

The Final Message



Week Twelve

inTro



Read This Week's Passage:
Revelation 14:6–12

A GLOBAL MESSAGE

The SDA Church is present in 218 of the 235 countries recognized by the United Nations. This is somewhat deceptive, however, because even in countries where our church is present, there are billions of people who have never even heard Christ's name. Our global mission is driven by a unique message that no other church preaches.

Our message is summarized in the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6–12. The first angel announces that God's judgment has arrived (understood through the 2,300-day prophecy). The second exposes Babylon's sins. The third instructs us to avoid the mark of the beast, keep God's commandments, and have the faith of Jesus. The third also declares that no nation may enforce a form of worship that goes against God's Word. Religious liberty underlies the warning against receiving the mark of the beast. Revelation 14 clarifies the doctrine of death (v. 13) and aims to prepare people for the Second Coming (v. 14). The church properly understood and officially adopted each of the messages' topics in the years following 1844.

An overview of these three messages was first printed in the 1846 tract *A Word to the Little Flock* by Joseph Bates and the Whites. Since then, our understanding of these important verses has deepened but not changed. They summarize Revelation's final warning and invitation and explain the mission and message of the SDA Church. This week's study will unpack their meaning and significance.



inScribe

Write out Revelation 14:6–12 from the translation of your choice. If you're pressed for time, write out a portion of the primary passage. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.



Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

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Memorize your favorite verse. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

How can you show from Revelation 14 what the purpose of the three angels' messages is?

What was the impact of preaching the judgment hour message leading up to 1844?



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www.inversebible.org/SDAH12-3

AN APPEAL TO PREPARE

The three angels' messages, which early Adventists began to study in earnest in the early 1840s, are the last messages that will be shared with the whole world before Christ comes. The first angel of Revelation 14 commands us to fear God and worship Him because the hour of His judgment has arrived (vv. 6, 7). The three angels' messages as a whole lead to verse 14, which depicts Jesus' second coming in the clouds of heaven. Thus we conclude that the purpose of these messages is to prepare people for that long-awaited event.

These messages have always had a profound impact wherever they were preached. With a clear view of God's approaching judgments against the world, early Advent preachers appealed to their audiences to urgently prepare for Christ's soon return. The Holy Spirit stirred many people to turn their hearts toward God through these appeals. Based on their interpretation of the 2,300-day prophecy from Daniel 8:14, the early Millerite-Adventists first calculated that Jesus would appear in the clouds of heaven to deliver His people and bring judgment against the wicked in the spring of 1843. When He didn't appear at the expected time, they kept studying the Bible and concluded that He would come that autumn, eventually settling on October 22, 1844 as the day of their Lord's return.

At the time, there were no thoughts of establishing a new church; it was simply a multi-denominational revival movement. By 1844, the relationship between the Advent believers and the established churches had become very tense. Churches that had happily hosted Advent preachers for years began closing their doors to those same preachers. Many Adventists were being disfellowshipped from the churches they had belonged to for years. As a result Adventists felt compelled to do something they didn't want to do; they began separating themselves from the established churches. When they were no longer welcome, they realized it was time to step out. Studying the second angel's message in Revelation 14:8, they believed that many of the churches were spiritually fallen and that they could no longer be at home within them. In the summer of 1844, about 50,000 believers left their churches. The months and weeks leading up to October 22 produced an experience of unity, confession, humility, separation, and deep brotherly love amongst those who accepted the Advent faith. Their highest hopes were bitterly disappointed when October 22 came and went. Most fell away or set new dates. Through deeper Bible study, only a small handful of people concluded that the mistake lay in misinterpreting the event. Out of the ashes of this stinging disappointment, the three angels' messages would go on to be proclaimed with great strength and clarity.

Satan's agenda in the final conflict is seen in Revelation 13 while God's message is revealed in chapter 14. The global mission in Revelation 14:6 corresponds with the worldwide directive given in (cont. on p. 101) ⁹⁹

AN EVERLASTING GOSPEL

The gospel does not change from generation to generation; though our understanding of it may deepen over time, every generation is saved by the same gospel. Because Revelation 14:6 declares the gospel to be “everlasting,” we can infer that as long as there are people to be saved, it will continue to be preached. The three angels’ messages are the gospel contextualized for people living at the end of the world. With the everlasting gospel as the foundation of the entire message, Verse 7 starts with a call to “fear God and give glory to Him.” The Greek word translated here as fear means to show reverence; it does not refer to being afraid. Ecclesiastes 12:13 links the phrase “fear God” with keeping His commandments, so Revelation 14:7 is a call to revere and obey God. The second part of the phrase, “give glory to Him,” refers to honoring Him in the way we live our lives. 1 Corinthians 10:31 affirms this, instructing us to do everything for God’s glory, regardless of how small it seems to be.

