

Charts: The Third Parenthetical Visions: Chart #15 (with references to #1 and #2)

PREFACE

Angels play an important role in God's economy. He and the Son employ their angels to deliver messages—the literal meaning of the Greek *angelos*—to reassure and comfort humans, to fight for and protect humans, and to carry literal judgment to humans. The three angels presented in the passage before us—Revelation 14:6-12—are delivering three different messages: the first offering hope by means of the gospel; the second forecasting the approaching fall of “Babylon the great,” which, in the Revelation, represents “Antichrist’s worldwide political, economic, and religious empire” (MacArthur); the third pronouncing the doom that awaits those who worship the beast.

These three messages have a central theme—*judgment is imminent*—and constitute the offering of God’s final avenue of escape, His last offering of salvation extended before the ax falls, followed by a clear promise of that which awaits those who turn down His offer. Even as various plagues and judgments have been meted out—to those on earth they must seem by now interminable, unrelenting—God still offers unbelievers one last warning before the final, absolute, no-turning-back judgment descends.

Read Revelation 14:6-8.*The First Angel*

And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people;

There seems to be no significance to the adjective “another,” apparently just meaning something along the lines of, *Here is one more vision of another angel*. There is, however, significance to *where* the angel is. He is flying in “midheaven”; the ESV says the same thing using different words, while the NIVs are disappointing. The word translated “midheaven” is *mesouranemati* (mess-ur-on'-ee-matee), which means the zenith, the sun at the meridian. That is, the angel, as the ESV has it, is “directly overhead,” thus at the point in the sky most visible to the most people on earth. And remember, the common phrase in God’s word, “those who live on the earth,” always refers to unbelievers.

Because it is important, we need to split a few hairs here to understand just what message the angel is bringing. **First**, in our common versions only the NASB and ESV have it correct: *an* eternal gospel; the rest have “the,” implying *the* familiar NT gospel. But there is no definite article in the text itself.

Second, it says it is an *eternal* or everlasting gospel, so there must be *something* different about it. **Third**, the word *euangelion* (yoo-ahn-gelion), translated gospel, means “good news,” but v7, which gives us the content of the angel’s message, is not the familiar gospel of salvation in Christ through His atoning blood. So what are we to make of this? J. A. Seiss says it best.

Seiss: Paul once said, if an angel from heaven preach unto you any other Gospel than that ye have received, let him be accursed. And when he so said, he spoke the very truth of God; but it is the truth with special reference to the present dispensation, till the Church-period has come to its end...; for here, when “the judgment is come,” an angel from heaven preaches, and what he preaches is not “the everlasting Gospel” as the English version is, but “a Gospel everlasting.” It is not indeed “another Gospel,” for it is in inner substance the same old and everlasting Gospel, but now in the dress and features of a new order of things—the Gospel as its contents shape themselves in its address to the nations when “the hour of judgment is come,” and the great final administrations are in hand.

Of course, then, we have here another dispensation, a different order of things from that which now obtains. The same is also intimated in the features of the Word preached. It is no longer the meek and entreating voice, beseeching men to be reconciled to God, but a great thunder from the sky, demanding of the nations to Fear the God, as over against the false god whom they were adoring,—to Give glory to Him, instead of the infamous Beast whom they were glorifying,—to Worship the Maker of all things, as against the worship of him who can do no more than play his hellish tricks with the things that are made; and all this on the instant, for the reason that “the hour of judgment is come.”

Early on we discussed the different and progressive dispensations ([Chart #2](#)), and here we see them coming into play. The dispensation of grace (the present church age) is now over. In our dispensation angels do not proclaim the gospel of grace; they do not preach. But during the Tribulation they will. And although his message is technically not a “different gospel” ([Galatians 1:6-9](#)), it is a gospel for a different time, a different situation, a different sort of people dwelling on the earth.

This is not a *graceful* gospel, but a more forceful, imperative gospel. Frankly, it is a gospel for which I lobbied at the end of Session 38: a “fire and brimstone” gospel.

v7: and [the angel] said with 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 sea and springs of waters.”

It is the same gospel, just presented in a different manner. This is delivered forcefully to “every nation and tribe and tongue and people” as a last-chance imperative. Let me offer a Lampel paraphrase: *Before you know it every one of you is going to be knee-deep in hell fire. This is a last call. Declare yourself for the true God; give Him glory instead of that pitiful human you have been following. Do it now—or you will burn for eternity.* Finally, John Walvoord offers an interesting take on this “good news.”

Walvoord: The everlasting gospel seems to be neither the gospel of grace nor the gospel of the kingdom, but rather the good news that God at last is about to deal with the world in righteousness and establish His sovereignty over the world. This is an ageless gospel in the sense that God’s righteousness is ageless.

The next two angels punctuate that gospel message with the *bad* news for all those who will reject it.

