

Our Prophetic¹ Message



SABBATH—DECEMBER 7

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Revelation 10; Daniel 12:4–9; Revelation 14; Revelation 11:17, 18; Revelation 13; Genesis 7:11; Genesis 11:1–9; Jeremiah 50; Jeremiah 51.

MEMORY VERSE: “I saw another angel. He was flying high in the air. He came to tell everyone on earth the good news that will always be true. He told it to every nation, tribe, language and people. In a loud voice he said, ‘Have respect for God. Give him glory [praise and honor]. The hour has come for God to judge. Worship him who made the heavens and the earth. Worship him who made the sea and the springs of water’ ” (Revelation 14:6, 7, NlrV).

THE JUDGMENT MESSAGE OF DANIEL 7 AND DANIEL 8 IS CLOSELY CONNECTED TO THE GREAT CONTROVERSY (WAR BETWEEN CHRIST AND SATAN) THEME DESCRIBED IN REVELATION 12–14. Here we find the three angels' messages,² which hold the themes of Creation, judgment, and gospel³ (Revelation 14:6–12). These verses show God's final call to His people to prepare for the second coming of Jesus.

The message of the first angel is really the “everlasting gospel” (Revelation 14:6). This is because it is the same truth that the apostles (teachers and leaders) preached when they said that people “should turn from these useless [foolish] 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 Acts 4:24). The word *gospel* itself appears only here in the book of Revelation. Therefore, every time we preach about end-time events, we must make sure that the “gospel” is the center of all the messages that we preach.

1. prophetic—foretelling future events.

2. three angels' messages—God's end-time truth (read Revelation 14:6–12) for His church to give to the world in the last days.

3. gospel—good news about Jesus Christ.

SUNDAY—DECEMBER 8**TIME OF DISAPPOINTMENT
(Revelation 10)**

Read Revelation 10. What is the message of the angel with the little scroll?⁴ What does it mean to “prophecy⁵ again”?

The description of the angel reminds us of Christ (Revelation 1:13–16) and the God-like “man clothed in linen” in Daniel’s last vision (Daniel 10:5, 6; Daniel 12:5–7). The descriptions suggest that they are the same. In Daniel 12:6, 7, the Man in linen swore by “the One who lives forever” (NIRV) as He gave the prophecy⁶ of three and a half times (1,260 years). This is a repeat of the important prophecy given in Daniel 7:25. This prophecy describes how God’s people will face attacks and terrible suffering. The suffering of God’s people is mentioned in Daniel 12:7, too.

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 (Daniel 12:4–9). In other words, people would better understand Daniel’s prophecies. When the prophesied (foretold) period of 1,260 years ended, the time had come to open the book. This is symbolized (shown) by the

open book in the hand of the angel in Revelation 10.

At the same time, Revelation 10 shows that the experience would not all be pleasant. John ate the book as commanded. It was sweet in his mouth but bitter to his stomach. John is a symbol for the people who studied the book of Daniel. We believe that the prophecy of Revelation 10 was fulfilled (completed) in the Millerite movement.⁷ This movement arose in the first half of the nineteenth century when people all around the world became very interested in end-time events. The Daniel 10 prophecy also describes the bitter disappointment of those who understood that the long-time prophecies in Daniel were pointing to their time, but not as they had first thought. In other words, the “2,300 evenings and mornings” did not mean the return of Christ. Instead, they meant the beginning of the great judgment scene of Daniel 7.

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

Disappointment is nothing new to Christians. The experience of the disciples between Jesus’ death

4. scroll—a roll of “paper” that people of long ago used for writing and reading purposes. Today we use books instead of scrolls.

5. prophecy—to foretell things that will happen in the future.

6. prophecy—a message from God about what will happen in the future.

7. the Millerite movement—In the 1830s and early 1840s, there was a great religious awakening started by a man named William Miller. This sparked a great religious movement in which people believed Jesus would return in 1844. This movement ended in great disappointment. But out of it came a group of people who made a deeper study of the Bible and discovered greater truths, which led to the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

and His resurrection (return to life) 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?



John ate the book as commanded.

MONDAY—DECEMBER 9

FEAR GOD! (Psalm 34:7–22)

The first angel's message in Revelation 14:6, 7 tells us to "fear God." What does that mean? Read Psalm 34:7–22.

