

The 1st Angel's Message

Angels Flying in the Sky. The term “angel” is to be understood as “one who bears a message.” The term in the original is angelos, which forms the root for the word “evangelism.” It describes “one who is giving news, one who has a message to share.” The book of Revelation is filled with symbols, and we needn’t think that this picture of three angels flying in the sky is to be taken literally. This is a symbolic picture depicting three messages going to all the world. Is there a place in the Bible in which humans are called “angels,” that is, those delivering His message? Yes! In Matthew 11:10, Jesus said that John the Baptist was the “angel” (angelos in the original) fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi 3:1. Just as John the Baptist was God's “angel” (“messenger”) alerting the world to Christ's first coming, so these “angels” of Revelation 14 alert the world before Christ comes back the second time.

The Everlasting Gospel. The first component of the message is the “everlasting gospel.” This is the Good News of salvation revealed throughout the Bible. It is the message of God’s love that forms the basis for all the truths in Scripture. God loves us very much, so much that He sent His divine Son Jesus to die for our sins! The Good News includes the forgiveness of past sins, the power to overcome temptation today and the promise of a home in a future kingdom “in which righteousness dwells.” II Peter 3:13. It is referred to as the “everlasting” Gospel, telling us that God's Good News hasn't changed. The Bible defines only one way by which people are saved: it is by grace through faith. Ephesians 2:8. People were saved in Old Testament times by grace through faith just as we are today, Paul declares in the book of Romans.

Those Who Dwell on the Earth. This message is given particularly to alert those who “dwell” on the earth, those who are making this “world” their home. In the Scriptures, God’s followers are not of those who “dwell” here. We are called to be “pilgrims,” “strangers” and “aliens” as we “sojourn” in this world, recognizing that this world is not our home. We are called to look by faith, as did Abraham, to the kingdom above, the city “which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.” Hebrews 11:10.

To Every Nation, Tribe, Tongue, and People. This message is a global message; it is to go everywhere. God wants everyone to know the content of these messages before He comes back in glory. Just as Noah warned his world before the flood, so these messages are designed to alert the entire world of what will soon take place.

Saying With a Loud Voice. These messages are to be given prominence and emphasis. The word in Greek translated “loud” is mega, a term with which we're familiar. It means “huge,” or “big.” The word in Greek translated “voice” is also familiar to us, its root appearing in words such as telephone, microphone and phonograph. This message is to be given with a loud (“mega”) voice (“phone”); a “megaphone.” God wants everyone to hear and understand these messages!

Fear God. The “angel” cries out, “Fear God and give glory to Him.” To “fear” God in the biblical sense does not mean to cringe in abject terror. God is our heavenly Father, Who seeks a relationship with His creatures based on appreciation, not dread. To “fear God” in this context means to respect, reverence, love and obey Him. Said the wise man Solomon as he closed his sermon, “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” Ecclesiastes 12:13.

Within this phrase is encapsulated the basic issue that is the under-structure of God's kingdom. It is that which testifies as to our relationship with our Creator. It is a very simple issue! It is the issue that surfaced in the Garden of Eden and will be the issue that will face the world at the end of time. The issue is simply this: Will we, as creatures from God's hand, render to Him the loyalty and allegiance He deserves as our Maker? Will we trust Him and heed His Word? Will we love and obey Him at all costs? Regarding this issue, the Bible tells us that Adam and Eve failed. They disregarded the express Word of God in the Garden and ate the fruit which had been forbidden. They set aside His commandment and listened to the devil, masquerading as the serpent. The issue of loyalty to God expressed by loving obedience will be the prime issue of the last days.

Give Glory to Him. What is meant by the angel saying, "Give glory to Him"? We do that by our lips, but more importantly by our lives. The Bible is calling us to holy living in these last days. Yes, we should "continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." Hebrews 13:15. But giving "glory to Him" goes far beyond what we say. It impacts our whole lifestyle. We honor God when we live in a way that gives evidence that His Spirit is operating in our lives. Paul wrote, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." I Corinthians 10:31. We glorify God when we obey the laws of health and don't poison and pollute our bodies through intemperance; when we treat our bodies as God's temple. "You were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." I Corinthians 6:20. We glorify God when we think, act and behave in a way that is in harmony with His principles. God will enable us to do this if we ask Him.

