

Peter's Ladder – The First Angel's Message Sermon Transcript

By Adrian Ebens at Talking Rock Georgia, 24 October 2013

Father, I thank you. I thank you for the knowledge of God and the only begotten Son. If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. I pray that as we walk through the Scriptures tonight that once again, you'll give us the teaching of righteousness, you'll reveal to us the beauty of the third angels message. I thank you in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.

Just a few facts and figures that are personally of interest to me. Let me say this. I share these things with you in the spirit of vulnerability so that you might know more about my journey and that you might know me.

I find it interesting that it was on the day before my 40th birthday that I walked into the conference office and I handed Return of Elijah to my conference president. I served a different god for 40 years, and after 40 years on the day of my birthday I walked free. That was an interesting experience.

But over the next six years I engaged in a process of appeal with my believed church pleading with them to look at My Beloved and to find the joy that I have found. Over a period of six years, I have been engaged in that process. I had not heard from my former conference president, my boss, whom I love dearly, a dear friend, and after three and a half years of not hearing from him I suddenly receive and email from him. This is a few days after six years of appealing to the brethren and appealing to the church.

He basically writes to me and he says, "Adrian, are you sure you want to walk this path? Do you have to be so dogmatic about what you believe? Can't we just smooth this over? Can we work together? Are you sure about this?" I attached a copy of My Beloved and I said, "In this book is all the reasons why I can't deny the only begotten Son." I can't. I'm in love with Him. I can't do that. I know that might sound harsh or whatever you want to call it, but I just can't. As much as I love you and as much as I care about you... I didn't write those parts in but I should've, but that's what I was thinking. And I sent it off.

And then, I was reading in the statutes. The very first statute says, "Now, these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them. If thou buy a Hebrew servant six years, he shall serve and in the 7th year he shall go out free for nothing." It was like the Father was saying to me, "Adrian, you've served your time. You've served. You've made your appeal. Your master's come to you and asked you the question." I said, "No, I don't want go the post and get a thing put through my ear. I think I'll go out free."

That statute really spoke to me. I was really blessed by that because I believed the Lord was saying to me, "It's time to move on. I have other work for you to do now." And so, there I was blessed by the statutes.

Tonight I want to begin the first of a three part series on the third angel's message. We are to allow nothing else to absorb our... You know the rest of it? Attention. Inspiration tells us this message, the third angel's message.

I want to share with you some of my relationship with this message. I want preface this by saying and it's something that I have observed in regard to perception. When we read through the three angel's messages... I'll mention this at this point. The first time I really encountered the three angel's messages was when I had to memorize them for a bible exam in high school in the Adventist high school. That was the first time I really... You know on all the buildings when they have the three angels on different parts

up on the buildings? I'd see the three angels and I knew they were important. I didn't know why, but I knew they were important.

And then, I was memorizing these in my final year of high school. This was the general gist that I got. Fear God. Judgment. Get ready. The second angel's message was Babylon is fallen. That great city. Babylon is... I'd heard preachers talking about the daughter of Babylon and this related to other Christians who didn't measure up. So, the judgment's coming. Get ready. The other churches have already lost. And then, the third angel, "If any man worship the beast or his image, receive his mark on his forehead or on his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God." Point number three, if you don't get your act together, you get in the fire. That was my really first encounter with three angel's messages. Great message.

I tell that experience of mine because... I want you to turn to Matthew 25. I just want to highlight something for you about perception when you're reading something as opposed to actually what really is going on. It's the parable of the talents. And we come in Mathew 25 and verse 24. I want to highlight something here. "Then he which received the one talent came and said, "Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man.""

Did he know that? He didn't know that. "I knew thee that thou art a hard man." He knew no such thing. He perceived that. He perceived his master to be what he thought he was rather than what he actually was. In the context of God that's idolatry.

This problem of... And it follows the same vane, I knew thee that though wast a hard man. Who was in the voice of Revelation chapter 24? When I first began to read this, and this was just before my conversion experience, I'm reading through this, "Judgment is coming. Get ready." I'm saying, "I know thee that you are a hard god."

My perception was colouring the way that I was reading this passage and it wasn't a good message. It was a bad message. I was a frightful message, but this is the message that has to go to the world and somebody has to give it. So, we have to do this and that's just... Someone has to do the hard yards, brother. Just got to get down and give them the straight truth.

