

the REFORMATION *herald*

Vol. 57, No. 1



The Purifying of God's Remnant Church / The Outpouring of the Latter Rain

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Volume 57, Number 1

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"The age in which we live calls for reformatory action."

—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 488.

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Know Yourself

“Know Yourself” was the main motto of the illustrious teacher, Socrates, in guiding his students. But more importantly, the Heaven-inspired apostle Paul tells us something similar—that we need to examine ourselves to see if we are truly abiding in the faith of Christ. He bids us, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (2 Corinthians 13:5). As we consider this matter, we come to the conclusion that knowing ourselves is quite essential to life—and above all, to our eternal salvation.

There are two ways to examine ourselves. One is the method of the Pharisees. Why did they consider themselves to be good and righteous people? Because they compared themselves among themselves. The worse the people were with whom they compared themselves, the better the Pharisees felt. This is a very dangerous method. Paul wrote to the Corinthians brethren: “We dare not

make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise” (2 Corinthians 10:12).

The second method—and the only safe way—to know ourselves is by knowing God and Christ. Jesus prayed to His Father in our behalf: “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

“[John 17:3 quoted.] These words mean much. It is only by knowing Christ that we can know God. The Sent of God calls upon all to listen to these words. They are the words of God, and all should give heed to them; for by them they will be judged. To know Christ savingly is to be vitalized by spiritual knowledge, to practice His words. Without this, all else is valueless.”¹

Only by knowing Christ through the prayerful study of His Word—and obeying it—can we really know ourselves.

This results in a clear diagnosis of our sinful condition and a realization of our need of a Saviour. It helps us to love God and our neighbors as ourselves. Our self-exaltation then melts into the dust. This will lead us to submit our whole life to Jesus as our only hope of salvation and as our only true Pattern.

Writing to the Hebrew believers, Paul urges us to be “looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down as the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Hebrews 12:2, 3).

The apostle doesn’t say that just one look to Christ is enough. We need to keep looking to Him. As we do that, we learn to know our sinful condition, but we do not become discouraged because we consider His love for us, and we are transformed by this constant looking.

“We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

“The sense of unworthiness will lead the heart to hunger and thirst for righteousness, and this desire will not be disappointed. Those who make room in their hearts for Jesus will realize His love. All who long to bear the likeness of the character of God shall be satisfied. The Holy Spirit never leaves unassisted the soul who is looking unto Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto him. If the eye is kept fixed on Christ, the work of the Spirit ceases not until the soul is conformed to His image. The pure element of love will expand the soul, giving it a capacity for higher attainments, for increased knowledge of heavenly things, so that it will not rest short of the fullness. ‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled’ (Matthew 5:6).”²

Knowing the Father through Christ, knowing Christ through His Word, we can know ourselves and find full salvation in the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29)—especially our own sins. To Him be the glory!

References

- ¹ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, pp. 1145, 1146.
- ² *The Desire of Ages*, p. 302.



“Prisoners of *Hope*”

By D. P. Silva

After spending 70 years under Babylonian captivity as prophesied by Jeremiah, only a small remnant of about 50,000 people undertook the difficult journey back to Jerusalem. The city was devastated, the walls were broken down, and the people were surrounded by bitter enemies through whom Satan tried to hinder the restoration of the worship of the true God. Because Israel was the only people who represented the principles of heaven, Satan didn't spare his devilish schemes to discourage and even destroy them.

God sent two main prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to encourage the people with the assurance that God was with them and would strengthen them to rebuild the walls, the temple, and the city.

Most of the Israelites preferred to stay in Babylon, where they had built comfortable houses instead of making the dangerous and difficult trip to a city in ruins.

The first divine appeal by the prophet to the people was: “Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you” (Zechariah 1:3). When the prophet asked the Lord: “How long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? And the Lord answered . . . with good words and comfortable words” (verses 12, 13).

And the Lord added: “I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem” (verse 16).

Our Lord is a God of love, grace and mercy, and full of compassion. In spite of the rebellion of His people Israel, He bore with them for a long time. He was more than willing to guide, save, and protect them as long as they were willing to accept His instructions. The prophet revealed the great interest of God in their prosperity with these words: “He who toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye” (Zechariah 2:8).

Zechariah had a very comforting vision in which he saw the high priest Joshua making intercession for his people before Jesus (the Angel of the everlasting covenant). In this vision, Satan was accusing God's people and Joshua of sin and was asking the Lord permission to destroy His disobedient children.

“Joshua was clothed with filthy garments” (Zechariah 3:3),

representing his people before the Lord. He couldn't deny the accusations of Satan, but he presented their repentance and faith in the Redeemer.

Zechariah represented both Joshua and the people as being justified by faith in the promised Messiah, and the Lord gave him the assurance of sins forgiven with these beautiful words: "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment" (verse 4).

After that the Lord promised His people power from above to make them able to perform the necessary work of reformation: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6) with the additional assurance that "the hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it" (verse 9).

Another divine appeal was presented to the people, instructing them how to deal with their fellow brothers and sisters: "Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart" (Zechariah 7:9, 10).

"These are the things that ye shall do: Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: and let none imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord" (Zechariah 8:16, 17).

The Lord also promised the coming of the Messiah, Jesus, to restore His children to the favor of the Lord through a perfect life and death as a supreme sacrifice. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zechariah 9:9).

Christ would fulfill the everlasting covenant. Through His sacrifice on the cross, He would redeem His

This inspired expression, "prisoners of hope," gives the idea of a people who will not give up. Hope is part of their life.

people from the pit of despair to place them on a higher spiritual level before heaven. "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" (Verse 11).

Based on the virtue of the covenant of grace, God invited His people to Himself with these beautiful words: "Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto thee" (Verse 12).

This inspired expression, "prisoners of hope," gives the idea of a people who will not give up. Hope is part of their life. And the Lord addresses this small remnant with encouraging words: "Turn you to the stronghold." Then our hope is established on a very strong foundation. For sure, Christ is our stronghold.

The psalmist expresses his trust in the Lord, saying: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea" (Psalm 46:1, 2).

Micah applied this title to Christ, when he said: "And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem" (4:8).

Nahum used different words to say the same truth about Christ: "The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him" (1:7). Notice this inspired thought: Christ is a stronghold for those who trust in Him.

When are we protected within the stronghold of the Lord? When we totally surrender our life to Christ.

"When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. But unless we do yield ourselves to the control of Christ, we shall be dominated by the wicked one. We must inevitably be under the control of the one or the other of the two great powers that are contending for the supremacy of the world. It is not necessary for us deliberately to choose the service of the kingdom of darkness in order to come under its dominion. We have only to neglect to ally ourselves with the kingdom of light. If we do not co-operate with the heavenly agencies, Satan will take possession of the heart and will make it his abiding place. The only defense against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness. Unless we become vitally connected with God, we can never resist the unhallowed effects of self-love, self-indulgence, and temptation to sin. We may leave off many bad habits, for the time we may part company with Satan; but without a vital connection with God, through the surrender of ourselves to Him moment by moment, we shall be overcome. Without a personal acquaintance with Christ, and a continual communion, we are at the mercy of the enemy, and shall do his bidding in the end."¹

In this wonderful quotation, we find very important and comforting

*When we give back our life to Christ,
we enter into an impregnable stronghold which
the enemy cannot enter.*

truths. When we give back our life to Christ, we enter into an impregnable stronghold which the enemy cannot enter, because Christ is much more powerful than the enemy. The converted soul itself becomes a fortress under the control of the Holy Spirit. We can be kept in the stronghold by faith in Christ and vital connection with God through prayer and obedience to His word. This surrender is not an isolated incident but a continuous relationship with the Lord. Any time we neglect this vital connection we will be in trouble, becoming an easy prey for the enemy.

From slaves of sin to servants of Christ

There are millions of people who are prisoners of the enemy, slaves to sin and vice, and “having no hope, and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). In the following verse, Paul presents a very different picture: “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off made nigh by the blood of Christ” (verse 13).

“Christ became the sinless sacrifice for a guilty race, making men prisoners of hope, so that, through repentance toward God because they had broken His holy law, and through faith in Christ as their substitute, surety, and righteousness, they might be brought back to loyalty to God and to obedience to His holy law.”²

We shouldn’t selfishly keep this hope only to ourselves. As soon as we have received this hope, we need to take it to those who are in despair.

“The members of the church need now to confess their backslidings and press together. My brethren, allow nothing to come in that will separate you from one another or from God. Talk not of differences of opinion,

but unite in the love of the truth as it is in Jesus. Come before God, and plead the shed blood of the Saviour as a reason why you should receive help in the warfare against evil. You will not plead in vain. As you draw near to God, with heartfelt contrition and in full assurance of faith, the enemy who seeks to destroy you will be overcome.

“Turn to the Lord, ye prisoners of hope. Seek strength from God, the living God. Show an unwavering, humble faith in His power and His willingness to save. From Christ is flowing the living stream of salvation. He is the Fountain of life, the Source of all power. When in faith we take hold of His strength, He will change, wonderfully change, the most hopeless, discouraging outlook. He will do this for the glory of His name.

“God calls upon His faithful ones, who believe in Him, to talk courage to those who are unbelieving and hopeless. May the Lord help us to help one another and to prove Him by living faith.”³

The Blessed Hope

Writing to Titus, Paul talks about “that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (2:13, 14).

The second coming of Christ is “our blessed hope,” the climax of the plan of redemption. All our hopes will be fulfilled when our Saviour and Lord will appear in the clouds of heaven to take His people to the heavenly abode.

“Jesus is soon coming; and it is for us who believe this solemn truth to give the warning to the world.

We should show by our dress, our conversation, and our actions, that our minds are fixed on something better than the business and pleasures of this short life. We are but pilgrims and strangers here, and should give some evidence that we are ready and waiting for the appearing of our divine Lord. Let the world see that you are journeying from this to a better land, dear reader—to an immortal inheritance that passeth not away; that you cannot afford to devote your life to the things of this world, but that your concern is to prepare for the home that awaits you in the kingdom of God.

“How shall we make this preparation? It is by bringing our appetites and passions into subjection to the will of God and showing in our lives the fruits of holiness. We must deal justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before God. We must let Christ into our hearts and homes. We must cultivate love, sympathy, and true courtesy one to another. Our happiness depends upon our taking this course. The reason that there are so many hard-hearted men and women in the world is that generous affection has been regarded as weakness and has been discouraged and repressed. If we would have tender hearts, such as Jesus had when He was upon the earth, and sanctified sympathy, such as the angels have for erring mortals, we must cultivate the simple, unaffected affections of childhood. Then we shall be directed by heavenly principles, which are refining and elevating in their tendency.

