

the
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Vol. 62, No. 4



**It's Time for
Jesus to Come!**

the REFORMATION *herald*

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Is Jesus

Really Coming Soon? Prove it!

In his final epistle, the apostle Paul gives a powerful appeal so needed today: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Timothy 4:2–5).

The ears of people are itching for something new, exciting, and smooth. So many are rejecting sound doctrine—preferring instead a cheap, easy message that requires no exercise of faith nor denial of self.

The apostle concluded the passage with the words: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (Verses 6–8).

DO WE LOVE THE APPEARING OF JESUS?

The apostle refers to those who do. We need to love His appearing to be among those who will declare with joy unspeakable, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:9). Can we really prove that Jesus is indeed coming soon? Absolutely! The signs revealed in Matthew chapter 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 are plainly unfolding—and in view of history, the things which Jesus said would shortly come to pass in the book of Revelation are unmistakable. The Revelation is indeed revealed as promised.

This issue of *The Reformation Herald* presents clear, unmistakable evidence based on comparing Scripture with Scripture. There is no need for some flawed human interpretation to be arbitrarily pasted onto a prophecy. Instead, God is His own interpreter through His sacred Word and the facts of history corroborate with those events which have already occurred—establishing a solid foundation for understanding those events which are yet to come.

Yet multitudes are being deluded. Why? The time is ripe for "Wicked [to] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; **because they received not the love of the truth**, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them **strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness**" (2 Thessalonians 2:8–12). If we cherish evil and unrighteousness instead of coming to Christ to save us from our sins, we will be deluded. Don't let that happen to you! "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Peter 3:3, 4). Even the scoffers are proof of God's words, since He foretold of them.

May the Lord strengthen each one of us to prepare wholeheartedly for the return of Jesus. What a privilege it is to know Him—and to know Him is to love Him. The Lord assures us, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). He makes it clear: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31, 32). Amen! *R*



RECOGNIZING

God's Voice

By Paul M. Balbach

How can we recognize God's voice? How can we know when God is speaking to us and it is not our own thoughts or desires that we are thinking about? How can we tell?

Sometimes we think God is leading us to do something or say something, and He's not—but it's not until later that we find that out.

Sometimes we may say: "God, why didn't I get into that school the first time I applied? Why didn't I get the job that I wanted? God, why did you allow me to go through this relationship for years knowing that we would break up? Why did you allow me to get this disease or health problem?"

Maybe we were even praying and pleading for God to lead us, even while in these situations—and yet, why did God still allow us to go through that experience?

We may say, "God, I know you don't want me to get hurt, I know you want what is best for me . . . so why would you allow me to go through this?" God responds: "I didn't allow you to get into the first school you applied for because I had a better school for you. I didn't allow you to get that job you wanted, because I had another job that would be a perfect fit. I allowed you to stay in that relationship for years because I had to hold you for the special person that I had for you. I allowed you to get this disease, or go through this trial, because I knew that was the only way you could be saved."

Many times, we may pray, agonize, and plead with God for something, but God does not answer us as we wish. Yet, He always gives us what we ask for or something better.

When we fully surrender our lives to God, things may not always go as we plan, but we may be confident that God is purifying and leading us to trust Him and surrender to Him fully. **As Jesus' soon return approaches, there is nothing more important in this life than being fully surrendered to Christ each moment and having our lives in harmony with His word.**

How can we recognize God's voice and leading in our lives? Isaiah 30:21 tells us: "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Before answering this question, let us briefly notice that God's voice will never contraindicates the Bible. Isaiah 8:20 says, "To the law and to the testimony: if they

5 Keys to Recognizing God's Voice

1. STUDY THE WORD
2. RECOGNIZE PROVIDENCE
3. LISTEN TO HIS SPIRIT
4. RECEIVE HIS PEACE
5. SLOW DOWN TO HEAR HIS VOICE



speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

I. STUDY THE WORD

Search for God in His Word. The Lord assures us: “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13). Where should we search for God? In His Word. In order to recognize God’s voice, we must “dig in” and take the time to study His word. How often? Not just here and there, or halfheartedly, but rather we must put our whole heart and energy into it. David said, “With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments” (Psalm 119:10). God speaks to us in His Word. Have you ever had an experience of reading a verse (that maybe you had read before), but this time something was different? This time, the verse fit right into your life and came “alive,” and at that moment and you know God is speaking to you through that verse. This is what is so beautiful about God’s Word—when we seek Him with our whole heart, we will find His answer(s).

II. RECOGNIZE PROVIDENCE

Sometimes in this life, circumstances and events work out in a way that cannot be explained humanely. Events happen sometimes where people can’t explain how or why this happened. At times, from a human standpoint, we may only be able to say “What are the chances?!” or “It’s a miracle.” Romans 8:28 tells us that for those who love God, nothing comes by chance or luck, but rather it is “worked out” by

God. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

How have you been able to recognize God’s providence in your life? How have you seen Him leading? Have you recognized that certain events were not only by chance, but that God was guiding and directing you and opening the way for you?

God says in Isaiah 55:8, 9, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

III. LISTEN TO HIS SPIRIT

Before Jesus left this earth, in John 16:7, He told His disciples: “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”

What is the work of the Comforter? The Lord explains that “the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, **he shall teach you all things**, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26). [Emphasis added.]

As you study God’s Word and recognize God’s Providence, the Comforter will teach and guide you in the will of God. God always speaks through conscience to convict of sin (e.g., what is right or wrong). But how about for personal desires? God does speak through

His Spirit for personal desires, **but not as often as we think or would like to think.**

Psalm 32:8 says, “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.” God instructs, teaches, and guides us in a unique and special way for the circumstances of our life with His own Spirit. Have you heard the Holy Spirit’s voice?

God’s voice is a still, small voice. It is soft, but brings a strong impression. **God’s voice is usually only heard after much prayer and tears. When it’s God’s voice, we will know it 100% and recognize His voice without a doubt. When we listen to the Holy Spirit, “thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left” (Isaiah 30:21).**

What happens when we listen to God’s Spirit and obey it? Inspiration gives the encouraging words, “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.”¹

When you and I listen to God’s voice, there are limitless possibilities of what God can do through us!

IV. RECEIVE HIS PEACE

Doing God’s will always brings peace. “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Psalm 119:165). “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Corinthians 14:33). Peace—no confusion, no questions

Do you slow down to hear God's voice? Do you stand still, stop, and separate from the things that crowd out His voice?

of "why did this happen or why did things go that way? Or why can't it be different?"

You won't have to question or ask anymore "if this is right." If you are doing God's will and His way, you will know it and will have peace. Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

V. SLOW DOWN TO HEAR HIS VOICE

The fifth step to recognizing God's voice is that we must "slow down" and take the time to hear His voice. We may have to wait for it, but it will come. Isaiah 64:4 (NKJV) says "For since the beginning of the world Men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, Nor has the eye seen any God besides You, **Who acts for the one who waits for Him.**" [Emphasis added.] "We must individually **hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God**"²

Lamentations 3:25 says "The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him."

VI. LEARNING FROM ELIJAH

Let us learn from the experience of the prophet Elijah the importance of slowing down to hear God's voice.

Elijah fled from Jezebel after the experience on Mt. Carmel and went to Jezreel that same night (25 miles or 40 km.). The next day, he took his servant to Beersheba and left him there. The distance from Jezreel to Beersheba is 100 miles or 160 km. From there, Elijah ran into the wilderness and was given food and

drink by an angel. Then the Bible tells us in I Kings 19:8 (NKJV), "So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God."

After this, Elijah travelled 40 days and 40 nights to Mount Horeb, "the Mountain of God." It was not an easy journey.

"And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? (1 Kings 19:9).

"[Elijah] was in a wilderness. At night he lodged in a cave for protection from the wild beasts.

"Here God, through one of His angels, met with Elijah, and inquired of him: 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' I sent you to the brook Cherith, I sent you to the widow of Sarepta, I sent you to Samaria with a message to Ahab, but who sent you this long journey into the wilderness? And what errand have you here?"³

"And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away" (1 Kings 19:10).

What's the problem here? We start thinking about me, myself, and I. "Poor me. Why does this have to happen to me"? Instead of thinking about ourselves, we must look to God and His unfailing love and power. **God promises to direct, but we must listen and wait patiently for His leading.** "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:21).

When Elijah was running away from God, he did not stop to listen.

He did not stop to ask God what He wanted him to do or where He wanted him to go. Do you and I make the same mistake sometimes?

After God asked Elijah what he was doing there, "He said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire **a still small voice**" (1 Kings 19:11, 12).


The Hebrew word for voice still, small voice that is used here is *kol d'mamah dakah*. "Mamah" means quiet, still, whisper. God spoke to Elijah in a gentle, low whisper, and He still speaks to you and me the same way today.

Do you slow down to hear God's voice? Do you stand still, stop, and separate from the things that crowd out His voice? Do you wait to see your redemption power of God and grace in your life? Our Heavenly Father calls us by the quiet movings of His Spirit. Do not drown out the Spirit's promptings. The world drowns its conscience by activity, excitement, noise, but Psalm 46:10 says, "**Be still**, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

An oft-related story is told as follows:

A young man and his father farmed a small piece of land. Several times a year they would load up a cart with vegetables and take them to the market.

The two had little in common. The son was a tense and ambitious individual, the go-getter type. The father, on the other hand, was steady and relaxed.



One morning they loaded the cart, hitched up the ox, and started out for the nearest city. The young man, true to his disposition, kept prodding the ox with a stick. He reasoned that they had a better chance of getting good prices if they reached the marketplace early.

Several hours down the road the father stopped. It was his brother's farm, and he wanted to say hello, for so seldom did he have the opportunity. The son, of course, was impatient at what he considered a needless delay, and did not conceal his restlessness. But the father cautioned, "Take it easy. You'll last longer."

After an hour they drove on. They came to a fork in the road and the father turned to the right. "The other way is shorter," the son reminded him. "Yes, son, but this way is more beautiful."

"Have you no respect for time?"

"Yes," said the father, "I respect it so much that I like to use it in looking at beautiful things."

"At twilight they found themselves in country as lovely as a garden. The father suggested, "Let's sleep here." By this time the boy was angry, and he exploded, "You're more interested in flowers than money!"

