APPLAUDING THE APOCALYPSE

Danish author Søren Kierkegaard told a parable about the end-time. It went something like this: A fire broke out backstage in a big theater. A clown, who had been part of the performance, came out to warn the audience: Get out; the place is on fire! The audience thought it was just a big joke, part of the show, that’s all, and just applauded. He repeated the warning: Get out! Get out! But the more emphatically he warned them, the greater the applause. For Kierkegaard, that was how the world is going to end: to the general applause of people who believe it’s a joke.

The end of the world and the events leading up to it are, as we know, no joke. The world faces the most serious crisis since the Flood. In fact, Peter himself uses the story of the Flood as a symbol of the end, warning that just as the world of old perished by water, in the end-times, “the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10). Having been warned about what is coming, we must be prepared for it.
Write out Revelation 14:7, 12 from the translation of your choice. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map it.
**FEARING GOD**

For our generation the purpose of the book of Revelation is to prepare a people to be ready for Jesus’ soon return and to unite with Him in spreading His last-day message to the world. Revelation reveals the plans of God and unmasks the plans of Satan. It presents God’s final appeal, His urgent, eternal, and universal message for all humanity.

The Greek New Testament word for “fear” found 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. It is the opposite of Lucifer’s attitude in Isaiah 14:13, 14 when he says in his heart, “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.”

Instead, it is the attitude of Christ, who, though He was “in the form of God, . . . humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:6, 8).

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. Put simply, to fear God is to place Him first in our thinking. It is to renounce our self-centeredness and pride and to live a life wholly for Him.

It obviously must be important since it’s the first words out of the mouth of the first angel of the three. We therefore must take heed.

The Bible reveals a link between fearing God and keeping His commandments (Deut. 6:2; Ps. 119:73, 74; Eccles. 12:13, 14). Fearing God is an attitude of reverential respect that leads us to obedience. Heaven’s urgent appeal is for those saved by grace to be obedient to God’s commands (Eph. 2:8–10). Grace does not free us from obeying His commands. The gospel sets us free from the law’s condemnation, not from our responsibility to obey it.

Grace not only delivers us from the guilt of our past but also empowers us to live godly, obedient lives in the present. The apostle Paul declares that “we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations” (Rom. 1:5).

There are some people who have the strange idea that salvation by grace somehow negates the law of God or minimizes the necessity for obedience. They believe that any talk about obedience is legalism. They have declared, “All I want is Jesus.” The question is, which Jesus? A Jesus of our own making, or the Jesus of Scripture? The Christ of Scripture never leads us to downplay His law, which is the transcript of His character (see John 1:1, 14). The Christ of Scripture never leads us to minimize the doctrines of the Bible, which reveal more clearly who He is. Christ is the embodiment of all doctrinal truth. He is truth incarnate and doctrine lived out.

Revelation’s final appeal calls us through faith in Jesus to accept the fullness of everything He offers. It calls us to “fear God,” which is expressed by faith in His ability to empower us to live godly, obedient lives.
A GOD-CENTERED LIFE

In an age of consumerism, when secular values have made self the center, heaven's appeal is to turn from the tyranny of egocentricity and the bondage of self-inflated importance and to place God at the center of our lives. For some, money is the center of their lives. For others, it is pleasure or power. For still others, it may be sports, music, or entertainment. Revelation's message is a clarion call to fear, respect, and honor God as life's true center.

The main issue in earth's final conflict is a battle for the mind. It is one of allegiance, authority, and commitment to God's will. The final battle in the great controversy is between good and evil over which controls our thoughts. The apostle Paul gives us this admonition: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). The word "let" means to allow or to choose. It speaks of a volitional act of the will. The mind is the citadel of our being. The decision to have the mind of Christ is the decision to allow Jesus to shape our thinking and by extension our being by filling our minds with the things of eternity. The mind is the wellspring of our actions, and our actions consequently reveal where our thinking process is. To fear God is to make Him first in our lives.

Think about how easy, in one sense, it is to control your thoughts, at least when you are conscious that you need to control them. The problem is often that unless we make a conscious effort to dwell on the right things, the "things above, not . . . things on the earth" (Col. 3:2), our minds, fallen and sinful as they are, will naturally tend toward the base things, the things of the world. We therefore need to purposely and deliberately choose, using the sacred gift of free will, to dwell on the heavenly things as Paul said.

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

A study of the use of the phrase in the Old Testament "to give glory to God" shows that, interestingly enough, it often, though not always, appears in the context of divine judgment (Josh. 7:19; 1 Sam. 6:5; Jer. 13:15, 16; Mal. 2:2), just as it does in the first angel's message (Rev. 14:7). This idea is also seen in Revelation 19:1, 2: "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments."

According to the apostle Paul, our bodies are a sanctuary, the dwelling place of the Spirit of God, a temple made holy by His presence. The Scriptures call us in no uncertain terms to glorify God in every aspect of our lives. When God is the center of our lives, our one desire is to give glory to Him, whether with our diet, dress, entertainment, or interactions with others. We glorify God as we reveal His character of love to the world through our commitment to doing His will. This is even more important in light of earth's end-time judgment.

In Romans 12:1, 2, the Greek word for bodies is somata, which is better translated as the collective sum of who you are—body, mind, and emotions. The J. B. Phillips translation of the Bible translates the phrase "reasonable service" as an "act of intelligent worship." In other words, when you make a total commitment to "fear God" and "glorify Him" in all you do, giving your mind, body, and emotions to Him, it is an act of intelligent worship. And indeed, in light of God's judgment, taking heed and obeying is a good idea.
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What relationship do the following verses have with Revelation 14:7, 12?

