

Third Angel's Message - 2

The third angel's message is graphically chronicled in the heart of Revelation as follows:

"14:9 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,

14:10 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:

14:11 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 14:9-11)

In order for us to obtain a clear understanding of this important message, we will consider the pivotal expressions that are found in the passage, and provide key explanations to them as follows:

1) THE THIRD ANGEL

This expression does not suggest the point that this angel is the third angel that John sees in the book of Revelation. The apostle had come across several angels as he beheld various visions and compiled them into the scrolls of Revelation (see Revelation 7:1, 2; Revelation 8:1, 2; Revelation 10:1 etc.). Thus, the title "The Third Angel's Message" does not suggest that this message is the third the apostle John receives from an angel in the book of Revelation. However, the title suggests the third of a threefold final warning message that goes to the whole world with a loud voice before the second coming of Jesus in the clouds of heaven (see Revelation 14:14-16).

2) IF ANY MAN WORSHIP

One of the recurring themes in the book of Revelation is the issue of worship. In the early chapters of the book, we find that heavenly subjects such as the twenty-four elders, the four beasts, and all the angels of heaven worshipped the Creator God who liveth forever and ever (see Revelation 4; Revelation 5). This order of worship is challenged as we progress to the latter chapters of the book. In Revelation 9, we come across a different scenario where certain inhabitants on earth choose to rather "worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk" (Revelation 9:20).

In the chapters 13 and 14 of the book of Revelation, the issue of worship rises to a crescendo. In the chapter 13, the wicked inhabitants of the earth choose to worship Satan, the dragon. We read the full details from Revelation 13 as follows:

"13:4 And they WORSHIPPED the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they WORSHIPPED the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall WORSHIP him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

13:12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to WORSHIP the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13:15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not WORSHIP the image of the beast should be killed." (Revelation 13:4, 8, 12, 15; Capital Emphasis Added)

As the world is coerced to worship the beast power, and the dragon who is behind him (see Revelation 13:2), God sends His messengers in the form of three angels to draw the attention of the world to the Creator God who rather deserves their worship (see Revelation 14:6-12). Through these messengers the world is warned of the dire consequences that will come upon those who choose to worship the beast power and Satan instead of the Creator God. The message of the three angels concerning the issue of worship is expressed vividly in Revelation 14:6-12 as follows:

"14:6 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,

14:7 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.

14:8 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.

14:9 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,

14:11 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.

14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." (Revelation 14:6-12; Capital Emphasis Added)

In Revelation 14, God sends forth one of the most fearsome warnings ever given in the Holy Scriptures to mankind (review Revelation 14:9-11). This warning has to do with the pivotal theme of worship in the book. The warning message begins with the words "IF ANY MAN WORSHIP" (Revelation 14:9). Through this phrase God clearly establishes the fact that none besides Him, the Creator, is to be worshipped, and that if one chooses any other object of worship, the person will face the dire consequences of His choice as is expressed in the message of the third angel (review Revelation 14:9-11). It is interesting to learn that at the latter portions of the book of Revelation, we read about the end of Satan, sin and sinners (Revelation 20:9-15). From this point forward, the redeemed from the earth, just as the unfallen angels in heaven, will forever worship the Creator God who inhabiteth eternity (Isaiah 66:22, 23; Isaiah 57:15; Revelation 21:1-4; Revelation 21:22-27; Revelation 22:1-5).

3) THE BEAST AND HIS IMAGE

The twin prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation provide over 20 characteristic marks that show clearly the identity of the beast power that is mentioned here in Revelation 14. For a comprehensive study that will guide you to know the various characteristic marks of the beast power, and how they all fit one particular power in secular history, please request for our Bible Prophecy Series dubbed: The Final Events of Bible Prophecy through any of our WhatsApp Numbers at the end of this lesson. This prophecy series will lead you step by step to discover from Scripture and history the identity of the beast power, the antichrist of Bible prophecy.