But the father quietly replied, "That's the nicest thing you've said in a long time."

"I'll never take a trip with you again!" the boy vowed.

In the morning they were on their way early. Soon they came upon a cart in the ditch, and the father stopped to help while the son, of course, protested. "Take it easy," said the father. "Sometime you might be in the ditch yourself."

And then it was eight o'clock. There was a brilliant flash of lightning. And thunder. "Must be a big rain in the city," said the old man.

"But, Dad, if we had hurried, we could have been sold out by now."

"Take it easy, son. You'll last longer."

It was late afternoon when they reached the hill overlooking the city. The two men stood for a long moment, looking down. Neither said a word.

And then the son broke the silence. "I see what you mean, Father."

They turned and drove their cart away from what had been, until eight o'clock that morning, the city of Hiroshima!⁴

The father and the son had a different set of values. The father had wisely learned that we are healingly

distracted from the tensions of life by heeding the promptings of the still small voice. But how much the son missed! And how much we miss of life's richest rewards! We hurl ourselves into life with such reckless abandon that we wring ourselves physically and spiritually dry.

Are we like the son, impetuous, impatient with a mind for material advantage? Deaf to the deep movings of God's Spirit? The big question today is not if we can recognize God's voice, but *will we follow it? Will we accept and obey it? We must listen to, and follow the promptings of the still small voice.*

When you really want to recognize God's voice, cry out to Him in prayer, and make sure you are 100% surrendered and consecrated to God. And if His voice is still not clear, then tell God it's not clear and ask Him something like this: "Dear Lord, impress, convict, and build a burden in my soul for Thy will. Direct and lead me. Show me the indications of your providence to know 100% that this is Thy will. Please, give me your peace, Amen." *R*

References:

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 250, 251.

² *Ibid.*, p. 363.

³ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 291.

⁴ <https://sermons.faithlife.com>

THE TIME OF YOUR VISITATION:

Part 1

The Earth Trembling!

By Septimiu D. Muresan [Emphasis added throughout.]



Have you ever experienced an earthquake?



SCALE LEVEL	GROUND CONDITIONS
I. NOT FELT	Not felt. Traffic. Seismograph. Not equivalent on Richter scale.
II. WEAK	Felt only by a few people at rest. 2.0 Richter.
III. WEAK	Felt quite noticeably by people indoors, especially on upper floors of buildings. Many people do not recognize it as an earthquake. 3.0 Richter.
IV. LIGHT	Felt indoors by many, outdoors by few during the day. At night, some are awakened. Dishes, windows, and doors are disturbed; walls make cracking sounds. +3.0 Richter.
V. MODERATE	Felt by nearly everyone; many awakened. Some dishes and windows are broken. Unstable objects are overturned. <u>Pendulum clocks may stop.</u> 4.0 Richter.
VI. STRONG	Felt by all, and many are frightened. Some heavy furniture is moved. Bells are ringing, the leaves of the trees are rustling. +4.0 Richter.
VII. VERY STRONG	Slight to moderate in well-built ordinary structures; damage is considerable in poorly built or badly designed structures; some chimneys are broken. 5.0 Richter.
VIII. SEVERE	Considerable damage in ordinary substantial buildings with partial collapse. Damage great in poorly built structures. Fall of chimneys, factory stacks, columns, monuments, walls. Heavy furniture overturned. Thick trees bend. 6.0 Richter.
IX. VIOLENT	Damage is great in substantial buildings, with partial collapse. Buildings are shifted off foundations. Liquefaction occurs. 7.0 Richter.
X. EXTREME	Most masonry, frame structures - destroyed with foundations. Rails are bent. 7.6 Richter.
XI. EXTREME	Few, if any, (masonry) structures remain standing. Bridges are destroyed. Broad fissures erupt in the ground. Underground pipelines are rendered completely out of service. Rails are bent greatly. +8.0 Richter.
XII. EXTREME	Damage is total. Waves are seen on ground surfaces. Lines of sight and level are distorted. Objects are thrown upward into the air. +8.7 Richter.

The Bible mentions a few earthquakes, such as the following:

AT THE DEATH OF OUR LORD JESUS:

"And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And

the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Mark 15:37, 38).

"Now **when the centurion**, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, **saw the earthquake**, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this

was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).

AT THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS:

"And, behold, there was a **great earthquake**: for the angel of the

Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it" (Matthew 28:2).

IN PHILIPPI FOR PAUL AND SILAS:

"And suddenly there was a **great earthquake**, so that the **foundations of the prison were shaken**: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed" (Acts 16:26).

On that occasion, the jailer "had expected to hear from them bitter groans and imprecations, but he heard instead songs of joy and praise. With these sounds in his ears the jailer had fallen into a sleep from which he was **awakened by the earthquake** and the shaking of the prison walls."¹

"At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and I saw that immediately the angel of God loosed everyone's bands."²

THE VERY FIRST SIGN WHEN THE SIXTH SEAL WAS OPENED (LISBON 1755):

"And I beheld when he had **opened the sixth seal**, and, lo, there was **a great earthquake**; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood" (Revelation 6:12).

THE LAST PLAGUE AT THE END IS MARKED BY THE MIGHTIEST EARTHQUAKE EVER:

"And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was **a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth**, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. . . . And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found" (Revelation 16:18, 20).

I. WHAT CAUSES EARTHQUAKES?

The wrath of a merciful, longsuf-

fering God, that has been ignored and mocked:

"The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, **two years before the earthquake**. And he said, **The Lord will roar from Zion**, and utter his voice from Jerusalem" (Amos 1:1, 2).

"Behold, **the day of the Lord cometh**, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. . . . And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, **ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah**: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee" (Zechariah 14:1, 5).

ANGELS CAUSE SOME EARTHQUAKES:

"In the prison at Philippi, while suffering from the cruel stripes they had received, their feet fast in the stocks, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praise to God; and **angels were sent from heaven** to deliver them. **The earth shook under the tread of these heavenly messengers**, and the prison doors flew open, setting the prisoners free."³

SATAN IS PRODUCING SOME EARTHQUAKES . . .

"While appearing to the children of men as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, [Satan] will bring disease and disaster, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation. Even now he is at work. In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power."⁴

II. THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD TO AROUSE THE CONSCIENCE

The significance of the earthquakes,

"We see and hear of confusion and perplexity, want and famine, earthquakes and floods; terrible outrages will be committed by men; passion, not reason, bears sway. **The wrath of God is upon the inhabitants of the world**, who are fast becoming **as corrupt as were the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah**."⁵

"I am bidden to declare the message that cities full of transgression, and sinful in the extreme, will be destroyed by earthquakes, by fire, by flood."⁶

THE JUDGMENT OF GOD ON OUR CITIES

"Pleasure resorts, theaters, hotels, and the homes of the wealthy were shaken and shattered. Many lives were blotted out of existence, and the air was filled with the shrieks of the injured and the terrified.

The destroying angels of God were at work. One touch, and buildings, so thoroughly constructed that men regarded them as secure against every danger, quickly became heaps of rubbish."⁷

"There will be mighty earthquakes and great destruction of human life."⁸

The very first sign when the sixth seal was opened: (Lisbon 1755).

"And I beheld when he had **opened the sixth seal**, and, lo, there was **a great earthquake**; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood" (Revelation 6:12).

LISBON, PORTUGAL, ON NOVEMBER 1, 1755

"These signs were witnessed before the opening of the nineteenth century. In fulfillment of this prophecy there occurred, in the year 1755, **the most terrible earthquake that has ever been recorded**."⁹

On a single apocalyptic day in 1755, Lisbon, Portugal, was hit with an earthquake, a tsunami, and destructive fires.

"Though commonly known as

the earthquake of Lisbon, it extended to the greater part of Europe, Africa, and America. It was felt in Greenland, in the West Indies, in the island of Madeira, in Norway and Sweden, Great Britain and Ireland."¹⁰

"Tremors and waves rippled across the North Atlantic, raising rivers in Scotland and claiming lives as far away as Brazil."¹¹

"It pervaded an extent of not less than four million square miles."¹²

What Lisbon, Portugal, looked like just before the earthquake of 1755 struck. Photo of engraving by Chronicle/Alamy Stock Photo



More than a century after the earthquake, an artist depicted the maelstrom in this wood engraving. Photo of engraving by World History Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

"There has been much discussion on the estimated size of the earthquake, but it is believed to be between magnitude 8.5–9.0. . . . The earthquake was a massive slip of the Azores Gibraltar Faultline."¹³

"Seismically speaking . . . that morning the tectonic plates slipped and released as much energy as 32,000 Hiroshima bombs."¹⁴



THE KING OF PORTUGAL

"The monarch, Dom José I, had narrowly escaped death by staying at his country palace outside the city. . . . After the earthquake, Dom José suffered from acute claustrophobia inside buildings and lived the rest of his days in a palatial tent."¹⁵

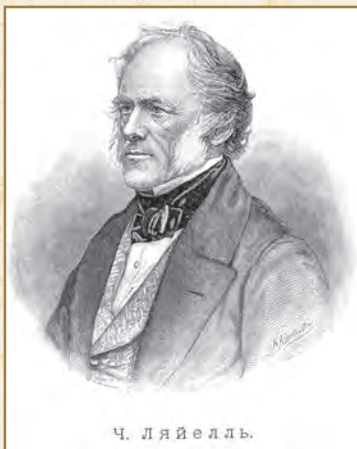
"In Africa the shock was almost as severe as in Europe. A great part of Algiers was destroyed; and a short distance from Morocco, a village containing eight or ten thousand inhabitants was swallowed up.

A vast wave swept over the coast of Spain and Africa engulfing cities and causing great destruction.

