

# A Message Worth Sharing



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** 2 Pet. 1:12, 16–21; Rev. 19:11–18; Rev. 14:14–20; Eccles. 12:13, 14; Rev. 14:6–12.

**Memory Text:** “Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water’ ” (Revelation 14:6, 7, NKJV).

Christ's atoning death was universal; that is, it was meant for all people who have ever lived, regardless of when or where. Thus, the gospel speaks to people of every language group, culture, and background. It bridges ethnic divides. It is the incredibly good news that Jesus, in His life, death, and resurrection, has triumphed over the principalities and powers of hell. The gospel is all about Jesus. He died for us and now lives for us. He came once to deliver us from the penalty and power of sin and is coming again to deliver us from the presence of sin. He died the death we deserve so that we can live the life He deserves. In Christ we are justified, sanctified, and one day glorified.

The Bible focuses on the two comings of Jesus. He came once to redeem us and will return to take home what He has purchased at such an infinite cost. The Bible's last book, Revelation, was written especially to prepare the world for Jesus' return. It is an urgent message for this generation. In this week's lesson, we will study Revelation's relevance for a twenty-first-century contemporary society. Together we will discover anew Jesus' appeal to His last-day church to share this end-time message.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 19.

## Peter's Present-Truth Message

Throughout salvation history, God has regularly sent a special message through the prophetic Word to prepare people for what was coming. God is never caught off guard (*Isa. 46:9, 10*). He prepares His people for the future by sending prophets to reveal His message before the judgment falls (*Amos 3:7*). In the days before the Flood, God sent a message to the world through Noah that the Flood was coming. In Egypt, God raised up Joseph to prepare for the famine during the seven years of plenty. The Jewish prophets warned the Israelite leaders of the coming destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian armies. John the Baptist's message of repentance prepared a nation for the first coming of Jesus.

**Read 2 Peter 1:12.** What expression does Peter use to describe God's message to his generation?

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**Read 2 Peter 1:16–21.** What was this “present truth” message that Peter and the disciples proclaimed?

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The message of eternal significance for the first century was that Christ had come. The Father's love was revealed through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Although the “wages of sin is death,” through Christ eternal life has been secured for all. It is our choice whether by faith we will receive it (*Rom. 3:23, Rom. 6:23, Eph. 2:8*). This message of salvation in Jesus will never be out of date. It is present truth for every generation.

The Bible's last book, Revelation, presents Jesus and His eternal salvation in an end-time context to prepare a people for His soon return. It exposes the falsehood of human tradition and self-centered religiosity. From the beginning to the end, Revelation reveals Jesus and His work in behalf of humanity.

Jesus is the true witness of His Father's character. He is the “ruler over the kings of the earth.” He is the One “who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father” (*see Rev. 1:1–6, NKJV*). Revelation is all about Jesus and His end-time message to get His people ready for His soon return.

**When you think of the book of Revelation, what comes to your mind? Are your thoughts more about beasts and prophetic symbols than about Jesus? Why do you think Jesus gave us the prophecies in Revelation? How do they reveal His loving plans for humankind?**

## Revelation's End-Time Focus

The gospels primarily center on Christ's first coming. They tell the story of His birth, His life and ministry, and His death and resurrection. Although they speak of His second coming, that is not their main emphasis. The book of Revelation's primary focus, however, is the climax of the centuries-long conflict of the ages. Each of its major prophecies ends in the glorious return of our Lord.

**Read Revelation 1:7, Revelation 11:15, Revelation 14:14–20, and Revelation 19:11–18. What similar conclusion do you see in each of these passages?**

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From the first to the last chapter of the book of Revelation, the climax of each prophecy is the coming of Jesus. The “Lamb who was slain” (*Rev. 5:12, NKJV*) is coming again as King of kings and Lord of lords (*Rev. 19:16*). He will defeat all of the foes that oppress and persecute His people (*Rev. 17:14*). He will deliver them from this nightmare of sin and bring them home to glory. The great controversy between good and evil will be ended. The earth will be made new, and the redeemed will live with their Lord forever (*Rev. 21:1–4*).

In Revelation 22:7 (*see also Rev. 22:12, 17, 20*), Jesus says: “Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book” (*NKJV*). Thus, Jesus' final appeal to all humanity is to respond to His love, accept His grace, and follow His truth to be ready for His soon return. Revelation concludes with Jesus' invitation, “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’” (*Rev. 22:17, NKJV*).

