

# God's Final Message

## First Angel's Message

### Introduction to the Three Angels Messages

The 3 Angels' Messages, as found in Revelation 14:6-12, are God's final messages of love and warning to the world, just before Jesus' coming. As such, they are of critical and urgent importance. Nothing should thus get us side-tracked from trying to understand their contents and obeying their admonitions.

This 6 part series will enlighten, empower and encourage you. Set aside regular, scheduled time to explore each lesson. Go through each verse mentioned, mark your Bible, take notes, and seek God for direction. Feel free to share each presentation with a friend or a loved one.

Note that the New King James version is used throughout the series, unless otherwise stated.

### Introduction

- The Three Angels Messages **ripen the world for the harvest**. Just after they are proclaimed, the next scene is that of Christ's Second coming (Rev. 14:14-20)
  - Rev. 14:14 – "Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp \_\_\_\_\_." A sickle is a symbol of reaping.
- This ripening results **in only two groups**, i.e. no one will be neutral thereafter:
  - The **grain** harvest (representing the righteous) is gathered in and
    - Rev. 14:15 – "...Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is \_\_\_\_\_". The Greek word here for **ripe** (*xeraino*) is used for the ripening of grain crops.
    - Furthermore, Matt 13:30 says that at harvest time, the weeds (a symbol of the wicked) are tied in bundles to be burned, but the **WHEAT** (a symbol of the righteous) is gathered into the barn.
  - The **grape** harvest (representing the wicked) is trampled on.
    - The trampling of grapes is a well-known Old Testament image of divine wrath. Speaking of Messiah's victory over His enemies, Isa. 63:2-3 says:  

"Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the \_\_\_\_\_? I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one *was* with Me. For I have trodden them in My \_\_\_\_\_, And trampled them in My \_\_\_\_\_..."
- The Three Angels Messages are **sequential** (they follow a certain order) and **cumulative** (they build up in intensity). If you do not accept the first message, you will reject the second & third.
- **The acceptance or rejection of these messages is thus a matter of life or death.**

### First Angel's Message:

<sup>6</sup>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— <sup>7</sup>saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgement has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”

1. **Angel** – That is, God's human messengers involved in sharing the everlasting gospel with the world.

The word **angel** means 'messenger' and is the very same word used in the following verses, in relation to people:

**Matt. 11:10** – “For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My \_\_\_\_\_ [‘angel’ in Greek] before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.’”

**James 2:25** – “Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the \_\_\_\_\_ [‘angels’ in Greek] and sent them out another way?”

Furthermore the Great Commission in Matt. 28:18-20 given by Christ to share the gospel with the world, was not committed to angels, but to humans:

**Matt. 28:18-20:** <sup>18</sup>“And Jesus came and spoke to them [the people on the mountainside], saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and **make disciples** of **all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

**Acts 1:8:** “But you [Jesus' disciples] shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

So the angels of Rev 14:6-12 are really human messengers, not heavenly beings.

2. **Midst of Heaven / Midair** – Indicates that the message is of **heavenly origin**, that its nature is to be **worldwide**, and that it must 'fly' with **great speed**.
3. **The Everlasting Gospel**
  - This phrase is only used here in the Bible
  - It is the **same** and **unaltered** gospel proclaimed from Adam's day and will continue as long as people need to be saved. There never will be another gospel.
  - This gospel is the **good news** of Christ. It covers the following aspects:
    - His extreme love that caused Him to leave His home of bliss and perfection to come to a sin-darkened world, and be **incarnated** as a man – thus identifying with His lost children [John 3:16; Phil. 2:5-8]

