

the
REFORMATION

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herald

AT THE BRINK OF ETERNITY

Week of Prayer, December 6–15, 2019

the REFORMATION *herald*

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THE WEEK OF PRAYER

On a long journey, it's easy to become weary in our longing for the ultimate arrival. Sometimes the destination seems to be so, so far away that we just tend to think about other things instead. Yet, as we are finally approaching the goal, there's a new determination and a stronger sense of urgency—and of hope.

The people of God today are on a spiritual journey of much greater importance than any travels on earth. We are actually at the brink of eternity. The signs of the times are fast fulfilling around us and the Lord is soon to descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God.

Our merciful Lord and Saviour has seen fit to sustain us another year to see another Week of Prayer. Will this one really have an impact on us? "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

This year's readings, "At the Brink of Eternity," are to inspire and remind us of the tremendous privilege we have to walk with the Master of land, sea, and sky before probation closes for our fallen planet.

Let us each prayerfully consider these readings, sharing them also with others who may be isolated or homebound, and keep in mind the following dates:

Prayer with fasting: Sabbath, December 14
Offering for missions: Sunday, December 15

It is our prayer that the Spirit of Christ may imbue us with new vitality in eager anticipation for our Lord's return—and fortify our hearts to soon be able to greet Him wholeheartedly with the words, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:9). Amen!

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—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 488.

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At the Brink of ETERNITY

The Israelites were nearing the Promised Land—their final destination, their ultimate goal. Forty years of travel in the wilderness was now behind them. Because of their constantly rebellious attitude, most of them had been left behind, dead in the desert.

Satan was not happy. He would do his most to hinder God's people from entering Canaan. Now he would use an apostate prophet to cause great damage to that multitude in order to make God displeased with them, that they might be destroyed.

Balaam in time past had been God's prophet, but then he apostatized. Now the former prophet of God presented to Balak a devilish plan as to how to destroy God's people exactly when they were at the very borders of Canaan. In his plan he included friendship with pagans, sensual music, dancing, sensuous women and wine to becloud their senses and entice them into gross and degrading idolatry.

The Bible sums it up saying that "Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat and bowed down to their gods" (Numbers 25:1, 2).

God sent a severe plague that destroyed 24,000 Israelites. Reviewing this terrible moral disaster and its immediate consequences, Paul wrote: "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to

eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed. . . . Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Corinthians 10:6–8, 11).

We are living at the brink of eternity. This is a very solemn and perilous time when we expect to see the Lord very soon, and Satan will use his most powerful weapons to hinder God's people from entering the heavenly Promised Land.

"Satan well knows the material with which he has to deal in the human heart. He knows—for he has studied with fiendish intensity for thousands of years—the points most easily assailed in every character; and through successive generations he has wrought to overthrow the strongest men, princes in Israel, by the same temptations that were so successful at Baalpeor. All along through the ages there are strewn wrecks of character that have been stranded upon the rocks of sensual indulgence. **As we approach the close of time, as the people of God stand upon the borders of the heavenly Canaan, Satan will, as of old, redouble his efforts to prevent them from entering the goodly land.** He lays his snares for every soul. It is not the ignorant and uncultured merely that need to be guarded; he will prepare his temptations for those in the highest positions, in the most holy office; if he can lead them to pollute their souls, he can through them destroy many. And he employs the same agents now as he employed three thousand years ago. By worldly friendships, by the

charms of beauty, by pleasure seeking, mirth, feasting, or the wine cup, he tempts to the violation of the seventh commandment. . . .

"It was when the Israelites were in a condition of outward ease and security that they were led into sin. They failed to keep God ever before them, they neglected prayer and cherished a spirit of self-confidence. Ease and self-indulgence left the citadel of the soul unguarded, and debasing thoughts found entrance. It was the traitors within the walls that overthrew the strongholds of principle and betrayed Israel into the power of Satan. It is thus that Satan still seeks to compass the ruin of the soul. A long preparatory process, unknown to the world, goes on in the heart before the Christian commits open sin. The mind does not come down at once from purity and holiness to depravity, corruption, and crime. It takes time to degrade those formed in the image of God to the brutal or the satanic. By beholding we become changed. By the indulgence of impure thoughts man can so educate his mind that sin which he once loathed will become pleasant to him."¹

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

May the Lord be gracious and merciful with His people as we approach the heavenly Canaan! *R*

References

¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 457–458. [Emphasis added.]

Preparation for the Last Crisis



*Compiled from the writings
of E. G. White*

A sobering vision

In a view given June 27, 1850, my accompanying angel said, “Time is almost finished. Do you reflect the lovely image of Jesus as you should?” Then I was pointed to the earth and saw that there would have to be a getting ready among those who have of late embraced the third angel’s message. Said the angel, “Get ready, get ready, get ready. Ye will have to die a greater death to the world than ye have ever yet died.” I saw that there was a great work to do for them and but little time in which to do it.

Then I saw that the seven last plagues were soon to be poured out upon those who have no shelter; yet the world regarded them no more than they would so many drops of water that were about to fall. I was

then made capable of enduring the awful sight of the seven last plagues, the wrath of God. I saw that His anger was dreadful and terrible, and if He should stretch forth His hand, or lift it in anger, the inhabitants of the world would be as though they had never been, or would suffer from incurable sores and withering plagues that would come upon them, and they would find no deliverance, but be destroyed by them. Terror seized me, and I fell upon my face before the angel and begged of him to cause the sight to be removed, to hide it from me, for it was too dreadful. Then I realized, as never before, the importance of searching the Word of God carefully, to know how to escape the plagues which that Word declares shall come on all the ungodly who shall worship the beast and his

image and receive his mark in their foreheads or in their hands. It was a great wonder for me that any could transgress the law of God and tread down His holy Sabbath, when such awful threatenings and denunciations were against them.¹

A greater preparation

. . . I was pointed to the remnant on the earth. The angel said to them, “Will ye shun the seven last plagues? Will ye go to glory and enjoy all that God has prepared for those who love Him and are willing to suffer for His sake? If so, ye must die that ye may live. . . . Sacrifice all to God. Lay all upon His altar—self, property, and all, a living sacrifice. It will take all to enter glory. Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where no thief can

approach or rust corrupt. Ye must be partakers of Christ's sufferings here if ye would be partakers with Him of His glory hereafter.

Heaven will be cheap enough, if we obtain it through suffering. We must deny self all along the way, die to self daily, let Jesus alone appear, and keep His glory continually in view. I saw that those who of late have embraced the truth would have to know what it is to suffer for Christ's sake, that they would have trials to pass through that would be keen and cutting, in order that they may be purified and fitted through suffering to receive the seal of the living God, pass through the time of trouble, see the King in His beauty, and dwell in the presence of God and of pure, holy angels.

As I saw what we must be in order to inherit glory, and then saw how much Jesus had suffered to obtain for us so rich an inheritance, I prayed that we might be baptized into Christ's sufferings, that we might not shrink at trials, but bear them with patience and joy, knowing what Jesus had suffered . . .²

Some, I saw, have not a realizing sense of the importance of the truth or of its effect, and moving from the impulse of the moment or from excitement, often follow their feelings and disregard church order. Such seem to think that religion consists chiefly in making a noise. Some who have but just received the truth of the third angel's message are ready to reprove and teach those who have been established in the truth for years, and who have suffered for its sake and felt its sanctifying power. Those who are so puffed up by the enemy will have to feel the sanctifying influence of the truth and obtain a realizing sense of how it found them—"wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." When the truth begins to purify them and purge away their dross and tin, as it surely will when it is received in the love of it, the one who has this great work done for him will not feel that he is rich and increased in goods and has need of nothing.

Those who profess the truth and think they know it all before they

have learned its first principles, and who are forward to take the place of teachers and reprove those who for years have stood stiffly for the truth, plainly show that they have no understanding of the truth, and know none of its effects; for if they knew any of the sanctifying power, they should yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness and be humbled under its sweet, powerful influence. They would bear fruit to the glory of God, and understand what the truth has done for them, and esteem others better than themselves.

I saw that the remnant were not prepared for what is coming upon the earth. Stupidity, like lethargy, seemed to hang upon the minds of most of those who profess to believe that we are having the last message. My accompanying angel cried out with awful solemnity, "Get ready! get ready! get ready! for the fierce anger of the Lord is soon to come. His wrath is to be poured out, unmixed with mercy, and ye are not ready. Rend the heart, and not the garment. A great work must be done for the remnant. Many of them are dwelling upon little trials." Said the angel, "Legions of evil angels are around you, and are trying to press in their awful darkness, that ye may be ensnared and taken. Ye suffer your minds to be diverted too readily from the work of preparation and the all-important truths for these last days. And ye dwell upon little trials and go into minute particulars of little difficulties to explain them to the satisfaction of this one or that." Conversation has been protracted for hours between the parties concerned, and not only has their time been wasted, but the servants of God are held to listen to them, when the hearts of both parties are unsubdued by grace. If pride and selfishness were laid aside, five minutes would remove most difficulties. Angels have been grieved and God displeased by the hours which have been spent in justifying self. I saw that God will not bow down and listen to long justifications, and He does not want His servants to do so, and thus precious time be wasted that should be spent in showing transgressors the

error of their ways and pulling souls out of the fire.

I saw that God's people are on the enchanted ground, and that some have lost nearly all sense of the shortness of time and the worth of the soul. Pride has crept in among Sabbathkeepers—pride of dress and appearance. Said the angel, "Sabbathkeepers will have to die to self, die to pride and love of approbation."³

Getting our priorities straight

Truth, saving truth, must be given to the starving people who are in darkness. I saw that many prayed for God to humble them; but if God should answer their prayers, it would be by terrible things in righteousness. It was their duty to humble themselves. I saw that if self-exaltation was suffered to come in, it would surely lead souls astray, and if not overcome would prove their ruin. When one begins to get lifted up in his own eyes and thinks he can do something, the Spirit of God is withdrawn, and he goes on in his own strength until he is overthrown. I saw that one saint, if he were right, could move the arm of God; but a multitude together, if they were wrong, would be weak and could effect nothing.

Many have unsubdued, unhumiliated hearts, and think more of their own little grievances and trials than of the souls of sinners. If they had the glory of God in view, they would feel for perishing souls around them; and as they realized their perilous situation, would take hold with energy, exercising faith in God, and hold up the hands of His servants, that they might boldly, yet in love, declare the truth and warn souls to lay hold upon it before the sweet voice of mercy should die away. Said the angel, "Those who profess His name are not ready." I saw that the seven last plagues were coming upon the shelterless heads of the wicked; and then those who have stood in their way will hear the bitter reproaches of sinners, and their hearts will faint within them.

Said the angel. "Ye have been picking at straws—dwelling upon little trials—and sinners must be lost as a

consequence.” God is willing to work for us in our meetings, and it is His pleasure to work. But Satan says, “I will hinder the work.” His agents say, “Amen.” Professed believers in the truth dwell upon their petty trials and difficulties which Satan has magnified before them. Time is wasted that can never be recalled.⁴

Many do not realize what they must be in order to live in the sight of the Lord without a high priest in the sanctuary through the time of trouble. Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully.

I saw that many were neglecting the preparation so needful and were looking to the time of “refreshing” and the “latter rain” to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight. Oh, how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! They had neglected the needful preparation; therefore they could not receive the refreshing that all must have to fit them to live in the sight of a holy God. Those who refuse to be hewed by the prophets and fail to purify their souls in obeying the whole truth, and who are willing to believe that their condition is far better than it really is, will come up to the time of the falling of the plagues, and then see that they needed to be hewed and squared for the building. But there will be no time then to do it and no Mediator to plead their cause before the Father. . . . I saw that none could share the “refreshing” unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action. We should, therefore, be drawing nearer and nearer to the Lord and be earnestly seeking that preparation necessary to enable us to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. Let all remember that God is holy and that none but holy beings can ever dwell in His presence.⁵

The testing time

To all the testing time will come. By the sifting of temptation the genuine Christian will be revealed.

Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible and the Bible only? Satan will, if possible, prevent them from obtaining a preparation to stand in that day. He will so arrange affairs as to hedge up their way, entangle them with earthly treasures, cause them to carry a heavy, wearisome burden, that their hearts may be overcharged with the cares of this life and the day of trial may come upon them as a thief.

As the decree issued by the various rulers of Christendom against commandment keepers shall withdraw the protection of government and abandon them to those who desire their destruction, the people of God will flee from the cities and villages and associate together in companies, dwelling in the most desolate and solitary places. Many will find refuge in the strongholds of the mountains. Like the Christians of the Piedmont valleys, they will make the high places of the earth their sanctuaries and will thank God for “the munitions of rocks.” Isaiah 33:16. But many of all nations and of all classes, high and low, rich and poor, black and white, will be cast into the most unjust and cruel bondage. The beloved of God pass weary days, bound in chains, shut in by prison bars, sentenced to be slain, some apparently left to die of starvation in dark and loathsome dungeons. No human ear is open to hear their moans; no human hand is ready to lend them help.

Will the Lord forget His people in this trying hour? Did He forget faithful Noah when judgments were visited upon the antediluvian world? Did He forget Lot when the fire came down from heaven to consume the cities of the plain? Did He forget Joseph surrounded by idolaters in Egypt? Did He forget Elijah when the oath of Jezebel threatened him with the fate of the prophets of Baal? Did He forget Jeremiah in the dark and dismal pit of his prison house? Did He forget the three worthies in the fiery furnace? or Daniel in the den of lions? . . .

