

Part 4

The Three Angels' Messages

Chapter 11

Rev 4-5 and the Disappointment of Rev 10

Despite its title this chapter really does have a direct bearing on the three angels' messages, as its location in part 4 implies. In fact I think the reader will agree, having read it, that the relationship between the two chapters (Rev 10 and 14) is surprisingly close.

Rev 10 and the Judgment

Rev 10 describes a period in the church's history when it believes - on the basis of its study of a "little scroll" (Rev 10:2,9-10), presumably Daniel⁶² -that its mission on earth is done. It would not have to prophesy any more because Jesus was going to come and make all such witnessing activity a thing of the past. When the church learns it is mistaken about the nature of the event it expected there is a bitter disappointment.

I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour, Then I was told, 'You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings. (Rev 10:10-11)

What makes the church's experience with the little scroll turn sour? It is the fact that they must prophesy again. They find nothing distasteful in talking about Jesus, but they had hoped for more than that. They had hoped to see Him in person and be in His presence. Rev 10 describes the experience of the Millerites who preached that Christ would return sometime during 1843 (see Dan 12:12), then that the date would be October 22, 1844. But what does all of this have to do with Rev 4-5 and the judgment?

Jesus did exactly what He said He would do on the above date. "'See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,' says the Lord Almighty" (Mal 3:1). Christ was the Lord that the Millerites were seeking so actively and so publicly. They were His messengers and on October 22, 1844 He suddenly came to His temple.

⁶² The word translated "scroll" is not the same in Rev 10:2,9-10 (*biblaridion*) as it is in Rev 5:1-5,8-9 (*biblion*). The force of saying so is blunted, however, by the fact that in Rev 10:8 the word is *biblion*, as in chap. 5. Thus both words occur chap. 10 and they are used interchangeably. And yet, bringing us back to our starting point, the word used most in chap. 10 is not the same as that used exclusively in chap. 5. For further comment on the identity of this "scroll" or "book" see part 6 below ("The Spirit of Prophecy").

The prophet says "suddenly" because the coming he is talking about in the above passage would be a surprise. We have already read in Rev 10 how surprising it was for the Millerites. But there is an irony here. How could Christ's coming be a surprise to people who were going everywhere preaching about it?

They thought they would see Him come in the clouds with power and great glory, whereas what He had in mind was quite different. He came to His temple. Of course this is exactly what He said He would do, but they had misunderstood His intent. The temple He would come to so suddenly - in so surprising a manner, so unexpectedly" was not the earth where His people were looking for Him but the second apartment of the sanctuary in heaven. Christ had done what He said, but His people had misunderstood Him. Mal 3 is the natural counterpart to Rev 10.

Like Columbus discovering the New World, they thought they were finding one thing whereas in fact they were finding something else. But this does not make the Millerites' discovery any less important. Columbus did not find a new way to India, as he hoped, but what he did find nearly doubled the size of our world as it was known in his day. In the same way the Millerites' discoveries opened new theological vistas that have occupied us ever since. What they found had always been there awaiting discovery, but now - after Miller - these things could be seen and appreciated by any who chose to see and appreciate them.

Rev 10 in Relation to Rev 14 and 18

As stated above, the disappointment of God's people in Rev 10 centers on the fact that they would have to prophesy again, when they thought those days were over because of Jesus' second coming. If the operative word here is "prophesy," then what were they told to say? John does not tell us in Rev 10 nor does Daniel tell us in Dan 11 when he mentions the final giving of this very same message. Daniel does not use the word "prophecies" or "messages." Instead (in NIV) he uses the word "reports": "But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many" (vs. 44). This passage is describing the loud cry of the third angel in Rev 18.

