



## Three Angels, One Message Presentation Ten: God Wants Us To Be Ready!

The messages of the Three Angels contain God's last warning to Planet Earth. It is a startling, warning message given in love. He must fix the sin problem, but He wants everyone to be saved. He's invested His own life blood in your salvation! Because He extends the freedom of choice to all, He will force no one to receive His grace. If we persist in turning Him away, eventually He will, with great sadness, recognize our decision and allow us to reap the consequences of our wrong choice. This in the Bible is called "God's wrath." See Romans 1:24, 26, 28; Galatians 6:7, 8; Matthew 23:37, 38.

There are two "wraths" mentioned in the Three Angels' Messages. There is the wrath of "Babylon," which refers to her severe penalties inflicted on those who dissent from her doctrines. Revelation 12:17; 13:14-16; 14:8. This is illustrated in the story that took place in ancient Babylon concerning the three Hebrew youth who refused to bow and worship the image and caused Nebuchadnezzar to become furious. Daniel 3:15, 19, 20. Revelation's warning message against "bowing to the image," even though there is a "death decree" issued against those who, in obedience to God's commandments, refuse to bow, can be seen against the backdrop of this story. Remember that Daniel 11's "king of the north," representing the papacy of the last days, will go out with great fury to destroy." Daniel 11:44.

On the other hand, God's "wrath" is His allowing us to receive the consequences of our own choices when we make wrong ones and turn away from Him. This too is an expression of His love! If we push Him away, He will withdraw His presence and His protection, leaving us vulnerable to the cruel devices of the wicked one.

In this condition, one would be left unsheltered during the fierce "time of trouble" that is to come upon the earth, and the seven last plagues which are referred to as God's "indignation." The "cup" represents guilt, ordeal and judgment. Jesus drank from this "cup" on our behalf, accepting the curse and penalty of sin so that we wouldn't have to. Matthew 26:39. When we experience guilt now, it is not in full measure, for if it were, it would crush us. However, for those who finally and obstinately refuse God's grace, His law and His ways, they will drink from the "cup" of His "indignation" which is poured out in "full strength." It will be much better to suffer the "wrath" of Babylon than the "wrath of God"! He will shelter His faithful ones through the time of trouble if we trust and obey Him. See Psalm 91.

What about the phrases, "the smoke of their torment arises forever and ever" and "they have no rest day or night"? These phrases, drawn from the Old Testament account of Edom, refer to the complete and total destruction by which God will forever remove sin and unrepentant sinners. There is a huge difference between "everlasting punishing" and "everlasting punishment." See Matthew 25:41. The Bible does not teach that sinners will be tortured in fire forever and ever. Ancient Edom suffered God's judgment which included the indictment, "its (fire) shall not be quenched night or day; its smoke shall ascend forever." Isaiah 34:10. Yet Edom is not burning today, nor are its inhabitants continuing to suffer punishment. Likewise, God declared that Sodom and Gomorrah suffered the vengeance of "eternal fire," yet they are not burning now. Jude 7. They were "forever destroyed." Jerusalem suffered "unquenchable fire," (meaning fire that could not be stopped when it was burning), but it's not burning today. See I Kings 17:27; Lamentations 4:11. Sinners will be "as though they had never been." Obadiah 16. The Bible presents a picture of God, not as a vengeful tyrant, but a benevolent Ruler Who must deal with sin, once and for all. We can ask Him now to remove it from our lives, which He has promised He can do! Matthew 1:21.

The third angel closes with the encouraging thought, "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." We are admonished to exercise patience and tenacity as we wait for the coming of the Lord. James 5:7, 8.

Though we are saved by grace and not by our obedience, genuine faith will respond in appreciation by willing compliance to God's commandments. Listening to what Satan said instead of the Word of God led to disobedience in the Garden of Eden and eviction. God's people in the last days will obey Him in all things, including the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, as a sign of their loyalty and love to His government. It would be impossible for God to take rebels to heaven; that would only perpetuate the sin problem. True obedience is made possible through the grace of Christ. It is by having His "mind" that we can have "His faith" and be overcomers. Romans 12:1, 2; Philippians 2:5. Through His Spirit He will write the principles of His law in our minds and on our hearts so that we can be remade into His likeness, to the glory of His name. That's what you want in your life, isn't it?