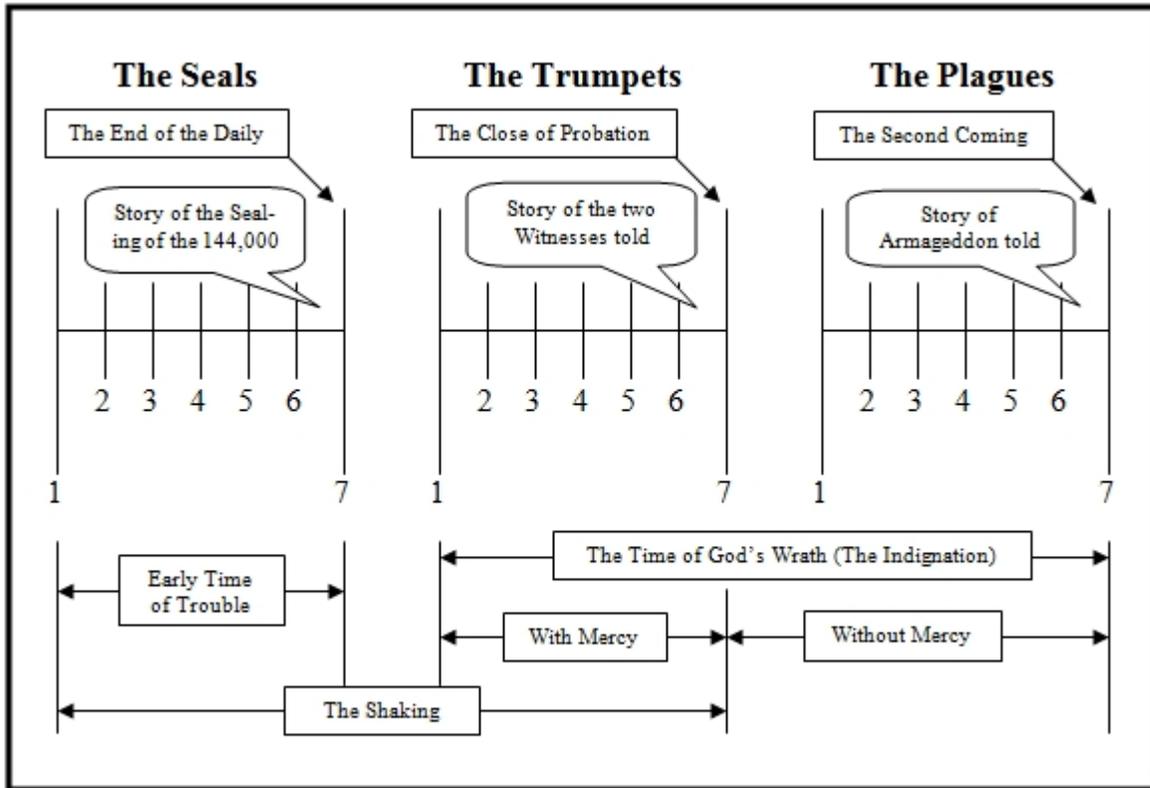


The Beasts and Three Angels

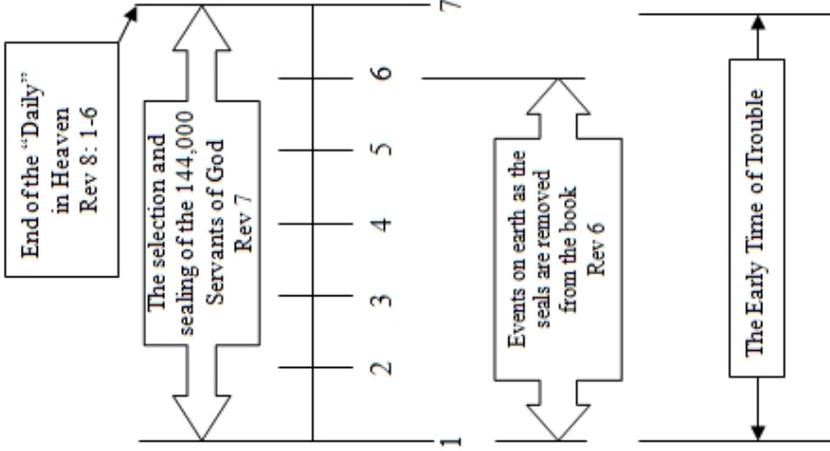
As stated in the earlier studies, we are examining the possibility that the major themes of the prophetic portion of Revelation - the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Plagues - form a continuous story as shown in the chart below:



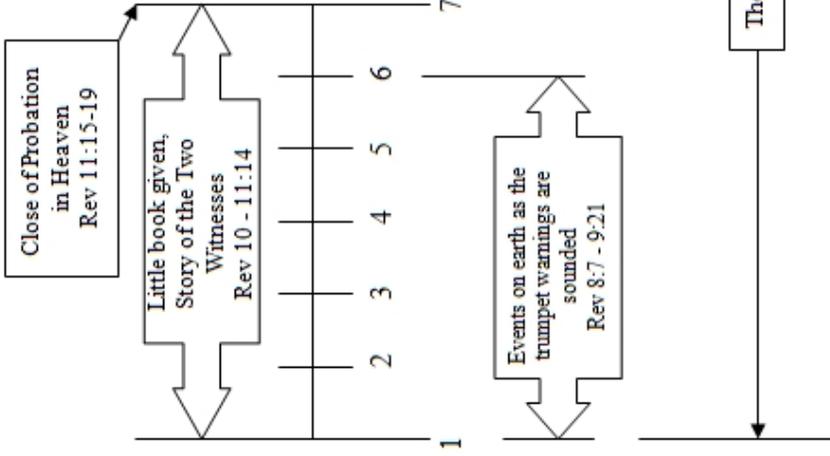
Interrupting this simple narrative, Revelation chapters 12, 13 and 14 are inserted between the stories of the Trumpets and the Plagues. (See the chart on the next page.) Clearly some of the information given in these chapters does not fit into the continuous story line given in the Seals, Trumpets and Plagues. So we have to ask why this information is placed where it is. Why wasn't it placed between the Seals and the Trumpets instead? What information does this block of passages contain that makes it "fit" where it is?

I believe that the information in these chapters overlays - and gives additional information about - the period of the Seals and Trumpets.

