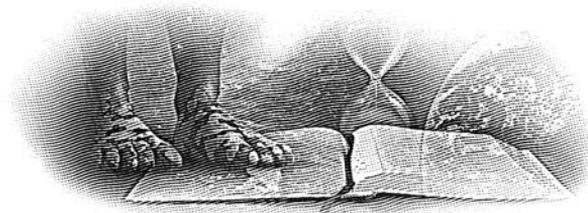


# The Bible *and* Prophecy




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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Dan. 2:27–45, John 14:29, Num. 14:34, Dan. 7:1–25, Dan. 8:14, 1 Cor. 10:1–13.*

**Memory Text:** “And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (*Daniel 8:14, KJV*).

**B**ible prophecy is crucial to our identity and mission. Prophecy provides an internal and external mechanism to confirm the accuracy of God's Word. Jesus said, “ ‘And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe’ ” (*John 14:29, NKJV; see also John 13:19*). This presents a crucial question: How do we interpret prophecy correctly so that we know when the prophecy has, indeed, come to pass?

During the Reformation, the reformers followed the historicist method. This method is the same one Daniel and John used as the key for their own interpretation. The historicist method sees prophecy as a progressive and continuous fulfillment of history, starting in the past and ending with God's eternal kingdom.

This week, we will study the pillars of historicist prophetic interpretation. “We are to see in history the fulfillment of prophecy, to study the workings of Providence in the great reformatory movements, and to understand the progress of events in the marshalling of the nations for the final conflict of the great controversy.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 307.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 13.

## Historicism and Prophecy

The foundational method that Seventh-day Adventists apply for studying Bible prophecies is called historicism. It's the idea that many of the major prophecies in the Bible follow an unbroken linear flow of history, from past to present, and to future. It's similar to how you might study history in school. We do it this way because that is how the Bible itself interprets these prophecies for us.

**Read Daniel 2:27–45.** What aspects of the dream indicate a continuous, uninterrupted succession of powers throughout history? In what way do we have the Bible itself showing us how to interpret apocalyptic (end-time) prophecy?

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Note that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom is recognized as the head of gold. Thus, Daniel identifies Babylon as the first kingdom (*Dan. 2:38*). Then Daniel says, " 'But after you shall arise another kingdom . . . then another, a third kingdom' " (*Dan. 2:39, NKJV*) and then a fourth (*Dan. 2:40*). That these are in succession one after another without any gaps also is implied in the image itself, for each of the kingdoms is represented in parts of a larger body moving from the head down to the toes. They are connected, just as time and history are connected.

In Daniel 7 and Daniel 8, instead of an image, specific beast symbols are used, but the same thing is taught. We are given an unbroken sequence of four earthly kingdoms (three in Daniel 8). They start in antiquity, and go through history, up to the present and into the future, when Christ returns and God establishes His eternal kingdom.

Thus, the image of Daniel 2 and the successive visions of Daniel 7 and Daniel 8 provided the basis for the Protestant historicist interpretation of prophecy, which Seventh-day Adventists still uphold today.

**Read John 14:29.** What does Jesus say that helps us to understand how prophecy can function?

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What great advantage do we have today, living when so much history already has unfolded, that someone living in the time of Babylon would not have had?

## The Year-Day Principle

One of the interpretative keys of historicism is the year-day principle. Many scholars throughout the centuries applied this principle to the time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. They derived the principle from several key texts and from the immediate context of the prophecies themselves.

**Read** Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6. How does God spell out the year-day principle in these specific texts?

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In these texts, we can see very clearly the idea of the year-day principle. But how do we justify using this principle with some of the time prophecies, such as in Daniel 7:25 and Daniel 8:14, as well as Revelation 11:2, 3; Revelation 12:6, 14; and Revelation 13:5?

Three other elements support the year-day principle in these prophecies of Daniel and Revelation: the use of symbols, long time periods, and peculiar expressions.