"It was in Spain and Portugal that the shock manifested its extreme violence. At Cadiz the inflowing wave was said to be sixty feet high. Mountains, 'some of the largest in Portugal, were impetuously shaken, as it were, from their very foundations, and some of them opened at their summits, which were split and rent in a wonderful manner, huge masses of them being

thrown down into the adjacent valleys. Flames are related to have issued from these mountains.' " — Sir Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology*, page 495.¹⁶

" 'The shock' of the earthquake 'was instantly followed by the fall of every church and convent, almost all the large public buildings, and more than one fourth of the houses. In about two hours after the shock, fires broke out in different quarters, and raged with such violence for the space of nearly three days, that the



“There has been much discussion on the estimated size of the earthquake [of Lisbon in 1755], but it is believed to be between magnitude 8.5-9.0. . . . The earthquake was a massive slip of the Azores Gibraltar Faultline.”

city was completely desolated.’ ” — *Encyclopedia Americana*, art. “Lisbon,” note (ed. 1831).¹⁷

“For the religious celebration [Feast of All Saints – November 1], every candle in every church was lit, and the churches were decorated with flowers and flammable decorations. As the tremors rocked the churches, the candles tumbled, igniting the decorations, and creating massive fires which ravaged Lisbon for five further days after the earthquake.”¹⁸

“The sea first retired, and laid the bar dry; it then rolled in, rising fifty feet or more above its ordinary level.” — Sir Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology*, page 495.¹⁹

“Before the tsunami hit, the water drained from Rio Tejo estuary, revealing shipwrecks loaded with treasures. Thousands of people raced into the muddy river to claim the riches, but no person of that era could predict what was about to be unleashed upon the city of Lisbon.

“The tsunami arrived so fast that several people riding on a horse back were forced to gallop as fast as possible to the upper grounds for fear of being carried away.

“Thousands who had escaped the earthquake’s destruction, were either drowned, killed by debris or dragged out to the sea by the tsunami.”²⁰

“The earthquake generated a tsunami that produced waves about 20 feet (6 meters) high at Lisbon and 65 feet (20 meters) high at Cádiz, Spain. The waves traveled westward to Martinique in the Caribbean Sea, a distance of 3,790 miles (6,100 km), in

10 hours and there reached a height of 13 feet (4 meters) above mean sea level.”²¹

“The terror of the people was beyond description. Nobody wept; it was beyond tears. They ran hither and thither, delirious with horror and astonishment, beating their faces and breasts, crying, ‘*Misericordia! the world’s at an end!*’ Mothers forgot their children, and ran about loaded with crucified images. Unfortunately, many ran to the churches for protection; but in vain was the sacrament exposed; in vain did the poor creatures embrace the altars; images, priests, and people were buried in one common ruin.’ It has been estimated that ninety thousand persons lost their lives on that fatal day.”²²

“Corpses were buried en masse or ferried out to sea to avoid an epidemic.”²³

GOD’S PURPOSE MAY BE READ IN FREQUENT EARTHQUAKES

“How frequently we hear of earthquakes and tornadoes, of destruction by fire and flood, with great loss of life and property! Apparently these calamities are capricious outbreaks of disorganized, unregulated forces of nature, wholly beyond the control of man; but in them all, God’s purpose may be read. They are among the agencies by which He seeks to arouse men and women to a sense of their danger.”²⁴

These will be more and more

frequent, and you will be pointed at as being guilty for them.

“[Men in responsible positions] will point to calamities on land and sea—to the storms of wind, the floods, the earthquakes, the destruction by fire—as judgments indicating God’s displeasure because Sunday is not sacredly observed. These calamities will increase more and more, one disaster will follow close upon the heels of another; and those who make void the law of God will point to the few who are keeping the Sabbath of the fourth commandment as the ones who are bringing wrath upon the world.”²⁵

III. AN EARTHQUAKE FOR OUR SINS . . .

At the death of our Lord Jesus.

“And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom” (Mark 15:37, 38).

“Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God” (Matthew 27:54).

A violent earthquake . . .

“There was a violent earthquake. The people were shaken together in heaps. The wildest confusion and consternation ensued. In the surrounding mountains, rocks

were rent asunder, and went crashing down into the plains. Sepulchers were broken open, and the dead were cast out of their tombs. Creation seemed to be shivering to atoms. Priests, rulers, soldiers, executioners, and people, mute with terror, lay prostrate upon the ground."²⁶

The nature groans in sympathy with her bleeding, dying Author.

"Amid the agonizing sufferings of the Son of God, blind and deluded men alone remain unfeeling. The chief priests and elders revile God's dear Son while in His expiring agonies. Yet inanimate nature groans in sympathy with her bleeding, dying Author. *The earth trembles.* The sun refuses to behold the scene. The heavens gather blackness. Angels have witnessed the scene of suffering until they can look no longer, and hide their faces from the horrid sight. Christ is dying! He is in despair! His Father's approving smile is removed, and angels are not permitted to lighten the gloom of the terrible hour. They can only behold in amazement their loved Commander, the Majesty of heaven, suffering the penalty of man's transgression of the Father's law."²⁷

The priests and rulers had no rest that Sabbath ...

"Yet the priests and rulers were not at rest. . . . They had heard the cry, 'It is finished.' 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit' John 19:30; Luke 23:46. They had seen the rocks rent, and had felt the mighty earthquake, and they were restless and uneasy."²⁸

IV. CONCLUSION

Elijah received a special communication—an earthquake.

"And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of

Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way" (1 Kings 19:9–15).

"**Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire**" (Isaiah 29:6).

WHAT IS YOUR REFUGE IN THAT DAY?

"If such scenes as this are to come, such tremendous judgments on a guilty world, **where will be the refuge for God's people?** How will they be sheltered until the indignation be overpast? John sees the elements of nature—**earthquake, tempest, and political strife—represented as being held by four angels. These winds are under control until God gives the word** to let them go. There is the safety of God's church."²⁹

"**If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.** For the days shall come upon

thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou **knewest not the time of thy visitation**" (Luke 19:42–44).

"**See that ye refuse not him that speaketh.** For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now **he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven**" (Hebrews 12:25, 26).

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37).

"**The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel**" (Joel 3:16). *R*

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- ²⁴ *Prophets and Kings*, p. 277.
- ²⁵ *The Southern Watchman*, June 28, 1904.
- ²⁶ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 756.
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The Sky Has Spoken!

By Bethany Muresan

“But in those days, after that tribulation, **the sun shall be darkened**, and the moon shall not give her light, And **the stars of heaven shall fall**, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken” (Mark 13:24, 25). [Emphasis added.]

Have you ever gone outside on a starry night and just stopped—paused to look at the vast expanse of space? What comes through your mind? Have you ever wondered what it’s like beyond our galaxy? Or why different constellations are the way they are? Or what the future holds? Or even wished you could go on a space mission and discover more about the many mysteries of the great unknown?

It is normal for us to look at the night sky and stand in awe. The view seems like a glimpse into a universe beyond. The reason is that God’s handwriting is seen there. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Psalm 19:1).

But there were a few times when these celestial bodies exhibited a rather unusual display—something beyond their normal course of action. Before we delve into the prophecy of Mark 13:24, 25, let’s take a look at a few biblical examples of times when God worked through the sky.

OUTSTANDING PHENOMENA IN HISTORY

One of the plagues that fell on Egypt involved darkness. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt" (Exodus 10:21). It says that not only could the people not see, but they also felt the darkness. This must have been a really spooky feeling.

Our God is the source of light. And He wants to give us light, not darkness. We see another, different example, where He overruled the natural cycle of dark time and light time. In Joshua 10:13, we read how God stopped the earth's rotation so that: "the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies."

A special star was used to announce Jesus' first coming. Remember the wise men that travelled all the way from the east to see baby Jesus? They came to Jerusalem, "saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him" (Matthew 2:2). The Jews knew that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem and they should have known that the time had come for Him to be born, but did they go? No. These pilgrims had to be led by a star in order to find the promised Messiah. Actually, we are told what this was in reality:

"The wise men had seen a mysterious light in the heavens upon that night when the glory of God flooded the hills of Bethlehem. As the light faded, a luminous star appeared, and lingered in the sky. It was not a fixed star nor a planet, and the phenomenon excited the keenest interest. That star was a distant company of shining angels, but of this the wise men were ignorant. Yet they were impressed that the star was of special import to them. They consulted priests and philosophers, and searched the scrolls of the ancient records. The prophecy of Balaam had declared, 'There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel.'

Numbers 24:17. Could this strange star have been sent as a harbinger of the Promised One? The magi had welcomed the light of heaven-sent truth; now it was shed upon them in brighter rays. Through dreams they were instructed to go in search of the newborn Prince.

"As by faith Abraham went forth at the call of God, 'not knowing whither he went' (Hebrews 11:8); as by faith Israel followed the pillar of cloud to the Promised Land, so did these Gentiles go forth to find the promised Saviour."¹ The Creator employed this unusual phenomenon in the sky to guide the earnest seekers after truth.

WHAT ABOUT IN THE FUTURE?

One of the seven last plagues that will fall on the earth after the close of probation also involves darkness. "And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness" (Revelation 16:10). As the beast (the antichrist power) has long been a strong proponent of spiritual darkness, its seat (city) will also receive physical darkness as a punishment.

From these few examples, we can learn that the same God who created the sun, moon, and stars can also use these instrumentalities to communicate special messages to humanity.

God promised that in the end times, there would be prophetic manifestations involving the sun and the stars: "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" (Luke 21:25). Here we will cover two such events:

THE DARK DAY

The Bible speaks of the 1260 years of tribulation (an historic time period unveiled not by mere guesswork but by comparing in the sacred scriptures Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6; Daniel 7:25; Revelation 11:2, 3.) By comparing Scripture

with history, we know this to be the 1,260 years of persecution or the Dark Ages, a time when God's church had to be underground.

Jesus plainly foretold: "**Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened**, and the moon shall not give her light" (Matthew 24:29).

An exact timeframe is given in this prophecy. It says, "after the tribulation." What does that mean? It refers to that time of difficulty, trial, and intense persecution, when over 50,000,000 souls were martyred. Jesus explained, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matthew 24:21, 22).

"What rendered this [darkening of the sun] more striking was the fact that the time of its fulfillment had been definitely pointed out. In the Saviour's conversation with His disciples upon Olivet, after describing the long period of trial for the church—the 1260 years of papal persecution, concerning which He had promised that the tribulation should be shortened—He thus mentioned certain events to precede His coming, and fixed the time when the first of these should be witnessed: 'In those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.'