Though enemies may thrust them into prison, yet dungeon walls cannot cut off the communication between their souls and Christ. One who sees their every weakness, who is acquainted with every trial, is above all earthly powers; and angels will come to them in lonely cells, bringing light and peace from heaven. The prison will be as a palace; for the rich in faith dwell there, and the gloomy walls will be lighted up with heavenly light as when Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises at midnight in the Philippian dungeon.⁶

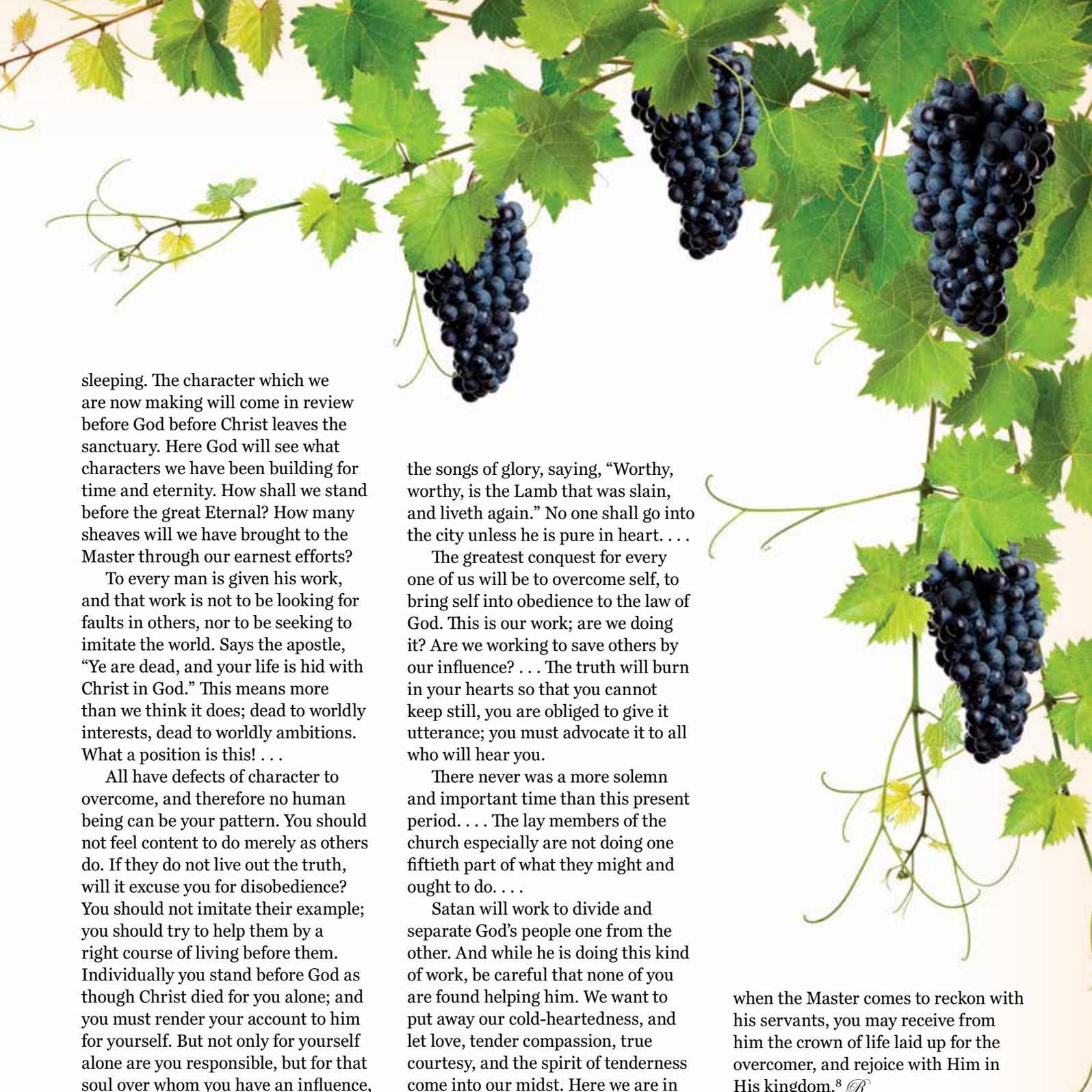
The essence of our religion

“Love to God and our neighbor is the very essence of our religion. No one can love Christ and not love His children. When we are united to Christ, we have the mind of Christ. Purity and love shine forth in the character, meekness and truth control the life. The very expression of the countenance is changed. Christ abiding in the soul exerts a transforming power, and the outward aspect bears witness to the peace and joy that reign within.”⁷

We must be in Christ and He in us; then the defects will disappear from our characters. The closer we live to Jesus, the more we shall reflect in words and character His image. And the farther we separate from God, the farther we live away from the light of life, and, as the sure result, become perverse, dictatorial, hard-hearted. We should make it a life work to gather up the divine rays of light that come from the throne of God, and scatter them upon the pathway of others. . . .

Bearing fruit

It is in this time of probation that we are to prepare either for eternal life in glory, or for perdition. It is here that we are engaged in the work of character-building; and if we succeed, we shall merit from the Master the welcome, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” Christ has gone into the most holy department, and has left us word to watch and pray, lest He return suddenly and find us



sleeping. The character which we are now making will come in review before God before Christ leaves the sanctuary. Here God will see what characters we have been building for time and eternity. How shall we stand before the great Eternal? How many sheaves will we have brought to the Master through our earnest efforts?

To every man is given his work, and that work is not to be looking for faults in others, nor to be seeking to imitate the world. Says the apostle, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." This means more than we think it does; dead to worldly interests, dead to worldly ambitions. What a position is this! . . .

All have defects of character to overcome, and therefore no human being can be your pattern. You should not feel content to do merely as others do. If they do not live out the truth, will it excuse you for disobedience? You should not imitate their example; you should try to help them by a right course of living before them. Individually you stand before God as though Christ died for you alone; and you must render your account to him for yourself. But not only for yourself alone are you responsible, but for that soul over whom you have an influence, and for whom God has paid such a price. If you neglect your duty in this matter, what will be your portion in the day of God? How do you think the unfaithful ones will feel to see the nations of the saved walking within the portals of the city of God, and they themselves shut out? But how shall we feel, if we can look around and see many in the kingdom as the results of our labors? We shall be able to swell

the songs of glory, saying, "Worthy, worthy, is the Lamb that was slain, and liveth again." No one shall go into the city unless he is pure in heart. . . .

The greatest conquest for every one of us will be to overcome self, to bring self into obedience to the law of God. This is our work; are we doing it? Are we working to save others by our influence? . . . The truth will burn in your hearts so that you cannot keep still, you are obliged to give it utterance; you must advocate it to all who will hear you.

There never was a more solemn and important time than this present period. . . . The lay members of the church especially are not doing one fiftieth part of what they might and ought to do. . . .

Satan will work to divide and separate God's people one from the other. And while he is doing this kind of work, be careful that none of you are found helping him. We want to put away our cold-heartedness, and let love, tender compassion, true courtesy, and the spirit of tenderness come into our midst. Here we are in the waiting time, in the day of God's preparation. Here in this world we are to fit up for these great trials that are soon coming upon us. And yet some of us act as though we had a whole millennium before us in which to accomplish the work. But, says the text, "Watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is." And what Christ said to His disciples, I say unto you, "Take ye heed, watch and pray," that

when the Master comes to reckon with his servants, you may receive from him the crown of life laid up for the overcomer, and rejoice with Him in His kingdom.⁸ *R*

References

- ¹ *Early Writings*, pp. 64, 65.
- ² *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 67.
- ³ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-120.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 120, 121.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- ⁶ *The Great Controversy*, pp. 625-627.
- ⁷ *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 337.
- ⁸ *The Review and Herald*, August 18, 1885.

The Imminent Crisis of the Centuries

By Edgar Ramos — Bolivia

“Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come” (Joel 1:15).

“The prophecies which the great I AM has given in His word, uniting link after link in the chain of events, from eternity in the past to eternity in the future, tell us where we are today in the procession of the ages and what may be expected in the time to come. All that prophecy has foretold as coming to pass, until the present time, has been traced on the pages of history, and we may be assured that all which is yet to come will be fulfilled in its order.”¹

The disciples ask Christ about His return

Referring to the magnificent temple in Jerusalem, Jesus declared that the day will come when “there

shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matthew 24:2).

“Christ’s words had been spoken in the hearing of a large number of people; but when He was alone, Peter, John, James, and Andrew came to Him as He sat upon the Mount of Olives. ‘Tell us,’ they said, ‘when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?’ Jesus did not answer His disciples by taking up separately the destruction of Jerusalem and the great day of His coming. He mingled the description of these two events. Had He opened to His disciples future events as He beheld them, they would have been unable to endure the sight. In mercy to them He blended the description of the two great crises, leaving the disciples to study out the meaning for themselves.”²

The prophecies of Jesus are fulfilling

“Today the signs of the times declare that we are standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. Everything in our world is in agitation. Before our eyes is fulfilling the Saviour’s prophecy of the events to precede His coming: ‘Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. . . . Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places’ (Matthew 24:6, 7). The present is a time of overwhelming interest to all living.”³

False prophets

One of the signs of the destruction of Jerusalem that Christ had

announced was: “Many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many” (Matthew 24:11).

“False prophets did rise, deceiving the people, and leading great numbers into the desert. Magicians and sorcerers, claiming miraculous power, drew the people after them into the mountain solitudes. But this prophecy was spoken also for the last days. This sign is given as a sign of the second advent.”⁴

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1).

Every day the sad evidence increases that faith is diminishing in the sure prophetic word, and that in its place superstition and satanic sorcery captivate the intellects of many, including, ironically, a number of religious leaders. Others are misled by the mysticism of theosophy and other Eastern religions based on spiritualism. “The doctrine of man’s consciousness in death, especially the belief that spirits of the dead return to minister to the living, has prepared the way for modern spiritualism.”⁵

Spiritualism today is amalgamated with nominal Christianity, performing miracles and lying wonders. Through spiritualism, the sick appear to be healed as Satan counterfeits the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

In this way Spiritualism, Catholicism and apostate Protestantism increasingly work together, just as John the Revelator described when he “saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet” (Revelation 16:13). The prophetic word is thus fulfilling before our eyes.

“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Signs in the heavens and the earth

Jesus foretold that “there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth

distress of nations” (Luke 21:25). See also Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24–26; and Revelation 6:12–17.

“There shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places” (Matthew 24:7).

“In those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light” (Mark 13:24).

What is meant by “those days”? The prophecy of the 1260 years of the time of papal supremacy, lasted from the year A.D. 538 to A.D. 1798. The tribulation ended at least 25 years before the year 1798. Around that time, the following signs occurred as a fulfillment of prophecy.⁶

The great earthquake on November 1, 1755.

Signs in the sun and the moon on May 19, 1780.

Signs in the stars on November 13, 1833.

“When ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors” (Matthew 24:33).

Approaching an even greater crisis

“The present is a time of overwhelming interest to all living. Rulers and statesmen, men who occupy positions of trust and authority, thinking men and women of all classes, have their attention fixed upon the events taking place about us. They are watching the relations that exist among the nations. They observe the intensity that is taking possession of every earthly element, and they recognize that something great and decisive is about to take place—that the world is on the verge of a stupendous crisis.”⁷

“Soon grievous troubles will rise among the nations—trouble that will not cease until Jesus comes.”⁸

Mortality and hunger

“Perilous times are before us. The whole world will be involved in perplexity and distress, disease of every kind will be upon the human family, and such ignorance as now prevails concerning the laws of health would result in great suffering and

the loss of many lives that might be saved.”⁹

“There will be suffering ones, plenty of them, who will need help, not only among those of our own faith, but largely among those who know not the truth.”¹⁰

“Our world is a vast lazar house, a scene of misery that we dare not allow even our thoughts to dwell upon. Did we realize it as it is, the burden would be too terrible. Yet God feels it all. In order to destroy sin and its results He gave His best Beloved, and He has put it in our power, through cooperation with Him, to bring this scene of misery to an end. ‘This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come’ (Matthew 24:14).”¹¹

“The Christian world have shown contempt for the law of Jehovah, and the Lord will do just what He has declared that He would—He will withdraw His blessings from the earth and remove His protecting care from those who are rebelling against His law and teaching and forcing others to do the same. Satan has control of all whom God does not especially guard. He will favor and prosper some, in order to further his own designs; and he will bring trouble upon others and lead men to believe that it is God who is afflicting them.

“While appearing to the children of men as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, he will bring disease and disaster, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation. Even now he is at work. In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence. These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous. Destruction will be upon both man and beast. . . .

“Some will be tempted to receive these wonders as from God. The sick

will be healed before us. Miracles will be performed in our sight. Are we prepared for the trial which awaits us when the lying wonders of Satan shall be more fully exhibited? Will not many be ensnared and taken? By departing from the plain precepts and commandments of God and giving heed to fables, the minds of many are preparing to receive these lying wonders. We must all now seek to arm ourselves for the contest in which we must soon engage. Faith in God's word, prayerfully studied and practically applied, will be our shield from Satan's power and will bring us off conquerors through the blood of Christ."¹²

An age of violence

"The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Genesis 6:11, 12).

