

Table of Contents

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page #</u>
1. Introduction to the Seven Churches	3
2. Revelation and the book The Great Controversy.....	5
3. Message to Ephesus	35
4. The Message to Smyrna	41
5. The Message to Pergamum.....	49
6. The Message to Thyatira	71
7. The Message to Sardis.....	85
8. The Message to Philadelphia	97
9. The Message to Laodicea	117
10. The Barren Fig Tree	141
11. Additional Study Material on the Judgment Process During the Churches of Philadelphia and Laodicea.....	147
12. The Examination of the Robe	159
13. Study on the 1844 Movement (Philadelphia)	169
14. Study on the End Time Philadelphia Movement.....	179
 Contact Information	 193

“STUDIES IN REVELATION-THE SEVEN CHURCHES”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #1 - Introduction to the Seven Churches

There were many Christian churches in Asia Minor—such as Troas, Assos, Miletus, Colossae, Hierapolis, Tralles and Magnesia, to mention a few. Why, then, were these specific seven chosen? One reason is that they geographically form a candelabrum (see the picture at the end of these notes) and further, they had characteristics that illustrate the condition of the church in seven successive stages of church history until the end of time. Thus, Ellen White stated:

“The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian Era. The number 7 indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the messages extend to the end of time, while the symbols used reveal the condition of the church at different periods in the history of the word.” AA, p. 585

Relationship between Revelation 1-3 and 21-22

There is a close relationship between Revelation 1-3 and Revelation 21, 22. While Revelation 1-3 portrays the church militant on earth, Revelation 21-22 portrays the church triumphant in the Eternal kingdom. Most of the promises that Jesus made to the seven churches in chapters 1-3 are repeated and fulfilled and realized in chapters 21-22.

Patmos

Patmos is an island in the Aegean Sea about 50 miles southwest of Ephesus. It covers an area of about 16 square miles and has no trees or rivers. Patmos was the Alcatraz of the Roman Empire where criminals were sent into exile. The question is: how did the apostle John end up on the island?

According to Ellen G. White, the emperor Domitian (AD 81-96) threw John into a cauldron of boiling oil in the hopes of burning him alive but he was preserved, as were the three young men in the fiery furnace:

“John was cast into a caldron of boiling oil; but the Lord preserved the life of His faithful servant, even as He preserved the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace.” AA, p. 570

Christian tradition is in harmony with what Ellen White stated. According to Tertullian, John “was plunged into burning hot oil without being hurt and then banished to an island.” Clement of Alexandria added that John was later released by the Roman emperor Nerva and was permitted to return to Ephesus where he became bishop.

The Process of Inspiration in the Book of Revelation

Revelation 1:1-3 explains that God has a chain of command in the communication of His will to mankind:

- God gave the message to Jesus
- Jesus gave the message to the Holy Spirit
- The Holy Spirit gave the message to the angel
- The angel gave the message to John
- John wrote the message in a book and sent it to the seven churches
- The churches were then supposed to share the contents with the world

“STUDIES IN REVELATION-THE SEVEN CHURCHES”

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Lesson #2 - Revelation and the book The Great Controversy

John’s Visionary Experience

There is a remarkable parallel between the manner in which John received the book of Revelation and the manner in which Ellen White received the information that she included in The Great Controversy. Let’s take a few moments to draw the parallels beginning with John.

Revelation 1:2: John had the testimony of Jesus

*“Who bare record of the word of God, and of the **testimony** of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.”* See also 1:9; 21:16

Revelation 22:16; Revelation 2:7: The testimony of Jesus was particularly for the church

*“I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the **churches**. . . He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the **churches**. . .”*

Revelation 1:17: John fell as one dead when he entered the visionary experience

*“And when I saw him, I fell at his feet **as dead**. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last. . .”*

More than **50 times** in his book John uses the expression “I saw” and God told him “I will show you”. John was shown vivid **panoramic views of heavenly realities** and of the conflict between good and evil.

Revelation 2:11; 22:16: The message was imparted by the Holy Spirit to John through the ministration of an angel

*“He that hath an ear let him hear what the **Spirit** saith unto the churches. . . I Jesus have sent mine **angel** to testify unto you these things in the churches.”*

This is true of the **book of Daniel** as well. The angel **Gabriel** was the being who was sent by God to give visions to Daniel.

Revelation 1:11 (also 1:19; 19:9; 21:5): John was ordered by the angel to write what he saw while he was in vision

*"I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, what thou seest **write** in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea."*

Daniel 7:16: Daniel and John both conversed with angels

*"I came near unto one of them that stood by, and **asked him** the truth of all this. So **he told me**, and made me know the interpretation of the things."*

Revelation 10:9

*"And I went unto the angel, and **said unto him**, Give me the little book. And **he said unto me**, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey."*

Revelation 7:13, 14: John also spoke with beings other than ordinary angels

*"And one of the elders answered, **saying unto me**: What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they? And **I said unto him**, Sir, thou knowest. And **he said to me**: These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."*

Revelation 1:12: John also conversed with Jesus

*"And I turned to see the **voice that spake with me**. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man. . ."*

Revelation 21:9, 10: John was transported by his angel to faraway places (1:10; 4:2; 17:1, 3; 21:9, 10)

*"And there came unto me **one of the seven angels** which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And **he carried me away in the spirit** to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God."*

2 Corinthians 12:2-4: The visionary experience of a prophet who was transported in vision to heaven was so very real that the prophet actually thought that he was physically there.

*"I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether **in the body**, I cannot tell; or whether **out of the body**, I cannot tell: God knoweth) such a one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."*

Revelation 21:10, 11: John struggled for words to describe heavenly realities

*"And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Having the glory of God: and her light **was like** unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. . ."*

John's Literary Sources

There can be no doubt that the book of Revelation was inspired by the Holy Spirit. But what sources did God employ to give John the information? Was everything that was given to John original? The book of Revelation seems to have **three** sources:

- John borrowed **words, phrases, and sentences** from other **inspired sources**. There are **hundreds** of allusions to the **Old Testament** (for example, Revelation 14:7). Many ideas also come from other **New Testament** sources (for example, Revelation 1:7 with Matthew 24:30)
- John borrowed words, phrases and sentences from other **non-inspired sources**. We know, for example, that John occasionally used the language of **Enoch and Tobit**.

Does this mean that the books of Enoch and Tobit were inspired? Of course not! It simply means the language of these books was common jargon in John's day and God gave him permission to use this language, which was well known to the recipients of his book. Let's notice a few parallels between Revelation and the book of Enoch:

Enoch 40:1 "After that [Revelation 7:9] I saw thousands of thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand [Revelation 5:11], I saw a multitude beyond number and reckoning [Revelation 7:9] who stood before the Lord of spirits."

Enoch 91:16 "And the first heaven shall depart and pass away, and a new heaven shall appear" [Revelation 21:1]

Enoch 90:26 ". . . They were judged and found guilty and cast into the fiery abyss" [Revelation 20:15].

- John received much information in **visions and dreams**, which was original and is not found in any other **extant source** that we know of.

John's Literary Ethics

- John used **no direct quotations** from his sources. He generally **paraphrased** them and used **allusions**.
- John never gave any **source credit** in his book though he **borrowed prolifically** from other inspired sources and less frequently from **non-inspired** sources.
- Was John a **plagiarist** because he did not credit his sources? Someone might say: "But the **literary ethics of John's day** did not require authors to credit their sources." This may well be true, but **Matthew**, in contrast to John, is very careful to give credit to his sources (1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 3:3; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 22:31; 24:15; 27:9, 35)
- Though John **borrowed** material from other sources, his book is a **totally new literary production**. In fact, those who have carefully studied the **literary structure** of this book have concluded that it is a **work of art**. The book is **meticulously organized** around the

Hebrew sanctuary. In fact, it follows the precise order of the sanctuary service. Like a **mosaic**, each part of the book is **linked beautifully** with every other part.

- We could use the following example: Let's suppose that **ten** different contractors go to **Home Depot** and each of them buys the necessary materials to build a house. They all buy **nails, lumber, concrete, sand, drywall, tile, shingles, doors, windows, electrical wiring, light fixtures, etc.** But when each of them finishes his house, there are **ten totally different** houses. They all used the **same materials** but they all put them together differently.

Revelation's Symbolic Character

The book of Revelation presents God's end time message in **symbolic, coded** language and therefore the language must be **deciphered**. For example, the book describes the **dragon, the beast, the false prophet, the harlot, the wine, the twelve stars, the waters, the earth, the two witnesses, the seal of God, the mark of the beast, the 1260 days, the seven horns, the seven eyes, etc.** But what do these symbols mean? In order to comprehend the book it is necessary to **decode** or **decipher** this symbolic language.

The Central Thesis and Theme of Revelation

Even a casual look at the book of Revelation reveals that the central theme of the book is the **great controversy between Christ and Satan with Christ being the final victor!** This theme is especially revealed in chapters **12 and 13** where Christ and Satan are in a death struggle. This battle is constantly in the **background of the book**. The book of Revelation actually reveals the history, which is being written **behind history**.

Revelation's Two Halves

The **first half** of Revelation is of **historical** emphasis. The **churches, the seals and the trumpets** all begin to be fulfilled in the days of the apostles and climax at the end time (chapters 1-9)

The **second half** of Revelation (chapters 12-22) deals primarily with events at the **very end of history** including the powers which will **oppose God's people** (12, 13), the **warning against these powers** (14) the **close of human probation** (15), the **plagues** (16-18), the **second coming** (19), the **millennium** (20) and the **earth made new** (21, 22).

In the **very heart of the book** is the episode about the **little book** (Revelation 10) and the opening of the **Most Holy Place** (Revelation 11:19)

Satan Attempted to Kill John

Christian tradition has it that during the reign of the emperor **Domitian**, John was thrown into a **cauldron** of boiling oil but was miraculously preserved, as were the **three young men** in the fiery furnace in the days of Daniel. Ellen White supports this tradition:

"John was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, but the Lord preserved the life of His faithful servant, even as He preserved the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace." AA, p. 569

Ellen G. White's Visionary Experience

Ellen White had the testimony of Jesus:

Revelation 12:17: Ellen White had the testimony of Jesus

*"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the **testimony of Jesus Christ**." (19:10; 22:8, 9)*

Ellen White frequently called her messages "**the testimonies**" because she had the Testimony of Jesus (Rev. 12:17)

Ellen White's message was primarily for the church:

Ellen White's message, like that of John the Baptist was primarily for the church. She wrote an entire series of nine volumes called, Testimonies for the Church.

1 Corinthians 14:22: The gift of prophecy is primarily for those who believe

*"Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but **prophesying** serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe."*

Ellen White was as dead when she was in vision:

"They thought that I was dead, and there they watched and cried and prayed so long, but to me it was heaven, it was life." Manuscript 16, 1894

Ellen White repeatedly used expressions such as 'I Saw' and 'I Was Shown':

In the earliest edition of the great controversy story (Spiritual Gifts), Ellen White the expression "**I saw**" or "**I was shown**" an average of about **once per page**. Later, in the book The Great Controversy, these expressions were **not included** because the book was used for the general public and Ellen White did not want to **prejudice** them against the book.

Ellen White's message was given to her by the Holy Spirit through the ministration of an angel:

Though Ellen White's message was given to her by inspiration of the **Holy Spirit**, yet it was imparted to her by an angel whom she called "**my guide**", "**my instructor**" or "**my accompanying angel**."

The angel ordered Ellen White to write while she was in vision:

"While in vision, I was commanded by an angel to write the vision. I obeyed, and wrote readily." (Testimonies, volume 1, p. 73)

Ellen White asked her angel questions:

"I begged of my attending angel to let me remain in that place. I could not bear the thought of coming back to this dark world again. Then the angel said, "You must go back, and if you are

faithful, you, with the 144,000, shall have the privilege of visiting all the worlds and viewing the handiwork of God." Early Writings, p. 40.

In the famous "**train vision**," she asked her angel who the conductor was to which the angel replied that it was Satan disguised as an angel of light. (Early Writings, p. 88)

Ellen White spoke with inhabitants of other planets:

God took her in vision to another world where she asked **one of the inhabitants** why they were so much lovelier than those on the earth to which he replied:

"We have lived in strict obedience to the commandments of God, and have not fallen by disobedience, like those on the earth." Christian Experience and Teaching, p. 98

Ellen White once saw **Enoch** on a planet with seven moons. She asked Enoch if this was the place to which he was translated from the earth to which he said:

"It is not, the city is my home, and I have come to visit this place." (Christian Experience and Teaching, p. 98)

Is this really so **preposterous**? The Bible says that Enoch was **translated to heaven** from among the living. Hebrews 11 says that the Old Testament heroes **looked forward to a city** whose builder and maker is God.

Ellen White also spoke with Jesus:

Ellen White once asked Jesus if the Father had a **form** such as Himself. Jesus answered that He did and then added:

"If you should once behold the glory of His person, you would cease to exist." (Early Writings, p. 54)

Ellen White witnessed future events as if they were transpiring in the present:

Ellen White was sometimes **transported to the future** where she witnessed events as if they were transpiring in the present. For example, she saw in vision a future conversation that she had with brothers **Fitch and Stockman** under the tree of life. Christian Experience and Teaching, p. 61

Ellen White was transported in vision by her angel to distant places:

"Soon I was lost to earthly things and was wrapped in a vision of God's glory. I saw an angel flying swiftly to me. He quickly carried me from the earth to the Holy City. In the city I saw a temple, which I entered." Early Writings, p. 32

Ellen White described her experience while she was in vision:

"As inquiries are frequently made as to my state in vision, and after I come out, I would say that when the Lord sees fit to give a vision, I am taken into the presence of Jesus and angels, and am entirely lost to earthly things. I can see no farther than the angel directs me. My attention is often directed to scenes transpiring upon earth." Selected Messages, volume 1, p. 36

Human language was inadequate to describe what she saw:

“The wonderful things I there saw I cannot describe. Oh, that I could talk in the language of Canaan, then could I tell a little of the glory of the better world.” Early Writings, p. 19

“Language is altogether too feeble to attempt a description of heaven. As the scene rises before me, I am lost in amazement. Carried away with the surpassing splendor and excellent glory, I lay down the pen, and exclaim, “Oh, what love! what wondrous love!” The most exalted language fails to describe the glory of heaven or the matchless depths of a Savior’s love.” Early Writings, p. 289.

Ellen White’s Literary Sources

A significant part of The Great Controversy consists of **words, phrases and sentences** from the **Old and New Testaments**. The Scripture references at the **end of the book** reveal her profound knowledge of Scripture.

Ellen White also borrowed some material from **non-inspired sources**. In the **first editions** of what is now The Great Controversy, (Spiritual Gifts and Spirit of Prophecy) she used quotations from **other authors** but did **not give them credit**. Some say this was **literary piracy** or **plagiarism**. We must remember, however that the literary ethics of the **19th century** were different than they are today.

Ellen White **did not try to hide** the fact that she used non-canonical sources. She readily announced this in the **introduction** to The Great Controversy:

“In some cases where a historian has so grouped together events as to afford, in brief, a comprehensive view of the subject, or has summarized details in a convenient manner, his words have been quoted; but in some instances no specific credit has been given, since the quotations are not given for the purpose of citing that writer as authority, but because his statement affords a ready and forcible presentation of the subject. In narrating the experience and views of those carrying forward the work of reform in our own time, similar use has been made of their published works.” GC, p. xi.

Much of the material in The Great Controversy is **original** with Ellen White. Chapters such as **“God’s People Delivered,” “The Desolation of the Earth”** and **“The Controversy Ended”** came to her directly in **visions and dreams**.

She took what she **found in Scripture**, what God gave her in **visions** and what she researched in **non-inspired sources** and she **wove them** into a **literary masterpiece** totally **unlike anything**, which has ever been written! What John developed in **22 chapters**, Ellen White amplified in **678 pages**.

A Decoded Book of Revelation

Ellen White **decodes the symbols** of Revelation: She **decodes** the meaning of the **dragon, the beast, the false prophet, the harlot, the wine, the twelve stars, the waters, the earth, the two**

witnesses, the seal of God, the mark of the beast, the 1260 days, the seven horns, the seven eyes, etc. What Revelation presents in symbols she presents in matter of fact language.

The Central Theme

The Great Controversy is **not an ordinary history book**. It is actually a **philosophy of history**. In it, Ellen White sees the history, which is being **written behind history**. She discerns the **real causes** of visible historical events. She is allowed **to look behind the veil** into the invisible world to see the battle between **two supernatural forces** vying for world dominion. She sees what the **most able historian** is not able to see. This is what makes her **book unique** and unrivalled.

For example, she speaks of **natural disasters** occurring more frequently and each time more terrible. The historian would simply describe that these events **occurred** and **where they occurred** and **how many people** were killed. Ellen White explains the **real reason** for them—who caused them and why. Satan wants to blame God's people. GC, pp. 589, 590

Some get all hung up because Ellen White said the **bell of the palace** in Paris was the signal for the beginning of the **St. Bartholomew Massacre**. Most historians think it was the **bell of the Cathedral** which gave the signal. Those who get hung up on this fail to realize that Ellen White's role was **not to define which bell** tolled but rather who was behind the massacre and why—**Satan wanted to stomp out the Reformation in France**. So don't get all hung up over a bell!!

The Book's Two Halves

The **first half** of The Great Controversy is of **historical** emphasis (pp. 17-316). These pages cover basically what is described in the **churches, the seals and the trumpets** (Revelation 1-9)

The **second half** of the book deals primarily with **end time events** (pp. 419-612) including the role of the **kings** of the earth, the **papacy** and apostate **Protestantism** in end time events. She describes the trial over **Sabbath** and **Sunday** and how the **three angels' messages** reveal to the world the real issues in the controversy. She then describes the **close of probation**, the **plagues**, the time of **Jacob's trouble**, the **second coming** of Jesus, the **millennium** and the **earth made new**. Even a cursory glance reveals that she is expounding upon the events of Revelation **in their proper order**.

At the **center** of the book (pp. 317-408) is a description of the **Millerite movement**, their **bittersweet experience** and Christ's opening of the **heavenly temple** to begin the judgment. This is also at the very center of the book of Revelation.

Satan Attempted to Kill Ellen G. White

On **March 14, 1858**, Ellen White received her great controversy vision at **Lovett's Grove, Ohio**. On the way back home James and Ellen laid plans to publish what she had seen. They decided to stop over at the **Palmer home** in **Jackson, Michigan**. Ellen White describes what happened next:

"After I came out of vision, the afflicted friends and a portion of the congregation bore the body to its resting-place, and great solemnity rested upon those who remained. Two days after this occurrence, we took the cars at Fremont for Jackson, Mich. While on the cars we arranged our

plans for writing and publishing the book called 'The Great Controversy' immediately on our return home. I was then as well as usual. On the arrival of the train at Jackson, we went to Bro. Palmer's. We had been in the house but a short time, when, as I was conversing with Sister Palmer, my tongue refused to utter what I wished to say, and seemed large and numb. A strange, cold sensation struck my heart, passed over my head, and down my right side. For a time, I was insensible, but was aroused by the voice of earnest prayer. I tried to use my left limbs, but they were perfectly useless. For a short time I did not expect to live. It was my third shock of paralysis, and although within fifty miles of home, I did not expect to see my children again. I called to mind the triumphant season I had enjoyed at Lovett's Grove, and thought it was my last testimony, and felt reconciled to die." *Life Sketches*, p. 338.

Was this just a common ordinary stroke?

"At the time of the Conference at Battle Creek, in June, 1858, Sister Hutchins, who now sleeps in Jesus, was sorely afflicted with sickness, and we all felt that she would go down to the grave unless the Lord should raise her up. While praying for her, the power of God rested upon us all, and as it came upon me, I was taken off in vision. In that vision it was shown that in the sudden attack at Jackson, Satan intended to take my life, in order to hinder the work I was about to write; but angels of God were sent to my rescue. I also saw, among other things, that I should be blest with better health than before the attack at Jackson." *Life Sketches*, p. 339.

Introduction to the Book of Revelation

The title of the book contains several important points:

- The beginning of verse 1 indicates that the book is not about beasts, mysterious numbers and mystic symbols. It is "the **Revelation of Jesus Christ**".
- The Greek word *apocalypsis* means '**to reveal or unveil**' and is the opposite of the word *apocryphon* which means "to conceal or to hide". The book of Revelation is not sealed as was the book of Daniel (see Daniel 12:4; Revelation 22:10).
- There are **four reasons** given why the book can be understood:
- First, the **title** ('the revelation') clearly indicates that the book of Revelation is not concealed but rather revealed. Second, a **blessing** is pronounced upon those who read, hear and obey. How could people claim the blessing if they could not understand the book? The word 'hear' in the accusative case always means 'to hear with understanding'. Third, there is an explicit command **not to seal** the book. Fourth, there is a **command 'to hear** what the Spirit says to the churches'. Once again, the word 'hear' means 'to hear with understanding'.
- People offer two types of **excuses** to not study the book: (**Isaiah 29:11, 12**)

*"The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is **sealed**, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, "Read this, please." And he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed." ¹² Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, "Read this, please." And he says, "**I am not literate.**"*

- Revelation is the only book of the Bible which was **divinely named**
- The book is of **divine origin** as indicated by the expression “which God gave”
- The introduction clearly identifies the **writer** of the book as John
- The **recipients** of the message are identified as “his servants”. This makes clear that the message of the book was not given for the world at large but rather for God’s own chosen people (see Daniel 12:10; compare Matthew 24:6). It goes without saying that after God’s people assimilate the message they are to share it with the world.
- Revelation was given in **symbolic language**, which appeals to the **eyes and ears**. It might be said that it is God’s message in prophetic cartoons. The book is presented in the form of a **play or drama** which is divided into different acts or scenes participated in by different actors. The emphasis on seeing and hearing is abundant:

35 times: I Saw
 7 times: I beheld
 5 times: I looked
 2 times: He showed me
 2 times: There appeared
 28 times: I heard
 18 times: Behold
 4 times: Come and see

- The **purpose** of the book is clearly stated: It was given so that God’s people would know “what must soon take place.”
- A **divine promise** is given to those who “read, hear and obey” the book’s message.

Commentary on Verses 4-10

In verses 4 and 5, we have a clear reference to the fact that the Godhead is composed of three persons. The message of Revelation is “from him which is, and which was, and which is to come” (**the Father**), and “from the seven spirits which are set before His throne” (**the Holy Spirit**), and “from Jesus Christ” (**the Son**).

“The Faithful Witness”

The word “witness” here is *martyros*. It is the same root word that is translated “testimony” in Revelation 12:17 and 19:10. We can trust the message of the book of Revelation because in it is the **faithful testimony** of Jesus. The source for the expression ‘faithful witness’ is to be found in **Jeremiah 42:5** where the LORD is called the faithful and true witness. Jesus is called by the same name in Revelation 3:14. Clearly, Jesus is to be identified as the JHWH of the Old Testament.

Yet Jesus does not bear the message directly. It is through the Holy Spirit as His Ambassador that Christ bears faithful and true witness to the churches. The Holy Spirit is Christ’s representative and spokesperson (John 15:26) and it is through Him as Christ’s Ambassador

that the message is imparted. And yet the Holy Spirit imparts the message to John through the mediation of an angel.

*“The Holy Spirit comes to the world as **Christ's representative**. It not only speaks the truth, but it is the truth--the **faithful and true Witness**. It is the great Searcher of hearts, and is acquainted with the characters of all. The Holy Spirit has often come to our schools, and has not been recognized, but has been treated as a stranger, perhaps even as an intruder. Every teacher should know and welcome this **heavenly guest**. If the teachers will open their own hearts to receive the Spirit, they will be prepared to co-operate with it in working for their students; and when it is given free course, it will effect wonderful transformations. It will work in each heart, correcting selfishness, molding and refining the character, and bringing even the **thoughts into captivity to Christ**. Special Testimonies on Education, p. 51.*

“The first-begotten of the dead”

Jesus was not literally **the first** to resurrect from the dead. In the Old Testament, several people were resurrected including Moses, the son of the widow of Zareptah and the body of the dead man who touched Elisha's bones. In the New Testament Jesus also raised the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Nain and Lazarus before His own resurrection.

Jesus is the first born from the dead in the same sense in which he is the first-born of all creation (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15, 18; see also Jeremiah 31:9; Exodus 4:22; Psalm 89:27). The words “first-begotten” and “first-born” are identical in Greek. The words do not refer to **order of origin** but rather **pre-eminence** (see Colossians 1:15-18). The resurrection of Jesus is pre-eminent above all other resurrections because His resurrection makes all others possible. Jesus said: “Because I live, you shall live also.” See also I Corinthians 15:16-23.

“Prince of the kings of the earth”

The word “prince” here is to be understood in the sense of “ruler” (see Daniel 2:21). Jesus is the absolute ruler over the kings of the earth and therefore in Revelation 17:14 He is called King of kings.

Verses 4 and 5 give us the historical and chronological markers for the book of Revelation. All of the verbs in these verses are in the past. Jesus “loved us” (John 3:16; I John 2:2), “washed us” (I John 1:7; 7:14), and “has made us” kings and priests (I Peter 2:9-10). Thus, the beginning point of the book of Revelation is found in what Jesus did while He was on earth.

We are now spiritual kings and priests in the spiritual house of God. But according to Revelation 5:10; 20:6 we shall be kings and priests literally in the heavenly temple during the Millennium.

“With clouds”

The climax of the book of Revelation is the second coming of Christ, the millennial judgment, the eradication of evil and the creation of new heavens and new earth. It is significant that Jesus comes ‘with’ clouds. In other passages, Jesus is said to come **in** the clouds of heaven. What is symbolized by the clouds that Jesus will come with? Matthew 25:31 says He will come with all his holy angels. Let's look at this a little more closely.

Isaiah 19:1 tells us that God rides upon a **swift cloud**. Psalm 104:3, 4 says that the clouds are His **chariots** and that he walks upon the wings of the wind. Psalm 68:17 emphasizes that the chariots of God are the angels. The cloud that covered Mt. Sinai was a **cloud of angels** (Deuteronomy 33:2). See Psalm 18:10. The angels are also compared to **wind and tongues of fire** thus indicating that on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit imparted the gift of tongues through the ministrations of the angels.

Every eye shall see Him

“Every eye shall see Him and those who pierced Him and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him” (Revelation 1:7)

Every eye of those who are alive will see Jesus come. But there are **two special groups** of dead people who will rise to witness the second coming as well. The following texts describe the resurrection of these two groups: Matthew 26:64; Daniel 12:2; Revelation 14:13; Matthew 24:30.

Revelation 1:7 does not refer to the general resurrection of the wicked because they will not live again until the end of the thousand years (Revelation 20:5). So this must be a special resurrection of a select group—those who pierced Jesus.

Matthew 26:64 (see also Matthew 24:30): Jesus promised the Jewish high priest that he would be an eyewitness to the second coming so he must resurrect in order to witness the event:

“Jesus said to him, “It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Revelation 14:13: There will also be a special resurrection of a **select group** of righteous people. Revelation describes this special resurrection, which is composed of those who died in the faith of the third angel’s message:

“Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.’

- In context, this text comes immediately **after** the third angel’s message (Revelation 14:12) and **before** the second coming (Revelation 14:14).
- The word **“blessed”** is important. This blessing is not pronounced upon **all** those who have died in the Lord from the beginning of time. It is only pronounced on a **special group** who died in the Lord **after** the third angel’s message began to be proclaimed. This is clearly indicated by the expression **“from now on.”**
- Death is spoken of as **“rest”**. In Revelation 4:8 and 14:11, the word is used to describe ‘ceasing’. In this sense it is similar to the Hebrew word *shabbath*, which means ‘to cease’. At death, a person ceases from their labors as we do when we sleep. This is the reason why the Bible, over 50 times, compares death with sleep.

- The third angel’s message began to be proclaimed shortly after **1844** so those who die in the Lord after this date are blessed in a special sense.
- No Seventh-day Adventists who are saved will come forth in the general resurrection— all will come forth in the special resurrection!

Daniel 12:7, 11, 12

- Some have attempted to make these time periods literal time in the future but **Revelation 10:6** precludes this possibility. These time periods had to end in 1844 at the very latest.
- The 1260, 1290 and 1335 days are mentioned. The 1260 days begin in 538 and end in 1798. The 1290 days begin in 508 and end in 1798. The 1335 days begin in 508 and end in 1843 (for more on these dates, see the well-documented works of Heidi Heiks, available from Secrets Unsealed; also see the booklet produced by BRI and written by Gerhard Pfandl).
- The word “blessed” in Daniel 12:12 and in Revelation 14:13 links the two texts together. A special blessing is pronounced upon those who **wait and reach** until the 1335 days and upon those who live after the third angel’s message begins to be proclaimed.
- At the latest, the time periods of Daniel 12 have to end in 1844 because we are told in Revelation 10:6 that prophetic time would be no longer after 1844. Ellen White warned repeatedly about the dangers of prophetic time speculation. All time prophecies came to an end in 1844. There will never again be a message that is based on time.

*“There will always be false and fanatical movements made by persons in the church who claim to be led of God--those who will run before they are sent and will **give day and date for the occurrence of unfulfilled prophecy**. The enemy is pleased to have them do this, for their successive failures and leading into false lines cause confusion and unbelief.” Selected Messages, volume 2, p. 84*

*“Our position has been one of waiting and watching, with **no time-proclamation to intervene** between the close of the prophetic periods in 1844 and the time of our Lord’s coming.” Manuscript Releases, volume 10, p. 270*

*“The people will **not have another message upon definite time**. After this period of time [Rev. 10:4-6], reaching from 1842 to 1844, there can be no definite tracing of the prophetic time. The longest reckoning reaches to the autumn of 1844.” Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 7, p. 971*

Daniel 12:2

- We are told that **many** (Hebrew: *rab*, see Daniel 12:3, 4, 10; 11:44) of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will be raised. Notice that **not all** who are dead resurrect but rather “**many**”.

- This text speaks of a partial resurrection of **some righteous** and **some wicked** people. This cannot be referring to the **general resurrection** of the wicked because they do not rise until **after the millennium**.

The question that begs to be asked is this: Why do those who died this side of 1844 resurrect in a special resurrection? Why not just resurrect them at the same time as the righteous from all ages? There is a practical reason:

Those who died after 1844 understood the Present Truth concerning the sanctuary, the Sabbath, the state of the dead, the identity of the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, the image of the beast and the mark of the beast. If those who died before 1844 resurrected in the special resurrection, they would not be able to understand the historical context of what is happening at that particular moment.

But Seventh-day Adventists who have died after 1844 and before the close of probation will understand these matters because they have studied and preached them. They will stand with the 144,000 and comprehend exactly what is going on.

Furthermore, God will resurrect His people to vindicate them before their wicked tormentors. The Synagogue of Satan will come and worship before the feet of God's people (Revelation 3:9, 10).

Notice how Ellen White describes this special resurrection:

"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. 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. "They also which pierced Him" (Revelation 1:7), those that mocked and derided Christ's dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people, are raised to behold Him in His glory and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient." GC, p. 637

"The Alpha and the Omega"

This person is identified as Jesus Christ in Revelation 1:11-13; 2:8; Revelation 22:12, 13. Jesus is God in the highest sense because in the Old Testament it is YHWH who is described as the first and the last, the beginning and the end (see Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12) Jesus is the Genesis (Alpha) and Revelation (Omega) of world history.

"In the Spirit on the Lord's Day"

Ranko Stefanovic and Samuele Bacchiocchi have argued that the reference to the 'Lord's Day' in Revelation 1:10 is the same as the Day of the Lord in the Old Testament. In other words, John was transported in the Spirit (in vision) to the second coming. But such a view does not fit the context (where Jesus is in the holy place ministering to the seven churches) and is in open contradiction of the Spirit of Prophecy. Ellen White explicitly explains the meaning of the 'Lord's Day':

"It was on the Sabbath that the Lord of glory appeared to the exiled apostle. The Sabbath was as sacredly observed by John on Patmos as when he was preaching to the people in the towns and cities of Judea. He claimed as his own the precious promises that had been given regarding that day. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," John writes, "and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. . . . And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks One like unto the Son of man." Revelation 1:10-13. AA, pp. 581-582

Ellen White's view is supported by texts such as Mark 2:27 where Jesus describes Himself as the Lord of the Sabbath and Isaiah 58:13 where God calls the day His own.

The Background of John 14-16

In John 14-16 Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit as His representative and spokesperson:

*"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: **I will come to you.**"*

In the Upper Room Jesus had told His disciples that there were some things He could not then and there tell them. But He promised that when Holy Spirit was poured out He would show them things to come (John 16:12-13). Many of these "things to come" are found in the book of Revelation. In other words, the "things to come" of John 16:13 are found in the book of Revelation. In John 15 and 16, Jesus described the trials and tribulations, which are later described in the book of Revelation (see for example John 16:1-3, 32-33).

"Seven golden candlesticks"

Revelation 1:12: John sees seven lamps **irradiating their light**.

Revelation 1:20: The seven lamps represent the **seven churches** of Asia Minor which in turn represent seven stages in the history of the church universal. The church is to **shed light** but in order to shed light the wicks must be regularly **trimmed** and the lamps must be supplied with **oil**.

Leviticus 24:1-4: It was the task of the High Priest to make sure the **wicks** were trimmed and the candelabrum had sufficient **oil**. Aaron typified Jesus Christ who is our High Priest (Hebrews 8:1, 2).

Revelation 1:13: Jesus was seen **walking** in the midst of the lamps. This means that Jesus walks in the **midst of church history**. What does He **do while He walks** in the midst of the seven lampstands that represent seven consecutive stages of church history? He keeps the light of the church burning.

“Son of Man”

This is a description of the glorified Jesus who serves in the heavenly sanctuary as our High Priest. Repeatedly during His ministry Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of Man. Daniel 7 has the background to the description in Revelation 1 but the historical occasion is different. Whereas Revelation 1 deals with Christ’s ministry in the holy place at His ascension, Daniel 7 describes the ministry of Jesus in the most holy place at the beginning of the Investigative Judgment.

“Walking”

Jesus is seen walking among the seven candlesticks. He is not a passive participant simply observing what is occurring in church history but is actively involved in making sure that the lamps never go out. He is always trimming the wicks and supplying the oil to make sure that the church sheds His light (see Leviticus 24:1-4). There were times in church history when the light grew dim (during the Dark Ages) but it was never totally extinguished (see Leviticus 26:11-12).

Jesus walks among His people through the supervision of the Holy Spirit and by the ministrations of the angels. Speaking about the 1901 General Conference where the denominational structure was reorganized, Ellen White remarks:

*“God’s **angels** have been **walking up and down** in this congregation. I want every one of you to remember this, and I want you to remember also that God has said that He will heal the wounds of His people.” General Conference Bulletin, April 25, 1901.*

*“Christ is spoken of as **walking** in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Thus is symbolized His relation to the churches. He is in **constant communication** with His people. **He knows** their true state. He **observes** their order, their piety, their devotion. Although He is high priest and mediator in the sanctuary above, yet He is represented as walking up and down in the midst of His churches on the earth. With untiring wakefulness and unremitting vigilance, **He watches** to see whether the light of any of His sentinels is burning dim or going out. If the candlesticks were left to mere human care, the flickering flame would languish and die; but He is the **true watchman** in the Lord’s house, the true warden of the temple courts. His continued care and sustaining grace are the source of life and light.” AA, p. 586*

“Robe”

The *poderes* was a long robe used by the High Priest. The background is once again found in Leviticus 24. Aaron was the high priest and one of His duties was to keep the lamps of the candelabrum burning. The kings of Israel also used *poderes* (I Samuel 18:4; 24:5, 11). Upon his ascension, Jesus became our king and priest. This was the message that was delivered by Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:36; Psalm 110:1, 4).

“A golden girdle”

Once again, we encounter the attire of the high priest in Israel (Leviticus 8:7). The key text, which explains this, is found in the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 11:5:

“Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist.”

“Hair White as Wool”

The color white represents purity (Revelation 7:13, 14) and gray and white hair symbolize wisdom and aged experience (Job 15:10; Proverbs 20:29) and dignity (Proverbs 16:31).

Eyes of fire: Remedial and retributive

The eyes of Jesus are depicted as being fiery, and fire is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The eyes represent wisdom because the Spirit is all-wise and searches out the deep things of God (Ephesians 1:18). The Holy Spirit knows all and discerns all (Job 34:21, 22; Psalm 139:1-9; Psalm 15:3).

Having assumed a human nature, Jesus sees all through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit, His emissary (Zechariah 4:10; Revelation 5:6; 2:18 where the eyes of Jesus are identified as the seven spirits of God sent into all the earth). In Revelation one, the eyes are **remedial** in the sense that Jesus detects sin (‘I know your works’) with the intention of eradicating it.

In Revelation 19:12 we are told that people will have to meet those eyes again but in the context of **retribution**. The book of Revelation informs us that when the wicked see those eyes at Jesus’ coming they hide in the caves and cry for the rocks to fall upon them to hide them from the face of Jesus (Revelation 6:15-17). It will then be too late for the eyes to fulfill a remedial role.

In Ezekiel 1:12 we are told that the Spirit guides the movements of the angels. They move like lightning (1:14), they are like torches of fire (1:13), are full of eyes (10:12) and have four faces, that is, they see in every direction (1:17). The angels move the wheels of history wisely under the direction of the Holy Spirit who is now the representative of the ‘Commander of the Lord’s host’ (*The Upward Look*, p. 82). The Holy Spirit is at the command and control center of the universe and the angels are his foot soldiers. The angels are the intermediaries between heaven and earth as depicted by the ladder which Jacob saw in his dream (see John 1:51).

The relationship between the Holy Spirit and the ministration of the angels is vividly described in Ezekiel **1:12-14** where the angels are impelling the wheels of history under the command of the Holy Spirit:

*“And each one went straight forward; they went wherever the spirit wanted to go, and they did not turn when they went. ¹³ As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning **coals of fire**, and like the appearance of **torches**. Fire was going back and forth among the living creatures; the fire was bright, and out of the **fire** went **lightning**. ¹⁴ And the living creatures ran back and forth, in appearance like a **flash of lightning**.”*

Ellen White makes it perfectly clear that the Holy Spirit impels the wheels through the ministration of the angels:

*“There were wheels within wheels in an arrangement so complicated that at first sight they appeared to Ezekiel to be all in confusion. But when they moved, it was with beautiful exactness and in perfect harmony. **Heavenly beings were impelling these wheels**, and, above all, upon the*

glorious sapphire throne, was the Eternal One; while round about the throne was the encircling rainbow, emblem of grace and love.” 5T p. 751

“The wheellike complications that appeared to the prophet to be involved in such confusion were under the guidance of an infinite hand. The Spirit of God, revealed to him as moving and directing these wheels, brought harmony out of confusion; so the **whole world was under His control**. Myriads of glorified beings were ready at His word to overrule the power and policy of evil men, and bring good to His faithful ones.” 5T p. 752

“The tireless vigilance of the heavenly messengers, their unceasing employment in their ministry in connection with the beings of earth, shows us how God's hand is guiding the wheel within a wheel.” 4BC p. 1161

“Face as the Sun”

Jesus is described in various passages of the Bible with solar imagery. In Matthew 17:2 we are told that at the transfiguration the face of Jesus shone as the sun (see also Daniel 10:5, 6). He is the Sun of righteousness that brings healing in His wings (Malachi 4:2)

“Right hand”

In the Bible the right hand is the hand of God’s favor (Matthew 25:33; Ephesians 1:20). Multiple times in Scripture Jesus is described as sitting at God’s right hand.

“Seven stars”

The seven stars represent all the faithful teachers of the Christian Church throughout its history (Revelation 1:20; 2:1).

“Christ is represented as holding the seven stars in His right hand. This assures us that no church faithful to its trust need fear coming to nought, for not a star that has the protection of Omnipotence can be plucked out of the hand of Christ.

“These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand.” Revelation 2:1. These words are spoken to the teachers in the church--those entrusted by God with weighty responsibilities. The sweet influences that are to be abundant in the church are bound up with God's ministers, who are to reveal the love of Christ. The stars of heaven are under His control. He fills them with light. He guides and directs their movements. If He did not do this, they would become fallen stars. So with His ministers. They are but instruments in His hands, and all the good they accomplish is done through His power.” AA, p. 586

Two-edged sword

It is notable that the two-edged sword comes out of the mouth of Jesus (Revelation 1:16). It is words that come out of the mouth, and thus the sword represents the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17; Matthew 4:4). The two edges represent the fact that the word is sharp but it could also represent the fact that the word of God is found in two places, the Old and New Testaments.

In this context, it is interesting to read the words of **L. D. Fleming** who attended one of the meetings where **William Miller** was preaching in **Portland, Maine**. Notice that it was the preaching of the Word of God that had 'cutting' power:

"Things here are moving powerfully. Last evening about two hundred requested prayers and the interest seems constantly increasing. The whole city seems agitated. Bro. Miller's lectures have not the least effect to frighten people; they are far from it. The great alarm is among those who do not come near them. Many who stay away and oppose, seem excited, and perhaps alarmed; but those who candidly hear are far from excitement or alarm.