First, the symbolic nature of the beasts and horns representing kingdoms suggests that the time expressions also should be understood as symbolic. The beasts and horns are not to be taken literally. They are symbols for something else. Hence, because the rest of the prophecy is symbolic, not literal, why should we take the time prophecies alone as literal? The answer, of course, is that we shouldn't.

Second, many of the events and kingdoms depicted in the prophecies cover a time span of many centuries, which would be impossible if the time prophecies depicting them were taken literally. Once the year-day principle is applied, the time fits the events in a remarkably accurate way, something that would be impossible if the time prophecies were taken literally.

Finally, the peculiar expressions used to designate these time periods suggest a symbolic interpretation. In other words, the ways in which time is expressed in these prophecies (for example, the "2,300 evenings and mornings" of Daniel 8:14, NIV) are not the normal ways to express time, showing us that the time periods depicted are to be taken symbolically, not literally.

**Look at the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9:24–27. We read that “the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince” (*Dan. 9:25, NKJV*) will be a literal 69 weeks, or just one year and four months and one week. The prophecy makes no sense when understood that way, does it? What happens, however, when we apply the Bible’s own year-day principle—and the 70 weeks become 490 years?**

## Identifying the Little Horn

For centuries, the Protestant reformers identified the little-horn power of Daniel 7 and in Daniel 8 as the Roman church. Why?

**Read Daniel 7:1–25 and Daniel 8:1–13. What are the common characteristics of the little horn in both chapters? How can we identify it?**

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There are seven common characteristics between the little horns of Daniel 7 and Daniel 8: (1) both are described as a horn; (2) both are persecuting powers (*Dan. 7:21, 25; Dan. 8:10, 24*); (3) both are self-exalting and blasphemous (*Dan. 7:8, 20, 25; Dan. 8:10, 11, 25*); (4) both target God’s people (*Dan. 7:25, Dan. 8:24*); (5) both have aspects of their activity delineated by prophetic time (*Dan. 7:25; Dan. 8:13, 14*); (6) both extend until the end of time (*Dan. 7:25, 26; Dan. 8:17, 19*); and (7) both are to be supernaturally destroyed (*Dan. 7:11, 26; Dan. 8:25*).

History identifies the first kingdom as Babylon (*Dan. 2:38*), the second as Media-Persia (*Daniel 8:20*), and the third as Greece (*Dan. 8:21*). History is unequivocal that after these world empires comes Rome.

In Daniel 2, the iron representing Rome *continues* into the feet of iron mixed with clay; that is, until the end of time. The little horn of Daniel 7 comes forth from the fourth beast but remains *part of* this fourth beast.

What power came out of Rome and continues its politico-religious influence for at least 1,260 years (*see Dan. 7:25*)? Only one power fits history and prophecy—the papacy. The papacy came into power among the 10 barbarian tribes of Europe and uprooted three of them (*Dan. 7:24*). The papacy was “ ‘different from the previous ones’ ” (*Dan. 7:24, NASB*), indicating its uniqueness compared to the other tribes. The papacy spoke “ ‘pompous words against the Most High’ ” (*Dan. 7:25, NKJV*) and “exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host” (*Dan. 8:11, NKJV*) by usurping the role of Jesus and replacing it with the pope. The papacy fulfilled the prediction of persecuting “ ‘the saints of the Most High’ ” (*Dan. 7:25, NKJV*) and casting down “some of the host” (*Dan 8:10, NKJV*) during the Counter-Reformation, when Protestants were slaughtered. The papacy sought “ ‘to change times and law’ ” (*Dan. 7:25, NKJV*) by removing the second commandment and changing the Sabbath to Sunday.