"In the days of Noah the overwhelming majority was opposed to the truth, and enamored with a tissue of falsehoods. The land was filled with violence. War, crime, murder, was the order of the day. Just so will it be before Christ's second coming."¹³

"The terrible reports we hear of murders and robberies, of railway accidents and deeds of violence, tell the story that the end of all things is at hand. Now, just now, we need to be preparing for the Lord's second coming."¹⁴

Actions of the trade unions

The prophet Joel foresaw a prevailing attitude in the last days: "Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong" (Joel 3:10).

"The labor unions are quickly stirred to violence if their demands are not complied with. Plain and plainer is it becoming that the inhabitants of the world are not in harmony with God.

"No scientific theory can explain the steady march of evil workers under

the generalship of Satan. In every mob wicked angels are at work, rousing men to commit deeds of violence."¹⁵

"The trades unions will be one of the agencies that will bring upon this earth a time of trouble such as has not been since the world began."¹⁶

Earthquakes and floods

"In fires, in floods, in earthquakes, in the fury of the great deep, in calamities by sea and by land, the warning is given that God's Spirit will not always strive with men."¹⁷

Tremendously catastrophic earthquakes have marked the 21st century. Over 806,000 people have lost their lives in earthquakes since the year 2000. Indeed, the Spirit of Prophecy explains, "The time is now come when one moment we may be on solid earth, the next the earth may be heaving beneath our feet. Earthquakes will take place where least expected."¹⁸

Signs in nature

"The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant" (Isaiah 24:4, 5).

"Satan is working in the atmosphere; he is poisoning the atmosphere, and here we are dependent upon God for our lives—our present and eternal life. And being in the position that we are, we need to be wide awake, wholly devoted, wholly converted, wholly consecrated to God. But we seem to sit as though we were paralyzed. God of heaven, wake us up!"¹⁹

"God has not restrained the powers of darkness from carrying forward their deadly work of vitiating the air, one of the sources of life and nutrition, with a deadly miasma. Not only is vegetable life affected, but man suffers from pestilence. . . .

"These things are the result of drops from the vials of God's wrath being sprinkled on the earth, and are

but faint representations of what will be in the near future."²⁰

A moral plague

As of this writing, according to the Pew Research Center, there are 30 nations that perform marriages of individuals of the same sex, and 4 more countries recognize such marriages. Remember the pleading of Abraham in Genesis chapter 18 that God might spare the inhabitants of the wicked cities in his day.

"There is a strange abandonment of principle, a lowering of the standard of morality; the sins are fast increasing which caused the judgments of God to be poured upon the earth in the Flood and in the destruction of Sodom by fire. We are nearing the end. God has borne long with the perversity of mankind, but their punishment is no less certain. Let those who profess to be the light of the world depart from all iniquity."²¹

The last sign that will announce the end of God's grace

"[The second beast] had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed" (Revelation 13:15).

"With unerring accuracy the Infinite One still keeps account with the nations. While His mercy is tendered, with calls to repentance, this account remains open; but when the figures reach a certain amount which God has fixed, the ministry of His wrath begins. The account is closed. Divine patience ceases. Mercy no longer pleads in their behalf."²²

"For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities" (Revelation 18:5). When is this time?

"God keeps a record with the nations: the figures are swelling against them in the books of heaven; and when it shall have become a law that the transgression of the first day of the week shall be met with punishment, then their cup will be full."²³

The coming events are in the Lord's hands

"The world is not without a ruler. The program of coming events is in the hands of the Lord. The Majesty of heaven has the destiny of nations, as well as the concerns of His church, in His own charge."²⁴

Conclusion

My beloved brethren, through the fulfillment of the signs, God has a purpose in allowing these calamities to occur. They are one of His means to call men and women to reflection and repentance.

As another year draws to a close, should not these judgments cause us, the people of God, to consider our ways?

"The end is near, probation is closing. Oh, let us seek God while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near! The prophet says: 'Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger' [Zephaniah 2:3]."²⁵

It is our prayer that we may have a sincere experience of repentance and confession to our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. *R*

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- ³ *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 536, 537.
- ⁴ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 631.
- ⁵ *The Great Controversy*, p. 551.
- ⁶ (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 304–308, 333, 334.)
- ⁷ *Prophets and Kings*, p. 537.
- ⁸ *Maranatha*, p. 174.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 185.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ *Education*, p. 264.
- ¹² *Counsels on Health*, pp. 460, 461.
- ¹³ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1090.
- ¹⁴ *Last Day Events*, p. 23.
- ¹⁵ *The Upward Look*, p. 334.
- ¹⁶ *Maranatha*, p. 182.
- ¹⁷ *The Upward Look*, p. 340.
- ¹⁸ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 421.
- ¹⁹ *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 52.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, bk. 3, p. 391.
- ²¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 601.
- ²² *Prophets and Kings*, p. 364.
- ²³ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 910.
- ²⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 753.
- ²⁵ *Maranatha*, p. 37.

What are some current signs of the times?

1. A sign that Jesus will come again soon is the choice of the people of the world to seek pleasure instead of God.

"In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:1–7). This passage describes the world of our time and its problems. People openly place pleasure above God and His claims. They are always in search of "truth." But when truth requires humility, recognition of God, a compassionate love for our "neighbors," a respect for authority, and gratitude, then truth is ignored. Our world is fast sacrificing truth for what they experience as pleasure. In a supposed search of truth, they can never come to it.

2. A sign that Jesus will come again soon is the opportunity for the gospel to be preached in all the world as never before.

"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14). Recent changes in travel and communication provide the opportunity to spread the gospel in more of the world than ever before. Now is the time when the resources are available to fulfill this prophecy. Who will accept the challenge to cooperate with God to do what God said will be done?

3. A sign that Jesus will come again soon is the opposition to the message of the everlasting gospel as given by the three angels of Revelation.

First angel's message: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Revelation 14:7).

Lie used to oppose this message: God did not create this world and therefore worship should be made to humanity and glory given to the creature rather than the Creator.

Second angel's message: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (Revelation 14:8).

Lie used to oppose this message: The world is not fallen, but rather progressing to the highest achievements and perceptions of truth.

Third angel's message: "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb" (Revelation 14:9, 10).

Lie used to oppose this message: God is so loving that He would not punish or destroy us.

These are indeed some current evidences of our Lord's soon return!

The Last Message of Mercy

By Alonso Amaya — Honduras

Introduction

God's message of mercy to fallen man has been offered to each successive age. The Sovereign of the universe has raised up self-denying men and women to woo with "bands of love" (Hosea 11:4), using them as a blessing in every generation. In His great mercy, He sent angels on a special mission to save three souls with the simple message, "Escape for thy life" (Genesis 19:17). And our beloved Saviour also came to save an extreme yet valuable man with the startling appeal, "Why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4).

Likewise, in our generation, this message of mercy is no less important than in the past. We are the town criers of the last generation because to us has been revealed the final hour in which God's mercy is being manifested.

The 6,000-year timetable

The great controversy between Christ and Satan, now underway for nearly 6,000 years, is about to close. Satan is redoubling his efforts to sabotage the work of Christ in behalf of humanity and to bind souls in their bonds. His aim is to have the

people submerged in darkness and impenitence until the mediatorial work of the Saviour is finished and there is no more sacrifice for sin.

"The great controversy between Christ and Satan, that has been carried forward for nearly six thousand years, is soon to close."¹

"For six thousand years, faith has builded upon Christ. For six thousand years the floods and tempests of satanic wrath have beaten upon the Rock of our salvation; but it stands unmoved."²

Divine inspiration thus reveals to us that the time period for our planet and the acts to unfold in this

drama—either in its favor or in its destruction—span approximately 6,000 years.

Having this clear evidence with respect to time, certain events have been determined in the great controversy. The building of faith in Christ, the unshakable Rock of Ages, has remained the only Source of salvation in the face of every storm.

Grace for the antediluvians

1. A time of probation. In the early period of earth's history, when the world was still young, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5).

The Eternal One declared, "My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years" (Verse 3).

2. The call for destruction. The Almighty warned of the destruction of man, beasts, reptiles, and birds. "And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them" (Verse 7).

3. The instrument of destruction. The instrument of destruction was to be a worldwide flood: "Behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die" (Verse 17).

4. The solution. The solution was to enter the ark: "And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation" (Genesis 7:1).

Notice that for this pre-Flood generation, the last message of mercy specified the period of time to remain; it also determined the creatures that would be destroyed, the instrument of destruction that would be used—and finally the way the people could be saved. Hence it is clear that the

antediluvian generation perished not because of any neglect on God's part to inform them and offer His grace. No, God in His great mercy placed their entire salvation within reach. But they refused it. This is why the word of God refers to the antediluvians as those "which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water" (1 Peter 3:20). The patience of God lingered while the ark was being prepared—and any could freely enter. But sadly, the vast majority rejected that last invitation because they had no faith, and thus their own disobedience sealed their destiny.

The last night for Sodom and Gomorrah

1. The time of probation. The people established in the cities of the plain had been richly prospered. Unfortunately, an abundance of bread brought with it selfish idleness and sin despite the fact that God sent His messengers with the purpose of saving and not destroying them. These messengers appealed fervently that night. They explained clearly their divinely-appointed purpose, for "the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous" (Genesis 18:20). This grievous sin was to be the cause of their destruction.

"And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; and he said, Behold, now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night" (Genesis 19:1, 2). That was the final night for the city.

2. The call for destruction. The angels warned, "Whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and

the Lord hath sent us to destroy it" (Verses 12, 13).

3. The instrument of destruction. "Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven" (Verse 24).

4. The solution. When Lot's family had been mercifully led out by the angels, they were warned, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed" (Verse 17).

God never fails to give in His word everything that is essential to be accomplished. He had a specific aim in the flames that shot from the sky. At the request of Lot, God did not direct His punishment toward Zoar, which was also in the plain. Amid this scene we see the supreme love and mercy of God in saving that small city of Zoar—along with Lot and his daughters.

The above illustrations from the book of Genesis are only in the past. Now we need to engage in an analysis of our own present and future:

Our opportunity in these last days

1. The time of probation. The time allocated for this planet is limited. The Lord Jesus Christ is soon to issue the solemn proclamation: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:11, 12). In this case, to some extent the time specified is partly determined by our own behavior:

"It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be thus delayed. God did not design that His people, Israel, should wander forty years in the wilderness. He promised to lead them directly to the land of Canaan, and establish them there a holy, healthy, happy people. But those to whom it was first preached, went not in 'because of unbelief' [Hebrews 3:19]. Their hearts were filled with

murmuring, rebellion, and hatred, and He could not fulfill His covenant with them.”³

“We may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination many more years, as did the children of Israel; but for Christ’s sake, His people should not add sin to sin by charging God with the consequence of their own wrong course of action.”⁴

“In mercy to the world, Jesus delays His coming, that sinners may have an opportunity to hear the warning and find in Him a shelter before the wrath of God shall be poured out.”⁵

2. The call for destruction.

In the last days, the spiritual crisis at hand is the worship of the beast and his image. The third angel of Revelation 14 warns, “If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall 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 ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name” (Revelation 14:9–11).

3. The instrument of destruction. John the Revelator, who was shown in vision the closing scenes of earth’s history, writes, “I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth” (Revelation 16:1). As a result of the seven last plagues that follow, the Eternal One declares, “The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end” (Jeremiah 4:27). Ultimately, with regard to the enemies of God, the Revelator was given a prophetic view that “fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Revelation 20:9, 10)

until finally, “Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame . . .” (Isaiah 47:14).

4. The solution. Follow the Lamb wherever He goes. “These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God. . . . Here is the patience of the saints: her are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:4, 5, 12).

1888, at the threshold of the Kingdom

At the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in 1888, “the Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family.”⁶

What were the effects of the last message of mercy on the angel of the church of the Laodiceans? The reactions were mixed. Strong opposition developed in Battle Creek and the Lord’s messenger supported Elders Jones and Waggoner in taking the message to the churches.

Sister Ellen G. White testified, “I became the subject of remarks and criticism, but no one of our brethren came to me and made inquiries or sought any explanation from me. We tried most earnestly to have all our ministering brethren rooming in the house meet in an unoccupied room and unite our prayers together, but did

not succeed in this but two or three times. They chose to go to their rooms and have their conversation and prayers by themselves. There did not seem to be any opportunity to break down the prejudice that was so firm and determined, no chance to remove the misunderstanding in regard to myself, my son, and E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones.”⁷

Yet she also related a more positive subsequent experience: “I have never seen a revival work go forward with such thoroughness, and yet remain so free from all undue excitement. . . .

