

The Last Message for this World

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Last messages or last warnings are very important. If one does not take them seriously, one has to count on unpleasant consequences. On the other hand, if they are followed, one can enjoy wonderful benefits. The Bible presents a last message in Rev 14:6-12.

I. The Context

1. The Larger Context

Rev 12-14 portrays the final conflict of earth's history. From Rev 15 onward, the last moments of this drama are revealed: God's intervention in favor of His saints in the form of seven plagues. Plagues six and seven depict the collapse of Babylon in the battle of Armageddon. Rev 17 and 18 describe this fall of Babylon in more detail, and Rev 19 pictures the intervention of Jesus with His army as the rider on the white horse. This is followed by the Millennium (Rev 20) and the new heaven and new earth including the New Jerusalem (Rev 21-22). Thus the message of the three angels is the final and universal message addressed to all people in the last time of earth's history.

2. The Context of the Central Vision of Revelation (Rev 12-14)

a. Chapter 12

After a short introduction (Rev 11:19), Rev 12 narrates in symbolic form:

- The birth (coming forth) of the Messiah (the male child) from the true people of God (the woman) and the attempt of Satan (the dragon/serpent) to kill Him (Rev 12:1-5).
- Satan's war against the church throughout the centuries (1260 symbolic days=1260 years) after the ascension of the Messiah to God in order to destroy her (Rev 12:6, 13-16).
- A heavenly battle between Satan and Jesus (Michael), which ended in Satan's defeat but not destruction (Rev 12:7-12).
- Satan's battle at the end time against God's people, called remnant, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus (Rev 12:17).

b. Chapter 13

In two parts, chapter 13 develops how Satan attempts to achieve his goal of the destruction of God's people.

- He uses a beast coming out of the sea (the papacy) to wage war against those who are true to God and to enforce universal worship of the dragon and the beast (Rev 13:1-10).
- In addition, he uses a beast coming out of the earth (fallen Protestantism) to erect an image of the first beast, forcing the world population to worship the sea beast and to accept the mark of the beast (Rev 13:11-18).

c. Chapter 14

This chapter not only presents the divine counter message to the evil propaganda of the evil powers, but also shows the final outcome of the great controversy.

- First, this chapter portrays those who have withstood the satanic trinity (dragon, sea beast, and earth beast which is later called Babylon) and are with Jesus Christ—the 144,000 (Rev 14:1-5).
- Then follows the last message, the message of the three symbolic angels, which is proclaimed by the remnant (the 144,000) (Rev 14:6-13).
- Next occurs Christ’s second coming, described symbolically as the harvest of the earth with two groups involved—the saved and the lost (Rev 14:14-20).

II. God’s Last Message (Rev 14:6-12)

This message comes in three parts proclaimed by three angels. But this message, although sounding like judgment, is nevertheless the great eternal gospel.

1. The First Part of the Message (Rev 14:6-7)

a. The Universal Proclamation of the Eternal Gospel

Revelation shares with the rest of the New Testament the conviction that the gospel must be preached to all nations before the end comes (Mark 13:10; Matt 24:14). The eternal gospel of the last message is by definition good news for those who accept it.

The prologue of the Apocalypse contains a clear description of the gospel—Rev 1:5-7—and we should understand the term “eternal gospel” on this background:

- Jesus loves us.
- Jesus has saved us.
- Jesus has set us in a new state, being a kingdom and priests.
- Jesus comes again.

Therefore, those who die in the Lord have nothing to fear (Rev 14:13). They rest in the Lord until the resurrection day.

b. “Fear God and Give Him Glory”

It is good news that even in this late hour of world history, salvation is still available. People can still make a decision for the Creator God, accepting redemption. They can commit their lives to Him and give glory to Him, that is, repent (Rev 11:13; 16:9) and acknowledge Him as the most important being in the entire universe. Glory is associated with creation (Rev 4:11), but also with salvation (Rev 1:6; 5:12; 19:1).

c. “The Hour of His Judgment Has Come”