“Our lives should be consecrated to the good and happiness of others, as was our Saviour’s. This is the joy of angels, and the work in which they are ever engaged. The spirit of Christ’s self-sacrificing love is the spirit that pervades heaven and is the source of its blessedness. And it must be our spirit, if we would be fitted to join the society of the angelic host. In proportion as the love of Christ fills our hearts and controls our lives, selfishness and love of ease will be overcome; it will be our pleasure to



minister to others, and to do the will of our Lord, whom we hope soon to see.”⁴

There is a very interesting parallel between the remnant of Israel in the time of Zechariah, and the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement. Few in number, with a faith that separates us from the world, without worldly power, we depend only on the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill our prophetic task to be used by the Lord to finish His worldwide plan.

The author of Revelation, foreseeing the true remnant, wrote: “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” (Revelation 12:17).

“Zechariah’s vision of Joshua and the Angel applies with peculiar force to the experience of God’s people in the closing scenes of the great day of atonement. The remnant church will then be brought into great trial and distress. Those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus will feel the ire of the dragon and his hosts. Satan numbers the world as his subjects; he has gained control even of many professing Christians. But here is a little company who are resisting his supremacy. If he could blot them from the earth, his triumph would be complete. As he influenced the heathen nations to destroy Israel, so

in the near future he will stir up the wicked powers of earth to destroy the people of God. Men will be required to render obedience to human edicts in violation of the divine law.

“Those who are true to God will be menaced, denounced, proscribed. They will be ‘betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends,’ even unto death. (Luke 21:16). Their only hope is in the mercy of God; their only defense will be prayer. As Joshua pleaded before the Angel, so the remnant church, with brokenness of heart and unfaltering faith, will plead for pardon and deliverance through Jesus, their Advocate. They are fully conscious of the sinfulness of their lives, they see their weakness and unworthiness; and they are ready to despair. . . .

“As the people of God afflict their souls before Him, pleading for purity of heart, the command is given, ‘Take away the filthy garments,’ and the encouraging words are spoken, ‘Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment’ (Zechariah 3:4). The spotless robe of Christ’s righteousness is placed upon the tried, tempted, faithful children of God. The despised remnant are clothed in glorious apparel, nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions of the world. Their names are retained in the Lamb’s book of life, enrolled among the faithful of all ages. They have resisted the wiles of the deceiver;

they have not been turned from their loyalty by the dragon’s roar. Now they are eternally secure from the tempter’s devices. Their sins are transferred to the originator of sin. A ‘fair miter’ is set upon their heads.”⁵

“We must behold Christ. It is ignorance of Him that makes men so uplifted in their own righteousness. When we contemplate His purity and excellence, we shall see our own weakness and poverty and defects as they really are. We shall see ourselves lost and hopeless, clad in garments of self-righteousness, like every other sinner. We shall see that if we are ever saved, it will not be through our own goodness, but through God’s infinite grace.”⁶

“Clad in the armor of Christ’s righteousness, the church is to enter upon her final conflict. ‘Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners’ (Song of Solomon 6:10), she is to go forth into all the world, conquering and to conquer.”⁷

Are you, dear reader, a prisoner of hope? Let us go to our stronghold, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. While we remain in Him, Satan has no power to separate us from our divine safety.

References

- ¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 324.
- ² *Reflecting Christ*, p. 53.
- ³ *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 11, 12.
- ⁴ *The Signs of the Times*, November 10, 1887.
- ⁵ *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 587, 588, 591.
- ⁶ *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 159.
- ⁷ *Prophets and Kings*, p. 725.

An artistic illustration of three crosses standing on a dark, rocky hill. The sky is a mix of deep blues, purples, and oranges, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The lighting is dramatic, with rays of light emanating from behind the crosses. The overall mood is solemn and contemplative.

The Greatest COMMANDMENT

By G. Bendezu


During His earthly ministry, our Lord Jesus was subject to many critical questions. These questions were constantly put to Him by both sincere souls earnestly seeking truth and by bigoted men with malicious purposes, intending to trick Him into His own disgrace. However and whichever was the source, our Saviour always provided the necessary response, a response suited to the occasion and especially to the one asking. The light He provided on these occasions is still to be considered, contemplated on, and discussed today. One of the most

famous of these occasions is found in Matthew 22 and Mark 12.

“Then one of [the Pharisees], which was a lawyer, asked [Jesus] a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” (Matthew 22:35, 36).

Though it was asked with malicious intent, the question was and still is a critical one, “Which is the great commandment?” To understand better the question, let us consider the context. It helps to realize that in that particular time and setting, giving the appearance of a supposed

implication of ecclesiastical or theological truth meant everything for those involved in these verses. In fact, the Jewish historian Josephus records that during the time of Jesus’ ministry, the Pharisees would often gather in public places to engage in back-and-forth debates in order to exalt individual knowledge. In such a way they would spend whole days, often discussing, for example, the traditionally accepted 613 laws in the books of Moses and how they should be implemented, or arguing over such matters as divorce and remarriage, hand washing, the purpose of the



And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Verses 37–40).

We modern-day Israelites, with the inclusion of some Pharisees as was the case in Matthew 22, may also ask that question. It would be something like, **WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO DO IN THIS LIFE?**

As the title of this article reads, there is one "Greatest Commandment," and as you read in the previous-to-last paragraph, Jesus provided a straightly strong and clear answer about it, splitting it up into two basic commandments, love for God and likewise for our neighbor. In this article we will look at what Christ declared to be the "first commandment"—love for God. In this passage of the Gospel of Matthew the word "first," translated from the original Greek, means chief or having foremost importance.

Let us examine this fundamental point within the entire law of God.

He loved us first

In order to love God we must first understand His nature, and His Being. When we study of Him in the scriptures we learn of how He, in His essence, is defined—by everlasting, infinite, unconditional grace for us, and grace translates into LOVE. From the beginning of our human history, we have been privileged to live and to have an opportunity to reconcile with God. Our entire existence is based on a plan of grace, designed by God, and completed by our Lord Jesus Christ. Here are some verses to consider:

"God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)" (Ephesians 2:4, 5).

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that

whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Understanding that God loved us first is the key. We must learn and accept that God, from even before we were born, loved us in such a way that is beyond our understanding. Once we have understood this we will be filled with a passionate feeling of gratitude for Him, knowing that He would defend and love us even when we were in rebellion against Him. With this comprehension we will also love Him. Once we have developed this sentiment we will feel the impulse to want to demonstrate and prove our love for Him through obedience. There is a short story which can illustrate this.

Sometime in the early 19th century, when the practice of slavery was at its peak in the United States, a noble man went down to his local town square for the weekly auctioning of slaves. He heard "Sold!" just as he joined the crowd. A strong young man was taken away by his new owner. Next up was a young girl that seemed rather angry, despaired, and helpless. She was pushed up onto the platform; immediately the bidding began. Within a minute, the bids had surpassed what most slave owners at that time would have paid for a slave girl. Finally, when the price had reached what seemed to be the top, the auctioneer called out, "Going once! Going twice!" and just before the final call, the noble man yelled out a price that was exactly twice as much as the amount of the previous bid. With no one else in the crowd standing a chance against the offer made by the noble man, the young girl was finally given to him to take.

The young girl, with a long history of having been mistreated and abused, feared that the same fate awaited her with her new owner, so she was resistant to comply with him. She made herself heavy and was uncooperative to be led away by him. She had determined in her heart that she would never again in her life be at the service of anyone. "I will refuse to work for you!" She exclaimed bitterly,

Sabbath, whether Gentiles could be saved and, inevitably, the most important question of **WHICH WAS THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT.**

What is most compelling is the way in which Christ answered and summarized this question. His response was so powerful, yet so plain and simple. And this question was really an intended trap set by one of the Pharisees who stood out for being a lawyer. This is how Jesus replied:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.

When we come to an understanding of the infinite grace and love God has for us, and of the inconceivable sacrifice that He made on our behalf, we too will be moved and overcome with gratitude for Him.

"I would rather die before serving anyone ever again!" She added. At one point she even spat straight into his face and said through clenched teeth, "I hate you!" The noble man, without a word or reaction, silently reached for a handkerchief and wiped the spittle from his face, smiled at the girl, and kept leading her.

They continued until reaching a nearby office where each public deal or transaction was legally closed. In those days, if a slave was to be made free, a set of documents, called manumission papers, were first necessary. The gentleman went into the office, there he bought and signed all the official papers for manumission or liberation of the slave girl. When he came out the door of the legal office the young girl looked away distressed, thinking that she had just been officially made someone else's property. The noble man stretched out his hand and said to the young girl, "Here are your emancipation papers. You are free." She did not even bother looking up. He tried again. "Here. These are papers that say you are free. Take them." "I hate you!" the young girl responded, refusing to look up. "Why do you make fun of me?" she added. "No, listen," pleaded the noble man. "These are your freedom papers. As long as you have them no one will ever be able to make you a slave again. You are a free person." Finally the young girl took the papers and looked at them, then looked back at the man, and looked at the papers once again. Was it possible that anyone would carry out such a benevolent act on her

behalf? "You just bought me to set me free?" she asked in disbelief. "Yes," the noble man quietly answered with a smile on his face. At that moment the now-free girl began to grasp the significance of what she held in her hands, and how her life would radically change. Tears of emotion, joy, and gratitude began to stream down her face. She fell on her knees and as she wept at his feet she told him, "I owe you the rest of my life! Because you have done this for me, I WILL SERVE YOU FOREVER!"

Just as this story was, so it is also ours with the Lord. In the same manner that the young slave girl was originally resistant and insolent towards the noble man, so are we to God. However, going back to the story, once the girl understood what the man had done for her she was overwhelmed with feelings of appreciation and gratitude, and completely changed her disposition toward him. Likewise, when we come to an understanding of the infinite grace and love God has for us, and of the inconceivable sacrifice that He made on our behalf, we too will be moved and overcome with gratitude for Him. And just as the young slave girl did, we will become fully devoted, and say to the Lord: "I WILL SERVE YOU FOREVER!"

Our love for God can be manifested and shown through our actions, if they are to His honor and glory. Through love we will have a basis of strength to follow His instruction, which is found in His commandments, His law.

A premise to the commandments

If you analyze the Ten Commandments, you will notice that every one of them essentially relies on either one of these two principles—love to God or love to our neighbor, as a premise. That is why Jesus said, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." The first four commandments are based on what should be our love toward God. Let us break them down:

First Commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). Without true love for God we cannot happily go forth with this instruction when we live in a world full of other "gods," or what can also be translated as ungodly interests. Only by a superior love for God over anything else can we truly keep this commandment, the first to be written in stone.

Second Commandment: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" (Verse 4). This commandment follows the lines of the first one. It must be kept by true love to God.

