

Why a Detached Fourth Angel

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F. T. Wright

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THE book of *Revelation* is a book of sevens—seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven plagues and seven angels. But whereas, in the cases of the churches, seals, trumpets and plagues, each of the seven comes in direct order of sequence in the presentation, it is not so with the seven angels. The first three are outlined in *Revelation* 14. The fourth is found in chapter 18 after which a return to chapter 14 is necessary to find the last three.

A natural question then arises as to why this is so. Inasmuch as nothing in Scripture is done without meaning and purpose, it is not accidental. There is a good reason for it and understanding that reason will greatly assist in making the preparation for the final conflict.

It will also remove a certain uneasiness arising from being aware that here is something a little different from the pattern of the rest of *Revelation*. That uneasiness will be replaced by the assurance that the work of God is very close to completion and that the Lord has everything going according to His divine wisdom and pattern. It will be seen that He has foreseen and made provision for every exigency.

The understanding of why the fourth angel is detached from the other six is obtained by searching into the specific purpose intended by God in each of the first three angels in particular. God sent them to accomplish individually and collectively a work whereby the great controversy could be brought to its end. This

should be clearly known by the people of God who have dedicated themselves for the accomplishment of that wondrous purpose.

The Fullness of Time

The time of the end began in 1798. It was in that year according to *Daniel* 12:6-12, that those things to which the heavenly explainer referred as being “these wonders” came to their end. As a careful study of *Daniel* and other parts of the Scriptures show, these wonders were the capacity of the man of sin to:

1. Take away the daily,
2. Cast down the place of the sanctuary, and
3. Trample the people of God underfoot.

This should never have been, for the mighty power of God is available to His people. While it did go on century after century, the work of God certainly could not be finished and it was not.

But the time comes when no longer will Babylon be able to cast down the sanctuary, take away the daily and trample on the people of God. Once that had been achieved as it had been by 1798, then the stage was set for the finishing of the work. The end of these wonders began the time of the end.

So God sent, in their turn, the angels of whom thus far the first four have arrived to do their work. The remaining three cannot appear until the work of this first four has been ended. This final and finishing work involves the complete defeat of the man of sin in whom is the spirit of the mystery of iniquity. The weapons by which that victory shall be obtained is the revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the power of God.

Accordingly the first angel came with that gospel as it is written:

Revelation 14

⁶ And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.

This first angel comes having the everlasting gospel which he in turn preaches to the entire world. In that gospel is the whole of the message of mankind. There is no other and there can be no other.

It is a serious mistake to segment the Scriptures into subject areas: history, doctrine, prophecy, genealogies, law and the gospel. It is all the gospel. Therefore, if prophecy is taught as God intended that it should be, then it will be but the teaching of the gospel of Christ. So with history, doctrine, and any other type of Biblical revelation. The Christian, like Paul, has nothing else to preach but the gospel. He said to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 2

² For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

He limited his preaching to them because of the nature of his commission. He testified of his calling in these words:

1 Corinthians 1

¹⁷ For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

Christ had not commissioned Paul to preach the gospel along with other things. He had sent him to preach the gospel and nothing else. There can be no doubt of this for he testified that he would preach nothing else but the gospel to the Corinthians. In doing so he was exactly and faithfully fulfilling his commission, neither adding to nor defaulting from what he had been called to do.

The commission given to Paul is exactly the same commission given to every Christian. It was expressed in explicit terms by Christ just prior to His departure from this earth.

Mark 16

¹⁵ And He said unto them, Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

That is the work which the Lord has given to every one of His children. It is to preach the gospel and nothing else but that. Like Paul, we are to go forth determined to know nothing among those who hear us but Christ and Him crucified. This point is strongly and clearly made by E. J. Waggoner in *Bible Studies on the Book of Romans*, p. 47-49. It is recommended that time be given to studying this reference in connection with this study.

Then Why the Second?