*"The interest awakened by his lectures is of the most deliberate and dispassionate kind; though this is the greatest revival I ever saw, yet there is the least passionate excitement about it. It seems to take a deep hold on the main part of the community. What produces the effect is this: **Bro. Miller simply takes the sword of the Spirit, unsheathed, and lays its sharp edge on the naked heart, and it cuts; that is all.** Before the edge of this mighty weapon, infidelity falls and Universalism withers; false foundations vanish, and Babel's merchants wonder. It seems to me that this must be a little the nearest to apostolic revivals of anything that modern times have witnessed." RH, November 25, 1884*

Ellen White also described the cleansing power of the Word of God:

*"The worldliness in the church, which is the great cause of spiritual death, is attributable to the influence of selfish, ease-loving members. The progress of this **deadly malady** must be checked. The **surgeon's knife** cuts deep when it is necessary to remove **festering, pestilent matter**; so the word of God, sharper than any two-edged sword, must be made to **cut to the heart**, or the evil will never be removed." Signs of the Times, May 17, 1883.*

There is a close relationship between the eyes and the sword. Both symbols appear at the beginning and at the end of the book of Revelation (Revelation 1:16; 19:12). The eyes have the purpose of detecting the sins of the church and the sword has power to cut them out.

The following illustration will help us understand the relationship between the eyes and the sharp sword:

Before a person has a surgical procedure performed, the **surgeon must "see"** or diagnose what the **malady is**. Therefore, the technician will do **sonograms, x-rays, Kat scans** and other tests to **detect** the problem. After the instruments have detected or 'seen' the disease, the physician then **recommends surgery** so that the disease can be eradicated or cut out.

The patient might ask the surgeon: **"Will the surgery hurt?"** The physician will answer: "Yes it will, but would you rather have a **little hurt** now or have the disease kill you? Likewise, the Holy Spirit detects sin in our lives and the Word of God cuts it out if we consent to have the surgery. The surgery might be painful but it will save our lives.

Let's suppose that a certain person has a severe problem with pornography addiction. Then, one day, the person is reading the story of David's adultery with Bathsheba and its consequences. The person reads the story and then the story, through the power of the Holy

Spirit begins reading him! The Holy Spirit, through Scripture tells him: This is your story as well. The person began by searching the Scriptures and now the Scriptures are searching him!

We should never open the Bible without sincere prayer. We must plead that the Holy Spirit will use Scripture to show us our true condition. The heart of man is a **desperate rationalizer**. If we come to the Bible without a sincere and open heart and the spirit of the learner, we will use the Bible to justify our behavior. This is why people will come to the Bible and justify things such as eating pork, keeping Sunday, going to the movies, living a gay lifestyle, dressing immodestly, etc.

David prayed that God would search him:

Psalm 139:22, 23:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; 24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Hebrews 4:12, 13: This text puts the two symbols together:

*“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any **two-edged sword**, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a **discerner** of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His **sight**, but all things are naked and open to **the eyes** of Him to whom we must give account.”*

Mark 9:43-48: Sometimes it is as painful for us to give up sin as it would be to poke out an eye, or cut off a hand or a foot.

Another Picture of Jesus

Revelation 19:11, 14, 16: Jesus is described as coming with the armies of heaven, garbed as King of king and Lord of lords.

Revelation 19:12: The **eyes of Jesus** penetrate like fire. When the lost see those eyes, they hide in the caves and cry for the rocks to fall upon them (**Revelation 6:14-17**). It is too late for the eyes to do them any good.

Revelation 19:15: The sword now comes out of His mouth **to smite** the nations, not to save them. The sword now does not cut out the sin but rather destroys the sinner.

Matthew 21:44: We can now **fall upon the rock** and our selfish heart can be broken but if we don't the **rock will crush us**.

Matthew 3:11, 12: We can allow the fire of the Spirit to consume sin in our life but if we don't then the **fire will consume us**.

“To sin, wherever found, “our God is a consuming fire.” Heb. 12:29. In all who submit to His power the Spirit of God will consume sin. But if men cling to sin, they become identified with it. Then the glory of God, which destroys sin, must destroy them.” The Desire of Ages, p. 107

“Keys of Death and Hades”

Greek words with a Hebrew connotation:

The words ‘soul,’ (*psyche*) “spirit” (*pneuma*) and “hades” were very **common** in the Greek world. These same words are used extensively in the New Testament.

The **critical question** is this: Should the meaning of these words in the New Testament be determined by how they were used by Greek philosophers such as **Plato and Socrates** or must we determine their meaning by how their **equivalent Hebrew words** were used by the writers of the Old Testament? In short, is the meaning of the words determined by the Greek philosophers or the Hebrew Bible?

In order to find the answer to this very important question, we will **study two words**. The first is the Hebrew word *Sheol* and the second is the Greek word *Hades*.

The Hebrew Word *Sheol*:

The translation of the Hebrew word *Sheol* in the **KJV**:

- It is translated ‘grave’ some 30 times
- It is translated ‘hell’ some 31 times
- A handful of times it is translated ‘pit’ (for example, Numbers 16:30, 33)

In the overwhelming majority of the 31 times it is translated “hell” in the KJV, it could just as correctly have been translated ‘grave’. First, let’s notice several examples where the **KJV** and the **NKJV** correctly translate the word *Sheol* as ‘grave’. We will use the **NKJV** as our foundational version:

I Samuel 2:6: The synonymous parallelism in this verse clearly indicates that ‘kills’ is parallel to ‘down to the grave’ and ‘makes alive’ is parallel to ‘brings up’. Thus, *Sheol* is the resting place of the dead:

“The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave [Sheol] and brings up.”

Psalm 49:14-15: The grave is clearly linked with death

*“Like sheep they are laid in the grave [Sheol]; death shall feed on them; the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling. 15 But God will redeem **my soul** [nephesh, meaning ‘life’] from the power of the grave [Sheol], for He shall receive me.”*

Psalms 89:48: The synonymous parallelism clearly links the Sheol with death

*“What man can live and not see **death**? Can he deliver his life [soul in the KJV] from the power of the grave [Sheol]?”*

Ecclesiastes 9:10

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave [Sheol] where you are going.”

Isaiah 38:10

*"I said, "In the prime of my life I shall go to the **gates** of **Sheol** [the grave, KJV]; I am deprived of the remainder of my years."*

Isaiah 38:18

*"For Sheol [the grave, KJV] cannot **thank You**; **death** cannot **praise You**; those who **go down to the pit** cannot hope for Your truth."*

Psalms 6:5

*"For in **death** there is no **remembrance** of You; in the **grave** [Sheol] who will give You **thanks**?"*

Job 14:10-15

*"But man **dies** and is **laid away**; indeed he **breathes his last** and where is he? ¹¹ As water disappears from the sea, and a river becomes **parched** and **dries** up, ¹² so man **lies down** and does not rise. Till the heavens **are no more**, they will **not awake** nor be **roused** from their **sleep**. ¹³ "Oh, that You would hide me in the **grave** [would Job want to go to Sheol if the word meant 'hell'?), that You would **conceal me** until Your wrath is past, that You would appoint me a set time, and remember me! ¹⁴ If a man **dies**, shall he **live again**? All the days of my hard service I will wait, Till my **change** comes. ¹⁵ You shall **call**, and I will **answer** You; You shall **desire** the work of Your hands."*

Job 7:9:

*"As the cloud disappears and vanishes away, so he who goes down to the **grave** [Sheol] does not come up."*

The following are examples of places where the KJV translates the word *Sheol* with "hell":

Psalms 116:3: Note the synonymous parallelism that links ***Sheol* with death**

*"The pains of **death** surrounded me, and the pangs of **Sheol** ["hell" in the KJV] laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow."*

Proverbs 7:27: This text describes a harlot. Notice how the word *Sheol* is synonymous with 'death'.

*"Her house is the way to **hell** [Sheol], descending to the chambers of **death**."*

Proverbs 5:5: Again, the synonymous parallelism links *Sheol* with death.

*Her [the strange woman's] feet go down to **death**; her steps lay hold of **hell** [Sheol]".*

Proverbs 15:24: Notice the **antithetical parallelism** between life and death.

*"The way of **life** winds **upward** for the wise that he may turn away from **hell** [Sheol] **below**."*

Isaiah 28:15: Notice the synonymous parallelism where death and Sheol are linked.

*"Because you have said, "We have made a **covenant** with **death**, and with **Sheol** [hell in the KJV] we are in **agreement**."*

Amos 9:2: Notice that *Sheol* is a place that a person digs into.

*"Though they **dig** into **hell** [Sheol], from there my hand shall take them; though they **climb** up to heaven, from there I will bring them **down**."*

Jonah 2:2: When Jonah was swallowed by the great fish he cried out to the Lord from the belly of Sheol. Jonah was obviously not in hell!!

***KJV:** "And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of **hell** [Sheol] cried I, and thou heardest my voice."*

***NKJV:** "And he said: "I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, and He answered me." Out of the belly of **Sheol** [hell in the KJV] I cried, and You heard my voice."*

The New Testament cognate of *Sheol*:

The question which must be answered now is this: Which **New Testament word** is equivalent to *Sheol*? The answer is not hard to find. It is the word *Hades*. Before I prove this, let's take a look at a few statistics about the word *Hades* in the various Bible versions

Hades in the New Testament:

The word *Hades* is used **11 times** in the New Testament. **Only once** [in the parable of the **rich man and Lazarus** where Jesus is clearly using the **common beliefs** of the day as a teaching vehicle] does it describe a **place of burning**. The other ten times it could very well be translated "grave".

The King James Translation of Hades:

- **Ten times** it is translated 'hell'
- **Only once** is it translated 'grave' (**I Corinthians 15:55**)

The New King James Version transliterates the Greek word in all eleven references

The New International Version:

- Twice the word is translated 'depths' (Matthew 11:23; Luke 10:15)
- Thrice it is translated 'grave' (Acts 2:27, 31; I Corinthians 15:55)
- Five times it is transliterated "*hades*" (Matthew 16:18; Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14)
- Only once is it translated 'hell' (Luke 16:23)

Now, how do we know that *Hades* in the **New Testament** is equivalent to *Sheol* in the **Old Testament**? The key text is found in **Hosea 13:14**.

Hosea 13:14: This is the key text

"I will ransom them from the power of the **grave** [Sheol]; I will redeem them from **death**. O **Death**, I will be your plagues! O **Grave** [Sheol], I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes."

1 Corinthians 15:54-55: The apostle Paul is loosely paraphrasing Hosea 13:14 and uses the word *Hades* in place of the Hebrew word *Sheol*.

"So when this **corruptible** has put on **incorruption**, and this **mortal** has put on **immortality** then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "**Death** is swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵ "O **Death**, where is your sting? O **Hades** [grave in the KJV], where is your victory?"

Psalms 16:8-10: In this text David wrote prophetically about how the Messiah would feel when He was about to experience death. This passage was quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost who applied to Christ.

NKJV: "I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My **flesh** also will **rest** in hope. ¹⁰ For You will not leave **my soul** [nephesh] in **Sheol** [hell in the KJV], nor will You allow Your **Holy One** to see **corruption**."

Synonymous Parallelism

Thou → soul → hell
Thou → Holy one → corruption

Acts 2:25-27

KJV: "For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my **flesh** shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my **soul** [psyche] in **hell** [Hades], neither wilt thou suffer thine **Holy One** to see **corruption**."

NKJV: "For David says concerning Him: 'I foresaw the LORD always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. ²⁶ Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my **flesh** also will rest in hope. ²⁷ For You will not leave my **soul** in **Hades** [hell in the KJV], nor will You allow Your **Holy One** to see **corruption**."

NIV: "David said about him: "'I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. ²⁶ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my **body** also will live in hope, ²⁷ because you will not abandon **me** to the **grave**, nor will you let your Holy One see **decay**."

Acts 2:31

"He, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the **resurrection** of the Christ, that His soul [psyche] was not left in Hades [hell in the KJV], nor did His **flesh** see **corruption**."

The word *Hades* elsewhere in the New Testament:

Revelation 6:8: Notice that *Hades* is linked with death, not with life in misery.

*“So I looked, and behold, a **pale** horse. And the name of him who sat on it was **Death**, and **Hades** [hell in the KJV] followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.”*

Matthew 16:18: The context indicates that the gates (remember that in the Old Testament Sheol was conceived as having gates) of the grave would not prevail against Jesus because he was going to resurrect from the dead on the third day (see Matthew 16:22, 23).

*“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of **Hades** [hell in the KJV] shall not prevail against it.”*

Luke 10:15

*“And you, Capernaum, who are **exalted to heaven**, will be thrust down to **Hades** [hell in the KJV].”*

Matthew 11:23

*And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to **Hades** [hell in the KJV].”*

Two characteristics of the grave:

Psalms 115:17

*“The dead do not praise the LORD nor any who go down into **silence**.”*

Job 17:13, 14

*“If I wait for the grave [Sheol] as my house, If I make my bed in the **darkness**,¹⁴ If I say to corruption, 'You are my father,' and to the worm, 'You are my mother and my sister,'”*

There is no place **darker** or more **silent** than to be **six feet under!!**

Revelation 1:17, 18: Once again, Hades is linked with the idea of death. Jesus died and went to the grave but He came to life again and came forth from the grave

*“And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.”¹⁸ I am He who **lives**, and was **dead**, and behold, I am **alive forevermore**. Amen. And I have the keys of **Hades** [hell in the KJV] and of **Death**.”*

- **Satan** as the **jailer**
- The **tomb** as the **jail**
- The dead as the **prisoners**
- The jailer **has the keys** and **dares Jesus** to go in to **get them**.
- Jesus **goes into the tomb** and takes away the keys

- He **comes out** on the third day and says: *“I am the resurrection and the life, because I live, you will live also.”*
- This battle can be clearly seen in the story of the resurrection of Moses (Jude 9)

The Christian Hope is in the Resurrection, not the immortality of the soul:

1 Corinthians 15:16-22

*“For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁷ And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸ Then also those who have **fallen asleep** in Christ have **perished** [how could they perish if they are in heaven?]. ¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. ²⁰ But now **Christ is risen from the dead**, and has become the **first-fruits** of those who have **fallen asleep**. ²¹ For since by man came **death**, by Man also came the **resurrection** of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all **die**, even so in Christ all shall be **made alive**.”*

Matthew 27:51-53: Jesus took the **sample or first fruits** to heaven

“Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, ⁵² and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³ and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.”

Hebrews 2:14-15: We have no reason to fear death because Jesus has the keys

*“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that **through death** He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”*

In the past anti-venom was made from **venom**. That is to say: Jesus **defeated death by His death!** (This truth is taught by the serpent that was raised up in the wilderness).

Revelation 20:13-15

***KJV:** “And the sea gave up the **dead** which were in it; and **death** and hell [hades] delivered up the **dead** which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And **death** and hell [hades] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the **second death**. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”*

***NKJV:** “The sea gave up the **dead** who were in it and **Death** and **Hades** [hell in the KJV] delivered up the **dead** [notice that the people in **Hades** were dead, not alive] who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. ¹⁴ Then **Death** and **Hades** were cast [Hades itself cannot be the lake of fire because it is cast into the lake of fire] into the lake of fire. This is the **second death**. ¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire [notice that the wicked are cast into hell at the end of the millennium, not at death].”*

1 Corinthians 15:26

*“The **last enemy** that will be destroyed is death.”*

Revelation 21:4

*“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be **no more death**, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”*

Romans 8:11: Our only hope of life is to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts.

“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

Luke 16:23: The only place in the New Testament where Hades is a place of burning is in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Clearly, this story is allegorical as I have shown in the series, ‘Misunderstood Texts on the State of the Dead’.

“And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

The Seven Churches: Introductory Matters

In a **primary sense**, the messages to the seven churches represent seven stages in the history of the Christian church. But it bears noting that there are **individuals** at every stage who bear characteristics of churches in other stages. Notice how Ellen White applies both the message to Ephesus and Laodicea to the end time church:

“As it was in the days of Christ, so it is now; the Pharisees do not know their spiritual destitution. To them comes the message, “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.” Rev. 3:17, 18. Faith and love are the gold tried in the fire. But with many the gold has become dim, and the rich treasure has been lost. The righteousness of Christ is to them as a robe unworn, a fountain untouched. To them it is said, “I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Rev. 2:4, 5. DA p.280

In the following quotation, Ellen White applies the expression “their candlestick will be removed out of its place” to the church of **Laodicea** but the expression is used in Revelation in connection with the church of **Ephesus**:

*“I was shown the churches in different states that profess to be keeping the commandments of God and looking for the second coming of Christ. There is an alarming amount of indifference, pride, love of the world, and cold formality existing among them. And these are the people who are fast coming to resemble ancient Israel, so far as the want of piety is concerned. Many make **high claims to godliness** and yet are destitute of self-control. Appetite and passion bear sway; self is made prominent. Many are arbitrary, dictatorial, overbearing, boastful, proud, and unconsecrated. Yet some of these persons are ministers, handling sacred truths. Unless they repent, **their candlestick will be removed out of its place**. The Savior's curse pronounced upon*

the fruitless fig tree is a sermon to all formalists and boasting hypocrites who stand forth to the world in pretentious leaves, but are devoid of fruit. What a rebuke to those who have a form of godliness, while in their unchristian lives they deny the power thereof! He who treated with tenderness the very chief of sinners, He who never spurned true meekness and penitence, however great the guilt, came down with scathing denunciations upon those who made high professions of godliness, but in works denied their faith. 4T, pp. 403, 404

The various branches of the candelabrum are to be connected: Ephesus and Laodicea have similar characteristics and are on the same branch, Ten-year periods link both Smyrna and Philadelphia and thus they are on the same branch. Philadelphia and Smyrna are on the same branch because both are commended but are not rebuked. The church of Thyatira, on the other hand, is one of a kind or unique and stands by itself at the top of the candelabrum.

Seven Eras of the History of the Christian Church

- **Ephesus**: ‘Desirable’ (31-100 AD): Losing its first love
- **Smyrna**: ‘Bittersweet Myrrh’ (100-313 AD): Persecuted and killed
- **Pergamum**: ‘Acropolis’ or ‘Elevation’ (313-538): Key figure is Balaam
- **Thyatira**: ‘Sacrifice of Penitence’ (538-1517): Key figure is Jezebel
- **Sardis**: ‘Escaping’ (1517-1833): Looks alive but actually dead
- **Philadelphia**: ‘Brotherly Love’ (1833-1843): The Millerite movement
- **Laodicea**: ‘Judgment of the People’ (1844-Close of Probation): Judgment

The seven parts of each message

- **Address** to the church pastor
- **Description of Jesus** fitting the nature and experience of the respective church
- **Commendation** (praiseworthy features of the church)
- **Censure** or rebuke (things which need to be corrected)
- **Exhortation** (counsel or warning)
- **Appeal** to hear what the spirit says
- **Promises** to the overcomer. In Revelation 2 and 3, the church is portrayed as the church militant while in chapters 21, 22 it is portrayed as the church triumphant. The very same promises that Jesus made to the church in Revelation 2 and 3 are realized in Revelation 21 and 22.

The churches provide the **chronological and historical** framework for the events in the rest of the book. For example, the message to the church of Thyatira is amplified in the description of the first beast of Revelation 13 and the harlot of Revelation 17; the message to the church of Philadelphia is enlarged in Revelation 10 and 11:1, 2, 19 and the message to the church of Laodicea is enlarged in Revelation 14:7. The warning which was given to Laodicea about the

danger of being found naked (Revelation 3:17-18; 16:15) is further expounded upon in the period of the sixth plague. Thus, the series of the churches must be seen as the 'skeleton' that the rest of the book builds upon.

“STUDIES IN REVELATION-THE SEVEN CHURCHES”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #3 – Message to Ephesus

Revelation 2:1-7

"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write: 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: ² 'I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; ³ and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. ⁴ Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place — unless you repent. ⁶ But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.'"

The City of Ephesus

Ephesus was the fourth largest city of the Roman Empire and the capital of Asia Minor. It was famous for the temple of the goddess Diana who, according to Acts 19:27 'all the world worshiped'. The Temple was massive, measuring 324 feet by 164 feet and in the very center was the image of Diana. This temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world and took 220 years to build.

Diana was the moon goddess. Inscriptions have been found which describe her as “savior goddess” and “mother of the gods”. She is depicted as a many-breasted woman with an infant in her arms. It is no coincidence that in 431 AD Mary was officially proclaimed “the mother of God” in the Council of **Ephesus**. In Roman Catholic art, she is constantly depicted as the mother having the baby Jesus in her arms.

The Temple of Diana brought thousands of tourists to the city. In fact, the city's commerce, industry and economy depended to a great degree on the cult of Diana. Her followers practiced the arts of magic and astrology.

The Apostle Paul had problems at Ephesus (Acts 19:8ff) and the apostle John knew this city very well. In fact, according to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, John settled there several years after he was released from Patmos, which is 60 miles away.

“Walks among the candlesticks”

“Christ is spoken of as walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Thus is symbolized His relation to the churches. He is in constant communication with His people. He knows their true state. He observes their order, their piety, their devotion. Although He is high priest and mediator in the sanctuary above, yet He is represented as walking up and down in the midst of His churches on the earth. With untiring wakefulness and unremitting vigilance, He watches to see whether the light of any of His sentinels is burning dim or going out. If the candlesticks were left to mere human care, the flickering flame would languish and die; but He is the true watchman in the Lord's house, the true warden of the temple courts. His continued care and sustaining grace are the source of life and light.” AA, p. 586

“While Jesus ministers in the sanctuary above, He is still by His Spirit the minister of the church on earth. He is withdrawn from the eye of sense, but His parting promise is fulfilled, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Matt. 28:20. While He delegates His power to inferior ministers, His energizing presence is still with His church.” DA, p. 166

In most cases, stars in the Bible represent the angels but in this case, the stars represent the messengers or ministers to the church in the different eras of Church history. In Daniel 12:3 God's faithful people are symbolized by stars. When the stars are not in the hand of Jesus they become erratic fallen stars (Jude13).

“These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand.” Revelation 2:1. The sweet influences that are to be abundant in the church are bound up with God's ministers, who are to represent the precious love of Christ. The stars of heaven are under the control of Christ. He fills them with light. He directs their movements. If He did not do this, they would become fallen stars. So with His ministers. They are but instruments in His hand, and all the good they accomplish is done through His power. Through them His light is to shine forth. It is to the honor of Christ that He makes His ministers greater blessings to the church, through the workings of the Holy Spirit, than are the stars to the world. The Savior is to be their sufficiency. If they will look to Him as He looked to His Father, they will do His works. As they make God their dependence, He will give them His brightness to reflect to the world.” 6T, 413-414.

“God's ministers are symbolized by the seven stars, which He who is the first and the last has under His special care and protection. The sweet influences that are to be abundant in the church are bound up with these ministers of God, who are to represent the love of Christ. The stars of heaven are under God's control. He fills them with light. He guides and directs their movements. If He did not, they would become fallen stars. So [it is] with His ministers. They are but instruments in His hands, and all the good they accomplish is done through His power. Gospel Worker, pp. 13-14.

“Holds”

This is a very strong Greek word, which means “to grasp” or “to clench”. Jesus clenches or grasps His ministers with his right hand, which is the hand of His favor and power.

“Works and labor”

The church of Ephesus was an active, **working church**. The word ‘works’ [*erga*] is the same as the one used by James to describe an active faith. The word ‘labor’ is frequently used of missionary work under difficult and extenuating circumstances. It is translated ‘**hard work**’ in 2 Corinthians 6:5. A practical description of the meaning of the word ‘labor’ is found in Paul’s description of his work in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27:

*“Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in **labors** more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. ²⁴ From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶ in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; ²⁷ in weariness and **toil**, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—²⁸ besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.”*

Thus, the church of Ephesus was a hard working missionary church almost to the point of exhaustion. This idea is repeated in **verse 3** where Jesus commends the church: ‘you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary.’ The word ‘persevered’ in the NKJV is translated ‘borne’ in the KJV. The word means to ‘bear a heavy burden’. It is used, for example in Matthew 20:12 where those who worked in the vineyard for twelve hours bore ‘the burden of the heat of the day.’

“Patience”

There are two Greek words that are translated ‘patience’ in the New Testament. One is the word **makrothumia** and the other is **hupomone**. *Makrothumia* is translated ‘longsuffering’ but the word *hupomone* means endurance or perseverance. The word is used twice in the message to the church of Ephesus (verses 2 and 3). It is the same word that is used in Hebrews 12:1, James 5:11; Revelation 13:10; Matthew 24:13.

“Cannot bear those who are evil”

The church of Ephesus had a very low tolerance for evil and for those who were teaching heresy. It preserved doctrinal orthodoxy by testing those who taught the Word. One is reminded that the apostle Paul warned the elders **of Ephesus** to be vigilant because wolves would arise among them teaching perverse things; not sparing the flock (Acts 20:28-30). The apostolic church tested all teaching comparing it with the Word of God.

“For My Name’s Sake”

Truly, those who belonged to the apostolic church exalted the name of Jesus. In Acts 5:41 we are told that Peter and John considered it a privilege to suffer shame for the name. Acts 15:25 explains that those who preached the gospel risked their lives for the name and Acts 21:13 says that those who preached the gospel were willing to die for the name.

“Left your first love”

Jesus had something against the church of Ephesus. It had lost its first love. One is reminded of a marriage where at the beginning of the relationship love is alive and vibrant. The husband and wife spend quality time together and regularly express their love for one another. But in the course of time, there is a very real danger that work and other activities will lead the couple to spend less time together and as a result the first passion and love wanes.

There was and is a very real danger that in working to the point of exhaustion the church would **lose its vital connection with Jesus**. One is reminded of the contrast between Mary and Martha. Martha was a hard worker for Jesus but Mary sat at His feet learning of and from Him. Working to advance the gospel and preserving doctrinal orthodoxy are important but not at the expense of a personal, living relationship with Christ. The very next verse describes losing the ‘first love’ as **falling**.

“Keep remembering”

The translation ‘remember’ does not capture the meaning of the verb. The verb is actually in a present **continuous tense**. Jesus admonishes His bride to repent and ‘keep remembering’ from where it has fallen.

“Repent”

The word means to change directions, to **turn around or make a U-turn**. The church of Ephesus was moving in the wrong direction and needed to make a U-turn and return to what it once used to be—a church that worked hard, preserved doctrinal orthodoxy but did it out of love for Jesus.

“Do your first works”

The loss of first love is revealed in the loss of the first works. In other words, love for Jesus is revealed by works of love (Galatians 5:16). To lose the first love is to lose the first works. To do the first works is to recover the first love. The first epistle of John reveals the relationship between love and works but it also describes a personal relationship to Jesus (I John 3:16-18; 5:3; II John 6).

“Remove the candlestick”

Jesus threatened to remove the light from the church of Ephesus if it did not repent and return to its first love (Matthew 5:14-16; Mark 4:21-25; Luke 8:16-18).

“Nicolaitans”

Hippolytus and Irenaeus tell us that the Nicolaitans were heretical followers of **Nicolas**, one of the seven deacons mentioned in Acts 6:5. If this is true, Nicholas apostatized from the faith.

The Nicolaitans were a group who taught a radical dualism between the body and the soul. They believed that what is done with the body cannot in any way defile the soul. Therefore, they taught that believers are freed from the law and they can do as they please. It is important

to note that Ephesus **rejected the Nicolaitans** outright but later on the church of Pergamum **tolerated them** (Revelation 2:15).

Ellen White explained that the church today has people who bear the characteristics of the Nicolaitans. Notice how she describes this heretical group:

*“Those who are teaching **this doctrine today** have much to say in regard to **faith and the righteousness of Christ**; but they pervert the truth and make it serve the cause of error. They declare that we have **only to believe** on Jesus Christ and that faith is all-sufficient: that the righteousness of Christ is to be the sinner's credentials; that this imputed righteousness fulfills the law for us, and that we are under **no obligation to obey the law of God**. This class claims that Christ came to save sinners, and that He has saved them. "I am saved," they will repeat over and over again. But are they saved while **transgressing the law** of Jehovah? No; for the garments of Christ's righteousness are not a cloak for iniquity. Such teaching is a gross deception, and Christ becomes to these persons a stumbling block as He did to the Jews—to the Jews, because they would not receive Him as their personal Savior, to these professed believers in Christ, because they **separate Christ and the law**, and regard faith as a **substitute for obedience**. They separate the Father and the Son, the Savior of the world. Virtually they teach, both by precept and example, that Christ, by His death, saves men in their transgressions.”*
Bible Echo, February 8, 1897

“He who Overcomes”

The word *nikao* means ‘to gain the victory’ or ‘to conquer’. It is used to describe a struggle that ends in victory. In Revelation it is a present participle which means ‘he who continues to gain the victory’ (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 5:5; 12:11; 15:2; 17:14; 21:7).

“Paradise of God”

The word ‘paradise’ is found in only **three** New Testament texts (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:4 and Revelation 2:7). It is the identical word that is used in the LXX for the **Garden of Eden** in Genesis 2:8-10. It is not some intermediary place between heaven and earth as the Jews believed in the days of Christ. The apostle Paul made it clear that paradise is in the **third heaven** where God dwells. This is supported by a comparison of Revelation 2:7 and Revelation 22:2. The tree of life, which is mentioned in both verses, is located in the very presence of God.

Ellen White on the Message to Ephesus

Ellen White vividly describes the condition of the church during the period of Ephesus:

*“At the first the experience of the church of Ephesus was marked with **childlike simplicity and fervor**. A lively, earnest, heartfelt **love for Christ** was expressed. The believers rejoiced in the **love of God** because Christ was **in their hearts** as an abiding presence. The praise of God was on their lips, and their attitude of thanksgiving was in accord with the thanksgiving of the heavenly family.*

The world took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. Sinful men, repentant, pardoned, cleansed, and sanctified, were brought into partnership with God through His Son.

The believers sought earnestly to receive and obey every word of God. Filled with **love for their Redeemer**, they sought as their highest aim to win souls to Him. They did not think of hoarding the precious treasure of the grace of Christ. They felt the importance of their calling, and, weighted with the message, Peace on earth, good will to men, they **burned with desire** to carry the glad tidings to the earth's remotest bounds.

The members of the church were united in sentiment and action. **Love for Christ** was the golden chain that bound them together. They followed on to **know the Lord** more and still more perfectly, and brightness and comfort and peace were revealed in their lives. They visited the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and kept themselves unspotted from the world. A failure to do this would, in their view, have been a contradiction of their profession and a denial of their Redeemer.

In every city the work was carried forward. Souls were converted, and in their turn felt that they must tell of the inestimable treasure. They **could not rest** till the beams of light which had illumined their minds were shining upon others. Multitudes of unbelievers were made acquainted with the reason of the Christian's hope. Warm, inspired, personal appeals were made to the sinful and erring, to the outcast, and to those who, while professing to know the truth, were lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.

But after a time the zeal of the believers, their **love for God and for one another**, began to wane. Coldness crept into the church. Differences sprang up, and the eyes of many were **turned from beholding Jesus** as the Author and Finisher of their faith. The masses that might have been convicted and converted by a faithful practice of the truth were left unwarned. **Then it was that the message was addressed to the Ephesian church by the True Witness**. Their lack of interest in the salvation of souls showed that they had **lost their first love**; for none can love God with the whole heart, mind, soul, and strength without loving those for whom Christ died. God called upon them to repent and do the first works or else the candlestick would be removed out of its place." 6T, pp. 421, 422

“STUDIES IN REVELATION-THE SEVEN CHURCHES”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #4 – The Message to Smyrna

Revelation 2:8-11:

"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death."' (Revelation 2:8-10).

The City of Smyrna

The city of Smyrna was the center of **emperor worship** in the Roman Empire. Once a year Roman citizens were required to burn incense in honor of the godhood the emperor and they were issued a certificate indicating that they had complied. To refuse to do so entailed certain death. **Ignatius**, bishop of Antioch, was thrown to the lions in the amphitheater in Smyrna (AD 107) and **Polycarp**, who was born in Smyrna in AD 69, was burned at the stake (AD 156).

The name 'Smyrna' means 'bittersweet myrrh' which was used to **embalm the dead**. This name is not coincidental because there is much 'death language' in the message to Smyrna. This is the period when God's people were slaughtered by the pagan Roman Empire (GC, pp. 40-42). Notably, Jesus says nothing negative about this church but He strongly commends it.

Poor yet Rich

Jesus knew the works, tribulation (*thlipsis*) and poverty of this church. The word 'tribulation' means 'to bear a burden that crushes,' or 'to be under intense pressure'. The church during this period was crushed under the **pressure of persecution**.

The church during the period of Smyrna had very little of this world's goods. The word 'poverty' here is a strong word. It means, "**to be dirt poor**" (*Ptocheia*).

Although this church was poor in material goods, it was rich in another sense. After telling the parable of the man who built ever-larger barns, Jesus expressed the lesson, which He wished to teach: "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not **rich toward God**." (Luke 12:21).

The apostle Paul contrasted those who are rich in this life with those who are truly rich in the sight of God:

*“Command those who are rich in **this present age** not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be **rich in good works**, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life (1 Timothy 6:17-19)*

James wrote about what God considers to be true riches:

*“Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the **poor of this world** to be **rich in faith** and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” (James 2:5, 6)*

The life of Moses is a living illustration of what it means to be **rich in the sight of God** but poor in the sight of men:

*“By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming **the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt**; for he looked to the reward.” (Hebrews 11:24-26)*

Counterfeit Jews

There was a strong and large Jewish population in Smyrna who were **hostile toward Christians**. These Jews joined the Romans in denouncing the Christians as cannibals, atheists and seditionists against the Roman government. In claiming to be the children of God and persecuting the Christians, these Jews were actually guilty of blasphemy.

John 8 helps us understand how it is possible for a Jew **not to be a Jew!** Jesus stated that the Jews claimed to be the children of Abraham and of God but they were really of their Father the devil. In other words, they were **physical Jews**, but having rejected Christ, they were not Jews in the spiritual sense of the word.

In the same manner, the literal Jews during the period of the church of Smyrna claimed to be Jews but they were not in the spiritual sense of the word. According to the apostle Paul, a Christian who has accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is a true Jew while those who reject Christ are **not Jews at all** (Romans 2:28, 28; 9:6-8; Galatians 3:16, 26-29; Philippians 3:3-8). Like Saul before his conversion, the Jews during the period of Smyrna, by encouraging the persecution of the people of God, were guilty of persecuting Christ (Acts 9:4).

Synagogue of Satan: The church of Satan

The apostate church during the period of Smyrna was the Jewish church because at this point in time the Christian church had not yet fallen into apostasy. Ellen White describes the characteristics of the Synagogue of Satan:

“Satan has a large confederacy, his church. Christ calls them the synagogue of Satan because the members are the children of sin. The members of Satan's church have been constantly working to cast off the divine law, and confuse the distinction between good and evil. Satan is

working with great power in and through the children of disobedience, to exalt treason and apostasy as truth and loyalty. And at this time the power of his satanic inspiration is moving the living agencies to carry out the great rebellion against God that commenced in heaven.” CET, p. 207

“Satan has a church upon the earth which out-numbers the church of Christ. Christ calls it the ‘Synagogue of Satan,’ because its members are the children of sin and transgression. They have ceased to honor God, they have cast his divine law aside, they have confounded the distinction between good and evil. But the world’s Redeemer will have a church in which these essential differences will be made apparent, where the character of God will be represented. In marked contrast to the character of Satan, the beauty of holiness will be exemplified, the loveliness of truth shine forth in life and practice. Its members will honor, love, and glorify God whom the world has despised. These are the fruits by which they are known to the world; these will have the superscription of heaven by which all men may know that they are Christ’s disciples.” GCB, April 1, 1897

The sin of the Jews in Christ’s day was actually the same sin that is committed by the Christian world today. Some Christians say: ‘I love Jesus’ but they crucify His law. But to crucify the law means to crucify Jesus because the law is a reflection of Jesus. In this context, Ellen White explains:

GC, p. 22: “The great sin of the Jews was their rejection of Christ; the great sin of the Christian world would be their rejection of the law of God, the foundation of His government in heaven and earth.”

The Jews claimed to believe in the reflection but rejected the original. Christians will reject the reflection and claim to follow the original. It is impossible to love Christ and despise the law because the law is a reflection of who He is. Jesus was the law in living color.

“He was the embodiment of the law of God, which is the transcript of His character” Manuscript 77, 1899.

Ten-Day Tribulation

Revelation 2:10:

“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life.”

Jesus warned the church of Smyrna that they would suffer a period of severe persecution. By using the Roman emperors as his instruments, Satan would throw some of them into prison and this would test their faithfulness to Christ. The word ‘tested’ is the same as the one used in Revelation 2:2 where we are told that the apostolic church tested those who claimed to be apostles and were not. The Greek word is *perirazoo*. Says the Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament:

“This testing is accompanied by burdening, risk, uncertainty, and even danger and mistrust. Depending on the intention at hand, the test can be, positively, a test in which one proves oneself or, negatively, an enticement to failure. Since persons are virtually the only object of such testing in the NT, trust, faithfulness, and obedience usually play a role as well.”

Tests are meant to **make us**, not to break us (see Daniel 11:35; 12:10; Psalm 66:10; Job 23:10; Hebrews 11:17; I Peter 4:12).

Applying the year/day principle, the ten days of persecution that the church of Smyrna suffered lasted from 303 to 313 AD. During this period, the pagan Roman emperor **Diocletian** unleashed a merciless persecution against the Christians. The Lutheran church historian, Roland Bainton, describes this period:

“Early in the fourth century, the Emperor Diocletian initiated a further attempt at extermination. The persecution of Christians began in 303 with an edict requiring that church buildings be destroyed and all copies of the Scriptures be consigned to be publicly burned. Christians lost their civil status and protection of the laws. Next the edict was issued against the officials of the Church. A third edict was in effect an invitation to repent, but a fourth decreed death for all Christians. The roster of martyrs was so swollen that the days of the year no longer suffice for their commemoration.” Roland Bainton, *Christendom*, volume 1, pp. 89-90

This period of persecution finally came to an end when the emperor Constantine the Great signed the decree of toleration in the Edict of Milan in the year 313. A few years later, at the Council of **Nicaea in 325**, **Eusebius** described how bishops had suffered during the ten-year tribulation. One had his two hands incapacitated because they had been seared with burning iron. Others were missing eyes and others had their right limb cut off. According to Eusebius, this was an assembly of martyrs.

Faithful unto death

The promise that Jesus made to the church of Smyrna was a proper response to the persecution that they had experienced. Jesus admonished them and promised: *“Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life.”*

The word here for crown is *stephanos* which was given to the winners at the **Olympic games** held at Smyrna. God, through James made a similar promise:

*“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the **crown of life** which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”*

To the faithful elders of the church, the apostle Peter promised in 1 Peter 5:4 that *‘when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the **crown of glory** that does not fade away.’*

And the apostle Paul, when he was in prison and about to be beheaded expressed the firm assurance that he would receive the crown of glory:

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid

up for me the **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing." (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

The death of the martyrs was as a **sweet smelling savor (Ephesians 5:2)** before God because in their faithfulness they died conquerors. If their faith had failed, they would have been defeated. By death, they triumphed. At the end, there will be another group of victors who will not experience death (Revelation 15:2-4).

*"Whenever, through faith in the Lamb of God, a soul renounces the service of sin, Satan's wrath is kindled. The holy life of Abel testified against Satan's claim that it is impossible for man to keep God's law. When Cain, moved by the spirit of the wicked one, saw that he could not control Abel, he was so enraged that he destroyed his life. And wherever there are any who will stand in vindication of the righteousness of the law of God, the same spirit will be manifested against them. It is the spirit that through all the ages has set up the stake and kindled the burning pile for the disciples of Christ. But the cruelties heaped upon the follower of Jesus are instigated by Satan and his hosts because they cannot force him to submit to their control. It is the rage of a vanquished foe. **Every martyr of Jesus has died a conqueror.**" PP, pp. 77*

Not Hurt by the Second Death

The final promise that Jesus made to the faithful church of Smyrna is that they would not be hurt by the second death. Once again, the promise is congruous with their experience. Many of them were slaughtered. But the death they suffered was only the first death from which there will be a resurrection (see Revelation 20:6; 20:14; 21:8). Jesus instructed his followers not to fear those who could kill the body but not the soul (Matthew 10:28). The apostle Paul assures us that not even death itself can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38, 39). For those who are in Christ, death has lost its sting because Jesus went into the tomb, unlocked it and brought out the keys (Revelation 1:17, 18).

The Period of Smyrna

Prophetically viewed, this church is a picture of the period in history from about 100-313 AD. The whole period has been called the "Age of the Martyrs." The bodies of God's faithful people were torn apart on racks. Their fingernails were pulled off. They were hung by their thumbs, oftentimes for days. They were wrapped in animal skins and thrown out for bulls to gore and to pitch around. The gruesome details are described in *Fox's Book of Martyrs*.

Ellen White described this period vividly:

"The powers of earth and hell arrayed themselves against Christ in the person of His followers. Paganism foresaw that should the gospel triumph, her temples and altars would be swept away; therefore she summoned her forces to destroy Christianity. The fires of persecution were kindled. Christians were stripped of their possessions and driven from their homes. They "endured a great fight of afflictions." Hebrews 10:32. They "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment." Hebrews 11:36. Great numbers sealed their testimony with their blood. Noble and slave, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, were alike slain without mercy.

These persecutions, beginning under Nero about the time of the martyrdom of Paul, continued with greater or less fury **for centuries**. Christians were falsely accused of the most dreadful crimes and declared to be the cause of great calamities--famine, pestilence, and earthquake. As they became the objects of popular hatred and suspicion, **informers stood ready**, for the sake of gain, to betray the innocent. They were condemned as **rebels against the empire**, as **foes of religion**, and pests to society. Great numbers were thrown to wild beasts or burned alive in the amphitheaters. Some were crucified; others were covered with the skins of wild animals and thrust into the arena to be torn by dogs. Their punishment was often made the chief entertainment at public fetes. Vast multitudes assembled to enjoy the sight and greeted their dying agonies with laughter and applause.