Third Commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (Verse 7). This one alludes to reverence and respect. True respect can only be devoted to someone or something which you have first already loved, otherwise it would be compulsory and not genuine.

Fourth Commandment: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Verse 8). Here we are called to a commemoration for the marvelous works of creation. Only through love can we truly delight in creation and ultimately in its author, the Creator.

As we can see, in order for us to keep the commandments above we must first experience the embedding of the love of God firmly into our heart and character. Love for God is the underlying purpose for every one of the commandments, and love for God will be the sustaining foundation to our obedience to the law of God. It cannot work the other way around, learning to love God after we've

imposed methodical obedience. That is confusing the order.

Beware of confusing the order

Jesus explains: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

The Lord did not present it in the reverse order, “If you obey me, you will love me,” because it doesn’t work that way. Rote obedience does not lead to love, but true love will lead to passionate obedience. Love is the only source by which obedience can be motivated.

“As men fail to practice obedience in its simplicity, they depart from God. Plans and methods that bear the marks of man’s natural attributes are brought in to be obeyed, while the principles of truth, love to God and to man, are left out of the life. Kindness, love, and mercy are not seen in the character.”¹

But we must be aware and be very careful of a great danger—a formal obedience to God without first having love for Him would just be an empty form. It is exactly the problem into which the Pharisees fell. We may take an example from their error, in an effort not to repeat it. They lost sight of the very heart of the matter, which is the cause and purpose for following the commandments—loving God. As a result, they became hypocritical in their purely external observance of the law. Jesus rebuked them saying:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. . . . Cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also” (Matthew 23:25, 26).

Loving God begins by first accepting internal cleansing. Only then can our obedience be genuine. Without this, even though we may be able to present an outward appearance of being righteous, our obedience would be corrupted by bad motives, as the verses above reveal.

obey and serve Him; the two must go hand in hand. Jesus said: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:21).

The apostle John said: “This is love, that we walk after his commandments” (2 John 6). Just as the verse says, true love for God is the very definition of true obedience to Him. It is only genuine love for God that can naturally lead us forth into obedience for his commandments. This is why love for God is the greatest commandment.

Conclusion

The greatest commandment allows us to see and appreciate the law of God and the gospel of Christ. It says to us that we have an infinite obligation to the One who is infinite in His love and grace for us.

Christ with every instance of His life exemplified and followed the greatest commandment. By positively changing

the world for the better, He left a testament of what would result if we lived by this commandment. We, too, can choose to live by and obey the greatest commandment and fulfill the prayer of Jesus:

“Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be . . . as we are” (John 17:11).

May the Lord help us, and may we decide to be cheerful followers and partakers of the greatest commandment today! This is my earnest desire and prayer for each and every one of us.

References

- ¹ *The Signs of the Times*, February 24, 1898.
- ² *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 187.

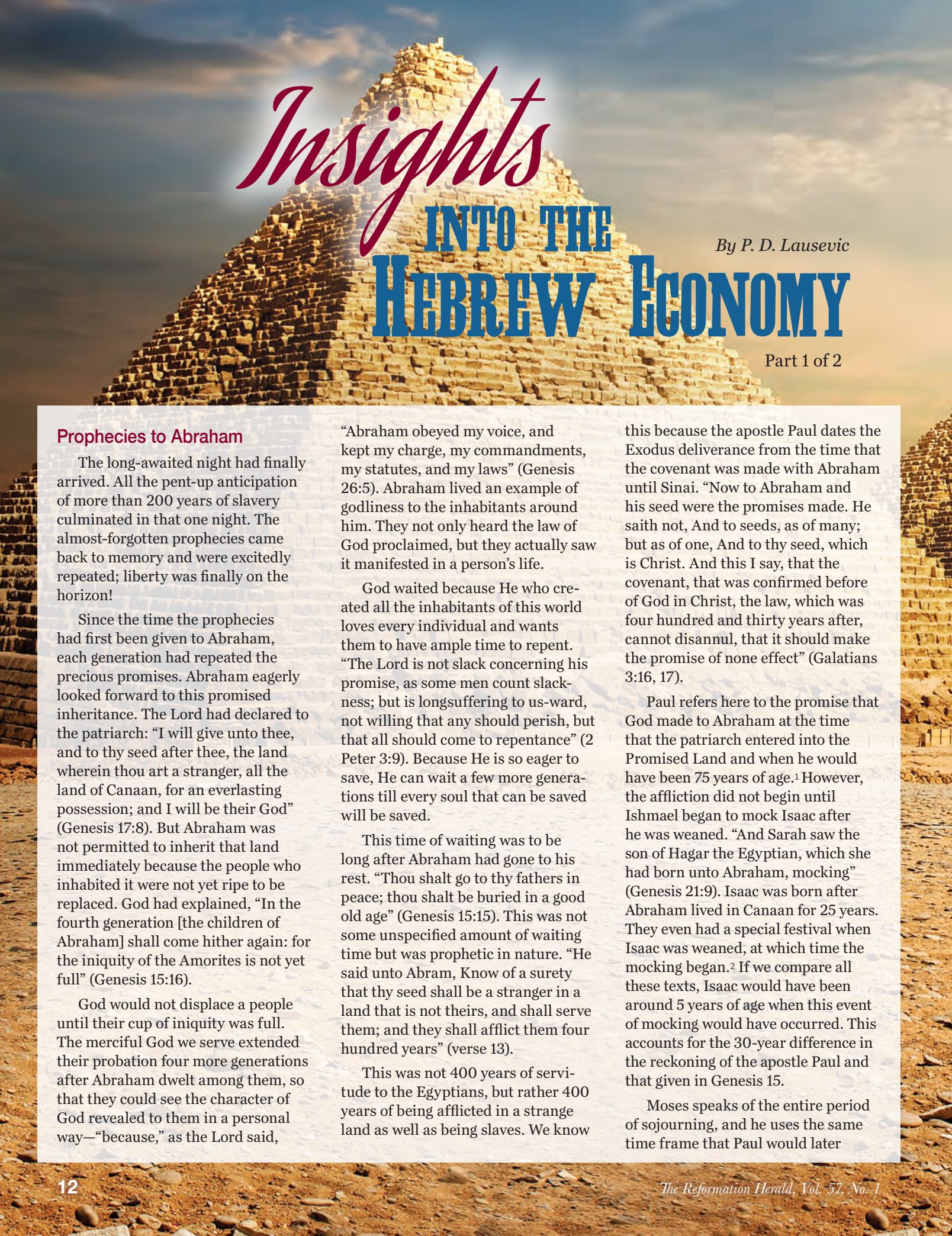


This is love, that we [follow] His commandment

God Himself gave the central commandment to love Him, along with the other commandments (Deuteronomy 6:1–25). This central command determines whether or not we are keeping His law. If we are not wholeheartedly keeping this one command, we cannot be keeping any of the other commandments, either. The Spirit of Prophecy supports this idea:

“Love for God and man alone places human beings on vantage ground with God. Obedience to the divine command enables us to become laborers together with God.”²

When we accept to love God, we will automatically feel the desire to



Insights INTO THE HEBREW ECONOMY

By P. D. Lausevic

Part 1 of 2

Prophecies to Abraham

The long-awaited night had finally arrived. All the pent-up anticipation of more than 200 years of slavery culminated in that one night. The almost-forgotten prophecies came back to memory and were excitedly repeated; liberty was finally on the horizon!

Since the time the prophecies had first been given to Abraham, each generation had repeated the precious promises. Abraham eagerly looked forward to this promised inheritance. The Lord had declared to the patriarch: “I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Genesis 17:8). But Abraham was not permitted to inherit that land immediately because the people who inhabited it were not yet ripe to be replaced. God had explained, “In the fourth generation [the children of Abraham] shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full” (Genesis 15:16).

God would not displace a people until their cup of iniquity was full. The merciful God we serve extended their probation four more generations after Abraham dwelt among them, so that they could see the character of God revealed to them in a personal way—“because,” as the Lord said,

“Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws” (Genesis 26:5). Abraham lived an example of godliness to the inhabitants around him. They not only heard the law of God proclaimed, but they actually saw it manifested in a person’s life.

God waited because He who created all the inhabitants of this world loves every individual and wants them to have ample time to repent. “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Because He is so eager to save, He can wait a few more generations till every soul that can be saved will be saved.

This time of waiting was to be long after Abraham had gone to his rest. “Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age” (Genesis 15:15). This was not some unspecified amount of waiting time but was prophetic in nature. “He said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years” (verse 13).

This was not 400 years of servitude to the Egyptians, but rather 400 years of being afflicted in a strange land as well as being slaves. We know

this because the apostle Paul dates the Exodus deliverance from the time that the covenant was made with Abraham until Sinai. “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect” (Galatians 3:16, 17).

Paul refers here to the promise that God made to Abraham at the time that the patriarch entered into the Promised Land and when he would have been 75 years of age.¹ However, the affliction did not begin until Ishmael began to mock Isaac after he was weaned. “And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking” (Genesis 21:9). Isaac was born after Abraham lived in Canaan for 25 years. They even had a special festival when Isaac was weaned, at which time the mocking began.² If we compare all these texts, Isaac would have been around 5 years of age when this event of mocking would have occurred. This accounts for the 30-year difference in the reckoning of the apostle Paul and that given in Genesis 15.

Moses speaks of the entire period of sojourning, and he uses the same time frame that Paul would later

refer to: “Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:40, 41). It was exactly to the day, at the end of this prophetic period given to Abraham, that the Hebrew nation departed from Egyptian slavery.

Passover liberation

During this liberating exodus from slavery, the Hebrew people learned the name of YHWH that had never before been used in communication with humanity. This name was used in conjunction with the Abrahamic promise as they are once again repeated. “And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers” (Exodus 6:3, 4).

You know the story of Pharaoh’s refusal to let Israel go, along with the accompanying plagues that devastated the entire slaveholding nation, including the very last plague—the destruction of the firstborn in the entire land, both of humans and of beasts. Only the Hebrews were protected along with any of the Egyptians that came within the protection of an Israelite household that had the symbol of blood on their doorposts and side posts of their homes.³ It was at this time that the Passover festival was instituted.

The Hebrews were to experience a great liberation from literal slavery—and this liberation was a symbol of the liberation from spiritual slavery to sin. To demonstrate to the Hebrews that they needed a new beginning from sin, the exodus was to be a new beginning for them as individuals and as an entire nation. As a new beginning, they were to start the calculations of their religious year based on the time they were delivered



from servitude. “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you” (Exodus 12:2). Ancient nations did not calculate time as *Before Christ* (B.C.) or *Anno Domini* (A.D.) in that period. Instead, all nations used some epic event in their national history as a point of reference. To the Israelites, this epic event was their deliverance from Egypt. The exodus marked their first month called Abib.⁴

However, deliverance did not happen on the first day of that month. A few more things were to happen before they could be free. They needed a more spiritual understanding before they could leave. They needed to understand the place of the Lamb of God in their lives. “Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house. . . . Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it” (verses 3–8).