The Seals



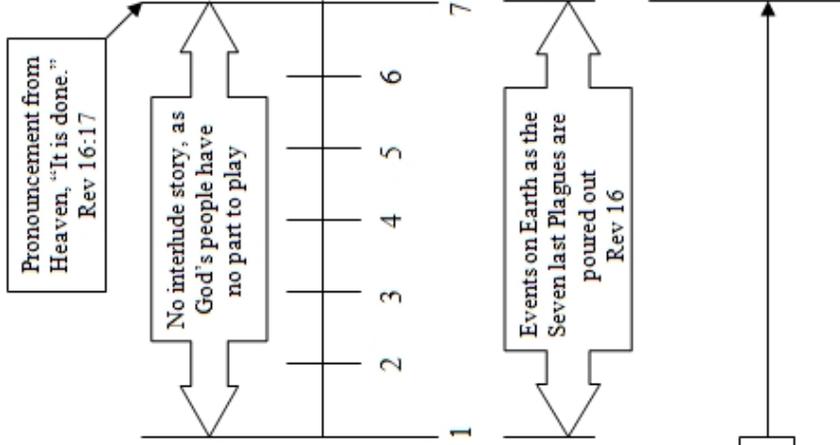
The Trumpets



Extra Info

The Church, The Dragon, and The Male Child
 War In Heaven
 Satan persecutes the Church
 Satan goes off to destroy the remnant
 The Sea-beast (Babylon)
 The Land-beast (False Prophet)
 The Image to the Beast

The Plagues



That the Trumpets and the Plagues are sequential story lines - and that they are in fact not separated by the events listed in Chapters 12 through 14 - is shown by the verbal equivalent of two linking puzzle pieces. The first of these is found at the very end of the story of the Trumpets, the other is found at the beginning of the story of the Plagues.

1) As the story of the 7th Trumpet ends we read, "And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm." Rev 11:19 NASB This is part of a larger passage depicting the close of human probation, when Christ will no longer serve as our High Priest and the Temple will be open to view.

2) The linking verse just before the Plagues are poured out is found in Revelation 15:5, where we read, "After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened." (NASB) These two verses speak of the same event, and tie their two story lines together. Just as the 7th Seal was an event in the heavenly sanctuary that allowed the Trumpets to begin, so the 7th Trumpet is an event in the heavenly sanctuary that allows the Plagues to be poured out. These events flow seamlessly out of each other.

The inserted information of Chapters 12, 13 and 14 must be seen primarily as extra resource material that is needed to flesh out our understanding of the events that have just been described - the Seals and the Trumpets. While it does start out by giving us historical references, its placement indicates that its **major** focus is last-day events. Because it is deliberately placed between the stories of the Trumpets and the Plagues, we should assume that the passage illuminates that general time.

Because the stories of Revelation have – to this point – shown that they have a clear end-time focus, when we come to passages such as Revelation 12, or 13, or 14 which have an uncertain timeframe, we should first make sure that they can not apply to end-time events before we assume they apply to another.

Revelation 12 is such a puzzle. It is a puzzle that has two linking pieces. The first is the birth of Jesus; the second is Satan’s last battle against the remnant.



The intervening story element - the woman fleeing into the wilderness - must go on one end of this timeline or the other. It is either a continuation of the story of the birth and life of

Jesus or it is a prelude to the war on the remnant. Either way we have to contend with a “gap” in our story.¹

The Woman, the Dragon, and the Child

“A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.”
Rev 12:1-6 NASB

4

This passage is a great demonstration of the power of preconception to affect what is gleaned from a passage. Most expositors agree that the male child is Jesus, and that the great red dragon is Satan. But who is the woman?

To many Evangelicals, the woman is Israel. This determination arises from the Evangelical’s belief that the Church is raptured out of the world before end-time events begin and that Jews will play a large role in the final drama. When the dragon goes off to make war against the remnant of her children *who keep the commandments*, it must be Jews that are the object of the attack (because the Christian Church has left the stage). Therefore, the woman must be Israel. They bolster this opinion with scripture in which God likens Israel to a beautiful woman. (Ezekiel 16 is an excellent example.)

To Catholics she is Mary. Mary was, after all, the literal mother of Jesus. Catholics love the almost divine imagery used to describe her, although it’s hard to see how Mary was chased into the wilderness for 3-1/2 years. She and Joseph did have to take Jesus with them and flee into Egypt for safety, but since that happened just after Jesus was born - long before he ascended to heaven - it is hard to believe that Revelation is speaking of this event.

¹ One other possibility, that the two references to the woman fleeing into the wilderness actually apply to two different events, is dealt with later in this paper.

To Adventists she is the True Church. The “other woman” mentioned in Revelation is an impure woman, which symbolizes an impure church or faith. Just so, this pure woman represents pure faith - true religion.

While I believe this identification is correct, we have tended to play just a little bit loose with the application of the symbol. Tracing the history of the Christian Church, we find ourselves shifting the identification of the “true church” from one organization to another. In the first century it was the Apostolic Church. In the Middle Ages it was the Waldenses. Later it was the Huguenots, the Lutherans or the Methodists.

Today it’s the Adventists?

We would be far better off to recognize that the True Church is made up of all True Worshipers - of whatever era, whatever church, whatever nation. It has never been all of the visible, corporate worshipers in any organization - even the early Christian church. Let’s nail this one down. No corporate church *is* the woman. No corporate church is pure and without stain. This woman is the true, invisible church of God on earth.

The Dragon

While we are nailing down definitions, let’s give a little more attention to the dragon. Here again we have “played loose” with scripture. Revelation 12:9 identifies this actor. The great red dragon **is** the devil. Period. Seldom is Revelation so clear as to an identity. And yet we have often said - and taught - that the symbol includes Satan and the earthly agents through which he works. This enabled us to say that since Satan used the agency of Imperial Rome to put Jesus to death, that Pagan Rome could also be viewed as “the dragon.” Then when we saw the dragon giving “his power and his throne and great authority” to the sea-beast, we could conclude that we were witnessing the “passing of the baton” from Pagan to Papal Rome.

This doesn’t work. First, if the definition of the dragon includes the agents through which Satan works, then both Pagan and Papal Rome could be included in the dragon symbol. Second, when the Bible wishes to speak of the agents through whom the dragon works, it introduces them as separate actors. (In Chapter 13, those agents in the last great war are fully and separately described *in their own right*.)

More importantly, the Bible is clear as to the identity of the Dragon. It was Satan who drew 1/3rd of the angels away from God. It was Satan who fought Michael and His angels. It is the devil and his angels who lost that war and were thrown down to the earth.

Neither Pagan nor Papal Rome did these things. It is Satan who recognizes his time is short and goes off to make war with the remnant. The dragon is mentioned 14 times in Revelation, and each occurrence refers to Satan himself. Two of those verses clearly give his identity:

“And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world.” Rev 12:9

“And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.” Rev 20:2

6

We need to stick to what the Bible plainly states, even if other Adventists before us have used these texts differently, and even if we are forced to give up some of our anti-Catholic proof-texts.

When did the war in heaven take place?

“And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.” Rev 12:7-8 NASB

When used by Seventh-day Adventists, this passage is almost always assumed to refer to the original outbreak of hostilities between Christ and Satan. Indeed there was a “war” that resulted in Satan’s departure from heaven. But is that what is here being spoken of? I think not.

The passage quoted above makes it clear that after this war “there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.” And yet in the book of Job - well after Satan’s first eviction from heaven - we see Satan presenting himself in heaven as the representative of earth. At that point in history Satan could still “find a place” in heaven.

There are two good textual reasons that when taken together seem to indicate that this war took place after Christ ascended to heaven. First, that is the order that the story is told. Revelation 12:5 tells of Christ being received into heaven. Then verse 7 tells us of the

war. This fact however does not prove that story is told in a linear manner. We might view verse 7 as starting a new story line at an earlier time, just as verse 1 did.

