

The Gospel During the Great Tribulation

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The purpose of this study is to exalt the Centerpiece of the Great Tribulation, Jesus Christ and His everlasting gospel. Hopefully, this short study will lift some darkness that currently obscures this most important and wonderful subject.

What makes this subject so important is that the gospel is good news from God and also good news about God. (I should also point out the gospel also contains bad news from God for those who refuse to submit to His authority.) In the coming hours of human extremity, God will completely reveal the everlasting gospel. In other words, during the great tribulation, the gospel of Jesus Christ will be stripped of human varnish and denominational ownership.

Truth will shine brighter than the sun at noon on a cloudless day and truth will soar high above the antagonism and confusion caused by the diverse religions of the world. Everyone will clearly hear the gospel – yes, even above the roar and din of overwhelming destruction and suffering. During the appointed time of the end, the Holy Spirit will empower God's anointed messengers as never before, exalting Jesus Christ and His everlasting gospel with great power and simplicity. (Rev 7:1-8; 11:3; Joel 2:28-32)

There is no higher subject, there is no grander theme and there is nothing more glorious in the whole Bible than the "revelation" of Jesus Christ. Billions of people have rejoiced to learn about Him down through the ages without seeing the stunning revelation of His Majesty that is about to take place. Every born-again Christian knows that nothing can compare with the joy, peace and transformation that comes from knowing Jesus and understanding the gospel of His kingdom.

He is the King of kings! He is Lord of lords! He is Alpha and Omega! He is the eternal Sun of Righteousness, the Day Star of humankind! Yet, for all that He is, His favorite titles seem to be Son of God and Savior of man. (John 14:31; John 10:11; Rev 5:9)

So why is it then, that when people tell the story of the Great Tribulation, our Lord and His gospel are not usually the centerpieces of the story? Why is the book of Revelation regarded with so much mystery, fear, foreboding and gloom when Revelation is expressly declared to be "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him . . ." (Rev 1:1) Is it possible that Christians do not comprehend how Jesus and His everlasting gospel fit into the end-time story?

It is absolutely fascinating to discover how all the books in the Bible are "directly wired" into Revelation's story, comparable to the electrical wiring connected to the main breaker box in my house. All 66 books, written by 40+ authors over a period of about 1,400 years, connect to the book of Revelation in ways that reveal something about the enormous dimensions of God's love and His Plan to save man.

No book in the Bible stands alone; no book should be excluded from our study. Each book

contributes something essential to our understanding of the everlasting gospel. Each book adds color and detail to an infinite picture that says something about the Most High God.

However, if I could exalt one book above all others, it would be the last book of the Bible. I say this because I believe we are living in the final days of Earth's history and the message within the book of Revelation uniquely applies to the last generation. In other words, Revelation merits closer attention because it is the most timely.

God is Love?

I have often said during seminars that the most difficult idea the 144,000 must convey during the Great Tribulation will be that God is love, simply because the world's view of what constitutes God's love is highly distorted. Think about it. Revelation describes many horrible events.

Consider a global scene with people perishing by the hundreds of millions in great fires, tidal waves, volcano eruptions, contaminated waters, famines, plagues, wars and other physical calamities.

Consider the great suffering that every survivor will experience.

Words cannot express the anguish that will torment every living person during the Great Tribulation. No book in the Bible is more graphic or more depressing than the book of Revelation, especially if we focus on the results of God's justifiable wrath. So, how can I say that the book of Revelation is the most glorious book in the Bible? I say this because of what God *produces* during the Great Tribulation and what He *brings out* of the Great Tribulation!

What do I mean when I say "what will God produce during the Great Tribulation?" God will enable *every* person to have an unmistakable understanding of Jesus Christ and His gospel. "What will God bring out of the Great Tribulation?" God will save a numberless multitude of people who supremely love Him and His truth. (Revelation 7:9,14) Any process that can produce results like this is nothing short of amazing – especially when you consider the religious and cultural diversity of this planet!

Basic Elements of the Gospel

The gospel of Jesus Christ can be compared with different levels of algebra. Algebra I contains introductory ideas. Algebra II builds upon the foundations established in Algebra I, so that issues like quadratic and differential equations can be studied. Algebra II also sets the stage for the advanced study of calculus, etc. The point is that the gospel is not a "sound bite" or a flippant "one-liner" – it is as wide and deep as the ocean. (Ephesians 3:16-19)

True, you can put a small sample of the ocean in a jar, but the water in the jar is not the ocean! Unfortunately, many Christians have been led to believe that the gospel is a small matter (the jar of water) rather than an infinite matter operating within well-defined principles and laws.

The Apostle Paul became annoyed with the Hebrews because they would not move on to "Algebra II." He wrote, **"In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the *elementary teachings about Christ* and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment."** (Hebrews 5:12-6:2; italics mine)

If Paul were alive today, I wonder what he would say about the current condition of Christians and their understanding of the gospel?