Our Lord invites all of those who seek for eternal life to come to Him. He then invites those of us who have accepted the message of salvation and are eagerly anticipating His return to join Him in inviting others to accept the message of His love. He sends us out on His mission to share His message to prepare a world for His soon return. There is nothing more rewarding than participating with Jesus in His mission to the world. There is nothing more fulfilling than cooperating with Christ in His last-day plan of salvation.

**Christ, coming quickly? John wrote those words about two thousand years ago. However, given our understanding of the state of the dead, why is Christ's second coming never more than an instant after our death? How does this fact help us to understand how quickly, indeed, Christ is coming?**

## Revelation's End-Time Message

The epicenter of Revelation is chapter 14. This chapter is of paramount importance to God's people living in the last days of human history. It unfolds God's last-day message to humankind. This end-time message is crucial to the people of God and to all humanity.

**Read** Revelation 14:14–20. What symbolism is used here to portray the return of our Lord?

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The symbolism of the harvest is used throughout the Bible to describe Christ's return (*Matt. 13:37–43, Mark 4:29*). In Revelation 14, the harvest of ripe grain represents the redemption of the righteous, and the harvest of overripe grapes depicts the destruction of the wicked. Revelation 14:6–12 contains an urgent last-day message to prepare men and women for earth's final harvest.

**Read** Revelation 14:6, 7. What is the essence of the message found in these two verses? How do they help us to understand who we are as Seventh-day Adventists?

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The message of the first angel in Revelation 14 appeals to a twenty-first-century generation longing for purpose in their lives. It presents the gospel of God's grace that provides forgiveness for all. It cleanses us from the guilt of sin and gives us power to be overcomers. This message provides the basis for all self-worth in the fact that Christ created us and redeemed us. It points out that one day all injustice will come to an end in God's final judgment. It is incredibly good news because it reveals that unrighteousness will not last forever.

**“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.”—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, pp. 119, 120. As a church, but even more important, as individuals, how can we take these words to heart?**

## Understanding God’s Message More Fully

Revelation’s last-day message presents Jesus in the fullness of His saving grace for all humanity (*Rev. 14:6*). It is an earnest appeal to “fear,” or give reverence, to God in all we do—to respect His commands and obey His law in the light of God’s judgment (*Rev. 14:7*). To “fear God” has to do with how we think. It is an appeal to live to please God and to place Him first in all of our thoughts. It is an attitude of obedience that leads us to live godly lives (*Prov. 3:7, Acts 9:31, 1 Pet. 2:17*). This message also invites us to “give glory” to God. Giving glory to God relates to what we do in every aspect of our lives.

**Read Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14 and 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20. How do these verses help us to understand what it means to both fear God and give glory to Him?**

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In an age of moral irresponsibility, when millions of people feel that they are accountable to no one but themselves, this judgment-hour message reminds us that we are responsible for our actions. There is a relationship between an attitude of reverence for God, obedience to God, and the judgment. Obedience is the fruit of a saving relationship with Jesus. Only His righteousness is good enough to pass the judgment, and, in His righteousness, we are secure. Through His righteousness we live to glorify His name in all that we do.

**Read Revelation 14:7, Revelation 4:11, Genesis 2:1–3, and Exodus 20:8–11. What is the basis of all true worship of God, and how does the Sabbath reflect this understanding?**

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Satan has attacked the Sabbath because he knows that it is the very heart of worship. It exalts Christ as the Creator and appeals to all men and women everywhere to “worship Him who made heaven and earth” (*Rev. 14:7, NKJV*). It speaks with relevance in an age of evolution. It calls us back to worshipping the Jesus who created us and who gives us a sense of our true worth in Him.

**Think about how important the Sabbath is as a reminder of God as our Creator and, hence, the One who alone is worthy of our worship. After all, what other teaching is so important that God *commands* one-seventh of our lives every week in order to help us remember Him as our Creator?**

## God's Final Appeal

**Read** Revelation 14:8, Revelation 17:3–6, and Revelation 18:1–4. What do we learn about spiritual Babylon from these verses?

