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## ***Into Thy Word Bible Study in Revelation***

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### **Revelation 14:6-13: “The Three Angels”**

**General idea:** John now sees more angels flying around and about in Heaven; such a scene could not be expressed in mere words. These angels were conveying the Good News of God, the salvation that is offered by the work of Christ through the proclamation of the Spirit. They are challenging the people who bow to the world's ways to look to God, reverence Him, and get away from sin; it is a message of hope and grace to those who do not deserve it. Then, another angel appears to warn of judgments to those who refuse God's love, judgments from their own hand and actions. Then a third angel appears and gives even more dire warnings against sin and disloyalty to God. God is patient but He will not always keep His patience and will eventually, in His good time, condemn those whose hearts seek sin rather than seeking Him. God is patient, but He is also jealous and will not tolerate sin and blasphemy. All of humanity is called to Him so there is no excuse to reject His election and salvation. We are called to accept and worship Christ and His Way, yet most will only accept and worship sin and evil ways. The end of the road can either be incredible bliss and wonder or eternal struggle and toil; we are given the choice and the Spirit to lead us to the correct choice—even God who pays our way.

**Vs. 6-13, Contexts:** This passage is about vindication. The Hebrew and other ancient cultures believed that what angels in heaven did reflected events on earth. Thus, this imagery is common, but not necessarily literal although it certainly could be; it is an illustration to make a grand point. These angelic messengers proclaim hope for the faithful and fear for the wicked. All those who suffered and were faithful will see those who were evil and connived against them face judgment. The judgment is also merciful as God keeps offering His love and grace even though they do not deserve it, yet evil seeks its own and refuses Him and His Way. This passage brings comfort, as we will see that what we went through in life had a reason and purpose to it. Those of faith do not toil in vain; our lives have meaning and reason (Is. 21:9; Nahum 1:15; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 12:7)!

### **Word and Phrase Meanings:**

- *Eternal gospel* refers to the "good news" of Christ and a summons to repent as clearly stated in verse seven (7): *fear God and give him glory... Worship him*. Fear God (Prov. 3:5; Luke 1:50; 12:5; Acts 10:35; 14:15), give Him Glory (Matt. 5:16; 9:8; 15:31), judgment is coming (John 12:23-32; 16:8-11), and worship Him (Acts 14:15; 17:24-31) are the basic applications of the Gospel, which is the work of Christ on our behalf, the Good News of reconciliation to God for those who are sinners (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 10:1; John 17:17; Cor. 15:1-4).

- *Every nation...* Refers to the theme of the passage—*allegiance*; our allegiance is to Christ by His sacrificial work, not to political power, or people’s agendas. Being in Christ means we are a part of a greater Kingdom (Matt. 28: 18-20; Rev. 5:9).
- *Him who made the heavens* refers to God who is Sovereign and Creator and Who is in charge—meaning command and control—a God we can indeed trust and resound to with our love and faith (Ex. 20:11; Psalm 146:6).
- *Springs of water*, an image of great comfort. In context, this assures the Faithful of who God is and what He can do. This contains the images of a God who is forever faithful, remains true, is worthy of praise, and whose love endures forever so we can realize and grasp that our help comes from the LORD (Psalm 33:6; 89:11-13; 96:4-5; 104:2-9; 124:8; 134:3; 136:4-9; 146:6)!
- *Babylon the Great* refers to Isaiah’s mockery of sin and those who follow it as a “harlot” follows sin. This is about the bad character of evil that is depicted by that ancient city. It is a contrast of evil governments in antagonism to God and God’s Kingdom, the captivity of the Jews under Babylon and its moral decadence, and the early Christians under Rome, which was also steeped in immorality. This is also a reference to how people are led into captivity to sin. This was also a metaphor that meant to sin and fall into seduction, what lures us away from faith and what replaces faith. The application of seduction is corruption and this can range from pagan worship and atheism to following what is fruitless and meaningless, all while ignoring our Lord. This is not necessarily referring to one specific specious person or entity or political system, but to what evil is in general. It does not mean that Babylon will be rebuilt or restored in some way. This theme is about enmity to God and people’s participation in it, which is in direct contrast to what Christ offers and is—Pure and Holy (Is. 21:9; Jer. 51:7-8; Dan. 2:35, 4:30; 44; Rev. 13:1-18; 16:19; 17:1-5; 18:3; 18:2, 10, 21, also 4 Ezra).
- *Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great* refers to Jeremiah’s prediction of the fall of historical Babylon and how God is in control of evil and the powers of people and governments, and that their judgment is upon them. Babylon, who sacked Israel, carried away the treasures and the best people as a part of God’s judgment for Israel’s unfaithfulness; the restoration was about God’s grace and faithfulness. This theme of hope, victory and grace for the faithful and judgment for the wicked is predominating in the last days (Dan. 2:35-44).
- *Made all the nations drink* means intoxication, and is referring to being lured and tempted. Adultery with shrine prostitutes and pagan worship were the biggest temptations to the Early Church. Their society said this was OK and it was beyond fun, but the consequences were as grave as they are to us today (Judges 17:6; James 2: 14-26). Our call is to stay away from the influence of evil, to be self-controlled, and to never portray evil as being good as the pagans do (Rom. 6:1-2; 14-15; 13:8, 10; Gal. 5:14; 6:2; Gal. 5:22-25; Jude 4).

