

Table of Contents

Lesson #1 – The Literary Structure of Revelation 12-22	3
Revelation 12-22 Chart.....	4
Lesson #2 – Revelation 15:1-8: Without an Intercessor	5
Lesson #3 – Revelation 16: An Introduction to the Plagues	23
Lesson #4 – Three Perspectives of the Last Three Plagues	35
Lesson #5 – The Last Three Plagues of Revelation 16.....	57
Lesson #6 - Decoding the Mysteries of Revelation 17.....	71
Parallels Between Revelation 12, 13 and 17 Chart	94
Lesson #7 – Revelation 18: The Demise of Babylonian Capitalism.....	111
Lesson #8 – Here Comes The Bride: Eastern Wedding Customs	145
Lesson #9 – Revelation 19:1-9: Song of Praise to the King.....	161
Chart: Sequence of Events in Revelation 14-19.....	163
Lesson #10 – Revelation 19:11-21: The Battle of Armageddon.....	181
Lesson #11 – Daniel 11:40-45 and the Final Crisis	203
Lesson #12 – The Special Resurrection.....	221
Lesson #13 – The Typology of Sennacherib’s Invasion.....	231
Lesson #14 – Isaiah 24:21-23: The Millennium in the Old Testament.....	239
Lesson #15 – The Millennium: Changing the Ordinance	249
Lesson #16 – The Four Cycles of Revelation’s Millennium.....	261
Lesson #17 – Sins of Commission and Omission	281
Lesson #18 – Reflections on Second Death.....	293
Lesson #19 – Revelation 21:9-22:21: Like a Bride Adorned for Her Husband	317
Lesson #20 – Keep the Commandments or Wash their Robes?	329
Lesson #21 – The Right to the Tree of Life.....	335
Lesson #22 – The Therapeutic Tree of Life	347
Lesson #23 – Righteousness by Faith and the Final Conflict	361
Lesson #24 – The River Dragon: Its Meaning in Scripture	401
Contact Information	421



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
“FROM THE CLOSE OF PROBATION TO THE NEW EARTH:
A STUDY OF REVELATION CHAPTERS 15 TO 22”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

(**Note:** Required reading for this entire class: The Great Controversy, pp. 603-678)

Lesson #1 – The Literary Structure of Revelation 12-22

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Revelation 12-22 Chart

(to view larger version of this chart go to:
https://store-58mm4kv8p.mybigcommerce.com/content/PDF_downloads/Chart-Anchor21-LiteraryStructureofRev12-22.pdf

The Literary Structure of Revelation 12-22						
Chapter ↓						∞ New Earth 21:9 22:21
21: 2-8						21: 2-8 After Life with God
20: 11-15; 21: 1						20: 11 Beginning 20: 12 During 20: 13 - 21: 1 After
20: 4-10						20: 4 Beginning 20: 5-6 During 20: 7-10 After View of the Saints
20: 1-3						20: 1-2 Beginning 20:3a During 20: 3b After Satan/Earth
19						19: 11-21 Seventh Plague
18						18: 1-5 Flashback Warning 18: 6-24 Sixth and Seventh Plagues 19: 1-10 Climax Mt. Zion
17						17: 1-18 Sixth and Seventh Plagues Political/Economic Perspective Religious/Political Perspective
16						16: 1-21 Seven Last Plagues
15						15:1, 5-8 Close of Probation; Time of Trouble
14						14: 6-17 Three angel's messages gather God's Remnant 14: 18-20 Probation closes-final war on remnant-Winepress 15: 2-4 Climax Mt. Zion
13	13: 1-2 Lion, Bear, Leopard	13: 2 Dragon-Imperial Rome	13: 3-10 1260 years Beast Papal Rome	13: 11a Lamb-like beast from Earth-USA	Lamb-like beast gives freedom so as to gather God's Remnant	13: 11b-18 Lamb-like beast speaks as Dragon 14: 1-5 Climax Mt. Zion
12	12: 7-9 Heaven	12: 1-2 Old Testament	12: 3-5, 10-12 Jesus' birth and death-Imperial Rome	12: 6, 13-15 1260 years Papal Rome	12:16 Earth helps Woman-USA 12:17 Remnant gathered who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus	12:17 Dragon unleashes final war against remnant
?	1875-4 BC	4 BC - 31 AD	538-1798 AD	1798 AD	1833 AD FF	?
Dates						



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Lesson #2 – Revelation 15:1-8: Without an Intercessor

Verse 1

*“Then I saw another sign **in heaven**, great and marvelous: **seven angels** having the seven **last [eschátas]** plagues, for in them the wrath of God is **complete**.”*

This verse portrays seven angels in the **most holy place** (see verses 5-8) of the heavenly sanctuary **receiving** from God the seven bowls with the seven last plagues. At this point the angels have **not yet** poured out the plagues but they are preparing to do so. The word ‘last’ is *eschátas* from where we get the word ‘eschatology’.

It is not coincidental that God will give the seven angels the plagues in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary (Revelation 16:1) where the ark of the covenant is found. The Ten Commandments, the foundation of God’s government, are inside the ark. When Israel was in a faithful covenant relationship with the Lord and went to battle against their enemies they bore the ark in front of the troops and God protected them (Joshua 6:13). However, when Israel broke their covenant relationship with the Lord, the glory of the Lord departed from them and the ark did not protect them from their enemies (1 Samuel 4:3-11, 21, 22).

When the uncircumcised Philistines captured the ark and placed it beside their fish-god Dagon, the idol fell on its face and the second time the idol lost its head and both extremities (1 Samuel 5:1-5). The ark then poured out plagues upon the cities of the Philistines (1 Samuel 5:6-12).

The so-called Christian world after the close of probation will have trampled on God's Law and they will have no protection from the enemy. However, God's people, who have a strong covenant relationship with the Lord will be protected.

The number **seven** symbolizes **fullness** or completeness. Examples:

- ✓ **Creation** was complete in seven days
- ✓ The city of **Jericho** was completely destroyed when the armies marched around it for seven days and seven times on the seventh day.
- ✓ **Naaman** was totally clean after dipping in the Jordan seven times.
- ✓ The **seven churches** depict the totality of church history.
- ✓ The **seven seals** depict seven stages of world history since apostolic times.
- ✓ The **seven trumpets** cover the totality of human history.
- ✓ The **seven plagues** are the total outpouring of God's wrath.
- ✓ The **seven horns** on the head of Jesus represent His total power.
- ✓ The **seven eyes** of Jesus represent totality of wisdom.
- ✓ The **blood sprinkled** seven times totally cleansed the sanctuary.
- ✓ The **furnace** heated seven times hotter meant total heat.

Before God pours out the seven eschatological plagues, He mingles His judgments with mercy but the seven eschatological plagues are the **full and total** outpouring of his justice **without mixture** of mercy. Revelation 14:10

refers to this as ‘the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out **without mixture** [‘full strength, NKJV’] into the cup of his indignation’.

We are not to conceive of God’s wrath as ‘anger’ or ‘revenge’ as commonly understood, but rather as a manifestation of His **strict justice**. Just before the close of probation God will give every inhabitant of the world the choice either to receive the seal of God or the mark of the beast. Every person on the planet will choose sides. When all have made their **irrevocable decision**, God will release the plague angels.

The outpouring of God’s holy wrath in the plagues is for those who worshiped the beast and his image and received his mark (Revelation 14:9-11). In contrast to this, is a group who **gained the victory** over the beast and his image and refused to receive the mark. The book of Revelation refers to this group as the 144,000 (Revelation 15:2-4). The third angel warns the world before the close of probation not to worship the beast or his image or receive his mark because, if they do, they will drink the wine of God’s wrath without mixture of mercy. There is no excuse for being on the wrong side!

Ellen White clearly states that God will pour out the plagues **after the close of probation**:

*“The world is soon to **be left by the angel of mercy**, and the seven last plagues are to be poured out.” Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 182*

*“The nations are now getting angry, but when our High Priest has **finished His work in the sanctuary**, He will stand up, put on the **garments of vengeance**, and **then** the seven last plagues will be poured out . . . I saw that the four angels would hold the four winds until Jesus’ **work was done in the sanctuary**, and **then** will come the seven last plagues.” Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 36*

“The words will soon be spoken, “Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.” One of the ministers of vengeance declares. “And I heard

the angel of the waters say, 'Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because Thou hast judged thus.' These heavenly beings, in executing the mandate of God, **ask no questions**, but do as they are bid. Jehovah of hosts, the Lord God Almighty, the just, the true, and the holy, has given them their work to do. With unswerving fidelity, they go forth panoplied in pure white linen, having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And when their task is done, when the last vial of God's wrath is poured out, they **return and lay their emptied vials at the feet of the Lord**. And the **next scene** is recorded, 'After these things . . . I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. [Revelation 19:6]" They sing the **[the 144,000]**.'" *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 432

It is significant that Ellen White quotes Revelation 19:6—a great multitude singing at the marriage **supper** of the Lamb—and applies it to the 144,000 in heaven after the plagues are over. Thus, the book of Revelation contains four views of the 144,000 with different emphases:

- ✓ Revelation 7:1-8 The **sealing** of the 144,000.
- ✓ Revelation 14:1-5: The **character** of the 144,000.
- ✓ Revelation 15:2, 3: The **victory** of the 144,000.
- ✓ Revelation 19:1-9: The **jubilatory song** of praise to God of the 144,000.

Verses 2-4

"And I saw something **like** a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who **have [present tense]** the **victory** over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. "They **sing [present tense]** the **song of Moses**, the servant of God, and the **song of the Lamb**, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! **Just and true** are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? for You alone are holy. For all nations **shall come [future**

*tense] and worship before You, for [because] Your judgments **have been manifested.**"*

The sea is not made of glass but rather is **like** glass mingled with fire because it shines with the glory that **emanates from** God's throne (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 648). Clearly, at this point the 144,000 are standing victorious in heaven before the throne of God. They **have gained** the victory over the beast, his image, his mark and the number of his name. This means that Revelation 15:2-4 is the climax of Revelation 14:20. Revelation 16:1 is a parenthetical statement that introduces Revelation 15:5-8 and Revelation 16. This is how it works out:

- ✓ Revelation 14:20: Christ and His angels trample the winepress at the seventh plague and deliver God's people who are spiritually in Jerusalem.
- ✓ Revelation 15:1: Headline for the events described in Revelation 15:5-8 and chapter 16.
- ✓ Revelation 15:2-4: The 144,000 stand victorious in heaven after Christ and the angels have trampled the winepress.
- ✓ Revelation 15:5-8: The close of probation.
- ✓ Revelation 16: The outpouring of the seven plagues.

The backdrop for the song of Moses and the Lamb is in the story of the deliverance of Israel from the armies of the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Exodus 14, 15). When we study the plagues in Revelation 16 we will draw a striking parallel between the events at the **Red Sea** and the events that will transpire during the **last three plagues**.

In their song, the 144,000 refer to God as the 'king of the saints' because the pre-advent investigative judgment has previously revealed who are the **members of the kingdom**. In 1844, Jesus went into the presence of the Father in the most holy place to receive the kingdom from His Father. At the conclusion of the judgment, once the subjects of the kingdom are made up, the Father gives the kingdom to Jesus and the saints (Daniel 7:13, 14, 27).

The expression in the song ‘**just** and **true** are your ways’ brings to mind the pleas of the **martyrs** that are under the altar in the fifth seal (Revelation :9-11):

*“How long, O Lord, **holy** and **true**, until You **judge** and **avenge** our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”*

God **judges** the cases of the martyrs during the pre-Advent investigative judgment and during the second and third plagues He does the **avenging**. Even further, the second and third plagues—the seas and fountains of waters turned into blood—are not only God’s response to the pleas of the martyrs of the past but also His answer to the death decree against the 144,000 during the time of trouble. The living saints have also cried out for the Lord to judge and avenge the blood that their enemies intended to shed (see Luke 18:1-8):

Revelation 16:4-7

*“Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. ⁵ And I heard the angel of the waters saying: “You are **righteous**, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You **have judged** these things. ⁶ For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. For it is their **just due**.” ⁷ And I heard another from the altar saying, “Even so, Lord God Almighty, **true and righteous are Your judgments**.”*

After quoting the verses that refer to the outpouring of the second and third plagues, Ellen White wrote:

*“By condemning the **people of God [the 144,000]** to death, they have as truly incurred the guilt of their blood **as if** it had been shed by their hands. In like manner Christ declared the Jews of His time guilty of all the blood of holy men which had been shed since the days of Abel; for they possessed the **same spirit** and were seeking to do the same work with these murderers of the prophets.”*
Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 627

Revelation 19:1, 2 picks up on the victorious song of the 144,000:

*"After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, 'Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! ² For **true and righteous** are His judgments, because He **has judged** the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He **has avenged** on her the blood of His servants shed by her.'"*

The song of the 144,000 not only praises God for delivering them at the end of the time of trouble. The song takes us beyond the millennium when God will reveal His righteous judgments before Satan, his angels and the wicked. Ellen White described the post-millennial event:

*"As if entranced, the wicked have looked upon the coronation of the Son of God. They see in His hands the tables of the divine law, the statutes which they have despised and transgressed. They witness the outburst of wonder, rapture, and adoration from the saved; and as the wave of melody sweeps over the multitudes without the city, all with one voice exclaim, "Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints" (**Revelation 15:3**); and, falling prostrate, they worship the Prince of life." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 668, 669*

*"In the day of **final** judgment, every lost soul will understand the nature of his own rejection of truth. The **cross** will be presented, and its real bearing will be seen by every mind that has been blinded by transgression. Before the vision of Calvary with its mysterious Victim, sinners **will stand condemned**. Every lying excuse will be swept away. Human apostasy will appear in its heinous character. Men will see what their choice has been. **Every question** of truth and error in the long-standing controversy will then have been made plain. In the **judgment of the universe**, God will stand clear of blame for the existence or continuance of evil. It will be **demonstrated** that the divine decrees are not accessory to sin. There was no defect in God's government, no cause for disaffection. When the thoughts of all hearts shall be revealed, both the **loyal and the rebellious** will unite in declaring,*

*"Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name?...for Thy judgments are made manifest" **Revelation 15:3, 4**" Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 58*

Ellen White presents a clear chronological sequence of events from the close of probation to the deliverance of the 144,000:

*"I saw that the four angels would hold the four winds until Jesus' **work was done** in the sanctuary, and then will come the **seven last plagues**. These **plagues enraged the wicked** against the righteous; they thought that we had brought the judgments of God upon them, and that if they could rid the earth of us, **the plagues would then be stayed**. A **decree went forth to slay** the saints, which caused them to **cry day and night** for deliverance. This was the **time of Jacob's trouble**. Then all the saints cried out with anguish of spirit, and were **delivered** by the voice of God. The **144,000 triumphed**. Their faces were **lighted up** with the glory of God." Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, pp. 36, 37*

This quotation is significant because it presents a series of events after the close of probation in **chronological order**:

- ✓ The **angels hold** the four winds.
- ✓ Jesus **finishes His work** in the sanctuary.
- ✓ The angels pour out the seven **plagues**.
- ✓ The plagues **enrage the wicked** against the 144,000.
- ✓ The wicked give a **death decree** against the 144,000.
- ✓ The time of **Jacob's trouble** ensues.
- ✓ The 144,000 cry **day and night** for deliverance.
- ✓ God's **voice delivers** the 144,000 and their faces light up.

Ellen White wrote about the moment when the 144,000 gain the victory over the worshipers of the beast, his image and his mark. Notably, she refers to the

144,000 as the **Israel of God** which proves that we are dealing with spiritual Israel:

*"The **Israel of God** stood with their eyes fixed upward, listening to the words as they came from the mouth of Jehovah and rolled through the earth like peals of loudest thunder. It was awfully solemn. At the end of every sentence the saints shouted, "Glory! Hallelujah!" Their countenances were lighted up with the glory of God, and they shone with glory as did the face of Moses when he came down from Sinai. The wicked could not look upon them for the glory. And when the never-ending blessing was pronounced on those who had honored God in keeping His Sabbath holy, there was **a mighty shout of victory over the beast and over his image**." Ellen G. White, Early Writings, pp. 285, 286*

John saw the smoke and din of the final battle and the joyous song of the 144,000 upon their deliverance:

*"While John was shown the last great struggles of the church with earthly powers, he was also permitted to behold the **final victory and deliverance of the faithful**. He saw the church brought into **deadly conflict with the beast and his image**, and the worship of that beast enforced **on pain of death**. But looking **beyond** the smoke and din of the **battle [Armageddon]**, he beheld a company **upon Mount Zion** with the Lamb, having, instead of the mark of the beast, the "Father's name written in their foreheads." And again he saw [now Ellen White cites Revelation 15:2, 3] "them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God" and singing the song of Moses and the Lamb." Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, pp. 752, 753*

Ellen White intermingled the descriptions of the 144,000 in Revelation 7, 14 and 15:

"Upon the crystal sea before the throne, that sea of glass as it were mingled with fire, --so resplendent is it with the glory of God, --are gathered the company that have "gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark,

and over the number of his name." **[Revelation 15:2]** With the Lamb upon Mount Zion **[Revelation 14:1]**, "having the harps of God," **[Revelation 15:2]** they stand, the hundred and forty and four thousand that were redeemed from among men **[Revelation 14:4]**; and there is heard, as the sound of many waters, and as the sound of a great thunder, "the voice of harpers harping with their harps." **[Revelation 14:2]** And they sing "a new song" before the throne, a song which no man can learn save the hundred and forty and four thousand **[Revelation 14:3]**. It is the song of Moses and the Lamb--a song of deliverance **[Revelation 15:3]**. None but the hundred and forty-four thousand can learn that song **[Revelation 14:3]**; for it is the song of their experience--an experience such as no other company have ever had. "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." **[Revelation 14:1]** These, having been translated from the earth, from among the living, are counted as "the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb." **[Revelation 14:4]** "These are they which came out of great tribulation;" **[Revelation 7:14]** they have passed through the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation; they have endured the anguish of the time of Jacob's trouble; they have stood without an intercessor [after the close of probation] through the final outpouring of God's judgments [the seven last plagues]. But they have been delivered, for they have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." **[Revelation 7:14]** "In their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault" **[Revelation 14:5]** before God. "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." **[Revelation 7:15]** They have seen the earth wasted with famine and pestilence, the sun having power to scorch men with great heat **[Revelation 16:8, 9]**, and they themselves have endured suffering, hunger, and thirst. But "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." **[Revelation 7:16, 17]**. Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 648, 649

Verse 5

Revelation 11:19

*“After these things I looked, and behold, the **temple of the tabernacle** of the testimony in heaven **was opened**.”*

The opening of the door in this verse reminds us of the same door that was opened in 1844 for the beginning of the judgment. Although the door in both instances is the same, the historical occasion and the reason for opening it is different. The door in Revelation 11:19 was opened for God’s people to enter there by faith and to follow the final work of Christ in the most holy place. However, the door in Revelation 15:5 is opened for the plague angels to come out because Christ’s ministration has ended:

Without exception, Ellen White applied the opening of the door in Revelation 11:19 to 1844:

*“Therefore the announcement that the temple of God was opened in Heaven, and the ark of his testament was seen, points to the **opening of the most holy place** of the heavenly sanctuary, in **1844**, as Christ entered there to perform the closing work of the atonement. Those who **by faith followed** their great High Priest, as he entered upon his ministry in the most holy place, **beheld the ark of his testament**. As they had studied the subject of the sanctuary, they had come to understand the Savior's change of ministration, and they saw that he was now officiating before the ark of God, **pleading his blood** in behalf of sinners.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 433*

It is important to remember that **Revelation 11:19** begins a **new series** of events in the book of Revelation (the beginning of the investigative judgment) and Revelation 15:5-8 concludes the series with the end of the judgment.

The chronology of Revelation 11:15-19 is tricky. This is how it works:

- ✓ The **mystery of God** (the close of probation) ends when the seventh trumpet is about to sound (Revelation 10:7)
- ✓ The seventh trumpet concludes in Revelation 11:17 where Jesus takes **possession of the kingdom** at His coming.
- ✓ Revelation 11:18 takes us **back in time** and summarizes the five main events of Revelation 12-22 from 1844 onward in chronological order.
- ✓ Revelation 11:19 takes back to the starting point of Revelation 12-22.

Ellen White clearly wrote that Revelation 11:18 takes place during the period of the sixth trumpet, not the seventh.

*“Then I saw that Jesus would not leave the most holy place until every case was decided either for salvation or destruction, and that **the wrath of God could not come** until Jesus had **finished His work** in the most holy place, laid off His priestly attire, and clothed Himself with the garments of vengeance. Then Jesus will step out from between the Father and man, and God will keep silence no longer, but **pour out His wrath** on those who have rejected His truth. I saw that the **[1] anger of the nations**, the **[2] wrath of God**, and the **[3] time to judge the dead** were **separate and distinct**, one **following the other**, also that Michael had not stood up, and that the time of trouble, such as never was, had not yet commenced. The **nations are now getting angry**, but when our High Priest has finished His work in the sanctuary, He will stand up, put on the garments of vengeance, and then the **seven last plagues** will be poured out [the wrath of God].” Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 36*

Summary of the **chronological** arrangement in Revelation 11:18, 19:

- ✓ Revelation 12-14: ‘The nations were angry’ (the growing anger against God’s people).
- ✓ **Revelation 11:15-17: The seventh trumpet** (see GC, p. 301; FW, p. 115).

- ✓ Revelation 15-19: 'Your wrath has come' (the close of probation and the plagues).
- ✓ Revelation 20:4, 11: 'the time to judge the dead' (the beginning of the investigative judgment of the wicked in heaven).
- ✓ Revelation 19:11-21; 22:12: 'the time to reward your servants' (Jesus gives His people their reward at His coming).
- ✓ Revelation 20:14, 15: 'destroy those who destroy the earth' (the destruction of the wicked after the millennium).
- ✓ Revelation 11:19: The introduction to chapters 12-14.

Revelation 3:7, 8

*"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, 'He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens': ⁸ 'I know your works. See, I have set before you **an open door**, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.'"*

Ellen White also invariably applies Revelation 3:7, 8 (the sixth church) to the opening of the door to the most holy place in 1844:

*"Men sought to **close the door** which God had opened, and to **open the door** which He had closed. But "He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth," had declared: "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." Revelation 3:7, 8. Christ had opened the door, or ministration, of the **most holy place**, light was shining from that open door of the sanctuary in heaven, and the fourth commandment was shown to be included in the law which is there enshrined; what God had established, no man could overthrow." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 435*

Verses 6, 7

At this point the plague angels have not yet poured out their vials. This must refer to the close of probation just before the plagues fall:

“And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands. Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever.”

Verse 8

“The temple [the tabernacle is the total sanctuary and the temple of the tabernacle is the most holy place—see Revelation 11:19] was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.”

Here is the sequence of events in Revelation 15:

- ✓ The plague angels receive the seven bowls when probation closes.
- ✓ The plague angels pour out their bowls in consecutive order.
- ✓ While the plague angels pour out their bowls the 144,000 living saints cannot enter the temple because there is no mediator there.
- ✓ After the plagues are poured out only the 144,000 can enter the temple:

“And as we were about to enter the temple, Jesus raised His lovely voice and said, “Only the 144,000 enter this place,” and we shouted, “Alleluia!” Heaven, p. 88

There are two occasions in the Old Testament when the earthly sanctuary was filled with smoke and no one could enter. The first was when the wilderness tabernacle services were inaugurated and the second was when the priests placed the ark of the covenant in the most holy place of the temple built by Solomon:

Exodus 40:34, 35

“Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of

meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the **glory** of the Lord filled the tabernacle.”

1 Kings 8:10-11

“And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, ¹¹ so that the priests **could not continue ministering** because of the cloud; for the **glory** of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.”

Both of these events in Old Testament times occurred at the beginning of the sanctuary ministration. However, Revelation 15:8 cannot be referring to the inauguration of the priestly ministration of Christ but rather to its consummation. What historical moment is described in Revelation 15:8? When does Jesus cease to minister for sinners in the sanctuary so that no one can enter by faith anymore? The answer is the close of probation. Thus, Revelation 15:8 describes the moment when probation closes and Revelation 16 then describes the seven last plagues.

Revelation 8:3-5: At the conclusion of the temple's service the censer will be thrown to the earth and intercession will cease

“Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense that he should offer it with the **prayers of all the saints** upon the golden altar which was before the throne. ⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. ⁵ Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and **threw it to the earth**. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.”

Ellen White vividly described the events that lead to the close of probation and the outpouring of the plagues:

“I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven. An angel with a writer's inkhorn by his side returned from the earth and reported to Jesus that his **work was done**, and the **[living] saints were numbered and sealed**. Then I saw Jesus, who **had been ministering** before the ark containing the Ten Commandments, **throw**

down the censer. He raised His hands, and with a loud voice said. 'It is done.' And all the angelic host laid off their crowns as Jesus made the solemn declaration, "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." **Revelation 22:11.**" Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption*, p. 402

"As Jesus **moved out** of the most holy place, I heard the tinkling of the bells upon His garment; and as He left, a cloud of darkness covered the inhabitants of the earth. There was then **no mediator** between guilty man and an offended God. While Jesus had been standing between God and guilty man, a restraint was upon the people; but when He **stepped out** from between man and the Father, the restraint was removed and Satan had entire control of the finally impenitent. It was **impossible for the plagues to be poured out while Jesus officiated in the sanctuary**; but as His work there is finished, and His **intercession closes**, there is **nothing to stay the wrath of God**, and it breaks with fury upon the **shelterless head** of the guilty sinner, who has slighted salvation and hated reproof. In that fearful time, after the close of Jesus' mediation, **the saints** were living in the sight of a holy God **without an intercessor**. Every case was decided, every jewel numbered. Jesus tarried a moment in the outer apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, and the sins which had been confessed while He was in the most holy place were placed upon Satan, the originator of sin, who must suffer their punishment.

Then I saw Jesus **lay off His priestly attire** and clothe Himself with **His most kingly robes**. Upon His head were many crowns, a crown within a crown [Revelation 19:11-21]. Surrounded by the angelic host, He left heaven. The **plagues were falling** upon the inhabitants of the earth. Some were denouncing God and cursing Him. Others rushed to the people of God and begged to be taught how they might escape His judgments. But the saints had nothing for them. The last tear for sinners had been shed, the last agonizing prayer offered, the last burden borne, the last warning given. The sweet voice of mercy was no more to invite them. When the saints, and all heaven, were interested for their salvation,

they had no interest for themselves. Life and death had been set before them. Many desired life, but made no effort to obtain it. They did not choose life, and now **there was no atoning blood to cleanse the guilty**, no compassionate Savior to plead for them, and cry, "Spare, spare the sinner a little longer." All heaven had united with Jesus, as they heard the fearful words, "It is done. It is finished." The plan of salvation had been accomplished, but few had chosen to accept it. And as **mercy's sweet voice died away**, fear and horror seized the wicked. With terrible distinctness they heard the words, "Too late! too late!"

Those who had not prized God's Word were hurrying to and fro, wandering from sea to sea, and from the north to the east, to seek the Word of the Lord. Said the angel: 'They shall not find it. There is a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but for hearing the words of the Lord. What would they not give for one word of approval from God! but no, they must hunger and thirst on. Day after day have they slighted salvation, prizing earthly riches and earthly pleasure higher than any heavenly treasure or inducement. They have rejected Jesus and despised His saints. The filthy must remain filthy forever.'

Many of the wicked were greatly enraged as they suffered the effects of the plagues. It was a scene of fearful agony. Parents were bitterly reproaching their children, and children their parents, brothers their sisters, and sisters their brothers. Loud, wailing cries were heard in every direction, 'It was you who kept me from receiving the truth which would have saved me from this awful hour.' The people **turned upon their ministers with bitter hate and reproached them**, saying, 'You have not warned us. You told us that **all the world was to be converted**, and cried, **Peace, peace**, to quiet every fear that was aroused. You have not told us of this hour; and those who warned us of it you declared to be **fanatics and evil men**, who would ruin us." But I saw that the ministers did not escape the wrath of God. Their suffering was **tenfold greater** than that of their people." Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, pp. 280-282

Revelation 22:10-12

*"And he said to me, "**Do not seal** the words of the prophecy of this book, for the **time is at hand**.¹¹ He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still."¹² "And behold, I am **coming quickly**, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work."*



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
“FROM THE CLOSE OF PROBATION TO THE NEW EARTH:
A STUDY OF REVELATION CHAPTERS 15 TO 22”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #3 – Revelation 16: An Introduction to the Plagues

Two Backgrounds

Two Old Testament stories stand as the backdrop of Revelation 16:

- Israel's exodus from Egypt.
- Israel's deliverance from Babylon.

Covenant Context

It not possible to fully understand the purpose of the plagues without first understanding the biblical concept of the covenant. When probation closes, the living saints have a perfect covenant relationship with God and therefore God promises to protect them. There are four illustrations that help us understand this covenant relationship:

- The Shepherd protects His sheep.
- The Suzerain protects his vassal
- The Husband protects his bride
- The Head defends His body

Who Pours out the Plagues?

Some have suggested that God does not pour out the plagues but rather allows Satan to do it. However, this does not fit with the biblical evidence. The plague angels come out from the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary.

Revelation 15:5-7

*"After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony **in heaven** was opened. ⁶ And **out of the temple [the most holy place]** came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in **pure bright linen**, and having their chests girded with **golden bands**. ⁷ Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls **full** of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever."*

Some wonder how a loving God can pour out plagues upon His creatures. Ellen White answered:

*"The plea may be made that a loving Father would not see His children suffering the punishment of God by fire while He had the power to relieve them. But God would, for the **good of His subjects and for their safety**, punish the transgressor. God does not work on the **plan of man**. He can do infinite justice that **man has no right to do** before his fellow man. Noah would have displeased God to have drowned one of the scoffers and mockers that harassed him, but **God drowned** the vast world. Lot would have had no right to inflict punishment on his sons-in-law, but **God would do it in strict justice**." Ellen G. White, Last Day Events, p. 241*

God not only allows Satan and his angels to destroy. There are occasions when holy angels destroy as well. Ellen White made this point clear:

*"The same destructive power exercised by **holy angels** when God **commands**, will be exercised by evil angels when He **permits**. There are forces now ready and only waiting the **divine permission**, to spread desolation everywhere." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 614*

The World during the Plagues

Ellen White described the disastrous condition of the world during the outpouring of the seven last plagues. In the first chapter of *The Great Controversy* she described the **condition of Jerusalem** leading up to its destruction. And yet Jerusalem was a mere shadow of what will transpire in the world during the time of trouble. When one reads the first chapter of *The Great Controversy*, one wonders how the condition of the world could be worse:

*“Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God **cease to hold** in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the **elements of strife will be let loose**. The **whole world** will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p.614*

*“Angels are now **restraining the winds** of strife that they may not blow until the world shall be warned of its coming doom, but a storm is gathering, ready to burst upon the earth, and when God shall bid His angels loose the winds there will be such a scene of strife as **no pen can picture**.” Ellen G. White, *Education*, pp 179, 180*

*“It is often the case that trouble is greater in anticipation than in reality; but this is not true of the crisis before us. The **most vivid presentation** cannot reach the magnitude of the ordeal.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 621, 622*

*“The **forces of darkness** will unite with **human agents** who have given themselves into the **control of Satan**, and the **same scenes** that were exhibited at the trial, rejection, and crucifixion of Christ will be **revived**. Through yielding to satanic influences, men will be **transformed into fiends**; and those who were created in the image of God, who were formed to honor and glorify their Creator, will become the **habitation of dragons**, and Satan will see in an apostate race his **masterpiece of evil**—men who reflect **his own image**.” Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, April 14, 1896*

Are the Plagues Literal or Symbolic?

The plagues will be very literal. Notice The Great Controversy, pp. 627-629:

*“The plagues upon Egypt when God was about to deliver Israel were **similar in character** to those **more terrible** and **extensive** judgments which are to fall upon the world **just before** the final deliverance of God's people. Says the revelator, in describing those terrific scourges: **[Plague #1]: ‘There fell a **noisome and grievous sore** upon the men which had the mark of the beast and upon them which worshiped his image.’ [Plague #2]: **The sea** ‘became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.’ [Plague #3]: And ‘the rivers and fountains of waters . . . became blood.’ Terrible as these inflictions are, God's justice stands fully vindicated. The angel of God declares: ‘Thou art righteous, O Lord, . . . because Thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.’ Revelation 16:2-6. By **condemning the people** of God to death, they have as truly incurred the guilt of their blood **as if** it had been shed by their hands. In like manner Christ declared the Jews of His time guilty of all the blood of holy men which had been shed since the days of Abel; for they possessed the **same spirit** and were seeking to do the same work with these murderers of the prophets.***

[Plague #4]: ‘In the plague that follows, power is given to **the sun** ‘to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat.’ Verses 8, 9. The prophets thus describe the condition of the earth at this fearful time: ‘The land mourneth; . . . because the harvest of the field is perished. . . All the trees of the field are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men.’ ‘The seed is rotten under their clods; the garners are laid desolate. . . How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture. . . The rivers of water are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.’ ‘The songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord God: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.’ Joel 1:10-12, 17-20; Amos 8:3.

*“These plagues are **not universal**, [Plagues #1-4] or the **inhabitants** of the earth would be **wholly cut off**. Yet they will be the **most awful scourges** that have ever been known to mortals. All the judgments upon men, prior to the close of probation, have been mingled with mercy. The pleading blood of Christ has shielded the sinner from receiving the full measure of his guilt; but in the final judgment, wrath is poured out **unmixed with mercy**.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 627-629*

The plagues are God’s **literal response** to specific **spiritual maladies** in Babylon. The spiritual leaders of Babylon used their **tongues** to deceive, they intended to shed the blood of God’s people, they worshiped on the day of the sun, they kept the world in darkness and they used the multitudes to persecute God’s people. Now they reap what they sowed. As we shall see later in our study, the last three plagues will be **very literal** but they are described in **symbolic language** because Revelation 16-19 must connect with the symbolic terminology that was previously used in Revelation 12 and 13.

Are the Plagues Local or Global?

Some have misunderstood a statement about the first four plagues in Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 628, 629:

*“These plagues are **not universal**, or the **inhabitants of the earth** would be **wholly cut off**. Yet they will be the most awful scourges that have ever been known to mortals. All the judgments upon men, prior to the close of probation, have been mingled with mercy. The pleading blood of Christ has shielded the sinner from receiving the full measure of his guilt; but in the final judgment, wrath is poured out unmixed with mercy.”*

There are two ways of understanding the word ‘universal’ in this quotation. It can mean ‘worldwide’ in terms of **geographical extension** or it can mean ‘worldwide’ in terms of **every person** within that geographical extension. The plagues will fall upon the **entire world** because Babylon is worldwide but they

will not affect **every single person** in the world or else everyone would be cut off.

Notice the following statement in Prophets and Kings, pp. 171 where Ellen White uses the word ‘universal’ in the second sense:

*“Yet this apostasy, widespread as it has come to be, is **not universal**. **Not all in the world** are lawless and sinful; **not all** have taken sides with the enemy. God has many thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal, many who long to understand more fully in regard to Christ and the law, many who are hoping against hope that Jesus will come soon to end the reign of sin and death. And there are many who have been worshiping Baal ignorantly, but with whom the Spirit of God is still striving.”*

The three angels’ messages (including the call to come out of Babylon) are proclaimed to the **entire world** (Revelation 14:6, 8; 18:1) and people all over the world will receive them or reject them. The entire world will have worshipers of the beast and his image (Revelation 13:3, 11-18) so these plagues must be **global in extension**.

The book of Revelation species that Babylon will be a global system at the end of time and therefore the plagues must fall upon Babylon in the entire world (Revelation 18:4). If Babylon is a worldwide system, then the Jerusalem that Babylon surrounds must be worldwide as well.

How long will the Plagues Last?

At this point we don’t have a precise answer to this question but we do know that the plagues will last a short time. Notice the following texts:

Isaiah 54:4-8

“For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. 6 For the Lord has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful

wife when you were refused," says your God. ⁷ "For a **mere moment** I have forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you. ⁸ With a **little wrath** I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you," says the Lord, your Redeemer."

Isaiah 26:20-21

"Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself, as it were, for **a little moment**, until the indignation is past. ²¹ For behold, the Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain."

Psalms 30:5

"For His anger is but **for a moment**, His favor is for life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning."

Revelation 18:9, 10, 17, 19

"The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰ standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in **one hour** your judgment has come.' ¹⁷ For in **one hour** such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance ¹⁹ "They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in **one hour** she is made desolate.'"

Matthew 24:21-22

"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²² And unless those **days were**

shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.”

