

# the **REFORMATION** herald

Vol. 62, No. 6



What  
if It Were  
Today?

Week of Prayer, December 3–12, 2021

# the REFORMATION *herald*

Volume 62, Number 6

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## NEARING THE END

The inspired psalmist prayed to the Lord, "Teach us to number our days"—and he plainly stated the reason why—"That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalm 90:12).

As mere mortals, we have but a limited span of time here on earth. Jesus, "by His own example taught that every moment of time is fraught with eternal results; that it is to be cherished as a treasure, and to be employed for holy purposes." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 91.

The annual Week of Prayer provides a priceless opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to our Creator. In deep sincerity, let us present to His throne of grace our fervent words of praise, thanksgiving, confession, and supplication.

This year's series of readings based on the theme, *What if It Were Today?* alert us to the reality that the signs of the times clearly reveal how the time of grace provided to humanity is almost over. We urgently need to come into a state of faithful preparedness through the power of Christ.

So, let us each prayerfully consider the readings for this Week of Prayer, sharing them also with others who may be isolated or homebound, and remember the following dates:

**Prayer with fasting:** Sabbath, Dec. 11

**Offering for missions:** Sunday, Dec. 12

May the Holy Spirit deeply impress our hearts with the alarming shortness of time—and the wondrous opportunity to seek the Lord while He may be found and call upon Him while He is near. "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Romans 13:11).

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"The greatest want of the world is the want of men—  
men who will not be bought or sold." —*Education*, p. 57.

Editor L. Tudoroiu  
Assistant to the Editor B. Montrose  
Layout and Design E. Lee

Web: <http://www.sdarm.org>; E-mail: [info@sdarm.org](mailto:info@sdarm.org)

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# LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Truth *vs.* falsehood. Honesty *vs.* lies. Transparency *vs.* foggy confusion.

As we rapidly approach the final events of earth's history, the prevailing confusion—the Babylonian philosophies and practices of modern civilization—are collapsing before our very eyes. Nations are angry, passions are inflamed, leaders are livid. There's not much time left.

One of the biggest challenges currently facing society seems to be the violation of the ninth commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" (Exodus 20:16). False information reported in ignorance—and disinformation maliciously propagated with an intent to deceive are both rampant, as are other violations of the Creator's moral law of Ten Commandments. How can God-fearing people face such overwhelming opposition?

The apostle urges, "My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:10–13).

## LOOKING UPWARD

None need be surprised at all the darkness. In fact, "the coming of Christ will take place in the darkest period of this earth's history."<sup>1</sup>

We must ever keep foremost in mind: Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is coming to deliver His faithful children from the fierce persecution soon to be unjustly unleashed against them. In His infinite love, He has explained in advance what will transpire, that none need fear. He bids us, "Occupy til I come" (Luke 19:13). "For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee" (Isaiah 60:2).

"The exact time of Christ's second coming is not revealed. Jesus said, 'No man knoweth the day nor the hour,' but He also gave signs of His coming, and said, 'When ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the door.' He bade them, as the signs of His coming should appear, 'Look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.' And in view of these things the apostle wrote: 'Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day.' Since we know not the hour of Christ's coming, we must live soberly and godly in this present world, 'looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious

appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.'

"Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. His people are to preserve their peculiar character as His representatives. There is work for every one of them to do. The rich should bring their means, the honored their influence, the learned their wisdom, the poor their virtue, if they would be effective workers with God. They are to bring themselves into right relation with God, that they may reflect the light of the glory of God that shines in the face of Jesus Christ. We read of a class who put far off the day of the coming of Jesus; but upon such His coming will be as a thief in the night, and they will be suddenly overtaken with destruction. How many there are who are willing to be rocked to sleep in the cradle of carnal security; but it is time for us to wake out of sleep. Says the apostle, 'We are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.'<sup>2</sup> *R*

## References:

- <sup>1</sup> *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 414.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Signs of the Times*, June 24, 1889.



# THE PROMISE

compiled from the writings of Ellen G. White



The thrilling truth that has been sounding in our ears for many years, "The Lord is at hand; be ye also ready," is no less the truth today than when we first heard the message. The dearest interests of the church and people of God, and the destiny of an impenitent and ungodly world, for time and for eternity, are here involved. We are all judgment bound. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain [unto the coming of the Lord] shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Christ will then be revealed from heaven, "taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel."<sup>1</sup>

## THE SCENE OF DELIVERANCE

The voice of God is heard from heaven, declaring the day and hour of Jesus' coming, and delivering the everlasting covenant to His people. Like peals of loudest thunder His words roll through the earth. The Israel of God stand listening, with their eyes fixed upward. Their countenances are lighted up with His glory,

and shine as did the face of Moses when he came down from Sinai. The wicked cannot look upon them. And when the blessing is pronounced on those who have honored God by keeping His Sabbath holy, there is a mighty shout of victory.

Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man's hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Saviour and which seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness. The people of God know this to be the sign of the Son of man. In solemn silence they gaze upon it as it draws nearer the earth, becoming lighter and more glorious, until it is a great white cloud, its base a glory like consuming fire, and above it the rainbow of the covenant. Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror. Not now a "man of sorrows," to drink the bitter cup of shame and woe, He comes, victor in heaven and earth, to judge the living and the dead. . . . With anthems of celestial melody the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng, attend Him on His way. The firmament seems filled with radiant forms—"ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." No human pen can portray the scene; no mortal mind is adequate to conceive its splendor. . . . No crown of thorns now mars that sacred head; but a diadem of glory rests on His holy brow. His counte-

nance outshines the dazzling brightness of the noonday sun. "And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, *King of kings, and Lord of lords*" (Revelation 19:16).<sup>2</sup>

## WHERE ARE WE NOW?

These momentous events are nigh at hand, yet many who profess to believe the truth are asleep. They will surely be numbered with the unfaithful servant who saith in his heart, "My Lord delayeth His coming," if they remain in their present position of friendship with the world. It is only to those who are waiting in hope and faith that Christ will appear, without sin unto salvation. Many have the theory of the truth who know not the power of godliness. If the word of God dwelt in the heart, it would control the life. Faith, purity, and conformity to the will of God would testify to its sanctifying power.<sup>3</sup>

Eternal realities must be kept before the mind's eye, and the attractions of the world will appear as they are, altogether profitless as vanity. What are we to do with the world's vanities, its praises, its riches, its honors, or its enjoyments?<sup>4</sup>

Many who profess to be looking for the speedy coming of Christ are becoming conformed to this world and seek more earnestly the ap-



## THE TIME IS VERY, VERY NEAR

The restraining Spirit of God is even now being withdrawn from the world. Hurricanes, storms, tempests, fire and flood, disasters by sea and land, follow each other in quick succession. Science seeks to explain all these. The signs thickening around us, telling of the near approach of the Son of God, are attributed to any other than the true cause. Men cannot discern the sentinel angels restraining the four winds that they shall not blow until the servants of God are sealed; but when God shall bid His angels loose the winds, there will be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture.<sup>8</sup>

We are now upon the very borders of the eternal world, but it is the purpose of the adversary of souls to lead us to put far off the close of time. Satan will in every conceivable manner assail those who profess to be the commandment-keeping people of God and to be waiting for the second appearing of our Saviour in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He will lead as many as possible to put off the evil day and become in spirit like the world, imitating its customs. I felt alarmed as I saw that the spirit of the world was controlling the hearts and minds of many who make a high profession of the truth. Selfishness and self-indulgence are cherished by them, but true godliness and sterling integrity are not cultivated....

In consideration of the shortness of time we as a people should watch and pray, and in no case allow ourselves to be diverted from the solemn work of preparation for the great event before us. Because the time is apparently extended, many have become careless and indifferent in regard to their words and actions.

They do not realize their danger and do not see and understand the mercy of our God in lengthening their probation, that they may have time to form characters for the future, immortal life. Every moment is of the highest value. Time is granted them, not to be employed in studying their own ease and becoming dwellers on the earth, but to be used in the work of overcoming every defect in their own characters and in helping others, by example and personal effort, to see the beauty of holiness. God has a people upon the earth who in faith and holy hope are tracing down the roll of fast-fulfilling prophecy and are seeking to purify their souls by obeying the truth, that they may not be found without the wedding garment when Christ shall appear.<sup>9</sup>

My dear brethren and sisters, let the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ be in your minds continually and let them crowd out worldly thoughts and cares. When you lie down and when you rise up, let them be your meditation. Live and act wholly in reference to the coming of the Son of man. The sealing time is very short, and will soon be over. Now is the time, while the four angels are holding the four winds, to make our calling and election sure.<sup>10</sup>

We are living in the closing scenes of this earth's history. Prophecy is fast fulfilling. The hours of probation are fast passing.

We have no time—not a moment to lose. Let us not be found sleeping on guard. Let no one say in his heart or by his works: "My Lord delayeth His coming." Let the message of Christ's soon return sound forth in earnest words of warning. Let us persuade men and women everywhere to repent and flee from the wrath to come. Let us arouse them to immediate preparation, for we little know what is before us.<sup>11</sup>

plause of those around them than the approbation of God. . . . And unless they heed the counsel of the "faithful and true Witness," and zealously repent and obtain "gold tried in the fire," "white raiment," and "eye-salve," He will spew them out of His mouth.<sup>5</sup>

Because Satan is so ready to catch away the mind and divert the affections from the Lord's promises and requirements, the greater diligence is needed to fix them in the mind and impress them upon the heart.<sup>6</sup>

We are pilgrims and strangers who are waiting, hoping, and praying for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If we believe this and bring it into our practical life, what vigorous action would this faith and hope inspire; what fervent love one for another; what careful holy living for the glory of God; and in our respect for the recompense of the reward, what distinct lines of demarcation would be evidenced between us and the world.<sup>7</sup>

*"It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Were all who profess [Christ's] name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain."*

## HOW NEAR IS IT?

The disciples had asked the question: "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Jesus gave them signs, and said: "When ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Verses 3, 33. One saying of the Saviour must not be made to destroy another. Though no man knoweth the *day* nor the *hour* of His coming, we are instructed and required to know when it is near. We are further taught that to disregard His warning, and refuse or neglect to know when His advent is near, will be as fatal for us as it was for those who lived in the days of Noah not to know when the Flood was coming. . . . "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Revelation 3:12.

The coming of Christ is nearer than when we first believed. The great controversy is nearing its end. The judgments of God are in the land. They speak in solemn warning, saying: "Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Matthew 24:44.

But there are many, many in our churches who know little of the real meaning of the truth for this time. I appeal to them not to disregard the fulfilling of the signs of the times, which says so plainly that the end is near. Oh, how many who have not sought their souls' salvation will soon make the bitter lamentation: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved"!<sup>13</sup>

The day is at hand when the destiny of every soul will be fixed forever. This day of the Lord hastens on apace. The false watchmen are raising the cry, "All is well"; but the day of God is rapidly approaching. Its footsteps are so muffled that it does not arouse the world from the deathlike slumber into which it has fallen. While the watchmen cry, "Peace and safety," "sudden destruction cometh upon them," "and they shall not escape"; "for as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." It overtakes the pleasure-lover and the sinful man as a thief

in the night. When all is apparently secure, and men retire to contented rest, then the prowling, stealthy, midnight thief steals upon his prey. When it is too late to prevent the evil, it is discovered that some door or window was not secured. "Be ye also ready: for in an such hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." People are now settling to rest, imagining themselves secure under the popular churches; but let all beware, lest there is a place left open for the enemy to gain an entrance. Great pains should be taken to keep this subject before the people. The solemn fact is to be kept not only before the people of the world, but before our own churches also, that the day of the Lord will come suddenly, unexpectedly. The fearful warning of the prophecy is addressed to every soul. Let no one feel that he is secure from the danger of being surprised. Let no one's interpretation of prophecy rob you of the conviction of the knowledge of events which show that this great event is near at hand.<sup>14</sup>

## HOW SHOULD THIS MOTIVATE US TO ACTION?

It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain.

My brethren and sisters, plead for the Holy Spirit. God stands back of every promise He has made. With your Bibles in your hands, say: "I have done as Thou hast said, I present Thy promise, 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you'."<sup>15</sup>

Let ministers and lay members go forth into the ripening fields to tell the unconcerned and indifferent to seek the Lord while He may be found. The workers will find their harvest wherever they proclaim the forgotten truths of the Bible. They will find those who will accept the

truth and will devote their lives to winning souls to Christ.<sup>16</sup>

## SETTING OUR PRIORITIES STRAIGHT

We have no time now to give our energies and talents to worldly enterprises. Shall we become absorbed in serving the world, serving ourselves, and lose eternal life and the everlasting bliss of heaven? Oh, we cannot afford to do this! Let every talent be employed in the work of God. Those who receive the truth are, by their efforts, to increase the number of men and women who shall be laborers together with God. . . .

