempted to usurp God’s throne by questioning God’s authority. He challenged God and led a rebellion against His government. Every angel had to make the all-important choice regarding whose side they would be on in this cosmic conflict. One third of the angels sided with Lucifer and were cast out of heaven. Lucifer, the “lightbearer,” became Satan, the enemy or the adversary.

Here is the incredibly good news: Revelation 12 describes Christ’s triumph in this initial phase of the cosmic conflict that began in heaven millennia ago. In that struggle in heavenly places, Jesus defeated Satan. Satan was cast out of heaven, and as Revelation 12:8 describes it, the devil and his evil angels “did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.” Jesus has never yet lost a battle with Satan. In this first episode of the controversy between good and evil, Jesus won and Satan lost.

Down through the ages Satan has viciously attacked God’s people. There have been temporary defeats for heaven’s purposes, but God has always had an overall plan to defeat the forces of evil and triumph over the principalities and powers of hell. Even in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve listened to Satan’s lies and disobeyed God, bringing upon the human race sickness, suffering, sorrow, disease, and death, God promised to send the Messiah, who would ultimately crush the head of the serpent and defeat Satan on the cross (see Genesis 3:15).

Episode 2: Satan Attacks Jesus: Jesus Wins—Satan Loses

3. In this second episode of the conflict recorded in Revelation 12:4, 5, where does Satan focus his attention? Who is the object of his vicious attacks?
Standing before the woman is a great, fiery red dragon. He is waiting, prepared to “devour her Child as soon as it was born” (verse 4). This is clearly a picture of what happened at the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Using King Herod as his agent, Satan tried to kill the baby Jesus as soon as He was born. Satan remembered God’s words in Eden (see Genesis 3:15). He knew Jesus had come to gain the victory and destroy his power. “Then Herod ... sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men” (Matthew 2:16).

Satan tried to kill Jesus, but the “Child was caught up to God and His throne” (Revelation 12:5). Of course, Satan did manage to kill Jesus on the cross. But although it might have seemed like a victory for the dragon, Jesus’ death on the cross dealt a mortal wound to his head. Satan was defeated. Christ’s death on the cross revealed the immense love of God in the conflict between good and evil. It answered Satan’s charges that God was unfair and unjust. It revealed that Heaven was willing to do whatever was necessary to save all humanity.

The Bible teaches that the “wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Since all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, we all deserve to suffer the eternal consequences of sin (Romans 3:23). On the cross Jesus bore the guilt, shame, and condemnation of our sin. He died the death that was ours so we could live the life that was His. Through His grace the gift of eternal life is ours (Ephesians 2:8).

Although Satan is still active in this world, his stranglehold on the human race has been broken by Jesus’ death on the cross. In His life and in His death, Jesus revealed God’s love to our sinful planet. Jesus was resurrected and returned to heaven. His death was a temporary blow to His heel. God won, and Satan lost this episode in the great controversy.

4. Define the following symbols:

a) Dragon (Revelation 12:9)

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b) Woman (Ephesians 5:25-27, 32)

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c) Male child (Matthew 1:21-23)

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d) Iron rod (Psalm 2:7-9)

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In the Bible, a rod is a symbol of dominion or rulership. A rod of iron is a symbol of an unbreakable, all-powerful, invincible rulership. Jesus faced every single temptation that we experience and came off conqueror. The devil is a defeated foe. Christ has triumphed over him in His life, death, and resurrection. Since Jesus has already defeated the devil on Calvary’s cross, we can be victorious too. Christ’s victory over the dragon was complete, but the great controversy between Christ and Satan is not over yet. Satan was defeated at the cross, but the battle still rages.

The Lamb is a central figure in the book of Revelation. The Lamb of God, our perfect Savior, who gave His life in a perfect sacrifice, is mentioned 28 times in the book of Revelation. When we accept in faith what Christ has done for us, our debt is canceled and our sins forgiven. If we are forgiven, there is nothing for which we can be accused. Jesus conquered and overcame forever the worst that sin and evil could do to Him. He made the full assault on evil and overcame it. When we accept Jesus by faith, His victory is ours. In the second episode, Jesus wins and Satan loses.

**Episode 3: Satan Attacks in the Middle Ages**

In the early centuries after the death of Christ the Christian church grew rapidly. The book of Acts records thousands of converts accepting Christ, and despite oppression, ridicule, persecution, and martyrdom, these faithful believers remained steadfast in the truths of God’s Word. In the fourth and fifth centuries, church and state united in Europe. Bible truths were compromised. Fierce persecution followed. Those who refused to accept the teachings of the church of the Middle Ages were fiercely persecuted.

   What is taking place in these verses?

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6. What is the meaning of the time periods in Revelation 12:6, 13, 14? Compare these verses with Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6.

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In the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation one prophetic day equals one literal year. As a result, 1260 days equals 1260 years. The Middle, or Dark, Ages began in A.D. 538 and continued to A.D. 1798. God’s people had to “fly into the wilderness” in order to worship God in truth and in peace. During the long centuries of the Middle Ages, church and state united. Faithful Bible-believing Christians were persecuted for their conscientious commitment to the teachings of God’s Word.

Millions were martyred during this time because they obeyed God and His Word instead of the traditions and rituals of the church/state power. They were martyred for the cause of Christ. Revelation 12:11 declares, “They overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” Believers overcome the wiles of the evil one through faith in Christ’s atoning sacrifice for their sins. In Christ they are set free from the guilt and grip of sin. They are no longer in bondage to their sinful natures. His grace has set them free. They overcome “by the blood of the Lamb.” Christ’s victory over Satan on the cross becomes their victory. Their lives are a living testimony of His grace, and day by day they testify of His love. He has overcome the grave, so all fear of death is gone. Their testimony is fearless because they serve the Christ who has conquered death itself.

At times the flood that Satan sent to destroy them seemed about to overwhelm them. But God protected His people. “The earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon spewed out of his mouth” (verse 16). Toward the end of the 1260 years in the wilderness, a new world was discovered. America became a place where those who stood for the truth of God’s Word were persecuted for their faith could find relief. There the devil’s flood was swallowed up (“the earth helped the woman” [verse 16]). God won and Satan lost. But Satan was still intent on continuing the great controversy.

7. **How do these passages relate to your own life? What encouragement do you get from them? You will find some important clues in Revelation 12:6, 14.**

Notice the phrases: “a place prepared by God;” “she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished;” and “the earth helped the woman.” During the Middle Ages, although many of those who stood for the truth of God’s Word were martyred, God miraculously preserved a faithful group of believers to be witnesses of His love and grace. He also will strengthen each one of us in the midst of Satan’s attacks. Every time the devil attacks a child of God, God provides a place of refuge. Christ has called us to victory, not defeat; to triumph, not loss; to success, not failure.
Episode 4: Satan Will Viciously Attack the Remnant, God’s Faithful Last-day People

In this last episode in Revelation 12, the devil focuses his hellish wrath on God's end-time people. His goal is to stamp them out or destroy them. In every age he has used deception and persecution to counteract the witness of God’s Bible-believing people. Yet in every generation God has had a group of people who have been loyal to Him. Just before His return, He will once again have a people who are faithful to His Word.

8. What characteristics of God’s remnant, His last-day church, are found in Revelation 12:17 and Revelation 14:12?

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According to Revelation 12:9, the dragon represents Satan. In this passage Satan is angry with the woman, God’s church. The devil is furious with a people who keep the commandments of God, and he will do everything he can to destroy them. Throughout history in the great controversy between good and evil, God has always had a people who have remained loyal to Him. He has always had a remnant—those who remained true to His Word while the majority departed from the faith. God’s faithful people living in the last days are the offspring, the remnant, of all those generations that have gone before—the apostles, the martyrs, the Reformers, the faithful men and women who stood for truth during all those long, dark centuries.

Can we identify this remnant? Verse 17 gives two identifying characteristics of this last-day group with whom the dragon is enraged and with whom he makes war. First, they keep the commandments of God. In the last days before Jesus returns God is going to have a people who keep His commandments—not because they believe that obeying the commandments will save them. Not because they are trying to earn salvation. They are keeping God’s commandments because they love Him. Because they want to please Him and show their loyalty to Him. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15).

Love is the most powerful motive for obedience. When we grasp even a glimpse of His love at the cross, our hearts are broken. We long to serve Him. As the apostle John states, “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). As Jesus also said through the psalmist, “I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my
heart” (Psalm 40:8). Love is the motive; obedience is the response. You can’t really love and be disobedient. One of the identifying characteristics of God’s remnant people is that they keep His commandments.


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At the end of time God’s remnant will proclaim the gospel message of salvation to the ends of the earth, teaching people to observe all those things that Jesus has commanded. He will be with His people to the very end. The dragon will be enraged against them. The devil will make war against them with every hellish power at his command. But Jesus says, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end” (Matthew 28:20). Down through the ages Jesus has never lost a battle with Satan. He is our all-powerful, conquering, triumphant Lord. In this last battle, once again, God wins and Satan loses!

The central question in this final war is, Who has our loyalty? Where is our allegiance? Heaven calls for a final generation of believers who are so charmed by Christ’s love, redeemed by His grace, committed to His purposes, empowered by His Spirit, and obedient to His commands that they are willing to face death itself for His cause.

Our world is headed for a major crisis. We are on a collision course. But here is the incredibly good news: We are on the winning side. Christ and His people are going to triumph. In Jesus, by Jesus, through Jesus, and because of Jesus, we will triumph at last.

Would you like to say, “Lord, I want to be on your side, the winning side, of this great conflict between good and evil?”

In our next lesson we will study the events that will take place just before the climax of human history and what the Bible says about the glorious return of Christ to this world.

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The following excerpt from the best selling book, *The Great Controversy* enlarges upon the topics presented in our lesson today. You will be richly blessed as you read it.

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20). The people of God are directed to the Scriptures as their safeguard against the influence of false teachers and the delusive power of spirits of darkness. Satan employs every possible device to prevent men from obtaining a knowledge of the Bible; for its plain utterances reveal his deceptions. At every revival of God’s work the prince of evil is aroused to more intense activity; he is now putting forth his utmost efforts for a final struggle against Christ and His followers. The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested.

Those who endeavor to obey all the commandments of God will be opposed and derided. They can stand only in God. In order to endure the trial before them, they must understand the will of God as revealed in His word; they can honor Him only as they have a right conception of His character, government, and purposes, and act in accordance with them. None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict. The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested.

Before His crucifixion the Saviour explained to His disciples that He was to be put to death and to rise again from the tomb, and angels were present to impress His words on minds and hearts. But the disciples were looking for temporal deliverance from the Roman yoke, and they could not tolerate the thought that He in whom all their hopes centered should suffer an ignominious death. The words which they needed to remember were banished from their minds; and when the time of trial came, it found them unprepared. The death of Jesus as fully destroyed their hopes as if He had not forewarned them. So in the prophecies the future is opened before us as plainly as it was opened to the disciples by the words of Christ. The events connected with the close of probation and the work of preparation for the time of trouble, are clearly presented. But multitudes have no more understanding of these important truths than if they had never been revealed. Satan watches to catch away every impression that would make them wise unto salvation, and the time of trouble will find them unready.

When God sends to men warnings so important that they are represented as proclaimed by holy angels flying in the midst of heaven, He requires every person endowed with reasoning powers to heed the message.

—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 593 & 594
THE THREE ANGELS’ MESSAGES OF REVELATION 14

FIRST ANGEL

“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 —

SECOND ANGEL

“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 —

THIRD ANGEL

“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 ...

Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

— Revelation 14:9, 10, & 12 —

www.ThreeAngels.info
THREE COSMIC MESSAGES REVEALED

A Moment of Destiny

LESSON 2
Deep within our hearts there is a longing for eternity. There is a sense within each one of us that there must be something beyond this life. We understand that life must be more than a march toward death. This longing for immortality is embedded within the human psyche. It is part of our psychological DNA. It is a desire inspired by our hope that somewhere out there in the great beyond there is a bright new morning where sickness and suffering will no longer be our master and death will no longer reign.

King Solomon, known as the wise man, observed this universal quest, and He wrote: God “has put eternity in their [men’s] hearts” (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

In this lesson, we will look at this issue through the eyes of the Bible and discover Jesus’ plan to rescue humanity from sickness, suffering, poverty, injustice, war, and death itself.

Solving the Mystery of Immortality

1. What assurance did Jesus give His disciples just before ascending to heaven? Read John 14:1-3 and share your thoughts on the lines below.

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Just before He went back to heaven, Jesus said to His disciples, “Let not your heart be troubled” (John 14:1-3). Deep within our hearts we long for assurance, for a future and a hope. Jesus says, “Let not your heart be troubled.” But we need to ask: Why? Why would He say that? In this world of heartache, disappointment, and sorrow, why shouldn’t we be troubled? Jesus has the answer. “In My Father’s house,” He says, there “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” (verses 2, 3). This is Heaven’s answer to our most urgent question, to our deepest need. Jesus is coming again, bringing with Him immortality, life forever. The Scriptures describe the Christ who came once to deliver us from the penalty and power of sin, and now He is coming again to deliver us from sin’s presence. When Christ returns, death, and all its consequences will be defeated. Sickness, suffering, and sorrow will be no more.

When Jesus ascended to heaven two thousand years ago, as the disciples strained their eyes to see the last lingering glimpses of their Lord, two angels standing by their sides inquired, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). Jesus Himself is really coming back to this world. This same Jesus—the Christ that healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, forgave and transformed sinners—is going to return to earth in spectacular glory.

2. How does the apostle Paul describe the return of our Lord? What events will take place when He returns? Discover the answer in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.

How Will Jesus Come Again?

The second coming of Christ is beyond the scope of anything we have seen, and it’s hard even to imagine how spectacular it will be. The Bible teaches that it is a literal event, not some shadowy, mystical, ethereal atmosphere of love and peace. Some people think that the coming of Jesus is the coming of a spirit being to lead us into the Age of Aquarius, but there is nothing about that in the Bible. When Jesus
returns, He will come in triumphant glory. The righteous dead will be raised, and the righteous living will be translated without seeing death. As the apostle Paul declares, “This mortal will put on immortality” (verse 53), then shall come to pass the saying, “Death is swallowed up in victory” (verse 54).

3. **How does Jesus describe the spectacular glory of His return to earth?**


   That’s clear enough, isn’t it? A lightning flash is dazzling; it’s spectacular. It’s not something vague that you might miss. We have already discovered that the apostle Paul said that Christ is coming from above: “The Lord Himself will descend from heaven” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). He won’t be born again on the earth, and He won’t rise from below. He won’t mysteriously appear in one of the world’s great cities as a wonder worker or mighty healer. In fact, Jesus specifically warned about that. He said: “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. … If they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it” (Matthew 24:23-27).

   What if there was a stadium somewhere and thousands of people were flocking to it? What if a being of dazzling brightness somehow miraculously appeared? What if he healed blind eyes and gave the deaf their hearing back again? What if he touched crippled people and they were jumping out of wheelchairs? Would you think, “This must really be Jesus?” If you did not know how Christ was coming in the clouds in glory for every eye to see, you might. But Jesus’ warning about this is clear: “False messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect” (Matthew 24:24, NIV).

4. **How does the apostle John describe the second coming of Christ in Revelation 1:7?**

   The Second Coming is not a vague feeling of love. Jesus will not appear as a being of dazzling brightness in some stadium: “He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him” (Revelation 1:7). “All the tribes of the earth [that means, people
everywhere] … will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30). The redeemed will be “caught up” (1 Thessalonians 4:17) to meet Him in the air. He is coming to take us home, not to dwell upon the earth now. The book of Revelation repeatedly portrays Jesus coming as King of kings and Lord of lords.

5. **Compare Revelation 11:15, Revelation 19:11-16, and Revelation 14:14.**
   **What common theme do you see in these verses?**

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**Revelation’s Last-day Message Leads to Eternal Choices**

Revelation 14 is at the very heart of Revelation’s last-day message. The Bible’s final book, Revelation, reveals God’s message to His people living at the close of this earth’s history. The heart of the book of Revelation is Revelation 14.