The reason for emphasizing that the only message which God's people have to preach in these last or any other days, is to show the importance of asking the question of why the second angel followed the first. It is just as important to understand the true nature and work of the second angel as to know the first. Otherwise we will find ourselves preaching something other than the gospel.

So the question arises:

“If the first angel brings the gospel and that is all that we have to preach, then what does the second angel bring?”

It cannot be another gospel, or simply a repeating of what the first brought, nor can it be any other message apart from the gospel. The fact that the first angel brought the gospel which is the only thing we are to preach, makes it clear that the first brought the final message to mankind and that no other angel is needed.

Yet the second angel is needed. God would never send an additional angel unless he was needed. Therefore, in the very fact that

God did send another angel is the proof that he was needed. Why was he needed? What does the second angel bring that is so essential to finishing the work and yet is not a message beyond the gospel?

To answer the question simply it must be said that the second announces the result of the preaching of the first. This should not really be necessary and would not be but for the slowness of the perceptions of God's people. But they need reassurance and direction as the preaching of the gospel brings certain results which they find difficult to understand and to accept.

A simple survey of the results of the first angel's work will show the necessity for the second. When the first angel came to the people in the churches back in 1833 and onward, it found them in a state of apostasy. They had lost their vital connection with God although they still professed to be His people and to worship Him. From outward appearances they made a fairly convincing profession. But within them was the spirit of Babylon which is the spirit of the mystery of iniquity.

It must be emphasized that Babylon does not come into existence as a result of the rejection of the first angel's message. The second angel says that Babylon falls. Therefore, it must already be there to fall. Now what is Babylon? To this question many would reply:

- In Daniel's day it was a vast city on the banks of the Euphrates;
- In John's day it was pagan Rome;
- In Luther's day it was the papacy;
- And today it includes all the fallen denominational churches.

In this answer, reference is being made to vast organizations and it is true that they are Babylon. But a closer and more perceptive scrutiny will reveal that these organizations are but the combining of the efforts of thousands of people possessed of the spirit

of Babylon. Within them are certain ambitions, drives, and the committal to certain ways of achieving those aspirations. This is the real Babylon.

Wherever that spirit is found, there Babylon is found, whether it be in a single individual or in ten thousand times ten thousands who are joined together to effect world dominion. So subtle is this spirit that it can be present even within those who have come out of such organizations and number themselves with the true people of God.

It is present to a larger or lesser degree, the measurement of which is precisely related to the level of faith in God. To whatever degree faith in God is lacking, so will the spirit of Babylon be developed. This is automatic. Therefore, the only real cure for the mystery of iniquity is the fullness of faith in God. It is for this reason that that company who will finally be found victorious over the beast and his image will have “the faith of Jesus,” and not simply faith in Jesus. *Revelation 14:12.*

The first one in whom the spirit of Babylon developed was Lucifer while he was yet in heaven and it came about in this way:

1. The truth, “the just shall live by faith”, is as true in heaven as it is upon this earth. Therefore, the just in heaven live by faith in the promises of God, even as the just on earth live by the promises of God.
2. One of those promises to Lucifer was that he would be accorded a position in the government of the universe commensurate with his spiritual, physical, mental and social development. With unfailing certainty, he had found that promise fulfilled until he occupied the highest position available to an angel.
3. But then pride gave to him an inflated view of his worth leading him to expect that God would give him a yet higher place above that possible to an angel. This God could not do. But the promise had not failed. Lucifer was asking God to do more than He had promised.

4. Yet, Lucifer waited in expectation that God would do it until the passing of time first caused him to doubt, and then to utterly disbelieve that He would.
5. Faith in God then became replaced by faith in himself. No longer could he believe that the Lord would take care of him. He believed that he must now do for himself the work which God had promised to do for him.
6. Thus the creature took out of God's hands the work which God alone could do and the manifestation of the mystery of iniquity began.

