

THE THIRD ANGELS' MESSAGE

We had received our room key and had just waited fifteen minutes for a broken elevator which never arrived to go up to our seventeenth floor room. A maintenance man directed us to a shortcut to our accommodations. As we entered our hotel room, a warning signal alerted guests that there was a fire in the building. We were alarmed at how we might make our escape down all those flights of stairs. Mercifully it was a false alarm as a voice came over the speaker system that all had been taken care of and resume our normal activity.

God is love. He cares about the people on the earth who are His enemies. He is doing everything within His power short of coercion to draw them to Himself through the wonderful gospel message. Through the gospel message He is warning and preparing them for the crises to come.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ predicted the rise of the Seventh-day Adventist movement. Here is our prophetic credentials. Think of it as an airplane flying over the city with a banner trailing behind it

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” Revelation 14:6.

When William Miller preached the soon return of Jesus, He was joined by many others and the movement grew from 1840-44. They loved Jesus very much and earnestly desired to see Him come in the clouds of glory. Their fervent zeal for the Lord goes without question.

There is a false “trinity” that vies for the supreme attention and worship of “them that dwell on the earth” (Rev. 13:14). The dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (earth beast) of Revelation 12-13 are Satan working through his surrogates: Pagan Rome, Papal Rome, and the New Roman Empire. Satan sets himself up as the eternal Father God with his own Vicar of Christ and counterfeit holy ghost which demands the worship of the image to the beast and the mark of the beast.

The antidote for the worship of this false trinity is the everlasting gospel. God’s everlasting covenant is His promise of love to save His people from their sins. God gives His Son, Jesus Christ, as the righteousness of God, to the world. Jesus draws the world to Himself

by His eternal death upon the cross for the sins of the world. God's message of love for the world will be heard:

"Saying with a *loud voice*, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Revelation 14:7.

To "fear God" does not mean to be afraid of Him. "Fear God" means to love God. This is the reverence that is due His holy name. King Solomon enjoined, "Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Eccl. 12:13. To love God is to keep His commandments. Said Jesus, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." John 14:15. So we see that to fear God means to love God.

The process that the Holy Spirit uses in converting our souls is to convict us of our sins by speaking to our conscience. The Holy Spirit uses the mighty sword of the word of the Lord and commandments of God to prick the heart. He convinces us that without Jesus we are doomed to perdition. Thus we are driven in repentance for sin to the only remedy of healing and that is the blood of the Lamb shed for us on His cross.

The way is thus opened for us to "give glory to God." We become partakers of the divine nature. The Holy Spirit writes God's character in His law upon our hearts and our minds. In thinking and acting we are but doing His will as spontaneously as did Jesus when He walked this earth. This is the fulfillment of God's everlasting covenant.

This first angel's message is given in the setting of "the hour of His judgment is come." In other words, the gospel plan of salvation has ever and always been the same in Jesus Christ, but now its "present truth" application is with the sense of urgency that only "His judgment" can motivate.

"His judgment" commenced, in the heavenly sanctuary, in 1844, according to Daniel's prophecy. "His judgment" before the second coming of Jesus is investigative. God is on trial. Satan has leveled his accusation against the Judge in an attempt to overthrow His government of law and mercy. The evidence that God's brings into court to disprove the prosecutor's accusations is the fruits of the gospel in saving Satan's victims on earth from their sins. They have overcome by the blood of the Lamb. Their works demonstrate what God can do in them. They are the evidence which turns the verdict of the onlooking universe in God's favor and He wins His case.

The first angel's message consists of the gospel and the judgment. The truth about Jesus ministry as our high priest entering into the second phase ministry of the most holy place. For two thousand years He had served in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary ministering the benefits of His blood for the forgiveness of sins. This ministry was adequate to prepare a believer to die and come up in the first resurrection at His second coming. But now, following 1844, Christ is ministering His victory over sin to believers who follow Him in order that they might sit with him on His throne. This deeper work of Christ is justification by faith in connection with the cleansing of the sanctuary. It prepares the sealed 144,000 to be translated without seeing death at His second coming.

Satan has been universally successful in convincing man that his scientific method of establishing the truth regarding origins is infallible. The evolutionary theory is the triumph of humanism and survival of the fittest. It even dominates Christian thinking in the form of theistic evolution within Catholicism and Protestantism.

When the beast from the earth is deceiving "them that dwell on the earth," to worship the image to the beast, and receive his mark, the 144,000 "worship Him that made heaven." They have the seal of God in that they worship God on His seventh day Sabbath. His Sabbath is the seal of the everlasting covenant. It is the sign that God is the Creator and the Recreator.