The second point confirms the first, for verse 13 states that “when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he went in pursuit of the woman who had given birth to the male Child.”² The word “when” is a timing word. “When” he lost the war and saw that he was permanently barred from heaven then he became very angry, and turned that wrath on to God’s people. If he couldn’t get the Son, he’d try to get the followers.

Taken together, these two clues indicate that before Satan demonstrated his murderous hatred toward Jesus, he had a degree of access to heaven that was denied him afterward. By exhibiting his animosity before the universe, he lost all support among heaven’s hosts, and was subsequently barred from heaven and confined to his earthly prison.

7

The 1260 days in Revelation 12

“Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.” Rev 12:6 NASB

“And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth.” Rev 12:13-16 NASB

As seen above, two different times we are told of the woman fleeing to the wilderness. The first reference comes in verse 6. It seems to indicate that the woman fled to the wilderness just after the man-child was taken up into heaven and before the heavenly battle between Michael and Satan occurred.

²*The Amplified New Testament*, (La Habra CA: The Lockman Foundation) 1999.

The second reference is in verses 13-16. The timing of verse 13 and 14 seems to indicate that sometime *after* Satan realized he was cast down to the earth he then chased the woman into the wilderness for 3-1/2 years. Is this the same 1260-day period as mentioned in verse 6? If so, why do they seem to be couched in different time settings?

We can take two different positions on the above. I'll try to outline them below:

Option A - Two Events

In this scenario, the first reference to the woman fleeing into the wilderness applies to the time of the early church, and is a continuation of the story of the birth of Jesus and his ascension into heaven. The second reference is seen as a prelude to the story of the war on the remnant. When taking this view, we must identify both of these events.

The most common manner of dealing with the first flight of the woman into the wilderness is to associate this event with the underground Christian church during the Dark Ages, while the Papacy was supreme. The 1,260 days is seen as "prophetic time" and is understood to mean 1,260 years.

The second flight into the wilderness might be seen as yet ahead of us - perhaps during the early time of trouble, but before the final warfare against the remnant. Here the 3-1/2 years is suggested to be literal time.

There are a number of difficulties that arise with this two-event option.

1. "Prophetic" time in Revelation. Not once yet in our study of Revelation have we found even a single occurrence of "prophetic" time. Not once *after* this reference will we find an example of such usage. Every other time in Revelation, "days" mean days and "hours" mean hours. Time is not used symbolically.

If this passage is using "prophetic" time (i.e., if a day means a literal year), then it is the only time such a rule comes into play. Logic would demand a pretty high standard of proof to accept this anomaly.

2. "Prophetic" time mixed with literal time. This is a single story with two time references. If one time reference is to be understood as "prophetic" shouldn't the other as well? On what basis can we switch our rules of interpretation in the middle of a story?

3. The timing of the first flight. The first reference, as was pointed out, seems to place the flight of the woman into the wilderness at or about the time that Christ was caught up into heaven. A medieval application does not fit this framework.

4. The fulfillment of the specifications. Applying this to the medieval church requires that we find 1260 years in which the true Church was in the “wilderness” being nurtured by God. We usually equate this to the years of “Papal domination” that began in 538 and ended in 1798 when the Pope was taken captive. But in reality, “Papal domination” was broken with the reformation, and the Papacy was in decline for hundreds of years prior to 1798. Can we really say that the Church of God was driven into the wilderness in 538, where it stayed until 1798, and then came out of the wilderness in 1799? Was 1799 any different than 1798 in terms of the spiritual life of the Church? If not, how can we claim historical fulfillment of this prophecy?

Option B - One Event

In this view, Revelation 12:6 is speaking of the same event as Revelation 12:13-16. This view can be supported by the common language elements used:

	Rev 12:6	Rev 12:13-16
Actor:	“the woman...”	“the woman...”
Action:	“fled...”	“that she could fly...”
To:	“into the wilderness...”	“into the wilderness...”
Description:	“a place prepared by God...”	“to her place...”
Why:	“there she would be nourished...”	“where she was nourished”...
Duration:	“for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.”	“for a time and times and half a time.”

In this view, as only one event is being spoken of, and since the detailed narrative of Revelation 12:13-16 places this event just before the dragon goes off with great anger to do battle with the last of God’s people, we should allow for the possibility that this is an end-time related event, and that its fulfillment is yet to come. This agrees with the general rule

of thumb discussed on page 197, that the placement of Revelation 12-14 between the Trumpets and the Plagues implies an end-time import.

Both the references indicate that the woman runs to the wilderness in response to - and out of fear of - the dragon. Yet it is clear that God has a purpose in it as well, for it is in the wilderness that God nourishes her.

The Old Testament story of Elijah comes to mind. He too fled from a dragon, this one named Jezebel. He too ran to the wilderness. And there, he too was fed by God. He was fed by God because the journey ahead of him required more strength than he had. I suspect that is why the woman is fed as well. The Church is about to go through its most trying hour, and its strength is not sufficient. God allows the devil to chase her into the wilderness, to put her under duress, so that she will recognize her need of divine strength and sustenance.

Sanctified Speculation

While I favor “Option B” above, it is not without its difficulties. One must still propose a future meaning for these words, and they must fit within the construct that has been revealed to this point.

In this effort I am forced to reason backwards. As will be shown later in this paper, I believe that the two beasts of Revelation 13 hold sway during the time of the Trumpets. Assuming the truth of that assertion, then one possibility is that the 1260 days of Revelation 12 precedes the Trumpets, and corresponds to the time of the Seals, or the Early Time of Trouble.

This is not unreasonable. Certainly that will be a time when Satan will be allowed to inflict trouble on the Church, for Jesus called it a time of “tribulation” for the Church.³ It will also be a time when the Lord will “nourish” and strengthen the Church with the Holy Spirit.

How will the earth help the Church at that time? During the time of the Seals, Sunday laws will be passed. God’s people will recognize the sign to get out of the cities, and will withdraw to remote areas. Thus they will be out of harm’s way when destruction of the cities begins under the Trumpets. This could be seen as the earth helping the woman. Satan’s efforts against the Church during the time of the Seals will fail. He will find that he has only driven them to their knees, and driven them into seclusion.

³ See Matthew 24:9

If this is correct - and I'm willing to admit that it may not be - then it is possible that the duration of the Seals is 3-1/2 literal years. While this is not stated within the story of the Seals themselves, the events delineated there will clearly take some time to work out. It will take time for warfare to break out around the world. The ensuing famine, pestilence and death will follow - but will take time to mature. In the same manner, it will take time for those who are to be chosen as the 144,000 servants to mature into their relationship with their Lord.

3-1/2 years does not seem at all unreasonable.

However, since I'm admittedly into the realm of speculation, let's carry it one step further. I have stated that I believe the 1st Seal to be the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The first time the Holy Spirit was poured out in this manner was on the Day of Pentecost. In fact, unknown to the Jews, this is what the Day of Pentecost prefigured in the sacred calendar. It was no accident that the Holy Spirit was given on this day, just as it was no accident that Jesus was slain on Passover. It was all in God's plan.

