

“The Three Angels and Adventism”

In the Adventist world, the messages of the three angels play a prominent role. Having visited and participated in many of our churches in the United States and abroad, it is safe to say that even though they are familiar to us, we do not understand these Three Angels as it is our privilege to understand them. We tend to hold them as something external. In other words, they are something we have that we believe we need to give to others, while we do not really understand them ourselves.

“I was shown three steps—the first, second, and third angels’ messages. Said my accompanying angel, ‘Woe to him who shall move a block or stir a pin of these messages. The true understanding of these messages is of vital importance. The destiny of souls hangs upon the manner in which they are received.’” (EW258.3)

This article is simply an attempt to set a framework for a different perspective of the role of the three angels than we normally see. In order to do that, we’ll be looking at a couple of types that will help us to see through a different lens, which you can find in Genesis 19, Joshua 2, and Luke 11:5-8. I will also be drawing from the chapter called A Firm Platform found in the book Early Writings, pp. 258-261. To better understand the context, it would be helpful to read each account in the Bible, along with the short chapter in Early Writings as you read this article.

Connecting the Histories

To begin with, Early Writings makes a definite connection between the three angels messages given in the Millerite time period, and of the messages given to the Jews at the first advent of Christ. There are two statements that clearly show the connection:

- Time period of the Jews:

“I was pointed back to the proclamation of the first advent of Christ. John was sent in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way for Jesus. Those who rejected the testimony of John were not benefited by the teachings of Jesus.” (EW259.1)

- Time period of the Millerites:

“All heaven watched with the deepest interest the reception of the first angel’s message... Those who rejected the first message could not be benefited by the second..” (EW260.1)

More than just connecting the histories of the Jews and the Millerites, she is making the direct comparison of the message of the first angel with that of John the Baptist, and the message of the second angel with that of the teachings of Christ. In other words, they are one and the same. John is giving the first angel’s message, and Christ Himself is giving the second.

She is also showing that there is an order in which these messages must be received, that the first message must be received before they could be benefited from the second.

To further cement them together, she then lays out the consequences of rejecting the first message in each time period.

- Time period of the Jews:

“But the Jews were left in total darkness. They lost all the light which they might have had upon the plan of salvation, and still trusted in their useless sacrifices and offerings. The heavenly sanctuary had taken the place of the earthly, yet they had no knowledge of the change. Therefore they could not be benefited by the mediation of Christ in the holy place.” (EW259.1)

- Time period of the Millerites:

“I saw that as the Jews crucified Jesus, so the nominal churches had crucified these messages, and therefore they have no knowledge of the way into the most holy, and they cannot be benefited by the intercession of Jesus there. Like the Jews, who offered their useless sacrifices, they offer up their useless prayers to the apartment which Jesus had left.” (EW260.1)

Useless: Having no use; Unserviceable; Producing no good end; Not advancing the end proposed. 1828 Webster Dictionary

Here she is linking the three angels’ messages directly with the heavenly sanctuary, showing that the rejection of the first two leads to the failure to get into the heavenly sanctuary, or to advance from one compartment to the other. There is a definite case to be made that they are one and the same; that is—the first, second, and third angels’ messages which must be taken in their order, are identical with the courtyard, holy place, and most holy place, which must also be taken in their order.

“Many who embraced the third message had not had an experience in the two former messages. Satan understood this, and his evil eye was upon them to overthrow them; but the third angel was pointing them to the most holy place, and those who had had an experience in the past messages were pointing them the way to the heavenly sanctuary. Many saw the perfect chain of truth in the angels’ messages, and gladly received them in their order, and followed Jesus by faith into the heavenly sanctuary. These messages were represented to me as an anchor to the people of God. Those who understand and receive them will be kept from being swept away by the many delusions of Satan.” (EW 256.2)

Struck with Blindness

The account of Lot in Sodom provides us with a more tangible look at how these angels work. Two angels were sent into the city with a message. Not just any message, but one that warned of imminent destruction.

It was accepted by a few but rejected by the many. In fact, the men of the city wanted Lot to bring the men out to them so they could 'know' them, in other words, they wanted to adulterate those messages. They did not want to accept the messages for what they were and therefore rejected them. When that happened the angels themselves struck the men with blindness, then pulled Lot in and shut the door. The Bible tells us that they wearied themselves to find the door, as they were left blind and in darkness with no way to get in. There is now one class of people shut up inside the house, and the other class locked out. The same was true in the account of Noah's ark. When the door was shut, also by an angel, two classes are separated—one shut up safely within, and the other locked out forever. It is a significant point that Noah's ark contained three floors, representing as a type, the sanctuary and the three angels' messages.

The Harlot Who Hid the Messengers

In Joshua 2 we can see the same thing put in a different way. Rahab received and hid the two spies, or messengers, just as Lot did, and as a result her and her household were saved. This account also has a shut door; this time it was the gate to the city. In both accounts the messages came in the evening. By hiding the messengers and following their directions, she was prepared to safely pass through the destruction of the city. See Joshua 6:25. For us this represents the coming Sunday Law time period under the third angel, and its resulting destruction. Because of the messages from those two men, she and her household hid inside and were spared. See Isaiah 26:20-21:

“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.”