So tonight I want to unpack the hour of His judgment has come and what I see is really going on. I want to offer you three lines of thought. Three lines of thought. Let's see if I can get this to... Oh, I have to come over here.

The first line of thought. I hope you can read. Can you read Australian?

Congregation: Yeah.

Is that guile?

Congregation: Peter's ladder.

Peter's ladder. You got that. That's the first line of thought that I want to work through. Second line of thought, seven churches. Third line of thought. I'll just do abbreviations. It's a book of the Bible. Which one?

Congregation: Song of Solomon.

Song of Solomon. Three lines of thought. The point, the first... The way we lay out these three lines of thought is that I John 4:8 and I John 4:16 ... Well, let's read I John 4:16.

And we have known and believe the love that God hath to us. God is-

Congregation: *Love.*

... love. And the that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him. God is love.

The story of the sanctuary, the story of the gospel, is the reconciliation of the human soul with their heavenly Father. Which means that if we, being reconciled to God, we are approaching love. Is that right?

This approach towards love... I want to follow this through. Let's start with Peter's letter. Let's go to II Peter 1:5. "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness..." Kings James says "charity". It's *agape*. Love.

So, let's go through these. We've got add to your faith virtue, and add to your virtue knowledge, and add to your knowledge-

Congregation: *Temperance.*

... temperance, add to your Temperance-

Congregation: *Patience.*

... patience, add to your patience-

Congregation: *Godliness.*

... godliness. Godliness? Brotherly kindness. I have to bend down. Number seven. Seven points in the letter. Love.

Congregation: *Agape.*

And that love is *agape*. *Agape* is a love that gives without any manipulation on the part of the receiver or anything within the receiver that deserves, merits, warrants, whatever word you want to use, receiving love from that giver. It's benevolent love.

So, in Peter's ladder we have this progression towards God. Is that right? These are the steps, virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and love. This, Peter's ladder, is a love story. You'll find this story in the sanctuary. I've tried to detail parts of this in My Beloved.

Congregation: *[Inaudible].*

Diligence. You've got diligence in there, have you? Which one? Number zero, diligence. Add to your faith. Add to your faith virtue.

Congregation: *Yeah, do all things with diligence.*

Do all of them with diligence. Receive all of things?

Congregation: *With diligence.*

Receive as you fall in love.

Congregation: *[Inaudible].*

It's just setting up a line of thinking that this is a love story that's leading you towards God. These are the steps that Peter, by the inspiration of the spirit, is laying out for us. It's a progression towards our heavenly father. It's the same thing as when you... You could add... When you first step on through the sanctuary and you see the gift, the righteousness of God manifested in the person of Jesus Christ the lamb. You see virtue. And you can move through these toward the most holy place. I'm not going to go into them now.

Now, let's go to the seven churches. Revelation 2 and 3. Now, the seven churches as we have understood from the midnight cry, the prophetic message that's been given to God's people, the seven churches have a special application covering the period of church history. This journey here we would naturally understand to be within one's individual experience. Is that right? This is the process that we're walking towards our heavenly Father in Christ Jesus that it speaks to an individual experience.

The churches of Revelation speak to us of a corporate experience from the time of Christ right through to the second coming of God's church. We can look at each of the churches and we can draw a personal application and there can be a personal understanding following through those seven churches, but there is a corporate story.

How many people have seen Nader Mansour's Baptism for the Dead? Anyone see that?

Congregation: *Yeah.*

If you haven't seen that have a look. It's another way of addressing corporate humanity, a corporate experience, where a group of people at the end of time go through an experience on behalf of the entire group of God's children.

So, let's go through the seven churches. We've got Ephesus. Now, Ephesus ... Do you know the meaning of the work Ephesus? Desirable. Virtuous. Can you see a connection? A pure church cannot bear those who ... What does it say? I know thy works, and thy labour, and they patients, and how thy connect bear them which are evil. And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and hast found them to be liars. They were very zealous to protect the gospel.

What's interesting, and I'll mention this point here, is because of the story of coming to *agape* in the corporate experience actually begins with *agape* because the church was exposed to a demonstration of the love of God never seen before. And that Spirit through Mary Magdalene coming out to the other disciples and the rest of God's people. In the Pentecostal experience there is a coming together and experiencing *agape* through the Pentecostal experience. So, the church begins with *agape*. But what happens?

