

THREE REASONS TO FEAR GOD AND GIVE HIM GLORY

14 ⁶Then I saw another angel flying in mid-air, he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation and tribe and language and people. ⁷He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and the springs of water.” ⁸A second angel followed and said, “Fallen! Babylon the Great has fallen!—[the one] who caused the nations to drink the wine of the passion of her immorality.” ⁹A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰he shall indeed drink the wine of God’s wrath, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his anger. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.” ¹¹The smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; there is no rest day and night for those who worship the beast and his image, for whoever receives the mark [that represents] his name. ¹²This calls for perseverance on the part of the saints, those who obey God’s commandments and maintain their faith in Jesus.*

¹³Then I heard a voice from heaven say, “Write: Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on.” “Indeed,” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest from their labors; for their deeds will follow them.” ¹⁴I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was someone [who looked] like the Son of Man; he had a golden crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. ¹⁵Another angel came out of the temple, and he cried out in a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, “Use your sickle and reap; for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.” ¹⁶So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested. ¹⁷Another angel came out of the temple that is in heaven, he also had a sharp sickle. ¹⁸Still another angel, he who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, “Use your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the earth’s vineyard, for her grapes are fully ripe.” ¹⁹Then the angel swung his sickle upon the earth, gathered the grapes of the earth, and dumped them into the winepress, the great [winepress] of the wrath of God. ²⁰They trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of it, rising as high as the horses’ bridles for a distance of about one hundred and eighty miles.** (Rev. 14:6-20)

*Literally, “and keep the faith of Jesus.”

**Literally, “a distance of one thousand and six hundred stadia,” (a stadia is approximately 600 feet.)

Introduction

How likely would it be to pick up your daily newspaper and find a front-page story such as the following, reporting the occurrence of a devastating natural catastrophe?

... the crash of falling walls, the shrieks, the groans, the account of agony and despair of that long night cannot be described ... such events must be numbered amongst the “terrible things of God,” in which his irresistible power to punish his sinful creatures is most awfully displayed: and which fill the human mind with greater terror than any other public calamity ... should not these awful demonstrations of divine power cause us to fear him who can so suddenly sweep away a whole city into destruction? Should not sinners tremble to think how awful it is to have such a God for an enemy? Should they not immediately seek reconciliation to him through the Blood of the Lamb? ... why sinners, standing “on the brink of eternity, and liable by a thousand means to be hurried into eternity,” do ye not “seek the LORD while he may be found”?

This very article did in fact appear in a major American newspaper, *The Boston Recorder*, in the year 1822, it was reporting the disastrous earthquake that struck the Syrian city of Aleppo. (*WORLD*, 9/5/92, p. 9)

Compare that newspaper article with a contemporary editorial cartoon that appeared shortly after the devastating storms that struck Florida in the late summer of 1992:

Under a drawing of a hurricane-struck community, appears a caption that mocks: “These hurricanes are caused by Godless, non-Christian, pro-choice, anti-family, homosexual-sympathizing, liberal, unpatriotic anti-Christian supporters!”

Reverential fear and worship are an appropriate response to the majestic person of God, especially when He displays His works of judgment—but such an attitude of godliness is tragically lacking in many of the societies of the world today.

In Revelation 14:7 there is this exhortation and commandment set before us:

Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and the springs of water.

As we examine this passage of Scripture, let us consider, “Three Reasons to Fear God and Give Him Glory.”

I. Fear God and Give Him Glory, ...Because Such is Part of the Gospel Call

The angel flying in mid-air—where he can be seen and heard by all the world—bearing the eternal gospel, reminds us of the angel who appeared to the shepherds at the time of the Savior’s birth:

... there were shepherds out living in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do

not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹Today in the town of David a Savior has been born for you; he is Christ the Lord.” (Lk. 2:8-11)

This angel of Revelation 14:6 appears to represent the proclamation of the gospel throughout the New Testament era; beginning with the initial revelation to the shepherds and continuing through the witness of the church, in obedience to the Great Commission given her by her Lord:

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matt. 28:18-20)

Notice that the proclamation of the gospel comes with the commandment, *“fear God and give him glory,”* and the call, *“worship him,”* the One who is the Creator of all (vs. 7.) Stated another way, the gospel contains a call both to faith in Christ and to repentance. The Apostle Paul reminds the Ephesians, *“I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus”* (Acts 20:21.)