“There were many who testified that as the searching truths had been presented, they had been convicted in the light of the law as transgressors. They had been trusting in their own righteousness. Now they saw it as filthy rags, in comparison with the righteousness of Christ, which is alone acceptable to God. While they had not been open transgressors, they saw themselves depraved and degraded in heart. They had substituted other gods in the place of their Heavenly Father. They had struggled to refrain from sin, but had trusted in their own strength. We should go to Jesus just as we are, confess our sins, and cast our helpless souls upon our compassionate Redeemer.”⁸

Reconversion and rebaptism a privilege for anyone

“The Lord calls for a decided reformation. And when a soul is truly reconverted, let him be rebaptized. Let him renew his covenant with God, and God will renew His covenant with him. . . . Reconversion must take place among the members, that as God’s witnesses they may testify to the authoritative power of the truth that sanctifies the soul.”⁹

A revival among the workers

“. . . The workers in the cause need now to be wide awake. Many need to be converted anew and rebaptized. When they learn to drink of the Spiritual Rock which followed the army of Israel in the wilderness, when they partake daily of the heavenly

man, how their experience will change! What the food we eat is to our physical needs, Christ is to our spiritual necessities.”¹⁰

Those who thirst for supremacy must be reconverted

“I speak to our leading brethren, to our ministers, and especially to our physicians. Just as long as you allow pride to dwell in your hearts, so long will you lack power in your work. For years a wrong spirit has been cherished, a spirit of pride, a desire for preeminence. In this Satan is served, and God is dishonored. The Lord calls for a decided reformation. And when a soul is truly reconverted, let him be rebaptized. Let him renew his covenant with God, and God will renew His covenant with him.”¹¹

Repenting and doing our first works

“Have not many in this ministerial school seen their mistake of not abiding in Christ? Can not they have the privilege of repenting, and of doing their first works? Who shall condemn this work of repentance, of confession, of baptism? If some conscientiously feel that their first duty is to repent of their sins, confess them, and be baptized, is not this the first works that they must do?”¹²

Rough ministers and apostate churches need rebaptism

“So much coarseness, such a lack of Christian politeness, has come into the lives of men who stand in official positions that my heart is sick and sore, and I can but weep to see how little of the tenderness of Christ they bring into their dealing with the children of God, the purchase of the blood of His only begotten Son. . . .

“It is this baptism of the Holy Spirit that the churches need today. There are backslidden church members and backslidden ministers who need re-converting, who need the softening, subduing influence of the baptism of the Spirit, that they may rise in newness of life and make thorough

work for eternity. I have seen the irreligion and the self-sufficiency cherished, and I have heard the words spoken, ‘Except ye repent and be converted, ye shall never see the kingdom of heaven.’ There are many who will need rebaptizing, but let them never go down into the water until they are dead to sin, cured of selfishness and self-exaltation; until they can come up out of the water to live a new life unto God.”¹³

Are we preparing for the global event soon to start?

We should not despair when considering the vast territory around the world where we are not yet represented as a church. Our God is well aware of this reality, and He wants us to have a victorious Christian experience in our lives and thus be fitted for the latter rain. Only then will we actually be in a position to go to the whole world as promised in God’s Holy Word, the Bible, and in the Spirit of Prophecy. (See Isaiah 66:18–21.)

“Clad in the armor of Christ’s righteousness, the church is to enter upon her final conflict. ‘Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners’ (Song of Solomon 6:10), she is to go forth into all the world, conquering and to conquer.

“The darkest hour of the church’s struggle with the powers of evil is that which immediately precedes the day of her final deliverance. But none who trust in God need fear; for ‘when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall,’ God will be to His church ‘a refuge from the storm’ (Isaiah 25:4).”¹⁴

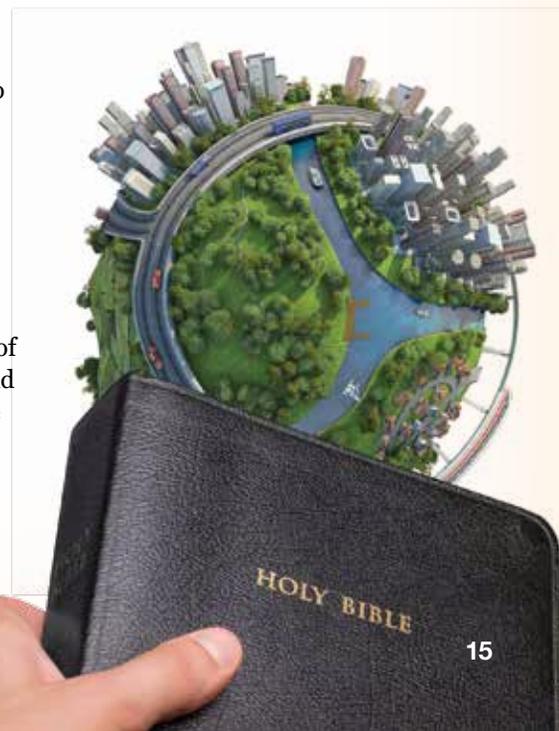
Conclusion

Esteemed and beloved people of God who are scattered throughout many parts of the planet: The period of divine mercy is almost over for us, and as God’s people, our preparation time is almost over. The situation is very urgent. With all that we know and love, we need to act now at all levels of God’s work, and also as members and supporters of this great final

message—with actions continuously wrought through the Divine channel. Following the Lamb wherever He goes, I will not hesitate to give a childlike jump into His loving arms, obeying His every word as a child does with his father who loves him. Following the Lamb wherever He goes means not to be passively strolling year after year on the same path, because “there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12). To follow the Lamb wherever He goes means to move upward (vertically) because “the way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath” (Proverbs 15:24). This last message of mercy that God has granted us does not allow us to stay and move on a horizontal plain—no, every day He elevates us as He did with Enoch and soon we will be closer to heaven and farther away from this world. *R*

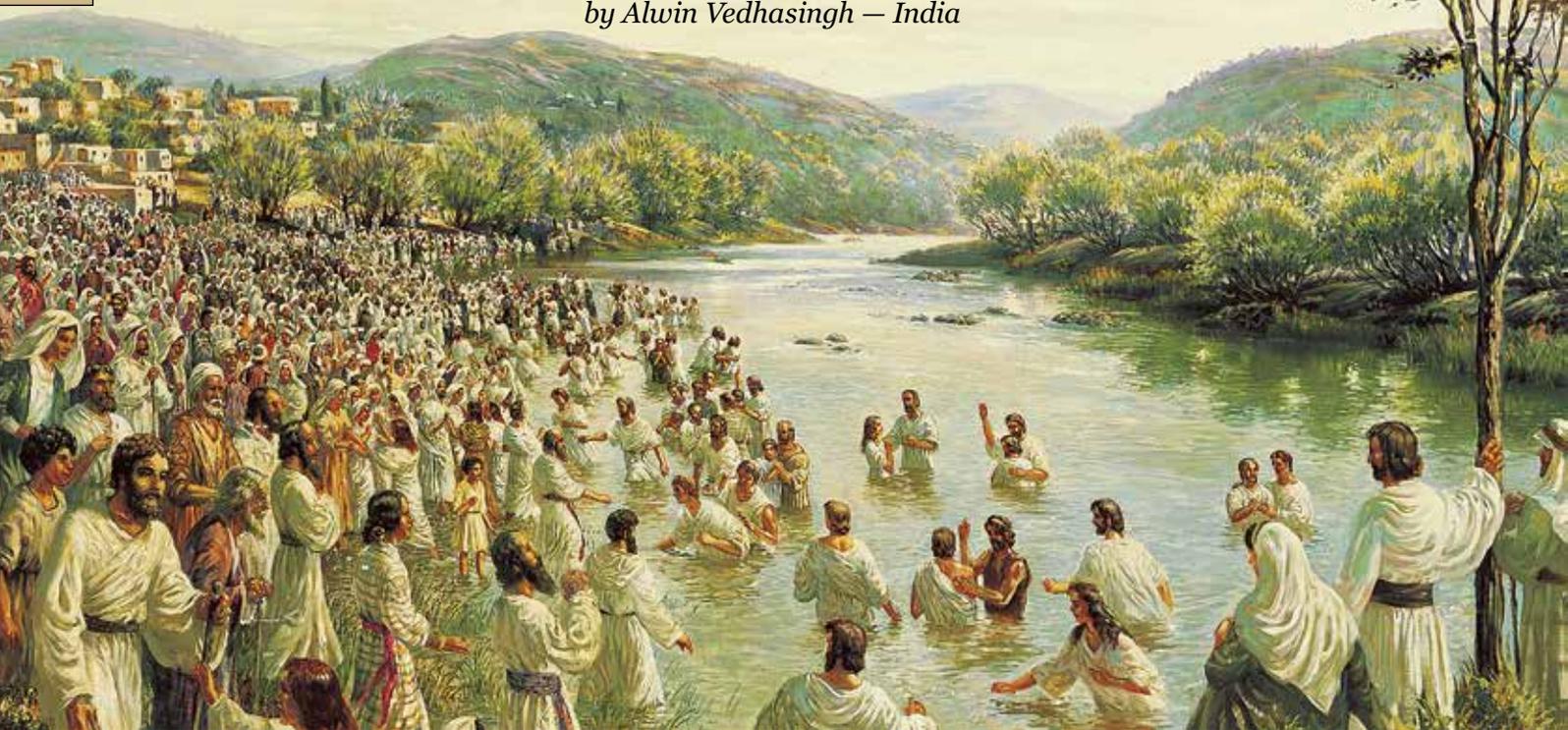
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A Prophecy and a Promise

by Alwin Vedhasingh — India



The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead. In Acts 5:3, 4, we read that the apostle Peter said, “Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whilst it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men but unto God.” Here the Holy Spirit, to whom Ananias had lied, is referred to as God.

The Holy Spirit is eternal. “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall

the blood of Christ, who through **the eternal Spirit** offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:13, 14). [Emphasis added.]

The Holy Spirit is omnipresent. In Psalm 139:7–10, King David reveals that God’s Spirit is everywhere.

“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.”

The Holy Spirit is omniscient. “As it is written, Eye hath not seen,

nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:9–11).

The Holy Spirit is omnipotent.

“And the angel answered and said unto [Mary], The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall over shadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

The prophecy and the promise of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament era

In the time of the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was active in individual human beings chosen by God for specific purposes. The Holy Spirit came upon people to enable them to accomplish God-given tasks. Hence the prophets used the words, “Thus saith the Lord” to attest to the divine thoughts on which their proclamation of both judgment and salvation were based.

In Genesis 20:7, Moses revealed that Abraham was a prophet. Prophets were men of the Spirit. They were spokesmen, for “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21).

It is evident that the Holy Spirit has been at work throughout both the history and redemption of mankind. The Holy Spirit is active in every instance of creation, as Psalm 104:30 points out: “Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.”

Genesis 1:2 states that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters at the time of creation.

When mankind sinned, the human race was cut off from fellowship with God. But in mercy, God’s Spirit continued to deal with humanity after the fall. This is brought out in Genesis 6:3 where “the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.”

Joseph and Daniel were men of prayer and faith. They devoted their lives to God. When Joseph interpreted the dream to Pharaoh in Genesis 41:37–40, the monarch observed plainly that Joseph had the Spirit of God and there was no one as discerning and wise as Joseph. When Daniel was able to interpret the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, that king said that he knew that the Spirit of the holy gods was in Daniel (Daniel 4:9). Joseph and Daniel prospered in foreign lands after interpreting dreams for their rulers and both of them were elevated to high office as a result of their faithfulness to God.

In Psalm 51:11, King David prays to God, “take not thy holy spirit from me” indicating that he, too, had the Holy Spirit. In 1 Samuel 16:13, the Spirit of the Lord came upon David when the prophet Samuel anointed him in the midst of his brethren. This was not only an anointing with power but an anointing also of wisdom and grace, enabling him to live a true life.

King Saul was anointed as king by the prophet Samuel. In 1 Samuel 10:11, when he was in the company of the sons of the prophets, the Spirit of prophecy came upon Saul virtually unsought and apparently without any spiritual preparation. It was the Spirit of God given for service, power to prophesy, to conquer and to rule.

Samson was a man filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb. God had a purpose for his life—to use this human to bring deliverance to the people of Israel. In Judges 13:25 we read that the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon Samson. The key to his victories over the Philistines may be found in a single phrase: “The Spirit of the Lord came upon him.”

The success of the ministry of the prophet Elijah was not due to any inherited qualities he possessed, but to his submission to the Holy Spirit, which was given to him as it will be given to all who exercise living faith in God. The prophet Elisha received a double portion of the Spirit that had rested on Elijah. In him, the power of Elijah’s spirit was united with the gentleness, mercy, and tender compassion of the Spirit of Christ (2 Kings 2:9).

In Judges 6:33, 34, we find that Gideon had been appointed by God as the judge who was to deliver Israel. He was empowered by the Holy Spirit for the task of driving out the Midianites.

The Holy Spirit led the prophet Nehemiah to weep, pray and fast for the needs of his people (Nehemiah 1:4). The Holy Spirit led Nehemiah to praise God amidst great difficulties (Verse 5). The Holy Spirit led him to confess personal and national sins (Verses 6, 7). The Holy Spirit led him to remind God and his people of the Lord’s promises, perspectives and plans (Verses 10, 11).

The prophecy of the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28, 29) about the Holy Spirit was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. In Isaiah 44:3–5, God promised to pour out His Spirit upon Israel’s descendants. The promise of the Spirit will be poured out upon him who is thirsty. In Isaiah 32:15–17, the result of the outpouring of the Spirit is justice, righteousness and peace.

In Ezekiel 36:26, 27, God promises to put His Spirit “within you.” It will then cause one to walk in His statutes and keep His judgments.

In Ezekiel 39:29, the Lord God promised that He will not hide His face from Israel, for He had poured out His Spirit upon their nation.

In Zechariah 12:10 the Spirit of grace and supplication was to be poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, prompting people to look upon Jesus whom they have pierced and to mourn because of Him.