Three Important Points

The way the gospel will be presented during the Great Tribulation will be as it has always been, only on a much grander scale. God has always used a specific person or remnant group to accomplish His purposes. During the tribulation, God will choose and empower 144,000 ordinary people from every religion and culture to do the job. (See February 1998 issue of *Day Star* that addresses the topic of God's 144,000 messengers.)

To be more specific, one religious body will not present the gospel during the Great Tribulation and for the most part, neither scholars nor "men and women of letters" will present the gospel either! God looks within the heart (1 Samuel 16:7, 17:10; Jeremiah 29:13) and He will choose 144,000 humble messengers that will come from all nationalities and faiths! Many people may question how this diverse group will present only one gospel! How will God accomplish this?

In every nation, there are people who love God with all their heart, mind and soul. These people are living up to all they know to be righteous and true. These are His sheep. (John 10:16; Romans 2:14,15) Once God presents the "book of truth" to such people (Ezekiel 2:3-3:4; Revelation 10:8-11) they will rejoice to understand the gospel! (Matthew 13:23)

God will then empower them to preach to their respective nations. (Hebrews 8:10-13; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 24:14) The world will listen because God will stop the daily affairs of the human race with His judgments. (Isaiah 26:9,10; Revelation 8 and 9)

As a result of God's intervention, a numberless multitude will receive salvation. Think about it. God is going to save to the utmost and redeem people from every religion and nation!

Two Problems

Before we get into the elements of the everlasting gospel, I would like to present two important points for consideration:

A. - Most Christians believe *their* church has the correct interpretation of the gospel. (This is one reason the Christian community is so divided – each church is convinced of the certainty of its position. Many churches use prophets or authorities outside the Bible to confirm their claims.) Regardless of denomination, church leaders, pastors and church members all believe *their version* of the gospel will be preached to all the world and evangelicals are doing everything within their power to accomplish "the impossible." I say "the impossible" for two reasons:

First, the majority of people living on Earth have not heard any portion of the gospel after 2,000 years of promotion. According to figures released by the American Bible Society, it is currently estimated that more than 3.5 *billion* people have never heard of Jesus Christ!

Second, the population of Earth is growing faster than people sharing the gospel can reach. Yes, through the miracle of radio and TV the gospel is being preached in remote places, but the problem is not reaching remote places! The problem is religion! Radio and TV may beam the gospel to every nation, but *culture and religion prevent most people from giving the gospel fair consideration.*

History confirms that it is almost impossible for one man to prove the superiority of his religion over that of another man. One cannot count the number of "holy wars" fought in the name of God. Figures show that less than 5% of the world's population change religions. Can Moslems convince Jews of the superiority of Islam? Can Catholics convince Hindus that Catholicism is right? Can the Mormons convince Jehovah's Witnesses that Mormonism is the correct?

No, the likelihood of change in each example is slim to none. It is heartbreaking, but true – when it comes to religion, most people cannot objectively consider another point of view if they have already embraced a particular religion. Religion usually starts in the cradle and whatever religion a person is born into, that is the religion they die out of. The question is, will God allow people to perish because two men cannot agree with each other?

No. God intends to present the gospel to every person and in a setting where each person may fully consider His offer of salvation. To do this, God must and will break down religious barriers by sending a series of devastating judgments.

B. - During the Great Tribulation, God will tear down the enormous loyalty, trust and confidence that each person places in his or her religion and religious leaders. This tearing down (disillusionment) will be painful and sad (and many will curse God out of deepest bitterness), but this terrible experience will enable Jews, Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Hindus, Moslems and everyone else on Earth to consider the everlasting gospel for what it really is. (Revelation 10:10,11)

God will open everyone's mind by a powerful and overwhelming course of events that no one can deny. God will put all people on a level playing field. The pompous, arrogant claims of religious leaders and religious systems will be illuminated by the light of His Truth. (Zechariah 13:7-9)

Sadly, the pride of their hearts will be revealed. In stark contrast, the 144,000 will present the

everlasting gospel in simple, but powerful terms. Blazing truth will shame the darkness that is protected in the name of religion with the same clarity that daylight defeats darkness. In this environment, everyone will have an opportunity to

- a. hear the gospel;
- b. make a decision (for the truth or take a stand against it);
- c. have their resolve about their decision tested by persecution; and
- d. ultimately be sealed or marked according to their decision.

In this manner, the everlasting gospel will be preached to every man, woman and child on Earth and each person will have a fair chance to make an intelligent decision about it.

Elementary Teachings of the Gospel

My comments in the previous paragraphs may have caused some of you a great amount of distress. You may want to ask: "So, if this is true, then just what is the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ?" I would respond by saying, "The everlasting gospel is the truth about the relationship that exists between the government of God, Jesus Christ, Lucifer and fallen man." The following six statements explain this relationship.

