

THE
PRESENT TRUTH

—AND THE—

THREE ANGELS'
MESSAGES

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The Present Truth and the Three Angels' Messages

The concept of “present truth” is not unique to Seventh-day Adventists. In fact, in 1883, Charles Spurgeon published a book titled *The Present Truth: A Collection of Sermons Preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle*. Since present truth is a message applicable to the present, it would seem logical that there has always been a present truth. The apostle Peter wrote, “For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth” (2 Peter 1:12). This truth Peter speaks of is “the whole body of Christian teaching in which the believers had already been instructed, and which they ‘know.’”¹

We find many examples of present-truth messages in the Bible. For example, in Genesis 6 and 7, we read that God was going to destroy the world with a flood. Noah preached for 120 years to prepare the people of that day; that was their present truth. God also had a message of destruction to the people of Nineveh in the time of the prophet Jonah; that was their present truth. Thus, we find truths in Scripture that applied to the time they were written; however, some truths, while they fall under the umbrella of present truth (as Peter said above), are timeless and apply to all. For example, the message of the gospel—that Jesus died to save us from our sins and that we are saved by grace through faith in Him—was true in Peter’s time, and it remains true today.

However, some aspects of the present truth apply to the here and now, and it is imperative that we are familiar with them. John the revelator records a vision in Revelation 14:6–11,

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.”

And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”

Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

This passage is known as the three angels' messages, and it constitutes God's final warning to the world just before Jesus returns. So this message is today's present truth, or today's newspaper, as it were. A careful examination of the passage will reveal that much of what is known as “Adventist doctrine” is found in the three angels' messages; thus, an understanding of these messages will answer church critics by giving individual Adventists a reason for the hope that is in them.

Before diving into the messages given by each angel in Revelation 14, we must set the context. The apostle John had just concluded a vivid description of the two beasts in Revelation 13 and outlined their behavior and characteristics that would enable the reader to identify them (more on this later). The chapter ends with the infamous 666: “Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666” (verse 18). John's next statement paints a contrast with what he just described in the previous chapter: “Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion,

and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads" (Revelation 14:1). This seems to be the same group of saints we find described in Revelation 7:4, "And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed." The 144,000 answer the question presented in the previous chapter, "Who is able to stand?" (Revelation 6:17). The angels on the four corners of the earth in Revelation 7:1–3 were told not to harm the earth, the sea, or the trees until the one hundred and forty-four thousand were sealed on their foreheads—in Revelation 14:1, they have been sealed.

These saints sing a "new song" (verse 3). "It is the song of Moses and the Lamb—a song of deliverance. None but the hundred and forty-four thousand can learn that song; for it is the song of their experience—an experience such as no other company have ever had."² This is reminiscent of Moses' song of deliverance in Exodus 15 after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea; they were finally free. Thus, the one hundred and forty-four thousand have experienced the freedom that Christ gives to those who receive Him as Savior and Lord, and they have been faithful to God despite the odds, challenges, and difficulties in the world because of the beasts of Revelation 13 (see also Revelation 14:4, 5). They are God's people, and God's people have a message. This message will introduce Jesus, His love, and His mission to the world. It will warn the world about what is to come and prepare people to meet Jesus when He comes in the clouds of heaven. We will start studying this message in the next chapter.

1. Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7 (Washington DC: Review and Herald®, 1980), 599.

2. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press®, 2005), 649.