North and east (i.e. northeast) from Egypt is the direction one would have to go in order to reach Jerusalem. This is not literal language. Here Jerusalem, as the place where the temple once stood and God was worshiped, is a code word for God's people, whoever and wherever they might be. At the time in history when this passage is fulfilled God's people are faithful Christians scattered everywhere around the circle of the globe. So let us not try to carry the geographical language too far. In any event, there were reports. It is a pity that we do not know what they say in Dan 11 or what the church is told to prophesy in Rev 10.

But we do know what the reports say! What Daniel calls "reports" John calls "messages." We can read the full text of these messages in Rev 14:6-13. The second and third messages are given again with great emphasis in Rev 18:1-8 and 9-24 respectively. More than this, we are commanded to share in the work of giving these

messages. We are the three angels - the ones commissioned to bring these three messages to the attention of a lost world.

When the judgment begins in heaven God commissions His servants on earth to let everyone know. And so they must prophesy again, telling everyone, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come" (Rev 14:7). This, incidentally, is a message they cannot give until they understand that there will be a judgment and that it will take place in heaven before Christ comes. The earliest Adventists did not preach this message until after the passing of the time in 1844. It was a message they thought they would never have to give. In any event, this is one part of what they were told to prophesy in Rev 10.

There are two other parts " in Rev 14:8 and Rev 14:9-12. The sealing up of the message in Rev 10 does not apply to the three angels' messages, but to the Millerites' misunderstanding of that portion of Daniel which led to the disappointment.⁶³ When the seven thunders spoke John started to write down they said, but was commanded not to. Here is the context for that command.

Notice that the error was exposed with a voice seven times louder than thunder, or alternatively as loud as thunder seven times over. And yet the Millerites still got this wrong! But let us not be too harsh with them. Christ warned His disciples that He "must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again" (Luke 24:7; see also Matt 16:21; Luke 13:33). When everything happened just as He said it would, and two disciples said, "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people" (Luke 24:19), Jesus answered, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" (vs. 25).

The Scriptures had clearly predicted Christ's death - the temple services predicted His death countless times every day - and so had He in talking with them, but with the event actually upon them His followers were still crushed by what happened. This same scenario was to be reenacted in a different venue some nineteen hundred years later in connection with the second coming rather than the first. The Scriptures were clear. Christ's followers should have known better, but they were still crushed when the event occurred.

We have talked about the "messages" part of the three angels' messages. Now let us talk about the "angels." It is true that angels are powerful supernatural beings, lower than God but higher than man. This, however, is not Rev 14 has in view. In the Old Testament an angel (*mal'āk*) is anyone sent on another's behalf.⁶⁴ This fact explains how

⁶³ "The special light given to John which was expressed in the seven thunders was a delineation of events which would transpire under the first and second angels' messages. It was not best for the people to know these things, for their faith must necessarily be tested" (Ellen White, SDA Bible Commentary, 7:971).

⁶⁴ The word *mal'āk*, in its various forms, occurs 213 times in the Old Testament with examples found in twenty-six of the thirty-nine books. In one case the referent is inanimate, in ninety-nine cases clearly human. Sixty-one times it refers to an angel, and fifty-two times to a divine Being which I identify with the pre-existent Christ" (Hardy, "What Does the Word *mal'āk* Mean?" Historicism No. 5/Jan 86, pp. 2-25).

the preexistent Christ can be called an Angel in many Old Testament passages.⁶⁵ Clearly He is not an angel in the sense of Greek *aggelos* (or English "angel"). Instead He is the Creator of the angels. And yet a number of inspired authors do use the Hebrew term *mal'āk* when describing Him. What this illustrates is the difference between the two words. It says nothing about the nature of Christ. The same word can be applied equally well to inanimate forces of nature, as in Ps 104:4 which says, "He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants" (see 1 Kgs 19:11-13).

The angels of Rev 14 are ordinary people who bear a message for God. In Rev 10 the ones given a message are the disappointed Millerites who would later become Seventh-day Adventists. They are told to prophesy again. This is their commission. What they tell the world is that instead of focusing attention on seeing Jesus in the sky they are to focus on Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary. There is to be a judgment in heaven before Christ comes. More than this, "the hour of his judgment has come" (Rev 14:7).

