



ALARM

THE LAST MESSAGE OF HOPE
FOR A PERISHING WORLD

HOPE IN THE MIDST OF DESPAIR

TRY JESUS COURSE BOOK 18

“OUR SOCIETY HAS ALL THE MARKS OF A DYING CULTURE.
ROCK MUSIC IS THE CRY OF THAT CULTURE IN ITS LAST
THROES OF DEATH.” - John Smith, God Squad

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TUCSON TRAGEDY

18 - HOPE IN THE MIDST OF DESPAIR

Like all 9/11, 2001 babies, **Christina Green** entered this world as a ray of hope on a dark day. She loves baseball and her daddy calls her Princess. For Christmas, she asked to volunteer at a soup kitchen. At 9 she is listening to Congresswoman **Gabrielle Giffords** talking with constituents in Tucson, Arizona.

A deranged gunman arrives, shoots Gifford in the head, then sprays the crowd with bullets. Six people die, including Christina. Her short life was radiant with possibility, her death senseless and wrenching.

Why - nearly four years after the massacre at Virginia Tech, where 33 died, including the shooter - an obviously deranged college student can still fall so easily through the cracks, only to emerge with a gun in his hand. (reported in *Time* Jan. 24, 2011).

Linkin Park, on their *A Thousand Suns* album, sing about the tragedy of life:

*When you were standing
in the wake of devastation
When you were waiting
on the edge of the unknown
And with the cataclysm raining down
Your insides crying, "Save me now"
You were there, impossibly alone.
Do you feel cold and lost in desperation?
You build up hope, but failures all you've known.
Remember all the sadness and frustration...
Falling into empty space
With no one there to catch you in their arms.*

President **Obama**, in his State of the Union Address said: *"The dreams of a little girl in Tucson are not so different than those of our own children, and that they all deserve the chance to be fulfilled."*

When will such tragedies end?



Photo: E. Webster

At a Hell's Angels' three-day rock concert 6000 people drank, did drugs and rocked nonstop around the clock until they dropped. Crushed beer cans and bodies were sprawled across the ground as if a bomb disaster had taken place. People partied on to the nonstop music until they were stoned off their brains. Christian bikie group God Squad were there to share their Christian faith. **John Smith**, founder of God Squad said:

"Our society has all the marks of a dying culture. Rock music is the cry of that culture in its last throes of

The Last Message of Hope

It's interesting that 2000 years ago Jesus had something to say about these things in His last talk to His followers. In Matthew 24, speaking about end-times, He said, "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold" (verse 12).

1. What sign did Jesus say would be the last to be fulfilled before the end of this world and the beginning of the next takes place? Matthew 24:14 (page 701 in NIV Bible: International Bible Society, 00195)
And this _____ will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and _____ the end will come.

The "gospel of the kingdom" is the good news that the kingdom purchased when Jesus died will be set up. The book of Revelation is an enlargement of Matthew 24. This prophecy is expanded in Revelation 14:6-12, which is a composite of three messages symbolically given by three angels. It is known as the **three angels' messages**.

2. How do we know that the THREE ANGELS' MESSAGES are God's last warning? What event is pictured as taking place immediately after these messages are given? Revelation 14:14-16 (page 874)
...seated on the cloud was one "like a _____" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.... "Take your sickle and reap...." So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was _____.



Jesus told a story about a farmer's enemy sowing weeds in his paddock. The farmer told his workers to leave them until the harvest when the weeds and wheat would be separated.

3. What did Jesus say the harvest symbolises? Matthew 13:36-39 (page 691)

The harvest is the _____, and the harvesters are _____.

God has promised to give warnings concerning important coming events through His prophets (Amos 3:7, page 648)

1st Angel: Creator, Redeemer and Judge

4. What is to be proclaimed to the entire world? Revelation 14:6 (page 874)

Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the _____ to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people.

This is the message that Jesus said would be proclaimed to the entire world and then the end of this world would come and His heavenly kingdom would be set up.

5. What is announced as having begun? Revelation 14:7 (page 874)

He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his _____ has come."

6. Who are people called to worship? Revelation 14:7 (page 874)

Worship _____ the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.

This is a call to worship the true God, the Creator of heaven and earth. God's claim for worship is based on the fact that He made us. This is the most basic fact of the Bible. The prevailing world view in the West, particularly since the 1960s, is that of secular humanism based on evolution. It holds that there is no God and that life happened by chance. Therefore, life is ultimately meaningless and "anything goes." There's no right or wrong - everything is relative. **This threefold message is tailor-made for our age. It presents God as Creator, Redeemer and Judge.**

2nd Angel: Babylon, Modern Idolatry

7. What did the second angel say? Revelation 14:8 (page 874)

A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is _____ the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her _____."

8. The name Babylon comes from the tower of Babel. Genesis 11:1-9 (page 7) (1) What were the people trying to do? (2) For whom did they want to make a name? (3) What did God do to them?

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

"Is this not the great Babylon I have built... by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" Daniel 4:30

While the word **Babel** sounds like the Hebrew for "confused", in the Akkadian language it means "**gateway to the gods**". In building the tower of Babel the people were trying to save themselves, presumably from another flood. This is the essence of all false religions - legalism - thinking that salvation depends on something that we do. It means human-centred as opposed to God-centred religion - creature worship versus Creator worship. When **Nebudachnezzar, king of Babylon**, came to power (605 BC), he sought to glorify himself. He oppressed the people of God and imposed idol worship on



Examples of such religion can be found in history. **The Jewish religion** in the first century AD had become distorted and legalistic. The religious leaders rejected Jesus' gospel and crucified Him and then persecuted His followers (Matthew 23-28; Acts 4-8). During the first century AD the **pagan Roman Empire** persecuted the Christians because they refused to worship Caesar and call him lord. And again, during the **Middle Ages**, the church in apostasy used political power to impose a false gospel and religious system upon the then known world. The Christians who would not conform were persecuted.