**In Daniel 2, Daniel 7, and Daniel 8, after Greece, one power arises that exists to the end of time. What power could that be other than Rome, now in its papal stage? No matter how politically incorrect, why is this a crucial teaching of the three angels’ messages, and hence, a crucial component of present truth?**

## The Investigative Judgment

The prophetic outline studied this week has found overwhelming support among Protestant historicists since the Reformation. But it was not until the Millerite movement in the early 1800s that the 2,300 days and the investigative judgment were carefully reconsidered and studied. Look at the following chart:

Daniel 7	Daniel 8
Babylon (lion)	_____
Media-Persia (bear)	Media-Persia (ram)
Greece (leopard)	Greece (he-goat)
Pagan Rome (fourth beast)	Pagan Rome (horn moves horizontally)
Papal Rome (little horn)	Papal Rome (horn moves vertically)

**Read Daniel 7:9–14 and Daniel 8:14, 26. What is happening in heaven as depicted in these texts?**

After the period of medieval persecution, which ended in 1798 with the capture and imprisonment of the pope by Napoleon’s General Berthier (*Rev. 13:3*), Daniel 7 and 8 speak of judgment. The judgment is to take place in heaven where “the court was seated” (*Dan. 7:10, NKJV*) and “One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven . . . came to the Ancient of Days” (*Dan. 7:13, NKJV*). This is a judgment scene that occurs after 1798 and before the second coming of Jesus.

This judgment scene in Daniel 7 is directly parallel to the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14. They are talking about the same thing. According to Daniel 8:14, the time of this “cleansing of the sanctuary,” which is Day of Atonement terminology, is 2,300 evening-mornings, or days. With the year-day principle, these days represent 2,300 years.

The starting point of the 2,300 years is found in Daniel 9:24, in which the 70-week (490 year) prophecy is *chatak*, or “cut off;” from the 2,300-day vision (*Dan. 9:24*). In fact, many scholars correctly see the 2,300-day (year) prophecy of Daniel 8:14 and the 70-week prophecy (490-years) of Daniel 9:24–27 as two parts of one prophecy. The next verse in the 70-week prophecy, Daniel 9:25, gives the beginning of the time period, “from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem” (*NKJV*). The date for this event is “the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king” (*Ezra 7:7*), or 457 B.C. Counting forward 2,300 years, we come to 1844, which is not long after 1798 and before the second coming of Jesus. This is when Jesus entered into the Most Holy and began His work of intercession, of cleansing the heavenly sanctuary. See the chart in Friday’s study.

## Typology as Prophecy

The symbols of apocalyptic prophecies, such as those found in Daniel and Revelation, have one single fulfillment. For example, the he-goat found its fulfillment in Greece, a singular kingdom (*Dan. 8:21*). After all, the text came right out and named it for us! How much clearer could it be?

Typology, however, focuses on actual persons, events, or institutions of the Old Testament that are founded in a historical reality but that point forward to greater reality in the future. The use of typology as a method of interpretation goes back to Jesus and the New Testament writers, and is even found in the Old Testament itself. The only guide to recognizing a type and antitype is when an inspired writer of Scripture identifies them.

**Read 1 Corinthians 10:1–13.** To what events in history does Paul refer as he admonishes the Corinthian church? How does this relate to us today?

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Paul refers back to the historical reality of the Exodus and develops a typology based on the experience of the ancient Hebrews in the wilderness. In this way, Paul shows that God, who inspired Moses to record these events, intended that “these things became our examples” (*1 Cor. 10:6, NKJV*), thereby admonishing spiritual Israel to endure temptation as we live in the last days.

**Read** the passages below and write down each type and antitype fulfillment, as described by Jesus and the New Testament writers.

*Matt. 12:40* \_\_\_\_\_

*John 19:36* \_\_\_\_\_

*John 3:14, 15* \_\_\_\_\_

*Rom. 5:14* \_\_\_\_\_

*John 1:29* \_\_\_\_\_

In each case, Jesus and the New Testament writers apply the type and antitype interpretation that allow the prophetic significance to stand out. In this way, they point to a greater fulfillment of the historical reality.

