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A MESSAGE FOR THE
LAST DAYS

WEEK OF PRAYER | DECEMBER 6-15, 2024

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PRAYING FOR POWER

So much information is out there! Much of it is inaccurate; some of it true. Yet, even within the scope of that which is true, what really warrants our most determined attention? What should we be thinking about? Our Creator has a distinct message for us to know and share in these last days—and this annual Week of Prayer provides a perfect opportunity for us to focus on this together. The Lord has been so good to us over the past year. We are still alive with the precious opportunity to be participating in this event.

"Precious gems of truth lie beneath the surface, and every hour's search will be fully repaid. Store the mind with the principles of the gospel of Christ; seek with painstaking effort for the hidden wealth of God's word. All heaven is watching to see what man will do with the precepts and promises of Jehovah." (*The Review and Herald*, December 3, 1889.)

"There are many precious truths contained in the Word of God, but it is 'present truth' that the flock needs now." (*Early Writings*, p. 63.)

As we go through these readings on the theme, *A Message for the Last Days*, with the aim of truly understanding and living this message, our faith will be richly rewarded. Let us share the great blessing of these readings also with others who may be isolated or homebound, and remember the following dates:

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

May the Lord graciously respond to the heartfelt longing of all who are earnestly seeking to live this message and receive His Holy Spirit in latter rain power during this Week of Prayer!

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

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A MESSAGE FOR THE LAST DAYS



Picture the scene: The Holy Spirit has been poured out upon the early church in the abundant power of the early rain. Peter and John are at the gate of the temple, where, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Peter has bidden a man lame from birth to rise up and walk. He takes him by the hand and the man begins walking, leaping, and praising God.

This miraculous event, of course, causes a stir among the people, for they know this was he who had sat begging for alms. Now Peter gives all glory to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and explains to them about the Holy One, the Prince of life. He reveals how through the name of Jesus, the lame man was made strong by faith in Him. Peter then boldly proclaims the reality that they had denied the Lord before the Roman authorities and had preferred a murderer (Barabbas) over God's Anointed One. He then states they had incurred this guilt through ignorance, but further reveals that the suffering of Christ was a fulfillment of prophecy.

But what should they do about this now? The words resound:

“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: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19–21).

WHY IS THIS A MESSAGE FOR THE LAST DAYS?

In context, this declaration clearly was made soon after the ascension of Christ. Yet there is a sequence of events for Christians from that time forward:

1. Repent—now
2. Be converted—now
3. That your sins (rather than your names) may be blotted out.
4. When? In the time of investigative judgment before Christ's return, when the times of refreshing—the Holy Spirit in latter rain power—shall be poured out without measure.
5. Then Heaven will send Jesus Christ. Why not sooner? Jesus will remain in the celestial courts until every principle of His moral law is restored in human hearts—in

whosoever will surrender to His will by accepting Him wholeheartedly, entirely.

“At the transfiguration, Jesus was glorified by His Father. We hear Him say: ‘Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.’ Thus before His betrayal and crucifixion He was strengthened for His last dreadful sufferings. As the members of the body of Christ approach the period of their last conflict, ‘the time of Jacob's trouble,’ they will grow up into Christ, and will partake largely of His spirit. As the third message swells to a loud cry, and as great power and glory attend the closing work, the faithful people of God will partake of that glory. It is the latter rain which revives and strengthens them to pass through the time of trouble. Their faces will shine with the glory of that light which attends the third angel.”¹

Is it time for Jesus to come? Yes, indeed! How can we be ready? The steps in Acts 3:19–21 are plain. Let us deeply absorb this message for the last days during this Week of Prayer and diligently apply it to our hearts! *R*

Reference:

¹ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 353.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2024



A SPECIAL DIVINE MESSAGE

COMPILED FROM THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

PREPARATION FOR CHRIST'S COMING

Dear Brethren and Sisters,

Do we believe with all the heart that Christ is soon coming and that we are now having the last message of mercy that is ever to be given to a guilty world? Is our example what it should be? Do we, by our lives and holy conversation, show to those around us that we are looking for the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who shall change these vile bodies and fashion them like unto His glorious body? I fear that we do not believe and realize these things as we should. Those who believe the important truths that we profess, should act out their faith. There is too much seeking after amusements and things to take the attention in this world; the mind is left to run too much upon dress, and the tongue is engaged too often

in light and trifling conversation, which gives the lie to our profession, for our conversation is not in heaven, whence we look for the Saviour.

Angels are watching over and guarding us; we often grieve these angels by indulging in trifling conversation, jesting, and joking, and also by sinking down into a careless, stupid state. Although we may now and then make an effort for the victory and obtain it, yet if we do not keep it, but sink down into the same careless, indifferent state, unable to endure temptations and resist the enemy, we do not endure the trial of our faith that is more precious than gold. We are not suffering for Christ's sake, and glorying in tribulation.

There is a great lack of Christian fortitude and serving God from principle. We should not seek to please and gratify self, but to honor

and glorify God, and in all we do and say to have an eye single to His glory. If we would let our hearts be impressed with the following important words, and ever bear them in mind, we should not so easily fall into temptation and our words would be few and well chosen: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." "Thou God seest me."

We could not think of these important words, and call to mind the sufferings of Jesus that we poor sinners might receive pardon and be redeemed unto God by His most precious blood, without feeling a holy restraint upon us and an earnest desire to suffer for Him who suffered and endured so much for



been so full of love and compassion to us. With our lives we should honor Him, and with pure and holy conversation show that we are born from above, that this world is not our home, but that we are pilgrims and strangers here, traveling to a better country.

Many who profess the name of Christ and claim to be looking for His speedy coming, know not what it is to suffer for Christ's sake. Their hearts are not subdued by grace, and they are not dead to self, as is often shown in various ways. At the same time they are talking of having trials. But the principal cause of their trials is an unsubdued heart, which makes self so sensitive that it is often crossed. If such could realize what it is to be a humble follower of Christ, a true Christian, they would begin to work in good earnest and begin right. They would first die to self, then be instant in prayer, and check every passion of the heart. Give up your self-confidence and self-sufficiency, brethren, and follow the meek Pattern. Ever keep Jesus in your mind that He is your example and you must tread in His footsteps. Look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame. He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself. He for our sins was once the meek, slain lamb, wounded, bruised, smitten, and afflicted.²

and brought into the life, as well as advocated, and that man or woman will hate sin and will be a living representative of Jesus Christ to the world.

The people claiming to believe the truth will not be condemned because they had not the light, but because they had great light and did not bring their hearts to the test of God's great moral standard of righteousness. The people who claim to believe the truth must be elevated by living it out. Real Bible religion must leaven the life, refine and ennoble the character, making it more and more like the divine model. Then will the home be vocal with prayer, with thanksgiving and praise to God. Angels will minister in the home and accompany the worshiper to the house of prayer.

Let the churches who claim to believe the truth, who are advocating the law of God, keep that law and depart from all iniquity. Let the individual members of the church resist the temptations to practice evils and indulge in sin. Let the church commence the work of purification before God by repentance, humiliation, deep heart searching, for we are in the antitypical day of atonement—solemn hour fraught with eternal results.

Let those who teach the truth present it as it is in Jesus. Under the subduing, sanctifying, refining influence of the truth of God they are as clean vessels. Let them be leavened with Bible religion, and what an influence would go forth from them to the world! Let the individual members of the church be pure, steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the love of Jesus, and they will then be a light to the world. Let the men standing as watchmen and as shepherds of the flock proclaim the solemn truth, sound the notes of warning to all people, nations, and tongues. Let them be living representatives of the truth they advocate, and honor God's law by strict and holy compliance with its requirements, walking before the Lord in purity, in holiness, and a power will attend the proclamation of the truth that will reflect light everywhere.

us. If we dwell on these things, dear self, with its dignity, will be humbled, and its place will be occupied by a childlike simplicity which will bear reproof from others and will not be easily provoked. A self-willed spirit will not then come in to rule the soul.¹

CHERISHING OUR OPPORTUNITY

As I realize how much has been done for us to keep us right, I am led to exclaim, Oh, what love, what wondrous love, hath the Son of God for us poor sinners! Should we be stupid and careless while everything is being done for our salvation that can be done? All heaven is interested for us. We should be alive and awake to honor, glorify, and adore the high and lofty One. Our hearts should flow out in love and gratitude to Him who has

LIVING BELOW OUR PRIVILEGES

We are far from being the people God would have us to be, because we do not elevate the soul and refine the character in harmony with the wonderful unfolding of God's truth and His purposes. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). Sin is a disorganizer. Wherever it is cherished—in the individual heart, in the household, in the church—there is disorder, strife, variance, enmity, envy, jealousy, because the enemy of man and of God has the controlling power over the mind. But let the truth be loved

GRIEVING THE SPIRIT OF GOD

God never forsakes people or individuals until they forsake Him. Outward opposition will not cause the faith of God's people, who are keeping His commandments, to become dim. The neglect to bring purity and truth into practice will grieve the Spirit of God and weaken them because God is not in their midst to bless. Internal corruption will bring the denunciations of God upon this people as it did upon Jerusalem. Oh, let pleading voices, let earnest prayer be heard, that those who preach to others shall not themselves be castaways. My brethren, we know not what is before us, and our only safety is in following the Light of the world. God will work with us and for us if the sins which brought His wrath upon the old world, upon Sodom and Gomorrah and upon ancient Jerusalem, do not become our crime.

The least transgression of God's law brings guilt upon the transgressor, and without earnest repentance and forsaking of sin he will surely become an apostate. . . . Let us as a people, as far as possible, cleanse the camp of moral defilement and aggravating sins. When sin is making its march upon the people who claim to be elevating the moral standard of righteousness, how can we expect God to turn His power in our behalf and save us as a people that did righteousness? . . . If as a people we do not keep ourselves in the faith and not only advocate

with pen and voice the commandments of God, but keep them every one, not violating a single precept knowingly, then weakness and ruin will come upon us. It is a work that we must attend to in every one of our churches. Each man must be a Christian.

PUTTING AWAY SIN

Let the sin of pride be put away, let all superfluities of dress be overcome, and repentance toward God be exercised for the high-handed robbery toward Him which has withheld money which should flow into the treasury to sustain the work of God in its mission fields. Let the work of reformation, of true conversion, be set before and urged upon the people. Let our works, our deportment, correspond with the work for this time, that we may say, "Follow me as I follow Christ." Let us humble our souls before God by humiliation, fasting and prayer, repentance of sin and putting it away.

The voice of the true watchman needs now to be heard all along the line, "The morning cometh, and also the night" (Isaiah 21:12). The trumpet must give a certain sound for we are in the great day of the Lord's preparation. . . . There are many doctrines current in our world. There is many a religion current that numbers its thousands and tens of thousands, but there is but one that bears the superscription and the stamp of God. There is a religion of man and a religion of God. We must have our souls riveted to the

eternal Rock. Everything in God's world, both men and doctrines and nature itself, is fulfilling God's sure word of prophecy and accomplishing His grand and closing work in this world's history.

We are to be ready and waiting for the orders of God. Nations will be stirred to their very center. Support will be withdrawn from those who proclaim God's only standard of righteousness, the only sure test of character. And all who will not bow to the decree of the national councils and obey the national laws to exalt the sabbath instituted by the man of sin, to the disregard of God's holy day, will feel, not the oppressive power of popery alone, but of the Protestant world, the image of the beast.

