

Voices from Heaven #3: Worship in the Face of God's Judgments, cont.

In the first lesson we saw from the book of Revelation examples of voices from heaven (angels, elders, and saints) crying out to God in praise of his holiness and worthiness, and ascribing to him all blessing, honor, glory and power. In the second lesson, we started looking at the utterances concerning the great judgments of God in the earth, specifically at the time of the end, in the "Great Tribulation". This will be a continuation of that lesson.

4. Announcements of God's judgments

*14:6-7 – "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, **Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.**"*

We may wonder at this, why an angel would be preaching the gospel – isn't that something that Jesus told us to do? The word for "preach" means to proclaim or announce. Ordinarily in the NT it means to tell people the good news of the gospel, as an invitation to enter the kingdom of God, through Christ. In this context though, just prior to the great harvesting of the earth (14:14-20), it may mean, not the proclamation of the gospel as an invitation, but as simply as an angelic announcement of the work of Christ and God's kingdom as a fact to be realized immediately. Those who have received that gospel will willingly and gladly give glory to God, but to the rest, it is an announcement that immediately precedes their judgment.

*14:8 – "And there followed another angel, saying, **Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.**"*

Babylon was an earthly city and Babylonia an empire in the centuries before Christ, but in the book of Revelation (here and in chapters 17-18), it is symbolic of something else (beyond the scope of this study), but evidently represents an earthly, devil-inspired system of commerce, moral filth, and anti-God religion that has spanned centuries but reaches its climax during the Tribulation, and will at that time be totally judged and destroyed by God.

*14:9-12 – "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, **If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.**"*

The context of the beast (the Antichrist) and his image, and the mark of his name must be seen in the preceding chapter. It says that everyone will be required to have the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name (666) on their right hand or forehead, and that without the mark, no one can buy or sell. Those who receive that mark have, in effect, pledged their souls in worship to the Antichrist, and have thus sealed their doom.

*14:14-15 – "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, **Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.**"*

This is the time of the "harvest", as in the parables of the good and bad fish in the net (Mt. 13:47-48), and the wheat and the tares (Mt. 13:36-43). Evidently the first harvest (Rev. 14:14-16) is the gathering up of the good (the righteous; the elect believers) from all the earth by the angels.

*14:18-20 – (another angel) "... cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, **Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the***

angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs. [200 miles]”

This on the other hand, is the harvest of the “bad fish”, or the “tares” – the unbelievers who have not received Christ but have instead received the mark of the beast. It is also spoken of in similarly violent language in Isa. 63:1-6.

5. Warnings to flee the targets of God’s wrath

*18:1-6 – “And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, **Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.”***

Without getting into a detailed discussion of exactly what this “Babylon” represents (I cannot confidently say), it is apparent that

- it is some great system or institution
- it is totally infested with demonic activities and uncleanness
- it has enriched and corrupted all nations

As a consequence, God warns his people to have nothing to do with her, but to come out of her, lest we partake of the same judgment. So even if you aren’t fully sure what “Babylon the great” represents, you should make sure that you are unaffiliated with ungodly, anti-Christian, immoral, occultic, or covetous organizations, activities, and attitudes.

1 Jn. 2:15-17 – “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

6. On the justice and righteousness of God’s judgments

*16:5-7 – (after the third vial of judgment) “And I heard the angel of the waters say, **Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. ... Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.”***

*19:1-3 – (after the destruction of Babylon the great) “And after this I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, **Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God. For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia.”***

In all the horrible judgments that fall upon the earth and those who ally themselves with the beast, and refuse to repent, we are assured that these judgments are not excessive or unfair, but are done in truth, justice, and righteousness. In all times we have had objectors who say that God would be unloving and unfair to condemn anyone to hell. That is also too much to cover now, but anyone who is interested can read a sermon by Jonathan Edwards (1703 – 1758), entitled “The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners”.