Friends, there is only one power in secular history that fits all the identifying marks of the beast power as described in the prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation. This power is none other than the Papacy, the Roman Catholic Church System. It is interesting to note that just as the Scripture portrays concerning the beast power (see Revelation 13:8), the Roman Catholic Papacy is actually a religious system whose pontiff receive worship from the inhabitants of the earth. Describing the leader of this antichristian power, the apostle Paul made the following sobering statement:

"2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

2:4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4)

From the Catholic book, *Prompta Bibliotheca Canonica Juridica Moralis Theologica* by F. Lucii Ferraris, we read the following: "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.... The pope is as it were God on earth, sole sovereign of the faithful of Christ, chief king of kings, having plenitude of power to whom has been entrusted by the omnipotent God direction not only of the earthly but also of the heavenly kingdom."

From the book, "On the Authority of Councils 1619 ed, book 2, chapter 17, we read the following: "All names which in the scripture are applied to Christ by virtue of which it is established that He is over the church, all the same names are applied to the pope."

Friends, when we begin to consider some of the names that apply to Christ in Scripture, we shudder at such pompous words from the Catholic Church. Is it possible to apply names such as The Mighty God, Prince of Peace, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and The Everlasting Father, to a mere man?

This attitude of coveting the position and titles that are due God alone was born in the heart of the dragon that actually set up this antichristian power of Roman Catholicism (see 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:2). For Satan has from the beginning of his fall coveted the high and lofty throne of the Creator God. The prophet Isaiah was inspired to record the following concerning the heart condition of Satan in relation to the throne of God:

"14:13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

14:14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." (Isaiah 14:13, 14)

Thus friends, it is not surprising that the religious system that Satan has set up to receive worship from the world also has similar characteristics of coveting and actually receiving the worship that is due the Creator God alone. From Revelation 13, we read the following in relation to this point:

"13:4 And they WORSHIPPED the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they WORSHIPPED the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?"

13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall WORSHIP him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:4, 8)

The subject concerning the image of the beast can be well understood when we understand the entire passage of Revelation 13. In summary, Revelation 13 talks about 2 beasts: The sea beast which represents the Papacy and the land beast which represents the United States of America. In Revelation 13:12, we learn that America will exercise all the power of the first beast before him, and cause the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. This text portrays how America that began like a lamb will behave like a dragon in the closing scenes of this world's history (see Revelation 13:11). What this means is that America will forsake her constitutional mode of governance, and utilise the coercive instruments such as was utilised by the Papacy in the middle ages. When America begins to utilise brute force in compelling her citizens to go by her dogmas such as the Papacy utilised in the middle ages, she will have formed an image or a copy of the sea beast of Revelation 13. This is what is referred to as the image of the beast. The apostle John captures this concept in Revelation 13 with the following strong graphic words:

"13:11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

13:12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13:13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

13:14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

13:15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." (Revelation 13:11-15)

4) RECEIVE HIS MARK IN HIS FOREHEAD, OR IN HIS HAND

From Revelation 14:9, we learn that the wicked will receive the mark of the beast in their foreheads or in their hands. Before we consider what receiving the mark in the forehead or hand means, it is important for us to first know what the mark is. Friends, the mark in reference here is the mark of the beast power. We have earlier determined in this lesson that the beast power that is mentioned in Revelation 14:9 is the Papacy. Now, from simple

logic, we can postulate that if the beast power is the Papacy, then it follows that the mark of the beast will actually be a mark that is associated with Roman Catholicism. With this clear point made, a very important question that we will have to find an answer to is this: What does the Roman Catholic Church claim to be the MARK or SIGN of her authority?

Friends, I want us to hear this from the horse's own mouth. And so let's check some Catholic sources:

i) From the Catholic Record, London, Ontario September 1, 1923 we read the following: "Sunday is our mark of authority, the church is above the Bible and this transference of Sabbath observance is proof of the fact and any protestant who keeps Sunday acknowledges this".

ii) From the "Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine" 2nd Edition 1910, p. 50 we read the following:

"QUESTION: Which is the Sabbath day?"

"ANSWER: Saturday is the Sabbath day."

"QUESTION: Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?"