However, the outpouring seen in 31AD was not a complete fulfillment of the great prophecy of Joel 2:28-29. That event is yet ahead of us, and I believe it will occur when the 1st Seal is opened.

If so, wouldn't it seem in keeping with God's character and His purposes to fulfill this prophecy *on the very day that prefigured it*? Shouldn't we expect God to pour out His Spirit on the Day of Pentecost? I think it most likely.

I also believe it is no accident that 3-1/2 years past Pentecost takes us to the start of the Feast of Trumpets, the time of warning that occurred before the Day of Atonement. I believe the Feast of Trumpets in the sacred calendar of Israel prefigures the Trumpets of Revelation. Therefore, I would not be surprised to find that they are to begin sounding at the time specified in that calendar.

While it is speculative to extrapolate, we do know for certain that the timing of the Passover was met, as was the timing of the first Pentecost. Should not the timing of the second Pentecost also be met, as well as the timing of the Trumpets?

3-1/2 years will do that.

The Remnant

“So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.” Rev 12:17 (NASB)

Among Seventh-day Adventist, this is one of the most frequently quoted texts in Revelation. When combined with Revelation 19:10 - “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” - it has been used to mark two key identifiers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We have pointed to these two texts to show that we are - collectively and corporately - the “remnant.” No other church, we point out, keeps all the commandments and has a prophet like Ellen White. God must groan at our arrogance and presumption, for a thoughtful reading of the above text would lead us to quite a different conclusion.

Can you hear the echoes of the Jewish Scribes and Pharisees? “If we keep all the commandments, and have a prophet among us, then we are God’s people.” These were the hallmarks of Judaism. They kept the commandments - all of them. They had a long heritage of prophecy. They were **Seventh-day** (they worshiped on the true Sabbath) **Adventists** (they taught of the imminent arrival of the Messiah). And yet they rejected Jesus because he taught that all of their righteousness was worthless. In His great Sermon on the Mount He showed what “keeping the law” meant. A person could only keep the law if he was holy. Only if righteousness flowed from the heart would a person be truly righteous. It mattered not if you didn’t kill your brother if your heart was warped with hatred for him.

Jesus taught that the Sabbath could only be kept holy by *people who were holy*. And since the leaders of the people were plotting in their hearts on the Sabbath day to murder Jesus, they were themselves violating the law that they claimed to honor.

To that point, note this. Revelation 12:17 does not speak of the emergence of a people, or church, that **believes** in keeping all of the commandments. We have always had such people on earth. The reason that this verse leaves me in awe, that it fills my heart with hope and anticipation, is that it predicts the emergence of a people who truly do keep the commandments. A people whose lives have been transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ. A people who can be said to keep the commandments, not because they have managed by strength of will to bring their lives into outward conformance to that standard, but because the law has been written on the tablet of their hearts.

Is it revealing too much about myself to admit that this is not my experience? That I struggle with the obedience of a law that I find in conflict with my internal nature? That I must admit to denying my Lord because in my heart I have failed to submit to His Lordship?

That I have sometimes been surprised by my outward actions - only to discover upon introspection that the actions were born out of the blackness of my sinful heart? Have you too found yourself on your knees begging with the Father for that total change of heart and mind that would ensure that you would never again walk out of His will for you?

If so, then this promise in Revelation is for you too.

Before Jesus returns, there will be a group of people so responsive to the Holy Spirit's leading, so filled with the indwelling of their Lord, that they will completely and fully demonstrate in their lives what it means to keep the commandments just as Jesus kept them.

Is it any wonder that this group will stir the unbridled hatred and murderous rage of the Adversary?

The Segue to Chapter 13

Chapter 12 ends with a story about an increasingly angry and frustrated dragon (Satan). It details his effort to sweep away the woman with a flood of water that he pours out after her. He is foiled in this effort when the earth swallows up the water. Burning with rage, he turns his attention to the rest (remnant) of her children - intent on destroying them.

The insertion of a chapter break at this point is one of the most unfortunate editorial decisions ever made. In the King James, this mistake was compounded by a translating error that is found in chapter 13, verse 1. That verse reads, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy."⁴

The combination of these two errors may give the casual reader the impression that the story of Chapter 12 - the dragon chasing the woman - comes to an end along with the chapter, and that a new story - the two beasts from the sea and earth - begins with Chapter 13.

Almost all later translations, which rely on better textual sources, translate the "I" of Revelation 13:1 as "he", i.e., the dragon. This changes the focus of Revelation 13. It shows

⁴The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

us that when the dragon goes off to make war with the “remnant,” that he will do so in the manner described in chapter 13.

John sees the dragon stomping off in rage to implement a war plan - a war intended to wipe out the last of God’s people. He watches as the dragon plants himself on the beach, and then seems to call up another beast out of the water. Another joins this beast later in the passage. Together, they serve as Satan’s agents in his final battle plan. In revealing this information to us, God is giving us an advance look at the strategy that this powerful foe will use in his last attempt to be declared as the ruler of this world.

The Sea-beast

“And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns *were* ten diadems, and on his heads *were* blasphemous names. And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like *those* of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. *I saw* one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed *and followed* after the beast; they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?” There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, *that is*, those who dwell in heaven.

It was also given to him to **make war with the saints and to overcome them**, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, *everyone* whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. If anyone has an ear, let him hear. If anyone *is destined* for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.” Rev 13:1-10 NASB (Emphasis Supplied)

When Satan launches his final war on the remnant of God’s people, he will establish on earth a most extraordinary organization. This organization will wield enormous political and religious authority *over the entire earth*.

Note the following aspects of this beast:

It comes up out of the sea. (Verse 1)

In speaking of this very beast, an angel later tells John that “The waters which you saw... are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.” (Rev. 17:15 NASB) This entity will be born out of the mass populace of earth. It will happen quickly, and the Bible doesn’t speak of any competition that it will have to overcome in order to establish its power. It doesn’t have to fight any other beasts in its ascendancy. It arises in a power vacuum, and is immediately granted tremendous authority over the entire earth.

Note that it is made up part of bear, part of lion, part of leopard. By selecting components of each of the major earthly powers that preceded it (as depicted in Daniel 2), God seems to be telling us that this new creature is not to be identified with one of the earlier kingdoms, but spans them all - that it is worldwide.

It has ten horns. (Verse 1)

The fact that crowns are on the horns indicates political authority. Later these horns are identified as 10 kingdoms that have not yet come to be. (Rev 17:12) Evangelical Christians often equate these kingdoms as modern Western Europe. It’s been interesting to watch the explanations alter with every change in the political landscape. At one point the European Union (EU) had ten major players, but now the membership is significantly higher.