All heaven is interested in the carrying forward of the work that Christ came to the world to do. Heavenly agencies are opening ways for the light of truth to shine to the dark places of the earth. Angels are waiting to communicate to those who will take hold of the work that has been pointed out to us for years. . . .

The Lord cannot commend the people who, professing godliness, professing to believe in the soon coming of Christ, leave the cities unwarmed of the judgments that are soon to fall on the land. Those who do this will be judged for their neglect. Christ gave His precious life to save the souls that are perishing in their sins. Shall we refuse to do the work assigned us, refuse to co-operate with God and heavenly agencies? There are thousands who are doing this, who are failing of becoming one with Christ, failing of letting the great sacrifice of Christ shine forth in the life, in saving grace that reveals the truth in works of righteousness. Yet this is the work given to men by the sacrifice of the Son of God. Knowing this, can we remain indifferent? I appeal to our brethren to wake up. The spiritual faculties will grow weak and die if they are not exercised in winning souls to Christ. What excuse can be offered for the neglect of the great, grand work that Christ gave His life to accomplish?

We cannot afford in the few days we have here on earth to spend our

time in trifling and nothingness. We need to humble our souls before God, that every heart may drink in the truth, and let it work in the life a reformation that will convince the world that this is indeed the truth of God. Let the life be hid with Christ in God. Only when we seek the Lord as little children, when we cease picking flaws in our brethren and sisters, and in those who are seeking to carry faithfully the responsibilities of the work, and seek to get our own hearts right with God, can He use us to the glory of His name.

We all need to come into a self-sacrificing position before God if our work is to be accepted by Him. Let us remember that profession is nothing unless we have the truth in the heart. We need the converting power of God to take hold of us, that we may understand the needs of a perishing world. The burden of my message to you is: Get ready, get ready to meet the Lord. Trim your lamps, and let the light of truth shine forth into the byways and the hedges. . . .

My brethren and sisters, seek the Lord while He may be found. There is a time coming when those who have wasted their time and opportunities will wish they had sought Him. God has given you reasoning faculties. He wants you to keep in the line of reason and in the line of labor. He wants you to go forth to our churches to labor earnestly for Him. He wants you to **institute meetings for those outside the churches**, that the people may learn the truths of this last message of warning. There are places where you will be gladly received, where souls will thank you for coming to

their help. **May the Lord help you to take hold of this work as you have never yet taken hold of it.**

Let us begin to work for those who have not had the light.”<sup>17</sup>

## THE PROMISE IS VERY, VERY REAL

Jesus is coming, but not as at His first advent, a babe in Bethlehem; not as He rode into Jerusalem, when the disciples praised God with a loud voice and cried, “Hosanna”; but in the glory of the Father and with all the retinue of holy angels to escort Him on His way to earth. All heaven will be emptied of the angels, while the waiting saints will be looking for Him and gazing into heaven, as were the men of Galilee when He ascended from the Mount of Olivet. Then only those who are holy, those who have followed fully the meek Pattern, will with rapturous joy exclaim as they behold Him, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us.” . . .

With such a prospect as this before us, such a glorious hope, such a redemption that Christ has purchased for us by His own blood, shall we hold our peace? Shall we not praise God even with a loud voice, as did the disciples when Jesus rode into Jerusalem? Is not our prospect far more glorious than was theirs? Who dare then forbid us glorifying God, even with a loud voice, when we have such a hope, big with immortality, and full of glory?<sup>18</sup>

Living power must attend the message of Christ’s second appearing. We must not rest until we see many souls converted to the blessed hope of the Lord’s return. In the days of the apostles the message

that they bore wrought a real work, turning souls from idols to serve the living God. The work to be done today is just as real, and the truth is just as much truth; only we are to give the message with as much more earnestness as the coming of the Lord is nearer.<sup>19</sup>

Let us be determined to do all in our power to impart light to those around us. We are not to be sad, but cheerful, and we are to keep the Lord Jesus ever before us.<sup>20</sup>

Long have we waited for our Saviour’s return. But nonetheless sure is the promise. Soon we shall be in our promised home. There Jesus will lead us beside the living stream flowing from the throne of God and will explain to us the dark providences through which on this earth He brought us in order to perfect our characters. There we shall behold with undimmed vision the beauties of Eden restored. Casting at the feet of the Redeemer the crowns that He has placed on our heads, and touching our golden harps, we shall fill all heaven with praise to Him that sitteth on the throne.<sup>21</sup> *R*

## References:

- <sup>1</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 14.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 640.
- <sup>3</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 14, 15.
- <sup>4</sup> *Evangelism*, p. 220.
- <sup>5</sup> *Early Writings*, pp. 107, 108.
- <sup>6</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 504.
- <sup>7</sup> *Evangelism*, p. 220.
- <sup>8</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 408.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 306.
- <sup>10</sup> *Early Writings*, p. 58.
- <sup>11</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 252, 253.
- <sup>12</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 371. [Author’s emphasis.]
- <sup>13</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 252.
- <sup>14</sup> *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 335, 336.
- <sup>15</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 22, 23.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 9, pp. 104–107. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>18</sup> *Early Writings*, p. 110.
- <sup>19</sup> *Evangelism*, p. 219.
- <sup>20</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 253.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254.

# WHAT OF THE NIGHT?

by Thomas Ngunts

[Emphasis added throughout.]

"'Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?' The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night, if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come" (Isaiah 21:11, last part, 12).

How does this verse apply to us now?

As the disciples beheld the resurrected Christ ascend into heaven, the precious assurance was given, "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). This is the event for which we are looking. Let this promise be written in large letters, to be read and understood by all. "An understanding of the hope of Christ's second coming is the key that unlocks all the history that follows, and explains all the future lessons."<sup>1</sup>

"The voice of the true watchman needs now to be heard all along the line, 'The morning cometh, and also the night.' The trumpet must give a certain sound, for we are in the great day of the Lord's preparation."<sup>2</sup>

In the great day of the Lord's preparation, to what are we, whom God has chosen, called to do in order to enter into the heavenly courts? "All the people shall keep the watch of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 23:6).

When the inquiry is made to the watchman, the answer in response is, "'The morning cometh, and also the night.' . . . The morning and the night are both at hand—the opening of the endless day to the righteous, the settling down of eternal night to the wicked."<sup>3</sup> Ever since the fall of man into outer darkness, the gospel has been a light. Gross darkness covers the whole world, especially those who believe not the message of hope. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4).

## THE WATCH OF THE LORD

As the keepers of the Lord's watch, we need to count the second hand, the minute hand and the hour hand of the Lord's great clock and give the trumpet a certain sound to awaken people out of their slumber. As watchmen, it is important to read the watch correctly and understand in which watch of the night we now are—and to give the trumpet a certain sound at the right hour to get the people ready for the great day of the Lord.



First, we should know how many watches exist. During the periods of work and hours of watching, the breath of prayer is vital to spiritual life and energy to walk aright. "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world" (John 11:9). According to the parable in Matthew 20:1-14, Christ rightly divides the twelve hours of working and leaves one final hour of the eleven hours worked to complete the hours of the day. There are also hours of night which the Jews divided into three watches.

Notice this special blessing: "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the **second watch**, or come in the **third watch**, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through" (Luke 12:37-39).

## KNOWING THE HOUR

When the watchman was asked "What of the night?" he gave the

certain reply, "The morning cometh and also the night!" Isaiah was prophesying of the fall of ancient Babylon and the deliverance of the Jews from their captivity. In Isaiah's prophecy, the watchman is asked to declare what he sees. In response he describes an approaching army. Then a voice is heard declaring, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground" (Isaiah 21:9). The watchman was confident that deliverance was soon coming and there would be a glorious morning for the Jewish captives. At the same time, it would be a terrible night of devastation for those who were rejoicing in the Jews' calamity. The fact that the watchman was awake to see the signs of the coming destruction enabled him to give the trumpet a certain sound. "The morning cometh and also the night!" This has important lessons for us.

In order for us to give the trumpet a certain sound, we must be awake to the hour in which we are living. The pioneers of the Advent movement first expected Christ to come in the Spring of 1844. With great anticipation, they gave the trumpet a certain sound. They watched and waited, only to be disappointed when the time they first

expected Christ to come had passed. Though disappointed, they renewed their watch. Taking courage from their renewed study of the Word of God, they were convinced that the churches that denied Jesus' soon coming, and shut down all discussion on the subject, had fallen. The second angel's message, "Babylon is fallen," was appropriately applied to these churches. That message was joined by the midnight cry, given in the very words of the parable of the ten virgins, "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him."

Tens of thousands of believers responded. They left their fallen churches to await the coming of Christ at the second expected time. Sadly, this company of believers though faithful to their watch, were disappointed again. Nevertheless, the company of Advent believers, though greatly decreased in number, took up their watch once more. Their further study of God's word revealed that on October 22, 1844, Jesus, instead of coming to earth, left the Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary and entered the Most Holy Place to commence His final work of atonement prior to His coming to earth. This was the light of the third angel's message, the last message to be given to the world. Realizing this, they were to continue to give the trumpet a certain sound. They were now living in what may be considered the third and final watch of the night. In case any should doubt the significance of the message and the hour in which they were living, the Lord's messenger reminded them of Jesus' instruction.

"Jesus has left us word: 'Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.' We are waiting and watching for the return of the Master, who is to bring the morning, lest coming suddenly He find us sleeping. **What time is here referred to? Not to the revelation of Christ in the clouds of heaven to find a people asleep. No; but to His return from His ministration in the most**

**holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, when He lays off His priestly attire and clothes Himself with garments of vengeance, and when the mandate goes forth:** '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.' "<sup>4</sup>

In His mercy, God provides light so that we will not be left in darkness but will rather see the signs and know the time in which we are living. "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thessalonians 5:5, 6).

As God's people today, with Jesus' coming nearer than when we first believed, we may also consider ourselves to be in the third and final watch. So, does that mean we can lessen our watchfulness?

The Lord's messenger explains: "I saw that watch after watch was in the past. Because of this, should there be a lack of vigilance? Oh, no! There is the greater necessity of unceasing watchfulness, for now the moments are fewer than before the passing of the first watch. Now the period of waiting is necessarily shorter than at first. If we watched with unabated vigilance then, how much more need of double watchfulness in the second watch. The passing of the second watch has brought us to the third, and now it is inexcusable to abate our watchfulness. **The third watch calls for threefold earnestness.**"<sup>5</sup>

In this period of trying hour, what character is to be manifested? "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

"To become impatient now would be to lose all our earnest, persevering watching heretofore. The long night of gloom is trying; but the morning is deferred in mercy, because if the Master should come, so many would be found unready. God's unwillingness to have His people perish has been the reason for so long delay. But the coming of

the morning to the faithful, and of the night to the unfaithful, is right upon us. By waiting and watching, God's people are to manifest their peculiar character, their separation from the world. By our watching position we are to show that we are truly strangers and pilgrims upon the earth. The difference between those who love the world and those who love Christ is so plain as to be unmistakable. While worldlings are all earnestness and ambition to secure earthly treasure, God's people are not conformed to the world, but show by their earnest, watching, waiting position that they are transformed; that their home is not in this world, but that they are seeking a better country, even a heavenly.”<sup>6</sup>

## A SPECIAL BLESSING

Why is a blessing pronounced on those found watching unto the second and third watch? According to the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25, the wake-up cry was made at midnight. That was the call to awaken God's people out of slumber—and by faith they went with Jesus into the Most Holy Place. Though all were slumbering, the wise had prepared for the emergency. During the tarrying period, they had kept their lamps trimmed and burning and their faith fixed on the Word of God. These believers went on to faithfully endure under the third angel's message, watching, waiting, and working for the Lord's coming. John sees those among this company who die in the faith of the third angel's message. “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, **Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth:** Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Revelation 14:13). Why was this special blessing pronounced? The answer is related to their experience under the final watch.

Malachi 3:1, 2, is a prophecy of the time when the third angel's message would begin: “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly

come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.”

The sudden coming to His temple took place in 1844 when Jesus entered the Most Holy Place of the temple in heaven. Since that time, what has He been doing?

“And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness” (Malachi 3:3).

In Old Testament times, the sons of Levi were the ones dedicated to serving the Lord in His temple. Today, all members of the church are called to serve the Lord. As spiritual Israel, God's people are to carry to all the world the light of the three angels' messages. This light reveals the truth of Jesus' final work in the heavenly sanctuary. There Jesus is sitting “as a refiner and purifier of silver” to purge the dross from among His people that together they may offer to Him an offering in righteousness. That righteousness will be the character of Christ perfectly reproduced in His people. Zechariah speaks of those in Israel who endure the refining process:

“And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God” (Zechariah 13:8, 9).

Where do you find the sons of Levi? And what is their work? “When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it” (Joshua 3:3). The sons of Levi were those bearing the ark of the covenant in which lay the Ten Commandments.

Where do you find the ark of the covenant? “And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; which had the

golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant” (Hebrews 9:3, 4). The ark of the covenant was found in the second apartment of the sanctuary, the Most Holy Place.