As soon as Satan gained access to Adam and Eve in the Garden, he worked to instill the same spirit into them. To Eve he argued that the Lord would never fulfill the promise to make them like Himself for the very means whereby it was to be accomplished was denied to them—that tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

This was a lie but Eve came to believe it. Thus she lost faith in God and responded to the devil's instructions to forget about the Lord doing it for her and instead to do it for herself. She put herself in the place of God, taking God's work to herself, and the mystery of iniquity was established in this earth.

Saul, the first king of Israel, exhibited the same spirit when he lost patience while waiting for Samuel to come to offer the sacrifice and offered it himself.

So With Judas who, convinced that Christ should be the Messiah, but frustrated because Christ did not take the mighty power He had and use it to make Himself king, decided to take the work into his own hands. He betrayed Christ to the Jews, convinced that this would create a situation which would compel Jesus to assert Himself to the kingship. It was because the plan failed that Judas went and hanged himself in despair.¹

This is the way of the man of sin. It is to put man in the place of God, simply because he has more faith in himself than he has in

¹ See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 720-721.

the God who made him. Always it is the mystery of iniquity and always it leads to suffering, sickness, violence, death and utter separation from God. It is evil through and through, yet it is the universal way of unconverted man and of apostate churches in particular.

The Gospel is the Answer

The gospel is the revelation of the mystery of God. This is the complete and only answer to the mystery of iniquity. The churches in 1833 were in a sad state of apostasy in which the spirit of Babylon was present. Men had set themselves in the place of God and were in desperate need of a return to God. To them the Lord sent the first angel with the revelation of the gospel of Christ. The vast majority refused to turn from their ways of unbelief and self-sufficiency and in consequence suffered a moral fall of terrible consequences.

But there were those who heeded the invitation of mercy and in them a wonderful work was done. The gospel brought about the fall of Babylon from within them so that the mystery of iniquity reigned in them no more and they lived by simple trusting faith in God. A great change had been wrought in them; a change greater than they were truly able to appreciate.

At the same time those who had refused the message suffered a terrible fall. But because they fell more heavily into the ways of unbelief which were already the familiar pattern of their lives, they did not even know they had fallen. Rather they tended to think that they had grown in what they believed to be the ways of God.

This is the pernicious and insidious deception of the ways of the mystery of iniquity for it leads men who have put themselves in the place of God, to think that they are working mightily for God. Therefore, while they think they have moved nearer to God, they have in fact separated farther from Him.

So by 1844, a great gulf had been created between those who had accepted the message and from within whom Babylon had been dethroned, and those who had rejected the message and who had fallen with Babylon into a still sadder state of apostasy.

Any possibility of a fellowship or working relationship between these two groups who had previously known years of fellowship together, was now impossible. Separation was the only way for each of them. But it was difficult for the people of God to understand this. They did not understand the full implications of all that had happened both to them and to the rejecters of the message. Furthermore they had been taught all their lives that “the good ship was going through” and that it was about the worst kind of sin to separate from it.

Therefore, the people of God needed instruction to open their eyes to the true nature of the situation which had now developed and to inform them that the will of God was for them to separate from the fallen churches.

This is the office of the second angel. He does not bring an additional message beyond that of the first. He simply tells the people of God what the first has accomplished and what they must now do to advance with the message of the first for the first has not yet completed his work. He continues as the second joins him.

A Progressive Work

The first angel does not complete his work and then leave the field to the second. Even though the spirit of the mystery of iniquity is said to be fallen from within them, every trace of that spirit is not yet taken away.

Furthermore there is constant temptation to return to it, a temptation to which many succumb. A splendid example is found in the lives of both Abraham and Moses.

Abraham and Sarah were initially in the land of Ur of the Chaldees which was at that time the very seat of the mystery of iniquity. Therefore, the Lord literally called him to come out of

Babylon and by faith he did. Faithfully and submissively, he followed God through the subsequent years with God's promise ringing in his ears that he would have a son. But time tarried and the Lord showed no disposition it seemed, to make the promise anything more than words even though Abraham openly said to the Lord:

Genesis 15

³ Behold, to me You have given no seed.