Satan will work his miracles to deceive; he will set up his power as supreme. The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat. This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place. None but those who have been overcoming by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony will be found with the loyal and true, without spot or stain of sin, without guile in their mouths. We must be divested of our self-righteousness and arrayed in the righteousness of Christ.³

I was shown that if God's people make no efforts on their part, but wait for the refreshing to come upon them and remove their wrongs and correct their errors; if

“The remnant that purify their souls by obeying the truth gather strength from the trying process, exhibiting the beauty of holiness amid the surrounding apostasy. All these, He says, “I have graven upon the palms of My hands” (Isaiah 49:16).

they depend upon that to cleanse them from filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and fit them to engage in the loud cry of the third angel, they will be found wanting. The refreshing or power of God comes only on those who have prepared themselves for it by doing the work which God bids them, namely, cleansing themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.⁴

ARRAYED IN CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

The remnant that purify their souls by obeying the truth gather strength from the trying process, exhibiting the beauty of holiness amid the surrounding apostasy. All these, He says, "I have graven upon the palms of my hands" (Isaiah 49:16). They are held in everlasting, imperishable remembrance. We want faith now, living faith. We want to have a living testimony that shall cut to the heart of the sinner. There is too much sermonizing and too little ministering. We want the holy unction. We need the spirit and fervor of the truth. Many of the ministers are half paralyzed by their own defects of character. They need the converting power of God.

That which God required of Adam before his fall was perfect obedience to His law. God requires now what He required of Adam, perfect obedience, righteousness without a flaw, without shortcoming in His sight. God help us to render to Him all His law requires. We cannot do this without that faith that brings Christ's righteousness into daily practice.

Dear brethren, the Lord is coming. Lift up your thoughts and heads and rejoice. Oh, we would think that those who hear the joyful news, who claim to love Jesus, would be filled with joy unutterable and full of glory. This is the good, the joyful news which should electrify every soul, which should be repeated in our homes and told to those whom we meet on the street. What more joyful news can be communicated! Caviling and

contention with believers or unbelievers is not the work God has given us to do.

If Christ is my Saviour, my sacrifice, my atonement, then I shall never perish. Believing on Him, I have life forevermore. Oh, that all who believe the truth would believe in Jesus as their own Saviour. I do not mean that cheap faith unsupported by works, but that earnest, living, constant, abiding faith, that eats the flesh and drinks the blood of the Son of God. I want not only to be pardoned for the transgression of God's holy law, but I want to be lifted into the sunshine of God's countenance. Not simply to be admitted to heaven, but to have an abundant entrance.

SALVATION A UNION WITH CHRIST

Are we so insensible as a peculiar people, a holy nation, to the inexpressible love that God has manifested for us? Salvation is not to be baptized, not to have our names upon the church books, not to preach the truth. But it is a living union with Jesus Christ, to be renewed in heart, doing the works of Christ in faith and labor of love, in patience, meekness, and hope. Every soul united to Christ will be a living missionary to all around him. He will labor for those near and those afar off. He will have no sectional feeling, no interest merely to build up one branch of the work over which he presides and there let his zeal end. All will work with interest to make every branch strong. There will be no self-love, no selfish interest. The cause is one, the truth a great whole.

Well may the question be asked with earnest, anxious heart, "Is envy cherished, is jealousy permitted to find a place in my heart?" If so, Christ is not there. "Do I love the law of God, is the love of Jesus Christ in my heart?" If we love one another as Christ has loved us then we are getting ready for the blessed heaven of peace and rest. There is no struggling there to be first, to have the supremacy; all will love their neighbor as themselves. Oh,

that God would open the understanding and speak to the hearts of our churches by arousing the individual members. . . .

Those who are at ease in Zion need to be aroused. Great is their accountability who bear the truth and yet feel no weight or burden for souls. Oh, for men and women professing the truth to arouse, to take on the yoke of Christ, to lift His burdens. There are wanted those who will not have merely a nominal interest but a Christ-like interest, unselfish—an intense ardor that will not flag under difficulties or cool because iniquity abounds. . . .

We are standing upon the very borders of the eternal world. Fair-weather Christians will not be wanted for this work. The sentimental and tasteful religion is not needed for this time. There must be intensity brought into our faith and in the proclamation of truth. I tell you, a new life is proceeding from satanic agencies to work with a power we have not hitherto realized. And shall not a new power from above take possession of God's people? The truth, sanctifying in its influence, must be urged upon the people. There must be earnest supplications offered to God, agonizing prayer to Him, that our hopes as a people may not be founded on suppositions, but on eternal realities. We must know for ourselves, by the evidence of God's Word, whether we are in the faith, going to heaven or not. The moral standard of character is God's law. Do we meet its requirements? Are the Lord's people bringing their property, their time, their talents, and all their influence into the work for this time? Let us arouse. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1).³ *R*

References:

¹ *Early Writings*, pp. 111, 112.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 114.

³ *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, pp. 377–380.

⁴ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 619.

⁵ *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, pp. 380–382.

“BE ZEALOUS THEREFORE AND REPENT”

BY DANIEL LEE – U.S.A.

THE NATURE OF GENUINE REPENTANCE

The first question that needs to be settled is, what is genuine repentance? Secondly, what can a people who are already keeping the commandments of God, including the Sabbath and living blameless lives as far as moral behavior is concerned, possibly repent of?

Faith in God and its fruit of repentance for sin are the natural and automatic result of communion with God. The revelation of the goodness and righteousness of God, obtained alone through an active connection with Him is what leads men to repent (Romans 2:4). Outside of this communion, there is no genuine repentance.

The more the soul converses with God, the more it becomes acquainted with Him, the stronger the conviction of sin becomes and the deeper and more intense the repentance.

“The nearer we come to Jesus, and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly shall we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the less shall we feel like exalting ourselves. There will be a continual reaching out of the soul after God, a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the heart before Him. At every advance step in our Christian experience our repentance will deepen.”¹

Of Enoch it is said, that “the closer the connection with God, the

deeper was the sense of his own weakness and imperfection.”²

Repentance cannot be artificially manufactured. It is not mechanically contrived; it cannot be generated like other whims of human emotions. It is simply the Holy Ghost striking the chords of the human heart, melting and subduing it under Its strong convicting power. Then genuine repentance occurs. Sorrow for sin and repentance are the human agent’s natural and automatic response to the Spirit’s work of constantly impressing upon the mind the loveliness of the character of God in Christ Jesus. When the believer constantly looks to Jesus and opens his heart to Him as a friend in holy fellowship, all self-righteousness and imagined goodness are

stripped away and the nakedness of the soul is laid bare. Then his soul naturally bows down in contrition, humbled and penitent.

“One ray of the glory of God, one gleam of the purity of Christ, penetrating the soul, makes every spot of defilement painfully distinct, and lays bare the deformity and defects of the human character. It makes apparent the unhallowed desires, the infidelity of the heart, the impurity of the lips. The sinner’s acts of disloyalty in making void the law of God, are exposed to his sight, and his spirit is stricken and afflicted under the searching influence of the Spirit of God. He loathes himself as he views the pure, spotless character of Christ.”³

ISAIAH’S REPENTANCE—A MODEL FOR GOD’S END-TIME CHURCH

When the prophet Isaiah beheld the glory of God in the temple, he was struck and overwhelmed with a sense of his own moral weakness and imperfection of character. The prophet’s despairing cry was, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5). Before he had this life-changing personal encounter with God in the sanctuary, he had been moved to rebuke sins of others. With the following stern words, he pointed out the sins of others: “Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him.” (Isaiah 3:11). “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink” (Isaiah 5:20-22).

While the prophet was moved to condemn the prevailing iniquity around him in his zeal for God, he wasn’t necessarily convicted of his own sinfulness at that stage of his spiritual walk. Not until that fateful

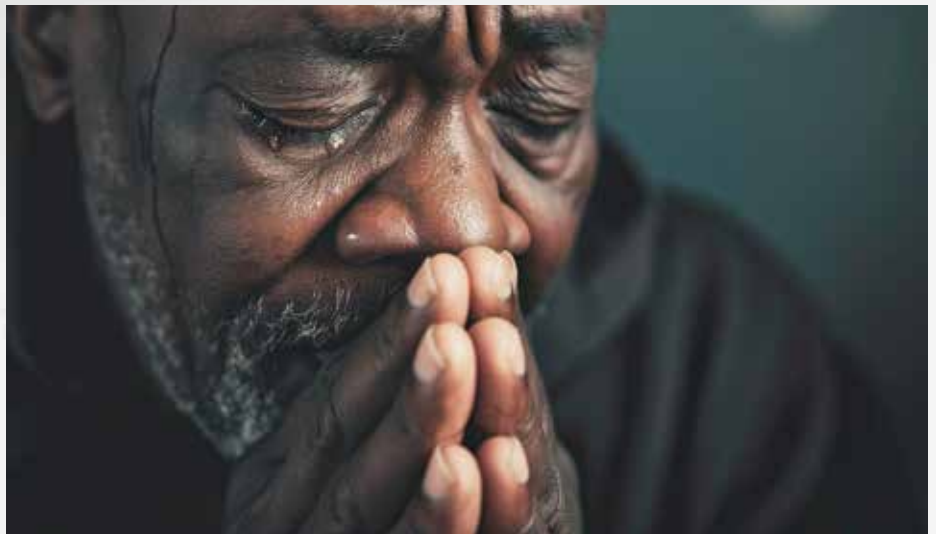
encounter with God in the temple did the prophet understand something of his own sinfulness of life in stark contrast with the glory of God, so vividly impressed upon his mind and heart. As a result of that unforgettable encounter, “Woe unto you” turned into “Woe unto me . . .”

“Isaiah had denounced the sin of others; but now he sees himself exposed to the same condemnation he had pronounced upon them. He had been satisfied with a cold, lifeless ceremony in his worship of God. He had not known this until the vision was given him of the Lord. How little now appeared his wisdom and talents as he looked upon the sacredness and majesty of the sanctuary. How unworthy he was! How unfitted for sacred service! His view of himself might be expressed in the language of the apostle Paul, ‘O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ ”⁴

God’s remnant church today, while the object of God’s supreme regard, is just as blind to her true spiritual state, as the prophet Isaiah was, before his personal encounter with God in the temple. Her elevated status as depositary of sacred truths and her blameless demeanor have, unfortunately, produced in her the undesirable effect of thinking that she is in a better position than she really is. Her estimation of her own spiritual condition differs widely from that of the Faithful and True Witness, Who says, “Thou

knowest not that thou art wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked” (Revelation 3:17). Genuinely unaware of her true state, she confidently exclaims, “I am rich with goods and have need of nothing” (Revelation 3:17). As long as God’s people wallow in this triumphalistic, self-congratulatory attitude, deceived by the magnitude of their assumed goodness, the Holy Ghost cannot convict of sin. There can be no genuine heartbreaking repentance and confession of sin, and no real communion with God unless this pernicious state of mind is put away decisively and abandoned.

The Scribes and the Pharisees during the time of Jesus prided themselves of their own manufactured self-righteousness. John the Baptist’s call to “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2), made no impression upon them. The call to repent to them was distasteful. Blinded by feelings of heightened spiritual superiority by virtue of their affinity with Abraham and their multitudinous works-oriented reforms, their rigid formalism, they felt no need of a Savior, no need to humble themselves and confess their sins, and certainly no need for repentance. Jesus described these self-deceived professors of religion of His time as “. . . whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness” (Matthew 23:27). These had confused external



conformity to rules and regulations with the righteousness that springs naturally from within the heart. They knew nothing of the meekness and lowliness of heart that is obtained only in the school of Christ, learned only through constant communion with Him.

The call found in the message to the church of Laodicea, "Be zealous therefore and repent" (Revelation 3:19), unpopular as it stands, is nevertheless for every member of the church today to take very seriously. We are living in the period of Laodicea. This call to repent is therefore present duty. Failing to heed this call will result in being categorically spewed out of Christ's mouth, an act of utter rejection. Self-abasement, self-renunciation, and self-surrender such as that which the prophet Isaiah experienced in the temple while beholding the glory of God, will be seen in the lives of those who have heeded the call to repent. None but those who, by faith, encounter God in the sanctuary as Isaiah did, will have the privilege of knowing something of the goodness of God which will lead them to repentance (Romans 2:4).

