

# Be Prepared With the Lord

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]      Revelation chapter 14, we read at verse 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 labours, and their works do follow them. Now, first thing we notice here about this verse is that not everything that John has revealed to him in the Revelation at this time is he expressly told to write down, he is told that he is to record what he sees and hears, but there are some occasions when he hears voices and thunders and he's about to write down what they say, and the Lord stops him, says don't write those things down because we are sealed.

But in the midst of this general revealing of what God intends to do in the last time, and that revealing is what Revelation is all about, there is this express instruction here at verse 30, almost an additional emphasis, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.

Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them. We might be a little concerned if we think too much about what does this word henceforth mean?

I mean, does it mean that there is a particular time beyond which the people that die in the Lord are okay, and prior to that they are not okay? Well, I don't think we should think in those terms.

[ 1 : 3 3 ]      Remember that what is being revealed in the Revelation is a glimpse of eternity, and that which is taking place in the Revelation is taking place in an eternal context.

And therefore, what we read here, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, it is from all eternity. If we leave this world in Christ and in the Lord, then we are safe and secure for all eternity.

If we leave it without him, we are lost for all eternity. And it is from all eternity that God's plan of salvation has been worked out and worked through between the persons of the Trinity, so that our Saviour Jesus Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Not simply from the moment of his crucifixion at Jerusalem in the time of Pontius Pilate, but rather from all eternity, from the foundation of the world.

This arrangement was entered into. And Christ was already, the second verse of the Trinity, was set apart to be the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world.

[ 2 : 5 6 ]      That this would be the once and for all sacrifice, which would secure the forgiveness and the payment for sin for all who leave this world in him.

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. That is, from the time when this plan is entered into. From the time of this divine plan, which is from all eternity.

There is no stage in history when those who die in the Lord are somehow not okay. That they are somehow not secure in their salvation.

That if Adam dies in a state of grace, then, oh, he's not alright because Jesus hasn't yet died on the cross. Or Abraham, or Isaac, or Solomon, or David, or any of these.

No. From henceforth means, from the time of this covenant plan, which the Lord entered into between the different persons of the Trinity.

[ 4 : 01 ] That from all eternity, God the Son would be the Lamb's slave from the foundation of the world. That from all eternity, God the Spirit would awaken those whom he was setting apart for salvation.

To trust and believe in this once and for all sacrifice. And God the Father would receive them into his everlasting presence. But if we see the context here, in which this verse 13 is written.

It is a context of otherwise quite tumultuous events. And quite stark realities. Because we've got at one and the same time here, for example, you've got an angel from verse 6 and 7, flying in the midst of the heaven with the everlasting gospel.

Good news. That's what the gospel means. Good news to preach to every tribe, every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. Saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come.

And worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. Now, good news is that there is a means of access to God.

[ 5 : 13 ] A means of access to enter into this blessedness. Because for all our fallenness, and for all our sin, which would exclude us from that blessed eternity, the good news, the everlasting gospel, is that there is opportunity to come to the Lord through Christ, and to be saved through him.

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.

Now, Babylon, of course, is, if you like, a metaphor. It is a name that sums up all the power and forces and emptiness of this world. The vanity, the pomp, and earthly power, and all the wealth and violence and bloodshed that the world in its fallen condition represents.

And this Babylon is fallen. This Babylon cannot last. It is on borrowed time. This fallen world is already hurtling towards the end of its shelf life.

So Babylon is already fallen in that sense. It cannot win the victory. And even though it may win a little battle here and there, the war is already overwhelmingly against it.

[ 6 : 35 ] Babylon is fallen. It cannot win that great city. Because she made all nations, and everybody is effectively, unless they're saved by Christ, they're all enslaved by this Babylon.

They all think this world is what it's all about. Gratifying their needs or desires or wealth or whatever it is they want in this world is the be-all and end-all.

And even if they pay lip service to some form of religion, that religion will, nine times out of ten, be a man-centered religion. Even if it wears a Christian face, it will probably be a man-centered religion, whereby if I do certain things, and I fulfill certain rituals, and I perform certain rites, and I make sure that I tick all these boxes, then I will be okay.

And God will have to make sure that I'm all right come eternity, because I have done everything that I think is right according to this man-centered religion. But the good news of the gospel is that although you are going to fail in all these man-centered things, Christ himself, God has already done all that is needful to save such a soul as yours.

God has already done everything that is needful on the cross to redeem sinners like you and me, because although we can't do any of it, he has done all of it.

[ 8 : 07 ] Babylon is fallen, and although all nations are drunk of the wine, of the wrath, of our fornication, now remember fornication is illicit relationship, outside of that which is sanctified, and if we take the analogy of marriage, then of course the intimate relations between husband and wife are sanctified, or holy, and anything which is outside of that is fornication.

