

Our Prophetic Message



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Revelation 10; Dan. 12:4–9; Revelation 14; 11:17, 18; Revelation 13; Gen. 7:11; 11:1–9; Jeremiah 50, 51.*

Memory Text: “Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water’ ” (*Revelation 14: 6, 7, NKJV*).

The judgment message of Daniel 7 and 8 links directly to the great controversy scenario depicted in Revelation 12–14. Here we find the three angels’ messages, which contain the themes of creation, judgment, and gospel (*Rev. 14:6–12*). These texts present God’s urgent and final call to prepare for the second coming of Jesus.

The message of the first angel is indeed the “everlasting gospel” because it’s the same truth that the apostles preached when they said that people “should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them” (*Acts 14:15, NKJV; compare with Act 4:24*). Highlighting the importance of the message is the fact that the word *gospel* itself appears only here in the book of Revelation. Whatever we preach about end-time events, we must make certain that the “gospel” is at the core.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 14.*

Time of Disappointment

Read Revelation 10. What is the message of the angel with the little scroll? What does it mean to “prophecy again”?

The portrayal of the angel recalls the description of Christ (*Rev. 1:13–16*) and of the divine-like “man in linen” in Daniel’s last vision (*Dan. 10:5, 6; 12:5–7*), suggesting that they are identical. In Daniel 12:6, 7, He swore by the One who lives forever as He gave the prophecy of three and a half times (1,260 years). This is a repetition of the crucial prophecy given in Daniel 7:25, describing that God’s people would face terrible persecution, another truth that is repeated in Daniel 12:7, as well.

The book of Daniel was supposed to be sealed until the end of time. Then it would be opened, and many would gain knowledge from it (*Dan. 12:4–9*). When the prophesied period of 1,260 years ended, the time had come to open the book for further knowledge. This is symbolized by the open book in the hand of the angel in Revelation 10. From then on, Daniel’s prophecies were to be better understood.

At the same time, Revelation 10 reveals that the experience would not be totally pleasant. John ate the book as commanded, and it was sweet in his mouth but bitter to his stomach. John stands symbolically for the people who internalized the book of Daniel. This prophetic description, we believe, was fulfilled in the Millerite movement, which arose in the first half of the nineteenth century amid great worldwide interest in end-time events. It also describes the bitter disappointment of those who understood that the long-time prophecies in Daniel referred to their time, but not in the way they had first thought. The “2,300 evenings and mornings” did not signal the return of Christ but, rather, the beginning of the great judgment scene of Daniel 7.

Right after the bitter experience, John was told to “prophecy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings” (*Rev. 10:11, NASB*). This is being fulfilled as Seventh-day Adventists preach the “everlasting gospel” to the world.

Disappointment isn’t alien to Christians, especially when they misinterpret the meaning of events. Certainly the experience of the disciples between their Master’s death and His resurrection was a disappointment. Such was the experience of the Millerites in 1844. How can we handle disappointments without losing our faith? What Bible promises can you hold on to during your own times of disappointment?

Fear God!

The first angel's message tells us to "fear God." What does that mean? See *Ps. 34:7–22*.

Fear could be understood in two ways. First, there is a fear that shows itself in reverence and respect. This kind is what the first angel wants to bring to our attention. Those who fear God are true believers in Him (*Rev. 11:18*). To fear God means to honor Him (*Rev. 14:7*), praise Him (*Rev. 19:5*), obey Him (*Rev. 14:12*), and glorify His name (*Rev. 15:4*). The fear of God in the first angel's message also acknowledges God as Judge and as Creator, and it calls us to worship Him as such.

Second, there is a fear in the sense of being afraid that sooner or later God will judge this world. To the unfaithful, the message of the judgment is a message of terror. That's why we often call the three angels' messages God's last warning to the world. Inherent in the very notion of a "warning" is something to be feared, and if we read about that which the lost will face, they indeed do have something to fear.

However, as long as mercy is available, God always desires to move the lost to repentance, and the fear of God could be an incentive to start seeking Him (*see Rev. 11:13*). Though ultimately a saving relationship with God is one based on love, sometimes people need a good dose of fear to open their eyes. And if it takes a warning to get their attention, why not?

We know that "God is love," and nothing reveals this love more than the Cross. We know, too, that God loves this world, and it must pain Him tremendously to see what sin has done to it. A God of love and justice isn't going to sit by forever and let evil go unpunished. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (*Heb. 10:31, NKJV*). How can we strike the right balance in understanding both God's love for us and understanding His wrath against the evil that has done us all so much harm?

The Rage of Nations

Read Revelation 14:7. What judgment is this verse talking about?