In reply God simply reiterated the promise, then went away and seemingly did nothing about it. More years passed until Abraham and Sarah decided that they could no longer wait for the Lord to do it for it seemed evident that He either could not or would not. Therefore, they must do it themselves which they did.

So Ishmael was born and both Abraham and his wife were well satisfied that they had done a great work for God when, in fact, they had done a great work for the devil. Ishmael, God could never accept as the child of promise. When God's own good time came with the birth of living faith in Abraham and Sarah, then the real child appeared. So it was with Moses:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 245:

The elders of Israel were taught by angels that the time for their deliverance was near, and that Moses was the man whom God would employ to accomplish this work.

But Moses came to the place where he felt that the Lord was waiting too long so he took the work into his own hands. He slew the Egyptian expecting that this would precipitate the crisis and compel the Lord to get busy about the work. Instead, God sent him off to unlearn the ways of the mystery of iniquity and to learn the ways of the mystery of God.

When he had thus been thoroughly cleansed of the wrong attitudes and spirit, he was sent back to lead them out. But the time came again when he yielded to the pressure of taking the work of the Lord to himself and struck the rock in anger saying:

Numbers 20

¹⁰ Must we fetch you water out of this rock?

These illustrations demonstrate that even though we have come out of Babylon and that Babylon has fallen from within us, the work is not yet complete for there can be residues of that old spirit there and the constant temptation to turn away from the pathway of faith to the pathway of unbelief wherein we substitute human power and wisdom for the divine leadership and blessing.

Therefore, the first angel who alone can dethrone Babylon must continue his work as the second angel assists him by explaining what the first is accomplishing.

The work of the first thus leads on to its ultimate objectives and the accomplishment thereof. That is, the full dismissal of every trace of the spirit and ways of the mystery of iniquity from the lives of God's people on the one side and the full and total downfall of Babylon itself on the other. It is the office of the third angel to explain and announce these ultimate objectives. On the one hand it is expressed in these words:

Revelation 14

¹² Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

- This is a patience which will never permit them to give up their belief in God and take the work to themselves.
- It is a keeping of the commandments which is perfect and permits no substitution of the ways of God for the ways of the mystery of iniquity.
- It is the faith of Jesus and not merely faith in Him. It is a faith so absolute that no matter what the pressure may be to take the work of God into our own hands we absolutely refuse to do it, even though such refusal may seem to cause great detriment to the work of God.

Thus the third angel instructs us as to what the ultimate result of the teaching of the first angel will be so far as the acceptors of it are concerned. But there is the other side of the picture too. In 1844, the churches did not fall all the way.

The Great Controversy, p. 389:

As they have continued to reject the special truths for this time, they have fallen lower and lower.

The time will come when that fall will be complete as the result of their resistance to the gospel preached in mighty power. Then they will have formed the full manifestation of the beast and his image which in turn is the full manifestation of Babylon and the spirit of the mystery of iniquity. Bear in mind that the last vast organization is but the assembly of those within whom the spirit of Babylon is present. It is only in the whole as it is in each person individually.

So, Why a Fourth Angel?

From the above, it is evident that the three angels' messages are the complete and total provision for the finishing of the work. It is impossible to take the work of God beyond that envisaged by the third angel. We cannot go beyond the faith of Jesus. That is the ultimate, and all who have that faith certainly will have none of the spirit of the mystery of iniquity in them. That would be an impossibility.

Yet, we have another angel, the fourth. Why was he sent in addition to the others? And why is he located apart from the others? Surely, if the first three bring all that is needed to finish the work then the fourth must be needless.

But he is needed, otherwise he would not have been sent for God does not do anything unnecessary to bring this misery to an end. It is costing too much already.

The addition of the fourth angel became necessary not because of any insufficiency in the other three but because the generation to whom they were first preached did not allow those messages to

do their full work in them. That generation was told over and over that they could have been in the kingdom if only they would avail themselves of the full provisions offered to them. We are familiar with the statements in the Spirit of Prophecy to this effect. Study the opening pages of *Christ's Coming Delayed: Why?* to refresh your mind if necessary.

