

Your Choice: Eternal Fire or Eternal Faith?

Revelation 14:8-13

Today's text offers you a simple, but dramatic choice. Will you choose the eternal fire of those who are condemned? Or will you choose eternal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? The reality is that you will be somewhere forever. Eternity cannot not be spent: it will never end, never be exhausted. Let's labor together over this passage to understand this choice clearly. Will you choose the lake of fire or place your faith in the Lord?

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I. The Angel's Pronouncement of Judgment upon Babylon, 8

And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. (Revelation 14:8)

A. The Identity of Babylon

There are four opinions about what is meant by the term "Babylon." John's vision includes more about this Babylon in Revelation chapters 16-18. All of these opinions emphasize the character of Babylon more than its actual location. Up to this point in Scripture, The Tower of Babel (described in Genesis 11) has been the foremost illustration of manmade, man-centered religion, empowered by Satan. But the angel in Revelation 14 announces the doom of man-centered religion led by the Antichrist. Here are the four opinions about the identity of Babylon:

1. Is this merely the worldwide system of evil, with all its devious and dangerous parts? In Revelation 14, it is referred to as a city.
2. Is this the actual city of the ancient Chaldean empire -- the capital city on the Euphrates River (now in modern day Iraq, 50 miles south of Baghdad)? It seems to be more than this.
3. Is this a secretive reference to Rome? Some early Christians referred to the Roman Empire as "Babylon." This view emphasizes the similarities between these two wicked nations in history (1 Peter 5:13).
4. A fourth view about the identity of Babylon incorporates elements from the first three views. This approach holds that Babylon is the fourth kingdom (described by Daniel), and that it is, in some way, connected to the ancient Roman Empire (as a political and religious system). In a message from Daniel chapter 7, entitled "[Earthly Kingdoms and the Everlasting Kingdom](#)"ⁱ we noted that the last kingdom in Daniel's vision, characterized as a savage, horrible beast; this will be similar to the previous kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persian and Greece. So it is not surprising that the Roman Empire was similar to Babylon. In a message from Daniel 2 entitled, "[The Ultimate Kingdom](#)"ⁱⁱ, Pastor Rodney King explained Nebuchadnezzar's vision, including the image of the fourth kingdom and its ten toes.

As one author noted, "The name [Babylon] thus stands for the pride of mankind and for the heathen city-empire. For John, Babylon is the great city, the symbol of mankind in community opposed to the things of God."ⁱⁱⁱ In Revelation 17:5, "Mystery Babylon" is referred to as "the mother of prostitutes and abominations in the earth."

B. The Fall of Babylon (with the nations)

In the original language, the angel's message begins with the two words: "**Fallen, fallen.**" Repeating these two words reemphasizes the certainty of coming judgment upon this mysterious, great city of Babylon. Why will this judgment come? It is because of the maddening influence of her adulteries among the nations. This seems to indicate that the nations corrupted by her will fall with her. According to Revelation 19:2, Babylon's evil influence will lead to the martyrdom of

believers. Remember that, in Scripture, adultery is a picture of spiritual idolatry. As part of “the mystery of iniquity” (2 Thessalonians 2:7) which is already at work, the spirit of Babylon is alive today, poisoning the souls of men. For this evil influence, Babylon will be ultimately judged (Revelation 18:21).

According to Revelation 13:6-7, an angel will be given the privilege of preaching God’s gospel of mercy to all those on the earth. Then, each person on the earth will have to make a choice: Christ or Antichrist? Since the mystery of iniquity is already at work today, you are already making this choice. As we shall see, the choice is between eternal fire and eternal faith.

II. The Angel’s Pronouncement of Judgment upon Men who Worship the Beast, 9-11

And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and 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 up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receives the mark of his name. (Revelation 14:9-11)

The Worship of the Beast: In the message, [“The Beast and His Mark^{iv},”](#) Pastor Rodney King explained the Antichrist, the image (the statue), and mark of the beast from Revelation 13:11-18. Here in Revelation 14, the angel’s message is loud and clear. Those who worship the beast (the Antichrist) and receive his mark will be doomed for all eternity. They will worship the Antichrist and his image as the center of their existence, receiving his mark in their forehead or hand. According to Revelation 13:17, the people of the world will be required to have this mark to buy or sell. Yet to take the mark is to be marked for torment forever. Undoubtedly, some of those who are alive at the time will hear the words of Jesus preached to them: **“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”** (Mark 8:36). Jesus said, **“You cannot serve God and mammon [riches]”** (Matthew 6:24). Those who love their materialism, rejecting God’s message, will suffer eternal misery. Who would take the mark that would mark them for unending torment – at any cost?