In light of New Testament teaching, the true preaching of the gospel consists of 1) the proclamation of what God has done for man’s salvation at the cross of Calvary, summed up in Paul’s word to the Corinthians, *“Christ died for our sins”* (1 Cor. 15:3,) and 2) the call to respond to Christ’s work with faith and repentance. There must be a personal response to Christ; the Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved”* (Acts 16:30-31.) Scripture assures us, *“to all who did receive him, to those who believe on his name, to them he gave the right to become children of God”* (Jn. 1:12.) That response to Christ must include both faith—dependence upon Christ and His atoning sacrifice—and repentance—the surrender of our sins and our sinful heart to Christ. The Apostle Paul reminds the Thessalonians, *“you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God”* (1 Thess. 1:9b.)

The reason for urgency in responding to the gospel, and to do so in the way prescribed by God, is found in the angel’s word of warning: *“the hour of his judgment has come”* (vs. 7)—note the use of the Greek tense: that hour *“has come.”* At Calvary, God pronounced the sentence of judgment against the world; on His way to the cross, the Lord Jesus declared, *“Now has come the judgment of this world; now the prince of this world shall be cast out”* (Jn. 12:31.) But, at that time, God executed that sentence of judgment only against Christ as He hung upon the cross. At the end of history, God will execute that sentence of judgment against the whole world; at that time the only One who will be exempt is Christ, together with all those who have repented and believed in Him as their Savior.

Therefore, as the Apostle Paul declares to the Corinthians, *“now is the day of salvation”* (2 Cor. 6:2b.)

Here is the first reason to fear God and give Him glory, namely, the fact that this is an integral part of the gospel call; note 1 Peter 1:17-19,

And if you call upon the Father who judges impartially according to each one's work, live your remaining time [on earth] in fear, ¹⁸knowing that you were redeemed from your futile way of life handed down from your forefathers—not by perishable things, such as silver or gold, ¹⁹but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish or defect, [the blood] of Christ. (1 Pet. 1:17-19)

II. Fear God and Give Him Glory, ...Because He will Execute the Final Judgment

A second angel now proclaims, *“Babylon the Great has fallen!”* (vs. 8.) To understand what *“Babylon the Great”* represents—the spirit that motivates the kingdoms of the world—we may look back to the spirit and purpose of ancient Babylon: it was a society built by man and for man. As he surveys his domain, King Nebuchadnezzar asserts, *“Is not this great Babylon that I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?”* (Dan. 4:30.) We may also look ahead to Revelation 17-18, where *“Babylon the Great”* is described as a hedonistic, materialistic, and lawless society. In the Revelation, *“Babylon the Great”* represents the spirit of rebellion against the moral law of God and the unrestrained pursuit of the passions of the sinful heart, as well as the societies of history that epitomize that spirit.

“Babylon the Great” is said to have seduced *“the nations to drink the wine of the passion of her immorality”* (vs. 8b.) All the peoples of the world willingly drink of the “wine” offered to them by “Babylon,” yielding themselves to their passions as opposed to submitting themselves to the moral law of God. The Apostle Paul describes the society of his day in these terms: *“Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity with the lust for more”* (Eph. 4:19.) Toward the close of history, all the nations of the world will desire to emulate and to participate in the hedonistic and materialistic life of one last *“Babylon the Great,”* when it makes its appearance on the stage of history, (such is the subject of Revelation 17-18.)

The angel of God proclaims, *“Babylon the Great has fallen!”* (vs. 8)—once again, the use of the Greek past tense underscores the certainty of the divine judgment against “Babylon.” Just as the LORD God brought judgment upon the hedonistic and materialistic societies of the past (such as Sodom, ancient Babylon, and Rome,) at the end of history He will bring His righteous judgment upon the final *“Babylon the Great”*—and upon the whole world of mankind who give themselves to their unbridled passions rather than giving themselves to God and to His Christ, those who emulate “Babylon” and desire to partake of her lifestyle.

The execution of that final judgment is graphically pictured in verses 14-20; it will be carried out by the Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of God the Father. Coming on a white cloud *“was someone who looked like the Son of Man,”* wearing a golden crown (the symbol of authority) and holding a sharp sickle (the symbol of judgment) (vs. 14.) Another angel came out from the sanctuary (the very presence and dwelling place of God,) directing this one who looked like the Son of Man—the one representing the Lord Jesus Himself—to *“use your sickle and reap”* (vs. 15.) What is portrayed here is the Lord Jesus, as the Messiah and the Servant of God, carrying out His Father’s will—to Christ has been given by the Father the authority to carry out the Final Judgment: *“just as the Father has life in himself, so also he has granted the Son to have life in himself.”*²⁷ Furthermore, *he has given him authority to judge, because he is the Son of Man”* (Jn. 5:26-27.)