We can know for certainty that this Evangelical guessing game is producing the wrong answers because of the following:

- ◆ The sea-beast will have *worldwide* authority. Everyone who is not to be saved will give his or her allegiance to it. Europe could not have this broad reach.
- ◆ The sea-beast is an end-time entity. It comes out of the sea as Satan’s first play in the final battle that he launches against God’s people. Contrary to this, modern Europe has been centuries in forming.
- ◆ The sea-beast is a marvelous, powerful force from its inception. It comes into existence as a mighty authority that is not seen as having any competition. This does not apply to the kingdoms of Europe that have had to repeatedly defend their very existence.
- ◆ The ten kingdoms making up the sea-beast will have one purpose and one mind. The level of cooperation between them will surpass anything seen in the modern political world.

It has seven heads with blasphemous names. (Verse 3)

Blasphemy is not a political act; it is a religious act. So while the horns represent political kingdoms, the heads represent spiritual authorities. Without further input, I would have to conclude that the world-spanning nature of this beast is being displayed both in the

spiritual and political realm, and that the seven heads represent the seven major religions of the world.

This beast takes religio-politics to a whole new level. The authority this beast wields will amaze the people of earth, who will unanimously declare “Who is like the beast?”

This extraordinary creature - this powerful melding of Church and State - is so different from what we know today that one is tempted to wonder if this prophecy could ever come to pass. How will these kingdoms come about? What events could clear away the present powers so as to allow a new system? Wouldn't it take a huge event to topple the existing structure of nations?

I believe that just such a series of events is described in the first four trumpets. I believe that as the earth is blackened by fiery hail - that as cities are wiped out - that as infrastructure tumbles - the existing nations are humbled and shown to be impotent against such devastation. Mankind will resort to the same tactic as did the offspring of Noah, who - when faced with the possibility of extinction - came together as one to create a structure that could rise above the flood. In doing so they gave rise to Babel - the forerunner of Babylon, the perpetual symbol of man's attempt to save himself.

Is it any wonder that this sea-beast - formed when modern man unites to create a powerful central authority to cope with earth's dark passage through fire - is named Babylon? Mankind will know that the earth has been dealt a deathblow, and in its anguish and panic all thoughts of independence and nationalism will be replaced by the drive for mere survival. People will work and worship together with fervor, and any attempt to work against this beast will be called an act of treason against humanity.

Thus will be born the latter-day Babylon – a world-spanning conglomeration of religious and political authorities – a force so unanimously supported by the masses of humanity that one would quail at the thought of opposing it. For “who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?” Rev. 13:4 (NASB)

Let us not forget that the breathtaking ascent of the Sea-beast to this unprecedented position of authority and power is not due solely to earthly forces and circumstances. Overriding all these temporal factors and influences is the direct action of Satan himself, who being released under the 5th Trumpet to work more directly in the world of men, uses that impunity to infuse his newly-formed agent with his own great power and authority.

But the Bible tells us that Satan will usher onto the scene another powerful compatriot in his final battle for control of planet earth.

The Land-Beast

“Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.” Rev. 13:11-17 (NASB)

In the Eschatological view that we are examining this is not the United States of America. The land-beast, like the sea-beast, arises in the final years of earth’s history to play its role in Satan’s end-time struggle for world supremacy. Note the following characteristics:

It arises after the sea-beast. (Verse 11)

“Then” is a sequential timing word. “Another” indicates that it is in addition to an already existing beast. Clearly, if the end-time Babylon has not yet arrived, this second beast cannot be here.

It does not seek to get worship for itself. (Verse 12)

The goal of its deceptions is to get people to submit to the authority of the first beast, the one that arose from the sea. This beast never asks for submission to itself - it never seeks to be the center of worship or adoration. Instead, it puts forth every effort to persuade - and then compel - people to submit to the political and spiritual authority of the first beast.

Its primary actions are religious in nature.

It is not described as a political force or as a nation that rules over people. Look carefully at the actions of this beast. He

- ◆ “makes the earth... worship”,
- ◆ “performs great signs” (miracles),
- ◆ “makes fire come down out of heaven”,
- ◆ “deceives those who dwell on the earth”,
- ◆ “causes all... to be given a mark...”,
- ◆ and gives “breath to the image of the beast.”

These are not the actions of a nation. *They are the actions of a prophet.*

Most of us have no power to perform miracles. I’ve never healed the sick. I’ve never caused the blind to see, the lame to walk, or the dumb to speak. But scripture is replete with such stories. Miracles flowed from the hands of Jesus. They spread from the shadow of Peter. Salt from Elisha made bad water good. Iron floated. The sun stood still. Armies were struck blind. In each of these occurrences God reached directly into the affairs of men. Occasionally He intervened directly. More often he used a prophet as a channel of divine grace.

Scripture records numerous occasions when fire fell from heaven. Both David and Solomon were recipients of this sign of God’s favor. (1 Chr. 21:26, 2 Chr. 7:1) On three separate occasions Elijah called fire from heaven. The disciples sought the Lord’s permission to call fire from heaven to burn up a Samaritan village that denied them hospitality. But Satan also was allowed to wield this power, for it was not the Lord who destroyed Job’s flocks. So while God, Satan and prophets have all called fire from heaven, no nation has ever done so.

In all of scripture, only God or a prophet appointed by Him ever “gave breath” to anyone. God did it in Eden. Elijah did it in Zarephath. Elisha did it in Shunem. Jesus did it in Nain. Peter did it in Joppa. Ezekiel did it in the Valley of Dry Bones. And in Revelation, the land-beast does it.

Nations are not spiritual leaders. Prophets are.

Identified as the False Prophet (Rev 16:13, 19:20)

The exact identity of this beast is clearly stated in the rest of Revelation. We are not left to wonder who he is. The first clue is given in Rev. 16:13, where we read, “And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs.” (NASB) Revelation 13 introduces Satan’s end-time cast of characters. They are the dragon (Satan), the sea-beast and the land-beast. In Revelation 16 these same actors are called the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. It takes only a small jump of logic to draw the conclusion that the

sea-beast of Revelation 13 is the “beast” mentioned in Revelation 16, which would make the land-beast of Revelation 13 the “false prophet” of Revelation 16.

Revelation 19 confirms this identification. In Revelation 19:20 we read, “And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.” (NASB) In this passage the “false prophet” is clearly identified as the land-beast of Revelation 13, for it is he that

- ◆ performs the signs in his (the first beast’s) presence, and
- ◆ deceives those who receive the mark of the beast.

There can be no question about this. The land-beast of Revelation 13 is - throughout the rest of Revelation - called the False Prophet.

This identification helps us to focus in on this beast, and to understand his role in this end-time drama.

The Strategic Role of the False Prophet

In His great end-time sermon Jesus warned of false Christs and false prophets. In Matthew 24:24 we read, “For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.” (NASB) The fact that Revelation even has an actor called the “false prophet” should raise red flags about the role that this entity will play.

For while prophets served many functions throughout the history of God’s people, one role seems paramount to our discussion - **the prophet precedes the Christ**. The prophet Malachi pointed this out. “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.” Malachi 4:5-6 (NASB)

The religious teachers of Jesus’ day knew the truth of this teaching, for when the disciples were coming down from the mountain where Jesus had been transfigured they asked, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” Matthew 17:10 (NASB) In response Jesus explained that His cousin John was the fulfillment of that prophecy for His time. He also pointed forward to a future fulfillment as well. “And He answered and said, ‘Elijah is coming and will restore all things; but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is

going to suffer at their hands.’ Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.” Matthew 17:11-13 (NASB) While John the Baptist was “Elijah” for the first coming of Christ, Jesus also pointed to a future fulfillment when he said “Elijah is coming and will restore all things.”