Verse 7 continues by declaring that the hour of judgment has arrived, a fact that God’s end-time church is expected to tell the world. This part of the message began to be preached prior to 1844 but wasn’t fully understood until after the Great Disappointment. The next part of verse 7 calls us to worship the Creator of heaven and earth, and the wording is almost a direct quotation from Exodus 20:11, which is part of the fourth commandment regarding the Sabbath. After the Millerites had declared the judgment hour, the next major truth, discovered around 1846, was the Sabbath. This truth was used as a rallying cry to gather the believers together again after the Great Disappointment scattered them.

Verse 8 warns that Babylon has fallen. This proclamation was applicable in the summer of 1844, but so much more as time progresses, and false religion is exposed for portraying an inaccurate picture of God’s character. The name Babylon is derived from the word “babel” and refers to a state of confusion. The verse declares that all the nations of the earth have become intoxicated by Babylon’s wine. Drunkards who are heavily intoxicated become so confused they cannot walk or talk correctly. The inhabitants of the world have become intoxicated by the wine of Babylon, meaning they have become morally deranged and spiritually confused by Babylon’s false doctrines. When the teachings of apostate churches do not harmonize with the Bible, they must be rejected.

Verses 9–11 warn the world against receiving the mark of the beast since those who do will face the full wrath of God. God’s wrath has been mingled with mercy every other time He’s poured it out on mankind, but not this time. Revelation 15:1 indicates that this wrath is realized in the seven last plagues. God doesn’t want us to receive these judgments; this is a merciful appeal as it gives us a chance to avoid what’s coming.

(Cont. on p. 100.)



inTerpret

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks seem to point to overall?



What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

How can we preach about topics such as Babylon and the mark of the beast without immediately driver people away?



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What relationship do the following verses have with Revelation 14:6–12?

Matthew 24:14
Revelation 4:11
Exodus 20:8–11
2 Corinthians 6:14–18
Revelation 18:1–5
Revelation 13:11–17

What other verses come to mind in connection with the primary passage?

(Cont. from inGest, p. 99):

Revelation 10:11. Chapter 10 portrays the bitter disappointment God’s people endured, chapter 12 describes the characteristics of God’s end-time, commandment-keeping church, and chapter 14 outlines the message that this people will spread—a message that you and I need to understand and share with the world. The three angels’ messages are even more needed today than it was in the 1840s. May we study, understand, live, and proclaim the truths designed to prepare us for Jesus’ soon return.

(Cont. from inTerpret, p. 100):

Verse 12 ends by drawing attention to “the patience of the saints.” Despite the attacks from the beast power (See Rev. 13:11–18), this group remains steadfast and endures the persecution. God’s people have two characteristics: they will keep God’s commandments (in contrast to those in verses 9–11), and they will have the faith of Jesus. It is only by trusting God completely that His people do not conform to the demands of the world.

Review your memorized verse from Revelation 14:6–12.

THE CALL TO WORSHIP THE CREATOR

There is a recurring debate in Christian circles whether we should prioritize the gospel message or doctrinal truth. Some argue that we need to unite around the gospel and not focus on doctrine, but Jesus’ mission included teaching doctrine (John 7:16). Those who follow Christ share in that same mission. Perhaps this dispute is best answered by Revelation 14:6–12, which opens with an angel carrying the everlasting gospel and is followed by verses that explain the gospel through doctrinal truths. The everlasting gospel is inextricably linked to doctrinal truth in this passage. These verses include a call to put God first—to worship Him as the Creator, which in some ways is the central point of the whole gospel message. A recurring theme in chapters 13 and 14 is worship, and God created us to worship Him. This message calls us back to the one true Creator and reminds us that God made literally everything. Knowing God as our Creator is the basis of true worship. When John wrote in his gospel that all things were created through Jesus (John 1:1–3), he placed Jesus in His rightful position as One who is worthy of our worship.