“When Jesus leaves the most holy His restraining Spirit is withdrawn from rulers and people. They are left to the control of evil angels. Then such laws will be made by the counsel and direction of Satan that, unless time should be **very short**, no flesh could be saved.” Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 1, p. 204

The Position of the Death Decree

Revelation 16:5-7 clearly indicates that the wicked will ratify the death decree because of the devastating effects of the **first two plagues**. After the fresh waters turn to blood in the third plague, God explains the reason why He has given the wicked blood to drink (see Revelation 17:6; 18:20, 24; Matthew 23:29-35; Luke 11:49-51; GC 628):

“By condemning the people of God to death, they have as truly incurred the guilt of their blood **as if it had been shed by their hands**.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 628

“I saw the **leading men** of the earth consulting together, and Satan and his angels busy around them. I saw a writing, copies of which were scattered in different parts of the land, giving orders that unless the saints should yield their peculiar faith, give up the Sabbath, and observe the first day of the week, the people were at liberty after a certain time, **to put them to death**.” Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* pp. 282, 283

Early Writings, pp. 36, 37 gives us an interesting chronology of the timing of the death decree:

“Then I saw that Jesus would not leave the most holy place until **every case was decided** either for salvation or destruction, and that the wrath of God could not come until Jesus had **finished His work** in the most holy place, laid off His priestly attire, and clothed Himself with the garments of vengeance. Then Jesus will **step out from between** the Father and man, and God will keep silence no longer, but

pour out His wrath on those who have rejected His truth. I saw that the ***anger of the nations***, the ***wrath of God***, and the ***time to judge the dead [in the light of Revelation 11:18]*** were ***separate and distinct***, one ***following the other***, also that Michael had not stood up, and that the time of trouble, such as never was, had not yet commenced. The nations are ***now getting angry***, but when our High Priest ***has finished*** His work in the sanctuary, He will stand up, put on the garments of vengeance, and ***then*** the seven last plagues will be poured out.

I saw that the four angels would hold the four winds until Jesus' work was done in the sanctuary, and ***then*** will come the seven last plagues. These ***plagues enraged the wicked against the righteous***; they thought that we had brought the judgments of God upon them, and that if they could ***rid the earth*** of us, the plagues would then be stayed. ***A decree went forth to slay the saints***, which caused them to ***cry day and night*** [see Luke 18:1-8] for deliverance. This was the time of ***Jacob's trouble***. Then all the saints cried out with anguish of spirit, and ***were delivered by the voice of God***. The 144,000 triumphed. Their faces were lighted up with the glory of God." Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* pp. 36, 37

Are the Plagues Consecutive and Cumulative?

The biblical evidence indicates that the plagues will be ***consecutive*** and ***cumulative***. The first four plagues will ***have longer intervals between them*** than the last three. We know that the plagues are cumulative because each successive plague increases the rage of the wicked against the living saints. During this time, God's people must have learned to trust only in God.

The first four plagues are what I call '***jeopardy plagues***' because during them, God's people are in danger of being annihilated by the wicked. The last three plagues are what I call '***deliverance plagues***' because during them, God's people will no longer be in danger because the wicked will turn on one another. The last three plagues flow in ***quick succession*** one right after the other.

Ellen White's assessment of the 'jeopardy plagues' and 'deliverance plagues' is in the chapter 'God's People Delivered' in GC, pp. 635, 636. Regarding the first four 'jeopardy plagues' Ellen White wrote:

*"When the protection of **human laws** shall be withdrawn from those who honor the law of God, there will be, in different lands, a simultaneous movement **for their destruction**. As the **time appointed in the decree draws near**, the people will conspire to **root out** the hated sect. It will be determined to strike in **one night a decisive blow**, which shall **utterly silence** the voice of dissent and reproof.*

*The people of God—some in prison cells, some hidden in solitary retreats in the forests and the mountains—still **plead for divine protection**, while in every quarter companies of armed men, urged on by hosts of evil angels, are preparing for the **work of death**. It is now, in the hour of utmost extremity that the God of Israel will interpose for the **deliverance** of His chosen. . .*

Ellen White continued with a description of the three 'deliverance plagues':

*"With shouts of triumph, jeering, and imprecation, throngs of evil men are **about to rush [waters rush]** upon their prey, when, lo, a **dense blackness [plague #5]**, deeper than the darkness of the night, falls upon the earth [**darkness for the wicked**]. Then a rainbow, shining with the glory from the throne of God, spans the heavens and seems to **encircle each praying company [light for God's people]**. The **angry multitudes are suddenly arrested [plague #6; Babylon's waters dry up on her]**. Their mocking cries die away. The **objects of their murderous rage are forgotten**. With fearful forebodings they gaze upon the symbol of God's covenant and long to be shielded from its overpowering brightness.*

*It is at midnight that God manifests His power for the deliverance of His people. The sun appears, shining in its strength. Signs and wonders follow in quick succession. The wicked look with terror and amazement upon the scene, while the righteous behold with solemn joy the **tokens of their deliverance**. Everything in nature seems turned out of its course. The streams cease to flow. Dark, heavy*

clouds come up and clash against each other. In the midst of the angry heavens is one clear space of indescribable glory, whence comes the voice of God like the sound of many waters, saying: "It is done." Revelation 16:17. [plague #7]

The Moral Reason for the Plagues

"The plagues upon Egypt when God was about to deliver Israel were similar in character to those more terrible and extensive judgments which are to fall upon the world just before the final deliverance of God's people." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 627, 628

The seven last plagues accomplish **five things** just like they did in Egypt:

- In each plague God says to the wicked: '**let my people go**'.
- Each plague afflicts the favorite 'gods' of the Christian world.

"The Lord God of Israel is to execute judgment upon the gods of this world as upon the gods of Egypt. With fire and flood, plagues and earthquakes, He will spoil the whole land. Then His redeemed people will exalt His name and make it glorious in the earth. Shall not those who are living in the last remnant of this earth's history become intelligent in regard to God's lessons?" Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases, vol. 10, pp. 240, 241

- The reaction of the wicked to the plagues will reveal that their choice is **irreversible**. Instead of repenting, each plague further enrages the wicked against God's people like they did with Pharaoh in Egypt (Revelation 16:8-11).
- The plagues put God's people in an **inescapable situation** to show the universe that their faith is fixed for eternity and not even death can shake their trust in God. When all is said and done the universe will see that the final generation does not serve God for the loaves and the fishes but out of pure love. The story of the three young men in the furnace and Daniel in the lion's den will be repeated with the living saints on a global scale.

- The deliverance of the saints will exalt the glory of God and prove that God is faithful to His covenant. None of the glory will belong to the saints. If God did not intervene to deliver them they would perish (Ezekiel 38:18-23).

Some Adventists today fear the plagues and hope to be laid to rest before their outpouring. However, there is no reason to fear. The plagues are for Babylon in its three ramifications (Revelation 14:8-11; 18:4, 8, 10), not for God's people. At no point do the plagues afflict the righteous so there is no need to fear them. Although God's people will have no mediator for sin they will have an almighty protector (see Psalm 91; Daniel 12:1).

Enjoy Fellowship While it Lasts

Many times we do not realize what a blessing it is to be able to gather in full freedom to worship as God's corporate people. Let us enjoy fellowship now not forsaking the assembling together because in the time of trouble we will have to stand alone.

*"The people of God are not at this time all in one place. They are in different companies and in all parts of the earth; and they will be tried singly, not in groups. Everyone must stand the test **for himself**." Ellen G. White, Last Day Events, p. 260*

*"The faith of **individual members** of the church will be tested as though there were not another person in the world." Ellen G. White, Last Day Events, p. 260*

Let us learn the lessons of Psalm 91 because this 'tribulation psalm' will bring strength and comfort in the trying times ahead.



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Lesson #4 – Three Perspectives of the Last Three Plagues

Tips for the Study of the Last Three Plagues

When we study the last three plagues of Revelation 16 we must not only study them individually but also look at the **broader picture**, how they fit together. Do not merely consider each plague as isolated from the rest but rather **how they flow**. By way of example, when we study the Elijah passages in Scripture we must not only consider Elijah but how the details of the entire story fit together including Baal, Jezebel, Ahab, and the false prophets.

When we study the last three plagues we must also make sure that we take into account all the details of the Old Testament **root stories** because they are **fundamental** to the typological application.

When you search for **Ellen White’s** understanding of the last three plagues, do not assume that she will quote the verses that refer to them or even that she will use the biblical terminology. Ellen White frequently refers to biblical passages without using the specific words that are found in the passage.

Learn to ask questions of the passage. For example, ask the question: Why does Revelation 15:2-4 say that the 144,000 will sing the Song of Moses and the Lamb after they come forth victoriously from the great tribulation? What does the final deliverance have to do with Moses? Is it possible that the final deliverance will follow the same pattern as the deliverance of Israel at the Exodus?

Return to Pre-Creation Chaos

Revelation 16 describes seven devastating plagues that will fall upon the wicked on planet earth after the door of human probation closes (Revelation 15:5-8). These plagues will, to a great degree, return the earth to the condition it was in before creation week—without form, void, in darkness and without inhabitants (Jeremiah 4:19-27).

In this lesson we will consider the subject of the last three plagues from three different perspectives and look for parallels in the thematic structure. Here are the three perspectives:

- ✓ Revelation 16:10-21
- ✓ Exodus 14 and 15
- ✓ The Great Controversy, pp. 635-637

Perspective #1: The Last Three Plagues in Revelation 16:10-21

The Fifth Plague

Revelation 16:10, 11

“Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.”

The **central components** in the fifth plague are:

- ✓ The **throne of the beast**.
- ✓ The **kingdom** of the beast.
- ✓ The **darkness** on the kingdom of the beast.
- ✓ The **sores and gnawing of tongue**.

The beast under the sixth plague is the same as the beast of **Revelation 13** and the little horn of **Daniel 7** that spoke blasphemies against the Most High, persecuted the saints of the Most High, thought it could change times and law and ruled for 1260 years. The beast is a symbol of the **Roman Catholic Papacy**.

The **throne** is the **center of government** from where the beast rules. In other words, this plague falls on the governing See of the beast. The papacy's center of power is in **Vatican City** within the confines of the ancient city of **Rome**.

The beast's kingdom is composed those who **support it globally**. The following verses describe the global nature of the beast's kingdom:

Revelation 13:3

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

Revelation 13:7

*"It was granted to him [**the beast**] to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over **every tribe, tongue, and nation**."*

Revelation 17:1, 2

*"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who **sits on many waters**,² with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."*

Revelation 17:15

*"Then he said to me: "The **waters** which you saw, where the harlot **sits**, [**sitting refers to rulership**] are **peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues**."*

In these verses there is a **clear distinction** between the ruling authority of the beast and his kingdom which is composed of peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues.

The **darkness** that afflicts the throne of the beast and his kingdom is **supernatural** and **global**. When the darkness falls upon the throne of the beast system, those who belong to it gnaw their **tongues** in pain. Even further, God sends upon them a **panic** that leads them to **kill one another** with the weapons they intended on using to destroy God's people.

Zachariah 14:12, 13

*"And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem. Their **flesh shall dissolve** while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their **tongues shall dissolve** in their mouths. It shall come to pass in that day that a **great panic** from the LORD will be among them. Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor, and **raise his hand against his neighbor's hand**."*

The expression 'and they **did not repent** of their deeds' indicates that those who belong to the kingdom of the beast are beyond repentance because **their decision is set in stone**.

The Sixth Plague

Revelation 16:12, 16

*"Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great **river Euphrates**, and its **water was dried up**, so that the way of the **kings from the east** might be*

prepared. . . And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, **Armageddon**.”

Central elements:

- ✓ The River **Euphrates**.
- ✓ The **drying up** of the waters.
- ✓ The **kings** from the **east**.
- ✓ The **gathering**.
- ✓ The place called **Armageddon**.

Important Questions about the sixth plague:

- ✓ What is the symbolic meaning of the great river **Euphrates**? (hint: Isaiah 8:7, 8; 17:12, 13; Revelation 17:15)
- ✓ What is the symbolic meaning of the **drying up** of the waters of the river?
- ✓ Who are the **kings from the east** (literally, from ‘the rising sun’)?
- ✓ How is the **way prepared** for the arrival of the kings?
- ✓ **Where** is the gathering **place** called Armageddon?

The Old Testament background

In order to answer these questions, we must go to the Old Testament root prophecy, the story of the **fall of ancient Babylon**. The Old Testament describes this story in Daniel 5, Jeremiah 50 and 51 and Isaiah 41 as well as in the descriptions given by secular historians **Xenophon and Herodotus**. Here is the composite picture when we put all the evidence together:

- ✓ Babylon sat upon the many waters of the Euphrates river (Jeremiah 51:12, 13)

- ✓ Although the Euphrates river was Babylon's greatest **source of security**, it was also its greatest **potential liability**.
- ✓ On the night of its fall, Babylon was practicing **idolatry**, false **worship** and drinking **wine** in holy vessels (Daniel 5).
- ✓ **Cyrus** came with his armies from the **north** and **east** and surrounded the city.
- ✓ Cyrus came with many kings
- ✓ The Medo-Persian troops **dried up the riverbed** of the Euphrates diverting it to channels that had been built outside the city.
- ✓ In their drunken stupor, Belshazzar and his courtiers left open the great brass gates that protected the city.
- ✓ The drying up of the waters **prepared the way** for Cyrus and his armies to enter the city **unopposed**.
- ✓ Cyrus and his armies on horses **entered the city** through the dry riverbed and Babylon fell.
- ✓ Cyrus then delivered God's people so that they could go **back to Jerusalem**.

This entire scenario is applied **symbolically** and **globally** in Revelation 17. At this point we will only consider some of the details of Revelation 17.

Questions about Revelation 17

- ✓ **Which** of the seven plague angels came back to speak with John in Revelation 17:1?
- ✓ What does a **harlot** represent in Scripture (Ezekiel 16 and 23)?
- ✓ What is the **name** of the harlot woman?
- ✓ What are the **waters** upon which the harlot sits?

- ✓ What will the **kings** and waters end up doing to the harlot?

Revelation 17:1-5, 15, 16

*"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls [which of the seven?] came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the **judgment [condemnation]** of the **great harlot [the papacy]** who sits on **many waters [the Euphrates]**,² with whom the **kings** of the earth committed **fornication [she had the rulers impose her agenda]**, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the **wine** of her fornication [**her false doctrines**]." ³ So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ The woman was arrayed in **purple and scarlet**, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of **abominations** and the filthiness of her fornication. ⁵ And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, **BABYLON THE GREAT [her name is Babylon so she must be seated on the waters of the Euphrates]**, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS [so she must have daughters] AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. . . ¹⁵ Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are **peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues**. ¹⁶ And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will **hate the harlot [her supporters will turn against her]**, make her **desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her** with fire. ¹⁷ For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of **one mind [all on the same page to destroy God's people]**, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the **words of God are fulfilled [when God says 'it is done' at the seventh plague]**."*

The Seventh Plague

Revelation 16:17-21

*"Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a **loud voice** came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "**It is done!**" [**GC 635**] ¹⁸ And there were **noises** and **thunderings** and **lightnings**; and there was a **great***

earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.¹⁹ Now the great city [Babylon] was divided into three parts [three parts are in Revelation 16:13] before this the three parts had been united], and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered [reckoning day has come] before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath [same words in the third angel's message and Revelation 19:15].²⁰ Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found [predicted at the end of the sixth seal in Revelation 6:14-16 and also in Revelation 20:11]²¹ And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great."

The central themes of the seventh plague are God's voice saying 'it is done' followed by an earthquake, thunder, lightning, terrific precipitation and the disappearance of mountain ranges and islands. We shall see in a future study that Revelation 19:11-21 expands upon the seventh plague. In fact, the seventh plague is the battle or Armageddon where Christ and the armies of heaven come from the north and the east on horses to defeat Babylon and deliver God's people.

Perspective #2: The Background of Exodus 14, 15

As we saw in perspective #1, the fall of Babylon in the days of Belshazzar is in the background of the fifth, sixth and seventh plagues. However, I want to suggest that there is another story in the Old Testament that also stands in the background—the story of the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. We know that there is a connection because the 144,000 will sing the Song of Moses and the Lamb which points back to the Song of Moses in Exodus 15. So let us review the entire story of the Exodus to see the connection.

The Captivity

Israel was in bondage in Egypt (Exodus 2:23-25) to the great dragon—Pharaoh (Ezekiel 29:3). God promised to deliver them (Exodus 3:7, 8) and in order to accomplish His purpose, God sent plagues to persuade Pharaoh to let His people go. With each plague God was saying to Pharaoh, “Let my people go” (Exodus 8:1). However, instead of heeding the message, each plague further increased Pharaoh’s animosity and anger against God in the person of His people.

The Sabbath

Israel’s captivity was made more difficult when they tried to keep the Sabbath:

Exodus 5:4, 5

“Then the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people from their work? Get back to your labor.”⁵ And Pharaoh said, “Look, the people of the land are many now, and you make them rest [Shabbat] from their labor!”

Right after quoting Exodus 5:4, 5 Ellen White explained:

“In their bondage the Israelites had to some extent lost the knowledge of God’s law, and they had departed from its precepts. The Sabbath had been generally disregarded, and the exactions of their taskmasters made its observance apparently impossible. But Moses had shown his people that obedience to God was the first condition of deliverance; and the efforts made to restore the observance of the Sabbath had come to the notice of their oppressors.” Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 258

When God’s people came out of Egypt, the crescendo of Pharaoh’s rage reached its peak and he made one last attempt to recover the subjects that he had lost. The people must submit to Pharaoh’s authority or be killed.

Shut In and No Escape

Pharaoh hedged the Israelites in and there appeared to be no escape. The people feared that the armies of Pharaoh would kill them. We know this because they complained that Moses had taken them out into the wilderness **to perish** (Exodus 14:12). The **location** of the crossing was most likely at the **Gulf of Akaba** in the extreme north end of the Red Sea.

Exodus 14:3

*"For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, 'They are **bewildered** by the land; the wilderness has **closed them in**.'"*

Ellen White described the location:

*"The Hebrews were encamped beside the sea, whose waters presented a seemingly **impassable barrier** before them, while on the **south** a rugged mountain obstructed their further progress." Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 283, 284*

Pharaoh Prepares for Battle

Pharaoh filled with **wrath** because Israel **escaped** prepared his armies **for battle**. There appeared to be **no escape** and **no hope**—Israel was **defenseless!**

Exodus 14:5-9

*"Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was **turned against the people**; and they said, 'Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?'"⁶ So he made ready **his chariot** and took his people with him.⁷ Also, he took **six hundred choice chariots**, and **all the chariots of Egypt** with captains over every one of them.⁸ And the LORD **hardened the heart of Pharaoh** king of Egypt, and **he pursued** the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness.⁹ So the Egyptians **pursued them**, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his **horsemen***

and **his army**, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon.”

The Time of Trouble

A horrific **time of trouble** ensued and the people cried out to God for deliverance from their enemies:

Exodus 14:10

*“And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel **cried out** to the LORD.”*

The Lord Promised to Fight for Israel

The battle was not Israel’s. It was the battle of the LORD God Almighty. In fact, the LORD promised to fight for Israel, and He just asked them to trust in Him—this is **righteousness in verity**!

Exodus 14:13, 14

*“And Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. ¹⁴ The **LORD will fight for you**, and you shall hold **your peace**.”*

When all appeared to be lost, the LORD **dried up** or **divided** the waters of the Red Sea. As long as the waters were ‘united’ they were a menace to God’s people. However, if they were divided or dried up the people would be delivered.

Exodus 14:16, 21

*“But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and **divide** it. And the children of Israel shall go on **dry ground** through the midst of the sea. ²¹ Then*

*Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into **dry land**, and the waters were **divided**.”*

The Fifth Plague: Light and Darkness

When the Egyptian armies were about to pounce upon God’s people, the pillar of cloud moved between them and there was darkness for the Egyptians but noonday light for Israel:

Exodus 14:19, 20

*“And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and **stood behind them**.²⁰ So it came **between** the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and **darkness** to the one, and it gave **light by night** to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all that night.”*

Ellen White described the situation:

*“But now, as the Egyptian host approached them expecting to make them an easy prey, the cloudy column rose majestically into the heavens, passed over the Israelites, and descended **between** them and the armies of Egypt. A **wall of darkness** interposed between the pursued and their pursuers. The Egyptians **could no longer discern** the camp of the Hebrews, and were forced to halt. But as the darkness of night **deepened**, the wall of cloud became a **great light to the Hebrews**, flooding the entire encampment with the radiance of day. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 286, 287*

God Takes the Battlefield

As the sun was about to rise God took the battlefield on behalf of Israel. Confusion and panic suddenly overtook the armies of the Egyptians and they began to flee. In fighting the people of God, the Egyptians were fighting the God of the people. This was the battle of the LORD God Almighty!

Exodus 14:24, 25

*"Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that **the LORD looked down** upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and **He troubled** the army of the Egyptians. ²⁵ And **He took off** their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty; and the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel, for **the LORD fights** for them against the Egyptians."*

The Sixth Plague: The Waters Dry Up or are Divided

As the Egyptian armies began to retreat, Moses extended his rod and the waters of the Red Sea dried up or were divided to prepare the way for the escape of God's people. Up to this point the waters had been a menace to God's people. As long as the waters were united there was no escape:

Exodus 14:16, 21

*"But lift up **your rod**, and stretch out your hand over the sea and **divide** it. And the children of Israel shall go on **dry ground** through the midst of the sea. ²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into **dry land**, and the waters were **divided**."*

After God dried up or divided the waters, the waters became **inimical** to the Egyptians. God dried up the waters and then turned them against the Egyptians:

Exodus 14:25-31

*"Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea that the **waters may come back** upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen." ²⁷ And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the **morning appeared [at the sun rising]**, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the **LORD overthrew** the Egyptians **in the midst of the sea**. ²⁸ Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. **Not so***

much as one of them remained. ²⁹ But the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ³⁰ So **the LORD saved Israel** that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ Thus Israel saw the great **work which the LORD had done** in Egypt; so the people **feared** the LORD, and **believed** the LORD and His servant Moses.”

The Seventh Plague: Natural Calamities

Spectacular ‘natural phenomena’ occurred when God delivered His people at the Red Sea. The book of Exodus does not record these phenomena but the book of Psalms does:

Psalms 77:15-20

“You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. ¹⁶ The **waters saw You**, O God; the waters saw You, **they were afraid**; the depths also trembled. ¹⁷ The clouds **poured out water**; the skies sent out a sound; **your arrows** also flashed about. ¹⁸ The **voice of Your thunder** was in the whirlwind; the **lightnings** lit up the world; the **earth trembled and shook**. ¹⁹ Your way was in the sea, your path in the **great waters**, and Your footsteps were not known. ²⁰ You led Your people like a flock by the hand of **Moses and Aaron**.”

It is no coincidence that deliverance came at the sun rising:

Exodus 14:24, 27

“Now it came to pass, in the **morning watch**, that the LORD looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and **He troubled the army** of the Egyptians. ²⁷ And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the **morning appeared**, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.”

Every single one of the Egyptians perished:

Exodus 14:28

"Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained."

After God delivered His people, they shouted out the **Song of Moses**, the **song of victory**:

Exodus 15:1-18

*"Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song **to the LORD**, and spoke, saying: "I will sing **to the LORD** for **He has triumphed** gloriously! The horse and its rider **He has** thrown into the sea! " ² **The LORD** is my strength and song and **He has become** my salvation; **He** is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will **exalt Him**. ³ **The LORD** is a **man of war**; the LORD is **His name**. ⁴ Pharaoh's chariots and his army **He has cast** into the sea; his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. ⁵ The depths have covered them; they sank to the bottom like a stone. ⁶ "**Your right hand**, O LORD, has become glorious in power; **your right hand**, O LORD, has dashed the enemy in pieces. ⁷ And in the greatness of Your excellence, **You have overthrown** those who rose **against You**; You sent forth **Your wrath**; it **consumed** them like **stubble**. ⁸ And with the blast of **Your nostrils** the waters were gathered together; the floods stood upright like a heap; the depths congealed in the heart of the sea. ⁹ The **enemy said**, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword, **my hand shall destroy them**.' ¹⁰ **You blew** with Your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters. ¹¹ **Who is like You**, O LORD, among the gods? **Who is like You**, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? ¹² **You stretched** out Your right hand; the earth swallowed them. ¹³ **You in Your mercy** have led forth the people whom **You have** redeemed; **You have** guided them in **Your strength** to Your holy habitation. ¹⁴ "The people will hear and be afraid; sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia. ¹⁵ Then*

*the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling will take hold of them; all the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away. ¹⁶ Fear and dread will fall on them; by the **greatness of Your arm** they will be as still as a stone, till Your people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over whom **You have purchased.***

God then promised to take His people to the Mountain of His Inheritance:

Exodus 15:17, 18

*“You will bring them in and **plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance [Zion]**, in the place, O LORD, which You have made for Your own dwelling, the **sanctuary**, O LORD, which Your hands have established. ¹⁸ The LORD shall **reign forever and ever.**”*

Pharaoh came to realize too late, that in fighting the people of God he was fighting the God of the people. The protecting care of God must be understood within a **covenant context**. When God’s people are in a covenant relationship with the Lord, the Lord protects them from annihilation! When **Saul of Tarsus** persecuted the church he was persecuting the Lord. Jesus said to Saul: ‘Why are you persecuting me?’

A Vital Prophetic Principle

Literal Israel was **literally captive** in **literal Egypt**, to **literal Pharaoh**. God raised up a **literal person** (Moses) to lead God’s **literal people** out. Literal Israel was **literally** closed in at the edge of the **literal sea**. The **literal waters** were divided or dried up by Moses’ **literal rod** and then the waters **literally avalanched** themselves upon the enemies to deliver literal Israel. Literal Israel then **sang the song** of their deliverance and God took them to the **literal mountain** of God’s inheritance—Mt. Zion.

All of this will transpire once more under the seven last plagues with spiritual Israel on a global scale.

Perspective #3: Ellen White's Interpretation

Ellen White's Methodology

It is common for Ellen White to refer to biblical events without actually quoting the verses that describe the event. In *The Great Controversy*, Ellen White **does not quote** the verses that describe the fifth and sixth plagues. Rather, she interprets the symbols in matter of fact language and follows the same literary sequence. Let's notice an example from **Revelation 4 and 5**: As I have shown in the series on the 24 elders, these chapters contain several symbols:

- **One** seated on the throne (not identified by name)
- **Four living creatures** (presented in symbolic terms)
- **24 elders** (symbolic language)
- **Seven lamps of fire** (symbolic language)
- **Lamb** as though it had been slain (symbolic language)

In **The Desire of Ages**, pp. 833-835 Ellen White **interprets the symbolic language** of Revelation 4 and 5 without actually quoting the specific verses:

- She identifies the One on the throne as the God the **Father**.
- She explains that the four living creatures are **cherubim and seraphim**.
- The **24 elders** are the representatives of the worlds that never sinned.
- The **seven lamps** of fire represent the Holy Spirit.
- The **Lamb** as though it had been slain is Jesus Christ.

We find another example in Daniel 11:40-45. Ellen White never quoted these verses or even alludes to the language in them. Yet, as I have shown in another place (see 'Daniel 11:40-45 and the Final Crisis') she comments on this passage in *The Great Controversy* without using the terminology.

Let's notice now how Ellen White interprets the fifth, sixth and seventh plagues in matter of fact language. Although she quotes verses from the seventh plague she does not quote any verses for the fifth and sixth. I have added my own explanatory remarks in brackets:

The Fifth and Sixth Plagues in The Great Controversy, p. 635:

*“When the protection of human laws shall be withdrawn from those who **honor the law of God**, there will be, in **different lands**, a **simultaneous** movement for their destruction [**similar to Pharaoh who gathers his armies to attack Israel**]. As the time appointed in the **decree** [Revelation 13:15; Esther 3:8] draws near, the **people** will conspire to root out the **hated sect**. It will be determined to strike in one night a decisive blow, which shall utterly silence the voice of **dissent** and **reproof**.*

*The **people of God**—some in prison cells, some hidden in solitary retreats in the forests and the mountains—still **plead for divine protection** [**like Israel did at the edge of the Red Sea**], while in every quarter **companies of armed men**, urged on by hosts of evil angels are **preparing for the work of death** [**Pharaoh and his armies come and there is no escape**]. It is now, in the hour of **utmost extremity** that the **God of Israel** [notice the allusion to ancient Israel] will interpose for the **deliverance** of His **chosen** [**like at the edge of the Red Sea**].*

*With shouts of triumph, jeering, and imprecation, throngs of evil men are about to **rush** [**the Euphrates is at flood stage: See the meaning of the word rush in Isaiah 17:12, 13 and 8:7, 8**] upon their prey, when, lo, a dense **blackness**, deeper than the darkness of the night, falls upon the **earth** [**the fifth plague of darkness**]. Then a rainbow, **shining with the glory from the throne of God**, spans the heavens and seems to encircle each praying company [**light for God’s people**]. The **angry multitudes** [**symbolically represented as the ‘waters’ upon which the harlot sits**] are suddenly **arrested** [**the waters of the Euphrates are dried up**]. Their mocking cries die away. The **objects of their murderous rage are forgotten** [**God’s people are no longer in jeopardy after the fifth plague**]. With fearful forebodings they gaze upon the symbol of **God’s covenant** [**the covenant that protects God’s people**] and long to be shielded from its overpowering brightness. . .*

In the next chapter (*'The Desolation of the Earth'*) Ellen White comes back to describe this climactic moment of the sixth plague but adds some very important details:

*"The **people** see that they have been **deluded**. They accuse one another of having led them to destruction; but all unite in heaping their bitterest condemnation upon **the ministers [the leaders of the harlot and her daughters]**. **Unfaithful pastors** have prophesied **smooth things [this is why the fifth plague afflicts the tongue]**; they have led their hearers to **make void the law of God** and to **persecute those who would keep it holy**. Now, in their despair, these teachers confess before **the world** their work of deception. The **multitudes [the waters of the Red Sea and the Euphrates]** **are filled with fury [they withdraw their support and then avalanche themselves against the apostate system]**. "We are lost!" they cry, "and you are the cause of our ruin;" and they **turn upon the false shepherds [the waters now drown their religious leaders]**. The very ones that once **admired them most** will pronounce the **most dreadful curses** upon them. The very hands that once crowned them with laurels will be raised for their destruction. The **swords which were to slay God's people** are now employed to **destroy their enemies [Zechariah 14:12, 13 is fulfilled when the swords turn upon the religious leaders]**. Everywhere there is strife and bloodshed. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 655, 656*

*"And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold everyone on the hand of his neighbor and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbor." **Zechariah 14:12, 13**. In the mad strife of their own fierce passions, and by the awful outpouring of God's unmingled wrath, fall the wicked inhabitants of the earth--priests, rulers, and people, rich and poor, high and low. "And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto*

the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried." Jeremiah 25:33." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 657

We know that we are on the right track because at the bottom of page 636 and the top of page 637 Ellen White comments on the **seventh plague** and actually quotes verses:

*"In the midst of the angry heavens is one clear space of indescribable glory, whence comes the voice of God like the sound of many waters, saying: "**It is done.**" Revelation 16:17 [**the seventh plague**].*

*That voice **shakes the heavens and the earth**. There is a **mighty earthquake**, "such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great" Verses 17, 18. The firmament appears to open and shut. The glory from the throne of God seems flashing through. The mountains shake like a reed in the wind, and ragged rocks are scattered on every side. There is a roar as of a coming tempest. The sea is lashed into fury. There is heard the shriek of a hurricane like the voice of demons upon a mission of destruction. The whole earth heaves and swells like the waves of the sea. Its surface is breaking up. Its very foundations seem to be giving way. **Mountain chains** are sinking. Inhabited **islands disappear**. The seaports that have become like Sodom for wickedness are swallowed up by the angry waters. Babylon the great has come in remembrance before God, "to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath." **Great hailstones**, every one "about the weight of a talent," are doing their work of destruction." **Revelation 16:19, 21** [**the seventh plague**]*

In *The Great Controversy*, pp. 648, 649 then explains that the 144,000 will sing the **Song of Moses and the Lamb**, the song of their deliverance from end time spiritual Babylon.

The Litmus Test

The final and most important question: What will determine **whose side** we are on in this great final battle? Revelation 16:15, in the middle of the

Armageddon message, has the answer. In our final lesson we will dedicate and entire class to this verse.

Revelation 16:15

*"Behold, I am **coming** as a **thief**. Blessed is he who **watches**, and keeps his **garments** lest he **walk naked** and they see his **shame**."*

Revelation 3:18-19

*"I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and **white garments**, that you may be **clothed**, that the **shame** of your **nakedness** may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see."*



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

“FROM THE CLOSE OF PROBATION TO THE NEW EARTH: A STUDY OF REVELATION CHAPTERS 15 TO 22”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #5 – The Last Three Plagues of Revelation 16

The Old Testament Background

- The Exodus from Egypt
- The fall of Belshazzar's Babylon

The Flow of the Last Three Plagues

- **Probation** has closed (Revelation 15:1, 5-8)
- The **first four plagues** infuriate the wicked against God's people.
- The **fifth plague** of darkness falls upon the kingdom of the beast but upon God's people there is light.
- The multitudes 'dry up' on their religious leaders and avalanche themselves against them.
- The seventh plague includes thunder, lightning, and an earthquake.
- The first four are jeopardy plagues and the last three are deliverance plagues.

The Armageddon Passage

Revelation 16:12-16

"Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. ¹³ And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. ¹⁵ "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." ¹⁶ And they [the threefold union instigated by the evil spirits] gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon."

Questions

- What is represented by the Great River Euphrates?
- What is meant by its drying up?
- What is the purpose of gathering the kings of the earth and the whole world?
- Who are the kings that come from the east?
- Who are the dragon, the beast and the false prophet?
- Who are the three evil spirits like frogs?
- Where is Armageddon located?

Background of Ancient Babylon

Ancient Babylon was seated upon the waters of the Great River Euphrates so the waters upon which the harlot sits are the waters of the Euphrates. However, this is not a literal harlot or a literal river. The harlot represents an apostate church and the waters represent multitudes, nations, tongues and people.

Babylon was very **confident** that she was **invincible** (Isaiah 47:7-10; see also 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3). She was so confident, that on the night of her fall, while the armies of the Medes and Persians had the city surrounded, King Belshazzar was **having a party**! (Daniel 5)

The main source of Babylon's security was **her river** that flowed right through the center of the city:

Jeremiah 51:12, 13

*"Set up the standard on the walls of Babylon; make the guard strong, set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes. For the Lord has both devised and done what He spoke against the inhabitants of Babylon. ¹³ O you who **dwelt by many waters**, abundant in treasures, your end has come, the measure of your covetousness."*

The city had **three walls** and great **gates of bronze** that reached to the bottom of the river:

Isaiah 45:2

*"I will go before you [**before Cyrus**] and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the **gates of bronze** and cut the **bars of iron**."*

Babylon gave **her wine** to the nations and they **became mad**:

Jeremiah 51:7

*"Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunk. The nations **drank her wine**; therefore, the **nations are deranged**."*

When Belshazzar drank the wine he was not able to distinguish between the holy and the common and he practiced false worship and idolatry:

Daniel 5:1

*"Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and **drank wine** in the presence of the thousand. ² **While he tasted the wine**, Belshazzar*

*gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken **from the temple** which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might **drink** from them. ³ Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines **drank** from them. ⁴ They **drank wine**, and **praised the gods** of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone."*

God promised that He would **send plagues** upon Babylon and use the weapons of His indignation against her

Jeremiah 50:13

*"Because of the **wrath of the Lord** she shall **not be inhabited**, but she shall be wholly **desolate**. Everyone who goes by Babylon shall be horrified and hiss at all **her plagues**."*

Jeremiah 50:25

*"The Lord has opened **His armory**, and has brought out the **weapons of His indignation**; for this is the work of the Lord God of hosts in the land of the Chaldeans."*

God called His people **to flee** or come out from Babylon **before** she met her fate

Jeremiah 50:6-8, 28, 51:45

*"**Move from the midst of Babylon, go out** of the land of the Chaldeans; and be like the rams before the flocks. ⁹ For behold, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an **assembly of great nations** from the **north country**, and they shall array themselves against her; from there she shall be captured. Their arrows shall be like those of an expert warrior; none shall return in vain. ¹⁰ And **Chaldea shall become plunder**; all who plunder her shall be satisfied," says the Lord. . . The voice of those who **flee and escape** from the land of Babylon declares in **Zion** the **vengeance** of the Lord our God, the **vengeance** of His **temple**. . . **My people**,*

***go out** of the midst of her! and let everyone deliver himself from the **fierce anger** of the Lord.”*

Cyrus and his Armies

Babylon was seated upon the many waters of the Euphrates river. As long as the river flowed, Babylon was secure (Jeremiah 51:12, 13). In the Bible, Babylon is the enemy of God’s people par excellence. Babylon had God’s people in bondage and mistreated them (Jeremiah 50:33, 17; 51:24). God used Cyrus to destroy Babylon and deliver His people (Isaiah 44:26).

Notably, the name ‘Cyrus’ means ‘sun’. God referred to Cyrus as His **shepherd** (Isaiah 44:28) and His **messiah** or anointed (Isaiah 45:1). God called him **in righteousness** to let the **captives go** back to Jerusalem (Isaiah 45:13). Cyrus came from a **far country** (Isaiah 46:11) against Babylon from the **north and the east** (Isaiah 41:2, 25; 46:11). He did not come against Babylon alone but rather with a coalition of armies (Jeremiah 51:11, 28)

Cyrus dried up the waters of the Euphrates River, Babylon fell and God’s people were delivered:

Jeremiah 50: 38

*“A **drought** is against **her waters**, and they will be **dried up**. For it is the land of carved images, and they are insane with their idols.”*

Jeremiah 51:36

*Therefore, thus says the Lord: “Behold, I will plead your case and take vengeance for you. I will **dry up her sea** and make her **springs dry**.”*

Isaiah 44:27, 28

*“Who says to the deep, ‘**Be dry!**’ and I will **dry up your rivers**’; ²⁸ Who says of **Cyrus**, ‘He is **My shepherd**, and he shall perform **all My pleasure**, saying to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built,’ and to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’”*

We have three primary and two secondary sources that describe the fateful night that Babylon fell. The primary sources are Daniel 5, the **Nabonidus Chronicle** and the **Cyrus Cylinder** the two secondary sources are the Greek historians **Xenophon** and **Herodotus**. Remarkably all of these sources are in agreement about the events that led up to the fall. All agree that Babylon was taken without a struggle and that the population welcomed Cyrus with open arms. The Greek historians are the only ones who **directly** explain how the city fell although the Bible strongly alludes to it. The Greek historians agree that Cyrus dried up the riverbed of the Euphrates and this led to the fall of the city.

