

PROPHECY UNCUT

The 3 Angels' Messages: Worship the Creator

INTRODUCTION

In previous studies we have unpacked the meaning and significance of the first angel's message in Revelation 14:6-7 phrase by phrase. Indeed this is a message of good news – a message of righteousness by faith (the everlasting gospel).

What follows is a study regarding the great climax of the first angel's message: the appeal to worship the one and only true God – the Creator.

IS THERE A CONNECTION BETWEEN CREATORSHIP, DIVINITY, AND WORSHIP?

Revelation 19:10; 22:9

Worship should only be offered to the Divine Being. Divinity by right should be worshipped. Revelation contains two instances where the prophet John was in such awe of the angel messenger sent to reveal the visions to him that he fell before the angel to worship, thinking it was Jesus. The angel – although a powerful, majestic, beautiful being that must have had some divine resemblance in John's mind – immediately instructed John to stop worshipping him (Rev 19:10; 22:9).

Revelation 4:10-11; 14:7

Elsewhere in Revelation it is clear that the divine being worthy of worship is also the Creator (Rev 4:10-11; 14:7). The distinction between the Creator and the creature is one of the strongest motivations to render grateful worship to the Divine Being.

It is worthy to note at this point that in this context of the distinction between the Creator and the creation, the first angel's message of Revelation 14:6-7 opposes the philosophy of pantheism.

Pantheism teaches that the divine essence flows through all of creation i.e. that all of creation is a manifestation of divinity. Thus, according to this philosophy, God was once what you and I are and we shall one day be what God presently is. The need of humanity is simply to awake to the divine consciousness dwelling within.

The first angel reminds humanity that we are NOT God, nor will we ever be God. Rather, God is a personal divine being separate and distinct from His creation.

Jeremiah 10:10-12; Isaiah 44:13-20

The fact of the Lord's creatorship is used throughout Scripture to distinguish between Him and the false gods or idols (Jer 10:10-12). The false gods are useless, formed by human effort and skill but impotent to do, act, save, or protect (Jer 10:3-5). At the end of the day an idol is created in the image of the person who makes it – foolish and useless (Jer 10:8).

In fact, the prophet Isaiah observes the foolishness of idolatry



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by pointing out the fact that the remainder of the tree that is used to make a wooden idol is used to make a fire to warm the idolater and cook his food (Is 44:13-20). It begs the question, how do you know you used the correct half of the tree for the idol?

The Creator of the heavens and the earth – the one who created humanity in His image – is the Divine Being and the only one worthy of worship. No other being or object is to receive the worship and reverence due to God.

WHO IS THE CREATOR?

Genesis 1:2; Psalm 104:30 *The Holy Spirit as Creator*

Scripture reveals that the Holy Spirit was present and active in the work of creating the world (Gen 1:2). Moreover, the Holy Spirit continues to be involved in sustaining and perpetuating life on earth (Ps 104:30). The fact that the Holy Spirit is involved in creation and that creatorship is a trait of divinity, implies strongly that the Holy Spirit is a Divine Being.

An additional verse that supports this concept is Acts 5:3-4 where lying to the Holy Spirit is equated with lying to God.

Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:1-2 *The Son (Jesus) as Creator*

Scripture also reveals that Jesus is the creator (Col 1:16). In fact, the New Testament is very clear that Jesus was the primary agent in the creation of this world (Heb 1:1-2).

Additional texts that support the divinity of Jesus can be found throughout the New Testament (Col 2:9; Rom 9:5; Matt 28:17; Rom 1:4; John 5:17-18; 8:58-59).

Ephesians 3:9; Hebrews 1:1-2 *The Father as Creator*

Scripture further reveals that the Father was involved in the creation of earth. The Father worked through Jesus and in partnership with Him (Eph 3:9; Heb 1:1-2).

There are numerous texts in the New Testament that attest to the divinity of the Father (Rom 15:6; 1 Cor 1:3; 8:6; 15:24; Eph 4:6; Phil 2:11).

Genesis 1:26 *The Triune Godhead as Creator*

When one takes the testimony of Scripture as a whole on the topic of the creation of this earth it is apparent that the Triune God worked in partnership and harmony with one another to bring this



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world into existence.

This is underscored by the fact that in the story of the creation of humanity the plural pronoun is used with reference to the divine Creator – “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image...’” (Gen 1:26). All three – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – are therefore worthy of human worship and adoration. Together they share both the essence of divinity and Creatorship.