Christ will truly come in the sky with all the angel armies of heaven "and every eye will see him" (Rev 1:7), but not yet. There are other things to do first.⁶⁶ The judgment must sit. The books must be opened. And someone must say so. This is our message as Seventh-day Adventists. If we do not give it, who will? Must God raise up another people? Why should He need to? He has already done that. The three angels are those entrusted with giving the three messages. We are those angels. So let us be found faithfully doing the work He has given us.

Notice that Rev 14 bears the same relation to chaps. 4-5 that Rev 18 bears to chap. 19a. Rev 14 applies especially at the beginning of the judgment. So does Rev 4-5. Rev 18 applies especially to the end of the judgment. So does Rev 19a. The two sections (Rev 4-5 and 19a) are chiasmic counterparts of each other. When the judgment finally does end (in Rev 19a) it only remains for Christ to return immediately afterward (in Rev 19b).

So it is not only the case that we can know what John heard in Rev 10. We must take up that message ourselves so that "every nation, tribe, language and people" (Rev 14:7) can make an intelligent decision to accept what Christ has done and is doing and be a part of His kingdom. Jesus wanted to come in 1844 and could have done so shortly afterward,⁶⁷ but He is Lord of all the earth and was concerned about more than a handful of Millerites.

⁶⁵ "(a) The angel of Jehovah identifies himself with Jehovah; (b) he is identified with Jehovah by others; (c) he accepts worship due only to God. Though the phrase 'angel of Jehovah' is sometimes used in the later Scriptures to denote a merely human messenger or created angel, it seems in the Old Testament, with hardly more than a single exception, to designate the pre-incarnate Logos, whose manifestations in angelic or human form foreshadowed his final coming in the flesh" (Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* [Philadelphia: Judson, 1907], p. 319).

⁶⁶ Here is the fulfillment of Christ's words, "Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth" (Rev 3:10). He kept His followers from the hour of trial by delaying the hour of trial. It would come later and those who first gave the message of Christ's return would be spared. They had suffered enough in their own generation.

⁶⁷ "Had the purpose of God been carried out by His people in giving to the world the message of mercy, Christ would, ere this, have come to the earth, and the saints would have received (their

The message we have been describing is not well served by obscuring the relationships among Dan 7, Rev 4-5, and Rev 19a. Whatever clarifies them clarifies it, and conversely whatever obscures them obscures it. Rev 4-5 quotes Dan 7 and is parallel to Rev 19a. Let us embrace these relationships and emphasize them.

welcome into the city of God" (Ellen White, Testimonies to the Church [Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1948], 6:450).

Chapter 12

Rev 4-5 and the Three Angels' Messages of Rev 14 and 18

And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the eiders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. (Rev 14:3)

Revelation 14:1-5 corresponds more closely to an earlier passage in Rev 7:1-17 than to what follows in Rev 14:6-13. And yet because of the textual association between that and the three angels' message and because in the present model the throne scene of Rev 14:3 is the same as the judgment announced in Rev 14:7 I include a brief summary of the three messages here.

In Rev 18 the second and third messages are repeated. Thus, Rev 18:1-3 corresponds to 14:8 (the second message) and Rev 18:4-24 corresponds to 14:9-12 (the third message). The similarity extends to the amount of space each message occupies. Number 2 is short, number 3 is long. The subject matter in the two chapters is identical. The parallel is exact.

In the present context notice that Rev 14 describes the beginning of the time when the three messages would be given, while Rev 18 describes the last moments of that time. Just before Christ comes the messages are taken to the world with immense force. On the one hand we are dealing with the beginning of the judgment (see Rev 14:7), and on the other with the end of the judgment (see Rev 19:1-10). The period during which the three angels' messages are given to the world corresponds to the period during which the judgment is in session in heaven. The two events not only happen at the same time but it is a major function of the messages to call people's attention to the judgment. The two are directly related and it is our function to convey this fact.