On the 14th day of that first month they were to kill the lamb—and during that night, they were to eat that lamb because at midnight was to be the obliteration of the firstborn in every Egyptian family, followed by the deliverance of the Hebrew people. This ceremony became a law in Israel. “In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord’s passover” (Leviticus 23:5).

The Passover lamb was a symbol of the death of Christ. “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). His character was represented by a spotless lamb that was used for the sacrifice and whose life is able to give us redemption. “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18, 19).

The 14th day of Abib

The first Passover lamb was killed on the 14th day of that year so long ago and was eaten that night. That midnight all the firstborn in the land died. “It came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the

captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle.” Sometime later that night Pharaoh expelled the Hebrew host from his land. “Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said” (Exodus 12:29–31). By morning light⁵ they were on their way.

That first Passover has great significance in everything they did. Because it was their last meal in Egypt, they had to be ready for travel. They were instructed: “Thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord’s passover” (verse 11). After all the preparation, they were actually packed and ready for travel. Not only were they dressed for departure, they even had to eat standing up. “At the time of their deliverance from Egypt, the children of Israel ate the Passover supper standing, with their loins girded, and with their staves in their hands, ready for their journey. The manner in which they celebrated this ordinance harmonized with their condition; for they were about to be thrust out of the land of Egypt, and were to begin a painful and difficult journey through the wilderness.”⁶ It was only when they were in Canaan and settled in that country that they could eat it in a more relaxed position.

For that reason they remembered that night with special significance. “It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations” (verse 42). That is why the Passover service was instituted on that day.⁷

The Passover lamb was to be killed at a specific time on the 14th day. This

is made clear in the marginal reading of the King James Version and also in Young’s Literal Translation. “It hath become a charge to you, until the fourteenth day of this month, and the whole assembly of the company of Israel have slaughtered it between the evenings.” F. C. Gilbert, a London-born Jew who converted to Seventh-day Adventism, explains in his book, *Practical Lessons*, the meaning of the phrase “between the evenings”:

“The Jews believed there were two evenings, the evening of the day, the evening of the night. See Num. 28:4, margin. The first evening began at noon. One writer, on the words between the evenings, says, ‘We mean by this expression, the dark part of the day, after the noon hour.’

“When the first evening began is thus expressed by the commentator Rashi, a great authority among Jewish writers:

“From the sixth hour [twelve o’clock, see next note] and upward is called, ba-an ha-ar-ba-yim, between the evenings; because the sun inclines toward his home, which he reaches at evening.’ The thought evidently is, that the sun reaching its highest point at noon, begins to decline toward the west, in which direction it continues till sunset.’ And he continues:

“And by the language, ba-an ha-ar-ba-yim, we also understand it to be the hours between the evening of the day, and the evening of the night. The evening of the day begins with the seventh hour [that is, immediately after twelve o’clock noon], and continues till the evening of the night. And the evening of the night begins at night, or sunset.’—Rashi’s comment on Exodus 12:6. See also next note.

“From this we gather that one evening began at twelve, and the other began at six. The six hours between these two points being called between the evenings. But the word rendered ‘between’ is of itself extremely significant. It would indicate that the lamb would be killed between the time of the first evening and the time of the second evening. What would be

the hour between the first and second evening? Between twelve and six? The answer is three. And this was just the hour the Savior expired on the cross. He was crucified at the sixth hour, He died at the ninth. The Scripture was fulfilled. Jesus Christ was the paschal Lamb. Even Josephus mentions the fact that the paschal lambs were slain from the ninth to the eleventh hours; the time they began to kill them was three o’clock. See Josephus, ‘Sixth Book of Jewish Wars,’ chapter 6, paragraph 3.”⁸

From this we can see that the Passover lamb was to be killed exactly at 3:00 in the afternoon—the exact time of death for the Messiah. “And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” “And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost” (Mark 15:34, 37). The ninth hour was three o’clock⁹ according to our calculation of time, as the Jews began counting the daylight hours at sunrise or 6:00 a.m.

References

- ¹ Abraham was 75 years old when he left Haran to dwell as a stranger in the Promised Land (Genesis 12:4). It was then that the promise of the seed was given him (verses 1–3).
- ² Abraham was 86 years old when Ishmael was born (Genesis 16:16). He was 100 when Isaac was born (Genesis 21:5).
- ³ “Many of the Egyptians had been led to acknowledge the God of the Hebrews as the only true God, and these now begged to be permitted to find shelter in the homes of Israel when the destroying angel should pass through the land. They were gladly welcomed, and they pledged themselves henceforth to serve the God of Jacob and to go forth from Egypt with His people.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 279.
- ⁴ “This day came ye out in the month Abib” (Exodus 13:4).
- ⁵ “With their loins girt, with sandaled feet, and staff in hand, the people of Israel had stood, hushed, awed, yet expectant, awaiting the royal mandate that should bid them go forth. Before the morning broke, they were on their way.”—*Ibid.*, p. 281.
- ⁶ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 653.
- ⁷ Please read the context of Exodus 12:29–51, especially in light of verse 42.
- ⁸ F.C. Gilbert, *Practical Lessons*, p. 123. (PDF Version.)
- ⁹ 6:00 a.m. plus nine hours is 3:00 p.m.

THE *Purifying* OF GOD'S REMNANT CHURCH

Part 2 of 2



*A compilation from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy,
with commentary by M. B. Southwell
(Emphasis supplied throughout.)*

What does God use to test and sift His people?

1. Tested by messages

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). "God has revealed sacred and holy truths to **separate** His people from the ungodly and **purify** them unto Himself."¹

Sister White wrote: "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. . . .

"This testimony must work deep repentance; all who truly receive it will **obey** it and be **purified**."²

2. Tested by the third angel's message

"I saw that the holy Sabbath is, and will be, the separating wall between the true Israel of God and unbelievers; and that the Sabbath is the great question to unite the hearts of God's dear, waiting saints."³

3. Tested by the health message

"The work of health reform is the Lord's means for lessening suffering in our world and **for purifying His church**."⁴

4. Tested by the dress reform message

"The dress reform is treated by some with great indifference and by others with contempt, because there is a cross attached to it. For this cross I thank God. It is just what we need

to distinguish and separate God's commandment-keeping people from the world. The dress reform answers to us as did the ribbon of blue to ancient Israel."⁵

5. Tested by trials

"God has shown me that He gave His people a **bitter cup** to drink, **to purify and cleanse them**."⁶

"I was pointed to the providence of God among His people and was shown that **every trial made** by the **refining, purifying** process upon professed Christians proves **some to be dross**. The fine gold does not always appear. In every religious crisis some fall under temptation. The **shaking of God blows away multitudes like dry leaves**. Prosperity multiplies a mass of professors. **Adversity purges** them out of the church. As a class, their spirits are not steadfast with



God. **They go out** from us because they are not of us; for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, **many are offended.**⁷

“As the storm approaches, a **large class** who have professed faith in the third angel’s message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, **abandon their position** and join the ranks of the opposition. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have **come** to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. **They become** the most bitter enemies of their **former brethren.**”⁸

It was written in 1882: “Soon God’s people will be tested by **fiery trials**, and the **great proportion** of those who now appear to be genuine and true will prove to be **base metal**. . . . 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. The nation will be on the side of the great rebel leader.”⁹

Sister White wrote in 1888: “As **trials** thicken around us, both **separation** and **unity** will be seen in our ranks. Some who are now ready to take up weapons of warfare will in times of real peril make it manifest that they have not built upon the solid rock; they will yield to temptation. Those who have had great light and precious privileges, but have not improved them, will, under one pretext or another, **go out from us**. . . . When the **storm of persecution** really breaks upon us, the true sheep will hear the true Shepherd’s voice. Self-denying efforts will be put forth to save the lost, and many who have **strayed** from the fold will come back to **follow the great Shepherd**. The **people of God will draw together and present to the enemy a united front.**”¹⁰

Trials identified

Just before World War I, Sister White wrote in 1909: “Fearful tests and trials await the people of God. The **spirit of war** is stirring the nations from one end of the earth to the other.”¹¹ And in 1913, “I see a crisis

before us, and the Lord calls for His laborers to **come into line.**”¹² “I have been deeply impressed by scenes that have recently passed before me in the night season. There seemed to be a great **movement**—a work of revival—going forward in many places. Our people were **moving into line.**”¹³ (Remember the statement quoted above from *The Great Controversy*, p. 608, describing how, as the storm approaches, a large class of Seventh-day Adventists abandon their position.)

“A new life is coming from heaven and taking possession of all God’s people. But divisions will come in the church. Two parties will be developed.”¹⁴

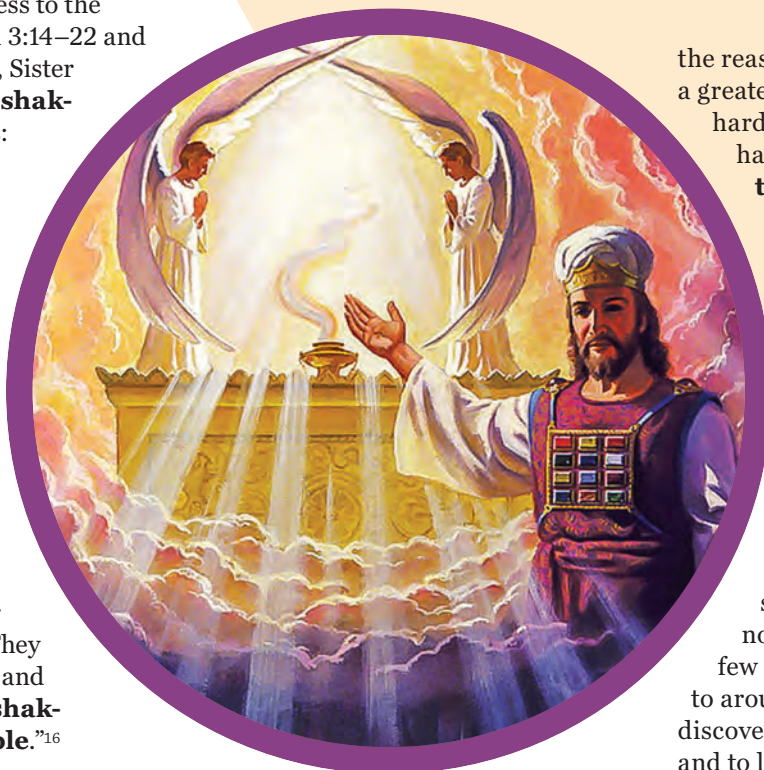
In an article written in 1907, Sister White warned against the spirit of ecumenism and compromise as described in Isaiah’s references to confederacies: “In this representation of the prophet, we see that Satan is at work not only with worldlings, who have not the fear and love of God before them, but also with those who profess faith in Christ. Here are plainly represented two distinct parties, formed from a company **that was once united**. The members of **one** of these parties are in resistance



to the will of God. They have taken themselves from the side of the loyal and true, and are **now resisting the warnings of the Spirit of God**. To the obedient the Lord will be 'for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem' (Isaiah 8:14).¹⁵

Tested by the 1888 message

God is calling us to heed the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:14–22 and 18:1–4. As quoted earlier, Sister White saw a tremendous **shaking**, explained as follows: "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**."¹⁶



What is the result when a church rejects a message from God?