- His **life** and **ministry** of love and service while on earth [His spotless life satisfied the requirements of the law; His selfless ministry showed us the character of His Father and served as an Example to us]
- His sacrificial **death** on the Cross to deliver us from sin [Rom. 6:10; Heb. 9:28]
- His **resurrection** guaranteeing our salvation [See 1 Cor. 15:17]
- His **ascension** to heaven [At His ascension Christ took with Him the first fruits of humankind – Eph. 4:8 – His glorious ‘captives’ assuring us that we will follow later]
- His **intercession** [the application of His blood on our behalf - Heb. 7:25; 8:1-2] and **judgement** [Dan.7:9-10; 8:14 – *see point 8 below*] in the heavenly sanctuary
- His **soon return** to liberate us from sin forever, set up His new kingdom, and to restore us to Himself [John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-54]

Every aspect of the gospel only makes sense if understood in the context of God’s love. Apart from this love there would be no gospel, no good news (see John 3:16; Eph. 2:4-7; Titus 3:3-5; 1 John 4:9).

This love however calls for some response, similar to what Pilate asked in **Matt 27:22**: “What then shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ”. Each person will at some stage have to answer that question individually. **Accepting Christ means life, rejecting Him is rejecting life** (1 John 5:12)

Christ’s love, wrapped up in the gospel, is a free gift. The Bible tells us that we are saved by **grace, and not by our own works**:

**Eph. 2:8-9**: “<sup>8</sup> For by \_\_\_\_\_ you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> **not of \_\_\_\_\_**, lest anyone should boast.”

Grace however is not just a warm fuzzy feeling, or wonderful idea; when truly understood and embraced, it naturally leads to lifestyle change:

**Titus 2:11-14** - “For the **grace of God** that brings salvation has appeared to all men, <sup>12</sup> teaching us that, **denying \_\_\_\_\_ and worldly lusts**, we should **live \_\_\_\_\_, righteously, and godly** in the present age, <sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, <sup>14</sup> who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, **zealous for \_\_\_\_\_**.”

4. **Every Nation, Tribe, Language and People** – this is a **worldwide** message of warning to be shared by a **worldwide** church
5. **Loud Voice** – indicates **urgency**, and a voice loud enough so that **all can hear**. The Greek word for ‘loud voice’ is the same as the English word **megaphone**, a message to be proclaimed from the roof tops.
6. **Fear God** – i.e. Reverence Him, take Him seriously in life by obeying Him.

Fearing God denotes a relationship with Him and being fully surrendered to His will:

**1 Sam. 12:14:** “If you fear the Lord and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, and do not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the Lord your God.”

**1 Sam. 12:24:** “Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with \_\_\_\_\_; for consider what great things He has done for you.”

Fearing God is the **beginning of wisdom**

**Ps. 111:10** – “The fear of the Lord is the \_\_\_\_\_; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments.”

It means **obeying His commandments**

**Deut. 5:29** – “Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would **fear Me and always** \_\_\_\_\_, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!”

It means living uprightly

**Prov. 16:6** – “In mercy and truth, atonement is provided for iniquity; and by the **fear of the Lord one** \_\_\_\_\_.”

**Josh. 24:14** – “Now therefore, fear the Lord, **serve Him in** \_\_\_\_\_ **and in** \_\_\_\_\_, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord!”

So fearing God means responding to His love through obedience, giving Him first place in our lives, being completely surrendered and loyal to Him.

7. **Give Him Glory** – We give God in the following ways:

By bearing much fruit (reflecting God’s character)

**John 15:8** – “By this **My Father is glorified, that you** \_\_\_\_\_; so you will be My disciples.”

**Gal. 5:22-23** – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”

Jesus glorified His Father by accomplishing the work He gave Him to do, i.e. by obedience to His Father’s will.

**John 17:4** – “I have glorified You on the earth. I have \_\_\_\_\_ **which You have given Me to do.**”

We also give God glory, among other things, through our good works.

**Matt. 5:16** – “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see **your** \_\_\_\_\_ and **glorify your Father in heaven.**”

Through our bodies

**1 Cor. 6:19, 20** – “<sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? <sup>20</sup>For you were bought at a price; therefore \_\_\_\_\_ and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

and our lifestyles

**1 Cor. 10:31** – “Therefore, whether you \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_, or whatever you do, **do all to the glory of God.**”

Thus glorifying God means that every aspect of our lives is under His Lordship: our time, money, relationships, entertainment, diet, etc. We desire to reflect His character of love to all those around us. We live by “every word that proceeds from God’s mouth” (Matt. 4:4).