Revelation 14 is divided into three parts. The first five verses picture a group of people called the 144,000—the redeemed who will be alive when Jesus comes—standing with Christ in heaven. In Revelation 14:6-12, we discover Christ’s last-day message for humanity. In Revelation 14:14-20 we discover God’s final harvest. In Revelation 14:6-20, six angels are mentioned. The first three angels announce the final judgment. The first angel announces that the hour of God’s judgment has come. The second angel announces judgment on Babylon, the apostate religious powers of our day. The third angel announces judgment on the beast who oppresses, persecutes, and declares war on the people of God.

The last three angels execute the judgment announced by the first three angels. The Son of man stands in the center of these six angels, in triumph over the powers of hell, to deliver His people.

Let’s focus now on the last part of Revelation 14, verses 14–20, which describe the execution of Heaven’s final judgment.

6. **What imagery does Revelation 14:14 use to describe Jesus?**
   **What is upon His head and in His hand?**

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4.
“And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle” (Revelation 14:14).

Jesus is “the Son of Man.” This was His favorite title that He used of Himself. It is used 82 times in the gospels alone. John uses it 12 times. It is used to describe Christ’s intimate connection with all humanity. The Son of God became the Son of man so we as sons and daughters of men could become children of God. Jesus is not far off. He dwelt in human flesh, experienced temptations like each one of us, and triumphed in His life and death over the principalities and powers of hell. The One who dwelt with us 2000 years ago is coming again for us. This is why the expression “Son of Man” is used so frequently in connection with the second coming of Christ.

7. Consider these following Bible passages. What do you discover in these passages? Why are they so encouraging?

(a) Matthew 16:27 ______________________________________________________

(b) Matthew 24:27, 30 ___________________________________________________

(c) Matthew 25:31 ____________________________________________________

The Victor’s Crown

John describes Jesus as the “Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.” The word for crown is the Greek word Stephanos. It is a victor’s crown. It is a crown of honor. It is a crown of glory. It is a crown symbolizing victory.

Jesus once wore the crown of thorns, symbolizing shame and mockery. He was once despised and rejected of men. He was reviled, ridiculed, spat upon, beaten, and whipped, but now He wears the crown of glory. He comes as King of kings and Lord of lords. Notice what the angel says:

“And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, ‘Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe!’” (Revelation 14:15).

This angel comes from the presence of God in the glory of the temple. God looks at the angel and says, “It’s time. The harvest is fully ripe.” The long night of earth is over.
Another Harvest

8. How does Revelation 14:17-20 describe this second harvest?

“Another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire” (verse 18). Here is the angel who commands the fires of God’s final judgment. The harvest is ripe. Sin has reached its limits. Rebellion has crossed the line of God’s mercy. A loving God has done everything He can do. There is nothing more grace can do to redeem those who have repeatedly rejected the claims of His Holy Spirit.

Throughout Scripture God’s wrath is His judgment on sin. The time has come to execute God’s final judgment on sin and make an utter end of rebellion. When grapes are harvested for their juice, they are put into a press. In Bible times, the grapes were trampled by human feet to extract the juice. Revelation pictures the grape juice as blood coming out of the wine press in a graphic illustration of the truth that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

Notice that in both the harvest of the saved and the harvest of the lost, it is specifically stated that the harvest is “ripe” (Revelation 14:15, 18). God has borne long with sin on the earth. He has given every man and woman ample opportunity to accept His salvation. Each person has made his or her irrevocable choice. Not until the harvest is “fully ripe” does God thrust in His sickle and reap. Those who are in the harvest of the saved stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion. Those who are lost are thrown into “the great wine press of the wrath of God” (verse 19). The book of Revelation presents us with two destinies, two choices, two masters, and all of heaven is appealing to us to make the right choice. Jesus has done and is now doing everything possible to save us. Now the choice is up to us. Will we respond to the wooing of His Spirit? Will we respond to His loving appeals? How can we possibly resist or reject such love?

Here is the urgent prophetic message of Revelation 14. Every seed has gone to harvest. The grain is fully ripe, and the grapes are fully ripe. The people of God reveal His image of grace, compassion, mercy, and love before the universe. The children of the evil one reveal greed, lust, hate, jealousy, and impurity. The character of Jesus is revealed in one group, and the character of Satan in the other.
Sowing and Reaping

9. What eternal truth does the apostle Paul communicate in Galatians 6:7, 8? How does this relate to the final harvest described in Revelation 14:15-20?

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In the last days, the seeds of righteousness and the seeds of wickedness will be fully ripe. Every one of us is sowing seed and growing seed in the choices we make day by day. What seeds are you sowing? The fruit we produce in our lives is the result of the seed we sow in our lives. You cannot sow the seeds of evil and reap righteousness. You cannot sow the seeds of immorality and reap purity. You cannot sow the seeds of dishonesty and reap honesty. You cannot sow the seeds of worldliness and reap heavenly mindedness. You cannot sow the seeds of anger and reap patience. You cannot sow the seeds of intemperance and reap health. You cannot sow the seeds of the world’s mass media entertainment and reap heaven’s character.

Our heavenly Father is working in our lives today to prompt us to make positive choices. Jesus is wooing us, drawing us to Himself, to make the best positive decisions for time and eternity. And all the while, the Holy Spirit is empowering us to carry out the desire He has placed in our hearts to make right choices.

It is harvest time.
Every seed is going to result in harvest.
Seeds of righteousness and seeds of wickedness.
Seeds of good and seeds of evil.
Echoing down the centuries come the words of Scripture:

“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve ... But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15).
The following excerpt from the best selling book, *The Great Controversy* enlarges upon the topics presented in our lesson today. You will be richly blessed as you read it.

The fearful judgments denounced against the worship of the beast and his image (Revelation 14:9-11), should lead all to a diligent study of the prophecies to learn what the mark of the beast is, and how they are to avoid receiving it. But the masses of the people turn away their ears from hearing the truth and are turned unto fables. The apostle Paul declared, looking down to the last days: “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:3). That time has fully come. The multitudes do not want Bible truth, because it interferes with the desires of the sinful, world-loving heart; and Satan supplies the deceptions which they love.

But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support.

Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will.

When Christ came to speak the words of life, the common people heard Him gladly; and many, even of the priests and rulers, believed on Him.

—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 594 & 595
The Three Angels’ Messages of Revelation 14

First Angel

“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 —

Second Angel

“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 —

Third Angel

“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 ... Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.
— Revelation 14:9, 10, & 12 —

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THREE COSMIC MESSAGES
REVEALED

Hope's Grace-filled End-time Message

LESSON 3
Three Cosmic Messages Revealed
by Mark Finley

Study Guide 3 of 10

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Lesson 3

Hope’s Grace-filled End-time Message

Businesses, political parties, and religious movements all have their slogans. According to Entrepreneur.com’s small business encyclopedia, a slogan is “a catchphrase or small group of words that are combined in a special way to identify a product or company.” In many ways, they are like mini-mission statements. These brief one-line statements powerfully identify the organization. They shape the attitude of the employees and the consumers regarding what the business is all about. In a sense, just like ranchers brand cattle with a mark of the owners’ identity, these statements brand businesses or products.

God brands religious movements as well. He places His identifiable stamp of approval on them to distinguish the genuine from the counterfeit. He clearly reveals this brand at the end of human history in the Bible’s last book, Revelation.

Revelation’s End-time Message

In this presentation, we will begin a detailed study of Revelation 14:6-12 and seek to discern answers to our deepest questions. Our previous messages in this series have given us the background of these three angels flying in mid-heaven. We have discovered that in this cosmic battle between good and evil, Jesus has sent His last-day message to the world to prepare this planet for His soon return. In the blazing light of eternity, this message is filled with hope for men and women seeking answers to life’s most perplexing questions. In this presentation we will seek answers to two pressing issues that have been the quest of humanity throughout the millennia.

1. How can I live forever? Is eternal life even a possibility?
2. What is the meaning of life? How can I find real fulfillment and purpose?
A Grace-filled Book of Hope

When most people think about the Bible’s last book, Revelation, their thoughts turn almost immediately to frightening beasts, mystic symbols, and strange images. The book of Revelation scares as many people as it reassures. On one occasion, as a barber cut the hair of one of his customers, he commented, “I read the Bible’s final book, Revelation, last evening and became so frightened that I couldn’t sleep.” Thankfully the customer was someone with a knowledge of Revelation and was able to reassure his barber friend that the book of Revelation is one of hope.

It is rather surprising that so many people are hesitant to read Revelation and that they view it through the eyes of fear. The first verse of the first chapter titles the book.

1. What insight do we receive from Revelation 1:1 about the Bible’s last book? What is this a revelation of? Where do these messages originate?

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Revelation’s message is a grace-filled message of end-time hope. It describes Christ as the slain Lamb 28 times. In Revelation 5, He is heaven’s slain Lamb, and heavenly beings sing His praises. In Revelation 13:8, He is the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” In Revelation 17, He is the Lamb that defeats the dragon. Throughout history, God’s people have faced trials, oppression, and persecution, but Jesus, the Lamb of God, has not forsaken them. He has always been there to encourage, support, and strengthen them.

2. What three things do we find Jesus doing for us in Revelation 1:5 and 6?

(a) ______________________________________________________________________

(b) ______________________________________________________________________

(c) ______________________________________________________________________

According to Revelation 1:5, 6, He is the One who “loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father.” In Christ we are forgiven. We are cleansed. We are transformed. Grace pardons our past, empowers our present, and provides hope for our future.
In Christ we are delivered from sin’s penalty and power, and one day soon we will be delivered from sin’s presence. This is the hope-filled, grace-filled message of the Bible's last book, Revelation. It is Christ who satisfies our inner longing for fulfillment, purpose, and meaning.

Revelation’s End-time Message

The heart of the book of Revelation is an urgent last-day message found in the 14th chapter. In the imagery of three angels flying in mid-heaven, God proclaims His last message of mercy to a dying world. Revelation 14:6 declares, “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.”

Here is a message that is urgent—the angel flies in mid-heaven. It is eternal—the angel has the everlasting gospel. And it is universal—it is to be proclaimed to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.

A message that is urgent, eternal, and everlasting must be incredibly relevant and extremely significant for an end-time generation. It is an understanding of this message that will enable us to discover God’s design for living and the identifying marks of His people today.


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The Eternal Gospel

Let’s pause for a moment to meditate on this expression: “the eternal,” or “the everlasting,” gospel. If we fail to understand the depth of the gospel, we will miss the entire point of the messages of these three angels. We can never fully understand the issues described by the first angel in God’s judgment-hour message if we do not understand the gospel. We will never fully understand the second angel’s message on the fall of Babylon and God’s call for His people to come out of her if we fail to understand the gospel. We will never understand the fateful warning of the third angel about the mark of the beast if we fail to understand the gospel.
This leads us to ask a very basic question: What is the gospel, and why is it everlasting? In his letter to the church at Corinth, the apostle Paul gives one of the clearest definitions of the gospel in the New Testament.

4. How does the apostle Paul define the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-3? What are the main points he emphasizes?

Paul is very clear in his definition of the gospel. The gospel is the incredibly good news of Christ’s death for our sins, His sinless life, His glorious resurrection, and His ever-present love and concern for us.

The gospel is the joyous reality that Jesus will deliver us from sin’s penalty and sin’s power. By faith in His shed blood and His resurrection power we are delivered from the guilt of sin and the grip of sin.

Christ absorbed the apostle Paul’s thoughts and was the foundation and center of his teaching and preaching.

The crucified Christ redeemed him from the condemnation and guilt of his past.

The resurrected Christ gave him power for the present, and the returning Christ gave him hope for the future.

Paul cries out from the depths of his being, “I am a debtor to grace.”

He continues describing this amazing grace throughout the book of Romans. Let’s get a glimpse of the apostle Paul’s teaching on the magnificence of grace throughout his letter to the church at Rome. This will help us to understand the everlasting gospel more clearly in Revelation 14.

Notice three points in this passage:

1. We are justified freely by grace.
2. Grace is a declaration of God's righteousness.
3. Through grace God justifies those who believe in Jesus.

Christ's grace is unmerited, undeserved, and unearned. Jesus died the agonizing, painful death that lost sinners will face. He experienced the fullness of the Father's wrath, or judgment, against sin. He was rejected so we could be accepted. He died the death that was ours so we could live the life that was His. He wore the crown of thorns so we could wear a crown of glory. He was nailed upright in torturous pain upon a cross so we could sit upright on a heavenly throne with the redeemed of all ages, wearing the robes of royalty forever. Marvel of all marvels, wonder of all wonders, in our shame and guilt Jesus did not reject us; instead, He reached out in love to accept us.

The Great Substitute

There is a remarkable statement Ellen White made in her book *The Desire of Ages*, page 753: “Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. ... Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race.”

On the cross Christ assumed the penalty of sin for all humanity. He bore the guilt and shame of sin for the entire human race. The dark shadows of death hung over the cross, and Jesus experienced the death all sinners will die as the result of the guilt and shame of sin (see Galatians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

“Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father’s acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 753).

This is the story of grace. This is the story of a Savior’s love beyond measure. This is the story of a Jesus who loves us so much that He would rather experience hell itself than have one of us lost. This is the story of a boundless, unfathomable, incomprehensible, undying, unending, infinite love thatlongs for us to be with Him eternally. Jesus was willing to assume the guilt, condemnation, and
consequences of our sin, and if need be, be separated from His Father forever if that was what it took to save us.

Redeemed by grace, motivated by love, and empowered by Christ’s Spirit that dwells in our hearts by faith, “sin no longer reigns in our lives.” Although at times in our humanness we may fail, we are no longer under the domain of sin. Its hold on us has been broken. According to the apostle Paul, “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father’” (Romans 8:15).

To a generation starved for genuine, authentic love, longing for meaningful relationships, the gospel speaks of acceptance, forgiveness, belonging, grace, and life-changing power. It speaks of a God of unconditional love who cares so deeply that He will go to any length to redeem us because He wants us with Him forever. The gospel answers the question that we raised at the beginning of our presentation. How can I live forever? Is eternal life even possible? Eternal life is a gift of grace that Jesus provides for us through the everlasting gospel. He bore the curse of sin so we can experience eternal life. Accepting Jesus, we have life. This gift of eternal life given freely by Jesus changes us. It leads us out of ourselves. It motivates us to live for a higher purpose. It inspires us to labor for the enlargement of His kingdom.

**Into All the World**

6. **How far-reaching is Heaven’s final message to humanity?**

   Read Revelation 14:6 and write your thoughts on the lines below:

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   According to the urgent, end-time message of the first of these three angels, the “everlasting gospel” is to be proclaimed to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people. Here is a mission so grand, so large, so great, and so comprehensive that it is all-consuming. It demands our best efforts and requires our total commitment. It leads us from a preoccupation with our own self-interest to a passion for Christ’s service. It inspires us with something larger than ourselves and leads us out of the narrow confines of our own minds to a grander vision.

   In his new book, *The Quest for More*, Paul David Tripp discusses the psychological need of every human being to be part of something larger than themselves. He states
it this way: “Human beings were created ... to be part of something bigger than their own lives.” Sin causes us to shrink our lives down to the size of our lives. The grace of Christ is given to rescue us from the claustrophobic confines of our own little self-focused kingdom and frees us to live for the eternal purposes and satisfying delights of the Kingdom of God. We live in a culture that has institutionalized self-focus and personal entitlement. If you look around, it is very clear that we need to be rescued from ourselves. Things like debt, addiction, obesity, divorce, etc. are the fruits of a culture of self-focus, where we look for meaning where meaning cannot be found. There is freedom to be found in living for something bigger than yourself. ... Ultimately it means living for the glory of God and the success of his agenda for the world he made.

There is nothing more inspiring, more fulfilling, more rewarding than being part of a divine movement far larger than any one human being could ever accomplish on their own. The New Testament Christian church exploded in growth because each believer lived for a purpose bigger than themselves. The book of Revelation describes an end-time people who are passionate about sharing Jesus’ love and grace with others. They have been charmed by His love, redeemed by His grace, and changed by His power. Receiving the gift of eternal life from Jesus, they have discovered their purpose for living and desire to share the good news with others. Good news is too good to keep to oneself.

The commission given by God described in Revelation 14 is the greatest task ever committed to His people. It is an earnest appeal to give our lives to Heaven’s grandest task.