"Where the message of divine truth is spurned or slighted, there the church will be enshrouded in darkness."¹⁷

Is this work of purification a quick work?

"This is an age famous for surface work, for easy methods, for boasted holiness aside from the standard of character that God has erected. All short routes, all cutoff tracks, all teaching which fails to exalt the law of God as the standard of religious character, is spurious. Perfection of

character is a lifelong work, unattainable by those who are not willing to strive for it in God's appointed way, by slow and toilsome steps."¹⁸

"Courage, fortitude, faith, and implicit trust in God's power to save do not come in a moment. These heavenly graces are acquired by the experience of years. By a life of holy endeavor and firm adherence to the right the children of God were sealing their destiny. Beset with temptations without number, they knew they must resist firmly or be conquered."¹⁹

"I was shown that the testimony to the Laodiceans applies to God's people at the present time, and

"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."

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 out Jesus. This fearful message will do its work. . . . 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 is designed to arouse the people of God, to discover to them their backslidings, and to lead to zealous repentance, that they may be favored with the presence of Jesus, and be fitted for the loud cry of the third angel. . . .

"God will prove His people. Jesus bears patiently with them and does not spew them out of His mouth in a moment. Said the angel: '**God is weighing His people**.' If the message had been of as short duration as many of us supposed, there would have been no time for them to develop character. . . .

"God leads His people on, **step by step**. He brings them up to different points calculated to manifest what is in the heart. Some endure at one point but fall off at the next. At every advanced point the heart is tested



A people who will bear the ark

“You are exhorted to touch not the unclean thing; for in touching this, you will yourself become unclean. It is impossible for you to unite with those who are corrupt and still remain pure.”²⁴

“There is a people who will bear the ark of God.”²⁵

“The present is a time of great peril to the people of God. **God is leading out a people**, not an individual here and there. He has a church on the earth **that abide in the truth**.”²⁶

“Before the destruction of Sodom, God sent a message to Lot, ‘Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed’ (Genesis 19:17). The same voice of warning was heard by the disciples of Christ before the destruction of Jerusalem: ‘When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is

and tried a little closer. . . . Those who come up to **every point**, and stand **every test**, and **overcome**, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and **they will receive the latter rain**, and thus be fitted for translation.”²⁰

“The mighty shaking has commenced and will go on.”²¹

Shaking — sealing — latter rain

“Said the angel, ‘Look ye!’ My attention was then turned to the company I had seen, who were **mightily shaken**. I was shown those whom I had before seen weeping and praying in agony of spirit. The company of guardian angels around them had been doubled, and they were clothed with an armor from their head to their feet. **They moved in exact order**, like a company of soldiers. Their countenances expressed the severe conflict which they had endured, the agonizing struggle they

had passed through. Yet their features, marked with severe internal anguish, now shone with the light and glory of heaven. **They had obtained the victory**, and it called forth from them the deepest gratitude and holy, sacred joy.”²²

“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**. . . . But the light will shine, and all who are honest will leave the fallen churches, and **take their stand with the remnant**.”²³



nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains' (Luke 21:20, 21). They must not tarry to secure anything from their possessions but must make the most of the opportunity to escape.

"There was a **coming out, a decided separation** from the wicked, an escape for life. So it was in the days of Noah; so with Lot; so with the disciples prior to the destruction of Jerusalem; and **so it will be in the last days**. Again the voice of God is heard in a message of warning, bidding His people **separate themselves** from the prevailing iniquity.

"The state of corruption and apostasy that in the last days would exist in the **religious world** was presented to the prophet John in the vision of Babylon, 'that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth' (Revelation 17:18). Before its destruction the call is to be given from heaven, 'Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues' (Revelation 18:4). As in the days of Noah and Lot, there must be a **marked separation from sin and sinners.**"²⁷

Summary

Jesus said in John 4:34, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." The work on earth will soon come to an end, and Jesus will return to this corrupt, polluted world and claim His purified, unified church "not having spot, or wrinkle" (Ephesians 5:27). To accomplish this cleansing, He sends messages and trials.

As we look back to the phase of the Sardis church (the Protestant movement), we see Jesus sending the first angel's message that shook the Protestant world and separated about 50,000 or more souls who were known as Millerites. Hence the message, "Babylon is fallen."

To these souls, who then constituted the Philadelphia church, Jesus said He would make of the synagogue of Satan those who

"God has given the message time to do its work. The heart must be purified from sins which have so long shut out Jesus. This fearful message will do its work."

said they were Jews and were not (Revelation 3:9; *Early Writings*, p. 15). This I believe depicts the separation of the tares from the wheat during the Laodicean period.

The bitter disappointment of 1844 purged the Millerite (Philadelphia) movement.

Understanding the sanctuary doctrine with the help of the Spirit of Prophecy gave rise to the Seventh-day Adventist reformatory movement (Laodicean period). This movement had to be purged by messages and trials:

1. the health reform message.
2. the dress reform message.
3. the message of the True Witness to the Laodiceans; the 1888 message of Christ and His righteousness, beginning the work of the fourth angel of Revelation 18:1-4.

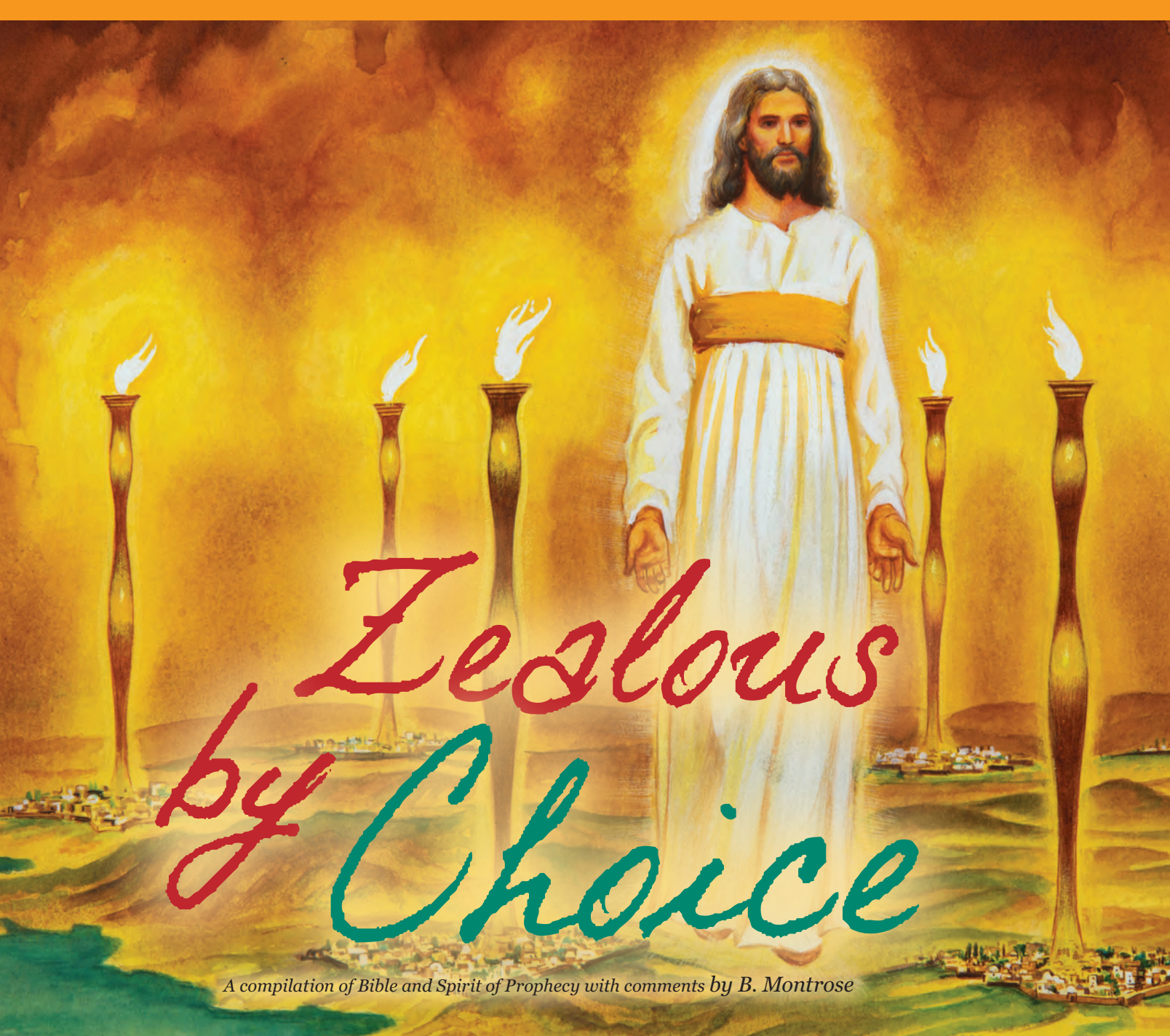
Two distinct classes were prophesied to come into existence from within the Advent movement. One class, which included the majority of Seventh-day Adventists, would eventually join the ranks of the opposition (the world). Meanwhile, the small class would cling to Jesus (truth) and be led out from the world.²⁸ The trials on the commandments of God vs. the commandments of men came first to the Advent movement by the Civil War in the United States. The church was victorious during that particular trial, but when global war broke out in 1914, the majority of Seventh-day Adventists went the way of the world.