**Think about the earthly sanctuary service, which functioned as a type of the *entire* plan of salvation. What does this teach us about the importance of the sanctuary message for us today?**

**Further Thought:** Read Clifford Goldstein, *1844 Made Simple* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1988) as one place, of many, to find more material on the 2,300-day prophecy. See also [1844madesimple.org](http://1844madesimple.org).

Study this chart below:

Daniel 7	Daniel 8
Babylon (lion)	_____
Media-Persia (bear)	Media-Persia (ram)
Greece (leopard)	Greece (he-goat)
Pagan Rome (fourth beast)	Pagan Rome (horn moves horizontally)
Papal Rome (little horn)	Papal Rome (horn moves vertically)
<b>Judgment in heaven</b>	<b>Cleansing of heavenly sanctuary</b>

The crucial point to see here is that the judgment scene in Daniel 7, which occurs after 1,260 years of persecution (*Dan. 7:25*), is the same thing as the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14. And this judgment scene in heaven is what leads, ultimately, to the establishment of God’s eternal kingdom at the end of this fallen earth’s sad history. Hence, we have powerful biblical evidence for the great importance that Scripture places on Daniel 8:14 and the event it signifies.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1** Go back and review Daniel 2. See how clearly the historicist method is revealed here: an unbroken sequence of world empires, starting in antiquity and ending with the establishment of God’s eternal kingdom. God gives us the key to interpreting these prophecies. What does it say, though, about the state of the Christian world that very few Christians today employ the historicist method anymore? Why does this fact help establish even more the pertinence of the Adventist message for the world at this time?
- 2** How well do you understand the 2,300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14? If you don’t understand it, why not take the time to learn it and to share it with your class? You might be surprised at how solidly grounded our interpretation of that prophecy really is.
- 3** Read Daniel 7:18, 21, 22, 25, 27. Notice the focus on what happens to the saints. What does the little-horn power do to them? In contrast, what does the Lord do for them? What is the good news for the saints in regard to the judgment? What does the judgment ultimately give to them?

**Key Texts:** *Dan. 2:27–45, John 14:29, Num. 14:34, Dan. 7:1–25, Dan. 8:14, 1 Cor. 10:1–13.*

## ***Part I: Overview***

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The revival of the Protestant Reformation came as a direct result of studying the stirring prophecies of Daniel and Revelation and the rediscovery of the historicist method of interpretation, derived from *sola Scriptura*. In fact, the internal way in which Daniel and John interpreted the prophecies became the key for Protestant Bible study. The historicist method views prophecy as a progressive and continuous fulfillment over time. This view led men such as Wycliffe, Luther, Zwingli, Knox, and others to identify the little horn in Daniel 7 and 8 and the beast that rises out of the sea, as depicted in Revelation 13, as the Roman Catholic Church, the papal power. The groundswell of reform had an enormous influence in Europe, as people came out of the Dark Ages. This groundswell was followed by the Inquisition and massive persecution. Many of the Reformers fled to the peaceful shores of the New World, where they were able to worship God in spirit and in truth (*see Rev. 12:13–17*).

Today the Bible remains unique when compared to other religious literature of the world in that 30 percent of its contents are prophetic in nature. Biblical prophecy provides an internal and external mechanism to confirm the accuracy of God’s Word. Prophecy pointing to the hope of the coming Messiah, the Second Coming, keeps the church looking forward with anticipation. It provides a sense and urgency of mission, for if Jesus is coming soon, it calls believers to prepare the world for His great Advent. This week we will study the pillars of historicist prophetic interpretation that provide the identity and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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### **Illustration**

Far removed from the Inquisitors in Europe, American Protestants established the first major universities—Harvard, Yale, and Princeton—to train their ministers. For more than a century and a half, the presidents and professors of these institutions produced major works outlining the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation from a historicist perspective. But

Rome was not idle. Catholic scholars in the Counter Reformation reacted to the Protestants with new interpretations that deflected the attention away from the papacy.