Wherever they sought refuge, the followers of Christ were hunted like beasts of prey. They were forced to seek concealment in desolate and solitary places. "Destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy)" they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" Verses 37, 38. The catacombs afforded shelter for thousands. Beneath the hills outside the city of Rome, long galleries had been tunneled through earth and rock; the dark and intricate network of passages extended for miles beyond the city walls. In these underground retreats the followers of Christ buried their dead; and here also, when suspected and proscribed, they found a home. When the Life-giver shall awaken those who have fought the good fight, **many a martyr for Christ's sake will come forth from those gloomy caverns**.

Under the **fiercest persecution** these witnesses for Jesus **kept their faith unsullied**. Though deprived of every comfort, shut away from the light of the sun, making their home in the dark but friendly bosom of the earth, they uttered no complaint. With words of **faith, patience, and hope** they encouraged one another to endure privation and distress. The loss of every earthly blessing could not force them to renounce their belief in Christ. **Trials and persecution** were but steps bringing them nearer their rest and their reward.

Like God's servants of old, many were "tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection" Verse 35. These called to mind the words of their Master, that when persecuted for Christ's sake, they were to be exceeding glad, for **great would be their reward in heaven**; for so the prophets had been persecuted before them. They rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the truth, and songs of triumph ascended from the midst of crackling flames. Looking upward by faith, they saw Christ and angels leaning over the battlements of heaven, gazing upon them with the deepest interest and regarding their steadfastness with approval. A voice came down to them from the throne of God: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." **Revelation 2:10**.

In vain were Satan's efforts to destroy the church of Christ by violence. The great controversy in which the disciples of Jesus yielded up their lives did not cease when these faithful standard-bearers fell at their post. **By defeat they conquered**. God's workmen were slain, but His work went steadily forward. The gospel continued to spread and the number of its adherents to increase. It penetrated into regions that were inaccessible even to the eagles of Rome. Said a Christian, expostulating with the heathen rulers who were urging forward the persecution: You may "kill us, torture us, condemn us. . . . Your injustice is the proof that we are innocent . . . Nor does your cruelty . . . avail you." It was but a stronger invitation to bring others to their

persuasion. "The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow; the blood of Christians is seed."--Tertullian, Apology, paragraph 50.

Thousands were **imprisoned and slain**, but others sprang up to fill their places. And those who were martyred for their faith were secured to Christ and accounted of Him as **conquerors**. They had fought the good fight, and they were to receive the **crown of glory** when Christ should come. The sufferings which they endured brought Christians nearer to one another and to their Redeemer. Their living example and dying testimony were a constant witness for the truth; and where least expected, the subjects of Satan were leaving his service and enlisting under the banner of Christ." GC, pp.40-42

“STUDIES IN REVELATION-THE SEVEN CHURCHES”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #5 – The Message to Pergamum

Revelation 2:12-17

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write: 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: ¹³ 'I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴ But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. ¹⁵ Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. ¹⁶ Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. ¹⁷ 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.'"

The City of Pergamum

The city of Pergamum was named after a lofty and ragged hill on which the city was built. The rock stood one thousand feet above the fertile valley floor. The walls of the elevation were almost perpendicular except on one side where there was a steep and narrow passageway to the top, which could be easily fortified and guarded. The city was considered an impregnable stronghold. The only way it could be captured was by treachery, trickery or stratagem like ancient Troy.

The name fits well with the characteristics of the city. Pergamum means “height” or “elevation.” The name also has a possible connection with the word *gamos*, which means “marriage.” During this time, the church married the state and Satan was able to ruin it from within. What he had failed to do through persecution during the church of Smyrna, he now did by infiltrating the church with apostasy from within.

Pergamum was the educational center of Western Asia. Both Homer and Herodotus studied and wrote there. There was a great library, which contained some 200,000 volumes of literature. It was second only to the world famous library of Alexandria.

The temple of Zeus was there and it was dedicated to Asclepius “the serpent god.” In 1871, the altar of Zeus was discovered with the inscription: “Zeus, *Soter*,” which means “Zeus, savior”.

The serpent god was also called the 'great physician' and in the temple, a living serpent was kept and worshiped. Many of the ancient coins found at Pergamum depict a serpent wrapped around a pole similar to the one which symbolizes medical practice today.

The capitol of the gods was found there and the first temple of the imperial cult was built there in honor of Rome and Augustus. The worship of the divine emperor was made a touchstone of civic loyalty under the emperor Domitian at the end of the first century. This caused a very difficult crisis for the faithful members of the church because they refused to worship the emperor and burn incense in his honor. Sun worship (Mithraism) and an apostate remnant of Babylonian priests had its seat there.

In the book of Revelation, Satan is known as the ancient serpent (Revelation 12:7-9) and thus the city of Pergamum was dedicated to the worship of Satan. As we shall see, Pergamum was the link between ancient Babylon, pagan Rome and Papal Rome.

Description of Christ

Jesus presents Himself to the church of Pergamum as the one who has the **two-edged sword**. This symbol appears in the introductory chapter (1:16) and also in Revelation 19:15. In the context of the church of Pergamum, the sword is **remedial** while in Revelation 19 it is **retributive**. In other words, the church of Pergamum could accept the Word of God remedially or it would have to face it later, punitively. In **Hebrews 4:12, 13** we are told that the sword is a symbol of the Word of God. What this church needed most was to **follow the word** of God rather than adopting the traditions of men.

Satan's Throne

Verse 12 says that the church of Pergamum dwelt where **Satan's throne** was and verse 13 says it was where **Satan dwelt**. When Jesus faced Satan on a high mountain (perhaps this is the reason why the name "**Pergamum**," "**Elevation**" was given to the third church), Satan, as the **prince of this world**, offered Jesus **dominion** over all the kingdoms of the world if He would worship him (Matthew 4:7-10; Luke 4:5-7). Jesus instantly refused because His spiritual kingdom was not of this world. If Christ had accepted Satan's offer, Jesus would have become the **vice-regent of Satan**.

The same offer was later made on the **elevated mountain of Pergamum** (Revelation 13:1-2) by Constantine and the Bishop of Rome accepted the throne and authority over the world (Revelation 13:2; Daniel 7:23, 24). In this way, the Bishop of Rome became the vice-regent of Satan.

The Transference of Satan's Throne through Pergamum from Pagan to Papal Rome

It was Nebuchadnezzar's goal to re-establish the Babylonian kingdom that had existed at the Tower of Babel. Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon had a system of **pagan polytheistic magi and astrologers**, which carried on the religion of Babylon (Daniel 2:2).

When Cyrus conquered Babylon and took over the kingdom, things changed. **Cyrus was a Zoroastrian**, which was a monotheistic religion. Cyrus was tolerant of all religions and gave religious liberty to all. But when Cyrus captured the city of Babylon, the **ancient seat of Satan's counterfeit** religious system of religion, the **supreme pontiff** of the Chaldean mysteries and his retinue of priests fled from the city and made their residence in Pergamum in Asia Minor. There they re-established their Babylonian worship (for the historical documentation for this see Stephen P. Bohr's Notes on Daniel 8).

In **520 BC, Darius I** (the Persian) massacred a large number of these polytheistic Babylonian priests who had remained in the Medo-Persian kingdom. Those who survived fled to **Pergamum in Asia Minor** and continued their religion there. The religion of the pagan polytheistic Babylonian priests was incompatible with the monotheistic religion of Zoroastrianism

In the year **482 King Artaxerxes I** further massacred many of the priests who had remained in Persia after the first massacre. At this time, Artaxerxes **destroyed their gods and melted the image of the sun god Marduk**. Once again, Pergamum provided refuge for these priests and adopted their religion and culture.

In the year **67 BC Pompeii** made Mithraism, which had its origins in Pergamum, **the official religion of the Roman legions**. The **eagle**, symbol of the sun-god Mithras was also adopted by the Roman legions as their ensign.

There is abundant historical evidence that Rome acquired its **religion and culture** from Pergamum and Pergamum from Babylon. Perhaps this is the reason why Rome is referred to with the cryptic name of Babylon in **1 Peter 5:13**. Thus, the literal city of Pergamum was the link between the religion of ancient Babylon and the religion of the pagan Roman Empire.

Symbolic Pergamum

Pagan Rome, through the influence of **Constantine the Great** (during the period of Revelation's church of Pergamum) then transferred Satan's throne from Pagan Rome to Papal Rome (**Revelation 13:2**)

Thus, there is an **unbroken succession** between ancient Babylon and the Roman Catholic papacy:

Literal Babylon → **Pergamum** → Pagan Rome → **Pergamum** → Papal Rome

The Christians during the period of the church of Pergamum lived at the **very headquarters of Satan**, "the man of sin," whose religion is the "mystery of iniquity." They lived in the spiritual place where the baton would be handed on from pagan Rome to the Papal Rome. There is thus actually an **unbroken connection** between Babylon and Pagan Rome through Pergamum and Pagan Rome and Papal Rome through spiritual Pergamum.

Ellen White makes this incisive remark about this time period:

"Little by little, at first in stealth and silence, and then more openly as it increased in strength and gained control of the minds of men, "the mystery of iniquity" carried forward its deceptive

and blasphemous work. **Almost imperceptibly** the customs of heathenism found their way into the Christian church. The **spirit of compromise and conformity** was **restrained** for a time by the fierce persecutions [Smyrna period] which the church endured under paganism. But as **persecution ceased [313; Edict of Milan]**, and Christianity **entered the courts and palaces of kings**, she laid aside the humble simplicity of Christ and His apostles for the pomp and pride of pagan priests and rulers; and in place of the requirements of God, she substituted human theories and traditions. **The nominal conversion of Constantine**, in the early part of the fourth century, caused **great rejoicing**; and the world, **cloaked with a form of righteousness, walked into the church**. Now the work of **corruption** rapidly progressed. **Paganism, while appearing to be vanquished, became the conqueror**. Her spirit controlled the church. **Her doctrines, ceremonies, and superstitions** were incorporated into the faith and worship of the professed followers of Christ. GC, pp. 49-50.

It is a historical fact that the religion of the Roman Catholic Papacy was inherited **from Pagan Rome**. It is well known that the pagan emperor, Constantine the Great brought all sorts of pagan practices into the church. This is recognized by both secular and church historians. In fact, the name, 'Supreme Pontiff' (*Pontifex Maximus*) was used by the pagan Roman emperors before it became a title for the bishop of Rome. After the Edict of Milan was signed in the year 313 AD Christians were restored as *bona fide* citizens of the Roman Empire. The result of this is described by Dave Hunt:

"Freedom at last from persecution seemed like a gift from God. Unfortunately, it set the stage for an apostasy that would envelop Christendom for more than a millennium. Christ's bride had been wedded to paganism." (Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, pp. 202-203)

Regarding Constantine, Hunt remarks:

*"A brilliant military commander, Constantine also understood that there could be no political stability without religious unity. Yet to accomplish that feat would require a union between paganism and Christianity. How could it be accomplished? The Empire needed an **ecumenical religion** that would appeal to every citizen in a multi-cultural society. Giving Christianity official status was not enough to bring internal peace to the Empire: Christianity had to undergo a transformation so that pagans could 'convert' without giving up their old beliefs and rituals.*

*Constantine himself exemplified this expediency. He adopted Christ as the new god that had given him victory in the crucial battle at Milvian Bridge in 312 A.D., and brought him into Rome as its conqueror. Yet, as Caesar, he continued to function as the Pontifex Maximus of the Empire's pagan priesthood, known as the Pontifical College. . . As a 'Christian' Emperor, he automatically became the *de facto* civil head of the Christian church and seduced her with promises of power. Thus began the destruction of Christianity and the process that created Roman Catholicism as it is today."*(Dave Hunt, *Global Peace*, pp. 106-107)

*"It was 'Christianity', in fact, which gave the Empire a unity and continuity that held it together culturally and religiously. When the Empire later disintegrated politically under the onslaught of the Barbarians, it was held together religiously by the all-pervasive presence of the Roman Catholic Church with its ingenious ecumenical **blend of paganism and Christianity** still headquartered in Rome."* (Dave Hunt, *Global Peace*, p. 110)

The renowned philosopher and historian, Will Durant, remarks:

*“When Christianity conquered Rome, the ecclesiastical structure of the pagan church, the title and vestments of the Pontifex Maximus, the worship of the Great Mother and a multitude of comforting divinities, the sense of super-sensible presences everywhere, the joy or solemnity of old festivals, and the pageantry of immemorial ceremony, passed like maternal blood into the new religion, and **captive Rome captured her conqueror**. While Christianity converted the world, the world converted Christianity. . .”* Will Durant, *Civilization: Caesar and Christ*, Volume 3, p. 657

John Henry Cardinal Newman makes this admission:

“We are told in various ways by Eusebius, that Constantine, in order to recommend the new religion to the heathen, transferred into it the outward ornaments to which they had been accustomed in their own. It is not necessary to go into a subject which the diligence of Protestant writers has made familiar to most of us. The use of temples, and these dedicated to particular saints, and ornamented on occasions with branches of trees, incense, lamps, and candles; votive offerings on recovery from illness, holy water; asylums; holy days and seasons, use of calendars, processions, blessings on the fields; sacerdotal vestments; the tonsure, the ring in marriage, turning East, images at a later date, perhaps the ecclesiastical chant, and the Kyrie Eleisen, are all of pagan origin, and sanctified by their adoption into the church.” Henry Cardinal Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, p. 373

Philip Schaff, one of the greatest church historians ever to wield a pen, wrote the following:

*“But the elevation of Christianity as the religion of the state presents also an opposite aspect to our contemplation. It involved great risk of degeneracy to the church. The Roman state, with its laws, institutions, and usages, was still deeply rooted in heathenism, and could not be transformed by a magical stroke. The christianizing of the state amounted therefore in great measure to a paganizing and secularizing of the church. The world overcame the church, as much as the church overcame the world, and the temporal gain of Christianity was in many respects cancelled by spiritual loss. The mass of the Roman Empire was baptized only with water, not with the Spirit of the gospel, and it smuggled heathen manners and practices into the sanctuary under a new name. The very **combination** of the cross with the military ensign by Constantine was the most doubtful omen, portending an unhappy **mixture** of the temporal and the spiritual powers.”* (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 3, p. 93, bold is mine).

The link between pagan and papal Rome are abundant. The **architecture** at the Vatican is Roman. Recently, I made a visit to the ruins of the old city of Rome and then on the same day visited Vatican City. The architecture is virtually identical. Also, the old city of Rome was filled with statues of gods and heroes, as is Vatican City. The Papal church is called the **Roman Catholic Church**. The official language of the Vatican is **Latin**, the language of ancient Rome. In official documents, the Vatican employs **Roman numerals**. The headquarters of the Papacy is **Vatican City**, which is located in the geographical location of ancient Rome. Says the Catholic Encyclopedia:

“It [Vatican City] is within the city of Rome, called the city of seven hills, that the entire area of Vatican State proper is now confined”. (The Catholic Encyclopedia, Tomas Nelson Publishers, 1976. Article: ‘Rome’)

Furthermore, historians and theologians consistently emphasize that Papal Rome inherited and perpetuated the Roman Empire but in a different way: It was a **religious-political** system. Notice the following quotations from church historians and theologians:

*“Within three centuries, the Roman Church had transformed the administrative organization of the Roman Empire into an ecclesiastical system of bishoprics, dioceses, monasteries, colonies, garrisons, schools, libraries, administrative centers, envoys, representatives, courts of justice, and a criminal system of intricate laws all under the direct control of the pope. His Roman Palace, the Lateran, became the new Senate. The new senators were the cardinals. The bishops who lived in Rome and the priests and deacons helped the pope to administer this **new imperium**.” (Malachi Martin, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Church, p. 105, italics mine)*

*“The Roman Church in this way privily pushed itself into the place of the Roman World-Empire, of which it is the actual continuation; the empire has not perished, but has only undergone a transformation. . . That is no mere ‘clever remark,’ but the recognition of the true state of the matter historically, and the most appropriate and fruitful way of describing the character of this Church. It still governs the nations. . . It is a political creation, and as imposing as a World-Empire, because [it is] the **continuation of the Roman Empire**. The Pope, who calls himself ‘King’ and ‘Pontifex Maximus,’ is Caesar’s successor.” (Adolph Harnack, What is Christianity? pp. 269-270)*

“The Empire was falling into decay. The Barbarians knew that its life was failing, that the old organism was worn out, and they hastened to take possession of the remains. From every direction they came for the spoils. The Saxons and the Angles settled in Great Britain; the Franks invaded Northern Gaul; the Visigoths made Spain and the region south of the Loire their own; the Burgundians took possession of the upper valley of the Rhone; the Vandals made conquests in Africa. The Ostrogoths and Lombards were waiting for their turn to come. Among these new invaders, some were heretics, others were pagans. What is to become of the Church? Are its days numbered, and is the Empire to bring it down as its companion into an open tomb?

*No, the Church will not descend into the tomb. It will survive the Empire. It will have to pass through days of distress. It will witness calamity after calamity, ruins heaped upon ruins. But in the midst of the greatest sadness, it will receive precious consolations. One after another, these barbarian peoples will submit to its laws, and will count it a glory to be the Church’s children. The frontiers of the Church will be extended; its institutions, for a moment shaken by the Barbarians, will be consolidated, developed, and will adapt themselves to their surroundings. The papacy, most sorely tried of all, will make a new advance. At length a **second empire** will arise, and of this empire the Pope will be the master. More than this, he will be the master of Europe. He will dictate his orders to kings who will obey them.” (Joseph Turmel, The Latin Church in the Middle Ages, p. v, vi. Emphasis supplied).*

“The all-conquering barbarians were storming the gates of Augustine’s city when the saint died in 430. The North African town of Hippo was one of the last imperial outposts to be attacked. Rome had already gone under. Only four years before, St. Augustine’s City of God had laid the

theological groundwork for the church to **step into the void** left by the collapsing Roman Empire.” (Douglas Auchincloss, *City of God and Man*, Time, 76 (December 12, 1960), p. 64, emphasis supplied.

“The removal of the capital of the Empire from Rome to Constantinople in 330 left the Western Church practically free from imperial power, to develop its own form of organization. The Bishop of Rome, **in the seat of the Caesars**, was now the greatest man in the West, and was soon forced to become the political as well as the spiritual head. To the Western world Rome was still the political capital—hence the whole habit of mind, all ambition, pride, and sense of glory, and every social prejudice favored the **evolution** of the great city into the ecclesiastical capital. Civil as well as religious disputes were referred to the successor of Peter for settlement. Again and again, when barbarians attacked Rome, he was compelled to actually assume military leadership. Eastern Emperors frequently recognized the high claims of the Popes in order to gain their assistance. It is not difficult to understand, how, under these responsibilities, the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, established in the pre-Constantine period, was emphasized and magnified after 313 [Edict of Milan]. The importance of this fact must not be overlooked. The organization of the Church was thus put on the same divine basis as the revelation of Christianity. This idea once accepted led inevitably to the medieval Papacy.” Alexander Clarence Flick, *The Rise of the Mediaeval Church* pp. 168, 169, emphasis supplied.

“During the whole medieval period there was **in Rome a single spiritual and temporal authority** [the papacy] exercising powers which in the end exceeded those that had ever lain within the grasp of the Roman emperor.” R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, volume 2, pp. 24-25 emphasis supplied.

“The papacy is no other than **the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire**, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof.” (Thomas Hobbes, as quoted in, Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, p. 95) emphasis supplied.

“Christian Rome was the **legitimate successor of pagan Rome**.... Christ had triumphed [and] Rome was ready to extend its sway to the heavens themselves.” (W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, p. 773) emphasis supplied.

“The Roman Christian Church was a church of world-wide importance and power, and her bishop the most influential. Out of the ruins of **political Rome** arose the great **moral empire** in the ‘giant form’ of the Roman Church. In the marvelous rise of the Roman Church is seen in strong relief the majestic office of the Bishop of Rome.” (Alexander Clarence Flick, *The Rise of the Mediaeval Church*, p. 150) emphasis supplied.

“When the Western empire fell into the hands of the barbarians, the Roman bishop was the only surviving **heir of this imperial past**, or, in the well-known dictum of Hobbes, ‘the ghost of the deceased Roman empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof.’” (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 3, p. 287) emphasis supplied.

“Long before the fall of Rome, there had begun to grow up within the Roman Empire an **ecclesiastical state**, which was **shaping itself upon the imperial model**. This **spiritual empire**, like the secular empire, possessed a hierarchy of officers, of which deacons, priests or presbyters, and bishops were the most important. . . . Another consequence of the fall of the

Roman power in the west was the development of the Papacy. In the absence of an Emperor in the west, the popes rapidly gained influence and power and soon built up an **ecclesiastical empire** that in some respects took the place of the old empire.” (Myers, General History for Colleges, pp. 348, 316) emphasis supplied.

“St. Thomas. . . says that **the Roman Empire has not ceased**, but is **changed** from the temporal into the spiritual. . . It was, then, the Apostolic Church, which, spreading throughout the nations, already combined together by the power of the heathen empire of Rome, quickened them with a new life. . . the temporal power in the old heathen empire of Rome, and the spiritual power in the supernatural kingdom of God met together. . . these two powers were **blended and fused together**; they became one authority, the emperor ruling from his throne within the sphere of his earthly jurisdiction, and the Supreme Pontiff ruling likewise from a throne of a higher sovereignty over the nations. . . the material power which once reigned in Rome [was] consecrated and sanctified by the investiture of the Vicar of Jesus Christ with temporal sovereignty over the city where he dwelt. And now for these twelve hundred years the peace, the perpetuity and faithfulness of the Christian civilization of Europe, has been owing solely in its principle to this consecration of the **power** and **authority** [Revelation 13:2] of **the great empire of Rome**, taken up of old, perpetuated, preserved, as I have said, by the salt which had been sprinkled from heaven, and continued in the person of the Supreme Pontiff, and in that order of Christian civilization of which he has been the creator.” (Cardinal Manning, The Temporal Power of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, pp. 123-128) emphasis supplied.

“If we extend our view over the ruins of the Western Empire, such is the spectacle that meets us on every side. . . . the Pax Romana has ceased; it is universal confusion. But wherever a bishop holds his court, religion protects all that is left of the ancient order. **A new Rome ascends slowly above the horizon**. It is the **heir of the religion** which it has overthrown; it assumes the outward splendors of the Caesars. . . . The emperor is no more. . . . But the **Pontifex Maximus** abides; he is now the Vicar of Christ, offering the old civilization to the tribes of the north. He converts them to his creed, and they serve him as their Father and Judge supreme. This is the Papal Monarchy, which in its power and its decline overshadows the history of Europe for a thousand years.” (W. F. Barry, The Papal Monarchy, pp. 45, 46) emphasis supplied.

“As Rome’s role in **pagan history** came to an end, she was destined to play another, a sacred one, in **Christian history**. . . . Rome’s part in ecclesiastical history had begun. . . Thus a Christian Rome, destined, like its pagan predecessor on the Palatine, to conquer a large part of the earth, gradually arose on Vatican Hill. . . . While today the Palatine [the hill of the Roman Emperors’ palaces] is in ruins, St. Peter’s still draws worshipers from all parts of the world.” (Walter Woodburn Hyde, Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire, pp. 6-7) emphasis supplied.

Notice the following amazing declaration by Cardinal Edward Manning:

“Now the abandonment of Rome was the **liberation** of the pontiffs. Whatsoever claims to obedience the emperors may have made, and whatsoever compliance the Pontiff may have yielded, the whole previous relation, anomalous, and annulled again and again by the vices and outrages of the emperors, was finally dissolved by a higher power. The providence of God permitted a succession of **irruptions**, Gothic, Lombard, and Hungarian, to desolate Italy, and to **efface from it every remnant of the empire** [remember this fact of history. Later on in this

*paper we will see that Protestant futurists rewrite history and deny that the Roman Empire was ever divided]. The pontiffs found themselves alone, the sole fountains of order, peace, law, and safety. And from the hour of this providential **liberation**, when, by a divine intervention, the **chains fell off** from the hands of the successor of St. Peter, as once before from his own, no sovereign has ever reigned in Rome except the Vicar of Jesus Christ” Henry Edward Manning, *The Temporal Power of the Vicar of Jesus Christ*, Preface, pp. xxviii, xxix. London: Burns and Lambert, 1862*

The Mysterious Restrainer

This might well be the time to write about the mysterious ‘restrainer’ that the Apostle Paul refers to in II Thessalonians 2. The early church Fathers were practically unanimous in the opinion that the ‘restrainer’ was a reference to the **Roman Empire** in general and **the emperors** in particular.

Paul indicates that the Church at Thessalonica knew who the restrainer was. Yet he wrote in veiled language. Why would this be? Paul could not write openly about the Empire, which was governing in his day. If he had publicly stated that the Roman Empire was going to be taken out of the way, the emperors would have had grounds to accuse Paul of sedition. Therefore, Paul had to be cautious in his comments.

If the restrainer was the Holy Spirit, as many futurists believe, then why was Paul so cautious? It is clear that Paul could not define the ‘restrainer’ openly. It was not necessary to do so because the Thessalonians knew what he was talking about.

You will notice in the comment by Manning that the fall of the Roman Empire led to the ‘liberation’ of the Roman Pontiff. You will also notice that the fall of the Roman Empire is described as chains falling off the hands of the successor of St. Peter. The inevitable conclusion we reach from Manning’s words is that the fall of the empire removed the restraint placed upon the Bishop of Rome.

Now let us turn to the writings of the early church Fathers. Let us start with **Tertullian** (160-240 AD):

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now hinders must hinder, until he be taken out of the way.’ What obstacle is there but the Roman state, the falling away of which, by being scattered into ten kingdoms, shall introduce Antichrist upon (its own ruins)? ‘And then shall be revealed the wicked one.’ ‘On the Resurrection of the Flesh,’ chapter 24; Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. III, p. 563 [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908]

In yet another comment, **Tertullian** states:

“The very end of all things threatening dreadful woes is only retarded by the continued existence of the Roman Empire.” ‘Apology,’ chapter 32; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. III, p. 43)

Now notice the words of **Lactantius** (early fourth century):

“The subject itself declares that the fall and ruin of the world will shortly take place; except that while the city of Rome remains, it appears that nothing of this kind is to be feared. But when that capital of the world shall have fallen, and shall have begun to be a street, which the Sibyls say shall come to pass, who can doubt that the end has now arrived to the affairs of men and the whole world? It is that city, that only, which still sustains all things.” ‘The Divine Institutes,’ book 7, chapter 25; Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. VII, p. 220

Let’s listen to **Cyril of Jerusalem** (318-386 AD):

“But this aforesaid Antichrist is to come when the times of the Roman Empire shall have been fulfilled, and the end of the world is drawing near. There shall rise up together ten kings of the Romans, reigning in different parts perhaps, but all **about the same time**; and after those an eleventh, the Antichrist, who by his magical craft shall seize upon the Roman power; and of the kings who reigned before him, ‘three he shall humble,’ and the remaining seven he shall keep in subjection to himself.” (*‘Catechetical Lectures,’* section 15, on II Thessalonians 2:4; Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. VII, p. 108 [New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1895])

Next, we present the testimony of **Ambrose** (died in 398 AD):

“After the falling or decay of the Roman Empire, Antichrist shall appear.” (Quoted in, Bishop Thomas Newton, Dissertations on the Prophecies, p. 463 [London: B. Blake, 1840])

Next in line is **Chrysostom** (died in 407 AD):

“When the Roman Empire is taken out of the way, then he [the Antichrist] shall come. And naturally. For as long as the fear of this empire lasts, no one will willingly exalt himself, but when that is dissolved, he will attack the anarchy, and endeavor to seize upon the government both of man and of God.” ‘Homily IV on 2 Thessalonians 2:6-9,’ Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. XIII, p. 389 [New York: Charles Scribner’s and Sons, 1905]

Finally, we will quote from **Jerome** (died 420 AD):

“He that letteth is taken out of the way, and yet we do not realize that Antichrist is near.” (Letter to Ageruchia, written about 409 A. D. Letter 123, section 16; Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. VI, p. 236 [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1912]).

Ellen G. White has some interesting statements regarding the restrainer both in history and in prophecy:

*“The spirit of compromise and conformity [of the early Christian church] was **restrained** for a time by the fierce persecutions which the church endured under **paganism**. But as persecution ceased, and Christianity entered the courts and palaces of kings, she laid aside the humble simplicity of Christ and His apostles for the pomp and pride of pagan priests and rulers; and in place of the requirements of God, she substituted human theories and traditions.” The Great Controversy, p. 49*

Regarding the future, Ellen White explains:

*“Let the **restraints** now imposed by **secular governments** be **removed** and Rome be reinstated in her former power, and there would speedily be a revival of her tyranny and persecution.” GC, p. 564*

*“The vast empire of Rome crumbled to pieces and **from its ruins** rose that mighty power, the Roman Catholic Church. This church boasts of her infallibility and her hereditary religion.” Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases, Volume I, p. 50*

Ellen White further remarks:

*“This **compromise between paganism and Christianity** resulted in the development of “the man of sin” foretold in prophecy as opposing and exalting himself above God. That **gigantic system of false religion** is a **masterpiece** of Satan's power--a monument of his efforts to seat himself upon the throne to rule the earth according to his will.*

*“Satan once endeavored to form a **compromise** with Christ. He came to the Son of God in the wilderness of temptation, and showing Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, offered to give all into His hands if He would but acknowledge the supremacy of the prince of darkness. Christ rebuked the presumptuous tempter and forced him to depart. But Satan meets with greater success in presenting the same temptations to man. To secure worldly gains and honors, the church was led to seek the favor and support of the great men of earth; and having thus rejected Christ, **she was induced to yield allegiance to the representative of Satan --the bishop of Rome.**” GC, pp. 50, 52*

After being in the **valley** of the shadow of death because of persecution (during the period of the church of Smyrna), the church came to occupy the **pinnacle** of popularity and power (Pergamum).

Interestingly, the god **Jupiter** had his origin there in Pergamum. This is significant because the **famous statue of Jupiter** became the statue of **St. Peter in St. Peter's basilica**. He has **two keys** in his hand, which is interpreted by the Catholic Church as **spiritual and temporal power**. This power is also referred to as the **two swords**.

Sunday Laws

The first civil Sunday Law was enacted by Constantine in 321 AD. His coins had “*Deus Sol Invictus*” on them, which means, ‘to the invincible sun’. One of the reasons why the papacy adopted Sunday as the day of worship was because of the influence of pagan sun worship in Rome. Regarding this law, Ellen White remarks:

“In the early part of the fourth century, the emperor Constantine issued a decree making Sunday a public festival throughout the Roman Empire. The day of the sun was revered by his pagan subjects, and was honored by Christians; it was the emperor's policy to unite the conflicting interests of heathenism and Christianity. He was urged to do this by the bishops of the church, who, inspired by ambition, and thirst for power, perceived that if the same day was observed by

both Christians and the heathen, it would promote the nominal acceptance of Christianity by pagans, and thus advance the power and glory of the church. But while Christians were gradually led to regard Sunday as possessing a degree of sacredness, they still held the true Sabbath as the holy of the Lord, and observed it in obedience to the fourth commandment. GC, p. 88.

Here is Constantine's famous Sunday law:

"ALL JUDGES AND CITY PEOPLE AND THE CRAFTSMEN SHALL REST UPON THE VENERABLE DAY OF THE SUN. COUNTRY PEOPLE, HOWEVER, MAY FREELY ATTEND TO THE CULTIVATION OF THE FIELDS, BECAUSE IT FREQUENTLY HAPPENS THAT NO OTHER DAYS ARE BETTER ADAPTED FOR PLANTING THE GRAIN IN THE FURROWS OR THE VINES IN TRENCHES. SO THAT THE ADVANTAGE GIVEN BY HEAVENLY PROVIDENCE MAY NOT FOR THE OCCASION OF A SHORT TIME PERISH." JOSEPH CULLEN AYER, A SOURCE BOOK FOR ANCIENT CHURCH HISTORY (NEW YORK: CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS, 1913), DIV. 2, PER. 1, CH. 1, SEC. 59, G, PP. 284, 285. GC, p. 680

Historians recognize that one of the factors that led to the adoption of Sunday as the Christian day of worship was the influence of pagan sun worship in Rome:

"Constantine labored at this time untiringly to unite the worshipers of the old and the new faith in one religion. All his laws and contrivances are aimed at promoting this amalgamation of religions. He would by all lawful and peaceable means melt together a purified heathenism and a moderated Christianity." H. G. Heggveit, Illustreret Kirkehistorie (Christiania: Cammermeyers Boghandel, 1891-1895) p. 202

"His injunction that the 'Day of the Sun' should be a general rest day was characteristic of his standpoint. . . Of all his blending and melting together of Christianity and heathenism, none is more easy to see through than this making of his Sunday law. 'The Christians worshiped their Christ, the heathen their sun god; according to the opinion of the Emperor, the objects for worship in both religions were essentially the same.'" Geggveit, p. 202

Concerning the Sunday law we are told that "he designated Sunday by its traditional pagan name, the Day of the Sun, not the Sabbath or the Day of the Lord. Pagans could therefore accept it. Christians gave the natural sun a new meaning by thinking of Christ the Sun of Righteousness. Both Constantine and later emperors, as well as the church councils, enacted additional Sunday legislation. It was Constantine's decree of 321, however, that laid the basis for the universal recognition of Sunday as a day of rest." Harry R. Boer, A Short History of the Christian Church, p. 142

The Commendation

Yet there were some in the church of Pergamum that did not deny Christ's name and His faith (see Acts 5:41; 9:16; 15:26; 21:13; Rev. 3:8; Matthew 24:9). One of those who remained faithful to Christ's name was Antipas who was Jesus' **faithful martyr** and paid for his faithfulness by making the ultimate sacrifice. The Greek word 'martyr' actually means 'witness' or 'one who gives testimony'.

According to Patristic tradition, Antipas was martyred during the persecutions of Domitian by being shut up in a brazen bull, which was heated until it was red hot. He ended his life with praises and thanksgiving to God.

The Censure or Rebuke

*“But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of **Balaam**, who taught **Balak** to put a **stumbling block** before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.”*

The names that are used in the rebuke are significant. The name “Balaam” means “**destroyer of the people**” and the name “Nicolaitans” means “**overcomer of the people.**” We have already described the heresy of the Nicolaitans and now we must turn to the story of Balaam.

The Story of Balaam

Throughout the course of history, Satan has used two methods to decimate the Lord’s followers: persecution and infiltration. The two methods can be seen in the early chapters of Genesis:

- Satan uses physical **violence** to destroy God’s faithful servants: **Cain killed Abel**
- **Satan mingled the righteous with the wicked**: The descendants of Seth married the wicked female descendants of Cain

Physical Persecution led to Phenomenal Church Growth

When it comes to the early church, Satan’s **plan ‘A’ backfired**. **Persecution** in the early church led to **explosive church growth**:

*“In vain were Satan’s efforts to destroy the church of Christ **by violence**. The great controversy in which the disciples of Jesus yielded up their lives did not cease when these faithful standard-bearers fell at their post. By **defeat they conquered**. God’s workmen were slain, but His work went **steadily forward**. The gospel continued to spread, and the number of its **adherents to increase**. . . . Said a Christian, expostulating with the heathen rulers who were urging forward the persecution: “You may torment, afflict, and vex us. Your wickedness puts our weakness to the test, but your **cruelty is of no avail**. It is but a stronger invitation to **bring others to our persuasion**. The more we are mowed down, the more we **spring up** again. The blood of the Christians **is seed**.” *Christ Triumphant*, p. 319*

Satan’s Plan ‘B’

Satan’s **plan ‘B’** worked much better. Seeing that he could not destroy God’s people by persecution, he changed his tactics. His new strategy can be phrased as ‘if you can’t **fight them, join them**’.

It is a statistical fact that **liberal mainline churches** today are either **stagnant** in their growth or are **decreasing** in numbers. They have become increasingly **irrelevant** because they simply **reflect what exists in society**. The church has become the **captive of culture** rather than a transformer of culture. Instead of being **politically incorrect**, it has come to reflect the values of society. Instead of being a **transformer**, it has become a **conformer**.

The Most Diabolical Method

According to Ellen White Satan's attempt to destroy the church by **infiltration** worked far better than **persecution**:

The Great Controversy pp. 42, 43: "The great adversary now endeavored to gain by **artifice** what he had **failed to secure by force**. **Persecution ceased**, and in its stead were substituted the dangerous **allurements of temporal prosperity and worldly honor**. **Idolaters** were led to receive a part of the Christian faith, while they rejected other essential truths. They **professed** to accept Jesus as the Son of God and to believe in His death and resurrection, but they had **no conviction of sin** and felt no need of repentance or of a **change of heart**. With some **concessions** on their part they proposed that Christians should make **concessions**, that **all might unite** on the platform of belief in Christ.

"Now the church was in **fearful peril**. **Prison, torture, fire, and sword** were blessings in comparison with this. Some of the Christians stood firm, declaring that they could make **no compromise**. Others were in favor of **yielding or modifying** some features of their faith and **uniting** with those who had accepted **a part** of Christianity, urging that this might be the means of their **full conversion** [in other words, **the church would grow**]. That was a time of deep anguish to the faithful followers of Christ. Under a cloak of **pretended Christianity**, Satan was insinuating himself into the church, to corrupt their faith and turn their minds from the word of truth."

Seven Seals

The **truthfulness** of Ellen White's statement is not only proved true by what happened in **history** but also by what is written in **Bible prophecy**. Notice the historical flow of the first four horses of the book of Revelation:

- **White Horse**: Like a white horse the earliest church goes out **conquering and to conquer**
- **Red Horse**: Satan uses **persecution** to try and snuff out the growing church
- **Black Horse**: When persecution leads to phenomenal church growth, Satan changes his tactics and plants **apostasy within** the church
- **Yellow Horse**: Spiritual apostasy leads to spiritual death during the period of **Papal dominion**

The Seven Churches Parallel the Seven Seals

Ellen G. White Acts of the Apostles, p. 585:

*“The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in **different periods** of the Christian Era. The number 7 indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the messages extend to the **end of time**, while the symbols used reveal the condition of the church at **different periods** in the history of the word.”*

Hal Lindsey Vanished into Thin Air, p. 276:

*“I believe, along with many scholars, that these seven letters were not only written to **seven literal churches** with real problems, but also that they have a **prophetic application to Church history**. . . I believe that these seven churches [though there was many more in Asia Minor] were selected and arranged by our omniscient Lord because they had problems and characteristics that would **prophesy seven stages** of history through which the **Church Universal would pass**.”*

The Names of the Churches

Ephesus: ‘Desirable’. The apostolic church experienced significant growth but she was already beginning to lose her first love at the end of the first century.

Smyrna: ‘Bittersweet myrrh’. Myrrh was used to embalm the dead and there is much death language used in relation to this church. During this period, the church was persecuted by the Roman emperors.

Pergamum: ‘Elevation or height’. From the valley of persecution, the church now reaches the height of popularity. Balaam is the key figure during this period:

*“Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of **Balaam**, who taught Balak to **entice** the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to **idols** and by committing **sexual immorality [fornication]**.” Revelation 2:14*

Teaching of Balaam

Israel was **advancing toward Canaan** and **Balak**, king of Moab, feared that paganism would be destroyed:

Numbers 22:3:

“And Moab was exceedingly afraid of the people because they were many and Moab was sick with dread because of the children of Israel.”

Something parallel occurred in the **early church**:

Great Controversy, p. 39: *“Paganism foresaw that should the gospel triumph, **her temples and altars would be swept away**; therefore she summoned her forces to destroy Christianity.”*

Four times, enticed by the promise of **material prosperity** and **fame**, Balak sought to convince Balaam to curse Israel.

Balaam's First Attempt

Numbers 22:18: Balaam told Balak that **all the money** in the world could not lead him to curse Israel:

"Even if Balak gave me his palace filled with silver and gold, I could not do anything great or small to go beyond the command of the LORD my God."

Balaam's Second Attempt

A second time Balak sought to convince Balaam to **curse Israel** so that they could be **easy prey** but Balaam could not:

Numbers 23:8-10:

"How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him; there! A people dwelling alone not reckoning itself among the nations. "Who can count the dust of Jacob, or number one-fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his!"

Balaam's Third Attempt

Balaam could not curse Israel because at the time she was in a **faithful covenant relationship** with the Lord:

Numbers 23:20-23:

"Behold, I have received a command to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it. "He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, nor has He seen wickedness in Israel. The LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them. God brings them out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox "For there is no sorcery against Jacob, nor is there any divination against Israel. It now must be said of Jacob and of Israel, 'Oh, what God has done!'"

Balaam's Fourth Attempt

Numbers 24:5, 9: The fourth time Balaam also failed in cursing Israel:

"How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel! "May those who bless you be blessed and those who curse you be cursed!"

The Last Time

Failing to curse Israel from the outside, Balaam suggested a diabolical scheme. Why not introduce apostasy within the camp and then God would withdraw His protection? Balaam made a subtle suggestion to Balak. He recommended that the **women of Moab entice Israel into fornication and idolatry** and then God would remove his blessing and the people would fall (Numbers 31:16). Balak decided to follow Balaam's counsel.