"And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Revelation 14:8.

These angel messengers are all connected the second with the first and followed by the third. Their messages come in this sequence in terms of their "present truth" relevance. Following the Millerite announcement of the second coming of Jesus, there was a rejection of the message by the mainline churches. Many Advent believers were disfellowshipped from their churches. Access to pulpits was denied.

This necessitated the call, "Babylon is fallen!" Babylon in ancient times was where God confused the languages of the people because they conspired to build a tower in defiance of God and unbelief of His promise to spare the earth another flood. Babylon was the enemy of God's people.

The prophetic city of Babylon likewise is the conglomerate enemy of God's end-time people, the 144,000. It consists of a religious

confederacy of the false trinity: the dragon, the sea beast and the earth beast. This trinity has enlisted the support of the political powers of the earth.

Later on in Revelation Babylon is depicted as a prostitute woman seducing nations into immortality by intoxicating them with the wine of her fornication (Rev. 17:1-12; 18:3). This intoxicating wine of deception seduces the inhabitants of the earth to worship the beast and his image and to receive the mark of the beast. They do this out of fear because of economic sanctions. No one can buy or sell without the mark of the beast.

At the time when the Millerites proclaimed the gospel message the churches experienced a fall as Babylon. However, God is great in mercy and gives them a second chance to hear the truth. But as the gospel is again proclaimed to them with renewed vigor, they have settled even further into apostasy and their rejection of the truth is so final and irrevocable that it can truly be said Babylon is fallen, is fallen (Rev. 18:2, 3).

That is why the third angel following the first two has a message for them which is delivered with “a loud voice” or the loud cry message. It is a solemn warning to would-be worshipers of the beast. This message is yet to be delivered and remains for the future.

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand.” Revelation 14:9.

This nation came ever so close to forming an image to the beast in the 1880's, when the churches petitioned the U. S. government to enact a Sunday law that all should be compelled to worship God on the first day of the week. But the effort was forestalled by the work of A. T. Jones lobbying Congress on behalf of civil and religious liberty. As a result the votes never materialized to pass the legislation.

With this historical precedent it is entirely possible that another such effort could be made by the churches of America. Religious liberty and civil freedom come only at the cost of constant vigilance, for the people seem to care not for their freedoms so long as big brother will take care of them.

The first angel's message bids us to worship the Creator on His seventh-day Sabbath. The third angel's message posts a warning about worship the beast and his image. These two allies of Satan are identified in Revelation 13. The beast from the sea is the counterfeit religious system which dominated for 1260 years from 538-1798

A.D., persecuting God's faithful. It received a deadly wound in 1798 by going into captivity, but its wound was healed.

It is the image to the beast which assists in healing the wound of the papacy. That "image to the beast" is the lamblike beast which arises from the earth at around the time of 1798. In 1776 a youthful nation arose on the political scene from a relatively uninhabited part of the earth. It was the United States of America. Its twin horns represent the principles of civil freedom and religious liberty—republicanism and Protestantism. It had no king and no pope.

The lamblike nation soon spoke like a dragon in that it formed an image to the beast. The beast has always operated on the basis of the union of church and state. The Holy Roman Empire was an alliance of the states and monarchies of Europe acknowledging the supreme rulership of the Roman pontiff. When the United States renounces its fundamental principle of separation of church and state and accedes to the wishes of the churches in legislating its morality and worship then it will have formed an image to the beast. This is for the purpose of worshiping the beast. This country has not reached the point where the churches have formed an alliance with the state. Neither has the mark of the beast yet been formed.

The true mark of the counterfeit system of worship is Sunday, the first day of the week. It was taken over from paganism which worshiped on that day in honor of the sun. Says *The Convert's Catechism*, "We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday."

God sends the warning forth that Sunday is not His day of worship. The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. Sunday is a man-made institution for worship. When the churches because of world peril, global unrest and warfare, and crime and violence spiraling out of control, demand that a nation turn back to its God in worship on the first day of the week, Congress will accede to their wishes as a last effort to save the nation.

This mark of the beast will be accompanied by legal sanctions. If one refuses to worship on Sunday they will not be able to buy or sell. It will be the law of the land. When God has clearly revealed His Sabbath day and the image of the beast has clearly enacted a Sunday law, then if one knowingly chooses to go against God's law, they have received the mark of the beast. They are worshiping the beast who instituted Sunday worship as a "Christian" observance.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down to the golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar on the plain of Dura. They could not worship an idol in violation of God's commandments. Nebuchadnezzar threatened them with a death decree, but they were not moved by fear of punishment or hope of reward. They were not under the old covenant. They refused to offer acts of worship that were selfishly motivated to preserve life. Such acts were dead works.