The Dark Day

—by John G. Whittier

*'Twas on a May-day of the far old year
Seventeen hundred eighty, that there fell
Over the bloom and sweet life of the Spring,
Over the fresh earth and the heaven of noon,
A horror of great darkness, like the night. . . .
Birds ceased to sing, and all the barn-yard fowls
Roosted; the cattle at the pasture bars
Low'd, and looked homeward; bats on leathern wings
Flitted abroad; the sounds of labor died;
Men prayed, and women wept; all ears grew sharp
To hear the doom-blast of the trumpet shatter
The black sky, that the dreadful face of Christ
Might look from the rent clouds, not as he looked
A loving guest at Bethany, but stern
As Justice and inexorable Law."*

(A few lines composed on the dark day, May 19, 1780).

Mark 13:24. **The 1260 days, or years, terminated in 1798.** A quarter of a century earlier, persecution had almost wholly ceased. Following this persecution, according to the words of Christ, the sun was to be darkened. **On the 19th of May, 1780, this prophecy was fulfilled.**²

"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come" (Joel 2:31). This was to be a sign of the end times.

"An eyewitness living in Massachusetts describes the event as follows: 'In the morning the sun rose clear, but was soon overcast. The clouds became lowery, and from them, black and ominous, as they soon appeared, lightning flashed,

thunder rolled, and a little rain fell. Toward nine o'clock, the clouds became thinner, and assumed a brassy or coppery appearance, and earth, rocks, trees, buildings, water, and persons were changed by this strange, unearthly light. A few minutes later, a heavy black cloud spread over the entire sky except a narrow rim at the horizon, and it was as dark as it usually is at nine o'clock on a summer evening. . . .

" 'Fear, anxiety, and awe gradually filled the minds of the people. Women stood at the door, looking out upon the dark landscape; men returned from their labor in the fields; the carpenter left his tools, the blacksmith his forge, the tradesman his counter. Schools were dismissed, and

tremblingly the children fled homeward. Travelers put up at the nearest farmhouse. "What is coming?" queried every lip and heart. It seemed as if a hurricane was about to dash across the land, or as if it was the day of the consummation of all things."³

"By noon of 19 May 1780, the pall cast over coastal New England was so deep that citizens of Portland, Boston, and Providence had to eat their midday meals by candlelight. Many thought the Day of Judgment was at hand."⁴

The darkness was not just in one small locality. From the following paragraph, it seems to have covered the entire east coast of the United States.

"The extent of this darkness was extraordinary. It was observed as far east as Falmouth. To the westward it reached to the furthest part of Connecticut, and to Albany. To the southward, it was observed along the sea coasts, and to the north as far as the American settlements extend."⁵

Can you imagine experiencing such an event? I know many of us are afraid of the dark—but how would we feel if it wasn't even just normal darkness? This was a supernatural type of darkness. No one expects it to get dark in the middle of the day!

When it finally was time actually to get dark in the evening, there was still something different about this darkness. Remember earlier when we read about a darkness that could be felt? It seems this was that way, too:

"The darkness of the following evening was probably as gross as ever has been observed since the Almighty fiat gave birth to light. . . . I could not help conceiving at the time, that if every luminous body in the universe had been shrouded in impenetrable shades, or struck out of existence, the darkness could not have been more complete. A sheet of white paper held within a few inches of the eyes was equally invisible with the blackest velvet."⁶

"After midnight the darkness disappeared, and the moon, when first visible, had the appearance of blood."⁷

From these several eyewitness accounts and the fact that the prophecy references a time period in which this would take place, we can safely conclude that this event was fulfillment of the prophecy. It was designed by God to wake people up to eternal realities and serve as a reminder that the end time is at hand. "It was needful that men should be awakened to their danger; that they should be roused to prepare for the solemn events connected with the close of probation."⁸

The churches, which once were beacons of light, had become characterized by pride and formalism. Once zealous but now cold, the Christian world had forgotten about the Second Advent. People had been enjoying the freedom and ease offered in the New World, and had become absorbed in the things of this life. They had allowed darkness to obscure their vision of the future.

THE FALLING OF THE STARS

" 'Somebody in the quarters started yellin' in the middle of the night to come out and to look up at the sky. We went outside and there they was a-fallin' everywhere!

" 'Big stars coming down real close to the groun' and just before they hit the ground they would burn up! We was all scared. Some o' the folks was screamin', and some was prayin'. We all made so much noise, the white folks came out to see what was happenin'. They looked up and then they got scared, too.

" 'But then the white folks started callin' all the slaves together, and for no reason, they started tellin' some of the slaves who their mothers and fathers was, and who they'd been sold to and where. The old folks was so glad to hear where their people went. They made sure we all knew what happened . . . you see, they thought it was Judgement Day.' "⁹

The above paragraphs are an eyewitness account handed down over generations of what that eventful night was like. Some were awakened by the exhibition, and they screamed in panic because it seemed like the whole sky was alight. Slave owners believed they would be

judged for their evil deeds, and so they confessed to the slaves. But did that wake-up call change their course of action in the days that followed? Unfortunately not.

Frederick Douglass records in his autobiography: "1833 . . . was also the year of that strange phenomenon when the heavens seemed about to part with their starry train. I witnessed this gorgeous spectacle, and was awe-struck. The air seemed filled with bright descending messengers from the sky. It was about daybreak when I saw this sublime scene. I was not without the suggestion, at the moment, that it might be the harbinger of the coming of the Son of Man; and in my then state of mind I was prepared to hail Him as my friend and deliverer."¹⁰

What made this meteor shower different from all others? "The meteor storm of 1833 was of truly superlative strength. One estimate is over one hundred thousand meteors an hour, but another, done as the storm abated, estimated in excess of two hundred thousand meteors an hour over the entire region of North America east of the Rocky Mountains."¹¹

What else was going on during this time? "In 1833, two years after [William] Miller began to present in public the evidences of Christ's soon coming, the last of the signs appeared which were promised by the Saviour as tokens of His second advent."¹²

We find this foretold in Matthew 24:29, "the stars shall fall from heaven."

"This prophecy received a striking and impressive fulfillment in the great meteoric shower of November 13, 1833. That was the most extensive and wonderful display of falling stars which has ever been recorded; 'the whole firmament, over all the United States, being then, for hours, in fiery commotion! No celestial phenomenon has ever occurred in this country, since its first settlement, which was viewed with such intense admiration by one class in the community, or with so much dread and alarm by another.' 'Its sublimity and awful beauty still linger in many minds. . . . Never

did rain fall much thicker than the meteors fell toward the earth; east, west, north, and south, it was the same. In a word, the whole heavens seemed in motion. . . . The display, as described in Professor Silliman's Journal, was seen all over North America. . . . From two o'clock until broad daylight, the sky being perfectly serene and cloudless, an incessant play of dazzlingly brilliant luminosities was kept up in the whole heavens.' —R. M. Devens, *American Progress; or, The Great Events of the Greatest Century*, ch. 28, pars. 1-5."¹³

WHY DID GOD CAUSE THESE THINGS TO OCCUR?

When the people experienced these events, they immediately recognized the voice of God trying to speak to them. But how long did it last? Did they really change their lives and confess their sins and begin a lasting walk with the Lord?

How many times do we as humans determine that we are in the wrong only when in fear of immediate consequences? Perhaps when something bad or surprising happens, we remember God. But as soon as life returns to normal, so do our thoughts.

Mark 13:33 instructs us: "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." God is looking for characters formed after His likeness—the results of a lifetime, not a moment or a day.

The prophecies are plentiful; the fulfillments accurate. Even the sky has spoken. What are we waiting for? *R*

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CELESTIAL QUALITY CONTROL:

The Investigative Judgment

By Peter D. Lausevic [Emphasis added throughout.]

INTEGRITY THROUGH INSPECTION

Often after unscrewing the lid of a brand new jar of some important product, we are pleased to see another delicate layer attached underneath with small letters explaining, "Sealed for your protection." This seal reassures us that careful quality checking has been done and the manufacturer has taken seriously the need for excellence of the product. For that to be ensured, thorough examinations and investigative tests

have inevitably occurred during the process before the product is presented to you.

If conscientious manufacturers take such care, would not the Master manufacturer of all that is in heaven and earth exercise at least comparable care—or even greater?

Solomon, the inspired wise man of Scripture, gives a clear message:

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the

sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment" (Ecclesiastes 11:9).

This is not a judgment only for the sins that are seen by others. Solomon wrote: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14). Those

In this heavenly judgment, we are to be judged by the Ten Commandments law. Even Christians are to be judged by that law. So then, “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

secret things that no one else knows about is something that we will have to revisit again and they actually be judged.

Many people would like to be exempt from being judged. The good and the evil are alike going to be evaluated.

We often think of a judgment merely in a sense of punishment. But is it always that way? I remember when I was attending Rio Linda Junior High School back in California in the mid 1970's. Although I enjoyed all my classes, I had one particular class in which I spent at least three hours every day — my eighth-grade wood-shop class.

One day I decided to make a step table. The aroma of wood smelled so delightful that after sanding day after day, week after week, even my breath smelled of sawdust. Finally, I was approaching the finish line! It was then that the teacher announced that all of our work was going to be displayed in a special school-wide show, and that there would be judges to decide whose work would be considered worthy of recognition or merit.

We did not think of the judges as something fearful. We were thrilled that our work was going to be evaluated by experts in the field.

At last, the weekend was over — and we went to our furniture to see if any of us had received a ribbon. I was delighted to see a blue ribbon on my step table. In this case, that judgment was great for me.

The apostle Paul confirms that this heavenly judgment is not just to punish the wicked. He says: “Every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12).

As we study this matter further, we will see the twofold purpose of the heavenly judgment.

WHAT DOES THE JUDGMENT INVOLVE?

The first thing needed in a righteous judgment is an investigation of the case to see whether there is enough evidence for an indictment. In the United States, when there is suspicion of guilt in a capital crime, a grand jury is convened. The dictionary defines a **grand jury** as: “A body of persons, consisting of not fewer than twelve nor more than twenty-four, called to hear complaints of the commission of offenses and to ascertain whether there is prima-facie evidence (evidence that, if unexplained or uncontradicted, would establish the fact alleged) for an indictment.”

In connection with this, it is interesting to see that in the heavenly judgment, “Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after” (1 Timothy 5:24). The grand jury convenes **before** the actual judgment. If a man is cleared by the grand jury, he is not even indicted; he is guiltless. Most of us are somewhat familiar with grand jury investigations. Some bring indictment, others pronounce a verdict of guiltless. As we study this subject further, we will see how the same thing happens to those whose “sins are open beforehand” in the judgment.