The prophet Jeremiah tells us repeatedly that the great sin of Babylon was that she mistreated and **persecuted** God's people (Jeremiah 51:34-36; 51:49; 50:33, 34).

It is a paradox that Jeremiah wrote about the rivers of Babylon drying up and then turned right around and predicted that she would be **drowned by her own river**.

Jeremiah 51:42, 63, 64

*"The **sea has come up over Babylon**; she is covered with the **multitude of its waves**. Now it shall be, when you have finished reading this book, that you shall tie a stone to it and throw it out **into the Euphrates**.⁶⁴ Then you shall say, 'Thus **Babylon shall sink** and not rise from the catastrophe that I will bring upon her. And they shall be weary.'"*

Thus, Babylon would be **paid back** for the payment she meted out:

Jeremiah 50:29

*"Call together the archers against Babylon. All you who bend the bow, encamp against it all around; let **none of them escape**. **Repay** her according to her work; according to all she has done, do to her; for she has been proud against the Lord, against the Holy One of Israel."*

Daniel 5 describes the last night of Babylon and the reason for its fall. This chapter provides details that the Greek historians could not. We discover that the fall of Babylon was due to its sins and that God decreed its fall. The king drank wine and gave it to one thousand of the VIP's in the kingdom (5:1, 3). The wine did not allow the king to distinguish between the holy and the common (5:2) and therefore he practiced idolatry (5:4). A handwriting on the wall announced the close of probation for Babylon (5:24-28) and that very night Cyrus dried up its river and the city fell to the Medes and Persians (5:31).

A Parenthetical Statement

Revelation 16:12

*“Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates [**Babylon’s river**], and its water [**multitudes, nations, tongues and people**] was dried up [**withdraw their support from Babylon**], so that the way of the kings from the east [**Jesus and His angels—picked up in Revelation 19:11-21**] might be prepared [**before Jesus comes He must unmask the religious leaders**].”*

Revelation 16:12 portrays moment of the **sixth plague after the close of probation** when the persecuting waters (multitudes, nations, tongues and people) of Babylon withdraw their support and then drown her.

However, verses 13 and 14 are parenthetical and take us **back** to the last remnant of probationary time. During this short period, **three evil angels** are gathering the wicked world to Satan’s side with the purpose of **drowning God’s people**. At the same time, three holy angels are gathering God’s people on the Lord’s side.

Revelation 16:13, 14

*“And I saw three unclean spirits [**three evil angels**] like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon [**the secular powers of the world**], out of the mouth of the beast [**the papacy**], and out of the mouth of the false prophet [**apostate Protestantism**].¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go*

out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle [against God in the person of His witnesses] of that great day of God Almighty [for the battle of Armageddon].”

The Gathering of the Righteous

Three holy angels gather righteous

The righteous follow the lamb

The righteous worship God

The righteous gather to Jerusalem

The righteous receive the seal of God
beast

The Gathering of the Wicked

Three evil angels gather wicked

The wicked follow the beast

The wicked worship the beast

The wicked gather to Babylon

The wicked receive the mark of the

The Spirit of Prophecy confirms that the gathering of the wicked in Revelation 16:13, 14 occurs **before** the close of probation:

*“The **present** is a solemn, fearful time for the church. The angels are already girded, **awaiting** the mandate of God to pour **their vials** of wrath upon the world. Destroying angels are taking up the work of vengeance for the Spirit of God is **gradually withdrawing** from the world. Satan **is** also mustering his forces of evil, going forth ‘unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world,’ to gather them under his banner, **to be trained** for ‘the battle of that great day of God Almighty.’”*
Ellen G. White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 983

Revelation 16:15 is a **parenthetical statement** that encourages God’s people, during the gathering time’ to prepare for the close of probation and to **gather on God’s side** in the final battle:

*“Behold, I am coming as a [1] **thief**. Blessed is he who [2] **watches**, and [3] **keeps** his [4] **garments**, lest he [5] **walk** naked and they see [6] **his shame**.”*

This warning would be fruitless after the close of probation because by then all cases will have been decided. The **ESV** puts this verse in parentheses indicating

that it **breaks the flow** of the previous verses. The context proves that the ESV is correct. You will notice that **verse 14** ends with the word 'gather' and **verse 16** picks up with the word 'gather'. The expression '*they gathered them*' refers to the three counterfeit angels that gathering the kings of the earth and the whole world on Satan's side.

Let's link Revelation 16:16 with Revelation 16:14 and skip verse 15:

*"For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to **gather them** to the battle of that great day of God Almighty . . . ¹⁶ And they **gathered them** together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon:*

A Counterfeit Godhead

Revelation 16:13 describes **three powers** that will play a role in end time events:

1. The **Dragon** (Revelation 12) represents the **civil powers** of the world:
 - ✓ Some may wonder whether the **dragon** represents the **political powers** of the earth. Here is the evidence that the dragon represents **Satan working through** the political systems of the world.
 - ✓ **Revelation 12:4**

*"And the **dragon** stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born."*

Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 438

*"Thus while the dragon, primarily, represents Satan, it is, in a secondary sense, a symbol of **pagan Rome**."*
 - ✓ **Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 39**

***"Kings and rulers and governors** have placed upon themselves the brand of antichrist, and are **represented as the dragon** who goes to make war with the saints--with those who keep the commandments of God and who have the faith of Jesus."*

✓ **Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 54**

*"In the sixth century the papacy had become firmly established. Its seat of power was fixed in the imperial city, and the bishop of Rome was declared to be the head over the entire church. **Paganism** had given place to the **papacy**. The **dragon had given to the beast** "his power, and his seat, and great authority." [Revelation 13:2]."*

✓ **Ezekiel 29:3**

*"Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the **great dragon** that lies in the midst of his streams, that says, 'My Nile is my own; I made it for myself.'"*

✓ In **Revelation 19:19, 20** the coalition that opposes God is composed of the beast, the false prophet and the kings of the earth.

2. The **Beast** (Revelation 13:1-10) represents the **papacy**.

3. The **false prophet** (Revelation 13:11-18) represents **apostate Protestantism** in the United States.

The same **threefold alliance** is described in Revelation 17 as the **kings**, the **mother** and the **daughters** (cf. the martyrdom of John the Baptist in **Mark 6**).

In Revelation the **Godhead** is described as **triune** (see Revelation 1:4, 5). At the end of time, the triune Godhead sends **three angels** (Revelation 14:6-12) to **gather** people from every nation, kindred, tongue and people on God's side wage a spiritual **war** against the powers of evil and to follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Revelation 14:1, 4).

The counterfeit godhead also has three entities and three unclean angels that proclaim their message and they will, for a time, be perfectly united. The unclean evil spirits come out of the mouth of the counterfeit godhead and the mouth is used to speak (see 1 Timothy 4:1; Matthew 5:2; Revelation 13:5; Daniel 7:8, 11, 20 and 25). The purpose of the three counterfeit messages is to **gather the entire world** (Revelation 13:3) to follow and **worship the beast** (Revelation 13:8, 16) and to war against God in the person of **His witnesses**:

*“As we approach the last crisis, it is of vital moment that harmony and unity exist among the Lord's instrumentalities. The world is filled with storm and war and variance. Yet under one head—the papal power—the people will unite to **oppose God in the person of His witnesses**. This union is **cemented by the great apostate**. While he seeks to **unite his agents** in warring against the truth he will work **to divide and scatter** its advocates. Jealousy, evil surmising, evil speaking, are instigated by him to produce **discord and dissension**. The members of Christ's church have the power to thwart the purpose of the adversary of souls. At such a time as this let them not be found **at variance** with one another or with any of the Lord's workers. Amidst the general discord let there be **one place where harmony and unity exist** because the **Bible is made the guide of life**. Let the people of God feel that a responsibility rests upon them to build up His instrumentalities.” Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 182*

*When the voice of God delivers His people, the wicked awaken from their stupor and realize ‘that they have been **fighting against God**.’ Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 640*

The multitudes of the world at this time will ask, who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” (Revelation 13:3, 4). God answers the question in Daniel 12:1; Revelation 16:16; 17:14; 19:11ff.

The Link Between Revelation 6, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19

Revelation 6:16, 17: **wrath** of the Lamb’

Revelation 6:17: ‘the great day of His **wrath**’

Revelation 11:18: 'thy **wrath** has come'

Revelation 14:10: 'shall drink of the **wine of the wrath of God**, which is poured out **without mixture** into the **cup** of his indignation'

Revelation 14:19: 'gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the **great winepress** of the **wrath** of God.'

Revelation 15:1: 'seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is **filled up the wrath** of God.'

Revelation 15:7: 'seven angels seven golden vials **full of the wrath of God**.'

Revelation 16:1: 'pour out the **vials of the wrath** of God upon the earth.'

Revelation 16:19: 'great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the **cup of the wine** of the fierceness of **his wrath**.'

Revelation 17:14: (picked up in Revelation 19:15) "These shall **make war** with the Lamb, and **the Lamb** shall overcome them: for he is **Lord of lords**, and **King of kings**.'

Revelation 18:4: 'Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of **her plagues**.'

Revelation 18:8: 'Therefore, shall **her plagues** come in one day.'

Revelation 19:15: 'he treadeth the **winepress** of the fierceness and **wrath of Almighty God**.'

Joel 2:32; 3:9-12 and Revelation 14

Joel 2:32 describes the remnant in Mt. Zion

*"And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in **Mount Zion** and in **Jerusalem** there shall be **deliverance***

*[deliverance from what?], as the Lord has said, among **the remnant** whom the Lord calls."*

Then in Joel 3:9-16 we see the nations surrounding Jerusalem in the winepress with evil intentions:

*"Proclaim this among the nations: "Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. ¹⁰ Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, 'I am strong.'" ¹¹ Assemble and come, all you nations, and **gather together all around [Jerusalem]**. Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O Lord **[God's mighty ones are His armies]**. ¹² "Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge **[Revelation 19:11, 12: Jesus judges and makes war]** all the **surrounding** nations. ¹³ Put in the **sickle**, for the **harvest is ripe**. Come, go down; For the **winepress is full**, the vats **overflow**—For their **wickedness is great**." ¹⁴ Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. ¹⁵ The **sun** and **moon** will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. ¹⁶ The Lord also will **roar from Zion**, and utter His voice **from Jerusalem**; the heavens and earth will shake; but the Lord **will be a shelter** for His people, and the **strength** of the **children of Israel**."*

Revelation 14:14-17 globalizes Joel 3:9-12. In the book of Joel, the winepress is in the Valley of Jehoshaphat outside the **literal city** of Jerusalem. However, in Revelation 14:14-20 the winepress outside the city is not merely in the valley of Jehoshaphat but in the whole world (Revelation 16:1). Therefore, Jerusalem where God's people are gathered must also be a worldwide Jerusalem.

Revelation 14:14-18: The message of the three angels ripens the harvest and the grapes for the harvest.

The horses that trample the winepress in Revelation 14:20 are later identified in Revelation 19:11ff as Jesus and the angelic hosts who come to trample the

wicked in the winepress. The city of Jerusalem is global because Babylon is global (Revelation 17:15).



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
“FROM THE CLOSE OF PROBATION TO THE NEW EARTH:
A STUDY OF REVELATION CHAPTERS 15 TO 22”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #6 - Decoding the Mysteries of Revelation 17

Introductory Matters

The book of Revelation is saturated with exotic imagery. This imagery, known as apocalyptic, was part of the *lingua franca* of that day. In order to comprehend this bizarre symbolism, we must walk in the shoes of the people of that time. That is, we must understand the symbols as they did and not as we would in the twenty-first century.

Revelation 17 is one of the most complex and intellectually challenging chapters in the book of Revelation. It contains vivid symbols, mysterious numbers and strange expressions. It is like a giant jigsaw puzzle with each symbol being a piece of the puzzle. Before we can put the puzzle together we must first carefully analyze the shape of each piece to see where it fits within the puzzle as a whole. Fortunately for us, the first part of the vision (verses 1-8) is explained in great detail by the interpreting angel in the second part (verses 9-18).

Signs and Wisdom

Revelation 1:1 tells us that the book of Revelation was **signified** to John. The root word behind the verb 'signified' is '**sign**'. This indicates that the book of Revelation was given to John in **sign language** and sign language is **symbolic**. This means that the symbols must be **decoded** or **deciphered** in order to ascertain the book's message.

In order to understand the symbolic language of Revelation 17 we must have **wisdom** (Revelation 17:9) and wisdom comes only from **God** (James 1:5). It is not enough to study Revelation 17. We must **pray** that God will give us supernatural wisdom from on high to **understand it**.

The Angel of Revelation 17

Revelation 16 describes seven angels who pour out the seven last plagues upon the earth. The vision of Revelation 17 was given to John by one of those **seven** angels who had the seven **plagues** (Revelation 17:1; 16:12). The question that begs to be asked is: Which of the seven plague angels in Revelation 16 comes back to speak with John in Revelation 17?

The answer to this question is not hard to find. The harlot of Revelation 17 is described as a woman sitting upon **many waters** (17:1) and on her forehead is found the inscription: "MYSTERY: **BABYLON** THE GREAT" (17:5). She is also said to be that "**great city** which **reigns over** the kings of the earth." (Revelation 17:18). That is to say, the '**harlot**' and the '**city**' are interchangeable terms. The harlot represents the religious side of Babylon and the city represents its civil side.

What was the **name of the river** that ran through the city of **Babylon**? The answer to this question is provided by a geographical study of the region as well as by Scripture. The ancient city of Babylon sat upon the many waters of the **river Euphrates** (Jeremiah 51:12, 13). This means that we must look for the **bowl angel** who refers to the river Euphrates and that bowl angel is the **sixth**

(Revelation 16:12). In other words, the angel who poured out the sixth plague upon the **river Euphrates** in Revelation 16:12-16 **came back to John** in chapter 17 and further explained the meaning of that same plague in Revelation 17. In short, Revelation 17 is an explanation and amplification of **Revelation 16:12-16**.

The Harlot Woman (17:1)

The harlot woman is the **main protagonist** of the story. She **sits** on the waters, on the dragon beast and on the heads. She **fornicates** with the kings of the earth. She **gives wine** to the nations. She **sheds** the blood of the saints. She **has dominion** over the nations and she is eventually **hated** by the ten kings who are described as the ten horns on the seventh head of the dragon beast. So, what system does this harlot woman represent?

In the Old Testament a harlot woman was a symbol of apostate **Israel** (Ezekiel 16:15, 16 and chapter 23, Hosea). Ellen White explains that the harlot of Revelation 17 symbolizes an apostate church—the Roman Catholic papacy.

*“In Revelation 17 Babylon is represented as a woman—a figure which is used in the Bible as the **symbol of a church**, a virtuous woman representing a pure church, a vile woman an **apostate church**.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 381.*

*“The power that for so many centuries maintained despotic sway over the monarchs of Christendom is **Rome**.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 382*

The harlot woman of Revelation 17 represents **apostate religion** which has climbed on the **back of the civil powers** of the world with the purpose of using them to support her doctrines and **persecute** God’s faithful people.

The harlot woman at the stage in which she appears in Revelation 17 represents the apostate **Roman Catholic system**. However, the meaning of the symbol is **broader**. In our study we shall find that apostate religion actually **allied itself** with **seven consecutive world civil powers** beginning with

Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon and ending with a resuscitated papacy after her deadly wound is healed.

Her Fornication (17:2; 18:3)

What is meant by the harlot's fornication? The Bible refers to the church as Christ's bride (Ephesians 5:25-27). The church must be faithful to Jesus, her one husband. However, when the church seeks out other lovers, she becomes a harlot. The harlot represents an apostate religion that links up with the kings of the earth and influences them to support her agenda. Thus, fornication means that the church unites the church with the **state** in an unholy love affair.

As much is confirmed by Ellen White:

*"It was by **departure** [the meaning of the word 'apostasy'] from the Lord, and **alliance** with the heathen, that the **Jewish church** became a harlot; and **Rome**, corrupting herself in like manner by seeking the support of **worldly powers**, receives a like condemnation."* Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 382

Ellen White adds:

*"Whenever the church has obtained **secular power**, she has employed it to punish dissent from her doctrines. Protestant churches that have followed in the **steps of Rome** by forming alliance with **worldly powers** have manifested a similar desire to restrict liberty of conscience."* Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 443

The Act of Sitting (17:1)

Revelation 17 tell us that the Babylonian harlot sits on many **waters** (17:1, 15), on a **scarlet** beast (17:3) and on the **seven mountains** (17:9). How is it possible for the harlot to sit upon **all three** of these at the same time? We shall answer this very important question a little later in our study.

The **act of sitting** symbolizes the fact that the harlot not only **rules** over the kings of the earth (17:18) but also over every **tribe**, tongue and nation through their power (Revelation 13:7).

The Waters (17:1)

What do the waters upon which the harlot sits represent? Chapter 17 gives us the answer. The waters are symbolic of people from every nation, kindred and tongue. Later on in this study we shall find that the waters and the body of the dragon beast are interchangeable and mean the same thing.

According to the prophet **Isaiah** the nations make a noise like the noise of the **seas** and a rushing like the rushing of many **waters**:

Isaiah 17:12, 13

*“Woe to the **multitude** of many **people** who make a noise **like** the roar of the **seas**, and to the **rushing of nations** that make a rushing like the **rushing of mighty waters**! ¹³ The **nations will rush** like the rushing of **many waters**; but God will **rebuke them** and they will **flee far away**, and be **chased** like the chaff of the mountains before the wind, like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.”*

Waters Dried Up

A careful comparison of Revelation 12, 13, and 17 reveals that the persecuting waters upon which the woman sat were **dried up once in the past** (when the populace forsook the papacy and arose against it in 1798) and will **be dried up once more in the future** (when the populace will arise during the sixth plague against the apostate religious leaders). Let's take a look at these two occasions.

The Perspective of Revelation 12:

- **Revelation 12:15** tells us that the seven-headed dragon (seemingly with seven mouths) spewed water out of a single **mouth** for **1260 days/years** with the intention of drowning the woman. However, **Revelation 12:16**

states that when the persecuting waters were at flood stage the earth **dried** them up.

*“So the serpent spewed water out of his **mouth [singular]** like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away **by the flood**.¹⁶ But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and **swallowed up the flood** which the dragon had spewed out of his **mouth [singular]**.”*

- After a time of **respite** when the waters no longer persecuted, the dragon will once again be enraged with the woman and will **spew waters out** of its mouth against the **remnant** of the woman’s Seed, that is, the remnant of Jesus.

Revelation 12:17

*“And the **[seven-headed] dragon** was enraged with the woman, and he **went to make war** with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”*

Joshua 24:2, 3, 14, 15 describes the Euphrates River euphemistically as ‘**the Flood**.’ In fact, several modern versions such as the ESV and the NCV replace the word ‘flood’ with the word ‘Euphrates’. **Genesis 15:18** describes the Euphrates as ‘**the great River**’ (see also Isaiah 8:7, 8; 17:12, 13; 59:19; Revelation 16:12). Thus in Revelation 12 we are to understand **the** River (with the definite article in the Greek) or **flood** that the dragon spewed out his mouth as the **river Euphrates**.

The word ‘flood’ in Revelation 12:15, 16 is *pótamos*, the selfsame word that appears in the story of the wise and foolish men who built their houses on the rock and on the sand. In the New Testament most of the uses of this word refer simply to a river. However, in the parable of the wise and foolish man Jesus was not referring to a mere river but rather to a river at **flood stage**. Thus, the KJV translates the word ‘river’ in Revelation 12:15, 16 correctly as ‘flood’. Notably, the parable in Luke

6:48, 49 uses the word *pótamos* and also *plemmúra* which does not mean 'river' but rather 'flood'.

Luke 6:48, 49

*'And when the **flood** [plemmúra] arose, the stream [pótamos] beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock.'*

The Perspective of Revelation 13:1-10

- Revelation 13:1-10 repeats and expands the scenario in Revelation 12 but with different symbolism. Revelation 13:7 describes a sea beast that persecuted the saints for 42 months (the same period as the 1260 days/years during which the flood attempted to drown the woman in Revelation 12:6, 14, 15). At the end of this period, the sea beast received a **deadly** wound (the same as the earth swallowing up the waters) with the sword (Revelation 13:10) and persecution against the woman ceased for a season. It is important to underline that only one of the seven heads was wounded (Revelation 13:3) just like in Revelation 12:14, 15 only one head was spewing out waters. When the wound heals, all the heads do not heal but only the one that was wounded.
- According to **Romans 13:4**, the sword belongs to the **civil rulers**. After a period of convalescence, the deadly wound of the sea beast is **healed** (the waters of persecution flow again) and the whole world wonders after the beast (Revelation 13:3, 11-18). In other words, the multitudes, tongues and people (Revelation 17:1, 2, 15) once again support the harlot.

Some wonder whether the beast was actually killed or only mortally wounded. The expression "*as it were wounded to death*" (13:3) is identical to the description of Jesus as a Lamb "**as it had been slain**" (5:5). No one would sustain that Jesus was not killed! Revelation 13:10 leaves no doubt

that the beast **was killed** with the sword (13:10). It is very important to remember that when the **head is dead**, the **beast is dead** but when the **head is alive**, the **beast is alive** (cf. Revelation 13:12, 14).

The final flood and **its drying up** at the end of the Time of Trouble:

- When the deadly wound is healed, the harlot will influence the persecuting waters of the symbolic Euphrates to **inundate/persecute** God's people **once more** (Revelation 13:3). This is the Euphrates at flood stage as described in Revelation 17. Thus, Revelation 17 describes the time when the symbolic Euphrates will flow once more because the harlot is able once more to fornicate with the kings of the earth because they will lend her the power of the sword.
- The scenario will be similar to the one in Revelation 12. After the earth helped the woman by drying up the persecuting waters, the dragon was **enraged with the remnant** of her seed and launched a deadly persecution/flood against them (Revelation 12:17).
- **Revelation 16:12** explains that God will dry up the raging waters of the Euphrates as He did at the end of the 1260 years. In other words, the seventh and final head will receive a definitive and final deadly wound. Thus, Revelation 17 is an expansion of the final flowing of the water and its drying up.
- Revelation 17 explains that the kings over whom the harlot ruled will **hate her** and make her **naked**, eat her **flesh** and **burn** her with fire (Revelation 17:16). Once again, the sword of civil power that the harlot used to kill God's people will turn against her, **repeating events globally** that will be similar in character to the French Revolution.

The Perspective of Daniel 11:40-45

Though Daniel 11:40-45 falls outside the immediate scope of our present study, a few remarks might be helpful.

- Daniel 11:31-39 describes the king of the north **persecuting** the saints and doing his will for [1260] 'days' (11:33).
- However, when the 'days' are over (at the time of the end in 1798) the king of the south rises against him and **wounds** him (11:40).
- The king of the north then **recovers from his wound** and rises like a mighty **tempest** to **flood** and **overflow** the world (11:40-44).
- But at the apex of his power the king of the north comes **to his end** and has **no one to help** him (11:45). This is another way of saying that the waters which helped the king of the north will dry up on him! The kings of the earth will rise against him. The kings and the multitudes will no longer support the harlot!

It does not take much of an imagination to discern the link between Daniel 11 and Revelation 12, 13 and 17. Notice the following comparison:

The waters flow during the 1260 days/42 months/time, times and dividing of time:

- ✓ **Revelation 13:5, 7** depicts the **beast** (the **King of the North**) **persecuting** the saints and ruling for **42 months**.
- ✓ **Revelation 12:13-15** describes this same period of persecution but with different symbolism. The **dragon** spews flood waters out of his mouth to overflow the woman (the faithful church) for **3.5 times**.

The waters are dried up at the end of the 1260 days, 42 months/time, times and dividing of time:

- ✓ At the time of the end, the **beast** (the **King of the North**) received a **deadly wound** (Revelation 13:3).
- ✓ Toward the end of the 1260 days/years, the **dragon's** persecuting flood waters were **dried up** (Revelation 12:16). The drying up of the waters in Revelation 12 is related to the deadly wound in chapter 13.

Note: The earth represents the territory of the United States before the founding of the nation. The earth provided a refuge for the Pilgrims and others who fled the Old World to escape persecution in Europe. Someone might object that it was France that gave the papacy its deadly wound and not the United States. This is only partially true. The Colonial period provided the territory where later the nation of the United States arose with the principles that have kept the papacy inactive. Revelation 12:14-17 presents the following sequence of events:

- ✓ The dragon persecutes the woman for 1260 years from 538-1798 (Revelation 12:14-16) ending with the French Revolution.
- ✓ The Colonial period when the territory of the United States provided a refuge for God's people who fled persecution in Europe (Revelation 12:16).
- ✓ The dragon persecutes the remnant of the woman's seed (Revelation 12:17).

It is hardly coincidental that Ellen White presents the same chronological order of events in *The Great Controversy*:

- ✓ Ellen White described the 1260 years of papal persecutions ending in the French Revolution (GC, pp. 265-288).
- ✓ In the next chapter, Ellen White takes us back in time to describe the Colonial period (GC, pp. 291-298).
- ✓ Then Ellen White describes the nation that rose in that Colonial territory with its two foundational principles of civil and religious liberty. Then she describes how the nation will repudiate these principles and speak like a dragon (GC, pp. 433-450).

The waters flow again and are dried up for the last time:

- ✓ After a period of **respite**, the beast's deadly wound is **healed** and the **floodwaters flow** once more thus threatening the very existence of God's remnant people (12:17; 13:11-18)
- ✓ Finally, when the **spiritual Euphrates is at flood stage**, God will **dry it up** and deliver his people (Revelation 16:12-16; see also Daniel 12:1).

In summary, the sequence in Daniel 11 and Revelation 12, 13 and 17 is as follows:

- ✓ The **Flood** (the papacy ruled for 1260 days or 42 months: 538-1798).
- ✓ The waters **dried up** (the papacy lost the support of the state in 1798 and the wound is kept in place by the United States).
- ✓ **The Flood** (the deadly wound healed: The papacy will once again gain the support of the state through the agency of the United States).
- ✓ Waters **dried up** (the papacy loses world support during the sixth plague when the symbolic Euphrates dries up).

The Harlot's Name

The harlot's name is **Babylon** and she is the **mother** of harlots (17:5). If the harlot is the **mother** of harlots, then she must have **daughters** that were **born from her** at some point. Revelation also describes the daughters as the **false prophet** or the **lamb-horned beast** (Revelation 13:11; 16:13).

In order to get the full picture of the end time evil triumvirate, we need to study the story of Elijah in the Old Testament (along with his enemies, Ahab, Jezebel and the false prophets of the sun-god Baal) and the story of the martyrdom of John the Baptist (along with his enemies, Herod, Herodias and Salome in Mark 6).

The **Protestant churches** that were born from Roman Catholicism in the **sixteenth century** failed to fully sever their relationship with their harlot mother. Instead of completing the Reformation, they fell into apostasy along with the mother, teaching many of their mother's false doctrines such as the sacredness of Sunday, the immortality of the soul and an eternally burning hell. The book of Revelation clearly teaches that the daughters will be as **anxious to join church and state** as is their mother. In fact, the daughters will help the mother recover the power she lost at the end of the 1260 years.

*"Babylon is said to be 'the mother of harlots.' By her daughters must be symbolized churches that **cling to her doctrines** and traditions, and follow her example of sacrificing the truth and the approval of God, in order to form an **unlawful alliance** with the world." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 382, 383*

At Vatican Council II Pope John XXIII and Paul VI referred to the Catholic Church as the **Mother** and the Protestant churches as her **alienated children**:

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

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

This conciliatory tone sounds nothing like the church that slew the saints of the Most High during the 1260 years. Ellen White well described the deceitfulness of this system:

*"It is a part of her policy to assume the character which will best accomplish her purpose; but beneath the **variable appearance** of the chameleon, she conceals the **invariable venom** of the serpent." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 571*

Pope Paul VI also addressed the Protestant observers during Vatican Council II:

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

John O'Brien who for many years taught at Notre Dame University and wrote over 40 books, explained the link between the mother and the daughters as regards the observance of Sunday:

*“That observance remains as a reminder of the **Mother Church** from which the non-Catholic sects broke away—like a boy running away from home but still carrying in his pocket a picture of his mother or a lock of her hair.” John O'Brien, The Faith of Millions (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1974) pp. 400, 401.*

The Evil Triumvirate

Revelation 17 describes a wicked triumvirate composed of the **harlot**, her **daughters** and the **kings of the earth**. **Revelation 16:13** describes this evil trilogy as the dragon, the beast and the false prophet and Revelation 17 describes it as the kings, the mother and the daughters.

In another extremely significant statement Ellen White explained the relationship between the Mother and the Daughters:

*“I saw that the two-horned beast [**the false prophet**] had a dragon's mouth [**the beast from the earth speaks as a dragon**], and that his power was in **his head**, and that the **decree** would go **out of his mouth** [**very interesting in the light of Revelation 12:15**]. Then I saw the **Mother of Harlots**; that the mother was **not the daughters**, but separate and **distinct** from them [**this indicates that Roman Catholicism in the Old World and Protestantism in the New, cover the period***

of two separate heads on the beast of Revelation 17]. She [the Mother] has had her day, and it is past [during the 1260 years], and her daughters, the Protestant sects, were the next to come on the stage and act out the same mind [notice the allusion to Revelation 17:17] that the mother had when she persecuted the saints [during the 1260 years]. I saw that as the mother has been declining in power, the daughters had been growing, and soon they will exercise the power once exercised by the mother [this can be seen clearly today].

I saw the nominal church and nominal Adventists, like Judas, would betray us to the Catholics to obtain their influence [of the Catholics] to come against the truth. The saints then will be an obscure people, little known to the Catholics; but the churches [Protestants] and nominal Adventists who know of our faith and customs (for they hated us on account of the Sabbath, for they could not refute it) will betray the saints and report them to the Catholics as those who disregard the institutions of the people; that is, that they keep the Sabbath and disregard Sunday.

Then the Catholics bid the Protestants [the mother stands behind the daughters to get them to issue a death decree] to go forward, and issue a decree that all who will not observe the first day of the week, instead of the seventh day, shall be slain. And the Catholics, whose numbers are large, will stand by the Protestants. The Catholics will give their power to the image of the beast. And the Protestants will work as their mother worked before them [during the 1260 years] to destroy the saints.” Ellen G. White, Spaulding Magan Collection, pp. 1, 2.

This statement indicates that we have far more to fear of apostate Protestantism than we do of the papacy. In a related statement, Ellen White gave her understanding (actually, God’s understanding) of Revelation 17:1-4:

“In the seventeenth of Revelation is foretold the destruction of all the churches [these are the apostate Protestant churches] who corrupt themselves by

idolatrous devotion to the service of the papacy, those who have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. [Rev. 17:1-4 quoted.]

Thus is represented the papal power [the harlot], which with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, by outside attraction and gorgeous display, deceives all nations; promising them, as did Satan our first parents, all good to those who receive its mark, and all harm to those who oppose its fallacies. The power which has the deepest inward corruption will make the greatest display, and will clothe itself with the most elaborate signs of power. The Bible plainly declares that this covers a corrupt and deceiving wickedness. 'Upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth.'

What is it that gives its kingdom [the United States] to this power [to the papacy]? Protestantism, a power which while professing to have the temper and spirit of a lamb and to be allied to Heaven, speaks with the voice of a dragon. It is moved by a power from beneath." (Letter 232, 1899) Ellen G. White, The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 983

One cannot miss the fact that apostate Protestantism in the United States and the papacy are two separate kingdoms and the United States will give its kingdom to the papacy.

Ellen White's assessment squares perfectly with Revelation 13:11-18 where everything the false prophet does, it does to honor the first beast:

Revelation 13:11-18

"Then I saw another beast coming up [used of plant growth in Matthew 13:7] out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb [symbol of Christ 28 times in Revelation] and spoke like a dragon [symbol of Satan working through Rome]. ¹² And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence [at the first beast's commissioning], and causes [by the use of compulsion] the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast whose deadly

wound was healed **[the papacy]**.¹³ He **[the land beast]** performs great signs, so that he even makes **fire come down from heaven** on the **earth** in the **sight of men** **[reminiscent of the stories of Elijah and Pentecost]**.¹⁴ And he **[the false prophet]** deceives those who dwell on the **earth** by those signs which he was granted to do **in the sight of** **[at the commissioning of]** the beast, **telling those** **[NIV: 'he ordered them']** who dwell on the **earth** to make an image **to** **[in honor of in the NIV: dative case]** the beast who was **wounded by the sword** and lived.¹⁵ He **[the first beast in the light of Ellen White's comment in Spaulding-Magan, pp. 1, 2]** was granted power to **give breath** to the image of **[genitive case]** the beast, that the image of **[genitive case]** the beast should both **speak** **[through its legislative and judicial authority]** and **cause** **[uses compulsion]** as many as would not worship the image **of** **[genitive case]** the beast to be killed.¹⁶ He **causes** **[NIV: 'forced everyone']** all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark **[Sunday observance]** on their right **hand** **[out of convenience]** or on their **foreheads** **[out of conviction]**¹⁷ and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the **name** **[Vicarius Filii Dei]** of the beast, or the **number of his name** **[666]**." ¹⁸ Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding **calculate** **[psephizo: see Luke 14:28]** the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666."

In summary, the beast from the earth (the daughters) does everything to please the first beast (the mother):

- ✓ The false prophet speaks **like the dragon** and the dragon represents **Rome in its various stages** (Revelation 13:11).
- ✓ The false prophet exercises **all the authority** of the first beast (Revelation 13:12).
- ✓ The false prophet makes an image **of** the first beast (Revelation 13:15).
- ✓ The false prophet makes an image **in honor** of the first beast (Revelation 13:14).
- ✓ The false prophet makes all its citizens **worship** the first beast (Revelation 13:12).

- ✓ The false prophet imposes the **mark** of the first beast (Revelation 3:16).
- ✓ The false prophet does everything **in the presence** or at the **commissioning** of the first beast (Revelation 13:12, 14).
- ✓ The false prophet performed **signs in the presence** of the first beast 'to deceive those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image' (Revelation 13:13; 19:20).

Names of Blasphemy

The harlot has names of **blasphemy** on her forehead (17:5). In Scripture, blasphemy means to provoking God by claiming to exercise His powers on earth (John 10:30-33) such as the power to forgive sins (Mark 2:7). It also is used in the Old Testament to describe opposition to God in the person of His people (Ezekiel 37:3; 35:12).

The Bible mentions several **titles and functions** that belong to the **Creator God alone** and the papacy claims them all:

- The **representative** of Christ on earth is the **Holy Spirit** (John 14-16)
- God alone is our **Father** (Matthew 23:9)
- We can **only bow** in reverence to God (Acts 10:25, 26)
- God alone can **forgive sins** (Mark 2:7)
- God alone is **infallible** in his proclamations (James 1:17)
- God alone has the right to **set up kings** and **depose them** (Daniel 2:21)
- God alone can **judge** all but can be judged by none (John 5:22, 27)
- God established the **seventh day** as **His memorial** of creation (Exodus 20:8-11)

The Harlot's Attire

Purple and scarlet are the colors of **royalty** (John 19:5; Matthew 27:28) and the harlot sits or reigns over multitudes, nations, tongues and people. The harlot is attired with gold, silver, precious stones and pearls. This indicates that this is a very **rich** and **ostentatious** power. Notably, in the Old Testament, Israel clothed herself with all this **paraphernalia** to entice the kings of the surrounding nations to fornicate with her.

*"The purple and scarlet color, the gold and precious stones and pearls, vividly picture the **magnificence** and more than **kingly pomp** affected by the haughty **see of Rome**." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 382.*

It is significant that the Roman Catholic clergy's colors are **purple and scarlet**. It is also significant that the garments that the papal clergy uses do not include the color blue! In Scripture, blue is a symbol of God's holy Law (Numbers 15:37-41). The papacy deceives the political powers of the world and the multitudes by its imposing ritual, bewitching music, majestic cathedrals, impressive vestments and priceless works of art. Ellen White once visited the **Cathedral in Milan**. She seemed to be impressed with the majestic architecture but ended on a sour note:

*"Chief among these is the Cathedral, which, next to St. Peter's at Rome, is the largest church in Europe. Built entirely of white marble, and adorned as it is on the exterior with three thousand marble statues, ninety-eight Gothic turrets, and a tower three hundred and sixty feet high, one cannot fail to be **impressed** with its **grandeur** and **immensity**, and the **artistic skill** displayed in its design and execution. And yet we could only look upon it as **a vast pile of extravagance**." Ellen G. White, RH, June 1, 1886*

The Golden Cup with Wine

The golden cup in the harlot's hand contains the **wine of Babylon**. The cup could very well represent the magisterium of the church or what she calls 'the

deposit of the faith'. Babylon **gives** her wine to the kings and all the **inhabitants** of the earth (17:2; 18:3). Drinking or not drinking the wine is **not optional** because the text tells us that Babylon **makes** all nations drink her wine and makes the nations drunk with it (14:8; 17:2)

The wine is called '*the wine of **the wrath** of her fornication*'. That is, drinking the wine causes **wrath** against those who are not willing to drink (14:8; 18:3).