"In the choice of instrumentalities for the reforming of the church,

the same divine plan is seen as in that for the planting of the church. The heavenly Teacher passed by the great men of the earth, the titled and wealthy, who were accustomed to receive praise and homage as leaders of the people. They were so proud and self-confident in their boasted superiority that they could not be molded to sympathize with their fellow men and to become colaborers with the humble Man of Nazareth. To the unlearned, toiling fishermen of Galilee was the call addressed: 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men' (Matthew 4:19)."²⁹

References

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- ² *Early Writings*, p. 270.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 33.
- ⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 112, 113.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 171.
- ⁶ *Early Writings*, p. 47.
- ⁷ *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 89.
- ⁸ *The Great Controversy*, p. 608.
- ⁹ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 136.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, pp. 400, 401.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 17.
- ¹² *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 514.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 515.
- ¹⁴ *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 114.
- ¹⁵ *The Review and Herald*, July 18, 1907.
- ¹⁶ *Early Writings*, p. 270.
- ¹⁷ *The Great Controversy*, p. 378.
- ¹⁸ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 500.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 213.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 186, 187.
- ²¹ *Early Writings*, p. 50.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 271.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 261.
- ²⁴ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1102.
- ²⁵ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 411.
- ²⁶ *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 79.
- ²⁷ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 166, 167.
- ²⁸ See *The Great Controversy*, p. 608; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 136; *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 400; *Early Writings*, p. 271.
- ²⁹ *The Great Controversy*, p. 171.



A compilation of Bible and Spirit of Prophecy with comments by B. Montrose

When we think of fervent love for God, a key concept comes to mind: Zeal.

History has plenty of examples of misguided zeal, yet the Lord nonetheless bids us cultivate the real thing in His appeal: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:19).

To be zealous for God is a decision. We are not to wait for some catastrophe or momentous crisis to

impel us to action; we must be zealous for God because it is the right thing to do, whether we feel like it or not.

When our zeal is languishing, we are to look to Calvary. "He giveth power to the faint and to them that have no might he increaseth strength" (Isaiah 40:29).

We need not wait for zeal. We should choose it by principle, humbly remembering that "we are unprofitable servants, [doing] that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10).

The psalmist describes his zeal for the Lord and the way it was misunderstood by others. "Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel. Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are



fallen upon me. When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them” (Psalm 69:6–11).

This kind of zeal was manifested in the life of Jesus on earth when “the Jews’ passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting; and when he had made a scourge of small cords,

he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up” (John 2:13–17).

Zeal in the early church

“Paul could not labor as he had hoped, yet before the close of [his] two years’ imprisonment he was able to say, ‘My bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;’ and among those who send greetings to the Philippians, he mentions chiefly them that are of Caesar’s household.

“The zeal and fidelity of Paul and his fellow workers, no less than the faith and obedience of those converts to Christianity, under circumstances so forbidding, should be a rebuke to slothfulness and unbelief in the followers of Christ. Never let us, by our human, short-sighted judgment, limit the plans and work of God. Never let us excuse ourselves from efforts to win souls to Christ, even in the most unpromising fields. The apostle and his subordinate ministers might have argued that the servants of Nero were subjected to the fiercest temptations, surrounded by the most formidable hindrances, exposed to the most bitter opposition, and that under such circumstances it would be in vain to call them to repentance and to faith in Christ. Should they be convinced of the truth, how could they render obedience? But the gospel was presented to those souls, and there were some among them who decided to obey it at any cost. Notwithstanding the obstacles and dangers, they would walk in the light, trusting in God for opportunity to let their light shine forth to others.

“Who is placed in circumstances more unfavorable to a religious life, or required to make greater sacrifices, to encounter greater dangers, or to bring upon himself fiercer opposition,

than would follow the exchange of heathenism for Christianity by those who were in office in the court of Caesar? No man can be so situated that he cannot obey God. There is too little faith with Christians of today. They are willing to work for Christ and His cause only when they themselves can see a prospect of favorable results. Divine grace will aid the efforts of every true believer. That grace is sufficient for us under all circumstances. The Spirit of Christ will exert its renewing, perfecting power upon the character of all who will be obedient and faithful.”¹

Avoiding the error of Jehu

If the Lord ignites us to zeal, we had better not become self-righteous about it like Jehu, who boasted, “Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord” (2 Kings 10:16). Why?

“If Satan cannot keep souls bound in the ice of indifference, he will try to push them into the fire of fanaticism. When the Spirit of the Lord comes among His people, the enemy seizes his opportunity to work also upon different minds and lead them to mingle their own peculiar traits of character with the work of God. Thus there is always danger that they may allow their own spirit to mingle with the work and that unwise moves may be made. Many carry on a work of their own devising that is not prompted by God.”²

“The truth has taken hold of hearts. It is not a fitful impulse, but a true turning unto the Lord, and the perverse will of men is brought into subjection to the will of God. . . .

“If the enemy can push individuals to extremes, he is well pleased. He can thus do greater harm than if there had been no religious awakening. We know that there has never yet been a religious effort made in which Satan has not tried his best to intrude himself, and in these last days he will do this as never before. He sees that his time is short, and he will work with all deceivableness of unrighteousness to mingle errors and incorrect views with the work of God and push men into false positions.”³

Victorious zeal

“Our only sure defense against besetting sins is prayer, daily and hourly prayer. Not one day zealous and the next careless, but through watchfulness and earnestness becoming vitalized by intercourse with God. Prayer is necessary, and we should not wait for feeling, but pray, earnestly pray, whether we feel like it or not. Heaven is open to our prayers. Prayer is the channel that conducts our gratitude and yearnings of soul for the divine blessing to the throne of God, to be returned to us in refreshing showers of divine grace. With very many, this channel is allowed to freeze up, and then the connection with heaven is interrupted. . . . Oh, that we would spend more time upon our knees and less time in planning for ourselves and in thinking we may do some great thing.”⁴

How to be zealous and repent

“‘Be zealous and repent,’ is the admonition of Jesus to the Laodicean church. There is something to repent of. Worldly-mindedness, selfishness, and covetousness have been eating out their spiritual life. While they flatter themselves that they are rich, and increased with goods, and in need of nothing, Christ declares them to be ‘wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked’ (Revelation 3:17).

“Among the greatest dangers that threaten the church is the love of the world. Out of this spring the sins of selfishness and covetousness. With many, the more they get of earthly treasure, the more they set their affections on it, and still they reach out for more. . . . Many who profess to believe that we are now giving the last warning to the world are striving with all their energies to place themselves in such a position, that it would be easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye than for them to enter the kingdom.

“Satan employs every means which he can devise to overthrow the followers of Christ. With marvelous

skill and cunning he adapts his temptations to the peculiar temperament of each. Those who are naturally selfish and covetous he often tempts by throwing prosperity in their way. He knows that if they do not overcome their natural temperament, the love of mammon will cause them to stumble and fall. His object is often accomplished. When the riches of the world are offered them, many eagerly grasp the treasure and think they are wonderfully prospered. The strong love of the world soon swallows up the love of the truth. . . .

“If those who are thus prospered would lay all their possessions upon the altar of God, they might overcome their selfish, covetous spirit, and so thwart the design of Satan. Worldly wealth may be made a blessing, if rightly used. All who possess it should realize that it is lent them of God to be employed in His service. By giving freely to advance the cause of truth, and to relieve the wants of the needy, they may be the means of saving others and thus bring a blessing to their own souls here, and lay up in heaven a treasure that shall be theirs hereafter.

“The True Witness counsels, ‘Buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed’ ‘and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see’ (verse 18). The gold of faith and love, the white raiment of a spotless character, and the eyesalve, or the power of clear discernment between good and evil—all these we must obtain before we can hope to enter the kingdom of God. But these precious treasures will not drop upon us without some exertion on our part. We must buy—we must ‘be zealous and repent’ of our lukewarm state. We must be awake to see our wrongs, to search for our sins, and to put them away from us.

“Those who have set their affections upon earthly treasures have a work to do to overcome their love of the world. Many are not giving heed to the admonition of the True Witness. They desire the blessings which He offers but do not seek them

with earnestness proportionate to their value. While striving for the possessions of earth, what zeal and energy they manifest! What cool calculations they make! They plan and toil early and late, and sacrifice their ease and comfort to obtain a treasure that must soon pass away. A corresponding zeal on their part to obtain the gold, the white raiment, and the eyesalve would place them in possession of these heavenly treasures and of everlasting life in the kingdom of God.

“Jesus is saying, ‘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’ (verse 20). But many have so much rubbish piled up at the door of the heart that they cannot admit Jesus. Some have difficulties between themselves and their brethren to remove; others have evil tempers, pride, covetousness; with others, love of the world bars the entrance. All this must be taken away, before they can open the door and welcome the Saviour in.

“How precious is the promise, ‘I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me’ (verse 20). Oh, the love, the wondrous love of God! After all our lukewarmness and sins He says, Return unto Me, and I will return unto thee, and will heal all thy backslidings.

“‘To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne’ (verse 21). We can overcome. Yes; fully, entirely. Jesus died to make a way of escape for us, that we might overcome every fault, resist every temptation, and sit down at last with Him in His throne.

“It is our privilege to have faith and salvation. The power of God has not decreased. It would be just as freely bestowed now as formerly; but the church have lost their faith to claim, their energy to wrestle, as did Jacob, crying, ‘I will not let thee go, except thou bless me’ (Genesis 32:26). Enduring faith has been dying away. It must be revived in the hearts of

God's people. They must claim the blessing. Faith, living faith, always leads upward to God and glory; unbelief, downward to darkness and death.

"Many are so absorbed in their worldly cares and perplexities that they have little time to pray, and feel but little interest in prayer. They may observe the form of worship, but the spirit of true supplication is lacking. Such have departed widely from the pattern. Jesus our example was much in prayer; and oh, how earnest, how fervent were His petitions! If He, the beloved Son of God, was moved to such earnestness, such agony, in our behalf, how much more need that we, who are dependent upon heaven for all our strength, have our whole souls stirred to wrestle with God.

"We should not be satisfied until every known sin is confessed, then it is our privilege and duty to believe that God accepts us. We must not wait for others to press through the darkness and obtain the victory for us to enjoy. Such enjoyment will not be lasting. God must be served from principle instead of from feeling. Morning and evening we should obtain the victory for ourselves, in our own families. Our daily labor should not keep us from this. We must take time to pray, and as we pray, believe that God hears us. We may not at all times feel the immediate answer, but then it is that faith is tried. We are proved to see whether we will trust in God, whether we have living, abiding faith.

"'Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it' (Thessalonians 5:24). We must trust the promises of the Lord, trust God in darkness; that is the time to have faith. But many let feeling govern them. They look for worthiness in themselves when they do not feel comforted by the Spirit of God; and they despair because they cannot find it. They do not trust enough in Jesus, precious Jesus. They do not make His worthiness to be their all. The very best that we can do, we shall not merit His favor. It is the worthiness of Christ that must save us, His blood that must cleanse



us. But we have efforts to make. We must do what we can, be zealous and repent, then believe that God accepts us.