"The vision given to Isaiah represents the condition of God's people in the last days. They are privileged to see by faith the work that is going forward in the heavenly sanctuary. 'And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament.' As they look by faith into the holy of holies, and see the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, they perceive that they are a people of unclean lips,—a people whose lips have often spoken vanity, and whose talents have not been sanctified and employed to the glory of God. Well may they despair as they contrast their own weakness and unworthiness with the purity and loveliness of the glorious character of Christ. But if they, like Isaiah, will receive the impression the Lord designs shall be made upon the heart, if they will humble their souls before God, there is hope for them. The bow of promise is above the throne, and the work done for Isaiah will be performed in them. God will

respond to the petitions coming from the contrite heart."⁵

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT REPENTANCE TYPIFIED

Isaiah's vision of God in the temple is a type of the experience of the people of God in the last days. By faith, they will have the privilege of following Jesus in the holy of holies. As they commune with Him and contemplate His closing work in the sanctuary, they will be led to understand something of His great love in blotting out their sins forever from memory and from the books of record; they will discern more clearly the extent of the impurity of their hearts and deformity of their characters in marked contrast with the purity of Christ's. As a result, their repentance will deepen immensely. They will sigh and cry and weep between the porch and the altar; they will afflict their souls and plead earnestly for purity of heart.

"All need to become more intelligent in regard to the work of the atonement, which is going on in the sanctuary above. When this grand truth is seen and understood, those who hold it will work in harmony with Christ to prepare a people to stand in the great day of God, and their efforts will be successful. By study, contemplation, and prayer God's people will be elevated above common, earthly thoughts and feelings, and will be brought into harmony with Christ and His great work of cleansing the sanctuary above from the sins of the people. Their faith will go with Him into the sanctuary, and the worshipers on earth **will be carefully reviewing their lives** and comparing their characters with the great standard of righteousness. **They will see their own defects.**"⁶

THE FULL EXTENT OF HUMAN SINFULNESS TO BE EXPOSED AND REPENTED OF

The penitent believer really has no idea of the extent of the sinfulness of his life. He is unable to perceive with his mind the enormity of the guilt of his transgressions

and sins. Therefore, on any given day, his repentance is never deep enough. He doesn't know what to repent of! He does not realize that he is a lot more indebted to the law of God than what he repents of and confesses every day. The books of record in the sanctuary contain a lot more sins than what is typically repented of and confessed on a daily basis.

"Every man's work passes in review before God and is registered for faithfulness or unfaithfulness. Opposite each name in the books of heaven is entered with terrible exactness every wrong word, every selfish act, every unfulfilled duty, and every secret sin, with every artful dissembling. Heaven-sent warnings or reproofs neglected, wasted moments, unimproved opportunities, the influence exerted for good or for evil, with its far-reaching results, all are chronicled by the recording angel."⁷

Even sins not yet actually committed are recorded in the books of heaven, testifying against men in the judgment.

"God's law reaches the feelings and motives, as well as the outward acts. It reveals the secrets of the heart, flashing light upon things before buried in darkness. God knows every thought, every purpose, every plan, every motive. **The books of heaven record the sins that would have been committed had there been opportunity.** God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing."⁸

Ideally speaking, the more one's sinfulness is exposed and brought to light, the deeper will be the work of repentance. Unfortunately, one's understanding of his sinfulness of life can be grossly distorted and even blurred as a result of constructive reforms introduced in the life at conversion. The introduction of positive modifications in the diet, the dress, the disposition and the deportment often lead many to think (erroneously) that they have become more and more righteous and therefore, less and less sinful. This is self-deception at its very best; it is the very essence of the Laodicean gridlock which says, "I am

increased with goods and have need of nothing." Needless to say that it is a lot easier to fall into this trap than many people realize. It is in fact, the condition of many people in the church, although it may not be discerned and acknowledged. This explains why of Laodicea, Jesus exclaimed, "Thou knowest not. . . ." Everything told, this attitude is deplorable and very much affects the degree of repentance felt.

A WORK OF DEEP REPENTANCE TO PRECEDE THE FINAL ATONEMENT AND CLEANSING

God will have a people in the last days who will be closely connected to His Son in the context of His final ministration in the holy of holies. These will be led to grasp fully the extent of the sinfulness of their lives, even to the point of despair. They will clearly discern it in contrast with the matchless charms of Christ. They will then be led by the Holy Ghost to ditch the Laodicean mindset so prevalent in the churches these days and go through a spiritual catharsis characterized by deep soul-searching and deep repentance. This experience will be similar to what Isaiah went through, except it will be much more intense and much more sustained. This experience, termed "afflicting the soul" (Leviticus 16:29; 23:27-32) is what prepares the remnant church for the final atonement and cleansing.

"Zechariah's vision of Joshua and the Angel applies with peculiar force to the experience of God's people in the closing scenes of the great day of atonement. . . ."

"As Joshua pleaded before the Angel, so the remnant church, with brokenness of heart and unfaltering faith, will plead for pardon and deliverance through Jesus, their Advocate. They are **fully conscious of the sinfulness of their lives**, they see their weakness and unworthiness; and they are ready to despair."⁹

A work of deep self-examination and repentance is called for at this time. (Joel 2:13.) The usual adherence to cold, spiritless, formalistic rites and ceremonies in the church



The vision given to Isaiah represents the condition of God's people in the last days. They are privileged to see by faith the work that is going forward in the heavenly sanctuary.



will not be sufficient to make this happen. Neither will the customary preaching of lifeless, theoretical sermons nor the offering up of anemic, mechanical prayers in the church and in the home bring this experience about. Only a practical religion characterized by an incessant seeking after God in daily, hourly communion and becoming assimilated with Him, will avail.

Since we are now living during the antitypical day of atonement, it is not business as usual in the church. Soul affliction is Christ's marching orders to the remnant church. Jesus is about to make His final atonement; He is about to give the command, "Take away the filthy garments and . . . I will clothe thee with change of raiment" (Zechariah 3:1-5). Soon, in line with His closing ministration in the heavenly sanctuary as High Priest, Jesus will cleanse His people from all iniquity and sin by conferring upon them His perfect righteousness. Those who have been in the habit of lamenting their spiritual declension and mourning over their poverty of soul, will receive it, while those who have been careless and indifferent will be cut off from among His people.

Will you be one of those blessed ones who will receive the benefit of His final atonement and be part of the 144,000? Will your name be retained in the Lamb's book of life? Will you be cleansed completely and permanently of all unrighteousness and be fitted to dwell in the

society of sinless angels? May the Lord count us all worthy. Be zealous therefore and repent.

"As the people of God afflict their souls before Him, pleading for purity of heart, the command is given, 'Take away the filthy garments,' and the encouraging words are spoken, 'Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment' (Zechariah 3:4). The spotless robe of Christ's righteousness is placed upon the tried, tempted, faithful children of God. The despised remnant are clothed in glorious apparel, nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions of the world. Their names are retained in the Lamb's book of life, enrolled among the faithful of all ages. They have resisted the wiles of the deceiver; they have not been turned from their loyalty by the dragon's roar. Now they are eternally secure from the tempter's devices. Their sins are transferred to the originator of sin. A 'fair miter' is set upon their heads."¹⁰ *R*

References:

- ¹ *The Acts of Apostles*, p. 561.
- ² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 85.
- ³ *Steps to Christ*, p. 29.
- ⁴ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1139.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 575. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁷ *The Great Controversy*, p. 482.
- ⁸ *The Signs of the Times*, July 31, 1901. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁹ *Prophets and Kings*, p. 588. [Emphasis added.]
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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2024

CONVERSION

BY ELIAS RIVERA — U.S.A.

METAMORPHOSIS

Nature has beautiful illustrations that teach us about the great power of God, as well as His redemptive work in our hearts. The cycle of butterflies is composed of four stages, namely: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. The process is short, taking about a month. Butterflies lay their eggs on the underside of the leaves of the plants on which their larvae will feed. When the egg hatches, a small caterpillar emerges from its shell. Caterpillars, on the other hand, are very voracious; they eat a lot and grow quickly. When the caterpillar reaches maturity, it forms a pupa, which is also called a chrysalis. Once inside the chrysalis, the caterpillar will undergo a transformation known as metamorphosis and after a few days, from the pupa will emerge a beautiful butterfly.

The caterpillar undergoes a total transformation. He becomes a completely different creature with a completely new and distinct nature. And this is what God intends for our spiritual life in Christ: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away;

behold, **all things are become new**" (2 Corinthians 5:17). God's plan is to transform our lives, to restore His image in us, to change our hearts. He declares, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26, 27).

The word "conversion" means to transform, to make different, to change completely into something other than what it was. An example of this is found in John 16:20, "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy" or in Revelation 11:6, ". . . they have power over waters to turn them into blood."

So, when we speak of conversion, we're talking about God's transforming work **for** man and **in** man, a work whereby man is forgiven and transformed, a sublime work that justifies and sanctifies the believer. It is a work whereby the old man is crucified and buried and where the new man is born to new life.

HOW CONVERSION WORKS

Conversion is God's work in man by the power of His love and His Holy Spirit. There are radical conversions such as that of Saul, a conversion which was very marked when the man of Tarsus had a personal encounter with Christ on his way to Damascus. Saul's life was impacted by the revelation of Christ's glory. This encounter changed his life instantly to the point that, smitten with blindness and prostrated on the ground, he declared: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). He who had been heading to Damascus with dark purposes against the church of Christ, regained his sight only after spending three days of fasting and prayer followed by baptism. Then he immediately began to work to build the church that days before he had persecuted with a passion. Saul was now eager to preach Christ who was now the center of his life and message. "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20).

The conversion of Saul, also called Paul (signifying "the little



[Emphasis added throughout.]

one”), was a work of God’s grace and the transforming love of Jesus Christ. This caused the fierce persecutor to be himself persecuted for Jesus’ sake, and to proclaim His message without fear, facing all kinds of difficulties, even death itself. There are also other types of conversion such as in the case of Nicodemus. It took three years after that interview with Jesus (see John chapter 3) for Nicodemus to reach the point of making public his faith in Jesus and surrendering himself completely to the crucified Saviour.

WE OWE IT ALL TO GOD

“The wind is heard among the branches of the trees, rustling the leaves and flowers; yet it is invisible, and no man knows whence it comes or whither it goes. So with the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. It can no more be explained than can the movements of the wind. **A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or to trace all the circumstances in the process of conversion; but this does not prove him to be unconverted.** By an agency as unseen as the wind,

Christ is constantly working upon the heart. **Little by little, perhaps unconsciously to the receiver, impressions are made that tend to draw the soul to Christ.** These may be received through meditating upon Him, through reading the Scriptures, or through hearing the word from the living preacher. **Suddenly, as the Spirit comes with more direct appeal, the soul gladly surrenders itself to Jesus.** By many this is called sudden conversion; but it is the result of long wooing by the Spirit of God—a patient, protracted process.”¹

DO NOT RESIST

“How, then, are we to be saved? . . . **The light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. His love is drawing us to Himself.** If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour. Then **the Spirit of God through faith produces a new life in the soul. The thoughts and desires are brought into obedience to the will of Christ. The heart, the mind, are created anew in the image of Him who works in us to subdue all things to Himself.** Then the law of God is written in the mind and heart, and we can say with Christ, ‘I delight to do Thy will, O my God’ (Psalm 40:8).”²

CONVERSION BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

“While the wind is itself invisible, it produces effects that are seen and felt. So the work of the Spirit upon the soul will reveal itself in every act of him who has felt its saving power. **When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife.** Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven. No one sees the hand that lifts the burden, or beholds the light descend from the courts above. **The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God.** Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God.”³

GENUINE REPENTANCE

“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).