I point out above that some of what we read in Rev 14 is repeated in Rev 18. In this regard notice two facts. First, the repetition involves only the second and third messages. The first is linked to a specific time. It announces the beginning of the judgment (see Rev 14:7) and would be out of place when the judgment is coming to an end. And so we speak of the loud cry of the third angel (not the loud cry of the first angel).⁶⁸ Actually Rev 18:1-3 is the loud cry of the second angel, since what he says

⁶⁸ "A few years later when the third angel's message had become the dominant factor in their theology, added support was given to the idea that their missionary work would succeed because the proclamation of the warning message was to take place with a "loud voice" (Rev. 14:9). Since 1850 this final future proclamation of the last warning message came to be identified by the term

corresponds to Rev 14:8. The loud cry of the third angel is found in Rev 18:4-24. Those verses correspond to and expand on the themes of Rev 14:9-12.

The second point to notice is that when Daniel refers to the last mighty efforts to give these messages he does not use that term but calls them "reports" instead (see Dan 11:44). The intent of what he says, however, is the same whatever word is used to translate it. These messages or "reports from the north and east" have so powerful an impact that the world's last usurping king of the North is infuriated by them (Dan 11:44-45). What infuriates him is the loud cry of the third angel (see Rev 18), just [before Michael stands up at the end of the judgment (see Rev 19a; Dan 12:1), prior to coming back to earth in glory (see Rev 19b).

When Michael stands up, He mounts a white horse in the language of J Rev 19:11, and leads all the angel armies out of heaven (see Rev 8:1). Here again we see Michael and His angels actively engaged in battle (see Rev 12:7; Matt 26:53; Ps 24:8). The two armies cannot confront each other until the second one arrives. When it does arrive, that is the second coming. Its arrival is brought about by His arrival. But my point here is that the subject matter of Rev 19a, which immediately precedes these events, is the end of the judgment.

'the loud cry' of the third angel or of me third angel's message" (Gerhard P. Damsteegt, Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977], p. 219; see also pp. 233,275).

Chapter 13

Brief Note on Rev 11a

In the same way that Rev 10 deals with the end of the 2300 days, Rev 11a deals with the end of the 1260 days. The one chapter brings us to 1844, the other to 1798.

There are a number of clues in regard to time in both chapters. In chap. 10 the angel says, "There will be no more delay!" (vs. 6). KJV says "that there should be time no longer." The intent cannot be that time should cease at that moment because in vs. 11 John is told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings." The fact that the church would have to do that is what made its experience so bitter in and around 1844. So this is not the end of history as we know it. But clearly something had changed. The reference is to the end of the great 2300-day time period of Dan 8. These things are discussed in another chapter.

In Rev 11a, on the other hand, we have a full range of references to the period from A.D. 538 to 1798. "They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth" (vss. 2-3). And again, "For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial" (vs. 9). Here the same period is described as a number of months, a number of days, and a number of years.

Notice two things in this regard. First, the numbers correspond on the assumption that a month is always 30 days long. We do not need to find an actual calendar on which every month is 30 days in order to appreciate the point being made. The numbers are round enough that everyone will be able to catch what they mean. And second, there is day-year symbolism in the third case. Each "day" of the prophetic period of 1,260 days itself stands for a prophetic day, i.e., for a literal year.

Notice also that this same period is mentioned again in chaps. 12 ("The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days" [Rev 12:6]) and 13 ("The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months" [Rev 13:5]), and twice in Daniel ("The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time" [Dan 7:25]; "It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed" [Dan 12:7]).

Seven times God brings us back to the 1260 days, or 42 months, or three and a half years of prophetic time. This is the Middle Ages - the period skipped over by the gap that so many of our Evangelical friends propose. If we subscribe to a gap theory we must ignore this period. If we allow the above Scriptures to interpret themselves and apply them to history in a manner consistent with other similar prophetic time periods we cannot ignore it. We cannot ignore what God lays under such heavy emphasis.