For the Hour of His Judgment Has Come. Throughout the Scriptures the Bible has taught accountability, responsibility and judgment. When the wise man King Solomon said, "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man," he followed that immediately by stating, "For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil." Ecclesiastes 12:14. Notice though, that when Solomon wrote, as well as other Bible authors, he spoke of the judgment as being in the future. In contrast, the first angel of Revelation 14 clearly speaks of the hour of His judgment as having come and taking place, at least part of it, before Christ's return. This is crucial!

The prophecies of the book of Daniel reveal that since the year 1844 we have been living in the time of God's judgment. The phase of judgment that involves the opening of the books and the investigation into who will be the heirs of His kingdom takes place prior to the Advent, for when He returns His "reward is with Him." Revelation 22:12. Just as an earthly trial includes separate and distinct phases of investigation, decision-making and execution, so also God's system of divine justice operates on similar principles.

As revealed in many stories contained in Scripture, it has been the consistent pattern of God to investigate before taking action, not because He needs to (because He's perfect in knowledge), but to inspire confidence in the minds of His creatures. Before He returns, the phase of the judgment that involves "investigation" will have been completed. The promise is given, "At that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book." Daniel 12:1. This text obviously contemplates a process of looking into "books" prior to the great deliverance.

The word "found" is a legal term, as when a jury declares, "We find the defendant not guilty." The word "find" or "found" is used in that same legal way in many places of the Bible. The "handwriting on the wall" declared that the kingdom of Babylon had been "weighed in the balances and found wanting." Daniel 5:27. Divine investigation took place prior to judgment

being executed on ancient Babylon. Concerning apocalyptic Babylon John states, "in her was found the blood of prophets and saints." Revelation 18:24. Knowing that someday he would "appear before the judgment seat of Christ, Paul's prayer was that he would be "found in Him," not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith." II Corinthians 5:10, Philippians 3:9.

Daniel describes a heavenly judgment setting that takes place prior to the Advent, in which thrones are put in place with the Ancient of Days presiding and the numberless hosts of angels attending as the "court was seated and the books were opened." Daniel 7:10. The message that we are now living in the "hour of His judgment" gives impetus and momentum to the angel's cry. There is utmost urgency! One of the very last items on God's agenda is being completed right now! His coming is imminent!

Worship Him Who Made. The first angel continues with his proclamation. "Worship Him Who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of waters." The central issue of the last days will focus on worship. We know that because the word "worship" appears no less than 8 times in chapters 13 and 14 of Revelation. The call is to worship God and not worship the beast or his image.

There is a very specific aspect in this call to worship God. We are called to worship "the God Who made." The creatorship of God is the fundamental platform on which rests His right to reign; it is the reason why He is to be revered and worshiped. "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created." Revelation 4:11. "Thus shall you say to them (idols): 'The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens.' He (the LORD) has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom." Jeremiah 10:11, 12.

This invitation to worship "Him Who made," the Creator God, must include a call to return to the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath, the day which the Lord set aside as a reminder of His creation; the day instituted at creation and embedded in the Ten Commandments which were written by God's own finger. The language of the first angel, "worship Him Who made heaven and earth and the sea" is drawn from the fourth commandment which presents the Sabbath as the reminder of creation, reminding us that "in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them." Exodus 20:11. On the other hand, the phrase "and the springs of water," ("fountains of water" KJV) is derived from the story of the Deluge. Genesis 7:11; 8:2. (In the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, the same word is used.) Thus our minds are directed to the two great geological events recorded in Genesis as evincing God's authority, power and justice.

In this age when evolution is taught as the explanation of how life began there is to be a clear and decisive appeal to return to the understanding of God as Creator and observe the only day which Scripture identifies as being sanctified and blessed; His memorial of creatorship, the Sabbath of the seventh-day. Satan hates the Sabbath because it identifies God as Creator; it teaches us to "rest" from our works of trying to earn God's favor and trust in what He's done; and because it demonstrates that just as God was able to take a world that was "without form and void" and make it "very good," so He can take the tattered shreds of our lives and transform them into something beautiful. Most importantly, God set apart the Sabbath so that time, a most important component in building relationships, can be spent with Him every week and we can know Him better. Satan doesn't want this to happen!