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In the book of Revelation, the term “Babylon” represents a false system of religion based on human works, man-made traditions, and false doctrines. It exalts human beings and their self-righteousness above Jesus and His sinless life. It places the commands of human religious teachers above the commands of God. Babylon was the center of idolatry, sun worship, and the false teaching of the immortality of the soul. This false religious system has subtly integrated many of ancient Babylon’s religious practices into its worship. God’s last-day message to our dying planet is the message of Jesus and His righteousness. It echoes heaven’s appeal: “ ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen. . . . Come out of her, my people’ ” (*Rev. 18:2, 4*). God has divinely raised up the Seventh-day Adventist Church to exalt the message of Christ in all of its fullness. To exalt Jesus is to lift up everything He taught. It is to proclaim the One who is “the way, the truth, and the life” (*John 14:6*). It is to expose the errors of Babylon in contrast to the truths of Jesus.

**Read** Revelation 14:7, 9–11. What contrasting objects of worship are highlighted in these verses?

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Revelation 14 describes two different acts of worship—the worship of the Creator and the worship of the beast. These two acts of worship center around God’s day of worship, the true Sabbath, and a substitute, or counterfeit, Sabbath. The Sabbath represents the rest, assurance, and security that we have in Christ our Creator, Redeemer, and coming King. The counterfeit day represents a human and false substitute based on human reasoning and man-made decrees.

**Read Revelation 14:12. What is this text saying, especially in the context of what came before? How are the law and grace both revealed in this text, and what should this teach us about how law and grace are two inseparable aspects of the gospel?**

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**Further Thought:** “God has called His church in this day, as He called ancient Israel, to stand as a light in the earth. By the mighty cleaver of truth—the messages of the first, second, and third angels—He has separated them from the churches and from the world to bring them into a sacred nearness to Himself. He has made them the depositaries of His law and has committed to them the great truths of prophecy for this time. Like the holy oracles committed to ancient Israel, these are a sacred trust to be communicated to the world.

“The three angels of Revelation 14 represent the people who accept the light of God’s messages and go forth as His agents to sound the warning throughout the length and breadth of the earth. Christ declares to His followers: ‘Ye are the light of the world.’ Matthew 5:14. To every soul that accepts Jesus the cross of Calvary speaks: ‘Behold the worth of the soul. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”’ Mark 16:15. Nothing is to be permitted to hinder this work. It is the all-important work for our time; it is to be far-reaching as eternity. The love that Jesus manifested for the souls of men in the sacrifice which He made for their redemption, will actuate all His followers.

“Christ accepts, oh, so gladly! every human agency that is surrendered to Him. He brings the human into union with the divine, that He may communicate to the world the mysteries of incarnate love. Talk it, pray it, sing it, fill the world with the message of His truth, and keep pressing on into the regions beyond.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels for the Church*, pp. 58, 59.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 How do the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14 identify the essence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?
- 2 Think about the Sabbath and the importance of what it represents. As we saw this week, the message it contains is so important that God commands that we set apart one-seventh of our lives in order to remember Him as our Creator and our Redeemer. Also, unlike a holy mountain or a holy city, we don’t have to go to it to worship. Every week, at about a thousand miles per hour (at least, near the equator), the Sabbath comes to us. How does this truth also help us to understand the importance of the day and what it points to?
- 3 How can we explain the idea of the fall of Babylon, or the concept of the mark of the beast, in the most winsome way? That is, how can we present these truths in the least offensive way possible, even though we must understand that despite our best efforts some people will be offended?

## Adventist in the Next Life

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

The elderly woman listened attentively in Sabbath School in Southeast Asia.

Her Sabbath School lesson book was filled in meticulously. She looked up every verse in her Bible. Many verses were underlined in it. She placed money in the Sabbath School mission offering.

The woman, known to church members as “Grandmother,” looked like a model Seventh-day Adventist.

Visiting U.S. church leader Gregory Whitsett met with Grandmother after church to ask why she had left her non-Christian world religion to become an Adventist.

Grandmother related a tragic story about losing her parents in an accident at the age of five and suffering years of harassment by evil spirits. She sought help from doctors and spiritual mediums, but the medicine offered only temporary relief.

One day, an Adventist pastor moved next door, and Grandmother curiously watched people gather at his home every Friday evening. She stood at his gate to find out what was happening and heard music. Peace filled her as she listened to the music week after week. The pastor couldn’t convince her to come into the house, but he learned about her spirit problems and offered to pray. Grandmother agreed, and the evil spirits left permanently. Filled with gratitude, she accepted Jesus and joined the Adventist Church.