When that generation failed to go through, then the next was declared to have sunken into a Laodicean condition of lukewarmness and ineffectiveness. In that condition they certainly could not and did not go through to the kingdom.

Between these two generations there is a very interesting difference so far as their receiving of the messages is concerned. The first generation received the messages fresh and live from the angels through certain messengers chosen of God for the purpose. But the next generation received it not from the angels but from their fathers who taught their children what the angels had given them. A message coming through these secondary channels could never have the same freshness, power and effectiveness, so that this generation could not see the work through. The next generation would be understandably in an even worse plight.

What was needed was a fresh presentation to be given by another angel directly to the people once again. So the fourth angel was commissioned to bring all three of the former messages with added light and power directly to the Advent people. This should not have been necessary and would not have been if the people had received all that the first three had already offered to them.

A simple comparison will show that the fourth angel does indeed repeat the full messages of the first three. The first angel comes having the everlasting gospel. The fourth comes "having great power". This can only be the power of God which is the same gospel as was brought by the first angel. Therefore the fourth certainly presents all that the first angel presented. As already shown, this is the full message.

The second and third announce the developments to their fullness of both the acceptance and the rejection of the gospel as brought by the first. The fourth likewise covers the same ground, announcing that Babylon the great is fallen to that point where she is fully and finally exposed to the plagues which come as the grim reaping to her years of sowing the evil seed.

So, the fourth angel came live to the people of God in 1888, bringing the full light and power of the three angels' messages. It is for this reason that he is described as being "the loud cry of the third angel."²

That generation could likewise have gone through to the kingdom but they declared that they did not want what the angel offered to them. They wanted what their fathers had transmitted to them. What a sad exchange that was, for the best their fathers could offer them was the law in the form of the ministration of death. They had preached that until they had become as dry as the hills of Gilboa without dew or rain.

By this refusal of the light which the angel had to offer to them they closed the door of opportunity against themselves of going into the kingdom without seeing death.

But today, the angel has returned with the glorious light of these three angels' messages. The loud cry of those messages has come again but the church of today has again declared that they do not wish to receive what the angel is offering them. Instead they choose to have what Babylon herself has offered. They found the message brought by the evangelicals much more to their taste than the loud cry of the third angel.

But, let the Lord be praised, there is a goodly though small company of people around the earth who are accepting with gladness the light of the angel as he comes to us today. And it is clear that the message is coming from the angel. We did not get it from any source except directly from heaven through the Bible,

² *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 984; *Early Writings*, p. 271.

the Spirit of Prophecy, and the writings of Waggoner and Jones—the messengers appointed by the Lord to transmit the message to the people.

From all this it must be evident that that generation which receives the message directly from the angel is the one which will experience translation. Therefore, we who today are receiving that light directly from the angel are the people who will see the work through and go on to translation. This must come as a great comfort and at the same time, a tremendous challenge to us. We cannot for one moment rest on false assurances that we are to automatically go through. We could fail as have all the others before us.

But let this not be. Let each determine to rise to the fullness of the glory of this message so that the mystery of iniquity will be fully and completely dethroned from our hearts forever.

The displacement of the fourth angel's message and movement from *Revelation* 14 to 18, is to show us that this angel was not initially necessary. It was only because of the apostasy of the generation to which the three angels' messages was first preached that he did become needful. Because he had to be added later, he is located later in the book.

However, the *Revelation* was written centuries before the appearance of any of the angels. Far back, God foresaw the rejection and provided for the coming of the fourth. He did not have to give the revelation of the coming of that other angel when the generation of 1844 failed. He foresaw the failure and provided for it long before the need actually arose.

It follows that today we need a much more accurate and deeper understanding of what the three angels' messages are and what they are designed to accomplish. When we have that, then we will be better prepared to accept and enter into the fullness of the work which the Lord designs to accomplish in the return of these messages in the greater light and power afforded in their presen-

tation by the fourth and final angel to do a work before the close of probation.