In the earthly judgment, we usually have our own peers judging our case (they are the jury). In the case of the grand jury there are between twelve and twenty-four. In the most righteous court that can ever be assembled in the universe, we are also judged by our own peers. We read about them in the fourth and fifth chapters of Revelation: “And round about the throne were four and

twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw **four and twenty elders** sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold” (Revelation 4:4).

Who are these elders? This question is answered in the following chapter: “And when he had taken the book, the **four beasts** (living creatures in the NIV) and **four and twenty elders** fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou was slain, and hast **redeemed us to God** by thy blood **out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation**” (Revelation 5:8, 9). These are saints that have been redeemed from this earth and they are present in heaven **before** the seals were opened.

And where are these twenty-four elders? “After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven” (Revelation 4:1). Where **in** heaven is this door that was opened? Looking inside that open door John beheld and saw that “a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald” (Revelation 4:2, 3). This Being, in verse 8, is declared to be the “Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”

We find that in heaven there is a door. Therefore, some type of building must be in existence. The psalmist sheds a bit more light on this matter: “The Lord is in his **holy temple**, the Lord’s throne is in heaven” (Psalm 11:4). Therefore, this door that was opened wherein are



the elders, must be that door that opens into the heavenly temple or sanctuary. Therefore, they minister in our behalf together with Christ in the heavenly temple.

But how did they get to heaven when the resurrection of the righteous is yet a future event? The Bible is clear on this matter, too: “When he **ascended** up on high, he led a **multitude of captives**” (Ephesians 4:8, mgn.) These must be they of whom it is spoken of in Matthew 27:52, 53: “and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.”

Among this multitude of captives from every kindred and nation that were led up into heaven were the twenty-four elders. John saw them up in heaven sitting on seats (or as the Greek indicates, stately seats or thrones). We find that their thrones were placed around the Father’s throne during the judgment set forth in Daniel 7:9–11. Thus, in the judgment in heaven, we also have our peers present as the judging jury, making sure that God is just, as even He is being judged (Romans 3:4).

THE TYPE OF SENTENCE NEEDED

As in the earthly, so in the heavenly judgment—we are judged by a law: “So speak ye, and so do, as

they that shall be judged by the law of liberty” (James 2:12). This law of liberty is none other than the Ten Commandments—for verse 11 gives an example of it: “Do not commit adultery,” and “Do not kill.” Therefore, in this heavenly judgment, we are to be judged by the **Ten Commandments** law. This verse also shows that even Christians are to be judged by that law. So then, “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, **according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad**” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

In the grand jury investigation, what type of sentence do we need in order to be found **NOT GUILTY**? In many earthly courts there is usually room for a plea bargain; but in the heavenly, Jesus said: “Be ye therefore **perfect**, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” “Blessed are they that do **his commandments**, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Matthew 5:48; Revelation 22:14). In other words, we must be sinless in order not to be condemned by the heavenly court!

That all may sound well, but there is one big problem with that idea: You and I are not sinless! “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). “If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:10).

So then, how can we, whom the word of God condemns as sinners, be found not guilty? Our only hope lies in a precious Old Testament verse found in **Isaiah 43:25**: “I, even I, am he that **blotteth out thy transgressions** for mine own sake, and will **not remember thy sins**.” Isn’t this a very precious thought? You and I, with all the sins that we have committed against our Lord and King, can actually have our sins blotted out of heaven’s record books and out of the record books of the mind so that we can be accounted as not guilty—yes, sinless! And not only so, but this verse tells us that God will not even remember them anymore! In reality, our only hope of salvation lies in this blotting out of sins!

THE TIME OF THE BLOTTING OUT OF SINS

Soon after the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples, Peter was speaking to the multitude gathered, and he shed great light upon the question as to when this blotting out of sins would take place. He said, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, **that your sins may be blotted out**, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).

We have often read this verse and may not have noticed its importance. Peter told the eager listeners: “Repent **NOW**! Be converted **NOW**! So that your sins may be blotted out.” When? The reading of this text indicates that it was yet future for them. Otherwise, he would have told them to repent and be converted **and** have their sins blotted out. But to the contrary, he shares with them that the time of the blotting out of sins was still at some distant day in the future—a day “when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

Some have asked: “Isn’t blotting out of sins the same as having them forgiven?” Christ anticipated this question, so He gave a parable to clarify the matter:

“Therefore is **the kingdom of heaven likened** unto a certain king, which would take account of his

servants." The story in **Matthew 18** goes on to show how one servant owed the king ten thousand talents. After the servant pleaded for mercy, "the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and **forgave** him the debt" (Matthew 18:27). This servant was **forgiven**.

But, as we read the story further, we see that it was not **forgotten**. When that wicked servant did not do likewise to one who owed him considerably less, and he did **not** forgive him, the record states that "his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Matthew 18:34, 35).

In this example of what "the kingdom of heaven" is likened unto, we see that forgiveness is greatly different from that of blotting out. This is quite clear when we remember that the Lord, through the prophet Isaiah, revealed that after our sins are indeed blotted out, they are to be remembered no more by God Himself. If God does not remember them, surely we will not remember them either.

So then, the time of the blotting out of sins was yet future in the days of the apostles. But this work is to be done before Jesus comes again. Let us read Acts 3:19, 20 together to see its importance: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. **And he shall send Jesus Christ**, which before was preached unto you."

The context in which this was written clearly shows that this work of blotting out of sins is to be done before Jesus comes again. We further understand that there is a special work of reformation on earth among God's people that coincides with the work to be completed in heaven that must be accomplished before He comes again. The following verse reads: "Whom the heavens must receive until the time of **restitution of all things**, which God hath spoken

by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

We clearly see by these verses that, while God is blotting out the sins of His people from the books of heaven, His faithful remnant here on earth are blotting (or cleansing) sin out of their lives in a perfect work of restoration. This is why Inspiration said: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, **not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing**; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27).

BLOTTING OUT OF SINS NEEDS A JUDGMENT

There is a judgment recorded in prophecy. The prophet Daniel describes: "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: **the judgment was set, and the books were opened**" (Daniel 7:9, 10).

The words "cast down" in the original mean "to set" or "to place." The meaning "cast down" may come from the fact that Asians have neither chairs nor stools, but, in order to receive persons of rank, they "cast down" or "place" cushions round the room for seats. So we can understand that when the "judgment was set," these thrones were erected for the judgment. We remember that the twenty-four elders also have thrones. We can thank the Lord that we have representatives of the redeemed taking part in this work of judgment.

For this judgment, we find that "one like the **Son of man came with the clouds of heaven**, and came to the Ancient of days, and they

brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13, 14).

This coming of the Son of man to the Ancient of days is not the second coming of Christ to this earth, but the coming of Christ to the heavenly sanctuary into the presence of the Father. We understand this because the Father's throne is not in this earth but in His temple in heaven, as we have already learned from Psalm 11:4.

These verses presented a judgment which must be before Jesus comes again to this earth, for we read that **after the judgment**, He received His dominion and glory and a kingdom. In the Orient of Bible days, when a prince went to accept his kingdom, it was symbolized by a marriage—a king was married to his kingdom. And so the inspired writer, speaking of the second coming of Christ, uses this same illustration: "Let our loins be girded about and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for the lord, **when he will return from the wedding**: that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately" (Luke 12:35, 36).

This is further confirmed by the fact that when Jesus comes again, He will come as a King with a kingdom, and not as a Lamb for the slaughter. In Daniel 7, we read that before Christ accepts that kingdom, "the judgment was set, and the books were opened" (Daniel 7:10).

MORE EVIDENCE

The apostle John shed a bit more light on the reasoning for this pre-coming judgment: "And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the **dead, that they should be judged**, and that thou shouldest **give reward unto the servants** the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.



And the **temple** of God was **opened** in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament" (Revelation 11:18, 19).

According to these verses, the dead are to be judged. For what purpose are these dead to be judged? In order to receive their reward—the servants of God are here included. But when do God's servants receive their reward?

The apostle Paul in his last letter that was written before he was executed for his faith looks forward to the day in which he will receive his reward. He says: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: **henceforth** there is laid up for me a **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the **righteous judge**, shall give me **at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing**" (2 Timothy 4:7, 8).

Which day was he speaking of when he said, "at that day"? I thank the Lord that He has already answered most of our questions before we even think or ask them. In the last few verses of the Bible, Jesus left us with a promise concerning the day when we shall all, together with that great apostle, receive

our rewards: "And behold, **I come quickly; and my reward is with me**, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:12).

When Christ comes to take His own, according to these verses, they would have already been judged (this clearly agrees with the prophecy in Daniel). This is why Christ can justly give a reward to those who serve Him. Who ever heard of a reward being given first and then follows a judgment? This idea does not make sense in these earthly things and much less sense in the heavenly things. Therefore the saints are to be judged before the return of our Lord and Saviour so that He can justly give them their reward. The apostle Peter must have been referring to this judgment both in that statement in Acts and also in 1 Peter 4:17, "For the time is that **judgment must begin at the house of God**: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES

Again, in the Revelation, we read that there is a **time** for this judgment to take place. But in order for it to be started, the temple in heaven, or the heavenly sanctuary, must be opened—and it opened into the Most Holy Place, for this is where the ark of God is. In the ark we find the "**golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant**" (Hebrews 9:4). We will not touch upon the pot of manna nor the rod at this time, but upon the tables of the covenant. These tables were the law of God, the Ten Commandments that all of us are to be judged by (as we have already learned earlier).

Now, these things that take place in heaven have already been typified here in the earthly tabernacle which was "**the example and shadow of heavenly things**" (Hebrews 8:5).

So then, in the earthly tabernacle service, when do we find this investigation and blotting out of the confessed sins of God's people taking place? We read the following: "Also on the **tenth day of this seventh month** there shall be a day of atone-

ment" (Leviticus 23:27). Among the things that were to take place on that day was the cleansing of the people's sins in the most holy place before the presence of the ark. "Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: and he shall **make an atonement for the holy place**, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness" (Leviticus 16:15, 16).

What happened with their sins on that day? "For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to **cleanse** you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord" (Leviticus 16:30).