Verse 4, "Never the less I have somewhat against thee because thou has left thy first-

Congregation: *Love.*

Agape. A tragedy occurs. The rest of the story of the seven churches is coming back to that love. So, we have Smyrna. What does Paul say in Philippians? He talks about What is it? Philippians 3. "That I may

know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering." You're brought into a knowledge of Christ, the fellowship, a knowledge. Did Smyrna obtain knowledge in laying down their lives for the Lord Jesus? You see? Can you start to see a bit of the parallel?

What's the third church?

Congregation: Pergamos.

Pergamos. What's going on in Pergamos? Pergamos is having difficulty with sexual immorality? Food offered to idols? Is that right? They're temperance issues, aren't they? About what you eat and moral issues? Temperance. God's people are challenged in these challenges that are going on in constant time of Constantine and the church is being challenged on its temperance and it's being

Let's read. In Pergamos. Verse 14, "But I have a few things against it because there has them that hold the doctrine of Balaam who taught Balaam to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed unto idols." That's not temperate. "And to commit fornication. So hast though also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which things I hate." Basically, no victory over sin. We could add a lot more to that, but there's a temperance issue going on. And so, we're starting to see a parallel.

What's really interesting is when we come to the next church. Now, this church covers how many years? It's varying, but Pergamos typically goes up the beginning of the 1260 year period. Some take Thyatira or right through to the end of 1798 others to the period of Reformation. It's at least 1,00 years. It's a long, long time.

One of the things that Jesus says to Thyatira. Verse 19, "I know thy works, and thy charity, and thy service, and thy faith, and thy patience." The wearing away of the saints develops patience. Add to your temperance patience.

But in this time period something surfaces again that has been missing for a little while and I read it before. "I know thy works and they *agape*." *Agape* surfaces maybe within the Waldenses, people that were not afraid of death.

Agape disappeared in Ephesus, but it briefly reappears in the time of... Well, maybe it was over a long period of time. But he says, "I know thy *agape*. You're manifesting my benevolent love and you're dealing with the great apostacy that's going on within the church at this time."

Next church. Now, the time period of status in my understanding, relates to the Protestant Reformation. We see at this particular time the growth of the anabaptists and the pietistic movements. And piety is? Godliness.

A godliness comes to God's people at this time. In the corporate experience of God's people this ladder is being followed. The very devoted lives of the Pietists and the Puritans was out of this experience that the pilgrim fathers came. They're out of a pietistic movement. So, we have godliness.

Now, the next one is... You're going to see the parallel straightaway. Philadelphia. Which actually means?

Congregation: Brotherly love.

Brotherly love. Brotherly kindness. The word here is the Greek is *philia, philias, phileo*. *Phileo* is love of the brethren. It is water that finds its own level. It is mutual respect, mutual admiration. You get the idea of *phileo*? In some respects, it's a recognition of equality in some respects or well it's ...

Congregation: *Philanthropy.*

Philanthropy. There were go.

Congregation: *A friend.*

A friend. A friend. A close friend.

Congregation: *The bible mentions familio.*

Familio, yeah. Close association. Okay?

Now, if you're following this list and it's coming down in this manner, what's the next church?

Congregation: *Laodicea.*

Are we going to put that next to *agape*?

I want to show you a few things that give me some confidence that Laodicea is going to manifest this kind of love. And that relates to our final experience in the Song of Solomon.

Come of over to Song of Solomon. I hope that as we start to build this structure that the points will start to come home for us.

Now, what I did is that I read the Septuagint, the LXX, because, of course, it's got the Greek. So I'm looking to see the words in the Greek that are saying *agape*. What we find happening is in Song of Solomon 2:5. It says, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love." That sounds so good, doesn't it?

Now I used to have the understanding that this actually meant that I'm so overwhelmed with love that-

Congregation: *Lovesick.*

Adrian ([28:01](#)):

... I'm lovesick, but that's not actually ... Again, I footnote Robert Wheeland. His expression or what he has commented on this is I am diseased of love. I am diseased or weak. Weak in *agape*. Now, hang on. What happened to Ephesus? Lost your first love. Weak in *agape*. Diseased. A falling away from the truth.