- *Maddening wine* means drunkenness and the shame that results. What seems fun has consequences and causes disgrace to us and all who see and know about it. This is spiritual adultery against God by seeking to replace Him with our whims and plans, and/or following others who are evil. The chastisement comes when we are willing participants, faithfully and deliberately seeking evil and thus ignoring, and consequently forfeiting Christ's love and redemption. This is classic relativism in the face of a world that is not really relative. We are in a society that loves and teaches relativism, yet when a CEO of a company practices what he or she learned in higher education, he or she is put in jail for fraud. Relativism and sin are contradictory to each other and only cause havoc.
- *Adulteries* means the effect of sexual immorality, and chasing what is wrong and false because of spiritual deceitfulness and betrayal. Immorality produces foolishness and shame for everyone involved, even when they refuse to admit to it, choosing rather to remain in sin. This also involves harboring sin and iniquity in our hearts and minds while thinking we are OK (Prov. 9:13-18; Jer. 51:7).
- *Worships the beast and his image and receives his mark* refer to Chapter 13; will it be our loyalty to Christ or our loyalty to evil?
- *He, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury.* The image here is that God will judge the infidelity and betrayal of faith; you can bank on it (Ezek. 23:31; 38:22; Jer. 49:12; Hab. 2:3; Zech. 12:2; Rev. 2:21)!
- *God's fury... wrath* refers to God's passion, as His Wrath is just, and His fervent anger at sin.
- *Cup of his wrath.* This means God's right to be angry at sin and those who disobey Him and refuse righteousness, those who fight against the righteous and refuse Christ's love and grace. Wine was given to condemned criminals. This was also a connection to Isaiah and his prophecy of Edom's downfall—how sin causes us to fall (Psalm 75:8; Is. 34:10; 51:17; Jer. 25:15; Mark 15:35).
- *Tormented.* This is a reference that those who are evil judge themselves by knowingly refusing God and His offer of grace. This may also show that the wicked will not be annihilated (Rev. 19:20; 20:10).
- *Burning sulfur... smoke* means desolation, a reference to Sodom and Gomorrah and the evil they represented, and the fate of those who are wicked. This is also a picture of God's right to judge and His vengeance (Gen. 19; Psalm 11:6; Is. 34:8-10; Rev. 4:8; 12:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8).
- *Patience/Patient endurance/perseverance* refers to our assurance and the resolve of our faith. If we are not patient, we will never see how God indeed cares for us. *Endurance* is a call to remain faithful and keep our trust in Christ no matter what comes our way in sufferings or temptations. We are to focus on His Way, even in

persecution and stress. This is a prominent theme in Revelation (Rev. 1:9; 2:2-3, 13, 19; 3:10; 6:11; 13:10; 14:12; 16:15; 18:4; 20:4; 22:7,11,14).

- *Obey God's commandments* refers to people who think God does not have the right to judge, who think judgment will not come about or apply to them, or who think that since God is about love and mercy, He will not judge. Thus, a warning is given to the Christian against apathy and complacency as well as against liberalism and relativism; it will be severely judged as it is a disgrace to a Holy God of Truth! If you force your ideas as God's or manipulate others away from solid biblical precepts, judgment and grace are at your door. To open the door of grace, we have to repent; to open the judgment door, all we have to do is just remain in our pride!
- *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.* This is where we get our phrase, "rest in peace," a common funeral saying; it comes from the extra biblical texts of 1 Enoch 99:13-14; 103:3 and refers to the hope that suffering is for a purpose, as it is. Our sufferings and toils will end; our great reward awaits us, literally, in eternity. This also means we should be joyful and happy being in the Lord no matter what we face. In contrast, the wicked will not have rest (Phil. 1:21; Rev. 13:10; 22:12).
- *Their deeds will follow them.* This refers to what we take with us into eternity. It is not material possessions; rather, our faith and character, who we are in Christ, our growth in Him, and what we did with what He gave us is what will resonate to God and will be the basis of our reward. Thus, what the wicked chase in their sensational self-gratification will end up as meaningless and of no true lasting value (Matt. 6:20-21; James 5:2).