The prophecy and promise of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament era

The New Testament, like the Old Testament, was written under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist baptized people by submersing them in the river Jordan to symbolize their repentance for sin. He told them that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire, (Matthew 3:11).

Jesus told the disciples, “the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26). The Spirit would be given as “living water” to all who would thirst and come to Him in faith (John 7:37–39). Jesus promised His disciples the “Spirit of truth” who would be a helper and would abide with them (John 14:16, 17). The Lord told His apostles to wait in Jerusalem until they would receive the “promise of the Father” (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4). This He clearly connects to the baptism of the Spirit spoken of by John the Baptist, through which they would receive power and

be eyewitnesses (Acts 1:5, 8). The Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus as a dove is a sign of His divine anointing (Matthew 3:16, 17). The visible descent of the Spirit upon Jesus served as the God-given sign by which the Baptist would know that this was the long-awaited coming One (John 1:32–34).

The apostle Peter, baptized by the Holy Spirit, suddenly had supernatural boldness and authority beyond himself when he stood and lifted up his voice, addressing the crowd on the day of Pentecost, explaining that they were not drunk but were experiencing a fulfillment of that which had been uttered by the prophet Joel (Acts 2:14–17). In the course of his sermon, Peter spoke of the outpouring of the Spirit as a promise Jesus had received from the Father (Acts 2:33). The gift of the

Spirit is for all who repent and are baptized (Acts 2:38). The promise was received by Christ and now poured out by Christ (Acts 2:33).

The apostle Stephen reproached the Jewish authorities as stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears because they always resisted the Holy Ghost as their fathers did (Acts 7:51). Note that they not only resisted Jesus while He was on earth but they also resisted the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul spoke of the blessing that the Holy Spirit “might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:14).

The apostle James exhorted the fellow believer to be patient until he receives the early and the latter rain (James 5:7).

The apostle Jude advised the believer to have holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20).

John the Revelator continued his relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We read that he was “in the Spirit on the Lord’s day” (Revelation 1:9–10).

The role of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit plays a vital role in God’s plan of redemption, from creation to eternity. As mentioned, in Genesis 1:2, the Spirit of God, that is the Holy Spirit, moved upon the face of the waters, when the earth was without form and void. In the last chapter of Revelation, the Holy Spirit invites humanity to partake in God’s redemption (Revelation 22:17).

In Matthew 1:20 an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph to explain that his betrothed wife had conceived through the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit dwells in the believer and causes our body to become the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16). The Holy Spirit grieves with our actions and language (Ephesians 4:30). He intercedes for us with groanings, prompting us to pray (Romans 8:26). He searches our hearts (Verse 27) and He talks to us (Acts 13:2; 16:6, 7; Revelation 2:7). He teaches all things and reminds us of scriptures (John 14:26).

God has revealed Himself to us through His Spirit, who spoke through the prophets. The Holy Spirit reveals light to us and leads us so that we can understand the Word.

The Holy Spirit has a twofold part in redemption; first the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, then leads us to repentance for sin. Therefore, we rely on God’s righteousness and mercy and are led to redemption. We can have victory over the flesh because of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit gives the power to accomplish the Lord’s work beyond our abilities if we yield to His power. The Holy Spirit also gives each of us our own gifts (1 Corinthians 12:3–5). He gives us the power to accomplish His will (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit is our Teacher, guiding us into all truth



(John 14:26). He gives us joy and peace (Galatians 5:22, 23). He gives power (Ephesians 3:16), including power to live godly lives (Ezekiel 36:27). He helps us to pray (Ephesians 6:18). He gives wisdom and revelation (Ephesians 1:17, 18). He gives boldness to witness (1 Timothy 3:13). God the Father speaks through us by the Spirit (Matthew 10:20).

The Holy Spirit in the last days

“Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left” (Isaiah 30:21).

“It was by the confession and forsaking of sin, by earnest prayer and consecration of themselves to God that the early disciples prepared for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The same work, only in greater degree, must be done now. Then the human agent had only to ask for the blessing, and wait for the Lord to perfect the work concerning him. It is God who began the work, and He will finish His work, making man complete in Jesus Christ. But there must be no neglect of the grace represented by the former rain. Only those who are living up to the light they have will receive greater light.”¹

God’s promise is sure. He will pour out His Spirit on all flesh with

enlightening and soul-winning results of great magnitude (Joel 2:28).

“Near the close of the earth’s harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man. This outpouring of the Spirit is likened to the falling of latter rain.”²

Without God’s Spirit we are blind to Jesus. Personal pride and glory prevent the seeker from finding Christ. But through His Holy Spirit, we can gain power over our flesh if we repent and are baptized. When we receive and cherish the word of God in our hearts, this Holy Spirit acts as the indwelling Guest of the church and the Christian life will be our portion.

“When trials overshadow the soul, remember the words of Christ, remember that He is an unseen presence in the person of the Holy Spirit.”³ “The promise of the Holy Spirit is not limited to any age or to any race. Christ declared that the divine influence of HIS Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. From the day of Pentecost to the present time, the Comforter has been sent to all who have yielded themselves fully to the Lord and to His service.”⁴

“Unless we are daily advancing in the exemplification of the active Christian virtues, we shall not recognize the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain. It may be

falling on hearts all around us, but we shall not discern or receive it.”⁵

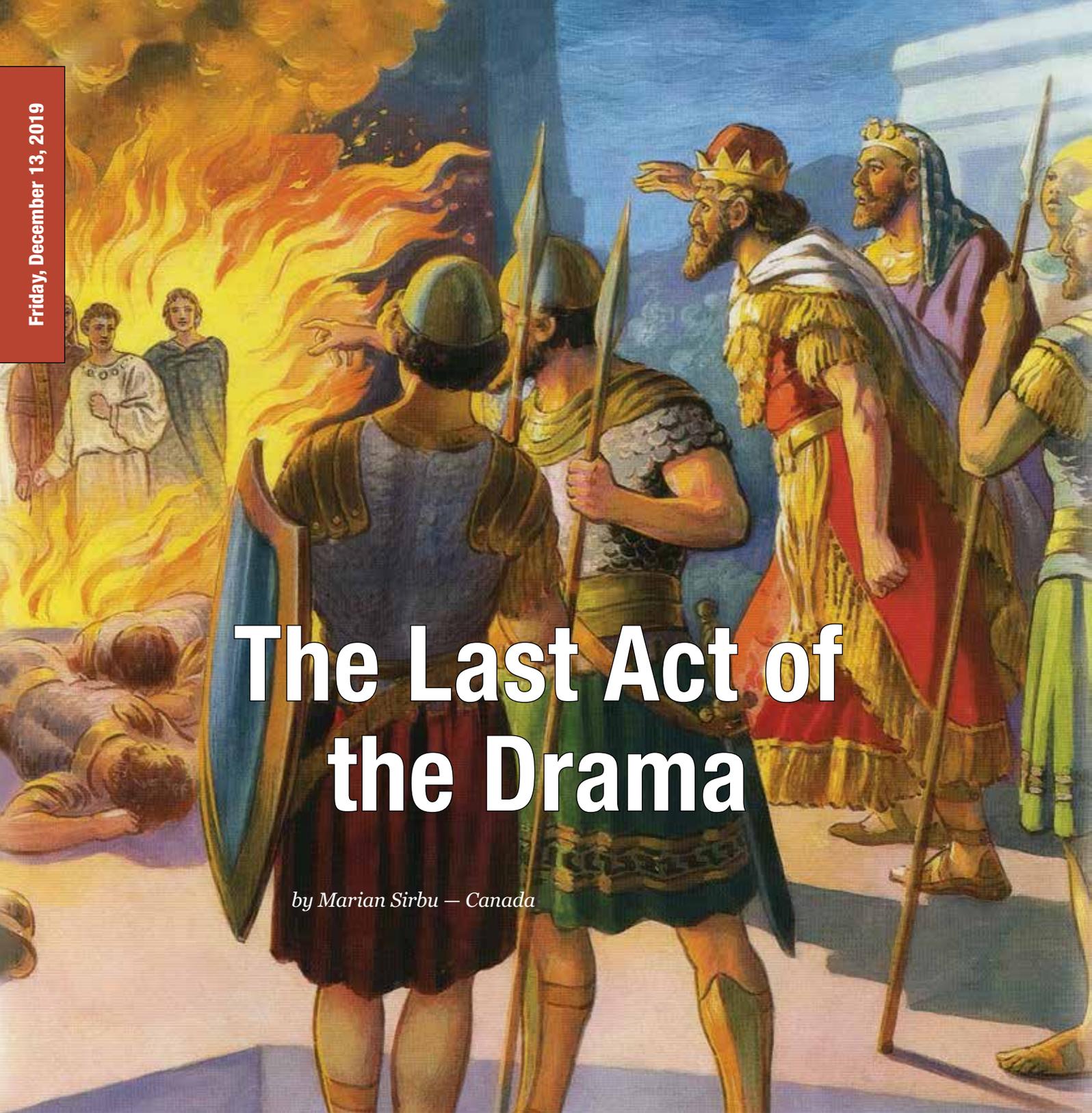
Receiving the Spirit is an indication that we are the children of God and joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:14–17). Through obedience to the word of God and faithful prayer, we will be led by the Spirit to produce His fruit in our lives. To grow spiritually, we need to submit our lives to the words of the Spirit which is the word of God.

We must play an active role in seeing God’s prophetic word manifest in our lives. While believing the word of the Lord will come to pass in our lives, we must allow the promises of God to give us hope and stability. Do not allow the enemy to sow seeds of discouragement while waiting for the fulfillment. The same Jesus who promises us the fullness of the Holy Spirit is also able to preserve our whole spirit, soul and body blameless until His coming. “Jesus comes to you as the Spirit of truth; study the mind of the Spirit, consult your Lord, follow His way.”⁶ *R*

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The Last Act of the Drama

by Marian Sirbu — Canada

With regard to the present age, the apostle Paul bids us to be “redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16).

The word “redeeming” in Greek means “to buy up, ransom, or rescue from loss.” We need to rescue from loss the time that remains in our life. We can only redeem today and plan

to redeem tomorrow, for yesterday is gone! We alone are responsible for using what God has given to each of us—time—to prepare for our spiritual vocation.

Building a holy, righteous character is becoming ever more difficult as we live in the last days. Many paths of wrongdoing and wrong thinking can

cause us to lose focus on God’s way of life.

Most people do not meditate on the temporary state of human existence or the fact that our days are numbered.

The days are evil. This simply means that we live in a sinful world where sinful choices are made each day, and each of those choices defile

God's good gift of time. Because the days are evil, God urges you to be careful how you live your life.

The American poet and biographer Carl Sandburg observed: "Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you."

So, how do you redeem your time? How do you make sure that you are spending the coin of your life wisely?

Every day, every hour, and every moment should be used to serve God. As much time as possible should be used to better ourselves by learning from the Word of God, and this in turn will benefit us in knowing how to serve Him. By not making this a priority, much of our time will be wasted.

As we already noticed, the apostle Paul describes the necessity of making the most of our time. However, the process primarily depends on us and our perspective on the matter. Considering King Solomon's words: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Therefore, we should examine our lives, and upon closer inspection see whether we really apply this principle or not.

The world we live in has seen many more changes in a very short period of time than in ages past. It is a great mistake to believe that we will only be standing on the sidelines, watching the last events unfold before our eyes.

"We are standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. Prophecies are fulfilling. The last great conflict will be short, but terrible. Old controversies will be revived. New controversies will arise."¹

What are our expectations?

The Bible teaches us that the great controversy between good and evil will continue to the end, after which the kingdom of heaven will be established. Based on this, many Christians have created their own replicas of how this world will come to an end.

We cannot claim to know when the world will come to an end and how God will take action in the final days.

We must rely on His wisdom and trust His leading hand.

The end will be sudden and unexpected, and most people will be unprepared. Just as in the days of Noah's flood, a catastrophe will suddenly overtake the earth, and by then it will be too late to repent and turn to God.

Let us ponder on this amazing thought:

"The world is a theater; the actors, its inhabitants, are preparing to act their part in the last great drama."²

Considering the significance of this statement, a question appears: Do people know what their role is? Are they aware that this is not fiction but real life?

At the present, for modern society, the media has become a part of daily life. Statistics show that even though people are all aware that television and films are not real, a lot of their TV and film heroes and heroines have become the majority of their role models.

On the other hand, the Bible teaches us that we have one role model, the Lord Jesus Christ as the Author and Finisher of our faith—and to follow His example is the most important thing. Therefore, we should be more careful about knowing for sure who is the designer of our role and who is our role model. The enemy of God has been preparing for over 6,000 years especially for these last moments in history.

How is it with our preparation for these last events?

The facts that call our attention

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

In present-day standards, the vital truths of God's word are set aside for human theories, speculations and tradition. It is remarkable that many church people and many professed ministers of the gospel don't recognize the entire Bible as the inspired Word of God. Starting from a standpoint of

rejection of one portion or to question another statement, they too often end up considering their judgment superior to the Word of God. In that case, the authority of the Scripture is destroyed.

Do we remember who first started to question the word of God? What were the results?

Recognizing the tactics of the enemy

It was Satan who was the one who started the great controversy in heaven, because he hated the law of God.

