

- Away from potential Pantheism and firmly into Christian Theism
- Away from Arianism (denial of Jesus divinity) and to the scriptural teaching of Jesus divinity and the Trinity

Using her, God's Spirit prevented the SDA church from departing from Biblical Christian teaching and becoming a non-Christian cult. Also in obedience to God she opposed slavery, promoted mission, religious freedom, Health (especially a preventative approach), encouraged the church to build Hospitals and develop an Education system.

Great Controversy Theme

Her greatest contribution is probably her 'Great Controversy' theme. This is the cosmic and panoramic view God gave her of history and the battle between Christ and Satan. Ellen White has amazing insight into the fall of Satan, the wonderful life and victory of Jesus, and the exhilarating end of sin. When you read you realise that God has shown her these things!

Finding Out about Ellen White

Where does one start looking? Try starting with books like *Steps to Christ*, *The Ministry of Healing*, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Prophets and Kings*, *The Desire of Ages* (a beautiful book about the life of Jesus), *Acts of the Apostles* and *The Great Controversy*. All her other writings (letters etc) must be read in their time, place, and setting and for their original purpose. Often they are to a specific individual person for a specific situation and may not be applicable to everyone. We need to read intelligently so we don't misuse, misunderstand or misinterpret.

Jesus is the Centre and the Bible is the Standard

For Seventh-day Adventists Jesus and no one else is the centre. Ellen White occupies a place of recognition, not just because of the abundant evidence of the Spirit's activity in her life, but because she so fervently adores and exalts Jesus as the hope of the world and our incomparable personal Saviour. She honours and celebrates Jesus as *only* centre. In addition, the Bible is the basis for Adventist doctrine and practice, not Ellen White. Adventists do not make acceptance of Ellen White a test of fellowship, and accept those who are not sure of her role and position. Even so, the Adventist church as a body does recognise God's speaking to them through Ellen White and cannot help but acknowledge the wonderful way God has blessed and guided the church through her. Anything less would be historically misleading and ignorant.

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Prophecy Guide

Daniel 2

Daniel 7

Daniel 9

Daniel 8

Revelation 12

Revelation 13

Revelation 14a

Revelation 14b

Revelation 20

Revelation 14b

Babylon and the Remnant

In our last study we looked at the issues in the final crisis. We saw that the whole world, both religiously and politically, will be united in opposition to God's commandments. The Dragon (symbolising Satan and the kings and political powers he uses to oppose God) will use the healed sea-beast (religious Rome or the fallen church which has regained and is reusing political power like it did in the medieval period) and the land-beast (the USA which has turned its back on freedom and is religiously controlled) to entice, deceive, pressure or force the world to follow a false law that is in opposition to God's holy law (Rev13:11-17).

Beware!

Who and what does Satan use in Rev 16:13,14?

Here the Bible warns us that in the final conflict there will be lots of *false miracles*, and lots of *activity by spirits*. To this we could add false prophets. We cannot base our decisions on miracles or spiritual activity. It is very important then that we be warned, aware and prepared to resist deception and to help warn other people to avoid it. We need to have a good knowledge of the Bible and a strong daily relationship with Christ.

False Miracles

What are some of the miracles Satan uses? These miracles that religious people who oppose God's law will work may even be similar to the miracles Jesus worked. However, these miracles are connected with spirits and seem to particularly point to another kind of miracle.

False Spirits

One of the most dangerous activities of Satan is to impersonate the dead or to act as a spirit of some kind. God explicitly forbade his people to have any contact with spiritists, mediums with 'familiar spirits', or any form of magic (see Deut 18:10,11; Lev 19:31, 20:27).

Ellen White and the Tests of a Prophet

Adventists believe the Spirit of Prophecy or Testimony of Jesus mentioned in Rev 12:17 was *active* in a lady by the name of Ellen G White. Ellen White lived from 1827 to 1915. She lived mainly in America, but also spent time in Europe and Australia. Adventist make such a claim only because they believe Ellen White meets the criteria of the Bible for a prophet. She passes the guidelines mentioned earlier.

