

Reformation 2014  
Revelation 14:6

THEN I SAW ANOTHER ANGEL FLYING DIRECTLY OVERHEAD, WITH AN ETERNAL GOSPEL TO PROCLAIM TO THOSE WHO DWELL ON EARTH, TO EVERY NATION AND TRIBE AND LANGUAGE AND PEOPLE.

As good Lutherans, we know that the Reformation began on October 31, 1517, when Dr. Martin Luther, professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg, Germany, and pastor of St. Mary's Church posted, his 95 Theses on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg. His theses challenged all to a public debate on the power and efficacy of indulgences. What inspired Martin Luther to post the 95 Theses was something that the pope at that time did. The pope said that the church was going to have a special jubilee indulgence. This was rather a special indulgence. It promised to the purchaser the complete remission, forgiveness, of all his his/her sins, plus also, the remission of any temporal or eternal punishment associated with those sins. The indulgences were being sold so that the profits could be used to build St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome.

Luther considered this jubilee indulgence, and all indulgences for that matter, to be an attack on the eternal Gospel. The eternal Gospel says to every sinner of every nation, tribe, language, and people, that the forgiveness of sins comes solely by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Forgiveness of sin cannot be purchased. It is given as a free gift to you from God because of Jesus' suffering and death and it to you through the Word and Sacraments. That is the comforting message of the eternal Gospel.

And if there is anyone who needs to hear that message it's you and everyone who dwells on earth, of every nation, tribe, language, and people.

You see, the reason everyone on earth needs to hear the eternal Gospel is because everyone on earth shares a common problem. David tells us what that problem is, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me (Ps 51).” Our common problem is that we are all born sinners. We sin against God and our neighbor in our thoughts, words, and deeds, what we do and by what we do not do. Our sinful condition is such a terrible problem that we cannot free ourselves from it by our own reason or strength, our good works, or our good intentions. Left in our sin, we would be condemned to hell fire for eternity.

That is exactly where we would end up if it were not for the eternal Gospel. The eternal Gospel proclaims to you to everyone who lives on earth, of every nation, tribe, language, and people, that Jesus Christ is your Savior. It proclaims that Jesus Christ is true God, begotten of the Father from all eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary.

What Jesus Christ has done for you is this: He has redeemed you a lost and condemned person. And He did it in a most marvelous way. He did not do it with gold or silver but with His holy, innocent suffering and blood, that was shed for you on the cross of Calvary.

That is the comfort of the eternal Gospel that God brings to you through the proclamation of that Gospel and the Sacraments of Baptism and Communion. He gives it all to you as gift. Indulgences don't -- can't do -- that for you. Indulgences give nothing full or free. Rather, indulgences say you must pay, you must do and then maybe – perhaps -- you will have the forgiveness of your sins.

Are you starting to see why Luther nailed 95 Theses to the Castle Church door? Are you starting to see what this Reformation is all about? The Reformation is about the eternal Gospel of Jesus Christ, so that every

nation, tribe, language, and people may have what you have -- the complete and total confidence that all of their sins are completely and totally forgiven because of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, with no strings attached. Indulgences cannot give that to you. Indulgences will only leave you doubting -- have I paid enough, have I done enough, am I good enough?

History teaches us that on September 25, 1555, peace was reached between Lutherans and Catholics. Emperor Charles V issued what was called the Peace of Augsburg, which allowed Lutherans and Catholics to peacefully co-exist in Germany. It gave the authority of the governing prince to decide if his region was going to be Lutheran or Catholic. Once that decision was reached, you were either Lutheran or Roman Catholic. If you didn't like that, you could move to a different region. So, there you have it. Lutherans were legit, so the Reformation was over, right?

You can say that, but remember: it all started with the sale of indulgences. Get this -- you can still get indulgences today and the Roman Catholic church encourages you to get them.

Remember, the Reformation is about the eternal Gospel being attacked, by taking glory away from Jesus Christ as the only Savior for mortal humans. So it's not just that indulgences are still available, it's also that the devil is still telling so many lies about how the forgiveness of sins comes to you.

For example, we have this:

If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will, let him be anathema.

“Anathema” means condemned to hell. Did you catch what was being said? If you believe in justification by faith alone, you are condemned to hell, so says the Roman Catholic church in the Council of Trent.

And we have this: God revealed his truth to the Prophet Mohammed and he wrote it down in the Koran. So, if you do five things: believe and say, “There is no god but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet;” pray facing Mecca 5x / day; give alms; fast; and if you are able-bodied and can afford it, make a pilgrimage to Mecca, then maybe, just maybe, Allah will let you live in his heaven, so says Islam.

How about this? Let’s say God made Joseph Smith his prophet and told him not to join any church because they are all corrupt. And because the Bible alone is not a good enough witness of Jesus, an angel named Moroni brought Joseph more prophecies engraved in gold plates – that he translated by looking at a seer stone placed in his top hat, I kid you not – and called it the Book of Mormon, another testament of Jesus Christ, so says Mormonism.

How about this: “All religions worship the same god. We just call him – or her – by a different name. And because we all worship the same god, all religions are just different paths to the same heaven,” so says the post-modern age in which we live.

Do you hear what’s being said in all of these? What’s being said is that you must do something to be saved. You must do something in order to obtain the forgiveness of your sins. Oh and by the way, Jesus dying on the cross was not enough for the salvation of every nation, tribe, language, and people.

These statement and beliefs are as blasphemous as indulgences. They are attacks on the eternal Gospel of Jesus Christ. And when such attacks are being made, the Reformation continues today.

The reason the Reformation continues today is so that the eternal Gospel may be proclaimed to every nation, tribe, language, and people. It is proclaimed so all people may be comforted with the complete and total confidence that all of their sins are forgiven because of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He has indeed paid the debt of all your sins. He has redeemed you, a lost and condemned creature, so that you would be “His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity (2<sup>nd</sup> Article),” with no “if’s,” “and’s,” “but’s,” or “have I done enough” about it.