"ANSWER: We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church, in the council of Laodicea transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday."

iii) From C. F. Thomas, Chancellor to Cardinal Gibbons, we read the following answer in regard to a letter concerning the change from the Bible Sabbath to Sunday: "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."

iv) From the book Rome's Challenge, page 34, we read the following: "Most Christians assume that Sunday is the biblically approved day of worship. The Roman Catholic Church protests that it transferred Christian worship from the biblical Sabbath (Saturday) to Sunday, and that to try to argue that the change was made in the Bible is both dishonest and a denial of Catholic authority. If Protestantism wants to base its teachings only on the Bible, it should worship on Saturday."

v) From the Saint Catherine Catholic Church Sentinel May 21, 1995, we read the following: "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... not from any directions noted in the Scriptures, but from the churches 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."

Friends, from the several quotes above, we learn clearly that the mark of the beast, that is, the mark of Catholic authority, is SUNDAY WORSHIP.

At this point in our study, the follow up question that begs for an answer is this: What does it mean to receive the mark in the forehead or in the hand? The answer to this question is quite straightforward: People who will receive the mark in their hand will do so for convenience. Such people will not want to be affected by the strict Sunday laws that will affect their labour, and hence their source of livelihood. On the other hand, those who receive the mark on their forehead will do so on the basis of their personal beliefs or convictions in respect to Sunday sacredness.

Beloved, in either way, the Bible teaches that in the final hours of earth's history, anyone who decides to accept the mark of the beast (Sunday worship) instead of the Bible Sabbath will actually be trampling upon the plain commandments of God as found in Exodus 20:8-11 (see Revelation 14:6, 7). Such people will be acting in direct opposite to the saints of God who will keep all of the commandments of God (see Revelation 14:12). In relation to those who will choose to honour the Papal Sunday Sabbath, the Bible pronounces the following strong words: "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

5) THE WINE OF THE WRATH OF GOD

From Revelation 14:10, we learn that those who receive the mark of the beast will also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation. From the previous passage of Revelation 13, Satan has coerced the inhabitants of the world to receive the mark of the beast (see Revelation 13:15-17). Those who decided to go contrary to the devil's coercive instruments have been persecuted through economic sanctions, and finally the death penalty. As Revelation 13 closes, it looks as if all hope for God's people is gone, and that the wicked who follow and worship the beast power are the ones who will triumph and have life, peace and rest.

But friends, as we open the next chapter of the book of Revelation, we see a glorious picture of the saints who had been persecuted because of their faith stand on Mount Zion with Jesus Himself (see Revelation 14:1-5). This glorious picture is strategically positioned right after Revelation 13 to encourage the people of God who will be going through the final brutal persecution during the closing scenes of earth's history (review Revelation 13:15-17). Our caring Father provided such an encouraging picture of the glorious future life for us so that we will be encouraged to bear the present and future persecution to come with patience and hope.

In Revelation 14, the apostle John also records the sordid imagery of how God chooses to deal with those who follow and worship the beast. From Revelation 14:9-11, we are told that such people will go through the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture. Right from the fall of man, God's punishment of the wicked has always been tempered with mercy. But as the wicked finally separates from the entreaties of a loving God, they are left to experience the full wrath of the God they had despised.

We can fully grasp the meaning of the wrath of God when we follow the last scenes of the life of Christ and what our Saviour had to go through as a result of His choice to die in the place of the sinner. After the Last Supper with the disciples, Jesus set His face to go to the Garden of Gethsemane. We read from Matthew and Luke the details of Jesus' agony there:

"26:36 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

26:37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

26:38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

26:39 And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

26:40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

26:41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

26:42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

26:43 And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

26:44 And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

26:45 Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." (Matthew 26:36-45)

"22:40 And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

22:41 And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,

22:42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

22:43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

22:44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

22:45 And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow,

22:46 And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." (Luke 22:40-46)

The cup of suffering that Christ dreaded to drink and thus petitioned His Father to release Him from was not the physical torture of death. It was rather the cup that was full of the wrath of God without mixture; the cup of eternal separation of the sinner from the arms of a loving God. It was this thought that Christ dreaded, the thought that forced His veins to open, unleashing on His body red blood that mixed with His sweat (review Luke 22:44).