7. **In His magnificent sermon on last-day signs, how did Jesus link the preaching of the gospel to all the world to His return to earth?**

The preaching of the everlasting gospel leaps across geographical boundaries, it penetrates earth’s remotest areas, it reaches people of every language and culture. It impacts the entire world. The foundations of hell are shaken and the forces of evil tremble. Jesus’ plan and purpose and people will triumph at last. The church battered by Satan’s attacks, oppressed by the powers of evil, harassed by the forces of hell, and crushed by persecution will rise and proclaim God’s last-day message of grace in the context of the three angels’ messages to the ends of the earth.
8. What is the ultimate result of the preaching of God’s last-day message to the world? Read Revelation 14:14, 15 and write your answer on the lines below.

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As the result of accepting or rejecting the gospel message of salvation, every human being on planet Earth will be either saved or lost. When the gospel is preached to the entire world and every person has had the opportunity to see the truth about Jesus and eternal life clearly, human probation will close. God has given every one of us the freedom of choice. Heaven’s final appeal is for each one of us to commit our lives to this Christ who bore our guilt, shame, and condemnation on Calvary’s cross. It is to accept the forgiveness that He so freely offers and to receive the power to live a new life in Christ. When Jesus saves us and changes us, He invites us to give our lives to something bigger than ourselves. Whatever your profession or occupation, God has a larger plan for your life.

Jesus is inviting you on a journey of faith to share His love with those around you—your family, your friends, and your working associates. Will you open your heart to this Christ right now, receive His grace, respond to His love, and join Him on His mission to save this world? Let’s pray together.

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The following excerpt from the best selling book, *The Great Controversy* enlarges upon the topics presented in our lesson today. You will be richly blessed as you read it.

The chief of the priesthood and the leading men of the nation were determined to condemn and repudiate His (Jesus') teachings. Though they were baffled in all their efforts to find accusations against Him, though they could not but feel the influence of the divine power and wisdom attending His words, yet they encased themselves in prejudice; they rejected the clearest evidence of His Messiahship, lest they should be forced to become His disciples. These opponents of Jesus were men whom the people had been taught from infancy to reverence, to whose authority they had been accustomed implicitly to bow. “How is it,” they asked, “that our rulers and learned scribes do not believe on Jesus? Would not these pious men receive Him if He were the Christ?” It was the influence of such teachers that led the Jewish nation to reject their Redeemer.

The spirit which actuated those priests and rulers is still manifested by many who make a high profession of piety. They refuse to examine the testimony of the Scriptures concerning the special truths for this time. They point to their own numbers, wealth, and popularity, and look with contempt upon the advocates of truth as few, poor, and unpopular, having a faith that separates them from the world.

Christ foresaw that the undue assumption of authority indulged by the scribes and Pharisees would not cease with the dispersion of the Jews. He had a prophetic view of the work of exalting human authority to rule the conscience, which has been so terrible a curse to the church in all ages. And His fearful denunciations of the scribes and Pharisees, and His warnings to the people not to follow these blind leaders, were placed on record as an admonition to future generations.

The Roman Church reserves to the clergy the right to interpret the Scriptures. On the ground that ecclesiastics alone are competent to explain God's word, it is withheld from the common people.

—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 595 & 596
THE THREE ANGELS’ MESSAGES OF REVELATION 14

FIRST ANGEL

“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 —

SECOND ANGEL

“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 —

THIRD ANGEL

“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 ... Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

— REVELATION 14:9, 10, & 12 —

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THREE COSMIC MESSAGES REVEALED

God’s Prophetic Timetable

LESSON 4
Three Cosmic Messages Revealed
by Mark Finley

Study Guide 4 of 10

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Lesson 4
God’s Prophetic Timetable

The Bible’s last book, Revelation, focuses on the end of the age-long controversy between good and evil. Lucifer, a rebel angel, challenged the justice, fairness, and wisdom of God. He claimed that God was unfair and unjust in the way that He administered the universe. At the very center of this conflict over the character of God is Revelation’s final judgment.

When most people think of facing God’s judgment they tremble with fear. They picture themselves standing before God’s throne quaking with guilt while all their sins are laid bare before the universe. It is certainly true that we “must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:10) and that “God will bring every work into judgment” (Ecclesiastes 12:14). But it is also true that Jesus is both our defense attorney and our judge (1 John 2:1, 2; John 5:22). In this presentation we will discover mathematical proof from Bible prophecy that Jesus is the Messiah. We will also learn how, through Jesus, we can face unafraid the judgment that has already begun in heaven.

1. What two main facts does Revelation 14:7 tell us about the judgment?

The judgment reveals God’s justice and mercy. Once and for all the beings on unfallen worlds will see, in the light of the judgment hour, that God has done everything He can to save every human being. The judgment is part of God’s ultimate solution to the sin problem. Revelation’s judgment reveals God’s unfathomable love as well as His justice in dealing with the controversy between good and evil. It reveals once and for all, now and forever, in the present and through all eternity, that Heaven could not have done one more thing to save us.
The broken law demands the death of the sinner. Justice declares that “the wages of sin is death.” Mercy responds, “The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Christ’s death establishes the eternal nature of the law, and the law is the basis of judgment (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14; James 2:10-12). Our good works, empowered by the Holy Spirit, do not save us, but they do testify that our faith is genuine. There is a second eternal truth about the judgment announced by the three angels that we cannot miss.

The judgment has arrived. It is a present-tense judgment. The hour of God’s judgment is here. The first of these three angels’ messages to all humanity announces that the judgment, which the Bible writers have spoken so freely about, has begun. John declares in no uncertain terms in Revelation 14:7 that “the hour of His judgment has come.” Here is an urgent, present-truth message for the entire world. Notice our text does not say that “the hour of His judgment will come.” It emphatically announces that “the hour of His judgment has come” in the present tense. Exiled on the island of Patmos, the apostle John, writing in the last chapter of the last book of the Bible, Revelation, declares, “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work” (Revelation 22:12). If Christ is coming to give out the rewards, there must, of necessity, be a judgment before He comes to determine who receives what reward when He comes.

The books of Daniel and Revelation are companion prophetic books in the Bible. Daniel helps to explain the meaning of John’s phrase, “the hour of His judgment has come.”

A Magnificent Scene in Heaven

After describing the oppressive powers of Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, Rome, the break-up of the Roman empire, and the union of church and state throughout the centuries, God focuses Daniel’s mind on a glorious celestial event that will set all things right.

2. In your own words describe the judgment scene that Daniel saw in Daniel 7:9, 10, 13, 14.

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The destiny of all humanity is decided in heaven’s courtroom. The oppressive powers that persecuted God’s people are judged. Right prevails. Truth triumphs. Justice reigns. The purpose of the judgment is not to condemn sinners. It is to reveal Christ’s love, His goodness, His grace, His lovingkindness before the universe. In the judgment it will be clearly demonstrated that our Jesus has done everything possible to save us. Those who are lost are lost because of their own choice to turn their back on His love, reject His claim upon their lives, and rebel against His commands.

3. **What is the ultimate result of this heavenly judgment? Discover the answer in Daniel 7:14, 22, 27.**

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Jesus is worthy to receive the kingdom. The judgment reveals the saving righteousness of Jesus and His triumph over the principalities and powers of hell. Notice that in Revelation 5:1 we read about the throne once again, and a scroll written on both sides is introduced. It is sealed with the divine seal, and no one in heaven or on earth can open the scroll.

The question is raised in verse 2, “Who is worthy to open the scroll?” Heavenly beings tremble. The issue is serious. If no one in heaven can open the judgment scroll, all humanity will be lost. No angelic being can represent humanity in earth’s final judgment.

4. **Why does John weep when he gazes on this heavenly scene, and what is the solution to his tears? See Revelation 5:3-7.**

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Jesus the Lamb of God, who has sacrificed His life for the salvation of all humanity, takes the scroll of judgment and opens it. All of heaven bursts forth in rapturous praise. His victory over Satan’s temptations, His death on Calvary’s cross, His resurrection, His high priestly ministry provide salvation for all who choose by faith to respond to His grace. This is illustrated in the scene in an American courtroom many years ago.
Judge Pays a Prisoner's Fine

Two men who had been friends and companions in their youth met in the police court—the one on the magistrate's bench, the other in the prisoner's dock. The case was tried, and the prisoner was found guilty. Would the judge, in consideration of their friendship years before, forbear to pass judgment? No, he must fulfill his duty, justice must be done, the law of the land obeyed. He gave out the sentence—14 days' hard labor or a fine of $500. The condemned man had nothing to pay, so the prison cell was before him. But as soon as he had pronounced the sentence the judge rose from the bench, threw aside his magistrate's robes, and stepping down to the dock he stood beside the prisoner, paid his fine for him, and then said, “Now, John, you are coming home with me to supper.”

God cannot overlook sin. Justice must be done and the sentence pronounced, but Christ Himself pays the debt and the sinner is free. But this freedom is not the freedom to continue in sin. It is the freedom to live a godly, obedient life through His power. In the final judgment Jesus stands before the whole universe and declares that our debt is paid, and through His grace our lives are changed.

The judgment is incredibly good news for the people of God. It speaks of the end of the reign of sin and the deliverance of God's people.

Can anything be more encouraging? Jesus stands for us in the judgment. His perfect righteous life covers our imperfections. His righteousness works within us to make us new. His grace pardons us, transforms us, and empowers us to live godly lives.

We need not fear. In the judgment the powers of hell are defeated. Judgment is passed in “favor” of the people of God. The purpose of the judgment is not to find out how bad we are but to reveal how good God is. Throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity, we will sing the praises and glory of Jesus. He redeemed us. He shed His blood for us. He sacrificed His life for us. He is our Savior, our Redeemer, our slain Lamb, our interceding High Priest, our living Christ, and our coming King.

When Did the Judgment Begin?

Revelation 14:7 declares, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come.” As we pointed out earlier in this lesson, there must be a judgment before Christ comes to determine who will receive what reward when He comes. The companion book to Revelation, Daniel, describes precisely when this last-day judgment began. Daniel 7 describes the celestial judgment, but it does not tell us when this judgment begins. In Daniel 8 and 9, we discover the divine timetable for the beginning of this heavenly judgment.
5. What time period is mentioned in Daniel 8:14, and what event is associated with this timetable?

Daniel 8:14 declares, “For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.” Each Jew clearly understood the significance of the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary. It occurred at the end of the Jewish year on the Day of Atonement and was a day of judgment. Although Daniel understood the concept of the Day of Atonement, the cleansing of the sanctuary, and the judgment, he was confused about these 2300 days. At the end of chapter 8 we find Daniel exclaiming, “I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it” (Daniel 8:27). The next chapter, Daniel 9, records Daniel’s earnest prayer to understand the vision. As he prayed, the angel Gabriel came in answer to his prayer.

6. What does the angel explain to Daniel regarding the portion of the prophecy he did not understand? Read Daniel 9:21, 22 to discover the answer.

The angel Gabriel returned in answer to Daniel’s prayer to explain the portion of the prophecy Daniel did not understand. He revealed the truth about the coming Messiah. He then revealed the opening of God’s judgment centuries later.

7. What period of earth’s history did the angel declare the prophecy of the 2300 years referred to? Read Daniel 8:17 to discover the answer.

In Daniel 8, Gabriel began his explanation of the 2300-day prophecy. He described the ram representing Media-Persia and the male goat representing Greece. He went on to explain the role of the civil and then the ecclesiastical power of Rome in the eternal plan of God. And then when he was ready to explain the time of the
cleansing of the sanctuary, something happened to Daniel. The prophet fainted. Daniel was overwhelmed by what Gabriel revealed in vision. He did not understand this heavenly scene and needed divine guidance.

The Vision Explained

In Daniel 9, the angel Gabriel appeared and reassured the aged prophet, “Consider the matter, and understand the vision” (Daniel 9:23). What matter—and what vision? The matter that he was discussing in chapter 8—when Daniel fainted and didn’t understand—was the cleansing of the sanctuary. The vision is the one of the 2300 days.

Gabriel continues in verse 24. “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.”

A Divine Timetable

Gabriel continues explaining this remarkable timetable of prophecy in verse 25: “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks.” With divine insight, prophecy reveals specific dates on the Messianic timeline. The first portion of this prophecy relates to God’s people, the Jews. “Seventy weeks are determined for your people” (verse 24)—the Jewish nation.

In Bible prophecy, one prophetic day equals one literal year (Ezekiel 4:6; Numbers 14:34). Now, please don’t misunderstand. In the Bible, when a day is spoken of, it’s a literal day; but in Daniel and Revelation, when you have symbolic imagery you have symbolic time prophecies. Seventy weeks are composed of 490 days. Since one prophetic day equals one literal year, 490 days are 490 literal years.

Seventy weeks, or 490 days (years), apply specifically to the Jewish nation and the coming of the Messiah. They are determined for Daniel’s people, the Jews. A literal translation of the word “determined” means “to cut off or separate from.”

Gabriel tells Daniel that 490 years are cut off, or separated from, the 2300 years. Gabriel continues to explain the prophecy to Daniel by showing him when this period starts.

8. When would this entire prophecy begin, and what event would occur at the end of the first part of this remarkable prophecy?

Discover the answer in Daniel 9:25.
The prophecy begins with the decree to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem when the Jews could return from captivity to restore temple worship. According to Daniel 9:25, 26, there would be 69 prophetic weeks, or 483 literal years, from the decree to restore Jerusalem until the Messiah.

According to Ezra 7, the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem was issued by Artaxerxes in the autumn of 457 B.C. Four hundred eighty-three years in the future takes us to exactly A.D. 27. According to Daniel’s prophecy, the Messiah would appear in A.D. 27. The word “messiah” means “the anointed one.” In exactly A.D. 27, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was baptized, as prophecy predicted hundreds of years in advance.

The Crucifixion Predicted

9. **What significant event would take place next in this amazing prophecy?**


Daniel makes it plain. The Messiah would be “cut off.” In other words, Jesus would be crucified. The verse adds, “but not for Himself.” The death of Christ on Calvary’s cross was for us. The text also says, “And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary” (Daniel 9:26). This refers to the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the earthly sanctuary by Titus in A.D. 70.

Let’s continue studying Gabriel’s message from Daniel 9:27: “Then he”—that is, Jesus—“shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.” By A.D. 27, 69 of those 70 prophetic weeks, or 483 years, would be used up. There would be one week left. One prophetic week from A.D. 27—7 years from A.D. 27—takes us to A.D. 34. The Bible says that sometime in the middle of this last prophetic week, the Messiah would be crucified. The middle point of seven years is three and a half. Gabriel tells Daniel that the Messiah would be crucified three and a half years from A.D. 27, or in the spring of A.D. 31. In the middle of this 70th week, Christ confirmed the covenant with His blood by dying on the cross exactly on the day the Passover lamb was offered. Jesus is the fulfillment of these Messianic predictions.

According to the prophecies of Daniel, God’s covenant with the Jews would cease in A.D. 34. At the end of 490 years, in A.D. 34, the gospel would be proclaimed by those early Christian converts to the entire world.
Time of the End

The final portion of the 2300 years, or 1810 years, has to do with the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, the judgment, and the second coming of Christ.

Let’s read Daniel 8:14 again: “And he said to me, ‘For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.’” Since one prophetic day equals one literal year, the 2300 years must take us down to the time of the end, just as the angel Gabriel revealed.

Subtracting 490 years from 2300 years leaves us with 1810 years. If we begin at A.D. 34, and we add 1810 years, we come to A.D. 1844. To explain it another way, if you start at 457 B.C. and go forward 2300 years, it takes you to 1844.

This is no common or ordinary time. We are living in what the Bible calls the judgment hour. Heaven’s celestial courtroom is in session. The destiny of all humanity will soon be settled. Christ will be crowned as King of kings and Lord of lords and will return to take His people to their heavenly home.

Another word for “cleansed” in Daniel 8:14 is “restored.” At the end of the 2300 days (years), the truth about Jesus as our dying Lamb and living High Priest would be restored. Throughout the Dark, or Middle Ages, the truth about Jesus’ great gift of salvation was obscured. In the light of Heaven’s end-time judgment, God would make His final appeal to all humanity everywhere to respond to His love, accept His grace, and live godly, obedient lives.

We are living in the judgment hour. Since the year 1844, God has been restoring the truth of Scripture to the world—truth that had been lost sight of down through the centuries, truth that had been obscured by human tradition.

Time is running out. Is there anything in your life that’s not in harmony with His will, anything in your life that separates you from Him? Why not surrender that thing to Him right now?