*Preterism* was developed by the Spanish Jesuit, Luis de Alcazar (1554–1613), who interpreted prophecies in the Bible as simply communicating events that happened in the past. Preterists largely denied the possibility of *predictive* prophecy. De Alcazar projected the antichrist power into the past, identifying it with the Roman Emperor Nero.

Another Spanish Jesuit, Francisco Ribera (1537–1591), published a 500-page commentary on the book of Revelation, teaching that the majority of prophecy was to be fulfilled at the very end of time in a brief three-and-a-half-year period. *Futurism* went the opposite direction from that of de Alcazar, placing the emphasis of prophecy far into the future and leaving the papal church of the Middle Ages outside of the prophetic time frame altogether.

Neither of these views had much influence at the beginning. Two developments changed this fortunate fact. The historical-critical approach to Scripture in the eighteenth century claimed to remove the possibility of predictive prophecy, adopting some tenets of the preterist position. This view is now the prevailing one, widely held by higher-critical scholars, both from Catholic and Protestant traditions. Meanwhile, more conservative Christians were heavily influenced by the Scofield Reference Bible (1906), leading a large majority today to accept a futurist (dispensationalist) view that envisions a secret rapture, the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, and a millennium before Christ's second coming. Seventh-day Adventists alone remain a remnant among Protestants to uphold the historicist method. How did the prophets of Scripture use this method?

## Scripture

Daniel interpreted the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2 and the symbols of chapters 7 and 8 as a series of empires appearing one after another in a continuous sequence. He specifically told Nebuchadnezzar that he, as representing Babylon, was the head of gold (*Dan. 2:38*). The next three kingdoms occur in succession as parts of the body connected to each other. These parts are composed of various metals, which distinguish them from one another, but they are connected by the bodied image in descending order. The second and third kingdoms after Babylon are specifically identified by the angel Gabriel as "the kings of Media and Persia" (*Dan. 8:20, NKJV*) and the "kingdom of Greece" (*Dan. 8:21, NKJV*). Clearly, the legs of iron, which come next, are to be identified with Rome, as the course of history has demonstrated. The continuation of the iron into the toes, though mixed with clay, indicates the continuation of the Roman power. Each successive vision expands with greater detail those things to come "in the latter days" (*Dan. 2:28*). Daniel 7 and 8 place

increasing focus on the little-horn power. The recapitulation, expansion, and enlargement of detail continues in Daniel 11, in which the papacy becomes the predominant focal point. This focus on the papacy is appropriate when we see that the major force to be reckoned with in the 1,260 day/year prophecy must be, and can only be, the papacy up until the deadly wound in 1798, and then beyond. This interpretation connects us with the powers that John spoke of prophetically in Revelation 12, 13, and 17.

In Revelation 13, the beast power that rises up out of the sea mirrors the actions of the little horn in Daniel 7 and 8. He reigns for the same period of forty-two months (*Rev. 13:5*), or 1260 years. He blasphemes God's name and His tabernacle (*Rev. 13:6*). He kills by the sword and makes war with the saints (*Rev. 13:10*). He will be worshiped (*Rev. 13:8*). These descriptions are fulfilled in the papacy. But God protected the woman, His church, from the serpent-induced power of the beast that rises up out of the sea, and the earth "swallowed up the flood" (*Rev. 12:16*).