Going on in Song of Solomon 2:7, "I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my *agape*, till he please." *Agape* goes to sleep within the church and we don't see it rise again until Thyatira where it mentions in the seven churches, "I know your *agape*." When you read in Smyrna and Pergamos it doesn't mention *agape*.

And then, in Song of Solomon 3:1-4 it says, "By night on my bed I sought him who my soul loveth. I sought him, but found him not. I will arise and go about the city and the streets and in the broad ways. I will seek him whom my soul loveth. I sought him, but I found him not." She's looking for *agape*. "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him." Fond him. Thyatira.

And then 5:8. We come over to 5:8. "I charge you oh daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved that you tell him that I am sick of love." Diseased again. Loss. What happens to Sardis? You have a name that you lived, but you are no *agape*.

A little footnote here in regard to the church in Sardis. There is much said about the glory of the reformation. You have a name that you live, but the reformation in many respects joined itself and it used the force of the state. It became a state church like the Catholic church had done, but you are dead. You have a name that you lived, but you're dead.

There are many good things that have come out of the reformation, the pietistic movement, all those things, but as Sardis tells us you're not who you think you are. It says again in 8:4... I'm just coming down here. "I charge you oh daughters of Jerusalem that you stir not up nor awake my love till he please."

And then, we come to the culmination in Song of Solomon 8:5 where it says... Or verse 6. "Set me as a seal upon thing heart, as a seal upon thing arm, for *agape* is as strong as death. Jealousy is as cruel as the grave. The calls there are the calls of a fire which has the most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench *agape*. Neither can the floods drown it. If a man would lose all the substance of his house for *agape*, it would utterly be condemned."

The book at the end of Song of Solomon is the triumph of *agape* against the odds, which is so we lose it again and then we find it again. And it uses the word set me as a seal. A sealing. A sealing into *agape*. Can you see that?

What's interesting is in Song of Solomon 5:2. I want to make a connection, just coming back to 5:2. It says, "I will sleep, but my heart waketh. It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh." Behold I stand at the door and... Where is that from? Laodicea. "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I'll come into him and sup with him and he with me." There is an illusion here which is picked up in the book of Laodicea.

Now, having established that, I want to come to this point of judgment because Laodicea means people of the...

Congregation: Judgment.

Judgment. Judging of the people.

Now, I want to share with you and you may have heard this before, but I want to share with you a different angle, a different perception of what judgment is really about and what is actually going on in the investigative judgment Because investigative judgment... Daniel seven, "I saw the son of man coming to the ancient of days and to him was given a kingdom, and a dominion, and glory, and power."

Another way of describing this, the bride groom goes off to receive the bride. The bride is being made up as the judgment is set. The books are open. Who is part of the bride? he goes to receive his bride. Investigative judgment. There's only one question that the bridegroom has for the bride.

Well, let's read it because Jesus spoke it to Peter in John chapter 21. Now, in the English translation it completely misses what's really going on here. Completely misses it. Verse 15, "So, when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Lovest. What word in the Greek?

Congregation: Agape.

The only question that the bridegroom has for the bride is, do you love me? Do you love me? Do you *agape* me? And when He's asking that question, we've been talking a lot about this, He's not talking about keeping. He's talking about receiving. Do you see in me *agape*? Are you receiving from me my *agape*? Do you *agape* me?

"He said unto him, "Yeah, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." What word is this? *Phileo*. What's going on? He got asked the question, do you *agape* me? And he says, "Yeah, Lord, I *phileo* you." You're my friend. You mean a lot to me. But can you see in that statement there's, just stay right there.

This is where we come back to the spirit of Cain. I *phileo* you. Lord, if you really knew me, you wouldn't want to be that close to me. I *phileo* you.

Remember when they caught the fish and he falls at the feet of Jesus? What does he say? "Depart from me." But he's hanging onto his feet. He's a confused man like all of us. I want that relationship with him, but I'm so bad. I'm so evil.

This is after the crucifixion. "Peter, do you *agape* me?" Lord, but you saw what I did to you. I did everything wrong. I cursed you. You cannot be asking me to *agape* you. I am not worthy of that relationship. My iniquity is greater than can be forgiven. Who is sovereign? Who is sovereign?