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The following excerpt from the best selling book, *The Great Controversy* enlarges upon the topics presented in our lesson today. You will be richly blessed as you read it.

Though the Reformation gave the Scriptures to all, yet the selfsame principle which was maintained by Rome prevents multitudes in Protestant churches from searching the Bible for themselves. They are taught to accept its teachings as interpreted by the church; and there are thousands who dare receive nothing, however plainly revealed in Scripture, that is contrary to their creed or the established teaching of their church.

Notwithstanding the Bible is full of warnings against false teachers, many are ready thus to commit the keeping of their souls to the clergy. There are today thousands of professors of religion who can give no other reason for points of faith which they hold than that they were so instructed by their religious leaders. They pass by the Saviour's teachings almost unnoticed, and place implicit confidence in the words of the ministers. But are ministers infallible? How can we trust our souls to their guidance unless we know from God's word that they are light bearers? A lack of moral courage to step aside from the beaten track of the world leads many to follow in the steps of learned men; and by their reluctance to investigate for themselves, they are becoming hopelessly fastened in the chains of error. They see that the truth for this time is plainly brought to view in the Bible; and they feel the power of the Holy Spirit attending its proclamation; yet they allow the opposition of the clergy to turn them from the light. Though reason and conscience are convinced, these deluded souls dare not think differently from the minister; and their individual judgment, their eternal interests, are sacrificed to the unbelief, the pride and prejudice, of another.

Many are the ways by which Satan works through human influence to bind his captives. He secures multitudes to himself by attaching them by the silken cords of affection to those who are enemies of the cross of Christ. Whatever this attachment may be, parental, filial, conjugal, or social, the effect is the same; the opposers of truth exert their power to control the conscience, and the souls held under their sway have not sufficient courage or independence to obey their own convictions of duty.

The truth and the glory of God are inseparable; it is impossible for us, with the Bible within our reach, to honor God by erroneous opinions.

— *The Great Controversy*, pp. 596 & 597
The Three Angels’ Messages

First Angel

“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 —

Second Angel

“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 —

Third Angel

“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 ... Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

— Revelation 14:9, 10, & 12 —

www.ThreeAngels.info
Three Cosmic Messages Revealed
by Mark Finley

Study Guide 5 of 10
Lesson 5

An Urgent Call to Action

Let’s suppose you are spending a relaxing evening in the packed Carnegie Hall in New York City listening to the famed London Philharmonic Orchestra play in a guest concert in one of their only appearances in the United States. The music is breathtaking. The audience is totally enraptured by the magnificent performance. Suddenly, in the middle of the concert, someone stands up and yells, “Fire! Fire!” The audience is stunned. They are confused and wonder what to do.

To yell “fire” when there is no fire is a very serious thing. People can be severely injured or trampled in the crush of the crowd as they run for the exits in a false alarm. Crying “fire” when there is no fire endangers public safety and is a crime punishable with heavy consequences. But if there is indeed an emergency and you know it, not to warn those affected by it is gross negligence.

Warnings are valid only if the crisis is real. They have no value in a made-up, fabricated, manufactured crisis. The three angels’ messages are God’s final warning given in love to a world on the verge of a stupendous crisis.

The Bible’s first book, Genesis, helps us to understand the Bible’s last book, Revelation. The crisis that the world faced in Noah’s day is like the crisis the world will face in the last days. Turn please to Genesis 6:3: “And the Lord said, ‘My Spirit shall not strive with man forever.’” There will come a day when Heaven’s final appeal will be made. There will come a day when the Holy Spirit will make His last call to human hearts. There will come a day when the judgments of God will fall upon the land. There will come a day when Jesus will return to deliver His people.
1. **What was the condition of the world in Noah’s day?**

   Read Genesis 6:5, 11 to discover the answer.

   Noah preached for 120 years. Heaven did all it could do. The cancer of sin had to be rooted out of our world; then God would start over again with righteous Noah and his family. Speaking of the last days, Jesus said, “As the days of Noah were ... ” (Matthew 24:37). Once again God will send His final warning message to the world. Once again Heaven is making its final appeal. Through the messages of three angels, Jesus is giving this world its final warning to prepare for His soon return.

**Revelation’s Purpose**

The purpose of the book of Revelation is to prepare a people to be ready for Jesus’ soon return and unite with Him in giving His last-day message to the world. The aged apostle John, a prisoner on Patmos, continues his urgent end-time appeal in Revelation 14.

2. **What urgent appeal does Jesus give His people in Revelation 14:7?**

   What Does It Mean to Fear God?

   The Greek New Testament word for fear in verse 7 is “phobos.” It is used here not in the sense of being afraid of God but in the sense of reverence and respect. It conveys the thought of absolute loyalty to God and full surrender to His will. It is an attitude of mind that is God-centered rather than self-centered. In Scripture the fear, or reverence, of God leads to obedience to His commands. The book of Ecclesiastes puts it too plainly to be misunderstood: “Let us hear the whole conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether
In the light of the judgment hour, Heaven's urgent appeal is for those saved by grace to live godly lives. The gospel not only delivers us from the guilt of our past; it empowers us to live godly, obedient lives in the present. Grace always leads to obedience (see Romans 1:5). We are saved by grace through faith, but salvation by grace does not do away with God's law. It does not negate the need for godly living. Grace is God's unmerited favor, His kindness toward sinners, His mercy toward those who have broken His law. When we are saved by grace through Christ's works and not our own, our response is one of obedience. Motivated by love and empowered by His Holy Spirit, our goal is to live godly lives.

Love is the fulfilling of the law, not the breaking of the law (Romans 13:8-10). So-called love without obedience is not love at all. It is mere hypocrisy, pretense, and show. The apostle John makes this very straightforward point: “He who says ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in Him” (1 John 2:4). God's end-time message of grace will produce a people who are motivated by love and love alone and will keep God's law.

3. How does Revelation 14:12 describe God's last-day people?

What three characteristics of God's people do you find in this text?

(a) _____________________________________________________________

(b) _____________________________________________________________

(c) _____________________________________________________________

The Christ of Scripture never leads us to downplay His law, which is the transcript of His character. Jesus never leads us to minimize the doctrines of the Bible, which reveal more clearly who He is and His plan for this world.

Ellen G. White, a 19th-century religious writer, makes this thought-provoking statement: “Those who think that it matters not what they believe in doctrine, so long as they believe in Jesus Christ, are on dangerous ground” (Christ Triumphant, p. 235). You cannot separate Jesus from doctrine. Jesus is truth incarnate. He is doctrine lived out.

Revelation's final appeal calls us through faith in Jesus to accept the fullness of everything He offers. It calls us to “fear God” and by faith in His redeeming power to live godly, obedient lives.
Revelation’s message is a clarion call to fear, respect, and honor God as life’s true center. The final battle in the great controversy between good and evil is for our minds. Our actions reveal where our thinking process is. To fear God is to make Him first in our lives. It is being like Jesus when we can say, “I always do those things that please Him” (John 8:29).

The message of these three angels continues, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of God’s judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Revelation 14:7).

**What Does It Mean to Give Glory to God?**

Notice this contrast: fearing God speaks of an attitude of God-centered obedience; giving glory to God speaks of our actions or how we live. Fearing God has to do with what we think; giving glory to God has to do with what we do. Fearing God deals with the inner commitment to make God the center of our lives; giving glory to God deals with how our inner convictions translate into a lifestyle that honors God in everything we do.

4. **What appeal does the apostle Paul make regarding how we treat our bodies?**
   Discover the answer in Romans 12:1, 2.

A lot of people have the idea that the way they treat their bodies is unrelated to their faith. The New Testament Greek word for bodies is *somata*, which is better translated as the collective sum of who we are: body, mind, emotions, and soul. The Phillips translation of the Bible translates “reasonable service” as an intelligent act of worship. In other words, when you make a total commitment to “fear God” and “glorify Him” in all you do, giving your mind, body, and emotions to Him, this is an act of intelligent worship.
5. In the apostle Paul’s epistle to the Thessalonians, how does he describe his desire for faithful believers waiting for the coming of Christ? Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24.

Paul’s desire for the church is that God will “sanctify them completely” in spirit (attitudes or disposition), in their souls (spiritual nature), and in their bodies (physical nature). This passage, along with others, clearly reveals that God is interested in the whole person. The plan of the gospel is to restore human beings into the image of God. Sin has ravaged our minds, bodies, and spirits. Jesus came to cleanse our sin-sick minds; restore our broken, diseased bodies; and heal our palsied souls.

When God is the center of our lives, our one desire is to give glory to Him in every aspect of our lives, whether that has to do with our diet and the things we eat, our dress and the things we wear, our entertainment and the things we view, or our music and the things we listen to. We give glory to God as we reveal His character of love to the world through lives committed to doing His will.

Revelation’s Overcomers

Revelation’s message is one of victory, not defeat. It speaks of a people who through His grace and by His power overcome. Jesus’ last-day message is an urgent appeal to live godly lives. It is a clarion call to holiness. The expression “to overcome” or its equivalent is used 24 times in 28 verses in the New Testament. The book of Revelation uses it at least ten times. The original meaning of the word is to conquer, to triumph, or to prevail. It has the connotation of victory. The idea of overcoming is set forth in the description of the seven churches in Revelation 2, 3. The remarkable thing about the verses in these chapters is that they address almost every situation imaginable. A careful reading of the messages to the seven churches indicates that it is possible to overcome spiritual apathy, fierce opposition, religious persecution, the influence of false religious teachers, and the stranglehold of undesirable habits and the bondage of sin.
6. Read the three texts below and answer the questions that follow.
1 John 4:4; 1 John 5:5; and John 16:33.

How is it possible to be an overcomer?
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What role does faith play in overcoming?
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What assurance does Jesus give us that we can overcome?
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A Call to Victory

Jesus calls us to victory and not defeat. Whatever you might be struggling with, whatever undesirable habits seem to keep you in bondage, whatever sins you seem to repeatedly commit, grace is greater than sin. The Holy Spirit’s power is greater than the power of the evil one. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we can be overcomers. We may feel weak, but Jesus is strong. We may be frail, but we can trust His enduring might for deliverance from the chains that bind us. Revelation’s last-day message invites us, by faith, to receive Christ’s victory in our behalf and live in the light of that victory by “fear[ing] God and giv[ing] glory to Him” (Rev. 14:7).

7. What surprising scene do we find in Revelation 17:12-14? Who are the two opponents in this final conflict? Why do you think this scene is surprising?
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This is a remarkable scene. The powers of hell under the leadership of the anti-Christ form an unholy alliance. Church and state unite in an attempt to curtail our liberty and do battle with the Lamb. From a logical standpoint a lamb has no
chance of victory over such a powerful alliance, but according to Revelation 17:14, the Lamb overcomes this alliance of evil. Christ and those who are with Him triumph over the principalities and powers of hell. The faithful followers of Christ, through His power, live lives of loving obedience. One day God will have a group of people of whom it is written, “Here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). The only way anyone can keep the commandments of God is through the faith of Jesus. Notice that our text does not say “faith in Jesus,” although that is extremely important; rather, this expression, “the faith of Jesus,” means something more. It is the quality of faith that enabled Christ to be victorious over Satan’s fiercest temptations. Faith is a gift given to each believer. When we exercise the faith the Holy Spirit puts in our hearts, that faith grows. We overcome not by our own willpower but by the power of the living Christ working through us. We overcome not because of who we are but because of who He is.

**Vicarious Overcomers**

We can overcome because He overcame. We can be victorious because He was victorious. We can triumph over temptation because He triumphed over temptation.

8. **How does the apostle John provide the key to overcoming in Revelation 12:11?**

We overcome by “the blood of the Lamb,” or the power of the cross. Christ’s death on the cross dealt the death blow to Satan. On the cross Jesus triumphed over the “principalities and powers” of hell. By meditating on what Christ has done for us on the cross and by faith accepting His sacrifice for our sins and His victory in our behalf, we, too, can overcome.

Jesus, the divine Son of God, has overcome the wiles of the devil. He faced temptation trusting in the promises of God, surrendering His will to the Father’s will, and depending on the Father’s power. Trusting Him, looking to Him, believing in Him, we, too, can be victorious. Jesus is our all in all, and the three angels’ messages are all about Him.
Did you notice that our text also says that “they overcame him by the word of their testimony?” In other words, they spoke out the victory that Christ had already given them. They believed the promises of God and testified to Christ’s power in their lives.

Will you accept Christ’s death for your sins right now? Will you by faith believe that you, too, can be an overcomer? Will you listen to Heaven’s urgent, last-day appeal in this first angel’s message and give your life totally, completely, right now as we pray?

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Many claim that it matters not what one believes, if his life is only right. But the life is molded by the faith. If light and truth is within our reach, and we neglect to improve the privilege of hearing and seeing it, we virtually reject it; we are choosing darkness rather than light.

“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 16:25). Ignorance is no excuse for error or sin, when there is every opportunity to know the will of God. A man is traveling and comes to a place where there are several roads and a guideboard indicating where each one leads. If he disregards the guideboard, and takes whichever road seems to him to be right, he may be ever so sincere, but will in all probability find himself on the wrong road.

God has given us His word that we may become acquainted with its teachings and know for ourselves what He requires of us. When the lawyer came to Jesus with the inquiry, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” the Saviour referred him to the Scriptures, saying: “What is written in the law? How readest thou?” Ignorance will not excuse young or old, nor release them from the punishment due for the transgression of God’s law; because there is in their hands a faithful presentation of that law and of its principles and claims. It is not enough to have good intentions; it is not enough to do what a man thinks is right or what the minister tells him is right. His soul’s salvation is at stake, and he should search the Scriptures for himself. However strong may be his convictions, however confident he may be that the minister knows what is truth, this is not his foundation. He has a chart pointing out every waymark on the heavenward journey, and he ought not to guess at anything.

It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help we are to form our opinions for ourselves as we are to answer for ourselves before God.

The truths most plainly revealed in the Bible have been involved in doubt and darkness by learned men, who, with a pretense of great wisdom, teach that the Scriptures have a mystical, a secret, spiritual meaning not apparent in the language employed. These men are false teachers. It was to such a class that Jesus declared: “Ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God” (Mark 12:24).

The language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning, unless a symbol or figure is employed. Christ has given the promise: “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine” (John 7:17).

—The Great Controversy, pp. 597 & 598
The Three Angels’ Messages of Revelation 14

First Angel

“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 —

Second Angel

“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 —

Third Angel

“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 ...

Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

— Revelation 14:9, 10, & 12 —

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Lesson 6

Creation Speaks

In the 1840s, social, political, scientific, and religious revolutions changed the world as we know it. Charles Darwin published his first draft of *The Origin of Species* in 1842. This was followed by an essay published in 1844 that further outlined his thoughts on the evolutionary development of living things. By 1859, Darwin’s thoughts had pretty much fully developed. The impact of evolutionary thought on science, philosophy, psychology, and religion is incalculable. If we are some aberration of nature, some random collection of chemical components, or some chance arrangement of cells, we become little more than advanced animals.

Simultaneously, with the development of evolutionary thought, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were rocking the world with the publication of *The Communist Manifesto*, first published in German in London; then published in various languages throughout the world. These two movements—evolution and communism—developing simultaneously, placed an extremely low view on divinely created human life by dismissing the concept of a personal God who is the Creator of the universe.

A Message for the Hour

God would not allow the world to be without a witness. It was at this precise moment in the 1840s that God raised up a divine movement of destiny to proclaim His last-day message to a world longing to discover meaning, purpose, and identity. A group of Bible-believing Christians from multiple faith backgrounds began studying the age-old prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. It was there that they discovered a message tailor-made for the times—a message suited to answer the great questions of a generation anticipating the soon return of Christ.

The central issue in the book of Revelation is worship. We were created as worshiping beings. Every one of us will worship something or someone. True worship, the worship of the Creator, enables us to discover life’s true purpose. It provides a
reason for living. It gives us not only something to die for but, even more significantly, something to live for. The message of the first angel in Revelation 14 is to “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).

**Worship the Creator**

In our last few presentations, we discovered that the expression “fear God and give glory to Him” speaks of making God the center of our lives. This inner commitment of absolute loyalty to God results in living lives of obedience to His will and pleasing Him in all we do. When self is the center of our lives rather than God, our lives loose meaning, and we miss the purpose that we were created for. This decision to dedicate our lives completely to God is made more urgent in the blazing light of eternity.