Preterism redates the prophet Daniel to the second century, *after* Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece come on the scene. Further, preterism reinterprets the little-horn power as a Seleucid king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. (Futurism also tends to interpret the little horn as Antiochus IV but then suggests a future antichrist to appear at the end of time.) But this identification does not fit, for several reasons. (1) *The Origin of the Little Horn*. The little horn came "out of one of them" (*Dan. 8:9*). Preterists argue that the little horn came out of one of the four horns (the generals Lysimachus, Cassander, Ptolemy, and Seleucus and their successors as heads of the four Macedonian kingdoms into which Alexander's empire was divided). But the grammatical, contextual, and syntactical evidence points to the conclusion that the little horn came out of one of "the four winds" or compass points, an expression that immediately precedes the phrase. (2) *The Progression of Power in Kingdoms*. The Medo-Persian ram "magnified himself" (*Dan. 8:4, RSV*), the Greek he-goat "magnified himself exceedingly" (*Dan. 8:8, RSV*), the little horn "magnified itself, even up to the Prince of the host" (*Dan. 8:10, 11, RSV*). But this magnification of power cannot be attributed to a single, weak ruler such as Antiochus IV. (3) *The Placement of Order*. Antiochus IV ruled in the middle of the Seleucid dynasty, the seventh in a series of twenty-seven kings. The little-horn power appears "at the latter end of their rule" (*Dan. 8:23, RSV*). Rome appears at the latter part of the Greek Empire, but Antiochus IV does not. (4) *The Direction of Conquest*. The little-horn power was to conquer toward the east, the south, and toward "the Beautiful Land" (*Dan. 8:9, NASB*); that is, from the direction of the west. But Antiochus IV was responsible for losing Judea, the "Beautiful Land," not conquering it, and he had only limited

success in the south (Egypt). (5) *The Abomination of Desolation*. Scholars believe that Antiochus IV caused the desolation of the sanctuary, but Jesus, quoting from Daniel, refers to this desolation as still in the future in His day (*Matt. 24:15*), and Antiochus IV already had been dead for two centuries. (6) *The Evening/Morning “Days.”* The 2,300 evening-mornings are interpreted as the sacrifices that ceased during Antiochus IV’s desecration of the temple. Thus, to accommodate the Antiochus interpretation, the number is reduced to 1,150 literal days. But the phrase *‘ereb bōqer* is very similar to the designation used in Genesis 1 to refer to the 24-hour day. The morning and evening sacrifices associated with the earthly sanctuary are referred to in a different order, however; thus, the desolation mentioned in Daniel 8:13 does not refer to the stopping of the earthly sanctuary services during the time of Antiochus. (7) *The Prophetic Close of the Prophecy*. The close relation between Daniel 2 and 7 indicates that there is a glorious conclusion. But if Judas Maccabeus, the Jew, defeated Antiochus IV, how does Judas come in the clouds of heaven, like the Son of man (*Dan. 7:13*), and how is his kingdom eternal (*Dan. 7:14*)? (Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: The Church and the Last Things* [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2016], pp. 713–717). Neither the preterist nor the futurist interpretation matches the criteria in the text or the testimony of Jesus. Thus, for these reasons, and others, the Antiochus interpretation for Daniel 8 is untenable. It is only the historicist interpretation of prophecy that identifies accurately the last 2,600 years of history in prophetic, sequential perspective.

### ***Part III: Life Application***

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Why do these details matter to us in the twenty-first century? In examining some of the challenges posed to the historicist model of prophetic interpretation, we must admit that when we use Scripture to interpret Scripture and allow the prophets Daniel and John to speak on these matters, we must conclude with the Reformers that the little-horn power came out of the fourth beast (*Daniel 7*) from the western direction of the four winds (*Daniel 8*) and ruled for 1,260 years, shortly before Christ’s entering into the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary. John refers to this same power as the beast that rises up out of the sea (*Rev. 13:1–10*). There is only one entity that fits the criteria of Scripture and history: papal Rome. We also must recognize that the other two main methods of interpretation—preterism and futurism—originated in Rome with the primary objective to throw off the Protestant interpretation during the Counter Reformation. This fact raises serious questions about

current mainline Protestant churches that have adopted these Catholic models. Certainly, this situation points to the fulfillment of our mission and message to proclaim the three angels' messages, calling God's people out of the confusion of Babylon while there is still time in earth's history. Ask your class these questions:

- 1. How have the Protestant churches changed today? In what ways did the historicist position protect them from the errors taught by the Catholic Church, and how has that protection effectively been removed?**

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- 2. What are some ways that you can share the unique message of the “everlasting gospel” embodied in the three angels’ messages with “every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” (*Rev. 14:6, 7, NKJV*)?**

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