“**Without true repentance, there can be no true conversion.** Many are deceived here, and too often their entire experience proves to be a deception. This is why so many who are joined to the church have never been joined to Christ.”⁴

“Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin” (Ezekiel 18:30).

“Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life.”⁵

However, to experience this kind of repentance, we need to understand how it is produced. “As the sinner is convicted of sin, he is also attracted by the love and holiness of Christ; for Jesus is drawing him unto Himself. No man can originate the repentance which is essential for the saving of the soul. He can no more bring himself to repentance than he can bring about his own conversion. Repentance is born in the heart by beholding the love of Christ, who gave His life to save the sinner. It is the love of God that softens the hardest hearts.”⁶

FRUITS OF CONVERSION

The work of conversion brings with it wonderful fruits: A new life, a clean and renewed heart, a right spirit and other fruits, are glorious evidences of conversion. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a **new creature**: old things are passed away; behold, **all things are become new**” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

- The **Samaritan woman**, upon converting to Jesus, gave up her life of adultery and went to the city to confess Jesus Christ as the Saviour Messiah. John 4:28, 29.

- The **demoniac**, who was naked when he was released, was now seen clothed and in his right mind;

his nakedness disappeared after his conversion. Luke 8:35.

• **Peter**, the unlettered fisherman, after his conversion became a faithful shepherd of the gospel, a learned man and a herald of the kingdom of light. Matthew 4:19.

• **Zacchaeus**, the tax collector, who was accused of being a traitor and an enemy of the people after his conversion, gave half of his property to the poor and decided to make restitution to those he had defrauded. Luke 19:8, 9.

• **Mary**, who was possessed by seven demons because of her licentious life, after her deliverance and conversion brought Jesus a precious gift in order to express her love and gratitude. Mark 14:3.

Conversion will cause the excellence of Christ to flourish in our lives; there will be a missionary spirit, submission to the will of God, faithfulness, and holy joy. All that is noble and beautiful will abound in the life of one who has been converted to the Lord.

“The spirit of Christ is a missionary spirit. **The very first impulse of the renewed heart is to bring others also to the Saviour.**”⁷

“**Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary.** He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver.”⁸

FALSE CONVERSION

It is fashionable to make a profession of religion. Not all who profess to be religious are indeed Christians; many who call themselves Christians do not obey the principles of God’s law, they live fed by the old man pleasing the flesh. They are self-deceived into believing they are converted when in fact they are not. Many proclaim: “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess” (Luke 18:11, 12). The profession will have no value if the heart has not been changed.

The reason for false conversions is not due to a lack of knowledge or opportunities, but to a lack of total

and complete surrender, to the failure to open one’s heart fully to Jesus and allow the transforming work of His grace to operate in the life.

A prime example is that of Judas Iscariot, whose notoriety is well known.

“Judas did not come to the point of surrendering himself fully to Christ. He did not give up his worldly ambition or his love of money. While he accepted the position of a minister of Christ, he did not bring himself under the divine molding.”⁹

When you are willing to separate totally from all your sinful ways, you will be one with Christ, and to be one with Christ is to enter into the way of life and the regions of peace.

So now that we are in the Week of Prayer, let this be an opportunity to examine our hearts and see if there is any path of iniquity we are following—if our affections are divided, if we have idols that occupy the throne of the heart, and to ensure that we have an experience where Jesus is the King and the only King who occupies the throne of our hearts. (Isaiah 33:22.) “**Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old**” (Lamentations 5:21).

THE TIME HAS COME

It is time for us, like Jacob, to remove the idols that have been in our hearts and bury them forever (Genesis 35:2–4). It is time to be born again by the word of God and the power of His spirit (1 Peter 1:23). It is time to be free with the freedom with which Christ made us free. It’s time to leave the divided heart, and, by God’s miraculous grace, be transformed into men, women, and youth after His own heart (Acts 13:22). It’s time to say yes to Jesus. If you surrender to Jesus today, He will perform the miracle that may be missing in your life. His purpose is firm: “And I will give them **one heart, and I will put a new spirit** within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: **That they may walk in my statutes**, and keep

mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God” (Ezekiel 11:19, 20).

REAL, NON-SUPERFICIAL CONVERSION

Conversion must be real, not superficial. The inner heart must be changed, not just the outward life; the core of faith must go beyond the ritualistic or ceremonial. In the Saviour’s day, Jews and religious leaders made a great show of godliness, but Jesus declared their lives to be empty and immoral. Matthew 23:27, 28. More than external changes are required; these have their place, but the “spiritual heart”—that is, the mind—must be renewed, and this will bring forth new life.

The Jewish people in Christ’s day relied on sacrifices and rituals instead of the One to whom these pointed. And as if that were not enough, they came to replace the lost presence of God with numerous requirements of human invention—even going so far as to measure their holiness by the multitude of ceremonies, while their hearts remained unchanged, full of pride and hypocrisy.

It is not outward changes or improvements that are required, but a total and complete transformation of life. The fur of the Arctic fox is brown, but during the winter its fur becomes as white as snow. It then seems that the fox is a different being, but in truth the only thing that changed is its fur, a change that will provide it with camouflage during the winter season. Although his outward appearance changes temporarily, his nature remains the same, he is still that of a bold, stalking, murderous fox.

“**The fountain of the heart must be purified** before the streams can become pure. **He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility.** There is no safety for one who has merely a legal religion, a form of godliness. **The Christian’s life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature.** There is a death to self and sin, and a new

life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit."¹⁰

"I DIE DAILY"

Our walk with God must be daily; every day we need His renewing grace in our hearts so that our old sinful nature—"the old man"—is utterly annihilated. The observation has been made that while the old man is buried in the waters of baptism, the wretch also happens to be a good swimmer. Hence the determined words of Paul: "I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31).

"There is need of constant watchfulness, a daily reconversion, that our individual traits of character shall be wholly sanctified to God. All our powers are to be purified from the dross of sin, and trained for service."¹¹

"Paul's sanctification was a constant conflict with self. 'I die daily,' he said. Every day his will and his desires conflicted with duty and the will of God. But instead of following inclination, he did the will of God, however unpleasant and crucifying to his nature. If we would press forward to the mark of our high calling in Christ Jesus, we must show that we are emptied of all self, and supplied with the golden oil of grace."¹²

THE SECRET IS REVEALED

Daniel in Babylon is described as a blameless man: "Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but **they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him**" (Daniel 6:4).

Where was the secret to living such a faithful life? King Darius reveals Daniel's secret to us; he recognized on two occasions that Daniel's secret was in his continual communion with God. Daniel maintained a life of faith and daily prayer, enjoying intimate communion with God every day. The inspired record says: "**O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continu-**

ally, able to deliver thee from the lions?" "Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God" (Daniel 6:20, 23).

"Genuine conversion brings us daily into communion with God. There will be temptations to meet, and a strong undercurrent drawing us from God to our former state of indifference and sinful forgetfulness of God."¹³

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

PERSONAL CONVERSION

Every one of us needs to make sure of our individual consecration, a personal conversion. We all need to gain a living experience; Christ must be enthroned in the heart, His Spirit must control our affections. Parents need the redeeming grace of God through a personal experience with Christ, just as children do. Each one must be grafted into the true vine to yield the fruits by which our heavenly Father is honored. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8).

"God is dealing with us through His providence. From eternity He has chosen us to be His obedient children. He gave His Son to die for us, that we might be sanctified through obedience to the truth, cleansed from all the littleness of self. Now He requires of us a personal work, a personal self-surrender."¹⁴

"Into the city of God there will enter nothing that defiles. All who are to be dwellers there will here have become pure in heart. In one who is learning of Jesus, there will be manifest a growing distaste for careless manners, unseemly language, and coarse thought. When Christ abides in the heart, there will be purity and refinement of thought and manner."¹⁵

CONCLUSION

Enoch walked with God 300 years after the birth of his son Methuselah, and for more than 300 years every day Enoch invited God to walk with him, until one day God came and essentially said to him, "Enoch, you have invited me to walk with you for all these 300 years, so today I have come to invite you to walk with me," and took him to heaven. "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Genesis 5:24). Enoch not only prayed but also faithfully fulfilled his duties to God and to his fellowmen; Enoch came to love what God loved and hate what God hated; he lived by faith a life in the way of obedience, pleasing God in all that he did. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he **had this testimony, that he pleased God**" (Hebrews 11:5).

"Now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning" (Joel 2:12). Take enough time today to consider your ways and see if you are in a right relationship with Jesus.

- Would you like to surrender your heart to Jesus today to be changed?
- And you who have already given yourself to Jesus, would you like to renew your surrender to Jesus so that your heart may be ever more beautiful like Christ's?
- Would you like to pray right now to give your heart to Jesus?

Let us pray together. *R*

References:

- ¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 172.
- ² *Ibid.*, pp. 175, 176. [Emphasis added.]
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 173. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁴ *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p. 298. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁵ *Steps to Christ*, p. 23.
- ⁶ *The Review and Herald*, September 3, 1901.
- ⁷ *The Great Controversy*, p. 70. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁸ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 195. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 717.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 172. [Emphasis added.]
- ¹¹ *This Day With God*, p. 307.
- ¹² *The Youth's Instructor*, August 24, 1899.
- ¹³ *This Day With God*, p. 277.
- ¹⁴ *The Youth's Instructor*, August 24, 1899.
- ¹⁵ *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 24, 25.

THE BLOTTING OUT OF SINS

BY JETHRO M. SITHOLE — SOUTH AFRICA

[*Emphasis added throughout.*]

“**I**, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins” (Isaiah 43:25). To blot out means to remove completely without a trace, to efface or to wipe out of existence or memory.

God’s assurance conveyed to us through the prophet Isaiah means that “All who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life.”¹ Let us therefore consider deeply why the blotting out of sins is necessary.

DISOBEDIENCE AND THE STAIN OF SIN

After man disobeyed God’s law in Eden, “the halo of glory, which God had given holy Adam, covering

him as a garment, departed from him after his transgression. The light of God’s glory could not cover disobedience and sin. In the place of health and plenitude of blessings, poverty, sickness, and suffering of every type were to be the portion of the children of Adam.”² Tragically, man forfeited great privileges in exchange for the stains of sin.

“Satan accomplished the fall of man, and since that time it has been his work to efface in man the image of God, and to stamp upon human hearts his own image.”³

“Before the entrance of sin, Adam enjoyed open communion with his Maker; but since man separated himself from God by transgression, the human race has been cut off from this high privilege. By the plan of redemption, however, a way has been opened whereby the inhabitants of the earth may still have connection with heaven.”⁴

GOD’S AMAZING LOVE FOR HUMANITY

The death of Adam and Eve due to disobedience was certain. Had it

not been for the plan of salvation, they would have died immediately upon eating the forbidden fruit.

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). The depth of God’s love expressed in the words, “God so loved the world” (John 3:16), can be better understood through the amazing revelation that the Lamb of God was “slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

Actuated by love which existed even before our creation, God made a promise of enmity against the evil one (see Genesis 3:15). “While [this promise] foretold war between man and Satan, it declared that **the power of the great adversary would finally be broken.**”⁵

“None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law and bring him again into harmony with Heaven.”⁶ God’s amazing love was manifested through the plan of salvation to restore His perfect plan for the human race. The Lord instituted the sacrificial services to visually reveal His plan of salvation.



THE SANCTUARY

“The term ‘sanctuary,’ as used in the Bible, refers, first, to the tabernacle built by Moses, as a pattern of heavenly things; and, secondly, to the ‘true tabernacle’ in heaven, to which the earthly sanctuary pointed.”⁸

While on their journey to Canaan, God commanded Israel through Moses to make Him a sanctuary; that He may dwell among them (Exodus 25:8). “God presented before Moses in the mount a view of the heavenly sanctuary, and commanded him to make all things according to the pattern shown him.”⁹

The earthly sanctuary or tabernacle was composed of the courtyard, the holy place, and the most holy place which represented the prophesied work of Christ from His birth to His blotting out of sin.