Numbers 25:1-3:

*"Then Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit **harlotry** with the women of Moab. ² They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and **bowed down to their gods**. ³ So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel."*

Regarding this diabolical scheme Ellen White remarks:

"Disappointed in his hopes of wealth and promotion, in disfavor with the king, and conscious that he had incurred the displeasure of God, Balaam returned from his self-chosen mission. After he had reached his home the controlling power of the Spirit of God left him, and his covetousness, which had been merely held in check, prevailed. He was ready to resort to any means to gain the reward promised by Balak. Balaam knew that the prosperity of Israel depended upon their obedience to God, and that there was no way to cause their overthrow but by seducing them into sin. He now decided to secure Balak's favor by advising the Moabites of the course to be pursued to bring a curse upon Israel.

He immediately returned to the land of Moab and laid his plans before the king. The Moabites themselves were convinced that so long as Israel remained true to God, He would be their shield. The plan proposed by Balaam was to separate them from God by enticing them into idolatry. If they could be led to engage in the licentious worship of Baal and Ashtaroth, their omnipotent Protector would become their enemy, and they would soon fall a prey to the fierce, warlike nations around them. This plan was readily accepted by the king, and Balaam himself remained to assist in carrying it into effect. Balaam witnessed the success of his diabolical scheme." PP, p. 451.

***Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 451.** "He immediately returned to the land of Moab and laid his plans before the king. The Moabites themselves were convinced that so long as Israel remained true to God, He would be their shield. The plan proposed by Balaam was to separate them from God by enticing them into idolatry. If they could be led to engage in the licentious worship of Baal and Ashtaroth, their omnipotent Protector would become their enemy, and they would soon fall a prey to the fierce, warlike nations around them. This plan was readily accepted by the king, and Balaam himself remained to assist in carrying it into effect. Balaam witnessed the success of his diabolical scheme."*

Balaam was once a **true prophet** of God who **betrayed the Lord's cause** and sold his integrity for the sake of worldly gain and kingly favors from a **pagan king** (Balak). In this, he led **Israel**

down the road to apostasy. The same happened with the church during the period of Pergamum only the king was Constantine the Great:

Balaam had a character similar to that of **Judas**:

*"The fate of Balaam was similar to that of Judas, and **their characters bear a marked resemblance to each other**. Both these men tried to unite the service of God and mammon, and met with signal failure. Balaam acknowledged the true God, and professed to serve Him; Judas believed in Jesus as the Messiah, and united with His followers. But Balaam hoped to make the service of Jehovah the steppingstone to the acquirement of riches and worldly honor; and failing in this he stumbled and fell and was broken. Judas expected by his connection with Christ to secure wealth and promotion in that worldly kingdom which, as he believed, the Messiah was about to set up. The failure of his hopes drove him to apostasy and ruin. Both Balaam and Judas had received great light and enjoyed special privileges, but a single cherished sin poisoned the entire character and caused their destruction. . . .*

One cherished sin will, little by little, debase the character, bringing all its nobler powers into subjection to the evil desire. The removal of one safeguard from the conscience, the indulgence of one evil habit, one neglect of the high claims of duty, breaks down the defenses of the soul and opens the way for Satan to come in and lead us astray. The only safe course is to let our prayers go forth daily from a sincere heart, as did David, "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not" (Ps. 17: 5). Conflict and Courage, p. 114.

"Balaam had sold the children of Israel for a reward [like Judas sold Jesus], and he perished with the people whose favor he had obtained at the sacrifice of twenty-four thousand Israelites. The Lord is regarded as cruel, by many, in requiring his people to make war with other nations. They say that it is contrary to his benevolent character. But he who made the world, and formed man to dwell upon the earth, has unlimited control over all the works of his hands; and it is his right to do as he pleases, and what he pleases, with the work of his hands. Man has no right to say to his Maker, Why doest thou thus? There is no injustice in his character. He is the ruler of the world, and a large portion of his subjects have rebelled against his authority, and have trampled upon his law. He has bestowed upon them liberal blessings, and surrounded them with everything needful; yet they have bowed to images of wood and stone, silver and gold, which their own hands have made. They teach their children that these are the gods that give them life and health, and make their lands fruitful, and give them riches and honor. They scorn the God of Israel. They despise his people because their works are righteous. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works." God has borne with them until they filled up the measure of their iniquity, and then he has brought upon them swift destruction. He has used his people as instruments of his wrath, to punish wicked nations who have vexed them, and seduced them into idolatry. Spirit of Prophecy, volume 1, pp. 328, 329.

Balaam did not accept the **warning of the sword** and therefore he was **killed by the sword** (**Numbers 31:8**). This foreshadows what happened with the Papacy. She refused to accept the word of the Lord and therefore she was killed with the sword in **1798** (Revelation 13:9).

Notice the **Teaching of Balaam** and how it applies to the period of the church of Pergamum:

The Great Controversy, p. 42: “Satan therefore laid his plans to war more successfully against the government of God by planting his banner **in** the Christian church. If the followers of Christ could be **deceived and led to displease God**, then their strength, fortitude, and firmness would fail, and they would fall **an easy prey**.”

Thyatira: The apostasy during the church of Pergamum was followed by an even deeper apostasy under the church of Thyatira. The church of Pergamum is condemned for idolatry and fornication, which will only deepen during the church of Thyatira (2:20, 21). These are the very sins, which entered at the time of **Constantine**. The church, which had remained faithful during the period of Smyrna, forsook Christ and formed an **adulterous relationship with the state**. This is shown later on in **Revelation 14:8; 17:2; 18:3; 19:2**) where the harlot fornicates with the kings of the earth. Idolatry entered at this time when the Roman gods were adopted and given Christian names.

Warning for the Church Today

The dangers that were faced by the church during the period of Pergamum are very real today as well:

II Timothy 3:12

*“Indeed, and **all** [no exceptions] who **desire** [choose to] to **live godly** in **Christ Jesus** [how it can be done] **will** [not might] suffer persecution.”*

John 17:14

*“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are **not of the world**, just as I am not of the world.”*

James 4:4

*“**Adulterers and adulteresses**, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”*

1 John 2:15-17

*“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world — the lust of the **flesh**, the lust of the **eyes**, and the **pride of life** — is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is **passing away**, and the lust of it; but he who **does the will** of God abides forever.”*

Worldliness means that people are more concerned with the **here and now** than with the **sweet by and by**. It means that they are **earth-focused**. The **clothes** we wear, the **houses** we live, the **cars** we drive, the **entertainment** we choose, how we **spend our time** (do we have

time for work, play, television, shopping, etc., but little or none for Bible study, prayer, coming to church on time, coming to prayer meeting, witnessing), how we use our **money**, how we use **our strength** reveals where **our heart is**.

The Great Controversy, p. 48

*“There is another and more important question that should engage the attention of the churches of today. The apostle Paul declares that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” **2 Timothy 3:12**. **Why** is it, then, that persecution seems in a great degree to slumber? The **only reason** is that the church has **conformed to the world's standard** and therefore **awakens no opposition**. The religion which is current in our day is not of the **pure and holy character** that marked the Christian faith in the days of **Christ and His apostles**. It is only because of the spirit of **compromise with sin**, because the **great truths** of the word of God are so **indifferently regarded**, because there is so little **vital godliness** in the church, that Christianity is apparently so popular with the world. Let there be a **revival** of the faith and power of the **early church**, and the spirit of persecution will be **revived**, and the fires of persecution will be **rekindled**.” **GC, p. 48***

According to Revelation 18:1-5 the greatest revival in the history of the world is right around the corner! In contrast to all previous revivals, this one will endure and prepare as people for the coming of Jesus. The latter rain will be the power and the loud cry will be the message. How can we call people out of Babylon if we are in it?

The Nicolaitans

It will be remembered that the church of Ephesus (see the comments on the church of Ephesus above) hated the Nicolaitans but the church of Pergamum now allowed them in the church:

*“Thus you also **have** [they no longer hate them like in Ephesus] those who hold the **doctrine of the Nicolaitans**, which thing I hate” (Revelation 2:15).*

The Exhortation

“Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth” (Revelation 19:15)

It was with the drawn sword that the Lord withstood Balaam to thwart his evil purpose against the Israel of old (Numbers 22:23, 31, 32). Jesus stood in front of the church of **Pergamum with the drawn sword** threatening all who refused to heed its cutting message by telling them that they would be **slain by the sword** as was Balaam in battle (Numbers 31:8; 25:5).

Promises to the Overcomer

*“To him who overcomes I will give some of the **hidden manna** to eat.”*

The manna that was hidden in the Ark of the **Covenant** represented the Word of God (Deuteronomy 8:3) as did the **sword** (Hebrews 4:12, 13). Instead of being destroyed with the sword, God will feed those who remain faithful to Him with the hidden manna.

The hidden manna was in the **Most Holy Place** (Hebrews 9:4) Manna was **angel's food** (Psalm 78:24). In the heavenly kingdom God's people will no longer hunger (**Isaiah 49:10; Revelation 7:16**). We can **now eat** that Manna spiritually by assimilating Christ (John 6:54). Notice the **spiritual application**, which is given by Ellen G. White:

"The question of what shall be published at the office must be viewed in the light of the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. The Lord's voice must be honored and obeyed. 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.' The truth must not be placed in the background as it now is, for subjects of vast importance to the soul receive only a passing notice, while these objectionable things have the foreground. The workers overlook the great truths that would make them wise unto salvation. They do not see that daily they are to receive manna from the heavenly table that they are to feed upon the Word of life, and so gain spiritual strength. They are now to store up, for the present and the future, supplies that will provide for the soul in times of emergency. They are to lay up in store the precious gold and silver and precious gems of the Word of God, jewels that will never perish." Letter 31, 1891

But there is also a **literal application** in the kingdom come:

"Here I saw a table of pure silver; it was many miles in length, yet our eyes could extend over it. I saw the fruit of the tree of life, the manna, almonds, figs, pomegranates, grapes, and many other kinds of fruit. I asked Jesus to let me eat of the fruit. He said: "Not now. Those who eat of the fruit of this land, go back to earth no more. But in a little while, if faithful, you shall both eat of the fruit of the tree of life and drink of the water of the fountain. And," said He, "you must go back to the earth again, and relate to others what I have revealed to you." Then an angel bore me gently down to this dark world. Sometimes I think I can stay here no longer, all things of earth look so dreary. I feel very lonely here, for I have seen a better land. Oh that I had wings like a dove then would I fly away and be at rest. Testimonies for the Church, volume 1, pp. 69-70

A White Stone

*"And I will give him a **white stone**, and on the stone a **new name** written which no one knows except him who receives it."*

The key background to this promise is found in the story of **Jacob** who struggled with the Angel of the LORD and prevailed or gained the victory. The word "**overcome**" in the message to Pergamum links the **new name** with the experience of Jacob who overcame and received a new name (Genesis 32:28; Hosea 12:3, 4; see also Isaiah 62:2; 65:15; 56:5).

White stones were used in multiple contexts in the Roman Empire. The **victor at the games** in Rome was given a white stone with his name on it. It was the equivalent of the gold medal at the Olympics. A **slave who had been freed** in Rome was also given a white stone, which he

carried around as the symbol of his emancipation. One who was **declared innocent in a court of law** was given a white stone.

“STUDIES IN REVELATION-THE SEVEN CHURCHES”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #6 – The Message to Thyatira

The City of Thyatira

The name ‘Thyatira’ means ‘sacrifice of contrition’

Of all the cities of the Roman Empire, Thyatira had the most organized **labor force**. It had a series of **trade guilds** (labor unions) of which the two most powerful were the guild of the **dyers** and the guild of the **coppersmiths**.

Thyatira was also renowned for its fabric dying business. The most famous dye that was used was the **royal purple** (today it is called Turkish red). We are told in the book of Acts that Lydia was from Thyatira and a seller of purple (Acts 16:14). This color will be significant when we study Revelation 17 where the harlot woman is garbed in purple and scarlet.

Thyatira also had expert coppersmiths who manufactured instruments of **brass and copper**. In this context it is significant that Jesus is described in the introductory message to this church as one having feet of fine brass burnished in the furnace (verse 18).

Description of Jesus Fitting the Condition of the Church

*“These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like **fine brass**”*

The eyes of Jesus **see** and **examine**. Nothing is hidden from the eyes of the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12, 13). The **cries of His people** do not go unnoticed. The reference to eyes as a flame of fire would be very familiar to a people who labored in foundries with their **flaming furnaces** where **fine brass and bronze** were manufactured into all sorts of articles for the market.

*“He whose eyes are “as a flame of fire” is searching every church in the world. His **gaze is piercing** every heart. He is measuring the temple and the worshipers thereof, weighing all their actions in the golden scales of heaven, and registering the result in the books of record. All things are **open to the eye** of Him with whom we have to do. He is a “discerner of the thoughts and intents and purposes of the heart.” No deed of darkness can be screened from his view. Sin, undetected by man, unsuspected by human minds, is noted and registered by the **great Heart searcher**.” Pamphlet 028: Elder Daniels and the Fresno Church, p. 2.*

Later on in the book of Revelation, we will discover that during this period the apostate church used the sword of the state to kill dissenters. But the end of this period the sword that the church had used to destroy the saints of the Most High gave the apostate church a deadly wound. (Revelation 13:9, 10)

The Commendation

*"I know your works, love [agape], service [diakonia], faith [pistis], and your patience [hupomone]; and as for your works, the **last** are more than the **first**."*

The Censure or Rebuke

The apostasy which was incipient in the times of Constantine became open in the sixth century:

"In the sixth century the papacy had become firmly established. Its seat of power was fixed in the imperial city, and the bishop of Rome was declared to be the head over the entire church. Paganism had given place to the papacy. The dragon had given to the beast "his power, and his seat, and great authority." Revelation 13:2. And now began the 1260 years of papal oppression foretold in the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation. Daniel 7:25; Revelation 13:5-7." GC, pp. 54, 55

By its own admission, the Roman Catholic Church simply adopted the practices of the pagan nations and Christianized them. In this way, the church became a harlot, fornicating with the state, embracing, and baptizing the practices of the heathen:

*"The missionary history of the Church clearly shows her **adaptability** to all races, all continents, all nations. In her liturgy and her art, in her traditions and the forming of her doctrine, naturally enough she includes Jewish elements, but also elements that are of **pagan origin**. In a certain respect, she has **copied her organization** from that of the Roman Empire, has preserved and made fruitful the philosophical intuitions of **Socrates, Plato and Aristotle**, borrowed from both Barbarians and the Byzantine Roman Empire, but **always remains herself**, thoroughly digesting all elements drawn from external sources. In her laws, her ceremonies, her festivals and her devotions, she makes use of local customs after **purifying them and 'baptizing' them**. 'This adaptation of pagan customs,' says Fr. Sertillanges in *Le Miracle de l'Eglise*, p. 183, 'prudently regulated, allows for the utilization of instincts and sentiments that preserve local traditions, and so lends powerful aid to the furthering of the Gospel. . . The Church's cultus of saints and martyrs is a helpful substitute and **replaces popular divinities** in the minds of the populace.'" Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, volume 88, p. 85.*

Elijah in the Wilderness

The message to the church of Thyatira centers on the mission of the '**Elijah in the Wilderness**'. The message to the church of Thyatira is the longest because it covers the longest period of church history. With this in mind let us read: Revelation 2:18-29 with my own interpretive remarks in brackets:

¹⁸ "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: ¹⁹ "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. ²⁰ Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman **Jezebel**, who calls herself a prophetess, to **teach** and **seduce [seduces by her teaching]** My servants to commit **sexual immorality [fornication]** and eat things sacrificed to **idols [idolatry]**. ²¹ And I gave her **time [1260 years]** to repent of her **sexual immorality**, and she **did not repent**. ²² Indeed I will cast her into a **sickbed [the deadly wound in 1798]**, and those who **commit adultery with her [she was fornicating with the kings]** into **great tribulation [the French Revolution]**, unless they repent of their deeds. ²³ I will **kill her children [the apostate Protestant churches]** with death, and **all the churches** shall know that I am He who **searches the minds and hearts**. And I will give to each one of you **according to your works [the coming judgment is described in the context of this church just as in Daniel 7]**. ²⁴ Now to you I say, and to the **rest [remnant]** in Thyatira, as many as **do not have this doctrine**, who have not known the **depths of Satan**, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. ²⁵ But hold fast what you have till I come. ²⁶ And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give **power over the nations--** ²⁷He **shall rule them** with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' [**allusion to Daniel 2 and 7**]-as I also have received from My Father; ²⁸ and I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ "He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"

Review of the Seven Periods of Church History

- **Ephesus** (apostolic church especially the later period)
- **Smyrna** (Imperial persecutions; death language)
- **Pergamum**: where **Satan's throne** is (Revelation 13:2). The throne is later **transferred** to Thyatira—the papal church (Revelation 13:2)
- **Thyatira (Jezebel)** is mentioned in the context of this church. She must be symbolic because at this point literal Jezebel had been dead for over eight hundred years and furthermore she did not live for 1260 years!
- **Sardis** (escaping)
- **Philadelphia** (open door of Revelation 11 and also 144,000 terminology)
- **Laodicea** (Revelation 16:15)

Introductory Remarks Concerning the Elijah Story

Not only are the **seven churches** symbolic of **seven periods** of church history. They are also foundational to the study of the rest of the book of Revelation. The evidence seems to indicate that the **seven churches** are to Revelation what **Daniel 2** is to Daniel. As Daniel 2 is the **foundational prophecy**, upon which the rest of **Daniel builds**, so the churches are the foundational prophecy upon which the rest of Revelation builds. In other words, the churches provide the **skeleton** or **basic chronological structure** upon which the **rest of the book** builds.

Principles of Interpretation

In order to fully comprehend the message to the church of Thyatira we must include Revelation 11 in our study because it is directly related to the church during this period. Furthermore, when we study Revelation 17 we will once again encounter this vile woman as the enemy of God's people in the end time.

The mention of Jezebel in the context of the church of Thyatira makes it necessary to review the mission and message of Elijah in Scripture. The Bible describes four Elijah stories. In the **first two** stories, Elijah is an **individual** (the Old Testament Elijah and John the Baptist) and his enemies are also individuals. These first two Elijahs, taken together, then become symbolic of the Elijah of the middle Ages and the end time Elijah.

The last Elijah will not be **an individual** but rather a **worldwide movement** and the **three enemies** of Elijah will not be individuals either but rather **worldwide systems**

The message to **Thyatira** is picked up and further explained in **Revelation 11-13 and 17**

Four Protagonists of the Elijah Story

- **Jezebel:** A determined and strong willed harlot woman
- **Ahab:** A weak and easily influenced king
- **False Prophets:** A group of apostate false prophets who do Jezebel's bidding
- **Elijah:** God's faithful prophet who was called to **denounce** the evil triple alliance.

It is important to remember that Elijah **never appears in a vacuum**. It would be impossible for the story of Elijah to be repeated on a grander and symbolic scale in the future if his enemies do not appear with him in the story.

In the **Old Testament** story Jezebel, a **literal** pagan priestess linked up with Ahab, a **literal** king who was influenced by her to use his executive authority to introduce a mixture of God worship and Baal worship into Israel. She had a group of **literal** false prophets who extended her influence in the **literal geographical territory** of Israel. God raised up an individual to denounce this apostasy.

In the book of Revelation Thyatira represents a **period right in the middle of church history** when the **apostate Christian** church **blended paganism and Christianity** and acted like Jezebel. The church during this period linked up with the **political systems** of Europe. After a period of time, **spiritual children** were born from her and **she persecuted** those who disagreed with her.

In Summary

In the interest of space, I will merely summarize the **main points** of the Old Testament Elijah story, which is the foundation of all succeeding Elijah stories:

- The harlot Jezebel fornicated with the king and used his executive authority to extend her counterfeit religion
- She shed the blood of God's servants
- She was involved in the occult because she is called a witch
- She blended true and false worship enforcing the worship of the sun-god Baal
- She instituted a counterfeit sacrificial system
- She led Israel to break the commandments of God
- She had a group of false prophets that extended her influence
- God called Elijah to unmask the apostate religion at the risk of his life!

According to Revelation 2:20 many of the details of this story were repeated symbolically within the fourth period of the history of the Christian church! Let's draw some parallels between the Old Testament Elijah story and its repetition on a larger and symbolic scale during the period of the middle Ages and the end time.

Fornication, idolatry and the occult

2 Kings 9:22: *"Now it happened, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, "Is it peace, Jehu?" So he answered, "What peace, as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many?"*

Revelation 2:20: *"Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols."*

Revelation 17:1, 2, 5: *"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication. . . And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."*

Revelation 18:23: *"For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived."*

Worship a Central Issue

1 Kings 16:30, 31: *"Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him. And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him."*

Revelation 13:4: *"So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"*

The Law a Central Issue

1 Kings 18:17, 18: "Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah that Ahab said to him: "Is that you, O troubler of Israel?" And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and you have followed the Baals."

Daniel 7:25: "He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time."

Trampling on the Sanctuary Truth is a Central Issue

1 Kings 18:30, 31, 36, 37: "Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me" So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name". And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again."

"He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down."(Daniel 8:11)

No rain during the period of apostasy

1 Kings 17:1: "And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew or rain these years, except at my word."

Revelation 11:6: "These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy."

The reason for the scarcity of rain

2 Chronicles 7:13, 14: "When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people,¹⁴ if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

Where there is no rain there is famine for the word of God

Deuteronomy 32:2: "Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, as raindrops on the tender herb, and as showers on the grass."

Amos 8:11, 12: "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord GOD, "That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it." (Amos 8:11, 12)

Revelation 11:6

These [one of which is Elijah] have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy [1260 days; 11:2]"

The length of the apostasy was three years and six months

James 5:17: "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months." (James 5:17) Instead of repenting, she persecuted God's people all the more.

Revelation 11:3: The 1260 days are years (if the 1260 days are really years then Elijah cannot be a literal person but a group of people who live like Elijah and proclaim the message of Elijah. Jezebel and Ahab cannot be literal either!

"And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

Daniel 7:25: The 1260 days are equal to three and a half times but these are symbolic times

"He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time."

Jezebel was given time to repent of her fornication

How much time was given her to repent? "Time, times and the dividing of time", a period that reached from **538 to 1798**

Revelation 2:21: "And I gave her time [chronos] to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent."

There was a faithful remnant within the apostate church

1 Kings 19:18: *"Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."*

Revelation 2:24, 25: *"Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine and who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. But hold fast what you have till I come."*

These are called the saints of the Most High in **Revelation 13:7** and **Daniel 7:25** and are described as a pure woman who flees to the wilderness. It is the same word (**loipos**) which is translated remnant in **Revelation 12:17**. There was also a remnant in the days of Elijah, which were the seven thousand who did not bend the knee to Baal.

The Depths of Satan

In **II Thessalonians 2** the apostle Paul affirms that the mystery of iniquity was at work during this period. In fact, he affirmed that the man of sin worked according to the operation of Satan. Revelation 17 refers to this system as Mystery: Babylon the Great (Revelation 17:5).

Elijah was blamed and sought out everywhere

1 Kings 18:10, 17: *"As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to hunt for you; and when they said, 'He is not here,' he took an oath from the kingdom or nation that they could not find you."*

"Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah that Ahab said to him: "Is that you, O troubler of Israel?"

Revelation 12:6: The faithful remnant was hunted for everywhere. The Waldensees and Albigenses are a prime example. Crusades were organized against them because they rebuked the apostasy.

Elijah Fled to the Wilderness

God had prepared a place for Elijah to hide:

1 Kings 17:3: *"Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan."*

Revelation 12:6, 14: *"Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. . . But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent."*

The faithful were nourished by God

1 Kings 17:4: *“And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and **I have commanded** the ravens to **feed you** there.”*

1 Kings 17:6: *“The **ravens** brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook.”*

Revelation 12:6, 14: *“Then the woman **fled** into the **wilderness**, where she has a **place prepared** by God that they should **feed her there** one thousand two hundred and sixty days. . . But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where **she is nourished** for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.”*

Jezebel shed the blood of the Saints and God’s prophets

1 Kings 18:4: *“For so it was, while Jezebel **massacred the prophets** of the LORD, that Obadiah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them with bread and water.”*

1 Kings 19:1, 2: *“Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.” And when he saw that, he arose and **ran for his life**, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.”*

Revelation 17:6: *“I saw the woman, **drunk with the blood** of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.”*

The False prophets of Baal were fed by Jezebel

1 Kings 18:19: *“Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who **eat at Jezebel's table**.”*

Revelation 16:13: The **beast** that ruled for **3.5 years** has a **false prophet** or daughters who do its bidding:

*“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the **false prophet**.”*

Revelation 17:5: the false prophet is also referred to as the **daughters of the harlot**

“And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”

Thrown into a sickbed

Revelation 2:22: *“Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation [this tribulation was in the French Revolution], unless they repent of their deeds [notice that the children can still repent but the mother did not repent].”*

The Arndt and Gingrich Greek Lexicon, p. 436 explains that this means *“to lay someone on a sickbed i. e. strike her with an illness Rv. 2:22 a lingering illness as a **divine punishment**.”*

This happened during and at the end of the French Revolution when the union of **church and state** was turned **upside down**. The wound culminated in **1798** when the harlot received the deadly wound.

The Harlot's Children

Revelation 2:23: Jezebel had **children** who were born from her toward the end of the 1260 years. These daughters will eventually do her bidding:

*“I will kill **her children** with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.”*

*“And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE **MOTHER OF HARLOTS** AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”*

The daughters of the harlot, **Apostate Protestantism**, will suffer **her same fate** unless they repent. In **Revelation 13**, the **daughters** are referred to as the beast with lamblike horns, which does the bidding of the beast. In **Revelation 17**, she is called the **mother** of harlots.

Words of **John XXIII** at the opening of **Vatican Council II** (1962-1965):

*“. . . She [the Roman Catholic Church] to be an affectionate, kind and patient **mother**, she is moved by compassion and goodness towards **her alienated children**.” (Ernesto Balducci, John: The Transitional Pope, transl., Dorothy White [New York: Hill Book Company, 1964], p. 269.*

Words of **Pope Paul VI** during the council:

*“Because of their position, separated brethren are the object of deep and tender affection on the part of the **Mother Church**. . . It is a love that feels grief and sadness, the love of a heart wounded by estrangement, because the estrangement prevents our brethren from enjoying so many privileges and rights, and makes them lose so much grace. But perhaps for this very reason its love is all the deeper and more burning. . .” Cardinal Augustin Bea, The Unity of Christians, ed., Bernard Leeming [New York: Herder and Herder, 1963], p. 140*

A continuation of Elijah at the end of time

Malachi 4:1-3: The Elijah of the middle Ages was not the final Elijah. The conclusion of the story has not been written. Jezebel did not come to an end, the daughters did not come to an end, the great and terrible day of the Lord did not come and the church was not translated, as was Elijah. We are to expect the final Elijah to complete the story that was suspended when Jezebel received the deadly wound.

The day of destruction is coming

Malachi 4:1-3: *"For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," Says the LORD of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch. But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this," says the LORD of hosts."*

Before that Day God will send the last Elijah, not a person but a worldwide movement

Malachi 4:5-6: *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: ⁶ And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."*

Two Stages

Revelation 13:3: The harlot has two stages of existence and so Elijah, the children of the harlot and Ahab must also have two stages of existence.

"And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed and all the world marveled and followed the beast."

Revelation 17:1-6 describes the moment when the harlot will arise once more. She will be accompanied by the kings of the earth and the whole world and by her daughters. Then the final message and persecution of Elijah will take place. But this will be the last chapter of our study (for further information on this moment study my notes on Revelation 17).

Elijah broadens from Israel to Western Europe to the world at the end of time. The enemies also broaden from Israel to Western Europe to the United States and to the world.

According to Revelation 12:17, after the three and a half prophetic times God would raise up a people who will keep the commandments of God, have the gift of prophecy, preach true worship to the creator, restore the gospel and denounce the fornication of Babylon with the kings of the earth. Under a divine manifestation of power, will they lead the world to take a stand for the seal of God or the mark of the beast? This will be the end time Elijah with the power from heaven, which will enlighten the world with its glory (Revelation 18:1)

The Exhortation

“But **hold fast** what you have till I come. . .”

The Promised Reward: Power over the Nations

*“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power **over the nations**—‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’--as I also have received from My Father.”*

The **original source** of this language is found in **Psalm 2**, which describes David’s coronation day. At that time the nations were conspiring to overthrow him.

The rod of the shepherd has **two parts**: On one end was the **crook**, which was used to keep the sheep together. The other end of the rod was made of **steel** and was used to **beat off predators**. This is why **Psalm 23:4** speaks of God’s rod and staff bringing comfort to David.

Daniel 7:14, 22, 26-27 must be studied that the Father will give the kingdom to Jesus but it also says that the kingdom will be given to the saints. This promise is particularly significant to those **who were persecuted** during this period because the horn and the beast had dominion and actually prevailed against the saints of the Most High during this period –[Daniel 7:21, 25; Daniel 8:24; Revelation 13:7]

The Morning Star

The Morning Star represents Jesus who is the Word of God:

Peter 1:19

*“And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the **morning star** rises in your hearts”*

It is significant that the morning star here is used in the context of the **prophetic** word. It was Bible prophecy which **dispelled the darkness** of the dark ages. Luther and the Reformers used Bible prophecy to tear away the disguise from this system.

*“He is the bright and morning Star, shining amid the **moral darkness** of this sinful, corrupt world. He is the Light of the world, and all who give their hearts to Him will find peace, rest, and joy.” Letter 115, 1905*

Ellen White identifies the morning star of the Reformation as **John Wycliffe**:

“In the fourteenth century arose in England the “morning star of the Reformation.” John Wycliffe was the herald of reform, not for England alone, but for all Christendom. The great protest against Rome which it was permitted him to utter was never to be silenced. That protest

opened the struggle which was to result in the emancipation of individuals, of churches, and of nations.” The Great Controversy, p. 80.

If Christ as the Word of God is the Morning Star, then how can we say that Wycliffe was? Notice how Ellen White beautifully explains it:

“Every true believer **catches the beams** from the Morning Star and **transmits the light** to those who sit in darkness. Not only do they shine amid the darkness of their own neighborhood, but as a church **they shine forth** to regions beyond. The Lord expects every man to do his duty. Everyone who unites with the church is to be one with Christ to **diffuse the beams of the Morning Star**, and becoming the light of the world, **Christ and His people** are to be **copartners** in the great work of saving the world.” Manuscript 51, Nov. 14, 1894. This Day with God, p. 327.

In **John 8:12** and **9:5** Jesus affirmed that He is the light of the world. But in Matthew 5:13-14 he says that we are the light of the world. We are moons and He is the sun. We merely diffuse His light.

“STUDIES IN REVELATION-THE SEVEN CHURCHES”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #7 – The Message to Sardis

Revelation 3:1:

"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.'"

Sardis

Six hundred years before Revelation was written, Sardis had been one of the greatest cities in the ancient world. It was the capital of Lydia, ruled by the wealthy Croesus. By the Roman period the city had lost its prestige. Its glory rested in the memory of its past history rather than its present greatness. This is the reason why W. M. Ramsay, who dedicated a lifetime to study the seven churches stated:

"No city of Asia at that time showed such a melancholy contrast between past splendor and present decay as Sardis."

This characteristic of Sardis is certainly significant. We shall see that this church represents the period that follows the Protestant Reformation. What begun gloriously did not advance to completion!

The Seven Spirits

The number 7 denotes completeness. The church of Sardis was about to die because she had the body (which is the church; I Corinthians 12:13) but the spirit was missing. At Pentecost, the body of Christ was joined to the spirit and there was life. Sardis needed a new Pentecost (see Genesis 2:7; Jeremiah 18:1-6; Ezekiel 37:1-10; Acts 2:1-4). Only the Holy Spirit can give life (Romans 8:11; John 6:63) and the church of Sardis needed a new life because it was a dying church.

"Without the Holy Spirit, without the breath of God, there is torpidity of conscience, loss of spiritual life. Many who are without spiritual life have their names on the church records, but they are not written in the Lamb's book of life. They may be joined to the church, but they are not united to the Lord. They may be diligent in the performance of a certain set of duties, and

may be regarded as living men; but many are among those who have "a name that thou livest, and art dead" (Rev. 3:1).--The SDA Bible Commentary, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 4, pp. 1165, 1166.

"Today there are few who are heartily serving God. The most of those who compose our congregations are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. They come and go like the door upon its hinges. For years they have complacently listened to the most solemn, soul-stirring truths, but they have not practiced them. They are less and less sensible of the preciousness and value of truth, because they neglect the practice of those things which are pleasing in the sight of God. The stirring testimonies of reproof and warning do not arouse them. The sweetest melodies that come from God through human lips--justification by faith, and the righteousness of Christ--do not bring forth from them a response of love and gratitude." Review and Herald, April 4, 1893

Seven Stars

The seven stars are the ministers of the seven churches. The ministers were responsible for the spiritual condition of the church and Jesus held them in His hand.

The Name

The NIV translators translate 'have a name' with the word 'reputation.' That is to say, Sardis had a reputation of being alive but it was really a church on its deathbed. I believe that the NIV catches the correct nuance of the expression. A parallel would be Genesis 11:4 where the builders said: "Let us make ourselves a name' by building the city and the tower." In other words, they were saying: "Let us make a reputation for ourselves."

The message to Sardis, in a general sense, applies to the church today:

"God calls upon this church to make a change. They had a name to live, but their works were destitute of the love of Jesus. Oh, how many have fallen because they trusted in their profession for salvation! How many are lost by their effort to keep up a name! If one has the reputation of being a successful evangelist, a gifted preacher, a man of prayer, a man of faith, a man of special devotion, there is positive danger that he will make shipwreck of faith when tried by the little tests that God suffers to come. Often his great effort will be to maintain his reputation."
ZBC p. 958

"Of the one who has been working with intensity of effort to keep up a name, God says, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." He has been so occupied with keeping up a name that he has neglected responsibilities of a most solemn character. God looks upon the name as dead, so far as correct influence is concerned. Those who follow in his tread will be dead, destroyed by false representations. There is nothing more dangerous to a professing Christian than to have merely a "name."" A Message to Our Physicians (1905)

"The accession of members who have not been renewed in heart and reformed in life is a source of weakness to the church. This fact is often ignored. Some ministers and churches are so desirous of securing an increase of numbers that they do not bear faithful testimony against unchristian habits and practices. Those who accept the truth are not taught that they cannot

safely be worldlings in conduct while they are **Christians in name**. Heretofore they were Satan's subjects; henceforth they are to be subjects of Christ. The life must testify to the change of leaders. Public opinion favors a profession of Christianity. Little self-denial or self-sacrifice is required in order to put on a form of godliness and to have one's name enrolled upon the church book. Hence many join the church without first becoming united to Christ. In this Satan triumphs. Such converts are his most efficient agents. They serve as decoys to other souls. They are false lights, luring the unwary to perdition. It is in vain that men seek to make the Christian's path broad and pleasant for worldlings. God has not smoothed or widened the rugged, narrow way. If we would enter into life, we must follow the same path which Jesus and His disciples trod--the path of humility, self-denial, and sacrifice." 5T, p. 172

A Truncated Reformation

In a more restricted sense, the church of Sardis represents the church during the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation. The word "Sardis" means, "escaping." This was the church, which was escaping from the darkness of the middle Ages. The Protestant Reformers brought life into a decaying church but then Protestantism itself began to decay.

After the Protestant Reformation, the church appeared to be quite alive. There was great emphasis on doctrinal orthodoxy and correct ritual but without the life giving power of the Holy Spirit. The great Protestant creeds were written during this period but the church was actually dead because it depended on a head religion based on a creed rather than a living experience with Jesus. The church of Sardis did not complete the Reformation. The various churches became petrified in their creeds and failed to accept increasing light. States Samuel Turner:

*"The Reformers **began well**, but many of their successors were not so consecrated as they and so their works were not found perfect before God. They had a name to live and yet were dead, and the life of vital godliness which sprang from the great doctrines of the Reformers, gradually **degenerated into lifeless formalism**, until at the time of John Wesley the conditions were such that many of the ministers of the Established Churches of Europe were **drunkards and libertines** and were among the lowest of the people. . . Men like the Wesleys, Whitfield, the Puritans and the Pietists began to protest against these things with such earnestness and unction of the Spirit of God that they succeeded in bringing about the modern revival and missionary period typified by the conditions at Philadelphia." Samuel H. Turner, Outline Studies in the Book of Revelation, p. 13.*

Ellen White describes the condition of the church during this period:

"For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the reformed churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will go at present no farther than the instruments of their reformation. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw; . . . and the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things. This is a misery much to be lamented; for though they were burning and shining lights in their time, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God, but were they now living, would be as willing to embrace further light as that which they first received."--D. Neal, History of the Puritans, vol. 1, p. 269. GC, p. 292

“The Reformation did not, as many suppose, end with Luther. It is to be continued to the close of this world's history. Luther had a great work to do in reflecting to others the light which God had permitted to shine upon him; yet he did not receive all the light which was to be given to the world. From that time to this, new light has been continually shining upon the Scriptures, and new truths have been constantly unfolding.

Luther and his co-laborers accomplished a noble work for God; but, coming as they did from the Roman Church, having themselves believed and advocated her doctrines, it was not to be expected that they would discern all these errors. It was their work to break the fetters of Rome and to give the Bible to the world; yet there were important truths which they failed to discover, and grave errors which they did not renounce. Most of them continued to observe the Sunday with other papal festivals. They did not, indeed, regard it as possessing divine authority, but believed that it should be observed as a generally accepted day of worship. There were some among them, however, who honored the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. Among the reformers of the church an honorable place should be given to those who stood in vindication of a truth generally ignored, even by Protestants--those who maintained the validity of the fourth commandment and the obligation of the Bible Sabbath. When the Reformation swept back the darkness that had rested down on all Christendom, Sabbathkeepers were brought to light in many lands.

*Those who received the great blessings of the Reformation **did not go forward in the path so nobly entered upon by Luther**. **A few** [interesting in the light of the fact that there were a few in Sardis who had not soiled their garments] **faithful men** arose from time to time to proclaim new truth and expose long-cherished error, but **the majority**, like the Jews in Christ's day, or the papists in the time of Luther, were content to believe **as their fathers believed**, and to live as they lived. Therefore religion again degenerated into **formalism**; and errors and superstitions which would have been cast aside had the church continued to walk in the light of God's Word, were retained and cherished. Thus the spirit inspired by the Reformation gradually **died out**, until there was almost as great **need of reform in the Protestant churches** as in the Roman Church in the time of Luther. There was the same **spiritual stupor**, the same respect for the opinions of men, the same spirit of worldliness, the same substitution of human theories for the teachings of God's Word. Pride and extravagance were fostered under the guise of religion. The churches became corrupted by allying themselves with the world. Thus were degraded the great principles for which Luther and his fellow laborers had done and suffered so much.*

*As Satan saw that he had failed to crush out the truth by persecution, he again resorted to the same plan of **compromise** which had led to the great apostasy and the formation of the Church of Rome. He induced Christians to ally themselves, not now with pagans, but with those who, by their worship of the god of this world, as truly proved themselves idolaters.*

*Satan could no longer keep the Bible from the people; it had been placed within the reach of all. But he led thousands to accept false interpretations and unsound theories, **without searching the Scriptures to learn the truth for themselves**. He had corrupted the doctrines of the Bible, and traditions which were to ruin millions were taking deep root. The church was upholding and defending these traditions, instead of contending for the faith once delivered to the saints. And*

while wholly unconscious of their condition and their peril, the church and the world were rapidly approaching the most solemn and momentous period of earth's history--the period of the revelation of the Son of man." The Story of Redemption, pp. 352-355

Ellen White makes the following statement about the church during the period of the Lisbon earthquake, the darkening of the sun and the moon turning into blood. This is the period between 1755 and 1780:

*"The condition of the **church at this time** is pointed out in the Savior's words in the Revelation: "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." And to those who refuse to arouse from their careless security, the solemn warning is addressed: "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 3:1, 3 GC, pp. 309, 310*

Most of the letter to Sardis applies to the **end of the period** rather than the beginning. Like Ephesus, Sardis began well but then lost its zeal. Sardis was alive at one time but was about to die.

Strengthen what Remains

Revelation 3:2:

*"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are **ready to die**, for I have not found your works **perfect** before God."*

What is meant by the expression 'I have not found your works perfect before God'? There are **two complementary possibilities:**

First, the church **claimed** to have faith during this period but did not have corresponding works. Their faith was a dead faith like the body without the spirit. There was a lot of saying, claiming the righteousness of Christ but not much doing. The church during this period taught a mere **forensic view** of justification, and sanctification was placed on the back burner. The church needed the message of James 2 where we are told that faith is made perfect by works (James 2:22) and that faith without works is dead.

Luther himself had a very low view of the book of James calling it 'the epistle of straw'. The successors of Luther became stagnant in their view of salvation and taught that faith was all that was needed and works had nothing to do with salvation. In this context, the words of James 2:26 are very significant: *"The body without the spirit is dead and so faith without works is also dead."* The Bible teaches that we are justified by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8, 9) but it also teaches that we shall be judged by works (Revelation 22:12).

Second, the word "perfect" in Revelation 3:2 is not *teleioo* [as in James 2] but rather *pleroma*, which means "to fulfill" or "to complete." The idea is not perfect versus imperfect but rather complete versus incomplete. The work of the church during this period was not complete. They were satisfied with where they were, with an intellectual assent to truth. The word *pleroo* or

pleroma means to fill up, finish, level up, complete. See Colossians 2:10; 4:12; Luke 9:31; Matthew 5:17; Ephesians 1:23; Colossians 1:19; 2:9

The Protestant Reformation was about to die and they needed to hold fast or strengthen that which was left or they would die. They were about to die because they had not completed or finished the works which God gave them to do. We know this because the text says: "You are about to die for [because] I have not found your works complete."