1) Before there was anything in the universe, there were three eternal beings that we call God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. (1 Timothy 1:17; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 9:14; Matthew 28:19,20) The laws of the Trinity are righteous, supreme, eternal and nonnegotiable. (James 1:17; Psalm 119:89,160; Daniel 4:34; Habakkuk 3:6; Romans 16:25-27) All violators of God's laws will receive the wrath of law that requires death by execution. (Genesis 2:17; Exodus 12:12,13; Romans 6:23; Revelation 15:1; Revelation 20:13-15)

Note: God's wrath is defined in this presentation as the fair and unbiased administration of a penalty as required by law. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were to be executed the very day they committed their sin because any violation of God's law is death by execution. (Genesis 2:17; 6:7; 13:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:8,9)

Why is the consequence so drastic? Here is the problem. When sin occurs, the nature of the violator is instantly changed – the sinner becomes anti-God. (Adam and Eve radically changed from having a propensity toward righteousness to having a propensity toward rebellion against God. This happened the very day that they sinned.

Remember how they ran and hid from God? This behavior shows this sudden change in their nature. (Genesis 3:8; Romans 8:7) From the beginning, God decreed that the penalty for sin was death by execution. To a liberal society, this may seem harsh. However, God knew the ultimate result of sin – He knew sinful beings would eventually attempt to destroy Him and all He had made if they had enough power, time, and of course, if it were possible. (See Revelation 12: 7-9; 17:12-14; 19:19,20.)

Violators of God's law cannot escape the moral changes that sin brings. It is "natural" for all

sinner to be anti-God. The only way to maintain a universe free from the chaos and deadly infection of sin is to totally eliminate sin and all who choose to continue in lawlessness. (2 Thessalonians 2:2:12)

Consequently, God executes the wicked (including the devil and his angels) at the end of the thousand years with fire. (Notice that they are *thrown* into the lake of fire! Revelation 20:15) Dying from the consequences of sin (cancer, stroke, accident, illness, etc.) is not to be equated with paying the penalty for sin (death by execution). If this was not the case, all the Father would have had to do was wait for Jesus to grow old on Earth and die "a natural death."

Please understand this point: The penalty for sin is not natural death. Now, follow this logic to its conclusion: This is the very reason why Jesus had to be executed at Calvary.

2) At a point in time (approximately 6,000 years ago), God the Son created life on this planet, including man. (Genesis 1:27; John 1:10; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2) At that time, Jesus placed man under the obligation of law with the promise of immediate death by execution if man violated the law. (Genesis 2:17) Unfortunately, man disobeyed his Maker. (Genesis 3:6)

3) Just as Adam and Eve were about to be executed, Jesus, the Creator of man, stepped "in the way" and offered to die in man's place. (Genesis 3:15; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1,2; 2 Thessalonians 2:7) The law of God, which condemned Adam and Eve to death, *could not* be changed. After Adam and Eve sinned, the Father had no option but to give the world to Lucifer as the spoils of his conquest. (Luke 4:6) However, when Jesus made His gracious offer to become man's intercessor, the Father accepted Jesus' offer based on certain conditions. From that moment in time, Jesus became man's intercessor and will continue to do so until the problem with sin is fully resolved. Jesus' great love for Adam and Eve and their offspring prompted His decision to live on Earth and die the second death (the penalty for sin). During Jesus' earthly life, He would be tempted to sin, just as Adam had been tested. (Hebrews 4:15) He became an over comer and lived a sinless life; therefore, He was executed as Adam and Eve deserved – the guilt of their sins would be transferred to Himself. (1 John 2:2,3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Revelation 1:5)

The Bible indicates that any person's guilt can be transferred to Jesus if they submit to the authority of Jesus and live by faith in a hostile world. This is the good news of the everlasting gospel – anyone who puts their faith in Christ as their "atonement" Lamb will receive eternal life at the appointed time and escape the execution awaiting the wicked at the end of the 1,000 years. (Luke 8:1; Acts 5:42; Ephesians 2:8,9; Malachi 4:1; Revelation 20:13-15)

Remember, the Father accepted Jesus' blood as an atonement for sin because He too, loved the human race as much as Jesus. (John 3:16) Yes, Lucifer had been successful in leading Adam and Eve to sin, but the Father promised that the world would be returned to its rightful owner (and all of the "faith" people who would live on it) if Jesus were successful in redeeming man from the condemnation of eternal death. (The spoils do go to the victor!) (Psalm 2:7-12; John 17:6; Hebrews 1:2,8-13; Daniel 7:13,14)

Note: Two points need to be injected here. First, Jesus created the human race for the glory of

the Father. (Colossians 1:10-17) When Jesus offered to become man's Redeemer, the Father promised to give Jesus the world as a gift for the price He would have to pay. (John 17:2-6) Jesus was found worthy to receive His kingdom in 1798. (Daniel 7:9,10, 13,14; Revelation 5. Also, see *Day Star*, November 1995 or my recent video presentation, Series 206 – Tape 6, for an in depth discussion on this point.)