The final message is good news because the investigative judgment, also called “pre-advent judgment,” is in progress (e.g., Dan 7). In the heavenly sanctuary, depicted in many places in Revelation, Christ is still working on our behalf. The decision is being made about who will be accepted to be with Christ at His second coming.

d. “Worship Him”

It is good news because it calls us to worship God instead of demonic or human-made systems (see Rev 13:4, 8, 12-18). These systems are coercive and oppressive, and cannot give peace or a real future. They do not provide meaning in life as the Lord does.

e. “Who Made the Heaven and the Earth and the Sea and the Springs of Water”

The message is good news because the Savior God is also the Creator God. Creation and salvation are clearly linked in the New Testament and in Revelation (e.g., chapters 4-5). We cannot have one without the other. And if there was not creation in the beginning, it does not make much sense to expect re-creation at the end of human history.

At the same time, the phrasing is taken from the fourth commandment; it has in mind the Sabbath commandment. During the last period of earth’s history, faith in the Creator God and keeping his commandments—including the Sabbath commandment—will be challenged. The conflict will focus on how we relate to God and His law. Verse 12 will come back to this issue. So apart from our relationship to God, the Sabbath will become a test of loyalty to God for all humankind.

2. *The Second Part of the Message (Rev 14:8)*

a. “Fallen, Fallen is Babylon the Great”

The second message proclaims the spiritual fall of Babylon (compare Rev 2:5). This is in some sense good news because people can leave behind deception and come out of Babylon. This message is repeated in Rev 18:2-4 with the call to leave Babylon. On the other hand, the executive phase of the judgment mentioned later assures believers that there will be justice, vindication, and a bright future for them.

b. “She has Made all the Nations Drink From the Wine of Wrath of Her Immorality”

Babylon will try to force all people worldwide to accept a system of worship, which talks about God and yet is opposed to the true God. It is a blasphemous, idolatrous, and therefore, immoral system. But not all will follow Babylon. The 144,000 will follow the Lamb, Jesus Christ (Rev 14:1 and 4).

3. *The Third Part of the Message (Rev 14:9-13)*

a. False Worshipers “will Drink of the Wine of the Wrath of God” (Rev 14:9-11)

In the third part of God’s final message, the angel announces the Lord’s final judgment on those who worship the beast or its image and carry the mark of the beast. God responds to the Babylonian wine of wrath with His own wine of wrath. The followers of the beast—which will also include many professed Christians—have made a decision against Jesus (the Lamb) and have persecuted His people. God intervenes on behalf of His children (Ps 75:9). Again, good news!

b. The Saints and Their Characteristics (Rev 14:12)

Finally, the worshipers of the beast and its image are contrasted with the true worshipers of God and followers of Jesus. Three characteristics are:

- They are patient and persevere. They do not give up.
- They keep God’s commandments, especially the Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath commandment.
- They have faith in Jesus and have the faith of Jesus. They are saved by grace and live with the Lord day by day. They rely on Him completely (justification of faith by grace). They believe what Jesus believed.

c. Blessings (Rev 14:13)

The blessing that follows in verse 13 points out that, although some may have to pay for their loyalty and their relationship to Jesus with their life or may die during the end time, they are blessed. They may rest until the resurrection.

III. Summary and Implications

This is a wonderful message, and it is God's last message. We summarize: The first message emphasizes worship of the Creator in contrast to worship of man-made systems and worship of Satan. It accentuates the pre-advent judgment and obedience to God, including the keeping of the biblical Sabbath.

The second message warns us of being associated with Babylon. The ties have to be cut with this apostate power and belief system. God's people are called to come out of Babylon and join the remnant.

The third message does not only depict the judgment on Babylon but also the character, and to some extent the fate, of the faithful ones. It is a group of people who love God and follow Him no matter what.

This last message challenges us: (1) To stop playing around and not taking God and His will seriously—to stop misjudging the enormity of the last conflict that is developing right before our eyes. As those who are saved, we decide to be loyal to the Lord. (2) To pass on this last message to others so that they may be invited to become children of God, be warned of the end-time deception, and be ready to meet the coming Lord Jesus.