Fear can be understood in two ways. First, there is a fear that means deep respect. This kind is what the first angel wants us to do. Those who fear God are true believers in Him (Revelation 11:18). To fear God means to honor and worship Him (Revelation 14:7), praise Him (Revelation 19:5), obey Him (Revelation 14:12), and give His name glory (Revelation 15:4). The

fear of God in the first angel's message also recognizes God as Judge and as Creator. So, it asks us to worship Him as such.

Second, there is a fear that means 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 is why we often call the three angels' messages God's last "warning" to the world. The very idea of a "warning" is something to be feared. After all, if we read about what the lost will face, they do have something to fear.

But God always desires to encourage the lost sinners to repent (turn away from sin). And the fear of God could help the lost to start turning back to Him (read Revelation 11:13). It is true that a saving relationship with God is one based on love. But sometimes people need a taste of fear to open their eyes.

We know that "God is love." Nothing shows this love more than the Cross. We know, too, that God loves this world. It must pain Him greatly to see what sin has done to it. But a God of love and justice is not going to sit by forever and let evil go unpunished. "It is a fearful [terrible] thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31, NKJV). How can we keep the right balance between understanding God's love for us and understanding His anger against the evil that has done so much harm to us all?



The first angel's message calls us to worship God as Judge and Creator.

TUESDAY—DECEMBER 10

THE ANGER OF NATIONS (Revelation 14:7)

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

The judgment described in Revelation 14:7 begins before the return of Christ. His return is described in Revelation 14:14–20. So, this judgment is the same as the pre-Advent judgment⁸ of Daniel 7. Daniel 8:14 connects this part of judgment to the year 1844. This is supported by the fact that the three angels' messages

call people to worship God and turn away from the beast⁹ and its "image"¹⁰ or likeness. This "image," however, comes to life only after the prophetic 42 months,¹¹ as with the 1,260 days. This is because they are the same time period. This period ended in A.D. 1798 (Revelation 13:3–5, 12–14).

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

According to Revelation 11:17, 18, what does God's judgment include?

God answers the anger of the nations by showing His power. Revelation 13 describes this anger, which Satan's anger has started (Revelation 12:17). To the suffering believers, who begged for God's judgment to come (Revelation 6:10), the judgment might seem to be very late. But it begins at the right time in prophecy, and the eschatological (closing) Day of Atonement¹² follows

8. pre-Advent judgment—the judgment that takes place before Jesus' second coming. The pre-Advent judgment began in 1844 and continues until the Second Coming. The pre-Advent judgment is also called the investigative judgment. It examines the lives of all believers, living and dead, before Jesus comes to take those loyal to His name to heaven.

9. beast—a symbol of the end-time power on earth that enforces, as a sign of its power, the worship of God on a false day (Sunday or the first day of the week). Anyone who refuses to worship the beast or the sign of its power, and who chooses to keep God's true Sabbath (the seventh day) holy instead, will be threatened with death.

10. image—the image to the beast is a sign of its power, in this case a worldwide Sunday law, which it forces everyone to obey or to be put to death.

11. 42 months—if you multiply 42 months by 30 days a month, the answer will come to 1,260 days, which equals 1,260 years, according to the year-for-a-day rule of the Bible. (Read Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:5, 6.)

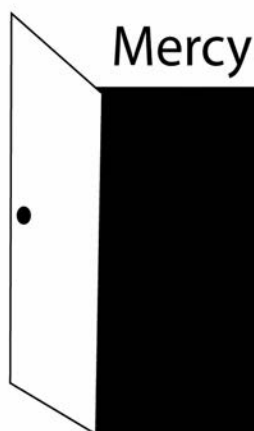
12. eschatological Day of Atonement—the time in which God rewards us for the choice we have made to love and serve Him. We are free to accept or reject God's gift of mercy to take away our sins. Only the blood of Jesus can save us from sin. Those who accept Jesus as their Savior receive freedom from all the sin they have ever done and will live with Him always. But those who reject His mercy choose instead to die for their sins. On the day of judgment (or atonement), God will make clear the reasons for the choice of every believer, both the living and the dead.

God's plan exactly when it should.

Revelation 11:17, 18 gives a short review of God's judgment. It begins in heaven and is brought to earth, when God destroys the wicked powers that caused man to sin (Revelation 19:2). God's anger starts in the heavenly sanctuary¹³ and is poured out in the seven plagues (Revelation 15–18).