She was also instructed to place a scarlet thread in the window as a signal to the destroying army to pass her by. It was the same for the Hebrews during the Passover in Egypt, who had to have blood on the doorposts in order for the destroying angel to pass them by. Both represent a class of people who rely solely on the merits and atonement of Christ, and not to their own works. She would not have known how to apply the scarlet thread except for the instruction of those two men, representing the instruction of the first and second angels' messages. Rahab as a harlot, represent those who receive the three angels as they go to the world in the form of the loud cry.

Who Did the Messages go to First?

One of the first things to consider would be the fact that in each time period the message was delivered directly to God's true church on earth, before it went to the world. The Jews were the church until their probation closed in AD 34, and the Protestant Churches were the true church until the door was shut in 1844. In each case two distinct messages are delivered to God's church just prior to their removal and replacement.

The third angel always then arrives as judgment:

"I then saw the third angel. Said my accompanying angel, "Fearful is his work. Awful is his mission. He is the angel that is to select the wheat from the tares, and seal, or bind, the wheat for the heavenly garner. These things should engross the whole mind, the whole attention." (EW 118.1)

The connecting link for the Jews and the Millerites is the 2300-year prophecy. The present truth message delivered to the Jews was the conclusion of the seventy weeks based on Daniel 9:24-27, and the present truth message delivered to the Protestant churches was the conclusion of the 2300-year prophecy based on Daniel 8:14. Both were a part of the same 2300-year prophecy, one at the beginning, the other at the end. (See Great Controversy pp. 324-329; also pp.351-354) Each one showed God's people that Christ was moving from one portion of the sanctuary to another.

If you think about it, there is only one change left in the sanctuary before Christ stands up; that of moving from the judgment of the dead to the judgment of the living. The other thing to note is that in both cases, it was the reception of the first and second angels' messages that allowed them to understand their present truth. In other words, if we fail to understand the first and second angels' messages, then we will also fail to understand our present truth. As their present truth was found in Daniel 9, and Daniel 8, so we can expect to find our present truth in Daniel. For us it is the last unfulfilled portion of Daniel 11 before Michael stands up.

With the Jews of Christ's time, the messages delivered to them were opposed and rejected, with the result that the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from them and placed on a remnant who went on to partake of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. With the Protestant churches of the Millerite time, those same messages were opposed and rejected with the same result—the Spirit was withdrawn and placed on a remnant who went on to give the Midnight Cry. The same will be true with us, for the very same reasons, and a remnant will be produced who will go on to give the loud cry.

What is Present Truth?

Mrs. White tells us that there is precious truth, but what we really need is present truth. (EW63.1)

The present truth for each of these groups, the Jews, the Millerites, and us, is directly related to the movement and ministration of Christ. The Jews were exposed to two movements of Christ—His entrance into the courtyard here on earth to be sacrificed as the Lamb of God, and His ascension into the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. For the Protestant churches in the Millerite time period, it was His movement from the holy place to the most holy place. In our time period there is only one actual movement left, and that is when Christ stands up and probation is closed for all people.

It needs to be pointed out again however, that there are two phases to His ministration in the most holy place.

The first phase is the judgment of the dead, and the second is the judgment of the living. This is the one we need to be concerned with. If we get this one right, then we have nothing to fear when Christ stands and probation closes for everyone. To fine tune this a little further, the last movement of Christ before He stands up is to move into the hearts of His people, who have become the true temple of God, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. This is the result of the judgment of the living for those who have accepted the first message, and have gone on to be benefited by the second, and were thereby enabled to understand and pass through the testing present truth of the third angel.

Three Loaves and a Shut Door

Since the message goes first to the house of God, then it is equally true that judgment begins with the house of God. (See 1 Peter 4:17.) A good way to sum this all up is with the parable of the three loaves at midnight.

“And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves? For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.” (Luke 11:5-8)

This parable applies directly to us, as we are the last true church of God on earth.

This message goes at midnight, representing the wise and foolish virgins of Matt 25. **From within** = The Most Holy Place. **The door is now shut** = Probation closed for Adventism. **My children are with me in bed** = Adventists who are sealed. **The three loaves he is asking for** = The three angels' messages that are to be given to the world as the loud cry. **His friend** = Those in the world who receive these messages.

Put in a different way, the person asking for the three loaves represents a class of people who have given a distinct message of the three angels to Seventh-day Adventists in their own Adventist language. Now they are asking for the three angels' messages in the format that goes to the world as the loud cry. The door is now shut for those in the Adventist church who rejected the message, but those who receive it are represented as His children who are in bed with Him, having gone by faith into the most holy place with Christ, and are sealed.

Those who give the last message to the world have become righteous by faith in Christ and have overcome sin in all of its forms. This is the direct result of passing through the experience of the three angels' messages in their order. They are not giving the messages from theory, but have become the message themselves.