Today, the sons of Levi are all those who, through the surrender of their sinful hearts to Jesus, and the converting power of the Holy Spirit, have had God's law written on their hearts and minds and are carrying it out in their lives. This is what it means to offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.

Those who have died in the faith of the third angel's message have boldly entered by faith with Jesus into the Most Holy Place. They have kept the Sabbath faithfully in a time when the world has made God's law void by trampling the Sabbath underfoot. Consequently, they will be especially blessed because just before Jesus comes, “all who have died in the faith of the third angel's message come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God's covenant of peace with those who have kept His law.”<sup>7</sup>

Though dying prior to His coming, and not having to endure the peril that the rest of the living saints must endure, they will still be raised to join in the last moments of the final watch to receive the covenant blessing and see Jesus come. Before His return, graves are opened, and “many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth . . . awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2).

## ARE WE FALSE OR TRUE WATCHMEN?

“The watchmen upon the walls of Zion should have been the first to catch the tidings of the Saviour's advent, the first to lift their voices to proclaim Him near, the first to warn the people to prepare for His coming. But they were at ease, dreaming of peace and safety, while the people were asleep in their sins. Jesus saw His church, like the barren fig tree, covered with

pretentious leaves, yet destitute of precious fruit. There was a boastful observance of the forms of religion, while the spirit of true humility, penitence, and faith—which alone could render the service acceptable to God—was lacking. Instead of the graces of the Spirit there were manifested pride, formalism, vainglory, selfishness, oppression. A backsliding church closed their eyes to the signs of the times. God did not forsake them, or suffer His faithfulness to fail; but they departed from Him, and separated themselves from His love. As they refused to comply with the conditions, His promises were not fulfilled to them.”<sup>8</sup>

To whom can the promises be fulfilled? The Lord says, “I have set **watchmen upon thy walls**, O Jerusalem, which shall **never hold their peace day nor night**: ye that make mention of the Lord, **keep not silence**” (Isaiah 62:6). As the four angels of Revelation 7 begin to loose the winds of strife to blow in full strength upon this earth, calamity after calamity befalls us. Yet the great men of earth are saying, “Peace; and there was no peace” (Ezekiel 13:10).

While our Great Watchman is pleading at His Father’s throne in behalf of the remnant who were not sealed, with a voice of deep pity He cries, “My blood, Father, my blood, my blood, my blood.” As the watchmen set over the walls of Zion, shall we not “lift up the voice” (Isaiah 52:8)? Or will we be among these: “His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark” (Isaiah 56:10).

## A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

As we see the sword of the Lord upon the land, what shall we as the appointed watchman do? “Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and **give them warning from me**” (Ezekiel 3:17). See also Ezekiel 33:2–6.

What is the warning to us if we do not give the trumpet a certain sound? Especially do the guardians of the church have a solemn responsibility.

“Souls are in danger of falling under temptation, and they will perish unless God’s ministers are faithful to their trust. If for any reason their spiritual senses become so benumbed that they are unable to discern danger, and through their failure to give warning the people perish, God will require at their hands the blood of those who are lost.”<sup>9</sup>

“Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at My mouth, and warn them from Me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.’ Ezekiel 33:7, 8.

“Never did this message apply with greater force than it applies today. More and more the world is setting at nought the claims of God. Men have become bold in transgression. The wickedness of the inhabitants of the world has almost filled up the measure of their iniquity.”<sup>10</sup>

Brothers and sisters, it is a serious matter to consider that the salvation of others depends upon the warning given to the wicked to turn from their ways. Why not let the word of the Lord given to us by the prophet Isaiah unify our voices and eyes together in the warning or cheer to be sounded? “Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion” (Isaiah 52:8).

## LITERATURE AS A TOOL

“Church members, awake to the importance of the circulation of our literature, and devote more time to this work. Place in the homes of the people papers, tracts, and books that will preach the gospel in its several lines. There is no time to be lost. Let many give themselves willingly and unselfishly to the canvassing work, and thus help to sound a warning that is greatly needed.”<sup>11</sup>

## THE WAKE-UP CALL FOR US ALL

As the keepers of the “watch of the Lord” (2 Chronicles 23:6), are

we sleeping or awake? “Knowing the time, that now it is **high time** to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Romans 13:11–14).

“The work is fast closing up, and on every side wickedness is increasing. We have but a **short time** in which to work. Let us awake from spiritual slumber, and consecrate all that we have and are to the Lord. His Spirit will abide with true missionaries, furnishing them with power for service.”<sup>12</sup>

My fellow brethren and sisters, our time is limited, the work is fast closing up and on every side wickedness is increasing. What are we doing? Are we still asleep?

“Whoever has received the Holy Spirit, will make it manifest; for all his powers will be employed in the most active service. All who actually receive Christ by faith, work. They feel the burden of souls. God now calls upon **every one who has a knowledge of the truth**, who is a depositary of sacred truth, to **arise and impart the light of heaven to others**.

“Wake up, brethren; for your own soul’s sake, wake up. Without the grace of Christ you can do nothing. Work while you can.”<sup>13</sup>

When the inquiry is made today, “Watchman, what of the night?” our response should be, “enquire ye, return, come” and keep the Lord’s watch; the night is almost over! *R*

## References

- <sup>1</sup> *Evangelism*, p. 220.
- <sup>2</sup> *Maranatha*, p. 15.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 632.
- <sup>4</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 190.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.
- <sup>7</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 637.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 315, 316.
- <sup>9</sup> *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 361.
- <sup>10</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, pp. 140, 141.
- <sup>11</sup> *Christian Service*, p. 147.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

# DISCERNING THE ENEMY'S TACTICS

by Dorin Burca

## SATAN'S STRATEGIES

### 1. Satan is a liar, and the father of lies

This is the strategy that Satan has used from the beginning: to lie and deceive. It should be clear to us that this tactic is not outdated. It is being used every day, every moment to try to delude people. To some, the archdeceiver tells the theory of the Big Bang; to others, that there is still time to prepare for the second coming; and to still others, that they can keep any other day than the seventh-day Sabbath. Christ unveiled the character of Satan when He rebuked the Pharisees and the rulers of His time, declaring: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). We see that the first example of deception upon Earth was when Satan in the form of a serpent spoke with Eve in Genesis 3:1, 4. He told her she would not die, but rather would be like God.

As part of his extensive work of deception, Satan will also use signs and wonders.

### 2. Signs and wonders

"Even him, whose coming is

after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9). Jesus describes that in the last days, the devil will manifest his power through false christ and false prophets, to deceive if possible even the very elect. Matthew 24:24.

### 3. Satan tempts people to sin

In the Judean wilderness, Satan tried to tempt Jesus to sin, but he was defeated. Although thwarted by Christ, he did not give up on Christ's followers. He has continued the same work of tempting God's people throughout all ages. In view of this, the apostle Paul expressed, "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3).

### 4. Satan causes sickness and disease

Jesus referred to a woman whom Satan had bound with sickness for 18 years. (Luke 13:16.) Another example is Job. We read that Satan "smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown" (Job 2:7).

### 5. Satan is a murderer

Jesus came to the world that we might have abundant life. Satan came to destroy life whenever he



can. He drove Cain to slay his brother. "And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 John 3:12).

#### 6. Satan is the accuser

"The accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" (Revelation 12:10).

#### ANXIETIES IN THIS AGE

Among many of those awaiting the second coming of Jesus, there is worry about tomorrow. One tactic of the enemy is to make them so busy with worldly things, that they spend very little time with the things that will not perish.

In Matthew 6:25, Jesus tells us: "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"

The Lord's messenger describes: "I saw that Satan bade his angels lay their snares especially for those who were looking for Christ's second appearing and keeping all the commandments of God. Satan told his angels that the churches were asleep. He would increase his power and lying wonders, and he could hold them. 'But,' he said, 'the

sect of Sabbathkeepers we hate; they are continually working against us, and taking from us our subjects, to keep the hated law of God. Go, make the possessors of lands and money drunk with cares. If you can make them place their affections upon these things, we shall have them yet. **They may profess what they please, only make them care more for money than for the success of Christ's kingdom or the spread of the truths we hate.** Present the world before them in the most attractive light, that they may love and idolize it. We must keep in our ranks all the means of which we can gain control. The more means the followers of Christ devote to His service, the more will they injure our kingdom by getting our subjects. As they appoint meetings in different places, we are in danger. Be very vigilant then. Cause disturbance and confusion if possible. Destroy love for one another. Discourage and dishearten their ministers; for we hate them. Present every plausible excuse to those who have means, lest they hand it out. Control the money matters if you can, and drive their ministers to want and distress. This will weaken their courage and zeal. Battle every inch of ground. Make covetousness and love of earthly treasures the ruling traits of their character. As long as these traits rule, salvation and grace stand back. Crowd every attraction around them, and they will be surely ours. And not only are we sure of them, but their hateful influence will not be exercised to lead others to heaven. When any shall attempt to give, put within them a grudging disposition, that it may be sparingly."<sup>1</sup>

The enemy hates the group of Sabbathkeepers, and he is concerned when they are passionate and dedicated to truth and the cause of God.

He wants to stop any advancement of this mission, and if he can do that, he has won the battle over God's people. So, we have two choices:

1. Either to press forward in truth and take the gospel to the world; or

2. Profess the truth with our lips, but in practice worry more about the things which will perish, showing that our heart is not one with Christ—or a total denial of Jesus.

Only one of these choices is worth making.

#### THE PLEASURES OF THE MOMENT

Many people think, "I have just one life, and I want to live it to the fullest. I want to eat, I want to drink, I want to have fun and do whatever my soul enjoys." What about those preparing to meet the Lord in these last days of earth's history? Are we looking for the pleasures of the moment, or do we have a higher and nobler goal, something which will last not merely for a moment, but for all eternity? Let us be like faithful Enoch whose mind was stayed upon God.

"Will you have eternal life? If so, you must turn away from the pleasures of the world."<sup>2</sup>

God is not opposed to His people having joy and happiness in this world. The problem is when pleasures divert our thoughts from our Creator, distract our minds, steal our energy and enslave us to the things of this world.

"When the mind dwells upon self, it is turned away from Christ, the source of strength and life. Hence it is Satan's constant effort to keep the attention diverted from the Saviour and thus prevent the union and communion of the soul with Christ. The pleasures of the world, life's cares and perplexities and sorrows, the faults of others, or your

*"The pleasures of the world, life's cares and perplexities and sorrows, the faults of others, or your own faults and imperfections—to any or all of these [Satan] will seek to divert the mind."*



own faults and imperfections—to any or all of these he will seek to divert the mind.”<sup>3</sup>

## NEGLECTING TO PREPARE

When taking an exam, an essential key to success is the preparation time. Many students are negligent in this. They procrastinate—and then one day before the exam, they begin their study and try to accomplish all the necessary preparation that would have been more effective over a longer period of time. With those who wait for the second coming of Jesus, there is a similar syndrome. They worry about not being ready, yet try to leave the actual preparation for when the Sunday Law will be enforced. Then it will be too late. Now is the time to get ready!

“Testing times come to all. How do we conduct ourselves under the test and proving of God? . . . Character must be formed by us as individuals. . . . **It is perilous to neglect to prepare the soul for eternity, and to put off making our peace with God until upon a dying bed.**”<sup>4</sup>

The enemy is the one that tempts people to neglect their spiritual preparation. When they are young he tells them, “Now you are young, enjoy life, have fun, pursue a career. Then when you get married you can give your life to Jesus.” When they get married, he comes and says: “Now you are too busy, you have got two jobs, children to rear and then to give in marriage. You can do it when you retire.” When a person gets older or retired and they think now it’s the opportune time to prepare, the devil says: “Now it’s too late, do you know how many wrong things and sins you have committed during your lifetime? God will not be able to forgive you.” Remember, Satan is a liar! The preparation should not be postponed. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

## CRITICISM AND JUDGMENTALISM

The word of God gives us the exact guidelines as to what we should be preoccupied with in these last days. We have a message to proclaim, and people to warn of what is coming upon this world. Sometimes the enemy succeeds in diverting our attention from the message and tempting us to criticize and speculate about the motives and actions of others. I’m not here referring to clear and apparent open sin—we have specific instruction regarding how that to handle that. But when people speculate and judge others based on mere assumptions, this is Satan’s tactic to keep us focused on things that are not only of less importance, but actually dangerous to our own spiritual well-being.

“We are to go forth to proclaim the goodness of God and to make plain His real character before the people. We are to reflect His glory. Have we done this in the past? . . . Have we not been passing judgment on our brethren, criticizing their words and actions? Then the love of God has not been enthroned in our souls. Let us make a decided change.”<sup>5</sup>

God always tests us on how and in what we are judging others.