It is illicit, and it may gratify the senses, but it only brings wrath and sin upon the individual's concern. So if we are engaged in that which is simply of the world, without reference to God, as though he did not exist, just as engaging in fornication, as though the marriage bond did not exist, brings wrath and sin and judgment upon us, so likewise, living as though God did not exist, is effectively fornication.

It is spiritual fornication, and it brings wrath upon us. And the third angel, all of them, saying with a loud voice, saying, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead and 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.

In other words, hell. Hell in all its fullness and fury is what awaits. Now, in order to get the sense of those verses, 9 and 10, we have to go back to chapter 13.

And in chapter 13, we read that the beast that comes, he deceiveth, in verse 14, that those that dwell on the earth by means of those miracles which he had power to do, and that they should make an image to the beast which had a wound by the sword and did live.

[ 10 : 03 ] He had power to give life unto the image of the beast. The image of the beast should both speak and cause, that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed, and he cause it all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads, and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark or the name of the beast or the number of his name.

No man might buy and sell. In other words, what he offers to those who will serve him is the ability to trade and become wealthy. He is offering them the power of the market, the power of this world in all its wealth and trade and ability to get wealth, and unless you're going to bow down and worship the beast, unless you're going to receive his mark and effectively sell your soul, what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul?

Unless you're going to do that, you won't be allowed to succeed. You won't be allowed to buy and sell and get wealth and so on. That is what he offers them, but he doesn't say anything about the eternity to come.

He offers them, in other words, jam today. He offers them the get rich quick. He offers them the satisfaction, the fulfillment of this world without any thought of eternity.

But what we have in chapter 14 here at verses 9 and 10 is, if any man worship the beast and his image and receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand, what does it say?

[ 11 : 45 ] Well, he won't be allowed to buy and sell and trade. We'll take away his trade and his buying and selling and his wealth and so on. He won't be allowed to enjoy this world.

No, it doesn't say that at all. You'll get exactly what you signed up for. You'll get all the glories of this world. You'll get your wealth, your buying, your selling, your markets, your accumulation of possessions.

You'll get all of this world can afford for as long as this life will last. You'll get it. There is no suggestion in verse 9 or 10 of chapter 14 that it is taken away from anyone that which they had contracted with the beast to receive.

but what they do have is the fact that there is literally and without any irreverence here hell to pay because the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation.

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 rose up forever and ever. They have no rest day nor night who worshiped the beast in his image and who so ever receiveth the mark of his name.

[ 13 : 02 ] In other words you make your bed here and only here you have no reference to eternity so when eternity comes you have nothing with which to deal with it. You have done it all here.

It's all your yesterdays. Yes, will add up but what about eternity? What about the Lord? What about the mark that now stands against you and condemns you?

It's though if you think about during the during the second world war it was said I don't know this actually but you know you read it in the history books and so on that those who were in the SS at the time of the war were considered at the time when the Reich was over all Europe and you know and they were conquering everybody the SS were regarded as the elite of the Reich's forces and the SS troops would have a tattoo giving their number and their regiment that would be tattooed onto their flesh as a sort of mark of to them their honour but of course after the war was over and the communists were sweeping into the east of Germany and the Americans and the Allies coming in the west then anybody who was associated with either the Nazi party or the SS or the Gestapo was especially hunted down and dealt with so that tattoo that mark which had been the status of your honour and your privilege before when everything was up on the rise now became that which was going to be your downfall and condemn you and in the same way this mark whether it is a literal mark we're talking about here or whether it is a spiritual mark more likely a spiritual mark that our hearts are sealed or seared in this way that we cannot get rid of it but rather that ends up condemning us that which is maybe privilege and glory in this world ends up being disaster in the world to come so in that context in all this torment and warfare and so on here is the patience of the saints here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus whatever the cost and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me right blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth when all is against them when there is nothing to attract them to the Lord in this world why would they love him they can't love him for the gain that they hope to make in this world they can't love him for the power they hope to accumulate or the wealth that might come to them they can only love him because they love him they can only love him for himself because everything else in this world is against them but then come the next world come the end of the war those who have been his loved against all the odds when there was nothing to gain when there was no prospect of hope or advancement or blessing for the blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth yea saith the spirit that they may rest from their neighbours and their works to follow man you see it's kind of like if you think in terms of let's say that all of your business and your life are being some tropical sun drenched island and you had a good little business going making sort of beach shorts and hula shirts and sunglasses and you're selling these to the tourists and you're doing great and this is your business and this is what you do and then suddenly you're shoved through a door and there you are in the south pole and it's absolutely freezing and if you've still got your bermuda shorts and your hula shirt and your sunglasses then and your flip flop saddles then you're doing well most likely you are nothing you're totally naked there and what you're going to do well I know my business is hula shirts my business is bermuda shorts my business is sun cream and sunglasses there's nothing here I can do with no you're in a totally different world you haven't come with your heavy duty cagules and your vortex sort of waterproof shoulders or snowshoes or rucksacks or survival tents you've got nothing you don't have any equipment to survive