Whitsett, director of the Center for East Asian Religions, part of the Adventist world church’s Global Mission program, asked Grandmother to explain what Jesus meant to her.

“Jesus means everything to me,” the old woman said, speaking through a missionary-interpreter. “He healed me and has given me peace. I cannot help but speak about Jesus to everyone whom I meet. I am an old woman, and I don’t have much longer to live. I love Jesus so much that I have decided to be Adventist in my next life too.”

The missionary-interpreter was stunned. She had studied the Bible with Grandmother and thought that she had left her old views completely.



Grandmother’s situation is not uncommon among people who become Christian after following other world religions and traditional animistic practices, church leaders say. This is a major challenge in gospel outreach and a reason for the establishment of the Center for East Asian Religions and other Global Mission Centers at [globalmissioncenters.org](http://globalmissioncenters.org). Please pray for the work of the Global Mission Centers and for people like Grandmother.



**Key Text:** *Revelation 14:1–12*

**Study Focus:** *2 Peter 1:12, Revelation 14:6–12, Revelation 14:14–20, Revelation 19:11–18.*

## ***Part I: Overview***

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In our Sabbath School Bible study guide this quarter, we have especially focused on Jesus as our Example in relating to people, revealing the character of God, and explaining the eternal truths of His kingdom. His witness was not only the witness of His words, but it also was the witness of His life. His actions revealed the truthfulness of His Word. His life was a testimony that what He taught was true. As Jesus sacrificially ministered to those around Him, hearts were touched. The barriers of prejudice were broken down, and multitudes responded to His gospel appeals.

All effective witness flows from a heart that is filled with love for Christ and His Word. New Testament believers were passionate about witness because they were passionate about Jesus. In Christ, they saw the fulfillment of prophecies, centuries old. In His life and teachings, they were eyewitnesses to the glory of God. Describing the experience of the early church, the apostle Peter says that they were established in “present truth.” Present truth is an expression that he uses to define truth that is both relevant and urgent for that generation. Christ had come. There was nothing more important for them to proclaim when they shared their faith. Jesus the Messiah was the fulfillment of prophecy. Salvation was available to all.

In our lesson this week, we will study Jesus’ final message to a dying world. We will discover His “present truth” message for an end-time generation, preparing for His return. We will discover anew the message of His everlasting love, His abounding grace, and His eternal truth in the Bible’s last book, Revelation, and, specifically, in Revelation 14:6–12.

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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The book of Revelation is “the Revelation of Jesus Christ” (*Rev. 1:1*). Each prophecy of the Bible’s last book uncovers gems of truth about Jesus. This is especially true about Jesus’ final message in Revelation 14. Revelation 14:6, 7 states, “Then I saw another angel flying in the midst

of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water’ ” (*Rev. 14:6, 7, NKJV*).

Here is a message that is *urgent*—the angel flies in mid-heaven. It is *eternal*—the angel has the everlasting gospel, and it is *universal*. It is to be proclaimed to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.

### The Eternal Gospel

The phrase “everlasting gospel” speaks of the past, the present, and the future. When God created humanity with the capacity to make moral choices, He anticipated that they would make errant choices. Once His creatures had the capacity to choose, they had the capacity to rebel against His loving nature. The plan of salvation was conceived in the mind of God before our first parents’ rebellion in Eden. (*See Rev. 13:8.*)

Ellen G. White states it this way: “The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of ‘the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.’ Rom. 16:25, R. V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God’s throne.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

The phrase “everlasting gospel” speaks of a God who loves the beings He has created so much that although He fully knew the consequences of their choices, He made provision for their eventual rebellion even before they sinned.

There is another sense in which the gospel is everlasting. To a generation starved for genuine, authentic love, longing for meaningful relationships, the gospel speaks of acceptance, forgiveness, belonging, grace, and life-changing power. It speaks of a God of unconditional love who cares so deeply for humanity that He will go to any length to redeem us because He wants us with Him forever.

### Into All the World

According to the urgent, end-time message of the first of these three angels, the “everlasting gospel” is to be proclaimed to “every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.” Here is a mission so grand, so large, so great, so comprehensive that it is all-consuming. It demands our best efforts and requires our total commitment. It leads us from a preoccupation with our own self-interest to a passion for Christ’s service. It inspires us with something larger than ourselves and leads us out of the narrow confines of our own minds to a grander vision.