Something happened during this time (from A.D. 538 to 1798) that the church needs to understand. God requires us to understand it and to help others to come to a clear understanding of what happened then as well. This part of our message is not something we can set aside if we choose.

Above I refer to other similar prophetic time periods. Which ones are they? There are the 2300 days of Dan 8, the 70 weeks of Dan 9, and the 1,290 days and 1,335 days of Dan 12. All of these periods must be accounted for using similar principles of interpretation if we are to achieve a coherent understanding of them. If we do not, how can we convey a coherent understanding of them? The relationships among the various prophetic periods are shown below. See fig. 4.

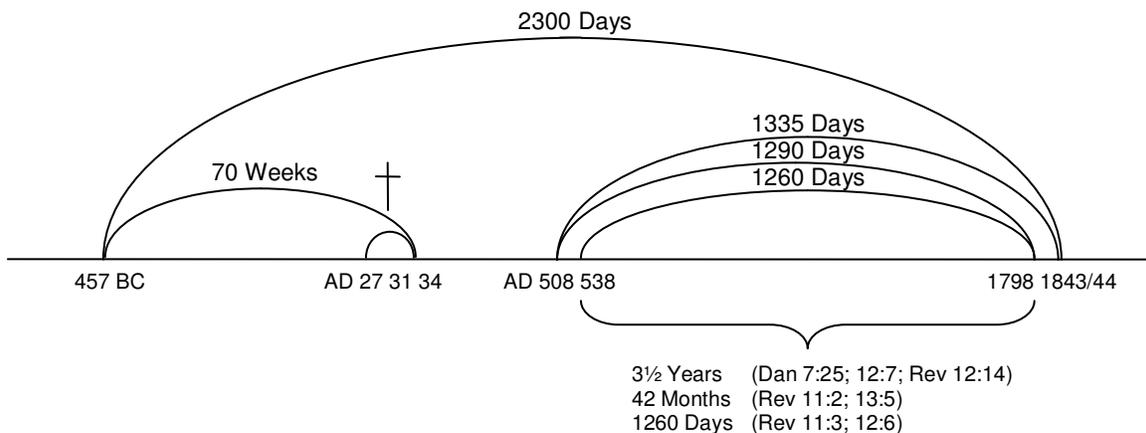


Fig. 4. Relationships among prophetic time periods drawing together eleven references to five different time periods in Daniel and Revelation.

There are five different time periods here. I list the 70th week separately because that forms an inclusio around the cross. If we make the cross our starting point, going from left to right along the arc of the 70th week, the entire structure can be drawn without lifting one's pencil. If this is not elegant, what is elegance? Two books spanning both major divisions of the Scriptures, five different time periods, eleven references to those time periods, foretold six hundred years apart and thousands of years in advance, all brought together in a seamless whole without any gaps or omissions.⁶⁹ I did not create this structure by choosing to talk about it. "This is the finger of God" (Exod8:19).

⁶⁹ The arc for the 1,335 days extends not to 1844 but to 1843 (508+1,335=1843). Recall that historically the disappointment of Rev 10 comes in two parts. There was the passing of the time in 1843, which was never tied to a given day, and the passing of the time in 1844, when the Millerites expected Christ to return more specifically on October 22. So one does have to lift one's pencil between the end of the 1,335 days and the end of the 2300 days. Doing so is an acknowledgement that both phases of the Millerite experience at this crucial time in prophetic history were genuine, because they are validated independently by separate prophetic time periods. Some will object to doing this, but to whatever extent they do to that same extent they fulfill Rev 3:9 ("I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars - I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you").

So let our opponents call us sectarian if we wish. We have a message that no one else can come remotely close to in its reliance on Scripture, internal cohesion, and focus on Christ.