It is well to notice that during the whole year, the sins of the people were typically forgiven through the priestly ministration in the holy place. Now, on the day of atonement, their sins that were forgiven were typically cleansed or blotted out. So, when Isaiah was telling them that when the Lord will blot out their sins and would remember them no more, they could understand his language if they kept the day of atonement as more than a mere ritual or ceremony.

And so it is in the heavenly service, the time had come, in Revelation 11:18 and Daniel 7:9, 10, when the dead should be judged or cleansed. Let us remember that this takes place just before Jesus can come to give them their reward.

Now is our opportunity to make sure that all our sins are confessed and forgiven before the final cleansing so that when that day comes, we will be completely pure and ready for our heavenly kingdom. What is even more solemn to think about is that that generation who live during the time of this Investigative Judgment, will be **alive** when their cases come up before that great Judge of the universe.

Are we living in that time? *R*

The Hidden Made Transparent

Unveiling the Unseen

By Barbara Montrose

Ever since the days of Eden, the insatiable urge to know that which has been kept hidden has gripped the human mind. Eve, the mother of us all, was utterly captivated by the enticing claim posed to her by a talking animal: “God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5).

Who wouldn’t like to have better vision and additional knowledge? It seems attractively flattering. Such a proposal is more relevant to today’s mindset than we may realize. Do we not see the same scenario repeated now more than ever before? For over half a century, wide-eyed children have been mesmerized by increasingly sophisticated talking animal cartoons on television, persons who mourn have been visited with secret insights from supposed ghosts of departed loved ones, and the alluring offer to become as gods seems to echo around the globe as a never-ceasing sales pitch.

In young adulthood, I reasoned that if I only would be able to know the future—and meet the One ultimately

in charge of it, efficient planning for joy and peace in life would be a lot easier. Others have evidently come to that conclusion as well, so they search for ways to find out more information about things typically hidden to normal sight. For many this is healthy inquisitiveness and longing to become acquainted with their Creator, yet for others it is idle curiosity, and, unfortunately, for still others, impish motives may make it a form of mischief. The aim that motivates the seeker’s quest will likely affect the outcome, either for good or bad, greater fulfillment in life or tragic destruction. “Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly” (Proverbs 16:22).

So, let’s investigate some of the sources that are typically pursued for hidden information:

PSYCHICS

A psychic is an individual with access to details outside the normal sphere of physical science or knowledge. Such a person is mysteriously sensitive to non-



physical or supernatural forces and influences. The source is actually the powers of darkness, but since the information provided is often uncannily accurate, it might impress those eager to pull aside the curtain of the future, so they often clamor for more—and the path gets darker.

The economically-challenged year 2020 brought a booming \$2,020,000,000 to entrepreneurs in the astrology business. But let's face reality: The notion that your day will go a certain way based on the alignment of inanimate stars at the time you were born really is a hoax. It certainly is a ploy for the desperate.

The biblical book of Daniel has six references to the embarrassing futility of astrological prediction, and in Isaiah 47:12–14, the God of heaven gives a plain message of warning with regard to the final outcome of its practitioners: "Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame."

Some famous psychics in recent years have even attributed their powers to God. But how serious are they about that? Talk is cheap. Yet none—that is, not a single one—has been able to produce a 100% success rate. That makes them liars. Do you really want to listen to liars? What sobering message does a perfect God warn us about their ultimate outcome?

"The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

Wizardry is often thought of a positive thing today, and the myth

has been perpetuated that there are good witches as well as bad. Others who typically claim to have the extrasensory psychic gift also include clairvoyants, mediums, clairaudients, palmists, crystal gazers, telepathists, and more. But the warning echoes down to all:

"Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:31).

"There shall not be found among you any one . . . that useth divination [fortune teller], or an observer of times [astrologer], or an enchanter [magician], or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer [one who claims to communicate with the dead]. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord" (Deuteronomy 18:10–12).

Sometimes such practices are cloaked in modern terms such as "channeling," but there is no new thing under the sun, and the Lord is not fooled by it; He sees it all and calls it an abomination.

PROPHECY JUST BEFORE CHRIST'S RETURN

What should we think if the one predicting the future is not a psychic, a witch, or a sorcerer blatantly in contact with the powers of evil? Such a person might instead be referred to as a prophet. After all, that word perhaps sounds more palatable and politically correct to the Judeo-Christian ear.

In fact, one of the signs of the true people of God just before the return of Christ relates to the issue of prophecy. As the enemy of souls knows that his time is short, he makes war with the remnant of Bible-believing Christians "which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17). What is the testimony of Jesus Christ? The Bible itself responds: "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10).

So, the faithful remnant will have genuine prophecy as a characteristic in their midst.

BUT ARE ALL PROPHETS REAL?

A serious warning given by Jesus resonates powerfully to us today, reminiscent of when His disciples privately asked, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. . . . And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:3–5, 11).

HOW CAN WE IDENTIFY A FALSE PROPHET?

"If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him" (Deuteronomy 13:1–3).

One might assume the above is only referring to those who do not profess to follow God. But is it possible to be claiming to follow the Lord and speak words of prophecy in His name while denying Him in heart? Sadly, yes, this does occur. Jesus tells it straight: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:22, 23).

"And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, **if the thing follow not,**

nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deuteronomy 18:21, 22). [Emphasis added.]

That means 100% success rate is necessary. Anything less is not an option, period!

False prophets are clearly on the rise—and their track record is not only flawed, in reality they do not fulfill the characteristics of true prophecy in other necessary requirements as well.

WHAT ARE SOME MORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE PROPHETS?

Trustworthy, reliable prophets cannot violate Bible principles nor act in contradiction to the biblical norms for a true prophet, for example:

1. To bear an honest and accurate message. Jeremiah 28:8, 9.
2. To recognize the incarnation of Jesus Christ. 1 John 4:1–3.
3. To prophesy in the name of the Lord, not in one's own name, and to reflect Christian virtues. Matthew 7:16–20; 2 Peter 1:21.
4. To not issue private interpretations. 2 Peter 1:20.
5. To harmonize completely with preceding prophets. Isaiah 8:20.
6. To be courageous to point out the sins and transgressions that have been committed against God. Isaiah 58:1.
7. To warn the people of God's impending judgment. Isaiah 24:20, 21; Revelation 14:7.
8. To edify the church to a higher consecration to God and to support and strengthen biblical doctrines and precepts. 1 Corinthians 14:3, 4.

PHYSICAL TESTS DURING AN ACTUAL VISION WHEN GIVEN WHILE AWAKE.

9. The normal breath of the prophet is taken away, but life is nonetheless sustained by miraculous divine intervention. Daniel 10:17.

10. The prophet's eyes remain open (not blinking). Numbers 24:4, 16; Acts 22:17, 18.

The names of modern-day false prophets are too numerous even to mention. Despite what they may profess to be, their fruits of character are inconsistent, their philosophies unbiblical, their predictions of fail—and regardless of what they may claim, at least a part-time occult connection can typically be traced to their work.

AN AMAZING EXCEPTION IN MODERN DAYS

We have been warned against false prophets for a reason: The biblical standard as shown above is indeed high—but if true prophets did not exist, the archdeceiver would not bother to make counterfeits. This fact in itself reminds us that the genuine does indeed exist!

The God of heaven assures us: "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).

Let us consider for a moment the case of Ellen Gould White (née Harmon), a humble Christian who lived from 1827–1915. The remarkable gift that was bestowed upon this individual beginning at age of 17 was nothing short of extraordinary. During a period of more than 70 years, she received:

- I. Visions given in public before witnesses, accompanied by marked physical phenomena.
- II. Visions given during periods of prayer or writing unaccompanied by physical phenomena.

nied by physical phenomena.

III. Visions given at night during the hours of sleep, often referred to as prophetic dreams.

FIRSTHAND WITNESSES OF THE VISIONS

James White testifies:

"1. She is utterly unconscious of everything transpiring around her, as has been proved by the most rigid tests, but views herself as removed from this world, and in the presence of heavenly beings.

"2. **She does not breathe.** During the entire period of her continuance in vision, which has at different times ranged **from fifteen minutes to three hours, there is no breath, as has been repeatedly proved by pressing upon the chest, and by closing the mouth and nostrils.**

"3. Immediately on entering vision, her muscles become rigid, and joints fixed, so far as any external force can influence them. At the same time her movements and gestures, which are frequent,



The legacy of Ellen G. White as a human being is extraordinary. She penned over 50,000 pages of manuscript (including more than 5,000 periodical articles and 40 books) to become the most translated woman writer in the entire history of literature, and the most translated American of either gender.

are free and graceful, and cannot be hindered nor controlled by the strongest person.

"4. On coming out of vision, whether in the day-time or a well-lighted room at night, all is total darkness. Her power to distinguish even the most brilliant objects, held within a few inches of the eyes, returns but gradually, sometimes not being fully established for three hours. This has continued for the past twenty years; yet her eyesight is not in the least impaired, few persons having better than she now possesses.

"She has probably had, during the past twenty-three years, between one and two hundred visions. These have been given under almost every variety of circumstance, yet maintaining a wonderful similarity; the most apparent change being, that of late years they have grown less frequent, but more comprehensive. She has been taken off in vision most frequently when bowed in prayer. Several times, while earnestly addressing the congregation, unexpectedly to herself and to all around her, she has been instantly prostrated in vision. This was the case June 12, 1868, in the presence of not less than two hundred Sabbath-keepers, in the house of worship, in Battle Creek, Mich. On receiving baptism at my hands, at an early period of her experience, as I raised her up out of the water, immediately she was in vision. Several times, when prostrated by sickness, she has been relieved in answer to the prayer of faith, and taken off in vision. At such times her restoration to usual health has been wonderful. At another time, when walking with friends, in conversation upon the glories of the kingdom of God,

as she was passing through the gate before her father's house, the Spirit of God came upon her, and she was instantly taken off in vision."¹

URIAH SMITH:

"Every test which can be brought to bear upon such manifestations, proves these genuine. The evidence which supports them, internal and external, is conclusive. They agree with the word of God, and with themselves. They are given, unless those best qualified to judge are invariably deceived, when the Spirit of God is especially present. They are free from the disgusting contortions and grimaces which attend the counterfeit manifestations of Spiritualism. Calm, dignified, impressive, they commend themselves to every beholder, as the very opposite of that which is false or fanatical. The instrument is herself above jugglery or deceit.