Revelation 14:7

Thus, the call of the first angel to worship God is designed to specifically direct the attention to the Creator. The call is not a general call to worship some non-descript God. It is a very targeted and specific call to worship the only true God – the Triune Creator God.

It is worth noting that this message which is brought to the inhabitants of earth just before the end of time flies in the face of the predominant evolutionary worldview which is taught in schools and the media. At a time when the world is being led to forget the Creator God by eliminating the awareness of intelligent design, God sends a message to remind humanity of its roots.

The evolutionary worldview has become so popular that even Christianity has incorporated it in various forms e.g. theistic evolution or deistic evolution. Essentially in these worldviews God is the primary cause and initiator for the evolutionary process. However, there was no literal six-day creation week. Rather this is interpreted allegorically as long periods of evolutionary progress.

The only difference between theistic and deistic evolution is the extent to which God is perceived to be involved in the directing of the evolutionary process. Thus, Christianity essentially offers an answer to the question that the scientific community cannot answer i.e. where did that initial matter and big bang come from? At the same time, Christianity does not lose credibility with the evolutionary scientific community by being perceived to be primitive, ignorant, and out of date.

The sad reality is, though, that in adopting the evolutionary bias into Christian thinking the nobility of humanity, as coming forth directly from the Creator’s hand, is lost. In seeking to be recognized as scientifically astute and intelligent, evolutionary Christianity loses the dignity invested in humanity by the literal creation account of being created in the image of God.



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WHERE IS THE PHRASE IN REVELATION 14:7 BORROWED FROM WHICH SAYS “MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH, THE SEA...”?

Exodus 20:8-11

Revelation 14:7 quotes a phrase verbatim, directly out of the fourth commandment in the Decalogue. Exodus 20:11 says “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them.” This is perhaps one of the clearest and most direct uses of the Old Testament in the entire book of Revelation.

It is worth noting that the seventh-day Sabbath commandment is rooted in the creation account. That is to say, it is a memorial in time of God’s creative power. It is not part of the ceremonies and types that pointed forward to the coming of Jesus and which now fall away in the light of the Christ event.

It is also interesting to note that the Sabbath was introduced in Eden before sin entered and was given to Adam and Eve who were not Jewish but were the parents of the entire human race. Thus as long as God remains the Creator the seventh-day Sabbath will be relevant and a requirement for all people to observe. In observing the seventh-day Sabbath one acknowledges God as the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

It stands to reason that by quoting directly from the fourth commandment of the Decalogue in making the appeal to worship the true Creator God, seventh-day Sabbath worship is included as a practical and outward sign of loyalty to Him.

The combination of the two facts that, firstly, the Sabbath is rooted in the Creatorship of God and, secondly, that the first angel’s appeal is clearly aimed at an end-time generation (after 1844), indicates that the seventh-day Sabbath is indeed to be observed and kept by all God’s followers in all ages – not simply the Jews in the Old Testament era.

IF THE SABBATH IS TO BE OBSERVED AND KEPT BY ALL PEOPLE, WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE TO ‘KEEP THE SABBATH HOLY’?

Revelation 15:4

Perhaps the first concept to attempt to understand before unpacking what is entailed in keeping the Sabbath holy is the very concept of holiness itself. Perhaps the most fundamental point to understand is that holiness is an attribute that belongs exclusively to God (Rev 15:4). Any object or person that is referred to as being holy (other than God Himself) is so only by rights of that object or person’s positive association with God.



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**2 Corinthians 1:1;
Ephesians 1:1**

For instance, in the New Testament the people who make up God's church are referred to as 'saints' (2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1). The Greek word for 'saint' is '*agios*' – the same word that is translated as 'holy' in other places. In other words, God's people are literally referred to as 'holy ones'.

The word '*agios*' has two primary, complementary, and related meanings: (1) "pertaining to being holy in the sense of superior moral qualities and possessing certain essentially divine qualities in contrast with what is human – 'holy, pure, divine'"¹; (2) "pertaining to being dedicated or consecrated to the service of God – 'devout, godly, dedicated'"².

The state of holiness, godliness, or dedication attributed to God's church is not intrinsic to the members. Rather it is the result of the gracious saving relationship offered by God and accepted by faith on the part of the redeemed. It is through their association with the God of grace and salvation that they come to be regarded as 'saints' or 'holy / dedicated / consecrated ones'.

**Exodus 30:10; Ezra 8:28;
Leviticus 27:21; 27:30-
32**

In the Old Testament the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek word '*agios*' (holy) is the word '*qôdesh*'.