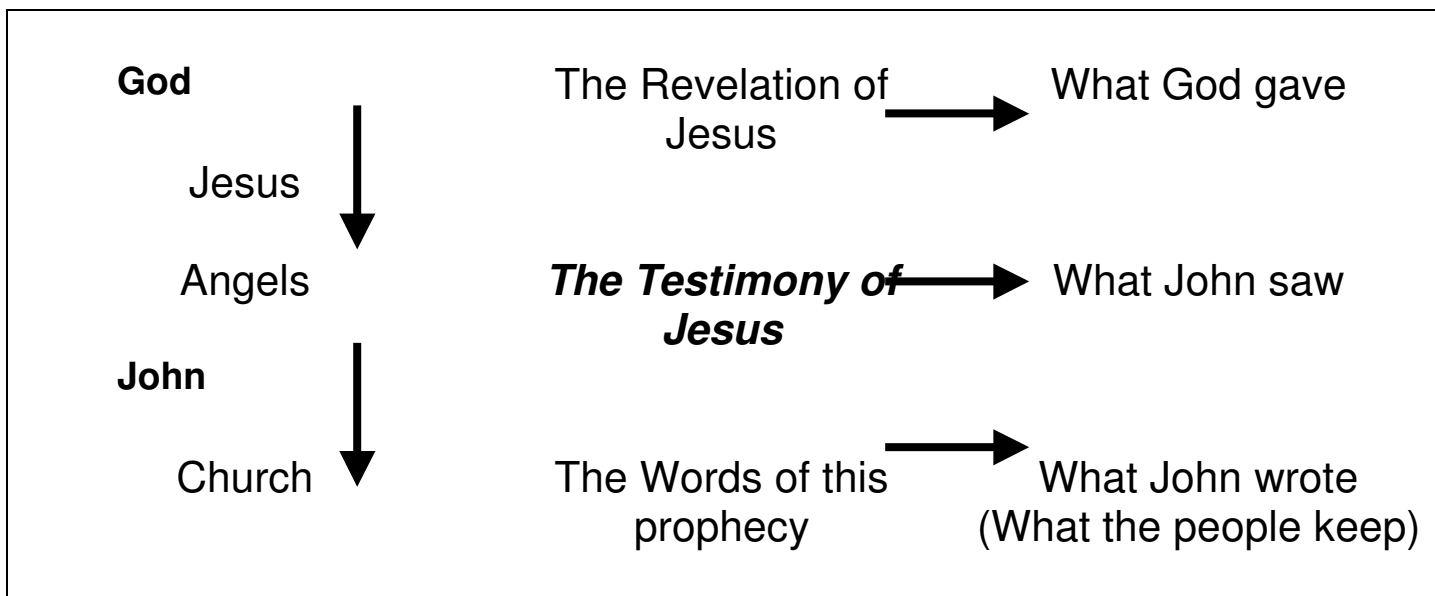
- She upholds the total supremacy of Jesus Christ. She loved to talk of Jesus and it is evident from her writings that she enjoyed a close relationship with him.
- She affirms that salvation and forgiveness are found only in Jesus Christ. Nothing we do merits salvation. It is a free gift of grace from God to those who trust in Christ.
- She upholds the Bible (not her own writings) as the supreme authority. None of her teachings contradict the Bible (although she often gives extra-biblical insights). She herself said the Bible alone is the standard of faith, doctrines, and practices. Those were her very words and contrast with all false prophets. No Adventist fundamental beliefs are built on her teachings, all are built on the Bible.
- She tirelessly upholds God's law against manmade laws and disobedience.

It is a very interesting experience to compare the life and teachings of Ellen White with many other so-called modern prophets. They consistently reject Biblical teachings, God's law and make themselves as some how crucial to salvation. Ellen White never does this but focuses us on Jesus. While quite a few 'miraculous' and extraordinary events marked Ellen White's life, the best evidence for her authenticity is that she meets the four criteria above. She never encouraged anyone to believe her except as they discerned the Spirit of God, in harmony with the Scripture, speaking through her.