"The influence is not mesmeric; for this people, reprobating the use of that agency, studiously refuse to learn the principles of its application, or to have aught to do with its practical workings; besides, the hallucinations of a mesmerized subject embrace only such facts and scenes as previously exist in the mind of the mesmerizing power; but the visions take cognizance of persons and things, and bring to light facts known, not only by no person present, but not even by the one through whom the visions are given.

"They are not the effect of disease; for no disease has ever yet been known to have the effect of repeatedly suspending the functions of the lungs, muscles, and every bodily sense, from fifteen to one hundred and eighty minutes, while in obedience to some influence

which evidently has supreme possession of the mind, and in obedience to that alone, the eyes would see, the lips speak, and the limbs move."²

These visions occurred both in the presence of witnesses and also in solitude. "What may be important to those who think the visions the result of mesmerism [*i.e.*, hypnotism induced by another person], she has a number of times been taken off in vision, when in prayer alone in the grove or in the closet."³

WHAT IS THE FRUIT OF THESE VISIONS?

"Their fruit is such as to show that the source from which they spring is the opposite of evil.

"1. They tend to the purest morality. They discountenance every vice, and exhort to the practice of every virtue. They point out the perils through which we are to pass to the kingdom. They reveal the devices of Satan. They warn us against his snares. They have nipped in the bud scheme after scheme of fanaticism which the enemy has tried to foist into our midst. They have exposed hidden iniquity, brought to light concealed wrongs, and laid bare the evil motives of the false-hearted. They have warded off dangers from the cause of truth upon every hand. They have aroused and re-aroused us to greater consecration to God, move zealous efforts for holiness of heart, and greater diligence in the cause and service of our Master.

"2. They lead us to Christ. Like the Bible, they set him forth as the only hope and only Saviour of mankind. They portray before us in living characters his holy life and his godly example, and with irresist-

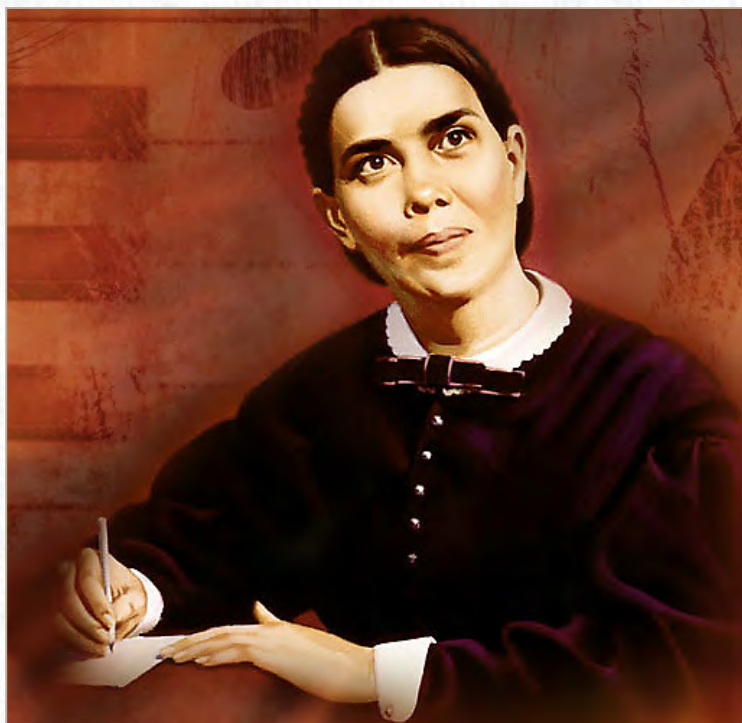
ible appeals they urge us to follow in his steps.

"3. They lead us to the Bible. They set forth that book as the inspired and unalterable word of God. They exhort us to take that word as the man of our counsel, and the rule of our faith and practice. And with a compelling power, they entreat us to study long and diligently its pages, and become familiar with its teaching, for it is to judge us in the last day.

"4. They have brought comfort and consolation to many hearts. They have strengthened the weak, encouraged the feeble, raised up the despondent. They have brought order out of confusion, made crooked places straight, and thrown light on what was dark and obscure. And no person, with an unprejudiced mind, can read their stirring appeals for a pure and lofty morality, their exaltation of God and the Saviour, their denunciations of every evil, and their exhortations to everything that is holy and of good report, without being compelled to say, 'These are not the words of him that hath a devil.'

"Negatively, they have never been known to counsel evil or devise wickedness. No instance can be found in which they have lowered the standard of morality. No one of their adherents has ever been led by them into paths of transgression and sin. They do not lead men to serve God less faithfully or to love him less fervently. They do not lead to any of the works of the flesh nor make less devoted and faithful Christians of those who believe them. In not a single instance can any of the charges here mentioned be sustained against them; and, concerning them, we may emphatically ask the question which Pilate put to the Jews in reference to the Saviour, 'Why, what evil hath he done?' "⁴

The legacy of Ellen G. White as a human being is extraordinary. She penned over 50,000 pages of manuscript (including more than 5,000 periodical articles and 40 books) to become the most translated woman writer in the entire history of literature, and the most translated American of either gender. Her writings



cover a broad range of topics, including religion, health and temperance, education, social relations, history, prophecy, and more. Although small in stature, her effectiveness as a speaker and her ability to project to audiences (of as many as 20,000) was remarkable. In 1875 it was reported that the sound of Ellen White's voice carried without amplification a mile away.

JUST A FEW EXAMPLES

Some of the best appreciated insights of Ellen G. White are in the field of health. Living as she did during a time when tobacco was considered to be good for health, as early as 1864, she warned about the dangers of its use, as well as of the liquor habit and its permanently damaging effects on the brain. Her understanding of the tremendous effects of prenatal influences on the unborn was nearly a century ahead of its time, as were her explanations of the most common causes of cancer and heart disease.

In the realm of prophecy, there is no question that the events foretold by her pen are indeed unfolding before our very eyes, besides those already fulfilled.

The very best way to appreciate Ellen G. White is to read her writings without prejudice or bias. The inspired words speak for themselves. Many who profess Christianity today seem to be alarmingly quick to label as inspired "prophets" various individuals having a mere fraction of the vital qualifications that Ellen G. White richly possessed.

IN CONCLUSION

Most who knew Ellen G. White remember her as a little old woman with white hair who always spoke so lovingly of Jesus. Evangelism and charity were deeply ingrained in her heart. She was well-loved and well-respected as a genuine Christian, a conscientious citizen, and a devoted wife and mother. The world is a far better, more hopeful, and more enlightened place for having had her presence in it. Do not hesitate to peruse prayerfully her writings! There is no question that your life will be richer for it. *R*

References:

¹ James White: *Life Incidents, in Connection With the Great Advent Movement*, p. 272. [Emphasis added.]

² Uriah Smith: *The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White*, pp. 5, 6.

³ James White: *Life Incidents, in Connection With the Great Advent Movement*, p. 273.

⁴ Uriah Smith: *The Visions of Ellen G. White*, pp. 6-8.

God's Work Done in God's Way for God's Glory

By D. Sureshkumar [Adapted.]



A couple visiting in Asia saw a father and his son working in a paddy field. The old man guided the heavy plow as the boy helped to pull it. "I guess they must be very poor," the man said to the missionary, who was the couple's guide and translator. "Yes," replied the missionary. "When the church was built, they were eager to give something to it, but they had no money. So, they sold their ox and gave the money to the church. This spring they are pulling the plow themselves." After a long silence, the woman said, "That was a real sacrifice." The missionary responded, "They do not call it a sacrifice.

They are just thankful that they had an ox to sell. Giving to God is not sacrifice. It is duty."

There is a saying in India, "If you give what you do not need, it isn't giving." There is another saying in China, "A bone to the dog is not charity. Charity is the bone shared with the dog, when you are just as hungry as the dog." These sayings spell out the practical religion which Christ taught in His life and teachings.

Christ commissions us to reach the people and then teach them the love of God. "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled

with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.' "¹

What was Christ's method? He met the needs of the people and then they followed Him.

Matthew 20 describes the blind men. What did they need? They needed to see! Before they could see spiritually, they needed to get past their physical need. Jesus didn't tell them to "ignore it." If He had, they would have forgotten about Jesus and spent the rest of their lives accepting pity. We may not have the kind of faith that can heal a blind

God accepts those who crucify self, and makes them vessels unto honor. They are in His hands as clay in the hands of the potter, and He works His will through them. Such men and women receive spiritual power.

man, but we surely can be of greater service than just to offer pity.

Problems and illnesses come as a result of sin—the transgression of God’s moral law of Ten Commandments. But like the friends of Job, when beholding the flaws and predicaments of others, we do not always view matters in a proper light.

WHAT ABOUT THE SIN PROBLEM? IS IT EVERYONE ELSE’S FAULT?

When we think about the great issues relating to right and wrong, often the first things that come to mind are the wrong things that others do—their glaring defects which annoy or even hurt us. Yes, they may be wrong things, for which those persons will need to give account to God. But the Master of all the universe—the Author of right and wrong—tells us, “Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee” (Proverbs 20:22). “Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door” (James 5:9). So that Supreme Judge of others is also the judge of each one of us, too. How we treat the faults of others will affect how we ourselves will be treated by our Master.

“Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with

me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses” (Matthew 18:23–35).

What clear message do we learn from this parable?

“He who is unforgiving cuts off the very channel through which alone he can receive mercy from God. We should not think that unless those who have injured us confess the wrong we are justified in withholding from them our forgiveness. It is their part, no doubt, to humble their hearts by repentance and confession; but we are to have a spirit of compassion toward those who have trespassed against us, whether or not they confess their faults.

“Nothing can justify an unforgiving spirit. He who is unmerciful

toward others shows that he himself is not a partaker of God’s pardoning grace. In God’s forgiveness the heart of the erring one is drawn close to the great heart of Infinite Love. The tide of divine compassion flows into the sinner’s soul, and from him to the souls of others. . . .

“We are not forgiven *because* we forgive, but *as* we forgive. The ground of all forgiveness is found in the unmerited love of God, but by our attitude toward others we show whether we have made that love our own. Wherefore Christ says, ‘With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.’ ”²

BUT WHAT IF THEIR SIN IS GREAT?