Chapter 17 identifies the wine as Babylon's '**abominations** and the filthiness of her fornication' (Revelation 17:4). That is, the cup is full of wine but the wine symbolizes the harlot's abominations. Thus, the words 'wine' and 'abominations' are interchangeable. The harlot's abominations include several things:

- ✓ **Idol** worship is an abomination (Deuteronomy 7:25, 26).
- ✓ The attempt to speak to and with the **dead** is an abomination (Deuteronomy 18:9-13).
- ✓ Refusing to hear God's **law** is an abomination (Proverbs 28:9).
- ✓ Spiritual **adultery** is an abomination (Ezekiel 23:35-45).
- ✓ Eating unclean **meats** is an abomination (Deuteronomy 14:3).
- ✓ Shedding innocent **blood** is an abomination (Ezekiel 22:2).
- ✓ Sun **worship** is the greatest abomination (Ezekiel 8:16).

Ellen White clearly identified the meaning of the wine:

*"The fallen denominational churches are Babylon. Babylon has been fostering **poisonous doctrines**, the **wine of error**. This wine of error is made up of **false doctrines**, such as the **natural immortality** of the soul, the **eternal torment** of the wicked, the denial of the **pre-existence** of Christ prior to His birth in Bethlehem, and advocating and exalting the **first day of the week** above God's holy and sanctified day. These and **kindred errors** are presented to the world by the **various churches**, and thus the Scriptures are fulfilled that say, 'For all*

*nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.' It is a wrath which is created by false doctrines, and when **kings and presidents** drink this wine of the wrath of her fornication, they are **stirred with anger** against those who will not come into harmony with the false and satanic **heresies** which exalt the false Sabbath, and lead men to trample underfoot God's memorial." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 61, 62*

At the end of our study we will see that these multitudes and rulers who have **swallowed the poisonous doctrines** of this apostate system will sober up from their drunken stupor and vent their wrath against the harlot.

In the above statement Ellen White blamed the churches for giving the rulers of the world the wine of Babylon. However, in *The Great Controversy*, p. 389 she is more specific. It is **the ministers** and the men of learning of the apostate churches who are guilty of the spiritual intoxication of the world:

*"When **faithful teachers** expound the word of God, there arise **men of learning**, ministers **professing to understand** the Scriptures, who **denounce sound doctrine** as heresy, and thus **turn away inquirers** after truth. Were it not that the world is **hopelessly intoxicated** with the wine of Babylon, multitudes would be **convicted and converted** by the plain, cutting truths of the word of God. But religious faith appears **so confused** and **discordant** that the people know not what to believe as truth. The sin of the world's impenitence lies **at the door of the church.**"*

After quoting **Revelation 17:1-4** Ellen White clearly identified this harlot as the Roman Catholic papacy:

*"In the seventeenth of Revelation is foretold the destruction of **all the churches** who corrupt themselves by idolatrous devotion to the service of the papacy, those who have **drunk of the wine** of the wrath of her fornication. [Rev. 17:1-4 quoted.]*

*Thus is represented the **papal power**, which with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, by **outside attraction** and **gorgeous display**, deceives all*

nations; promising them, as did Satan our first parents, all good to those who receive its mark, and all harm to those who oppose its fallacies.” Ellen G. White, The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 7, p. 983.

God’s Faithful People

In all **three chapters** (Revelation 12, 13, 17) where we find the seven-headed beasts, they are at war with the people of God:

- God’s people in **Revelation 12:13, 15** are referred to as a **woman** whom the dragon **attempts to drown** with the waters it spews out of its mouth.
- In **Revelation 12:17** God’s people are called the ‘**remnant** of her Seed.’ The dragon goes out to **make war** with them.
- In **Revelation 13:7** God’s people are called the **saints** and the beast **persecutes** them.
- In **Revelation 17:6** God’s people are called the **saints** and the **martyrs** of Jesus. The harlot, by **using the waters** upon which she sits, attempts to drown them.

Ellen White applies Revelation 17:6 to the career of the Roman Catholic papacy:

*“The power that for so many centuries maintained **despotic sway** over the monarchs of Christendom is **Rome**. . . And no other power could be so truly declared ‘drunken with the blood of the saints’ as that church which has so cruelly persecuted the followers of Christ. Babylon is also charged with the sin of unlawful connection with ‘the kings of the earth.’” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 382.*

The Seven Headed Scarlet Dragon

John N. Andrews, perhaps the ablest scholar in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, had this to say about the three seven headed beasts of Revelation 12, 13 and 17:

*"The seven heads are **seven forms of civil power** which **successively** bear rule. These seven heads belong alike to the **dragon** of Revelation 12, the **beast** of chapter 13, and **that of** Revelation 17. This shows **conclusively** that the dragon and these two beasts are symbols of the **same power under different heads**; for there are not three sets of seven heads, but it is evident that the heads are **successive forms** of its power, **one of them bearing rule at a time**, and then giving place to another (Revelation 17:9, 10). The proper period of each seems to be this: The dragon **before** the 1260 years, the beast of chapter 13 **during** that period, and the beast of chapter 17 **since** the deadly wound and captivity at the close of that period." (J. N. Andrews, *The Three Messages of Revelation XIV*, 6-12, pp. 77, 78).*

The **seven heads** of the dragon beast are also described as **seven mountains**. In Bible prophecy mountains represent **kingdoms, not individual kings** (Daniel 2:34, 35, 44; Jeremiah 51:25; Micah 4:1; Revelation 17:9 in the light of Daniel 2:38, 39; 7:17, 23). This means that the seven heads must represent **seven kingdoms** that have ruled upon the earth and have been **controlled by the harlot** or apostate religion.

The River Dragon

In order to comprehend the meaning of the seven headed dragon upon which the harlot sits, we must first understand how the ancients perceived **river dragons**.

In the mythology of the ancients, **mountains** were considered **the heads** of a great cosmic river serpent/dragon. According to their pre-scientific world view, the **mountains/heads** would **spew out waters** (we call them **headwaters**) which would flow down and form a riverbed in the valley. As the river twisted and turned tortuously in the valley it looked like the **body** of a great river **serpent/dragon**. According to their pre-scientific view, when the river was at **flood stage** it overflowed its banks and sprouted wings (see Isaiah 8:7, 8 for an example).

It is of the utmost importance to keep in mind that **Revelation 12:15-16 and 17:15, 9, 15** is drawing on this ancient concept. However, in Revelation the river dragon takes on a symbolic meaning. The mountains/heads symbolize **kingdoms** and the waters (the body of the dragon) represent **multitudes, nations, tongues and peoples**. It is important to understand that the nations, multitudes, tongues and peoples actually form the **body** of the **dragon beast**. This is the reason why the harlot is described as sitting on a **scarlet beast** as well as on the waters. In other words, the waters and the scarlet beast are **interchangeable**. And the waters/dragon are scarlet because they are filled with the **blood** of God's people (17:6).

The reliability of this ancient view as it applies to Revelation 17 is seen in the fact that the seven heads are identified also as **seven mountains**. As we have already seen, in antiquity, the mountains were conceived as the heads of a dragon beast.

It is crucially important to realize that while the heads/mountains are spewing out waters, the dragon beast is alive. When the heads/mountains, however, cease to spew out waters, the dragon beast is dead. Thus the beast is **alive or dead depending on whether the harlot is able to use the head to persecute God's people**. That is to say, when the harlot commands the kings to order their multitudes to persecute God's people, the dragon beast is alive. When the civil powers uphold democratic principles and keep aloof from the church, the dragon beast is dead!

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Parallels Between Revelation 12, 13 and 17 Chart

Revelation 12 and 13	Revelation 17
Seven heads and ten horns (12:3; 13:1)	Seven heads and ten horns (17:3)
Names of blasphemy (13:1)	Names of blasphemy (17:3)
Woman (12:1)	Woman (17:1)
Call for wisdom (13:18)	Call for wisdom (17:9)
Nations, tongues, peoples (13:7)	Nations, tongues, peoples (17:15)
Persecution (12:6, 13-15)	Persecution (17:6)
Waters (12:15)	Waters (17:1)
Waters dried up (12:16)	Waters dried up (16:12)
Was (1260 years—12:6; 13:5)	'Was' (1260 years—17:8)
Is not (deadly wound—12:16; 13:3)	'Is not' (deadly wound—17:8)
Wound healed (12:17; 13:3)	'Shall be' (wound healed—17:8)
Beast & false prophet (13:1-18)	Harlot and daughters (17:5)

Three Seven-headed Beasts

The three seven-headed beasts originate in **different places**:

- When the seven headed dragon attempted to slay the man child, a sign was seen in **heaven** (Revelation 12:1) because it was a battle between Christ and Satan that originated in heaven.

- The seven headed beast of Revelation 13:1 arose from the sea because it was a heavily populated area.
- The seven headed scarlet beast of Revelation 17:8 will arise from the abyss because the beast is resurrecting from the deadly wound.

From the Abyss

The dragon of Revelation 17 ascends from the abyss (Revelation 17:8) and the abyss is the realm of the dead:

Romans 10:7

“Or, who shall descend into the deep [abyss in Greek]? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)”

In Revelation 20:1 Satan is cast into the abyss with a deadly wound when he cannot use the rulers because they are dead. Satan comes up from the abyss when he is able once more to use the kings to accomplish his purposes because they have resurrected (Revelation 20:5, 7-9).

Seven Heads

Revelation 17:10 tells us that the seven heads represent seven kings (17:10). However, the word ‘kings’ in Bible prophecy is interchangeable with ‘kingdoms’ (Revelation 17:10; Daniel 7:17, 23; 2:37-39). The seven heads are actually seven successive civil kingdoms that have ruled the world since Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon.

Some have thought that Egypt and Assyria are the first two heads of the scarlet beast. According to this scenario the seven heads would be: [1] Egypt, [2] Assyria, [3] Babylon, [4] Medes and Persians, [5] Greece, [6] Roman Empire, [7] Papal Rome and [8] Papal Rome healed from its deadly wound (the eighth kingdom).

The problem with this concept is that Egypt and Assyria are not found in any of the lines of prophecy in Daniel or Revelation. Egypt does appear symbolically in Revelation 11 (representing France) but there the beast from the abyss does not persecute God's people but rather gives the fifth head a deadly wound.

Daniel 2 (the gold), Daniel 7 (the lion) and Revelation 13 (the lion) all begin with **Babylon as the first kingdom** and Daniel 8 and 11 begin with the kingdom of **Persia**. Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon is known as the **neo-Babylonian Empire**. It is called so because it is a continuation of the Babylon that originated at the tower of Babel. All false religions have their origin at the **fountainhead** of the tower of Babel because from there humans spread out all over the earth.

Are the Seven Heads Seven Popes?

In more recent times some have thought that the seven heads represent seven **successive popes** who have ruled **since** what they conceive to be the healing of the deadly wound in **1929**.

In this scenario, as of 2005, the **five heads which had fallen** since 1929 were:

- **Pius XI (1922-1939)**
- **Pius XII (1939-1958)**
- **John XXIII (1958-1963)**
- **Paul VI (1963-1978)**
- **John Paul I (1978)**

According to this scenario, the **head who is** (or sixth head) would have been **John Paul II (1978-2005)** and the one **who is to come** and would rule a short time was **Benedict XVI** (the seventh head) who served as pope from 2005-2013.

However, Benedict resigned from the papal chair on February 28, 2013 so the present pope, **Francis I**, would supposedly be #8 in the series of popes since 1929. So, as the speculation goes, **Francis I** will be the last pope because Revelation 17:11 refers to an eighth and Pope Francis I is the eighth pope since 1929! But this view can be discarded because Pope **Francis I**, is **not one of the seven previous ones** as is required by the prophecy of Revelation 17:11. Furthermore, the heads represent civil kingdoms, **not individual popes** within those kingdoms.

In summary, this is what the list of popes would look like in this scenario:

- **#1: Pius XI (1922-1939)**
- **#2: Pius XII (1939-1958)**
- **#3: John XXIII (1958-1963)**
- **#4: Paul VI (1963-1978)**
- **#5: John Paul I (1978)**
- **#6: John Paul II (1978-2005)**
- **#7: Benedict XVI (2005-2013)**
- **#8: Francis I (2013-?)**

Before the election of Francis, evangelicals and even some Adventists had referred to a prophecy by **St. Malachy** to the effect that the next pope would be the last, that **he would be black** (a euphemism for the head of the Jesuit Order who is called the 'black pope') and his name would be **Petrus Romanus**. None of these things are true of **Francis I**. All of this speculation detracts from the power of this prophecy.

The fact is that this prophecy has nothing to do with **individual popes**. The seven heads are not seven individuals but rather seven kingdoms. All this speculation about the seven heads should be discarded for the following reasons:

First, it comes pretty close to setting specific dates for the final prophetic movements. In this scenario, the successor of Pope Benedict XVI would be the last pope. Is this not setting a definite time frame for end time events?

Second, these speculative views sever Revelation 17 from the previous prophetic lines of Daniel 7 and Revelation 12 and 13. As we have seen above, Revelation 12, 13 and 17 are indissolubly linked! Ellen White understood the common thread between Revelation 12, 13 and 17:

“God has warned His people of the perils before them. John beholds the things which will be in the last days and he sees a people working counter to God.”

Then she wrote:

“Read Revelation 12:17; 14:10-13, and chapters 17 and 13.” Manuscript Releases, volume 17, p. 18

Third, although the seven heads/mountains of this dragon beast are said to be seven kings, the words ‘kings’ and ‘kingdoms’ are used interchangeably in prophecy (see Daniel 2:39; 7:17, 23). In prophecy, ‘mountains’ represent kingdoms not individual rulers. The popes on the list above are actually not rulers of seven distinct kingdoms but rather leaders of the **same kingdom**.

Finally, there is little evidence that 1929 should be chosen as the beginning date for the sequence of the seven heads. As I have clearly shown in another place, the deadly wound was not healed in 1929 because Revelation 13:11-18 tells us that **the United States** will be instrumental in the healing of the deadly wound, **not Italy**.

The Beast’s Three Final Stages

The beast from the abyss has three consecutive historical stages:

- It “**was** [past] and **is not** [present] and shall **be** [future]” (17:8)

- It “**was** and **is not** and **yet is** [better translation is: ‘shall be present’] (17:8).
- These same time periods are described as “five are **fallen** [past], one **is** [present] and the other is not yet **come** [future]” (17:10)
- The time periods are also explained as the beast who “**was** [past], and **is not** [present], even he is the **eighth** [future]” (17:11).

Note: The beast ‘**was**’ during the 1260 years of Papal dominion. It ‘**is not**’ because the beast presently has a deadly wound. It ‘**shall be**’ because the deadly wound will be healed and the whole world will wonder after the beast.

The heads of the dragon beast do not rule **simultaneously** but **consecutively**. The heads are wounded **one by one** as each civil power passes from the scene. We know this for at least two reasons:

- First, archeological digs in ancient **Tell Amar**:
A cylinder seal from Tell Amar in Mesopotamia (ancient Iraq) depicts a seven-headed dragon engaged in **conflict with two deities**, one before it and the other behind. Four of the heads, pierced by a spear, are shown **drooping** and are no longer in conflict. But the other three heads are still **erect**, maintaining the struggle.
- Second, Revelation 12:15 explains that **only one mouth** is spewing out persecuting waters at any given time. Further, Revelation 13:3, 5, 6 tells us that **only one head** of the seven-headed beast received the deadly wound.

The Meaning of the Seven Heads

To the best of our **present knowledge**, the seven heads represent the following successive civil kingdoms that have or will be allied with apostate religion:

- #1: Babylon
- #2: Medes and Persians

- #3: Greece
- #4: Roman Empire (and its ten horns/divisions).
- #5: The civil powers of Europe (with its ten horns/divisions) under the control of the harlot/papacy.
- #6: The civil power of the United States under the influence of apostate Protestantism.
- #7: The civil powers of the entire world (indicated by the ten horns) who resurrect, and under the leadership of the harlot will persecute God's people as in the past.

It will be observed that in this scenario, **three of the last four heads** of this scarlet beast are **Roman** (heads #4, #5 and #7) and even head #6 (the United States) will become an ally of Rome because it will speak like a dragon and the dragon is a symbol of Rome (see the material on Matthew 24 for the connection between the United States and its fascination with Rome). The question that begs to be asked is: Why would three (or four) of the seven heads relate to Rome? Isn't one head enough to represent the various stages of Rome?

The answer to these questions is quite simple. The books of Daniel and Revelation themselves take up the **stages of Rome separately**. In Daniel 2 the legs of iron [**the Roman Empire**] are distinguished from the feet of iron and clay [**the divided Roman Empire and papal Rome**]. In Daniel 7:23, 24 we find a clear distinction between the dragon ruling with ten horns (head #4), followed by the dragon with the little horn (head #5). Revelation 13 adds that the little horn/beast will have another stage after its deadly wound is healed (head #7). However, kingdom #6 (the United States) will be instrumental in giving head # 5 its power back.

Even further, Revelation 12 portrays a **dragon in heaven with ten horns** as a symbol for Pagan Rome, Revelation 13 uses a **composite beast from the sea with ten horns** to represent Papal Rome during the 1260 years and Revelation 17 employs yet a **third beast from the abyss with ten horns** to represent the papacy when its deadly wound is healed.

If three beasts which arise in three **different places** are used to represent the different stages of Rome, then it should not surprise us that **separate heads** are used to depict those same stages. It is important to underline that the **sixth head** (the United States under apostate Protestantism) is symbolized by a **separate beast** and is related to Rome because it speaks like a dragon and the dragon represents Satan working through Rome.

Ellen White clearly identifies the last three persecuting powers in their proper **historical sequence**. She underlines that when the heads persecute God's people, the heads are alive:

*"Under the symbols of the **great red dragon**, a **leopard-like beast**, and a **beast with lamblike horns**, the **earthly governments** which would be especially engaged in trampling upon God's law and **persecuting His people** were presented to John. Their war is to be carried on till the close of time. The **people of God**, symbolized by a **holy woman and her children** [Revelation 12:6, 17], are represented as greatly in the minority. In the last days, only a remnant still exists. John speaks of them as those that 'keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.' Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, February 8, 1910*

Regarding the **last head** in the sequence of seven, Ellen White has stated:

*"As we approach the last crisis, it is of vital moment that harmony and unity exist among the Lord's instrumentalities. The world is filled with storm and war and variance. Yet under **one head—the papal power**—the people will unite to oppose God in the person of His witnesses." Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 182*

Ellen White linked the United States with papal Rome:

"When the land which the Lord provided as an asylum for his people, that they might worship him according to the dictates of their own consciences, the land over which for long years the shield of Omnipotence has been spread, the land

which God has favored by making it the depository of the pure religion of Christ—when that land shall, through its legislators, **abjure [solemnly renounce] the principles of Protestantism**, and give **countenance to Romish apostasy** in tampering with God's law—it is then that the final work of the man of sin will be revealed. Protestants will throw their whole influence and strength **on the side of the Papacy**; by a national act enforcing the false Sabbath, they will give **life and vigor to the corrupt faith of Rome**, reviving **her** tyranny and oppression of conscience. Then it will be time for God to work in mighty power for the vindication of his truth." Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, June 12, 1893.

Some have wondered about the **eighth head** of the dragon beast. The simple fact is that this beast **does not have eight heads**—it has only seven but the seventh head counts as an eighth; that is to say, head number 7 bears the number 8.

Time and again Revelation 17 tells us that there are **only seven heads** on the dragon beast (17:3, 7, 9, 10). Louis Were has shown in his book, *The Woman and the Beast in Revelation*, that the number eight is symbolic of the **resurrection**. In other words, head #7 bears the number 8 because it has resurrected from the deadly wound.

The Wings

Though Revelation 17 does not use the symbolism of **wings**, it would be well to notice that in **Isaiah 8:7, 8** the invasion of King Sennacherib into the land of Judah is compared to the flooding of the mighty river Euphrates. The river at **flood stage** is compared to a dragon extending its wings:

*"Now therefore, behold, the Lord brings up over them the waters of **the River**, strong and mighty—the **king of Assyria** and all his glory; he will go up over all his channels and go over all his banks. 8 He will pass through Judah, he will **overflow and pass over**, he will reach up to the neck; and the stretching out of **his wings** will fill the breadth of Your land, O Immanuel."*

The Ten Horns

The **ten horns** are found on the head of the dragon beast of Revelation 12, on the head of the sea beast of Revelation 13 and on the head of the scarlet beast of Revelation 17. Whereas the seven heads rule **consecutively**, the ten horns **rule contemporaneously**. This is made clear by the fact that all ten horns will rule (when they receive the kingdom) simultaneously on the **seventh head** when the beast resurrects from its death wound (Revelation 17:12)

The ten horns are symbolic of ten **kings** (17:12) and the ten kings represent 'the **kings** of the earth and the whole **world**' (16:14; see also 17:18). During the 1260 days/years, the ten toes and the ten horns of Daniel 2 and 7 represented the nations of Western Europe but at the end, the ten toes and ten horns represent the kings of the earth and the **whole world** (see Revelation 16:14).

Revelation 17 is an explanation and expansion of the last three plagues of chapter 16. Notice the common themes:

- Babylon (Revelation 16:18, 19; 17:5)
- Waters (16:12; 17:1, 2, 15)
- Kings (16:13, 14; 17:2, 12-14)
- Drying up (16:12; 17:16)
- War and Christ's victory (16:18, 19; 17:14)

The Number Ten

Are we to understand that there will be **just ten nations** in the world that will have one mind? Of course not. Remember that the three evil spirits gather the 'kings of the earth and the whole world' to the final battle. The number ten is **synonymous with 'all'**. We can see this in several biblical texts:

Genesis 24:10: Ten camels are symbolic of **all** of Abraham's goods:

*"Then the servant took **ten** of his master's camels and departed, for **all** his master's goods were in his hand. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor."*

Luke 19:13: Ten servants are symbolic of **all** of Christ's professed followers:

*"So he called **ten** of his servants, delivered to them **ten** minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.'"*

1 Samuel 1:8: Ten sons:

*"Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than **ten sons**?"*

Ecclesiastes 7:19: More than **ten rulers** of the city represents all the rulers:

*"Wisdom strengthens the wise more than **ten** rulers of the city."*

Daniel 1:20: The young men were **ten times better**:

*"And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them **ten times better** than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm. ²¹ Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus."*

Matthew 25:1: **Ten virgins** represent **all** of God's professed people

*"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to **ten** virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish."*

Leviticus 27:30: When we return **10%** of our income we are confessing that **all** belongs to God

*"And all the **tithe** of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD 's. It is holy to the LORD."*

The **Ten Commandments** express the **entire** duty of man (**Ecclesiastes 12:13**). God added no more to them (**Deuteronomy 5:22**). The **whole** law and prophets are summarized in the ten (Matthew 22:40).

All on the Same Page

These kings of the earth and the whole world will be of **one mind** or be on the same page until the words of God are fulfilled and God's last word is 'it is done' at the seventh plague (16:17; 17:17).

When the words of God are fulfilled, Babylon united will become Babylon divided. Events similar to those at the tower of Babel will occur but on a global scale. Regarding the confusion at Babel, Ellen White wrote:

*"**Confusion** and **dismay** followed. All work came to a **standstill**. There could be **no further harmony or co-operation**. The builders were wholly unable to account for the strange **misunderstandings** among them, and in their **rage** and disappointment they **reproached one another**. Their **confederacy** ended in **strife and bloodshed**. **Lightnings** from heaven, as an evidence of **God's displeasure**, broke off the upper portion of the tower and cast it to the ground. Men were made to feel that there is a God who ruleth in the heavens." PP 119*

The ten kings represent the rulers of the Christian world who, under the leadership of apostate Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, will influence the multitudes to enact and enforce a Sunday law. When this happens, the kings will all be on the same page.

Ellen White linked the arrogance of the Babel builders with the final Babylon:

*"There are **tower builders** in our time. Infidels construct their **theories** from the supposed deductions of **sciences**, and reject the **revealed word of God**. They presume to pass sentence upon God's moral government; they **despise His law** and boast of the sufficiency of **human reason**. Then, 'because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.' Ecclesiastes 8:11.*

*In the **professedly Christian world** many turn away from the **plain teachings** of the Bible and **build up a creed** from **human speculations** and **pleasing fables**, and they point to their tower as a way to climb up to heaven. Men hang with admiration upon the **lips of eloquence** while it teaches that the transgressor shall not die, that salvation may be secured **without obedience** to the law of God. If the professed followers of Christ would accept God's standard, it would bring them **into unity**; but so long as **human wisdom** is exalted **above His Holy Word**, there will be **divisions and dissension**. The existing confusion of conflicting creeds and sects is fitly represented by the term 'Babylon,' which prophecy (Revelation 14:8; 18:2) applies to the world-loving churches of the **last days**." Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 123, 124*

Revelation 17 tells us that for a short period the kings will give their power, authority and kingdom to the **beast** (17:12, 13).

*"The **so-called Christian world** is to be the theater of great and decisive actions. **Men in authority** will enact laws controlling the conscience, after the example of the papacy. Babylon will make all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. Every nation will be involved. Of this time John the Revelator declares: [Rev. 18:3-7; 17:13, 14, quoted]. "These have one mind." There will be a **universal bond of union, one great harmony, a confederacy** of Satan's forces. "And shall give their power and strength unto the beast." [Ellen White cites Revelation 17:12, 13] Thus is manifested the same arbitrary, oppressive power against religious liberty—freedom to worship God according to the dictates of conscience—**as was manifested by the papacy**, when **in the past** it persecuted those who dared to refuse to conform with the religious rites and ceremonies of **Romanism**." Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 3, p. 392*

The ten kings will be 'kings with the beast for **one** hour' (17:12) and they will make **war** with the lamb (19:11, 19; 16:14; 17:14) in the person of His witnesses:

"As we approach the last crisis, it is of vital moment that harmony and unity exist among the Lord's instrumentalities. The world is filled with storm and war and

variance. Yet under one head—the papal power—the people [under the leadership of their political leaders] will unite to oppose God in the person of His witnesses. This union is cemented by the great apostate.” Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 183

The war will not be directly against God but rather against God in the person of His people. Those who touch His people touch the apple of His eye (Zechariah 2:8). In Matthew 25 Jesus said to His faithful followers: “*In that you have done it unto one of these the least my brothers you have done it unto me.*” And when Jesus spoke to Saul of Tarsus He said: “*Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?*”

The glorious climax of this prophecy tells us that Jesus will overcome the kings of the earth and the whole world because He is the King of kings and Lord of lords (17:14; 19:19-20). Those who are allied with Jesus are called, chosen and faithful (17:14).

The Kings Hate the Harlot

The kings of the earth and the whole world will not always carry on a love affair with the harlot who controls them. At the voice of God, they will realize, too late, that the harlot and her daughters have deceived them. Then, the kings will hate the harlot and turn against her (17:15-16). The political leaders will encourage the multitudes to turn against the harlot and her daughters. The kings will hate her and the waters will dry up on her. A scene similar to the French Revolution will be witnessed but on a global scale.

Ellen White described the time when the waters of the great River Euphrates will dry up (16:12):

“With shouts of triumph, jeering, and imprecation, throngs of evil men are about to rush upon their prey, when, lo, a dense blackness [the fifth plague], deeper than the darkness of the night, falls upon the earth. Then a rainbow, shining with the glory from the throne of God, spans the heavens and seems to encircle each praying company [God’s people in light]. The angry multitudes are suddenly

arrested [the sixth plague]. Their mocking cries die away. The objects of their **murderous rage are forgotten.** With fearful forebodings they gaze upon the symbol of God's covenant and long to be shielded from its overpowering brightness." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 635, 636

"The **people** see that they have been deluded. They accuse one another of having led them to destruction; but all unite in heaping their bitterest condemnation upon **the ministers.** **Unfaithful pastors** have prophesied **smooth things**; they have led their hearers to make **void the law of God** and **to persecute** those who would keep it holy. Now, in their despair, these **teachers confess** before the world their work of deception. The **multitudes are filled with fury.** "We are lost!" they cry, "and you are the cause of our ruin;" and they **turn upon the false shepherds [the waters now avalanche themselves against the religious leaders].** The very ones that once admired them most will pronounce the most dreadful **curses upon them.** The very hands that once crowned them with laurels will be **raised for their destruction.** The swords which were to slay God's people are now employed to destroy their enemies. Everywhere there is strife and bloodshed. Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 656.

The Final Drying up of the Waters

The seven headed dragon of Revelation 17 is reminiscent of a dragon like creature called Leviathan. There are **three key passages** in the Old Testament that describe this seven-headed monster: Psalm 74:10-14; Job 41 and Isaiah 27:1. The New Testament also alludes to this persecuting sea creature (Revelation 12:3, 4, 7-9). As we examine these texts we discover the following interesting details:

- Leviathan is a **sea creature** with **multiple heads** and he rules over the waters.
- Leviathan is also called the fleeting **serpent** and the **great dragon.** In fact, the Hebrew word 'Leviathan' means 'twisted, coiled.'

- Leviathan is a **deadly enemy** of God and His people. Job was afflicted by this archenemy.
- Leviathan is the king of the **children of pride**.
- Ultimately God will pull out Leviathan from its natural habitat, **cast him onto dry land** and crush its heads.

Though the book of Revelation does not use the name 'Leviathan' it is clear that the dragon beast of Revelation 12 and the scarlet beast of Revelation 17 is Leviathan. All of the details about Leviathan in the Old Testament coalesce in the portrait painted in Revelation. The dragon of Revelation 12 is defined as the dragon, the ancient serpent and Satan. The name 'Satan' appears in Job as the persecutor of Job and Isaiah 27:1 refers to Leviathan as the dragon and the fleeing serpent.

After the millennium the kings of the earth will resurrect from their death wound and will persuade the waters/multitudes to attack God and His people in the city (Revelation 20:5, 7-9). At this point Satan in person rides the beast, not the apostate religious systems. Satan will entice the kings and the multitudes to surround the New Jerusalem and they will be like the river Euphrates at flood stage (this is the imagery behind **Psalms 46**). As the political and military leaders are ready to drown the city, God reveals to the multitudes that Satan is the great deceiver and the kings and the multitudes will turn against him. Before this they were all of one mind but now Babylon falls apart. As the kings turned against the harlot and her daughters before the millennium, the kings and multitudes will turn against Satan at the end. Notice how Ellen White describes this final drying up of the waters after the millennium:

*"He [**Satan**] **rushes** into the midst of his subjects and endeavors to inspire them with **his own fury** and arouse them to **instant battle**. But of all the countless millions whom he has allured into rebellion, there are none now to acknowledge his supremacy. **His power is at an end**. The wicked are filled with the same hatred of God that inspires Satan; but they see that their case is hopeless, that they*

cannot prevail against Jehovah. Their **rage is kindled against Satan** and those who have been his agents in deception, and with the **fury of demons they turn upon them**." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 671.

This portrayal by Ellen White is corroborated by the picture in **Ezekiel 28:2-10** where the nations will **unsheathe their swords** against the covering cherub, Lucifer.



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
“FROM THE CLOSE OF PROBATION TO THE NEW EARTH:
A STUDY OF REVELATION CHAPTERS 15 TO 22”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

**Lesson #7 – Revelation 18: The Demise of
Babylonian Capitalism**

Review of the Structure of Revelation 16:12-16

Revelation 16:12

Up to the moment of the **fifth plague** (the plague of darkness), Babylon’s waters (the multitudes that support her) are **at flood stage** and intend to drown God’s people. However, at the sixth plague, the waters **suddenly dry up** (withdraw their support) and avalanche themselves against the religious leaders and **Babylon falls**. The drying up of the waters distracts the masses from their murderous rage thus **preparing the way** for the coming of the kings from the east (Jesus and His angels).

Revelation 16:13-14

Revelation 16:13, 14 are parenthetical and take us back to **probationary time** when the wicked swirling waters are in the process of increasing and consolidating against God’s people. Three **evil angels** with a counterfeit

message will go *'to the kings of the earth and the whole world'* to gather them for the **final battle** of Armageddon against God in the person of His people. At the same time three holy angels (Revelation 14:6-12) will be gathering God's remnant on His side.

Revelation 16:15

This verse continues the **parenthetical statement**. Jesus warns His people to be gathered on the right side before probation closes because when the **gathering is over**, there will only be **two groups**: Those who **walk clothed** and have the Seal of God and those who **walk naked** and have the Mark of the Beast.

Revelation 16:16

We must not understand the events of verse 16 as occurring after the events of verses 13 and 14. Rather, verses 13, 14 take us back to the gathering time before the close of probation. When all have been gathered for Armageddon and probation has closed, the battle will take place. Here is the sequence with verse 15 in parentheses:

*"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, **to gather them** to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. ("Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.") ¹⁶ And **they gathered them** [the three evil angels] to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon."*

- ✓ Verse 12: The sixth plague: The drying up of the waters
- ✓ Verses 13, 14: Go back in time to the gathering during probationary time
- ✓ Verse 15: Parenthetical statement: Be gathered on the Lord's side
- ✓ Verse 16: Gathered at the Mount of the Congregation for Armageddon.

The Location of Armageddon

Where is Armageddon located? The word Armageddon is a **compound name** that comes from two Hebrew words: **Har** (mount) and **mogged** (congregation). Putting the two words together, we find that the wicked are gathered for the final battle at the **Mount of the Congregation**.

As is well known, the Hebrew language had no vowels. Thus the vowels 'a' in *Har* and 'o' and 'e' in *mogged* are not in the Hebrew text. This means that in the original Hebrew we find the consonants *hr mggd*.

The Greek word *Har-magedon* is borrowed from the Hebrew and has the **identical vowels** as *Har-mogged*. But what do we do with the Greek ending '-on' in Armageddon? The addition of the ending -on is simply a way of rendering a Hebrew word into Greek. In other words, the ending '-on' is a Greek ending that is attached to a Hebrew word.

Let us provide another biblical example of a Hebrew word that is rendered in Greek with the -on ending, the word **abad** (Obadiah 12). The Hebrew word is rendered into Greek in **Revelation 9:11** as **Abaddon**. The ending '-on' is a Greek ending attached to the Hebrew word *abad*.

A practical contemporary example might help. In English we say: "*I am going to **park** the car.*" In Spanish you would say '*I am going to **parquear** the car*'. The ending '-ear' provides a Spanish ending to an English word.

Both Daniel and Revelation, tell us that God **will gather** His people **to spiritual Mt. Zion** where they will congregate to **worship the Lord**. In the dispensation of the Spirit, Zion represents **God's faithful** remnant that is gathered to Jesus in the **entire world**. Revelation describes a **two-fold gathering**. God's people are gathered globally to spiritual **Mt. Zion** (the Mount of the Congregation) and the wicked are **gathered globally around it** at Armageddon in an attempt to destroy it.

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word *mggd* ('congregation') is used exclusively to refer to the congregation of the **tabernacle**. It is a **sanctuary term** that refers to the congregation that meets at the temple on Mt. Zion to worship the Lord. The Mount of the Congregation in heaven is the place that Lucifer attempted to usurp from the Lord:

Isaiah 14:12-14; Psalm 48:1, 2

*"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! ¹³ For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the **mount of the congregation** on the farthest **sides of the north**; ¹⁴ I will **ascend above the heights of the clouds**, I will be like the Most High.'*

*"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain. ² Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is **Mount Zion** on the **sides of the north**, the city of the great King."*

God's dwelling place is on Mt. Zion on the sides of the north. At the beginning of the great controversy in heaven, **Satan** aspired to take over the **heavenly Mount** of the Congregation in the sides of the north, but was defeated. Therefore, at the end, Satan will attempt to conquer the **earthly mount** where God's people have spiritually gathered to worship the Lord. Carefully study the following texts:

- ✓ **Revelation 14:1**: God's people stand victorious on Mt. Zion after their trial over the beast, his image and his mark in the previous chapter:

*"Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing **on Mount Zion**, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads."*

- ✓ **Revelation 14:19, 20**: The grapes are gathered outside the Holy City and God's people are inside:

*“So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. ²⁰ And the **winepress** was trampled **outside the city**, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.”*

- ✓ **Joel 2:32; see also 3:9-12:** The wicked gather in the winepress in the Valley of Jehoshaphat outside of Jerusalem for an attack on God's people:

*“And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in **Mount Zion** and in **Jerusalem** there shall be **deliverance**, as the Lord has said, among the remnant whom the Lord calls.”*

- ✓ **Daniel 11:45:** The king of the north places the tents of his palace between the seas and the Glorious Holy Mountain of Zion:

*“And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the **glorious holy mountain**; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.”*

Conclusion: In Revelation 16:16 the kings of the earth and the whole world are gathered in the place whose name means ‘*Mount of the Congregation*’. Their intention in gathering there is to slay God's people who are spiritually on Mt. Zion. God's people are depicted as the harvest of the earth inside the city and the wicked are portrayed as the grapes gathered outside the city (Revelation 14:20).

The Composite Picture of Revelation 16-19

Revelation 16:12-16

- ✓ The spirits of devils have totally **possessed Babylon** at the close of probationary time and have **gathered the kings** of the earth and the whole world to war against Christ in the person of His witnesses.
- ✓ When **probation closes**, the waters of the spiritual Euphrates are at **flood stage**. Each of the **first four plagues** intensifies the anger of the waters until they are ready to **blot out God's people** from the earth.

- ✓ When it appears that the waters will drown God's people, the plague of **darkness** (the fifth plague) falls upon the earth immediately followed by the **drying up** of the flooding waters under the sixth plague.
- ✓ The **seventh plague** then **divides** Babylon into three parts and **desolates** the earth (Revelation 16:17-21).