At the Second Advent (Coming), God will also reward the faithful (Revelation 22:12). Finally, God judges the dead and removes evil (Revelation 20:11–15). When all is over, God's character is cleared in front of all the people in the universe. Everyone can see that God is just (right) and fair in all His ways.

For now, our challenge is to hold on to Him with all our heart and soul and mind. We need to trust that all this will come to pass in God's chosen time.



When the final call to turn from Babylon goes out, the door of mercy is still open.

WEDNESDAY—DECEMBER 11

WORSHIP THE CREATOR (Revelation 14:12)

The heart of the book of Revelation is about worship. The dragon,¹⁴ the beast from the sea,¹⁵ and the beast from the earth¹⁶ (often the three together are called “the false three”) join forces to unite (bring together as one) the world in worshiping them (read Revelation 13:4, 8, 12, 15; Revelation 14:9, 11). Meanwhile, God calls all humans to worship the Creator (Revelation 14:7). Those who do not worship the “image of the beast” risk losing their lives on this earth (Revelation 13:15; read also Daniel 3). But those who do worship that image lose eternal life (Revelation 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 war between Christ and Satan?

Worship is closely connected with God's commandments. Revelation 13 and 14 are full of words that remind us of the words of the Ten Commandments: for example, “image” (Revelation 13:14, 15 and Revelation 14:9, 11), idols and idol worship (Revelation 13:4, 8, 12, 15 and Revelation 14:9, 11), blasphemy¹⁷ (Revelation 13:1, 5, 6), the Sabbath (Revelation 14:7),

13. heavenly sanctuary—the place in heaven where Jesus works as our High Priest before the throne of God.

14. dragon—a symbol of the devil or Satan (read Revelation 12:9).

15. beast from the sea—a symbol or word-picture of papal Rome (read Revelation 13:1–10).

16. beast from the earth—a symbol of the United States in end-time prophecy (read Revelation 13:11–18).

17. blasphemy—to boast by saying, “I am God,” or “I am equal to God.”

murder (Revelation 13:10, 15), and adultery¹⁸ (Revelation 14:4, 8). It is clear that, in the words of Ellen G. White, the final “contest will be between the commandments of God and the commandments of men.” —Adapted from *Prophets [Special Messengers] and Kings*, page 188.

Since the theory of evolution¹⁹ became popular, it has been very important for us to stand strong in our belief in a six-day Creation. This teaching is the foundation of our worship of the Lord as Creator. Without Creation, however, the belief in the “everlasting gospel” and other teachings (such as the Sabbath) would be difficult to defend.

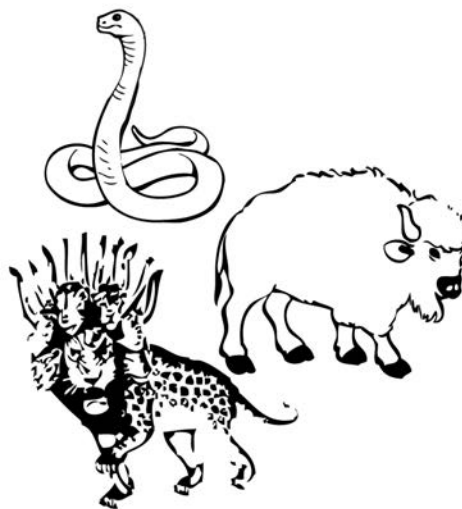
The wording of Revelation 14:7 that describes God as having “made heaven, and earth, and the sea” points to the Sabbath commandment (Exodus 20:11). This is because the Sabbath is the central issue in the war over God’s commandments. The chosen day of worship (the Sabbath) is suited for a test of loyalty. We keep it only because God has commanded us to keep it. Creation also goes hand in hand with judgment. The wording “springs of water” (Revelation 14:7, NKJV) suggests the Flood (Genesis 7:11) and points to God as the Righteous (Holy) Judge of the world (2 Peter 3:5–7).

Nothing we believe as Seventh-day Adventists makes sense if we do away with the Lord as Creator.

18. adultery—sex outside of marriage.

19. evolution—a theory (belief) that the differences between modern plants and animals are because of changes that happened by a natural process over a very long time.