1. **Who is Revelation 14:7 calling us to worship? What significance does this have in the light of the theory of evolution and the rise of atheistic communism?**

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   This is a clarion call to worship the Creator at a time when most of the scientific and religious world have accepted the theory of evolution. Evolution dismisses the idea of a personal God, negates the biblical story of Creation, and devalues human beings. It provides no basis for a moral ethic outside of ourselves.

**Why Creation Matters**

Let’s return to the beginning of the Bible so we can better understand the end of the Bible. Let’s read the first verse of the first book of the Bible, Genesis, together. Genesis 1:1 declares, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This verse is the foundation for all that follows in Scripture. “In the beginning, God created ... .” The Hebrew word for create in this passage is *bara*. It refers to something God did. This Hebrew verb is linked to God’s creative activity. God has the ability, the awesome power, to create something out of nothing. God speaks, and the earth comes into existence. He speaks, and this planet is carpeted with living green. He speaks, and trees and flowers spring forth in all their pristine beauty. He speaks, and sun, moon, and stars instantly appear in the sky.
The God of Creation; the God who brought the sun, moon, and stars into existence; the God whose awesome power created this planet and filled it with living things; the God who delivered His people from Egyptian bondage, guided them in their wilderness wanderings, rained manna out of heaven, caused the walls of Jericho to collapse, defeated Israel's enemies; this God is interested in you and me and unleashes creative power to defeat the enemy who battles for our soul—and this makes all the difference.

2. What assurance of His concern and care does our Creator give us? What three terms does He use to describe His attitude toward us? See Isaiah 43:1-3.

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According to the prophet Isaiah, God knows us each by name. We are not merely a blob of animated mud, not simply skin covering bones or an advanced species of the animal creation. We are human beings created in God's image. In His eyes we are precious, honorable, and loved.

The fact that God created us is the very basis of our worth. We are valuable because we are one of a kind, unique in all of God's creation. There is no one else like us in all the universe.

3. Read Psalm 139:14-18 and write on the lines below what you personally get out of these verses.

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Did you grasp the significance of David's words? God thinks about us more times each day then there are grains of sand by the seaside. In other words, there is never a moment when we are not in God's mind.

God has a purpose for your life. He has given us life, sustains our lives, and always works through all the circumstances of life, good or bad, to draw us closer to Him. Since He thinks of us constantly and we are on His mind moment by moment, we must be important to Him. It is the thought of His love for us that motivates our love
for Him. As the apostle John states, “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). It is His love, through the power of the Holy Spirit, that changes us and transforms us to be more like Him.

Jesus has something much more to offer than frustrated defeat. He is the all-powerful Creator with unlimited, infinite power that is ours when we grasp it by faith. We are transformed, changed, made new by the power of the Creator.

4. What assurance do we have in 2 Corinthians 5:17 regarding God's creative power in our lives?

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The apostle Paul makes it abundantly plain. In Christ we are a new creation. The God who created the world with infinite power longs to re-create us in His image. Creation speaks of a God who in the last days gives us the strength to overcome Satan’s fiercest temptations, his most cunning enticements, and his most subtle deceptions. Revelation’s call to worship the Creator is a call to live praise-filled lives that rejoice in the strength that He gives us to face each day. Revelation reveals that Jesus has never lost a battle with Satan yet. He is our triumphant Lord.

There is a second aspect of Creation that speaks to us at a time of doubt and uncertainty regarding the future. God is a God of infinite design and careful planning. Creation speaks of a divine plan. Since He created us, we are valuable in His sight. Whatever the circumstances of our lives, we are special to God.

5. How does God express His thoughts toward each one of us? Reflect on Jeremiah 29:11 and write your thoughts on the lines below.

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Life is not a haphazard, random assortment of events with little or no meaning. Look around you! Nature has a definite design. Think of the planets traveling at incredibly fast speeds around the sun in an orderly, predictable pattern. Consider the ocean tides, the migration of the birds, the intricacies of the human body—each of these gives evidence of careful planning, order, symmetry, and design. The same God that has carefully planned this world and everything in it has a marvelous individualized plan for each one of us.
Creation Is the Basis of Our Worship

Life is a gift. We did not choose to be born. In His grace and mercy God brought us into existence to experience the joy of life in all its fullness. Life is not an accident. It is a divine event brought about by a Creator God. Revelation 4:11 underlines the fact that God is the all-powerful Creator, and by His will “all things ... exist and were created.”


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Worship has to do with reverence, adoration, and honor. It declares the greatness of someone worthy of having us bow before them in heartfelt praise. The fact that God created us is the basis of all true worship. We bow before Him acknowledging that He created all things through Jesus Christ (see Ephesians 3:9). Our existence is not the result of blind chance or accidental happenstance. It is the purposeful act of God. We really have only one of two choices: either life is the result of pure biological chance or life is a gift of God with purpose and meaning.

Since we are living in a world of brokenness and sin, we often experience less-than-ideal circumstances. In this world there are physical and mental deformities. Still, all life is precious to God. Those who are less fortunate are not less valuable to God. Human beings are not defined by their intellectual capacities or their physical abilities. Human life has worth because a divine Creator brought us into existence and has a purpose for each individual.

Since life is the purposeful act of God, all life is sacred—whether that is the life of the unborn or the life of the aged. When we worship God as the Creator, we acknowledge the sanctity of life. Since every human being is unique, to lightly regard life is a sin against the Creator of all life. The call to worship the Creator is the call to understand the value of every human being.

Creation speaks of a God longing for personal fellowship and intimate relationship. Adam and Eve were created for fellowship with God and one another. Since each one of us is a unique creation and there is no one else like us in the universe, God has a place in His heart that only we can fill.
7. **Read Psalm 18:19 and Psalm 33:15. What do these passages tell us about our value to God?**

Creation speaks of our value in God’s sight. It speaks of our worth to Him. We are not alone in the universe—some speck of cosmic dust. He created us. He fashioned us. He made us. We did not evolve. We are not a genetic accident. There is no one else like you in the universe. If God loses you, there is no way He can replace you. You are one of a kind. He has a place in His heart that only you can fill. No one else can fill your place, and you cannot fill anyone else’s place. You are irreplaceable.

Creation is at the heart of all true worship. In Revelation 14:7, God gives all humanity a call to “worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.” This expression is a quote from the Sabbath commandment in Exodus 20:8, 11, when God says, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ... 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.” The Sabbath is a memorial of Creation, and God’s last message to every “nation, kindred, tongue and people” is an urgent appeal to worship the Creator.

8. **What major event took place at the conclusion of Creation week?**

*Read Genesis 2:1-3, and list the three things God did to set the seventh-day Sabbath aside as an emblem, or sign, of His creative authority.*

As we worship on the Sabbath, we open our hearts to receive the special blessing God placed on that day that was placed on no other day. The Sabbath reminds us that we are not cosmic orphans on some spinning globe of rock. It points us to a Creator who created us with a purpose and loved us too much to abandon us when we drifted from that purpose. The Sabbath reminds us of the One who has provided all the good things of life for us.
The Sabbath is an eternal symbol of our rest in Him. It is a special sign of loyalty to the Creator (Ezekiel 20:12, 20). Rather than an arbitrary legalistic requirement, it reveals that true rest from righteousness by works is found in Him. The Sabbath speaks of a God who has achieved so we can rest in His achievements.

True Sabbath rest is the rest of grace in the loving arms of the One who created us, the One who redeemed us, and the One who is coming again for us. The message of Revelation 14, God’s end-time message, calls us to rest in His love and care each Sabbath. It calls us to remember the One who created us and give Him glory.

The Sabbath is also the eternal link between the perfection of Eden in the past and the glory of the new heavens and the new earth in the future. One day God will create a new heaven and a new earth. Until that day, as we worship Him with all our hearts as the Creator of heaven and earth, we rest in His everlasting love, praise Him for His grace, and long for the day when He will return and make all things right.

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If the Sabbath is new to you, I am happy to answer any of your questions after class or meet with you personally. I can also provide you with a booklet that explains this subject in much more detail. Let’s pray together. Our all-powerful Creator loves it when we come to Him in prayer.
If men would but take the Bible as it reads, if there were no false teachers to mislead and confuse their minds, a work would be accomplished that would make angels glad and that would bring into the fold of Christ thousands upon thousands who are now wandering in error.

We should exert all the powers of the mind in the study of the Scriptures and should task the understanding to comprehend, as far as mortals can, the deep things of God; yet we must not forget that the docility and submission of a child is the true spirit of the learner. Scriptural difficulties can never be mastered by the same methods that are employed in grappling with philosophical problems. We should not engage in the study of the Bible with that self-reliance with which so many enter the domains of science, but with a prayerful dependence upon God and a sincere desire to learn His will. We must come with a humble and teachable spirit to obtain knowledge from the great I AM. Otherwise, evil angels will so blind our minds and harden our hearts that we shall not be impressed by the truth.

Many a portion of Scripture which learned men pronounce a mystery, or pass over as unimportant, is full of comfort and instruction to him who has been taught in the school of Christ. One reason why many theologians have no clearer understanding of God’s word is, they close their eyes to truths which they do not wish to practice. An understanding of Bible truth depends not so much on the power of intellect brought to the search as on the singleness of purpose, the earnest longing after righteousness.

The Bible should never be studied without prayer. The Holy Spirit alone can cause us to feel the importance of those things easy to be understood, or prevent us from wresting truths difficult of comprehension. It is the office of heavenly angels to prepare the heart so to comprehend God’s word that we shall be charmed with its beauty, admonished by its warnings, or animated and strengthened by its promises. We should make the psalmist’s petition our own: “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law” (Psalm 119:18).

—The Great Controversy, pp. 598 & 599
First Angel

“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 —

Second Angel

“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 —

Third Angel

“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 ...

Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

— Revelation 14:9, 10, & 12 —

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THREE COSMIC MESSAGES REVEALED

A Refuge in a World of Confusion

LESSON 7
Three Cosmic Messages Revealed
by Mark Finley

Study Guide 7 of 10
Lesson 7

A Refuge in a World of Confusion

In November 1998, Charles Colson wrote an article entitled “Astronauts Who Found God: A Spiritual View of Space.” Astronaut John Glenn is a good example of those whose faith in God was strengthened after his space journeys. His return to outer space 36 years after his awe-inspiring orbit around the Earth is a reminder of the kind of heroism that makes space exploration possible. “To look out at this kind of creation and not believe in God is to me impossible,” Glenn told reporters in 1998, just after returning from his final trip to space at age 77. “It just strengthens my faith.”

Many of the early astronaut heroes also had a deep religious faith. Their view of infinite space increased their faith. It did not diminish it in any way. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin are best known as the first astronauts to land on the moon and take that “giant leap for mankind.” But you probably don’t know that before they emerged from the spaceship, Aldrin pulled out a Bible, a silver chalice, and sacramental bread and wine. There on the moon, his first act was to celebrate communion.

Frank Borman was commander of the first space crew to travel beyond Earth’s orbit. Looking down on Earth from 250,000 miles away, Borman radioed back a message, quoting Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” As he later explained, “I had an enormous feeling that there had to be a power greater than any of us—that there was a God, that there was indeed a beginning” ( Adapted from Charles Colson’s article, “Astronauts Who Found God in Outer Space, Breakpoint Commentary, Nov. 5, 1998; accessed online May 2, 2021).

Many of this world’s greatest thinkers have been so moved by the incredible design, complexity, order, and vastness of the universe that they have developed a bedrock faith in God. Let me give you some examples.

Some people think science is antagonistic to faith. Yet most of the great figures who shaped the scientific enterprise from the beginning have been devout believers—people such as Copernicus, who discovered that the sun, not the earth, is the center of the planets; Isaac Newton, who discovered the law of gravity; Blaise Pascal,
who invented the first calculator; and James Maxwell, who formulated the laws of electromagnetism. All were Christians who felt that the study of nature did not challenge their faith but rather strengthened it. In the intricacies, complexities, and intricate design of the natural world they saw an infinite Creator God revealed.

1. **What do the following Bible texts tell us about God? What title do they give Him? Reflect on what you read in Isaiah 40:28, 29; 43:1-3, 15, and write your thoughts on the lines below.**

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Throughout the Bible God is revealed as the all-wise, all-knowing, and all-powerful Creator. The sacred pages of Scripture also reveal Him as the all-caring Creator who knows each one of us intimately and is concerned about our daily lives. The God who created the universe with all its vastness and complexity knows the name of everyone on Planet Earth and in His infinite love cares for each one as if there were not another person alive. The reality of Creation is the basis of all true worship.

2. **Compare Revelation 14:7 and Revelation 4:11. What do they tell you about the very foundation of true worship?**

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The question might be asked, “Why worship at all?” The answer is simple. We live because God lives. The Life-giver has given us life. The Creator has created us. We are not an anomaly or a genetic accident. Life is a gift flowing from the unfathomable life of the Life-giver.

3. **Has God given us a sign of His creative authority and power? What does it mean to “worship Christ as Creator?” See Exodus 20:8-11.**

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The seventh-day Sabbath reminds us each week that we are not alone in the universe. It is a perpetual sign that God is the Creator and we are His creatures. Each Sabbath as we worship, we rest in His love. We rejoice in His care. The Sabbath is a great stress reliever. Resting in the love, wisdom, and strength of our Creator we are at peace. The Sabbath is rich with a depth of meaning. It reminds us not only that God created us; it is also a weekly reminder that we are part of the whole of humanity created by God.

**Created by the Same God**

We are bound together as human beings, part of the family of God, because we have the same Father. God created us all!

4. **What profound truth regarding Creation do we discover in Acts 17:24-26?**

The essence of humanity's dignity is a common Creation. The fact that we are uniquely created by God places value on every human being. We belong to the same family. We are brothers and sisters fashioned, shaped, molded by the same God. Creation provides a true sense of self-worth. The Creator of the universe created us. Each one of us is special, a one-of-a-kind creation. This is the hope-inspiring message of Revelation's final message to a world broiled in injustice, racial tensions, and national conflicts. If we truly worship Christ as the Creator, we will value all life as He values life. We will be concerned about others as He is concerned about others. We will be sensitive to the needs of the marginalized and the poor because they are His children too. We will see one another through the lens of our common creation regardless of ethnic diversity, language, or culture.

**Evolution Is Dehumanizing**

Evolution, in contrast, is dehumanizing. If we are merely an advanced animal, products of chance and natural selection, where is the basis for morality? Who determines what is right and what is wrong? Does culture or society set the norms for behavior, or has God revealed these norms both through an enlightened conscience and in His Word? The concept of Creation provides a moral imperative for living. Just as our Creator has set in motion laws that govern the universe and keep it functioning at an optimum level, so God has established moral laws to ensure the
happiness of humans. He has also given to each one of us the freedom of choice to obey or disobey these eternal laws of life.

The One who made us holds us responsible for our attitudes and actions. Revelation 14:7 announces that the hour of God’s judgment has come. Since we were created by God with the capacity to make moral choices, we are responsible for the decisions we make.

The concept of Creation leads us back to the Creator. It establishes our self-worth. It forges ties with all humanity. It inspires confidence in a God who cares. It links us to God’s inexhaustible power, and it encourages us with the hope of life after death.

The Sabbath, a Link to our Family of Origin

The Sabbath calls us back to our roots. It’s a link to our family of origin. The Sabbath has been observed continuously since the beginning of earth’s history. It is an unbroken connection back through time to our Creator. It tells us that we are not just a product of time plus chance. It keeps us focused on the fact that we are children of God and calls us to an intimate relationship with Him.

The devil has introduced a not-so-subtle counterfeit. The counterfeit goes something like this: God is the prime cause of Creation, but He took long ages to bring the world into existence. This approach attempts to harmonize so-called “scientific data” with the Genesis account. It asserts that the days of Creation are long, indefinite periods of time. It accepts the evolutionary viewpoint that the earth is hundreds of millions of years old. This viewpoint creates far more problems than it solves. It completely disregards the clear teaching of Scripture.