The judgment proclaimed here begins before the return of Christ, which is described in Revelation 14:14–20. It is, therefore, the same as the pre-Advent judgment of Daniel 7. Its beginning, which Daniel 8:14 anchors in the year 1844, coincides with the fact that the three angels' messages call people to worship God and turn away from the beast and its "image." This "image" came into existence only after the prophetic 42 months, as with the 1,260 days (because they are the same thing), which ended in A.D. 1798 (*Rev. 13:3–5, 12–14*).

As the final call in Revelation 14:6–12 goes out, the door of mercy is still open, because people are still being called to turn away from Babylon and worship the true God.

What does God's judgment encompass? *Rev. 11:17, 18.*

God reacts to the rage of the nations by revealing His power. Revelation 13 depicts this rage, which Satan's wrath has incited (*Rev. 12:17*). From the perspective of the oppressed believers, whose perennial plea is the call for divine judgment (*Rev. 6:10*), the judgment might seem long overdue. However, it begins at the prophesied time, and the eschatological Day of Atonement takes its course all according to God's plan.

Revelation 11:17, 18 gives a short overview of God's judgment. It begins in heaven and is brought to earth, when God destroys the wicked powers that corrupted humanity (*Rev. 19:2*). God's wrath originates in the heavenly sanctuary and is poured out in the seven plagues (*Revelation 15–18*).

At the Second Advent, God will also reward the faithful (*Rev. 22:12*). Finally, God judges the dead and eradicates evil (*Rev. 20:11–15*). When all is over, God's character stands vindicated before the onlooking universe. Everyone can see that He is just and fair in all His ways. For now, our challenge is to cling to Him with all our hearts and souls and minds, trusting that all this will come to pass in God's appointed time.

Worship the Creator

The heart of the book of Revelation is about worship. While the dragon, the beast from the sea, and the beast from the earth (often called “the false trinity”) join forces to unite the world in worshipping them (see *Rev. 13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:9, 11*), God calls the human race to worship the Creator (*Rev. 14:7*). Those who do not worship the “image of the beast” risk losing their temporal lives (*Rev. 13:15; see also Daniel 3*), while those who do worship that image lose eternal life (*Rev. 14:9–11*).

What a choice!

Read Revelation 14:12. What does this teach us about the role of God’s commandments in the final conflict?

Worship is inextricably connected with God’s commandments. Revelation 13 and 14 are full of allusions to the Ten Commandments: “image” (*Rev. 13:14, 15; 14:9, 11*), idolatry (*Rev. 13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:9, 11*), blasphemy (*Rev. 13:1, 5, 6*), the Sabbath (*Rev. 14:7*), murder (*Rev. 13:10, 15*), and adultery (*Rev. 14:4, 8*). The final “contest will be between the commandments of God and the commandments of men.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 188.

Since the rise of the theory of evolution, it has become particularly important for us to uphold and affirm our belief in a six-day Creation. This teaching is the foundation of our worship of the Lord as Creator. Evolution, even a kind that purports to believe in the Bible, guts Seventh-day Adventism of all that it stands for. Without Creation, the belief in the “everlasting gospel,” among other teachings (such as the Sabbath), is seriously compromised, even negated.

The verse that describes God as having “made heaven and earth, [and] the sea” alludes to the Sabbath commandment (*Exod. 20:11*). The Sabbath is the central issue in the conflict over God’s commandments. As with no other commandment, the designated day of worship is suited for a test of loyalty because it cannot be deduced by logical reasoning. We keep it only because God has commanded us to do so. Creation also goes hand in hand with judgment. The phrase “springs of water” (*Rev. 14:7*) alludes to the Flood (*Gen. 7:11*) and points to God as the righteous Judge of the world (*2 Pet. 3:5–7*).

Nothing we believe as Seventh-day Adventists makes sense when taken apart from the Lord as Creator, and nothing in the Bible is as clear a sign of God’s creatorship as the Sabbath. How seriously do you take the Sabbath? How can you have a deeper experience with the Lord through obedience to this commandment?

The “Patience” of the Saints

The second and third angels’ messages of Revelation are a warning to all who do not heed the divine call of the first angel’s message. If people continue on their wrong path, they will partake of God’s seven last plagues, which are seen as “the wine of the wrath of God” (*Rev. 14:10*), and this wine will be poured out on those who remain in Babylon.

In the Bible, Babylon stands for rebellion against God (*Gen. 11:1–9; Jeremiah 50, 51*). Babylon arrogantly assumes the place of God and is the enemy of God’s people. By the time of the New Testament, Babylon had become a code word for Rome (*1 Pet. 5:13*). In the book of Revelation, the harlot Babylon is a religious-political power in opposition to God and to His people and, as such, attempts to control the world. Revelation 13:15–17 describes the “Babylonian crisis” when the beastly powers of Revelation 13 join forces to persecute the remnant of God. Babylon is thus a symbol of the end-time alliance of apostate churches together with the corrupt political powers of the world.

