

Lesson – Angelic Messengers (Revelation 14:6–11)

I. Introduction

- a. People are constantly hoping for a better day.
Politicians promise to bring in better times if they are elected.
- b. World leaders strive to find common ground between nations, seeking to bring about peace and harmony.
- c. Everyone would like to see the stock market up, the crime rate down, poverty and disease eliminated, the environment preserved, and an end to hatred and strife.
- d. But man's efforts to bring about a better world, however well intended, are ultimately doomed.
- e. They amount to little more than rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic to give everyone a better view as the ship sinks.
- f. The truth is that not a better day, but an unimaginably worse day lies ahead for man and his world. In the future, God will pour out His wrath and judgment on a scale never before seen.
- g. Only after the earth is utterly devastated and unbelievers judged will a better day come—the blessed earthly kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- h. Revelation has much to say about the coming judgments; as already noted, they are the primary focus of chapters 6–11 and 15–19, with chapters 12–

14 forming a brief interlude in the unfolding revelation of God's judgmental wrath.

- i. Chapters 12 and 13 have been seen to recount the events of the Tribulation from Satan's perspective; chapter 14 returns to what God is going to do.
- i. In three visions, this text previews the remaining judgments of the Tribulation and the return of Christ.
 - i. The first vision (vv. 1–5) was of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who will appear with the Lord Jesus Christ on Mount Zion at His second coming.
 - ii. Before us in verses 6 through 11 is the record of the second vision, in which judgment is proclaimed by three angelic messengers.
- j. Angels serve throughout Scripture as God's messengers; in fact, the Greek word *angelos* ("angel") means "messenger."
 - i. They were instrumental in the giving of the Mosaic Law (Acts 7:38, 53; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2).
 - ii. They also brought messages to individuals, such as Daniel (Dan. 8:15–17; 9:21–22), Zacharias (Luke 1:11–19), Mary (Luke 1:26–27), Joseph (Matt. 1:20; 2:13, 19), the shepherds (Luke 2:9–13), Phillip (Acts 8:26), and Paul (Acts 27:23–24).
 - iii. Angels also minister to and care for believers (Matt. 18:10; Acts 12:7–11; Heb. 1:14).
- k. Angels will play a major role in the end-time events.

- i. They will gather the nonelect for judgment (Matt. 13:41–42, 49–50), the elect for glory (Matt. 24:31), and accompany the Lord Jesus Christ when He returns to earth in triumph (Matt. 25:31; 2 Thess. 1:7).
 - ii. In Revelation, angels are involved in the outpouring of God’s wrath (8:6ff.; 11:15ff.; 16:1ff.).
 - iii. Unlike those angels, however, the three angels described in verses 6–11 do not bring judgment.
 - iv. Instead, they bring astounding proclamations from God concerning the consummation of the age.
- 1. The three angels do not appear in sequential or chronological order.
 - i. Instead, they address issues and events that stretch across the Tribulation period.
 - ii. Their messages anticipate the judgment of the seventh trumpet (11:15; chaps. 15, 16), which includes the final, climactic, rapid-fire bowl judgments at the end of the Tribulation.
 - iii. The messages they bring are designed to produce a remedial fear (cf. Luke 12:5; Heb. 10:31) leading to saving faith.
 - iv. God will graciously offer sinners another opportunity to repent before unleashing the terrifying bowl judgments (16:1ff.).

- m. The first angel preaches the gospel, the second pronounces judgment, and the third promises damnation.
- II. **The First Angel: Preaching the Gospel.**
- a. 14:6–7
 - b. The specific angel or group of angels that John **saw another angel** distinct from is not specified.
 - c. Dramatically, the angel appears in the sky flying in midheaven.
 - d. *Mesouranēma* (**midheaven**) refers to the point in the sky where the sun reaches its meridian, apex, or high point at noon (cf. 8:13; 19:17).
 - e. From that point, the angel would be most visible to those on the earth.
 - f. There he will also be beyond the reach of Antichrist, as well as Satan and his demon hosts, whose activity will by that time be restricted to the earth (12:7–9).
 - i. The battle that currently rages in the heavenlies between the holy angels and the demons (cf. Dan. 10:12–13) will by then be over.
 - g. This preaching angel will be unreachable, the world's view of him unobstructed, and his ministry unhindered.
 - h. By the time the angel begins his ministry, the world will have suffered the incredible devastation of the seal and trumpet judgments.
 - i. Relentless holocausts will have rocked the globe, and the familiarly stable heavens will have

become a disintegrating source of terror (cf. 6:12–14).