1. The courtyard (Exodus 27:9–18), the area surrounding the tabernacle and in which all the offerings were slain, is a type of the earth where Jesus, the great antitypical offering, was destined to die for our sins (John 12:32, 33).¹⁰ The singular entrance to the courtyard into which the sinner would bring their sin offering, reminds us of faith in Christ as the only access to our covenant relationship with God (John 10:7, 9). **The altar of burnt offering** (Exodus 27:1–8) beside which the blood of the sacrifice was poured out and the ashes of the burnt offering were placed (Leviticus 6:10; Deuteronomy 12:27), foreshadowed the pouring out of the precious blood of Jesus, which would remove the curse of sin from this earth, and pave the way for its purification by fire (Malachi 4:1,3).¹¹ The blood of the sacrifice also taught that it was by Jesus’ blood alone that we have a bold entrance into God’s presence within the sanctuary (Hebrews 10:19, 20 (ESV, ISV)). **The laver** of water (Exodus 30:17–21) between the courtyard entrance and the tabernacle and in which the priests were to wash both hands and feet before entering the tabernacle, is an appropriate illustration of the truth taught to Nicodemus regarding the spiritual cleansing needed to enter God’s presence, of which baptism is also a symbol (John 3:5).¹²

2. The tabernacle was divided into the holy place and the most holy place (Hebrews 9:1, 2).

A. **The holy place** had the following symbolic furniture: **The shewbread** (Exodus 25:23–30) which met its fulfillment in Jesus, the bread of life (John 6:48, 33, 51).¹³ **The candlestick** (Exodus 25:31–40) represented the church (Revelation 1:12, 20) which is to uphold the lamp of the word (Psalm 119:105) while the oil within each lamp symbolized the work of the Holy Spirit on earth (Zechariah 4:1–6, 10 c.f. Revelation 5:6). **The altar of incense** (Exodus 30:1–7) represented Jesus’ unceasing fragrant intercession mixed with our prayers (Hebrews 7:25; Revelation 8:3, 4).

B. **The most holy place** (Hebrews 9:3–5) had the following symbolic furniture and items: **The ark of the covenant** (Exodus 25:10–22), a symbol of the divine presence of God.¹⁴ Within the ark were the two tables of stone with **Ten Commandments** written by the finger of God (Deuteronomy 10:4, 5). These were and remain the expression of God’s unchanging character.¹⁵ **The mercy seat** (Exodus 25:17–21) covering the broken law, was where the visible presence of God was manifested (Exodus 25:32; 30:6). This represented the union of mercy and justice in the plan of redemption and was a fitting symbol of the throne of the great God, who proclaims His name as “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,” (Exodus 34:5–7).¹⁶ **The pot of manna** (Hebrews 9:4) was a reminder of God’s providential care when He rained bread upon His people in the wilderness to sustain their lives (Exodus 16:32, 33). So, today, in His care for us, God has rained upon us precious rays of light on the food question that will prove a blessing to all who gather them up.¹⁷ As we share this light, doors will open for the preaching of the gospel. Thus, the health message is to be the right hand of the third angel’s message.¹⁸ **Aaron’s rod** that budded (Hebrews 9:4) was a reminder to respect the system of order and leadership God had established for His church.¹⁹

SYMBOLS AND MONUMENTS OF CHRIST’S ATONEMENT

Atonement is the reconciliation of God with humanity through the sacrificial death of Christ. After declaring the plan of salvation to Adam and Eve, God replaced the departed garment of light and the fig leaf aprons with coats of skins, symbolizing the robe of Christ’s righteousness and the garment of salvation. To make those coats, a sacrifice had to be made, for “without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22), prefiguring the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

From the altar built by Abraham in the land of Moriah to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, to the temple built by Solomon on Mount Moriah for God’s presence and the animal blood sacrifices throughout the ages, symbols and monuments proclaiming the efficacy of Christ’s blood to blot out man’s sins have been evident (Genesis 22:2; 2 Chronicles 3:1). “The correct understanding of the ministration in the heavenly sanctuary is the foundation of our faith.”⁷

The earthly sanctuary and its typical services were temporarily instituted by God to teach Israel and us about the sacrificial system, the perfect and complete plan of salvation and Christ's ministration in the heavenly sanctuary. **The death of Christ on the cross blotted out the earthly sanctuary sacrificial ordinances** and thus they carry no further significance today (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 9:8-14).

THE PRIESTHOOD

There are notable distinctions between Jesus' priesthood in contrast to the earthly priesthood.

God chose the tribe of Levi to serve in the priesthood of the earthly tabernacle (Numbers 1:50; Exodus 28:1; Leviticus 21:17-23). But Jesus could not be a high priest on earth, "for it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood" (Hebrews 7:14). A high priest was chosen from his people (Hebrews 5:1). For Jesus to become humanity's high priest in heaven, He "took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:16). Unlike the Levite priesthood, Jesus' priesthood after the order of Melchisedec has no beginning or end (Hebrews 7:3).

Two events marked the transition from the earthly to the heavenly priesthood. When Christ was nailed to the cross, "the rending of the veil of the temple showed that the Jewish sacrifices and ordinances would no longer be received."²⁰ "By rending his garment, [Caiaphas] cut himself off from being a representative character. He was no longer accepted by God as the officiating high priest."²¹

THE DAILY SACRIFICES

The daily sacrificial services were conducted in the courtyard and the holy place to point forward to the Messiah's sacrifice on the cross. The sinner was required to bring a young unblemished animal (lamb) as a sin offering. The lamb (Exodus 12:21) represented Jesus the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7). The

sinner laid his hands on the head of the animal while confessing his sins as he personally slew the animal.

The priest took its blood, sprinkled it on the horns of the altar and poured the remainder at the bottom of the altar or sprinkled it before the veil over the altar of incense in the holy place or ate part of the offering before entering the holy place. The entire service signified the transfer of sins from the sinner to the sanctuary (Hebrews 9:6; Leviticus 4:3, 7, 22, 23; 6:10; 10:17, 18).

"As the priests morning and evening entered the holy place at the time of incense, the daily sacrifice was ready to be offered upon the altar in the court without . . . [the worshippers] united in silent prayer, with their faces toward the holy place. Thus their petitions ascended with the cloud of incense, while faith laid hold upon the merits of the promised Saviour prefigured by the atoning sacrifice."²²

"The sins of Israel being thus transferred to the sanctuary, the holy places were defiled, and a special work became necessary for the removal of the sins. God commanded that an atonement be made for each of the sacred apartments, as for the altar, to 'cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.'²³

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) is the 10th day of the 7th month of Tishrei (between September and October) and remains the holiest day in the Jewish calendar (Leviticus 23:27).

"Once a year, on the great Day of Atonement, the priest entered the most holy place for the cleansing of the sanctuary. The work there performed completed the yearly round of ministration (Hebrews 9:7)."²⁴

"Every man was to afflict his soul while the work of atonement was going forward. All business was laid aside, and the whole congregation of Israel spent the day in solemn humiliation before God, with prayer, fasting, and deep searching of heart. . . . Such was the service performed 'unto the example and shadow of heavenly things' (Hebrews 8:5)."²⁵

CHRIST'S MINISTRY IN THE HOLY PLACE

After Christ's ascension to heaven, He began His work as our High Priest. "For eighteen centuries this work of ministration continued in the first apartment of the sanctuary. The blood of Christ, pleaded in behalf of penitent believers, secured their pardon and acceptance with the Father, yet their sins still remained upon the books of record."²⁶

THE INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT

"As the typical cleansing of the earthly was accomplished by the removal of the sins by which it had been polluted, so the actual cleansing of the heavenly is to be accomplished by the removal, or blotting out, of the sins which are there recorded. But before this can be accomplished, there must be an examination of the books of record to determine who, through repentance of sin and faith in Christ, are entitled to the benefits of His atonement. The cleansing of the sanctuary therefore involves a work of investigation a work of judgment. This work must be performed prior to the coming of Christ to redeem His people."²⁷

"In the great day of final atonement and investigative judgment the only cases considered are those of the professed people of God [1 Peter 4:17]. The judgment of the wicked is a distinct and separate work, and takes place at a later period."²⁸

"At the time appointed for the judgment—the close of the 2300 days, in 1844—began the work of investigation and blotting out of sins. All who have ever taken upon themselves the name of Christ must pass its searching scrutiny. Both the living and the dead are to be judged 'out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.'²⁹

"The books of record in heaven, in which the names and the deeds of men are registered, are to determine the decisions of the judgment. . . .

"The book of life contains the names of all who have ever entered the service of God. . . . [Luke 10:20, Philippians 4:3; Daniel 12:1; Revelation 21:27.]

“A book of remembrance is written before God, in which are recorded the good deeds of ‘them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name’ (Malachi 3:16; Nehemiah 13:14). . . . Every deed of righteousness is immortalized.

“There is a **record also of the sins of men.**”³⁰ Every evil deed, every idle word spoken will be judged (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 12:36, 37; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Isaiah 65:6, 7).

“Sins that have not been repented of and forsaken will not be pardoned and blotted out of the books of record, but will stand to witness against the sinner in the day of God. . . . Sin may be concealed, denied, covered up from father, mother, wife, children, and associates; no one but the guilty actors may cherish the least suspicion of the wrong; but it is laid bare before the intelligences of heaven. . . . God has an exact record of every unjust account and every unfair dealing.”³¹

“Every man’s work passes in review before God and is registered for faithfulness or unfaithfulness. Opposite each name in the books of heaven is entered with terrible exactness every wrong word, every selfish act, every unfulfilled duty, and every secret sin, with every artful dissembling.”³² “How solemn is the thought! Day after day, passing into eternity, bears its burden of records for the books of heaven. . . . Our acts, our words, even our most secret motives . . . though they may be forgotten by us, they will bear their testimony to justify or condemn.”³³

CHRIST OUR ADVOCATE IN THE MOST HOLY PLACE

“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). See also Hebrews 9:24.

“As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of all who have believed on Jesus come in review before God. Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation, and closes with the living. Every name is mentioned, every case closely investigated. Names are accepted, names

rejected. **When any have sins remaining upon the books of record, unrepented of and unforgiven, their names will be blotted out** of the book of life, and the record of their good deeds will be erased from the book of God’s remembrance. . . .

“All who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life.” [Isaiah 43:25; Revelation 3:5; Matthew 10:32, 33.]³⁴

OUR SOLEMN RESPONSIBILITY

Our proper understanding of the work of investigative judgment requires us to take decisive action about our salvation.

“All who would have their names retained in the book of life should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance. There must be deep, faithful searching of heart. The light, frivolous spirit indulged by so many professed Christians must be put away.”³⁵

We need to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. (Philippians 2:12.) “When the work of the investigative judgment closes, the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death. Probation is ended a short time before the appearing of the Lord in the clouds of heaven. Christ . . . declares: ‘He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.’ Revelation 22:11, 12.”³⁶

CONCLUSION

“The righteous and the wicked will still be living upon the earth in their mortal state—men will be planting and building, eating and

drinking, all unconscious that the final, irrevocable decision has been pronounced in the sanctuary above. . . . Silently, unnoticed as the midnight thief, will come the decisive hour which marks the fixing of every man’s destiny, the final withdrawal of mercy’s offer to guilty men.