Revelation 17

- ✓ Once again, the Babylonian harlot seems to be in full control. She is **sitting** on many waters, is **fornicating** with the kings of the earth and is supported by her **daughters**. The waters are flowing and God's people are **in jeopardy**.
- ✓ The **unity of Babylon** is destroyed when the **kings turn on her** (Revelation 17:16). This unity comes to an end when the **words of God are finished** at the moment of the seventh plague (Revelation 17:17)

Revelation 18:6-24

- This chapter describes the **lamentation of the multitudes** of the world when they see that Babylon has fallen and they are lost.
- When God's people are **delivered by the voice** of God before Jesus comes with the armies of heaven (the kings that come from the east), there will be a period where the **merchants and the kings** of the earth will **lament and wail** over the fact that their riches cannot save them in the day of God's wrath.

Revelation 19:1-10 (clearly denoted in verses 2, 3):

- There is a **song of joy in heaven** because God has judged the harlot and avenged His people.
- This song is to be seen in **contrast to the lamentation** of the multitudes when they see that Babylon has fallen.

- **Jeremiah 51:48, 49** describes the joyous celebration in heaven:

*"When the **heavens and the earth and all that is in them** shall sing joyously over Babylon; for the plunderers shall come to her from the north," says the LORD. ⁴⁹ As Babylon has caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon the slain of all the earth shall fall."*

Revelation 19:11-21

- The kings from the east—Jesus and His angels—come for the one-sided **final battle** against the **kings** of the earth, the **beast** and the **false prophet** (Revelation 19:19, 20).
- ✓ The **winepress symbolism** from Revelation 14:18-20 is now further described. Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 641.

Ellen White on the Timing of Revelation 18:6-24

There are **three chapters** toward the end of *The Great Controversy* where Ellen White begins the chapter with Bible verses that provide the central theme of the entire chapter.

On page 603, Ellen White begins the chapter on the 'The Final Warning' (pp. 603-612) by quoting **Revelation 18:1, 2, 4**. Therefore, we know that the central theme of this chapter is the **latter rain** and the **Loud Cry** of Revelation 18:1-5.

On page 613, Ellen White begins the chapter on 'The Time of Trouble' (pp. 613-634) by quoting **Daniel 12:1**. There are **three** key events in this verse:

- ✓ The **standing up** of Michael when probation closes.
- ✓ The **time of trouble** after the close of probation.
- ✓ The **deliverance** at the end of the time of trouble of those who are written in the book of life.

In this chapter Ellen White expounds fully upon the first two events (the standing up of Michael and the time of trouble) of Daniel 12:1 and then ends the chapter with a **brief mention** of the third event (the deliverance of God's people).

*"Glorious will be the **deliverance** of those who have patiently waited for His coming and whose names are written in the **book of life**." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 634*

We would expect Ellen White to have much more to say about the third event and she does! The very next chapter is titled "*God's People Delivered*" (pp. 635-652). Ellen White does not quote any biblical verse to begin this chapter, why not? Simply because this chapter is a full exposition of the third event of Daniel 12:1 which she briefly introduced at the end of the previous chapter. That is to say, Daniel 12:1 is still the introductory verse to this chapter.

The Structure of The Great Controversy (GC), pp. 635, 636

It is important to note that Ellen White describes the first four plagues (the jeopardy plagues) in the chapter on "*The Time of Trouble*" (pp. 627-629) but does not comment on the last three (the deliverance plagues) until the first two pages of the next chapter (pp. 635, 636). The **first two pages** of the chapter '*God's People Delivered*' contain Ellen White's commentary on the fifth, sixth and seventh plagues.

Let's consider this in greater detail:

GC, p. 635: After the **first four plagues** are poured out (GC, pp. 627-629), the multitudes (waters) that support Babylon are furiously swirling and are **about to rush** upon God's people to execute the death decree. At this point, the harlot is sitting on many waters intending to destroy God's people:

*"With shouts of triumph, jeering, and imprecation, **throngs** [**multitudes**] of evil men are **about to rush** [**waters rush: Isaiah 17:12, 13**] upon their **prey** [**God's people**]."*

GC, p. 635: When the darkness of the fifth plague falls upon the earth, the raging waters of the spiritual Euphrates are suddenly arrested or dried up. This is the sixth plague, the drying up of the Euphrates, that prepares the way for the coming of Jesus and His armies from the east:

"The angry multitudes are suddenly arrested [dried up]. Their mocking cries die away. The objects [the faithful remnant] of their murderous rage are forgotten."

GC, p. 636: God's voice is then heard saying 'it is done' which marks the outpouring of the seventh plague:

"In the midst of the angry heavens is one clear space of indescribable glory, whence comes the voice of God like the sound of many waters, saying: "It is done." Revelation 16:17." That voice shakes the heavens and the earth."

Ellen White then goes on to quote Revelation 16:17, 18, 19, 21 that describe the seventh plague.

After ending the chapter on the deliverance of God's people on page 652, Ellen White begins the next chapter on *"The Desolation of the Earth"*, by citing Revelation 18:5-10, 11, 13, 15-17. Therefore, we know that this chapter contains Ellen White's commentary on the fulfillment of Revelation 18:5-24.

It is important to remember that Ellen White did not quote Revelation 18:1-4 at this juncture because she had already quoted these verses as the beginning of the chapter on *The Final Warning*. Clearly, Ellen White understood that Revelation 18:1-4 describes events during probationary time and Revelation 18:5-24 describes events during the last three plagues.

Ellen White's Perspective of Revelation 18:6-24

In the chapter on *"The Desolation of the Earth"* (pp. 653-661) Ellen White picks up at the very same point where she left off in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 635,

and 636. This means that in this chapter she expands upon the events that will occur when God delivers His people during the last three plagues:

“When the voice of God turns the captivity of His people [referring back to the beginning of the chapter on the deliverance of God’s people—GC, pp.635, 636], there is a terrible awakening of those who have lost all in the great conflict of life.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p.654

This quotation on the second page of the chapter ‘*The Desolation of the Earth*’ takes us **back to the moment** when the voice of God delivered His people at the moment of the fifth plague. Thus, Ellen White gives us the **precise chronological point** for the fulfillment of Revelation 18:6-24. The book of Revelation itself links the events of Revelation 16 and 17 with chapter 18 in the concluding verse of chapter 17:

“And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”

Revelation 17 expands upon Revelation 16 giving us the political/religious perspective and Revelation 18 provides the political/economic perspective. Revelation 17:18 is striking because it tells us that the kings reign over the earth but the **harlot reigns over them**. This clearly shows that the church in the end time will rule over the state.

Revelation 18:6-24 is a description of the **last three plagues**. It is a vivid portrayal of how the wicked will wail and lament when they see that their own choice has forfeited eternal life for present pleasures. Ellen White vividly describes the scene:

“The people [the waters of the ‘Euphrates’] see that they have been deluded. They accuse one another of having led them to destruction; but all unite in heaping their bitterest condemnation upon the ministers. Unfaithful pastors have prophesied smooth things; they have led their hearers to make void the law of God and to persecute those who would keep it holy. Now, in their despair, these teachers confess before the world their work of deception. The multitudes

*[the waters of the 'Euphrates'] are filled with fury. 'We are lost!' they cry [this is their lament and wailing in chapter 18], 'and you are the cause of our ruin;' and they turn upon the false shepherds [the waters dry up]. The very ones that once admired them most will pronounce the most dreadful curses upon them. The very hands that once crowned them with laurels will be raised **for their destruction**. The swords that were to slay God's people are now employed **to destroy their enemies**. Everywhere there is strife and bloodshed."* Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 655, 656

The following paragraph captures in summary form the **central theme** of Revelation 18:6ff:

*"The **rich [the merchants]** prided themselves upon their **superiority** to those who were less favored; but they had obtained their **riches** by violation of the law of God. They had **neglected** to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to deal justly, and to love mercy. They had sought to **exalt themselves** and to obtain the **homage** of their fellow creatures. Now they are **stripped of all that made them great** and are left destitute and defenseless. They **look with terror** upon the destruction of the idols that they preferred before their Maker. They have sold their souls for earthly **riches** and **enjoyments**, and have not sought to become rich toward God. The result is, their **lives are a failure**; their **pleasures** are now turned to **gall**, their treasures to corruption. The gain of a lifetime is swept away **in a moment**. The rich **bemoan** the destruction of their grand houses, the scattering of their gold and silver **[in the light of James 5]**. But their **lamentations** are silenced by the fear that they themselves are to perish with their idols."* Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 654

Thus the central theme of Revelation 18:6ff is the collapse of the **world political and economic** system that supported the Babylonian harlot and her daughters. At that point the kings, the merchants and the multitudes will see that they are lost and that their riches are worthless. And they will be infuriated primarily with the wicked religious leaders who have deceived them with a prosperity gospel!

The entire chapter is written in the literary style of a **lamentation or funeral dirge**. When the Babylonian system collapses, the multitudes will realize that their **religious leaders have deceived them** and they will turn on them. Their religious leaders encouraged them to get rich and to persecute those who keep the Sabbath. Both Ezekiel 7:15-19 and James 5:1-7 point forward to this time.

Ezekiel 7:15-19

*"They will throw their **silver** into the streets, and their **gold** will be like refuse; their **silver and their gold** will not be able to deliver them in the day of the **wrath of the LORD**; they will not satisfy their souls, nor fill their stomachs because it became their stumbling block of iniquity. ²⁰ 'As for the **beauty of his ornaments**, He set it in majesty; but they made from it the images of their **abominations** their detestable things; therefore, I have made it like refuse to them. ²¹ I will give it as plunder into the hands of strangers, and to the wicked of the earth as spoil; and they shall defile it."*

James 5:1-6

*"Come now, you **rich, weep and howl** for your miseries that are coming upon you! ² Your **riches** are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. ³ Your **gold and silver** are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will **eat your flesh** like fire. You have heaped up **treasure in the last days**. ⁴ Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. ⁵ You have lived on the earth in **pleasure and luxury**; you have **fattened your hearts** as in a day of **slaughter**. ⁶ You have condemned; you have **murdered the just**; he does **not resist you**."*

The Flow of Chapter 18

As we have seen, Revelation 17:18 **bridges** chapter 17 with chapter 18. This verse tells us that the harlot of chapter 17 and the city of chapter 18 are **interchangeable**:

*"And **the woman** whom you saw **is that great city** which reigns over the kings of the earth."*

Here is a bird's eye view of the structure of Revelation 18:

- ✓ Revelation 18:1-5: The loud cry to **come out** of Babylon before the outpouring of the seven last plagues.
- ✓ Revelation 18:6-8: **Retribution** upon Babylon for her sins.
- ✓ Revelation 18:9, 10: The lament of the **kings** of the earth.
- ✓ Revelation 18:11-16: The lament of the **Capitalists** ('the great men of the earth').
- ✓ Revelation 18:17-19: The lament of the **employees and travelers**.
- ✓ Revelation 18:20: **Rejoicing** in heaven over Babylon's fall.
- ✓ Revelation 18:21-24: **Drowning** of the Great City and **cessation** of her activities.

The Location of Verses 1-5

Revelation 18:1-5 is a **parenthesis** between Revelation 17 and 18:6-24. As we have seen, Revelation 17 portrays the **final global apostasy** of Babylon and **her doom**. Revelation 18:6-19 then describes the same period but from a different perspective. In between, we find the warning to come **out** of Babylon so as not to participate in her sins and receive her plagues. It is rather obvious that this warning must be given shortly before the close of probation and the outpouring of the plagues. Clearly, verse 5 indicates that when the warning is given the plagues have not yet fallen. Here is the scenario:

- **Revelation 17** describes the **sins** and **condemnation** of Babylon.
- **Revelation 18:1-5** calls God's people to **come out** of Babylon before divine condemnation falls upon her.
- **Revelation 18:6-24**: The **lamentation** of those who fail to respond to the call.

Analysis of the Revelation 18:1-5 Parenthesis

Revelation 18:1-5 (“The Final Warning”, GC, pp. 603-612)

*“After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having **great authority**, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. ² And he **cried mightily** with a **loud voice**, saying, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! ³ For **all the nations** have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the **kings of the earth** have committed fornication with her, and the **merchants of the earth** have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.” ⁴ And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, **my people**, lest you share in **her sins**, and lest you receive of **her plagues**. ⁵ For [because] her sins have **reached to heaven**, and God has **remembered** her iniquities.”*

Revelation 18:1-5: The Loud Cry

There is a close link between the **second angel’s message** in Revelation 14:8 and the **Loud Cry** message of the Angel in Revelation 18:1-5. The Millerites proclaimed the message of Revelation 14:8 leading up to 1844. At that time, God’s faithful children left the fallen Protestant Churches and joined those who were proclaiming the judgment hour message. Shortly before the close of probation the second angel’s message will be proclaimed once more but with **global extension** and with **far greater power**. Ellen White explained the relationship between Revelation 14:8 and 18:1-3 in this way:

*“When Jesus began His public ministry, He cleansed the temple from its sacrilegious profanation. Among the last acts of His ministry was the **second cleansing** of the temple. So in the last work for the warning of the world, **two distinct calls** are made to the churches. The **second angel’s message** is, ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.’ And in **the loud cry** of the third angel’s message*

a voice is heard from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities" Ellen G. White, RH December 6, 1892

*"This scripture [**Revelation 18:1-5**] points forward to a time when the announcement of the fall of Babylon, as made by the second angel of Revelation 14 (verse 8), **is to be repeated**, with the additional mention of the corruptions which have been entering the various organizations that constitute Babylon, **since that message was first given**, in the summer of 1844. A **terrible condition** of the religious world is here described. With every rejection of truth the minds of the people will become **darker**, their hearts more **stubborn**, until they are **entrenched in an infidel hardihood [resolute and self-assured audacity]**. In defiance of the warnings that God has given, they will continue to trample upon one of the precepts of the Decalogue, until they are **led to persecute** those who hold it sacred. Christ is set at naught in the contempt placed upon His word and His people. As the churches accept the **teachings of spiritualism**, the restraint imposed upon the carnal heart is removed, and the **profession of religion** will become a cloak to conceal the basest iniquity. A belief in **spiritual manifestations** opens the door to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, and thus the influence of **evil angels will be felt in the churches**." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 603, 604*

So to speak, the Loud Cry will be the three angels' message **on steroids**. Notice the following comparison between the second angel's message in Revelation 14:8 and the Loud Cry angel in Revelation 18:1-4:

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Revelation 14:8

Revelation 18:1-5

An angel proclaims the message	A <u>mighty</u> angel proclaims the message
No mention of a loud voice	The angel <u>cries mightily</u> with a <u>loud voice</u>
She fell because she made nations drink wine	She fell because she <u>gave wine</u> to the nations
No call to come out of her	<u>Call to come out</u> of her before the plagues
No mention of demons in Babylon	Babylon is the <u>habitation of demons</u>
No mention of kings and merchants	Mention of <u>kings and merchants</u>
No mention of sins piled up to heaven	Her sins have <u>filled the cup</u>
No mention of God's punishment of Babylon	Mention of God's <u>punishment of Babylon</u>

Counterfeit and Genuine

According to Revelation 13:13 and the Spirit of Prophecy there will be a great counterfeit revival **just before** the outpouring of the Latter Rain and the Loud Cry:

*"Notwithstanding the **spiritual darkness** and alienation from God that exist in the **churches** that constitute Babylon, the **great body** of Christ's true followers is still to be found in their communion. There are many of these who have never seen the special truths for this time. Not a few are dissatisfied with their present condition and are longing for **clearer light**. They look in vain for the image of Christ in the churches with which they are connected. As these bodies depart further and further from the truth, and ally themselves more closely with the world, the difference between the two classes will widen, and it will **finally result in separation**. The time will come when those who love God supremely **can no longer remain in connection** with such as are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."*

Revelation 18 points to the time when, as the result of **rejecting the threefold warning** of Revelation 14:6-12, the church will have **fully reached** the condition foretold by the second angel, and the people of God still in Babylon will be called upon to **separate from her communion**. This message is **the last** that will ever be given to the world; and it will accomplish its work. When those that "believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:12), shall be left to receive strong delusion and to believe a lie, then **the light of truth will shine** upon all whose hearts are open to receive it, and all the **children of the Lord** that remain in Babylon will heed the call: "Come out of her, My people" (Revelation 18:4). Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p.390

"Notwithstanding the widespread declension of faith and piety, there are true followers of Christ in these churches. **Before** the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth, there will be, among the people of the Lord, such **a revival of primitive godliness** as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon his children. At that time many **will separate themselves** from those churches in which the love of this world has supplanted love for **God and his Word**. Many, both of **ministers and people**, will gladly accept those great truths which God has caused to be proclaimed at this time, to prepare a people for the Lord's second coming. The enemy of souls desires to hinder this work; and **before the time** for such a movement shall come, he will endeavor to prevent it, by **introducing a counterfeit**. In those churches which he can bring under his deceptive power, he will **make it appear** that God's special blessing is poured out; there will be manifest what is thought to be **great religious interest**. **Multitudes** will exult that God is working marvelously for them, when the work is that of another spirit. Under **a religious guise**, Satan will seek to extend his influence over the **Christian world**." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 464

Ellen White seems to indicate that this counterfeit revival will be accompanied by literal fire from heaven as happened on the Day of Pentecost:

"Satan will work **through his agents** who have departed from the faith to bring fire down from heaven in the sight of men." *Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 54

Someone might say: Literal fire falling from heaven? Are you kidding? Really? How could such a thing happen?

We can illustrate how this might occur by mentioning some remarks that world-renowned Pentecostal evangelist and faith healer, Benny Hinn made. On Friday evening, **November 13, 2001** I was in a hotel room near Tucson, Arizona and happened to tune in to TBN's "*Praise the Lord*" program. Paul Crouch, President of TBN, was interviewing **Benny Hinn** about his conversion experience. Hinn explained that before he was a Christian he had visions and dreams of himself preaching in stadiums before thousands of people. Then he said this, and I quote:

"In the last twelve months I have been having some new dreams and visions . . . some amazing dreams. I have been seeing fire. I have seen myself in stadiums where literal fire was falling from heaven. The glory of God is about to be revealed visibly."

Hinn then referred to the tongues of fire on the **Day of Pentecost**, the Elijah experience on **Mt. Carmel** and the **pillar of fire** in the wilderness as proof that in the future literal fire would fall from heaven at his meetings.

The critical question is this: Would the descent of literal fire from heaven and the performance of undeniable miracles be a sign that the Holy Spirit is being poured out and that the message is true? Of course not! The Bible provides the standard by which all supernatural phenomena must be tested. Our senses cannot be trusted and our feelings can lead us astray.

Isaiah 8:20 clearly states:

"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

Do Benny Hinn's teachings square with the Bible? Two items will prove that they do not. Hinn claims to speak regularly with the spirit of **Katherine Kuhlman** at her graveside at the Forest Lawn Cemetery in Glendale, California. He also claims that he obtains power from the mausoleum of the deceased

Pentecostal preacher, **Amee McPherson** at the same cemetery. He has also gone on the record stating that **Sunday is the day** that the Lord has made to be kept by Christians in honor of the resurrection of Christ.

Verse by Verse Study of Revelation 18

Comments on Verse 1

"After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory."

The word 'power' is *exousía* and really should be translated, 'authority'. This angel not only has authority; he has **mega** authority. This is the **Loud Cry** angel. He is not the same Angel that calls the faithful out of Babylon in verse 4.

In the darkest period of history, God will reveal the **greatest light**, and that light is the truth about God's glorious character of love as revealed in His Law (see Exodus 33:18, 19; 34:6, 7). The Loud Cry angel actually strengthens the message of all three:

*"The three angels' messages are to be **combined**, giving their threefold light to the world. In the Revelation, John says, "I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory." [Revelation 18:2-5 quoted.] This represents the giving of the last and **threefold message** of warning to the world (Ellen G. White, Manuscripts 52, 1900). {Ellen G. White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 985.6}*

*"The prophecies in the eighteenth of Revelation will soon be fulfilled. **During the proclamation** of the third angel's message, 'another angel' is to 'come down from heaven, having great power,' and the earth is to be 'lightened with his glory.' The Spirit of the Lord will so graciously bless consecrated human instrumentalities that men, women, and children will open their lips in praise and thanksgiving, filling the earth with the **knowledge of God**, and with His **unsurpassed glory**, as the waters cover the sea." Ellen G. White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 983*

*"The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His **character of love**. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own **life and character** they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them." Ellen G. White, Christ Object Lessons, p. 415*

*"By beholding Christ, by talking of Him, by beholding the loveliness of His character we become changed. Changed from glory to glory. And **what is glory?** Character—and he becomes changed from character to character. Thus we see that there is a work of purification that goes on by beholding Jesus." Ellen G. White, Sons and Daughters of God, p. 337*

Comments on Verse 2

"And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!"

The **might** of the message is underlined by the words: 'He **cried** out with a **strong** voice'. This is the reason why we call this the 'Loud Cry'.

Verse 2 contains **three parallel** expressions each building on the previous one:

- 'a dwelling place of **demons**'
- 'a prison for every **foul spirit**'
- 'a cage for every **unclean and hated bird**'

The **two-fold** repetition of the expression '**is fallen**' and the three expressions that follow denote a **crescendo**. In Hebrew poetry this is what is called **synonymous parallelism**. At this point, just before the close of probation, Babylon will have experienced an irreversible moral fall that is **beyond repair**. She will have been totally possessed by the forces of evil.

Revelation 18:2 is a confirmation of **Revelation 16:13** where the text describes a Babylonian trilogy speaking with the authority of the **demons** whose sole purpose is to congregate the global community for the final battle against God

in the person of His witnesses. Ellen White used the same type of parallelism when she stated that:

*“There will be a **universal bond** of union, one **great harmony**, a **confederacy** of Satan's forces.” Ellen G. White, Last Day Events, p. 137*

The hateful birds here are not sparrows! They are **birds of prey**. This is clearly indicated in **Revelation 19:17** where the same Greek word refers to the **fowl of the air**. In other words, these birds are **scavengers** and they prey upon those who are deceived by Babylon. The word ‘cage’ is translated ‘prison’ elsewhere in the New Testament.

Ellen White described the condition of the religious world during this period:

*“A terrible condition of the religious world is here described. With every rejection of truth, the minds of the people will become **darker**, their hearts **more stubborn**, until they are entrenched in an **infidel hardihood**. In defiance of the warnings which God has given, they will continue to trample upon one of the precepts of the Decalogue, until they are **led to persecute** those who hold it sacred.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 603*

Ellen White remarks about this time:

*“After the truth has been proclaimed as a witness to all nations, **every conceivable power of evil** will be set in operation, and minds will be confused by many voices crying, ‘Lo, here is Christ; lo, He is there. This is the truth, I have the message from God, He has sent me with great light.’ Then there will be a **removing of the landmarks**, and an attempt to **tear down the pillars of our faith**. A more decided effort will be made to exalt the false sabbath and to cast **contempt upon God Himself** by supplanting the day He has blessed and sanctified. This false sabbath is to be enforced by an oppressive law. **Satan and his angels** are wide-awake and intensely active, working with energy and perseverance **through human instrumentalities** to bring about his purpose of obliterating from the minds of men the knowledge of God. But while **Satan works** with his lying wonders, the time will be fulfilled foretold in the Revelation, and the*

mighty angel that shall lighten the earth with his glory will proclaim the fall of Babylon, and call upon God's people to forsake her." Ellen G. White, The Review and Herald, December 13, 1892

Ellen White described the Loud Cry and its messengers:

"As the time comes for it to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through **humble instruments**, leading the minds of those who **consecrate themselves** to His service. The laborers will be qualified rather by the **unction of His Spirit** than by the training of **literary institutions**. Men of **faith and prayer** will be constrained to go forth with **holy zeal**, declaring the words that God gives them. The **sins of Babylon** will be laid open. The fearful results of enforcing the observances of the church by **civil authority**, the **inroads of spiritualism**, the stealthy but rapid progress of the **papal power**--all will be unmasked. By these solemn warnings the **people will be stirred**. Thousands upon thousands will listen who have never heard words like these. In **amazement** they hear the testimony that **Babylon is the church**, fallen because of her errors and sins, because of her **rejection of the truth** sent to her from heaven. As the people go to their former teachers with the eager inquiry: Are these things so? The ministers present **fables**, prophesy **smooth things**, to **soothe their fears** and quiet the awakened conscience. But since many refuse to be satisfied with the mere authority of men and demand a plain "Thus saith the Lord," **the popular ministry**, like the Pharisees of old, filled with anger as their authority is questioned, will denounce the message as of Satan and **stir up the sin-loving multitudes** to revile and persecute those who proclaim it." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 606, 607

Comments on Verse 3

"For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the **merchants** of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her **luxury**."

The word 'merchants' in verse 3 literally means 'one who is on a journey' for trade. The concept comes from **Ezekiel 27** where the merchants of **Tyre**

traveled in ships to sell their wares. We must link the merchants of Revelation 18 with **Revelation 13:15** where we are told that Babylon forbade God's faithful people to buy and sell because they did worship the image of the beast or receive his mark. Now, in return, Babylon is unable to sell her wares. She is **bankrupt!**

At the end of verse 3 the word that is translated 'luxury' is actually *dúnamis* which should be translated 'power'. The power of Babylon resided in her **economic clout**. Now she is going to totally lose her power because she will no longer be able to sell her merchandise.

Comments on Verse 4

*"And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "**Come out of her, my people**, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues."*

The purpose of the Loud Cry is to proclaim the fall of Babylon and to call God's faithful people to come out before the outpouring of the seven plagues. An angel comes down from heaven **to the earth** to proclaim that Babylon is fallen but it is **God's voice** from heaven that calls **His very own people** to come out of Babylon. Babylon is not only the papacy but also the apostate protestant churches:

*"Babylon is said to be 'the mother of harlots.' By **her daughters** must be symbolized churches that cling to her doctrines and traditions, and follow her example of sacrificing the truth and the approval of God, in order to form an **unlawful alliance with the world**. The message of Revelation 14, announcing the fall of Babylon must apply to religious bodies that were once pure and **have become corrupt**. Since this message follows the warning of the judgment, it must be given in the last days; therefore, it **cannot refer to the Roman Church alone**, for that church has been in a fallen condition for many centuries. Furthermore, in the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation the people of God are called upon to come out of Babylon. According to this scripture, many of God's people must still be in Babylon. And in what religious bodies is the greater part of the followers of Christ*

*now to be found? Without doubt, in the various **churches professing the Protestant faith**." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 382*

We must understand the call to come out of Babylon in verse 4 in the light of the **Old Testament literal parallel** (Isaiah 48:20; Jeremiah 50:8; 51:6, 45). God's literal Israel in the Old Testament were called to come out of literal Babylon in order escape her doom. However, they were not merely to leave Babylon without any particular destination. They were to come out of Babylon to **go to Jerusalem**. This will happen in a **spiritual sense** at the end of time. God has a global spiritual Israel in global spiritual Babylon and they will be called out to come to spiritual Jerusalem—God's global remnant people:

*"No longer have the hosts of evil power to keep the church captive; for "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city," which hath "made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication;" and to **spiritual Israel** is given the message, "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Verse 8; 18:4. As the captive exiles heeded the message, "Flee out of the midst of Babylon" (Jeremiah 51:6), and **were restored** to the Land of Promise, so those who fear God today are heeding the message to **withdraw from spiritual Babylon**, and soon they are to stand as trophies of divine grace in the earth made new, the **heavenly Canaan**." Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings, pp. 715, 134*

Comments on Verse 5

"For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities."

The **sins of Babylon** are listed in Revelation 17 and 18:

- Pride and **arrogance** (Revelation 18:7)
- Crass **materialism** (Revelation 18:11-14)
- Giving wine of **false doctrine** to the nations (Revelation 14:8; 17:2; 18:2, 3)
- Fornication between the **church and the state** (Revelation 17:2; 18:3)
- **Persecution** of God's people (Revelation 17:6; 18:20, 24; see Jeremiah

51:24)

- Practicing the 'art' of deception through **sorcery** (Revelation 16:13, 14; 18:23)

Revelation 16 describes **Babylon's plagues**. The culmination of her punishment will be during the fifth, sixth and seventh plagues when the multitudes withdraw will their support from her and the kings of the earth will turn against her (Revelation 16:19; 17:1, 16; 18:6-8).

We are not to understand the word '**remembered**' as God suffering from some sort of temporary amnesia. God has been aware of Babylon's sins all along and they have been accumulating (cf. Jeremiah 51:9). The divine ledger has been adding up and when her sins have reached the limit that God has established, God will remember, that is, execute punishment. God's 'remembering' must be understood in the sense of God delaying the ultimate punishment until the cup of iniquity is full. That is to say, God delays punishment and when the cup is full, He 'remembers' (Genesis 15:16; Revelation 14:10; 16:19; Matthew 23:32).

One is reminded of the doom of the **cities of the plain**. God did an investigative judgment of the cities because the outcry against them had reached unto heaven. When God determined that the ledger was full, the cities were destroyed (Genesis 13:13; 18:20, 21).

*"The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was on account of their great wickedness. They gave loose rein to their intemperate appetites, then to their corrupt passions, until they were so debased, and their sins were so abominable, that **their cup of iniquity was full**, and they were consumed with fire from heaven." Ellen G. White, Counsels on Diet and Foods, p. 60*

God keeps a ledger with every nation on earth:

*"With unerring accuracy the Infinite One still keeps **account with the nations**. While His mercy is tendered, with calls to repentance, this **account remains open**; but when the **figures reach a certain amount** that God has fixed, the*

ministry of His wrath begins. The **account is closed**. Divine patience ceases. Mercy no longer pleads in their behalf." Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 364

Regarding the Amorites, Ellen White wrote:

"Of the Amorites the Lord said: "In the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is **not yet full**." Although this nation was conspicuous because of its idolatry and corruption; it had **not yet filled up the cup** of its iniquity, and God would not give command for its **utter** destruction. The people were to **see the divine power [as in the Loud Cry]** manifested in a **marked manner**, that they might be left **without excuse**. The compassionate Creator was willing to bear with their iniquity until the fourth generation. Then, if **no change was seen for the better**, His judgments were to fall upon them." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol.5, p. 208

And Ellen White wrote about the downward slide of the Protestant world into apostasy:

"The **professed Christian world** is advancing, as did the Jewish nation, from one degree of sinfulness to a **greater degree**, refusing **warning after warning**, and rejecting a 'Thus saith the Lord', while crediting the fables of men. The Lord God will soon arise in His wrath, and pour out His judgments upon those who are repeating the sins of the inhabitants of the **Noachic world [see Genesis 6:5]**. Those whose hearts are **fully set** in them to do evil, as were the hearts of the inhabitants of Sodom, will like them be destroyed. The fact that God had long forbearance, patience and mercy, the fact that His judgments have been **long delayed**, will not make the punishment any less severe when it does come." Ellen G. White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1143

Ellen White wrote about the downward slide of the United States into apostasy:

"The people of the United States have been a favored people; but when they restrict religious liberty, surrender Protestantism, and give countenance to popery, the **measure of their guilt will be full**, and 'national apostasy' will be registered in the books of heaven. The result of this apostasy will be national ruin." Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, May 2, 1893

On the other side of the coin the same could be said about the relationship of **God with His people**. As His faithful children are suffering to the utmost in the time of trouble, and God seems to have forgotten them, He will ‘remember’ **His covenant** and deliver them (see Exodus 2:24; 6:5). God’s eye is on them all the time but their faith must be tested and their characters fixed for eternity before God will ‘remember’ his Covenant with them (see Luke 18:1-8).

Verses 6-8: Babylon’s Reward

*“Render to her just as she rendered to you, and **repay her double** according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, **mix double** for her. ⁷ In the measure that she **glorified herself** and **lived luxuriously**, in the same measure give her **torment and sorrow**; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am **no widow**, and will not see sorrow.’ [allusion to Isaiah 47] ⁸ Therefore **her plagues** will come in one day, death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly **burned with fire**, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.”*

*“Fallen angels upon earth form confederations with evil men. In this age antichrist will appear as the true Christ, and then the law of God will be fully made void in **the nations of our world**. Rebellion against God’s holy law will be **fully ripe**. But the true leader of all this rebellion is Satan clothed as an angel of light. Men will be deceived and will exalt him to the place of God, and deify him. But Omnipotence will interpose, and **to the apostate churches** that unite in the exaltation of Satan, the sentence will go forth, ‘Therefore shall **her plagues** come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.’” Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 62*

Isaiah 47:8, 9

*“Therefore hear this now, you who are given to pleasures, who dwell securely, who say in your heart, ‘I am, and there is no one else besides me; I shall not sit as a **widow**, nor shall I know the loss of **children**’; ⁹ But these **two things** shall come to you in a **moment**, in **one day**: The **loss of children**, and **widowhood**. They*

*shall come upon you in their fullness because of the multitude of your **sorceries**, for the great abundance of your **enchantments**.”*

Babylon will be a **widow** because she will lose the support of her lovers, the kings, and she will lose the support of her **children**, the Protestant denominations. Both her lovers and her children will turn against her. She will come to her end with none to help her (Daniel 11:45).

Verses 9, 10: The Lament of the Kings

*“The **kings of the earth** who committed fornication and **lived luxuriously** with her will **weep** and **lament** for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰ standing **at a distance** for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in **one hour** your **judgment** has come.’*

The Greek word ‘judgment’ is *krísis* and refers to the **execution** of the judgment rather than the **sentence**, which would be *kríma* (as used in Revelation 17:1: ‘I will show you the **judgment** upon the harlot’).

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary explains:

*“Whereas chapter 17 deals primarily with the **sentence** against Babylon, chapter 18 is concerned with the **execution** of that sentence.” Ellen G. White, The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 864*

The expression ‘at a distance’ no doubt means that the kings now realize that by collaborating with the harlot, they were involved in her sins and thus must share in her plagues. When we no longer want to be associated with someone we say that we **distance ourselves** from him. In other words, the fate of the kings is inexorably bound up with hers. They did not listen to the call to come out of her and therefore they **shared in her sins** and **received her plagues**.

Verses 11-16: The Lament of the Capitalists

These verses describe the **extreme anguish** of the **capitalist merchants** when they see that their trust in Babylon has all been in vain.

*“And the **merchants** of the earth will **weep and mourn** over her, for **no one buys** their merchandise **anymore**:¹² merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble;¹³ and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men. The fruit that your **soul longed for** has gone from you, and all the **things** which are **rich and splendid** have **gone from you**, and you shall find them no more at all.¹⁵ The merchants of these **things**, who became **rich by her**, will stand **at a distance** for fear of her **torment, weeping and wailing**,¹⁶ and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! **[Revelation 17:4]**¹⁷ for in one hour such great riches **came to nothing**.’*

These verses describe the **reaction of the merchants** of the earth when Babylon falls apart. These who weep and wail are ‘the great men of the earth’ (18:23). In that day the Amazons, the Facebooks, and the Googles of the world will see that the accumulation of wealth at the expense of the poor has cost them eternal life.

The wicked do not lament because they have sinned. They lament because they have **lost their riches** and with their riches, eternal life. Time and again as the plagues are being poured out we are told that the wicked **refused to repent** (Revelation 16:9-11).

Ellen White describes **the reason** for the lamentation of the wicked:

*“The rich **bemoan** the destruction of their grand houses, the scattering of their gold and silver. But their **lamentations** are silenced by the fear that they*

themselves are to perish with their idols.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 654

*“The wicked are filled with **regret**, not because of their sinful neglect of God and their fellow men, but because God has conquered. They **lament** that the result is what it is; but they **do not repent** of their wickedness. They would leave no means untried to conquer if they could.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 654*

*“The people see that they have been deluded. They accuse one another of having led them to destruction; but all unite in heaping their **bitterest condemnation upon the ministers. Unfaithful pastors** have prophesied smooth things; they have led their hearers to make void the law of God and to persecute those who would keep it holy. Now, in their despair, these teachers confess before the world their work of deception. **The multitudes are filled with fury.** “We are lost!” **they cry**, “and you are the cause of our ruin;” and they turn upon the false shepherds. The very ones that once admired them most will pronounce the most dreadful curses upon them. The very hands that once crowned them with laurels will be raised for their destruction. The swords that were to slay God's people are now employed to destroy their enemies. Everywhere there is strife and bloodshed.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 655, 656*

The extreme anguish of the wicked is expressed with several intense Greek words. The first of these is **klaío** which is translated ‘bewail’ (used in verses 9, 11, 15, 19; see also Luke 6:25; Matthew 2:18; 27:75; Mark 16:10; Luke 8:52; Revelation 5:5; Acts 21:13; James 5:1 [which is especially significant]).

The second word is **penthéo** that means ‘to mourn’ (used in verses 11, 15, 19; see also James 4:9; Revelation 21:4).

The third word is **kópto** which means ‘to lament’ (used in verse 9; see also Matthew 24:30; Luke 8:52; Revelation 1:7).

The fourth word is **krázo** that is translated ‘cry’. This appears word appears twice in Revelation 18:18, 19 and it is also used to describe Jesus crying out on the cross as He died (Matthew 27:50), a woman crying out in travail (Revelation

12:2), the disciples crying out in fear (Matthew 14:26), the demons crying out (Mark 5:5), the wicked mob crying out for the blood of Stephen (Acts 7:57) and the wages withheld from the laborers crying out to heaven (James 5:4).