“It is of little use to try to reform others by attacking what we may regard as wrong habits. Such effort often results in more harm than good.”<sup>6</sup>

“Let there be among you no accusing. This is the work of the enemy. If he can lead professing Christians to accuse and condemn, he is served as he desires to be. Let no one, by yielding to feelings of envy, weaken the hands of his brother, so that the work entrusted to him is marred.”<sup>7</sup>

## OUR FOE IS VERY TRICKY

“As soon as Satan can separate the soul from God, the only Source

of strength, he will seek to arouse the unholy desires of man’s carnal nature. The work of the enemy is not abrupt; it is not, at the outset, sudden and startling; it is a secret undermining of the strongholds of principle.”<sup>8</sup>

“We have a cunning devil to work against! Christ alone is mighty and fully able to match his power, therefore we must have Jesus with us every moment. We are sleepy, stupid, and do not sense the arts and gins and snares of Satan, set for unwary feet. Therefore we must know how we step, that every move is in God. Self must not come in here to make itself heard.”<sup>9</sup>

## EXPOSING THE MYTH

For many generations, Satan has tried to make people believe that he does not exist. He has invented all sorts of caricatures and stories about a devil with a pitchfork, horns and tail. But that is just a myth to catch us off guard.

Further, “as we approach the close of time, when Satan is to work with greatest power to deceive and destroy, he spreads everywhere the belief that he does not exist. It is his policy to conceal himself and his manner of working.”<sup>10</sup>

“If God has granted to His children promise of grace and protection, **it is because there are mighty agencies of evil to be met**—agencies numerous, determined, and untiring, of whose malignity and power none can safely be ignorant or unheeding.”<sup>11</sup>

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12).

“**There is nothing that the great deceiver fears so much as that we shall become acquainted with his devices.**”<sup>12</sup>

Although the enemy is working with full force and mastery to deceive if possible even the very

elect, the Bible has promised special protection for those who take God as their Safeguard.

## THE PROMISED HEDGE ABOUT US

In this battle we are not alone. We have protection promised to us, which is why God was accused by Satan that He had made a hedge around Job, his house, and all that he had on every side. Job 1:6–12.

"The power and malice of Satan and his host might justly alarm us, were it not that we may find shelter and deliverance in the superior power of our Redeemer. We carefully secure our houses with bolts and locks to protect our property and our lives from evil men; but we seldom think of the evil angels who are constantly seeking access to us, and against whose attacks we have, in our own strength, no method of defense. **If permitted, they can distract our minds, disorder and torment our bodies, destroy our possessions and our lives.** . . . But those who follow Christ are ever safe under His watch-care. Angels that excel in strength are sent from heaven to protect them. **The wicked one cannot break through the guard which God has stationed about His people.**"<sup>13</sup>

"Christ will never abandon the soul for whom He has died. The soul may leave Him and be overwhelmed with temptation, but Christ can never turn from one for whom He has paid the ransom of His own life. Could our spiritual vision be quickened, we should see souls bowed under oppression and burdened with grief, pressed as a cart beneath sheaves and ready to die in discouragement. We should see angels flying swiftly to aid these tempted ones, who are standing as on the brink of a precipice."<sup>14</sup>

As a matter of fact, in the conflict between Christ and Satan, the latter has already lost the battle. That's why he is so furious and goes around roaring as a lion, looking for any prey to devour. We must never underestimate his power. In Daniel chapter 10, we catch a glimpse of this spiritual warfare where we read that after 21 days of fierce spiritual

battle, the angel of God was joined by Michael the archangel, who came to withstand Satan and his host from having their way with Cyrus. Praise God, Michael won!

## CHRIST OVERCAME THE DEVIL

During Christ's entire time on earth, the Lord never gave the devil opportunity to say that He had failed in any temptation. "For 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" (Hebrews 4:15).

The victory of Jesus is our surety that we can overcome sin and the devil. He is our Elder Brother who has gone ahead of us to make the path to victory possible—and He offers His power in our lives.

## KNOWING THE COURSE

In any professional winter skiing competition, there is always a need for someone to check the course in advance and develop the first track for the competitors to use in order to protect them from veering off the safest path. Likewise, in the spiritual race, Christ is the One that traveled first. He has prepared the path on which we can firmly walk. Although there might be some hills, curbs, and dangerous corners, He has gone first.

"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:17, 18).

## WE CAN BE VICTORIOUS

Jesus has given us an example to show how we may meet and conquer Satan. At infinite cost the Son of God came into the world to counterwork the work of the enemy. He came to destroy sin and bring in righteousness by enabling the human agent to cooperate with the divine. He took His stand upon the

Word of God. 'It is written,' was the weapon with which He met and repulsed the enemy."<sup>15</sup>

"In Christ there is perfect and complete help for every tempted soul. Dangers beset every path, but the whole universe of heaven is standing on guard, that none may be tempted above that which he is able to bear."<sup>16</sup>

## CONCLUSION

"The work of the enemy . . . commences in small things—the neglect to be true to God and to rely upon him wholly, the disposition to concede to the demands of the world for the sake of gaining numbers on the church books. But soon a wide gulf is opened between the position of the shepherd of the flock and the plain truths of the word of God. Our only safety is in searching the Scriptures and in being much on our knees before God, entreating Him to imbue us with His Spirit, that when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall for us lift up a standard against him."<sup>17</sup>

The tactics and sophistry of Satan will be well-known to the children of God. But this will not be their main focus. The faithful ones who await the Lord and strive to hasten His soon return must put all their effort, time, and energy to save souls in darkness. Are you prepared to advance the kingdom of God? Would you be ready to give up your temporary comfort for the cause of Christ? These are the things we need to ponder—and as we choose to follow Him with all of our heart, the Lord will give us the will and power to accomplish His work. Amen! *R*

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- <sup>2</sup> *Christ Triumphant*, p. 65.
- <sup>3</sup> *Steps to Christ*, pp. 71, 72.
- <sup>4</sup> *The Review and Herald*, September 17, 1895. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>5</sup> *Faith and Works*, p. 61.
- <sup>6</sup> *Temperance*, p. 132.
- <sup>7</sup> *Pacific Union Recorder*, January 15, 1903.
- <sup>8</sup> *Our Father Cares*, p. 182.
- <sup>9</sup> *This Day With God*, p. 171.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 516.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 513. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 516. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 517. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>14</sup> *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessings*, p. 118.
- <sup>15</sup> *The Signs of the Times*, December 13, 1899.
- <sup>16</sup> *My Life Today*, p. 316.
- <sup>17</sup> *The Review and Herald*, August 12, 1884.

# AS IN THE DAYS OF NOAH

by Nasareno Turushima

The Lord was filled with sadness over the condition of the human race; it hurt His heart. But why? Why did He decide to destroy the earth with a flood? How do the days of Noah relate to our days? "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:26, 27).

## THE ANTEDILUVIAN WORLD

"Before the destruction of the old world by a flood, there were talented men, men who possessed skill and knowledge. But they became corrupt in their imagination, because they left God out of their plans and councils. They were wise to do what God had never told them to do, wise to do evil."<sup>1</sup>

The human race expanded rapidly, as did wickedness. It took only ten generations before "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.... The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence" (Genesis 6:5, 11).



The scene was one of total depravity. There was nothing good in the human race; their hearts were so corrupted that only "evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" sprang from them. (Matthew 15:19.) As a result of the people "willfully" ignoring the word of God, they drowned in the waters of the Flood.

## WHAT WAS THEIR MISTAKE? HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

"The sin of the antediluvians was in perverting that which in itself was lawful. They corrupted God's gifts by using them to minister to their selfish desires. The indulgence of appetite and base passion made their imaginations altogether corrupt. The antediluvians were slaves of Satan, led and controlled by him."<sup>2</sup>

## EATING AND DRINKING

"God did not condemn the antediluvians for eating and drinking; He had given them the fruits of the earth in great abundance to supply their physical wants. Their sin consisted in taking these gifts without gratitude to the Giver, and debasing themselves by indulging appetite without restraint."<sup>3</sup>

"The inhabitants of the Noachian world were destroyed, because they were corrupted through the indulgence of perverted appetite."<sup>4</sup>

"They loved to destroy the lives of animals. They used them for food, and this increased their ferocity and violence, and caused them to look upon the blood of human beings with astonishing indifference."<sup>5</sup>

## MARRYING AND GIVING IN MARRIAGE

"It was lawful for [the antediluvians] to marry. Marriage was in God's order; it was one of the first institutions which He established. He gave special directions concerning this ordinance, clothing it with sanctity and beauty; but these directions were forgotten, and marriage was perverted and made to minister to passion."<sup>6</sup>

What gave rise to corrupt this divine institution was to be unequally yoked. The faithful sons of Seth sadly lost their moral compass by fixing their eyes on the dazzling beauty of the impious daughters of Cain, choosing them as their wives—not for their virtues, but solely for their beauty.

"As the sons of God mingled with the sons of men, they became corrupt and, by intermarriage with them, lost, through the influence of their



wives, their peculiar, holy character, and united with the sons of Cain in their idolatry. Many cast aside the fear of God and trampled upon His commandments.”<sup>7</sup>

As polygamy was introduced, the more the men multiplied their wives, and the more wickedness and misery increased.

“It was Satan’s studied effort to pervert the marriage institution, to weaken its obligations and lessen its sacredness; for in no surer way could he deface the image of God in man and open the door to misery and vice.”<sup>8</sup>

## BAD COMPANY

There is an old adage that says, “Tell me who you’re with and I’ll tell you who you are.” The Bible makes it clear: “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Corinthians 15:33). That was the sad story of many in Noah’s day who knew the truth, accepted and lived the truth—but by choosing bad company, lost their moral compass even to desire salvation, and therefore they were lost.

“Those who believed when Noah began to build the ark, lost their faith through association with unbelievers who aroused all the old passion for amusement and display.”<sup>9</sup>

“As the time of their probation was closing, the antediluvians gave themselves up to exciting amusements and festivities. Those who possessed influence and power were bent on keeping the minds of the people engrossed with mirth and pleasure, lest any should be impressed by the last solemn warning.”<sup>10</sup>

## DECEPTION AND UNREST

“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.”<sup>11</sup>

## THE ACTUAL CONDITION OF THINGS RIGHT NOW

“Professed followers of Christ are today eating and drinking with the drunken, while their names stand in honored church records. Intemperance benumbs the moral and spiritual powers and prepares the way for indulgence of the lower passions. Multitudes feel under no moral obligation to curb their sensual desires, and they become the slaves of lust. Men are living for the pleasures of sense; for this world and this life alone.”<sup>12</sup>

## GLUTTONY

“Today the sin exhibited by intemperance in eating and drinking is so marked that God will not always tolerate it. Man carries to excess that which is lawful, and his whole being suffers the result of the violation of the laws which the Lord has established.”<sup>13</sup>

Diseases such as diabetes, osteoporosis, colon cancer, obesity, high blood pressure, gout, tooth decay, cardiovascular disease, and many others are undermining society, mostly due to intemperance. Research confirms that one in five deaths in the world is related to poor nutrition. The cause: excess salt, sugar, or meat-eating as well as insufficient consumption of whole grains and fruits.

## IMMORALITY

Many Christians have ventured to be unequally yoked, bringing bitter experiences that many regret. The number of marriages according to God’s plan decreases every day, while divorces are on the rise—as well as same-sex marriages, approved by approximately 30 countries. Society wants to live unbridled, without restraint or accountability; immorality is the daily bread.

“A terrible picture of the condition of the world has been presented before me. Immorality abounds everywhere. Licentiousness is the special sin of this age. Never did vice lift its deformed head with such boldness as now. The people seem to be benumbed, and the lovers of virtue and true goodness are nearly discouraged by its boldness, strength, and prevalence.”<sup>14</sup>

Principles of morality and integrity have been lost because many Christians have chosen bad company, which has led us to lose sight of the Saviour. We drift along with current of the customs and pleasures of the world so much that we are at risk of losing our soul.

## VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM

Today, the human race degenerated by sin is following the same path regarding terrorism. Around the world, hundreds of terrorist groups continue to sow terror in humanity. Terrorist attacks are constantly recorded around the world. It is reported that in certain belief systems, it has become increasingly acceptable to kill as many members of other religious communities as possible. Moral restrictions are disappearing.

In the last 90 years, wars have killed more people than in the previous 500 years. It is estimated that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century alone, 203 million people died from war, including 2 million children, disabling another 4–5 million. The organization *Save the Children* has reported that more than 100,000 babies die each year from armed conflict. Another 73 million per year die by abortion. The

violence is getting worse, as prophecy has foretold. (See Hosea 4:1–3.)

Dishonesty, fraud and bankruptcy, violence and bloodshed are everywhere. Widows and orphans are robbed of everything they have. Games, horse races, and amusements of all kinds occupy the mind. This wickedness and cruelty will reach such a degree that God will reveal Himself in all His majesty. Very soon the wickedness of the world will have reached its limit—and as in the days of Noah, God will pour out His judgments.