5. According to the psalmist David, how was this world created?
   Read Psalm 33:6, 9 and Hebrews 11:3.

   God created the world by His word in six literal days of twenty-four hours each and rested the seventh. To accept the false idea of long, indefinite periods is to challenge the very reason for the Sabbath. If God did not create the world in six literal days, what significance does the command “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” have? (Exodus 20:8). It would make absolutely no sense at all to have the Sabbath as an eternal legacy of a six-day Creation week if a six-day Creation week never existed. To accept long ages of creation is to also challenge the authority of the Bible and reduce the Genesis account to an allegory, a mere story, or a perception of Moses rather than a fact.
The great controversy that began in heaven millennia ago was over the question of God's authority. Satan claimed that God was unfair and unjust. He rebelled against the eternal laws of the universe given by a loving God to maintain heaven's peace and joy. Obedience that flows out of a heart that loves God is at the very core of the great controversy between good and evil. The Sabbath is not some arbitrary command. It is part of God's last-day message to the world.

The Sabbath’s Reassuring Message

It is because our world so desperately needs the reassuring message of Creation that God gave us the Sabbath. In the mid-1800s, when the evolutionary hypothesis was taking the intellectual world by storm, God sent a message of incredible hope to restore the truth about the Sabbath that was lost sight of during the Middle Ages.

6. Carefully compare the first angel’s message in Revelation 14:6, 7, Exodus 20:11, and Genesis 2:1-3 on the lines below. What similarities do you see?

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As recorded in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, God gave the Sabbath to humanity as a gift of love. Satan has attacked the Creator’s Sabbath through the theory of evolution. To meet this challenge God sent a message to restore the truth of Creation in the Bible's last book, the Revelation. The Revelation of Jesus Christ is a call to worship Jesus as the Creator. Satan has made every attempt to distort the idea of Creation because he hates Jesus and does not want Him to receive the worship due Him as our Creator and Redeemer. The Sabbath is at the center of the great controversy over Christ’s worthiness to receive worship.

Throughout the centuries He has been and still is the God of Creation who has not forgotten His creation. He is the God of beginnings who is with us to the end of time. He is the God who began this world, is ever present in this world, and will never forsake His people of this world.

He is the God who delivers, the God who provides, and the God who guides. The God of Creation is the God of unlimited power. He is the God of the impossible. Creation speaks of God's infinite power, which is available in the battle between good and evil in each of our lives. That’s why Creation matters. Creation speaks of an all-powerful God who can re-create our hearts in His image. Creation speaks of a God
who in the last days gives us the strength to overcome Satan’s fiercest temptations, his most cunning enticements, and his most subtle deceptions. Revelation’s call to worship the Creator is a call to live praise-filled lives that rejoice in the strength that He gives us to face each day.

The Sabbath—A Palace in Time

Someone has rightly said, “We live in the jet age, but we are not jets.” The 21st century might be termed the age of rush, hurry, stress, anxiety, and multitasking. Imagine a woman driving to work while eating the last remnants of her breakfast, talking to her husband on the cell phone, and listening to the latest traffic report on the radio; or a man playing with his son while he checks messages on the cell phone and thinks about the problems with his employees at work. Life has become intensely fast, and images on our iPhones and games on our computers and tablets have not helped us concentrate on a relationship with God, our families, and those closest to us.

God has a special blessing in store for those who keep the Sabbath. At Creation the Lord Himself blessed the Sabbath, and His blessing rests upon it today. The Sabbath is a place of refuge in a weary world. Each week we leave the cares of this world and enter God’s retreat center—the Sabbath. The famed Jewish author Abraham Heschel calls the Sabbath a palace in time. Each seventh day God’s heavenly palace descends to earth. Jesus invites us into the glory of His presence for this 24-hour period to spend a time of intimate fellowship with Him. At Creation, the Carpenter from Nazareth built a special dwelling for us. We can find refuge there. We can be safe there. His work is complete. We can know that in Christ we are accepted by our loving heavenly Father.

When we rest on the Sabbath, we are resting in His loving care. We are resting in His righteousness. We are resting in anticipation of our eternal rest in the new heavens and the new earth that are soon to come. At the end of Creation week, God rested, symbolizing a finished work. Each Sabbath as we rest on the seventh day of the week, we, too, declare, “God, I am resting in the completed work of Christ on the cross.”

Here is another reason why God gave us the Sabbath. It shows that the Lord is the One who sanctifies us. He can give us victory over those health-destroying habits, those negative attitudes, and those addictive behaviors. The Sabbath is a continual living promise of God's ability to help us grow through all the ups and downs, tragedies, and triumphs of our lives.

8. What do you discover about the great controversy between good and evil when you compare verses 7, 9, and 12 in Revelation 14?

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These verses make it clear that the central issue in the conflict between good and evil, Christ and Satan, in the last days is worship. Two worships are contrasted in these verses—worshiping the Creator and worshiping the beast. We have already discovered that the Sabbath is God's eternal sign of His creative power. Revelation 14:12 reveals that those who have the “faith of Jesus” are loyal to God in earth's final crisis and keep His commandments in the face of ridicule, opposition, persecution, and death.

A Forever Relationship With God

The Sabbath beautifully represents a forever relationship with God. It stretches from paradise lost to paradise restored. We need that kind of forever in our lives. We need a place that reassures us that we are in an eternal relationship with the heavenly Father. In the Sabbath, we can find a sense of contented rest. We can get in touch with our roots as His children there.

The message of the three angels flying through the heavens appealing for us to worship the Creator is heaven’s answer to the hopeless despair of many in the 21st century. It is the answer to the dehumanizing philosophy of atheistic evolution. It is the answer to worry, tension, and fear. It is the answer to a lack of power and a lack of purpose. It is the answer to the hopelessness of our society because it points us to assurance in Jesus today, tomorrow, and forever.

Do you accept the three angels’ urgent plea for us to worship the Creator? Let us pray.
The following excerpt from the best selling book, *The Great Controversy* enlarges upon the topics presented in our lesson today. You will be richly blessed as you read it.

Temptations often appear irresistible because, through neglect of prayer and the study of the Bible, the tempted one cannot readily remember God's promises and meet Satan with the Scripture weapons. But angels are round about those who are willing to be taught in divine things; and in the time of great necessity they will bring to their remembrance the very truths which are needed. Thus “when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him” (Isaiah 59:19).

Jesus promised His disciples: “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26). But the teachings of Christ must previously have been stored in the mind in order for the Spirit of God to bring them to our remembrance in the time of peril. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart,” said David, “that I might not sin against Thee” (Psalm 119:11).

All who value their eternal interests should be on their guard against the inroads of skepticism. The very pillars of truth will be assailed. It is impossible to keep beyond the reach of the sarcasms and sophisms, the insidious and pestilent teachings, of modern infidelity. Satan adapts his temptations to all classes. He assails the illiterate with a jest or sneer, while he meets the educated with scientific objections and philosophical reasoning, alike calculated to excite distrust or contempt of the Scriptures. Even youth of little experience presume to insinuate doubts concerning the fundamental principles of Christianity. And this youthful infidelity, shallow as it is, has its influence. Many are thus led to jest at the faith of their fathers and to do despite to the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29). Many a life that promised to be an honor to God and a blessing to the world has been blighted by the foul breath of infidelity.

—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 599 & 600
The Three Angels’ Messages

**First Angel**

“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 —

**Second Angel**

“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 —

**Third Angel**

“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 … Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

— Revelation 14:9, 10, & 12 —

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THREE COSMIC MESSAGES REVEALED

Solving the Mystery of Religious Confusion

LESSON 8
Three Cosmic Messages Revealed
by Mark Finley

Study Guide 8 of 10
Lesson 8
Solving the Mystery of Religious Confusion

The book of Revelation describes two systems of religion. It contains a strong appeal to men and women living in the last days of earth’s history. This appeal is summarized in the symbolism of two women: the woman dressed in white in Revelation 12, and the woman dressed in scarlet in Revelation 17.

In Revelation 12, there is a striking symbol of a woman dressed in white. She is faithful to her true lover, Jesus. She is not defiled with the corruption of false doctrines. Throughout the Bible, a pure woman symbolizes the bride of Jesus, or the true church. In Jeremiah 6:2, the prophet says, “I have likened the daughter of Zion to a lovely and delicate woman.”

The “daughter of Zion” is a term describing God’s people (see Isaiah 51:16). Here God compares His people to a beautiful, pure woman. The apostle Paul likens Christ’s church to His bride (Ephesians 5:26, 27, 31, 32).

1. What characteristics does Revelation 12:17 use to describe Christ’s church, or His bride?

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Down through the centuries God has always had a people who are faithful to Him. His Word has been the guide of their lives. Motivated by love, empowered by the Spirit, these grace-filled believers live lives of godly obedience. Satan hates Christ’s church, so he wages war on those who “keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17).
Apostasy Arises

Revelation 14 describes two religious streams flowing from entirely different fountains—the fountain of truth and the fountain of error. Revelation’s everlasting gospel presents the powerful truths of God’s Word to a world desperately seeking for meaning. The devil’s counterfeit system, termed “Babylon,” is a distortion of truth and originates with the father of lies (see John 8:44).

2. What solemn announcement does Revelation 14:8 make?

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John wrote the book of Revelation at the end of the first century. By this time the city of Babylon was a dust heap of mud bricks. It was a city in ruins, a faint reminder of its previous splendor. When John wrote, the literal city of Babylon had been destroyed for more than five hundred years.

Revelation is a book of vivid symbolism. In the prophecies of Revelation, Babylon represents a false religious system. In Revelation 17, a woman dressed in purple and scarlet strides across the landscape of history. This woman rides upon a scarlet-colored beast. The Bible calls her a harlot woman. She has left her true lover, Jesus Christ. Here the apostle John gives us a graphic portrayal of an apostate system of religion uniting with the state.

3. How does John describe this fallen church system in Revelation 17:1, 2?

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This apostate religious system compromises the truths of Scripture. The Bible says, “She sits on many waters” (Revelation 17:1). Verse 15 explains this symbolism: “Then he said to me, ‘The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.’” The fallen church system has an international reach influencing people around the world with her deceptions.
A Union of Church and State

Revelation 17:2 continues its explanation of the mystery of Babylon the Great by declaring that she has “committed fornication” with the kings of the earth. What is fornication? It’s an illicit union. In the fallen church system, the church unites with the state. In the true church system, the church is united with Jesus Christ. The fallen church looks to the political leaders of the earth for power and authority. It seeks the state to enforce its decrees.

Revelation 17:2 continues its dramatic portrayal: “And the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.” The fallen church gets her power from the state, but she also influences the state to support her falsehoods. She passes around her wine cup of erroneous doctrine. The world becomes intoxicated with these false religious ideas. Millions drink of the “wine of Babylon” and are deceived.

In Bible prophecy, a beast represents a king or a kingdom. When a nation turns its back on the principles of God’s kingdom, it becomes beastlike. When the church leaves her true lover and looks to the state for power and support, it becomes the harlot.

4. What color were the garments of the spiritual leaders of this religious system, and what does the woman have in her hand? See Revelation 17:4.

This fallen religious system, whose colors are purple and scarlet, has a wine cup in her hand. All the world drinks of the cup of her false doctrines and is deceived, except the faithful people of God.

Mystery of Babylon the Great

5. Discover the name on the woman’s forehead in Revelation 17:5.

In the Old Testament, shortly after the flood, a group of men and women rebelled against God. God promised that there would never again be a worldwide flood. Disbelieving His word, they built a tower to reach into the heavens to protect
themselves in the eventuality of another global catastrophe. The Tower of Babel, the site of ancient Babylon, was built in direct defiance to the word of God. It was at Babel that God confused their languages. The Genesis account puts it this way: “Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth” (Genesis 11:9). It was on the site of the Tower of Babel that ancient Babylon was built.

Spiritual Babylon represents religious confusion, or a religion based on human traditions rather than the Word of God.

**A Human Leader or a Divine Head**

In the days of ancient Babylon, church and state united. When King Nebuchadnezzar sat in his temple on his royal throne, he supposedly spoke for the gods. On one occasion, as an act of defiance of the true God, the Babylonian king passed a universal decree enforcing worship of a golden idol and commanded all his subjects to bow down.

Once again in the last days of earth's history, a church-state system called spiritual Babylon will arise with a spiritual leader claiming to speak as God. There will be one whose word will be declared to be the very word of God. Throughout the centuries the Roman pontiffs have declared that they stand in the place of God on earth. In his Encyclical Letter of June 20, 1894, Pope Leo XIII stated, “We hold upon this earth the place of Almighty God.” Ferraris’ Ecclesiastical Dictionary adds, “The Pope is of great authority and power that he can modify, explain, or interpret even divine laws. ... The Pope can modify divine law, since his power is not of man, but of God, and he acts as vicegerent of God upon earth” (Lucius Ferraris, *Prompta Bibliotheca, “Papa,”* vol. 2, translated). The apostle Paul adds these words exposing this power, “Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4). We have discovered the first key to identifying spiritual Babylon. It is an apostate religious system that substitutes human teaching for the divine revelation recorded in the sacred Scriptures.

**Babylon Was the Center of Idolatry**

Babylon was also the center of image worship. Idolatry was at the heart of Babylonian worship. The Babylonians believed that these images were representations of their deities. Spiritual Babylon is a system of religion that places emphasis on worshiping religious deities through images.

Idol worship limits the ability of the Holy Spirit to impress upon our minds the things of eternity. They are often perceived as sacred and receive the homage that belongs to God alone. Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer, is also our Intercessor. He
invites us to worship Him directly, not through the medium of a wooden image or one carved of stone.

6. **Compare Exodus 20:4, 5 with Psalm 115:4-8. What stands out to you?**

   [Blank space for answers]

   Babylon used images prolifically in its worship service, and many of those images found their way from paganism to Rome and into the Christian church. The images of Babylon simply represented the Babylonian gods and were the vehicle through which to worship those gods. Tragically, millions of Christians revere so-called images as objects of worship. This is one of Satan’s deceptions to cloud their minds from the truth of God’s Word.

   In 1 Timothy 2:5 the apostle Paul states that there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ. There is salvation in no other (Acts 4:12). Christ is the “image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). We come to God through our mighty Intercessor, Jesus Christ. Jesus is our Savior, our Intercessor, our Priest, and our coming King.

7. **What warning does the Bible give us in Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25?**

   [Blank space for answers]

   Millions of people will not suspect this final, fatal, last-day delusion. They will be led astray by a popular religious power that appeals to the majority with its falsehoods. There are multiple parallels between the teachings of Old Testament Babylon and Revelation’s spiritual Babylon. One of these parallels is spiritualism.

8. **According to Revelation 18:2, what link is there between the fall of Babylon and spiritualism?**

   [Blank space for answers]
The Babylonians believed that at death the disembodied soul descended into the spirit world. The teaching that when you die an immortal soul continues eternally is at the heart of all pagan religions.

9. **How were some Israelites influenced by the Babylonian teaching on death and immortality?** Read Ezekiel 8:13, 14.

Tammuz was the Babylonian god of vegetation. The Babylonians believed that when winter darkened the sky, Tammuz had died. But in the spring, there would be a resurrection. Some of God’s people, the Jews, accepted this Babylonian concept. This idea that the soul is immortal has become a part of most Christian religions.

10. **What clear instruction did God give His people about life after death?** Read Ecclesiastes 9:5; Job 14:12; Job 19:25.

The Bible teaching on death is clear. Death is an unconscious rest until Jesus returns.

11. **How did Jesus describe death in John 11:11-14?**

Bible writers often liken death to a sleep. In at least 53 places in the Bible, death is described as a sleep or a peaceful rest. The teaching of the Bible is clear: the righteous, or believers, sleep until Jesus returns and then awake on that glorious resurrection morning to meet Christ at His return (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54).

12. **How does Revelation describe the devil’s working in the last days?** Read Revelation 16:13.
Satan will bring about the final union of church and state through spiritualistic deceptions. Spiritualism will pave the way for the last deception of Satan in his attempt to control this planet. The three angels’ messages warn us against this last-day deception by revealing the truth about death. Revelation 14:13 declares, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.’” In Scripture death is a rest, a sleep, until the return of our Lord. The idea of the immortality of the soul greatly diminishes the doctrine of the second coming of Christ. A false understanding of death opens the way for the deceptive influence of spiritualism. The next great deception focuses specifically on worship.

Babylon Was Also the Center of Sun Worship


13. What did the prophet Ezekiel write about the influence of sun worship in Israel? Read Ezekiel 8:16.

With their backs toward the Temple of God, which housed the law of God, these men worshiped the sun toward the east. Satan is the master deceiver, and here he substitutes the worship of the sun for worshipping the Creator on the Sabbath.