Another sign of the affliction and angst of the wicked is the **sprinkling of dust** upon their heads (cf. Joshua 7:6; Job 2:12; Lamentations 2:10; Ezekiel 27:30)

This **list of merchandise** includes necessities, commodities and luxuries. It includes basically most of the items of trade in the ancient world and therefore it represents the fact that the capitalists exerted total control of the world economy and therefore lived in luxury.

There are **28 items** mentioned on the merchandise list. Some of the items on this list are **staples** and others are **luxuries**. The list includes items that were common in the days of John. God spoke to the prophet in the context of his time. If a prophet were to arise today, the prophet would speak of stocks, bonds, I-Phones, I-Pads wide-screen televisions, fancy automobiles and mansions. The main point is that before her fall, Babylon had a stranglehold on all the commerce of the world and used it to oppress God's people.

Of particular interest are the last two items on the list: *'the bodies and souls of men.'* The word 'bodies' refers to the present physical life of persons while the word 'soul' refers to the spiritual and future life in the kingdom. Jesus used the two words in this way in Matthew 10:28:

*"And do not fear those who kill the **body** [take away our present physical existence] but cannot kill the soul [take away our eternal life]. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both **soul** and body in hell."*

Elsewhere in Revelation the word 'souls' is used to describe those who are killed for **refusing to practice** the false worship of Babylon (Revelation 6:9-11). Babylon not only traded with the physical bodies of human beings but also toyed with their very salvation and eternal destiny.

Verses 17-19: The Lament of the Employees and Travelers

“Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance ¹⁸ and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What is like this great city?’ ¹⁹ “They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.’

Verse 20: Heaven Rejoices

The scene now changes and a voice exhorts the heavenly beings to celebrate the vengeance of God against Babylon:

“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!”

The theme of this verse will be picked up in Revelation 19:1-3 where a heavenly host is singing about the judgment that fell upon the harlot and her cohorts.

Verses 21-24: Cessation of City Life

“Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. ²² The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. ²³ The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. ²⁴ And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints [Revelation 17:6], and of all who were slain on the earth.”

The picture of the stone being thrown into the sea finds its backdrop in **Jeremiah 51:63, 64** where the prophet was commanded to throw a stone into the Euphrates River:

*“And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind **a stone to it**, and cast it into the **midst of Euphrates**:⁶⁴ And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon **sink**, and shall **not rise** from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary.”*

The stone here is a metaphor for Babylon. She will be drowned in the waters of the Euphrates. The waters will dry up like the waters of the Red Sea and then avalanche themselves upon the apostate Babylonian system. All the activities that characterize a city will cease when Babylon falls (verses 22, 23).

Babylon deceived the nations by her **sorcery** (*pharmakeía*). This word appears only in this verse and in Galatians 5:20, but a cognate word *pharmákon* is used in Revelation 9:21; 21:8; 22:15. The word denotes the use of magic, often involving drugs and the casting of spells upon people. The simple fact is that those who visit **Babylon’s pharmacy** are not able to think straight!

Isaiah 47:9

*“But these two things shall come to you in a **moment**, in **one day**: The loss of **children**, and **widowhood**. They shall come upon you in their fullness because of the multitude of your **sorceries**, for the great abundance of your **enchantments**.”*

The great sin of Babylon is that she persecutes God’s people and sheds their blood. This is the picture that we find in every one of the antichrist passages (Matthew 24:14, 15 Daniel 7:21, 25; Daniel 8:24; Daniel 11:44, 45; Revelation 13:7; Revelation 17:6; Revelation 18:20, 24).



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
“FROM THE CLOSE OF PROBATION TO THE NEW EARTH:
A STUDY OF REVELATION CHAPTERS 15 TO 22”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #8 – Here Comes The Bride:
Eastern Wedding Customs

Eastern Wedding Customs in Biblical Times

The present chapter will help us better understand Revelation 19:1-9. Wedding customs in biblical times differed from the customs today. Here are the basic elements of an eastern wedding:

- ✓ The **betrothal** or engagement between the bride and the groom took place at the home of the **bride's father**.
- ✓ At the bride's father's house, the **groom paid the dowry**.
- ✓ The **groom** then returned to **his** father's house to **prepare the home** where he would live with his wife after the marriage (John 14:1-3).
- ✓ During the period of **preparation**, the **bride** would remain **in her father's house** preparing for the wedding (Ephesians 5:25-27)
- ✓ In the interim, the groom sent out **invitations** to the guests of the wedding.

- ✓ On occasion, the groom sent a **special garment** to the guests that gave them **the right** to attend the wedding as guests. Those who **did not have** the garment had no right to be in the wedding chamber.
- ✓ When the **place** and the **bride** were ready, the bridegroom would **return to the bride's home** to take her to **his father's house** where the wedding ceremony took place (John 14:1-3).
- ✓ The **wedding reception** followed in the home of the **groom's father**.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

Matthew 25:1-13

The parable of the ten virgins contains several symbols that help us understand eastern wedding customs:

- ✓ **Lighting the way** to the bridal chamber (the preaching the gospel to invite individuals to the wedding).
- ✓ All ten virgins claimed to be **believers**. All had **lamps** and **oil** in their lamps (the early rain). However, the wise virgins had a reserve supply in their vessels (the latter rain).
- ✓ The five wise virgins represent **genuine Christians** while the five foolish represent **counterfeit** believers.
- ✓ The **delay** in the coming of the groom for the wedding (the delay in Jesus receiving the kingdom from His Father).
- ✓ The **midnight cry** (the final invitation for the guests to come to the wedding).
- ✓ The door is **shut** (the close of probation when all cases are final).
- ✓ The **wedding** (Jesus marries His church/His kingdom in heaven as a whole after the door closes).
- ✓ The **foolish return** and beg entrance but it is too late, the door is closed

(too late to prepare during the time of trouble after probation closes).

- ✓ Watch because you do not know when your **Lord is coming** (the coming of the groom for the wedding takes place in heaven while God's people are still on earth).

Without a Wedding Garment

The parable of the wedding garment of Matthew 22:1-14 is in many ways parallel to the parable of the ten virgins.

Matthew 22:1-14

*"In the parable of **Matthew 22** the **same figure [as the ten virgins]** of the marriage is introduced, and the investigative Judgment is clearly represented as taking place **before** the marriage." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 428*

- ✓ **Matthew 22:2, 3**: The Jewish nation rejects the first invitation to the wedding.
- ✓ **Matthew 22:4**: Jesus **dies**, symbolized by sacrificial animals.
- ✓ **Matthew 22:5, 6**: After Jesus dies, the Jewish nation rejects the **second invitation** to the wedding.
- ✓ **Matthew 22:7**: The **destruction of Jerusalem** in AD 70.
- ✓ **Matthew 22:8-10**: The invitation now goes **to the Gentiles** to come to the wedding (all during the Christian era).
- ✓ The wedding hall is full of **guests** (by the proclamation of the gospel).
*"So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was **filled with guests**."*
- ✓ The examination of the garments of the guests—**the investigative judgment** begins in 1844.

The Groom's Father sent out invitations to the wedding with a **special**

garment for each guest. Once in the wedding chamber, **the Father examined** the garments of **the guests** to determine if **each** guest wore the garment:

*"But when the king came in to **see [theaomai: 'examine']** the guests, he saw a man there who **did not have** on a wedding garment. ¹² So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you **come in here** without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless".*

Ellen White described the examination process:

*"Those who in the judgment are 'accounted worthy' will have a part in the resurrection of the just. Jesus said: 'They which shall be **accounted worthy** to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead . . . are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.' Luke 20:35, 36. And again He declares that 'they that have done good' shall come forth 'unto the resurrection of life.' John 5:29. The righteous dead will not be raised until **after the judgment** at which they are **accounted worthy** of 'the resurrection of life.' Hence they will **not be present in person** at the tribunal when their records are examined and their **cases decided**." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 482*

- ✓ After the garments of all the guests have been examined, probation closes, the bride/kingdom is complete and the **wedding** takes place.
- ✓ Those who did not have the garment **will be cast out** of the wedding chamber into **outer darkness** where there is **wailing and gnashing** of teeth (Matthew 8:12; 13:41, 42; 13:47-50; 22:13, 14; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:25-30).

*"Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into **outer darkness**; there will be **weeping and gnashing teeth**.'*

The Wedding and Wedding Supper

In 1844 Jesus moved from the holy to the **most holy** place of the heavenly sanctuary to **receive the kingdom** from His Father after the examination of garments is over.

Daniel 7:9, 10, 13, 14

*"I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; ¹⁰ A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The **court was seated, and the books were opened** . . . ¹³ I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. ¹⁴ Then to Him was given dominion and glory and **a kingdom** that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed."*

Receiving the kingdom from the Father is another way of describing the wedding between Jesus and the **totality** of the faithful members of His church. The wedding clearly takes place **in heaven** because Jesus returns from there to earth where the subjects of His kingdom are waiting for Him to take them to heaven for the reception. This is clearly taught in the gospel of Luke.

Luke 12:35-37

*"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; ³⁶ and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will **[1] return from the wedding**, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. ³⁷ Blessed are those servants whom the master, **when he comes**, will find watching. **[2]** Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them **sit down to eat**, and will **come and serve them**."*

In the parable of the pounds, Jesus informed his followers that he was going to a **far country** to receive the kingdom **after which He would return** to this earth.

Luke 19:11, 12

*"Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. Therefore, He said: "A certain nobleman went into a **far country** to receive for himself **a kingdom** and to **return**."*

The Lamb's bride is the **New Jerusalem** (with all of the redeemed in it), and the city is the **capital of His kingdom**, so we can know for sure that receiving the kingdom from His Father and marrying his bride are two complementary ways of saying the same thing.

The New Jerusalem

Revelation 21:2

*"Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a **bride** adorned for her **husband**."*

Jesus will marry His bride and receive the kingdom **before His second coming**. In the following statement, Ellen White equates Christ receiving the kingdom with Jesus marrying His bride:

***[When probation closes]** "Every case had been decided for life or death. While Jesus had been ministering in the sanctuary, **the judgment** had been going on for the righteous dead, and then for the righteous living. Christ had **received His kingdom**, having made the atonement for His people and blotted out their sins. The **subjects of the kingdom** were made up. The **marriage of the Lamb** was consummated. And the kingdom, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, was given to Jesus and the heirs of salvation, and Jesus was to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords." Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 280*

Jesus does not marry a city of **brick and mortar**, gold and silver. He marries the New Jerusalem with the redeemed of all ages inside. Hebrews 12:22-24 tells us that the names of the redeemed are written in the heavenly Jerusalem and Philippians 3:20 tells us that our citizenship is in heaven. Jesus spoke of Jerusalem as the city with the **people in it**:

Luke 19:41-44

*"Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, ⁴⁴ and level **you**, and your **children within you**, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because **you did not know** the time of your visitation."*

Matthew 23:38

*"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one **who kills the prophets** and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather **your children** together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but **you** were not willing!"*

The Wedding Reception

Revelation 19:9

*"Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the **marriage supper** of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."*

An angel pronounced a blessing upon the **invited guests** to the **marriage supper** of the Lamb. The bride (the church as a whole) was ready, clothed in fine linen, bright and pure. The marriage and the marriage supper are two **distinct** yet related events.

The Composite Picture

#1: Those who preach the gospel are inviting the guests to the wedding and those who genuinely accept the invitation become part of the bride corporately and guests individually.

#2: In 1844 Jesus began the process that will culminate with Him receiving the kingdom/marrying His bride—the church as a whole (Matthew 25:1-13).

#3: Since 1844, the King has been examining the garments of each person who accepted the gospel invitation to determine if they have the right to be present for the wedding.

#4: The process of examination began with the dead that first lived on the earth, and will end with those who are alive. These persons, as individuals, are the invited guests to the wedding. However, faithful believers as a whole—the church in its entirety—are Christ's bride or kingdom.

"The parable of the wedding garment opens before us a lesson of the highest consequence. By the marriage is represented the union of humanity with divinity; the wedding garment represents the character which all must possess who shall be accounted fit guests for the wedding." Ellen G. White, Christ Object Lessons, p. 307.

Someone might be wondering how individuals can be guests to the wedding and yet be part of the bride at the same time. Perhaps a contemporary illustration will help us understand the distinction between the bride and the guests. Joseph Biden is the president of the United States. Is he the president of rivers, lakes, mountains, empty buildings, streets and avenues? Yes, and no. He is the president of the totality of the citizens and the territory they live in. The totality of the citizens in all of the territory make up the country but individual citizens are not the country. Likewise, Jesus is the husband of the totality of the citizens of the New Jerusalem but the citizens are not the New Jerusalem.

According to **2 Corinthians 11:2** Paul **engaged** the **entire church** to Jesus:

*“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have **betrothed** you [**plural, the entire church**] to one husband, that I may present **you** [**plural, the entire church**] as a chaste virgin to Christ.”*

Note: The **NIV** translates “I have **promised you** to one husband.” **God’s Word** translates, “you’re a virgin whom **I promised in marriage** to one man—Christ.”

Ephesians 5:25-27 describes the **entire church** as the bride:

Ephesians 5:25-27

*“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved **the church** and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious **church**, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”*

#5: Not everyone who has claimed Jesus, as Savior has been true and faithful. Those who are found without a wedding garment in the judgment will be **removed from the book** of life (Matthew 22:1-14) and when the last case has been examined, the bride/kingdom will be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Revelation 19:7-9; Ephesians 5:25-27).

#6: When every person has been found either faithful or wanting in the judgment, the door will close and Jesus will receive the **kingdom** or **marry** His bride. Any guests who arrive late will hear Jesus say ‘I know you not’ and will be cast into outer darkness where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:1-14; Revelation 22:11).

#7: After the wedding in heaven is over, a terrible **time of trouble** will ensue for the bride (the church) who is still on earth, and Jesus **will return to the earth** to **rescue her** from what appears to be certain annihilation (Daniel 11:44-12:3).

#8: Jesus will then gather his kingdom/bride and take her to the Father's house in heaven. When the faithful arrive in heaven, they will sit down with Jesus to eat the marriage supper at the wedding reception (Revelation 19:9; Matthew 8:11, 12).

"To the mind of Jesus the gladness of the wedding festivities pointed forward to the rejoicing of that day when He shall bring home His bride to the Father's house, and the redeemed with the Redeemer shall sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb." Ellen G. White, The Adventist Home, p. 503

"Soon we heard His lovely voice again, saying, "Come, My people, you have come out of great tribulation, and done My will; suffered for Me; come in to supper, for I will gird Myself, and serve you." We shouted, "Alleluia! glory!" and entered into the city. And I saw a table of pure silver; it was many miles in length, yet our eyes could extend over it. I saw the fruit of the tree of life, the manna, almonds, figs, pomegranates, grapes, and many other kinds of fruit." Ellen G. White, Counsels to the Church, p. 36

Solving a Problem

The Bible teaches that the wedding will take place in heaven before Jesus returns. However, many modern versions (for example, the NIV and the ESV), leave the erroneous impression that Jesus will return to earth to gather his people to Himself after the marriage supper in heaven has ended. These translations are confusing because other texts clearly indicate that Jesus will literally sit with his people at the supper table in His kingdom after He has come for them (see Matthew 8:11, 12).

So the question is this, when is the marriage supper? Does it take place before Jesus comes for his own or after he takes them to heaven?

Let's compare Luke 12:35-37 in the NKJV with the NIV:

NKJV:

*“Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will **return from the wedding**, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them.”*

NIV:

*“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to **return from a wedding banquet**, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.”*

It will be noticed that in the **NIV** (and many other contemporary versions), Jesus returns to the earth **from** the heavenly **wedding banquet** to gather his waiting people. In other words, the wedding banquet takes place before Jesus comes to take His people to heaven. However, in the NKJV Jesus returns **from** the wedding (not the banquet) to gather His people to take them **to** the banquet. **Which translation** makes more sense and fits best with all the Biblical evidence?

In Greek, the words used for **marriage** (*gámos* and *gámoi*) **include both** the wedding and the wedding feast. In our times, we make a marked distinction between the wedding and the reception. However, in biblical times the **covenant vow** took very little time while the feast was a **major community event** that would last **hours** and even **days** or **weeks**. Thus, the wedding was simply a brief ceremony with a celebration that was a big feast after!

The **Greek language** did not have a word that **distinguishes** between the **wedding** and the **feast** as we do today (such as wedding and reception)

because people perceived both to be **phases of the same event**. However, although the Greeks did not have a word for the vow as distinguished from the feast, they did have a word for the **feast alone** when that is what they wished to emphasize. That word appears in **Revelation 19:9** where the saints are invited to the wedding **feast**.

Therefore, the process is as follows:

- Jesus will **marry** his kingdom/church **in heaven**.
- Jesus will then **return** from the wedding in heaven to take his waiting people on earth to the heavenly **feast/reception**.

The bride is the **church or kingdom as a whole** while the church members **as individuals** are the guests (clearly shown in Matthew 22). The bride/kingdom is the **New Jerusalem**, the dwelling place of Christ's entire human kingdom (Revelation 21:9, 10). Individual members of the city are not the city itself but **the residents** who have homes there (John 14:1-3)

Ellen White understood this very clearly:

*"I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven. An angel with a writer's inkhorn by his side returned from the earth and reported to Jesus that his work was done and the saints were numbered and sealed. Then I saw Jesus, who had been ministering before the ark containing the Ten Commandments, **throw down the censer**. He raised His hands, and with a loud voice said, '**It is done**.' And all the angelic host laid off their crowns as Jesus made the solemn declaration, '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.' Ellen G. White, Early Writings p. 279*

*"The marriage represents the **reception by Christ of His kingdom**. The Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which is the **capital and representative of the kingdom**, is called 'the bride, the Lamb's wife.' Said the angel to John: 'Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.' 'He carried me away in the spirit,' says the prophet, 'and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of*

heaven from God' Revelation 21:9, 10. Clearly, then, the bride represents the Holy City, and the **virgins** that go out to meet the bridegroom are a symbol of the **church**. In the Revelation, the people of God are said to be the **guests** at the marriage supper Revelation 19:9. **If guests, they cannot be represented also as the bride.** Christ, as stated by the prophet Daniel, will receive from the Ancient of Days in heaven, 'dominion, and glory, and a kingdom;' He will receive the New Jerusalem, **the capital of His kingdom**, 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.' Daniel 7:14; Revelation 21:2. Having **received the kingdom**, He will come in His glory, as King of kings and Lord of lords, for the redemption of His people, who are to '**sit down** with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,' **at His table** in His kingdom (Matthew 8:11; Luke 22:30), to partake of the **marriage supper of the Lamb**. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 426

'The proclamation, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh,' in the summer of 1844, led thousands to expect the immediate advent of the Lord. At the appointed time the **Bridegroom came**, not to the earth, as the people expected, but **to the Ancient of Days** in heaven, to the **marriage**, the **reception of His kingdom**. 'They that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut.' They were **not to be present in person** at the marriage; for it **takes place in heaven, while they are upon the earth**. The followers of Christ are to 'wait for their Lord, when He will return from the wedding' **Luke 12:36**. However, they are to understand His work, and to **follow Him by faith** as He goes in before God. It is in this sense that they are said to go in to the marriage." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 426, 427

Notice all the Biblical texts that Ellen White uses to sustain her explanation of the wedding and the reception:

"In both the Old and the New Testament, the marriage relation is employed to represent the tender and sacred union that exists between Christ and His people. To the mind of Jesus the gladness of the wedding festivities pointed forward to the rejoicing of that day when He shall **bring home His bride [the kingdom in its entirety] to the Father's house**, and the redeemed with the Redeemer **shall sit**

down to the marriage supper of the Lamb. He says, 'As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.' 'Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; . . . but thou shalt be called My Delight; . . . for the Lord delighteth in thee.' 'He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing' Isaiah 62:5, 4, margin; Zephaniah 3:17. When the vision of heavenly things was granted to John the apostle, he wrote: 'I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.' "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. Revelation 19:6, 7, 9." Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages p. 151

One Final Illustration

The parable of the dragnet illustrates the same lessons:

Matthew 13:47-50

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a **dragnet** that was **cast** into the **sea** and gathered some of **every kind**,⁴⁸ which, when it **was full**, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the **good into vessels**, but threw the **bad away**.⁴⁹ **So it will be** at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, **separate** the wicked from among the just,⁵⁰ and **cast them** into the furnace of fire. There will be **wailing and gnashing of teeth**."

Matthew 4:18-20

"And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, **casting a net** into **the sea**; for they were **fishermen**.¹⁹ Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you **fishers of men**."²⁰ They immediately left their nets and followed Him."

- ✓ The **sea**: Humanity.
- ✓ The **fish**: Persons that belong to humanity.
- ✓ The **fishermen**: Proclaimers of the gospel.
- ✓ The **net**: The gospel.
- ✓ The **casting**: The preaching of the gospel.
- ✓ The **boat**: The church (only the fish that end up in the boat are examined in the judgment. The cases of those who remain in the sea are examined later).
- ✓ **Separation** of the bad from the good: The investigative judgment.
- ✓ Casting out the bad: The **execution** of the judgment in the fire.

The Christian world **rejects** the heavenly judgment before the second coming because they believe that a person's soul goes to heaven or to hell at the moment of death. If this were the true, all cases are decided at the moment of death and not in a heavenly judgment before the second coming. The **so called Apostles' Creed** is also wrong when it states that Jesus **will come** to judge the living and the dead. He does not come to judge; He comes to give out rewards based on the judgment (Revelation 22:12).



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
“FROM THE CLOSE OF PROBATION TO THE NEW EARTH:
A STUDY OF REVELATION CHAPTERS 15 TO 22”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #9 – Revelation 19:1-9: Song of Praise to the King

The Literary Flow of Revelation 13:11–19:21

Revelation 13:11-18: These verses describe the final crisis over the beast, his image and his mark. However, they do not tell us if there was a group that remained faithful in the midst of the storm.

Revelation 14:1-5: These verses describe the group that will emerge victorious over the beast, his image and his mark. The 144,000 stand victorious on Mt. Zion with the seal of God on their foreheads.

Revelation 14:6-13: These verses take us back in time to the preaching of the three angels' messages. The three messages accompanied by the latter rain **ripen** the righteous (the harvest) and the wicked (the grapes) for the **close of probation**.

Revelation 14:14-17: When the **harvest** of the earth is ripe, Jesus sits on a cloud and **reaps it:**

*“The tares [**the grapes**] and the wheat [**the harvest**] are to grow together until the harvest; and the **harvest** is the **end of probationary time**.” Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 71*

Revelation 14:17-20: When probation closes, God’s **spiritual Israel** (the harvest) is gathered inside worldwide **spiritual Mt. Zion** and the wicked **spiritual Babylonians** (the grapes) are gathered in the worldwide spiritual winepress outside the city intent on destroying those who are inside (see Joel 3). At the critical moment, the horse riders trample the winepress and deliver those in the city.

Revelation 15: Takes us back to the **close of probation**.

Revelation 16: Describes the **seven plagues** after probation closes in their order.

Revelation 17: Describes events under the fifth, sixth and seventh **plagues**.

Revelation 18:1-5: Takes us back to the **final warning** before the close of probation.

Revelation 18:6-24: Carries us forward to the **last three plagues** when the wicked lament the fall and destruction of Babylon.

Revelation 19:1-9: The 144,000 praise the Lord in heaven for judging Babylon and avenging the blood of the martyrs. The bride is now in heaven for the wedding reception.

Revelation 19:11-21: Goes back in time to the **deliverance** of God’s remnant at the seventh plague—the battle of Armageddon.

Chart: Sequence of Events in Revelation 14-19

The titles of the following chart should be read from left to right:

Victory Celebration Plague	Warning Message	Close of Probation	Plagues	Sixth/Seventh Plagues
14:1-5	14:6-13	14:14-17	-	14:18-20
15:2-4	-	15:5-8	15:1	-
-	-	-	16:1-21	16:12-21
-	-	-	-	17:1-17
-	18:1-5	-	-	18:6-24
19:1-9	-	-	-	19:11-21

When the earth is desolated in revelation 18, the righteous dead are resurrected, the living righteous are changed and together they ascend with Jesus to heaven where they will sing the songs in Revelation 19:1-9. Revelation 19 is divided into two parts. The first part is verses 1-9 where we find the heavenly celebration of the redeemed. The second part is verses 11-21 where the rider on the white horse and his armies emerge victorious over the kings of the earth, the beast and the false prophet.

Comments on Verse 1

*"**After** these things [**the rescue of the righteous by the rider on the white horse**] I heard a loud voice of a **great multitude in heaven**, saying, 'Alleluia! [**The**] **Salvation** and [**the**] **glory** and [**the**] **honor** and [**the**] **power** belong to the Lord our God!'"*

This great multitude is composed of the **end time generation** who have lived without an intercessor during the outpouring of the seven last plagues. At this point they have been delivered from the harlot and they stand victorious in heaven. As we shall see in verse 2, the multitude is praising God because the Babylonian harlot **has been judged** and the spilt blood of the martyrs **has been avenged**. This proves that the events of Revelation 19:1-9 occur after the events of Revelation 19:11-21 and not before. The **following quote** provides clear evidence that the singers in Revelation 19 are the 144,000 and not the **heavenly hosts**:

*"The words will soon be spoken, "Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth." One of the ministers of vengeance declares. "And I heard the angel of the waters say, 'Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because Thou hast judged thus.' These heavenly beings, in executing the mandate of God, ask no questions, but do as they are bid. Jehovah of hosts, the Lord God Almighty, the just, the true, and the holy, has given them their work to do. With unswerving fidelity, they go forth panoplied in pure white linen, having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And when **their task is done**, when the **last vial** of God's wrath is poured out, they return and **lay their emptied vials at the feet of the Lord**."*

*And **the next scene** is recorded, "After these things . . . I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty 'thunderings, saying, alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." **[Revelation 19:6] They sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb [Revelation 15:2, 3].**" Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 432*

Comments on Verse 2

Verse 2 explains **the reason** why the multitude in heaven sing that **the** salvation and **the** glory and **the** honor and **the** power belong to the Lord their God:

*"For [because] **true and righteous** are His judgments, **because** He **has judged** the great harlot who **corrupted** the earth with her fornication; and He **has avenged** on her the blood of His servants shed by her." (compare Revelation 6:9-11; 17:6; 18:20, 24; Daniel 7:21, 25; 11:44)*

At this point the righteous are in heaven because the harlot **has been** judged and the blood of God's saints **has been** avenged. The judging of the harlot took place during the pre-Advent investigative judgment and the avenging will have taken place during the **seven last plagues**, especially the **sixth and seventh**. The Greek word 'avenge' is used in only **one other place** in the book of Revelation (Revelation 6:10; see also the significant use in **Luke 18:3, 5** where the widow cries out for justice against her adversary).

Revelation 6:10 describes the martyrs that the harlot killed during the 1260 years crying out for God to judge and avenge their blood. Verse 11 then describes another group of martyrs who will be killed during the little time of trouble just before the close of probation (see Matthew 24:9; Revelation 20:4). The plagues, particularly the sixth and seventh, are the avenging portion of the martyrs' cry.

As noted before, in order to comprehend the third angel's message (Revelation 14:9-11) we must go **back to chapter 13** where the beast, his image and his mark are mentioned for the first time in the book. Chapter 13 describes a beast that ruled for **42 months** (Revelation 13:1-10) and during this time period it wore out, persecuted and killed the saints of the Most High. In spite of being savagely mowed down, the saints remained **faithful** to God! These martyrs of the past are portrayed as **crying out from under the altar** of sacrifice at the time of the fifth seal:

*“When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of **those who had been slain** [these are the martyrs during the 1260 years] for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. ¹⁰ And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” ¹¹ Then a **white robe was given** to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who **would be killed as they were** [these are those who will be killed in the little time of trouble just before the close of probation—see Matthew 24:9], was completed.” Revelation 6:9-11*

This passage tells us that these martyrs that were **persecuted and killed** by the beast in the past were given the spiritual white robes of Christ’s righteousness as a reward for their **faithfulness**. Matthew 22:11, 12 explains that the robe is assigned to the faithful **before** the investigative judgment. Ellen White agrees:

*“When Christ shall come, he will not **change the character** of any individual. Precious, **probationary time** is given to be improved in washing our **robes of character**, and **making them white** in the blood of the Lamb.” Ellen G. White, Counsels on Education, p. 237*

*“The provision has been made for us to wash. The fountain has been prepared at infinite expense, and the burden of **washing rests upon us**, who are imperfect before God. The Lord does not propose to remove these spots of defilement **without our doing anything** on our part. **We must wash our robes** in the blood of the Lamb. We may lay hold of the merits of the blood of Christ by faith, and through His grace and power we may have strength to **overcome** our errors, our sins, our imperfections of character, and come off victorious, having washed our robes in the blood of the Lamb. Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3, p. 183*

The purpose of the investigative judgment is to reveal to the heavenly universe that the righteous were clothed with the white robe of Christ’s righteousness

when they died. And upon their resurrection they will be given literal white robes and they shall walk with Jesus in the kingdom (Revelation 3:4, 5).

As stated before, Revelation 6:9-11 describes **two groups** of martyrs. The first group was slain by the beast during the 1260 years, received a white robe and **rests in death**. Ellen White described this group of martyrs:

*“In the thirteenth century was established that most terrible of all the engines of the papacy—**the Inquisition**. The prince of darkness wrought with the leaders of the papal hierarchy. In their secret councils Satan and his angels controlled the minds of evil men, while unseen in the midst stood an angel of God, **taking the fearful record** of their iniquitous decrees and **writing the history of deeds** too horrible to appear to human eyes. ‘Babylon the great’ was ‘drunken with the blood of the saints.’ [Revelation 17:6] The mangled forms of millions of martyrs **cried to God for vengeance [notice the allusion to the fifth seal]** upon that apostate power.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 59, 60*

The second group will be **killed in the future** when the beast’s deadly wound is healed. The martyrs of the past suffered persecution and death at **the hand of the beast** but did not face persecution over the beast’s image or his mark. The future group of martyrs will be tested over the beast, his image and his mark:

*“When our nation shall so abjure the principles of its government as to enact a Sunday law, Protestantism will in this act join hands with popery; it will be nothing else than **giving life** [which means that it must have been dead] to the tyranny which has long been eagerly watching its opportunity to **spring again** [which means that the active despotism must have existed before] into **active** despotism.” Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 712*

*“When the defiance of God’s law is **almost universal**, when his people are pressed in affliction by their fellow men, God will interpose. **Then** will the **voice be heard** from the graves of martyrs, represented by **the souls that John saw slain** for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ, which they held—then the*

prayer will ascend from every true child of God: "It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law." The fervent prayers of his people will be answered; for God loves to have his people seek him with all the heart, and **depend upon him** as their deliverer. He will be sought unto to do these things for his people, and he will arise as their **protector and avenger**. "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?" Ellen G. White, The Review and Herald, December 21, 1897

Regarding the **revival of the persecutions** of the past we are told:

*"It is impossible to give any idea of the experience of the people of God who shall be alive upon the earth when celestial glory and a **repetition** of the persecutions of the past **are blended**."* Ellen G. White, Counsels to the Church, p. 39

Revelation 20:4 describes the end time martyrs who will be slain just before the close of probation:

*"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been **beheaded** for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the **beast** or his **image**, and had not received his **mark** on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."*

Comments on Verse 3

*"Again they **[the 144,000]** said, "Alleluia! **Her [the harlot's]** smoke rises up **forever and ever!**"*

What is the meaning of the expression 'forever and ever'? Revelation 20:10 tells us that not only the harlot, but Satan as well, will be **tormented** in the fires of hell 'forever and ever.' Although the word 'torment' does not appear in verse 3 it would be well at this point to take a look at the word as it appears in Revelation 20:10 in the original language.

The Greek word is *basanizo* and there is no doubt that it refers to **conscious torment**. For example, the word in Revelation 12:2 describes **birth pangs**. Clearly, the woman in travail is consciously feeling the pain of childbirth.

In **Matthew 8:29** the **evil spirits** asked Jesus whether he had come to torment them before their time. Once again the idea of conscious psychological torment and suffering is intended. Here the spirits are referring perhaps to their final punishment in the fires of hell.

We find a significant use of the word in **Revelation 9:5** where the **scorpions** from the abyss are given the command to torment men for five months. That conscious torture is intended is shown by the fact that the scorpions **do not kill** but rather inflict pain and torment.

In **Revelation 18:7, 10, 15** the word is used to describe the psychological and spiritual pain and anguish that **Babylon** will feel when she falls. There can be no doubt that conscious torment is intended in these verses.

It is clear that the word *basanizo* in Revelation 20:10 is graphically describing the future **conscious torment** of Satan in the fires of hell. Up to here there is no problem because the Bible consistently teaches that Satan and his angels will be tormented in the post-millennial lake of fire (cf. Matthew 25:41). However, a serious problem appears when we realize that Revelation 20:10 states that this torment will last ‘forever and ever.’ Are we to understand that the pain and anguish of Satan is to last forever, that is to say, shall never cease? Perhaps it would be a good idea to examine the meaning of the word ‘forever’ in the New Testament. Several non-Adventist scholars have weighed in to explain that the word *aion* in itself does not necessarily mean ‘without end.’ Let’s take a look at some of their comments.

*“The word **’olam** [the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek *aion*] has related forms in various ancient Near Eastern languages, all of which describe **lengthy duration** or **distant time**. The idea seems to be quantitative rather than metaphysical. Thus in Ugaritic literature, a person described as *’bd ’lm* was a*

‘permanent slave,’ the term ‘*lm* (the same as the Hebrew ‘*olam*) expressing a period of time that could not be measured other than **as lengthy duration.**”

“Only in rare poetic passages such as Psalms 90:2 are temporal categories regarded inadequate to describe the nature of God's existence as ‘*el ‘olam*’. In such an instance, the Creator is deemed to have been ‘from everlasting to everlasting’; but even this use of ‘*olam* expresses the idea of **continued, measurable existence rather than a state of being independent of temporal considerations.**” *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985

“The LXX generally translates ‘*olam* by *aion* which has essentially the same range of meaning. That **neither the Hebrew nor the Greek word in itself contains the idea of endlessness** is shown both by the fact that they sometimes refer to events or conditions that occurred at a **definite point in the past**, and also by the fact that sometimes it is thought desirable to repeat the word, not merely saying ‘forever,’ but ‘forever and ever.’” Allan Macrae, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, volume 2, pp. 672-673. Macrae is president and professor of theology at the Biblical School of Theology, Hatfield, Pennsylvania.

“In general, the word depicts **that of which the horizon is not in view**, whether the horizon be at an **infinite distance**. . . or whether it lies no further than the span of a **Caesar's life**.” James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (London: Holder and Stoughton, 1952), p. 16. Emphasis supplied.

“In the plural *aion* formulae the meaning of *aion* merges into that of a **long but limited stretch of time**. In particular, *aion* in this sense signifies the time or **duration of the world**, i. e., time as **limited by creation and conclusion**. At this point we are confronted by the remarkable fact that in the Bible the same word **aion is used to indicate two things that are profoundly antithetical, namely, the eternity of God and the duration of the world.** This twofold sense, which *aion* shares with the Hebrew ‘*olam*, points back to a concept of eternity in which

eternity is identified with the **duration of the world**.” Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, volume 1, p. 202

*“In order to bring out more fully the stricter concept of eternity, religious usage generally prefers the plural . . . But the plural presupposes knowledge of a plurality of aiones, of ages and periods of time whose **infinite series** constitutes eternity. **Thus the idea of prolonged but not unending time is also present in the aion formulae** . . . The concepts of **limited and unlimited time merge in the word aion**. The implied inner contradiction is brought to light in the expression *xronoi aionioi* which is used as an equivalent of the plural in Romans 16:25; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2; for eternal times is strictly a contradiction in terms.”* Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Wordbook of the New Testament*, volume 1, p. 202. *Emphasis supplied.*

Revelation 20:10 cannot contradict **Ezekiel 28:18, 19** or **Malachi 4:1, 3** where we are told that neither root (Satan) nor branch (his followers) will be left when the fire finishes its work. Likewise, Ezekiel 28 explains that Satan will be **reduced to ashes** and will **never be** any more. How is it possible for Satan to never be anymore and reduced to ashes if he is burning throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity?

Scripture must be consistent with itself. Revelation 20:10 must then mean that the burning will be unto the **ages of the ages** or as the 2000 Reina-Valera Spanish version reads: **“por los siglos de los siglos”** [**“for the ages of the ages”**]. If certain wicked people will burn for **many days** for their own individual sins, how long will Satan burn if he is to bear the ultimate punishment for the sins of **all the righteous** plus all his own? Just do the math!! Ellen White explained that Satan’s punishment will last much longer than we generally conceive:

*“Then **[during the millennium]** I saw thrones, and Jesus and the redeemed saints sat upon them; and the saints reigned as kings and priests unto God. Christ, in union with His people, judged the wicked dead, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Word of God, and deciding every case according to the deeds*

done in the body **[the investigation]**. Then they meted out to the wicked the **portion that they must suffer**, according to their works; and it was written against their names in the book of death **[the sentence based on the evidence]**. **Satan also and his angels** were judged by Jesus and the saints. Satan's punishment **[execution of the sentence]** was to be **far greater** than that of those whom he had deceived. His suffering would **so far exceed theirs** as to bear **no comparison** with it. After all those whom he had deceived had perished, Satan was still to live and suffer on **much longer**." Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* pp. 290, 291

"The wicked receive their recompense in the earth (Proverbs 11:31). They 'shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts.' Malachi 4:1. Some are destroyed **as in a moment**, while others **suffer many days**. All are punished 'according to their deeds.' The sins of the righteous having been transferred to Satan, he is made to suffer **not only for his own rebellion** but for **all the sins** which he has caused God's people to commit. His punishment is to be **far greater** than that of those whom he has deceived. After all have perished who fell by his deceptions, he is **still to live and suffer on**. In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch—Satan the root, his followers the branches. The full penalty of the law has been visited; the demands of justice have been met; and heaven and earth, beholding, declare the righteousness of Jehovah." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 673

Comments on Verse 4

"And the **twenty-four elders** **[the representatives of the worlds that never sinned]** and the **four living creatures** **[the cherubim and seraphim]** fell down and worshiped **God who sat** on the **throne**, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!"