For those individuals who are alive during the Great Tribulation, every decision to belong or not belong to the Kingdom of God will be made by the time the seventh trumpet is sounded. (Revelation 11:15) Jesus' first action after taking possession of His kingdom, will be to avenge the suffering of His saints. (This is the purpose of seven last plagues.) Ultimately, Jesus destroys His enemies. (Revelation 6:10,11; 15:1; 16:4-7; 19:15-21; Hebrews 10:13)

The second point that needs to be made is that although Jesus' intercession averted Adam's and Eve's execution that day, they did die years later due to the consequences of sin. This is why the Bible often speaks about the first death as a temporary sleep (1 Corinthians 15:51; John 11:11-13; John 6) and the second death as the eternal or everlasting death. (Revelation 2:11; 20:6; 21:8)

Many Bible students fail to distinguish between the *consequence* of sin and the *penalty* for sin. The wicked will be resurrected at the end of the 1,000 years to acknowledge their guilt and receive the *penalty* for their rebellion, which is death by execution.

4) Since all men have violated God's law (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:10; Romans 3:10), then all men fall under the penalty of law, e.g., death by execution. For those people who reject Christ's atonement, this execution will occur at the end of the 1,000 years. (John 5:28,29; 12:48; Revelation 20:6, 12-15; Colossians 3:5,6)

5) The good news from God is that no one needs to perish! (2 Peter 3:9; John 3:16; 1 John 5:13) The righteousness required for salvation has been provided for all people *through the life* of Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:10; 1:17; 3:21) The penalty for sin has been paid *by the death* of Jesus Christ. (Galatians 3:13,14; 1 Peter 3:18) Unfortunately, human nature is naturally drawn to rebel against God, His laws and Kingdom and it is often hard for sinners to accept the "good news." (Romans 8:7,8) Consequently, the only way a person can wholeheartedly submit to God's laws is to be born again. (John 3:3) The "born again" experience cannot be generated by human will. (We cannot make ourselves born again.) This is something that God alone creates in our hearts and the transformation is nothing less than a miracle. (John 3:6) The Bible also states that the born again life requires constant renewing. (2 Corinthians 13:5; Romans 12:2) However, the flip side of the coin is this: If anyone knowingly insists on remaining in a rebellious state against God, they will be considered a rebel who will be resurrected at the end of the thousand years. According to God's law, those who rebel must pay the penalty for their rebellion and they will be eternally destroyed in the lake of fire. (Mark 3:29; Hebrews 10:26,27; Revelation 20:11-15)

6) How does a person put their faith in Christ? To have faith in Christ means that out of a heart full of love and gratitude for what He has done, a person willingly submits to His authority. (1 John 5:2-4) Does obedience merit salvation? No. (Romans 1:17; 3:21,22; Hebrews 4:2-6) Is

obedience necessary for salvation? Yes.

(1 John 2:1-5) I know this sounds contradictory, but actually, the relationship is simple. Faith demonstrates obedience to God because the individual *believes* that God is Sovereign and there is a humble recognition that His commands are to be obeyed above all others. (Hebrews 11) Presumption, on the other hand, excuses transgression (rebellion), whereas obedience reveals our faith in God. (Romans 1:5,6) Obedience is a definitive way that faith can be refined and tested. (James 1:3; 2:17-26; 1 Peter 4:17; Hebrews 5:8,9; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; John 14:15,23) *Salvation is guaranteed to all who are willing to go, to be and to do as God directs.* GOBEDO! (John 3:16; Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 10:13, Philippians 4:19) Faith begins with a willing and submissive attitude. (Luke 23:42,43) Faith recognizes the authority of God by producing appropriate deeds. (James 2:17,19) The ultimate test of faith happens when loyalty to God stands in direct conflict with dire circumstances. (Genesis 6; Daniel 3 & 6)

Note: Many Christians today face a serious problem without recognizing it. Most Christians read and quote Bible texts in their Nike tennis shoes, instead of putting on the sandals of the apostles. In other words, too many Christians manipulate the conversations in the Bible (based on their own preconceptions) and glibly make them say things that were never intended. Here are two examples: **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."** (John 3:16)

This verse is often mistreated by individuals who read the Bible "while wearing Nikes!" Jesus uttered these words to Nicodemus. To understand the meaning of this verse, you have to "put on the sandals" of Nicodemus and consider the frame of mind he had *at that time*. The words of Jesus to Nicodemus could be paraphrased like this: "Nicodemus, the Father loves everyone in the world, not just this tiny nation of Jews. To restore all humankind to Eden, the Father has provided the necessary atonement for sin.

You and your fellow citizens are too parochial in your view of God's love. *Everyone* who submits to My teaching will have eternal life. I have only spoken the words the Father gave Me. If you accept Me as the Son of God, you must recognize that your religion and your religious acts cannot save you.

They are worthless in terms of salvation, because man is saved by faith alone. If you believe that I am the Lamb of God, sent here to fulfill all that the ceremonial system points to, then you need not take a lamb to the temple altar ever again. If you believe that I am the Son of God and my teaching is from God, you will not be able to conform to the religious customs of your people.

I have come to set you free of that obligation. If you confess that you believe that I am Messiah, the Holy One predicted by the prophets of Israel, you will be cut off from your family, friends and this nation – but, be assured of this, you will receive eternal life."