Great it may be—or so it may just seem to be. Jesus asks a pointed question, “Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:3–5).

The apostle explains the challenge involved in correcting the wrongs of others: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1).

If the Spirit of Christ dwells in our hearts, we will not be busily looking for things to condemn in others. Rather our aim will be to help, bless, and save them. When it is necessary to deal with wrong, we are to consider ourselves, lest

we also be tempted. We will recall the many times we, too, have made numerous mistakes in life and remember how hard it was to find our way back. In such a light, our compassion for our brother will know no bounds.

"God does not regard all sins as of equal magnitude; there are degrees of guilt in His estimation, as well as in that of man; but however trifling this or that wrong act may seem in the eyes of men, no sin is small in the sight of God. Man's judgment is partial, imperfect; but God estimates all things as they really are. The drunkard is despised and is told that his sin will exclude him from heaven; while pride, selfishness, and covetousness too often go unrebuked. But these are sins that are especially offensive to God; for they are contrary to the benevolence of His character, to that unselfish love which is the very atmosphere of the unfallen universe. He who falls into some of the grosser sins may feel a sense of his shame and poverty and his need of the grace of Christ; but pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the infinite blessings He came to give."³

But as we often look upon the cross of Calvary, remembering that it is our own sins that placed Jesus there, we will never try to estimate the degree of our guilt in comparison with that of others. We will not climb up on stilts of self-righteousness to accuse another. There is no spirit of criticism or self-exaltation in those who walk in the shadow of Calvary's cross.

The heart of Jesus overflows with tender pity for those who fall prey to temptation. It is not our mission to speak harsh, cutting words that drive the erring soul further from His saving grace—but rather to conduct a heartfelt mission of tender, earnest appeal for reconciliation to God.

CARING FOR REAL NEEDS

John chapter 8 portrays a woman caught in adultery. She needed protection, acceptance, and forgiveness. Jesus could not show her a better way until He had won

her confidence and love. God did not call us to be policemen but rather to be His instruments who love all for whom His precious blood was shed—to be those who hate the sin but love the sinner. Yes, there is a time to call sin by its right name, but only after the sinner can sense the drawing power of genuine unconditional love!

John chapter 3 illustrates this in Nicodemus' meeting with Jesus. What did this proud Pharisee need? A spiritual counselor, someone who could speak to his heart, with a poignant appeal to be born again. Through love, Jesus gently opened the mind and heart of this sincere seeker after truth, and He gained a follower.

Luke chapter 6 depicts a group of Pharisees. They needed to have an honest glimpse into their own motivations for harboring a heinous "holier-than-thou" attitude. Jesus showed them this reality by being a help to the man with the withered hand. The group ultimately made the choice of pride to not follow Jesus. Likewise, many today, when their authority or pet beliefs are challenged, they choose rather to follow pride than Jesus. How sad it is!

Mark chapter 6 recounts the feeding of the 5,000. What did these people need? It depends upon when the question is asked. First, they needed to hear the teachings of Jesus. That is why they were there. But as the day progressed, their needs changed. Their need for teaching changed to their need for eating. Jesus met this need so that He could once again meet their need for teaching. People's needs change. We continually need to meet those needs and continually draw them to Jesus.

Jesus taught His disciples this very thing. "And into whatsoever city ye enter . . . heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (Luke 10:8, 9).

See what the Lord is saying here: "Heal first, and then tell about God." Meet their needs and then share with them the answer to their greater need.

WHAT ABOUT WHEN FACING THE REALITY OF MY OWN SINS?

All are bidden to be perfect (Matthew 5:48)—and once we finally stop focusing on the defects of others, we are reminded of our own flaws. Thankfully, the merciful God of heaven declares, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isaiah 1:18-20).

The investigative judgment is something for which we can be thankful. Just imagine how it would be if the government of the universe had no justice! What a frustrating idea. The fact that our God knows us so well—knows even our thoughts and the motives that prompt our actions—reveals how much He cares, and how ready He is to meet our needs, just as He bids us meet the needs of others. We are not orphans! We have a Father in heaven who graciously provides for us.

"When Satan comes to tell you that you are a great sinner, look up to your Redeemer and talk of His merits. That which will help you is to look to His light. Acknowledge your sin, but tell the enemy that 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners' and that you may be saved by His matchless love."⁴

SURRENDERING ALL AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

"In words of great tenderness, Christ invites us, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' When you respond to this invitation, when you learn what it means to find rest by lifting the cross and bearing it after the Lord, you will be true witnesses for Him. But until this lesson is learned, self will appear, and Jesus will be kept in the background.

"Come to Christ, and His gentleness and love will break down the

harsh, cold selfishness that prevents you from revealing Him to the world. Your hasty temper will be subdued, your pride expelled. Jesus will fill your heart with His gentleness, His patience, His love. Then you can lift Him up before sinners. Working for Him, you will lose all thought of self. For His dear sake you will be willing to endure shame and reproach.

"The Lord says, 'Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God.' 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.'

"We must have a knowledge of ourselves, a knowledge that results in contrition, before we can find pardon and peace. It is only he who knows himself to be a sinner that Christ can save. We must know our true condition, or we shall not feel our need of Christ's help. We must understand our danger, or we shall not flee to the refuge. We must feel the pain of our wounds, or we shall not desire healing.

"Are you willing to cast down the idols you have cherished? Are you willing to let Jesus enter the heart to cleanse it from all that defiles? Are you at all times and under all circumstances, obtaining the mastery over yourself? Can you say, 'For me to live is Christ,' I am His? Whatever I have, of time, or

strength, or influence, all is His? Are you representing Him by your forbearance, your patience, your unselfishness? Are you learning to be like Him?

"God's word to us is, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' He calls upon every one to crucify self. Those who respond grow strong in Him. They learn daily from Christ, and the more they learn, the greater is their desire to build up God's kingdom by helping their fellowmen. The more enlightenment they have, the greater is their desire to enlighten others. The more they talk with God, the less they live to themselves. The greater their privileges, opportunities, and facilities for Christian work, the greater is the obligation they feel to work for others.

"Human nature is ever struggling for expression. He who is made complete in Christ must first be emptied of pride, of self-sufficiency. Then there is silence in the soul, and God's voice can be heard. Then the Spirit can find unobstructed entrance. Let God work in and through you. Then with Paul you can say, 'I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me.' But until self is laid on the altar, until we let the Holy Spirit mould and fashion us according to the divine similitude, we can not reach God's ideal for us.

"Christ said, 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' This life is what we must have in order to work for Christ,

and we must have it 'more abundantly.' God will breathe this life into every soul that dies to self. But entire self-renunciation is required. Unless this takes place, we carry with us that which destroys our happiness and usefulness.

"The Lord needs men and women who carry with them into the daily life the light of a godly example, men and women whose words and actions show that Christ is abiding in the heart, teaching, leading, and guiding. He needs men and women of prayer, who, by wrestling alone with God, obtain the victory over self, and then go forth to impart to others that which they have received from the Source of power. God accepts those who crucify self, and makes them vessels unto honor. They are in His hands as clay in the hands of the potter, and He works His will through them. Such men and women receive spiritual power. Christ lives in them, and the power of His Spirit attends their efforts. They realize that they are to live in this world the life that Jesus lived—a life free from all selfishness; and He enables them to bear witness for Him that draws souls to the cross of Calvary."⁵

Remember the words of Martin Luther, "I have tried to keep things in my hands and lost them all, but what I have given into God's hands I still possess."

Do your giving while you're living so you know where it's going. God judges what we give by what we keep.

"It's not what you do with the million, If riches should be at your lot. But what are you doing at present With the dollar and cents that you got?"

Practical Christianity is what the world needs. "Practical Christianity is the revealing in word and action of the will of God."⁶ When people know that we are genuine, when they know that we truly care, when we meet their needs, only then can we invite them to Jesus. In order to know those needs, we must know those people. When God's work is done in God's way for God's glory, it will never lack God's supply. *R*

References:

- ¹ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143.
- ² *The Faith I Live By*, p. 131.
- ³ *Steps to Christ*, p. 30.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 36.
- ⁵ *The Signs of the Times*, April 9, 1902.
- ⁶ *The Upward Look*, p. 184.



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MOVING? Please let us know.

A Dream and a Future

One night, the king of Babylon had a dream. When he woke up, he was upset, since he knew the dream was about something big. But there was one problem. He could not remember what the dream was about! It was his own dream in his own sleep, so for sure, he was the only one who would know about it. Now he was unhappy. How was he going to find out the answer if he forgot the dream?

So, the king called magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and some who had been to a lot of schooling in Babylon. These were the people the king trusted to help him answer his question. He hoped they could tell him what the dream meant—but also what the dream even was!

But there was something wrong with these people. They had super powers above what most humans had—but that power did not come from God—it came from Satan. And God did not let Satan fool the king.

The king got very angry that no one could help him, so he was about to kill all the wise men—including some who were good.

Why did this happen? God wanted the king to meet Daniel, a man of faith. The Lord gave Daniel the secret answer. How can a man tell the meaning of what someone else dreamed if the person forgot what they even dreamed? That's impossible!

But "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27).

The Lord gave special wisdom to Daniel to tell the king not only what the dream meant—but even what the dream was! That's amazing! When Daniel told the story to the king, the king got very excited. Yes! That was it! That was his dream! And when Daniel told him what it meant, it all made sense.

What was the dream about? God told Daniel that the dream was about four big, powerful kingdoms that would be in the world—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Over many years, sure enough, that's exactly what happened. God knows the whole story of the world from beginning to end; He can tell the future. And He is willing to tell us about it! "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29).

The best part of the king's dream was about how Jesus would come to earth and set up a new kingdom that would replace them all. The kingdom of Christ will be a happy kingdom where there will be no more mean people to hurt others. There will be no more crying and pain. No more fighting or killing. The animals will be kind and friendly. People won't steal from each other or tell lies. Everyone will be nice and free to do good, to build their own house, plant their own garden, and explore the beauty of God's creation all around the whole universe.

So, when you hear about the kingdom of God, be glad! Yes, it is a real kingdom—the best ever to exist! God is the only One who knows the future and He is the only One who can prepare us for it. Trust in Jesus and ask for His help to make you ready.

And He will help with whatever you need, just like he did to Daniel.—BHM.