“Watch ye therefore: . . . lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping” (Mark 13:35, 36). **Perilous is the condition of those who, growing weary of their watch, turn to the attractions of the world.** While the man of business is absorbed in the pursuit of gain, while the pleasure lover is seeking indulgence, while the daughter of fashion is arranging her adornments—it may be in that hour the Judge of all the earth will pronounce the sentence: ‘Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.’ Daniel 5:27.”³⁷

Not until God will have destroyed the author of sin, should the people of God consider themselves free from the burden of sin. **Now is the time to afflict ourselves, deeply search our hearts and pray earnestly for the blotting out of our sins instead of the blotting out of our names from the book of life, Amen.** *R*

References:

- ¹ *Maranatha*, p. 93.
- ² *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 270.
- ³ *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 161.
- ⁴ *The Great Controversy*, p. c. 2. [1888 edition.]
- ⁵ *The Faith I Live By*, p. 75.
- ⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63.
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- ⁸ *The Faith I Live By*, p. 202.
- ⁹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 343.
- ¹⁰ Haskell, S.N., *The Cross and Its Shadow*, pp. 176, 178.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 129, 130.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 179.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- ¹⁴ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 157.
- ¹⁵ *Reflecting Christ*, p. 46.
- ¹⁶ *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 69.
- ¹⁷ *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 269.
- ¹⁸ *Counsels on Health*, p. 219.
- ¹⁹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 397, 403.
- ²⁰ *Early Writings*, pp. 259, 260.
- ²¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 709.
- ²² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 353.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 355.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ *The Great Controversy*, p. 421.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 480.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 486.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 480, 481.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 486.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p. 482.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 486, 487.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 483.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 490.
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THE TIMES OF REFRESHING

BY A. C. SAS — AUSTRALIA

The Holy Scriptures plainly teach us that “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). So also the “refreshing” has a time when it should be fulfilled.

The word “refreshing” was used in the East with reference to the rain that fell upon the ground before the final harvest of the grain. It was also known as “the latter rain.”

“In the East the former rain falls at the sowing time. It is necessary in order that the seed may germinate. Under the influence of the fertilizing showers, the tender shoot springs up. The latter rain, falling near the close of the season, ripens the grain and prepares it for the sickle. The Lord employs these operations of nature to represent the work of the Holy Spirit.”¹

The prophet Zechariah in the Old Testament made reference not only to the falling of the latter rain, but also about the need of God’s people to pray and ask for its outpouring at the appropriate time.

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

In the New Testament the apostle Peter makes also reference to the “refreshing,” when he addressed his sermon to a multitude that gathered together on the day of Pentecost. At that time they were endowed with great power from heaven. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon them abundantly. That experience which they had was called the “early rain,” or the “former rain.”

“As the ‘former rain’ was given, in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the opening of the gospel, to cause the upspringing of the precious seed, so the ‘latter rain’ will be given at its close for the ripening of the harvest.”²

When the apostle Peter spoke of the “times of refreshing” he made it clear that some very important steps must be taken before the fulfillment of the event, as outlined in

the readings of this Week of Prayer, focused on the Bible verse: “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” (Acts 3:19, 20).

We have here five important points:

- a) Repentance
- b) Conversion
- c) Blotting out of sins
- d) Times of refreshing
- e) The coming of Jesus

REPENTANCE

Genuine repentance will lead a person to acknowledge their sin and confess it. “The examples in God’s word of genuine repentance and humiliation reveal a spirit of confession in which there is no excuse for sin or attempt at self-justification. Paul did not seek to shield himself; he paints his sin in its darkest hue, not attempting to lessen his guilt.”³



The apostle John writes, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8, 9). This is a wonderful promise: If we confess our sins, we are forgiven and are cleansed.

CONVERSION

After we repent and confess our sins we are invited to be converted. Conversion is a complete 180° turn in our lives, taking the opposite direction. The Lord invites us to turn away from the world to Him, willingly, not by coercion:

"Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil" (Joel 2:12, 13).

"A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits."⁴

This is not just a little improvement in our spiritual life but a complete change.

"There is no evidence of genuine repentance unless it works reformation. If he restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, confess his sins, and love God and his fellow men, the sinner may be sure that he has passed from death unto life."⁵

BLOTTING OUT OF SINS

As we have also seen during this Week of Prayer, only sins confessed and forsaken can be blotted out, or cancelled in the book of life. The cancellation of sins must take place before we receive the "refreshing"—the "latter rain."

"The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. The prophecies which were fulfilled in the outpouring of the former rain at the opening of the gospel, are again to be fulfilled in the latter rain at its close. Here are 'the times of refreshing' to which the apostle Peter looked forward when he said, 'Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out [in the Investigative Judgment], when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus.'"⁶

PREPARATION FOR THE LATTER RAIN

When the early rain fell on the day of Pentecost most of the disciples were gathered into one place, in the upper room. What were they doing there for ten days? The Bible tells us:

"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren" (Acts 1:14).

"These days of preparation were days of deep heart searching. The disciples felt their spiritual need and cried to the Lord for the holy unction that was to fit them for the

work of soul saving. They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely. They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls."⁷

This was fulfilled in Acts 2:1–4.

"The promise of the Holy Spirit is not limited to any age or to any race. Christ declared that the divine influence of His Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. From the Day of Pentecost to the present time, the Comforter has been sent to all who have yielded themselves fully to the Lord and to His service."⁸

In spite of the fact that the Holy Spirit is given us today in a certain measure, to teach us and guide us into all truth, the promised latter rain is needed for the finishing of God's work, for the conclusion of the proclamation of the everlasting gospel. And this promise will be fulfilled:

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

When we read the word "afterward" in the book of Joel we understand that in the last days a work must be accomplished before the Holy Spirit will be given us with the greatest measure. In the previous verses of Joel 2, the prophet makes it clear the work that must be done before the latter rain:

"Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people" (Joel 2:16–18).

No one will receive the “refreshing,” or “latter rain,” if his sins are not blotted out, or cancelled. Yet, it is sad to say, that many are expecting to receive that great blessing in their sinful condition, without repentance and conversion, expecting that in the time of the latter rain they will be reformed. The cases of such are hopeless, as we read in the following statements:

“I saw that many were neglecting the preparation so needful and were looking to the time of ‘refreshing’ and the ‘latter rain’ to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight. Oh, how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! They had neglected the needful preparation; therefore they could not receive the refreshing that all must have to fit them to live in the sight of a holy God. . . . I saw that none could share the ‘refreshing’ unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action.”⁹

“Those who delay a preparation for the day of God cannot obtain it in the time of trouble or at any subsequent time. The case of all such is hopeless.”¹⁰

“Day by day we are to seek the enlightenment of the Spirit of God, that it may do its office work upon the soul and character. Oh, how much time has been wasted through giving attention to trifling things. Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”¹¹

“Today you are to have your vessel purified that it may be ready for the heavenly dew, ready for the showers of the latter rain; for the latter rain will come, and the blessing of God will fill every soul that is purified from every defilement. It is our work today to yield our souls to Christ, that we may be fitted for the time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord—fitted for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.”¹²

THE LATTER RAIN WILL BE Poured OUT:

“Before the final visitation of

God’s judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon His children.”¹³

“As the members of the body of Christ approach the period of their last conflict, ‘the time of Jacob’s trouble,’ they will grow up into Christ, and will partake largely of His Spirit. As the third message swells to a loud cry, and as great power and glory attend the closing work, the faithful people of God will partake of that glory. It is the latter rain which revives and strengthens them to pass through the time of trouble. Their faces will shine with the glory of that light which attends the third angel.”¹⁴

“Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month” (Joel 2:23).

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:17, 18).

“At the commencement of the time of trouble, we were filled with the Holy Ghost as we went forth and proclaimed the Sabbath more fully.”¹⁵

“‘The commencement of that time of trouble,’ here mentioned does not refer to the time when the plagues shall begin to be poured out, but to a short period just before they are poured out, while Christ is in the sanctuary. At that time, while the work of salvation is closing, trouble will be coming on the earth, and the nations will be angry, yet held in check so as not to prevent the work of the third angel. At that time the ‘latter rain,’ or refreshing from the presence of the Lord, will come, to give power to the loud

voice of the third angel, and prepare the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out.”¹⁶

“The people of God have accomplished their work. They have received ‘the latter rain,’ ‘the refreshing from the presence of the Lord,’ and they are prepared for the trying hour before them. Angels are hastening to and fro in heaven. An angel returning from the earth announces that his work is done; the final test has been brought upon the world, and all who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received ‘the seal of the living God.’ Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above.”¹⁷

A COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE

As we study the Scriptures containing the wonderful promises of God in bestowing upon us the Holy Spirit in fulness, we should understand that in the time of the early rain the power of the Holy Spirit was given collectively on those who “were all with one accord in one place.” In the time of the latter rain the experience of God’s people should be similar. The Bible verse in Zechariah says:

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

Many times we have read this Bible verse, and put a strong emphasis on the words: “Ask the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain,” and forget the last part of the verse which says that the Lord shall give the showers “to every one grass in the field.” These last words indicate that every one that is in the field (the church), which at that time must be a purified church, will receive the latter rain. Those that had neglected to make their preparation for the blessing of the latter rain will not be found among them. They will be eliminated from the remnant people of God by a mighty shaking. The word of inspiration makes it very clear:

“God is sifting His people. He will have a clean and holy church. We cannot read the heart of man.

But the Lord has provided means to keep the church pure."¹⁸

"Some had been shaken out and left by the way. The careless and indifferent, who did not join with those who prized victory and salvation enough to perseveringly plead and agonize for it, did not obtain it, and they were left behind in darkness, and their places were immediately filled by others taking hold of the truth and coming into the ranks."¹⁹

THE COMING OF JESUS

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11–13).

"When the character of the Saviour shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim His own. It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten, the coming of our Lord."²⁰

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:30, 31).

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:31–34).

CONCLUSION

As we read about the experience of the early disciples at the beginning of the Christian dispensation when they received the former rain, we can see that those who were in the upper room received the baptism of the Holy Spirit collectively. The other members of the church received it afterwards, individually.

Could it happen so also in our time? The latter rain is spoken of, and we have prayed about it very often, as an event which will take place in the future. When will it be fulfilled? Is it the Lord's fault for the delay to receive this great blessing? The Bible tells us: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13).

In a few weeks' time, the representatives of God's remnant church will assemble together. Will the Holy Spirit be poured out on the delegates at the General Conference session in 2025? Can the wonderful promise of the latter rain be received then? Dear brethren, let us get ready for that great blessing. The Lord will help all who have this desire to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Prophecy advises us:

"Angels of God are watching the development of character and weighing moral worth. Probation is almost ended, and you are unready. Oh, that the word of warning might burn into your souls! Get ready! get ready!"²¹

As one of your fellow servants, I desire to make an appeal to everyone who will go as a delegate to the General Conference session in 2025: Please, go to the Conference empty, free from all preconceived ideas, make a thorough preparation, and make peace with God and with man, have a blameless conscience, and be ready to be baptized by the Holy Spirit. Who knows whether the much expected promise will be fulfilled? And all of us, brethren, who are not delegates, should examine our lives, confess our sins and

faults to God and to one another, and ask forgiveness, so that our sins may be blotted out, and pray earnestly for the success of the Conference, that the Lord may visit His servants with showers of great blessings. The Spirit of Prophecy advises us:

"Let Christians put away their dissensions, and give themselves to God for the saving of the lost. Let them in faith ask for the blessing, and it will come. The outpouring of the Spirit in apostolic days was the 'former rain,' and glorious was the result. But the 'latter rain' will be more abundant."²²

"Today you are to give yourself to God, that you may be emptied of self, emptied of envy, jealousy, evil surmising, strife, everything that shall be dishonoring to God. Today you are to have your vessel purified that it may be ready for the heavenly dew, ready for the showers of the latter rain; for the latter rain will come, and the blessing of God will fill every soul that is purified from every defilement. It is our work today to yield our souls to Christ, that we may be fitted for the time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord—fitted for the baptism of the Holy Spirit."²³

Amen! *R*

References:

- ¹ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 506.
- ² *The Great Controversy*, p. 611.
- ³ *Steps to Christ*, p. 41.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 57.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 59.
- ⁶ *The Great Controversy*, pp. 611, 612. [1888 edition.] [Words in brackets are in the original.]
- ⁷ *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 37.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 49.
- ⁹ *Early Writings*, p. 71.
- ¹⁰ *The Great Controversy*, p. 620.
- ¹¹ *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 319.
- ¹² *The Review and Herald*, March 22, 1892.
- ¹³ *The Great Controversy*, p. 464.
- ¹⁴ *The Review and Herald*, May 27, 1862.
- ¹⁵ *Early Writings*, p. 33.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 85, 86.
- ¹⁷ *The Great Controversy*, p. 613.
- ¹⁸ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 99.
- ¹⁹ *Early Writings*, p. 271.
- ²⁰ *Maranatha*, p. 112.
- ²¹ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 401.
- ²² *The Desire of Ages*, p. 827.
- ²³ *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 205.