Fruit of Her Ministry

Ellen White fulfilled the role of a prophet. Like all of us she was not perfect, and denied personal perfection, but her life was of the highest moral character as both friends and enemies admitted. More than once she helped the Adventist Church avoid going down the wrong track. This evidence greatly confirms her prophetic ministry. For example she helped move the church:

- Away from Legalism – and into Salvation by Grace



The Spirit on the Church and on specific individuals (prophets)

Joel 2:28-31 says God will pour out his Spirit just before the Day of the Lord. This was fulfilled at Pentecost just after Christ's First Coming and we will see it again just before Christ's Second Coming. This activity of the Spirit extends to everyone in the body of Christ. Revelation 12:17 speaks of a different activity. It is not the church wide outpouring of the Spirit, which happened at Pentecost, but the 'testimony of Jesus' amongst the woman's offspring at the very end of time. This is more than the testimony a believer bears about Jesus. It is the testimony Jesus bears to his people through a particular *prophet*. That is why the testimony of Jesus is said to be the spirit of prophecy (Rev 19:10). The spirit of prophecy is the prophetic spirit sent by Jesus to testify to the church. This Spirit gives the message of Jesus to the church through prophets.

The Role of the Prophets

Prophets had several main roles including:

- The main role was to call the people of God to be faithful to God's covenant and God's ways. This involved condemning false worship, social injustice, announcing God's judgment on rebellion (covenant curses). They also comforted God's people and pointed out how they might return and find mercy.
- Prophets would declare God's will for that moment in history and what the people should do.
- Prophets would announce what God is about to do in history. This involved a predictive element (surprisingly the predictive element was not the main role of a prophet. Some prophets made few predictions).

Spirits and spiritualism

As we have studied earlier when someone dies they sleep in the grave. They do not exist as a disembodied spirit. Spiritualists, mediums and channellers do not call up the dead. Rather they are in contact with demons who impersonate the dead (demons can impersonate or appear as Mary, Saints, great people from the past, aliens, Angels or a dead loved one)! *This is one of the most alluring and deceptive miracles that demons work.* The false unbiblical teaching that when you die you keep on living, either in heaven, hell, or by reincarnation, is preparing the world for massive deception. Only the Biblical teaching that the dead are really dead and sleeping in the grave will protect us. In 1 Samuel 28:3-20 King Saul, whom God has rejected, went to a medium or witch and tried to communicate with the prophet Samuel who had died. What the Medium saw was not Samuel but a familiar or demonic spirit impersonating Samuel. 1 Sam 28:6 tells us that God would not answer Saul by dreams, Urim or *by prophets!* Do not believe a person if they tell you this was Samuel the prophet. It wasn't Samuel rather it was a 'familiar spirit' or demon.

False Miracles by False Followers of Jesus!

What warning does Jesus give in Matthew 7:21-23?

This is a sober passage! Jesus refers to people who perform miracles in *his name*. In other words these are *deceived Christians!* These are Christians who profess Christ but do not obey his Fathers will. In the last days even Christians will refuse to obey God's covenant law. How can we avoid this deception? Here are the main protections.

- **Hold to the total supremacy of Jesus Christ.** Do not follow any Spiritual authority that does not submit to the Lord of all Creation and saviour of all humankind— Jesus Christ.
- **Understand the gospel of grace**, which centres our faith, trust and dependence on Jesus alone for salvation and forgiveness and not on ourselves or any other means (works, rules, gurus, priests, saints, etc).

- **Keep God’s Ten-Commandment Law.** Recognise that both Satan and the carnal heart hate God’s law. Jesus says they ‘practice lawlessness.’ The devil’s agents and philosophies will oppose the Decalogue. Staying loyal to God’s law will greatly protect us.
- **Hold to the Bible as the ultimate authority** and reject any teaching or teacher that teaches what contradicts the Bible. Watch out especially for false teachings about death and the afterlife, the nature of God, and morality. Jesus said you would know false teachers by their *fruits*. It doesn’t matter how many people believe it, how nice are the people who teach, or how wonderful the experience (see how Jesus used the Word of God in Matt 4:1-11).
- **Stick with People who hold to these four things!**

Modern Babylon

This final rebellion will involve religious and political groups that totally disagree with each other but will unite against God’s law. The Bible describes the religious side of this rebellion as Babylon. Ancient Babylon is the city, built beside the tower of Babel (confusion) that opposed Israel in the Old Testament. Modern spiritual Babylon is spiritual confusion.