Another example of a verse (and many others exist) that is often misrepresented is this: **"That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."** (Romans 10:9,10)

Many Christians quote the preceding two verses as though the words contain a magical statement, as if merely to quote this verse before other people and believe that Jesus rose from the dead will be enough to save them eternally! Paul had no such thought in mind when he wrote these words. Again, let us take off the Nikes and put on the sandals of the Roman converts and consider what Paul was actually saying to the Romans who had suffered so much torment at Caesar's hand.

Paul's words could be paraphrased as follows: "If, when you are standing before the authorities for your faith, and all your possessions are being confiscated from your house because your name was placed on the proscription list, and when you are being beaten with 39 lashes because you refused to bow down before Caesar as a god – when this happens, if you can still confess with your mouth that Jesus is your Lord and Master and not Caesar, and if you can still believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and that He will raise you also – this is faith.

Your faith in God will save you, although you may, like me, lose your life in Rome for serving Christ! However, keep this in mind: Neither giving away your possessions nor standing in defiance of Caesar will save you. Remember that we are saved by faith alone in Christ. Therefore, submit to the teachings of Christ, confess that Jesus is Lord of your life, acknowledge your faults, but stand firm in your loyalty to the commandments of Jesus and your faith will save you!"

To understand the Bible writers and the intended meaning of their words, we need to be sure we understand the culture and customs of people and the time frame in which the words were written. To do less is to make nonsense of the Bible. The point here is that anyone can enjoy a fellowship with the writers of the Bible (even across the passage of time), if he or she strives to understand the issues and circumstances surrounding the writer and the time in which he lived.

The Great Tribulation and the First Message of the Gospel

To describe the power of the gospel during the Great Tribulation, it might be best to briefly "walk through" the scenario. I have presented in previous studies why I reject the idea of a pre-tribulation rapture, so this topic will not be addressed again in this article. (See *Day Star* series on *Five Essential Bible Truths*, titled *Second Coming – Study # 1* and *The State of Man – Study # 3*) However, other matters need to be discussed as they relate to the gospel during the Great Tribulation:

A. - My understanding is that the Great Tribulation will be a time-period of 1,335 days (Daniel 12:11,12) that will be divided into two phases: God's wrath mixed with mercy (seven first plagues (trumpets) – Revelation 8 & 9), God's wrath without mercy directed at the wicked (seven last plagues (bowls) – Revelation 15 & 16). This represents a total of 14 coming judgments.

B. - The seven first plagues (seven trumpets) are judgments from God that will destroy much of the Earth and its delicate infrastructures. Communication, travel, commerce, manufacturing and

distribution are types of infrastructures. According to the Bible, about 50% of the world's population will perish before the seventh trumpet sounds (yes, this includes many saints). The rest of Earth's population will be destroyed at the Second Coming (excluding those saints who live during the 75 days of the seven last plagues).

C. - Right after the great earthquake and other phenomenon mentioned in Revelation 8:3-5, but right before the sounding of the first trumpet, the 144,000 will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak for God, much like Elijah, Moses and John the Baptist were empowered. The first gospel message to be proclaimed is recorded in Revelation 14:7. John describes the gospel message as carried on the wings of an angel. Notice what he saw: **"Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the *eternal* gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people."** (Italics mine)

Revelation 14:7 reveals three important things:

1. - An angel flying in midair suggests a rapid transmission of this message to the whole world. (See Daniel 8:5 for parallel language on the swiftness of the Grecian empire.)
2. - This angel has possession of the *eternal* gospel. The emphasis on eternal is given because the gospel preached during the Great Tribulation *will not* be new and improved. On the contrary, something eternal also means unchangeable and ancient. Indeed, the way to salvation has never changed. Salvation comes by faith – always has – always will. (Ephesians 2:8,9; Genesis 15:6; John 22:16; 2 Chronicles 20:20; Revelation 14:12) From the death of Abel in Genesis 4 to the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11, the gospel that leads to salvation includes joyful obedience to the King of kings. Joyful obedience can only occur in a born again heart. True, tests of obedience are not often joyful (Dan 3 & 6; Hebrews 11), but a great peace fills the hearts of those individuals who stand firm in their faith. (Psalm 119:165; Exodus 14:13; Isaiah 7:9; Ephesians 6:14; 2 Corinthians 11:10-12:11)
3. - Notice that the eternal gospel identified in this verse is sent to every nation, tribe, language and people. No worldwide church or TV ministry can accomplish this objective in the given time-period. (The entire Christian community, with divergent views on the gospel have not accomplished this task during the past 2,000 years, nor can they accomplish it during the Great Tribulation.) This flying angel is not symbolic of a denomination or a silver-tongued orator. Actually, this angel (Greek word for angel means "messenger") represents the proclamation and work of the 144,000. They will be the "spokespersons" for God during this hour. (See the February 1998 issue of *Day Star* for a study on the identity and role of the 144,000.)

The First Message of the Gospel

"He [the flying angel] **said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."** (Rev. 14:7)

The contents of the first message of the gospel during the Great Tribulation will not be hard to

understand – especially if you are living then. So, picture the setting this gospel message will be proclaimed in: The first four trumpets have just sounded. One-third of the Earth has been burned up by meteoric showers of burning hail. Great coastal cities and their mega-populations have entirely disappeared because of an asteroid impact in the ocean.