8. **Hour of Judgement Has Come** – The Greek shows that this refers to an event that happened in the past, indicating that this hour of judgement occurs before Jesus comes. This judgement is none other than the pre-Second Coming judgement that had begun in 1844 as detailed in Dan. 7-9 <sup>A</sup> (see Endnote A)

The 3 stages of judgement are:

- Before the Christ’s Second Coming (Rev. 14:6, 7 cf. Dan. 7:9-10, 26-27)
- During the Millennium (Rev. 20:4-6)
- After the Millennium (Rev. 20:13-15)

All are to appear before God’s Judgement seat at some stage (either before the Second Coming [for the righteous] or after it [for the wicked])

**2 Cor 5:10:** “For we must \_\_\_\_\_ appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done [as captured in God’s books], whether good or bad.”

Every work is brought into judgement:

**Eccl. 12:13, 14:** “<sup>13</sup>Fear God and keep His Commandments, for this is man’s all. <sup>14</sup> For God will **bring** \_\_\_\_\_ **into judgement**, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

**Rev. 20:12:** “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were **judged according to their works**, by the things which were \_\_\_\_\_.”

The standard of judgement is the law of God

**James 2:12:** “So speak and so do as those who will be **judged by the \_\_\_\_\_ of liberty.**”

Based on the findings in the Judgement, Christ will come and reward His children with eternal life:

**Rev. 22:12:** “And behold, I am coming quickly, and **My \_\_\_\_\_ is with Me**, to give to every one according to his work.”

Note the following concerning the Judgement:

- The end time judgement is part of the everlasting gospel
- All have to appear before the Christ’s judgement seat, whether before the Second Coming (the righteous) or after it (the wicked)
- This investigative judgement takes place in heaven before the Second Coming, which means we are now in the judgement hour.
- The standard of judgement is God’s law, the Ten Commandments
- Even though we are on earth, the judgement is conducted through the accurate reflection of our lives as captured in heavenly ‘books’ (Phil. 4:13; Mal. 3:16; Rev. 20:12, 15)
- The dead remain in their graves while they are judged, thus they do not go heaven or hell immediately at death. The subject of hell will be expounded on in the final lesson.
- The living will also at some time come up in judgement before the Second Coming.
- Once the whole process is completed, God’s door of mercy will close, He will then come to this earth (at the Second Coming), and will bring His reward of eternal life with Him based on the findings of the judgement (Matt 16:27; Rev 22:12). Remember that God does not need the judgement to know who are His or not; He does it for the sake of His finite creatures, with whom He deals transparently.

9. **Worship Him** – The central theme in Revelation is about **worship**. There is a ‘heavenly’ call to worship the Creator, instead of the beast (Rev 13:4). Notice in the following verses that the basis of worship is God’s creatorship:

**Ps. 95:6** – “Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our \_\_\_\_\_.”

**Neh. 9:6** – “You alone are the Lord; You have \_\_\_\_\_, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ on it, the seas and all that is in them.... The host of heaven \_\_\_\_\_ You.”

**Rev. 4:11** – “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and power; for you \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and by Your will they exist and were created.”

Thus worship only belongs to the Creator. His Creatorship makes Him worthy of our homage.

10. **“Made the Heavens and Earth ... Water”** – God’s creatorship is what distinguishes Him from all other gods.

**Jer. 10:11, 12** – “<sup>11</sup>Thus you shall say to them: “The gods that have \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens. <sup>12</sup>He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens at His discretion.”

This phrase (‘made the heavens and earth ... water’) is a direct reference to the fourth commandment (cf. Ex 20:11). So the everlasting gospel includes an appeal to worship the Creator by keeping His Sabbath day holy. Notice that the Sabbath is the outward sign of worshipping the Creator, just like a wedding ring is an outward sign of a marriage union.