From Matthew's record in relation to the suffering of Christ on the cross, we read the following:

"27:45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:45, 46)

The pen of inspiration summarises all that I'm trying hard to portray here concerning the wrath of God in these sorrowful words: "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. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God" (Desire of Ages, page 753). Friends, Jesus had already drunk the bitter cup of the unmixed wrath of God for every descendant of Adam. None need to go through the agony that Christ went through ever again. Jesus voluntarily experienced death for mankind so we can avoid the second death (see Revelation 20:10, 14; Revelation 21:8). The Saviour's sacrifice on the cross of Calvary is enough to pardon the most wicked of the sons of Adam who plead His atoning sacrifice. For Jesus Himself made the solemn salvific proclamation: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

It is unfortunate however, that despite this offer of salvation, many from the race of Adam will choose to follow Satan and the beast power that he has set up in direct contradiction to the commandments of God (Revelation 13:8). All of such, who follow the beast power, and thus Satan, will have to drink the cup of the wrath of God without mixture for themselves. As Jesus suffered on the cross, they will also suffer the heart wrenching reality of an eternal separation from their loving Creator when Christ will no longer plead for the sinner in the heavenly sanctuary (Revelation 22:11). This is the most bitter torture that the wicked will bear as they begin to face the awful physical penalties in the form of the seven last plagues that will herald the second coming of Jesus in the clouds of heaven (Revelation 16:1-21).

6) TORMENTED WITH FIRE AND BRIMSTONE

From Revelation 14:10, 11, we come across the following message in relation to the punishment of the wicked that will choose to follow the beast power:

"14:10 ... and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

14:11 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 14:10, 11)

Friends, the unleashing of the seven last plagues is the first portion of the physical torment that the wicked who choose to follow Satan will experience. The seven last plagues will destroy many of the wicked inhabitants of the earth. The rest will be consumed when Christ appears in glory to redeem the saints at the second coming (see 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Isaiah 11:4; Jeremiah 25:33). The fire and brimstone that are hurled on the wicked takes place 1,000 years after the second coming of Christ (see Revelation 20:4, 5). After the millennium, the wicked will be resurrected to face the executive judgement of God. It is here that the Lord will eternally destroy the wicked with fire and brimstone (Revelation 20:9-15).

The passage of Revelation 14:10, 11 is usually utilised by several denominations in Christendom to further the teaching of an eternally burning hell. However, the Bible clearly teaches that the punishment of the wicked is death (the cessation of life) not eternal life in hellfire. From Scripture, we learn that it is only the righteous that will be rewarded with eternal life. Let us check out some Bible texts that make this point clear:

- i) "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE" (John 3:16; Capital Emphasis Added).
- ii) "BUT THE WICKED SHALL PERISH, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away" (Psalm 37:20; Capital Emphasis Added).
- iii) "For the wages of sin is DEATH; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23; Capital Emphasis Added).
- iv) "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in THE LAKE WHICH BURNETH WITH FIRE AND BRIMSTONE: WHICH IS THE SECOND DEATH" (Revelation 21:8; Capital Emphasis Added).
- v) "10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE. 14 And death and hell (the grave) were cast into THE LAKE OF FIRE. THIS IS THE SECOND DEATH" (Revelation 20:10, 14 ; Capital Emphasis Added).
- vi) "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, SHALL BE STUBBLE: and the day that cometh shall BURN THEM UP, saith the LORD of hosts, THAT IT SHALL LEAVE THEM NEITHER ROOT NOR BRANCH" (Malachi 4:1; Capital Emphasis Added).
- vii) "9 For evildoers shall be CUT OFF: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. 10 For yet a little while, and THE WICKED SHALL NOT BE: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be"(Psalm 37:9, 10; Capital Emphasis Added).

Friends, the Bible is clear. The fires of hell will burn up the wicked, leaving them neither root nor branch. In other words, a time is coming that the unrighteous from all generations of human history, including Satan himself will cease to exist (see Psalm 37:9, 10; Ezekiel 26:21; Ezekiel 27:36; Ezekiel 28:19). As you might have noticed earlier, the Bible describes the final destruction of the wicked in the lake of fire as the SECOND DEATH (see Revelation 20:6; Revelation 20:14; Revelation 21:8). Unlike the first death that mankind experiences today, those who will experience the second death will never again see a resurrection. They will be eternally separated from the arms of the loving God whom they have despised and rejected (see 1 John 4:8, 16). Thus, contrary to the popular teaching about hell today, the Scripture reinforces the point that while the results of hellfire (second death) will be everlasting, the actual burning will be a temporary condition.