The message of the three angels calls God’s followers in Babylon to come out and join the faithful and visible end-time remnant of God (*Rev. 18:4, 5*). Yes, there is still a faithful remnant in Babylon, and they need to hear the Seventh-day Adventist end-time message.

As we saw yesterday, Revelation 14:12 clearly depicts God’s faithful remnant. The “perseverance,” or “patience,” of the saints does not describe so much a passive endurance of hostile activities but, rather, a steadfast awaiting of Christ. The believers not only follow the commandments but also proclaim them to the world.

At the same time, the “faith of Jesus” can refer to the believers’ “faith in Jesus” (*NASB*) and also to Jesus’ loyalty that carries the believers faithfully through. The end of the third angel’s message directs our eyes to Christ. Through His merits and His loyalty, God’s people are able to persevere and keep His commandments. “Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel’s message, and I have answered, ‘It is the third angel’s message in verity.’ ”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 372.

However central the commandments of God are to the final crisis, Ellen G. White says that justification by faith is the third angels’ message “in verity.” How does this help us to understand why, first and foremost, we must rely only on Jesus and His merits for salvation as the great hope that will get us through the final crisis?

Further Study: For the view of the three angels' messages by Ellen G. White, see the following: for the first angel's message, see "Heralds of the Morning," pp. 299–316, "An American Reformer," pp. 317–342, "Light Through Darkness," pp. 343–354, "A Great Religious Awakening," pp. 355–374, in *The Great Controversy*. For the second angel's message, see "Prophecies Fulfilled," pp. 391–408, "What Is the Sanctuary?" pp. 409–422, "In the Holy of Holies," pp. 423–432, in *The Great Controversy*. For the third angel's message, see "God's Law Immutable," pp. 433–450, "A Work of Reform," pp. 451–460, in *The Great Controversy*.

"Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world. The proclamation of the third angel's message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath truth. This truth, with others included in the message, is to be proclaimed; but the great center of attraction, Christ Jesus, must not be left out. It is at the cross of Christ that mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other. The sinner must be led to look to Calvary; with the simple faith of a little child he must trust in the merits of the Saviour, accepting His righteousness, believing in His mercy."—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, pp. 156, 157.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Warnings play a significant role in our society and in our daily dealings with each other. In most cases, warnings are for the good of those being warned. How can we present the fearful warnings found in the three angels' messages in a way that reveals the wonderful hope that they offer?
- ❷ Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and evolution are inherently contradictory. To paraphrase a fundamentalist atheist, evolution is an "acid" that erodes everything it touches. This would especially include the three angels' messages of Revelation 14, which have the central theme of Creation and Redemption, two truths nullified by evolution, even a "theistic" kind. (Who would want to worship a theos who created like that, anyway)? Why must we as a church never allow the false science of evolution to make any inroad into our teachings?
- ❸ In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the three angels' messages of Revelation 14 are a treasured beacon that encapsulates the divine end-time message that we are called to proclaim. Although many church members have certainly heard about these messages, some may still have questions about what they really mean. How would you explain briefly the meaning of the last call of God to this world, and what it entails?

The Ghost Dancer, Part 1

I am Daniel—at least that is the name I have taken. I live in the country of Benin, the birthplace of voodoo.

My grandmother was a voodoo priestess; so was my mother. People would come and whisper their problem or their wish into a seashell, which the priestess throws on the ground. How it lands tells the priestess what the problem is. The priestess tells the person what they must do and bring to receive what they wish. The person pays with money, alcohol, or an animal.

My father worshiped the spirits of dead people and called on them to bring peace to people who were troubled.

My father initiated me into the secrets of voodoo. He invited me to be a ghost dancer, a person who dances during certain voodoo ceremonies. He told me that if I danced well, people would give me money, and he warned me that if others became jealous of me, they would try to kill me. I agreed to join the ghost dancers.

The dancing ghosts were hired to perform for a ceremony. We all danced, but I danced very well and got a lot of money. I didn't think anyone was jealous, but when I returned home I did not feel well.

My legs swelled and became painful. My father suspected that someone had put a curse on me. He said it was urgent that I get treatment immediately, or I could die. I was afraid. I went to an old voodoo priest, and a few days later I felt better. But I decided this devil dancing was too dangerous and I needed to get out of it—fast.

I had met some Christians, but I didn't think their God was any different from voodoo gods. But after my brush with death, I wasn't willing to make fun of anyone's God. So when I heard an evangelist speaking one day, I stopped to listen.



I felt that the speaker spoke right to me. I continued to attend the meetings, and when the speaker invited people to follow Jesus Christ, I decided I must obey. But I knew my parents would be angry, so I didn't tell them.

I studied the Bible with the pastor who had spoken at the meetings. When I was ready, I went to a distant city to be baptized. I realized that sooner or later, I'd have to tell my parents. But I didn't look forward to it.

(Continued next week.)

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