- ii. During this time, the unbelieving world will have heard the gospel preached by the 144,000 Jewish evangelists and the two witnesses, as well as countless thousands of others saved under their ministries.
- iii. But despite all that, most of the earth's population will reject the gospel (9:20–21; cf. 16:9, 11); thus God graciously sends this powerful angel to proclaim the gospel to them yet again.
- i. As he flies through the sky, the angel will have **an eternal gospel to preach**.
- j. This is the only occurrence of the noun *euangelion* (**gospel**) in John's writings, though the related verb translated **to preach** also appears in 10:7.
 - i. Like a multifaceted jewel, Scripture describes the gospel in various terms, each looking at it from a different viewpoint.
 - ii. The gospel is called the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23), the gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:1), the gospel of God (Mark 1:14), the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24), the gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4), the gospel of salvation (Eph. 1:13), the gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15), and the glorious gospel (1 Tim. 1:11).
 - iii. Here it is described as **eternal** because it provides the means to eternal life.

- iv. It is the good news that God will forgive all the sins of those who repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation, and by that repentance and saving faith take them into His eternal kingdom
- k. The **eternal gospel** preached by the angel is the same one proclaimed throughout all history.
 - i. It is the good news of forgiveness and eternal life.
 - ii. He will declare that people are sinners, facing eternal judgment in hell, but that God has provided atonement for sins through the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - iii. That message of forgiveness was given even in Old Testament times based on new covenant terms (cf. Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:25–27).
 - iv. Its benefits were applied to all who truly repented and sought forgiveness and grace from God, even though the Savior had not yet died.
- l. In the purpose of God, the merits of the Lamb slain at Calvary have been granted to all true repenters in all ages.
 - i. In the Tribulation, most people will already be familiar with the gospel through the preaching of the 144,000, the two witnesses, and other believers.
 - ii. But Jesus declared that before the end comes the whole world will hear the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 24:14).

- iii. The preaching of this angel will reach any who still have not heard the gospel message.
- iv. As earth's darkest hour approaches, the angel will proclaim the good news that it is not too late.
- v. There is still time to repent before God's judgment resumes.
- m. The angel's message is addressed to those who live on the earth—a phrase always used in Revelation to refer to unbelievers (cf. 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 12, 14; 17:2, 8).
- n. The all-inclusive phrase every nation and tribe and tongue and people (cf. 5:9; 7:9; 11:9; 13:7) stresses the comprehensive, worldwide nature of the angel's proclamation.
- o. The angel will call out with a loud voice to all unregenerate people everywhere.
 - i. His loud voice ensures that he will be heard and emphasizes the urgency of his message.
 - ii. The angel's message to sinners is "Fear God, and give Him glory."
 - iii. He will call the people of the world to change their allegiance from the beast to the Lamb.
 - iv. He will urge them to no longer fear, reverence, and worship Satan and Antichrist, but instead to **fear**, reverence, and honor God by turning to His Son.
 - v. As the sovereign ruler of the universe, God alone—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—has the

right to be worshiped (19:10; 22:9; Isa. 42:8; 48:11; Matt. 4:10).

- p. The Bible repeatedly calls people to fear God.
 - i. In Psalm 111:10 the psalmist declared that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (cf. Prov. 1:7; 9:10), while Proverbs 23:17 commands, “Live in the fear of the Lord always.”
 - ii. A wise father counsels his son to “fear the Lord and the king” (Prov. 24:21), while Peter exhorted his readers to “Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king” (1 Pet. 2:17).
 - iii. In Matthew 10:28 Jesus warned, “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”
 - iv. To fear God is to live in the reality of His holiness, His sovereignty, and His judgment of sin.
 - v. It is to love God, respect Him, reverence Him, adore Him, hold Him in awe, and worship Him. And that can only be done by loving His Son the Savior (John 5:23).
- q. In addition to fearing God, men are to **give Him glory**. This requirement goes to the very essence of the problem of unregenerate people, who “even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks” (Rom. 1:21).

- r. Refusing to give God glory is at the core of man's prideful rebellion.
- s. Unbelievers will be called to fear and glorify God immediately **because the hour of His judgment has come.**
- t. Opportunity is fading fast; the bowl judgments are about to be poured out, to be followed shortly by the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to judge the unbelieving world (Matt. 25:31–46).
- u. This is the first occurrence of the word *krisis* (**judgment**) in Revelation.
 - i. Up to this point in Revelation, the word *wrath* has been used to describe God's judgment (cf. 6:16–17; 11:18); the two terms will continue to be used interchangeably (cf. vv. 10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19; 19:15).
 - ii. God's righteous judgments are the outpouring of His wrath against the stubborn and unrepentant world.
- v. It would seem that the angel's warnings would be redundant.
 - i. After all, by this point people will have experienced the devastating seal and trumpet judgments.
 - ii. The earth will have been devastated by worldwide wars, famines, and earthquakes, resulting in the destruction of the environment, witnessed terrifying signs in the heavens, and been attacked by demon hordes.