## SENT TO WARN THE WORLD

Before the Flood, God commanded Noah to warn the world so that men might be led to repentance and escape destruction. Likewise, as the time for Christ's second coming approaches, the Lord sends His servants with a warning to prepare for that great event. Multitudes have lived in violation of God's law, and now, with great mercy, the Lord calls them to obey His sacred precepts. To all who forsake their sins through repentance and faith in Christ, forgiveness is offered. Yet the faithful of today are ridiculed just as Noah was.

"In Noah's day the inhabitants of the old world laughed to scorn what they termed the superstitious fears and forebodings of the preacher of righteousness. He was denounced as a visionary character, a fanatic, an alarmist."<sup>15</sup>

"Great and learned men declared that such a flood of waters as [Noah] foretold had never been known, and that it would never come."<sup>16</sup>

"For one hundred twenty years [the Lord] sent them warnings through His servant Noah. But they used the probation so graciously granted them in ridiculing Noah. They caricatured him and criticized him. They laughed at him for his peculiar earnestness and intense feeling in regard to the judgments which he declared God would surely fulfill. They talked of science and of the laws controlling nature. Then they held a carnival over the words of Noah, calling him a crazy fanatic."<sup>17</sup>

These taunts increased even more after Noah entered the ark. For seven days the people gathered around the ark, mocking and even violently uttering words of contempt and derision. Today, as in the days of Noah, Christians and Christ Himself are the object of ridicule and blasphemy. Worse yet, false stories of the life of Jesus are presented to justify and promote degrading sins through films, television, and more. The apostle described it well: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Peter 3:3, 4).

"The Lord's servants will be called enthusiasts [fanatics]. Ministers will warn the people not to listen to them. Noah received the same treatment while the Spirit of God was urging him to give the message, whether men would hear or whether they would forbear."<sup>18</sup>

"Men will reject the solemn message of warning in our day, as they did in Noah's time. They will refer to those false teachers who have predicted the event and set the definite time, and will say that they have no more faith in our warning than in theirs. This is the attitude of the world today. Unbelief is widespread, and the preaching of Christ's coming is mocked at and derided. This makes it all the more essential that those who believe present truth should show their faith by their works. They should be sanctified through the truth which they profess to believe."<sup>19</sup>

"If the Christian thrives and progresses at all, he must do so amid strangers to God, amid scoffing, subject to ridicule. He must stand upright like the palm tree in the desert."<sup>20</sup>

## THE SEARED CONSCIENCE

"Noah's faith and works were united. The building of the ark went on amid the jeers and the ridicule and the scoffing of old and young. When they saw the last sign given—the provisions for man and beast taken into the ark—then mirth and revelry and mocking increased.... Reason was perverted by gratification

of appetite and low, carnal amusements; they denied the Lord God that bought them, and conscience had become unimpressible."<sup>21</sup>

## GRACE NO LONGER

"At the end of seven days clouds began to gather. This was a new sight; for the people had never seen clouds. Previous to this time no rain had fallen; the earth had been watered by a mist. Thicker and thicker gathered the clouds, and soon rain began to fall. Still the people tried to think that this was nothing very alarming. But soon it seemed as if the windows of heaven had been opened; for the rain poured down in torrents. For a time the ground drank up the rain; but soon the water began to rise, and day by day it rose higher and higher. Each morning as the people found the rain still falling they looked at one another in despair, and each night they repeated the words, 'Raining still!' Thus it was, morning and evening.

"For forty days and forty nights the rain poured down. The water entered the houses and drove the people to the temples which they had erected for their idolatrous worship. But the temples were swept away. The crust of the earth was broken, and the water that had been concealed in its bowels burst forth."<sup>22</sup>

The righteous and wicked will continue to live on Earth in their mortal state; they will be planting, building, eating, drinking—all unaware that the final, irrevocable decision has been pronounced in the heavenly sanctuary. Back in Noah's day, the people outside continued in their carefree, pleasure-loving lives and scoffed at warnings of impending judgment—and so shall it be at the coming of the Son of man.

"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."<sup>23</sup>

"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.”<sup>24</sup>

## FALSE REPENTANCE TO BE REPEATED

“As the violence of the storm increased, trees, buildings, rocks, and earth were hurled in every direction. The terror of man and beast was beyond description. Above the roar of the tempest was heard the wailing of a people that had despised the authority of God. . . . In that terrible hour they saw that the transgression of God’s law had caused their ruin. Yet while, through fear of punishment, they acknowledged their sin, they felt no true contrition, no abhorrence of evil. They would have returned to their defiance of Heaven, had the judgment been removed. So when God’s judgments shall fall upon the earth before its deluge by fire, the impenitent will know just where and what their sin is—the despising of His holy law. Yet they will have no more true repentance than did the old-world sinners.”<sup>25</sup>

## BECAUSE OF ITS EVIL, THE WORLD WILL BE DESTROYED AGAIN

“By the word of God, . . . the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. . . . But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Peter 3:5–7, 10).

## THE DANGER OF BECOMING WEARY

“Perilous is the condition of those who, growing weary of their watch, turn to the attractions of the world. While the man of business is absorbed in the pursuit of gain, while the pleasure lover is seeking indul-

gence, 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.’ ”<sup>26</sup>

## THREE TYPES OF PEOPLE DURING NOAH’S TIME

1. The faithful ones who died before the Flood.
2. Backsliders (those also who had ignored the warning altogether)
3. The faithful who were saved.

“For one hundred and twenty years Noah proclaimed the message of warning to the antediluvian world; but only a few repented. Some of the carpenters he employed in building the ark believed the message, but died before the Flood; others of Noah’s converts backslid.”<sup>27</sup>

“Many at first appeared to receive the warning; yet they did not turn to God with true repentance. They were unwilling to renounce their sins. . . . Overcome by the prevailing unbelief, they finally joined their former associates in rejecting the solemn message. Some were deeply convicted, and would have heeded the words of warning; but there were so many to jest and ridicule, that they partook of the same spirit, resisted the invitations of mercy, and were soon among the boldest and most defiant scoffers; for none are so reckless and go to such lengths in sin as do those who have once had light, but have resisted the convicting Spirit of God.”<sup>28</sup>

## GOD’S CALL TODAY

Noah was the kind of believer who could be called a herald of righteousness who found grace in the eyes of the Lord. “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. . . . Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God” (Genesis 6:8, 9). “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became

heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Hebrews 11:7).

Noah did not achieve that Christian stature by himself; it was by the grace of Jesus, by faith in Him, by not focusing on the situation of his time, but rather on maintaining uninterrupted connection with his Saviour.

Today the situation is overwhelming, but in Jesus our precious Saviour, we find everything—security, help, and peace. He is the One who clears away all our doubts; He is the Guarantor of all of our hopes, our Refuge in the storm.

Dear companions in this pilgrimage, we are still groping in the shadows and turmoil of earthly activities—but soon our Saviour will appear to bring deliverance and rest. Let us contemplate by faith the blessed beyond, as depicted by the hand of God. Soon the battle will be over and the victory won. We are soon to see the One upon whom our hopes of eternal life rest. In His presence, the trials and sufferings of this life will fade into insignificance.

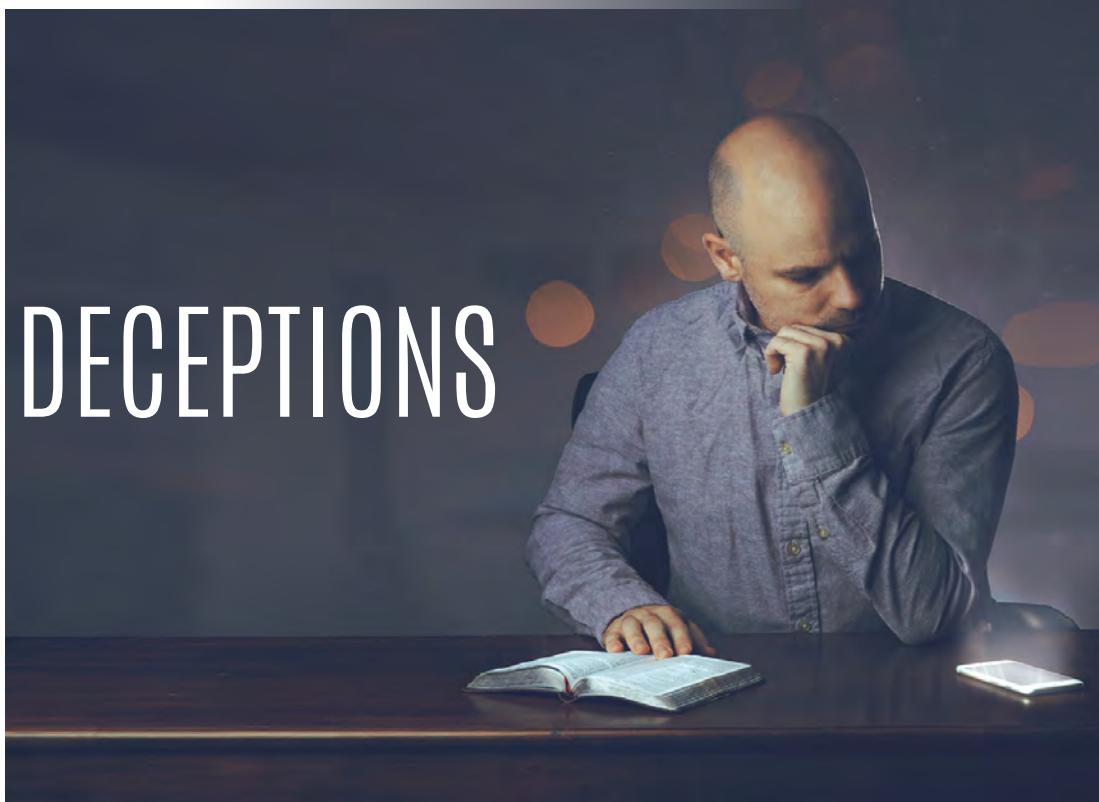
“Look up, look up, and let your faith continually increase. Let this faith guide you along the narrow path that leads through the gates of the city into the great beyond, the wide, unbounded future of glory that is for the redeemed.”<sup>29</sup> *R*

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- <sup>18</sup> *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 233.
- <sup>19</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 308.
- <sup>20</sup> *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 3, p. 1151.
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- <sup>22</sup> *The Signs of the Times*, April 10, 1901.
- <sup>23</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 491.
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- <sup>25</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 99.
- <sup>26</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 491.
- <sup>27</sup> *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1088.
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# MODERN DECEPTIONS

by Geoffrey Castro



## FAKE NEWS

The term *fake news* refers to the spread of false news that causes a dangerous circle of misinformation. This often results when objective facts are given less importance than shallow appeals to emotion or personal beliefs in the shaping of public opinion.

Politicians often manipulate the truth by telling huge lies—and in this kind of political communication, emotion prevails over rationality. Manipulation, half-truths or, directly, strategic lies play their part in forming an idea that suits a trend and can totally destroy the influence of those whom the manipulators consider to be their adversaries.

## THE ORIGINATOR OF FAKE NEWS

The practice of spreading fake news and rumors existed even before the human race was created. When rebellion broke out in heaven, Satan began his confrontation against the government of God by using this kind of weapon. The arch-

enemy's cunning and false rumors that God was unjust and His law oppressive—as well as the suggestion that a better system of government could be established, began to spread among the angels. "Much was involved in this controversy. . . . The questions to be answered were: Is God's law imperfect, in need of being amended or abrogated? Or is it immutable? Is God's government stable? Or is it in need of changes? Not only before those living in the city of God, but before the inhabitants of all the heavenly universe, were these questions to be answered."<sup>1</sup>

The result of this work was disastrous. The influence spread to such an extent that the rebellion swept away a third of the angels, who, as a consequence, were cast out of heaven to the earth. (Revelation 12:4.)

## FAKE NEWS COMES TO EARTH

Satan approached Eve with an evil suggestion—a rumor that he had supposedly heard, "Yea, hath

God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1, last part). After trapping her in his web, Satan presented her with fake news: "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Verse 5). Remember, fake news appeals to the emotions, so that rationality is suppressed and the individual is manipulated to act in the way that the originator of these falsehoods wants. Satan is an expert at triggering this kind of manipulation!

## AN INFORMATION WAR

During the reign of Zedekiah, Judah was under the captivity of the Chaldeans. King Nebuchadnezzar subdued the city of Jerusalem, sacked the temple, and even seized the sacred vessels, taking them away to Babylon. All of this tragedy came about as a consequence of the apostasy of God's chosen people, but the Lord was using this difficult experience to cure them from the evil of idolatry—and this restoration process was to take 70 years.