This great and final judgment, carried out by the Lord Jesus, will occur on the day appointed by God. The angel gives the one who looked like the Son of Man the signal to judge, *“because the harvest of the earth is ripe.”* The point being made is that God’s act of judgment is a righteous act, it is not capricious; and it is an act that will be carried out at its appointed time. The Apostle Paul testified before the Athenians, *“[God] commands all men everywhere to repent, ³¹because he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead”* (Acts 17:30-31.)

It will be the day when God expresses His righteous wrath against sinful mankind to the fullest extent. The awesome and awfulness of the Final Judgment is presented by using the imagery of the grape harvest (vs. 18-20.) The clusters of the grapes are hacked off the vines and dumped into the wine press. The grapes are then trampled under foot, yielding their blood-red juice. The juice—the blood—flows out of the winepress as high as the horses’ bridle for a distance of *“about one hundred and eighty miles.”* Here is a gruesome picture; giving us some idea of how outrageously wicked it is to rebel against God and what consequence sin shall at last receive. The Book of Hebrews declares, *“It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”* (Heb. 10:31.)

Here is the second reason to fear God and give Him glory, namely, the fact that He will execute His final judgment:

Therefore, you kings, be wise, be warned, you rulers of the earth. ¹¹Serve Jehovah with fear and rejoice with trembling. ¹²Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. (Psl. 2:10-12)

III. Fear God and Give Him Glory, ...Because He will Honor Those Who Fear Him

In verse 13 John reports that he heard “*a voice from heaven*”—it is the voice of God. The divine voice commands John to write down what he hears. Here is God Himself not only speaking, but causing what He speaks to be written down as a permanent record, a pledge of assurance, much like a written contract—here is a message of blessing addressed to those who fear Him. Note also that this message is affirmed by the Holy Spirit; the Spirit adds His personal testimony, “*Indeed, says the Spirit.*” Bear in mind that He is “*the Spirit of truth*” (Jn. 16:13.)

This message from God for those who fear Him is this: “*Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on*” (vs. 13a.) The believer in Christ, upon his death, enters into a state of blessing that far surpasses this present state of life on earth. In writing to the Philippian church, the Apostle Paul testifies, “*for me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* ²³... *I have the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better*” (Phil. 1:21,23.) The Psalmist testifies of the LORD, “*you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand*” (Psl. 16:11b.) Also, the meaning of this message seems to include the fact that, in view of all that is coming upon the world and what lies in store for the church, it is a blessing for the Christian to depart this present earthly life rather than remain on the earth until the LORD’s coming. The prophet Isaiah expressed the same sentiment with regard to the times in which he lived:

The righteous man perishes, but no one takes it to heart; devout men are removed, but no one understands that the righteous are removed [in order that they may be spared] from the [coming] calamity. ²The righteous enters into peace; they rest in their [death] beds, each one who walked in the way of righteousness. (Isa. 57:1-2)

The Holy Spirit adds an explanation of the reasons for this blessedness: “*Blessed are those who die in the Lord ... so that they may rest from their labors.*” The Scripture’s view of the Christian’s life in this world is a life of spiritual labor—labor to remain faithful to Christ in the face of manifold trials and temptations; labor to produce fruit for God in our lives and in Christ’s church. Not only is there rest for Christians in the kingdom of heaven, but also a further reason for his blessedness is the fact that “*their deeds will follow them.*” What is being referred to here are the Christian’s “*works of faith*” (1 Thess. 1:5)—works that stem from faith and are inspired and stimulated by faith. These deeds accompany the Christian into the kingdom of God where they have perpetual value and receive a full reward. With this in mind, the Apostle Paul exhorts the church: “*Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; knowing that your labor for the Lord is not in vain*” (1 Cor. 15:58.) By way of illustration: When you enter a foreign country you take your money with you by exchanging it into the currency of the new country. So, too, do you take your Christian works with you into the kingdom of heaven, there to eternally enjoy their value and reap their reward.

Here is the third reason to fear God and give Him glory, namely, the fact that the Lord God is faithful to honor those who fear Him; that is to say, those who are devoted to Him, their dear Lord and Savior:

Then those who feared Jehovah talked with each other, and Jehovah listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared Jehovah and honored his name. ¹⁷They will be mine, declares Jehovah of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. ¹⁸And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not. (Mal. 3:16-18)

Conclusion

Finding ourselves in a world that even now is being visited in some measure by the judgment of God, and that has been appointed for Final Judgment; finding ourselves in a society that either ignores or scoffs at God's visitations in judgment; let us be diligent to heed the commandment and exhortation of Revelation 14:7, "*Fear God and give him glory.*" May we be motivated to do so by the three reasons provided for us in this very passage of Scripture.