We know that his rebellion against the Creator caused him to be cast out of heaven. But he has continued his diabolic plan to destroy God's law upon the earth. In order to deceive men, and drive them to transgress God's law, he is not losing any opportunities. Satan's ways to fulfill his plan are by casting aside the law altogether, or by rejecting one of its precepts.

"Satan's policy in this final conflict with God's people is the same that he employed in the opening of the great controversy in heaven. He professed to be seeking to promote the stability of the divine government, while secretly bending every effort to secure its overthrow."³

There is a universal concept that God never forces the will or the conscience; but Satan's untiring effort is to gain control of those whom he cannot otherwise deceive.

"To accomplish this, [Satan] works through both religious and secular authorities, moving them to the enforcement of human laws in defiance of the law of God."⁴

Perilous times shall come . . .

We are living in the fulfillment of the perilous times written about in 2 Timothy 3:1–5. Moreover, the apostle Paul has stated that many people will not have any pleasure or disposition to hear sound doctrine: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves

teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3, 4).

One day, I had a Bible study with a man from another religious denomination—and at that Bible study, he agreed with the teachings of the Bible about the Sabbath day. Not long after, he came back and said to me: “If what you are saying about the Sabbath is true, then why have I never heard this from one of my leaders before? And why are there so many Christians who can’t understand it?” He concluded by saying: “I think that if the majority of people believe that Saturday isn’t the day of worship, then they are probably right.”

What we should call that: sincerity or ignorance? (Or neither?)

People in responsible positions will not only ignore and despise the Sabbath themselves, but from their pulpits will urge upon the people the observance of the first day of the week, pleading tradition and custom in behalf of this manmade institution.

“The substitution of the laws of men for the law of God, the exaltation, by merely human authority, of Sunday in place of the Bible Sabbath, is the last act in the drama. When this substitution becomes universal, God will reveal Himself.”⁵

God’s Eternal Law

It has often been said that if you want to know the truth you have to search for its origins. How was it in the beginning? Where can we find the answer?

John Wycliffe declared: “Holy Scripture is the highest authority for every believer, the standard of faith and the foundation for reform in religious, political and social life.”

“The law of God existed before man was created. The angels were governed by it. Satan fell because he transgressed the principles of God’s government. After Adam and Eve were created, God made known to them His law. It was not then written, but was rehearsed to them by Jehovah.

“The Sabbath of the fourth commandment was instituted in

Eden. After God had made the world, and created man upon the earth, he made the Sabbath for man. After Adam’s sin and fall, nothing was taken from the law of God. The principles of the ten commandments existed before the fall, and were of a character suited to the condition of a holy order of beings. After the fall, the principles of those precepts were not changed, but additional precepts were given to meet man in his fallen state.”⁶

“Had the Sabbath always been sacredly observed, there could never have been an atheist or an idolater.

“The Sabbath institution, which originated in Eden, is as old as the world itself. It was observed by all the patriarchs, from creation down. During the bondage in Egypt, the Israelites were forced by their taskmasters to violate the Sabbath, and to a great extent they lost the knowledge of its sacredness. When the law was proclaimed at Sinai the very first words of the fourth commandment were, ‘Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy’—showing that the Sabbath was not then instituted; we are pointed back for its origin to creation. In order to obliterate God from the minds of men, Satan aimed to tear down this great memorial. If men could be led to forget their Creator, they would make no effort to resist the power of evil, and Satan would be sure of his prey.”⁷

“‘Till heaven and earth pass,’ said Jesus, ‘one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.’ The sun shining in the heavens, the solid earth upon which you dwell, are God’s witnesses that His law is changeless and eternal. Though they may pass away, the divine precepts shall endure. ‘It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail’ (Luke 16:17). The system of types that pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God was to be abolished at His death; but the precepts of the Decalogue are as immutable as the throne of God.”⁸

History will repeat itself

Daniel and his companions loved God with all their heart and they

preferred even death rather than to commit an offense toward God. But this kind of devotion is not preserved without a struggle. It is well known that a test was brought on the three friends of Daniel when they were required to worship the great image set up by King Nebuchadnezzar on the plain of Dura! They knew from the scriptures that only God is worthy of adoration and worship. Their faith and trust in God was so strong that it presented a great lesson to all the inhabitants of the Babylonian empire.

Daniel and his friends let the word of God develop their faith in God. Nebuchadnezzar previously heard the word of God in the explanation of the image in his dream. How different would the history of the world be if Nebuchadnezzar, under the divine instructions, understood his role in the plan of God! Sadly, however, Nebuchadnezzar turned the divine plan from its purpose, letting his knowledge nourish his pride and vanity instead of learning the lessons of truth.

“By the height and beauty of his image, by the material of which it was formed, the king sought to make error and false doctrine magnificent and attractive, more powerful, seemingly, than anything God had given.”⁹

All false religion has its origin in a corruption of the truth.

It is easy to observe the similarities between how Satan worked in the past and how he works to deceive people in the same way in the present. Satan sought to make God-given light serve his own purposes, by leading the king to work for his own glory instead of working for the glory of God.

“History will repeat itself. In this age the great test will be upon the point of Sabbath observance. . . . A rival sabbath is exalted, as was the great golden image in the plain of Dura. Leaders claiming to be Christians will call upon the world to observe the spurious sabbath that they have made. All who refuse will be put under oppressive laws. This is the mystery of iniquity, the devising of satanic agencies, carried into effect by the man of sin.”¹⁰

There is a universal principle made known that God will honor those who honor Him. Through the way that God has delivered His faithful servants in the past, He demonstrates how He will be with all of His people in their trials for His glory—and rebukes all earthly powers that rebel against the authority of Heaven.

Examples for our learning

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Corinthians 10:11).

There’s no way to overestimate the importance of learning from the people around us. Learning from others is not a passive process, but one that requires work and commitment on our part. Observing others’ life experiences and understanding God’s ways from Holy Scripture will be of great benefit to us.

The lessons to be learned from the experience of the Hebrew youth on the plain of Dura are very important. In the future, many of God’s servants, though innocent of wrongdoing, will be fortified to endure humiliation and abuse at the hands of those who, inspired by Satan, are filled with envy and religious bigotry. The wrath of men will be especially aroused against those who hallow the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, and at last a universal decree will denounce these as deserving of death.

We ought to obey God rather than men

In the 20th century, as a part of atheistic education, communist states published and widely disseminated counter-Christian literature. This was particularly true for Romania, even before the dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu. Soon after the communist system collapsed, I remember that in Bucharest, I had the chance to meet a very faithful brother from our church. His name was Stefan Ungureanu. It was a privilege to hear the real life experiences that the believers went through during the communist era. As a Union president of the church, one day this brother was called by the authorities and interrogated as to why the religious books used by our church did not have a portrait of the leader of the country. It was mandatory for all books to have a picture of him on the front page. Then our brother’s answer was: “Please, don’t misunderstand us; we respect the Government and recognize it as an ordinance of divine appointment, but to show reverence and adoration to a human being would not be right in the sight of God. We do not change our principles according to a different government party, but rather we have always prayed for all of them. We have been the same in the past as we are today and will be the same for the future. We love God and love our neighbors.” After many years it has been proven that the people of God have upheld these principles.

“The people of God will recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment and will teach obedience to it as a sacred duty within its legitimate sphere. But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, the word of God must be recognized as above all human legislation. “Thus saith the Lord” is not to be set aside for Thus saith the church

or the state. The crown of Christ is to be uplifted above the diadems of earthly potentates.”¹¹

Testing time

“The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul.

The observance of the false sabbath will be urged upon us. The contest will be between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. Those who have yielded step by step to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will then yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. At that time the gold will be separated from the dross. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. Many a star that we have admired for its brilliance will then go out in darkness. Those who have assumed the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ’s righteousness, will then appear in the shame of their own nakedness.”¹²

“The powers of darkness must be met by every soul. The young, as well as the old, will be assailed, and all should understand the nature of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, and should realize that it concerns themselves. All are actors in the scene, sharers in the conflict.”¹³

Dear reader, God desires to use you in His service. There is a place for you to fill in this world. Every one of us will have a role in the last act of the drama. If you are faithful in filling the place the Lord desires you to fill, He will work in your behalf, and you will see of the salvation of God. *R*

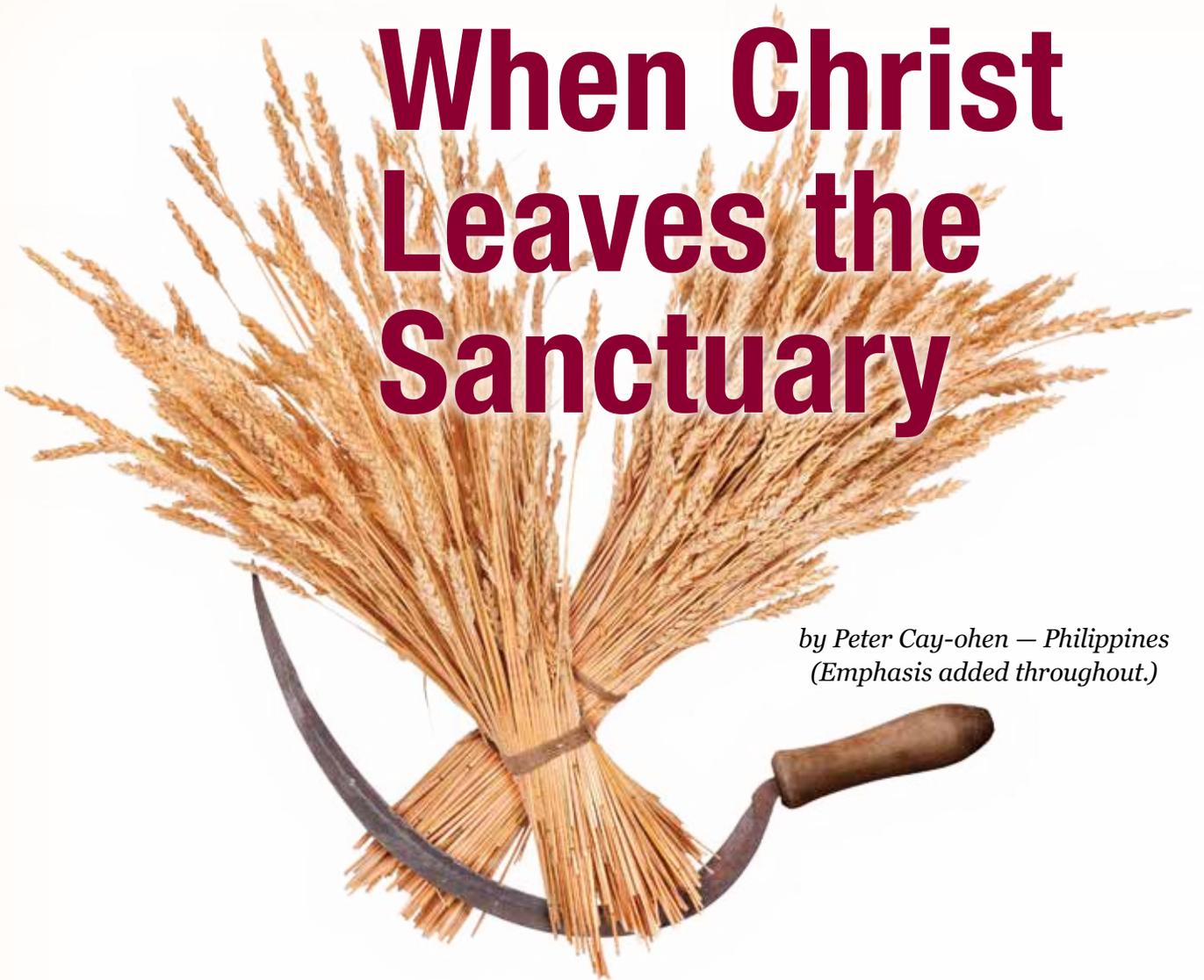
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Heroes of the faith in Romania.

When Christ Leaves the Sanctuary



by Peter Cay-ohen — *Philippines*
(Emphasis added throughout.)

We are living in the last period of the Christian era, known as the Laodicean period. This time since 1844 is also referred to as the antitypical Day of Atonement. Christ our High Priest is now ministering in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, pleading His blood before the Father in our behalf and making atonement for our transgressions. It is the second phase of His work as our “high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Hebrews 8:1–2).

What is Christ doing in the heavenly sanctuary? Paul tells us that Christ entered “into heaven itself, now

to appear in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:24) to intercede for us. “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:34).

Does the intercession of Christ have anything to do with our salvation? Certainly!

“The intercession of Christ in man’s behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross,”¹ for “he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

We have such an high priest who “is able also to save them to the

uttermost that come unto God by him.” What encouragement should this truth give to us? “We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:15, 16).

“Now Christ is in the heavenly sanctuary. And what is He doing? Making atonement for us, cleansing the sanctuary from the sins of the people. Then we must enter by faith into the sanctuary with Him, we must commence the work in the sanctuary of our souls. We are to cleanse ourselves from all defilement.

We must 'cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God' (2 Corinthians 7:1). . . . Why, come and humble your hearts in confession, and by faith grasp the arm of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. Believe that Christ will take your confession and hold up His hands before the Father—hands that have been bruised and wounded in our behalf—and He will make an atonement for all who will come with confession."²

We should take this call "to cleanse ourselves from all defilement" seriously while "Christ is in the heavenly sanctuary . . . making atonement for us," for the time is coming when Christ will leave the sanctuary and there will be no one to atone for our sins. Looking forward to that hour, the prophet Daniel wrote, "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Daniel 12:1).