**Ex. 20:8-11** – “<sup>8</sup>Remember the \_\_\_\_\_ day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work.... <sup>11</sup>For [*i.e. the reason why we keep the Sabbath is that*] in six days the Lord made the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”

Beside being an outward sign of worshipping the Creator, the Sabbath particularly symbolises God’s interest in having a relationship with mankind. Love can only develop in the medium of time. The one you love is the one you make time for! Thus God expresses His love by building in a weekly Sabbath at Creation. God could have made this planet and then left it to run on its own, while pursuing other creative projects somewhere in the universe. But the Sabbath tells us of His love and personal interest in us. An impersonal God would never have created a Sabbath. Yes, we can have a relationship with God throughout the week, but the Sabbath is the ‘peak’ of our weekday relational time with God, a special day that **God** has set apart and blessed – free from secular distractions and gainful employment – thus ensuring maximum time for connection.

### **Paraphrase of the First Angel:**

I saw human messengers spreading the original, unaltered gospel with urgency and great speed throughout the whole world. The first message they shared was: Serve God with all your heart, surrender your life completely to Him, and be obedient to His commands because He is currently finalising His work of judgement that started in 1844 in heaven. Worship Him as Creator of the universe, of which His Sabbath is an outward sign.

### **Personal Reflection**

- I accept Jesus into my life / recommit my life to Jesus
- I am determined to fear God in every area of my life
- I want to be part of God’s messengers to share His final warning to the world

What personally stood out for me in this lesson:

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<sup>A</sup> The scope of this lesson makes it difficult to share all the details concerning 1844, the beginning of the pre-Second Coming judgement, but here is a brief attempt to clarify this date:

Daniel 7, 8 and 9 are the core prophetic chapters of the book of Daniel. They can only be understood in comparison and reference to each other. In comparing Dan. 7 and 8, we find that the heavenly judgement of Dan 7:9-10 is actually the same as the Cleansing of the Sanctuary in Dan 8:14. See the comparison below as taken from Frank Breaden's, *New Pictorial Aid for Bible Study*:

Daniel 7	Daniel 8
Lion (Babylon) – vs 4	Babylon Omitted
Bear (Medo-Persia) – vs 5	Ram (Medo-Persia) – vss 3-4, 20
Leopard (Greece) – vs 6	He-Goat (Greece) – vss 5-8, 21-22
Fourth Beast: Pagan Rome – vs 7	Horizontal Work of Little Horn: Pagan Rome – vs 9
Fourth Beast's Little Horn: Papal Rome – vs 8	Vertical Work of Little Horn: Papal Rome – vs 10-12
<b>The Next Great Event:</b> <b>The Heavenly Judgement Scene – vss 9-10</b>	<b>The Next Great Event:</b> <b>The Sanctuary is Cleansed – vs 14</b>
Burning of Little Horn – vs 11	Breaking of Little Horn – vs 25

Dan. 8:14 reference to the cleansing of the sanctuary (also known as the Day of Atonement) is thus more clearly described in Dan. 7:9-10. Note that Lev. 23:29 also views the cleansing of the sanctuary as a day of judgement.

Dan. 8:14 tells us that the sanctuary will be cleansed after 2 300 days. These cannot be 2 300 literal days (i.e. about 6.5 years) since we are told that the vision applies to the **time of the end** (Dan 8:17, 19) – i.e. the period before our Lord's coming. If it were literal, it would have been fulfilled in Daniel's day already.

In a future study we will detail how one prophetic day is equal to one literal year (Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6), but for now let's just accept that conclusion. Thus 2 300 days equals 2 300 years.