In this setting, an information war broke out in Jerusalem as well as the entire nation. While God sent clear messages appealing to the people to turn from their evil ways and submit to the yoke of Babylon for the specified time—70 years—Satan used so-called “prophets” who gave a contrary message, one that sought to numb the conscience of the people of God and lead them to hope for speedy restoration without meeting the necessary conditions of repentance and reformation. In Jeremiah 27:16 and 17 we see this confrontation between the actual truth *vs.* the fake news: “Also I spake to the priests and to all this people, saying, Thus saith the Lord; Hearken not to the words of your prophets that prophesy unto you, saying, Behold, the vessels of the Lord’s house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you. Hearken not unto them; serve the king of Babylon, and live: wherefore should this city be laid waste?”

Satan, the instigator of fake news, cunningly used his agents to nullify the truths that Heaven

presented. The false prophet Hananiah appeared in the temple, and before the priests and all the people he brought the following message: “Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the Lord’s house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: and I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the Lord: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon” (Jeremiah 28:2–4).

Here are some characteristics of fake news:

1. It seeks to attract as much attention as possible.
2. It appears to be true and imitate the true news as much as possible (by its origin, its form, and its importance).

Finally, the people were seduced by this false report that flattered their senses, so they rejected the truth and did not seek genuine repentance—and, as a consequence, what remained of the sacred vessels was looted and the temple was destroyed by fire. (Jeremiah 52:12–15.)

### THE INFORMATION WAR IN CHRIST’S DAY

Jesus’ earthly ministry was full of signs and wonders that spread rapidly. Crowds gathered as He passed by. They listened intently to His words and saw great wonders which they described to their families and neighbors.

Satan did not remain silent about this reality. He began to spread fake news and rumors to stop—or at least hinder—Christ’s powerful ministry of salvation. Among the

rumors that spread was the denigration of the origin of Jesus through the Pharisees: “Jesus denied that the Jews were children of Abraham. He said, ‘Ye do the deeds of your father.’ In mockery they answered, ‘We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.’ These words, in allusion to the circumstances of His birth, were intended as a thrust against Christ in the presence of those who were beginning to believe on Him. Jesus gave no heed to the base insinuation.”<sup>2</sup>

Another bit of fake news that was spread was that Jesus was possessed by Beelzebub—and this was supposedly why He was casting out demons. (Mark 3:22.) The fake news also circulated that He was a glutton and drunk who mingled with bad company. (Luke 11:19.)

Even in the resurrection of Christ, the enemy sought to plant fake news that would distort the wonderful event that had occurred: “Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor’s ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day” (Matthew 28:11–15). It’s very sad that this fake news prevails to this day among those who were once God’s chosen people!

Digital communication platforms use algorithms that distribute existing content on the internet according to the most relevant interests for each user. By addressing filtered and conditional information, those who display material online seek to

“We have a decided work to do.  
Let not the enemy cause us to swerve from the  
proclamation of the definite truth for this time, and  
turn our attention to fanciful ideas.”

reach these individual users with specific content to keep them connected for as long as possible. Let us also take into account that the information flow in social networks is constantly updated, not only by relevance for the user, but also according to the scope and interactions of the posting—validating news only by its level of diffusion. Users believe that greater views imply greater credibility. This allows for public opinion to be manipulated by actually causing the circulation of misleading content to “go viral.” The collateral effects of this directing of information cause polarization and intolerance between those who have differing points of view, because everyone becomes much more opinionated by only feeding on perspectives that already match their own preconceived ideas.

## THE CHRISTIAN IN THE FACE OF FAKE NEWS

By means of social networks, we become not only consumers, but generators or replicators of information that spreads in seconds and affects our contacts—including those of the congregation to which we belong. This puts a solemn responsibility upon the Christian.

## CONSUMING INFORMATION

When consuming information, a Christian must filter it with the sieve of the Word of God. The advice of the apostle Paul is very clear: “Prove all things” (1 Thessalonians 5:21), or as the New International Version translates it, “test them all.”

A Christian cannot give credence to online information without confirming the origin and certainty of it, especially when it is of a religious nature. It is possible that the believer’s convictions may be misled and he/she be led down a path of perdition:

“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 16:25). If we paraphrase this verse in relation to fake news, we would say that there is news that seems true, but ends up being false news that leads to confusion and spiritual death. Even without being actual news, nowadays pseudo-religious publications abound with harmful theories and doctrines. Satan is presenting these contents to ruin the consecration in the lives of believers, forcing us to be constantly vigilant when we consume information, always remembering the advice of the apostle Paul, “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).

“Idle tales are brought in as important truths, and by some they are actually set up as tests. Thus controversy is created, and minds are diverted from present truth. Satan knows that if he can get men and women absorbed in trifling details, greater questions will be left unheeded. He will furnish plenty of material for the attention of those who are willing to think upon trifling, unimportant subjects.”<sup>3</sup>

## GENERATING OR DISSEMINATING INFORMATION

When generating information or distributing third-party publications, we must always bear in mind that the ninth commandment prohibits us from bearing false witness. (Exodus 20:16.) This mandate is expanded as follows: “Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness” (Exodus 23:1). Therefore, a Christian cannot afford to spread false or distorted news that ends up hurting his credibility

as an individual, undermining the credibility of our congregation, and ultimately affecting the presentation of the pure gospel of Jesus to a world perishing in the mire of sin.

“In these days many deceptions are being taught as truth. Some of our brethren have taught views which we cannot endorse. Fanciful ideas, strained and peculiar interpretations of the Scripture are coming in. Some of these teachings may seem to be but jots and tittles now, but they will grow and become snares to the inexperienced.

“We have a decided work to do. Let not the enemy cause us to swerve from the proclamation of the definite truth for this time, and turn our attention to fanciful ideas.”<sup>4</sup>

In the face of the pandemic troubling our planet and the consequent shaking for the church and its need to wake up from missionary lethargy, multiple and genuine concerns have arisen that, since they are not subjected to a systematic study within the framework of the great controversy between Christ and Satan and the plan of redemption, they generate fanciful ideas that absorb time and effort that should be devoted to the proclamation of the solemn truths for this time. Among the ideas that can absorb us may be: Trying to set dates for the Sunday decree, being preoccupied with papal encyclicals, etc. Does this type of information constitute the mission of the church? Are these the type of issues that should be presented to the people?

“If you have any question as to what you should teach, any question as to the subjects upon which you should dwell, go right to the discourses of the Great Teacher, and follow His instructions. . . .

“Do not allow anything to draw your attention from the question, ‘What shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ (Luke 10:25). This is a life and

death question, which we must each settle for eternity. Let the mind be weighted with the importance of the solemn truth which we possess. Those who allow the mind to wander in search of cheap, unimportant theories need to be converted.”<sup>5</sup>

“God desires men and women to think soberly and candidly. They are to ascend to a higher and still higher grade, commanding a wider and still wider horizon. Looking unto Jesus, they are to be changed into His image. They are to spend their time in searching for the deep, everlasting truths of heaven. Then there will be nothing frivolous in their religious experience. As they study the grand truths of God’s Word, they endure the seeing of Him who is invisible. They see that the most uplifting, ennobling truths are those most closely connected with the Source of all truth. And as they learn of Him, their motives and sympathies become firm and unchanging; for the impressions made by the All-wise are substantial and enduring. The living water, which Christ gives, is not like a surface spring, which bubbles for a short time, and then dries up. The living water springs up unto everlasting life.”<sup>6</sup>

It is possible that in our desire to awaken people, we fall into the error of presenting or spreading strange and fanciful theories, even going so far as to force the biblical message to give strength to our words. This is wrong and does not contribute to the progress of the truth. To the contrary, it will only generate a momentary interest that will end up hardening the heart and being a stumbling block for inexperienced souls.

Preaching Jesus in His purity, inviting people to contemplate Him, presenting the plan of redemption clearly, and urging them to live a “faith that works out of love,” not out of fear—this is our urgent task.

“Let us follow the revealed will of God. Then we shall know that the light we receive comes from the divine Source of all true light. Those who cooperate with Christ are on safe ground. God richly blesses them as they consecrate their energies to the work of rescuing the

*“God desires men and women to think soberly and candidly. They are to ascend to a higher and still higher grade, . . . Looking unto Jesus, they are to be changed into His image.”*

world from corruption. Christ is our example. By beholding Him we are to be changed into His image, from glory to glory, from character to character. This is our work. God help us rightly to represent the Saviour to the world.”<sup>7</sup>

### THE ONLY SURE SOURCE OF TRUTH

The news, blogposts, pseudo-religious videos and other information sources with misleading content and falsehoods are abundant; these are available to everyone who has access to the internet and have become an effective tool of Satan not only to deceive the unwary, but also to ensnare the careless ones who are not following the faithful example of the Bereans who “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

“We need to search the Scriptures daily, that we may know the way of the Lord, and that we be not deceived by religious fallacies. The world is full of false theories and seductive spiritualistic ideas, which tend to destroy clear spiritual perception, and to lead away from truth and holiness. Especially at this time do we need to heed the warning, ‘Let no man deceive you with vain words’ (Ephesians 5:6).”<sup>8</sup>

Our only assurance is in daily systematic, prayerful study of the Bible. To avoid being ensnared by false religious news and conspiracy theories that take our eyes off Christ, “the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2), we must make the revealed word of God our only reliable counselor.

### CONCLUSION

Many years ago, a local newspaper announced that a major bank needed to hire an expert to recog-

nize counterfeit bills. Appreciating this opportunity, a distinguished young man appeared who was sure of being hired. In his interview with the manager, he claimed to know all the counterfeits and he made his expertise known. The manager stared at him and boldly declared:

“You’re not the one I need!”

“But why not?” the young man replied.

“Fake banknotes appear every day, distinguished gentleman,” replied the banker. “What we need is someone who fully knows the real bill, as this will allow you to confidently distinguish counterfeits.”

There is no reason to stop and waste time presenting or feeding on the fantastic theories and fake news presented on digital media and social media. What we urgently need is to dedicate sufficient time to the daily and systematic study of the truth of God presented in His inspired Word: “and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

“My brethren and sisters, appreciate and study the truths God has given for you and your children. Spend not your time in seeking to know that which will be no spiritual help. ‘What shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ (Luke 10:25). This is the all-important question, and it has been clearly answered. ‘What is written in the law? how readest thou?’ ”<sup>9</sup>

May Heaven keep us from being trapped by false news generated by the father of lies and may we not be stumbling blocks to our neighbor by generating or spreading falsehoods. Amen. *R*

### References:

- <sup>1</sup> *Christ Triumphant*, p. 289.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 467.
- <sup>3</sup> *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 170.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

# WAITING AND HASTENING

by Eli Tenorio



## CLOSER THAN EVER

As an Adventist, losing someone dear to you through death at the beginning of 1844, probably would not be as sad and hurtful as it is today.

Though today we are comforted with the assurance of resurrection we do not know precisely the day it will happen, but in 1844 all Adventists were sure Christ would come on October 22nd of that year and therefore they would meet again their resurrected beloved ones who were resting in their graves. What a comfort to the mourning families!

Charles Fitch, one of the fervent Adventist pioneers, died just eight days before the day the church expected Jesus to return. He was still young, just thirty years old, but got sick apparently as a result of performing baptisms on some cold days before he died on Monday, October 14, 1844. We can imagine how comforting it was to his wife and their two children to believe that they would see him again on Tuesday of the coming week.

Oh, how they were looking forward for that day! But Jesus did not come on the 22nd of October and now we can only imagine the disappointment of that mother and two children. That Tuesday they probably cried out all the tears they had not cried the week before.

Almost two centuries have passed by, but soon that mother

and her two children who are now also sleeping, will have the privilege to reunite with their dear husband and father. Because though the Adventist pioneers misunderstood the event happening in 1844 (Christ entered into the most holy place in heaven instead of returning to earth), the prophecy has not failed and the promise of Jesus—that He will return, stands firm and it is now closer than ever.

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

Prophecies regarding the end of this world have been and are being fulfilled:

One day, the disciples approached Jesus "as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3).

Jesus answering, said: "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars . . . for 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 sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken" (Mark 13:24, 25). "And upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (Luke 21:25, 26). "And 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).

All the prophecies above, mentioned by Christ, have been or are being fulfilled, but one of them: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world" is our responsibility to fulfill, by God's grace.

And the Bible tells us that we can hasten the coming of Jesus: "Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" (2 Peter 3:12).