Watch

In the gospels and the book of Revelation, only believers are warned to watch. Sardis was built on a hill so steep that it was considered an invincible fortress. Its natural defenses seemed to be its greatest strength. The city fell twice because of its overconfidence. Cyrus the Persian conquered it in 549 BC and Antiochus defeated it in 218 BC. On both occasions, enemy troops scaled the precipice by night and found that the city had set no guard. The city was overwhelmed because they were overconfident and felt no need to watch.

This is the reason why Jesus counseled the church of Sardis to watch. Mark 13:33-37 is the key passage to understand what it means to watch. We will come back to the idea of watching in our remarks about the next verse. See also, Matthew 24:42, 43; 25:13; 26:38; I Thessalonians 5:6

The tense of the verb 'watch' is continuous. It means to "continue watching." It is the **imperative** mood and **progressive** tense, that is, it is a command to continue watching. What does it mean to watch? We will answer this when we study the coming of the thief in verse 3.

Strengthen

I Peter 5:10 has synonyms, which help us understand the meaning of the word 'strengthen'.

*"But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, **perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle** you."*

God is saying: "keep alive what you have received and complete the task which God has given you."

2 Thessalonians 3:3, 4:

*"But the Lord is faithful, who will **establish you and guard you** from the evil one. 4 And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you."*

The church of Sardis refused to live up to the old light and therefore rejected the new light. In contrast, we shall see that the church of Philadelphia accepted the new light because she was living up to the old light. As a result, Sardis received no commendation and Philadelphia received no rebuke.

Regarding the literal church of Sardis Ellen White stated:

*"In **Sardis** many had been converted through the preaching of the apostles. The truth had been received as a bright and shining light. But some had **forgotten the wonderful manner** in which they had received the truth, and Jesus found it necessary to send reproof. One after another of the **old standard-bearers** had fallen, and some had become **wearied of the oft-repeated truths**. They desired a **new phase of doctrine**, more pleasing to many minds. They thought they needed a wonderful change, and in their spiritual blindness did not discern that their sophistries would **uproot all the experiences of the past**. But the Lord Jesus could see the end from the beginning. Through John He sent them the warning, "**Remember** therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief" (MS, p. 34, 1905) 7BC, p. 958.*

Revelation 3:3:

*"**Remember** therefore how you have received and heard; **hold fast** and **repent**. Therefore if you will not **watch**, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not [emphatic double negative by no means know] know what hour I will come upon you."*

Four Concepts

There are four key concepts in this verse: 1) Remember, 2) hold fast [keep: the same word as keep in Revelation 12:17], 3) repent and 4) watch.

Hold Fast

"Hold fast" is in the **imperative** mood and should be translated "continue holding on to." The Sardians were to remember what they received from the Reformers and hold fast to it. But they were to repent for not completing the work that God had called them to finish.

Watch

In the following quotation, Ellen White explains what it means to watch. Notice that the coming of the Master is not referring to the second coming of Jesus but rather to the close of human probation. It bears noting that this message applies to everyone who lives and not only to the end time generation, because probation closes when a person dies. Thus, the message to Sardis does not only apply to those who will be alive when probation closes for the world but also to those who close their probation at the moment of death:

"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."

When Jesus ceases to plead for man, the cases of all are forever decided. This is the time of reckoning with His servants. To those who have neglected the preparation of purity and holiness, which fits them to be waiting ones to welcome their Lord, the sun sets in gloom and darkness, and rises not again. 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. They became weary of waiting and watching; they became indifferent in regard to the coming of their Master. They longed not for His appearing, and thought there was no need of such continued, persevering watching. They had been disappointed in their expectations and might be again. They concluded that there was time enough yet to arouse. They would be sure not to lose the opportunity of securing an earthly treasure. It would be safe to get all of this world they could. And in securing this object, they lost all anxiety and interest in the appearing of the Master. They became indifferent and careless, as though His coming were yet in the distance. But while their interest was buried up in their worldly gains, the work closed in the heavenly sanctuary, and they were unprepared. 2T, pp. 190, 191

A Faithful Remnant

Revelation 3:4

*"You have a **few names** [the remnant] even in Sardis who have not defiled their **garments** [Revelation 22:11; I John 3:1-3; II Corinthians 7:1]; and they shall walk with Me in **white**, for they are **worthy**."*

There are several parallels between the story of the prodigal son and the promises that Jesus made to the church of Sardis: Garments (15:21, 22), worthiness (15:19), alive (15:24), dead (15:24), repentance (15:18). The prodigal son considered that he was not worthy to be called his Father's son but the goodness of his Father led him to sincere repentance (Romans 2:4) and as a result he was accepted with open arms by the Father. The Father placed on him the best robe, the robe of His righteousness. On the other hand, the elder son well represents the self-sufficiency of the church of Sardis.

Ellen White explained what is meant by the robe that the Father placed on his son:

"This robe, Christ's own spotless character, is freely offered to every human being. But all who receive it will receive and wear it here." Education, p. 249.

Regarding Adam and Eve in the Garden, Ellen White explains:

"The sinless pair wore no artificial garments; they were clothed with a covering of light and glory, such as the angels wear. So long as they lived in obedience to God, this robe of light continued to enshroud them." PP, p. 45.

"This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us. "All our righteousness are as filthy rags." Isa. 64:6. Everything that we of ourselves can do is defiled by sin. But the Son of God "was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin." Sin is defined to be "the transgression of the law" 1 John 3:5, 4. But Christ was obedient to every requirement of the law. He said of Himself, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart" Ps. 40:8. When on earth, He said to His disciples, "I have kept My Father's commandments." John 15:10. By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah." Christ Object Lessons, pp. 311, 312

Promises to Overcomers

Revelation 3:5:

*"He who **overcomes** [the tense is continuous, a better translation would be: "to him who is overcoming'] shall be clothed in **white garments**, and I will not blot out his **name** from the **Book of Life**; but I will confess his name before **My Father** and before His **angels**."*

Three consecutive things are mentioned in this verse: Clothed in white garments, name not blotted out in the judgment, and name confessed before God. This is judgment language.

Five ideas coalesce here which are found in Daniel 7: God the Father, Jesus, the angels, books and our names.

Book of Life

When an individual believes in Jesus and is baptized his name is written in the Book of Life there to remain until his name comes up in the judgment. Read the following texts on the Book of Life: Luke 12:8; Matthew 10:32; Philippians 4:3; Exodus 32:32, Daniel 12:1; Psalm 69:28; Revelation 13:8; 17:8; 20:12-15; 22:19

*"Christ says of the overcomer, "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." The names of **all those who have once given themselves** to God are written in the book of life, and their characters are now passing in review before him. Angels of God are weighing moral worth. They are watching the development of character in those now living, to see if their names can be **retained** in the book of life." Historical Sketches, p. 138*

*"When we **become children of God**, our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, and they **remain there** until the time of the investigative judgment. Then the **name of every individual** will be called, and his record examined. . . . If in that day it shall appear that all our wicked deeds have not been fully repented of, our names will be **blotted from the book of life**, and our sins will stand against us." In Heavenly Places, p. 360*

*“Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. Those who are baptized in the **threefold name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit**, at the very entrance of their Christian life declare publicly that they have forsaken the service of Satan and have become **members of the royal family**, children of the heavenly King.” Counsels to the Church, p. 295*

Garments

“The white robe of innocence was worn by our first parents when they were placed by God in holy Eden. They lived in perfect conformity to the will of God. All the strength of their affections was given to their heavenly Father. A beautiful soft light, the light of God, enshrouded the holy pair. This robe of light was a symbol of their spiritual garments of heavenly innocence. Had they remained true to God it would ever have continued to enshroud them. But when sin entered, they severed their connection with God, and the light that had encircled them departed. Naked and ashamed, they tried to supply the place of the heavenly garments by sewing together fig leaves for a covering.

This is what the transgressors of God's law have done ever since the day of Adam and Eve's disobedience. They have sewed together fig leaves to cover the nakedness caused by transgression. They have worn the garments of their own devising, by works of their own they have tried to cover their sins, and make themselves acceptable with God.

But this they can never do. Nothing can man devise to supply the place of his lost robe of innocence. No fig-leaf garment, no worldly citizen dress, can be worn by those who sit down with Christ and angels at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God's presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul.” Christ Object Lessons, pp. 310, 311

“By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah.” Christ Object Lessons, p. 312

“As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of all who have believed on Jesus come in review before God. Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation, and closes with the living. Every name is mentioned, every case closely investigated. Names are accepted, names rejected. When any have sins remaining upon the books of record, unrepented of and unforgiven, their names will be blotted out of the book of life, and the record of their good deeds will be erased from the book of God's remembrance. . . .

All who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life. . . . The Faith I Live By, p. 212

The Command to Watch and the Coming of the Thief

Matthew 24:37-39: Jesus clearly refers to two key moments of time before the flood: The **closing of the door** of mercy and the **second coming** and succeeding destruction:

*“But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, **until** the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and did not know **until** the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”*

I want to draw your attention to a very important little word, which appears twice in **Matthew 24:38, 39**, the word “**until**.” It marks **two specific moments** of time. The **first “until”** marked the moment when Noah and his family **entered** the ark and the **second “until”** marked the moment when it **started to rain** and the wicked were all taken away. Probation closed **seven days** before it started to rain. Jesus said that something similar would occur in connection with His second coming. In other words, probation will close before Jesus comes in the clouds of heaven. Jesus compared the close probation with the coming of a thief in the night.

The coming of the thief has **two key moments** of time: The moment when the **[1] thief comes** and everyone in the house is sleeping, and **[2]** when those who were **sleeping awake** and realize that the thief has come but it is too late to do anything about it.

Before the flood, there were also two key moments: The **closing of the door** and the **execution** of the punishment. Both came upon the **pre-flood** race as an **overwhelming surprise**.

In the Bible, the door of mercy always closed before destruction came:

- The door closed for the **Jewish nation** in the year 34 and destruction followed in AD 70.
- The door closed for **Babylon** when the hand wrote on the wall and then Babylon fell a short while later
- The door closed in **Sodom and Gomorrah** when the men gathered around Lot’s house and a short time later destruction came
- The door **closed for Jerusalem** (Ezekiel 8) and then a short while later destruction followed
- The final **judgment** takes place in heaven before the second coming (Revelation 14:6, 7), the **sanctuary service closes** (Revelation 15:5-8) and then the **plagues** fall
- **Revelation 22:10-12:** Three points of time are mentioned. First, the book of Revelation stands open for all to understand. Second, probation closes and all cases are decided for life or death. Third, Jesus comes to give His reward to everyone according to the decision that has been made in the judgment

- **Daniel 12:1, 2**: Michael **stands up** (probation closes), there is a **time of trouble**, God's people are **delivered** and their oppressors are destroyed

“STUDIES IN REVELATION-THE SEVEN CHURCHES”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #8 – The Message to Philadelphia

Revelation 3:7-13

*"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the **key of David**, He who **opens** and **no one shuts**, and **shuts** and **no one opens**": ⁸ "I know your works. See, I have set before you an **open door**, and **no one can shut it**; for you have a **little strength**, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. ⁹ Indeed I will make those of the **synagogue of Satan**, who **say they are Jews** and are not, but lie--indeed I will **make them come and worship** before your feet, and to know that **I have loved you**. ¹⁰ Because you have kept My command to **persevere**, I also will keep you from the **hour of trial** which shall come upon the **whole world**, to **test** those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹ Behold, I am **coming quickly!** Hold fast what you have, that no one may **take your crown**. ¹² He who overcomes, I will make him a **pillar in the temple** of My God, and he shall **go out no more**. And I will **write on him the name** of My God and the name of the **city** of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My **new name**. ¹³ He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." '*

It is highly recommended that those who are interested in an in-depth study of the message to the church of Philadelphia read my book, [Worship at Satan's Throne](#). There I have written a careful and detailed study of verses 7-9.

Word of my patience

Jesus spoke to the church of Philadelphia: *"You have kept My command to persevere"* (*hupomone*).

It is highly significant that the word 'persevere' is the same as the word that is translated 'patience' in Revelation 13:10 and 14:12. The word 'patience' in these verses appears in the context of those who will suffer through the final persecutions of the two beasts of Revelation 13. As I have shown in my book, the church of Philadelphia has two stages of fulfillment. The first was a partial fulfillment with the Millerite movement and the second is with the final generation that will be alive when Jesus comes.

Keep you

It has been argued that the expression 'keep you from the hour of temptation' means that the righteous will be taken out of the earth to heaven in a pre-tribulation rapture. But such a view does not square with the use of the identical expression elsewhere. Notice that when Jesus prayed for His disciples, He did not pray that they be taken out of the world but they be kept from evil. Notice John 17:15:

"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one." (John 17:15)

Hour of trial

Peirazo is a word which is translated 'temptation' in the New Testament (I Corinthians 10:13). In a few cases, it refers to being 'tested' as in Hebrews 11:17. It is not the same word that is used in Matthew 24:21, 29 to describe the great tribulation. When we remember that Satan is going to attempt to deceive the very elect through his subtle temptations in the time of trouble (Matthew 24:23, 24), the use of this word makes perfect sense.

"Just before us is "the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Revelation 3:10. All whose faith is not firmly established upon the word of God will be deceived and overcome. Satan "works with all deceivableness of unrighteousness" to gain control of the children of men, and his deceptions will continually increase. But he can gain his object only as men voluntarily yield to his temptations. Those who are earnestly seeking a knowledge of the truth and are striving to purify their souls through obedience, thus doing what they can to prepare for the conflict, will find, in the God of truth, a sure defense. "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee" (verse 10), is the Savior's promise. He would sooner send every angel out of heaven to protect His people than leave one soul that trusts in Him to be overcome by Satan." The Great Controversy, p. 560

Whole world

There are four basic words which are translated 'world' in the New Testament: gues (earth), kosmos (world), aion (age) and oikoumene (inhabited earth). The word here is oikoumene, which refers to the inhabited earth. The Greek word is composed of *oikos* (house) and *meno* (dwell). There is an hour of temptation which will soon come upon the whole inhabited earth. And why is this hour of temptation coming upon the whole inhabited earth? It is to test all the inhabitants of the earth.

To test the inhabitants of the earth

The word that is translated 'test' here is the word *peirazo*. The word for 'earth' is *gues*.

"I am coming quickly"

The hour of temptation that God's people will go through will be short because Jesus promised to come quickly. In Matthew 24:22 we are told that this time of trial will be shortened because if it were not, no flesh would remain alive. The prophet Isaiah, looking down the corridors of

time to this moment said: *“In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.”* (Isaiah 54:8)

Hold fast

Jesus encourages His people to “hang on and not let loose”

Take your crown

If you do not hang on, someone will take your crown. The word “crown” (*stefanos*) here generally, but not exclusively, refers to the victor’s wreath, which was given to the winner in Olympic competitions.

Pillar in the temple

This promise is fulfilled in Revelation 7:15 where we are told that the 144,000 will serve the Lord in His temple day and night.

Name of God and City and Jesus

In the book of Revelation the name of God and the New Jerusalem are linked with the 144,000 living saints which will go victoriously through the final tribulation (see Revelation 14:1; 22:4)

*“The only hope of any man lies through Jesus Christ. . . . The pure and holy garments are not prepared to be put on by any one after he has entered the gate of the city. All who enter will have on the robe of Christ's righteousness, and the name of God will be seen in their foreheads. This name is the symbol which the apostle saw in vision, and signifies the **yielding of the mind to intelligent and loyal obedience** to all of God's commandments.” Sons and Daughters of God, p. 370*

*“The same angel who visited Sodom is sounding the note of warning, “Escape for thy life.” The bottles of God's wrath cannot be poured out to destroy the wicked and their works until all the people of God have been judged, and the **cases of the living** as well as the dead are decided. And even after the saints are sealed with the seal of the living God, **His elect will have trials individually**. Personal afflictions will come; but the furnace is closely watched by an eye that will not suffer the gold to be consumed. The indelible mark of God is upon them. God can plead that His own name is written there. The Lord has shut them in. Their destination is inscribed--“**God, New Jerusalem**.” They are God's property, His possession.” Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers p. 446*

*“The **144,000** were all sealed, and perfectly united. On their foreheads was written, “**God, New Jerusalem**,” and a glorious star containing Jesus' **new name**. At our happy, holy state the wicked were enraged, and would rush violently up to lay hands on us to thrust us into prison, when we would stretch forth the hand in the name of the Lord, and they would fall helpless to the ground. Then it was that the **synagogue of Satan** [Revelation 3:9] knew that God had loved us who could wash one another's feet, and salute the brethren with a holy kiss, and they worshiped at our feet.” Christian Experience and Teaching, p. 58.*

Message of Philadelphia in the Past

Although the message to Philadelphians applies **generally** to Christians throughout the entire history of the Christian church, in a more restricted sense it is **partially** fulfilled in the Millerite movement that announced the Midnight Cry. The message will be **totally fulfilled** with the generation that will be alive when Jesus comes. Let's look first of all at the application to the events surrounding 1844. Regarding the application to the Millerite movement Ellen White explains:

"This door [to the most holy place] was not opened until the mediation of Jesus was finished in the holy place of the sanctuary in 1844. Then Jesus rose up and shut the door of the holy place, and opened the door into the most holy, and passed within the second veil, where He now stands by the ark, and where the faith of Israel now reaches.

*I saw that Jesus had shut the door of the holy place, and no man can open it; and that He had opened the door into the most holy [in 1844], and no man can shut it (**Rev. 3:7, 8**); and that since Jesus has opened the door into the most holy place, which contains the ark, the commandments have been shining out to God's people, and they are being tested on the Sabbath question." Early Writings, p. 42*

Regarding the midnight cry in 1844 Ellen White explains:

"In the summer of 1844 Adventists discovered the mistake in their former reckoning of the prophetic periods, and settled upon the correct position. The 2300 days of Daniel 8:14, which all believed to extend to the second coming of Christ, had been thought to end in the spring of 1844; but it was now seen that this period extended to the autumn of the same year, and the minds of Adventists were fixed upon this point as the time for the Lord's appearing. The proclamation of this time message was another step in the fulfillment of the parable of the marriage, whose application to the experience of Adventists had already been clearly seen.

As in the parable the cry was raised at midnight announcing the approach of the bridegroom, so in the fulfillment, midway between the spring of 1844, when it was first supposed that the 2300 days would close, and the autumn of 1844, at which time it was afterward found that they were really to close, such a cry was raised, in the very words of Scripture: "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him."

Like a tidal wave the movement swept over the land. From city to city, from village to village, and into remote country places it went, until the waiting people of God were fully aroused. Before this proclamation fanaticism disappeared, like early frost before the rising sun. Believers once more found their position, and hope and courage animated their hearts." The Story of Redemption, p. 369

*"Had it not been for such portions of Scripture [like Habakkuk 2:4], admonishing them [the disappointed Millerites] to wait with patience, and to **hold fast** their confidence in God's Word, their **faith would have failed** in that **trying hour**." GC, p. 393*

End time Stage of the Philadelphia Church

Ellen White makes clear that the 144,000 will fully fulfill the message to the church of Philadelphia:

*"The 144,000 were all **sealed** and perfectly united. On their foreheads was written, **God, New Jerusalem**, and a glorious star containing **Jesus' new name** [promises made to the church of Philadelphia]. At our happy, holy state the wicked were enraged, and would rush violently up to lay hands on us to thrust us into prison, when we would stretch forth the hand in the name of the Lord, and they would fall helpless to the ground. Then it was that the **synagogue of Satan** [mentioned in the context of the message to the church of Philadelphia] knew that **God had loved us** who could wash one another's feet and salute the brethren with a holy kiss, and they **worshiped at our feet.**" Early Writings, p. 15*

"Have we decided to make our dwelling-place upon the earth? Are we not strangers and pilgrims seeking a better country, even a heavenly? "Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. . . . Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." [Revelation 3:10-12]

*The coming of Christ will be as it were at midnight, when **all are sleeping**. It will be well for every one to have his accounts all straightened up before sunset. All his works should be right, all his dealings just, between himself and his fellow-men. All dishonesty, all sinful practices should be put far away. The oil of grace should be in our vessels with our lamps. There will be some at that late day who will have the appearance of being Christians, but their identity with Christ is only a deception. Sad indeed will be the condition of the soul who has had a **form of godliness** but has denied the power thereof; who has called Christ, Lord, Lord, and yet who has not his image and superscription. The **foolish virgins** flattered themselves that they would have mercy, that they would obtain an entrance into the marriage feast; but the Master answered their plea for admission with a stern refusal, saying: "I know you not." "And the door was shut." Review and Herald, March 27, 1894*

*"Just before us is "the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth." **Revelation 3:10**. All whose faith is not firmly established upon the word of God will be deceived and overcome. Satan "works with all deceivableness of unrighteousness" to gain control of the children of men, and his deceptions will continually increase. But he can gain his object only as men voluntarily yield to his temptations. Those who are earnestly seeking a knowledge of the truth and are striving to purify their souls through obedience, thus doing what they can to prepare for the conflict, will find, in the God of truth, a sure defense. "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee" (verse 10), is the Savior's promise.*

He would sooner send every angel out of heaven to protect His people than leave one soul that trusts in Him to be overcome by Satan. The Great Controversy, p. 560

The events under the midnight cry in 1844 will be repeated on a grander global scale under the Loud Cry of the angel when the judgment of the living is beginning (Revelation 18:1-5):

*“Angels were sent to aid the mighty angel from heaven, and I heard voices which seemed to sound everywhere, “Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.” Rev. 18:4, 5. This message seemed to be an addition to the third message, **joining it as the midnight cry joined the second angel's message in 1844**. The glory of God rested upon the patient, waiting saints, and they fearlessly gave the last solemn warning, proclaiming the fall of Babylon and calling upon God's people to come out of her, that they might escape her fearful doom.” The Story of Redemption, pp. 399, 400*

“So the followers of Christ are to shed light into the darkness of the world. Through the Holy Spirit, God's word is a light as it becomes a transforming power in the life of the receiver. By implanting in their hearts the principles of His word, the Holy Spirit develops in men the attributes of God. The light of His glory--His character--is to shine forth in His followers. Thus they are to glorify God, to lighten the path to the Bridegroom's home, to the city of God, to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

The coming of the bridegroom was at midnight--the darkest hour. So the coming of Christ will take place in the darkest period of this earth's history. The days of Noah and Lot pictured the condition of the world just before the coming of the Son of man. The Scriptures pointing forward to this time declare that Satan will work with all power and "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness" 2 Thess. 2:9, 10. His working is plainly revealed by the rapidly increasing darkness, the multitudinous errors, heresies, and delusions of these last days. Not only is Satan leading the world captive, but his deceptions are leavening the professed churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. The great apostasy will develop into darkness deep as midnight, impenetrable as sackcloth of hair. To God's people it will be a night of trial, a night of weeping, a night of persecution for the truth's sake. But out of that night of darkness God's light will shine.” Christ Object Lessons, p. 414

Details about the Church of Philadelphia

- An open door is placed before Philadelphia
- Jesus invites His faithful followers to enter through the open door
- The door leads into the most holy place where Jesus will begin the judgment of His people and the blotting out of their sins. The process begins with the righteous dead, and will end with the living.
- The process of judgment takes place during the period of the church of Laodicea because the word means “judging the people”.
- In the message to the church of Laodicea on earth, the door leads to the heart.

- Jesus wants to come into our heart to cleanse it from sin so that He can cleanse the record of our sins in the heavenly sanctuary.
- God will not cleanse up there what is not cleansed here!

The Midnight Cry

Let's look more closely now at the experience of those who announced the judgment hour message leading up to 1844. Ellen White vividly described the religious experience of this movement:

*"Of all the great religious movements since the days of the apostles, none have been more free from human imperfection and the wiles of Satan than was that of the autumn of 1844. Even now, after the lapse of many years, all who shared in that movement and who have stood firm upon the platform of truth still feel the holy influence of that blessed work and bear witness that **it was of God.**" GC, pp. 401, 402*

Ellen White is not sharing someone-told-me-so information. She belonged to this group of believers and shared in their experience. She is speaking from personal knowledge. And what was the experience of this group like? The answer is that it was very similar to what transpired with the earliest church in the first few chapters of Acts of the Apostles.

Many of those who proclaimed the judgment hour message sold all their possessions to provide funds to print the good news and to pay the debts of other believers. They had seasons of prayer that lasted all night. They studied their Bibles with intensity earnestly seeking to know the will of God for their lives. They had a deep love for souls and desperately wanted to see them saved. They confessed their sins to one another and made things right with their brothers and sisters. Their deepest desire was to be clean when Jesus came.

Yet, in spite of this profound religious experience, the most perfect since apostolic times, we are told that the Millerites were not ready to meet their Lord:

*"But the people were not yet ready to meet their Lord. There was still a work of preparation to be accomplished **for** them. Light was to be given, directing their minds to the **temple of God in heaven**; and as they should by faith follow their High Priest in His ministration there, **new duties** would be revealed. **Another message of warning and instruction** was to be given to the church." GC, pp. 424, 425*

You will notice that they were not ready to meet their Lord because they needed to understand the work of Jesus in the most holy place of the temple in heaven. As they understood this, they would discover new duties. They needed another message of warning and instruction. Ellen White continues:

Says the prophet: "Who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: 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 3:2, 3. 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 investigative 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." GC, pp. 424, 425

The Ellen White explains that when this work is completed, Jesus will come:

*"When this work shall have been accomplished, the followers of Christ **will be ready for His appearing.**"* GC, p. 425

*"Very many raised their voices to cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!" and left their brethren who did not love the appearing of Jesus, and who would not suffer them to dwell upon His second coming. I saw Jesus turn His face from those who rejected and despised His coming, and then He bade angels lead His people out from among the unclean, lest they should be defiled. Those who were obedient to the message stood out free and united. **A holy light shone upon them**. They renounced the world, sacrificed their earthly interests, gave up their earthly treasures, and directed their anxious gaze to heaven, expecting to see their loved Deliverer. **A holy light beamed upon their countenances**, telling of the peace and joy which reigned within. Jesus bade His angels go and strengthen them, for the **hour of their trial** [Philadelphia language] drew on. I saw that these waiting ones were not yet tried [Philadelphia language] as they must be. They were **not free from errors**. And I saw the mercy and goodness of God in sending a warning to the people of the earth, and repeated messages to lead them to a diligent searching of heart, and study of the Scriptures, that they might **divest themselves of errors** which have been handed down from the heathen and papists. Through these messages God has been bringing out His people where He can work for them in greater power, and where they can **keep all His commandments.**"* Early Writings, pp. 249, 250

It will be noticed that the new duties were to be revealed in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. They still needed to understand the perpetuity of the Law of God, the sanctity of the seventh-day Sabbath, the vital necessity of complete victory over sin before the close of probation, the fact that the dead remain so until the resurrection and the need to care for their body temples.

The message of 1844 was that Jesus was going to begin the judgment of the dead. That is to say, the proclamation of that message announced the **beginning** of the judgment. As probation nears its close, we are to expect another announcement by God through His remnant people that the judgment of the living is about to begin. Ellen White wrote about this:

*"The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. For many years this work has been in progress. Soon--none know how soon--it will **pass to the cases of the living**. In the awful presence of God our lives are to come up in review."* The Faith I Live By, p. 211

In the 1911 edition of The Great Controversy Ellen White made it clear that the judgment of the living had not yet begun:

*“The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. For many years this work has been in progress. Soon--none know how soon--it **will pass** to the cases of the living. In the awful presence of God our lives are to come up in review.”* GC, p. 490

“Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation, and closes with the living.” GC, p. 483

The Loud Cry

It must be underlined that the first angel’s message will be proclaimed again. The attention of the people will once more be directed to the most holy place and the distinctive truths revealed there. The message of Revelation 14:8 that preached in 1844 will once again be repeated. This repetition is found in Revelation 18:1-5 where we are told about the demonic presence of Satan and His angels in Babylon (the synagogue of Satan).

It is important to note the context in which this passage of Scripture is found. Revelation 17 and 18:6-24 describe the same event—the moment when Babylon or the Synagogue of Satan will fall apart at the seams. In between these two portrayals of the physical fall of Babylon, we find God’s advance warning for His people to get out before the worldwide system implodes. Revelation 18:1-5 thus is the announcement of the conclusion of the judgment that began in 1844 or the judgment of the living under the power of the latter rain. It will call the world to receive the seal of God and reject the mark of the beast. The **midnight cry** (which announced the beginning of the judgment of the dead) will pale in power compared to the **loud cry** (the announcement of the judgment of the living):

*“After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, **“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.”** And I heard another voice from heaven saying, **“Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.”**”*

Ellen White clearly linked the Midnight Cry with the Loud Cry:

*“This message [Revelation 18:1-5] seemed to be an addition to the third message, joining it as the **midnight cry** joined the second angel’s message in 1844. The **glory of God rested upon the patient, waiting saints, and they fearlessly gave the last solemn warning, proclaiming the fall of Babylon and calling upon God’s people to come out of her that they might escape her fearful doom.**”* Early Writings, pp. 277, 278

In another place, Ellen White explains the relationship between the Midnight Cry that was given in 1844 and the final Loud Cry of Revelation 18:1-5:

*“This scripture points forward to a time when the announcement of the fall of Babylon, as made by the second angel of Revelation 14 (verse 8), is to be **repeated**, with the **additional mention** of the corruptions which have been entering the **various organizations that constitute Babylon**, since that message was first given, in the summer of 1844 [in the Midnight Cry]. A **terrible condition of the religious world** is here described. With **every rejection of truth** the minds of the people will become darker, their hearts more stubborn, until they are entrenched in an infidel hardihood. In defiance of the warnings which God has given, they will continue to **trample upon one of the precepts of the Decalogue**, until they are led to persecute those who hold it sacred. Christ is set at nought in the contempt placed upon His word and His people. As the **teachings of spiritualism** are accepted by the churches, the restraint imposed upon the carnal heart is removed, and the **profession of religion** will become a cloak to conceal the basest iniquity. A belief in **spiritual manifestations** opens the door to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, and thus the influence of evil angels will be felt in the churches.” GC, p. 603*

Ellen White explains that the power of the final Loud Cry will by far surpass the power of the Midnight Cry:

*“I saw that this message will close with power and strength far **exceeding the midnight cry**. Servants of God, endowed with power from on high with their **faces lighted up, and shining with holy consecration** [remember this expression?], went forth to proclaim the message from heaven. Souls that were scattered all through the **religious bodies** answered to the call, and the precious were hurried out of the **doomed churches**, as Lot was hurried out of Sodom before her destruction. God's people were strengthened by the excellent glory which rested upon them in rich abundance and prepared them to endure the hour of temptation. I heard everywhere a multitude of voices saying, "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Early Writings, pp. 278, 279*

Regarding this revival and its aftermath, Ellen White explains:

*“Notwithstanding the widespread declension of faith and piety, there are **true followers of Christ in these churches**. Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a **revival of primitive godliness** as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The **Spirit and power of God will be poured out** upon His children. At that time many will separate themselves from those churches in which the love of this world has supplanted love for God and His word. Many, both of **ministers and people**, will gladly accept **those great truths** which God has caused to be proclaimed at this time to prepare a people for the Lord's second coming” GC, p. 464*

During the judgment of the living the distinctive teachings of the Adventist Church will once more be brought to view on a global scale and with unlimited power—the Law, the Sabbath (seal of God), the state of the dead (to counteract spiritualism), the Spirit of Prophecy to comfort and correct the remnant, the judgment of the living and the need to prepare a character for heaven will all be seen in a new light.

These truths will be an anchor for God's people in the midst of the swirling tempest. Ellen White stated it well when she said that all who receive these messages will be spared from the many delusions of Satan.

"These messages were represented to me as an anchor to the people of God. Those who understand and receive them will be kept from being swept away by the many delusions of Satan." Early Writings, p. 256

Tragically, many Seventh-day Adventists at that time who have based their religious experience on superficial things such as signs, wonders, feelings, emotions, felt needs, excitement, upbeat worship services and who say that it is not possible to gain the victory over sin will be find themselves in the midst of the time of trouble without an anchor. Ellen White even says that some will confess their sins in anguish but it will be too late:

*"Those **professed Christians** who come up to that last fearful conflict **unprepared** will, in their despair, confess their sins in words of burning anguish, while the wicked exult over their distress. These confessions are of the same character as was that of Esau or of Judas. Those who make them, lament the result of transgression, but not its guilt" GC, p. 620*

According to Ellen White, this will be the time for the final fulfillment of the Parable of the Ten Virgins where the foolish virgins with anguish cried out: "Lord, Lord, open to us". Terrible will be the answer from the One who has shut the door to the most holy place: "I do not know you!" (See the last chapter in the book, Christ's Object Lessons)

Ellen White described the many defections from the faith with this startling language:

*"When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when His law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage and firmness the most unflinching. To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the **majority forsake us**, to fight the battles of the Lord when **champions are few**--this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason." Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, p. 136*

*"The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. Those who have **step by step yielded** to worldly demands and **conformed to worldly customs** will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. The contest is between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. In this time the gold will be separated from the dross in the church. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. **Many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy** will then go out in darkness. **Chaff like a cloud** will be borne away on the wind, even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat. All who assume the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ's righteousness, will appear in the shame of their own nakedness." Maranatha, p. 200*

At this time, multitudes will leave the apostate churches and join the remnant movement:

*“I saw that God has honest children among the **nominal Adventists** and the **fallen churches**, and before the plagues shall be poured out, ministers and people will be called out from these **churches** and will gladly receive the truth. Satan knows this; and before the loud cry of the third angel is given, he raises an excitement in these religious bodies, that those who have rejected the truth may think that God is with them. He hopes to deceive the honest and lead them to think that God is still working for the **churches**. But the light will shine, and all who are honest will leave the **fallen churches**, and take their stand with the remnant.” Early Writings, p. 261*

God’s faithful messengers will call upon the members of these apostate churches to leave and to receive the seal of God (preaching the Sabbath more fully in the context of the third angel’s message) and reject the mark of the beast.

Satan knows that this great revival is coming and his strategy will consist in bringing about a false revival in the Synagogue of Satan (Babylon) before the genuine occurs. Ellen White’s chapter titled, “Modern Revivals” in The Great Controversy, explains in fuller detail how Satan will use this false revival to fasten in deception those who remain before the throne in the holy place:

*“The enemy of souls desires to hinder this work; and before the time for such a movement [revival] shall come, he will endeavor to prevent it by **introducing a counterfeit**. In those churches which he can bring under his deceptive power he will **make it appear** that God’s special blessing is poured out; there will be manifest what is thought to be **great religious interest**. Multitudes will exult that God is working marvelously for them, when the work is that of another spirit. Under **a religious guise**, Satan will seek to extend his influence over the Christian world” GC, p. 464*

Ellen White clearly explained the characteristics of these counterfeit revivals that will arise before the genuine:

*“But many of the revivals of modern times have presented a marked contrast to those manifestations of divine grace which in earlier days followed the labors of God’s servants. It is true that a **widespread interest is kindled**, many profess conversion, and there are **large accessions** to the churches; nevertheless the results are not such as to warrant the belief that there has been a corresponding increase of real spiritual life. The light which flames up for a time soon dies out, leaving the darkness more dense than before. Popular revivals are too often carried by appeals to **the imagination**, by **exciting the emotions**, by **gratifying the love for what is new and startling**. Converts thus gained have **little desire to listen to Bible truth**, little interest in the testimony of prophets and apostles. Unless a religious service has **something of a sensational character**, it has no attractions for them. A message which appeals to **unimpassioned reason** awakens no response. The plain warnings of God’s word, relating directly to their eternal interests, are unheeded” GC, p. 463*

The same will happen as under the Midnight Cry. The Christian world will claim to follow Jesus. They will have signs and wonders, political clout, emotions, feelings, psychological self-help, a

prosperity gospel, and other gimmicks but they will refuse to enter the most holy place to accept the distinctive truths that are revealed there that will prepare Christ's people to go through the time of trouble and be ready for His coming. Those who reject the message will therefore receive the many delusions of Satan concerning the law, the Sabbath, the state of the dead, the Spirit of Prophecy, and the need to prepare a character to withstand in the time of trouble.

In fact, these apostate churches will persecute God's people (just like they did those who preached the judgment hour message in 1844) who are preaching the three angels' messages that announce the arrival of the bridegroom to judge the living saints. They will also persecute those who accept the Loud Cry message:

"As the controversy extends into new fields and the minds of the people are called to God's downtrodden law, Satan is astir. The power attending the message will only madden those who oppose it. The clergy will put forth almost superhuman efforts to shut away the light lest it should shine upon their flocks. By every means at their command they will endeavor to suppress the discussion of these vital questions" GC, p. 607

"I saw that the priests who are leading on their flock to death are soon to be arrested in their dreadful career. The plagues of God are coming, but it will not be sufficient for the false shepherds to be tormented with one or two of these plagues. God's hand at that time will be stretched out still in wrath and justice and will not be brought to Himself again until His purposes are fully accomplished, and the hireling priests are led to worship at the feet of the saints, and to acknowledge that God has loved them because they held fast the truth and kept God's commandments, and until all the unrighteous ones are destroyed from the earth." Early Writings, p. 124

But we are told that eventually these members of the Synagogue of Satan will come and bow before the feet of God's people and they will know that God truly loved them. Ellen White describes this climactic moment:

*"The 144,000 were all sealed and perfectly united. On their foreheads was written, God, New Jerusalem, and a glorious star containing Jesus' new name. At our happy, holy state the wicked were enraged, and would rush violently up to lay hands on us to thrust us into prison, when we would stretch forth the hand in the name of the Lord, and they would fall helpless to the ground. **Then** it was that the **synagogue of Satan** knew that God had loved us who could wash one another's feet and salute the brethren with a holy kiss, and they **worshiped at our feet.**" Early Writings, p. 15*

One thing that has always puzzled me over the course of many years is why Ellen White applies the Philadelphian message to the Millerite movement in 1844 and also to those who will pass through the time of trouble and be alive at the second coming. But now I understand the reason. You see what occurred in 1844 when the judgment of the dead began is parallel to what will occur to God's people at the end of time during the time of the judgment of the living. Both events lead God's people into the most holy place.

The two groups of faithful Philadelphians—the faithful Adventists who died in the faith of the third angel’s message and the 144,000 living saints—are to be understood within the framework of the special resurrection. The faithful Philadelphians who entered the most holy place in 1844 will be alive at the moment of the final deliverance of God’s people because they will rise from the dead in what has become known as the special resurrection (see Revelation 14:13; Daniel 12:12). Concerning this, Ellen White explains that when the living saints are delivered from annihilation by Babylon at the voice of God:

*“All who have **died in the faith of the third angel’s message** [those who entered the most holy place with Jesus after 1844] come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God’s covenant of peace with those who have kept His law. “They also which pierced Him” (Revelation 1:7), those that mocked and derided Christ’s dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people [the Synagogue of Satan], are raised to behold Him in His glory and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient.” GC, p. 637*

Those who were persecuted for proclaiming the judgment hour message in 1843 and 1844 and their persecutors will be alive and the persecuted 144,000 living saints and their persecutors will also be alive. Both groups who entered the most holy place and their oppressors will see that Jesus truly loved His remnant church.

Ellen White not only places the fulfillment of the Philadelphia message in the past but she also applies it to the 144,000 living saints in the future who will become pillars in the temple of God. Only the 144,000 will enter the temple. Early Writings, p. 19

You see, there will be another movement similar yet greater than the one in 1844. Once again, God’s faithful remnant will proclaim the three angel’s messages to the world rebuking the sins and errors that have been coming into the Synagogue of Satan since 1844. The midnight cry of the past will be replaced by the Loud Cry. The Holy Spirit will be poured out without measure as God’s people proclaim the Law, the Sabbath, the state of the dead and the judgment of the living. The world will hear about the need to put the life in harmony with the Law of God in order to have the sins blotted out from the records in order to subsist in the time of trouble.

Satan will attempt to prevent the effects of the revival by introducing a counterfeit revival into the Christian world. Once again, the apostate Christian world will reject the messages and scorn those who present it. God’s people who were scorned in 1844 and those who will be scorned when the Loud Cry is given at the end of time will be alive when the time of trouble comes to an end and at that moment, the wicked will worship before the feet of God’s people and understand that God truly loved them.

Their faith will be greatly tested and yet they will have patience like the Millerites did. This thought is repeated in Revelation 13:10; 14:12. The hour of trial in 1844 was great but the one in the future will be greater.

Once again Ellen White explains the consequences of not entering the most holy place:

*“In many of the revivals which have occurred during the last half century, the same influences have been at work, to a greater or less degree, that will be manifest in the more extensive movements of the future. There is an **emotional excitement, a mingling of the true with the false** that is well adapted to mislead. Yet none need be deceived. In the light of God's word it is not difficult to determine the nature of these movements. Wherever men neglect the testimony of the Bible, turning away from those **plain, soul-testing truths** which require **self-denial and renunciation of the world**, there we may be sure that God's blessing is not bestowed. And by the rule which Christ Himself has given, "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16), it is evident that these movements are not the work of the Spirit of God.”* GC, pp. 464, 465

Ellen White describes the preaching of this powerful message:

“Now the rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number take their stand upon the Lord's side.” GC, p. 612

“The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. The prophecies which were fulfilled in the outpouring of the former rain at the opening of the gospel are again to be fulfilled in the latter rain at its close. Here are "the times of refreshing" to which the apostle Peter looked forward when he said: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus." Acts 3:19, 20.

“Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works, with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand. GC, pp. 611, 612

Choice Quotations on the Millerite Movement and the Cleansing of the Soul Temple

“Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in Christ. Not even by a thought could our Savior be brought to yield to the power of temptation. Satan finds in human hearts some point where he can gain a foothold; some sinful desire is cherished, by means of which his temptations assert their power. But Christ declared of Himself: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." John 14:30. Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father's commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his advantage. This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble.” GC, p. 623

“Of all the great religious movements since the days of the apostles, none have been more free from human imperfection and the wiles of Satan than was that of the autumn of 1844. Even now, after the lapse of many years, all who shared in that movement and who have stood firm upon the platform of truth still feel the holy influence of that blessed work and bear witness that it was of God.”

“Some ministers laid aside their sectarian views and feelings, left their salaries and their churches, and united in proclaiming the coming of Jesus. There were comparatively few ministers, however, who would accept this message; therefore it was largely committed to humble laymen. Farmers left their fields, mechanics their tools, traders their merchandise, professional men their positions; and yet the number of workers was small in comparison with the work to be accomplished. The condition of an ungodly church and a world lying in wickedness, burdened the souls of the true watchmen, and they willingly endured toil, privation, and suffering, that they might call men to repentance unto salvation. Though opposed by Satan, the work went steadily forward, and the advent truth was accepted by many thousands. . . All who found peace in Christ longed to see others share the blessing. The hearts of parents were turned to their children, and the hearts of children to their parents. The barriers of pride and reserve were swept away. Heartfelt confessions were made, and the members of the household labored for the salvation of those who were nearest and dearest. Often was heard the sound of earnest intercession. Everywhere were souls in deep anguish pleading with God. Many wrestled all night in prayer for the assurance that their own sins were pardoned, or for the conversion of their relatives or neighbors. . .” GC, p. 369

“The work was free from those extremes which are ever manifested when there is human excitement without the controlling influence of the word and Spirit of God. It was similar in character to those seasons of humiliation and returning unto the Lord which among ancient Israel followed messages of reproof from His servants. It bore the characteristics that mark the work of God in every age. There was little ecstatic joy, but rather deep searching of heart, confession of sin, and forsaking of the world. A preparation to meet the Lord was the burden of agonizing spirits. There was persevering prayer and unreserved consecration to God.

Said Miller in describing that work: "There is no great expression of joy: that is, as it were, suppressed for a future occasion, when all heaven and earth will rejoice together with joy unspeakable and full of glory. There is no shouting: that, too, is reserved for the shout from heaven. The singers are silent: they are waiting to join the angelic hosts, the choir from heaven. . . . There is no clashing of sentiments: all are of one heart and of one mind" Bliss pages 270, 271.

Another who participated in the movement testified: "It produced everywhere the most deep searching of heart and humiliation of soul before the God of high heaven. It caused a weaning of affections from the things of this world, a healing of controversies and animosities, a confession of wrongs, a breaking down before God, and penitent, brokenhearted supplications to Him for pardon and acceptance. It caused self-abasement and prostration of soul, such as we never before witnessed. As God by Joel commanded, when the great day of God should be at hand, it produced a rending of hearts and not of garments, and a turning unto the Lord with fasting, and weeping, and mourning. As God said by Zechariah, a spirit of grace and supplication

was poured out upon His children; they looked to Him whom they had pierced, there was a great mourning in the land . . . and those who were looking for the Lord afflicted their souls before Him."--Bliss, in Advent Shield and Review, vol. I, p. 271 (January, 1845)

Of all the great religious movements since the days of the apostles, none have been more free from human imperfection and the wiles of Satan than was that of the autumn of 1844. Even now, after the lapse of many years, all who shared in that movement and who have stood firm upon the platform of truth still feel the holy influence of that blessed work and bear witness that it was of God". GC, pp. 400, 401

"But the people were not yet ready to meet their Lord. There was still a work of preparation to be accomplished for them. Light was to be given, directing their minds to the temple of God in heaven; and as they should by faith follow their High Priest in His ministrations there, new duties would be revealed. Another message of warning and instruction was to be given to the church.

Says the prophet: "Who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: 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 3:2, 3. 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 investigative 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." GC, pp. 424, 425

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." I saw that many have so much rubbish piled up at the door of their heart that they cannot get the door open. Some have difficulties between themselves and their brethren to remove. Others have evil tempers, selfish covetousness, to remove before they can open the door. Others have rolled the world before the door of their heart, which bars the door. All this rubbish must be taken away, and then they can open the door and welcome the Savior in. Testimonies for the Church, volume 1, p. 143

"When the heart is emptied of self-importance, the door will be opened to Christ, because you will recognize His knock. But unless you clear away the rubbish that keeps the Lord Jesus out, He cannot possibly enter; for He forces no entrance." This Day with God, p. 74

"Christ represents himself as calling to you to open the door. But you are to respond to that call. You are to open the door of the heart. You are to clear away the rubbish from the portals, and throw wide the door, that the heavenly Guest may find a welcome and an entrance. Christ will

not enter a heart that is defiled with sin. It is our work to put away all iniquity. We are to represent the character of our divine Lord." Review and Herald, October 30, 1888

"Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul-temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost." Christian Experience and Teaching, p. 189

"In order to be purified and to remain pure, Seventh-day Adventists must have the Holy Spirit in their hearts and in their homes. The Lord has given me light that when the Israel of today humble themselves before Him, and cleanse the soul temple from all defilement, He will hear their prayers in behalf of the sick, and will bless in the use of His remedies for disease. When in faith the human agent does all he can to combat disease, using the simple methods of treatment that God has provided, his efforts will be blessed of God." Counsels on Diet and Foods, p. 25

"In the cleansing of the temple, Jesus was announcing His mission as the Messiah, and entering upon His work. That temple, erected for the abode of the divine Presence, was designed to be an object lesson for Israel and for the world. From eternal ages it was God's purpose that every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator. Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God. Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One. But by the incarnation of the Son of God, the purpose of Heaven is fulfilled. God dwells in humanity, and through saving grace the heart of man becomes again His temple. God designed that the temple at Jerusalem should be a continual witness to the high destiny open to every soul. But the Jews had not understood the significance of the building they regarded with so much pride. They did not yield themselves as holy temples for the Divine Spirit. The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy traffic, represented all too truly the temple of the heart, defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts. In cleansing the temple from the world's buyers and sellers, Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin, -from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul. "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. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: 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." Mal. 3:1-3.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." 1 Cor. 3:16, 17. No man can of himself cast out the evil throned that have taken possession of the heart. Only Christ can cleanse the soul temple. But He will not force an entrance. He comes not into the heart as to the temple of old; but He says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him." Rev. 3:20. He will come, not for one day merely; for He says, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; . . . and they shall be My people." "He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." 2 Cor. 6:16; Micah 7:19. His presence will cleanse and sanctify the

soul, so that it may be a holy temple unto the Lord, and "an habitation of God through the Spirit" Eph. 2:21, 22. DA, pp. 161, 162

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"The more we contemplate the character of Christ, and the more we experience of His saving power, the more keenly shall we realize our own weakness and imperfection, and the more earnestly shall we look to Him as our strength and our Redeemer. We have no power in ourselves to cleanse the soul temple from its defilement; but as we repent of our sins against God, and seek pardon through the merits of Christ, He will impart that faith which works by love and purifies the heart. By faith in Christ and obedience to the law of God we may be sanctified, and thus obtain a fitness for the society of holy angels and the white-robed redeemed ones in the kingdom of glory." The Sanctified Life, p. 83

"While preparing for the meeting each individual should closely and critically examine his own heart before God. If there have been unpleasant feelings, discord, or strife in families, it should be one of the first acts of preparation to confess these faults one to another and pray with and for one another. Humble yourselves before God, and make an earnest effort to empty the soul temple of all rubbish--all envyings, all jealousies, all suspicions, all fault findings. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up." Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, p. 163

"Who is willing to take himself in hand? Who is willing to lay his finger upon his cherished idols of sin, and allow Christ to purify the temple by casting out the buyers and sellers? Who is prepared to allow Jesus to enter the soul and cleanse it from everything that tarnishes or corrupts? The standard is "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). God calls upon men and women to empty their hearts of self. Then His Spirit can find unobstructed entrance. Stop trying to do the work yourself. Ask God to work in and through you until the words of the apostle become yours, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" Manuscript Releases, volume 1, pp. 366, 367.

"The latter rain is to fall upon the people of God. A mighty angel is to come down from heaven, and the whole earth is to be lighted with His glory. Are we ready to take part in the glorious work of the third angel? Are our vessels ready to receive the heavenly dew? Have we defilement and sin in the heart? If so, let us cleanse the soul temple, and prepare for the showers of the latter rain. The refreshing from the presence of the Lord will never come to hearts filled with impurity. May God help us to die to self, that Christ, the hope of glory, may be formed within!" Ye Shall Receive Power, p. 295

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"The truth of God must be brought into the soul temple, to cleanse and purify it from all defilement. May God help us to search the Scriptures for ourselves, and when we are all filled with the truth of God, it will flow out as water from a living spring."

"The latter rain is to fall upon the people of God. A mighty angel is to come down from heaven, and the whole earth is to be lighted with his glory. Are we ready to take part in the glorious work of the third angel? Are our vessels ready to receive the heavenly dew? Have we defilement and sin in the heart? If so, let us cleanse the soul temple, and prepare for the showers of the latter rain. The refreshing from the presence of the Lord will never come to hearts filled with impurity. May God help us to die to self, that Christ, the hope of glory, may be formed within! I must have the Spirit of God in my heart. I can never go forward to do the great work of God, unless the Holy Spirit rests upon my soul. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." The day of judgment is upon us. O that we may wash our robes of character, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb!" The Review and Herald, April 21, 1891

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." No man can of himself cast out the evil throned that have taken possession of the heart. Only Christ can cleanse the soul-temple. But he will not force an entrance. He comes not into the heart as to the temple of old; but he says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him." He will come, not for one day merely; for he says, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and . . . they shall be my people." "He will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." His presence will cleanse and sanctify the soul, so that it may be a holy temple unto the Lord, and "an habitation of God through the Spirit." The Review and Herald, December 31, 1908

“STUDIES IN REVELATION-THE SEVEN CHURCHES”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #9 – The Message to Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: ¹⁵ 'I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷ Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' — and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked — ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. ¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. ²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. ²¹ To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. ²² 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

Five Parts of the Laodicean Passage

1. The **person** who delivers the message (3:14-15a)
2. The **diagnosis** of the disease or the rebuke (3:15b-17)
3. The **remedy** or cure for the disease (3:18)
4. The **reason** or purpose for the message (3:19-20)
5. The **reward** for those who accept the message (3:21)

Important details about Laodicea

This is the church of the end-time because it is the **seventh** in the series:

"The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian Era. The number 7 indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the messages extend to the end of time, while the symbols used reveal the condition of the church at different periods in the history of the word." AA, p. 585.

This is the church which exists during the period of the **judgment** as denoted by its name: “**judging the people**”. Not only is it the church of the judgment but the message itself will cause the **shaking** among God’s people. Many will arise and **oppose it** when it is preached:

*“I asked the **meaning of the shaking** I had seen and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the **True Witness to the Laodiceans**. This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth. Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this is what will cause a shaking among God’s people.” Early Writings, p. 270.*

This is the only church of which Jesus has **nothing good** to say. Most of our **pioneers** believed that the Laodicean message applied to the **nominal** Christians. But this idea was **shattered by Ellen White** when she wrote:

*“The message to the Laodiceans is applicable **to Seventh-day Adventists** who have had great light and have not walked in the light.” 2SM, p. 66*

*“The message to the church of the Laodiceans **applies especially** to the people of God **today**. It is a message to **professing Christians** who have become so much like the world that no difference can be seen.” 7BC, p. 959*

Great Power in the Message for Revival

A personal experience:

In 1978 I was called to teach theology at our Seventh-day Adventist University in Medellin, Colombia. Upon my arrival I discovered that one of my colleagues in the theology department was causing division in the church. He was surreptitiously criticizing the leaders, the organization and causing incredible strife in churches throughout the entire country.

Soon the spirit of strife spread like grassfire. Churches were split down the middle with members opposing other members and families torn apart.

Conference and Union leaders had been sent to deal with the issue but to no avail. The situation was getting worse and worse.

In the midst of the strife I was invited to give a revival series in one of the most strife-filled churches in the country. The church had 400 members and high percentage of them openly sympathized with the rebel pastor.

The first evenings that I preached I got mostly stony stares and glares from most of the members of the church. They could not hide their hostility. Each day that passed things got a little better.

Friday evening the Union president was present. He was public enemy #1 to this group because he represented the establishment and had taken strong measures to discipline the rogue theology teacher. That evening I preached on the message of the True Witness to the Laodicean church. I boldly told the congregation that both groups needed to accept the Laodicean message because each group was pointing the finger to the other and crying out to God: "Father, I thank you that I am not like them!" I told them: "Both groups are self-sufficient like the Pharisees of Christ's day".

The Holy Spirit worked with power. A solemnity seemed to be present in the air. Enemies reconciled amidst tears. Sins were confessed. There was an incredible revival. Juan Oviedo, the ringleader of the rebel group, stood up and asked to speak. I was fearful about what he would say, but the Spirit was moving so I recognized him and he stood up.

Juan called the Union president to the front and embraced him begging for his forgiveness. Other members then stood up and moved across the church and embraced one another with a spirit of contrition and forgiveness. The revival was lasting because I have visited the church several times after this and the church is thriving and at peace.

With regards to the Laodicean problem Ellen White has stated:

*"They have resisted His grace, abused His privileges, slighted His opportunities, and have been satisfied to sink down in **contentment**, in lamentable **ingratitude**, hollow **formalism**, and **hypocritical insincerity**. With **Pharisaic pride** they have vaunted themselves till it has been said of them, "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." 1SM, p. 357*

The messenger to the church of Laodicea (3:14)

This message is ironclad certain because the Messenger is described in the following terms:

- He is the "**Amen**" or 'it is so'
- He is the **beginner of the creation** of God and therefore knows all about His creation
- He is the **Faithful and True Witness**
- He says: "**I know your works**"
- This message is trustworthy because **Jesus** Himself delivers it

The Diagnosis of the Deadly Disease

- Jesus and Laodicea look upon the disease in **radically different ways**
- Laodicea says she is **rich**, that she is luxuriously **clothed**, that she has **20/20 vision** and **that she is happy**. But Jesus says that Laodicea is **poor, naked, blind and miserable**.
- There is **something terribly wrong** with Laodicea. Her problem is that she **refuses to believe that she is sick**. How can a physician **treat someone** who does not believe he is sick?
- Concerning this self-deception, Ellen White states:

*“The message of the True Witness finds the people of God in a **sad deception**, yet honest in that deception. They **know not** that their condition is deplorable in the sight of God.”*
3T, pp. 252-253

- The problem with Laodicea is that she is **lukewarm**. Lukewarm water is a combination of **hot and cold**. Laodicea has **something hot and something cold**. What does she have that is hot?

The Hot Element of Laodicea

- The **external** looks pretty well (like the fig tree which had an abundance of leaves but no fruit).
- She has a rich **denominational heritage**. She has William Miller, Joseph Bates, James and Ellen White, J. N. Loughborough and J. N. Andrews among others.
- She has a **health system** and health principles which are the envy of the world.
- She has the largest Protestant **parochial school** system in the world.
- She is working in over **200 countries** of the world and is **baptizing** thousands of people worldwide in a single day.
- She has hundreds of **publishing houses** which spread her literature on a global scale.
- She has an **organizational system** which spans the world and financial policies which distribute her resources so as to benefit the world field.
- She has a **belief system** with solid Biblical foundations. All her doctrines fit together like the links of a chain.
- Her members have a very **unique lifestyle**. They don't smoke or drink, they dress modestly, they don't eat pork or shrimp, they tithe their income, they go to church on Saturday and they don't dance or go to the theater. They consider themselves the peculiar people of the Lord!
- **Externally** all looks nice to the eye of the beholder. All of the form of religion and piety is there for the world to behold. We function like a gigantic fine tuned and oiled machine.

The Cold Aspect of Laodicea

- The problem with Laodicea is not on the **outside** but on the **inside**. The problem is not primarily with the behavior but with the **heart**:

*“There is hope for our churches if they will heed the message given to the Laodiceans. Sabbath after Sabbath they meet together, and with effort sing the songs that are assigned, but that do **not come from the heart**. The joy of Christ in the heart will make songs to come from inspired lips and warm, thankful hearts.”* *18MR, pp. 39-40*

- Laodicea is **hypocritical**. It shows one face on the **outside** when it is totally different on the **inside**

- Laodicea is composed of **halfhearted Christians**:

*“**Half-hearted** Christians are worse than infidels; for their deceptive words and **non-committal** position may lead many astray. The infidel shows his colors. The lukewarm Christian deceives both parties. He is neither a good worldling nor a good Christian. Satan uses him to do a work that no one else can do.” Spaulding Magan Collection, p. 260.*

- The Laodiceans are in a position of **carnal security**.

- Laodicea is filled with people who have **patchwork characters**.

*“The Savior gives no encouragement to any to think that He will accept a **patchwork religion**. Such a religion is of no value in His sight. There may at first seem to be some of self and some of Christ; but it soon seen that there is none of Christ. The patches of selfishness increase, till the entire garment is covered with them.” OHC, p. 342*

- The members of Laodicea are **almost Christians**:

*“**Almost Christians**, yet not fully Christians, they seem near the kingdom of heaven, but they cannot enter there. Almost but not wholly saved means to be not almost, but wholly lost.” Christ Object Lessons, p. 118*

- The Laodiceans are **neutral** and **non-committal**. They are neither **good Christians** or **good worldlings**.

- *“**Halfhearted Christians** are worse than infidels; for their deceptive words and noncommittal position, lead many astray. The infidel shows his colors. The lukewarm Christian deceives both parties. He is neither a good worldling nor a good Christian. Satan uses him to do a work that no one else can do.” OHC, p. 348*

- They have an **insipid** religious experience. Their spiritual life is **tasteless**.

- They are **role players**. They act on the outside the opposite of what they are inside.

- They are like **apples hanging** by threads from an apple tree. The fruit is **artificially hung** on the tree.

- They are Christians in the **intellect** but the truth has not reached their **heart**. This is why in **Revelation 3:20** Jesus is outside the heart begging to come in:

*“They are lacking in devotion and fervor: “They **profess** to love the truth, yet are deficient in Christian **fervor and devotion**. They dare not give up wholly and run the risk of the unbeliever, yet they are unwilling to die to self and follow out closely the principles of their faith.” 4T, p. 87*

Pharisaical Religion

- Laodiceans have the same problem as the **Pharisees in Christ’s day**.

- **Matthew 5:20**: Jesus calls for a greater righteousness than the Pharisees. What is the righteousness of the Pharisee?

- The Pharisees had an **external righteousness** that did not flow from the heart. Jesus calls upon the church to have a righteousness that **flows from the heart**.
- **Philippians 3:4-6**: The attitude of Paul before his conversion epitomizes the attitude of the Pharisee. He felt that he was rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing!
- **Matthew 5:21, 22**: To the Pharisees, killing was an **external act** of depriving someone of physical life. But to Jesus, killing was a heart attitude of hatred toward one's brother.
- **Matthew 5:27, 28**: The Pharisees defined adultery as an **external act**. Jesus defined adultery as something that occurred **in the heart**.
- **Matthew 23:23-28**: The Pharisees cleaned the outside but **inside they were sick**.
- **Mark 7:6**: The Pharisees honored God **with their lips** but their heart was far from the Lord.
- **Matthew 19:16-19**: The rich young ruler claimed to be a law keeper but his obedience was loveless because it did not come **from a loving heart**.
- **The Pharisee and the publican**: The Pharisee was full of himself and felt righteous because of all of his 'good' works but the publican felt his need.
- **The workers of the vineyard**: The workers who worked the most hours felt that they should be paid more than those who worked less.
- **The older brother of the prodigal son**: The prodigal son repented and appealed to his father's goodness while the older brother served the father, not out of love but out of **a sense of obligation**.
- It is sobering to realize that Jesus was crucified by a church attending, Sabbath keeping, tithe paying, health reforming, two-time a week fasting people.
- **Matthew 6:1, 2-5**: The Pharisees did things to be seen by men. Do we perhaps have the same spirit when we brag about the number of baptisms, the size of our church, etc.?
- Laodicea's problem is not with the **outside** (what she **professes**) but with the **inside** (that which she **is**).
- The problem of Laodicea is not with **sins** but with **sin**. The sin in the heart is **hidden** by apparently good external behavior.
- It is no use to eliminate sinful actions without killing the **sinful root** which produces those actions.
- The way to kill a tree is not by cutting off its leaves but by pulling it up by the roots.
- **Cleaning the stream** without cleaning the fountain does no good.
- In order to truly change behavior we must go to the heart or to the root: **Pride, selfishness, covetousness, envy, hatred**.
- You don't have to force an **apple tree to produce apples**. It will produce apples because by nature it is an apple tree.
- With many in Laodicea the truth has reached the **intellect** but it has not changed the **heart**. Jesus is outside the heart of Laodicea (3:20). **Who then is in control of the heart?**

Self!! The problem is with the heart. The **heart is cold** and the **works are hot**. The result is lukewarm.

- The problem with Laodicea is not with primarily with her **actions** but with the **motivations** which lead to these actions:

*“Many acts which pass for good works, even deeds of benevolence, will, when closely investigated, be found to be prompted by **wrong motives**. Many receive applause for virtues which they do not possess. The Searcher of hearts weighs the motives, and often deeds highly applauded by men are recorded by Him as springing from selfishness and base hypocrisy. Every act of our lives, whether excellent and praiseworthy, or deserving of censure, is judged by the Searcher of hearts **according to the motives which prompted it.**” Gospel Workers, p. 275.*

*“Every action derives its quality from the **motive** which prompts it.” Sons and Daughters of God, p. 171.*

*“Every course of action has a twofold character and importance. It is virtuous or vicious, right or wrong, according to **the motive** which prompts it.” Child Guidance, p. 201.*

*“It is not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is done, **the motive** underlying the action, that determines its worth.” 5T, p. 279*

*“Purity of heart, purity of **motive**, may yet characterize those who are halfhearted and who are striving to serve God and mammon.” 7BC, p. 966*

What is the Laodicean Disease?

Let's review what we studied last time:

- Laodicea does the right things for the **wrong reason** or with the **wrong motivation**: To **impress men** and to **impress God**.
- **The Outside** looks good but the **inside** is rotten
- **Laodicea has the form and theory of the truth**, the form of godliness but **no power**. Ritual and beliefs are right but there is no power.

Two Radically Different Views

Laodicea thinks she is **rich**, has **20/20** vision, is luxuriously **clothed** and is **happy**.

Jesus says that she is **poor, blind, naked and miserable and wretched**. Obviously Laodicea is **self-deceived**.

“The message of the True Witness finds the people of God in a sad deception, yet honest in that deception. They know not that their condition is deplorable in the sight of God.” 3T, p. 252

How do you convince one to seek treatment who does not believe that he is sick?

“The only hope for the Laodiceans is a clear view of their standing before God, a knowledge of the nature of their disease.” 4T, p. 87

Only the Holy Spirit can give us the capacity to understand the fatal seriousness of our illness. God proposes **three remedies** for Laodicea’s disease:

Gold tried in the fire

Galatians 5:6: Faith that works by love

*“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but **faith** which **worketh by love.**”*

James 1:27: True and pure religion

*“**Pure religion and undefiled** before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”*

I Timothy 6:17-19: Notice what it means to be rich:

*“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in **uncertain riches**, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they **do good**, that they be **rich in good works**, ready to **distribute**, willing to **communicate**; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”*

James 2:5: Rich in faith:

*“Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world **rich in faith**, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that **love him**?”*

James 2:14-22:

*“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man **say** he hath faith, and have not works? Can **[such a] faith save him?** ¹⁵ If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? ¹⁷ Even so faith, if it hath not works, is **dead, being alone.**”*

Note: Man is saved by **faith alone** but the faith that saves is **never alone**. A dead faith can never save a person.

¹⁸ *Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith **by my works.***

Note: Man is not saved by **faith alone** nor **works alone**, nor by faith **plus works** but by a **faith that works**.

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

Note: Demons have an **intellectual faith**. Faith is an **action** word. In **Hebrews 11** the heroes of faith are always doing something.

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

Note: Paul uses the example of Abraham when he obeyed God and came out of Ur. James uses the example of Abraham later in his life when his works revealed that his faith was genuine.

Paul's emphasis: How is a lost person saved?

James: How does a saved person live?

"22 Seest thou how faith wrought [was working together] with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?"

Note: When a door is opened both sides move simultaneously, a page has two sides. It is impossible for one side to exist and not the other. When you put your car in drive, the back wheels impel and the front wheels follow. Faith and works are like two oars of a boat. Both are needed to advance in the Christian life. The word "**Perfect**" means "complete". That is to say, faith without works is incomplete.

"23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God."

*24 Ye see then how that **by works** a man is justified, and not by faith **only**.*

Note: **Luther** could not understand this. He called James the **epistle of straw**. He would have **cut it out** of the New Testament if he could.

Paul: Was struggling against those who were saying that they were **saved by faithless works**.

James: Was struggling against those who were saying that they were saved by a **workless faith**

*"25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot **justified by works**, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?"*

Note: Rahab believed that God was going **to destroy Jericho** and she showed it by risking her life and sending the spies away in a different direction.

"26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

Laodicea needs a **faith which has love as the motivating force**:

*"Grace is unmerited favor, and the believer is justified without any merit of his own, without any claim to offer to God. He is justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, who stands in the courts of heaven as the sinner's substitute and surety. But while he is justified because of the merit of Christ, he is not free to work unrighteousness. **Faith works by love and purifies the soul**. Faith buds and blossoms and bears a harvest of precious fruit. **Where faith is, good works***

appear. The sick are visited, the poor are cared for, the fatherless and the widows are not neglected, the naked are clothed, the destitute are fed. Christ went about doing good, and when men are united with Him, they love the children of God, and meekness and truth guide their footsteps.” ISM, p. 398

Note: What’s worse: A bodiless spirit or a spiritless body? The fact is that neither one can exist without the other!!

White Garments

Genesis 2:25: In their innocence Adam and Eve were naked with regards to artificial garments but they were covered with a robe of light

“And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”

Genesis 3:7: The first result of Adam and Eve’s sin was nakedness. The robe of light faded away and Adam and Eve attempted to cover their nakedness with fig leaf garments that they themselves had fabricated. The fig leaf garments represent the excuses they offered for their sin. At this point they were not truly repentant.

“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.”

Genesis 3:10: Even though Adam and Eve covered their nakedness with fig leaves, they still felt naked when God came looking for them.

“And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

Isaiah 64:6: Our own righteousness is as filthy rags

“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.”

Genesis 3:21: By the death of lambs Adam and Eve’s nakedness was covered. The death of the lamb led Adam and Eve to truly repent because they now understood the cost of sin.

*“Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.”
Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.*

Isaiah 61:10: Garments represent righteousness

“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.”

Galatians 3:27: We are clothed with the robe of Christ’s righteousness at the moment of baptism:

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

Revelation 19:7, 8: NIV: In the kingdom come God’s people will be covered with a glorious robe of light such as covered Adam and Eve.

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

Revelation 7:13, 14:

“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

Romans 10:3: The problem with the Jews is that they were covered with the robe of their own righteousness which in the sight of God is nakedness!

“For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”

Ellen White explained what is represented by the robe:

*“This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of **human devising**. Christ in His humanity wrought out a **perfect character**, and this character He offers to **impart** to us. “All our righteousness are as filthy rags.” Isa. 64:6. Everything that **we of ourselves** can do is defiled by sin. But the Son of God “was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin.” Sin is defined to be “the transgression of the law.” 1 John 3:5, 4. But Christ was obedient to every requirement of the law. He said of Himself, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart.” Ps. 40:8. When on earth, He said to His disciples, “I have kept My Father's commandments.” John 15:10. By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for **every human being to obey God's commandments**. When we **submit ourselves** to Christ, the **heart** is united with His heart, the **will** is merged in His will, the **mind** becomes one with His mind, the **thoughts** are brought into captivity to Him; we live **His life**. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the **fig-leaf garment**, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is **perfect obedience** to the law of Jehovah. *Christ Object Lessons*, pp. 311-312*

Eye Salve

Matthew 15:14: The Pharisees lacked spiritual discernment to see their condition as God saw it:

“Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”

Matthew 23:16, 17, 19, 24 and 26: Jesus referred to the spiritual leaders as blind guides

John 9:39: When the blind man came to Jesus his sight was restored. On the other hand, the Pharisees claimed to have 20/20 eyesight but rejected Jesus and therefore were blind.

“And Jesus said: for judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.”

Philippians 3:3-8 Paul’s view of himself before his conversion epitomizes the Laodicean problem: Paul thought he was happy but deep inside, he was **miserable and bitter**. He thought he had **20/20 vision** but was blind, he thought he was **rich but he was poor**.

“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

*“The True Witness counsels us to buy of Him **gold** tried in the fire, **white raiment**, and **eyesalve**. The gold here recommended as having been tried in the fire is **faith and love**. It makes the **heart rich**; for it has been purged until it is pure, and the more it is tested the more brilliant is its luster. The white raiment is **purity of character**, the righteousness of Christ **imparted** to the sinner. This is indeed a garment of **heavenly texture**, that can be bought only of Christ for a life of willing obedience. The eye salve is that wisdom and grace which enables us to **discern between the evil and the good**, and to **detect sin** under any guise. God has given His church **eyes** which He requires them to anoint with wisdom, that they may see clearly; but many would **put out the eyes of the church** if they could; for they would not have their **deeds come to the light**, lest they should be reproved. The divine eyesalve will impart clearness to the understanding.” 4I, pp. 88-89*

Revelation 16:15: During the period of the sixth plague there will be some Laodiceans who **did not accept the remedies** and they will be lost.

At the Door of the Heart

Revelation 3:20

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

The big problem is that Jesus is **outside the heart**. This must mean that **self is in control** of the heart.

There are **two kinds of selfish hearts**:

- Those who **claim to serve** God and do **as they please**: They wish to be **saved in their sins**.
- Those who **claim to serve** God and seek to cover up their evil hearts with a **vener of good works**. They wish to be **saved by their good works**.

The First Type of Selfish Heart

Matthew 5:27-28

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

Matthew 6:19-21

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Matthew 12:34-35

“O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.”

Mark 7:21-23

“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.”

The Second Type of Selfish Heart

Matthew 15:8

“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me”.

- First type: A tree with a **bad root** which produces **bad fruit**
- Second type: A tree upon which **artificial fruits** are hung

- When the apostle Paul refers to **“works of law”** he is not speaking about good works. These are works are evil **by definition** because they are done to impress others and to earn merit.
- The problem with this second group of **selfish people** is not with their **acts** but with the **motivation** for their acts.
- The problem is doing the **right things** for the **wrong reason**. They want to **impress God** and their **fellow human beings**. This **deceives them** into thinking that **they alright** before God.

Notice what **Ellen G. White** says concerning the value of our acts:

“The drunkard is despised and is told that his sin will exclude him from heaven; while pride, selfishness, and covetousness too often go unrebuked. But these are sins that are especially offensive to God; for they are contrary to the benevolence of His character, to that unselfish love which is the very atmosphere of the unfallen universe. He who falls into some of the grosser sins may feel a sense of his shame and poverty and his need of the grace of Christ; but pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the infinite blessings He came to give. Steps to Christ, p. 30.

“Many acts which pass for good works, even deeds of benevolence, will, when closely investigated, be found to be prompted by wrong motives. Many receive applause for virtues which they do not possess. The Searcher of hearts inspects motives, and often the deeds which are highly applauded by men are recorded by him as springing from selfish motives and base hypocrisy. Every act of our lives, whether excellent and praiseworthy or deserving of censure, is judged by the Searcher of hearts according to the motives which prompted it.” GW, p. 111

“Every action derives its quality from the motive which prompts it.” Sons and Daughters of God, p. 171

“Every course of action has a twofold character and importance. It is virtuous or vicious, right or wrong, according to the motive which prompts it.” Child Guidance, p. 201

“It is not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is done, the motive underlying the action, that determines its worth.” 5T, p. 279

God sees **right through us**. He knows. We can **hide our wicked motivations** from man but not from God.

Hebrews 4:12, 13

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do”.

Practical Example of Doing the Right Things for the Wrong Reason

Matthew 6:1-4: Giving to charity

“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.”

Matthew 6:5-6: Prayer Ministries

- Is it possible to **pray for the wrong reason**?
- As a mere **religious exercise**?
- Prayer to be **seen by men**?

“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”

Deuteronomy 4:29: Prayer must come from the heart

“But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul”.

Psalms 66:18:

“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”

Giving to the Church

- Giving in the **wilderness** (Exodus 25:2; 35:21, 26, 29), give from the heart.
- God loves the **cheerful giver** (II Cor. 8:9).
- **Matthew 23:23**: You can give without loving but you cannot love without giving.
- The **widow’s mite (Mark 12:41-44)**: Giving for the **right and wrong reasons**.
- Our **problem in Fresno** is not with our **wallets** but with our hearts. If our heart was in the right place, our church budget would be **current next Sabbath**.
- If we applied this principle not because we **want to impress** God our others but because **we love things would be different**.

- A **philanthropist** may give a huge amount of money but God measures the reason why he gave it, not how much he gave.

Observance of the Sabbath

- In the times of Christ Sabbath observance was a **show** (Matthew 12).
- Do we then emphasize keeping the **Sabbath less strictly**?
- There are **two extremes**: Breaking the Sabbath and keeping it for the wrong reason. **Both persons are lost** because both are selfish.

Isaiah 58:1-7

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labors. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?”

God Looks at the Inward Motivations for our Acts

- God is less impressed with **what we eat than why we eat it**
- With **what we give than why we give it**
- What we do than **why we do it**
- What we wear than **why we wear it**
- Where we go than **why we go (Jesus went to the parties of the publicans and sinners but for the right reason)**

Does God not care then about our acts?

God cares about our actions but he wants our actions to be the result of correct motivations that come from the heart.

Deuteronomy 30:6

“And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.”

Romans 2:28-29

“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

Philippians 3:3

“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

- God is in the heart transplant business.
- God does not put in spiritual pacemakers, do bypass surgeries, change valves, or do angioplasty. The only type of surgery that God performs is heart transplants from one of stone (selfish) to one of flesh where God can write his law.
- The law on stone does me no good; it needs to be written on the heart.

Psalms 37:31: When the heart is right the actions are right

“The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.”

Jeremiah 31:31-33

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Psalms 40:8

“I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”

Ezekiel 36:26-27

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them”.

When the law is in our hearts:

- We will dress like Jesus
- Speak like Jesus,
- Give like Jesus
- Act like Jesus
- Eat like Jesus
- But for all the right reasons
- We will not do less but more.
- We will have a greater righteousness than the scribes and Pharisees.

Matthew 5:8:

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”

Choice Quotations on the Laodicean Disease

“There are a large number of professing Christians who do not really follow Jesus. They do not bear the cross by proper self-denial and self-sacrifice. Although making a great profession of being earnest Christians, they weave into the fabric of their character so many of the threads of their own imperfections that the beautiful pattern is spoiled. Of them Christ says: “You boast of being rich and increased with supposed spiritual attainments. In reality you are neither cold nor hot, but are filled with vain conceit. Unless converted, you cannot be saved; for you would mar heaven with your unsanctified wisdom.” The Faith I Live By, p. 306

“God is leading out a people. He has a chosen people, a church on the earth, whom He has made the depositaries of His law. He has committed to them sacred trust and eternal truth to be given to the world. He would reprove and correct them. The message to the Laodiceans is applicable to Seventh-day Adventists who have had great light and have not walked in the light. It is those who have made great profession, but have not kept in step with their Leader, that will be spewed out of His mouth unless they repent. The message to pronounce the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Babylon, and call the people of God out of her, does not come from any heavenly messenger, or any human agent inspired by the Spirit of God.” 2SM, p. 66

To lean upon the arm of the law is a disgrace to Christians; yet this evil has been brought in and cherished among the Lord's chosen people. Worldly principles have been stealthily introduced, until in practice many of our workers are becoming like the Laodiceans--half-hearted, because so much dependence is placed on lawyers and legal documents and agreements. Such a condition of things is abhorrent to God.--Manuscript 128, 1903. 3SM, p. 303

“The message to the church of the Laodiceans applies especially to the people of God today. It is a message to professing Christians who have become so much like the world that no difference can be seen.” 7BC, p. 959

“But the counsel of the true Witness does not represent those who are lukewarm as in a hopeless case. There is yet a chance to remedy their state, and the Laodicean message is full of

encouragement; for the backslidden church may yet buy the gold of faith and love, may yet have the white robe of the righteousness of Christ, that the shame of their nakedness need not appear. Purity of heart, purity of motive, may yet characterize those who are halfhearted and who are striving to serve God and mammon. They may yet wash their robes of character and make them white in the blood of the Lamb (RH Aug. 28, 1894).” 7BC, p. 966

“I saw that the testimony to the Laodiceans applied to God's people at the present time, and the reason it has not accomplished a greater work, is because of the hardness of their hearts. But God has given the message time to do its work. The heart must be purified from sins which have so long shut Jesus out. This fearful message will do its work. When it was first presented, it led to close examination of heart. Sins were confessed, and the people of God were stirred everywhere. Nearly all believed that this message would end in the loud cry of the third angel. But as they failed to see the powerful work accomplished in a short time, many lost the effect of the message. I saw that this message would not accomplish its work in a few short months. It was designed to arouse the people of God, to discover to them their backslidings, and lead to zealous repentance, that they might be favored with the presence of Jesus, and be fitted for the loud cry of the third angel. As this message affected the heart it led to deep humility before God. Angels were sent in every direction to prepare unbelieving hearts for the truth. The cause of God began to rise, and his people were acquainted with their position.” 2SG, pp. 223, 224

“The Lord here shows us that the message to be borne to His people by ministers whom He has called to warn the people is not a peace-and-safety message. It is not merely theoretical, but practical in every particular. The people of God are represented in the message to the Laodiceans as in a position of carnal security. They are at ease, believing themselves to be in an exalted condition of spiritual attainments.” 3I, p. 252

“What greater deception can come upon human minds than a confidence that they are right when they are all wrong! The message of the True Witness finds the people of God in a sad deception, yet honest in that deception. They know not that their condition is deplorable in the sight of God. While those addressed are flattering themselves that they are in an exalted spiritual condition, the message of the True Witness breaks their security by the startling denunciation of their true condition of spiritual blindness, poverty, and wretchedness. The testimony, so cutting and severe, cannot be a mistake, for it is the True Witness who speaks, and His testimony must be correct.” 3I, pp. 252-253

“As a people we are triumphing in the clearness and strength of the truth. We are fully sustained in our positions by an overwhelming amount of plain Scriptural testimony. But we are very much wanting in Bible humility, patience, faith, love, self-denial, watchfulness, and the spirit of sacrifice. We need to cultivate Bible holiness. Sin prevails among the people of God. The plain message of rebuke to the Laodiceans is not received. Many cling to their doubts and their darling sins while they are in so great a deception as to talk and feel that they are in need of nothing. They think the testimony of the Spirit of God in reproof is uncalled for or that it does not mean them. Such are in the greatest need of the grace of God and spiritual discernment that they may discover their deficiency in spiritual knowledge. They lack almost every qualification necessary to perfect Christian character. They have not a practical knowledge of Bible truth,

which leads to lowliness of life and a conformity of their will to the will of Christ. They are not living in obedience to all God's requirements." 3T, pp. 253-254

"The only hope for the Laodiceans is a clear view of their standing before God, a knowledge of the nature of their disease. They are neither cold nor hot; they occupy a neutral position, and at the same time flatter themselves that they are in need of nothing. The True Witness hates this lukewarmness. He loathes the indifference of this class of persons. Said He: "I would thou wert cold or hot." Like lukewarm water, they are nauseous to His taste. They are neither unconcerned nor selfishly stubborn. They do not engage thoroughly and heartily in the work of God, identifying themselves with its interests; but they hold aloof and are ready to leave their posts when their worldly personal interests demand it. The internal work of grace is wanting in their hearts; of such it is said: "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." 4T, pp. 87-88

"The gold here recommended as having been tried in the fire is faith and love. It makes the heart rich; for it has been purged until it is pure, and the more it is tested the more brilliant is its luster. The white raiment is purity of character, the righteousness of Christ imparted to the sinner. This is indeed a garment of heavenly texture, that can be bought only of Christ for a life of willing obedience. The eye salve is that wisdom and grace which enables us to discern between the evil and the good, and to detect sin under any guise." 4T, pp. 88

"We felt that the message of the True Witness to the Laodiceans applied with peculiar force to this people. On the part of many, a spirit of self-satisfaction was manifested. There is a disposition to be contented with forms and theories of the truth; and as a consequence, those who might be giants in the cause and work of God are mere dwarfs. As a people we are in imminent danger; for we are becoming superficial, deficient in practical godliness. In our camp-meetings we never receive the blessing that it is our privilege to gain; for we cease our efforts too soon. There is some confessing in a general way; but the real evil is untouched. There is no sense of the hatefulness of sin. There is repenting without brokenness of heart; there is professing to leave the world, but the life is still governed by its principles." Review and Herald, October 21, 1884

"There is hope for our churches if they will heed the message given to the Laodiceans. Sabbath after Sabbath they meet together, and with effort sing the songs that are assigned, but that do not come from the heart. The joy of Christ in the heart will make songs to come from inspired lips and warm, thankful hearts." 18MR, pp. 39-40

"Half-hearted Christians are worse than infidels; for their deceptive words and non-committal position may lead many astray. The infidel shows his colors. The luke-warm Christian deceives both parties. He is neither a good worldling nor a good Christian. Satan uses him to do a work that no one else can do." Spaulding Maqan Collection, p. 260.