Hundreds of millions have died of contaminated waters because of an asteroid impact on a continent. (Resulting ground waves from this asteroid impact cause septic systems and other buried toxic waste to filter into giant underground aquifers from which millions of people get their drinking water.) Hundreds of volcanoes around the "ring of fire" have blasted billions of tons of ejecta and debris into the atmosphere. There is great darkness.

Without sunlight, there is famine, suffering and misery beyond words. The survivors are in shock and trembling with fear and terror. Nearly 1.5 billion people are dead from these judgments. Many survivors will soon die. Plague is everywhere. It is in this setting that the first message of the gospel is delivered.

This message says three things:

1. - **"Fear God and give Him glory."**

This part of the message is self-explanatory. The implication is clear, God has not been feared nor has He received the glory, honor and respect that He is due throughout the ages.

2. - **"The hour of his judgment has come."**

The last moments of God's mercy have come, and the kingdom of Christ is about to be established. Everyone on Earth during the Great Tribulation will have a chance to be a part of His coming kingdom.

God has come to test the human race – who will remain loyal to Him above everything else. (Revelation 3:10) The phrase, "the hour of God's judgment" can apply two ways. First, this is the time when man will consider the authority of a Sovereign God. On the other hand, this will also be a time when God tests the behavior, loyalty and faith of every person.

Remember, the everlasting gospel explains the relationship that exists between the government of God, Jesus Christ, Lucifer and fallen man.

3. - **"Worship Him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."**

This phrase identifies the elements destroyed by the first four trumpets. The heavens are dark. The earth and its crops have been burned beyond recovery. The sea has suffered an asteroid impact and the springs of water are contaminated. This message commands everyone to Worship the Creator. Who is the Creator of the heavens, the Earth, the sea and springs of water? The Bible says it is Jesus Christ. (Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; John 1:1-14) How does Jesus want to be worshiped?

In His own words, here are the instructions (this is the fourth commandment of the Ten Commandments): **"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."** (Exodus 20:8-11)

Understand that this first message does not go forward without enormous controversy. This message will not be widely received at first because it stands contrary to the claims of nearly all religions of the world! You might ask, how is it contrary?

Catholics and most Protestants teach that Sunday, the first day of the week is the Lord's day. Moslems teach that Friday is the day of rest. Although Jews regard Saturday as a holy day, they reject Jesus as the Son of God and Creator of the universe, so they will not worship Him. Hindus also deny that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Savior of the world.

The few religious bodies that exist today that regard Saturday as God's holy day either deny that the trumpets of Revelation are in the future or they have no explanation of the seven trumpets. Incredible as it may seem, there is no religious body on Earth prepared to deal with this emergency and explain it! This being the case, no religious group is qualified to present the everlasting gospel. Therefore, just before the trumpets begin to sound, God chooses 144,000 common people from all religions and nations to do the work of proclaiming His everlasting gospel.

They will accomplish the impossible. Jesus said, **"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."** (Matt 24:14)

How does this message relate to "Righteousness by Faith?" Simple. People who have open hearts toward God and His truth, will understand that God's revealed wrath (the judgments) is justified. Our planet is in open, flagrant rebellion against our Creator and now the Creator commands all to render obedience and worship.

The observance of the seventh day Sabbath will again prove to be a sign between God and His people. (Exodus 31:17) The observance of the seventh day Sabbath will defy the laws that demand respect for another day. To willingly observe God's Sabbath during the tribulation and suffer the resulting consequences will be a powerful test of faith.

God has everyone's attention during the Tribulation and millions of people will be awakened for the first time to a knowledge of God's commandments. On the other hand, God will reveal how religious systems of the world are bankrupt of truth. If, as they claim, they had the truth about God, why didn't the religious leaders warn and prepare the people about God's plans written in Revelation?

We must note that the fourth commandment is the only commandment in the Ten Commandments that requires man to do nothing – at the right time each week. If God required man to do something to be saved, then it would not be righteousness by faith – it would be salvation by works!

However, the Sabbath commandment is a command to rest on God's holy day, the seventh day of the week. This is why I call this first message the announcement of the "Sabbath rest test." This test will quickly separate those who put faith in God from those who do not. (For a comprehensive study on God's holy day of rest, see *Day Star* – "Five Essential Bible Truths" – Study # 4 on the Sabbath.)

The Second Message of the Gospel

The survivors of the first four trumpets will scramble for understanding and information about the overwhelming wrath of God. Religious leaders will suddenly "figure out" that

- a. God has wrath, and
- b. God is responding to the world's corporate evil and degenerate ways.

Religious leaders will suddenly call for reform and seek laws demanding respect for God because of this crisis sent from God. They will form a world organization and each religious system, in its own way, attempt to appease God so that His judgments will cease. (See *Day Star*, March 1998 for an in-depth study on this coming crisis government.) Religious leaders will see that laws are quickly passed requiring all men to worship and honor God, including laws to respect His holy day.