The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures were present and sang when Jesus arrived in heaven at His ascension (Revelation 4:8-11; 5:8-10). As I proved in my series on the 24 elders, the four living beings represent **cherubim** and **seraphim** and the twenty-four elders symbolize the **representatives of the worlds** that never sinned.

Thus, the same beings that were present at the inauguration will be present at the consummation. However, the unnumbered host of the redeemed will be added to the celebration. Representatives from the entire universe will be present when the bride is welcomed to heaven. It is significant that at this point in history, the theme of the hymns is not creation or redemption (such as in Revelation 4 and 5) but rather deliverance from the reign of terror of the harlot.

Comments on Verse 5

"Then a voice came from the throne, saying, Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!"

An unidentified voice from the throne then commands the redeemed to praise God because He has dethroned the harlot and taken over the kingdom.

Comments on Verse 6

In response to the command, the great multitude of the redeemed sing in thundering voices a song of praise to the Lord for taking over the kingdom:

"And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

According to Ellen White, at this point, all of the redeemed from all ages are singing:

"They are God's jewels, and will be among that number of whom John writes, "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude . . . saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (Revelation 19:6). They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them (Revelation 7:15)." Ellen G. White, That I May Know Him, p. 123

At this point in time, the Father and Son have taken over the kingdom, the redeemed are singing in heaven, but the wedding supper has not yet occurred. Jesus took over the kingdom in Revelation 19:11-21 when He delivered His people from the wrath of the kings of the earth, the beast and the false prophet

The seventh trumpet points to the same point of time when 24 elders extol God because He has taken over the kingdom.

Revelation 11:15-17

*"Then the **seventh angel** sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'" ¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You **have taken** Your great power and **reigned**."*

Comments on Verse 7

A song is then heard in heaven announcing that the marriage supper of the Lamb has come:

*"Let **us** be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the **marriage [should be 'supper', the identical word of verse 9] of the Lamb** has come, and His **wife** has **made herself ready**."*

Ellen White explained that the bride represents the church in its entirety:

*"God is the husband of **His church [as a whole]**. The **church [as a whole]** is the bride, the Lamb's wife. Every true believer is **a part** of the body of Christ. Christ regards unfaithfulness shown to Him by **His people [as a church]** as the unfaithfulness of a wife to her husband. We are to remember that we are **members** of **Christ's body** (Letter 39, 1902). Ellen G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, pp. 985, 986*

*"The **church [as a whole]** is the bride, the Lamb's wife. She should keep herself pure, sanctified, holy. Never should she indulge in any foolishness; for she is the **bride of a King**. Yet she does not realize her exalted position. If she understood this, she would be all-glorious within (Letter 177, 1901)." Ellen G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 986*

Ellen White described the marriage supper:

*"Soon we heard His lovely voice again, saying, "Come, My people, you have come out of **great tribulation**, and done My will; **suffered** for Me; come in to supper, for **I will** gird Myself, and serve you." We shouted, "**Alleluia! glory!**" and **entered into the city**. And I saw a table of pure silver; it was **many miles in length**, yet our eyes could extend over it. I saw the fruit of the tree of life, the manna, almonds, figs, pomegranates, grapes, and many other kinds of fruit." Ellen G. White, Early Writings p. 19*

Just as a sidelight, Revelation 21, 22 appears to be ambivalent on whether there will be a temple in the holy city after the millennium. On the one hand Revelation tells us that the 144,000 will serve God in the temple day and night (Revelation 7:15). However, Revelation 21:22 tells us that there is no temple in the city. How can the 144,000 serve God day and night in the temple if there is no temple? As usual, Ellen White helps us understand the seeming difficulty by clarifying that there will be a temple but not within the city:

*"After we beheld the glory of the temple, we went out, and **Jesus left us and went to the city**. Soon we heard His lovely voice again, saying, "**Come**, My people, you have come out of great tribulation, and done My will; suffered for Me; **come in to supper**, for I will gird Myself, and serve you." We shouted, "Alleluia! glory!" and **entered into the city**." Ellen G. White, Early Writings p. 19*

Comments on Verse 8

*"And to her **it was granted** to be arrayed in **fine linen**, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the **righteous acts** of the saints."*

Ellen White explained the meaning of the fine linen:

*“By the wedding garment in the parable is represented the **pure, spotless character** which Christ's true followers will possess. To the **church [in its entirety]** it is given ‘that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white,’ ‘not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing’ Revelation 19:8; Ephesians 5:27. The fine linen, says the Scripture, ‘is the righteousness of saints’ Revelation 19:8. It is the righteousness of Christ, His own unblemished character, that through faith is **imparted** to all who receive Him as their personal Savior.” Ellen G. White, Christ Object Lessons, p. 310*

The expression ‘righteous acts’ in Greek is *dikaiómata*. This stands in contrast to the unrighteous deeds (*adikémata*) of the harlot (Revelation 18:5). The crucial question here is this: Is not the robe of Christ’s righteousness, His righteousness? Why, then, does this text tell us that the robe represents the righteous acts **of the saints?** The answer is that this text is speaking about the imparted righteousness of Christ. Ellen White described this beautifully:

*“When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with **His** heart, the will is merged in **His** will, the mind becomes one with **His** mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity **to Him**; we live **His life**. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but **His** own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah.” Ellen G. White, Christ Object Lessons, p. 311*

Some people think that justification is the work of God and sanctification is our own work. However, this is a deadly misconception. The righteous acts of the saints were not their own doing. They were the outflowing of the righteousness of Christ in their practical lives:

Isaiah 26:12

*“LORD, You will establish peace for us, for **You** have also done all **our works in us.**”*

Philippians 2:12-13

*"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out **your own salvation** with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is **God who works in you** both to **will** and to **do** for **His** good pleasure."*

Ephesians 2:8-10

*"For **by grace** you have been saved through faith, and that **not of yourselves**; it is the gift of God, ⁹ **not of works**, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are **His** workmanship, **created** in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which **God prepared** beforehand that we should **walk in them**."*

Comments on Verse 9

*"Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called **[invited]** to the **marriage supper** of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."*

The following quotations explain the distinction between the [1] **examination** of the guests, [2] the closing of the **door**, [3] the **wedding**, [4] and the wedding **reception**:

*"The parable of the wedding garment opens before us a lesson of the highest consequence. By the **marriage** is represented the **union of humanity with divinity**; the wedding garment represents the **character** which all must possess who shall be accounted fit **guests** for the wedding." Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 307*

*"In the parable of Matthew 22 the same figure of the **marriage** is introduced, and the investigative judgment is clearly represented as taking place **before the marriage**. **Previous to the wedding** the king comes in to see the **guests**, to see if all are attired in the wedding garment, the spotless robe of character washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. Matthew 22:11; Revelation 7:14 He who*

is found wanting is cast out, but all who upon examination are seen to have the wedding garment on are accepted of God and accounted worthy of **a share [a portion]** in His kingdom and a seat upon His throne. This work of examination of character, of determining who are prepared for the kingdom of God, is that of the investigative judgment, the closing of work in the sanctuary above.

When the work of investigation shall be ended, when the cases of those who **in all ages have professed** to be followers of Christ have been examined and decided, then, and not till then, **probation will close**, and the door of mercy will be shut. Thus in the one short sentence, "They that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut," we are carried down through the Savior's **final ministration**, to the time when the great work for man's salvation shall be completed." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 428

"The coming of the bridegroom, here brought to view [**in the parable of the ten virgins**], takes place **before the marriage**. The marriage represents the **reception by Christ of His kingdom** [**which can only take place when the judgment has revealed who are truly subjects of His kingdom**]. The Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which is the **capital and representative** of the kingdom, is called "the bride, the Lamb's wife." Said the angel to John: "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." "He carried me away in the spirit," says the prophet, "and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God" Revelation 21:9, 10. Clearly, then, the **bride represents the Holy City** [**with the names of humanity or the redeemed in it**], and the virgins [**as a group**] that go out to meet the bridegroom are a symbol of **the church**. In the Revelation the people of God are said to be **the guests** at the marriage **supper**. Revelation 19:9. If guests, they cannot be represented also as the bride. Christ, as stated by the prophet Daniel, will receive from the Ancient of Days in heaven, 'dominion, and glory, and a kingdom;' He will **receive the New Jerusalem**, the capital of His kingdom, 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.' Daniel 7:14; Revelation 21:2. Having **received the kingdom**, He will come in His glory, as King of kings and Lord of lords [**Revelation 19:11-21**], for the redemption of

*His people, who are to 'sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,' **at His table** in His kingdom (Matthew 8:11; Luke 22:30), to partake of the **marriage supper of the Lamb**."* Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp.426, 427

Comments on Verse 10

After an angel assures John that the words that he has spoken are true, John falls at his feet to **worship him**:

*"And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your **brethren** who have the **testimony of Jesus**. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the **spirit of prophecy**."*

Ellen White remarked about this encounter of the angel with John:

*"The angel from heaven came to John in majesty, his **countenance beaming** with the excellent glory of God. He revealed to John scenes of deep and thrilling interest in the history of the church of God and brought before him the perilous conflicts which Christ's followers were to endure. John saw them passing through fiery trials, made white and tried, and, finally, victorious overcomers, gloriously saved in the kingdom of God. The countenance of the angel grew radiant with joy and was exceeding glorious, as he showed John the final triumph of the church of God. As the apostle beheld the final deliverance of the church, he was **carried away with the glory of the scene** and with deep **reverence and awe** fell at the feet of the angel **to worship him**. The heavenly messenger **instantly** raised him up and gently **reproved him**, saying, "See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 230*

***[In Revelation 22]** The angel **then showed** John the heavenly city with all its splendor and dazzling glory, and he, enraptured and overwhelmed, and forgetful of the **former reproof** of the angel, again fell to worship at his feet. Again the gentle reproof was given, 'See thou do it not for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship*

God.’ Ellen G. White, Early Writings, pp. 230, 231

Revelation 12:17 affirms that Satan hates the final remnant because they keep the commandments of God and **have** the testimony of Jesus Christ. However, the text does not define meaning of the expression ‘testimony of Jesus’. However, Revelation 19:10 explains that the ‘testimony of Jesus’ is ‘the spirit of prophecy’. Revelation 22:9 completes the picture by telling us that those who have the testimony of Jesus are prophets. This means that the remnant church would have a prophet in their midst. The words that the angel spoke are true because they are the testimony of Jesus.



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
“FROM THE CLOSE OF PROBATION TO THE NEW EARTH:
A STUDY OF REVELATION CHAPTERS 15 TO 22”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #10 – Revelation 19:11-21: The Battle of Armageddon

It is important to keep in mind that the events of Revelation 19:11-21 transpire before the events in Revelation 19:1-10. That is to say, Revelation 19:1-10 is the climax and Revelation 19:11-21 describes the events that led up to that climax. Also, Revelation 19:11-21 is a further description of the battle of Armageddon under the seventh plague.

Armageddon is but the final battle of the war that began in heaven with Lucifer. At that time, Lucifer attacked **God's law** and aspired to receive the **homage** of the heavenly hosts that belonged only to Christ. Thus, the controversy is really between Christ and Satan. It can hardly be a coincidence that Lucifer's rebellion is described in Isaiah 14 as an oracle against Babylon:

Isaiah 14:12-14

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! ¹³ For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'”

*“He began to insinuate doubts concerning **the laws** that governed heavenly beings, intimating that though laws might be necessary for the inhabitants of the worlds, angels, being more exalted, **needed no such restraint**, for their **own wisdom** was a sufficient guide.” Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 37*

Ellen White wrote about the final stage of this long-standing controversy that began in heaven:

*“The **last great conflict** between truth and error is but the **final struggle** of the **long-standing controversy** concerning the law of God. Upon **this battle** we are now entering—a **battle** between the **laws of men** and the **precepts of Jehovah**, between the religion of the **Bible** and the religion of fable and **tradition**.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 582*

In the Old Testament there are many prophets who wrote about the great eschatological war that the wicked will wage against God’s people in the future (Joel 2:32, chapter 3; Ezekiel 38, 39; Zechariah 12, 14; Daniel 11:40-45 and 12:1, 2; Jeremiah 25:30-38; Psalms 2, 18). All of these prophecies describe the same war and teach that God will ultimately bring salvation at the most critical hour. Although there are diversities in the details, all these prophecies refer to the same final apocalyptic climax to the moral conflict between good and evil.

The parties in this war are God, His angels and His followers against Satan his angels and his followers. The war is not between Muslims and Christians, East and West, Chinese and American. The war is between the righteous and the unrighteous.

We must understand that at its core, this great controversy is between Christ and Satan. We must also remember that the prophecies that once applied to literal Israel in the literal ‘holy land’ now apply spiritually to the global church, the body of Christ. It is erroneous to teach that these prophecies will find a literal fulfillment with literal Israel in a literal geographical location. When the New Testament writers refer to these prophecies, they remove the ethnic and

geographical limitations and apply the language symbolically and globally to the church.

The New Testament apocalyptic fulfillment of these prophecies is in passages such as Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, 2 Thessalonians 2, Revelation 12:17, Revelation 13:1-10; 14:6-20; 13:11-18; 16:13-16 and chapters 17 and 19.

Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel describe Israel (the church of God) as God's bride. Likewise, the woman in Revelation 12 represents the history of God's faithful church in all ages since God gave the gospel promise in Genesis 3:15. God has only one church throughout both Testaments. Revelation 12:17, which is the final fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, is further developed in Revelation 13:11-18; 14:6-20; 16:13-16 and 19:11-21. In the very last remnant of time, the kings of the earth and the whole world will make war on the Lamb in the person of His witnesses (ZT, p. 182) and the Lamb will gain the victory. However, the Lamb will not be alone. With him will be the called, and chosen and faithful (17:14).

Revelation 20:8, 9 takes us beyond the second coming to post-millennial events when Gog and Magog will muster all the wicked for the final stage of the war against God and His people. At this point, the literal New Jerusalem will be on earth and Christ and His followers will be inside. Satan and his followers will be outside. At this point Christ will overcome His enemies in the second and final stage of Armageddon.

*"Here is the **great issue**. Here are the **two great powers** confronting each other, the Prince of God, Jesus Christ, and the prince of darkness, Satan. Here comes the open conflict. There are but **two classes** in the world, and **every** human being will range under one of the two banners, the banner of the prince of darkness or the banner of Jesus Christ." Ellen G. White, Letter 38, 1894.*

*"Satan will excite indignation against the **humble minority** who conscientiously refuse to accept popular customs and traditions. Men of **position and reputation** will join with the lawless and the vile to take counsel against the people of God. **Wealth, genius, education**, will combine to cover them with contempt.*

Persecuting rulers, ministers, and church members will conspire against them. With voice and pen, [also social media, television] by boasts, threats, and ridicule, they will seek to overthrow their faith. By false representations and angry appeals, they will stir up the passions of the people. Not having a 'Thus saith the Scriptures' to bring against the advocates of the Bible Sabbath, they will resort to oppressive enactments to supply the lack. To secure popularity and patronage, legislators will yield to the demand for a Sunday law. . . . On this battlefield comes the last great conflict of the controversy between truth and error." Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, pp. 450, 451.

"Two great opposing powers are revealed in the last great battle. On one side stands the Creator of heaven and earth. All on His side bear His signet. They are obedient to His commands. On the other side stands the prince of darkness, with those who have chosen apostasy and rebellion." Ellen G. White, The Review and Herald, May 7, 1901

Comments on Verse 11:

"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse and He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war."

"This horse tells of royalty, judgment, and war. His white color tells of righteousness and justice. Light is the robe of divine majesty, and white is the color that most attaches to Christ in all these judgment scenes. When the first seal broke he rode a white horse; when the great harvest is reaped he sits upon a white cloud; and at the end of the thousand years he sits upon a white throne; and so here he is seated on the white steed of battle, for 'in righteousness doth he makes war.' Joseph Seiss, The Apocalypse: Exposition of the Book of Revelation, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1998, 2003, 2006.

We are reminded of the cry of the martyrs in Revelation 6:10 where they clamored for a holy and true God to judge and avenge them over their adversaries. We are also reminded of the widow who cried out to the judge for justice and vengeance over her adversary (Luke 18:1-9). When Jesus comes on

the white horse to rescue His people, He will prove that, as the covenant keeping God, He is faithful and true to His word. As He was faithful and true in delivering **Daniel and his three friends** from certain death, He will deliver His beloved saints.

This passage describes the next to last stage of the war that began in heaven. The final stage will be at the end of the millennium. The battle of Armageddon does not actually take place during the sixth plague. The sixth plague merely prepares the way for the battle of Armageddon during the seventh plague. Revelation 19:11-21 describes the two armies. Christ and His angels are on one side and the kings of the earth, the beast and the false prophet are on the other. Ellen White linked **Revelation 19:11-21** with the seventh plague—the actual battle of Armageddon:

*“We need to study the pouring out of the **seventh vial**. The powers of evil will not yield up the conflict without a struggle. But Providence has a part to act in the **battle of Armageddon**. When the earth is lighted with the glory of the angel of Revelation eighteen, the religious elements, good and evil, will awake from slumber, and the **armies of the living God** will take the field.” Ellen G. White, Maranatha, p. 257*

*“The **battle of Armageddon** is soon to be fought. He on whose vesture is written the name, King of kings and Lord of lords, leads forth the **armies of heaven** on white horses, clothed in fine linen, clean and white”. [Revelation 19:11-16] Ellen G. White, Last Day Events, p. 251*

*“The battle of **Armageddon** will be fought. And that day must find none of us sleeping. Wide-awake, we must be, as wise virgins having oil in our vessels with our lamps. The power of the Holy Ghost must be upon us and the Captain of the Lord's host will stand at the head of **the angels of heaven** to **direct the battle**.” Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, vol. 3, p. 426*

Comments on Verse 12

*“His **eyes** were like a flame of fire, and on His head were **many crowns**. He had a **name written** that no one knew except Himself.”*

At the beginning of the book of Revelation (1:14) the eyes of Jesus were as flames of fire, penetrating to **detect sin**. The eyes of fire in Revelation 1 are remedial. However, in Revelation 19, those who did not allow the eyes of fire to detect sin will suffer its consequences:

*“To sin, wherever found, ‘our God is a consuming fire.’ Hebrews 12:29. In all who submit to His power the Spirit of God will **consume sin**. But if men cling to sin, they become identified with it. Then the **glory of God [which is like as consuming fire—Exodus 24:17; Hebrews 12:28, 29]**, which destroys sin, must destroy them.” Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* p. 107*

At the second coming the wicked will hide in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains begging to be hidden from those searching eyes (Revelation 6:16). On the other hand, God’s people will exclaim, ‘Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him and He will save us.’

As Jesus rides the white horse, He has many crowns on His head. The word ‘crown’ here is **diadémata** where we get the word ‘diadem’. This is the **royal crown** of a conquering king. The **number 7** indicates that Jesus is the King of all the world in **contrast to the seven crowns** on the heads of the dragon usurper (Revelation 12:3). Ellen White wrote that Jesus actually has seven crowns, one within the other.

*“We gathered about Jesus, and just as He closed the gates of the city, the curse was pronounced upon the wicked. The gates were shut. Then the saints used their wings and mounted to the top of the wall of the city. Jesus was also with them; His crown looked brilliant and glorious. It was **a crown within a crown, seven in number**.” Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* p. 53, 54*

When Jesus gallops on the horse He has taken **off his priestly attire** and has clothed Himself with what Ellen White refers to as His '**most kingly robes**' (EW, p. 281) or 'the garments of vengeance' (EW, p. 36). Ellen White described the sequence of events from the sealing till Jesus changes His garments:

*"I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven. An angel with a writer's inkhorn by his side returned from the earth and reported to Jesus that his work was done, and **the saints were numbered and sealed**. Then I saw Jesus, who had been ministering before the ark containing the Ten Commandments, **throw down the censor**. He raised His hands, and with a loud voice said, "**It is done**." And all the angelic host laid off their crowns as Jesus made the solemn declaration, "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.*

***Every case had been decided** for life or death. While Jesus had been ministering in the sanctuary, the judgment had been going on for the righteous dead, and then for the righteous living. Christ had **received His kingdom**, having made the atonement for His people and blotted out their sins. The **subjects of the kingdom** were made up. The **marriage of the Lamb** was consummated. And **the kingdom**, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, **was given** to Jesus and the heirs of salvation and Jesus was to reign as **King of kings and Lord of lords**.*

*As Jesus moved out of the most holy place, I heard the tinkling of the bells upon His garment; and as He left, **a cloud of darkness covered** the inhabitants of the earth. There was then **no mediator** between guilty man and an offended God. While Jesus had been standing between God and guilty man, a restraint was upon the people; but when He stepped out from between man and the Father, **the restraint was removed [the winds were released]** and Satan had **entire control** of the finally impenitent. It was impossible for the plagues to be poured out while Jesus officiated in the sanctuary; but as His work there is finished, and His intercession closes, there is **nothing to stay the wrath of God**, and it breaks with fury upon the shelterless head of the guilty sinner, who has slighted salvation and hated reproof. In that fearful time, after the close of Jesus' mediation, the*

saints were living in the sight of a holy God **without an intercessor**. Every case was decided, every jewel numbered. Jesus tarried a moment in the **outer apartment [the holy place]** of the heavenly sanctuary, and the sins which had been confessed while He was in the most holy place were **placed upon Satan**, the originator of sin, who must suffer their punishment.

Then I saw Jesus **lay off His priestly attire and clothe Himself with His most kingly robes**. Upon His head were **many crowns, a crown within a crown**. Surrounded by the angelic host, **He left heaven**. The **plagues were falling** upon the inhabitants of the earth." Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* pp. 279-281

Then I saw that Jesus would not leave the most holy place until every case was decided either for salvation or destruction, and that the wrath of God could not come until Jesus had finished His work in the most holy place, laid off His **priestly attire**, and clothed Himself with the **garments of vengeance**.

Then Jesus will step out from between the Father and men, and God will keep silence no longer, but **pour out His wrath** on those who have rejected His truth. I saw that the anger of the nations, the wrath of God, and the time to judge the dead, were separate and distinct, one following the other; also that Michael had not stood up, and that the time of trouble, such as never was, had not yet commenced. The nations are now getting angry, but when our High Priest has finished His work in the sanctuary, He will **stand up, put on the garments of vengeance**, and **then** the seven last plagues will be poured out." Ellen G. White, *Christian Experience and Teaching*, p. 100.

What is the name that no one knows except Himself? Ellen White explained that the Father has given Jesus **the name Jehovah** (*The Signs of the Times*, May 3, 1899). Jesus already had this name in the Old Testament (Exodus 23:20) but when he came to this earth it was given to him again ('you shall call His name **Jesus**'—which means 'Jehovah saves') and when He ascended to heaven the Father gave it to **Him again** (Philippians 2:9-11).

When Jesus comes the second time He will come with a new revelation of the name. At each of these stages Jesus reveals a new manifestation of the name, 'Jehovah saves'. The second coming is a new character manifestation of Jehovah not seen in the Old Testament or in the New. No one up to that point has known Jesus as the heavenly warrior who comes to save His people from a global death decree.

We find a similar idea in Revelation 15:2 where only the 144,000 can learn the Song of Moses and the Lamb. This does not mean that no one except the 144,000 can understand the lyrics of the song. It means that no one can sing it like the 144,000 because only they have gone through the experience.

For example, I am sure that someone today could write music to the lyrics of the Song of Moses in Exodus 15. However, could we sing it like the Israelites did when God buried the Egyptians in the Red Sea? Of course not because it is not the song of our experience!

We find a similar example in the song of redemption that the 24 elders and the four living beings sing in Revelation 5:8-10. How can the elders and the living beings sing that God has redeemed them 'out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation', and that they 'will reign upon the earth'? Ellen White answers:

***Holy angels will join in the song of the redeemed.** Though they cannot sing from **experimental knowledge**, "He hath washed us in His own blood, and redeemed us unto God," yet they understand the great peril from which the people of God have been saved. Were they not sent to lift up for them a standard against the enemy? They can fully sympathize with the glowing ecstasy of those who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony (Letter 79, 1900). Ellen G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 922*

These examples help us understand what appears to be an insurmountable problem in the Old Testament. Exodus 6:1-6 tells us that the patriarchs **did not**

know the name Jehovah even though elsewhere the Bible clearly indicates that **they did**. God introduced Himself to **Abraham** as Jehovah even before He introduced Himself as El Shaddai (Genesis 17:1; 22:14). **Jacob** knew the name as well as Isaac (Genesis 35:11; 28:3). However, they knew Him as the God of the covenant **promises** not in the character of the one who fulfills those promises.

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary explains:

*"The 'name written, that no man knew, but he himself' (v. 12) represents the heretofore **unknown role** in which He now appears, **as the avenger** of His people (see on chapter 16:1). In the performance of this 'strange' work (Isa. 28:21) He acts in a **role new to** both men and angels." Ellen G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 874*

Concerning the name in Exodus 6:3 the Commentary explains:

*"God was about to reveal Himself **more fully** than in the past, **delivering His people** with a 'strong hand' (Ex. 6:1), actually taking them to Himself for a people (v. 7), establishing His covenant with them, and giving them the land of Canaan (v. 4). This being true, it seems that in verse 3 God must refer to the **new meaning** that the experience of deliverance would **bring to the name** rather than to the **name itself** (see vs. 1-7)." Ellen G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 523.*

Comments on Verse 13

*"He was clothed with a robe **dipped in blood**, and His name is called The **Word of God**."*

Ranko Stefanovic in his commentary on Revelation suggests that the blood on the garment of Jesus is the blood of God's people that Christ comes to avenge. However, Isaiah 63:1-6; Joel 3:9-12 and Revelation 14:20 gives us a different interpretation of the symbolism. The blood that the garments of Jesus are dipped in is not His own but that of **His enemies**. As he tramples the grapes in

the winepress, the juice splatters on his garments and it looks like blood.

Revelation 14 explains that the **harvest** of the earth is gathered **inside** the Holy City and the **grapes** are gathered **outside**. Revelation 19:14 identifies the riders of the horses as the **armies of heaven** and their garments are splattered with the blood of the wicked who are in the winepress outside the city.

Comments on Verse 14

*“And the **armies in heaven**, clothed in fine linen, **white and clean**, followed Him on white horses.”*

Ranko Stefanovic identifies the armies that accompany Jesus as God’s people. However, the Spirit of Prophecy clearly identifies these armies as the angels who accompany Jesus from heaven at His second coming:

*“Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man's hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Savior and which seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness. The **people of God** know this to be the sign of the Son of man. In solemn silence they gaze upon it as it draws nearer the earth, becoming lighter and more glorious, until it is a great white cloud, its base a glory like consuming fire, and above it the rainbow of the covenant. **Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror**. Not now a ‘Man of Sorrows,’ to drink the bitter cup of shame and woe, He comes, victor in heaven and earth, to judge the living and the dead. ‘Faithful and True,’ ‘in righteousness He doth judge and make war.’ And ‘the armies which were in heaven’ follow Him (Revelation 19:11, 14). With anthems of celestial melody, **the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng**, attend Him on His way. The firmament seems filled with radiant forms— **‘ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.’** No human pen can portray the scene; no mortal mind is adequate to conceive its splendor. ‘His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. And His brightness was as the light.’ Habakkuk 3:3,4. As the living cloud comes still nearer, every eye beholds the Prince of life. No crown of thorns now mars that sacred head; but a diadem of glory rests on His holy brow. His countenance outshines the dazzling brightness of the noonday sun. ‘And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written,*

King of kings, and Lord of lords.’ Revelation 19:16” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 640, 641.

If we remember, the sixth plague has the purpose of preparing the way for the **kings that come** from the east (Revelation 16:12). The rider on the white horse and the armies of heaven are the kings that come from the east.

Comments on Verse 15

*“Now out of His mouth goes a **sharp sword**, that with it He should **strike** the nations. And He Himself will **rule them** with a rod of iron. He Himself **treads the winepress** of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” (Revelation 14:9-11, 18-20; see also Isaiah 11:3, 4)*

The sword is a symbol of the Word of God:

*“Out of His mouth issues a sharp, **two-edged sword**, an **emblem** of the power of His word.” The Sanctified Life, p. 77*

Like the eyes of fire, the sword from the mouth appears also in Revelation 1:16. However, in Revelation 1:16 the eyes are **remedial** whereas here they are **retributive** (see Psalm 149:6-9). The sword that could have cut out sin and saved the sinner now destroys the sinner who has identified with sin.

The bottom line is that on the one hand the **fire** can consume sin, the **sword** can cut out evil from the heart, the **stone** can break a selfish heart or on the other hand, the fire can consume the sinner, the sword can slay him and the stone can crush him (Matthew 21:44). It all depends on the person’s choice.

Hebrews 4:12, 13 explains the relationship between the eyes and the sword:

Hebrews 4:12, 13

*“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any **two-edged sword**, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a **discerner** of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ And there is no*

creature hidden from **His sight**, but all things are naked and **open to the eyes** of Him to whom we must give account."

William Miller was a powerful preacher of the Word. **L. D. Fleming** attended one of Miller's meetings in **Portland, Maine** and compared his message with a sword:

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

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

Ellen White also used the sword metaphor in its **redemptive** meaning:

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

If we fail to allow the sword to cut out the pestilential matter from our character now, it will smite us when Jesus comes.

In order to fully understand the winepress language in Revelation 19:15, we must go back to Revelation 14:14-20. Let's review the main structure of chapter 14:

- ✓ The 144,000 stand on Mt. Zion **victorious** after the crisis over the beast, his image and his mark in chapter 13 (14:1-5).
- ✓ The three angels' messages are proclaimed with the power of the latter rain (14:6-12).
- ✓ The messages polarize the world into two groups, the harvest and the grapes (14:14-18).
- ✓ Jesus harvests the righteous and they are gathered in spiritual Jerusalem (14:15, 16; see Joel 2:32; 3:9-12).
- ✓ Jesus then harvests the wicked and throws them into the winepress outside spiritual Jerusalem (14:18, 19).
- ✓ Horses trample the winepress and blood splatters on the horses (14:20)

Revelation 19:15 expands upon Revelation 14:14-20. In Revelation 14, Jesus gathers the harvest of the earth (the 144,000) into the city. Then He harvests the grapes (the wicked) and casts them into the winepress outside the city. Horse riders then trample the grapes in the winepress outside the city.

At this point we do not know who is riding the horses that trample the winepress. However, in Revelation 19:15 we discover that the horses that trample the winepress are ridden by Christ and the heavenly armies of angels.

One might ask why the wicked were gathered in the winepress outside the city. Did they come there on vacation? Of course not. Clearly they gathered there to destroy those who are inside the spiritual city. Later on in the chapter (verses 19, 20) we will find that the kings of the earth, the beast and the false prophets gathered there to deliver a death blow to the 144,000.

Jeremiah 25:30-38 also stands in the background of Revelation 14 and 19. However, Jeremiah adds that the false shepherds, **in particular**, will be punished in the winepress:

Jeremiah 25:30-38

*"Therefore prophesy against them all these words, and say to them: 'The Lord will roar from on high, and utter His voice from His holy habitation **[the voice at the seventh plague—Revelation 16:17]**; He will roar mightily against **His fold**. He will give a **shout** **[1Thessalonians 4:16]** as those who **tread the grapes**, **[Revelation 14:17-19; 19:15]** against **all the inhabitants** of the earth. ³¹ A noise will come to the ends of the earth —for the **Lord has a controversy** with the nations; He will **plead His case** with all flesh. He will give those who are wicked to **the sword**,' says the Lord." ³² Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Behold, disaster shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the farthest parts of the earth. ³³ "And at that day the **slain of the Lord** shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth. They shall **not be lamented, or gathered, or buried**; they shall become **refuse** on the ground. ³⁴ "Wail, **shepherds**, and cry! Roll about in the ashes, you **leaders of the flock**! For the days of your **slaughter** and your dispersions are fulfilled; you shall fall like a precious vessel. ³⁵ And the **shepherds will have no way to flee**, nor the **leaders of the flock to escape**. ³⁶ A voice of the **cry of the shepherds**, and a wailing of the **leaders to the flock** will be heard. For the Lord has plundered their pasture, ³⁷ And the peaceful dwellings are cut down because of the fierce anger of the Lord. ³⁸ He has **left His lair** like **the lion**; For their **land is desolate** because of the **fierceness of the Oppressor**, and because of His fierce anger."*

Verse 15 alludes to Psalm 2. The original historical setting of this Psalm is that David has just been crowned king of Israel and the nations are plotting and colluding to overthrow him. However, on a broader scale, the Psalm is messianic and points to the installation of Christ as King of the kingdom of grace after His resurrection. Let's first consider the content of the Psalm followed by the messianic fulfillment.

Verses 1-3 describe the rage of the kings and rulers of the earth colluding against God and His Anointed:

*"Why do the **nations rage**, and the people plot a **vain thing**? ² The **kings of the earth** set themselves, and **the rulers** take counsel **together**, against the Lord and against **His Anointed**, saying, ³ 'Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.'*

Verses 4-6 describe the reaction of God the Father to the plotting of the rulers against His Anointed:

*"He who **sits in the heavens** shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision. ⁵ Then He shall speak to them **in His wrath**, and distress them in His **deep displeasure**: ⁶ "Yet I have set **My King** on **My holy hill of Zion**."*

In **verse 7** the Anointed one speaks to his Father:

*"I will declare the decree: The **Lord** has said to **Me**, 'You are **My Son**, today I have **begotten** You."*

This begetting of the Anointed one by the Father cannot refer to His physical birth. Clearly, the psalmist uses the word 'begotten' in a metaphorical sense to describe the moment when the Anointed is installed as King on Mt. Zion.

In antiquity, the day of a king's enthronement was considered the day of his rebirth because from that point on he **began to count** his regnal years. Kings also adopted a **new name** upon their accession to the throne just as a newborn baby is given a name by his parents (see Stephen D. Ricks and John J. Sroke, King, Coronation, and Temple: Enthronement Ceremonies in History pp. 236-271.

In **verses 8, 9** the Father promises His Son the nations as His inheritance and the ends of the earth as His possession:

*"Ask of Me, and I will give You **the nations** for Your inheritance, and the **ends of the earth** for Your possession. ⁹ You **[the Son]** shall break them **[the plotting***

*kings, judges and rulers] with a **rod of iron**; you shall **dash them to pieces** like a potter's vessel.'"*

In **verses 10-12** the Father counsels the kings to treat His **Son with respect**:

*"Now therefore, be wise, O **kings**; be instructed, you **judges** of the earth. ¹¹ Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹² **Kiss the Son**, lest **He** be angry, and you perish in the way, when **His** wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him."*

This messianic Psalm was **partially** fulfilled when Pilate, Herod, the Gentiles and the people of Israel colluded against Christ, the Lord's Anointed. When the Jewish Sanhedrin persecuted Peter and John and forbade them to preach in the name of Jesus, they quoted Psalm 2:1, 2.

Acts 4:24-30

*"So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: 'Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, ²⁵ who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the **nations rage**, and **the people** plot vain things? ²⁶ The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.' **[Psalm 2:1, 2]** ²⁷ 'For truly against Your Holy Servant Jesus, whom **You anointed**, both **Herod** and **Pontius Pilate**, with the **Gentiles** and the **people of Israel**, were **gathered together** ²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. ²⁹ Now, Lord, look on **their threats**, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, ³⁰ by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your Holy Servant Jesus."*

It is important to note that at this point, Peter and John only quote Psalm 2:1, 2 because at this point Jesus had not yet been installed as King and Priest of the kingdom of grace. The apostle Paul described the resurrection of Jesus and His installation as King and High Priest as the day the Father metaphorically begot

Him:

Acts 13:33-35

*"God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has **raised up Jesus**. As it is also written in the **second Psalm**: 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.'³⁴ And that He **raised Him from the dead**, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.'³⁵ Therefore He also says in another Psalm: 'You will not allow Your Holy One **to see corruption**.'*

In the book of Hebrews Paul adds that Jesus resurrected so that He could sit with His Father as King and Priest of the kingdom of grace.

Hebrews 1:3-5

*"when He had by Himself purged our sins, **sat down at the right hand** of the Majesty on high,⁴ having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a **more excellent name** than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say: 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'? [**Psalm 2:7**] And again:⁵ 'I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son'?"*

Hebrews 5:5

*"So also Christ did not glorify Himself to **become High Priest**, but it was He who said to Him: 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.'"*

Ellen White explained:

*"The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven's communication that the Redeemer's **inauguration** was accomplished. According to His promise, He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers as a token that He had, as **priest and king**, received **all authority** in heaven and on earth, and was the **Anointed One** over His people." Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 39*

Upon His installation as King of the kingdom of grace, the Father gave Jesus a **new name** (Philippians 2:9-11) and He began a **new phase** of His ministry.