- iii. All of that will result in death on a scale unprecedented in human history.
- iv. Yet, though they will eventually realize that those disasters are God's judgments (cf. 6:15–17), people will defiantly refuse to repent (9:20–21).
- v. But God, in grace and mercy, will again call sinners to repentance through the preaching of this angel.
- w. The angel gives one final reason for sinners to turn from Antichrist to God, proclaiming that people should **worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.**
 - i. The created universe both offers proof of God's existence and provides grounds for worshipping Him. David affirmed in Psalm 19:1–4
 - ii. Isaiah 40:21–26 also teaches that the creation reveals God's glory and majesty:
- x. Because God reveals Himself in His creation, men are without excuse for not acknowledging Him: (Rom. 1:18–20)
- y. When Paul evangelized Jews, he always started from the Old Testament Scripture.
 - i. But when he evangelized pagans, whether simple common people (Acts 14:14–17) or sophisticated philosophers (Acts 17:22–31), he proclaimed that the true and living God must be worshiped because He is the Creator of everything.
- z. The angel's stern warning is that the Creator is also the Judge; He is the one people should fear and

worship, rather than Satan and Antichrist. As the world teeters on the brink of final disaster, God graciously offers people another chance to repent.

- i. He will snatch those who heed the warning from the fire of judgment (cf. Jude 23), and transfer them from Satan's kingdom of darkness into the soon to be manifest kingdom of His Son (Col. 1:13).

III. **The Second Angel: Pronouncing Judgment.**

- a. 14:8
- b. John saw **another angel, a second one**, who **followed** the first angel.
- c. Unlike the first one, this angel does not preach the good news of the gospel, but rather pronounces the bad news of judgment.
 - i. Sadly, that implies that the first angel's message was largely rejected.
 - ii. It is almost as if the second angel interrupts the first angel because no one is responding.
- d. The second angel's equally brief and direct message is **"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great."**
 - i. The repetition underscores the finality, certainty, and comprehensive nature of Babylon's judgment.
 - ii. Babylon's yet future fall is so certain that it can be spoken of as though it has already taken place.
 - iii. The angel's pronouncement will come as a shock to the unbelieving world.

- iv. That Antichrist's mighty empire, the most powerful in human history, could be destroyed will be inconceivable to his followers (cf. 13:4).
- v. It may be that a restored city of **Babylon** will be Antichrist's capital city.
- vi. But **Babylon** in this passage refers not just to the city, but to Antichrist's worldwide political, economic, and religious empire.
- e. **Babylon** has from its inception symbolized evil and rebellion against God.
 - i. It was founded by Nimrod (Gen. 10:9), a proud, powerful, God-rejecting ruler. Babel (Babylon) was the site of the first organized system of idolatrous false religion (Gen. 11:1–4).
 - ii. The Tower of Babel, the expression of that false religion, was a ziggurat; an edifice designed to facilitate idolatrous worship.
 - iii. God judged the people's idolatry and rebellion by confusing their language and scattering them over the globe (Gen. 11:5–9).
 - iv. Thus the seeds of idolatry and false religion spread around the world from Babylon, to take root wherever these proud rebels and their descendants settled.
- f. As humanity was united in idolatrous false religion at Babel, so will it again be united in the end times under the final Babylon.
 - i. History will thus come full circle.

- ii. The final Babylon, personified as a harlot (cf. 17:1–5), is described as **she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality**.
- iii. The world will be intoxicated, deceived, and seduced by the Babylonian false religion headed by Antichrist.
- g. *Thumos* (**passion**) describes strong, consuming lusts and desires.
 - i. As a result of their passion, sinners will engage in an orgy of rebellion, idolatry, and hatred of God.
 - ii. While sexual sin will be rampant, the **immorality** spoken of here is spiritual prostitution to Antichrist's false religion; it pictures unfaithfulness to God.
 - iii. Having imbibed the **wine** of the seductive harlot, **the nations** of the world will continue on their course of spiritual defection from God and end up drinking the “wine of the wrath of God” (v. 10).
- h. As the third angel reveals, this will prove disastrous.
 - i. This judgment will be detailed in the discussions of 16:17–19 and chapters 17 and 18.

IV. **The Third Angel: Promising Damnation.**

- a. 14:9–11
- b. The three angels appear in a logical, if not chronological, sequence.
- c. The rejection of the gospel preached by the first angel results in the pronouncement of judgment by the

second angel, which will be carried out in the damnation described by the third angel.