"He saith unto him, feed my lambs." What Peter just did then was hurtful, but Jesus doesn't let go. "He says unto him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, *agape* thou me?" The Saviour doesn't give up. I want you to be part of my bride Peter. I want you to be part of the bride. He reaches out again. You know when you reach out to someone and you're opening your entire heart to them, and they say no? That hurts. But he asks again.

"He saith unto him, yea, Lord, thou knowest that I *phileo* you." Just... Can you picture the scene? He's holding him out. I respect you. You're my friend. You're my master. I'll serve you all my life. Whatever you want me to do I'll do it. I'll kill for you, I'll lay down my life for you, but I can't get that close to you because you couldn't love me. I'm a bad person.

"He saith unto him, feed my sheep, for the hour of his judgment is come." There's only one question, do you *agape* me? It's fearful, but it's not in the way we think it's fearful. Not in the way I thought it was fearful. I knew thee that thou art a hard man.

Now, verse 17, "He saith unto him the third time, Simon son of Jonas, Lovest thou me?" What word? Simon son of Jonas, *phileo* thou me? Is that all? Peter, is that it?

Let me show you the connection to Laodicea. 3:19, "As many as I *phileo* I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore and repent." Repent of keeping your distance from me. Stop allowing your sins to come between you and me. I've paid the price. You see? As many as I *phileo*.

It's not enough. Philadelphia falls short. Broadway kindness is not enough. It's got to be *agape*. Does that speak to you? It really speaks to me about what the issue and the judgment really is.

What is the issue and the judgment? Can I allow myself... Can I fully open myself to Him knowing everything that I know about myself and knowing that He knows everything about myself, can I still allow that kind of intimacy to exist between myself and Himself knowing what I am?

That's what the judgment is about. That's the first angel's message as I understand it. That's what it means to come into the most holy place. To come into the most holy place you're going to be asked a question, do you *agape* me?

The only way you can say yes to that question is to behold *agape*, and believe in *agape*, and trust in *agape*, and to know that God is *agape*. If you don't know that, if you can't see that, then you can't even answer the question.

The good news for Peter is that in I Peter 4:8, "Above all things have fervent *agape* among yourselves for *agape* shall cover the multitude of sins. There's the answer.

In closing, we come back and I'll touch more again on this story again tomorrow, but the reason why wherever this gospel of the kingdom is preached that this story must also be taught is because Mary Magdalene describes victory in the judgment. Victory in the judgment. A woman of poor reputation. A woman that had failed.

Just a little side note and I'm probably edging into tomorrow, but when Mary had broken the alabaster box and she began to feel the irritation in the room, the Spirit of Prophecy says the thing that she feared the most was who? Do you know? Was her sister. Martha. Martha, Martha.

She feared her sister because her sister was good. Her sister could work out the *phileo* path. She had it all worked out. She had the market cornered. There was no hope for Mary. She could never do what Martha did.

But as I said previously as Ellen White has expressed it, "Oh, how I love him." I love him and I see in him such matchless charm. Beholding *agape*. That's what Mary Magdalene saw. And in beholding she became changed and she demonstrated what her master was about to demonstrate. She gave everything.

That's why this story must be told wherever the gospel is told because that's how you get through the judgment. That's how you answer the question. But where are you going to get an alabaster box from? You can inherit it.

So, Jesus stands at the door and knocks and he says, "Do you *agape* me?" Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we just thank you that you have a way through Scripture to be able to get through the layers behind the smiling face, behind the statements and expressions of love to get to the real issue about whether we're willing to believe that you could actually *agape* us. That you could love us knowing what we know about ourselves and with the accuser of the brethren constantly speaking in our mind, "You are not good enough. Try harder. Work harder. Perfect your routine. Get up earlier. Read more. Talk to more people. Hand out more brochures. Climb the ladder." This constant barrage. There's only one question to answer. Do you see something in me? What do you see in my eyes? Do you see that I'm pushing you harder?

Father, reveal to us the Spirit of Jesus. Help us to understand what the judgment really is about. I know for myself I'm so prone to be like Peter, "Yea, Lord, I *phileo* you." Even if I say the words *agape*, there's still this tendency. Cleans thou me from secret thoughts that only your love will be revealed in my life and in the lives of my brethren. Help us Lord to believe in the one who alone is *agape*, the Son of the living God, because He has received it from you. I think you in Jesus name. Amen.