In Revelation 14, 17, John describes a time when the principles of Babylon, including sun worship, would slip into the Christian church during an age of compromise. The casual conversion of Constantine in the early part of the fourth century caused great joy in the Roman Empire. Constantine had a strong affinity for sun worship. Renowned Roman historian Edward Gibbon says, “The Sun was universally celebrated as the invincible guide and protector of Constantine” (Edward Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. 3 (London: 1838), p. 237).

In A.D. 321, Constantine passed the first Sunday law. This Edict stated, “On the venerable day of the Sun let the Magistrates and the people residing in the cities rest, and let all workshops be closed” (Edict of Constantine, A.D. 321, emphasis supplied). This law should not be overstated. It was not a law enforcing Sunday observance for all of Constantine's subjects, but it did strengthen the observance of Sunday in the minds of the Roman population.
It was in succeeding decades that emperors and popes continued through state decrees and church councils to establish Sunday as the singular day of worship. Here is a quote from The Catholic World on the same subject: “The Sun was a foremost god with heathendom. ... Hence the Church in these countries would seem to have said, ‘Keep that old pagan name. It shall remain consecrated, sanctified.’ And thus, the pagan Sunday, dedicated to Balder, became the Christian Sunday, sacred to Jesus” (Catholic World, March 1994, p. 809).

Here is a remarkable statement by Dr. Edward T. Hiscox, author of the Baptist Church Manual. In 1893, he addressed a group of hundreds of Baptist ministers and shocked them as he explained how Sunday came into the Christian church.

“What a pity that it [Sunday] comes branded with the mark of paganism, and christened with the name of the sun god, then adopted and sanctioned by the papal apostasy, and bequeathed as a sacred legacy to Protestantism.” Even for the casual observer of church history, it is obvious that pagan practices have crept into the Christian church.

John the Revelator makes an urgent appeal for honest-hearted people in Babylon—in apostate churches teaching contrary to biblical teachings—to “come out of her, my people.” (Revelation 18:4). The message of the second angel in Revelation 14 is “Babylon is fallen, is fallen” (verse 8). In Revelation 17 John pictures a woman riding on a scarlet-colored beast. Church and state unite. Falsehood prevails. Demons work their miracles to deceive. The world catapults into its final conflict. The people of God are maligned, ridiculed, oppressed, and persecuted, but through the power of His Holy Spirit they stand steadfast. All the forces of evil cannot break their loyalty to Christ.

14. How does God describe His end-time people in Revelation 14:12?

God is giving His children who are entrenched in error one final, last-day appeal.

“And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.’ ... 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’” (Revelation 18:2, 4). Heaven’s appeal is to come out of every church that does not teach faithfulness to Scripture and obedience to the law of God.

You may be the only one in your family or your community who now understands God’s last-day message and responds to His final appeal. God is calling you. In the strongest appeal possible He says to you personally, “Come out of her, my people.”

Would you like to bow your head right now, wherever you are, and respond to His call?
The following excerpt from the best selling book, *The Great Controversy* enlarges upon the topics presented in our lesson today. You will be richly blessed as you read it.

All who trust to the boastful decisions of human reason and imagine that they can explain divine mysteries and arrive at truth unaided by the wisdom of God are entangled in the snare of Satan.

We are living in the most solemn period of this world’s history. The destiny of earth’s teeming multitudes is about to be decided. Our own future well-being and also the salvation of other souls depend upon the course which we now pursue. We need to be guided by the Spirit of truth. Every follower of Christ should earnestly inquire: “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” We need to humble ourselves before the Lord, with fasting and prayer, and to meditate much upon His word, especially upon the scenes of the judgment. We should now seek a deep and living experience in the things of God. We have not a moment to lose. Events of vital importance are taking place around us; we are on Satan’s enchanted ground. Sleep not, sentinels of God; the foe is lurking near, ready at any moment, should you become lax and drowsy, to spring upon you and make you his prey.

Many are deceived as to their true condition before God. They congratulate themselves upon the wrong acts which they do not commit, and forget to enumerate the good and noble deeds which God requires of them, but which they have neglected to perform. It is not enough that they are trees in the garden of God. They are to answer His expectation by bearing fruit. He holds them accountable for their failure to accomplish all the good which they could have done, through His grace strengthening them. In the books of heaven they are registered as cumberers of the ground. Yet the case of even this class is not utterly hopeless. With those who have slighted God’s mercy and abused His grace, the heart of long-suffering love yet pleads. “Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, ... redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:14-16).

*—The Great Controversy*, pp. 600 & 601
The Three Angels’ Messages
of Revelation 14

First Angel

“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 —

Second Angel

“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 —

Third Angel

“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 ...

Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

— Revelation 14:9, 10, & 12 —

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THREE COSMIC MESSAGES REVEALED

The Seal of God and the Mark of the Beast

LESSON 9
Lesson 9

The Seal of God and
The Mark of the Beast

God has always sent a message to prepare people for significant events that affect their eternal destiny. When the world was going to be destroyed by water, God sent Noah to warn the people and urge them to enter the ark of safety. When Jesus was about to take up His ministry on earth as the promised Messiah, God sent John the Baptist with a message of repentance to prepare the way. When there are major events affecting people’s eternal destiny, God regularly sends a message to prepare them to meet it. It would be strange, then, if God did not have a special message for earth’s last generation that is uniquely designed to meet the challenges we face.

The three angels here in Revelation 14 proclaim messages of the greatest significance. They are God’s final appeal to the inhabitants of earth. Satan is enraged against God’s people. The beast power demands worship. People must decide where they stand. And God does everything He can to encourage them to find salvation and strength in Him.

The message of the book of Revelation speaks of eternal truths written by a loving God to an end-time generation. The conflict between Christ and Satan began in heaven over worship. It will come to its final climax over worship.

1. **What do the two verses listed below tell us about true and false worship?**

   (a) Revelation 14:7: 
   
   Heaven’s appeal is to give our supreme allegiance and heartfelt worship to the Creator in light of Heaven’s cosmic judgment.

   (b) Revelation 14:9: 
   
   [Blank]
Worshiping the Creator stands in direct opposition to worshiping the beast and finds its expression in keeping the commandments of God. Revelation 14:12 summarizes the issues this way: “Here is the patience [endurance] of the saints [believers]; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” God will have an end-time people who are loyal to Him in the face of the greatest opposition and fiercest persecution in history. At the heart of this great controversy between good and evil is worship and God’s day of rest, the Sabbath.

These committed followers of the Savior will not only have faith “in” Jesus, they will have the faith “of” Jesus. The faith of Jesus is a faith so deep that it trusts when it cannot see, believes when it cannot understand, hopes when it cannot comprehend, and hangs on when there is little to hang on to. This “faith of Jesus” is itself a gift we receive by faith, and it will carry us through the crisis ahead.

A Cosmic Struggle

The overarching theme of Revelation is this cosmic conflict and Christ’s triumph over the principalities and powers of hell. Its central focus is on worshiping the Creator. Revelation 14:7 calls us to worship the Lord of all creation. Against the backdrop of an evolutionary hypothesis that has taken the world by storm in the last two centuries, the Sabbath is an eternal reminder of our identity.

Trouble Ahead!

The mark of the beast prophecy in Revelation 13 tells us about the very worst, the absolute fever pitch, of Satan’s war against God. Ever since Jesus died on the cross, the enemy knows that he has been defeated, but he is determined to destroy as many as possible with him. His first strategy in this campaign is deception. When deception does not work, he will resort to force. He is behind a decree stating that anyone who refuses to worship the beast or receive his mark will suffer the consequences.

Religious persecution, of course, is not new. It has been around ever since Cain killed Abel for obeying God’s command. Jesus said it would even happen among believers: “The time is coming,” He warned, “that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service” (John 16:2; see also Matthew 10:22; 1 Peter 4:12). Throughout the ages, persecution was common in pagan and papal Rome. This was especially true in the vicious persecution of the Bible-believing Waldenses by the Medieval church.

The mark of the beast is about the final link in this ungodly chain. Like the persecutions in the past, it is designed to force everyone to conform to a certain set of beliefs and an approved system of worship.

The prophecy says the persecution will start with economic sanctions: “No one can buy or sell” unless they have “the mark.” Anyone who refuses to receive the mark will eventually be placed under a death decree (see Revelation 13:15, 17).
Who Is the Beast/What Is His Mark?

Bible prophecy and history identify the beast and his mark. As we understand the identity of the beast and his mark, we will better understand the opposite sign—the seal of God. Revelation gives us some clear clues to identify the beast.

2. **Describe the beast that John saw rising out of the sea in Revelation 13:1.**

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

This composite beast of Revelation 13 receives his power from the dragon.

3. **According to Revelation 12:9, who is this dragon?**

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

God’s Word tells us that the dragon is the devil, or Satan. The archenemy of God and man is behind the apostate religious system called the beast power. Just as God works through His church, the devil works through fallen religious institutions that have rejected God’s truth and turned their back on His law. Although the dragon is primarily Satan, Revelation 12:3-5 says this “dragon”—the devil—attempted to destroy “as soon as it was born” the “male Child” who was later “caught up to God and His throne.” It was the dragon, or the devil, working through pagan Rome, who tried to destroy Christ.

Whoever this beast power is, Revelation 13:2 says that “the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.” This prophecy was precisely fulfilled when the Roman Emperor Constantine decided to move his capital from Rome to what came to be called Constantinople, in modern-day Turkey. This left a power vacuum in the imperial city of Rome. Careful Bible students through the centuries have identified Rome as the citadel of the beast power.

And it was that same power, pagan Rome, that gave the beast its seat, or capital city. According to historian Arthur P. Stanley, “the Papacy is but ‘the ghost’ of the deceased Roman Empire, sitting crowned upon the ‘grave thereof’” (Arthur P. Stanley, *Lectures on the History of the Eastern Church* [1884], p. 197). The beast is not a person; it is a religious organization that has replaced truth with falsehood.
4. How extensive would the power of the Medieval church become?
Read Revelation 13:3, 4.

This “beast” power of Revelation 13 and 14 is an apostate religious power that rises out of Rome and becomes a worldwide system of worship. It uses coercion to enforce its dogma. This age-long drama will one day come to its conclusion, and the universe will be secure forever when every person on Planet Earth has the opportunity to respond to God’s love. Rather than worshiping the beast, God’s people find their greatest joy and highest delight in worshiping Him. Here are some further clues that identify this power and allow us to discover essential truths about the coming conflict in the last days.

5. What key word is used to describe the beast power in Revelation 13:1, 6?

Since blasphemy is mentioned as one of the identifying features of the beast power, it must be significant.

6. How does the Bible use the term “blasphemy”?

Here are two biblical examples of what blasphemy is:

(1) If any religious leader claims the titles and prerogatives that are God’s alone, and ...

(2) If any man claims the power to forgive sins. In Jesus’ case, the accusations were unjust because He truly is God and has all the powers and prerogatives of God—including the right to forgive our sins.
The Roman Church has two distinctive doctrines that the Bible calls blasphemy. One is its claim that its priests have the power to forgive sins. The other is attributing to the pope the office of God on earth. Here is a very pointed statement from a prominent Catholic author:

“Seek where you will, through heaven and earth, and you will find but one created being who can forgive the sinner, who can free him from the chains of hell, that extraordinary being is the priest, the Catholic priest” (Michael Muller, The Catholic Priest [Baltimore: Kreuzer Bros., 1876], pp. 78, 79).

In 1 Timothy 2:5, the Bible teaches that there is one mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ. The Roman Church teaches that the priest is the mediator between God and sinful humanity. But since the priest himself is a sinful human being, he cannot be our mediator because he also needs a mediator. Let’s consider our second biblical example, the claim of any man to be God or to stand in the place of God. Here are just a few statements from the Roman Church’s authoritative sources:

“The Pope is of so great dignity and so exalted that he is not a mere man, but as it were GOD, and the vicar of God” (Lucius Ferraris, Prompta Bibliotheca, “Papa,” vol. 6 [Venice, Italy: Gaspar Storti, 1772], pp. 26-29).


7. There is another crucial identifying feature found in Revelation 13:5. Write this identifying characteristic on the line below.

________________________________________________________________________

In Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6, God gives us a key to understanding prophetic time. In prophecy, one prophetic day equals one literal year. Calculating the period mentioned in Revelation 13:5 of 42 months, with 30 days in a Hebrew month, we come up with 1260 prophetic days, or literal years. In A.D. 538, Justinian, the pagan Roman emperor, officially granted the Roman bishop the role of the definer of heretics and defender of the faith. The papacy exercised great influence from A.D. 538 to A.D. 1798. Napoleon’s general, Berthier, took the pope captive in 1798—exactly 1260 years later. This act of General Berthier taking the pope captive fulfilled Revelation’s prophecy: “He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity” (Revelation 13:10, emphasis supplied). The blow to the papacy was extremely serious but not fatal. According to Revelation 13:12, the deadly wound would be healed. The papacy’s influence was once again felt worldwide. In a world of instability, the scene is being set for the Roman pontiff to become the purported moral leader of the world.
Have you ever wondered what vehicle the devil might use to unite society? Remember that Constantine passed the first Sunday law to unite his empire, and the church reinforced his decree in church councils by making Sunday the sacred day of worship. The renowned historian Arthur Weigall states it clearly: “The church made a sacred day of Sunday ... largely because it was the weekly festival of the sun; for it was a definite Christian policy to take over the pagan festivals endeared to the people by tradition and give them Christian significance” (The Paganism in Our Christianity, p. 145).

A common day of worship has the potential to unite a divided world. Since the change of the Bible Sabbath was instituted by a church-state union in the early centuries, worship on the first day of the week is the sign of papal authority. To change the law of God, one must have authority that is higher than God’s authority. This is more than a matter of days; it is at the heart of the battle for the throne of the universe.

Louis Gaston Segur, in his treatise on the authority of the Catholic Church, writes, “Thus, the observance of Sunday by the Protestants is a homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the [Catholic] Church” (Plain Talk About the Protestantism of To-Day (London: Thomas Richardson and Son, 1874), p. 213).

Here is a twentieth-century acknowledgment from the Roman Church regarding its role in changing the Sabbath: “Perhaps the boldest thing, the most revolutionary change the Church ever did, happened in the first century. The holy day, the Sabbath, was changed from Saturday to Sunday. ‘The day of the Lord’ was chosen, not from any direction noted in the Scriptures, but from the [Catholic] Church’s sense of its own power. ... People who think that the Scriptures should be the sole authority, should logically become Seventh-day Adventists, and keep Saturday holy” (St. Catherine Church Sentinel [Algonac, Michigan, May 21, 1995]).

The Mark of Her Power and Authority

Here is a remarkable statement that removes all doubt of what the issues really are: “Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act. ... And the act is a mark of her ecclesiastical power and authority in religious matters” (American Catholic Quarterly Review, January 1883).

The Roman Church claims that the mark of its ecclesiastical authority is its right to change the Sabbath from the seventh day of the week to Sunday, the first day of the week. Although no one has the mark of the beast today, prophecy predicts that there will come a time when every person’s loyalty will be tested.

Sunday worship will be promoted as a world day of unity for the good of human-kind. Sunday laws will be enforced for society’s benefit and to protect the sanctity of the family. The stage is being set for this universal decree even now.
During his speech on June 6 to more than 15,000 people gathered in St Peter’s Square in Rome, Pope Benedict XVI declared, “Sunday must be a day of rest for everyone, so people can be free to be with their families and with God. By defending Sunday, one defends human freedom” (Pope Benedict XVI: Sunday Must Be a Day of Rest for God and Family, June 6, 2007; accessed May 15, 2021). Eventually, those who conscientiously follow the Word of God and keep the true Sabbath of the Lord will be labeled as opposing unity and the good of society. The only way we will be able to survive when the mark of the beast is enforced is to have absolute confidence in Christ’s ability and willingness to provide for us.

Sealed for Eternity

In this time of final crisis God’s faithful people will stand firm in the power of Christ. They will not yield to the pressure of the beast power. They are sealed by the Holy Spirit and cannot be moved. Seals were used in ancient times to attest to the authenticity of official documents. They were a unique, distinctive, individualized mark. Since the final conflict is over worship and God’s authority as revealed in His law, we would expect God’s seal to be embedded in His law. The Sabbath commandment in the heart of God’s law contains God’s seal.

