

**HEALING STREAM MINISTRIES** presents...

**THE UNDILUTED, FULL STRENGTH, THREE ANGELS' MESSAGES**  
with enough power to...

- **cleanse from all sin**
- **set us free from all bondage**
- **break all the power of the enemy over us**
- **restore us to total spiritual health**
- **develop immunity to all last-day deceptions**

## **#8 – Letting God Stretch You**

For many years I studied the Scriptures merely as a textbook on doctrine. It gave me immense satisfaction to find confirmation that my beliefs were indeed correct doctrine. But I also discovered that correct doctrine will not of itself change anyone's life, not even my own. Such study can lead to personal pride in one's beliefs, but without experiencing the life transforming power of the gospel. I discovered that I trusted more in the logic and rationality of my beliefs than I trusted in the covenant faithfulness of Jesus. We must not just study Scripture for support of what we already believe. We must, above all, study the Scriptures for the purpose of letting God stretch us.

In the 1840s and 1850s a group of severely disappointed Bible students engaged in an intensive study of the Bible. The disappointment they had just experienced, instead of becoming an occasion, as it had for so many others, to abandon the faith, drove them back to the Scriptures. Their intense discouragement became an occasion to let God stretch them. And stretching them is what God did – particularly through an intensive study of the Books of Daniel and Revelation.

As these believers read the passage in Revelation 10:8-11, they realized that the words there seemed to describe the experience they had just gone through. They had experienced the sweetness of the expectation of the soon coming of Jesus, and then that expectation turned to disappointment and then bitterness. Why had God let them down? But then their reading of Revelation 10:11 "*You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings*" led them to the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12. Those three messages became the motivation for the mission and message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The church literally had its birth in these powerful messages. God used these messages to stretch a group of some very discouraged believers into becoming a worldwide movement. This all happened as earnest Bible students saw themselves and God's personal leading in the Scriptures.

As I through the years have preached and taught about the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> angels' messages, I could become very persuasive in showing others the doctrinal apostasies of both Babylon and the beast. This knowledge gave me immense confidence that I was in the right church as I detected where other religious movements were wrong. But church membership will not change your life. Only Jesus will. And He wants to use Scripture to stretch you. And stretching hurts.

So without abandoning the solid prophetic/historical applications of the three angels' messages, would you also be willing to let God use these Scriptures to stretch you experientially in some most practical ways? Remember that the first purpose of Scripture is not for the confirmation of where our beliefs are right, and where others are wrong, but it is for the exposure of own hidden sinful strategies and their correction by the Great Physician. (see 2 Timothy 3:16). Just imagine how powerful your personal testimony can become when you are able to tell others about how Jesus through His word stretched you beyond the plateau of your present comfort zone to the higher ground of a closer walk with Him. *"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground!"*

Here's how this might work. Every time you meet someone whom you believe is part of Babylon or the beast communities, and before you start sharing with them about your beliefs (and the fallacies of some of theirs), first ask that the Holy Spirit will shine his penetrating x-ray into the dark and hidden recesses of your own heart. Ask the Spirit to show you where self-seeking, pride, arrogance, self-sufficiency, control, intimidation, manipulation, rebellion, god-playing, threats, force, and coercion (all traits of Babylon and the beast) may occur in your own life. God wants to stretch you from the pretense of satisfaction with yourself as you now are into a genuine likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The core message of the Revelation 14:6-12 is not just to watch out for the deceptions of Babylon and the beast out there, but it is also to discern where the traits of these last-day powers may be present inside ourselves – often without our knowledge. The religious people in Christ's day had no trouble in clearly seeing the sins of the Gentiles, the Samaritans, and the Romans. But they experienced an almost impenetrable resistance to see in themselves the traits they so vehemently despised in others. Their resistance to letting Jesus stretch them through the Scriptures and His teaching eventually led them to become the agents of Satan who stretched Jesus out on a cross.

As you embark on this most intensive study of Revelation 14:6-12, be prepared for some personal hurt and discomfort as Jesus starts stretching you. It is not so much new insights into the Scriptures that we need. It is rather the exposure of our own lives through the penetrating light of Scripture that will lead us to Jesus. (see Hebrews 4:11,12). There isn't a sin

He does not hate, and there isn't a sin He won't forgive. At the same time, be assured that this is a most necessary part of Jesus' work of being the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, and the Author and Finisher of your personal faith in Him.

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