## Thoughts and Applications

This passage is also a wake-up call to an apostate Church that ignores truth and chases trends and personalities, and that is uncaring and even callous to real, effectual, biblical truth. Too many Christians seek only what will make them feel good. They want "sermon-ettes" for "Christian-ettes" that tell them they are good just as they are, containing no real teaching or conviction so they can sit in a pew and feel good about them selves. In effect, they end up doing nothing for the Kingdom or the glory of the Lord. There is no stretching or exercising of faith, no work of the Spirit or living in the ways of His Love and Fruit. Only pride and thinking, in confidence, that they are doing and being good Christians remain. It is easy to see how God will judge the wicked, but what about when we seek to run his Church our way and not His Way, betray our faith, or become complacent and apathetic? Saved? Perhaps, but what good it is when we do nothing in the way of His Fruit, service, or precepts and plan?

Pastors and church leaders must heed God's ways and worship Him, not place their trust in the latest and greatest fads and ideas. It comes down to faithfulness and getting in His Word, allowing His Spirit to move and convict us, and following our Lord with allegiance, faith and loyalty. We are not to seek comfort for ourselves, manipulate others to get our way, or gossip and refuse to take personal responsibility for our evils

and lack of faith. We need to beware that judgment is coming for us too, those of us who seek to weed our churches of good and faithful people who teach, and replace them with smug, pretentious administrators who shovel papers and personal agendas devoid of His precepts, rather than shovel the paper of the written Word or stand on their faith in Christ. I have seen once good churches remove their faithful pastors who teach and call their people to read God's Word and replace them with sensational personalities who preach a "lite" gospel to attract more people. But, the only people they attract are those who do not want to grow or go for the Kingdom. These are the people marked, not by Christ, but by other means and things. This is what John is warning us about. It is not about a megalomaniac personality rising up politically; it is about you and me and to whom we are faithful. Is our faith based on Christ and His Word and led by His Spirit? Or, is our response to our selves, to the ways of the world, to what we want in "our" church, rather than to focus on Christ? Will our *mark* be of faith or of our own ways? It is easy to think the *mark* is about satanic influences, and for the most part it is. But, the bottom line is, what is Satan trying to do? He is seeking to get you to be disloyal and chase the things that are not of Christ, getting you to twist God's precepts thinking you do not need them, that you need something else. If you are manipulating others to get your way, using your strong will to strong-arm others, if you gossip, if you cause strife and if you connive to rid people of faith to have it your way, you are "marked," but that mark of yours is Satan's, not Christ's! The call for us is to be a real, vibrant, Christ-driven Christian who worships and is loyal to Christ's Supremacy, allowing His Truth and Conviction to lead His Church His way!

### **The Four Prevailing Views**

**The Preterist view:** They see this passage as the theme of the prophecy concerning the fall of Rome, and that we can trust God. The eternal gospel is the importance of solid biblical preaching. Preaching is not done by the *angels*; rather, they represent and show the call to us as well as the announcement of doom for those who fail to bring the salvation message. In addition, they announce doom to those who are evil and wicked and who refuse God. *Babylon* refers to Jerusalem and its wickedness, its unfaithfulness, and its betrayal to God and to Christ, refusing to allow the Gospel to be proclaimed; hence, the reason for Rome being used as the judgment tool. Some in this camp see Babylon as a cryptic reference to Rome or only referring to Rome after the fall of Jerusalem. *Drink of the wine of God's fury* is seen as an image of hell and suffering for the wicked. *Smoke of their torment* is seen as the example of Sodom and Gomorrah and God's vengeance. *Blessed are the dead* is seen as the righteous being taken care of and blessed and/or the eternal bliss of heaven.