However, the problem is that Moslems, Jews, Catholics and Protestants **do not agree which day is holy!**

In this setting, a second message from God will be sent throughout the Earth. Do not allow the brevity of this second message to mislead you. This is a very important message and it is also an extension of the first message. This message reveals certain matters about "Righteousness by Faith" that every Christian needs to know:

"A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries." (Revelation 14:8)

This message declares two things:

1. - "**Fallen!, Fallen is Babylon the Great**" A crisis government (Babylon the Great) will quickly form in response to God's judgments. This government will be led by the world's religious leaders – with politicians following. This message from God declares that this worldwide government is corrupt and blasphemous (or fallen). God has nothing to do with this global endeavor to appease His wrath. The whole system and theology upon which the crisis government is built is false. It is the work of the devil. Do not yield to its authority, have nothing

to do with it for God will destroy it and all who obey its blasphemous laws.

2. - **"Made all nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries"** The crisis government (Babylon the Great) will demand cooperation from all nations. This message declares that all nations will drink (buy into) the lies advocated by the world's religious leaders. The resulting laws will be conflicting and maddening. This crisis government is called adulterous and immoral because religious leaders and political leaders will be "in bed together" for a common cause. (See Jeremiah 25:15,16 for parallel language on this maddening wine.)

This message, like the first message, will reveal all who place the law of God above the laws of men. No one can hide from this test. People will demonstrate where their loyalties lie when tested with severe penalties for disobedience.

The greater the penalties, the clearer the outcome of the test. Just as winter strips the trees in the forest of their leaves, leaving the evergreens to stand out in contrast to the forest's barren limbs, so the hardships of tribulation will strip away the pretexts of religion, and faith in God will be revealed. The Great Tribulation is a time of wrath for everyone. If we obey God, we will suffer at the hands of men. If we obey men, we will suffer torment and eternal death from God.

This is the great vortex coming upon the Earth. This is the great testing time of faith. Those who love God and His truth, those who render obedience as He commands, will have to live by faith – there is no other way to remain faithful to God.

The seriousness of the second message can only be understood within the context of the stringent laws and severe penalties imposed upon the nations. Anyone who disobeys, rebels, opposes or aids and abets people opposing the crisis government's laws, will suffer greatly. The devil is the force behind the sudden and powerful rise of this crisis government. (Revelation 13:2-4)

The Bible indicates that all inhabitants of the Earth will submit to this government, all except those having their names written in the Book of Life. (Revelation 13:8) If you do not have a copy of the March 1998 issue of *Day Star*, I strongly encourage you to obtain one. It focuses on what the Bible says about this coming crisis government.

The Third Message of the Gospel

The gospel during the Great Tribulation will not have 20 or 30 points of faith, a unified creed, a catechism or a set of doctrines that all believers agree with. Actually, the everlasting gospel during that time will center on one poignant point: "Worship God as He commands." In Noah's day the testing truth was just as simple: "Get on the ark!"

Both messages are based on a faith response. Both messages cut to the crucial point. The command in Revelation 14 to worship God stands in contrast to the demands of the crisis government and its evil leader. Worshiping God on His holy Sabbath will be a great test for all people. Many Moslems, Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Hindus and others from every language

will be saved. God will not require everyone to adopt the Western culture or concepts of Christianity.

All God wants to know during the Great Tribulation is whether or not we put our faith in Him. The just (those justified) will live by faith! (Romans 1:17) So, God sends a simple truth, an old truth, a profound truth throughout the world. (Remember, the sacredness of His Sabbath rest began when the Lord rested at Creation, blessed it and then asked man to follow His example. Genesis 2:1-4)

God sends His judgments, giving the great religions the world over an opportunity to organize as one global organization – proving that its leaders and all who follow, stand in direct opposition to His law. God watches as each person decides whom they will follow – this is how the test of faith is implemented.

Here is a profound point: God is not concerned about all the other ideas we have and believe to be true about His ways, He is only interested in knowing whether we will be loyal to Him at any price. This is why the Sabbath rest test will be so direct and simple. Be prepared to stand alone for God!

History confirms that those who make a stand for Christ, do not have the support of large numbers. The gospel proclaimed by the 144,000 will not be supported by large denominations or religious groups from which to draw their courage. Before we can stand together on the Sea of Glass, we have to stand alone as Christ stood before His accusers. The servant is not greater than His Master.

The third message also reveals a great test of faith. Notice what it says: **"A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name." This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.**" (Revelation 14:9-12)

Antichrist will be Worshiped

God's timing is perfect. Immediately after the fifth trumpet, when Satan appears claiming to be God, the third angel's message is presented. (Revelation 9:1-11) This message is directed specifically at those people who have not yet submitted to the demands of the gospel. In all the Bible, there is no stronger warning than this message. The message of Revelation 14:9-12 makes five declarations:

1. If anyone worships the devil (the Antichrist, the lamb-like beast) and receives his tattoo (the number 666 placed on the right hand or the name of the devil tattooed on the

foreheads of his lieutenants), that person will receive the full wrath of God – no mercy will be shown.