- d. The **third** angel will deliver his warning **with a loud voice**, so that all will hear and understand his message.
 - i. God, being perfectly holy and righteous, judges people because they reject what they know to be true.
 - ii. That is why everyone sentenced to hell will be without excuse (Rom. 1:20; 2:1).
- e. The third angel's dire warning is addressed to **anyone** who **worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand**.
 - i. As noted in chapter 5 of this volume, everyone will be required, under pain of death, to worship **the beast and his image**.
 - ii. As sign of loyalty to Antichrist and in order to function in his world economy, everyone will be required to receive **a mark on his forehead or on his hand**.
 - iii. It will seem to the deceived followers of Antichrist who receive that mark that they are backing the winning side.
 - iv. But the angel warns that a terrible fate awaits those who, despite all of God's judgments and warnings, persist in worshiping Antichrist.
 - v. Once again, God graciously calls on sinners to repent in the final hour.

- f. Those who drank the wine of the harlot Babylon **also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger.**
- g. To **drink of the wine of the wrath of God** is to experience His wrath (cf. Job 21:20; Ps. 75:8; Isa. 51:17, 22; Jer. 25:15).
 - i. The full fury of God's wrath, so long restrained, will be unleashed.
 - ii. Such wrath is not an impulsive outburst of divine emotion aimed at people whimsically.
 - iii. It is the settled, deliberate, merciless, graceless response of the righteous God against all sinners.
 - iv. John describes that terrifying reality by noting that God's wrath will be **mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger.**
- h. **Mixed in full strength** (lit. "mixed unmixed") refers to the ancient practice of diluting wine with water.
 - i. The wine filling **the cup of God's anger**, however, is strong, undiluted wine.
 - ii. God's eschatological wrath will be undiluted vengeance, unmixed with any trace of compassion.
- i. The horrifying fate awaiting the person who drinks **the wine of the wrath of God** is to **be tormented with fire and brimstone.**
 - i. The verb translated be tormented speaks of the ceaseless infliction of unbearable pain.
 - ii. The noun form of that verb is used in Luke 16:23 to describe the agony of the rich man in Hades.

- iii. Those whom God will force to drink from **the cup of His anger** will know no lessening or diminishing of their torment; they will enjoy no moments of rest throughout eternity.
- j. **Fire and brimstone** are often associated in Scripture with divine judgment.
 - i. God used them to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24–25; Luke 17:29).
 - ii. In Psalm 11:6 David wrote, “Upon the wicked He will rain snares; fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup.”
 - iii. Hell, the final resting place of the unregenerate, is described as the “lake of fire which burns with brimstone” (19:20; cf. 20:10; 21:8).
- k. That the unregenerate will be tormented **in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb** will add shame and embarrassment to their suffering.
 - i. “To suffer in the presence of the hosts of heaven is not to lessen the fierceness of the judgment but to make it more grievous.
 - ii. Christians had borne the shame of public derision and opposition; soon their antagonists will suffer before a more august gathering” (Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977], 276).

- l. Unrepentant sinners will be banished from God's presence they will be forever barred from the loving fellowship with Him that believers will enjoy.
- m. They will not, however, be away from His presence in the sense of His sovereignty and omnipresence—even in hell.
 - i. David wrote, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there" (Ps. 139:7–8 NKJV).
 - ii. Those in hell will suffer eternal punishment at the hands of God, because He is the One who is "able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).
- n. The third angel concludes his message with a final sobering thought about the punishment of those who worship the beast, declaring that **the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night.**
 - i. This angel would strongly disagree with those who deny the eternality of hell. His description of hell as the place where **the smoke of the torment** of the wicked **goes up forever and ever** (cf. 20:10) is consistent with the rest of Scripture.
 - ii. Isaiah (Isa. 66:24), Daniel (Dan. 12:2), John the Baptist (Matt. 3:12; Luke 3:17), and the apostle Paul (2 Thess. 1:9) also affirm that hell is eternal.

- iii. But no one taught that sobering truth more clearly than did the Lord Jesus Christ.
- iv. He spoke of hell as the place of “eternal fire” (Matt. 18:8; 25:41), of “unquenchable fire” (Mark 9:43), where “the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48).
- v. And in Matthew 25:46, Jesus clearly taught that the torment of the lost in hell will last as long as the blessedness of the redeemed in heaven.
- vi. Though human sensitivities may balk at the doctrine of eternal punishment, it is both the explicit teaching of the Bible and demanded by God’s justice and holiness.
- o. So these three angels deliver God’s last call to repentance before the final judgments fall and the Lord Jesus Christ returns.
 - i. But God’s gracious warnings will go unheeded by most of the sinful world.
 - ii. There is perhaps no clearer illustration in Scripture of the sad truth that “men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil” (John 3:19).

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Revelation 12–22*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 2000), 84–92.