Summarise each verse of Rev 17:1-6 describing modern Babylon:

1

2

3

4

5

6

John tells us that when he saw the harlot woman he was greatly astonished. Why after seeing so many strange and unusual things in the visions of Revelation was John astonished at this sight? The last time John had seen a woman was in Revelation 12 where the church of God was symbolised by a pure and beautiful woman. But here John sees a corrupt and impure woman. John is astonished because he knows this is symbolising a corrupt and impure church at the end of time!

3

An Adventist is a curious mix revealing an enormous debt and connection with other Christian believers. An Adventist is part 'Lutheran', part 'Baptist', part 'Reformed', part 'Methodist' and is not afraid to admit indebtedness, dependence and similarity.

Seventh-day Adventists are not trying to make an arrogant claim about themselves. They officially teach that the body of Christ is *all* true Christians from whatever denomination and that Adventists are only a *small* part of that vast body. Adventists actively follow with interest, and rejoice in, the spread of the gospel by many other Christian groups. They see themselves and these other groups as God's chosen instruments for this very task. All true believers are to spread the gospel. But Adventists do believe God has called them to spread the same gospel but within the context of the special end time message of the Three Angels. This context will become more and more crucial the closer we get to the end of time. God has called and placed this conviction upon Adventists and they cannot do otherwise.

The Adventist Church is not the whole of the remnant in Rev 12:17, which will only be fully seen in the very end. Yet no other group has simultaneously, 1) arisen after the long period of the dragon's persecution which ended in the 1800's, 2) keeps *both* the faith of Jesus and the commandments of God, 3) self-consciously and deliberately understands and proclaims *all* Three Angels' Messages as a coherent whole, and 4) has had the testimony of Jesus or spirit of prophecy amongst them.

What is the Testimony of Jesus?

Compare Rev 1:1-3 with Rev 19:10 and 22:8-9. what parallels do you find? What do these verses seem to suggest the testimony of Jesus is?

The testimony of Jesus (that is the testimony Jesus sends to his people) is also called the 'spirit of prophecy'. Prophecy is of course, a message or testimony from God (or Jesus) given to his people through a prophet. This helps us to understand that the remnant will have a manifestation of the spirit of prophecy working among them. That is, they will have a prophet among them. The diagram over the page is based on Revelation 1:1-3 and shows the chain of Revelation.

A Gathered Remnant and a Scattered Remnant

God initiates this smaller group of people (**a gathered remnant**) to do a special work in the world and among God's larger family at the very end of time. The remnant saints are not all of God's people. God has many people in Babylon which he later on calls out of her (**the scattered remnant** see Rev 18:1-4)! With the final success and end of this call God's remnant will be one and ready for the Advent.

Historical Parallels

The features of this smaller group that spreads the 3 angels message correspond to a historical movement within the wider Christian church. The Seventh-day Adventist Church uniquely shares the following characteristics and history, which parallel the prophetic picture in Revelation.

- They arose at the time of the end
- They keep the faith of Jesus (Gospel)
- They keep the commandments of God (including the Sabbath)
- They understand and proclaim the Three Angels' Messages

No other group shares the complete combination of characteristics above. In fact no other group proclaims the Three Angels' Messages.

God has Children Everywhere

A true Christian is one who loves God, trusts in Jesus for salvation and seeks to follow all of God's ways. The Church or the body of Christ is not limited to any one church or denomination. Adventists believe that God was active before they, as a movement, came along and is active outside them. God is God of all the earth and not only the God of Adventists.

Part of the Wider Christian Church

The Seventh-day Adventist church holds the orthodox teachings of Christianity (Trinity, full deity of Jesus, etc) in common with all other Christians and is part of the wider Christian church. They are not a cult that believes the truth only arrived with them. Adventists positively regard the work of God amongst other believers (previous and contemporary) and consider other Christian groups as their spiritual 'parents.' Adventists appreciate thinkers that Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Christians look to for understanding and insight into the truth of God and salvation. For example Irenaeus, Augustine, Athanasius, Luther, Calvin, Wesley and others, while not infallible, are recognised as having much to teach.