Dan 8 has two sections, viz., the 'visual' vision (what Daniel SAW: vss 1-12) and the auditory 'vision' (what Daniel HEARD: vss 13-14). These 'visions' are actually two different words in Hebrew. The interpretation of the visual section is given in vss 15-29, but the auditory vision, which deals with the 2 300 days, is NOT explained in Dan 8. In fact it is this auditory vision (called the 'vision of evenings and mornings' in vs 26) which Daniel could not understand that caused him to be 'exhausted' and 'to lay ill several days' since it was 'beyond understanding.' (Dan. 8:27). So Dan 8 ends with the fact that the vision of the 2 300 days was unclear to him.

In Dan. 9 however, the prophet is given 'understanding' to the 2 300 day vision (Dan 9:22). Gabriel (the same interpreting angel from Dan 8, cf. Dan 8:16 and 9:21) says that he came to bring Daniel 'skill to understand' (NKJV). The only section that needed explanation from Dan 8's prophecy was the 2 300 days. Thus we can expect Gabriel, in Dan. 9, to bring understanding specifically about this aspect.

Dan 9 tells us that the starting point of this long prophecy is with the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (Dan 9:25). Historical evidence shows that this decree was issued by King Artaxerxes in the autumn of 457 BC, when he allowed the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild Jerusalem. You can read the decree in Ezra 7:12-26.

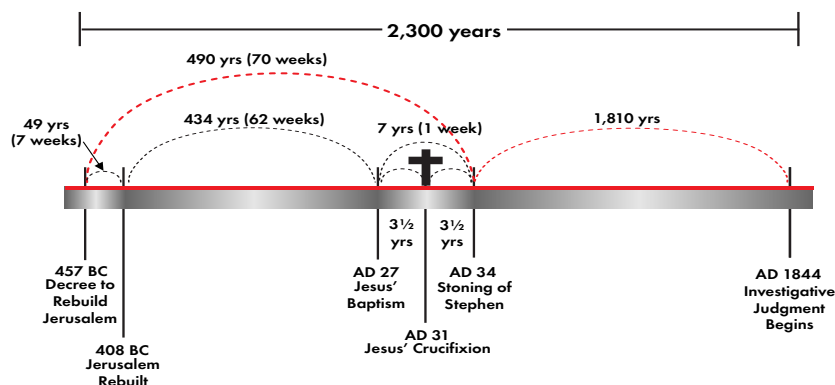
Before we look at the full 2300 day prophecy, it is important to note that the section in Dan. 9:25-27 is a chiasm, a Hebrew literary technique. This technique is conceptually like climbing a mountain (moving from A to B to C – see below), and reaching the peak (point D), the central point of the passage, then descending on the other side, but then coming across the same concepts, but in reverse order (C<sup>1</sup> to B<sup>1</sup> to A<sup>1</sup>).

This chiasm responds to 2 things Daniel was concerned about in his prayer, viz., His **people** (the Jews), and the **city** of Jerusalem which lay in ruins (see Dan. 9:19, 24). Dan. 9:25-27 answers Daniel's prayer by detailing, in this alternate fashion, the future of the Messiah (the personal representative of the **people**, and the sanctuary (which was the religious extension of the **city**). Note the chiastic alternation:

- **A: Construction of the city:** Dan. 9:25a (this is outlined in the books of Ezra and Haggai)
  - **B: Time to the Messiah:** Dan. 9:25b (Messiah would be anointed after 69 weeks (7 + 62) at the time of His baptism – see graphic on next page)
    - **C: Construction of the city:** Dan. 9:25c (this period of building the city in 'troublesome times' is also detailed in the books of Ezra and Haggai)
      - **D: Time and experience of Messiah:** Dan. 9:26a (Messiah is rejected by Israel and crucified. Note that up to this point in Dan. 9:25-27, it speaks about the **construction** of the city of Jerusalem. However, because of Israel's rejection of Messiah in Dan. 9:26a, from this point onward, the passage will speak of the **destruction** of the city)
      - **C<sup>1</sup>: Destruction of the city:** Dan 9:26b (Jerusalem would once again be destroyed, this time by Roman armies in AD 70. As mentioned, the city's destruction is linked to their rejection of Messiah)
      - **B<sup>1</sup>: Time and accomplishments of Messiah:** Dan 9:27a (Messiah's death would bring an end to the sacrificial system in the 'middle of the week')
      - **A<sup>1</sup>: Destruction of the city:** Dan. 9:27b (further describes Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70)