"I am commissioned now to say to our brethren, Humble yourselves, and confess your sins, else God will humble you. The message to the Laodicean church comes home to those who do not

apply it to themselves. They are neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm.” Counsels to Writers and Editors, p. 99

“Those who live for self are ranged under the head of the Laodicean church who are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot. The ardor of the first love has lapsed into a selfish egotism. The love of Christ in the heart is expressed in the actions. If love for Christ is dull, the love for those for whom Christ has died will degenerate. There may be a wonderful appearance for zeal and ceremonies, but this is the substance of their self-inflated religion. Christ represents them as nauseating to His taste.” Our High Calling, p. 348.

“Put away your faculty for seeing the mistakes of others. Turn your attention to your own defects. Your self-righteousness is nauseating to the Lord Jesus Christ.” 7BC, p. 963

“They do not engage thoroughly and heartily in the work of God, identifying themselves with its interests; but they hold aloof and are ready to leave their posts when their worldly personal interests demand it. The internal work of grace is wanting in their hearts. . .” 4T, p. 88

“The figure of spewing out of His mouth means that He cannot offer up your prayers or your expressions of love to God. He cannot endorse your teaching of His word or your spiritual work in anywise. He cannot present your religious exercises with the request that grace be given you.” 6T, p. 408

“It is difficult for those who feel secure in their attainments, and who believe themselves to be rich in spiritual knowledge, to receive the message which declares that they are deceived and in need of every spiritual grace. The unsanctified heart is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” I was shown that many are flattering themselves that they are good Christians, who have not a ray of light from Jesus. They have not a living experience for themselves in the divine life. They need a deep and thorough work of self-abasement before God before they will feel their true need of earnest, persevering effort to secure the precious graces of the Spirit.” 3T, p. 253

“They have resisted His grace, abused His privileges, slighted His opportunities, and have been satisfied to sink down in contentment, in lamentable ingratitude, hollow formalism, and hypocritical insincerity. With Pharisaic pride they have vaunted themselves till it has been said of them, “Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” 1SM, p. 357

“Today a large part of those who compose our congregations are dead in trespasses and sins. They come and go like the door upon its hinges. For years they have complacently listened to the most solemn, soul-stirring truths, but they have not put them in practice. Therefore they are less and less sensible of the preciousness of truth. The stirring testimonies of reproof and warning do not arouse them to repentance.” 6T, p. 426

“The only hope for the Laodiceans is a clear view of their standing before God, a knowledge of the nature of their disease. They are neither cold nor hot; they occupy a neutral position, and at

the same time flatter themselves that they are in need of nothing. The True Witness hates this lukewarmness. He loathes the indifference of this class of persons.” 4T, p. 87

“The message to the Laodicean church applies most decidedly to those whose religious experience is insipid, who do not bear decided witness in favor of the truth.” 7BC, p. 962

“No stronger delusion can deceive the human mind than that which makes them believe that they are right, and that God accepts their works, when they are sinning against Him. They mistake the form of godliness for the spirit and power thereof. They suppose that they are rich, and have need of nothing, when they are poor, wretched, blind, and naked, and need all things.” 1T, p. 407

“Some lean upon an old experience which they had years ago; but when brought down to this heart-searching time, when all should have a daily experience, they have nothing to relate. They seem to think that a profession of the truth will save them.” 1T, p. 188

“Almost Christians, yet not fully Christians, they seem near the kingdom of heaven, but they cannot enter there. Almost but not wholly saved, means to be not almost but wholly lost.” Christ Object Lessons, p. 118

“They profess to love the truth, yet are deficient in Christian fervor and devotion. They dare not give up wholly and run the risk of the unbeliever, yet they are unwilling to die to self and follow out closely the principles of their faith.” 4T, p. 87

“They have resisted His grace, abused His privileges, slighted His opportunities, and have been satisfied to sink down in contentment, in lamentable ingratitude, hollow formalism, and hypocritical insincerity. With Pharisaic pride they have vaunted themselves till it has been said of them, “Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” 1SM, p. 357

Acts Versus Motives

“The drunkard is despised and is told that his sin will exclude him from heaven; while pride, selfishness, and covetousness too often go unrebuked. But these are sins that are especially offensive to God; for they are contrary to the benevolence of His character, to that unselfish love which is the very atmosphere of the unfallen universe. He who falls into some of the grosser sins may feel a sense of his shame and poverty and his need of the grace of Christ; but pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the infinite blessings He came to give.” Steps to Christ, p. 30

“Many acts which pass for good works, even deeds of benevolence, will, when closely investigated, be found to be prompted by wrong motives. Many receive applause for virtues which they do not possess. The Searcher of hearts inspects motives, and often the deeds which are highly applauded by men are recorded by him as springing from selfish motives and base hypocrisy. Every act of our lives, whether excellent and praiseworthy or deserving of censure, is judged by the Searcher of hearts according to the motives which prompted it.” GW, p. 111

“Every action derives its quality from the motive which prompts it.” Sons and Daughters, p. 171

“Every course of action has a twofold character and importance. It is virtuous or vicious, right or wrong, according to the motive which prompts it.” Child Guidance, p. 201

“It is not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is done, the motive underlying the action, that determines its worth.” 5T, p. 279

Revival and Reformation

“God calls for a spiritual revival and a spiritual reformation. Unless this takes place, those who are lukewarm will continue to grow more abhorrent to the Lord, until He will refuse to acknowledge them as His children.” 1SM, p. 127

“A revival and a reformation must take place under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from the spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend.” Review and Herald, Feb. 25, 1902. Christian Service, p. 42

“Self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ.” DA, p. 523

“STUDIES IN REVELATION-THE SEVEN CHURCHES”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #10 – The Barren Fig Tree

Recommended Reading: The Desire of Ages (DA), pp. 97-108; 580-588; Christ Object Lessons (COL), pp. 212-218; Matthew 21:18-20; Mark 11:12-14, 21; Matthew 3:2, 7-12; Revelation 3:14-21)

In this lesson we will study the parable of the Barren Fig Tree. We are told by the Spirit of Prophecy that this was an “acted parable” (DA p. 582). In order to understand this episode, it will be necessary to study two other “tree passages”. One is found in Matthew 3:2, 7-12 and the other in Luke 13:1-9. Let’s delve right into our study.

The Message of John the Baptist

1. *In Isaiah 61:3 God’s plan for Israel is compared with a fruitful tree:*

“That they might be called _____ of righteousness, the _____ of the LORD, that he might be _____.”

2. *What symbol did John employ to represent the Israel of his day?*

(Matthew 3:10) _____.

3. *Who were present when John the Baptist presented God’s message?*

Present when John preached were the _____ and the _____. These people felt rich and increased with goods because they were sons of _____.
(Matthew 3:7, 9)

Note: John’s message was imparted to a nation which professed great piety and laid claim to the special favor of God. They were like a tree with abundant leaves but no fruit!

4. *Why did John rebuke the scribes and the Pharisees?*

John rebuked the Jewish nation because they were like trees without _____.
(Matthew 3:8)

Note: “Not by its name, but by its fruit, is the value of a tree determined. If the fruit is worthless, the name cannot save the tree from destruction. John declared to the Jews that their standing before God was to be decided by their character and life. Profession was worthless.” DA, p 107

5. *What did John admonish the Jewish nation to do?*

John encouraged the Jewish people to _____ and bear fruits which flow from repentance (Matthew 3:8).

Note: John's call to repentance would have been a great surprise to the Jewish religious leaders. After all, were they not children of Abraham? Were they not keepers of the law? Did they not fast, and pay tithe and keep the Sabbath? What were they to repent of?

6. *Besides the religious leaders, who else was present on the banks of the Jordan?*

There were other groups of people present when John preached. The parallel account in Luke 3:10, 12, 14 tells us that the people, the _____ and the _____ asked John what they should do.

Note: John the Baptist told the religious leaders that God could produce children of Abraham from stones. Notice that John was not speaking of literal stones: "As He had called Abraham out from a heathen people, so He could call others to His service. Their hearts might now appear as lifeless as the stones of the desert, but His Spirit could quicken them to do His will, and receive the fulfillment of His promise." (DA p. 107) The Jews considered that the gentiles and the publicans were as **dogs** and **swine**.

7. *What practical counsel did John give the people, the publicans and the soldiers?*

John told the people to share their _____ and food. He told the publicans to _____ no more than what was appointed to them and he exhorted the soldiers to not use _____ or accuse _____ and to be content with their _____. (Luke. 3:10-14)

Note: All these exhortations given by John had to do with human relations. This is the fruit which God expected the Jewish nation to produce. A description of the fruit is found in Galatians 5.

8. *According to John, what would happen if the tree did not bear fruit?*

John's message was one of judgment. He warned that every tree which did not produce fruit would be _____ down and thrown into the _____ (Matthew 3:10). He warned that this judgment process would be executed by the Messiah who would have his _____ in His hand to thoroughly _____ his floor. He would gather the _____ into his barn but would burn the _____ with unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:12).

Note: The chronology of John's message is important. He began his preaching six months before Jesus began His ministry.

The Parable of Luke 13

1. *To whom was this parable specifically addressed?*

This parable is addressed to those who felt better than the _____ whom Pilate slaughtered and the eighteen upon whom the tower in _____ fell. (Luke 13:1-3)

2. *What is the meaning of the various symbols of the parable?*

- The vineyard in this parable represents the _____.
- The owner of the vineyard symbolizes God the _____. (COL pp. 215, 216)
- The dresser of the vineyard represents _____. (COL pp. 215, 216)
- The fig tree represented the “_____ to whom the Savior had come...” (COL p. 214)

Note: “Israel was a cumberer of the ground. Its very existence was a curse; for it filled the place in the vineyard that a fruitful tree might fill. It robbed the world of the blessings that God designed to give. The Israelites had misrepresented God among the nations. They were not merely useless, but a decided hindrance. To a great degree their religion was misleading, and wrought ruin instead of salvation.” (COL p. 215)

She adds: “That barren tree, flaunting its pretentious foliage in the very face of Christ, was a symbol of the Jewish nation. The Savior desired to make plain to His disciples the cause and certainty of Israel’s doom.” (DA p. 582)

3. *Did the fig tree have leaves?*

The fig tree obviously had leaves. To the outward look it appeared to be healthy. But it was devoid of _____. (Luke 13:6)

Note: The Jewish nation was high on externals. They tithed, “kept” the Sabbath, fasted, practiced health reform, etc., but their lives were devoid of practical godliness. We might say that they appeared fine outside but they were rotten inside. This is seen in Matthew 23:23-28.

Ellen White remarks: “The Jewish religion, with its magnificent temple, its sacred alters, its mitered priests and impressive ceremonies, was indeed fair in outward appearance, but humility, love, and benevolence were lacking.” (DA p. 583)

4. *According to Jesus, what needed to be done by the self-righteous Jewish nation?*

Jesus called upon that generation to _____ or they would perish (Luke 13:1-3).

5. *How long into His ministry did Jesus speak this parable?*

Most scholars agree that this parable was told by Jesus two and a half years into His ministry. This would mean that three years had passed since John had begun to preach. This would explain why the owner of the vineyard came looking for fruit for a period of _____ years and found none (Luke 13:8).

6. *How much longer was the fruitless tree allowed to occupy the ground?*

The dresser of the vineyard begged the owner to allow the fig tree to remain for yet another _____ (Luke 13:8).

Note: During the last year of His ministry Jesus dedicated special attention to the Jewish nation in the hopes that they would repent and bear fruit.

7. *Does the parable of Luke 13 offer closure?*

The parable of Luke 13:1-9 ends in suspense: “...if it bear fruit, *well*: and if not, *then* after that thou shalt _____ it _____. (Luke 13:9)

8. *Why don’t we know at this point whether the tree bore fruit or not?*

“Jesus did not in the parable tell the result of the gardener’s work. At that point His story was cut short. Its conclusion _____ with the generation that heard his words. To them the solemn warning was given: ‘If not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.’ Upon them it _____ whether the irrevocable words should be spoken. The day of wrath was near. In the calamities that had already befallen Israel, the owner of the vineyard was mercifully forewarning them of the destruction of the unfruitful tree.” (COL p. 216)

The Fig Tree Withers

1. *What happened on the very Tuesday before Jesus was crucified?*

On the Tuesday before His death, Jesus saw in the distance a fig tree with _____ but when He arrived it had no _____ (Matthew 21:19).

Note: The fig tree first produces fruit and then leaves come out announcing that the tree has fruit. In other words, if the fig tree had leaves it should have had fruit as well!

Ellen White remarks: “...one tree appeared to be in advance of all the others. It was already covered with leaves. It is the nature of the fig tree that before the leaves open, the growing fruit appears. Therefore this tree in full leaf gave promise of well-developed fruit.” (DA p. 582) But she adds that the tree “was a mass of pretentious foliage, nothing more”. (DA p. 582)

2. *Were there other fruitless trees in the orchard?*

There were other fig trees in the orchard that day and they had no _____. These trees represented the _____. (DA p. 583)

Note: “All the trees in the fig orchard were destitute of fruit; but the leafless trees raised no expectation, and caused not disappointment. By these trees the Gentiles were represented. They were as destitute as were the Jews of godliness; but they had not professed to serve God. They made no boastful pretensions to goodness. They were blind to the works and ways of God. With them the time of figs was not yet.” (DA 583)

3. *What solemn words did Jesus speak to the fig tree?*

Jesus cursed the fig tree with the following words: “Let now fruit grow on thee henceforward for _____.” (Matthew 21:19)

4. *What happened to the fig tree which Jesus cursed?*

The next day Jesus and His disciples passed by the place where the fig tree had stood. The tree had dried up by its _____ and had _____ away. (Matthew 21:20; Mark 11:20)

Note: If the fig tree represents the Jewish nation and the tree dried up by its roots and withered away, then God’s plan for the Jewish nation is finished. Then the reestablishment of the Jewish nation in 1948 has no prophetic significance whatsoever!!

Ellen White solemnly warns: “The heart that does not respond to divine agencies becomes hardened until it is no longer susceptible to the influence of the Holy Spirit.” (COL p. 218)

5. *Does this warning apply to the Jewish nation alone?*

“The warning sounds down along the line to us in this _____.” (COL p. 216)

“The warning is for all _____. Christ’s act in cursing the tree which His own power had created stands as a warning to all _____ and to all _____.” (DA p. 586)

Note: It is highly suggested that those who are studying this lesson carefully review Christ’s message to the Laodicean church in Revelation 3:14-22. Laodicea (the Seventh-day Adventist Church) is repeating the history of ancient Israel.

6. What is represented by the hunger of Jesus? “He had come to _____ hungering to find in them the _____ of righteousness. He had lavished on them His gifts, that they might bear fruit for the _____ of the world.” (DA p. 583-584)

7. *Why did the Jewish nation bring ruin upon itself?*

“They brought ruin upon themselves by refusing to _____ to others. The treasures of truth which God had committed to them, they did not give to the _____.” (DA p. 586)

“STUDIES IN REVELATION-THE SEVEN CHURCHES”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #11 – Additional Study Material on the Judgment Process During the Churches of Philadelphia and Laodicea

Introduction

There are three doctrines that are inseparably linked in Scripture and must be studied together. If we get one of them wrong the others will be wrong as well. These doctrines are the **state of the dead**, the **judgment** and the **second coming** of Jesus. In order to understand how these three doctrines relate to each other, let us begin our study with the creation of man.

The Origin of Man

Genesis 2:7 (Isaiah 64:8)

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”

- Man was given a material body with all its organs.
- God then imparted to the body the breath of life (power source).
- In the head was the brain which is the processor that records and classifies all of what comes into it through the five senses.
- Once Adam was alive, he began forming his own self-identity which was determined by what entered his brain through the five senses.

What Happened to Adam at the Moment of Death?

Ecclesiastes 12:7

“Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.”

- When Adam died the breath of life or life force left the body.
- The body ceased to function and eventually disintegrated into dust.

- **The brain no longer processed** any information because the **five senses no longer provided** input. Because the brain is a physical organ where our self-identity is contained, it along with the personal identity decomposed and returned to the dust. Notice the following texts that say as much:

Psalm 146:3-4

*“Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. ⁴ His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his **thoughts perish.**”*

Ecclesiastes 9:5

*“For the living know that they shall die: but the **dead know not anything**, neither have they any more a reward; for the **memory** of them is forgotten.”*

Ecclesiastes 9:10

*“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor **knowledge**, nor **wisdom**, in the grave, whither thou goest.”*

Conclusion: When Adam died, the writing of his biography or life history came to an end and the books with his biography closed.

The Critical Question

The question that begs to be asked is this: What happened to Adam’s biography when he died? What happened with his **personal identity** which he **developed** during his 930 years of life? We know that his personal identity was formed in his brain and when he died his brain decomposed into dust so his personal identity must have perished with his brain, right?

The Content of the Books

The Bible teaches that each person’s personal identity is preserved in heavenly **books** (plural). They contain an exact written transcript of the life of Adam from the time he drew his first breath till the instant he died. **In other words, they contain a complete** biography including **actions**, **motives**, **words**, **feelings**, **emotions**, **secrets** and **thoughts**.

Let’s notice the Biblical evidence for this fact:

2 Corinthians 5:10: Actions

*“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the **things done in the body**, according to what he has done, whether **good or bad.**”*

Matthew 12:36-37: Words

*“But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they **will give account** of it in the Day of Judgment. For by your **words** you will be justified, and by your **words** you will be condemned.”*

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: Works and secret things

*“Fear God and keep His Commandments, for this is man's all. ¹⁴ For God will bring **every work** into judgment, including every **secret thing**, whether **good or evil.**”*

Daniel 7:9-10: Works

*“I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; ¹⁰ A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The **court was seated**, and the **books were opened.**”*

Revelation 20:12-13: Works

*“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and **books** were opened. And **another book** [notice that there is a distinction between the plural ‘books’ and the singular ‘book’. In a few moments we will deal with the contents of the book] was opened, which is the **Book of Life**. And the dead were judged according to their **works**, by the **things which were written in the books.**”*

Notably, Jesus is **personally** in **heaven** but on **earth** His life is written in **books** (66 of them). Jesus is the Word of God in person but He is also the written Word of God. On the other hand, we **are personally on earth** but in heaven the **record of our lives** is found in books.

The heavenly books contain a complete biography of Adam and each of his descendants: Every **act, every word, every motive, every thought, every emotion, even every opportunity to do good** which we did not take advantage of are written there. There is a complete record of our lives **inside and out!** So to say, God has **another me** in heaven in written form.

Ellen White understood this when she wrote:

*“As the artist takes on the polished glass a true picture of the human face, so the angels of God daily place upon the books of heaven an **exact representation** of the **character of every human being.**” In Heavenly Places, p. 360*

The Bible authors described the records of life's history with the word **“books”**. Ellen G. White used the idea of **photography**. Notice how she used the word **daguerreotype**:

*“Remember, your **character** is being **daguerreotyped** [photographed] by the great Master Artist in the record books of heaven, **as minutely** as the face is reproduced upon the polished plate of the artist.” Testimonies on Sexual Behavior Adultery and Divorce, p. 62.*

If God called a **prophet today** I am persuaded that he/she would speak in terms of **video cameras** and **computers**.

The Contents of the Book (Singular)

Whereas the books contain the records of each person's life, the book contains **the names** of all who have claimed Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord:

Philippians 4:3

*"And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose **names** are in the **Book** of Life."*

Revelation 3:5

*"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his **name** from the **Book** of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."*

Revelation 13:8

*"All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose **names** have not been written in the **Book of Life** of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."*

Exodus 32:31-33

*"Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! ³² Yet now, if You will forgive their sin--but if not, I pray, blot **me out of Your book** which You have written.""*

Daniel 12:1

*"At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, **every one who is found written in the book**."*

Now let's notice a few things about the pre-Advent investigative judgment:

All Must Appear

2 Corinthians 5:10

*"For we must **all** appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."*

The Judgment Takes Place in Heaven

Daniel 7:9-10

*"I watched till thrones were put in place, and the **Ancient of Days** was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; ¹⁰ a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; **ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him**. The court was seated, and the books were opened."*

The Judgment Transpires before the Second Coming

Revelation 14:6-7

*"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the **everlasting gospel to preach** to those who dwell on the earth--to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people-- ⁷ saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for **the hour of His judgment has come**; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."*

The **sequence of events** in Daniel 7:9, 10, 13, 14 clearly reveals that the judgment began in heaven **after** 1798 but **before** the second coming.

Rewarded when Jesus Comes

Matthew 16:27

*"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, **and then** He will reward each according to his works."*

Revelation 22:12

*"And behold, I am coming quickly, and **My reward is with Me**, to give to every one according to his work."*

I Thessalonians 4:15-17

*"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air** [the righteous dead and the righteous living receive their reward at the same time]. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."*

Where was Adam in 1844 when the Judgment Began?

We know that the investigative judgment began in heaven on October 22, 1844. The question is, where was Adam on that day? Jesus answered the questions definitively in John 5:28, 29:

John 5:28-29

“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice²⁹ and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

We know that Adam was the first to be judged:

“As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of all who have believed on Jesus come in review before God. Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation, and closes with the living.” GC, p. 482

How then could Adam have appeared before the great judgment seat of Christ in 1844 if he was dead and disintegrated? Ellen White answers the question:

“The righteous dead will not be raised until after the judgment at which they are accounted worthy of “the resurrection of life.” Hence they will not be present in person at the tribunal when their records are examined and their cases decided.” GC, p. 482

The Spirit that Returns to God

Traditionally Seventh-day Adventists have taught that the spirit that returns to God at death is the breath of life. This view is correct but incomplete. The Spirit is more than just the breath. It is actually the breath along with the self-identity. It is true that when a person dies, the breath leaves the body. But it is equally true that at death, God keeps an exact record or transcript of the person that we were at the instant of death. Notice in the following examples how the word spirit is used with the possessive personal pronoun. It is not merely the spirit or breath that returns when a person resurrects. The breath is given along with the person’s self-identity which was developed in life.

Luke 8:52-56: Jairus’ daughter

“Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, “Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping.” And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead. But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, “Little girl, arise.” Then her spirit returned [it must have left when she died], and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat.”

Acts 7:57-60: Stephen

*“Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and **stoned him**. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive **my** spirit.” Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he **fell asleep**.”*

Luke 23:46: Jesus

*“And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit **My** spirit.’ Having said this, He **breathed His last**.”*

Ellen White understood this concept as we can see from the following quotation:

*“Our **personal identity is preserved** in the resurrection, though not the **same particles of matter** or material substance as went into the grave. The wondrous works of God are a mystery to man. **The spirit, the character of man, is returned to God, there to be preserved. In the resurrection every man will have his own character.** God in His own time will call forth the dead, giving again the breath of life, and bidding the dry bones live. The **same form** will come forth, but it will be free from disease and every defect. It lives again bearing the **same individuality of features**, so that friend will recognize friend. There is no law of God in nature which shows that God gives back the **same identical particles** of matter which composed the body before death. God shall give the righteous dead a body that will please Him.” 6BC, p. 1093*

Notably, the apostle Paul uses the expression ‘your spirit’ interchangeably with ‘you’:

I Thessalonians 5:28:

*“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be **with you**. Amen.”*

Galatians 6:18:

*“Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be **with your spirit**. Amen.”*

A Practical Example

Let’s suppose that I turn on a video camera and tape a family reunion. I turn off the camera and I do not use it again for ten years. **Ten years later** I turn on the camera and tape another family reunion. On the tape there is **no time interval** between the two video tapings. So to speak, God is videotaping our life. He tapes our thoughts, feelings, emotions, words and actions. When **we die**, the video **camera is shut off**. At the resurrection it is **turned on again**. There has been no time interval on the tape. We will **pick up** where we **left off**.

Job 19:25-27, NIV

*“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after **my** skin has been destroyed, yet in **my** flesh **I** will see God; **I myself** will see him with **my own** eyes-I, and **not another**. How my heart yearns within me!*

I used to wonder why Job used the personal pronouns ‘my’ and ‘myself’ so many times in these verses. I now know the reason. Job is saying that when he resurrects he will have the same personal identity that he had at the moment of death. This is why he says that his own eyes would see his Creator and not another.

The Spirits of Just Men made perfect

Evangelical Christians have used Hebrews 12:22-24 to argue that the spirits of just men have gone to heaven at the moment of death. Let’s see if their understanding of the word ‘spirit’ is correct.

Hebrews 12:22-24:

*“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the **spirits of just men made perfect**, ²⁴ to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the **blood of sprinkling** that speaks **better things than that of Abel**.”*

Hebrews 11:39-40:

*“And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did **not receive the promise**, ⁴⁰ God having provided something better for us, that they should **not be made perfect apart from us**.”*

Hebrews 7:19:

*“For **the law made nothing perfect**, but the bringing in of a **better hope did**; by the which we **draw nigh** unto God.”*

Hebrews 10:1:

*“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, **can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect**.”*

Hebrews 10:14:

*“For by **one offering he hath perfected for ever** them that are sanctified.”*

Hebrews 5:7-9:

*“Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And **being made perfect**, he **became the author** of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”*

The Wicked outside the City

*“There are kings and generals who conquered nations, valiant men who never lost a battle, proud, ambitious warriors whose approach made kingdoms tremble. In death these **experienced no change**. As they come up from the grave, they **resume [start again] the current of their thoughts just where it ceased**. They are actuated by the **same desire** to conquer that ruled them when they fell. GC, p. 664*

This is an interesting quotation. **Why** do the wicked resume the current of their thoughts just where it ceased? Simply because when **God will return to them their breath** along with the **record of their lives!** They will pick up at the exact spot where they left off when they died. Thus the spirit is more than the simple breath!

John F. Kennedy

The assassination of **John F. Kennedy** will provide a good illustration. When I see the **short film clip** of Kennedy’s assassination is he alive or dead? The answer is that in the film clip he is alive but you are seeing the clip after he is dead. When you review that tape you are actually reviewing it after Kennedy is dead but the film shows him while he was alive. This is what happens in the judgment. So to speak, God brings out the video tape of the person’s life for review. At the moment of review the person is dead but the record was made while he was alive. In a very real sense, then, a person will stand before the judgment seat of Christ alive because the record was made while the person was alive. In a very real sense, when God brought out the records of Adam’s life they were **made while he was alive** but those records are actually **examined after he is dead**. In a very real sense, then, Adam **appeared alive** before the judgment seat of Christ.

How the Process Worked Beginning in 1844

Revelation 20:11-15: Even though this passage in context is speaking about the judgment of the **wicked dead**, the process is illustrative of how God performed the **judgment of the righteous** as well:

*“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I **saw the dead**, small and great, standing before God, and **books** were opened. And another **book** was opened, which is the **Book of Life**. And the **dead [they are dead!]** were judged according to their **works**, by the things which were written in the **books**.”*

The Daily and the Yearly Sanctuary Service

1 John 1:9: Sins entered the sanctuary day by day throughout the year. In the daily service sins were forgiven but not blotted out from the heavenly records:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Leviticus 16:16: Once as year the sins that had entered and been forgiven were deleted from the sanctuary records:

“So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.”

Hope for the Worst of Sinners

Acts 26:9-11: Saul of Tarsus lived a life full of sin before his conversion:

“Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. 11 And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.”

Acts 22:16: When Paul was baptized his sins were forgiven. This does not mean that they were blotted out. The record of his forgiven sins remained in the sanctuary. When the name of Paul comes up in the judgment his sins will be blotted out.

“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

The computer analogy:

- The **computer** = the body
- The **processor** = the brain
- The **power source** = the breath of life

Computer **information input** = what you allow to enter the five senses.

The moment when the **computer crashes** = the moment of death.

Backup disk = the records of our life that God keeps in heaven.

Buying a new computer after the first computer crashes:

A **new computer** = resurrection body (indestructible and immortal).

A **new brain** = resurrected brain (with far more memory).

Plugged into the power source = the breath of life.

Input information from **backup disk** = given the **same self-identity** that was backed up in heaven.

The computer has a **DELETE key**. When the backup disk with the record of my life is examined, God will **blot out every sin** which has been sincerely **repented of**, frankly **confessed** and by His power **overcome**. We will **not receive back** all the **bad things** which were on our record. This is why repentance (sorrow for sin and a turning away from it) and confession are a matter of **life or death**. Our **greatest assurance** is to have our sins covered by the blood of Jesus **in the sanctuary**.

“STUDIES IN REVELATION-THE SEVEN CHURCHES”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #12 – The Examination of the Robe

In our present study we will take a look at the investigative pre-Advent judgment. This subject is generally studied from the perspective of the books of Daniel and Revelation but in this study I would like to dwell on a parable that Jesus told that is recorded in Matthew 22:1-14. We will find in our study that this parable provides many important details that help us understand the when, where and how of the judgment. Let’s begin our study by reading the passage:

*“And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: ² “The kingdom of heaven is like a certain **king** who arranged a marriage for his **son**, ³ and **sent** out his **servants** to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. ⁴ Again, he sent out **other servants**, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle **are killed**, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.”’ ⁵ But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. ⁶ And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. ⁷ But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he **sent out his armies**, destroyed those murderers, and **burned up their city**. ⁸ Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹ Therefore go into the **highways**, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.’ ¹⁰ So those servants went out into the **highways** and gathered together all whom they found, both **bad and good**. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. ¹¹ “But when the king came in to **see** the **guests**, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. ¹² So he said to him, ‘**Friend**, how did you **come in here** without a wedding garment?’ And he was **speechless**. ¹³ Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**.’” ¹⁴ “For many are called, but few are chosen.”*

Verse 1

*“And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by **parables** and said. . .*

Verse 2

*“The kingdom of heaven is like a certain **king** [**God the Father**] who **arranged** a marriage for his **son** [**Jesus**]. . .”*

Verse 3

“. . . and **sent out** his **servants** to call those who **were invited** to the wedding and they were **not willing** to come.”

Who are the servants that were sent out?

John 1:6-7: John the Baptist was the first servant or messenger that was sent out:

“There was a man **sent** from God, whose name was John. ⁷ This man came for a witness, to bear **witness** of the Light that all through him might believe.”

Matt 10:5-7: The twelve disciples were also sent by Jesus to invite guests to the wedding:

“These twelve Jesus **sent out** and commanded them, saying: “Do not **go** into the **way** [this is a **key word** that is translated ‘**highways**’ in verses 9, 10] of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. ⁶ But **go** rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And as you **go**, preach, saying: ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

Luke 10:1: The seventy were sent out by Jesus to invite the guests to the wedding:

“After these things the Lord appointed seventy_others also, and **sent them** two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself **was about to go**.”

Note: John, the twelve and the seventy were sent out to invite the Jewish nation to the wedding. This first invitation was rejected by those who were invited as guests to the future wedding.

Verse 4

“**Again**, he sent out **other servants** saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner; my **oxen** and **fatted cattle** are **killed**, and all things are **ready**. Come to the **wedding**. [Jesus has been sacrificed at this point already].”’

Note: The second group of servants was sent out after Jesus died on the cross. We know this because they were sent out to announce that the oxen and fatted cattle **had been** killed. The slaughter of animals in the sacrificial system represented the death of Christ. At this point in the parable we have moved in time from John to the call of the twelve to the call of the seventy, to the death of Christ and beyond.

Isaiah 53:7:

“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the **slaughter** and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.”

Verses 5, 6

*"But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm another to his business. **6** And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. . ."*

Matthew 23:34-35: *"Therefore, indeed, I [will] send you prophets [Stephen], wise men [seven deacons], and scribes [Paul]: some of them you will kill and crucify [James, Peter], and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues [John, Peter, Paul, Silas] and persecute from city to city [Paul]."*

Note: The words of Matthew 23:34-35 were spoken by Jesus just a few days before His death. Peter prophesied to the Jews on the day of Pentecost and Stephen saw a vision of Jesus in heaven as he preached his sermon before the Sanhedrin. The seven deacons are referred to as individual full of wisdom and the apostle Paul was a theologian or scribe. James was killed with the sword and Peter was crucified with his head down. Peter and John were scourged in the synagogue and Saul of Tarsus persecuted from city to city. After Jesus died on the cross many messenger were sent to the Jews to invite them to receive Jesus and accept the invitation to the future wedding.

Acts 6:2, 3: The seven deacons were the wise men

[The wise men] *"Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said: "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. ³ Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."*

Acts 7:57-58: Stephen was the final prophet to the Jewish nation.

[Last prophet to Israel, he had a vision of Jesus in heaven] *"Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; 58 and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul."*

Acts 5:40-41: Peter and John were beaten in the synagogue

[Peter and John beaten] *"And they agreed with him and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus and let them go. ⁴¹ So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name."*

Acts 12:1-4: James was killed with the sword by Herod

[James the brother of Jesus killed] *"Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. ² Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. ³ And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread."*

John 21:18-19: Peter was crucified with his head down

[Peter crucified] *“Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will **stretch out your hands**, and another will gird you and **carry you where you do not wish**.”* ¹⁹ *This He spoke, signifying by **what death** he would glorify God.”*

Acts 26:11: Saul of Tarsus persecuted God’s people from city to city

[Paul persecuted in foreign cities like Damascus] *“And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to **foreign cities**.”*

Verse 7

*“But when the **king [God the Father]** heard about it, he was **furious**. And he sent out **his armies [Titus and the Roman legions; Israel chose it, and God acceded to their choice through the Roman armies], **destroyed** those murderers, and **burned up their city****. . . [the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70].”*

Note: We have now moved to the moment when Jerusalem was destroyed. The armies are the Roman Legions and the city is Jerusalem. Thus the parable began with John the Baptist in the spring of the year 27 AD and has moved to the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 AD

Luke 19:41-44: Jerusalem was destroyed because it rejected the invitation to the wedding

*“Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying, “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, **surround you** and close you in on every side, ⁴⁴ and **level you**, and your children within you, **to the ground**; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”*

Verse 8

*“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is **ready**, but those **who were invited [the first two times]** were not **worthy**. . .”*

Note: God gave two invitations to the Jewish nation to be guests at the future wedding of Jesus. One invitation was given before Jesus died on the cross and the other after. Both invitations were slighted. The word ‘worthy’ is very important at this point. In Matthew 10:5, 6, 11-15 we find that the lost sheep of the house of Israel were the ones who were unworthy.

Matthew 10:5, 6, 11-15:

*“These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: **“Do not go** into the way [**same word as in verses 9, 10 translated ‘highways’**] of the **Gentiles**, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. ⁶ But go rather to the **lost sheep of the house of Israel**. ¹¹ “Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is **worthy**, and stay there till you go out. ¹² And when you go into a household, greet it. ¹³ If the household is **worthy**, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not **worthy**, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴ And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. ¹⁵ Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.”*

Verse 9

*“Therefore go into the **highways [the way of the Gentiles]**, and as many as you find, invite **to the wedding**” [**the wedding has not taken place yet at this point when the gospel goes to the Gentiles**]*

Note: The word ‘highways’ is significant at this point. We are reminded that in Matthew 10:5, 6 Jesus instructed His disciples not to go in the **way** of the Samaritans or the Gentiles. The gospel was to go first to Jerusalem and Judea and only later to Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth. The word ‘way’ or ‘highway’ thus refers to taking the gospel to the Gentiles.

Matthew 8:11-12: The sons of the kingdom are the Jews and those who come from east and west are the Gentiles.

*“And I say to you that many will come from **east and west**, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹² But the **sons of the kingdom** will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**.”*

Luke 13:22-30: This passage amplifies the one in Matthew 8:11, 12 but provides additional details. Those who rejected the message admit that they ate and drank in the presence of Jesus and that He taught in their streets. The Jews were called first and yet they would be last. On the other hand, the Gentiles that had been called last would be first.

*“And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. ²³ Then one said to Him, “Lord, are there few who are saved?” And He said to them, ²⁴ “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. ²⁵ When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying: ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you: ‘I do not know you, where you are from,’ ²⁶ then you will begin to say, **‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.’** ²⁷ But He will say, ‘I tell you **I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me all you workers of iniquity.**’ ²⁸ There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and **yourself thrust out**. ²⁹ They will come from the **east and the west**, from the **north and the south**, and sit down in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ And indeed there are last*

[Gentiles preached to last] who will be first [preached to first], and there are first who will be last."

Matthew 21:43-44: Shortly before His death Jesus predicted that the kingdom would be taken from the Jewish nation and given to the Gentiles

"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation [ethnos] bearing the fruits of it."

Acts 13:47, 48: Paul and Barnabas made the same announcement when their message was rejected by the Jews at Pisidian Antioch

"Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said: "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles [ethnos]. ⁴⁷ For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth [same expression in Acts 1:8; also, Matthew 24:14: All the world as a witness to all the nations].'"

Verse 10:

*"So those **servants** went out into the **highways** [same word translated 'way' in Matthew 10:5 where Jesus says: 'don't go the way of the Gentiles] and **gathered** together all whom they found, both **bad and good** and the **wedding hall** [at this point the wedding has not yet taken place but the guests are there with the garments which the bridegroom has provided beforehand] **was filled** with guests. . ."*

Matthew 13:47-50: Jesus described his followers as fishermen. The casting of the net is the preaching of the gospel and the boat is the church. When the gospel is preached, it not only gathers true followers of Jesus but also hypocrites. The purpose of the judgment is to distinguish between those who have the power of godliness and those who have only the **appearance** of godliness.

*"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of **every kind**, ⁴⁸ which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the **good** into vessels, but threw the **bad** away. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, ⁵⁰ and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."*

Note: When I was a kid my parents used to take us on vacation to a pristine island state in Venezuela. One of our favorite activities was to get up early in the morning to watch the fishermen bring in their nets. In the nets were all sorts of fish, good and bad. When they arrived at the shore they would separate the good from the bad. The good they would put in baskets to take to the market place and the bad were placed in baskets to be discarded.

Verse 11

Note: When the fishermen had finished their task, and all the fish, good and bad, had been gathered by the net into the boat, it was time to separate the good fish from the bad. This is another way of describing the investigative pre-Advent judgment that transpires in heaven before the second coming. After the preaching of the gospel is finished and all the souls have been brought into the church, the heavenly judgment will separate the genuine believers from the counterfeit. In fact, we will see that the wedding takes place in heaven and God's people are present there only by faith.

*"But when the **king** came in to **see** [theaomai: 'examine'] **the guests** [here is the examination of the garments of the guests to the wedding], **he saw** a man there who did not have on a wedding garment [this examination of the wedding garments cannot take place after the second coming because no one will sneak into heaven. Actually the records in the books are examined to determine if the person has on the wedding garment]."*

The translation 'see' is weak. **The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament** explains that in the New Testament this word '**see**' "regularly connotes intensive, thorough, lingering, astonished, reflective, comprehending observation."

Ellen White describes the sanctuary context of the heavenly examination:

4SP pp. 266: "As the sins of the people were anciently transferred, in figure, to the earthly sanctuary by the blood of the sin-offering, so our sins are, in fact, transferred to the heavenly sanctuary by the blood of Christ. And as the typical cleansing of the earthly was accomplished by the removal of the sins by which it had been polluted, so the actual cleansing of the heavenly is to be accomplished by the removal, or blotting out, of the sins which are there recorded. This necessitates an examination of the books of record to determine who, through repentance of sin and faith in Christ, are **entitled to the benefits** of his atonement. The cleansing of the sanctuary therefore involves a work of **investigative Judgment**. This work must be performed **prior** to the coming of Christ to redeem his people; for when he comes, his reward is with him to give to every man according to his works." [REV. 22:12.]

Everyone's case will be examined

Christ Object Lessons, p. 310: "The guests at the gospel feast are those who **profess to serve God**, those whose **names are written** in the book of life. But not all who **profess** to be Christians are true disciples. Before the final reward is given, it must be decided **who are fitted** to share the inheritance of the righteous. This decision must be made **prior** to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven; for when He comes, His reward is with Him, "to give every man according as his work shall be." Rev. 22:12."

Note: The Bible is clear that all who have professed the name of Jesus must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. But they will not appear there in person but rather by their records in the books.

II Corinthians 5:10: We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to render an account for what we have done in the body.

Matthew 12:34: By our words we will be justified and by our words we will be condemned.

Ecclesiastes 12:14: God will bring every work into judgment along with every secret thing.

Revelation 22:12: When Jesus comes He will bring His reward to give to everyone according to his work.

The Hypocrites

Matthew 7:21-23: Many will claim the name of Jesus and He will say that He does not know them.

Dragnet gathered good and bad and the net is the gospel.

II Corinthians 11:13-15: In the church there are ministers of unrighteousness who are garbed as ministers of righteousness.

Matthew 13:30: The church has wheat and the tares and both look very much alike.

Matthew 25:1-10: All ten virgins had lamps and oil; all claimed to be waiting for the groom but five were foolish.

The purpose of the judgment is to reveal to the universe if repentance, confession, faith and baptism were genuine or not and this is exhibited in a sanctified life that produces works that flow from repentance. We are saved by grace through faith but we shall be judged by works because works reveal whether faith is genuine or not.