Why specifically is this woman impure? There are two main reasons:

Drunk with the Blood of the Saints

- The *first point* is an obvious symbolic reference to fact that the harlot is responsible for the persecution and deaths of many of God's people. Throughout history some churches have persecuted God's people and will do so again at the end of time. The worst example is the inquisitions by religious Rome. Christians persecuting Christians – it doesn't make sense but it has happened and will happen again.

Committing Fornication with the Kings of the Earth

- What does it mean when it says the harlot has committed fornication with the kings of the earth? As we now know, a woman symbolises a church. God expects exclusive loyalty and commitment to himself. Churches are to depend on and be faithful to God. Christ is the 'husband' of the church. *When a church aligns itself with the power of the political state (kings) it is unfaithful to God. It is prostituting itself.* It then usually starts to use the state to enforce its positions and persecute others who disagree with it. That is why being drunk with blood and committing fornication are linked. Reliance on political power leads to persecution (Unfortunately throughout history many churches and religious groups have acted like spiritual Babylon).

The Churches or Religious World at the End

Revelation predicts that the religious world (and, unfortunately, in particular the Christian world) will decline so badly that they will seek political power and will persecute the peaceful followers of Jesus. Babylon is said to have daughters (17:5) – other harlots. This symbolises that many churches and religions will be involved in the predicted apostasy.

What Does God do to Counteract Babylon?

Read Revelation 18:1-5. What happens in verse 1?

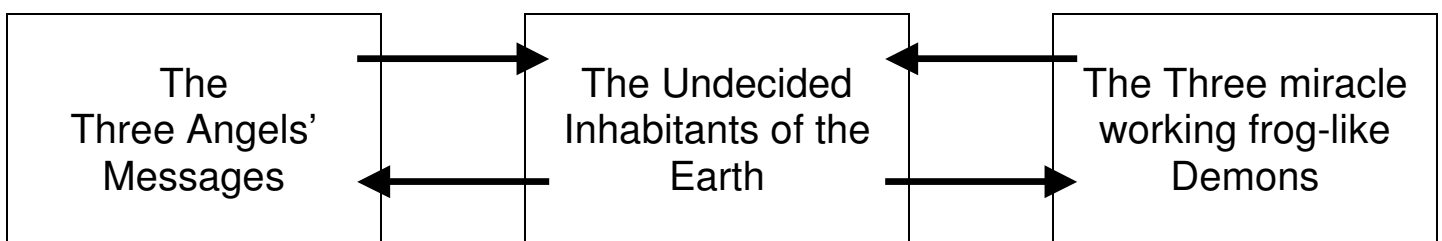
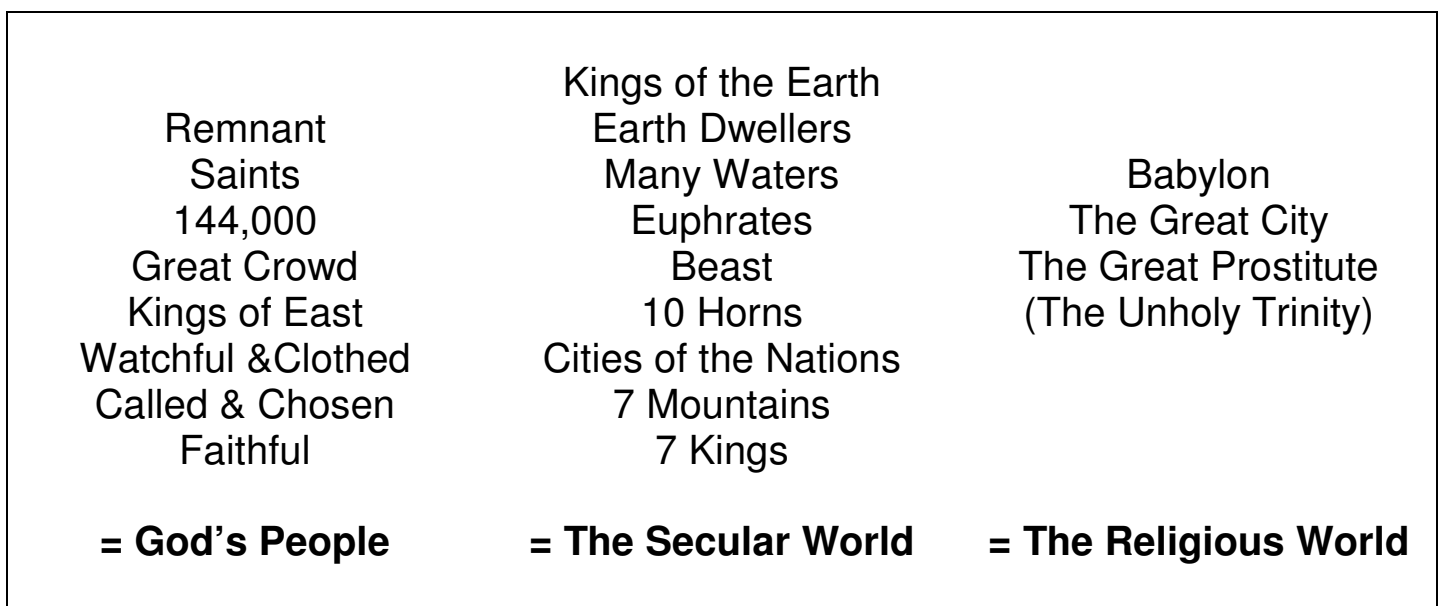
What is the message of verse 2?