The Wrath of God: Verse 10 predicts that God’s wrath will not be mixed with God’s mercy. Everyone at the time this was written understood that drinking undiluted wine produced unruly evils. Here, the wine of God’s wrath is not watered down in any way: it is pure wrath with no mercy. Even those all this occurs in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb – the Lord Jesus – there will be no mercy.

The Reality of Eternal Torment: There are false teachers who teach the annihilation of the soul. By this, they mean that the human soul can be completely destroyed: it will cease to exist. But notice how this false teaching is overturned by verses 10-11: ***“and 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 up forever and ever: and they have no rest day or night...”*** Day and night, no end in sight, these souls shall be tormented. On and on, they still persist, suffering, they still

exist; fire and brimstone, smoke ascends, torment that will never end. How horrible to be lost for all eternity!

Like the Devil whom they follow and the beast whom they worship, they will be tormented forever: **“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever”** (Revelation 20:10)

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Is there any good news in this passage? Yes! We have learned much about the eternal fire tormenting those who are lost. But in verses 12-14, we find an escape: eternally blessed faith in the Lord.

III. The Heavenly Pronouncement of Blessing upon the Believers, 12-14

12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. 13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them. (Revelation 14:12-13)

This will be an extremely difficult time for all the saints of God who are alive on the earth during the Tribulation. Yes, there are those in all ages who go through tremendous struggles (as demonstrated by the paraphrase of Psalm 124 below). But the time of Tribulation will be especially trying for those who trust in Jesus Christ during those difficult times. But remember: the alternative is far worse! Verse 12 describes the patient perseverance of those saints: the people who obey the commandments of God, placing their faith in Jesus Christ.

Two angels pronounced the doom of mystery Babylon, and the doom of the “Antichrist worshipers.” But then “a voice from heaven” commanded that a message of blessing be written. **“Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord henceforth...”** Can you imagine what a tremendous blessing that will be to those who go through deep trials and testing? But this helps us even today. Notice the form of this encouragement: **“WRITE!”** This reassurance comes from the Spirit-inspired Word of God. Far from being doomed by trusting Antichrist, **“blessed are the dead which die in the Lord!”**

Yes, those will be incredibly difficult times. As Revelation 13:10 puts it, **“He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity: he that kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.”** The Antichrist and his minions will go into eternal captivity. They will die; they will be doomed to the second death. But look at the way that the blessing is described for those who place their faith in the finished work of Christ: **“Yea, saith the Spirit that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.”** Why should you choose faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ? It is because God promises eternal rest to those who love Him and trust Him. In Jesus Christ, we find rest for our souls (Matthew 11:28-30). But wait: there’s more! The Spirit of God also promised that God will give eternal rewards: **“their works do follow them.”** The Son of God loved you so much that He gave His life for you. He died for your sins and remained in the grave for three days. Then, rising bodily from the dead, He demonstrated that He is the Lord of life and death. Here is the basis for our faith. Here is how we escape from eternal fire.

Today, we can learn the powerful lesson of salvation from those who will be alive during the Tribulation. Those who live for materialism – worshipping the Antichrist as the center of their existence – will be doomed to the Lake of Fire forever. Those who trust the Messiah – worshipping Christ as the center of their existence – will be delighted by their rest and rewards from the Lord.

So today, what will you choose? Will you try to put off this choice – which means that you are already making a dangerous choice? Will you risk your soul to the dangers of the eternal fire? Or will you today place your faith in the Lord who will deliver you from hell to take your place with the saints in heaven?

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Paraphrase of Psalm 124

To the tune of “Now Thank We All Our God”.

Without God on our side, (say all the people with us) / Without God on our side, the floods would have engulfed us. / For angry men rose up and like a swelling tide / They would have swallowed us, but God was on our side.

We praise and bless the Lord, our Wonderful Defender / Who kept us from the snare from being torn asunder / For they would tear our flesh and swallow us alive / But God protected us in Him we live and thrive.

*Now thank we all our God, the Lord Christ, our Creator / Who made the heav’n and earth and came as our Redeemer / He still defends today, our blessed Lord and Guide
Now let the people say, “The Lord is on our side.”*

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ⁱ Earthly Kingdoms and the Everlasting Kingdom accessed at <https://www.cbcbfindlay.org/earthly-kingdoms-and-the-everlasting-kingdom/>

ⁱⁱ The Ultimate Kingdom, accessed <https://www.sermonaudio.com/solo/calvaryfindlay/sermons/1019201455153423/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 173.

^{iv} The Beast and His Mark, accessed at <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=1010221511252118>