**The Futurist view:** They see the *eternal gospel* as two different gospels—one of John the Baptist and one of Christ. Or, they see the Gospel as being a different one from the Church Age proclaimed after the Church has been raptured. Most believe the *angels* are figurative because, in their view, angels do not evangelize. Others see this as the Good News for the faithful as God unleashes His judgment and vengeance. It is extraordinary that they can come up with so many views of the Gospel or that there are many types of gospels, when the Bible only teaches one. Others in this camp see this

as a summons to repent, which it is. *Babylon* is viewed as the great tribulation or that it is close. Others see it as literal city to be rebuilt, the rise of a persecuting political power, or the character of evil and a symbol of ungodliness as depicted by that ancient city. Others see it as a false church rising in the future. The *drink of the wine of God's fury* is God's judgment on those who take the "mark of the beast." *Full strength*, referring to His judgment and wrath, is not to be tampered with. *Blessed are the dead* is seen as the martyrs receiving their reward and/or to die for Christ is our gain from Phil 1:21. Others see it as a term for faithfulness and the rewards thereof.

**The Idealist view:** They see the *angels* as symbolic and the *eternal gospel* not the gospel of the New Testament but a last call for repentance and the call of judgment just before the end of days. Others see it as the Gospel of the New Testament being offered because of the term *everlasting*. *Babylon* is a symbol for humanity in rebellion and opposition to God, its seduction and ungodliness and/or governments which trick people away from God. *Drink of the wine of God's fury* is a warning of the seductions of evil and judgment to those who do not heed God's love and plan. And, His plan will be on full force without opposition, so get with it or else. *Smoke of their torment* is a symbol for the fires of hell and punishment. *Blessed are the dead* and *patience* are the rewards for staying loyal to God who gives us strength and answers our faithfulness with affirmation.

**The Historicist view:** They see this passage as symbolic of the rise and fall of the anti-Christian governments and powers over time. Thus, the *eternal gospel* is not thwarted by men because it is powered by God. The *angels* represent the various mission movements and/or the Great Awakenings and rise of evangelism. As well as the destruction of Babylon, Babylon as this time in Revelation is seen as evil Papal Rome and judgment to those whose allegiance is to them or to any form of fornication to God. The *smoke of their torment* is seen as hell and the results of judgment, and its people having no regret or remorse for their life choices or where they ended up. *Blessed are the dead* is seen as the resting place of the faithful and something we can look forward to.

**The Essential Inductive Questions** (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

### ***Additional Questions:***

1. When you are facing a crisis or just need a boost, what can be done to give you comfort and reassurance?
2. How is this passage also about Evangelism? How would you convey the Good News of God? How does having a firm salvation given to you by the work of Christ help motivate you to proclaim Him and make Him known to others?
3. Why do you suppose God bothers to challenge the people who seek the world's ways to look to Him and to get away from sin? Why would He send a message of hope and grace to those who do not deserve it?
4. How and why do you suppose God has the right to judge those who refuse His love and grace? How does it make you feel secure that people who are going to Hell are going because of the judgments from their own hand and actions?
5. How would you give an ominous warning to those embraced in sin and disloyalty to God? Do you think there is a message to which they would listen?
6. How would you contrast that God is patient with the fact He is also jealous and will not tolerate sin and blasphemy? How much time should God give a heinous sinner?
7. We are called to accept and worship Christ and His Way, yet most will only accept and worship sin and evil ways. Why? How has this affected you?
8. How can you take great comfort in that when the end of the road comes, it will be an incredible wondrous bliss? Now, consider all that you have been through in life—all of your unending struggles and toils—will have had a purpose, and if you have remained faithful, you will have great reward and Christ's glory?
9. Consider that all the people you have touched in life will be marked by the way you showed them Christ with your attitudes and deeds, even if you never told them about our Lord orally. How does that motivate you? So, which way will the people you encountered in life be tossed? Keep in mind that the Spirit leads and God pays our way!
10. How does it make you feel that what the wicked chase in their sensational self-gratification ends up being meaningless and of no true lasting value? What about when Christians chase what is wrong or misleading? What are you going to do about seeking what is truly important? What is a healthy balance between living a life that is productive in society and that also gives glory to God?

11. How does your faith and character, and who you are in Christ, resonate to God?  
How can you do this better? How does the fact that God empowers you now and will give you rewards later spur on your faith in Him?
  
12. Have you thought about what you will take into eternity? How can you better lead a life of Christian distinction so your focus is not just on material possessions and power, but on seeking of Christ and His character and Fruit? What can your church do to make sure it is not about “sermon-ettes” for “Christian-ettes,” but rather, being led by the conviction of Christ to lead His church His way?

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