The second angel calls us to separate ourselves from all false systems of worship (Rev. 14:8; 18:1–4), an increasingly challenging feat in the pluralistic societies in which we live. Babylon is depicted as a harlot woman in Revelation 17:5, meaning it symbolizes an apostate church or system of churches. The Bible consistently uses unfaithful women to represent God’s people when they are unfaithful to Him (Jer. 3:20; Hos. 1:2; 2 Cor. 11:2–4). The message of the second angel means some churches are fallen, and God is calling His people out of them. The third angel’s message includes a call to be loyal to God above all else. The choice is between fearing God or fearing man. When the third angel concludes their message, we’re given a picture of a group of people who wait patiently for Jesus’ return while keeping the commandments and the faith of Jesus. All who internalize and live the three angels’ messages are in this group.

Each aspect of this message is interconnected; each is essential to understanding the others. We cannot pick and choose which parts to study and teach and which to leave behind. Jesus is as much a part of the warning against Babylon in the second angel’s message as He is a part of the invitation to worship our Creator in the first angel’s message. This fusion of qualities clearly shows God’s duality—that justice and mercy have met and blended in our God. When we separate the gospel from the more societally charged doctrines, we strip Christ of part of His identity. We are called to tell the world who Jesus is, and we do this in part through the teachings in the Bible, each of which reveal a little about His character. To show the entirety of who He is, we must not neglect the aspects that may be difficult. The world needs the everlasting gospel undiluted and unchanged.



inVite

Meditate on the primary passage again and look for where Jesus is.



What are some ways our daily lives are impacted by only focusing on God’s love and not remembering His justice?

Are there certain aspects of the three angels’ messages that you believe we do not understand or teach enough? If so, which areas do you think are underemphasized?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

What is He saying to you personally through these texts?

Prayer Response:



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Review the memory verse.
How does it apply to your
life this week?

After this week's study of the
chapter, what are some personal
applications you are convicted
of in your life?

What are some practical
applications you must make in
your school, family, workplace,
and church life?



Read more inSight from the
Spirit of Prophecy at
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FEARLESS OF CONSEQUENCES

"In every generation God has sent His servants to rebuke sin, both in the world and in the church. But the people desire smooth things spoken to them, and the pure, unvarnished truth is not acceptable. Many reformers, in entering upon their work, determined to exercise great prudence in attacking the sins of the church and the nation. They hoped, by the example of a pure Christian life, to lead the people back to the doctrines of the Bible. But the Spirit of God came upon them as it came upon Elijah, moving him to rebuke the sins of a wicked king and an apostate people; they could not refrain from preaching the plain utterances of the Bible—doctrines which they had been reluctant to present. They were impelled to zealously declare the truth and the danger which threatened souls. The words which the Lord gave them they uttered, fearless of consequences, and the people were compelled to hear the warning.

"Thus the message of the third angel will be proclaimed. As the time comes for it to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service. The laborers will be qualified rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. The sins of Babylon will be laid open. The fearful results of enforcing the observances of the church by civil authority, the inroads of spiritualism, the stealthy but rapid progress of the papal power—all will be unmasked. By these solemn warnings the people will be stirred. Thousands upon thousands will listen who have never heard words like these. In amazement they hear the testimony that Babylon is the church, fallen because of her errors and sins, because of her rejection of the truth sent to her from heaven." (Ellen White, *The Great Controversy* [1911], 606, 607.)

"A great religious awakening under the proclamation of Christ's soon coming is foretold in the prophecy of the first angel's message of Revelation 14... The message itself sheds light as to the time when this movement is to take place. It is declared to be a part of the "everlasting gospel;" and it announces the opening of the judgment. The message of salvation has been preached in all ages; but this message is a part of the gospel which could be proclaimed only in the last days, for only then would it be true that the hour of judgment had come." (Ibid., p. 355).

"In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention. The most solemn truths ever entrusted to mortals have been given us to proclaim to the world." (Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9 [1909], 19).



Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



How can we preserve the urgent nature of this message without having a date to rally around?

The angel messenger spoke with a "loud voice." Why does this message need to be shared loudly?

How will the three angels' messages ever reach the whole world if at least three billion people still haven't heard Christ's name?

How is the Sabbath included in the three angels' messages?

How do the three angels' messages prepare us for the second coming?

What other ways are the gospel message and doctrinal truth connected? What would some of the consequences of separating them be?

How can we find the right tone in sharing some of the more offensive parts of our message such as coming out of Babylon?

What biblical promises can you claim when you're patiently waiting for something?