2. Everyone who worships the devil (the beast) will be publicly tortured before Jesus and His angels because they willingly received the evil mark of the beast and stubbornly refused to acknowledge the Sovereignty of God. These also rejected the clearest evidences of truth.
3. Everyone who "goes along" with the devil (the beast) will have no peace of mind after making the decision.
4. The saints must endure this time-period patiently, for many will be killed because they refused to render homage to the Antichrist and his evil government.
5. The saints will be easy to identify during these days. They will worship God on His holy seventh day, whereas the devil and his followers will worship at another time. The two groups will stand in clearest opposition to one another – one group following the Lamb of God, the other submitting to the lamb-like beast.

The third gospel message completes the test and causes the final separation of the faith-full from the cowards. (Revelation 21:8) Eventually, the whole world will submit to the crisis government and its glorious leader (the devil) – all except those people who remain loyal to Jesus.

The necessities of life will be controlled by the devil and his government and if anyone wishes to buy or sell or conduct commerce, he will have to show that he has the mark, the evil tattoo. Otherwise, he will be "cut off" from what meager supplies of food and medicines are available.

Understand the picture: The remaining assets of the world are under the control of Satan. Those who refuse to receive his mark have no option but to live by faith. It will be God who provides for people who remain loyal to Him, just as He provided for Elijah during the apostasy of Israel. (See 1 Kings 17.)

Last Call

A few days before God closes the door to mercy, just when it appears that Jesus has done everything to reach every person on Earth with His everlasting gospel, He sends one last invitation to the rebels of Earth. God is not willing that anyone should perish. (2 Peter 3:9)

So, with the greatest of love, God reaches out to gather in that one last person who has not found the courage to take his stand for the right. At the conclusion of the gospel invitation, the power of the Holy Spirit is poured out as never before, urging people through the 144,000 to stand for Jesus Christ.

There are two reasons for this.

1. First, as just mentioned, God is waiting for the last decision to be made.
2. Second, God wants a watching universe to witness a most amazing fact: When truth is set before a "free will being" in the plainest and clearest terms, nothing more can be

done to redeem that person if they choose to resist.

In other words, God does not destroy anyone for being misled or for believing a lie. Oh no, God only destroys people who stubbornly refuse to accept what is truth! Remember the problem with sinners? If the heart of a sinner remains unchanged and unregenerate, he is anti-God to the core.

If possible, he would even destroy God (as demonstrated by Lucifer)! Does this seem impossible? Read Revelation 17:14 and 19:19 and see what happens when Jesus comes. The wicked people on this Earth will attempt to destroy Jesus and His Kingdom with whatever weapons of destruction they have at their disposal! Can you imagine how insane this attempt will be – mere men attempting to destroy God? Before you shake your head in disbelief, just remember that Lucifer led one-third of Heaven's angels in an attempt to do the same thing.

This is the nature of sin fully revealed for all that it is.

So, God reaches out one final time. Here is the message: **"After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. With a mighty voice he shouted: "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird. For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries." Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes."** (Revelation 18:1-5)

You do not need a high school diploma to understand this last message. You do not need a priest, rabbi, holy man or preacher to explain it to you either. On the other hand, how tragic it is to realize that hundreds of millions of people will reject this serious warning? This is the very warning that introduces the seven bowls (seven last plagues) – the seven last plagues are not to be taken lightly. The world has never seen anything like them. They are awful and they are fitting.

In a future issue of *Day Star*, I will present a study on the seven last plagues. By the time the people of Earth hear this message, they should be able to make a fair comparison. The seven trumpets (God's wrath mixed with mercy) have occurred in the precise order the Bible predicted they would. People will understand that the seven bowls (God's wrath with no mercy) are next. By looking backward they will be able to anticipate something of the future.

Of course, the good news is that the seven bowls will not afflict the people of God who wait for their redemption. The seven last plagues are directed at those who receive the mark of the beast.

Summary

Now that we have considered the everlasting gospel that will be preached during the Great Tribulation, I will close on this thought: What do we learn about human nature when God is left with no other recourse than total destruction to inform and save the sincere of heart?

Isn't it wonderful that God's final test for humans is so simple, direct and easy to understand?

Isn't it wonderful that God's offer for salvation is so simple and direct?

There is no wiggle room on what God wants. There is no way to pass the test without having complete faith in God for He will not accept anything less than total submission! He is Lord over all or He is not Lord at all. What God offers is far beyond anything we can return. Truly, His grace is amazing.

Jesus has *promised*, "**...And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**" (Matthew 28:20)

I like the words found in the song of Moses: "**He [the Lord] is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.**" -" (Deuteronomy 32:4)

Then again in Job: "**It is unthinkable that God would do wrong, that the Almighty would pervert justice.**" (Job 34:12)

From these texts and the others used in this Bible study, I am fully convinced that God has carefully designed the events of the Great Tribulation so that He can save the largest number of people possible!