According to the Old Testament, it is not only people which are spoken of as being holy. Scripture reveals that the vessels used in the sanctuary services as well as the fields redeemed in the year of jubilee and also the tithes are regarded as holy unto the Lord.

These items were not intrinsically holy. Rather, they were deemed holy because of their association with God i.e. the fact that they were devoted, consecrated, and set apart for the Lord's special purpose and presence.

**Genesis 2:3; Exodus
20:8-11**

In both Genesis 2:3 and Exodus 20:8-11 the same Hebrew word is used with reference to the seventh-day Sabbath in terms of this day's 'holiness'. The word utilized is '*qâdash*' (from which '*qôdesh*' is derived). In Genesis 2:3 the word is translated as 'sanctified' whereas in Exodus 20:8 it is translated as holy. From this we understand that the English words 'sanctify' and 'holy' are used interchangeably. When God 'sanctified' the Sabbath day (Gen 2:3) He made it 'holy'.

Considering what has been learned regarding holiness being an attribute of God alone and that all else declared to be holy is so only by

¹ J. P. Louw & E. A. Nida, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, Vol. 1, (Roggebaai, Cape Town: Bible Society of South Africa, 1989), 745.

² Louw & Nida, 539.



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association with God it logically follows that the seventh-day Sabbath stands in a unique relationship to God i.e. it has a different purpose to the other six days of creation.

While God was present on the previous six days of creation week (as He was the one creating), it would seem that on the seventh-day God was present in a unique and different way – for a different purpose.

This concept is substantiated by Genesis 2:3 and Exodus 20:11 where God is said to have rested on the seventh-day. This resting should not be understood as resulting from tiredness as God does not grow weary (Ps 121:4). The rest here spoken of refers to God's ultimate purpose behind the whole work of creation i.e. fellowship and communion with the beings made in His own image. God's resting consisted in Him giving Himself to humanity for the twenty-four hour period on the seventh day.

It was God's unique presence for the purpose of fellowship with humanity invested in the seventh day that set it apart from the other six days and resulted in its holiness. On this day, like no other day, God makes Himself available in a qualitatively special sense to humanity.

This concept can perhaps best be illustrated by a date between a husband and wife. Although they live together every day and often do things together during the day enjoying frequent conversations, yet every so often they set aside a special time when they will enjoy a romantic dinner together free of the concerns of daily life, raising children, or interruptive telephone calls. This time is set apart for a unique and qualitatively different experience together during which they can focus especially on one another and their special relationship without other distractions.

The seventh-day Sabbath is essentially a divine, spiritual 'date' between God and the human family. According to the fourth commandment (Ex 20:8-11) humanity is called to imitate the Divine example recorded in the creation account (Gen 2:3) by setting aside all other earthly distractions and entering into God's rest of communion and fellowship with Him in a qualitatively different manner to the other six days of the week.

Once this concept is understood, it becomes self-explanatory regarding what activities are permissible to engage in on the seventh day Sabbath.

Knowing what God's intention for Sabbath is enables one to simply evaluate whether any given activity is in harmony with the



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original Divine intent of the Sabbath. One simply needs to ask whether this or that activity would enhance the experience of Divine-human fellowship or whether it would really be a distraction from this purpose.

Coming back to the illustration of the married couple's date, if on the special night the husband came to the table with his newspaper or laptop to continue his office work during dinner, the wife would no doubt be offended, hurt, and angry. It would be considered an insult in that the husband prizes and prioritizes his work over and above the relationship with his wife.

In a similar manner, all activities that would distract from the special and focused communion and fellowship that God intends on the seventh-day Sabbath between Himself and humanity should be set aside.

When human beings deliberately fail in this regard it is an indication that they have alternative priorities and values that supersede the unique fellowship that God has invited them to enjoy with Him every seventh day.

DOES SCRIPTURE GIVE ANY OTHER CLEAR INDICATIONS OF WHAT IS NOT PERMISSIBLE IN REGARD TO SABBATH OBSERVANCE?

There are a number of activities that are forbidden to engage in on the seventh-day Sabbath:

Exodus 20:8-11

Probably the most prominent and well-known prohibition regarding the seventh-day Sabbath is that no secular labour should be engaged in. However, the commandment (Ex 20:8-11) goes beyond a prohibition of engaging in personal labour to include also a prohibition against making others within one's circle of authority engage in labour.

In other words, all who fall within the Sabbath-keepers jurisdiction should be allowed the same opportunity to rest from secular labour to devote their time to a spiritual purpose. For example, one cannot truly keep the seventh-day Sabbath by coming to church while one's employees are left to continue the regular business operations.