Here is a graphic that helps us understand the 2 300 day prophecy more clearly:



The key time markers of the 2 300 day prophecy are:

- 457 BC:** Beginning of the 70 weeks prophecy (as well as the 2 300 day prophecy), based on the date of Artaxerxes' decree that year to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (Dan. 9:24). The 70 weeks apply directly to the Jews (Dan 9:24), and serve as a probationary period in which their fate as a nation will be determined based on their response to the Messiah (who will come during the 70<sup>th</sup> week). According to this verse, 70 weeks or 490 prophetic days (i.e.  $70 \times 7 = 490$  literal years) are 'determined' (NKJV) or 'decreed' (NIV) upon Daniel's people (i.e. the Jews). The original word translated 'determined' or 'decreed' literally means 'cut off or amputate' So the verse actually reads: 'Seventy weeks are cut off (or amputated) for your people.' What could the seventy weeks be cut off from? The only option is that it is cut off from the larger 2 300 days.
- 408 BC:** Rebuilding of Jerusalem completed. The first division of the 70 weeks, viz., the 7 weeks or 49 years is assigned to the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem. There is not much historical evidence to support this date, but this does not mean it did not happen. The post exilic books of Ezra, Haggai and Nehemiah show us that there were many difficulties and delays in rebuilding Jerusalem, its Temple, and its walls after the exiles had been set free by Cyrus in 539 BC.
- AD 27:** Jesus anointed at his baptism. Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit at His baptism (Luke 4:1, 14, 18; Acts 10:37-38). Although Jesus was humanity's sinless Example throughout His life, He officially became Messiah ('the Anointed One') when He was anointed with the Holy Spirit at His baptism. Support for AD 27 can be seen by the fact that John the Baptist began his ministry in the 15<sup>th</sup> year of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1). Luke pragmatically dated the 15<sup>th</sup> year of Tiberius according to when Tiberius obtained co-princeps authority (i.e. powers equal to Augustus) over Judea. The evidence, drawn largely from Suetonius, is that Tiberius exercised *imperium* control over Judea in AD 13, making his 15<sup>th</sup> year, by Roman inclusive reckoning, AD 27. Note Jesus' words, after His baptism, that He later began His public ministry in Galilee (Mark 1:14) with: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15). The only Old Testament time prophecy that Jesus could be referring to, which had been fulfilled, was the prophecy of the 70 weeks.
- AD 31:** This year signalled the death of Jesus In the middle of the last prophetic week (the 70<sup>th</sup> week). Messiah was to be 'cut off' (i.e. He was to die), bringing an end to 'sacrifice and offering' (Dan 9:26-27). Jesus was crucified three and a half years after His baptism (i.e. in the spring of AD 31). His death brought an end to the animal sacrificial system. The end of the sacrificial system was dramatically signalled when the Temple curtain was torn from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51).
- AD 34:** Stephen stoned. At the end of the 70 weeks, the Jewish nation sealed their doom and were rejected as God's chosen people when the highest Jewish authority, the Sanhedrin, seized and stoned Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Acts 6:12; 7:59). The date of Stephen's martyrdom is based on the career of the apostle Paul. At Stephen's stoning, he was still unconverted (Acts 7:58). A short time later he went to Damascus to persecute Christians but instead was himself converted (Acts 9:1-9). In Gal. 1 Paul gives some biographical details about his career: His first visit to Jerusalem came 3 years after his conversion (vs 18) and the second 14 years after the first (2:1). Shortly after his second visit to Jerusalem he went to Corinth (Acts 18). While there, he appeared before the proconsul Gallio (Acts 18:12). So he stood before Gallio 17 years after his conversion (14 years between his second and first visit to Jerusalem added to the 3 years between his first Jerusalem visit and his conversion). From an inscription found in Corinth we know that Gallio's one year proconsulship in Corinth occurred in AD 51. If the 17 years for Paul's 2 visits to Jerusalem are subtracted from the date of Paul's appearance before Gallio, then his conversion and Stephen's stoning should be dated AD 34, the very date that ends the 70 weeks prophecy (William Shea, *The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: Daniel 7-12*, pp. 68-70.)