Christ Object Lessons, p. 310: *“It is while men are still dwelling upon the earth that the work of investigative judgment takes place in the courts of heaven. The lives of all [‘guests’ (plural) were examined] His professed followers pass in review before God. All are examined according to the record of the books of heaven, and according to his deeds the destiny of each is forever fixed.”*

Christ Object Lessons, p. 312: *“Righteousness is right doing, and it is by their deeds that all will be judged. Our characters are revealed by what we do. The works show whether the faith is genuine.”*

Is Ellen White correct in this assessment? Absolutely because, as we have seen, in the Bible the judgment is always concerned with an examination of our works, words, deeds, thoughts, motives and intentions of the heart!

2 SM p. 380: *“That which God required of Adam before his fall was perfect obedience to His law. God requires now what He required of Adam, perfect obedience, righteousness without a flaw,*

without shortcoming in His sight. God help us to render to Him all His law requires. We cannot do this without **that faith** that brings Christ's righteousness **into daily practice**."

Luke 12:35-38: Clearly the wedding takes place in heaven and only after the wedding does Jesus return from the wedding and take his people home

"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; 36 and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will **return from the wedding**, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. 37 Blessed are those servants whom the master, **when he comes**, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them."

Verse 12:

"So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come **in here** without a wedding garment?' [this conversation between God and the believer does not actually take place in heaven]. And he was **speechless** [the point is that no excuses will be given or allowed]

Romans 3:19: "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that **every mouth may be stopped**, and all the world may become guilty before God."

Christ Object Lessons, pp. 315, 316: "Many who call themselves Christians are mere human moralists. They have refused the gift which alone could enable them to honor Christ by representing Him to the world. The work of the Holy Spirit is to them a strange work. They are **not doers** of the word. The heavenly principles that distinguish those who are one with Christ from those who are one with the world have become almost **indistinguishable**. The professed followers of Christ are no longer a **separate and peculiar people**. The **line of demarcation** is **indistinct**. The people are subordinating themselves to the **world**, to its **practices**, its **customs**, its **selfishness**. The church has gone over to the world in transgression of the law, when the world should have come over to the church in obedience to the law. Daily the church is **being converted to the world**. All these expect to be saved by Christ's death, while they refuse to live His self-sacrificing life. They extol the **riches of free grace**, and attempt to cover themselves with an **appearance of righteousness**, hoping to screen their defects of character; but their efforts will be of no avail in the day of God."

Christ Object Lessons, p. 317: "Men may now excuse their defects of character, but in that day they will **offer no excuse**."

Verse 13

"Then the king said to the **servants [the angels]**, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Matthew 13:30:

*"Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the **reapers**, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"*

Verse 14

"For many are called, but few are chosen"

Revelation 17:14:

*"These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, **chosen**, and faithful."*

Final Story

Matthew 18:23-35:

*"Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain **king [God]** who wanted to **settle accounts [judgment]** with his **servants [those who claim Jesus]**.²⁴ And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was **brought to him** who owed him ten thousand talents [**a huge debt that was impossible to pay**].²⁵ But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made [**what he deserved**].²⁶ The servant therefore **fell down** before him [**repentance for sin or the consequences?**], saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'²⁷ Then the master of that servant was moved with **compassion [grace and mercy]**, released him, and forgave [**God's free forgiveness or justification**] him the debt.²⁸ "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!'²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'³⁰ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.³¹ So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.³² Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You **wicked** servant! I **forgave you all that debt** because you **begged me**.³³ Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?'³⁴ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers **until he should pay** all that was due to him.³⁵ "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, **does not forgive** his brother his trespasses."*

Is the judgment investigation **a threat** to my salvation? Only if you have not truly repented of your sin, confessed it, trusted in Jesus and overcome sin by His grace. If you are on a train and you have purchased a ticket you have nothing to fear when the attendant asks for passenger to show their tickets. But if you are on the train and never purchased the ticket you have reason to fear.

“STUDIES IN REVELATION-THE SEVEN CHURCHES”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #13 – Study on the 1844 Movement (Philadelphia)

Prophecies

Seventh-day Adventists believe that Jesus moved from the holy to the most holy place for the investigative judgment of the faithful dead in 1844. Why do we believe this? Several **specific Bible prophecies** pointed to the **beginning** of the judgment in 1844:

Daniel 7:9, 10

*"I watched till thrones were **put in place**, and the Ancient of Days **was seated**; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its **wheels** a **burning fire**; A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The **court was seated**, and the **books were opened**."*

Daniel 7:13, 14

*"I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, **coming with the clouds** of heaven! He came **to the Ancient of Days**, and **they brought Him** near before Him. Then **to Him was given** dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed."*

Note: It is important to consider the **historical context** of Daniel 7. According to verses 1-8 the **lion**, the **bear**, the **leopard**, the **dragon**, the **ten horns** and the **little horn** ruled and then the Father sat in judgment and the books were opened. Jesus then came to the Father and received the kingdom (verses 13, 14). When the judgment is over the subjects of Christ's kingdom are made up.

Daniel 8:14: Supplies the **specific year** for the beginning of the judgment:

*"And he said to me, "For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary [**has to be the sanctuary in heaven according to Hebrews 8:1, 2**] shall be cleansed."*

Leviticus 23:26, 27: Provides the **specific day** and **month** for the beginning of the judgment:

“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ²⁷ “Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement.”

Daniel 12:4: God instructed Daniel that the **little book** of Daniel (Daniel 8-12) would be opened at the **time of the end**:

“But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”

Revelation 10:1, 2: Describes the moment when the little **book was opened** during an **interlude** between the **sixth and seventh** trumpets. When the book was opened it was **sweet** in the mouth but **bitter** in the stomach. This describes the experience of the Millerites leading up to 1844. The message of Jesus’ coming was sweet but the disappointment was bitter. After the disappointment John was instructed to **prophecy again** to the world.

*“I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. ² He had a **little book open** in his hand.”*

Revelation 14:6, 7 contains the message of those who prophesy again from the little book. As in Daniel, the judgment begins after the reign of the lion, bear, leopard, dragon, ten horns and beast (Revelation 13:1, 2).

Revelation 3:7-9: The door to the **most holy place** is opened before the church of Philadelphia in the context is the **sixth church** toward the **end** of human history. The name of the last church, **Laodicea**, means “**judging the people**.”

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, ‘He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens’: ‘I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.’”

Revelation 11:19: The door to the most holy place is opened as the **seventh trumpet is about to sound**. But as we shall see in our next study, this door will be opened before the world **once more** as the mystery of God (the preaching of the gospel) is about to be finished:

“Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.”

Fulfillment

In the **1830s and 1840s** there arose an **interdenominational** and **intercontinental** movement described by historians as the **Great Second Advent Awakening**. Those who participated in this

movement expected Jesus to come as King of kings and Lord of lords in the spring of 1843 and then in 1844.

Thousands preached the message and thousands embraced it. The people expected Jesus to come and establish His kingdom first in the spring of 1844 and later on October 22, 1844.

Their message revolved around **Revelation 14:7** and **Daniel 8:14**:

“Fear God and give glory to Him for the hour of His judgment is come.”

“Unto two thousand evenings and mornings and the sanctuary shall be cleansed.”

Those who belonged to this movement believed that the sanctuary was the earth and that it would be cleansed by fire when Jesus came to set up His everlasting kingdom.

Opened and Closed Door

There were prophecies that indicated that a door would be closed and another would be opened at this time.

Revelation 3:7, 8: It is important to remember the time frame of the church of Philadelphia. It arose after the apostolic church, after the church that was persecuted by the Roman emperors, after the church in the times of Constantine, after the church of the middle Ages and after the church of the Protestant Reformation. And it arose immediately before the judgment church of Laodicea.

Revelation 11:19: The context of this verse is as the seventh angel is about to begin to blow his trumpet. The door to the most holy place was opened at this point in history:

“Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.”

Concerning this, Ellen White explains:

*“Then Jesus rose up and **shut the door** of the holy place, and **opened the door** into the most holy, and passed within the second veil, where He now stands by the ark, and where the faith of Israel now reaches.” Early Writing, p. 42*

Publicity

“In every part of the land light was given concerning this message, and the cry aroused thousands. It went from city to city, from village to village, and into the remote country regions. It reached the learned and talented, as well as the obscure and humble. This was the happiest year of my life.” Christian Experience and Teaching of Mrs. Ellen G. White, p. 50

This preaching was **orchestrated by God Himself**. EGW explained that **God was in** this movement. The question is: How could God be in a movement which He knew would end in a **great and bitter disappointment**? **God knew** that there was going to be a disappointment why did He call Miller to preach? **He knew that William Miller was wrong** about the event yet He **encouraged Miller** to preach the message.

*“Thousands were led to embrace the truth preached by **William Miller**, and **servants of God** were raised up in the spirit and power of Elijah to proclaim the message. **Like John**, the forerunner of Jesus, those who preached this solemn message felt compelled to lay the ax at the root of the tree and call upon men to **bring forth fruits** meet for repentance.”*

“As John the Baptist [who was called by God to preach and was bitterly disappointed] heralded the first advent of Jesus and prepared the way for His coming, so William Miller and those who joined with him proclaimed the second advent of the Son of God.” Early Writings, p. 229

Ellen White had this to say about the **Midnight Cry** (July-October of 1844):

*“Like a **tidal wave** the movement **swept over** the land. From city to city, from village to village, and into remote country places it went, until the waiting people of God were **fully aroused**. Fanaticism disappeared before this proclamation like early frost before the rising sun. Believers saw their **doubt and perplexity removed**, and hope and courage animated their hearts. The work was free from those extremes which are ever manifested when there is **human excitement** without the controlling influence of the word and Spirit of God. It was similar in character to those seasons of humiliation and returning unto the Lord which among ancient Israel followed messages of reproof from His servants. It bore the characteristics that mark the work of God in every age. There was **little ecstatic joy**, but rather **deep searching of heart**, confession of sin, and forsaking of the world. A preparation to meet the Lord was the burden of agonizing spirits. There was persevering prayer and unreserved consecration to God.” GC, pp. 400, 401*

*“Of all the great religious movements since the days of the apostles, none have been more **free from human imperfection** and the wiles of Satan than was that of the autumn of 1844. Even now, after the lapse of many years, all who shared in that movement and who have stood firm upon the platform of truth still feel the holy influence of that blessed work and bear witness that **it was of God**.” GC, p. 401*

Disappointment

Adventists have been mocked by other Christians because our movement originated with a great and bitter disappointment. But the 1844 disappointment was not the first in the history of the Christian church. Jesus orchestrated His triumphal entry into Jerusalem knowing full well that it would lead to a bitter disappointment among His followers less than a week later?

Ellen White compared the Midnight Cry with the Triumphal Entry:

“The message, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!” [given in July of 1844] was not so much a matter of argument, though the Scripture proof was clear and conclusive. There went with it an

impelling power that moved the soul. There was **no doubt, no questioning**. Upon the occasion of Christ's **triumphal entry** into Jerusalem the people who were assembled from all parts of the land to keep the feast flocked to the Mount of Olives, and as they joined the throng that were escorting Jesus they caught the inspiration of the hour and helped to swell the shout: "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!" Matthew 21:9. **In like manner** did unbelievers who flocked to the Adventist meetings--some from curiosity, some merely to ridicule--feel the **convincing power** attending the message: "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!" GC, p. 402

Humble Instrument

God did not choose any of the great religious leaders of the day to **spearhead** this message. God chose a **humble farmer** and **former soldier** with **no theological training** who was willing to place himself in God's hands. Notably God also used a farmer—**Hiram Edson**—to explain the reason for the disappointment.

Said William Miller:

*"My great fear was that in their joy at the hope of a glorious inheritance so soon to be revealed, they would receive the doctrine without sufficiently examining the Scriptures in demonstration of its truth. I therefore feared to present it, lest by **some possibility** I should be in error, and be the means of misleading any." William Miller, Apology and Defense, p. 13*

Disappointment

After the **first disappointment in 1843** William Miller explained his convictions:

"I am willing to confess that Christ did not come in 1843—but I can't see where I'm wrong." William Miller, Vermont Chronicle, June 26, 1844

Ellen White compared the work of William Miller with that of **John the Baptist**. Like John, Miller preached the message of the **coming kingdom** but **did not fully understand** the meaning of that kingdom. Like John the Baptist, William Miller was **profoundly disappointed** when the Messiah did not come according to his expectations:

*"With trembling, William Miller began to unfold to the people the mysteries of the kingdom of God, carrying his hearers down through the prophecies to the second advent of Christ. With every effort he gained strength. **As John the Baptist** heralded the first advent of Jesus and prepared the way for His coming, **so William Miller** and those who joined with him proclaimed the second advent of the Son of God." Early Writings, p. 229*

Josiah Litch, one of the close collaborators with Miller, explained that he could find **no flaw** in Miller's arguments:

"Before concluding the book I became fully satisfied that the arguments were so clear, so simple, and withal so Scriptural, that it was impossible to disprove the position which Mr. Miller had endeavored to establish." Josiah Litch, The Advent Shield and Review, May, 1844, p. 54

Those who proclaimed the message did **not fully comprehend** its meaning. They were mistaken about the **meaning of the sanctuary and its cleansing**. They expected Jesus to return as **King of kings and Lord of lords**. This experience of **joy** that was followed by **bitter disappointment** is described as the book which was sweet in the mouth but bitter in the stomach:

Revelation 10:8-11

"Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth." 9 And I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth." 10 Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. 11 And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings."

Hiram Edson described the **bitter disappointment** of the Millerites when Jesus did **not come** as expected on October 22, 1844:

*". . . we confidently expected to see Jesus Christ and all the holy angels with him; and that his voice would call up Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the ancient worthies, and dear friends which had been torn from us by death, and that our trials and sufferings, with our earthly pilgrimage would close, and we should be caught up to meet our coming Lord to be forever with him, to inhabit bright golden mansions in the golden home city prepared for the redeemed. Our expectations were raised high, and thus we looked for our coming Lord until the clock tolled 12, at midnight. The day had then passed and our **disappointment** became a certainty. Our fondest hopes and expectations **were blasted**, and such a **spirit of weeping** came over us as I never experienced before. It seemed that the **loss of all earthly friends** could have been no comparison. We **wept, and wept**, till the day dawn. I mused in my own heart, saying, 'My advent experience has been the richest and brightest of all my Christian experience. If this had proved a failure, what was the rest of my Christian experience worth? Has the Bible proved a failure? Is there no God, no heaven, no golden home city, no paradise? Is all this but a cunningly devised fable? Is there no reality to our fondest hope and expectation of these things?' And thus we had something to **grieve and weep over**, if all our fond hopes were lost. And as I said, **we wept till the day dawn**." Hiram Edson, manuscript fragment on his "Life and Experience," no date, pp. 4-5, Ellen G. White Research Center, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

Washington Morse also described the feelings of the Millerites after the disappointment:

*"The passing of the time was a **bitter disappointment**. True believers had given up all for Christ, and had shared His presence as never before. The love of Jesus filled every soul; and with*

*inexpressible desire they prayed, 'Come, Lord Jesus, and come quickly;' but He did not come. And now, to turn again to the cares, perplexities, and dangers of life, in full view of **jeering and reviling unbelievers** who scoffed as never before, was a terrible trial of faith and patience. When elder Himes visited Waterbury, Vermont, a short time after the passing of the time, and stated that the brethren should prepare for another cold winter, my feelings were almost uncontrollable. I left the place of meeting and **wept like a child.**" Washington Morse, "Remembrance of Former Days," The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, May 7, 1901*

William Miller reminisced:

*"It passed. And the next day it seemed as though **all the demons from the bottomless pit were let loose upon us.** The same ones and many more who were crying for mercy two days before, were not mixed with the rabble and mocking, scoffing, and threatening in a most blasphemous manner." Words of William Miller in a letter to I. O. Orr, M. D. dated December 13, 1844*

Rejection by the Religious World

In **1842** Ellen White and her entire family were **disfellowshipped** from the **Methodist** Church **for attending** a Millerite tent meeting. The **mainline denominations** wanted nothing to do with the judgment hour message.

Most of those who preached the message or joined out of excitement and emotion **forsook the movement** and said that they had been deceived.

Ellen White later described the response of the established churches to the Millerite message: *"The message given from heaven **enraged** Satan and his angels, and led those who professed to love Jesus, but despised His coming, to scorn and deride the faithful, trusting ones." EW, p. 249*

*"When the **churches spurned** the counsel of God by rejecting the Advent message, the Lord **rejected them.** The first angel was followed by a second, proclaiming, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." [REV. 14:8] 4SP, p. 232*

*"I saw that as the Jews crucified Jesus, so the **nominal churches had crucified these messages,** and therefore they have **no knowledge** of the way into the most holy, and they cannot be benefited by the intercession of Jesus there. Like the Jews, who offered their useless sacrifices, they offer up their useless prayers to the apartment which Jesus has left; and Satan, pleased with the deception, **assumes a religious character,** and leads the minds of these professed Christians to himself, working with his power, his signs and lying wonders, to fasten them in his snare." Early Writings, p. 261*

*"**Preachers and people** joined to oppose this message from heaven and to persecute William Miller and those who united with him in the work. **Falsehoods were circulated** to injure his influence; and at different times after he had plainly declared the counsel of God, applying cutting truths to the hearts of his hearers, **great rage was kindled against him,** and as he left the place of meeting, some waylaid him in order to take his life. But angels of God were sent to*

protect him, and they led him safely away from the angry mob. His work was not yet finished.”
Early Writings, p. 234

Ellen White described the response of the established churches to the first disappointment:

*“We needed great patience, for the scoffers were many. We were frequently greeted by scornful references to our former disappointment. The **orthodox churches** used every means to **prevent the belief** in Christ's soon coming from spreading. **No liberty was granted** in their meetings to those who dared mention a hope of the soon coming of Christ. **Professed lovers** of Jesus scornfully rejected the tidings that He whom they claimed as their best Friend was soon to visit them. They were **excited and angered** against those who proclaimed the news of His coming, and who rejoiced that they should speedily behold Him in His glory. Christian Experience and Teaching of Ellen G. White, p. 52*

The churches that refused to enter the most holy place with Jesus rejected the message and **became Babylon** or the **Synagogue of Satan** and were left in darkness (Rev. 14:8; 3:9). Ellen White describes this in vivid fashion in Early Writings, pp. 54-56

Clarification with Scripture

After the Great Disappointment **Hiram Edson** was provided with an insight that led the pioneers to study their Bibles in order to **discover the reason** for their disappointment.

*“We started, and while passing through a large field I was stopped about midway of the field. Heaven seemed opened to my view, and **I saw distinctly and clearly** that instead of our High Priest coming out of the Most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth on the tenth day of the seventh month, at the end of the 2300 days [**calculated to be October 22, 1844**], He for the first time entered on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary; and that He had a work to perform in the Most Holy before coming to the earth.” F. D. Nichol, The Midnight Cry, p. 458*

October 22, 1844 marked the beginning of the **judgment of the dead**. The judgment of the living would **follow the same pattern** in the future when **Revelation 18:1-4** is fulfilled.

In the **Day-Star Extra, Feb. 7, 1846**, a memorable article concerning the heavenly sanctuary and its cleansing was published. This powerful article, written by **Hiram Edson, Franklin Hahn, and O.R.L. Crozier**, provided the **Biblical evidence for the sanctuary message**.

Remnant

After the disappointment a **small remnant** of Millerites **restudied** several passages from Scripture (such as **Leviticus 16; Daniel 7:7-14, 22; Daniel 8:14; Luke 12:35-37; Malachi 3:1; Revelation 10:8-11**) and they discovered that they had been **mistaken** in their understanding of the cleansing of the sanctuary. As a result, they **entered the most holy place** with Jesus and this led them to accept in the course of time the **distinctive truths of the SDA church** such as the

law, the Sabbath, the judgment and the state of the dead. As a result, the Seventh-day Adventist church had its origin.

“STUDIES IN REVELATION-THE SEVEN CHURCHES”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #14 – Study on the End Time Philadelphia Movement

The Model of Pentecost

In order to comprehend what will transpire during the judgment of the living it is necessary to take a look for a few moments at what occurred on the Day of Pentecost.

- For ten days before Pentecost the little remnant that remained after the bitter disappointment gathered together in the Upper Room. They emptied themselves of their personal agendas.
- They prayed for an understanding of Bible prophecy and by a study of the Old Testament Scriptures they came to fully understand the work that Jesus had accomplished in the camp and in the court
- As a result they followed Jesus into the Holy Place and personally claimed the benefits of His atonement

Power for the Task

The disciples were going to face grave dangers and the message of the gospel needed to spread on a global scale. Humanly speaking, the task was impossible to accomplish without divine aid and that divine aid was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:6-8: *“Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”⁷ And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

Ten Days of Preparation before Pentecost

- They were emptied of self.
- They cast aside their disagreements and the desire for supremacy and were all of one accord.

- They put all of their **possessions** at the disposal of the church.
- They **came to understand** by the study of the **prophecies** what Jesus had accomplished by His **perfect life** and **atonement death** and what He was about to do on the **Day of Pentecost**.
- They had a **passion to tell others** about what Jesus **had done** (in the camp and court) and what He **was doing** at that very moment in the holy place.

The Established Church of the Day

- The established church **refused to follow** Jesus to the **camp** and the **court** and therefore they were **clueless** about the work that Jesus was **about to begin** in the holy place.
- The **door of probation closed** for the Jewish leaders who had rejected Jesus but not for those who had not clearly understood why Jesus had lived and died.

The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit to Empower Preaching

When the disciples were ready, the Holy Spirit was **poured out** upon them to in order to **enable** them to preach the gospel with power to **two groups**:

- The **Jews** who had not openly rejected Jesus.
- The **Gentiles** who had not yet heard about Him.

Both of these groups needed to understand what Jesus **had accomplished** in the encampment and the court of the sanctuary. They needed to comprehend that they could now **personally and individually claim the benefits** of what Jesus had accomplished by His **perfect life** and His **vicarious death**. They needed to be informed about the work that Jesus was performing in the **holy place** of the heavenly sanctuary (I John 2:1; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). As we shall see, this was the **very message** that Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost.

*“The rending of the veil of the temple showed that the Jewish sacrifices and ordinances would no longer be received. The great **Sacrifice** had been offered and had been accepted, and the Holy Spirit which descended on the day of Pentecost **carried the minds** of the disciples from the earthly sanctuary to the heavenly, where Jesus had entered **by His own blood**, to shed upon His disciples the **benefits of His atonement**. But the Jews were left in **total darkness**. They lost all the light which they might have had upon the plan of salvation, and still trusted in their useless **sacrifices and offerings**. The heavenly sanctuary had taken the place of the earthly, yet they had **no knowledge of the change**. Therefore they could not be **benefited** by the mediation of Christ in the holy place. Early Writings, p. 259*

*“It is those who by faith follow Jesus in the great work of the atonement who receive the **benefits** of His mediation in their behalf, while those who reject the light which brings to view this work of ministration are not **benefited** thereby. The **Jews who rejected** the light given at Christ's first advent and refused to believe on Him as the Savior of the world, **could not receive pardon** through Him. When Jesus at His ascension entered by His own blood into the heavenly*

sanctuary to shed upon His disciples the **blessings** of His mediation, the Jews were left in total darkness to continue their useless sacrifices and offerings. The ministration of types and shadows had ceased. That **door** by which men had formerly found access to God was no longer open. The Jews had refused to seek Him in the only way whereby He could then be found, through the ministration in the sanctuary in heaven. Therefore they found no communion with God. To them the door was shut. They had no knowledge of Christ as the true **sacrifice** and the only **mediator** before God; hence they could not receive the **benefits** of His mediation. GC, p. 430

Peter's Central Message at Pentecost: Remission of Sins, not the Blotting out of Sins

Matthew 26:28:

*"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many **for** the **remission** of sins."*

Luke 24:45-47

*"And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that **repentance** and **remission** of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."*

Acts 2:38:

*"Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **for** the **remission** of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

Acts 5:31

*"Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and **forgiveness** of sins."*

Acts 10:43

*"To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever **believes** in Him **will receive** remission of sins."*

Acts 13:38-39

*"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the **forgiveness** of sins; and by Him everyone who **believes** is **justified** from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses."*

Acts 26:17-18

*"I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive **forgiveness of sins** and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me."*

1 John 1:7, 9

*"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son **cleanses us** from all sin . . . If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to **forgive us** our sins and to **cleanse us** from all unrighteousness."*

The Greek word **aphesis** (remission) means "to pardon, to forgive, cancellation of guilt and punishment" but it does not mean "to blot out sin." The word for blotting out sin is **hexaleipo**.

With this background on the Day of Pentecost in mind we will be able to better comprehend the judgment of the living.

Prophecies that Point to the Judgment of the Living

The purpose of the judgment of the living is not primarily to forgive their sins but rather to **expunge them** from the sanctuary records.

Acts 3:19-21

*"**Repent** [present active imperative] therefore and **be converted** [present active imperative],[so] **that** your sins may be **blotted out** [passive infinitive], **so that times of refreshing** may come [active subjunctive] from the **presence of the Lord**, and [so] that He may send [active subjunctive] Jesus Christ, who was **preached to you before**, whom heaven must receive **until the times of restoration of all things**, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."*

It is interesting to notice how Ellen White links the outpouring of the Early Rain at **Pentecost** with what will happen under the **latter rain** and the **loud cry**:

*"The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. **The prophecies** which were fulfilled in the outpouring of the **former rain** at the opening of the gospel **are again to be fulfilled** in the **latter rain** at its close. Here are "the times of refreshing" to which the apostle Peter looked forward when he said: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus." Acts 3:19, 20*

*"Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By **thousands of voices**, all over the earth, the warning will be given. **Miracles** will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and **signs and***

wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works, with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand.” GC, pp. 611, 612

- There is a clear **chain of events** in **Acts 3:19-21**. There are **two commands** that are in the **present active imperative voice**. This means that those who were listening to Peter at that very moment **could meet the conditions** that these two imperatives demanded.
- There is no indication in the text, however, that the other elements in the verse were to occur **immediately after repentance and conversion**. The **[1] blotting out of sins**, the **[2] times of refreshing**, the **[3] sending of Jesus** and the **[4] restoration** of all things are events that were to take place not immediately after repentance and conversion but **in the future**.

A similar idea can be found in **Acts 17:30, 31**:

*“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but **now commands** all men everywhere to **repent, because** He has appointed a day on which He **will judge** the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained.”*

Would anyone sustain that the judgment that is mentioned in **Acts 17** will occur **immediately after** repentance?

What these verses are teaching is that sins that had **already entered** the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus through **repentance, confession, trust in Jesus** and **baptism** and would be **[1] blotted out** from the sanctuary so that the **[2] latter rain** could fall, the **[3] final message** could be proclaimed with power and **[4] Jesus could come** again.

- The Greek word translated “blot out” is **hexaleipo**. It means “to blot out, to wipe away, to erase, to remove, and to obliterate from a written record.” The word is used in **Revelation 7:17; 21:4** to refer to the wiping away of tears from the eyes and in **Revelation 3:5** to describe the blotting out of names from the book of life.

The **sequence of events** in Acts 3:19-21 are explained in the Sanctuary Service:

- Jesus by His life in the **camp** provided a **perfect life** that could be imputed and imparted to penitent sinners.
- Jesus by His death in **court** provided the **currency** to pay the debt for every single human being that has ever lived on planet earth.
- By His work in the **holy place** Jesus applies the **benefits** of His life and death to those who come **personally** to Him in repentance and confession. In other words, the payment that Jesus made is **credited to their account** when they **receive the gift** that Jesus purchased.

- The work of Jesus in the most holy place involves judgment, blotting out the repented of, confessed and forgiven sins from the records.

Sanctuary Terminology

The expression “**blot out**” is sanctuary terminology. From Pentecost on, the sins entered the heavenly sanctuary through the blood of Jesus. This was the meaning of the daily service. But on the Day of Atonement once a year at the end of the year the sins that had entered the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus were to be blotted out from the records.

There is a distinction between the forgiveness of sins and the blotting out of sins. Sins were paid for in the court, forgiven in the daily service in the holy place and they were blotted out from the records on the Day of Atonement. Only sins that had entered the sanctuary through the blood in the daily service were blotted out from the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement.

On the Day of Atonement the greatest assurance for the Israelites was to have their sins covered by the blood in the sanctuary. In easy-to-understand terms Ellen White explains:

“As the sins of the people were anciently transferred, in figure, to the earthly sanctuary by the blood of the sin offering, so our sins are, in fact, transferred to the heavenly sanctuary by the blood of Christ. And as the typical cleansing of the earthly was accomplished by the removal of the sins by which it had been polluted, so the actual cleansing of the heavenly is to be accomplished by the removal, or blotting out, of the sins which are there recorded. This necessitates an examination of the books of record to determine who, through repentance of sin and faith in Christ, are entitled to the benefits of His atonement.” The Faith I Live By, p. 206

Leviticus 16:7, 20-22: The words ‘sin’, ‘transgression’, ‘uncleanness’ and ‘iniquity’ that were almost always in the singular in Leviticus 1-15 are in plural in Leviticus 16. The reason for this is that the focus in the first fifteen chapters is upon the cleansing of the individual while the focus in Leviticus 16 is upon the cleansing of the sanctuary from all the individual sins that had entered there throughout the course of the year.

Preparation for the Blotting out of Sins and the Outpouring of the Latter Rain

Those who live during the period of the judgment of the living will need to experience total victory over sin. Like the disciples on the Day of Pentecost, there will need to be a special preparation for this period

Revelation 6:15-17: Who will be able to stand?

“And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on

the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and **who is able to stand?**"

Revelation 7:1-4 (Ezekiel 9:1-6): The 144,000 will be able to Stand

"After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed."

Revelation 14:1-5: What Type of Character Will the 144,000 Possess?

*"Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His **Father's name** written on their **foreheads**. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for **they are virgins**. These are the ones who follow the Lamb **wherever He goes**. These were redeemed from among men, being first-fruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found **no deceit**, for they are **without fault** before the throne of God."*

Joel 2:11-17: Links the **living saints** with the **Day of Atonement** in the **most holy place**. The **first nine verses** describe the second coming of Jesus and then we have the following passage:

*"The earth quakes before them, the heavens **tremble**; the **sun** and **moon** grow dark, and the **stars** diminish their brightness. The LORD gives voice before **His army**, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. **For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible, Who can endure it?** "Now, therefore," says the LORD, "**Turn** to Me with all your heart, with **fasting**, with **weeping**, and with **mourning**." So **rend your heart**, and not your garments; **return** to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him--A grain offering and a drink offering For the LORD your God? Blow the **trumpet** in Zion, consecrate a **fast**, call a sacred **assembly**; **Gather** the people, **sanctify** the congregation, **assemble** the elders, **gather** the children and nursing babes; let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, and the bride from her dressing room. Let the priests, who minister to the LORD, **weep** between the porch and the altar; let them say, "**Spare Your people**, O LORD, and do not give Your heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?' "*

Isaiah 33:12-17: The same question as in Revelation 6:17

*“And the people shall be like the burnings of lime; like thorns cut up they shall be burned in the fire. Hear, you who are afar off, what I have done; and you who are near, acknowledge My might.” The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: **“Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”** He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, he who despises the gain of oppressions, who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil: He will dwell on high; his place of defense will be the fortress of rocks; bread will be given him, his water will be sure. Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; they will see the land that is very far off.”*

Psalm 15

*“**LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?** He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; He who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; In whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the LORD; he who swears to his own hurt and does not change; He who does not put out his money at usury, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. **He who does these things shall never be moved**”.*

When the Judgment of the Living?

Ellen White wrote in 1911 that the judgment of the living had not yet begun but that it would begin soon:

“The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. For many years this work has been in progress. Soon--none know how soon--it will pass to the cases of the living. In the awful presence of God our lives are to come up in review. At this time above all others it behooves every soul to heed the Savior's admonition, "Watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." Mark 13:33. "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." Rev. 3:3.” GC, p. 490

The congregation had a role to play on the Day of Atonement

- While the high priest was **purifying the sanctuary**, the people were gathered outside **afflicting their souls** (Leviticus 16:29, 30, 23:27).
- The congregation **fasted** (Isaiah 58; Joel 2:11ff).
- The congregation was to **abstain from work** (Leviticus 16:29, 30; 23:28).
- Leviticus 23 explains that those who did not afflict their souls were to be **cut off** from the congregation and destroyed (Leviticus 23:28-30).
- As the high priest blotted out the sins of the people **from the sanctuary** the people were to **blot out sin from their soul** temple through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The following texts speak about the necessary preparation for the coming of Jesus:

Hebrews 12:14, 28, 29

*“Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which **no one will see the Lord**:¹⁵ looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any **root of bitterness** springing up cause trouble, and by this many become **defiled**;¹⁶ lest there be any **fornicator or profane** person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. . .*

*Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with **reverence and godly fear**.²⁹ For our God is a consuming fire.”*

I John 3:1-3

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

Matthew 5:8

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”

Titus 2:11-14

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,¹² teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,¹³ looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,¹⁴ who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”

*“Those who are **distrustful of self**, who are **humbling themselves** before God and **purifying their souls** by obeying the truth--these are receiving the heavenly mold and preparing for the seal of God in their foreheads. When the decree goes forth and the stamp is impressed, their character will remain pure and spotless for eternity. **Now is the time to prepare**. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an **impure** man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the **ambitious, world-loving** man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of **false tongues or deceitful hearts**. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God--candidates for heaven.” *The Faith I Live By*, p. 288*

*“Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have **one spot or stain** upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to **cleanse the soul temple** of every defilement. **Then** the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples. . .” *Maranatha*, p. 240*

"All who have truly **repented** of sin, and by **faith claimed** the **blood of Christ** as their atoning sacrifice, have had **pardon entered** against their names in the **books of heaven**; as they have **become partakers** of the righteousness of Christ, and their **characters are found to be in harmony** with the law of God, their sins will be **blotted out**, and they themselves will be accounted **worthy of eternal life**. The Lord declares, by the prophet Isaiah: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Isaiah 43:25." GC, p. 483

"Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to **become perfect in Christ**. **Not even by a thought** could our Savior be brought to yield to the power of temptation. Satan finds in human hearts some point where he can gain a foothold; some sinful desire is **cherished**, by means of which his temptations assert their power. But Christ declared of Himself: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." John 14:30. Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father's commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his advantage. **This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble.**" GC, p. 623

"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 investigative 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." GC, p.425

How can the life be cleansed from sin?

Ephesians 5:25-27

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish."

Psalm 119:9-11

"How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. ¹⁰ With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! ¹¹ Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You."

II Corinthians 3:18

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Once the conditions are met by God's people, there will be another outpouring of the Holy Spirit for them to preach to others. After the sins of God's people have been blotted out God's people will receive the refreshing and preach the Loud Cry to others with power

When God's remnant people are totally emptied of self God will blot out their sins from the sanctuary and pour upon them the Holy Spirit without measure (the times of refreshing). God's people will then proclaim God's final message to those who are in Babylon—Protestants, Catholics and worldlings.

This message is found in **Revelation 18:1-4**: God's remnant people will proclaim this message to the world inviting people to abandon their affiliation with the three parts of Babylon (Revelation 16:19) and exhorting them to join the remnant in proclaiming the final message to others.

"After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury." And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities."

Revelation 18:1-4 describes a global message that is proclaimed with unlimited power. This global message will be the earthly announcement of a heavenly event. When the door of probation is **about to close** the world will be **invited to enter the most holy place for the last time** and when the door is finally shut, the solemn words of **Revelation 22:11** will be uttered by God.

Revelation 18:1-5 describes the time when the work of Jesus is **about to conclude**. The **Holy Spirit** will be poured out without measure and the message of the third angel will be proclaimed with **unlimited power to the world**. The message will be **first proclaimed by God's remnant** people whose sins have been blotted out but as others join the movement from Babylon they will also receive the latter rain and proclaim the message to others.

In other words the same thing will happen as at Pentecost. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the remnant in the Upper Room and they proclaimed the message with

power to others. Their **converts then joined** the movement and also announced to others what Jesus was **doing in the holy place**.

The same will happen in the future judgment of the living. The Holy Spirit will be poured out upon the remnant and they will invite the people in Babylon to **enter the most holy place**. There they will see the **distinctive doctrines** of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They will confess their sins and will **gain the victory** over them and God will **blot out their sins** from the sanctuary and they will **receive the seal of God** (Revelation 7:1, 2) Those who refuse to enter the most holy place will receive the mark of the beast.

Preaching to Two Groups

The sealed remnant at the end shall **preach to two groups**: Sincere souls in the **Christian churches** who do not know our message and have not rejected it and also to the **secular or unchurched** who have never heard the message.

We will invite them to **follow Jesus** into the [1] encampment, [2] the court, [3] the holy place and [4] the most holy place. They will then **join God's remnant people** to proclaim these truths to others. Thus the message will go to the **whole world**.

Jesus said in the **book of Acts**: *"You will receive power to be My witnesses."* In Revelation 18 a mighty angel descends from heaven having **great power** and the **whole world is filled** with his glory. Pentecost **began the harvest** and the **latter rain will conclude it**.

When the message is ended all the inhabitants of the earth will either be **grapes** (the wicked) or **harvest** (the righteous). All will have received the **mark of the beast** or the **seal of God**. The angels will then release the winds of strife and the time of trouble will ensue followed by the second coming of Jesus to deliver His people.

Catching up to Jesus

This time God's people will **fully comprehend** the prophecies. They will have **caught up to Jesus**. They will have **repented** of and **confessed, trusted in Jesus** and **overcome every sin** and they will have the **power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim** with power what Jesus the final work that Jesus is performing in the most holy place.

We also have the great commission that is found in **Revelation 14:6, 7**. The apostles were given the great commission in **Matthew 28:18-20**; Acts 1 and Mark 16. The central focus of their message was the **forgiveness or remission of sins** by **placing them in the sanctuary** through the blood that Jesus had just shed on the cross. This was the **present truth for their day**. There was **no message of judgment** but rather a message of **forgiveness and purification of the sinner from the guilt of sin**. Preaching about the most holy place message would not have been related to what Jesus was doing at that moment.

But at the **end of human history** God's remnant church will receive the **latter rain** and they will proclaim to the world what **Jesus is doing in the most holy place**. God's people will announce that Jesus is in the **process of judging the living**, that sin must be **cleansed from the soul temple** while Jesus is cleansing the record of sin in the sanctuary so that God's people can receive the **times of refreshing** to empower them to **preach the message with power** to the world so that Jesus can come.

Preaching merely the message of the **court** and the **holy place** would **not be present truth** because it would not be related to what Jesus is doing at the moment. We must direct the attention of people to the message of the most holy place. We must say to them: Jesus is **at the point of closing His great laundry** and if you don't **send your clothes to him now**, they will forever **remain dirty** because you will **no longer have an intercessor**. This will be a message of victory over sin.

Ellen White describes the preaching of this powerful message:

"Now the rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number take their stand upon the Lord's side." GC, p. 612.2

"The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. The prophecies which were fulfilled in the outpouring of the former rain at the opening of the gospel are again to be fulfilled in the latter rain at its close. Here are "the times of refreshing" to which the apostle Peter looked forward when he said: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus." Acts 3:19, 20.

"Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works, with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand. GC, pp. 611, 612

Few Great Men

*"The days are fast approaching when there will be great perplexity and confusion. Satan, clothed in angel robes, will deceive, if possible, the very elect. There will be gods many and lords many. Every wind of doctrine will be blowing. Those who have rendered supreme homage to "science falsely so called" will not be the leaders then. Those who have trusted to intellect, genius, or talent will not then stand at the head of rank and file. They did not keep pace with the light. Those who have proved themselves unfaithful will not then be entrusted with the flock. In the last solemn work **few great men will be engaged**. They are **self-sufficient, independent of God**, and He cannot use them" 5T, p. 80*

No Disappointment

The remnant of God will **finally catch up** to Jesus and follow Him in His **final work of atonement**. They will fully comprehend the message and will not go through any disappointment. After the close of probation there will **no longer be any opportunity to catch up to Jesus** but a small remnant will **enter** with Jesus, **overcome** sin, have their **sins blotted out**, receive the **latter rain**, be **sealed**, **preach** the message with power and **be ready** when the door of probation closes.

Rejection of the Message

The **religious organizations** of the day will arise against the message and will become the **habitation of demons**.

“As the controversy extends into new fields and the minds of the people are called to God's downtrodden law, Satan is astir. The power attending the message will only madden those who oppose it. The clergy will put forth almost superhuman efforts to shut away the light lest it should shine upon their flocks. By every means at their command they will endeavor to suppress the discussion of these vital questions. The church appeals to the strong arm of civil power, and, in this work, papists and Protestants unite.” GC, p. 607

As a result Babylon will **overflow with demons** and will fully become the **synagogue of Satan** (**Revelation 18:2, 3**)

The door of probation will close and the people of God will be **ready for the time of trouble**. They will have caught up to Jesus and **experienced the most holy place** work of Jesus.

When Jesus finishes His work the awesome words of **Revelation 22:11** will be spoken.

Leviticus 16:20-23: Jesus will cleanse the sanctuary in **three stages**. First He will cleanse those who entered the **most holy place** with him. Second He will cleanse the sincere souls who are in the **holy place** because they did not have the opportunity of knowing that Jesus had moved in the most holy place. Finally Jesus will cleanse the **court** where those are found who did not know the message of salvation through Jesus.



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