There shall be a time of trouble

Comparing Daniel 12:1 with Jude and Revelation 12:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:16 with John 5:25, we understand that Michael is none other than Christ. The time He stands up for His people will be when He has finished His work in the sanctuary, Revelation 22:11, 12. He will stand up, put on the garments of vengeance, and then the wrath of God, the seven last plagues described in Revelation chapter 16, will be poured out in the time of trouble.

Ellen White was given a view of this time of trouble. She wrote: "I was taken off in vision to the most holy place, where I saw Jesus still interceding for Israel. . . . Then I saw that Jesus would not leave the most holy place until every case was decided either for salvation or destruction, and that the **wrath of God** could not come until Jesus had finished His work in the most holy

place, laid off His priestly attire, and clothed Himself with the garments of vengeance. Then Jesus will step out from between the Father and man, and God will keep silence no longer, but pour out His wrath on those who have rejected His truth. I saw ... **when our High Priest has finished His work in the sanctuary**, He will stand up, put on the garments of vengeance, and **then the seven last plagues will be poured out**.

"I saw that the **four angels would hold the four winds until Jesus' work was done** in the sanctuary, and **then will come the seven last plagues**. These plagues enraged the wicked against the righteous; they thought that we had brought the judgments of God upon them, and that if they could rid the earth of us, the plagues would then be stayed. A decree went forth to slay the saints, which caused them to cry day and night for deliverance. This was the time of Jacob's trouble."³

It is said that God will pour out His wrath on those who have rejected His truth. What shows that they have rejected the truth? It is the mark of the beast that they will have received in their foreheads or in their hands. While Jesus still is in the sanctuary, the warning of the third angel is to be given to the inhabitants of the earth. (See Revelation 14:9–11.)

Those who reject the truth of the third angel's message will have the mark of the beast in their forehead or in their hands as proof of their rejection of God and their decision to worship the beast instead of their Creator as demanded by the first angel. For he is "saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Revelation 14:7).

Thus "when Christ ceases His intercession in the sanctuary, the **unmingled wrath** threatened against those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark (Revelation 14:9, 10), will be poured out. The plagues upon Egypt when God was about to deliver Israel, were similar in character to those more

terrible and extensive judgments which are to fall upon the world just before the final deliverance of God's people. Says the revelator, in describing those terrific scourges: "There fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshiped his image" (Revelation 16:2)."⁴

The destiny of all is forever fixed

When Christ leaves the sanctuary and the wrath of God is being poured out upon the rejecters of the truth, will there still be any people who will start to feel genuine sorrow for sin and by faith turn to God for mercy and salvation? We may be tempted to think that there may be some wicked who will be penitent when suffering severe judgment, as has sometimes occurred throughout history. But the Bible informs us that even the wicked who will be suffering with "noisome and grievous sores" and are being "scorched with great heat" inflicted by the first through fourth plagues, "repented not to give [God] glory" (Revelation 16:2–9).

The wicked cannot experience genuine repentance in the time of trouble because probation will have already closed and all will have made their irrevocable decision either for eternal life or eternal death. Henceforth there will be no crossing over or switching between the righteous and the wicked. It is no longer possible for a wicked individual to be converted to become righteous. The wicked will remain wicked, and the righteous and holy will remain righteous and holy forever. (See Revelation 22:11.)

When does probation close for the world? This event will take place just before the coming of Jesus in the clouds of heaven. This is evident by the fact that the solemn announcement that the righteous and the wicked will remain as they are is immediately followed by Jesus' statement, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:12).

“When the work of the investigative judgment closes, the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death.

Probation is ended a short time before the appearing of the Lord in the clouds of heaven.”⁵

The exact date when probation closes is not revealed

The Lord has revealed to us that our probation will end when Christ leaves the sanctuary before Christ comes in the clouds of heaven. But the exact date when probation closes is not revealed.

“God has not revealed to us the time . . . when probation will have an end. Those things that are revealed we shall accept for ourselves and for our children; but let us not seek to know that which has been kept secret in the councils of the Almighty. . . .

“Letters have come to me asking me if I have any special light as to the time when probation will close; and I answer that I have only this message to bear, that it is now time to work while the day lasts, for the night cometh in which no man can work. Now, just now, it is time for us to be watching, working, and waiting. . . . **But there is no command for any one to search the Scripture in order to ascertain, if possible, when probation will close. God has no such message for any mortal lips.** He would have no mortal tongue declare that which He has hidden in His secret councils.”⁶

This, of course, is referring to the general close of probation for the world. However, we must also keep in mind that “judgment must begin at the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17) and our individual close of probation does not necessarily coincide with the moment Christ leaves the sanctuary. Probation will close for those who have known the present truth before it closes for those who have never before heard the testing truths for this time.

The Lord’s messenger explains: “I speak not my own words when I say that God’s Spirit will pass by those who have had their day of test and opportunity, but who have not distinguished the voice of God or

appreciated the movings of His Spirit. Then thousands in the eleventh hour will see and acknowledge the truth.”⁷

“The time of God’s destructive judgments is the time of mercy for those who have no opportunity to learn what is truth. Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; His hand is still stretched out to save, while the door is closed to those who would not enter. Large numbers will be admitted who in these last days hear the truth for the first time.”⁸

Probation will end suddenly, unexpectedly

“Silently, unnoticed as the midnight thief, will come the decisive hour which marks the fixing of every man’s destiny, the final withdrawal of mercy’s offer to guilty men. . . . While the man of business is absorbed in the pursuit of gain, while the pleasure lover is seeking indulgence, while the daughter of fashion is arranging her adornments—it may be in that hour the Judge of all the earth will pronounce the sentence: ‘Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting’ (Daniel 5:27).”⁹

“When the irrevocable decision of the sanctuary has been pronounced and the destiny of the world has been forever fixed, the inhabitants of the earth will know it not.”¹⁰

A time of famine for the Word of God

The Bible prophesies of a famine of the word of God that is coming. (See Amos 8:11, 12.)

When will be this famine of hearing the words of the Lord? The spirit of prophecy tells us that it will be after Christ leaves the sanctuary, after probation has already been closed, and while the plagues are being poured upon the earth. The vision was shown:

“The plagues were falling upon the inhabitants of the earth. Some were denouncing God and cursing Him. Others rushed to the people of God and begged to be taught how they might escape His judgments. But the

saints had nothing for them. The last tear for sinners had been shed, the last agonizing prayer offered, the last burden borne, the last warning given. The sweet voice of mercy was no more to invite them. When the saints, and all heaven, were interested for their salvation, they had no interest for themselves. Life and death had been set before them. Many desired life, but made no effort to obtain it. They did not choose life, and now there was no atoning blood to cleanse the guilty, no compassionate Saviour to plead for them, and cry, ‘Spare, spare the sinner a little longer.’ All heaven had united with Jesus, as they heard the fearful words, ‘It is done. It is finished.’

The plan of salvation had been accomplished, but few had chosen to accept it. And as mercy’s sweet voice died away, fear and horror seized the wicked. With terrible distinctness they heard the words, ‘Too late! too late!’

“Those who had not prized God’s Word were hurrying to and fro, wandering from sea to sea, and from the north to the east, to seek the Word of the Lord. Said the angel, ‘They shall not find it. There is a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but for hearing the words of the Lord. What would they not give for one word of approval from God! but no, they must hunger and thirst on. Day after day have they slighted salvation, prizing earthly riches and earthly pleasure higher than any heavenly treasure or inducement. They have rejected Jesus and despised His saints. The filthy must remain filthy forever.’”¹¹

No second probation

“We are to make the best of our present opportunities. There will be no other probation given to us in which to prepare for heaven. This is our only and last opportunity to form characters which will fit us for the future home which the Lord has prepared for all who are obedient to His commandments. . . .

“All will be tested and tried according to the light they have had. Those who turn from the truth to fables can look for no second probation.

There will be no temporal millennium. If, after the Holy Spirit has brought conviction to their hearts, they resist the truth and use their influence to block the way so that others will not receive it, they will never be convinced. **They did not seek for transformation of character in the probation given them, and Christ will not give them opportunity to pass over the ground again. The decision is a final one.**¹²

Our protection in the time of trouble

We have seen that when Christ leaves the sanctuary and probation closes, the unjust and filthy have in their foreheads or hands the mark of the beast and they will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, the seven last plagues, which is poured out unmingled with mercy; and they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.

How about the righteous and holy? Will they be scourged with the plagues together with the wicked? Certainly not! Before probation closes that usher in the time of trouble they were sealed in their forehead with the seal of the living God.

The Lord's messenger describes: "I saw the time of trouble, such as never was—Jesus told me it was the time of Jacob's trouble, and that we should be delivered out of it by the voice of God. Just before we entered it [the time of trouble], we all received the seal of the living God. Then I saw the four angels cease to hold the four winds. And I saw famine, pestilence and sword,



nation rose against nation, and the whole world was in confusion."¹³

Our only safety

The seal of the living God is the covering of the Almighty over His people to protect them in the time of trouble that they be not hurt of the plagues. Ellen G. White said, "I saw a covering that God was drawing over His people to protect them in the time of trouble; and every soul that was decided on the truth and was pure in heart was to be covered with the covering of the Almighty."¹⁴

"I saw that Satan was at work in these ways to distract, deceive, and draw away God's people, just now in this sealing time. . . .

Satan was trying his every art to hold them where they were, until the sealing was past, until the covering was drawn over God's people, and they left without a shelter from the burning wrath of God, in the seven last plagues."¹⁵

This means that our only safety in the time of trouble is to have the seal of the living God in our foreheads so that we can be protected from the scourge of the plagues. To be sealed is to be settled in the truth so "that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:14).

"Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved."¹⁶

Moreover, to be sealed we must depart from iniquity. It is written, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19).

For us to be sealed, sin must "become exceeding sinful" (Romans 7:13) in our perception so that we shun it. We must no more be indifferent to sin. (See Ezekiel 9:4.)

"Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in

Christ. Not even by a thought could our Saviour be brought to yield to the power of temptation. Satan finds in human hearts some point where he can gain a foothold; some sinful desire is cherished, by means of which his temptations assert their power. But Christ declared of Himself: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John 14:30). **Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father's commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his advantage. This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble.**"¹⁷

"Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost."¹⁸

Note that the conditions for the sealing and for the latter rain are the same. John tells us that those who receive the seal of God are holy: "And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God" (Revelation 14:5). To be sealed therefore, we must, by the grace of God, overcome sin now before Jesus leaves the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. *R*

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- ³ *Early Writings*, pp. 36, 37.
- ⁴ *The Great Controversy*, pp. 627, 628.
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- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 615.
- ¹¹ *Early Writings*, pp. 281, 282.
- ¹² *Last Day Events*, pp. 236, 237.
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- ¹⁴ *Early Writings*, p. 43.
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The Blessed Hope

by Abel Morales — Argentina

It is interesting to visit the renowned Royal Tombs of Sipán Museum located in the city of Lambayeque, Peru, where the mortuary trousseau of the Lord of Sipán, an ancient ruler of the Moche culture, is exhibited. This ruler dominated the north of the current territory of that country during the third century A.D.

In 1987, a team of specialists excavated this archaeological site, recognized as the main pre-Inca discovery of the 20th century in South America.

With the mummified body of the Lord of Sipán can be found some insights into his personal life and hopes:

- His royal dress, revealing the presumptuous desire to perpetuate his dominion beyond death.

- Different representations of the god Al Paec, the main divinity that he worshiped.

- A gold and silver necklace made of twenty peanuts, symbolizing the sun and the moon, that is, the perfect spiritual balance between the darkness and the light that it wanted to reach.

- Some pieces on his face, displaying anatomical forms such as nose, eyes, teeth and earmuffs, all forged in fine gold, evidencing the desire to immortalize his face.

- The depiction of the funeral procession with what is understood to be his wife, two concubines, the military leader, a lookout, a soldier, as well as a child, a dog and two llamas (an indigenous animal of the Andean region sacrificed in his favor).

All this pointed to the center of his spiritual hopes, namely: living eternally with his objects and the most precious people to him.

A vain hope

“They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy” (Jonah 2:8).

To live in this world as the Lord of Sipán did, striving to obtain power and eternal youth, constitutes the most vain of hopes. But even more regrettable is the case of those who, being aware of the eternal gospel, incur such folly:

“Solomon sat upon a throne of ivory, the steps of which were of solid gold, flanked by six golden lions. His eyes rested upon highly cultivated and beautiful gardens just before him. Those grounds were visions of

loveliness, arranged to resemble, as far as possible, the garden of Eden. Choice trees and shrubs, and flowers of every variety, had been brought from foreign lands to beautify them. Birds of every variety of brilliant plumage flitted from tree to tree, making the air vocal with sweet songs. Youthful attendants, gorgeously dressed and decorated, waited to obey his slightest wish. Scenes of revelry, music, sports, and games were arranged for his diversion at an extravagant expenditure of money.