The three Hebrew worthies were under the new covenant. They chose to do the works of God by standing tall when all others bowed down. They were motivated by the fear of God—they loved God to the death. Just as Christ died to self on His cross, so these three sacrificed themselves and were cast into the burning fiery furnace. There they walked about with the son of God and were preserved alive, unharmed.

Those who knowingly go against God's Sabbath commandment and receive the mark of worship from the beast are warned:

"The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." Revelation 14:10.

Perhaps the most severe warning in all of Scripture is this aspect of the third angel's message. The wrath of God is the love of God for God is love and His wrath is but a part of His character of love. This cup of wine is not mixed with God's mercy. Probation has closed and they have sealed their own fate. God's word of warning and mercy has been clearly set before them and they have chosen the worship of the beast and his image out of fear for man rather than the fear of God. Therefore, the protective hand of God is removed from them and the seven last plagues fall upon them before the second coming of Christ.

But that is not the worst of it. "He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the Lamb." God has no delight in the torment of the wicked. It is they who are tormented while in the presence of the Lamb as they stand before the great white throne at the end of the millennium.¹ They will be tested and tried before the

¹ "In the day of final judgment, every lost soul will understand the nature of his own rejection of truth. The cross will be presented, and its real bearing will be seen by every mind that has been blinded by transgression. Before the vision of Calvary with its mysterious Victim, sinners will stand condemned." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 58.

Lamb in the full revelation of His cross. When these who have rejected the seal of God come into the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb, when they see Christ crucified by them anew and realize what they have actually done, they will see all their sin and rebellion exposed for what it has always been. They will see how their whole life has resulted in only hating and crucifying the Son of God. Such self-knowledge will surely be torment enough to them! The text does not say that God will torment them; He is not a sadist. Their remorse will be torment enough.

The fire and brimstone will destroy them.

“And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.” Revelation 14:11.

The ascending smoke indicates the completion of the burning rather than an eternal burning and suffering. The rest into which God’s people enter is eternal; so the unrest of the impending judgment for the unbelievers is eternal. From this last judgment there is no reprieve; the sentence of death is irreversible; the destruction permits no recovery.

The third angel’s message produces saints who exhibit endurance.

“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12.

Here is the motto of the third angel’s message. It is God’s promise of the everlasting covenant—the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus—the law and the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the law of God. The law of God is the love of God. His principles of holiness are given to us in Jesus Christ. So, then, he who has Christ, the Surety of the covenant, has the law of God written within the heart.

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.” Revelation 14:13.

Those who were the pioneers of the three angel’s messages such as William Miller, Josiah Litch, Joshua V. Himes, James and Ellen White, Joseph Bates and many others, endured great hardships as they traveled about proclaiming the return of Christ. They were ridiculed and persecuted. They undoubtedly experienced the trials attendant with “the seven thunders.” God has taken due note of the

labors and works and they are blessed and they rest in their graves awaiting a special resurrection from the dead just before Jesus' return.

The third angels' message is the fulfillment of the gospel commission to go into all the world. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Matthew 24:14.

"And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle." Revelation 14:14.

The mystery of God is finished. The gospel has ripened the harvest and the Son of man carries an instrument of reaping to garner the wheat.

"And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." Revelation 14:16, 17.

The fourth angel of this chapter proceeds from the heavenly temple crying with "a loud voice" for the Son of man to reap the grain. The hour of probation has closed. The 144,000 have been sealed with the Sabbath. The righteousness of saints preserves them from any further choice to sin. Their characters are perfect. They are ready for the harvest which belongs to Jesus because He is the one who produced it.

A fifth angel announces from the altar in heaven the time for the harvest of the grapes.

"And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to Him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe." Revelation 14:17, 18.

This is the garnering of the wicked for destruction.

"And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God." Revelation 14:19.

In October the grape harvest is on in the Napa Valley. The grapes are gathered for the crush of the winepress. Up and down the valley

one can smell the rotting mash in the storehouses. This impressive language is to stress the fate of the wicked.

“And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.” Revelation 14:20.

In Revelation 19 we read of the Word of God riding upon a white horse as He leads the horsemen of heaven. “He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” Revelation 19:15, 16.

In that day Jesus will not be riding upon a foal as He did when entering Jerusalem long ago for His crucifixion. He will be riding a magnificent white steed dressed in full royalty with an emblazoned shash proclaiming “King of kings and Lord of lords.” He is our Deliverer!