What are the directions given in verse 4?

Revelation 18 describes an angel (or message) that comes down from heaven at the very end of time when Babylon has fallen and is at the height of her power. This is God's final response to Babylon. God gives this message amazing power to illuminate the whole earth. This 4th angel repeats part of the three angels' message of Revelation 14 but adds a new note: *Come out of her my People*. This shows many of God's people are scattered within the religious groups that make up Babylon. The angels or messages of God call the world to follow God and reject Babylon.

Decision Time for the Earth

The Symbols of Revelation 12-18 paint the following picture:



On one side we have the people of God specifically symbolised by the three angels' messages. On the other side we have the forces of Babylon who take a different message to the world. And in the middle we have the political and secular people of the world. Everyone will have to make a decision. Eventually the world will fall into two camps and it will be impossible to sit in the middle.

The Two Camps at the end of time will be:

1. Those who keep God's Commandments and have the Faith of Jesus. This is the group that proclaims the Three Angels' Messages.
2. Those of Babylon who resist God and his messages. They have the Mark of the Beast in their head (religious ones who believe it), or in their hands (secular ones who go along with it even if they don't believe it).

Who are God's People?

We have seen that God's people at the very end of time are described as those who "keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus", and also have the 'testimony of Jesus' (Rev 12:17, 14:12). These are the people that proclaim and share the three angels messages with the world. If we put together all of the information in Revelation and Daniel that we have been studying over the last few months we can build the following picture of this group.

- They are a remnant or rest of the offspring of the woman (they are *part, but not all*, of the vast Christian church, appearing near the end of history). This means God has lots of followers everywhere, but not all of them are immediately part of the group that initially spreads the final message. Though, in the heat of the final crisis, all of God's people from every religion and background unite around the message and movement that resists the mark of the beast. Yet this message and movement does not just drop out of the sky one day. It has a historical origin in an historical group.
- They understand and share *all* Three Angels Messages that include:
 - Everlasting Gospel (first and most important!)
 - Fear God and give him glory (put God first)
 - Worship the Creator (Especially through the Sabbath)
 - Announce the Judgment has begun already and is taking place (the hour ... *has come*)
 - Warn that Babylon has fallen (warning about false religion)
 - Warn against receiving the mark of the beast (they understand this event)
- They keep God's commandments (including the Sabbath)
- They keeping the faith of Jesus (follow Jesus and his teachings)
- They have the testimony of Jesus (which is the Spirit of prophecy)
- They are active at the *end* of earth's history