“But all this did not bring happiness to the king. He sat upon his magnificent throne, his frowning countenance dark with despair. Dissipation had left its impress upon his once fair and intellectual face. He was sadly changed from the youthful Solomon. His brow was furrowed with care and unhappiness, and he bore in every feature the unmistakable marks of sensual indulgence. His lips were prepared to break forth into reproaches at the slightest deviation from his wishes.

“His shattered nerves and wasted frame showed the result of violating Nature’s laws. He confessed to a wasted life, an unsuccessful chase after happiness. His is the mournful wail, ‘All is vanity and vexation of spirit.’”¹

Live hopeful!

At the “Ebenezer Missionary School” in Brazil, the students assist at the Oasis Paranaense Naturist Hospital. On one occasion, two patients were admitted with terminal cancer. One of them was visited periodically by his wife and children. In their conversations, the patient saturated the air with laments and negative expressions. Observing the face of his wife whenever he expressed distrust in simple natural treatments, his bad attitude was clearly obvious. She asked us: “How can I encourage this man who is doomed because of his own negativity?” Some months later, this patient died in unfortunate circumstances.

At the other end of the same room, a diametrically opposite picture was

presented. A patient in a similar health condition—a man who did not even get the blessing of visitors—behaved very differently. Every time we entered to apply a treatment, he filled the room with expressions of joy and hope. His attitude exercised a healing power in his whole being, and also in those who assisted him.

Can you imagine the end? One day we entered the room according to our routine and we noticed an unusual situation. The patient was in the bathroom, but we could not understand his persistent silence. Finally we entered to see what had happened to him. We discovered that he had something in the oral cavity that prevented him from speaking. It was a deformed mass the size of a medium orange. Following the order of the professional on duty, he was taken immediately to the laboratory of the Hospital de Clínicas in the center of the city of Curitiba, where it was found that it was a cancerous tumor in its entirety, naturally and miraculously removed from the root.

The day they told him the news, we were at his side and watched his impressive leaps of joy. He hugged us and used an expression that will never be erased from my memory. He exclaimed: “From the very first day, I had hope in these natural methods!”

I never saw that young man again, but we can be sure that hope moved the divine arm and triggered a physiological response that flooded his organism with health—so surely, the tumor had no environment in which to develop.

If we learn to live with hope, we will fill the air with expressions of victory that would infect even the most hopeless.

An active hope

In New England region of the United States, the people needed to build a very important dam to generate electricity. In the projected terrain there was a village with beautiful houses. The government communicated to the inhabitants: “The execution of this project will take many years, although we have already

signed the contract and now your houses are property of the State, so you will be allowed to continue living in them for some time, until the day you must permanently leave the zone.”

This was a nice town, but from that time on, it began to deteriorate. People no longer repaired their homes or took care of their gardens—and what was once a pretty town became a miserable neighborhood. Why did such a change happen? They had lost hope.

Many Christians, who have stopped studying prophecy, no longer have a genuine hope for the glorious future of the church. Their loss of hope results in an inactive and miserable life.

“The coming of the Lord has been in all ages the hope of His true followers. The Saviour’s parting promise upon Olivet, that He would come again, lighted up the future for His disciples, filling their hearts with joy and hope that sorrow could not quench nor trials dim. Amid suffering and persecution, the ‘appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ’ was the ‘blessed hope.’ . . .

“From the dungeon, the stake, the scaffold, where saints and martyrs witnessed for the truth, comes down the centuries the utterance of their faith and hope. Being ‘assured of His personal resurrection, and consequently of their own at His coming, for this cause,’ says one of these Christians, ‘they despised death, and were found to be above it.’”²

“Hasten, O Lord, this blessed day!’ Such was the hope of the apostolic church, of the ‘church in the wilderness,’ and of the Reformers.”³

From ancient times the Scriptures have declared the certainty of the second coming of Christ, stimulating His church to stay active. Moreover, the prophecies also outline the signs so that everyone can know the time and prepare.

Signs of hope

“The revelator thus describes the first of the signs to precede the second advent: ‘There was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood’ (Revelation 6:12).

“These signs were witnessed before the opening of the nineteenth century. In fulfillment of this prophecy there occurred, in the year 1755, the most terrible earthquake that has ever been recorded. Though commonly known as the earthquake of Lisbon, it extended to the greater part of Europe, Africa, and America. It was felt in Greenland, in the West Indies, in the island of Madeira, in Norway and Sweden, Great Britain and Ireland. It pervaded an extent of not less than four million square miles. In Africa the shock was almost as severe as in Europe.”⁴

“Twenty-five years later appeared the next sign mentioned in the prophecy—the darkening of the sun and moon. . . . On the 19th of May, 1780, this prophecy was fulfilled. . . .

“Fowls retired to their roosts and went to sleep, cattle gathered at the pasture bars and lowed, frogs peeped, birds sang their evening songs, and bats flew about. But the human knew that night had not come.”⁵

“After midnight the darkness disappeared, and the moon, when first visible, had the appearance of blood.

“May 19, 1780, stands in history as ‘The Dark Day.’ Since the time of Moses no period of darkness of equal density, extent, and duration, has ever been recorded.”⁶

“In 1833, two years after Miller began to present in public the evidences of Christ’s soon coming, the last of the signs appeared which were promised by the Saviour as tokens of His second advent. Said Jesus: ‘The stars shall fall from heaven.’ Matthew 24:29. . . . This prophecy received a striking and impressive fulfillment in the great meteoric shower of November 13, 1833. That was the most extensive and wonderful display of falling stars which has ever been recorded.”⁷

Principles of interpretation that confirmed hope

“In the year 1840 another remarkable fulfillment of prophecy excited widespread interest. Two years before, Josiah Litch, one of the leading ministers preaching the second advent, published an exposition of

Revelation 9, predicting the fall of the Ottoman Empire. According to his calculations, this power was to be overthrown. . . . ‘It will end on the 11th of August, 1840, when the Ottoman power in Constantinople may be expected to be broken. And this, I believe, will be found to be the case.’—Josiah Litch, in *Signs of the Times*, and *Expositor of Prophecy*, Aug. 1, 1840.

“At the very time specified, Turkey, through her ambassadors, accepted the protection of the allied powers of Europe, and thus placed herself under the control of Christian nations. The event exactly fulfilled the prediction. When it became known, multitudes were convinced of the correctness of the principles of prophetic interpretation adopted by Miller and his associates, and a wonderful impetus was given to the advent movement.”⁸

But why are many indifferent?

“When the Saviour pointed out to His followers the signs of His return, He foretold the state of backsliding that would exist just prior to His second advent. There would be, as in the days of Noah, the activity and stir of worldly business and pleasure seeking—buying, selling, planting, building, marrying, and giving in marriage—with forgetfulness of God and the future life. For those living at this time, Christ’s admonition is: ‘Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares’ (Luke 21:34).”⁹

Spiritual blindness, greed, apostasy, gluttony and unrighteous sensuality are the sure result of a life without hope—a life which inevitably becomes careless and indifferent. I would like us to analyze the contrasting results that the true “Blessed Hope” will have on my life and yours:

The effects of true hope

“When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:2, 3).

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Wherever the word of God has been faithfully preached, those who were converted brought forth fruit meet for repentance. “They believed and were baptized, and rose to walk in newness of life—new creatures in Christ Jesus; not to fashion themselves according to the former lusts, but by the faith of the Son of God to follow in His steps, to reflect His character, and to purify themselves even as He is pure. The things they once hated they now loved, and the things they once loved they hated. The proud and self-assertive became meek and lowly of heart. The vain and supercilious became serious and unobtrusive. The profane became reverent, the drunken sober, and the profligate pure. The vain fashions of the world were laid aside.”¹⁰

Beloved, if our hope is genuine, we will not only long for Christ to return to earth the second time, but our chief aim will be that He will return definitively to our own lives and, as a result, to the church. Our desire should be to banish the enemy of souls from our midst along with his distractions of the world that divert us away from Jesus in our daily lives. Satan takes possession of the heart by sending demons with specific commissions to trigger the various tendencies to evil that separate us from our Lord.

Specific demons?

Let us consider some passages of the Spirit of Prophecy with respect to the demons that specifically attack our weak points.

“Evil spirits, in the beginning created sinless, were equal in nature, power, and glory with the holy beings that are now God’s messengers. But fallen through sin, they are leagued together for the dishonor

of God and the destruction of men. United with Satan in his rebellion, and with him cast out from heaven, they have, through all succeeding ages, cooperated with him in his warfare against the divine authority. We are told in Scripture of their confederacy and government, of their various orders, of their intelligence and subtlety, and of their malicious designs against the peace and happiness of men.”¹¹

“The demon of jealousy entered the heart of the king [Saul]. He was angry because David was exalted above himself.”¹²

When Jesus came to the earth, “the bodies of human beings, made for the dwelling place of God, had become the habitation of demons. The senses, the nerves, the passions, the organs of men, were worked by supernatural agencies in the indulgence of the vilest lust. The very stamp of demons was impressed upon the countenances of men.”¹³

The passages quoted are very clear. Satan organizes his agents to hammer on our weak points to confirm us in indolence. If I am greedy, a gossip, dishonest, selfish, intemperate, lascivious, impatient, a liar, lazy, superficial, vain, etc., certainly some of his evil agents are commissioned to prey heavily on some of my shortcomings. The old saying is: “What you do not overcome, will overcome you.”

Is there any hope?

If we possess some of these undesirable traits of character, we should not be discouraged, for the Spirit of Prophecy says that: “None but Christ can fashion anew the character that has been ruined by sin. He came to expel the demons that had controlled the will.”¹⁴

Even in the case of Judas Iscariot: “If he would open his heart to Christ, divine grace would banish the demon of selfishness.”¹⁵

Ultimately, Mary, “who had fallen, and whose mind had been a habitation of demons, was brought very near to the Saviour in fellowship and ministry.”¹⁶

“The arm of Christ can reach to the very depths of human woe and degradation. He can give us help to conquer even [the] terrible demon of intemperance.”¹⁷

In 1927 the submarine S-4 sank in the Gulf of Mexico. Many ships responded quickly to save the crew. During the rescue maneuvers, a tactical diver heard a sound on the metal walls of the ship; it was a message in Morse code. He deciphered the code and transmitted the message immediately: “The crew of the submarine is asking a question, they say: ‘Is there any hope? Is there any hope?’ That is what this world wants to know and it is our turn to remind them that we also live in the same way:

At one time “ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12).

“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:3–7).

What kind of hope do I have?

Observing the majority in the church today, a question arises. Will ours be a frivolous hope like that of the Lord of Sipán? Am I squandering the benevolence of God like King Solomon did? Has the active and fervent hope of the apostolic church and of the reformers been extinguished in us?

What is happening in our lives—have we cooled down? Is the absorbing devotion for the gain of money replacing my personal devotion? Did

the desire to be a popular church lead us to put that solemn day in the future when the current order of things will end?

Let us exclaim with the messianic prophet: “Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence” (Isaiah 64:1).

Brethren, may this vehement desire take us individually and as a people to live as true Christians!

“The early Christians were indeed a peculiar people. Their blameless deportment and unswerving faith were a continual reproof that disturbed the sinner’s peace. Though few in numbers, without wealth, position, or honorary titles, they were a terror to evildoers wherever their character and doctrines were known.”¹⁸

Then the world will not be able to deny that the Reform Movement is that people who are “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

Amen and amen! *R*

References

- ¹ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 3, p. 1165.
- ² *The Great Controversy*, p. 302.
- ³ *Ibid.* p. 304.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 306, 307.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 308.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 333.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 334, 335.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 309.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 461, 462.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 513.
- ¹² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 650.
- ¹³ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 36.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 294.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 568.
- ¹⁷ *Child Guidance*, p. 401.
- ¹⁸ *The Great Controversy*, p. 46.

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MOVING? Please let us know.

The Signs of the Times

“Ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?” (Luke 12:56).

The rustling leaves were falling
All around me where I sat;
The sunny days were passing by
And waning—what of that?
The summer, with its sunshine
And the fragrant flowers, is dead;
And the autumn, in her kindness,
Has now strewn the ground with red.

It needs no seer to tell us
When the summer passes by;
It needs no prophecy to say
That winter’s drawing nigh.
We know the signs of summer,
And of autumn, winter, spring;
But do we know the signs that tell
The coming of the King?

The signs are written plainly,
If we will only but look
Into the blessed pages
Of the grand, old-fashioned Book.
The day of His appearing
Now is surely drawing nigh—
The signs are all around us,
In the earth and sea and sky.

His bride is getting ready;
As she dons her robes of grace;
She waits to see the glory
And the smiling of His face.

Behold! He quickly cometh!
Lo, the Bridegroom draweth nigh!
The signs are all around us,
In the earth and sea and sky.

Are you ready for the supper,
For the marriage of the Lamb?
Or is it all to you a farce,
A theory, and a scam?
You say, “I’ve heard that story
Oh, so many times before.”
And so you do not realize
The Bridegroom’s at the door.

His day of preparation,
And His day of clouds and gloom,
His day of awful darkness,
And His day of awful doom,
The day of dread perdition hastes
Of all ungodly men,
Who’ll seek a shelter in the caves,
Or any refuge, then.

O, quickly come, Lord Jesus!
As we wait from day to day.
“Behold! He quickly cometh,”
Now I hear the Spirit say.
We have not long to tarry;
In the earth and sea and sky;
The signs are surely telling
That His kingdom draweth nigh.

—Adapted from an anonymous source