Of course, we see the future fulfillment of this prophecy in the great prophetic ministry of the 144,000 servants of God. Their 1260-day witness is spoken of in the 11th chapter of Revelation, where the allusion to Elijah is drawn in the 6th verse, “These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying.” And as Adventists we have long expected the “Elijah message.”

But since the entire Christian world is expecting this prophetic movement to usher in the return of the Lord, won’t Satan need to be similarly heralded if he is to deceive the world into believing that he is the Christ? If the prophet precedes the Christ, shouldn’t we expect that the False Prophet would prepare the way for the False Christ? If the world is anticipating the true 144,000 to signal the return of Jesus, wouldn’t Satan - in order to “appear in such a manner as to make men believe him to be Christ come the second time into the world” - need to be heralded by a *false* 144,000?

This appears to be the primary purpose of the activities of the land-beast.

In this context it is interesting to note that while we expect an “Elijah message” before Jesus returns, that “Elijah” - or references to him - shows up twice in the book of Revelation. The first time is noted above. The 144,000 in their 1,260-day witness will have the same miracle working authority of Elijah.

The second reference shows up in Revelation 13, where this land-beast - the False Prophet - calls fire down from heaven as Elijah did at Carmel, and then - like Elijah - sets about to use his divinely-proven authority to kill those who will not go along with him.

And so we find two Elijah movements in Revelation. One “true” and one “false”. One uses great signs and wonders to prepare the way of the Lord. One uses the same tools to deceive the world into accepting the Anti-Christ. Ellen White saw this show down of miracle-working powers. In *The Great Controversy* she recorded the following description:

“Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand.”

Great Controversy, p. 612

Timing Elements in Revelation 13

“There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.” (Rev 13:5 NASB)

Just as the two witnesses are allotted 1260 days to complete their task of taking the gospel to the entire world, so the sea-beast is given 1260 days to complete his work of persuasion. While these time periods are of the same duration, they may or may not start at precisely the same time. I do believe that the stories can be demonstrated to overlap. Consider the following:

Two-stage battle strategy seen under the Trumpets.

1. After the environmental devastation of the first four trumpets, Satan is allowed access to work out his battle plans amongst humanity. The opening of the door between his realm and ours is seen in the 5th Trumpet. However, this access is limited by divine mercy. Satan is not allowed to do further damage to the environment, nor is he allowed to kill anyone. This situation prevails for five months.
2. Under the 6th Trumpet the restriction against killing is removed, and a third of mankind is killed by the forces that Satan unleashes. The fact that the survivors are defined as being the impenitent implies that the ones who have been killed are those who had submitted their lives to God.

Two-stage battle strategy seen in Revelation 13.

1. When the sea-beast appears, it is an object of awe. It takes its position as the central religious and political authority of the world. This great power is a result of the workings of Satan himself. “And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.”

Rev. 13:2 (NASB) This situation could only develop under two conditions. First, the governments of the earth must be in a state of near collapse. Second, Satan must be given permission to work powerfully in and through the institutions of man. These conditions will exist after the first four trumpets have done their work, and when the 5th trumpet signals the unleashing of Satan.

2. When the land-beast arrives, this situation dramatically changes. The land-beast exists only for one reason - to cause everyone on earth to give allegiance to the sea-beast. He does this by a combination of deceptive miracles and compulsion. Everyone will be forced to either receive the mark of the beast or to be killed. The Bible states simply that all that do not take the mark will be killed. The number of righteous who survive this ordeal may be surprisingly small.

The common elements of the Trumpets and the Beasts suggest that they are overlays of one another. Under the Trumpets the veil is drawn aside allowing us to see the marshalling of Satan's forces. In Revelation 13 we get the "human" view of the same events. We see what the natural eye will be able to see. We see the structures and form that he will work through to compel human homage. Notice that in both views the death of untold numbers of people is foretold. Notice further that the killing occurs not in the first stage, but in the second.

The linkage between the story of the two witnesses, the Trumpets, and the beasts of Revelation 13 allows us to "fit" these puzzle pieces together, even though we may not yet be able to dogmatically lay out the precise timeline of events.

The Image to the Beast and the Mark of the Beast

"And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed."
Rev 13:14-15 NASB

I wish I could say for certain just who - or what - the image to the beast will be. However I can't. I can conjecture about some of its properties, but I cannot identify it.

An image (or statue)

- ◆ looks like the original subject,
- ◆ is usually erected to honor the original subject, and
- ◆ is inanimate.

In Daniel's time, Nebuchadnezzar created an image of solid gold to represent the unending timelessness of his empire. It was erected in defiance of the vision that the king had received. For in that dream, only the head was gold, and the king was told that his kingdom would give way to another. It was his hope that if everyone bowed down to his golden statue and gave their allegiance to it that his kingdom would endure without end.

In this example, the statue was a symbolic representation of his kingdom - much like our flag is today. Nebuchadnezzar decided that his subjects would pledge allegiance to it - or die.

Likewise, in Revelation the image to the beast is set up as a test. People will bow to it and express allegiance to it - and thus receive its mark of approval - or they will be condemned to death. Worshiping the image is the same as worshiping the beast itself.

But what exactly is the image? And what is meant by the statement that the image of the beast will be given breath? And what exactly is the mark of the beast?

I don't know – but I'm looking forward to finding out.

The 144,000 in Heaven

“Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb *was* standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb. And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.”

What a remarkable passage! Only twice in Revelation are the 144,000 spoken of by name. The first is in Revelation 7 when they are selected. The second is the above passage when they are depicted in heaven.

In addition to direct references, I believe that the 144,000 are seen in the parenthetical interlude that is placed between the 6th and 7th trumpet. In that story, we see the 144,000 (at first represented by the Apostle John) receiving the “open book” in Revelation 10. Then in Chapter 11 their experience during the time frame of the Trumpets is related in the story of the Two Witnesses. There, we see the Holy Spirit (in the symbol of the olive tree) and the Word of God (in the symbol of the lampstands) at work through the miracle working, end-time servants of God.

As Revelation 11 comes to an end, the ministry of the 144,000 also comes to an end. We see the beast from the abyss rise up against them and make war against them. By all appearances he overcomes them, putting them to death. His victory is short lived however, for the passage concludes with the Witnesses being brought back to life three days later, and being taken up to heaven.

Here in Revelation 14 the 144,000 are seen in heaven. Their being in heaven may hint (as discussed on pages 187 – 189 in this guide) that the 144,000 may be blessed with a special resurrection and ascension to heaven prior to general “harvest” of the earth.

What little could be gained by insisting on this view would relate chiefly to the *timing* of this scene. And that is not the most important part of this block. The important part is the *character* of the people portrayed here. That is, after all, what brings them this unique experience.