SABBATH, DECEMBER 14, 2024

THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

BY MARCELO PONCE — GERMANY

“**L**ooking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

“One of the most solemn and yet most glorious truths revealed in the Bible is that of Christ’s second coming to complete the great work of redemption. To God’s pilgrim people, so long left to sojourn in ‘the region and shadow of death,’ a precious, joy-inspiring hope is given in the promise of His appearing, who is ‘the resurrection and the life,’ to ‘bring home again His banished.’ The doctrine of the second advent is the very keynote of the Sacred Scriptures.”¹

I was a child of 11 years old when I attended our church meetings with my family for the first time. There I began to hear for the first time the wonderful message of the coming of Jesus Christ again to earth; and the great events revealed in the prophecies that have been fulfilled exactly and in the time predicted by them, are the proof that we will be able to see that event within a short time.

HIS PROMISE

Shortly before Jesus went to Gethsemane for the last time to pray, He announced to His disciples that He would leave them because His earthly mission was coming to

an end and He would return to the place where they, for now, could not go with Him. Seeing the disciples’ natural reaction of sadness and perhaps abandonment, Jesus told them: “Let not your heart be troubled” (John 14:1). Those words gave them hope and, like them, Jesus desires to give each believer the confidence of knowing that He understands all the circumstances of life and that He has everything the soul needs to be at peace. Then He said to them: “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2).

Those mansions represent a home and a home is the place where we all generally find security, peace



disciples needed at that moment. They did not yet know the test that awaited them, but from then on this promise would be the center of their attention and motivation to go out to preach His return, and strive to make Jesus Christ known to every nation, tribe, language, and people.

HIS ASCENSION AND RETURN

Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus led His disciples to the Mount of Olives, near Bethany, in front of the city of Jerusalem in which He had been rejected and then condemned to death. It was the moment of farewell and the opportunity to give the last instructions to this group of men and women who represented the lost sheep that had been found. Jesus' words were not reproaches for their faults or failures, they were words of the deepest tenderness and sympathy.

"With hands outstretched in blessing, and as if in assurance of His protecting care, He slowly ascended from among them, drawn heavenward by a power stronger than any earthly attraction. As He passed upward, the awe-stricken disciples looked with straining eyes for the last glimpse of their ascending Lord. A cloud of glory hid Him from their sight; and the words came back to them as the cloudy chariot of angels received Him, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' At the same time there floated down to them the sweetest and most joyous music from the angel choir."²

At that moment two powerful angels in the form of men, through sympathy and love for the disciples who were looking at heaven, approached and asked them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). This was the same message of hope that Jesus had told them long before "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory"

(Matthew 25:31). This was the same revelation that John received on the island of Patmos "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen" (Revelation 1:7). The angels had assured them that this same Jesus whom they had seen ascend into heaven would come again as He had ascended. Indeed, He will come in the clouds, and every eye shall see Him.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

Understanding more about the time of the end was something that attracted the disciples' attention—and it should attract ours as well. They came to Jesus privately to ask: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3).

In places where technology is more developed and trips are made with modern means of transportation, we pay close attention to the signals that the satellite navigator or GPS device gives us, about the remaining distance to the destination or possible alterations in the selected route. The signs near the roads also help us. Biblical prophecies are much like a GPS telling us where we are in time so we can be prepared and guided safely to the destination.

THE DECEPTION

"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" (Matthew 24:4, 5). Why did Christ present this as the first sign before the end? The answer is given by the apostle Peter: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Dear brothers and sisters, Satan also knows the Bible prophecies and knows that the coming of Christ will put an end to his reign of terror. That is why with great cunning and

and happiness. That promise should be a great inspiration to each of us; We will reach a home where also "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock" (Isaiah 65:25). That home will be far from everything that today causes us sadness and insecurity, where "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Revelation 21:4).

But the next promise was as great as the previous one: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). "I will come again" was the balm the

sly intrigue—just like the lion that observes its victim before attacking it—he introduces false doctrines mixed with portions of truth to make believers fall into his traps. The spread of Islam, Buddhism, agnosticism, and other philosophical currents throughout the world have distorted men’s perception of the character of the only true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and have distanced them from the only true source of knowledge, the Bible.

Our only security lies in studying the Holy Scriptures with much prayer and dedication. It is the only thing that can protect us against error. If we do so, we will surely be able to affirm “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20). With frequent study of them we will be able to store in our minds the only treasure that will make us affirm: “It is written.” But a warning: with technological advances it is increasingly common to see that believers have abandoned reading conventional paper Bibles. On the one hand, it has been made easier for us to always carry complete libraries, lessons, hymnals, etc. with our electronic devices. But on the other hand, at the slightest sign of a message that reaches us or a small moment of distraction, we abandon study and our mind quickly changes to other things that often have nothing to do with that moment. With great ease and with this method, Satan has many times managed to separate believers from the study of the truth.

WARS, PESTILENCES, FAMINE, EARTHQUAKES

Jesus warned His disciples: “And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places” (Matthew 24:6, 7). In recent years we have witnessed the upheaval in which nations live. While

everyone is currently seeking peace, major wars have broken out that have killed thousands around the world. The displacement of thousands of refugees caused by wars and political instabilities in many countries has taken them in different directions, creating true humanitarian crises where pain and hunger prevail. Despite these horrors, millionaire budgets of the great powers are allocated to buy weapons and ammunition to continue wars.

On the other hand, while in some countries there is an abundance of food and many people get sick because of all the fast food or junk food they consume, and where every day thousands of tons of food end up in the trash, there are also other places where thousands die of starvation. It is difficult to accept that in the 21st century, with all the technological advances and the ease and speed with which things can be transported. There are places where people die due to diseases caused by not having drinking water or from weakness due to not having anything to eat. The natural catastrophes that have occurred in recent decades are also among the signs to which Jesus referred. As droughts exterminate life in some regions of the planet, floods caused by extreme and abnormal rains or tornadoes and hurricanes leave destruction and thousands of victims in their wake. In recent years, violent earthquakes have occurred in different places and have not only increased in power, but also in the large number of victims they leave behind.

“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.”³ Scientists and philosophers seeking explanations and ways to prevent these events have concluded that everything is a product of climate change and that this is the

cause of nature reacting this way. Once again, human theories divert people’s ears from the true reason for these events. It is true that nature suffers and is altered by the evil actions of humanity, but we must not ignore that these are also the signs to which Jesus referred. Nor should we ignore the consequences that those who have destroyed the earth will suffer. “And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth” (Revelation 11:18). The great work of creation is being exterminated, and those responsible for its deterioration will be punished.

Are these events the signs that Jesus declared to His disciples would serve as a guide to know how to distinguish time? Yes, they are. As the disciples asked, when will be the end of the age? We cannot set a date, we can only interpret the signs and understand that there is not much time left for our world and its inhabitants. “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (Matthew 24:36).

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

Jesus pointed out that the time of the end would be similar to the time before the flood. “But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:37–39).

Eating, drinking, or getting married are not illegal things. What has made them abominable to God is the extremes to which man has taken them. The most common diseases today are largely responsible for bad eating or drinking habits, a sedentary lifestyle, and the use and

abuse of substances that are harmful to health. Prolonged exposure to toxic agents such as those breathed in large cities or the use of tobacco and drugs have not only been the cause of many diseases, but also genetic alterations that predispose to degenerative or autoimmune diseases. The story of what happened in Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as the experience lived by the people of Israel in Shittim in front of the promised land, are a warning that was recorded to teach us that sensuality and uncontrolled passions can lead human beings to commit before God the most abominable and vile acts that we can imagine. "All along through the ages there are strewn wrecks of character that have been stranded upon the rocks of sensual indulgence. As we approach the close of time, as the people of God stand upon the borders of the heavenly Canaan, Satan will, as of old, redouble his efforts to prevent them from entering the goodly land. He lays his snares for every soul. It is not the ignorant and uncultured merely that need to be guarded; he will prepare his temptations for those in the highest positions, in the most holy office; if he can lead them to pollute their souls, he can through them destroy many. And he employs the same agents now as he employed three thousand years ago. By worldly friendships, by the charms of beauty, by pleasure seeking, mirth, feasting, or the wine cup, he tempts to the violation of the seventh commandment."⁴

HASTENING HIS COMING

"It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain."⁵

It is our privilege to speak of the blessed hope that is the return of Jesus Christ. It is also our privilege to do the same work of reform that

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The sole purpose of the probation we enjoy today is for us to use it for our consecration and preparation for the great day of Christ's coming.

John the Baptist did to prepare the way for the first coming of the Lord. "The great subject of reform is to be agitated, and the public mind is to be stirred. Temperance in all things is to be connected with the message, to turn the people of God from their idolatry, their gluttony, and their extravagance in dress and other things."⁶

Now is the time to make a change in our lives, when our obedience to God's commandments reveals that we truly love Him. There is no time to lose. We must decisively close the doors to everything that does not represent the character of that people who are preparing to be translated to the heavenly mansions. Our works should demonstrate that "our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20).

OUR PREPARATION

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). The sole purpose of the probation we enjoy today is for us to use it for our consecration and preparation for the great day of Christ's coming. Every day that passes is one less day in the countdown to the end. If Jesus has not yet returned it is simply because He is giving us time so that we can all undergo thorough repentance and experience a deep, genuine conversion in our lives.

Our rescue was made with the precious blood of Christ, the Lamb without spot and without defilement (1 Peter 1:18, 19) to reach those

mansions where "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). Let not the attractions that this world offers us, its feasts and traditions, unnecessary fashions or decorations, unhealthy foods or drinks or the love of money and earthly possessions separate us from the precious message of the coming of the Lord and that now is the time to prepare!

CONCLUSION

Only the grace of God can help us prepare for His coming. Only the work of the Holy Spirit can convince us in the call to repentance and conversion. May our daily prayer be "thy kingdom come." May the blessed hope be like a torch that illumines our pilgrimage in this dark world so full of evil and suffering. May our purpose be to continually press toward the goal, to the prize of the supreme calling (Philippians 3:14) to reflect Jesus every day and in every action. May pure and undefiled religion (James 1:27) be the result of Christ in us.

"When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own."⁷ Maranatha, the Lord is coming! He declares: "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20). Amen. *R*

References:

- ¹ *The Great Controversy*, p. 299.
- ² *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 830, 831.
- ³ *Prophets and Kings*, p. 277.
- ⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 457, 458.
- ⁵ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69.
- ⁶ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 62.
- ⁷ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69.

THE KINGDOM OF GLORY

BY RÔMULO BORGES — BRAZIL

As we conclude this Week of Prayer, it's as if we are wrapping up a journey filled with secrets and discoveries. Guiding us from one revelation to another, the Scriptures have served as our compass. Building upon the text of Acts 3:19 and 20, we have explored significant themes such as repentance, conversion, the blotting out of sins, the time of refreshing, and the coming of Jesus. Now, in this final gathering, we will delve into "The Kingdom of Glory."