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 dragon, the sea beast, and the beast from the earth join forces to unite the world in worshipping them.

THURSDAY—DECEMBER 12

THE “PATIENCE OF THE SAINTS” (Revelation 14:12)

The second and third angels’ messages of Revelation are a warning to all who do not listen to God’s call in the first angel’s message. If people continue on their wrong path, they will have to suffer God’s seven last plagues. The last plagues are seen as “the wine of the wrath [anger] of God” (Revelation 14:10). And this

wine will be poured out on those who remain in Babylon.

In the Bible, Babylon stands for rebellion against God (Genesis 11:1–9; Jeremiah 50; Jeremiah 51). Babylon boasts of taking God’s place and is the enemy of God’s people. By the time of the New Testament, Babylon has become a symbol for Rome (1 Peter 5:13). In the book of Revelation, the harlot (whore) Babylon is a religious-political power, which is opposed to God and to His people. And it tries to control the world. Revelation 13:15–17 describes the “Babylonian crisis [problem]” when the beastly powers of Revelation 13 join together to attack the remnant²⁰ of God. Babylon is a symbol of false churches working together with the evil political powers of the world.

The message of the three angels calls God’s followers in Babylon to come out and join the faithful end-time remnant of God (Revelation 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 pictures God’s faithful remnant. Having the “patience of the saints” does not mean putting up with evil attacks without taking a stand for the truth. Not at all. Instead, it means faithfully waiting for Christ’s return. Patience means that the believers both follow the commandments and preach them to the world.

At the same time, the “faith of Jesus” can also mean Jesus’ loy-

alty that carries the believers faithfully through the difficult closing days of the world’s history. Without a doubt, however, the end of the third angel’s message directs our eyes to Christ. Through His goodness and loyalty, God’s people are able to remain faithful and keep His commandments. “Several people have written to me, asking if the message of justification [forgiveness and cleansing] by faith is the third angel’s message. And I have answered, ‘It is truly the third angel’s message.’ ”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 372.

The commandments of God are very important in the last days as events of the end time unfold. At the same time, Ellen G. White tells us that justification by faith is truly the third angel’s message. How does this help us to understand why we must depend only on Jesus and His goodness for salvation as the great hope that will get us through the time of trouble?

FRIDAY—DECEMBER 13

ADDITIONAL STUDY: For more information from Ellen G. White about the three angels’ messages, see “Heralds of the Morning,” pages 299–316, “An American Reformer,” pages 317–342, “Light Through Darkness,” pages 343–354, “A Great Religious Awakening,” pages 355–374, in *The Great Controversy*, for the first angel’s message. For the second

20. remnant—a small group of faithful believers.

angel's message, see "Prophecies Fulfilled," pages 391–408, "What Is the Sanctuary [Home of God]," pages 409–422, "In the Holy of Holies," pages 423–432, in *The Great Controversy*. For the third angel's message, see "God's Law Immutable [Unchanging]," pages 433–450, "A Work of Reform [Change for the Better]," pages 451–460, in *The Great Controversy*.

"Of all people who claim to be Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be the first to uplift Christ before the world. The preaching of the third angel's message means the preaching of the Sabbath truth, too. This truth is to be preached with others in the message. But the great center of the message, Christ Jesus, must not be left out. It is at the cross of Christ that mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness [holiness] 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 what the Savior can do for him. He needs to accept Jesus' righteousness and believe in His mercy."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, pages 156, 157.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① Warnings play an important part

in how people mix with one another. In most cases, warnings are for the good of those being warned. How can we show the wonderful hope that the three angels' messages offer?

② No Seventh-day Adventist belief makes sense with evolution. A strong atheist once said that evolution is an "acid" that wipes out everything it touches. This would include the three angels' messages of Revelation 14. The important theme of the three angels' messages is Creation and Redemption (Jesus' sacrifice for man's salvation). These two truths are "covered up" by evolution. Why must we as a church never let the false science of evolution smear (stain) our teachings?

③ In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the three angels' messages of Revelation 14 are a lighthouse shining God's end-time message that He has asked us to preach. Many church members have certainly heard about these messages. Some may still have questions about what they really mean. How would you explain the meaning of the last call of God to this world, and what is included in it?

④ "A healthy outlook on life involves a healthy amount of fear." Do you think this is true for a Christian's life? Explain your answer.