So the book of Revelation uses the term **Babylon** to indicate that a similar thing will happen in the final crisis, in the antichrist's opposition to God and His people. It is a worldwide false religious coalition, composed of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet (more on this in the next Bible Guide). This is the culmination of the great controversy between Christ and Satan that has been raging since Satan, in heaven, wanted God's position (Isaiah 14:12-15, page 493; Revelation 12, page 873). Ever since sin came in, the natural human heart has wanted to take God's place and earn or merit salvation. It is a conflict that we all experience.

The "wine of her adulteries" stands for Babylon's false teachings. It's a term used of idolatry and illicit relationships of the Jews with idol-worshipping nations during Old Testament times (Jeremiah 3:8, 9, 12, 13; 4:1, 2, page 536).

Just as the good news of salvation is to go to all the world, so this Babylonian false gospel will spread around the globe (Revelation 14:8; 16:12-16; 17:1-18; 18:1-4, page 874-6).

IDOLATRY in its larger meaning is properly understood as any substitution of what is created for the Creator. A man can place

THE WORLD WILL BE DIVIDED INTO TWO GROUPS, ACCORDING TO WHICH GOSPEL THEY FOLLOW.



Babylon will impose its false gospel and worship on the world and threaten with economic sanctions and death, those who refuse to conform (Revelation 13, page 873).

9. What does God call us to do? Revelation 18:1-4 (page 876)

Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! ... For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. ... _____, _____, so that you will not share in her _____, so that you will not receive any of her _____.

3rd Angel: Settling of Accounts

10. What is the most fearful warning found in the Bible? Revelation 14:9, 10 (page 874)

A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone _____ the beast and his image and receives his _____ on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured _____ into the cup of his wrath.

When people reject God's mercy to the extent that they no longer hear His voice or want His help, they have put themselves outside of God's protection. It reminds us of Jesus, who wept over Jerusalem and said, "How often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, **but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate**" (Matthew 23:37, 38, page 700). The Roman soldiers came in 70 AD and destroyed Jerusalem, killing over one million Jews. In the fate of that chosen city we can see the doom of a world that has rejected God's mercy and trampled on His law. They will have put themselves outside of God's mercy and He will no longer be able to protect them from Satan.

11. How are God's people described? Revelation 14:12 (page 874)

This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who _____ God's _____ and remain _____ to Jesus.

SUMMARY OF THE THREE ANGELS' MESSAGES

The last world crisis is over true worship versus false worship – loyalty versus disloyalty, obedience versus disobedience. The entire world will be divided into two groups over the true versus the false gospel. Jesus is both our Creator and Redeemer, and the Sabbath is a memorial of both. Only those who have accepted the free gift of salvation through Jesus will be serious about following Him and honouring God's Sabbath.

THIS LAST MESSAGE OF HOPE PRESENTS GOD AS JUDGE

All major world religions have a concept of judgment. For the Hindu and the Buddhist it's karma – the law of cause and effect; for the Muslim there is a day of judgment when all humanity will be gathered and people will be judged according to their deeds. The Christian concept of judgment is that things aren't going to continue as they are forever. There's going to be a time for settling of accounts. Wrongs will be righted and justice will prevail. The gospel presupposes judgment. Someone has said: "It is impossible to preach the gospel without proclaiming judgment. To hear the story of the cross is to stand at the judgment bar of God." (See John 12:31-33, page 762).

What the gospel tells us is that we don't need to fear the judgment. The gospel is a guarantee of a verdict in our favour if we have accepted Jesus as Saviour. Paul says: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1, page 800). But it also means condemnation for those who reject His free gift of eternal life.

After highlighting the heart of the gospel in John 3:16 (page 752), Jesus says: "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (verses 17, 18.)

The Bible presents two groups on earth just before the second coming of Jesus: those who follow a false gospel and worship the beast (the creature) and those who follow the true gospel and worship the Creator. By our choices each day we are determining which group we will be in then.

The “Unsinkable” Titanic On

the night when the “unsinkable” Titanic sank, warning after warning had been sent to tell them they were speeding into an icefield. But the messages were ignored. The *Titanic* was talking to Cape Race about the time chauffeurs were to meet arriving passengers at the dock, and what menus were to be ready.

Preoccupied with trivia, the *Titanic* responded to the warning: “Shut up! I am talking to Cape Race. You are jamming my signals.”

So confident were they of the indestructibility of their craft that when one lady, on boarding, asked a steward, “Can this ship sink?” she was told, “Madame, God Himself couldn’t sink this ship!” Such was the spirit of optimism at the turn of the century.

Archibald Brace, one of the survivors, later wrote of that fateful night when the Titanic sank:

“There arose to the sky the most horrible sounds ever heard by mortal man. The agonising cries of death from over a thousand throats, the wails and groans of the suffering, the shrieks of the terror-stricken and the awful gaspings of those in the last throes of drowning, none of us will ever forget to our dying day.” (Reader’s Digest)

Today, more than ever, our society is preoccupied with trivia while our world speeds to disaster. There is a new world coming (Revelation 21, 22, page 878). God wants us to be part of it. For those who heed this last message of hope to a perishing world, life’s not senseless!

How would you like to express your gratitude

who are loyal to God in the last days.

In what way do you think you could help to share this last message of hope to a perishing world?