in that atmosphere you're not going to last 10 minutes because now you're in a different world where nothing of all that you had or were good with is actually going to count it's as though you turn up at the stock exchange with your pocket stuffed full of monopoly money saying look I'm rich and it doesn't count for a thing because the minute you're through that door nothing in this world that you could ever have or bring with you is going to do you any good except one thing and that is Christ he is the only thing anyone can take with them from this world that will meet them at the other side that will be sufficient nothing you bring nothing you take you can't take anything from this world this is what Paul writes to Timothy in 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 7 he writes for we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing up we know that fact we know that we're all born from our mother's womb without a stitch of clothing without any food or anything everything we receive we have to be given we have nothing no wonder a baby cries when it's born because all the world that it has known that dark safe little close environment that little world that was everything to it it's been pushed out of it suddenly everything's unfamiliar and frightening of course it cries and then of course it gets comforted and fed and snuggled in a wee bit and then it's okay again and it's reassured and then life really begins now when we are expelled as it were from the womb of this world everything will be unfamiliar we have nothing we took nothing into this world we take nothing out of it and of course we may wail or cry but unless we are given what we need we will perish this little dark world that was so close and we think oh the world is in dark the sun shines lovely mountains and clouds and we've got sea and land and hills and we've got stars and light this is a wide open world this is a lovely beautiful world and so it may seem but in comparison to the vastness and openness and beauty and breath and glory and fulfilment of eternity with the

Lord this is like a close dark enclosed little womb in which you can't really see anything we can't see God we don't know what he looks like whatever a baby is conscious of in the womb it is in comparative darkness and in comparison to dwelling in light inexpressible with the Lord this world is a world of darkness we walk by faith not by sight but all we have in this closed little world it's like the womb which is all that we have known and when we come out of the womb of our mothers we have nothing and when we go from this world we take nothing with us we may dress the remains of a loved one in their best suit or their best dress or whatever we may make it so that they look nice in their coffin when the lid is closed we may do everything with all respect and love but by that the reality of them is long gone some of you will have seen in this month's record of course the poem towards the end five minutes after I die it's worth a read because it does bring things home to us as to the stark reality of what is just absolutely no use to us the minute we are through that door into eternity but this is not intended to be a sort of old gloom fearful kind of thought it is meant for us to focus on blessed are the dead which die in the

[ 21 : 26 ] Lord because that is the one thing which you can and do take with you from this world into the next you take Christ if you are in Christ he goes before you in the sense that to die in him is not really death at all it's like falling asleep you know in 1st Thessalonians chapter 4 at verse 16 we read the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout and with the voice of the archangel with the trump of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air so shall we ever be with the Lord wherefore comfort one another with these words the dead in Christ shall rise first but how would the dead in Christ describe well we go back a couple of verses in 1st Thessalonians 4 and we read from verse 13 I would not have you to be ignorant brethren concerning them which are asleep that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope for if we believe that

Jesus died and rose again even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with them for this we say unto you by the word of the Lord that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent and shall not go before them which are asleep to be asleep in Jesus it is your body that sleeps like in its bed when it sleeps in its grave if you're in Christ the soul is already with the Lord the money that departs from the body you know and as Paul writes to the Corinthians if the Christ are perished if there is no resurrection of course there's a resurrection and that resurrection if we are in Christ is blessed it's glorious you see just like we were saying to the children there's an awful lot of us perhaps that may think well tomorrow is a good day tomorrow is the time when

I'll start thinking about eternity tomorrow is the time when I'll think about the Lord tomorrow is always a day full of promise but tomorrow in that sense never comes it will always be today for all of your life you may remember your yesterdays and your yesterdays will follow you yes because your yesterdays are what make you the person you are today all the actions you have done all the opinions you have formed all the places you have been the things you have done the people you have met all that you have done it follows you it comes with you into the day there is a sense in which it is very true they may rest on their labours and their works to follow them in a sense whether we are in the Lord or not your works will follow you into eternity it doesn't mean you can take them with you but it will be the film that is run of your judgment and mine the film of your life every little detail of it not just the public things the things you thought in the secret of your mind that you were so glad nobody knew but there it is right out in the open all the inappropriate thoughts you may ever have had about anyone your neighbour or best friend that thought you loved them and all the bitchy or unkind or hurtful things you thought you didn't say them out all the times you may have cheated or stolen you never stole anything haven't you well the film of your life will soon turn that out will soon give that away whether you're telling the truth or not because every untruth you're told will also be out there all the truths as well