7) THE PATIENCE OF THE SAINTS

The last portion of the third angel's message reads: "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 patience of the saints' (Revelation 14:12, KJV) is also translated as "This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God" (Revelation 14:12, NIV). The patience or endurance of the saints is one of the vital fruit of the Spirit that the saints will have to develop before they enter the final crises of this world's history (Galatians 5:22, 23). Such patience is developed as the saints bear the various trials that God brings upon their Christian path with meekness and godly fear. Outlined below are some Bible passages from the book of Revelation and other portions of the New Testament which emphasises this important virtue that is to be developed by God's end time people:

- i) "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." (Revelation 13:10)
- ii) "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Revelation 1:9)
- iii) "3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:" (Romans 5:3, 4)
- iv) "But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses," (2 Corinthians 6:4)
- v) "So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:" (2 Thessalonians 1:4)
- vi) "7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. 10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience." (James 5:7, 10)
- vii) "3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James 1:3, 4)
- viii) "In your patience possess ye your souls." (Luke 21:19)

Friends, the patience or endurance that God calls His people to develop as they enter the end time phase of the great controversy battle is the kind that should be able to endure privation, distress, hunger, thirst, prison, torture and even death without complaint or hatred. It is the kind of patience that Christ exhibited when He went through the final hours of His salvific work for mankind (see Isaiah 53:7). If there was ever a time that God's people should be praying to develop this kind of patience it is now; for the end time saints of God who are described as a people that keep all of His commandments and exhibit the faith of Jesus (Revelation 14:12) will find themselves in direct opposition to the masses that will follow the dictates of the beast power (review Revelation 13:15-17). And just as the people of God were severely persecuted during the dark ages, so will God's end time saints also suffer persecution for their faith (see Revelation 6:9-11; Revelation 12:17). It is sobering to learn that right after the third angel's message of Revelation 14:9-12 is the record of martyrdom of the saints who will believe and live the truth as is expressed by the three angels of Revelation 14. The details of this subject as found in Revelation 14:13 is considered in the next segment of this study.

8) BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD FROM HENCEFORTH

After the third angel's message, the apostle John hears another message in relation to the saints: "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 labours; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

In Revelation 14:13, the saints are made aware that many of them will suffer martyrdom as a result of the oppression of the beast power. However, they are encouraged with the blessed hope of the special resurrection. Besides the special resurrection of the wicked that we find in Revelation 1:7, some scholars assert that the special resurrection will also involve some class of the righteous. For instance, scholars such as Gerhard Pfandl point out that the text in Daniel 12:2 conveys the idea of a special resurrection for both the righteous and the wicked. From the book "Daniel: The Seer of Babylon" page 107, we obtain the following insight on Daniel 12:2 from Gerhard Pfandl: "The text states: "Many of those who sleep ... shall awake," i.e., they shall be resurrected, some to eternal life and some to everlasting condemnation. Clearly this cannot be the general resurrection at the Second Advent, when only the righteous will rise (1 Thess. 4:16, 17), nor the resurrection of the wicked 1,000 years later (Rev. 20:4-6). It must, therefore, be a special resurrection of some righteous and some wicked at the time of the seventh plague (Rev. 16:17, 18)." At this point in our study, an important question that begs for an answer is this: "Who are the group of the righteous that will partake in the special resurrection before the general resurrection? Some Bible scholars see in the text of Revelation 14:13, the class of the saints who will partake in the special resurrection. From Revelation 14:13, we read the following: "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 labours; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13; Capital Emphasis Added).

