

Session 10: The Eternal Gospel and the Harvest

What We Found

Before anything is reaped, heaven says everything out loud. The eternal gospel turns out to be the oldest message aimed at the newest idol: fear God, give him glory, worship him who made heaven and earth: creation's claim against every beast. Babylon is introduced by her obituary (fallen, fallen), because this book refuses to present any evil as ultimate. The third angel's warning, the sternest text in the study, speaks the prophets' wrath idiom (Isaiah's smoke, Jeremiah's cup) and addresses conscious worshipers of the beast; the Church's doctrine holds both hands full: hell is real as definitive self-exclusion freely chosen, and God predestines no one to it and desires all to be saved (CCC 1033–1037). Four verses later comes the book's tenderest beatitude, which the Church prays over her dead: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord... their deeds follow them, a clause that accords with the Church's teaching on the particular judgment (CCC 1021–1022): nothing done in the Lord is left at the grave. Then two harvests grown from Joel 3:13: the grain reaped by one like a son of man, the vintage thrown to the winepress; whether the grain is the saved ingathered or both harvests are one judgment, the Church leaves open, and we said so. And Isaiah 63's winepress-treader comes with garments already stained.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Francis of Assisi · *Canticle of the Creatures*

Near his own death St. Francis praised God through Sister Bodily Death: woe to those who die in mortal sin; blessed those whom death will find in your most holy will, for the second death shall do them no harm. Warning and beatitude, held together without contradiction.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. Alphonsus Liguori · *Preparation for Death (summary)*

The remembrance of death is not morbid but medicinal, St. Alphonsus teaches in substance: the great teacher of how to live, detaching us from what we cannot keep and attaching us to the One no death can take from us while we remain in his grace.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. Bede the Venerable · *Explanation of the Apocalypse (summary)*

St. Bede reads the two harvests, in substance, as the end of the age gathering both crops the earth has grown, each given at last to its own end. The study's application: the crops ripen through long seasons of choices; history is not interrupted by the end but completed by it.

Live It This Week

- Begin the deed you named, the one you want following you: one concrete step this week, however small.
- Pray once for your own death: that it find you in the Lord; the Hail Mary's second half (now and at the hour of our death) hands you the words.
- Memorize the memory verse.

Memory Verse

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth. "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" (Revelation 14:13, RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Revelation 15–16.

Catechism references from this session: CCC 1021–1022; 1033–1037; 2096–2097.