Look at what this passage tells us about these exceptional humans:

- They are undefiled.
- They speak no lies.
- They are blameless.
- They have His name on their foreheads.
- They have been purchased from the earth *as first fruits*.
- They are with the Lamb (Jesus) in heaven, and follow Him wherever He goes.

In every way, their characters have been molded after the likeness of their Lord. To the on-looking universe they look *just like Jesus*. Is it any wonder that they can sing a song of praise before the Father that no one else can sing? While on earth they learned to follow Jesus. Their experience on earth – their ministry – paralleled His in remarkable ways. Because of the faithfulness they exhibited through their hardships they received the seal of God’s approval.

We need to recognize – because God will recognize and acknowledge – just how unique this outstanding group of individuals is. The 144,000 will reflect the character and

likeness of Jesus more clearly than the earth has ever seen. Not since Jesus walked on earth has anyone, or any group, been accurately described as “blameless” and “undefiled”.

And then, in one of those twists of language that catches us off guard, we are told that they will “follow the Lamb wherever He goes.” I happen to have some sheep. One of the endearing qualities of lambs is the way that they can bond to their human families. When our sheep Mary was just a tiny lamb she was rejected by her mother. We stepped in and bottle-fed her for sixteen weeks, creating a deep and abiding tie. When we were working outside we frequently let her out of her pen to be with us. Everywhere we went, she would follow. Neighbors stopped and watched our strange little lamb, acting more like a dog than a sheep, bounding after us, pressing against us, and completely tying our hearts up around her.

By actual experience I can testify that lambs are not leaders, they are followers. And yet in heaven, the Lamb doesn’t follow them around as our little Mary does. They follow the Lamb! I puzzled long over this twist of wording until I realized that the only thing that ever follows the leadership of one lamb is another lamb! In becoming Christ-like, the 144,000 become Lamb-like, and thereafter will gladly follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

The shepherd-poet set down this same sublime truth in the language of Psalms 100:3 (NASB):

“Know that the LORD Himself is God;
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;
We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.”

The last characteristic that is mentioned about the 144,000 at the conclusion of this block of verses is that no lie was found in their mouths. Clearly this is important. They told the truth. But what truth did they tell? What did they say? What was the message that they gave?

We are about to find out.

The Three Angels Messages

“And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, ‘Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.’

And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.’

Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he

also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.' Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus." Rev. 14:6-12 NASB

This passage is the second block contained in Revelation 14. Immediately the question must be raised as to the linearity of the first block - the 144,000 seen in heaven - and the second. If they are sequential, the three angels' messages could not be given until after the 144,000 are safely in heaven. And *however* we view that event, this would mean that the gospel call of the three angels' messages could not be given until after the close of probation. This is clearly an untenable position.

Hence, we are forced to conclude that these story blocks are not sequential, which raises an obvious question. Why is the story related this way? Why the focus on the victorious 144,000 bondservants before relating the messages of the three angels? How are they related?

The answer is derived by applying a rule of thumb that applies to all of Revelation 12, 13, and 14, and was stated in my paper on Revelation 12 and 13. This rule, succinctly stated is this: *We should assume that these passages are deliberately placed immediately after the stories of the seals and trumpets because they illuminate that general time.* Keeping this in mind, we should first look at the possibility that the messages of the three angels might overlay - and give additional information about - the events previously discussed, namely the Trumpets.

Also, because the spotlight of scripture has just illuminated the victorious 144,000 in heaven, we might be advised to look for some tie between the 144,000 (as seen in the time period of the Trumpets) and the three angels' messages. Is it possible that these messages are the primary messages that the 144,000 will take to the inhabitants of earth during the final appeal given under the Trumpets?

Such seems to be the case. The 3-Angels messages are tied directly to events that transpire in the time of the Trumpets.

The 1st Angel

“And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, ‘Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.’”
Rev. 14:6-7 NASB

The sounding of the first four trumpets results in enormous environmental damage to the environment and to the cities, societies and structures of mankind. In Revelation 7 - which happens to be the passage where the 144,000 were first introduced - the warning for these devastations was clearly stated. In Revelation 7:3 we read, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.” The clear implication is that as soon as the 144,000 are chosen and sealed (thus preparing them for their mission) that damage will be inflicted on the earth, the sea and the trees.

The mission of the 144,000 to the billions on earth begins against this backdrop. As the meteorites, asteroids and comet are striking earth - causing unprecedented damage to the earth and the seas, and poisoning the drinking water - the job of the 144,000 will be to warn mankind that the Creator-God has done these things. They will warn mankind of impending judgment. They will call for a form of worship that acknowledges that God is the Creator - Sabbath worship. They will say that the God who made the earth, the seas and the fresh water is in control of the destruction that is even then being poured out in the first flush of His wrath.

The 2nd Angel

“And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.’”
Rev. 14:8 NASB

The destruction under the first four Trumpets will be so great that mankind will know that the earth has been dealt a deathblow. Utility services will be non-existent in many places. Age-old diseases like cholera will erupt with deadly consequences. Governments will collapse. In desperation to save themselves from impending extinction, mankind will band together - politically and spiritually - to solve their problems.

They will have help in this effort from an unexpected ally. For though they may not see the release of the demonic forces under the fifth Trumpet as John saw it, they will see the results of it. As the Devil's forces are released, they will infuse humanity with a deceptive, miracle-working authority. All of the major religious systems will be swept up into an ecumenical vortex. All the remaining political authorities (and the Bible says there will be ten) will be united. Together, these religious and political authorities will insist that if each and every person on the face of the earth will submit to them that mankind can be saved.

For the first time since the Tower of Babel mankind will work together for the creation of a power - an entity - that man can use to save itself. Babylon will be reborn.

As Satan moves his plan against the people of God (and humanity at large) to this next level, the message of the 144,000 changes. No longer to they merely warn of the final judgment to come. Now a new element is added. Now they must warn that the political and religious structures of man - that mankind is relying on for salvation – stand in opposition to the God of heaven. “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great”, is their warning. “Don't think that you can save yourselves apart from God by your own works. You can't do it by yourselves. Don't submit to this evil authority that is commanding you to keep man's law by breaking God's.”

The Bible tells us that this phase of the end game will not last long. In a mere five months Babylon will have established its authority over the entire earth. Compulsion by lethal force will be the next step.

The 3rd Angel

“Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.’” Rev. 14:9-11 NASB

To spur his plans on to completion, and to prepare the world for the masterful deception of his arrival as Jesus Christ, Satan will introduce a new agent, one that will further demonstrate the principals of force and compulsion that are key to his government. This new agent – the two-horned beast of Revelation 13 – is the False Prophet, a counterfeit

to the 144,000. He will work mighty miracles to deceive the world into submitting to the authority of the first beast. These miracles will be so mighty, and so authentic, that he will be universally recognized as a true prophet of God. He will use this standing – this authority – to demand that all people undergo a loyalty test. Either they will receive the mark of allegiance to the beast or they will be put to death.