Note that Jesus also predicted that the Jewish nation would be rejected (Matt. 23:37-38; see also Matt. 21:33-43 [particularly vs 43] cf. Acts 13:46). In place of Israel, God raised up the Christian church (1 Pet. 2:9 - Notice in this verse Peter calls Gentile Christian converts a 'chosen people, a holy nation' [titles used previously of Israel - cf. Deut. 7:6, Ex 19:6]). Paul further adds in Gal. 3:29 that those who believe in Christ, are 'of Abraham's seed' (i.e. spiritual Jews). Thus the church replaced the stubborn and rebellious nation of Israel. That does not mean individual Jews cannot be saved, but as a nation, Israel ceased to be God's chosen representative to the world.

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- **AD 1844:** The 2 300 day prophecy ends in 1844, which is the beginning of the heavenly judgement. If the 2 300 day period starts in the autumn of 457 BC, then 2 300 years later brings us to the autumn of 1844 (remember that time counts down when you count before Christ (BC). Also keep in mind that there is no year '0' which means that we have to add another year to our calculations). Thus since 1844 Christ has been involved in a work of investigation that will end shortly before His Second Coming.

#### **Why a pre-Second Coming, Investigative Judgement?**

- God's Day of Judgement is His 'Day of Atonement' when He vindicates and cleanses everyone who sincerely desires to be "at-one" with Him, and removes everyone who wants to be separated from Him. The choice of where our final destiny will be is in our hands, not God's. The judgement merely reveals the genuineness of our faith.
- The personal message of Dan. 8:14 is that God loves us (John 16:27), has offered to be our Advocate and Defender (1 John 2:1) and wants us all to be saved (John 3:16)
- In the earthly 'Day of Atonement' only the names of Israel (God's believing children) came into judgement. Thus we can safely say that the heavenly investigative judgement is for those 'who have called on the name of the Lord'. The wicked are automatically condemned and judged because of their rejection of Jesus' offer of salvation (John 3:18; 1 John 5:11-12, cf. Rom. 8:1), and don't even come up in this pre-Second Coming judgement. Their judgement will however take place after the Second Coming (more on that later).
- The investigative judgement tells us that God deals openly with His children. He investigates before He executes (Gen 3:8-11, 17-19; 11:5, 7-8; 18:20-21, 19:24-25). When Jesus comes at the Second Coming, His reward of eternal life will be with Him (Rev. 22:12). This implies a prior investigation to decide who should or shouldn't get the reward.
- The investigative judgement actually also puts God on trial in a sense. The way He deals with His children, tells the Universe that He is a faithful and just God. He can be trusted throughout the ages of eternity. All Satan's lies and accusations about God are therefore shown to be false.
- This pre-Second Coming judgement tells us that God is a God of justice and will not allow any earthly power, like the little horn (of Dan. 7 & 8), to go unpunished. The little horn, under the guise of Christianity, meddled with God's plan of salvation, persecuted His children and spread deception and lies about Him. God's justice forces Him to act through judgement. The judgement, by implication, not only deals with the little horn, but with all God-opposing powers both before and after Rome.
- The records of God's investigations, done between 1844 and the Second Coming will be accessed by the righteous in heaven during the 1 000 years after Christ's coming. It will help answer some critical questions about why some people are not in heaven, while others are there.
- The investigative judgement ultimately restores God's Name, honour, law and kingship – all of which have been attacked, trampled on and villified.