8. What elements of a seal are contained in the Sabbath commandment?
   Analyze Exodus 20:8-11 and list those elements on the lines below.

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

Here we have three elements of an authentic seal: (1) the name of the originator of the seal, “the Lord Your God;” (2) the title of the sealer, the “Lord made,” or the Creator; and (3) His territory, “the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them.” According to Revelation 7:1, 2, the seal of God is placed on the forehead. The forehead is a symbol of the mind and represents a conscious decision.

   The mark of the beast is received in the forehead or in the hand, indicating people are either intellectually convinced and by choice accept Satan’s lies or are forced against their will.

   Saved by grace, God’s people are filled with the faith of Jesus. It inspires and empowers them. It frees them from the guilt of the past, delivers them from the bondage of sin in the present, and fills their hearts with hope for the future. Through His power they give God their allegiance and serve and obey Him forever.
Would you like to ask Jesus to give you the strength to obey Him today, tomorrow, and forever as we pray?

Notes:
The following excerpt from the best selling book, *The Great Controversy* enlarges upon the topics presented in our lesson today. You will be richly blessed as you read it.

“I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.” “And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:1, 2, 4).

This scripture points forward to a time when the announcement of the fall of Babylon, as made by the second angel of Revelation 14 (verse 8), is to be repeated, with the additional mention of the corruptions which have been entering the various organizations that constitute Babylon, since that message was first given in the summer of 1844. A terrible condition of the religious world is here described. With every rejection of truth the minds of the people will become darker, their hearts more stubborn, until they are entrenched in an infidel hardihood. In defiance of the warnings which God has given, they will continue to trample upon one of the precepts of the Decalogue, until they are led to persecute those who hold it sacred. Christ is set at nought in the contempt placed upon His word and His people. As the teachings of spiritualism are accepted by the churches, the restraint imposed upon the carnal heart is removed, and the profession of religion will become a cloak to conceal the basest iniquity. A belief in spiritual manifestations opens the door to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, and thus the influence of evil angels will be felt in the churches.

Of Babylon, at the time brought to view in this prophecy, it is declared: “Her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.” Revelation 18:5. She has filled up the measure of her guilt, and destruction is about to fall upon her. But God still has a people in Babylon; and before the visitation of His judgments these faithful ones must be called out, that they partake not of her sins and “receive not of her plagues.” Hence the movement symbolized by the angel coming down from heaven, lightening the earth with his glory and crying mightily with a strong voice, announcing the sins of Babylon. In connection with his message the call is heard: “Come out of her, My people.” These announcements, uniting with the third angel’s message, constitute the final warning to be given to the inhabitants of the earth.

—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 603 & 604
The Three Angels’ Messages of Revelation 14

First Angel

“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 —

Second Angel

“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 —

Third Angel

“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 ... Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

— Revelation 14:9, 10, & 12 —

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Lesson 10

History’s Coming Climax

Little things can make an eternal difference in our lives. A chance meeting, a brief conversation, a few words spoken in the right place at the right time can change the entire course of our lives. Let me give you an example.

Late one evening, a British naval officer walked down a well-known street in Sydney, Australia. Suddenly, he heard a voice behind him that said something like this: “If you should be called into eternity within the next 24 hours, how would you fare? Would your destiny be heaven or hell?” These startling words from an unknown man burned their way into this officer’s soul. He couldn’t get them out of his mind. As never before he felt the need of a Savior. As a sinner before God, unfit for His holy presence and unprepared for eternity, he sought the salvation that only Jesus can give. Eventually, he made a full commitment to the Christ of Scripture.

The remarkable thing is that several other people had the same experience in the same place by hearing the same words spoken by the same elderly Christian man on the streets of Sydney. They, too, were awakened by those words to see their need as sinners and to prepare for eternity, and they accepted Christ as their Savior. They recognized that they did not walk down that particular street that day by accident.

Could it be that you are not here by accident either? Is it possible that God has brought you to this place at this time of your life to hear His voice speaking to your heart and prepare you for eternity?

Preparing for Eternity

The message of the three angels flying in mid-air with the everlasting gospel to preach to every man, woman, and child on this planet is especially designed by Christ to prepare each one of us for eternity. These messages come to us from God’s
heart of divine love. To casually set them aside or treat them with careless indifference is to risk eternal loss. Complacency in the face of eternal truths is one of the greatest dangers of this generation.

1. **What warning does Jesus give us regarding the last days of human history?**

   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

Jesus has given Bible-believing Christians divine insight into what is coming upon this world in His Word. In His last-day messages in Mathew 24 and Luke 21, He urges us to be spiritually alert, not complacent; to be awake, not lethargic; and to be actively seeking His will, not selfishly pursuing our own pleasure. There is a danger that the things of time will crowd out the things of eternity. This is the reason it is vitally important that we understand what is coming so we can prepare for what is soon to break upon our world as an overwhelming surprise. The Bible’s last book, Revelation, clearly outlines these end-time events in vivid imagery to spiritually strengthen us for our Lord’s return. Revelation shines light on the road ahead. The prophetic word reveals the climatic events at the close of this earth’s history.

**A Summary of God’s Last-day Message**

Revelation 14 presents Heaven’s final message to this planet in the symbolism of three angels flying mid-heaven. In Revelation 14:6, 7, the first angel proclaims the everlasting gospel of God’s grace in the light of Heaven’s final judgment calling all peoples to obey God, give glory to Him, and worship Him as Creator.

The second angel announces in Revelation 14:8, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” As we have discovered in a previous presentation, Babylon is a symbol of religious confusion, false doctrine, and human traditions.

The message of the second angel calls us to decision. It appeals to us to decide for Christ, not falsehood; truth, not error; Scripture, not tradition; the teachings of God’s Word, not the teachings of fallible religious leaders; and the freedom of the Lamb, not the coercion of the beast. Indecision is not an option. Not to decide for Christ is to decide for the forces of the evil one. In earth’s final conflict we are on the side of Christ or the side of Satan. This is highlighted in the last of these three messages.
The third angel’s message that follows the first two angels presents a warning against the mark of the beast. Throughout the prophecies of the Bible, a beast represents a political or religious power. The beast of Revelation 13 and 14 arises out of Rome as a worldwide system of worship. The papacy will lead out in a movement to unite church and state. The goal will be to achieve world unity at a time of economic upheaval, natural catastrophes, social turmoil, international political crises, and global conflict.

History repeats itself, and just as in the days of the ancient Roman Empire under Constantine, a common day of worship becomes the vehicle to unite church and state to achieve unity. Our shattered world provides a backdrop for religions to unite in the common cause to create world peace. A global confederation of religious, political, and economic powers will unite in a futile attempt to save our planet.

Just as Satan marshals his forces to establish this religious/political/economic alliance under the power of the Antichrist, Jesus rallies His forces. His Holy Spirit descends in mighty power upon His faithful believers. Empowered by His Spirit they proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth. Revelation’s prophecies predict that God will raise up a last-day people to stand on the shoulders of the great reformers of the past with the Bible as their only creed, Christ alone as their only source of salvation, the Holy Spirit as their only source of strength, and the return of our Lord as the consummation of all their hopes.

The message of the three angels concludes with an urgent appeal for Christ’s faithful followers to keep the commandments of God through the living faith of Jesus dwelling in their hearts.

2. **How does John characterize God’s people in the last days? Read Revelation 12:17 and 14:12.**

God’s people are here identified as a body of Christ-centered believers filled with the faith of Jesus who lovingly keep His commandments, including the Bible Sabbath. Revelation 14 describes a worldwide church spanning the globe with the good news of the eternal gospel.
Lighted With God’s Glory

The three angels of Revelation 14 are joined by a fourth angel in Revelation 18. This angel gives power to the proclamation of the three angels, so the “earth was illuminated with his glory” (Revelation 18:1). Revelation 18 focuses on the major events leading up to the climax of human history and the final, ultimate triumph of the gospel.

3. Read Revelation 18:1, then summarize this passage on the lines below.

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The angel descends from the glorious presence of God in the throne room of heaven’s sanctuary. He is commissioned to proclaim God’s last message of mercy and to warn the inhabitants of the earth of what is coming. At the end time, the Holy Spirit will be poured out in unprecedented power, and the gospel will rapidly be spread to the ends of the earth. Thousands will be converted in a day, and God’s grace and truth will impact the entire planet.

4. The angel of Revelation 18 describes the “earth being filled with the glory of God.” What other words are associated with God’s glory in the following Bible verses? Compare Revelation 18:1; 4:11; 5:12; 19:1; and 21:26. Write these key words on the lines below.

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The great controversy between good and evil in the universe is about God’s honor and His reputation. Remember when Moses asked God to show him His glory? God responded to Moses in Exodus 33:18, 19, “I will make all My goodness pass before you.” God’s goodness is His character. The earth will be filled with the glory of God when we are so completely overwhelmed with His love, so totally comprehend its depth, and so fully grasp how amazing that grace, that our characters are changed by redeeming love. The last message to be proclaimed to a world engulfed in spiritual darkness is, “Fear God and give glory to Him” (Revelation 14:7). There is no glory in
our works; no glory in our righteousness; no glory in our goodness. Any goodness or righteousness we have comes from Jesus. The wonderful thing about Jesus is that He glories in allowing His glory to shine through weak, frail, sinful human beings.

**Babylon: A Works-centered Religion**

This is the opposite of the false teachings of Babylon, which are centered in human teachings, traditions, and works.

5. **How does Revelation 18:2-4 describe spiritual Babylon?**

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Demonic forces control spiritual Babylon. All nations have drunk the wine of her fornication. Wine represents false doctrine. People become confused in their thinking and mistake error for truth and conclude truth is error.

Fornication is an illicit union. Notice carefully who unites in this end-time confederacy. Babylon unites with the “kings of the earth” and “the merchants of the earth.” Revelation 18 pictures a union of apostate or false religions, political powers (the nations of the earth), and the financial institutions or economic powers. This threefold union unites in a confederacy of evil to eventually persecute the people of God.

6. **What is God’s final call to humanity?” See Revelation 18:4.**

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Where are most of God’s people? In Babylon. And what is Babylon? It is religious confusion, truth mingled with error, a religion based on human works, a disregard for God’s law, a departure from the teachings of Scripture. And what is God’s final call? “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins.” Since sin is the “transgression,” or the breaking, of God’s law, God is calling His people to come out of every lawbreaking church (1 John 3:4). Why is God making this final call now? Revelation 18:5 tells us: “For her sins have reached to heaven, and God
has remembered her iniquities.” Where are we in the panorama of last-day events? We are poised on the verge of a religious, political, and economic union. The accumulated figures of sin are rapidly reaching their limit in God’s record book. The gospel is being preached to the entire world. The Holy Spirit is moving on hearts. The stage is being set for the return of our Lord.

The Conquering Christ

7. What picture does John give us of the glorious climax of history? Read Revelation 19:11-16, and summarize this amazing event on the lines below.

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Jesus will descend the corridors of the sky with a retinue of glorious angels in power and great glory to redeem His people! He is pictured in Revelation 19 as symbolically riding a white horse and is followed by “the armies in heaven” (verse 14), also riding white horses. The white horse is a symbol of conquest and victory. White horses have traditionally been the favorite of kings and ancient military leaders. Roman generals rode white horses through the streets of Rome when they celebrated their triumphs in war. Through the cross Christ has “disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them” (Colossians 2:15). He has defeated Satan and is the rightful ruler of this world. The kingdoms of this world belong to Him. Now He appears as a warrior riding a white horse to claim what is lawfully His and escort His people back home.

It is important, as well, to notice the titles of Christ in this passage. According to Revelation 19:11, He is “Faithful and True.” He fulfills His promise in John 14:1-3 that He would return. The delay has been long, but Christ is faithful to His word and returns to take His people home. He is also known as the “Word of God” in Revelation 19:13. Jesus is the Living Word, revealing in His life what God is like. The glory of God is revealed in Christ, and when Jesus returns, He returns in the glory of the Father with all His angels (see Matthew 16:27). Our human, finite minds cannot possibly grasp the magnificence of the glory of God when Christ returns. His dazzling brightness flashes as the most brilliant lightning across the heavens.

This passage in Revelation 19 portraying Jesus on a white horse depicts Him as a conqueror over His enemies. He is not pictured here as the dying Lamb. He is King
of kings, Lord of lords, conquering, triumphing, defeating the powers of evil (see verses 11-19). His eyes are flames of fire, and a sharp sword goes out of His mouth as He rides forth to make war. Heaven has declared His judgments to be true and righteous (verse 2), and His name to be “Faithful and True” (verse 11). This image of the conquering Christ is set in the context of His righteous judgments against sin and sinners at the end of time.

The blood on His robe may well represent the blood shed on the cross freely for us; or in this context of Christ as a warrior, it is more likely the blood of those who refuse His offer of salvation, reject His loving appeals, turn their backs on His initiative to save them, and chose to rebel against His commands. The logical result of their decision is eternal loss. Christ longed to save them, but they refused to respond. Their choice seals their destiny. The prophet Isaiah describes a very similar scene in Isaiah 63:1-6.

The Final Battle

Satan and the hosts of those who have followed him in his rebellion against God make a final stand. They gather to make war against the conquering Christ. The war that began in heaven so long before (see Revelation 12:7-9) has reached its last battle. Satan and his angels lost that first battle in heaven, and they will lose this last battle as well. The beast and the false prophet are destroyed in the lake of fire “prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41). The rest are “killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse” (Revelation 19:21). The Word of God is a sharp two-edged sword. It lays bare the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). The truths of God’s Word condemn those who have rejected them and fought against them.

The supper of the great God is a graphic representation of the awful doom of Satan, his angels, and those who follow him. These final scenes of earth’s history are an urgent appeal to each one of us to respond to God’s grace, accept by faith the salvation He so freely offers, and live lives of godly obedience so we, too, can rejoice with the saved of all ages wearing the white robes of righteousness at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

God Prepares a People

God is preparing a people to proclaim the marvels of His grace, the greatness of His love, the goodness of His character, and the righteousness of His law. They love His truth, live His truth, and proclaim His truth. The earth is lightened with
the glory, the character, of God. The Holy Spirit is poured out in latter-rain power. Hearts are touched. Lives are changed. The world is reached, and Jesus comes again.

In the fading light of human history, in these critical times in this crisis hour, would you like to pray?

“Jesus, take away all human pride. Help me to trust in You and You alone. Make me what You want me to be, and keep me faithful until You come again.”

Would you like to ask Jesus to use you in this closing work to make a difference in our world? Why not bow your head right now and make that commitment?

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8.
The powers of earth, uniting to war against the commandments of God, will decree that “all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond” (Revelation 13:16), shall conform to the customs of the church by the observance of the false sabbath. All who refuse compliance will be visited with civil penalties, and it will finally be declared that they are deserving of death. On the other hand, the law of God enjoining the Creator’s rest day demands obedience and threatens wrath against all who transgress its precepts.

With the issue thus clearly brought before him, whoever shall trample upon God’s law to obey a human enactment receives the mark of the beast; he accepts the sign of allegiance to the power which he chooses to obey instead of God. The warning from heaven is: “If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation” (Revelation 14:9, 10).

But not one is made to suffer the wrath of God until the truth has been brought home to his mind and conscience, and has been rejected. There are many who have never had an opportunity to hear the special truths for this time. The obligation of the fourth commandment has never been set before them in its true light. He who reads every heart and tries every motive will leave none who desire a knowledge of the truth, to be deceived as to the issues of the controversy. The decree is not to be urged upon the people blindly. Everyone is to have sufficient light to make his decision intelligently.

The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not. While the observance of the false sabbath in compliance with the law of the state, contrary to the fourth commandment, will be an avowal of allegiance to a power that is in opposition to God, the keeping of the true Sabbath, in obedience to God’s law, is an evidence of loyalty to the Creator. While one class, by accepting the sign of submission to earthly powers, receive the mark of the beast, the other choosing the token of allegiance to divine authority, receive the seal of God.

—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 604 & 605
THE THREE ANGELS’ MESSAGES
OF REVELATION 14

First Angel

“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 —

Second Angel

“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 —

Third Angel

“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 ... Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

— Revelation 14:9, 10, & 12 —

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