## HOW CAN WE HASTEN HIS COMING?

**A. Preach the gospel.** One way of hastening the coming of Jesus is by getting more involved in the spreading of the gospel. We cannot



just go by our daily life of work to accomplish temporal things; yes, we have needs and we are supposed to work to satisfy our temporal needs, but that is not enough. What are you sacrificing for Christ today? "We are soldiers of Christ; and those who enlist in His army are expected to do difficult work, work which will tax their energies to the utmost. We must understand that a soldier's life is one of aggressive warfare, of perseverance and endurance. For Christ's sake we are to endure trials. We are not engaged in mimic battles."<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting that 2 Peter 3:14, tells us that by being involved in spreading the gospel we are kept in peace (true peace that only Jesus can give), without spot and blameless: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

#### B. Attend the church services.

Simple things like attending prayer meetings, camp meetings, youth conventions, etc., with the intention of being a blessing to those present will make a difference in the lives around us and lead them to Jesus. "Never entertain the thought that you can be Christians and yet withdraw within yourselves. Each one is a part of the great web of humanity, and the nature and quality of your experience will be largely determined by

the experiences of those with whom you associate. . . . Then let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together."<sup>2</sup>

**C. Be generous.** Being liberal with our offerings and faithful in our tithing will also accelerate the preaching of the gospel. "for the Lord says to you, 'Lay up your treasure in heaven.' Invest your means to advance My work, to open new fields, that the light of present truth may shine to all parts of the world."<sup>3</sup>

**D. Live the gospel of Jesus.** Witnessing in our daily walk by being honest, patient and caring will show to others that we care about the world to come and it will motivate souls to desire to know the Lord and the hope we have. "The Lord has honored us by choosing us as His soldiers. Let us fight bravely for Him, maintaining the right in every transaction. Rectitude in all things is essential to the warfare of the soul. As you strive for the victory over your own inclinations, He will help you by His Holy Spirit to be circumspect in every action, that you may give no occasion for the enemy to speak evil of the truth."<sup>4</sup>

Are you being merciful and forgiving, showing that Jesus is a reality in your life, thus leading those around you to glorify your Heavenly Father?

"The Bible enjoins courtesy; and it presents many illustrations of the unselfish spirit, the gentle grace, the winsome temper, that characterize true politeness. These are but reflections of the character of Christ. All the real tenderness and courtesy in the world, even among those who do not acknowledge His name, is from Him. And He desires these characteristics to be perfectly reflected in His children. It is His purpose that in us men shall behold His beauty."<sup>5</sup>

Are you keeping the Sabbath in such a way that reveals to your friends and relatives that you honestly believe that Christ is coming soon?

Are you progressing in your health reform, thus showing to the world that you are traveling to a better world?

Are you dressing in a manner (according to the Bible principles and with good taste) that others can see that you are a child of God?

"If the heart is right, your words, your dress, your acts will all be right."<sup>6</sup>

Are you united with your brethren, talking good about your church and its workers, loving and praying for them in such a way that those you come in contact with can see that you are a disciple of Jesus?

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

#### IT IS ONLY POSSIBLE IF YOU ARE CLOSE TO JESUS

Having fellowship with Jesus through the study of His word and prayer will empower us to detach from the world and its practices:

"The world does not know the exaltation of the sons and daughters of the Most High. Those around them do not see that the humble, self-denying spirit, the patient meekness of heart, has any extraordinary value. They did not know or appreciate Christ when He was on the earth, and the servant is not greater than his Lord. They could not understand Him; and the greater our likeness to the divine character of our Lord, the more we shall be misunderstood by the world. The more we come into fellowship with Christ and heaven, the less will be our fellowship with the world; for we are not of the world, therefore the world knoweth us not. Our work is to seek the closest union with the Son of God, to learn in His school, to become meek and lowly of heart, to work the works of Christ, advancing His kingdom and hastening His coming."<sup>7</sup>

"The great ambition of the children of this world is to meet the world's standard. They cannot see the precious advantages to be obtained in serving the God of heaven; but the children of light have the great prize set before them. They find the service of Christ is not grievous but full of delight. He says, 'My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' Beloved, if God has so loved us, should

*“Witnessing in our daily walk by being honest, patient and caring will show to others that we care about the world to come and it will motivate souls to desire to know the Lord and the hope we have.”*

we not serve him with all our might, and strive to enter in at the strait gate, complying with every requirement of his word? Let us seek by ‘patient continuance in well-doing’ to gain immortality and the crown of life. ‘Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.’<sup>8</sup>

By being ready to receive Jesus in His second coming we lead others to be ready as well and thus therefore we hasten His coming:

“Thousands who now reject the message of salvation would accept Christ if they could see the beauty of His character reflected in His followers.

“Then can we be surprised that the enemy should put forth every effort in his power to create dissension, alienation, and strife in the church of God, that they may not reveal to the world the glory, the character, of Christ?

“It is time that the people of God brought fervent love for one another into their daily experience. When the love of Jesus is abiding in the heart, it will be revealed in every action. Differences of opinion will disappear; for self will no longer seek the supremacy. Thus the church may become a bright and shining light, and Heaven, looking on, may see that there is a body with one spirit, one hope, drawing toward one great center—Christ.”<sup>9</sup>

“When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.”<sup>10</sup>

### SATAN IS PLAYING THE GAME OF LIFE FOR SOULS

The enemy is deceiving multitudes with false hopes, but we must ignore his ploys and climb heavenward in this waiting time.

“Satan has come down with great power; he is working with

desperate energy, playing the game of life for the souls of men. We need now men of discernment and understanding, who will look deep and reason soundly, men in living touch with Christ, the risen Saviour. Falsehoods are everywhere, but God’s Word is the solid rock. We are in the day of waiting; we are to be looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God. We are to be climbing, ever climbing, heavenward.”<sup>11</sup>

The leaders of the nations are desperately looking for environmental solutions, health solutions and economic solutions. But this old world seems to be speedily driving towards its end.

We as Christians are supposed to be good stewards and take good care of the planet entrusted to us, but we cannot forget that it is going to be destroyed and renewed not by man but by God.

Why do people still have the illusion that peace and security is a possibility on this planet despite all the evidence that this world is speedily going towards a level of chaos without precedent?

It is because multitudes distracted with the things of this world cannot see beyond this temporal life, few believe that we have a heaven to win!

“Everything in the world is in agitation. The signs of the times are ominous. Coming events cast their shadows before. The Spirit of God is withdrawing from the earth, and calamity follows calamity by sea and by land. There are tempests, earthquakes, fires, floods, murders of every grade. Who can read the future? Where is security? There is assurance in nothing that is human or earthly. Rapidly are men ranging themselves under the banner they have chosen. Restlessly are they waiting and watching the movements of their leaders. There are those who are waiting and watching and working for our Lord’s appearing. Another

class are falling into line under the generalship of the first great apostate. Few believe with heart and soul that we have a hell to shun and a heaven to win.”<sup>12</sup>

The prophecy of Isaiah 4:1 is being fulfilled in its completeness: “And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.”

In prophetic symbolism, a woman represents a church (and women churches), seven represents totality, bread represents doctrine and apparel righteousness. Therefore, the prophecy says that in general, the churches existing in the last days would only want to be called by the name of Jesus, but have their own doctrines and their own righteousness instead of His.

Pastors are preaching soft sermons to allow souls to sleep in their carnal passions. The voice rebuking vanity, self-indulgence, prostitution and adultery has been quieted and in exchange, pleasant words are spoken from the pulpits to please the people.

“What the church needs in these days of peril is an army of workers, . . . men who are brave, who are true; men who have Christ formed within them, and who, with lips touched with holy fire, ‘will preach the word’ amid the thousands who are preaching fables. For the want of such workers, the cause of God, languishes, and fatal errors, like a deadly poison, taint the morals and blight the hopes of a large part of the human race.”<sup>13</sup>

“At Christ’s first advent the angels broke the silence of the night with acclamations of praise, and proclaimed, ‘Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth; good will toward men.’ He is soon to come again with power and great glory. Those who are not wedded to the world will realize that the time demands something more than a weak, faint, methodical discourse. They will see that there must be earnestness and power accompanying the Word, which will arouse the powers of hell to oppose the warnings. God designs to come to the people to awaken men

out of their carnal security, that they may prepare themselves for the great event right upon us. . . . God will accept no sleepy, tame message at this time.”<sup>14</sup>

“Many voices are advocating error; let your voice advocate truth. Present subjects that will be as green pastures to the sheep of God’s fold. Do not lead your hearers into waste tracts, where they will be no nearer the fountain of living water than they were before hearing you. Present the truth as it is in Jesus, making plain the requirements of the law and the gospel. Present Christ, the way, the truth, and the life, and tell of His power to save all who come to Him. The Captain of our salvation is interceding for His people, not as a petitioner to move the Father to compassion, but as a conqueror, who claims the trophies of His victory. ‘He is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him.’ Make this fact very plain.”<sup>15</sup>

“He who in his preaching makes eloquence his highest aim, causes the people to forget the truth that is mingled with his oratory. When the emotion has passed away, it will be found that the word of God has not been fastened upon the mind, nor have the hearers gained in understanding. They make speak in terms of admiration of the minister’s eloquence, but they are not brought any nearer to the point of decision. They speak of the sermon as they would of a play, and of the minister as they would of an actor. They may come again to listen to the same kind of discourse, but they will go away unimpressed and unfed.”<sup>16</sup>

## THE BLESSED HOPE

It is said that the favorite verse of William Miller was Titus 2:13, “Look-

ing for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”—and from the time of his conversion, he lived waiting and hastening his Lord’s coming.

The Advent pioneer knew that the only solution for this world’s problems is Christ’s second coming and he shook the world of his time by preaching the soon coming of Christ. That was his blessed hope.

Likewise, the true believers of today are supposed to shake the world with the message of the blessed hope of Christ’s second coming, at this time when the world is once again sleeping in its false security and the nominal churches are looking for worldly gain and greatness.

“God has a people upon the earth who in faith and holy hope are tracing down the roll of fast-fulfilling prophecy and are seeking to purify their souls by obeying the truth, that they may not be found without the wedding garment when Christ shall appear.”<sup>17</sup>

## WHAT IF IT WERE TODAY?

My dear brethren, Christ is coming very soon, so let us by God’s grace wait (consecrate ourselves) and hasten His coming (by our actions).

What if it were today? Would you be ready?

“Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort, they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. While the inves-

tigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God’s people upon earth. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14.

“When this work shall have been accomplished, the followers of Christ will be ready for His appearing.”<sup>18</sup>

“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. . . . Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. . . . I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. . . . He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen” (Revelation 22:12, 14, 16, 17, 20, 21). *R*

## References:

- <sup>1</sup> *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 37.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Faith I Live By*, p. 246.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Upward Look*, p. 92.
- <sup>4</sup> *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 37.
- <sup>5</sup> *The Adventist Home*, p. 425.
- <sup>6</sup> *Messages to Young People*, p. 131.
- <sup>7</sup> *The Review and Herald*, February 28, 1888.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, November 3, 1896.
- <sup>10</sup> *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 69.
- <sup>11</sup> *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 14, p. 199.
- <sup>12</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 636.
- <sup>13</sup> *Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 326.
- <sup>14</sup> *The Voice in Speech and Song*, p. 231.
- <sup>15</sup> *Gospel Workers*, p. 154.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.
- <sup>17</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 307.
- <sup>18</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 425.

# IT IS FINISHED

by Ghita Ulici

Back in the garden of Eden, our first parents disobeyed their Creator's command to abstain from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16, 17). God spoke to Adam and Eve—and even the serpent, the medium used of Satan to deceive. He asked them questions regarding their disobedience to His divine command, and told them of the painful and inevitable consequences to be experienced by the first couple and their descendants, as well as by the serpent and the earth itself. (Genesis 3:8–23.)

The wonderful experience of living in the garden of Eden was over; the pair was driven from that happy and holy place, unable to return.

God declared that a curse would come upon the human race and all of creation upon this planet. Yet He also told the good news of the wonderful plan of redemption which presented hope that man could be rescued from sin, and destruction to the enemy who had tempted to disobedience. He promised, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it

shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

This declaration prophesied of the terrible battle that would take place during all of human history, between man and Satan, between the seed of the woman *vs.* the enemy and his agents. The words spoken by the Creator of the universe, including our planet, foretold the final end of the battle, the annihilation of the archenemy of both God and man, and the reestablishment of Adam's descendants to the paradise of God because of Christ's sacrificial gift of Himself for our redemption from sin.

"To man the first intimation of redemption was communicated in the sentence pronounced upon Satan in the garden. The Lord declared, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.' Genesis 3:15. This sentence, uttered in the hearing of our first parents, was to them a promise. While it foretold war between man and Satan, it declared that the power of the great adversary would finally be broken.

Adam and Eve stood as criminals before the righteous Judge, awaiting the sentence which transgression had incurred; but before they heard of the life of toil and sorrow which must be their portion, or of the decree that they must return to dust, they listened to words that could not fail to give them hope. Though they must suffer from the power of their mighty foe, they could look forward to final victory."<sup>1</sup>

## A MARKED HISTORY OF DIVERSE SCENES OF DESTRUCTION

Human history has been marked by a series of disasters and destruction caused by disobedience and the consequence of sin. There has been violence, perversion, wickedness, suffering, sickness and death. At times, God stopped the wickedness by His intervention. One such time is recorded about 1500 years after creation, when because of the constant, persistent, disobedience of the people of that time, the Creator brought a worldwide flood, bring-



faithful ones had an experience that we need at the time when this sinful world will come to an end, and the everlasting kingdom of heaven will be the result of God's great plan of redemption. Hebrews 11:13–16.