This kingdom is not an ordinary one, bounded by earthly borders or human time; it is an eternal reality, as vast and imposing as the universe itself, anchored in the unshakable justice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Like a lighthouse that withstands the test of time and storms, this kingdom is described in Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the

kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."

Therefore, I invite you to explore together the eternal promises of this glorious kingdom.

THE KINGDOM OF GRACE AND THE KINGDOM OF GLORY

The Holy Scriptures highlight the manifestation of God's kingdom in two distinct phases:

- (1) the kingdom of grace and
- (2) the kingdom of glory.

Glory cannot exist without the prior manifestation of grace; therefore, it is essential to participate first in the kingdom of grace to enter the kingdom of glory.

When Jesus began His ministry in Galilee, He proclaimed the arrival of the kingdom of God with these words: "The time is fulfilled,

and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:14, 15).

"As Jesus traveled through Galilee, teaching and healing, multitudes flocked to Him from the cities and villages. . . . Never before had there been such a period as this for the world. Heaven was brought down to men. Hungering and thirsting souls that had waited long for the redemption of Israel now feasted upon the grace of a merciful Saviour."¹

The kingdom of grace, heralded by Jesus, reached its climax at the cross of Calvary, where He took our place and died as our substitute to redeem us from the condemnation of sin. Through the provisions of His grace, humanity receives forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and complete salvation. As it is written in Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."



The word “kingdom” in the text of Matthew, when referring to the kingdom of glory, is used by Jesus as a description of what will happen in the end times when He establishes God’s universal kingdom. Although this event is in the future, the promise that the Lord will come is a reality. As He Himself said:

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

Based on these precious revelations, the Christian not only lives in the assurance of redemption in the present but also in the hope of ultimate redemption in the kingdom of glory.

GLORIFICATION ENABLES SUBJECTS TO LIVE IN THE KINGDOM OF GLORY

Glorification is the divine touch that transforms a human being, freeing us from the consequences of sin and making them immortal. Consider what 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52 declares:

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

The current body of a believer in Christ is not suitable for celestial life, as it is mortal, degraded, and fragile. Although the believer enjoys the fullness of the Spirit in their life, their body still bears the mark of death. Therefore, at the sound of the last trumpet, which will occur at the second coming of Christ, Christ will grant them a new body.

This new body will be imperishable, glorious, free from sin, and immortal, prepared for eternal life. The natural body of the Christian will be transformed into a spiritual body capable of withstanding the glory of God and ready for translation.

God will impart the divine touch of transformation to every redeemed individual, both to the resurrected saints and to the faithful who did not experience death. The book *The Great Controversy* beautifully expresses this thought:

“He will change our vile bodies and fashion them like unto His glorious body. The mortal, corruptible form, devoid of comeliness, once polluted with sin, becomes perfect, beautiful, and immortal.”³

All will be perfected! This transformation will affect the structure of the human body but preserve the personal identity of each individual, allowing the redeemed to recognize one another.

“Our personal identity is preserved in the resurrection. . . . The last lingering traces of the curse of sin will be removed, and Christ’s faithful ones will appear in ‘the beauty of the Lord our God,’ in mind and soul and body reflecting the perfect image of their Lord.”⁴

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KINGDOM OF GLORY

When we refer to the kingdom of glory, we think of God’s Paradise, the New Earth, and the new heavens. However, it’s crucial to acknowledge that our human language is inadequate to describe heavenly glory. All linguistic resources fall short in adequately portraying God’s Paradise. The page 675 of *The Great Controversy* emphasizes this point:

“Human language is inadequate to describe the reward of the righteous. It will be known only to those who behold it. No finite mind can comprehend the glory of the Paradise of God.”

Despite the limitations of human language, we can draw inspiration from the words of the prophets and let our imagination guide us towards the divine paradise. In the revelations of Revelation, the Apostle John was blessed to catch a glimpse of the heavenly glories of God’s eternal kingdom. His emphasis lies in the account of Revelation 21:1–5, which states:

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and

Jesus also taught about the future coming of the kingdom of God at His second advent. Among His various teachings, we highlight what Matthew 25:31–34 has to say in this context:

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

“As the message of Christ’s first advent announced the kingdom of His grace, so the message of His second advent announces the kingdom of His glory. And the second message, like the first, is based on the prophecies.”²

the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.”

Based on John’s prophetic vision, we can highlight some characteristics of the kingdom of glory:

THE EARTH MADE NEW AND THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM

The expression “New Earth” indicates a new creation. The planet that sin affected so deeply will be destroyed, consumed by the flames of divine judgment. Satan, his angels, and all the wicked will be completely annihilated. As Malachi 4:1 tells us:

“For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”

With the destruction of the instigator of sin (Satan) and the purification of the planet, the glory of Eden will be restored. Creation will be in harmony with the Creator, and the

New Jerusalem will be the capital of the New Earth.

THE GLORY OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

The description of the New Jerusalem impresses us with its beauty and splendor. It will shine with the glory of God and gleam like a precious stone, like jasper, with a crystalline brightness. (See Revelation 21:10, 11.)

THE TABERNACLE OF GOD AMONG HUMANITY

The Lord will be present with His people. God will choose to dwell among those He has redeemed, who are now His eternal children. They will forever enjoy His precious presence and His light. Christ, the One who redeemed them, will stand by their side. The saved will have the privilege of worshiping the Deity face to face for all eternity. The Tabernacle of God will be among them, establishing an intimate and loving relationship between Jehovah and the redeemed.

“The people of God are privileged to hold open communion with the Father and the Son. ‘Now we see through a glass, darkly.’ 1 Corinthians 13:12. We behold the image of God reflected, as in a mirror, in the works of nature and in His dealings with men; but then we shall see Him face to face, without a dimming veil between.”⁵

NO MORE SORROW OR TEARS

John, the prophet of Patmos, described a situation of eternal joy and happiness in God’s paradise:

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Revelation 21:4).

In the New Earth, the kingdom of glory will be the eternal home of the redeemed, where there will be no more tears, as all the reasons that cause sadness and weeping will be things of the past.

“And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 35:10).

NO MORE SICKNESS

In the New Earth, there will be no more sickness. There will be no need for hospitals, doctors, or medical treatments. All the consequences of sin will have been removed, and no one will say, “I am sick!”

“And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity” (Isaiah 33:24).

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert” (Isaiah 35:5, 6).

NO MORE DEATH OR FUNERAL PROCESSIONS

In earthly life, death puts an end to many happy stories. In the New Earth, there will be no death, funeral processions, or graves.

“He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he

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

take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it" (Isaiah 25:8). And those who have passed through death and were resurrected will proclaim, "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54).

GROWTH IN THE KINGDOM OF GLORY

In the New Earth, the redeemed will explore the wonders of God's love and continue to study tirelessly to understand more and more the creative power of God.

"There, immortal minds will contemplate with never-failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love. There will be no cruel, deceiving foe to tempt to forgetfulness of God. Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body.

"All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God's redeemed. Unfettered by mortality, they wing their tireless flight to worlds afar — worlds that thrilled with sorrow at the spectacle of human woe and rang with songs of gladness at the tidings of a ransomed soul. With unutterable delight the children of earth enter into the joy and the wisdom of unfallen beings. They share the treasures of knowledge and understanding gained through ages upon ages in contemplation of God's handiwork. With undimmed vision they gaze upon the glory of creation — suns and stars and systems, all in their appointed order circling the throne of Deity. Upon all things, from the least to the greatest, the Creator's name is written, and in all are the riches of His power displayed.

"And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God

and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise."⁶

The return of sin will never threaten growth in the kingdom of glory, as there will be no tempter or any risk of evil. Also, no tree of the knowledge of good and evil will offer an opportunity for temptation. The universe witnessed Satan's rebellion and saw the consequences. Divine justice was established, and all of God's vast domain will proclaim:

"Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints" (Revelation 15:3).

Indeed, there will only be a remembrance of the struggle between good and evil. Although the sufferings, pains, and temptations of Earth have ended, God's people will always have a clear and intelligent understanding of the price their salvation cost. Christ will still bear in His body the marks of redemption. Throughout the endless centuries of eternity, these signs will bear witness to God's immense love and Jesus' immeasurable sacrifice to redeem us.

"That the Maker of all worlds, the Arbiter of all destinies, should lay aside His glory and humiliate Himself from love to man will ever excite the wonder and adoration of the universe. As the nations of the saved look upon their Redeemer and behold the eternal glory of the Father shining in His countenance; as they behold His throne, which is from everlasting to everlasting, and know that His kingdom is to have no end, they break forth in rapturous song: 'Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His own most precious blood!'"⁷

CONCLUSION

After exploring the kingdom of glory and its incomparable wonders, profound questions arise: *Who will have the privilege of enjoying the delights of this kingdom? Who will be its heirs?*

In the light of divine revelations, we find the answers: Those who embrace and live the kingdom of grace will become subjects of the kingdom of glory. They are the ones who overcome the adversities of the world, the flesh, and the evil one.

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Revelation 21:7).

These had a personal communion with Jesus Christ, the Saviour, and the Lord of their lives. They were transformed by His grace in the time of salvation.

Dear brothers and friends, we are living in the final moments of the history of this world. Soon, very soon, we will witness the arrival of the kingdom of glory and have the privilege to enjoy its eternal delights. Therefore, we "are to make the best of our present opportunities. There will be no other probation given to us in which to prepare for heaven. This is our only and last opportunity to form characters which will fit us for the future home which the Lord has prepared for all who are obedient to His commandments."⁸

My sincere wish is that we stand together as conquerors. We cannot risk losing our salvation. May God assist and bless us so that you and I may share in the kingdom of glory in the heavenly paradise. Amen! *R*

References:

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 232.

² *Ibid.*, p. 234.

³ *The Great Controversy*, p. 645.

⁴ *The Faith I Live By*, p. 185.

⁵ *The Great Controversy*, pp. 676, 677.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 677, 678.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 651, 652.

⁸ *Last Day Events*, pp. 236, 237.

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MOVING? Please let us know.

A MESSAGE TO SPREAD

BY BARBARA MONTROSE

*In a world of deception, how many have heard
The gospel from God from the time of their youth?
It's written in Scripture so clear for today;
That message so vital for now — present truth!*

*When taught far and wide, over hill and o'er vale,
In hearts there resounds a sweet answering chord;
As souls long in darkness awaken in hope
Discerning this message that's straight from the Lord!*

*The call comes to each of us, deep in our soul,
That now is the time when we need to repent.
To put away sin and enticements to wrong,
And trust in the Saviour so graciously sent.*

*In looking to Christ interceding for us,
One for Whom all should be fervently yearning,
His sacrifice radiates pow'r through His blood:
The Rock of the ages; no shadow of turning.*

*This world's soon to end, with the sorrow it breeds;
So plainly all see that there's something amiss.
How great is our longing by faith as we ponder
Communion with Jesus and heavenly bliss!*

*Now amid tempests and famines prevailing,
Diseases and war with such sorrow and pain,
Surrendered to Jesus, our hope must yet flourish —
Determined in action through God's latter rain.*

*This truth is not theory; it's spirit and life;
With power, it's fruitful in hearts where its stored.
When all's said and done, and our Saviour will come —
For each He will bring a specific reward.*

*While truth to be cherished is laughed at and scorned;
The mocker and scoffer the message now spurns,
But when they're not watching, probation will close,
And Jesus, the King in His glory returns!*

*So, now is our chance to repent of our sins;
Now is our chance to reach out to the field —
The harvest is white for the reaping of souls
A work must be done by the few who be sealed.*

*By looking to Jesus, abiding in Him,
We rise above all the corruption and strife.
By grace in His strength, to His vineyard we venture
Through faith in His name and in living His life!*