"Many measure themselves among themselves, and compare their lives with the lives of others. This should not be. No one but Christ is given us as an example. He is our true pattern, and each should strive to excel in imitating Him. . . .

"Many know little of what it is to deny self for Christ's sake. They do not study how they can best glorify God and advance His cause. But it is self, self, how can it be gratified? Such religion is worthless. In the day of God, those who possess it will be weighed in the balance and found wanting.

"The true Christian will wait to learn the will of God and watch for the leadings of His Spirit. But with many, religion is a mere form; vital godliness is lacking. They flatter themselves that they will be saved at last; but God has no pleasure in them. They are offensive in His sight. Christ now bids them, 'Be zealous and repent.' He kindly and faithfully admonishes them to seek for love, and faith, and purity. They can choose either to heed the warning, repent, and secure the blessing of the Lord, or remain in their lukewarm condition, and be rejected of God as abhorrent to Him. God will not

always bear with the backslidings of His professed people. He is long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy; yet His Spirit, long resisted, will at last be withdrawn forever. The time will come when mercy's sweet voice will no more be heard. Its last notes will have died away, and those who have slighted its pleadings will be left to their own ways. . . .

"In the time of peril before us, the professed followers of Christ will be tested. None will be able to stand but those who have had a deep and living experience in the things of God. . . .

"Many hardly know, as yet, what self-denial is, or what it is to sacrifice for the truth's sake. But none will enter heaven but by the same path of humiliation, self-sacrifice, and cross-bearing that the Saviour trod. Only those who are willing to sacrifice all for eternal life will have it; but it will be worth suffering for, worth crucifying self and sacrificing every idol for. The far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory will outweigh every earthly treasure and eclipse every earthly attraction."⁵

References

- ¹ *Sketches From the Life of Paul*, pp. 294–296.
- ² *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 38.
- ³ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 644, 645.
- ⁴ *This Day With God*, p. 277.
- ⁵ *The Review and Herald*, September 4, 1883.



Bridging the Generation gap

By A. Balbach

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: 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” (Malachi 4:5, 6).

It has been observed that in many families, parents and children have virtually become strangers to one another. Unfortunately this is true even among the people of God. Many a father and mother, having to tackle this problem in their own home, ask: What can be done about it?

Self-examination

I cannot help thinking of a father and mother who were often wondering why their sons were helpless delinquents, causing them so much shame and trouble. The basic cause, which they were unable to see, was right there in their home, in their own reproachful behavior. Those parents were not criminals in the eyes of society. They would not cause any public offense. Yet their ungodly example was an evil seed that bore poisonous fruit in the life of their sons. Parents who are blind to this cause-effect relationship may never realize that they are the first to be blamed for the loss of their children through their negative example.

The sixteen generations of Judah's kings allow us to study early childhood influences across many generations in the same family. Based on the information available in the biblical record, a strong indicator of the spiritual course of any given king was the spiritual influence of his closest family members, as that king was growing up before the age of approximately 20.

A study in sociology observed a similar tendency (although the study has been abused and misused to justify the cruel rejection of those that need the work of the gospel, hope, and redemption).

In 1874 Richard L. Dugdale visited the Ulster County Jail in New York State as a volunteer inspector for the

New York Prison Association. During the visit, Dugdale discovered that some of the inmates were related to each other. This caused Dugdale to research their family tree to discover why the relatives were in jail for unrelated crimes. He traced the family back to a Dutch immigrant, Max Keyser. Dugdale gave the name Jukes to Max, instead of Keyser, and published a paper observing that a significant number of descendants of Max Keyser were involved in crime. Dugdale was able to track down some 540 people descended by blood from the Keyser's family (Dugdale also included statistics about those who married into the Keyser family and postulates about those relatives he could not track down). Of those 540 individuals, half of all women were sexually promiscuous. Of the larger group of blood relatives and those married into the family, between 20% and 30% were living off some form of welfare. Half of the family members that learned a trade at all, learned it in prison. Sixty individuals were thieves. At the time of Dugdale's report, the sociologist estimated the cost to the government: imprisonment, health care required that the family could not afford, police work, and so on, to be about \$1.3 million (approximately \$21 million in today's dollars).¹

Here are two examples showing how juvenile minds are influenced by their parents:

In contrast, the research into the Keyser family was commissioned in part by the descendant of Jonathan Edwards, that famous preacher who lived approximately the same time as Max Keyser. Researchers inform that Jonathan Edwards had 1,394 descendants through several generations in the 17th and 18th centuries. Among the descendants of this man there were 13 college presidents, 200 ministers of the gospel, 86 state senators (including 3 congressmen) and 1 vice president of the United States), 60 prominent lawyers (including 30 judges), about 300 farmers, and a certain number of businessmen.

These statistics are in harmony with the second commandment of the

Law of God (Exodus 20:5, last part) and propose to both old and young an honest self-examination.

Mothers as educators

Mothers should learn from Jochebed, whose main concern was to educate her son, Moses. This is why we find a favorable report about him (Hebrews 11:23–26).

“[Jochebed] faithfully improved her opportunity to educate her child for God. She felt confident that he had been preserved for some great work, and she knew that he must soon be given up to his royal mother, to be surrounded with influences that would tend to lead him away from God. All this rendered her more diligent and careful in his instruction than in that of her other children. She endeavored to imbue his mind with the fear of God and the love of truth and justice, and earnestly prayed that he might be preserved from every corrupting influence. She showed him the folly and sin of idolatry, and early taught him to bow down and pray to the living God, who alone could hear him and help him in every emergency.

“She kept the boy as long as she could but was obliged to give him up when he was about twelve years old. From his humble cabin home he was taken to the royal palace, to the daughter of Pharaoh, ‘and he became her son.’ Yet even here he did not lose the impressions received in childhood. The lessons learned at his mother's side could not be forgotten. They were a shield from the pride, the infidelity, and the vice that flourished amid the splendor of the court.”²

All through the history of God's people there have been Jochebeds. The mother of George Washington was one of them. She raised her son in the fear of the Lord, with the help of the Word of God, and with much prayer. And her efforts were not in vain. Great men have attributed their accomplishments to the educational efforts of their mother.

One day Napoleon asked Madame Campan: “What is wanting so that the youth of France be well educated?”

“Good mothers,” was her reply. Forcibly struck with the wise answer, the emperor said: “Here is a system in one word. . . . Let France have good mothers, and she will have good sons.” Whenever he had a chance, he repeated what he had learned from that lady.

Louis de Beaufort, a French historian, wrote: “The future of society is in the hands of mothers.”

Remember this: Behind every great man there is, in the first place, a great mother, and, in the second place, a great father. In their homes the generational gap is practically nonexistent.

By the way, how does a woman show her greatness? Not by exhibiting her vanities in her physical appearance but by revealing her spiritual qualities in her everyday life. Her worthy character is what makes her great in the eyes of God.

“Remember Lot’s wife”

Mothers should also learn a lesson from another woman mentioned in the Bible—Lot’s wife—not as an example worthy of imitation but as a serious warning. Why did Lot lose his children? Because his was a divided home. He was a God-fearing man, but she was an irreligious woman. Through her wrong influence, they made one mistake after another. First, they separated from father Abraham and from his congregation. They drifted away from the household of God. Second, they went to live in a very dangerous place, namely, Sodom, where corruption was reaching its culmination. Third, through her negative attitude before God, she counteracted the effect of the good influence that he was trying to exert upon the daughters. Therefore, when they reached adulthood, they were unable to distinguish between right and wrong.



In many cases it’s the father that exerts the wrong influence. But what if both father and mother pull in the same direction, toward the same self-destructive end? Listen to what a young girl wrote to Ann Landers:

“My parents spoiled me rotten. They let me do anything and everything. They let me go any place with anybody. Any kid who thinks life like that is fun, is crazy. I practically raised myself and my life is a mess.”

Even among Christians there are many who are repeating the mistake of Eli. Read 1 Samuel 2:22–24; 3:13, 14.

I’m acquainted with indulgent parents who pampered their children to a point where the youngsters would generally get away with their capricious desires, their neglect of duty, their irresponsible attitude. And when they grew up, they were misfits at home, at school, at work, in their marriage, in their religious life—misfits everywhere.

A cycle of psychological changes

In many cases the thinking of a son (or daughter) about his (or her) reasonable Christian parents reveals a cycle:

At the age of 8–10 the child thinks (and reveals his or her thinking): My parents are geniuses; they know almost everything. At 15: My parents do not know too many things. In a

number of areas I am better informed than they are.

At 20–30: My dad is a blockhead and my mom is outmoded and helplessly ignorant. They know practically nothing.

At 40–50: My parents aren’t as dumb as I thought they were. Oh, no!

Their eyes were open to many things that I was unable to see. At 60:

My dad was a wise man.

My mom had a lot of common sense. They had much experience, good judgment, and intelligent solutions. I should have listened to their advice.

A warning against excessive severity

While some parents are overindulgent, others are excessively severe. The ironical proverb, “Spare the rod and spoil the child,” is often misapplied. The result: Some children, subjected to severe punishment as a routine, lose their individuality, their personality, their self-respect. They don’t have enough stamina to stand on their own feet, and, when temptation comes, they fall an easy prey. Others go to the other extreme. They rebel against the parents, against the teachers, against the government, and against God. It’s not easy to keep a well-balanced middle line between the two extremes.

Conclusion

Isaiah the prophet anticipated the joy that Christian parents will experience in the great day which is before us. In that day no greater anxiety will trouble the mind of faithful parents until they can say: “Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me” (Isaiah 8:18).

References

¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/08/arts/bad-seed-or-bad-science.html>; <http://www.rfrick.info/jukes.htm>

² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 243, 244.

The Outpouring of the Latter Rain

Bible and Spirit of Prophecy compilation, with comments

by Francisco Devai

Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field” (Zechariah 10:1).

Our hope

One of the most dearly cherished hopes in connection with the finishing of God’s work on earth has been the promised latter rain. For decades, faithful believers have looked with anxious expectation for the fulfillment of the events associated with it. By the pen of inspiration, we know that the effects of the early and latter rain upon the seed represent the different phases of the work of the Holy Spirit. Every time we witness rain, it revives in us this anticipation. The apostle Peter speaking through inspiration applied the prophecies of Joel not only to the experience of the church during the early rain, but also to the time of the gospel’s final triumph. “In the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh . . . that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Based on this expectation Peter also admonish us to: “Repent . . . and be converted, that” our “sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 2:17–21; 3:19).