In response, the message of God’s servants will be clear and unambiguous. They will declare that if anyone concedes to the demands of the False Prophet, and accepts the mark of loyalty to the beast, that person will suffer the wrath of God.

The people of the world will thus be brought to make their choice. Whose wrath would they rather experience? Who do they believe? On the one hand, Satan’s False Prophet will say that safety lies in trusting the political and spiritual structures of mankind. Anyone who chooses not to “go along with the program” will be threatened with wrath – the wrath of the beast.

On the other hand, the 144,000 will warn that taking the actions demanded by the False Prophet will result in experiencing the greater wrath – the wrath of God.

Is it any wonder that prophetic scripture speaks of this as being the time of wrath⁵, or the indignation⁶? Everyone will experience wrath. Either Satan’s or God’s. Our only choice will be whose wrath we will experience.

The following chart may help synchronize the events spoken of above:

⁵ Zephaniah 1:14-18, Daniel 11:44

⁶ Isaiah 26:20-21, Daniel 8:19, Daniel 11:36

Trumpet #	Event	Effect	Message of the 144,000 Servants
1 2 3 4	Environmental devastation by meteorites, comets and asteroids	Man's governments and societies are dealt a fatal blow. Food resources are nearly wiped out. Millions perish.	Worship the God who made the earth, seas and fountains of water. It is time for His judgment to begin.
5	Abyss opened to allow Satan to work directly and openly with humanity. Causes intense pain.	Man responds to Trumpet devastations by efforts to save self. Babylon (the union of religion and politics) is reborn on a worldwide basis. Satan gives it great authority.	Babylon is fallen, is fallen.
6	Death angels released to kill 1/3 rd of mankind.	False Prophet works great miracles to deceive the world, then enforces loyalty test. To avoid death one must worship the beast or his image and receive his mark. All are forced to choose. Dissenters are killed.	Don't worship the beast or his image or receive his mark. If you do, you'll suffer the wrath of God, poured out without mercy.
7	Probation closes. All have made their choice and demonstrated their loyalty. Christ leaves the heavenly sanctuary.		

The messages of the three angels are precisely tied to the events that will unfold during the time of the Trumpets. Since this is also the time in which the 144,000 have their primary ministry (as seen in the story of the two witnesses) we must conclude that the three angel's messages are the last gospel call to the inhabitants of the world, given by the 144,000 servants of God during the time of the Trumpets.

This line of reasoning might be more than a little troubling to an Adventist who has been raised under the logo of the three angels. We have been taught that our forefathers sounded the messages of the three angels beginning in the mid 1800's.

It is a fact that Adventist preachers did preach these messages. But it is also a fact that their sermons on these verses did not take these messages into the whole world. They couldn't. Their time had not yet come. Consider these words from Ellen White's pen in this regard:

"[The angel of Revelation 14] presents a message that is to be proclaimed to the world just before Christ comes in the clouds of heaven."
 Signs of the Times, May 5, 1887

"The second angel's message... was first preached in the summer of 1844... But the message of the second angel did not reach its complete fulfillment... Not yet can it be said that 'Babylon is fallen...'"
 Great Controversy, p. 389

"The angels are represented as flying in the midst of heaven, proclaiming to the world a message of warning, and having a direct bearing upon the people living in the last days of this earth's history."
 Life Sketches, p. 429

"The three angels' messages are to be combined, giving their threefold light to the world."
 SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 7, p. 985

"The fourteenth chapter of Revelation is a chapter of the deepest interest. This scripture will soon be understood in all its bearings, and the messages given to John the revelator will be repeated with distinct utterance."
 RH Oct. 13, 1904

Ellen White clearly understood that though these messages were declared in the 1800's they had not reached their prophetic fulfillment, and that the full application of these messages would be seen in the time immediately preceding the return of Christ. She repeatedly used the future tense, "are to be combined...", "will be understood...", "will be repeated...".

Seeing the messages of the three angels as yet-to-be declared warnings about the events that will overtake humanity during the time of the Trumpets, fulfills much of what Ellen White said above. The messages

- Are to be repeated,
- Are to be combined,
- Will be a message of warning to those living in the last days of earth's history, just before Christ returns, and
- Will truly warn of a "Babylon" that is fallen.

Perseverance

"Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them." Rev 14:12 – 13 NASB

It's interesting to note that we usually only think of this verse as providing us with a working definition of who the "saints" are, i.e., those who keep the commandments (a.k.a. Adventists) and who have their faith in Jesus. In approaching the verse this way we miss the main point – that of perseverance. The perseverance of the saints will be seen in that they *keep* their faith in Jesus, and that they *keep* obeying the commandments. The main warning in this text is that during this time – during the time that the three angels messages are being declared – it will be important that the believers *keep on* believing, and that they hold fast to the hope that they have.

This declaration mirrors the one made in Revelation 13. You'll recall that Revelation 13 tells us about the awesome, worldwide authority that will be granted to the sea-beast, Babylon – so great that every person on earth will bow in obeisance to it. All, that is, except those who are to be saved. Of their experience during this time we read, "Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints." Jesus is stating that the saints during this time will have to hang on tight.

From the chart on page 34 we can see that both of the above story lines occur during the time of the Trumpets. Both the ascendancy of Babylon and the declaration of the three angels messages take place during the time of the Trumpets. So what we are seeing here is a double warning to persevere, to hold fast. This gracious warning should not be ignored. The saints are being warned that no matter what Satan throws at them during this time, no matter what false miracles they will confront, no matter what "evidence" is placed before them, they need to hold fast to the truth that has been delivered to them.

Clearly, many of the saints will be martyred during this time, especially under the events of the 6th Trumpet. So with the warning to persevere comes the statement that those who die during this period are blessed. Not only do they experience an end of their suffering (they rest from their labors), but they are assured that they will be rewarded for their decision to stay true to God in the face of death (their deeds follow them).

REVELATION REVISITED

- 1-4 Environmental Devastation
- 5 Abyss Opened – Torment for 5 months
- 6 Death Angels released – 1/3rd killed
- 7 Close of Probation

Babylon – an amalgamation of all the major political and spiritual powers – arises as mankind seeks to pull together to appease God and stave off extinction. Satan is allowed to give this beast great power and authority. It will quickly (in 5 month's time) gain enormous support and power.

The "False Prophet" arrives on the scene to convince the world to support Babylon. Its many dramatic miracles deceive the world as to his character and gain it great authority. This false prophetic movement runs into direct opposition of God's Servants, as each tries to prepare the way for the return of their God. Because he deceives the world by his miracles, he moves to have religious laws put into place commanding all to submit to Babylon's authority – and receive Babylon's mark – or die. A third of mankind is killed for refusing to submit.

"In this hour of judgment, obey and worship the Creator God who made the seas and trees."

"Babylon is fallen – it is wicked and immoral and has become the home of demons."

"Don't worship Babylon or its image and don't receive its mark. If you take Babylon's mark as the False Prophet is commanding you to do, you may avoid the wrath of Satan and the Beasts, but you will instead receive the full, undiluted wrath of God."

1260-day witness of God's Servants after they receive the open book from the Mighty Angel.