God isn't trying to catch you out God isn't trying to buy it or skew a picture or make it worse than it is all he needs to do is tell the truth all the film of your life needs to tell is every detail and my goodness you and I will be condemned your works will follow you but those who are in Christ the works that follow them are those which honour the Lord those which are pleasing to the Lord those who use their today to seize the opportunity now is the accepted time now is the day of salvation and who took the Lord at his word and believed him you know if you were trying to make a case for something you're trying to convince people and you looked around the room and nobody believed you and you're trying to say but it's true this is what happened and you looked to those and you thought you trusted and those were you could tell you they just don't believe you anymore and think of what the

Lord is like when he found those he thought to be his children who did not believe him did not take him at his word did not trust the truth of his word would rather go by the passing fashions of man by the flavour of the month and the ways of the world and the spirit of the age because that was more congenial but God and his truth and his word just don't believe think on the hurt think on the pain inflicted upon the Lord our works do follow us and one thing about everything in our lives that is really what is described as our works it's not just the things you have done the things you have thought the things you have said it's also the person you are the character the nature of your life and this is what the Lord says to each of the seven churches remember in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation how is it he begins every single one of the churches he addresses I know thy works chapter 2 verse 2

[ 27 : 24 ] I know thy works and labour and patience and so on verse 9 I know thy works and tribulation and poverty but thou art rich likewise in verse 13 I know thy works and will I wildest even where Satan see this verse 19 I know thy works and charity and service and faith notwithstanding somewhat against thee I know thy works this is the reality of every kind I know thy works but rather what he says also is fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison and this is what he's writing here to those in Smyrna it says fear none of those things because the devil cast some of you into prison that he may be tried and you shall have tribulation ten days be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life be thou faithful unto death blessed are the dead which die in the

Lord from henceforth yea sit the spirit that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them yes our works follow us and many of those works we will be ashamed of the greatest saints in the world will have cause to be ashamed of most of their lives the things of which they will not be embarrassed come that day will be those things wherein they have sought to honour Christ those things they have given to Christ those portions of their lives their heart their love that has been devoted to Christ of that they will never have cause to be embarrassed or to be ashamed save perhaps that it was so little but they will never have cause to regret what is given to Christ blessed are the dead the dying the Lord and hence for the age save the spirit that they may rest from their labours no more trials no more tribulations no more sufferings be thou faithful unto death but all that does is it pushes you through the door one world to another your body sleeps until the resurrection of the body your soul immediately with the

Lord blessed are the dead which die in the Lord and hence forth you see this is one reason why we shouldn't be unduly afraid no matter what panic is spreading across the world if anything and you know some people say oh this is a judgment of God let's not get too dramatic about that just now but rather let's recognize that this is something which does cause us each of us to recognize our own frailty our own helplessness and I think one of the things that is causing people to become so afraid is the knowledge that no matter how much hand gel you use or toilet rolls you buy you cannot stop the onward march of this virus you almost certainly can't prevent it coming you may delay it you may isolate all you like it can still get you and even if it doesn't if this causes us to turn to the

Lord in our weakness and to recognize that we have need of something more than this world can give then it is a good thing if it makes us realize our need of the Lord I suspect just as the book of Revelation makes clear for all that comes upon fallen man the vast majority of the people still won't give God a thought it is rather causing some people to be more self-centered more suspicious of each other more afraid of each other more hating of each other not loving one another not caring for one another and their weakness not recognizing their need of someone greater and bigger and stronger than themselves nothing that happens in this world is far nothing what might the Lord be trying to teach us let's not go in terms of oh judgment of God if this is a judgment that does nothing compared to what we deserve but it may be something teaching us about our need of the

Lord our need to turn to him because if this virus of which everyone is so afraid if this doesn't get us eventually something will you know even if it's only old age at the end of the day sooner or later in or out of the Lord we will have become the dead blessed are the dead however who die in the Lord from hence forth whatever it is that takes us from this world to the next the important thing is to be ready and prepared not just with hand gels and hygiene and so on but with the Lord of heaven and earth blessed are such blessed are they who are taken from this world to the next in the arms of Jesus blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from hence forth yea save the spirit that they may rest from their labours and their works their life who they are what they are in Christ it follows that it witnesses it testifies in Christ their friend is your salvation there is your hope this is the everlasting good news to people of every tribe and nation and tongue it is good news for them it is good news for us whether we live or whether we die if we are the lords let us pray things forna you