Jesus speaks of this gospel in His eschatological discourse in Matt 24:14; He also foreshadows v12 in our text. We will discuss these in our next session.

v8

And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.”

The seventh bowl of wrath, announced in Revelation 16:17-21, records the *actual* fall of Babylon, with all of Chapters Seventeen and Eighteen adding details subsequent to the fall; it is there that we will dig deeper into the details of Babylon in the Revelation. But for now, this verse contains the following description for Babylon: “she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion [or wrath, *thymos*] of her immorality.” To what does this refer? Who or what is “Babylon”?

I said earlier that in the Revelation Babylon represents “Antichrist’s worldwide political, economic, and religious empire.” Let’s add some more details to that, because this can be rather confusing to the casual reader.

We hear the name Babylon and, of course, think of the city on the Euphrates River (modern day Baghdad), the Babylonian empire founded by Nimrod ([Genesis 10:10](#)), subsequently ruled by (among others) Sargon I, Nebuchadnezzar (i.e., [Nebuchadnezzar](#)), and Belshazzar. Our present verse echoes the prophet Isaiah:

Belshazzar was Daniel; Belshazzar the king.

“Now behold, here comes a troop of riders, horsemen in pairs.” And one said, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon; And all the images of her gods are shattered on the ground.” (Isaiah 21:9)

That is a prophecy of the *city* of Babylon falling before the Assyrians; but that is not what is referred to in the Revelation. In the OT, Babylon was the literal city/empire, representing the very worst example of licentiousness, immorality, and corruption. In the NT—the time of the apostle John recording the visions of the Revelation—that dubious distinction was held not by Babylon, but by Rome. So we could say, as do many scholars, that the name “Babylon” simply refers to the restored “Roman” empire pasted together by Antichrist. That may be true, but it doesn’t give the full picture. There is much more behind this Babylon.

I do not do it often, but I would like to quote from Alan F. Johnson’s commentary. For the most part he has been little help in this study, but his comments here are helpful.

Johnson: It is simply not sufficient to identify Rome and Babylon. For that matter, Babylon cannot be confined to any one historical manifestation, past or future. Babylon has multiple equivalents (cf. 11:8). The details of John's description do not neatly fit any past city, whether literal Babylon, Sodom, Egypt, Rome, or even Jerusalem. Babylon is found wherever there is satanic deception. It is defined more by dominant idolatries than geographic or temporal boundaries. *The ancient Babylon is better understood here as the archetypal head of all entrenched worldly resistance to God.* Babylon is a trans-historical reality including idolatrous kingdoms as diverse as Sodom, Gomorrah, Egypt, Babylon, Tyre, Nineveh, and Rome. *Babylon is an eschatological symbol of satanic deception and power; it is a divine mystery that can never be wholly reducible to empirical earthly institutions. It may be said that Babylon represents the total culture of the world apart from God, while the divine system is depicted by the New Jerusalem.* Rome is simply one manifestation of the total system. (emphasis added)

Here the second angel prophesies—confirms—that the corrupting influence of “Babylon” is doomed. For the time being we will leave it there until we get to Chapters Seventeen and Eighteen.

So far the first angel holds out a last chance for unbelievers to repent, to follow God (and His Christ) instead of Antichrist, and thus avoid the lake of fire. The second angel has proclaimed that very soon the immoral culture of which they are a part is doomed to fall. Now the third angel puts the frosting on the cake.

Read Revelation 14:9-11.

We now have a third angel offering a third vision of the imminent future.

Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.”

The casual reader may not realize it at first, but this passage (vv9-11), in conjunction with the previous (v8), is a powerful, gut-wrenching picture of what awaits those who reject Christ. The metaphors employed—“drink of the wine of the wrath,” “mixed in full strength”—are not just florid euphemisms for the sake of color; they present a hideous turn of events from what we now experience in this dispensation.

Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2, just after Christ’s return to the Father, marked the beginning of the church age, and almost two thousand years later we remain in this dispensation of grace. Every day of our lives, as believers, we dwell in God’s grace; we are enveloped in it. It is His grace that allows the believer to find hope in a fallen world. There is so much of God’s grace that He even shares it with unbelievers—it is called God’s “common grace”—that he sends rain not just for the crops in the Christian’s field, but for those in his agnostic neighbor’s field as well.

Here in our text is a picture of a far different dispensation: a time when there is none of God’s grace on earth. None.

In v8 we are told that the licentious “Babylon the great” has “made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality”—or the wine of the wrath of her fornication (*porneias*). It is a picture of humanity being utterly enthralled, utterly consumed within “an orgy of rebellion, idolatry, and hatred of God” (MacArthur). They will be *drunk* on what Satan has to offer, embracing it to the full. And there will be no hiding who and what they are. God will not need to examine their hearts; their allegiance will be branded into them for *all* to see.