There is nothing more inspiring, more fulfilling, more rewarding than

being part of a divine movement, providentially raised up by God to accomplish a task far bigger, far larger than any one human being could ever accomplish on his or her own. The commission given by God described in Revelation 14 is the greatest task ever committed to His church.

### **Fear God**

The aged apostle John, a prisoner on Patmos, continues his urgent end-time appeal in Revelation 14:7 by declaring that the angel says, “with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water’ ” (*NKJV*). The Greek New Testament word for “fear” in Revelation 14:7 is *phobeo*. It is used here not in the sense of being afraid of God but in the sense of reverence, awe, and respect. It conveys the thought of absolute loyalty to God and full surrender to His will. It is an attitude of mind that is God-centered rather than self-centered. The essence of the great controversy revolves around submission to God. Lucifer was self-centered. He refused to submit to any authority except his own. Rather than submit to the One upon the throne, Lucifer desired to rule from the throne.

The first angel’s message calls us to make God the center of our lives. In an age of materialism and consumerism when secular values have made self the center, heaven’s appeal is to turn from the tyranny of self-centeredness and the bondage of self-inflated importance to place God at the center of our lives.

### **Giving Glory to God**

Giving glory to God speaks of our actions. Giving glory to God also deals with how our inner convictions translate into a lifestyle that honors God in everything we do.

The apostle Paul explains what it means to give God glory in his urgent appeal to the church at Corinth. “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (*1 Cor. 10:31, NKJV*). When God is the center of our lives, our one desire is to give glory to Him in every aspect of our lives, whether that has to do with our diet, our dress, our entertainment, or our music. We give glory to God as we reveal His character of love to the world through lives committed to doing His will.

### **An End-Time Judgment**

Our passage continues, “ ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come’ ” (*Rev. 14:7, NKJV*). The issues in the great

controversy between good and evil finally will be settled. The universe finally will see that God is both merciful and just. He is both loving and righteous. He is both compassionate and fair. The judgment reveals that God has done everything He possibly can to save every human being. It reveals before a waiting world and a watching universe that God will go to any lengths to save us. There is nothing more that He could have done to redeem us. The judgment sweeps the curtain aside and reveals the cosmic drama in the great controversy between good and evil. It reveals God's character of self-sacrificing love in contrast to Satan's selfish ambition. In the judgment, all wrongs will be made right. Righteousness will triumph over evil. The powers of hell will be defeated. Injustice will not have the last word—God will. All of life's unfairness will be gone forever.

Revelation 14:7 ends with an appeal to “worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (*NKJV*). This is a clarion call to worship the Creator at a time when most of the scientific world and the religious world has accepted the theory of Darwinian evolution.

Creation speaks of our value in God's sight. It speaks of our worth to Him. We are not alone in the universe. We are not some speck of cosmic dust. No, God created us. He fashioned us. He made us. We did not evolve. We are not a genetic accident. Creation is at the heart of all true worship. The Sabbath speaks of a Creator's care and a Redeemer's love. It reminds us that we are not cosmic orphans on some spinning globe of rock. It points us to a Creator who created us with a purpose and loved us too much to abandon us when we drifted from that purpose. The Sabbath reminds us of the One who has provided all the good things of life for us. Sabbath is an eternal symbol of our rest in Him.

True Sabbath rest is the rest of grace in the loving arms of the One who created us, the One who redeemed us, and the One who is coming again for us. It is the eternal link between the perfection of Eden in the past and the glory of the new heavens and the new earth in the future. The three angels' messages present the gospel in an end-time setting that meets the heart needs of a postmodern generation desperate for belonging, identity, community, purpose, fairness, justice, compassion, and worth.

### ***Part III: Life Application***

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All present truth is present because it makes a difference in our lives in the present. New Testament Christians who believed the prophecies of the Old Testament testified to Christ as the Messiah and were radically changed. They believed that the message of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and high-priestly ministry make an eternal difference. The reason they were so

passionate about witnessing is because the message they shared made such a difference in their own lives. Discuss the following questions with your class.

- 1. What difference does the end-time message of Revelation practically make in our day-to-day lives?**

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- 2. Describe aspects of this first angel's message that impress you most.**

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- 3. Suppose you have a friend who knows little about the Bible but has heard about the prophecies of Revelation and does not know how to make sense of them. How can the message of Revelation 14:6, 7 be the key that unlocks the theme of the entire book of Revelation?**

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