Nehemiah 10:31; 13:16-17

The prophet Nehemiah indicates that not only should one cease from personally engaging in secular labour, but all regular commerce on the Sabbath day should be avoided (Neh 10:31; 13:16-17). In our present day this would rule out activities such as visiting malls and doing one's shopping. These activities should be left for the other days of the week.



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Isaiah 58:13-14

A shallow and incorrect reading of the first two lines of Isaiah 58:13 may almost seem to indicate that the Sabbath day should be devoid of pleasure. However, a careful reading of the text will show that this is an unfortunate interpretation as it clearly indicates that the Sabbath should be called a 'delight' (Is 58:13).

Isaiah indicates that although the Sabbath is indeed a day of delight, it is not so because of fulfilling one's own every day desires or by talking about commonplace subjects. Rather the delight of the Sabbath is found in spiritual pleasures experienced in communion with the Lord (Is 58:14).

One's topics of conversation and one's activities should be of such a nature as to draw attention away from the regular round of worldly activities and focus on spiritual and eternal realities. The Sabbath day is not the time for discussing the latest developments in the sporting world or the trends of the stock market or even one's business aspirations and plans.

Scripture reveals that the seventh-day Sabbath is a day to set aside all secular labour – both personally and for those within one's jurisdiction – as well as other secular non-labour type activities including shopping, sports and recreation activities that would distract from the purpose of communion and fellowship with God. Even one's conversation should be different on this special holy day.

DOES SCRIPTURE GIVE ANY OTHER CLEAR INDICATIONS OF WHAT IS PERMISSIBLE IN REGARD TO SABBATH OBSERVANCE?

However, the Sabbath day is not simply a day of emptiness. Rather the exclusion of certain activities is to make room for other more important and enjoyable activities:

Exodus 20:8-11

The fourth commandment the Sabbath is said to be in honour of God's creative power. It serves as a memorial in time to what God accomplished by the power of His word over a six day period in creating this world and all that it contains (Ex 20:8-11).

Thus, as the seventh-day Sabbath points back to creation week it would be most appropriate to spend the seventh-day Sabbath in nature admiring God's creative genius and allowing one's heart to be drawn out in communion with the Creator through His creation. Nature is one way in which God reveals Himself to humanity. Thus nature outings conducted with a spiritual motivation can be a most effective and fulfilling means of communing with God.



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All throughout the natural world one can perceive the fingerprints of God. Spending time with God in nature is one of the most effective ways of making the Sabbath experience desirable to children.

Exodus 16:23, 26

A meaningful Sabbath experience begins before the seventh-day dawns at sunset on Friday evening. Part of keeping the Sabbath involves preparing for it ahead of time (Ex 16:23, 26). Whatever can be done ahead of the Sabbath hours should be done e.g. cooking, cleaning, preparing clothes etc.

The goal is that when the Sabbath day begins there are no more chores that can become a distraction to the day of rest. In a similar manner that one would prepare the house if a special guest were being expected so as to free up quality time with that person once they arrive, so too having all the chores done prior to the start of the Sabbath hours means less distraction and more quality time spent with the Lord.

Leviticus 23:3

The Sabbath is intended as a time not only for personal or individual communion and fellowship with the Lord, but also for corporate worship of the Lord (Lev 23:3). It is important that one devote at least a portion of the Sabbath day to meeting with fellow believers to join together in united praise and worship of Creator of all humanity. Such worship provides the opportunity to encourage others and to be encouraged. The Lord has clearly called for collective or corporate worship to play a part in the Sabbath experience.

Matthew 12:10-13; John 5:1-16; Mark 2:27

It is interesting to note that, throughout the gospels, the debate between Jesus and the Jewish leadership never centred on which day to honour as the Sabbath. The seventh-day aspect of Sabbath observance is never questioned by Jesus, the Jewish leaders, or apostles.

The only question ever debated is what it means to keep the Sabbath. In an age when the true purpose of the Sabbath had been lost sight of Jesus exemplified the true spirit behind Sabbath observance. He illustrated that the Sabbath was indeed made for the benefit of man (Mark 2:27).