And to those already satiated with the Antichrist’s wine God will dispense a second course of His own intoxicant: “the wine of the wrath of God,” on *any* occasion a potent vintage, but now “mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger.” The Greek is literally “mixed unmixed” (*kekerasmenou akratou*), which refers to the common ancient practice of diluting one’s wine with water. This wine will *not* be so diluted, so weakened in strength, but dispensed “untempered by the mercy and grace of God” (Walvoord).

Let that sink in for a moment.

God's anger, His wrath has always existed. He is the same God today as He was when He opened up the earth to swallow those who dared to rebel against Moses ([Numbers 16:28-33](#)). The difference is that now that same wrath is tempered by His grace—even His *common* grace. But no more. In the moment described by the third angel—remember, a messenger sent directly from God with His words—that wrath will be poured out and these made to drink of it full strength. There will not be a particle of grace or mercy included in this judgment of pure undiluted condemnation.

Walvoord: The righteousness of God is as inexorable as the love of God is infinite. The love of God is not free to express itself to those who have spurned Jesus Christ.

And what will be the fate of these adherents to the beast?

he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

Those who aligned themselves with the lies of Antichrist will suffer unrelenting torture in the lake of fire. No longer a vision, but the actual event in the narrative occurs later.

Read Revelation 19:20.

One thousand years later, Satan himself will join them.

Read Revelation 20:10.

Verse 10 ends with an unexpected phrase: "...in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb." My guess is that most of us, when we *do* think of hell, consider it to be a place absent the presence of God—that would be one of the qualities that defines it *being* hell: the absence of God. But Scripture is clear that there is no place in all of Creation shut to its Maker.

Read Psalm 139:7-10.

What *form* this "presence" will take we cannot say, but if God is omnipresent—and He is—then that would include even the bowels of the lake of fire. Perhaps, as John MacArthur suggests, "Unrepentant sinners will be banished from God's presence relationally... They will not, however, be away from His presence in the sense of His sovereignty and omnipresence—even in hell."

For many people—even some Christians—this is a bridge too far. It is sufficiently difficult for them to believe that “a loving God” would send individuals to eternal damnation and torment; it is too much to ask for them to believe that He would superintend their stay while there. But I do not think we can read this verse any other way.

This brings up another issue that I have mentioned before. How many of us grew up thinking that heaven was the domain of God, and hell (here, the final lake of fire) the domain of Satan? But that’s not true. God is Creator and Sovereign over *all*, and the devil will be an inmate—not the sovereign—of hell.

Bottom line: *Kings keep watch over their domain.*

v11

“And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

Walvoord: Their torment is not a momentary one, for it is described in verse 11 as continuing forever, literally “into the ages of ages,” the strongest expression of eternity of which the Greek is capable.

Verse 11 seems redundant at first, but does drive home the point. It stresses that this torment in the fire and sulfurous gases ([brimstone](#)) of the lake of fire will not be of brief duration, but “forever and ever.” Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise; God’s word—no less from the lips of Jesus Himself—is clear that this will be an *eternal* punishment for those who reject Christ. [Turn please to Matthew 18.](#)

Jesus, answering his disciple’s question about who is “greatest in the kingdom of heaven,” says at the end of v8, “...it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire.” He then repeats the application with another body part: “...It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell.” [Turn to Chapter 25.](#)

In his discourse on the final Judgment, in which he illustrates how He, personally, “the Son of Man,” will separate the sheep from the goats, closes in v46 with this regarding the goats: “These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

In this Christ is saying that the torment of those consigned to hell will be as eternal, as everlasting, as the blessed rest of the redeemed in heaven ([MacArthur](#)).

Ending on this dour note we need to remind ourselves that indeed *all three* of these angelic messengers will bring good news for the redeemed.

This passage represents the affirmative confirmation of many, *many* prayers from the redeemed for justice—and the martyred saints under the altar will by no means be the first ([Revelation 6:9-11](#)).

Turn please to [Psalm 73](#), a psalm of Asaph, and follow along with me as I read.

w3-5:

For I was envious of the arrogant
As I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
For there are no pains in their death,
And their body is fat.
They are not in trouble as other men,
Nor are they plagued like mankind.

w8-9:

They mock and wickedly speak of oppression;
They speak from on high.
They have set their mouth against the heavens,
And their tongue parades through the earth.

w11-14:

They say, "How does God know?
And is there knowledge with the Most High?"
Behold, these are the wicked;
And always at ease, they have increased in wealth.
Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure
And washed my hands in innocence;
For I have been stricken all day long
And chastened every morning.

w15-20:

If I had said, "I will speak thus,"
Behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children.
When I pondered to understand this,
It was troublesome in my sight
Until I came into the sanctuary of God;
Then I perceived their end.
Surely You set them in slippery places;
You cast them down to destruction.
How they are destroyed in a moment!
They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!
Like a dream when one awakes,
O Lord, when aroused, You will despise their form.

w25-28

Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.
My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
For, behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You.
But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, That I may tell of all Your works.