“But near the close of earth’s harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual

grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man. This outpouring of the Spirit is likened to the falling of the latter rain; and it is for this added power that Christians are to send their petitions to the Lord of the harvest ‘in the time of the latter rain.’ In response, ‘the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain.’ ‘He will cause to come down . . . the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain’ (Zechariah 10:1; Joel 2:23).¹

This hope of the promised refreshing helped to sustain the church through the centuries of persecution. This hope was revived during the early experience of the Advent movement through the manifestation of the prophetic gift. This hope was kept alive by the faithful remnant during the first and second world wars. This hope is still kept alive by the faithful not only in the countries where today we find religious freedom, but also by those faithful souls living under religious intolerance and persecution. Why is this hope still cherished? Has this hope been baseless?

Not a baseless hope

No! Our hope is not baseless! Peter says, “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

. . . “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.” The apostle continues, emphatically saying, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:16, 19–21).

Therefore our hope is based on God’s promises as revealed by inspiration to His servants the prophets. What then is the biblical basis for this cherished hope, the outpouring of the latter rain?

First of all, God through the prophet Zechariah told us to ask: “Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain.”

Christ Himself emphatically promised to His disciples that He would send them the Comforter. John 14:16–18; 15:26, 27; 16:12–14. Jesus also emphasized that our heavenly Father is more than willing to give the Holy Spirit to those that ask. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:13).

“As we seek God for the Holy Spirit, it will work in us meekness, humbleness of mind, a conscious dependence upon God for the perfecting latter rain.”

“In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail.”²

What a glorious fact, that God could give man no greater gift than One equal to Himself—His Son. “In giving His Son to die for the sins of the world, the Lord God made manifest what was the estimate He placed upon men; for in giving Jesus to the world, He gave heaven’s best gift.”³ And equally glorious is the fact that the Father and the Son could give no greater gift to the church than One equal to Themselves—the Holy Spirit. “Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power.”⁴

Why expect the fulfillment of this promise now?

The Lord, through His Word, not only promised to send His Holy Spirit but also foretold the events preceding the outpouring of the latter rain.

Through the prophet Joel God said, “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit” (Joel 2:28, 29).

Christ said to His disciples: “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:25–28).

“We are standing upon the threshold of great and solemn events. Prophecies are fulfilling. Strange, eventful history is being recorded in the books of heaven. Everything in our world is in agitation. There are wars and rumors of wars. The nations are angry, and the time of the dead has come, that they should be judged. Events are changing to bring about the day of God, which hasteth greatly. Only a moment of time, as it were, yet remains.”⁵ “Let us, with contrite hearts, pray most earnestly that now, in the time of the latter rain, the showers of grace may fall upon us. At every meeting we attend our prayers should ascend, that at this very time God will impart warmth and moisture to our souls. As we seek God for the Holy Spirit, it will work in us meekness, humbleness of mind, a conscious dependence upon God for the perfecting latter rain. If we pray for the blessing in faith, we shall receive it as God has promised.”⁶

Why is the latter rain needed?

a. For the individual, the latter rain is needed to ripen the grain.

“The latter rain, falling near the close of the season, ripens the grain and prepares it for the sickle. The Lord employs these operations of nature to represent the work of the Holy Spirit. . . . The ripening of the grain represents the completion of the work of God’s grace in the soul. By the power of the Holy Spirit the moral image of God is to be perfected in the character. We are to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ.”⁷

b. For the church, the latter rain is needed for several reasons.

“The latter rain, ripening earth’s harvest, represents the spiritual grace that prepares the church for the coming of the Son of man. But unless the former rain has fallen, there will be no life; the green blade will not spring up. Unless the early showers have done their work, the latter rain can bring no seed to perfection.”⁸

“‘At the commencement of the time of trouble, we were filled with the Holy Ghost as we went forth and proclaimed the Sabbath more fully.’ . . . ‘The commencement of that time of trouble,’ here mentioned, does not refer to the time when the plagues shall begin to be poured out, but to a short period just before they are poured out, while Christ is in the sanctuary. At that time, while the work of salvation is closing, trouble will be coming on the earth, and the nations will be angry, yet held in check so as not to prevent the work of the third angel. At that time the ‘latter rain,’ or refreshing from the presence of the Lord, will come, to give power to the loud voice of the third angel, and prepare the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out.”⁹

c. The people of the world need the latter rain so that they may make their final decision.

“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.

"The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God. The arguments have been presented. The seed has been sown, and now it will spring up and bear fruit. The publications distributed by missionary workers have exerted their influence, yet many whose minds were impressed have been prevented from fully comprehending the truth or from yielding obedience. 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."¹⁰

The latter rain has not been poured out yet. Why not?

"Christ has promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to His church, and the promise belongs to us as much as to the first disciples. But like every other promise, it is given on conditions. . . . We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us. Through the Spirit God works in His people 'to will and to do of His good pleasure' (Philippians 2:13). But many will not submit to this. They want to manage themselves. This is why they do not receive the heavenly gift. Only to those who wait humbly upon God, who watch for His guidance and grace, is the Spirit given."¹¹

"Christ declared that the divine influence of the Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. But the promise is not appreciated as it should be; and therefore its fulfillment is not

seen as it might be. The promise of the Spirit is a matter little thought of; and the result is only what might be expected—spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, spiritual declension and death. Minor matters occupy the attention, and the divine power which is necessary for the growth and prosperity of the church, and which would bring all other blessings in its train, is lacking, though offered in its infinite plenitude."¹²

Our trust is still in human plans and efforts. "Let me tell you that the Lord will work in this last work in a manner very much out of the common order of things, and in a way that will be contrary to any human planning. There will be those among us who will always want to control the work of God, to dictate even what movements shall be made when the work goes forward under the direction of the angel who joins the third angel in the message to be given to the world. God will use ways and means by which it will be seen that He is taking the reins in His own hands. The workers will be surprised by the simple means that He will use to bring about and perfect His work of righteousness."¹³

"Under the showers of the latter rain the inventions of man, the human machinery, will at times be swept away, the boundary of man's authority will be as broken reeds, and the Holy Spirit will speak through the living, human agent with convincing power. No one then will watch to see if the sentences are well rounded off, if the grammar is faultless. The living water will flow in God's own channels."¹⁴

What is needed?

What is needed today is to accept the work of the early rain.

"When one is fully emptied of self, when every false god is cast out of the soul, the vacuum is filled by the inflowing of the Spirit of Christ. Such a one has the faith that purifies the soul from defilement. He is conformed to the Spirit, and he minds the things

of the Spirit. He has no confidence in self. Christ is all and in all."¹⁵

"He who loves Christ the most will do the greatest amount of good. There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God. If men will endure the necessary discipline, without complaining or fainting by the way, God will teach them hour by hour, and day by day. He longs to reveal His grace. If His people will remove the obstructions, He will pour forth the waters of salvation in abundant streams through the human channels."¹⁶

"We are to pray for the impartation of the Spirit as the remedy for sin-sick souls. The church needs to be converted, and why should we not prostrate ourselves at the throne of grace, as representatives of the church, and from a broken heart and contrite spirit make earnest supplication that the Holy Spirit shall be poured out upon us from on high? Let us pray that when it shall be graciously bestowed our cold hearts may be revived, and we may have discernment to understand that it is from God and receive it with joy."¹⁷

Dear brethren and sisters, it is our privilege today to accept the counsel of the Lord as found in Zechariah 10:1, where we are urged to ask. Let us therefore ask by faith for this blessed gift of the Holy Spirit today!

References

- ¹ *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 55.
- ² *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.
- ³ *The Signs of the Times*, November 20, 1893.
- ⁴ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.
- ⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 14.
- ⁶ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 509.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 506.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ *Early Writings*, pp. 85, 86.
- ¹⁰ *The Great Controversy*, p. 612.
- ¹¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 672.
- ¹² *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 21.
- ¹³ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 300.
- ¹⁴ *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 324.
- ¹⁵ *Gospel Workers*, p. 287.
- ¹⁶ *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 250, 251.
- ¹⁷ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 64.



Fiji

*Baptism service,
September 2015.*

Canada

*Winter youth retreat in
the Algonquin Highlands,
Ontario, February 12–15,
2016 (middle).*

India

*Missionary outreach in
Ponnur, Tamil Nadu, July
2015 (bottom).*



Rwanda

*Members' seminar and
camp meeting in Kigali,
February 2016.*

Samoa

*Baptism service,
September 2015
(middle).*

Ethiopia

*Members' seminar and
camp meeting, January
2016 (bottom).*



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MOVING? Please let us know.

Children's Corner

A Letter to Two Boys

Henry and Edson were children of James and Ellen White. They had a little brother named Willie, who was 4 years old. When Henry was 13 years old and Edson 11, their mother had to be away traveling; she entrusted them to the care of two babysitters and wrote the older two boys a letter. What are some of the things she said to them in her letter? Let's see:

"My Dear Henry and Edson: Dear children, your mother has not forgotten you. She thinks of you many times every day. We hope you will be good and faithful children. I have been thinking, what if either of you should be taken sick and die, and your father and mother see you no more? Would you be prepared to die? Do you love God better than any one else? Can you forget your play to think of God, to go away alone and ask Him for Jesus' sake to forgive your sins? I know that much of your time is taken up with your studies, and with doing errands; but, dear children, don't forget to pray. The Lord loves to have children pray to Him. And if you really repent and feel sorry for your sins, God will forgive your sins for Jesus' sake.

"When you do wrong don't conceal your wrong but heartily and honestly confess it. This I believe you will do. I have confidence in you that you have tried to do it. Continue to do so, and we shall love you better than if you kept your wrongs concealed. God loves honest-hearted, truthful children, but cannot love those who are dishonest. Be obedient, dear children. . . .

"When asked to do anything, do not say, 'Wait a minute, till I do this.' It is unpleasant to repeat to you the same

things. Now, dear children, obey because you love to, not because you are driven to. I shall have confidence that you will do as I wish you to. I shall confide in your honor, your manliness.

"Many times I ask myself the question, Will my dear children be saved in the kingdom? I cannot bear the thought of their being shut out of the City with the wicked. I love my children, but God says that only the good and holy can be saved. And if you will overcome your wrongs, love one another, and be at peace among yourselves, the Lord will bless and save you. You cannot be good, or do right, in your own strength. You must go to God and ask him for strength. Ask Him that His grace may influence your hearts and make you right. Believe the Lord will do it; trust Him to do it. You can be little Christians; you can love and serve God.

"Be good to Willie. Love him. Teach him right things. If you do wrong, you not only sin yourselves, but you teach him to sin. When you do wrong, you teach him to do wrong; so double sin rests upon you. Always act as you would like to see Willie act. Always speak pleasantly to him and try to make him happy."¹

Indeed, the proverb is true: "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right" (Proverbs 20:11). Let us all think of this letter as if it had been written to each one of us and gain from these important thoughts.

Reference

¹ *An Appeal to the Youth*, pp. 42-44.