Genesis 22:12
Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14
Colossians 3:1, 2
Hebrews 12:1, 2
1 Corinthians 3:16, 17
Matthew 6:33
1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 10:31

What other verses come to mind in connection with Revelation 14:7, 12?

Review your memorized verse from Revelation 14:7, 12.
THE FAITH OF JESUS

“Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12). This is the depiction of God's faithful people in the last days. Yet the only way anyone can keep the commandments of God, then and now, is through the faith of Jesus. Notice our text does not say “faith in Jesus.” Although that, too, is extremely important, this expression, “the faith of Jesus,” is something more. It is the quality of faith that enabled Christ to be victorious over Satan's fiercest temptations. Faith is a gift given to each believer. When we exercise the faith that the Holy Spirit puts in our hearts, that faith grows. We overcome not by our willpower but by the power of the living Christ working through us. We overcome not because of who we are but because of who He is.

We can overcome because He overcame. We can be victorious because He was victorious. We can triumph over temptation because He triumphed over temptation. Jesus, the divine Son of God, has overcome the wiles of the devil. He faced temptation trusting in the promises of God, surrendering His will to the Father’s and depending on the Father’s power. Trusting Him, looking to Him, believing in Him, we too can be victorious. Jesus is our all in all, and the three angels’ messages are all about Him. Revelation’s message is one of victory, not defeat. It speaks of a people who through His grace and by His power overcome.

The word “overcome” in one form or another is used 11 times in the book of Revelation. In the vision of the seven churches that represent the Christian church from the first century to our time, there are believers in every generation who John says “overcame.” At the end time, those who “overcome” inherit all things (see Rev. 21:7). This is not legalism. It is victory through Jesus Christ, whose perfect life of perfect righteousness and that alone is what gives us the promise of eternal life. It is faith in action. It is transforming, life-changing, miraculous grace in the life of the believer.

What are things in your life that you desire to overcome?

How do you see Jesus differently in light of this week's lesson?

What is Jesus saying to you through these texts?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

Prayer Response:

Meditate on Revelation 14 again and look for where Jesus is.

Read more at www.inversebible.org/3am04-6
OVERCOMING AS HE OVERCAME

Unless the sacred word is appreciated, it will not be obeyed as a sure and safe and precious textbook. Every besetting sin must be put away. Warfare must be waged against it until it is overcome. The Lord will work with your efforts. As finite, sinful man works out his own salvation with fear and trembling, it is God who works in him, to will and to do of His own good pleasure. But God will not work without the cooperation of man. He must exercise his powers to the very utmost; he must place himself as an apt, willing student in the school of Christ; and as he accepts the grace that is freely offered to him, the presence of Christ in the thought and in the heart will give him decision of purpose to lay aside every weight of sin, that the heart may be filled with all the fullness of God, and of His love. (Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* [Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1923], 134.)

Ample provision has been made for all who sincerely, earnestly, and thoughtfully set about the work of perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Strength and grace have been provided through Christ, to be brought by ministering angels to the heirs of salvation. None are so low, so corrupt and vile, that they cannot find in Jesus, who died for them, strength and purity and righteousness, if they will put away their sins, turn from their course of iniquity, and with full purpose of heart seek the living God. He is waiting to take away their stained garments, polluted by sin, and to put upon them the pure robe of His righteousness, to bid them live and not die. In Him, as branches of the Living Vine, they may flourish. Their boughs will not wither nor be fruitless. If they abide in Him, they can draw nourishment from Him, be imbued with His Spirit, walk as He walked, overcome as He overcame, and be exalted to His own right hand. (Ellen G. White, *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene* [Battle Creek, Mich.: Good Health Publishing Company, 1890], 140.)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Those who overcome as Christ overcame will need to constantly guard themselves against the temptations of Satan. The appetite and passions should be restricted and under the control of enlightened conscience, that the intellect may be unimpaired, the perceptive powers clear, so that the workings of Satan and his snares may not be interpreted to be the providence of God. Many desire the final reward and victory which are to be given to overcomers, but are not willing to endure toil, privation, and denial of self, as did their Redeemer. It is only through obedience and continual effort that we shall overcome as Christ overcame. (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1872], vol. 3, 491.)

Fearing God—how little of it there is! . . . There are those who will be like the men who helped to build the ark. They hear the truth; they have every advantage to become men of moral worth, yet they will not choose the good society, but the corrupt. If there is an influence that is not heavenly, they will gather to their side and unite with them, and although they act a part in the preparation of the truth which is to fit a people to stand in the day of the Lord, they will perish in the general ruin like Noah’s carpenters who helped to build the ark. God help you that you may not be of that class. (Ellen G. White letter 36, 1887, in Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases* [Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1993], vol. 18, 261.)
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Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

How do we balance the gravity of last-day events with the necessity to live life abundantly?

Think about the incredible power of the One who created and sustains the entire cosmos. Think about how much greater and more powerful He is than we are. How do these facts help us understand the idea of the “fear of God” and what it means?

How can we avoid legalism when we discuss the biblical concepts of holiness, overcoming, and victory?

What mistakes are we making that don’t allow Christ to do His work? What does that look like in everyday life?

How can we translate our spiritual desires into action?

What practical steps can we take to be one of Revelation’s “overcomers”?