Friends, it is worth noting that the key words from the text above are "from henceforth" as opposed to before. You see beloved, the death of the saints mentioned in Revelation 14:13 is clearly positioned at the time of earth's history when the inhabitants of the world would have been polarised into two main groups; those who worship the beast power (Revelation 14:9-11) and those who obey the commandments of God, and have the faith of Jesus (Revelation 14:12). At this point in the history of our world (which is yet future), many of the people who will express faith in the message of the third angel will also seal their testimony with their blood (see Revelation 13:15-17; Revelation 20:4). However, the Scripture in Revelation 14:13 clearly teaches that these saints will obtain a special blessing from God. Some Bible scholars assert that this blessing, among other things, refers to the privilege that God will grant those who die in the faith of the third angel to partake in a special resurrection (review Daniel 12:2) before the general resurrection of all the saints (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16).

From the book Great Controversy, page 637, Ellen G. White summarises the special resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked with these clear words: "Graves are opened, and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth... awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Daniel 12:2. All who have died in the faith of the third angel's message come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God's covenant of peace with those who have kept His law. They also which pierced Him (Revelation 1:7), those that mocked and derided Christ's dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people, are raised to behold Him in His glory and to

see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient." -- Great Controversy, page 637. 9)

From the scriptural passages we have considered so far, it is clear that the third angel's message contains the most fearsome warning ever given by God to the human race. If we consider the fact that on the Cross of Calvary, God allowed His only begotten Son to drink of His wrath without mixture, the cup that indeed the sinner should have drunk himself (see Genesis 2:17), we come to understand why God has given the dire warning of the third angel in Revelation 14:9-11. This warning is to arouse the indifferent and careless to the lofty realities of the plan of salvation, and to help him make a decided choice to worship the Creator God rather than following the traditions and dictates of man. For at the end of the day, those who despite the entreaties and warnings of the third angel by choosing to worship the beast power, and subsequently Satan, will have no excuse when they are finally separated from the heart of a loving God.

Exhortation: From the pen of inspiration, we read the following theological concepts in relation to the third angel's message:

i) ""Saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast." Here is clearly presented a form of government in which the legislative power rests with the people, a most striking evidence that the United States is the nation denoted in the prophecy.

But what is the 'image to the beast'? and how is it to be formed? The image is made by the two-horned beast, and is an image to the beast. It is also called an image of the beast. Then to learn what the image is like and how it is to be formed we must study the characteristics of the beast itself - the papacy.

When the early church became corrupted by departing from the simplicity of the gospel and accepting heathen rites and customs, she lost the Spirit and power of God; and in order to control the consciences of the people, she sought the support of the secular power. The result was the papacy, a church that controlled the power of the state and employed it to further her own ends, especially for the punishment of "heresy." In order for the United States to form an image of the beast, the religious power must so control the civil government that the authority of the state will also be employed by the church to accomplish her own ends....

When the leading churches of the United States, uniting upon such points of doctrine as are held by them in common, shall influence the state to enforce their decrees and to sustain their institutions, then Protestant America will have formed an image of the Roman hierarchy, and the infliction of civil penalties upon dissenters will inevitably result....

The 'image to the beast' represents that form of apostate Protestantism which will be developed when the Protestant churches shall seek the aid of the civil power for the enforcement of their dogmas." — (The Great Controversy, pages 442-445.)

ii) "When Sunday observance shall be enforced by law, and the world shall be enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath, then whoever shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher authority than that of Rome, will thereby honor popery above God. He is paying homage to Rome and to the power which enforces the institution ordained by Rome. He is worshiping the beast and his image. As men then reject the institution which God has declared to be the sign of His authority, and honor in its stead that which Rome has chosen as the token of her supremacy, they will thereby accept the sign of allegiance to Rome—"the mark of the beast." And it is not until the issue

is thus plainly set before the people, and they are brought to choose between the commandments of God and the commandments of men, that those who continue in transgression will receive "the mark of the beast." — (Mar 169.4)

iii) "In the issue of the contest all Christendom will be divided into two great classes—those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark. Although church and state will unite their power to compel "all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond" (Revelation 13:16), to receive "the mark of the beast," yet the people of God will not receive it. The prophet of Patmos beholds "them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God" and singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Revelation 15:2, 3." — (The Great Controversy, 450; Mar 188.6)