Jesus often healed on the Sabbath day (Matt 12:10-13; John 5:1-16), which resulted in tension between Jesus and Jewish leaders. In fact, on numerous occasions Jesus' life was threatened on account of Him using the Sabbath day as a day of healing and restoration. It is thus appropriate that followers of Jesus in the present age view the



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Sabbath as an opportunity to reach out in a healing and restorative ministry to others who are broken by this sinful life. Such an outreach may incorporate one or all of the aspects of humanity – physical, emotional, social, or spiritual. If someone is suffering in any one of these aspects the true Sabbath keeper will seek to be an agent of healing immediately. There is no need to ask the person to wait until the Sabbath hours are passed. Whether through counseling, sharing Scripture, physical touch such as massage, or by applying other healing remedies to a person experiencing pain and suffering, the Sabbath provides an ideal opportunity to be a co-worker with the Lord for another person's salvation, healing, and restoration.

It is important to understand that while the Sabbath day is a day of rest, it is not necessarily a day of inactivity or boredom.

In some people's understanding it sometimes seems as if the way to gauge one's success in keeping the Sabbath holy is by measuring the extent of one's boredom or inactivity i.e. the less one does on the Sabbath, the holier the day was.

To others keeping the Sabbath day holy by resting is the equivalent of sleeping the day away. God's rest on the Sabbath day was not simply the emptying of the day of what He had been busy with the previous six days. Rather it was filling it with something different – something better.

Similarly, true Sabbath keeping is not simply doing nothing or sleeping away the day. Rather, it is ceasing from the regular activities of the other six days to free up time for undistracted fellowship with God through such activities as corporate and personal worship activities, spiritually minded family time, spending time in nature, engaging in ministry to others etc.

SUMMARY & APPEAL

The first angel of Revelation 14:6-7 speaks to the end-time generation with a call and reminder to honour and worship the Creator. In this single, brief phrase, which clearly indicates that 'Creatorship' is the identifying mark of the true God, is captured warnings and guidance regarding at least four important areas of truth.

Firstly, the first angel's message protects us from the heresy of pantheism, which would cause humanity to usurp the prerogatives of God and which ultimately destroys the personality of God.

Secondly, we are warned away from the popular evolutionary theory of origins that either denies God outright or, at best,



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undermines the inspiration of Scripture and casts a dark shadow over the character of God by teaching that God makes use of the cruel methodology of the evolutionary process.

Thirdly, by studying out the identity of the Creator according to the rest of Scripture, it becomes apparent that our worship is due to the triune Godhead – Father, Son & Holy Spirit. Each is clearly portrayed as being involved in the creation and sustenance of this world. In a day and age when the Biblical doctrine of the Godhead is under attack from various quarters, the first angel's message studied in conjunction with the broader Scriptures, confirms and reassures one's faith in Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Fourthly, the call to worship the Creator quotes directly from the fourth commandment of the Decalogue – the Sabbath commandment. The thematic and linguistic connection between Revelation 14:7 and Exodus 20:8-11 is a strong indicator that the call to worship the Creator will include a revival of seventh day Sabbath keeping. After all, the seventh day Sabbath is the divinely instituted memorial of the Creator's handiwork. How could one truly worship the Creator and yet change or neglect the very commandment that outwardly manifests one's belief in the Creator.

Just as human beings erect monuments and memorials in honour of great leaders or events that have changed the course of history so that all who look upon the memorial will remember how the present has been shaped by the past, so too the Creator's seventh-day Sabbath stands as a memorial in time for all people throughout history as a reminder that they had a noble beginning, having come forth from the Creator's hand in the image of God.

Because the seventh-day Sabbath is rooted firstly and primarily in the creation history of this world it is relevant to all of humanity throughout all time. As long as God remains the Creator the Sabbath will be in effect.

The seventh-day Sabbath facilitates the one experience that human beings need most of all – time spent with their Creator and Redeemer.

If the Sabbath were kept by all people as the Creator originally intended, there would have been no room for idolatry. Every week the Creator invites humanity to enter His rest of ceasing from this world's activities and burdens and devoting an entire day to the nurturing of a relationship with Himself.

The seventh-day Sabbath is a weekly spiritual 'date' with humanity, which affords a unique and qualitatively superior experience



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with the Creator as opposed to the other six days of the week, which are beset with the distractions of daily life.

It is awesome to think that the Lord has made such an opportunity available to human beings. The Sabbath is thus not only a memorial to Creation but also a gift of love. It is difficult to imagine that there would be anyone who would not appreciate or desire such an opportunity as is afforded through the seventh-day Sabbath.

Have you heard the voice of the Lord inviting you meet Him on His special day, this coming Sabbath? Are you willing to make a commitment to set aside all else as a token of your undivided affection and loyalty to the Creator of the heavens and the earth?



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