As we study the Bible, we discover the unfolding of the history of God's people who are set apart to be a holy nation governed by the principles given by the King of the universe. After a time, they lost their special identity through compromise with pagan practices and customs manifest in continuing disobedience to God. God chose prophets to give His Word to those people who failed to fulfill the plan of their Creator. This sacred history describes the rise and fall of great empires. Each had a specific time in which they evolved, prospered and eventually were destroyed by a succeeding empire upon the world's stage.

### A PROPHETIC DREAM

The first king of the Babylonian empire is known as Nebuchadnezzar. Among his conquests was the subduing of the people of Israel, the destruction of Jerusalem and their being taken captive for about 70 years. To this king, God gave an impressive prophetic dream in regard to future worldwide powers, beginning with Babylon to the end of this world's history.

By divine revelation, Daniel, a young, faithful, Jewish captive, was enabled to explain to the king the elements of that dream. The head was made of pure gold; the breast and the arms of silver; the belly and thighs out of brass, the legs out of iron, and the feet out of iron mixed with clay—plus he disclosed which empires were thereby represented. Daniel 2:31–43.

In that dream rests the most important element in relation to these world empires, the manner of their ultimate destruction by the rise of the eternal kingdom of God. “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms,

and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure” (Daniel 2:44, 45).

“Every nation that has come upon the stage of action has been permitted to occupy its place on the earth, that it might be seen whether it would fulfill the purpose of ‘the Watcher and the Holy One.’ Prophecy has traced the rise and fall of the world's great empires—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. With each of these, as with nations of less power, history repeated itself. Each had its period of test, each failed, its glory faded, its power departed, and its place was occupied by another.

“While the nations rejected God's principles, and in this rejection wrought their own ruin, it was still manifest that the divine, overruling purpose was working through all their movements.”<sup>3</sup>

### THE HOPE OF ALL BELIEVERS

During the Roman Empire, represented by the fourth kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, having dominated the world for over 500 years, came the Messiah as the Saviour and Redeemer of the human race. The Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea (Matthew 2:1–6), grew up in Nazareth until the age of 30 years old (Luke 4:16), and then dedicated the next 3½ years to the public ministry of preaching the gospel of the everlasting kingdom, healing the sick, giving hope to sinners, raising the dead—and through all His actions and miracles, ultimately fulfilling the plan of salvation. Galatians 4:4, 5; John 3:16.

“Instead of destroying the world, God sent His Son to save it. Though corruption and defiance might be seen in every part of the alien province, a way for its recovery was provided. At the very crisis, when Satan seemed about to triumph, the

ing destruction upon the entire planet with the exception of faithful Noah and his family—a total of 8 persons along with the creatures protected on the ark built by divine guidance. (Genesis 6:13–22.)

“By the word of God . . . the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”<sup>2</sup> Peter 3:5–7. Another storm is coming. The earth will again be swept by the desolating wrath of God, and sin and sinners will be destroyed.”<sup>2</sup>

After the flood, the descendants of Noah multiplied. Under the deceitful influence of the enemy and his agents, sin and wickedness flourished. Few there were that kept the true faith in God manifest in obedience to all of His commandments.

Noah is listed in the inspired Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, as one of the faithful few, a hero of faith, among many others who impacted the society they loved. These

Son of God came with the embassage of divine grace. Through every age, through every hour, the love of God had been exercised toward the fallen race. Notwithstanding the perversity of men, the signals of mercy had been continually exhibited. And when the fullness of the time had come, the Deity was glorified by pouring upon the world a flood of healing grace that was never to be obstructed or withdrawn till the plan of salvation should be fulfilled. "Satan was exulting that he had succeeded in debasing the image of God in humanity. Then Jesus came to restore in man the image of his Maker. 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. He came to lift us up from the dust, to reshape the marred character after the pattern of His divine character, and to make it beautiful with His own glory."<sup>4</sup>

In the Holy Scriptures, we find two decisive declarations of Christ in reference to the end of time. Presented in completely different circumstances, and separated by significant time, they are similar in import:

### 1. Christ's final declaration while on the cross

Amid the disbelief and constant opposition of the Jewish people and its leaders, the Lord Jesus was taken, judged, diabolically mocked and condemned to crucifixion. While hanging on the cross between two thieves, surrounded by a crowd of mockers, Christ pronounced a most important declaration before entrusting His Spirit to His Father, "It is finished!" At the end of His mission on earth, and in fulfillment of the prophecies in Word and symbol, He gave His life as the redeeming sacrifice for humanity. "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" (John 19:30).

"Jesus did not yield up His life till He had accomplished the work which He came to do, and exclaimed with His departing breath: 'It is finished.' Satan was then defeated. He knew that his kingdom was lost. Angels rejoiced as the words were ut-

tered: 'It is finished.' The great plan of redemption, which was dependent on the death of Christ, had been thus far carried out. And there was joy in heaven that the sons of Adam could, through a life of obedience, be finally exalted to the throne of God. Oh, what love! What amazing love! that brought the Son of God to earth to be made sin for us, that we might be reconciled to God, and elevated to a life with Him in His mansions in glory. Oh, what is man, that such a price should be paid for his redemption!"<sup>5</sup>

After His death and resurrection, in fulfillment of the prophecies relating to His earthly life, Jesus ascended to heaven from among His disciples on the Mount of Olives. While the disciples remained, two angels appeared and told them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

"Christ had sojourned in the world for thirty-three years; He had endured its scorn, insult, and mockery; He had been rejected and crucified. Now, when about to ascend to His throne of glory—as He reviews the ingratitude of the people He came to save—will He not withdraw from them His sympathy and love? Will not His affections be centered upon that realm where He is appreciated, and where sinless angels wait to do His bidding? No; His promise to those loved ones whom He leaves on earth is, 'I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' Matthew 28:20."<sup>6</sup>

Another assurance given is: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

Under divine inspiration, the apostle Paul wrote about Christ's intercessory work which had been typified through the whole sanctuary service for thousands of years. "Who is he that condemneth? 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).

"Our Saviour is in the sanctuary pleading in our behalf. He is our interceding High Priest, making an atoning sacrifice for us, pleading in our behalf the efficacy of His blood. . . . Christ suffered in order that through faith in Him our sins might be pardoned. He became man's substitute and surety, Himself taking the punishment, though all undeserving, that we who deserved it might be free, and return to our allegiance to God through the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour. He is our only hope of salvation. Through His sacrifice we who are now on probation are prisoners of hope. We are to reveal to the universe, to the world fallen and to worlds unfallen, that there is forgiveness with God, that through the love of God we may be reconciled to God."<sup>7</sup>

### 2. Christ's declaration at the end of His intercession in heaven

The moment is coming when Christ will finish His intercessory work for us in the heavenly sanctuary, and the case of every person on earth will have been decided either for eternal life or eternal damnation. At that moment, Jesus will make another declaration similar to the first noted on the cross. "And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great" (Revelation 16:17, 18).

"When the third angel's message closes, mercy no longer pleads for the guilty inhabitants of the earth. The people of God have accomplished their work. They have received 'the latter rain,' 'the refreshing from the presence of the Lord,' and they are prepared for the trying hour before them. Angels are hastening to and fro in Heaven. An angel returning from the earth announces that his work is done; the final test has been brought upon the world, and all who

have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received 'the seal of the living God.' Then Jesus ceases his intercession in the sanctuary above. . . . Every case has been decided for life or death. Christ has made the atonement for his people, and blotted out their sins."<sup>8</sup>

## WHEN AND HOW WILL THE TIME OF PROBATION CLOSE?

"When Jesus ceases to plead for man, the cases of all are forever decided. . . . Probation closes; Christ's intercessions cease in heaven. This time finally comes suddenly upon all, and those who have neglected to purify their souls by obeying the truth are found sleeping."<sup>9</sup>

"When probation ends, it will come suddenly, unexpectedly—at a time when we are least expecting it. But we can have a clean record in heaven today, and know that God accepts us."<sup>10</sup>

## THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST WILL BRING AN END TO SIN

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:12–14).

"The Lord is soon to come, and we must be prepared to meet Him in peace. Let us be determined to do all in our power to impart light to those around us. We are not to be sad, but cheerful, and we are to keep the Lord Jesus ever before us. He is soon coming, and we must be ready and waiting for His appearing. Oh, how glorious it will be to see Him and be welcomed as His redeemed ones! Long have we waited, but our hope is not to grow dim. If we can but see the King in His beauty we shall be forever blessed. I feel as if I must cry aloud: 'Homeward bound! We are nearing the time when Christ will come in power and great

glory to take His ransomed ones to their eternal home. "In the great closing work we shall meet with perplexities that we know not how to deal with; but let us not forget that the three great powers of heaven are working, that a divine hand is on the wheel, and that God will bring His promises to pass. He will gather from the world a people who will serve Him in righteousness."<sup>11</sup>

## A NEW END AND A NEW BEGINNING

John the Revelator explains: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Revelation 21:1–3).

"In that day the redeemed will shine forth in the glory of the Father and the Son. The angels, touching their golden harps, will welcome the King and His trophies of victory—those who have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. A song of triumph will peal forth, filling all heaven. Christ has conquered. He enters the heavenly courts, accompanied by His redeemed ones, the witnesses that His mission of suffering and sacrifice has not been in vain.

"The resurrection and ascension of our Lord is a sure evidence of the triumph of the saints of God over death and the grave, and a pledge that heaven is open to those who wash their robes of character and make them white in the blood of the Lamb."<sup>12</sup>

"With unutterable love, Jesus welcomes His faithful ones to the joy of their Lord. The Saviour's joy is in seeing, in the kingdom of glory, the souls that have been saved by His agony and humiliation."<sup>13</sup>

"The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of

harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love."<sup>14</sup>

"And [Jesus] said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Revelation 21:6, 7).

Dear friends, young people, brothers and sisters all over the world, we are approaching with rapid pace the fulfillment of these important promises given to us by God. The history of humanity affected by sin is coming to an end, and it is followed by eternal life without sin or the tempter. Are we ready to spend an eternity without sin and suffering with the One who has loved us so much that He gave His life for us?

What is our situation today? What decision would be written if probation closed today for me and for the whole world?

May God bless us with His presence and flood each soul with His love. Let us prepare wholeheartedly to meet Him. He is waiting to take us home. Is this your desire? My beloved, if we lose Heaven, it will be the biggest loss in the universe, but if we gain Heaven by God's grace, it will be the greatest victory. Nothing can be compared with this important treasure. I wish for this to be our experience, that the day of salvation may come as quickly as possible and that we may see each other in His kingdom, never again to depart. Amen! *R*

## References:

- <sup>1</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 65, 66.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.
- <sup>3</sup> *Education*, pp. 176, 177.
- <sup>4</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 37.
- <sup>5</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 211.
- <sup>6</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 830.
- <sup>7</sup> *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 370.
- <sup>8</sup> *The Great Controversy*, pp. 613, 614.
- <sup>9</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 191.
- <sup>10</sup> *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 989.
- <sup>11</sup> *Counsels for the Church*, p. 356.
- <sup>12</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 285, 286.
- <sup>13</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 647.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 678.

MOVING? Please let us know.

# WHAT IF IT WERE *Today?*

What am I doing  
With all that I've heard?  
And how am I spending my time?  
Is it for Jesus' own glory to glow,  
Or is it a "thoughtlessness" crime?

Do I help people?  
And does my light shine—  
Or am I just stuck in my world?  
Am I a witness of heavenly grace,  
With banner of truth now unfurled?

Looking around me,  
I see many signs—  
But will the end come by surprise?  
All these events were foretold long ago  
To guide us that we might be wise!

We're all on the run;  
Our life hurries on....  
Ambition builds quite a few goals.  
Have I remembered the far greater aim  
Of Christians to rescue lost souls?

On the horizon  
There's so much foretold;  
There's much that the prophecy shows.  
Moments are hast'ning for all now to see—  
A picture that's rampant with woes.

Many are sleeping  
As temporal things  
Predominate all that is seen.  
Jesus is coming for those who prepare,  
Whose minds are made true, pure, and clean.

What am I doing?  
Oh, what do I think?  
Oh, whom do I seek to befriend?  
Do I reach out to show Christ as my Lord,  
While knowing probation will end?

Time is now short,  
And the Lord will come soon—  
So, now's not the moment to play.  
"It is now finished" will soon be proclaimed!  
Oh, what if it happens today?

Jesus' soon coming  
Should fill up our minds  
With joy and devotion untold.  
Privileged to serve as His bearers of truth  
Should render us faithful and bold!

Jesus is willing—  
He'll help us right now;  
Just seek Him while He may be found!  
Strength will be rendered to those who just ask;  
His power will greatly abound!

Now is the hour  
To seek His dear face  
And relish the Word that He gives.  
God is our Saviour throughout all the gloom;  
We praise Him on high who now lives!

Jesus is coming;  
He's ready—are we?  
He really wants not to delay!  
Think of the joy to await the redeemed—  
Oh, what if it just were today?