In the final crisis, the enemies of Christ's people will attempt to do with them what the Jewish Sanhedrin and the Roman Rulers did with Peter and John. By persecuting the followers of Christ they are really plotting against Christ. For this reason, Jesus said to Saul 'why are you persecuting me?'

At the end, the kings of the earth and of the whole world, the beast, and the false prophet along with all their supporters will collude intending to destroy Christ's bride as Pilate, Herod, the Gentiles and the Jews colluded to destroy Jesus. The powers of earth and hell will collude together against Christ in the person of His witnesses. However, their plans will fail and they will be dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel.

Revelation 2:26, 27

*"And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give **power over the nations**—²⁷ 'He **[Jesus]** shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'.*

One is reminded of the image of Daniel 2 where the stone smashes all the nations of the world into smithereens and then Jesus establishes His everlasting kingdom.

Comments on Verse 16

*"And He has on His robe and on His thigh **a name** written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS**."*

This same title appears in Revelation 17:14 which means that Revelation 19:16 and Revelation 17:14 are referring to the same point of time.

Revelation 17:14

*"**These** [the kings of the earth and the whole world] will make **war** [Armageddon, the same war as Revelation 16:12 and 19:11-21] with the Lamb [in the person of His witnesses], and the Lamb will **overcome them** [as He rides the white horse], for [because] He is Lord of lords and King of kings;*

and those who are with Him [see Revelation 14:1 for those who are 'with Him', 144,000] are called, chosen, and faithful."

The questions that the rebellious multitudes asked in Revelation 13:4, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" will be answered in Revelation 19:11ff. The Lamb will be more than able.

Comments on Verses 17, 18

"Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great [terminology reminiscent of Revelation 6:15-17]."

We are not to understand the birds of prey literally. Revelation 19:11-21 expresses profound realities in symbolic language. Jesus does not come to trample a literal winepress and He does not have a literal sword coming out of His mouth. The root prophecy for verses 17 and 18 is in Ezekiel 39:17-20 where the beasts of the earth and the fowl of the air are summoned to feed on the hordes of Gog and Magog who have come to destroy Israel. What do the birds and the beasts symbolize?

The book of Revelation itself gives us the answer. The birds represent Satan and his demons. Revelation 18 describes the fall of Babylon with three synonymous expressions and the third refers to the demons as unclean and hateful birds:

Revelation 18:2-3

"And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a [1] dwelling place of demons, [2] a prison for every foul spirit, and [3] a cage for every unclean and hated bird!"

Comments on Verse 19

Revelation 19:19

*“And I saw the **beast**, the **kings** of the earth, and their **armies** [the question is: **Where is the dragon?**], gathered together to **make war** against **Him** who sat on the horse and against His army.”*

In this verse we have **two armies**. On one side is a threefold coalition with their armies and on the other side is Christ with His armies. The name of the battle that is to be fought is Armageddon. The battle ends up being a rout. The threefold coalition falls apart (see Revelation 16:19) and under demonic influences, ends up fighting with one another:

Zechariah 14:12-13

*“And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the people who **fought against Jerusalem**: Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and **their tongues** shall dissolve in their mouths.¹³ It shall come to pass in that day that a **great panic** from the Lord will be among them. Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor, and raise his hand **against his neighbor's hand**.” (see also, Haggai 2:20-22; Judges 6 and 7; Ezekiel 38:21; 2 Chronicles 20:22, 23; 1 Samuel 14:20; Isaiah 9:19).*

We must not misunderstand the nature of this war. It will not be that the threefold coalition is shooting nuclear weapons at Jesus as he descends from heaven riding on the white horse with His armies. The war is really against Christ in the person of His people. When the LORD took off Pharaoh's chariot wheels in the midst of the Red Sea, the Egyptians said: 'let us flee for the LORD fights for Israel'. In fighting the people of God they were fighting the God of the people. Ellen White explained:

*“As we approach the last crisis, it is of vital moment that harmony and unity exist among the Lord's instrumentalities. The world is filled with storm and war and variance. Yet under one head—the papal power—the people will unite to **oppose***

***God in the person of His witnesses.**" Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 182*

Comments on Verse 20

*"Then the **beast** [the sea beast of Revelation 13 a symbol of the papacy] was captured, and with him the **false prophet** [the land beast, a symbol of apostate Protestantism] who worked signs [Revelation 13:13] **in his** [the beast's] **presence**, by which he [the land beast] deceived those who received the **mark** of the beast and those who worshiped his **image**. These **two** were cast alive into the **lake of fire** burning with brimstone." (this is the fulfillment of the third angel's message. Revelation 13:11-18; 14:9-11 contain the same elements).*

We have previously noticed that three powers will oppose God in the person of His witnesses—the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. So the question, is, why does verse 20 refer only to two of them—the beast and the false prophet? Actually, verse 19 mentions the third power as the kings of the earth. You see, before the millennium the kings are the dragon and after the millennium Satan is.

Comments on Verse 21

*"And the **rest** [those who remained] were killed with **the sword** that proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were **filled with their flesh**."*



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
“FROM THE CLOSE OF PROBATION TO THE NEW EARTH:
A STUDY OF REVELATION CHAPTERS 15 TO 22”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #11 – Daniel 11:40-45 and the Final Crisis

Introduction

Daniel 11:40-45 has always been a subject of lively discussion among Adventist theologians. Until recently most agreed that, the king of the north represents the papacy and the king of the south represents atheism or secularism. However, now a new view has appeared on the horizon that sees radical Islam as playing a significant role in the fulfillment of this prophecy. Those who have embraced this view have concluded that the events of 9/11 and the war against Al-Qaeda are so significant that they must be contemplated somewhere in Bible prophecy. This has sparked a new interest in the study of the fifth and sixth trumpets in conjunction with Daniel 11:40-45.

Usually Ellen White has provided valuable guidance in the interpretation of difficult prophetic passages. However, unlike other passages in the book of Daniel, Ellen White seems to be silent on the meaning of most of chapter eleven, particularly verses 40-45. Nowhere, to my knowledge does she ever quote these verses or even echo the terminology contained in them.

This seeming silence on verses 40-45 has led some to conclude that Ellen White had nothing to say about them. We therefore ask, did Ellen White have anything

to say about the meaning of these verses or does her seeming silence indicate that their meaning would remain a mystery until long after her death? In this article, we will seek to answer this question.

Ellen White's Use of Daniel 11

To my knowledge, there are only **three** primary Ellen G. White references to Daniel 11 (except for one in *A Word to the Little Flock Scattered Abroad*).

One of these references is **indirect**, one is **general** in nature and the other is quite **specific**. Only in the specific reference does Ellen White actually quote any verses from the chapter (verses 30-36). Unfortunately, as stated before, she never quotes nor does she even allude to the language of verses 40-45 so it would seem well-nigh impossible to know if or how Ellen White understood them.

Ellen White's Three Quotations

The first quotation is **indirect** because she does not specifically mention Daniel 11 but only **alludes** to it (all bold type is mine unless specified). In **1896**, she wrote:

*"The light that Daniel received from God was given especially for these last days. The visions he saw by the banks of the **Ulai [Daniel 8:2]** and the **Hiddekel [Daniel 10:4 and chapter 11]**, the great rivers of Shinar, are now in **process** of fulfillment, and all the events foretold **will soon come to pass**." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 112*

The second quotation is **general** and she wrote it in **1909**:

*"The world is stirred with the spirit of war. The prophecy of the **eleventh chapter** of Daniel has **nearly reached its complete fulfillment**. Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 14*

She wrote the **third quotation** in **1904** and it is the **only one** where Ellen White actually quotes verses from Daniel 11:

*"We have no time to lose. Troublous times are before us. The world is stirred with the spirit of war. Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place. The prophecy in the **eleventh of Daniel** has **nearly reached its complete fulfillment**. **Much of the history** that has taken place in fulfillment of this prophecy **will be repeated**. In the thirtieth verse a power is spoken of that "shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant." [she quotes verses 30-36] **Scenes similar to those described in these words** will take place." Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases, vol. 13, p. 394 (Letter 103, 1904)*

Analysis of Ellen White's References to Daniel 11

We must now **examine** more closely the three quotations above:

The quotation from Testimonies to Ministers, p. 112 (1896) provides **two key items** of information:

- First, the prophecies of Daniel **eight and eleven** run concurrently and are **parallel**. The prophecy by the Ulai was the one given in chapter 8 (Daniel 8:2) and the one by the Hiddekel was the one given in chapters 10 and 11 (Daniel 10:4).
- Second, both of these prophecies were in the **process of fulfillment** when Ellen White wrote in 1896. Unfortunately, Ellen White does not specify **how much** of the chapter had already reached its fulfillment when she wrote the statement. She merely stated that these prophecies were in the **process** of fulfillment.

The quotation in Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, p. 14, adds some very valuable information: When Ellen White wrote this testimony in **1909** she stated that the prophecy of Daniel 11 had **nearly reached its complete fulfillment**. Thus, we can be certain that in 1909 the process of fulfillment of Daniel 11 was in the **last few verses** of the chapter.

The quotation from Manuscript Releases, vol. 13, p. 394 (1904) contains some significant information that we do not find in the other two.

In this statement, Ellen White explains that **much of the history** that fulfilled this chapter **will repeat**. The critical question then is this, to which history was she referring? Fortunately, it is not necessary for us to guess because she immediately quotes verses 30-36. Then, right after quoting these verses, she again repeats the thought that much of the history that fulfilled this prophecy will occur once more in the future:

“Scenes similar to those described in these words will take place.”

Clearly, Ellen White understood that **verses 30-36** (as well as verses 37-39 that she does not quote) had already reached their fulfillment before she wrote. If verses 30-39 had already reached their fulfillment in the past, then the future repetition of much of the history must occur in verses 40-45. Thus, verses 30-39 describe past events from the time that she wrote while verses 40-45 describe **future events**.

It is important to realize that Ellen White was **not** saying that these verses would have two fulfillments, one past and the other future. What she **is** saying is that much of **the history** that fulfilled these verses in the past will occur in similar manner in the future. Stated another way, it is **not the prophecy** in verses 30-39 that will be fulfilled once again but rather much of **the history** that fulfilled the prophecy in the past will be repeated in **similar fashion** in the future.

A Repetition of History

Now we must ask why the historical scenes of the past will repeat once again in **similar fashion in the future**. The answer is not hard to find. The arrogant and persecuting power that verses 30-39 describe is the **Roman Catholic papacy** as it behaved during its 1260-year career. During this period, it joined church and state, **ran loose** and used **the sword** of the state to persecute dissenters.

As is well known, at the end of the 1260 years the papacy received a deadly wound when the state turned against it at the conclusion of the **French Revolution**. However, this was not the end of the papacy's career. Prophecy predicts that after a period of convalescence the deadly wound **would be healed** (Revelation 13:3) when the United States returns the sword of civil power into the papacy's hand. Then the papacy will behave once more **as it did in the past**. Thus, the history of past papal oppression will transpire in the future because the papacy will rise once again to power.

In summary: Ellen White believed that Daniel 11:30-36 (also verses 37-39 although she does not quote them) **found its fulfillment** in the past. She also believed that much of **the history** that these verses describe would transpire once more in **similar** fashion. If verses 30-39 had already found their fulfillment when Ellen White wrote, then we must find the future repetition of the history of these verses in verses 40-45.

Notice the following three quotations on the **past** and **future** power of the papacy:

*"The influence of Rome in the countries that once acknowledged her dominion is still far from being destroyed. And prophecy foretells a **restoration of her power**. 'I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast' Verse 3. Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 579*

*"When our nation [**the United States**] shall so abjure the principles of its government as to enact a Sunday law, Protestantism will in this act join hands with popery; it will be nothing else that **giving life [it must have had a deadly wound]** to the tyranny which has long been eagerly watching its opportunity to **spring again [the active despotism died only to live again]** into **active [for a period the tyranny was inactive]** despotism." Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 712*

"When the land which the Lord provided as an asylum for his people, that they might worship him according to the dictates of their own consciences, the land

*over which for long years the shield of Omnipotence has been spread, the land which God has favored by making it the depository of the pure religion of Christ—when that land shall, through its legislators, abjure the principles of Protestantism, and give countenance to Romish apostasy in tampering with God's law—it is then that the final work of the man of sin will be revealed. Protestants will throw their whole influence and strength on the side of the Papacy; by a national act enforcing the false Sabbath, they will **give life** and **vigor** [the corrupt faith of Rome must have been dead for a period] to the corrupt faith of Rome, **reviving** [her tyranny and oppression of conscience were dead for a while] her tyranny and oppression of conscience. Then it will be time for God to work in mighty power for the vindication of his truth.” Ellen G. White, The Signs of the Times, June 12, 1893*

In the light of the foregoing analysis, we can safely conclude that the repetition of the scenes of the past career of the papacy that **verses 30-39** describe will repeat once again in similar fashion in **verses 40-45**.

Ellen White's Perspective of Daniel 12:1, 2

However, does Ellen White have anything to say about the events that verses 40-45 describe? Where would we **even begin to look** if she never quotes these verses or even alludes to their terminology? I believe that we find the key that will unlock her understanding of these verses in her understanding of Daniel 12:1. Although Ellen White never quoted or even alluded to the language of Daniel 11:40-45 in the book The Great Controversy, she did quote the next verse, **Daniel 12:1**. I believe that the place where she quotes Daniel 12:1 contains the key that unlocks her understanding of the immediately preceding verses.

Working Deductively

Because Ellen White did not quote or even allude to the terminology of verses 40-45 in The Great Controversy, we cannot work from verse 40 forwards. We

do not know where to find her comments on verse 40. What we must do then is work **deductively** from Daniel 12:1, 2 backwards.

Let us consider Daniel 12 verses one and two:

*"At that time [1] **Michael shall stand up**, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a [2] **time of trouble**, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people [3] **shall be delivered**, everyone who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth [4] **shall awake**, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt."*

The bold type indicates that there are **four sequential events** in Daniel 12:1, 2:

- The **standing up** of Michael
- The **time of trouble**
- The **deliverance** of God's people
- The **special resurrection**

Now let us consider how Ellen G. White developed these four events in The Great Controversy but in **reverse order** beginning with the fourth item on the list, the special resurrection and working backwards:

- **GC, p. 637:** Ellen White quotes Daniel 12:2 to describe the **fourth** item on the list, the **special resurrection**.
"Graves are opened, and "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth... awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Daniel 12:2."
- **GC, p. 635:** Ellen White describes the **third** item on the list. The chapter's title is '**God's People Delivered**'. At the beginning of the chapter she states:
"The people of God—some in prison cells, some hidden in solitary retreats in the forests and the mountains—still plead for divine protection, while in

*every quarter companies of armed men, urged on by hosts of evil angels are preparing for the work of death. It is now, in the hour of utmost extremity that the God of Israel will interpose for the **deliverance of His chosen**.*"

You will notice also that Ellen White concluded the previous chapter ('*The Time of Trouble*') with a clear allusion to Daniel 12:1 where the text tells us that those whose names are in the book will be delivered:

*"Glorious will be the **deliverance** of those who have patiently waited for His coming and whose **names are written** in the book of life." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 634*

- **GC, p. 616:** Ellen White describes the **second** item on the list by explaining the time of trouble through which God's people will go:

*"The people of God will then be plunged into those scenes of affliction and distress described by the prophet as the **time of Jacob's trouble**."*

- **GC, p. 613:** Ellen White begins the chapter on '*The Time of Trouble*' by quoting Daniel 12:1 and then amplifies the meaning of the standing up of Michael, the **first** item on the list.

*"Then Jesus **ceases His intercession** in the sanctuary above. . . When He leaves the sanctuary, darkness covers the inhabitants of the earth. In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God **without an intercessor**."*

Summary of Ellen White's Comments on Daniel 12:1, 2

Let us look now at Ellen White's development of Daniel 12:1, 2 in its regular order:

- **GC, p. 613:** The standing up of Michael
- **GC, p. 616:** The time of trouble
- **GC, p. 635:** God's people delivered
- **GC, p. 637:** The special resurrection

The perceptive reader will notice that Ellen White, in The Great Controversy, develops the events of Daniel 12:1, 2 in the **precise order** in which they appear in Daniel 12:1, 2.

Importance of the Expression ‘at that time’

We cannot understand Daniel 12:1, 2 independently of its immediately preceding context. It is important to remember that Daniel 12:1, 2 is **a continuation** of the flow of events that transpired in the previous verses. We know this because Daniel 12:1 begins with a time reference, “*at that time*”. This expression links Daniel 12:1 with what occurred previously in verses 40-45 particularly verses 44 and 45.

The crucial question at this point is this, where would we expect to find Ellen White’s comments about the events that occur immediately before Daniel 12:1? The answer is unmistakable. We must find them in the pages that immediately precede the chapter on the standing up of Michael and the time of trouble.

The Literary Structure of Daniel 11:44b-45 and 12:1

Now let us carefully consider the literary structure of verses 44b-45 to determine how they relate to Daniel 12:1. The purpose is to ascertain the event to which the expression “*at that time*” points.

A comparison of verses 44 and 45 with Daniel 12:1 reveals that they describe the **same events** in the **same order** but with a **different terminology** and **emphasis**:

Daniel 11:44b-45:

- A. The king of the north **goes out to destroy** and annihilate many (11:44b).
- B. The king of the north **sets up the tents** of his palace in a strategic place between the seas and the glorious holy mountain to give a final deathblow to the remnant (11:45a).
- C. The king of the north **comes to his end** with none to help him (11:45b).

Daniel 12:1

- A. Michael stands up **to defend** His people (parallel to 11:44b).
- B. A **time of trouble** such as never was ensues (parallel to 11:45a).
- C. God **delivers** His people (parallel to 11:45b).

Daniel 11:44b-45 and 12:1 are precisely parallel but they portray a different emphasis. Whereas Daniel 11:44b-45 highlights the activities of the **king of the north** and its destiny for oppressing God's people, Daniel 12:1 focuses on the **jeopardy of God's people** at the hand of the king of the north and their deliverance by God.

It works out this way:

When the king of the north goes "*out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many*" (11:44b), Michael will stand up to protect and defend them (12:1a).

When the king of the north places the tents of his palace in a strategic location to deliver the final deathblow against God's people (11:45a; vividly described in GC 635), they will go through a terrible time of trouble such as never was (12:1b).

However, the king of the north will "*come to his end with none to help him*" (11:45b) when God intervenes to deliver His people who are written in the book (12:1c).

The expression "*at that time*" thus links Daniel 11:44b-45 with Daniel 12:1. God answers the **actions** of the king of the north against the remnant by counteractions in defense of His faithful remnant.

What about Daniel 11:44A?

What about Daniel 11:44a? The first half of verse 44 tells us that '*tidings from the **north and from the east** will trouble the king of the north*'. The '*tidings from the north and from the east*' explain **the reason** why the king of the north will go out and attempt to destroy and annihilate many:

*“But news from the east and the north shall **trouble** [alarm or disturb] him [the king of the north]; **therefore**, he [the king of the north] shall go out with **great fury** to **destroy** and **annihilate** many.”*

What is this news from the east and the north that so infuriates the king of the north that he seeks to destroy ‘many’? We must go to the book of Revelation for the answer because Ellen White wrote that the little book of Daniel is unsealed by the book of Revelation:

*“The books of Daniel and the Revelation are **one**. One is a **prophecy**, the other a **revelation**; one a book **sealed**, the other a book **opened**.” Ellen G. White, *Christ Triumphant*, p. 344*

Revelation 7:2 describes an angel who ascends **from the east** having **the seal** of the living God. This angel comes to seal the faithful of God upon their foreheads. In contrast, the land beast will impose the mark of the beast on pain of death to those who refuse it (Revelation 13:15, 16). Thus, the beast from the earth gives a death decree against God’s people at the behest of the beast from the sea—the papacy.

Revelation 18:1-5 portrays a powerful angel who descends **from heaven** (the north according to Isaiah 14:13 and Psalm 48:1, 2) and gives a clarion call for God’s people to reject the mark of the beast and to **get out of Babylon** before she suffers the seven last plagues and comes to her end.

Thus, the book of Revelation identifies the tidings from the north and from the east as the message of the **sealing** and the **call to come out** of Babylon.

Ellen White concurs with this Biblical view. The title of the chapter that immediately precedes the standing up of Michael and the time of trouble bears the title, “*The Final Warning*.” Ellen White begins this chapter in *GC*, p. 603 by quoting Revelation 18:1, 2, 4 and 5. In perfect accordance with Daniel 11:44a and Revelation 7:2 she then described on **page 605** the issue that will divide the world:

*“While the observance of the false sabbath in compliance with the law of the state, contrary to the fourth commandment, will be an avowal of allegiance to a power that is in opposition to God, the keeping of the true Sabbath, in obedience to God's law, is an evidence of loyalty to the Creator. While one class, by accepting the sign of submission to earthly powers, receive the **mark of the beast**, the other choosing the token of allegiance to divine authority, receive the **seal of God**.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 605*

In the same chapter, Ellen White went on to describe the anger that this message will cause in the religious world:

*“The power attending the message will only **madden** those who oppose it.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 607*

Furthermore, in the next chapter Ellen White flashes back to events that occurred before the time of trouble:

*“The power attending the last warning **has enraged the wicked**; their **anger** is kindled against all who have **received the message**, and Satan will excite to **still greater** intensity the **spirit of hatred** and persecution.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 614, 615*

Thus, the news from the north is identified in Revelation 18 as the Loud Cry of the angel who descends from heaven (the north) and the news from the east is the message concerning the seal of God in Revelation 7. Daniel 11:44a describes this message from the north and the east that enrages the king of the north to the point of wanting to destroy God's remnant as described in Daniel 11:44b.

The Beginning Point of Daniel 11:40-45

We have focused in this article primarily on the events from Daniel 11:44 to Daniel 12:2. But if we continued moving backwards in The Great Controversy (before page 603) we would find, in **reverse order**, that Ellen White expounds upon each phrase of Daniel 11:40-45 ending with the chapter on “*The Bible and the French Revolution*” where the deadly wound of Daniel 11:40a is described

(GC, pp. 265-288). Though she does not employ the terminology of verses 40-45, the sequence of events clearly reveals that she is discussing these verses.

Daniel 11:40a tells us that the king of the south would **push** at the king of the north at the **time of the end**. Ellen White clearly identifies the beginning of the time of the end as the year 1798 when France dealt the papacy its deadly wound (GC, p. 356). The word 'push' does not adequately portray the idea of the text. The historical event that this word describes was not a friendly nudge or shove. The NIV translates: "*will engage him in battle*" while the ESV translates "*shall attack him*". That is, in the year 1798 some power described as the king of the south would attack the king of the north.

There is a **wide consensus** among students of prophecy in the Seventh-day Adventist Church that the king of the north represents **the papacy**. Furthermore, until recent times there was a broad consensus that the king of the south represents **secularism** as exhibited in the French Revolution. However, times have changed and some Adventist preachers, as they look at current events, are reinterpreting the king of the south as a symbol of **militant Islam**.

Literally and geographically speaking the king of the south was **Egypt** because Egypt was the kingdom south of Israel (see Daniel 11:5, 8). However, in eschatology we are not dealing with literal geographical locations but rather with global systems.

Who is the king of the south, symbolically speaking? I believe that **Revelation 11** (further described in the fifth and sixth trumpets) clearly identifies **France** as 'spiritual Egypt' (verse 8). While **Babylon** represents a global apostate religious system, Egypt symbolizes the secular powers of the world that threw off the yoke of papal Rome beginning with France. **Revelation 17** explains that for a very short while at the end of time, the secular powers of the world will once again join together in **unholy wedlock** with the harlot but in the end the kings of the earth will hate the Babylonian harlot and destroy her (Revelation 17:15, 16).

In Biblical times, Babylon was the **literal** king of the north because it was a literal enemy to the literal north of literal Israel. However, today the king of the north is a **global spiritual system** of counterfeit religion—the Roman Catholic papacy (see Revelation 17:1-6). The papacy is certainly not literally north of literal Israel (it is actually west). We must therefore interpret the king of the north and the king of the south symbolically.

Furthermore, what was the **main characteristic** of France in 1798? The spirit of the French Revolution was atheism but actually Daniel 11:40a involves far **more than atheism**. The genius of the Revolution culminating with the captivity of Pope Pius VI was to secularize the government and separate it from its adulterous relationship with the church. In the course of several decades after the French Revolution, country after country in Europe established **secular governments** separate from the dominance of the papacy.

In **1862**, Cardinal Henry Edward Manning complained about how the secular governments of Europe had forsaken the papacy:

*“See this Catholic Church, this Church of God, feeble and weak, rejected even by the **very nations called Catholic**. There is Catholic **France**, and Catholic **Germany**, and Catholic **Italy** giving up this exploded figment of the **temporal power** of the Vicar of Jesus Christ.’ And so, because the Church **seems weak**, and the Vicar of the Son of God is renewing the Passion of his Master upon earth, therefore we are scandalized, therefore we **turn our faces from him**.” (*The Temporal Power of the Vicar of Jesus Christ*, pp. 140, 141)*

Ellen White has stated why the papacy has not been able to ascend to power once more:

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

Beginning and Ending Point

We have the following beginning and ending points for Daniel 11:40-45 in The Great Controversy:

Daniel 11:40a; GC, pp. 265-288:

France 'attacks' the papacy and inflicts the deadly wound severing the illicit love relationship between church and state. Thus, the secular powers put a restraint on the papacy.

Daniel 11:40b-11:43; GC, pp. 289-605:

Events that transpire between the infliction of the deadly wound in 1798 and the Loud Cry.

Daniel 11:44a; GC, p. 605:

The Loud Cry and Sealing Message trouble the papacy.

Daniel 11:44b; 12:1a; GC, p. 607 (flashback to the past in GC pp. 614, 615):

The Loud Cry and Sealing Message enrage the wicked against God's remnant. Michael stands up, closing the door of probation and defending His people from the rage of the wicked.

Daniel 11:45a; 12:1b; GC, p. 613ff:

A universal death decree against God's people is signed as the king of the north sets up his tents outside spiritual Jerusalem (the remnant church) to deliver the final deathblow against God's people. This causes a time of trouble for God's people such as never has been.

Daniel 11:45b; 12c; GC, p. 635ff:

The king of the north comes to his end with none to help him because his supporters forsake him. As a result, God delivers His people.

Daniel 12:2; GC, p. 637:

Those who died in the faith of the third angel's message rise in a special resurrection along with those who pierced Jesus.

Thus the two reference points for the beginning and ending of Daniel 11:40-45 are the French Revolution at the beginning as described in GC, pp. 265-288 and the deliverance of God's people and the special resurrection in GC, pp. 635, 637. In between these two reference points, we have the events that Ellen White describes in GC, pp. 289-604. A careful study of these pages reveals that Ellen White comments on all the details in verses 40b-43 without actually quoting the verses or using the verbiage.

Ellen G. White and Islam

It is uncanny how Ellen White vividly describes the events of Daniel 11:40-45 without ever quoting the verses or alluding to the language. The question is, why did she not simply come out and quote the verses and then comment on them? There is a clear historical reason.

The original view of the pioneers was that the king of the north represents the Roman Catholic papacy. This is the clear view expressed in the pamphlet A Word to the Little Flock Scattered Abroad, **coauthored** by James and Ellen White in 1847. However, in the early **1870's Uriah Smith** (who was the highly respected editor of the Advent Review and Sabbath Herald) changed the view of the pioneers by reinterpreting the king of the north as **Turkey**. You see, in Smith's day Turkey was prominent in the news so he changed the traditional view to fit current events.

James White was unhappy about Smith's new view and accused him of removing one of the landmarks of the Advent Movement. Things started getting nasty and members began taking sides. In this context, Ellen White instructed her husband to desist of his criticism. She knew that an understanding of Daniel 11:40-45 was not a matter of life and death at that time. Her main concern, at that moment, was to preserve the unity of the church. If Ellen White had quoted the verses of Daniel 11:40-45 and offered a view contradictory to Uriah Smith's, she would have been accused of nepotism so she commented on these verses

without quoting them or alluding to the language knowing full well that someday someone would discover her view of the matter.

Significantly, in the eschatological portion of The Great Controversy, Ellen White does not mention Islam, even once, as playing any role in the fulfillment of Bible prophecy in the end time. It appears that Ellen White **saw no prophetic significance** to the rise of radical Islam. The same is true of the great chain prophecies of Scripture. There is **no reference to Islam** in the prophecies of Daniel 2, Daniel 7, Daniel 8 and 9, Revelation 12, Revelation 13, Matthew 24 and Revelation 17 neither is there any reference to Islam in the series of the churches and the seals.

Ellen White's silence on the role of Islam in Bible prophecy has puzzled some Seventh-day Adventist scholars who have concluded that Ellen White simply did not have all the light on end time events. At least one of these scholars has even reached the conclusion that Ellen White was wrong in her interpretation of the little horn as a symbol of the papacy and has reinterpreted it as Islam.

Do not get me wrong. I am not saying that Islam might not play a role in the **precipitation** of end time events as Ellen White describes them in The Great Controversy. It is true that Islam might serve as the catalyst for the fulfillment of Bible prophecies concerning the United States and the papacy, but I do not believe that prophecy contemplates the rising power of militant Islam directly by prophecy.

That is to say, in the light of the Biblical evidence I do not believe that radical Islam fulfills any specific end time prophecy but very well could serve as the catalyst for the fulfillment of prophecy. Radical Islam has brought the United States to prominence and has led it to flex its military muscles. It has made the curtailing of our civil and religious liberties easier and it has also misdirected the eyes of Christians (and even a few Seventh-day Adventists) to the Middle East for the fulfillment of prophecy thus hiding from view the powers that will play a role in end time events, the papacy and apostate Protestantism.

Time has proven that Uriah Smith's reinterpretation of the king of the north

was wrong. Will we learn from his mistake? Will we ever learn that the best way to understand prophecy is not to read the newspapers or to watch CNN but rather to study our Bibles?



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
“FROM THE CLOSE OF PROBATION TO THE NEW EARTH:
A STUDY OF REVELATION CHAPTERS 15 TO 22”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #12 – The Special Resurrection

Just before the second coming of Jesus, God’s people will experience the worst time of trouble since the world began. Ellen White explained that some of God’s faithful people will be laid to rest before that fiery ordeal while others will go through it alive:

“Many will be laid away to sleep in Jesus before the fiery ordeal of the time of trouble shall come upon our world. This is another reason why we should say after our earnest petition, “Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine, O Lord, be done.” Such a petition will never be registered in heaven as a faithless prayer. The Apostle was bidden to write: [she quotes Revelation 14:13] “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; Yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.” If Jesus, the world’s Redeemer, prayed, “O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” and then added, “Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt,” how very appropriate is it for poor, finite mortals to make surrender to the wisdom and will of God.”

Revelation 14:13

In the previous quote, Ellen White cites Revelation 14:13 as the biblical evidence that some will go to their rest **before** the time of trouble. It is noteworthy that **the blessing** that God pronounces upon those who sleep comes immediately after the **third angel's message**. Therefore, somehow, there is a special blessing for those who die after the third angel's message begins to be proclaimed. So the question we must ask is this: **When** did the third angel's message begin to be proclaimed? Ellen White gave the answer:

*"**Since 1844**, in fulfillment of the prophecy of the **third angel's message**, the attention of the world has been called to the **true Sabbath [the opposite of the beast, his image and his mark]**, and a constantly increasing number are returning to the observance of God's holy day." Ellen G. White, The Story of Redemption, p. 383*

Therefore, God pronounces a **special blessing** upon those who die in the faith of the **third angel's message** from **1844** on. Let us take a **closer look** at Revelation 14:13 with my personal comments in brackets.

Revelation 14:13

*"Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: '**Blessed** are the dead [not all the dead] who die **in the Lord from now on [from this point forward]**.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may **rest** from their **labors**, [Paul uses the word almost exclusively to refer to taxing evangelistic labor] and their **works [their influence] follow them**."*

The lexicons define the word 'labor' as 'exacting, shattering work, hardship'.

1 Thessalonians 2:9 provides an example:

*"For you remember, brethren, our **labor and toil**; for **laboring night and day**, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God."*

Letter to Leonard Hastings

Why are those who die after 1844 especially blessed? What is the blessing that no other group will receive? In order to understand the blessing, it is helpful to consider the case of a specific person who died in the faith of the third angel **after 1844**.

In 1850 Ellen White got news that her dear friend, Mrs. Hastings had passed away. Mrs. Hastings, who lived in Ipswich, New Hampshire, was a **very dear friend** of Ellen White:

*"Our hearts were **knit together**; especially was the heart of Sister Hastings **knit with mine** as were those of **David and Jonathan**. Our **union** was not marred while she lived." Ellen G. White, Christian Experience and Teaching, pp. 123, 124*

In response to the sad news of her friend's death, Ellen White wrote a letter of encouragement to Leonard Hastings, her **grieving husband**. The letter contains several important **theological points**.

Dear Brother:

*"I **hardly know what to say** to you. The news of your **wife's death** was to me **overwhelming**. I could **hardly believe it** and can **hardly believe it now**. God gave me a **view [a vision]** last Sabbath night which I will write.... I saw that **she was sealed** and would come up at the **voice of God [at the moment of the fifth plague]** and stand upon the earth, and would be **with the 144,000**. I saw we need **not mourn** for her; she would **rest in the time of trouble**, and all that we could mourn for was our loss in being **deprived of her company**. I saw her death would **result in good**." Ellen G. White, Selected Message, vol. 2, p. 263 (Letter 10, **1850**).*

In this letter Ellen White brought to view several important points as regards the special resurrection:

- ✓ Mrs. Hastings was **sealed** (she was secure in the Lord when she died).
- ✓ She would **rest** during the time of trouble.

- ✓ She will forth from the grave at the **voice of God** (the voice that delivers the living saints at the fifth plague).
- ✓ When she comes forth she will stand **with** (not 'among') the 144,000.
- ✓ Her death would result in **good** (because her works follow her).

The General Resurrection

Those who die in the faith of the third angel's message will **not resurrect** in the general resurrection of the righteous described in 1 Thessalonians 4:

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18

*"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will **descend** from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up together with them** in the clouds to meet the Lord **in the air**. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."*

The Special Resurrection

At the **end** of the time of trouble and **before** the second coming, **two groups** will stand together upon the earth:

- ✓ Those who will live through the time of trouble and be delivered from the death decree by the voice of God at the moment of the fifth plague.
- ✓ Those who will resurrect in a **special resurrection** at the same moment when God delivers the living from the death decree.

Daniel 12:1, 2 gives us the **chronology**:

*"At that time Michael shall **stand up**, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be **a time of trouble**, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people **shall be delivered [the righteous living]**, everyone who is found written in the book. ²*

And many [not all] of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life [those who died in the faith of the third angel's message], some to shame and everlasting contempt [those who pierced Jesus].”

We can reach the following conclusions from Daniel 12:1, 2:

- ✓ At the end of the time of trouble, one group will be alive and God will deliver it from the death decree.
- ✓ The other group will sleep during the time of trouble and resurrect when it ends.
- ✓ The resurrection in Daniel 12:2 cannot refer to the general resurrection because ‘many’ will be raised, not all.
- ✓ The resurrection to everlasting contempt cannot refer to the general resurrection of the wicked because that will occur after the millennium.

Ellen White Puts it all Together

The voice of God will deliver the living saints from the death decree at the same moment He calls forth from the grave those who died in the third angel’s message. This will take place at the end of the time of trouble just before the second coming begins. Ellen White wrote provided the precise chronology in the chapter, ‘*God’s People Delivered*’:

The Death Decree:

“When the protection of human laws shall be withdrawn from those who honor the law of God, there will be, in different lands, a simultaneous movement for their destruction. As the time appointed in the decree draws near, the people will conspire to root out the hated sect. It will be determined to strike in one night a decisive blow, which shall utterly silence the voice of dissent and reproof.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 635

The Fifth Plague of Darkness:

*"With shouts of triumph, jeering, and imprecation, throngs of evil men are about to **rush** upon their prey, when, lo, a **dense blackness**, deeper than the darkness of the night, falls upon the earth." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 635, 636*

The Raging Waters Arrested in the Sixth Plague:

*"The angry multitudes are suddenly **arrested**. Their mocking cries **die away**. The objects of their murderous rage are **forgotten**. With fearful forebodings they gaze upon the symbol of God's covenant and long to be shielded from its overpowering brightness." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 635*

The Voice of God Delivers the Living Saints at the Seventh Plague:

*"It is at **midnight** that God manifests His power for the **deliverance** of His people." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 635*

*"In the midst of the angry heavens is one clear space of indescribable glory, whence comes the **voice of God** like the sound of many waters, saying: 'It is done.' Revelation 16:17. **That voice** shakes the heavens and the earth. There is a mighty earthquake, 'such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.' Verses 17, 18." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 636, 637*

The Special Resurrection

*"**Graves are opened**, and 'many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth. . . awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.' [Daniel 12:2]. **All** who have died in the faith of the **third angel's message** come forth from the tomb **glorified**, to hear God's **covenant of peace** with those who have kept His law." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 637*

Day and Hour of Christ's Coming Announced

*"The voice of God is heard from heaven, **declaring the day and hour of Jesus' coming**, and delivering the everlasting covenant to His people. Like peals of loudest thunder His words roll through the earth. The **Israel of God** stand listening, with their eyes fixed upward. Their countenances are lighted up with His glory, and shine as did the face of Moses when he came down from Sinai. The wicked cannot look upon them. And when **the blessing [of Revelation 14:13]** is pronounced on those who have honored God by keeping **His Sabbath holy**, there is a mighty shout of victory." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 640*

The Sign of the Son of Man Appears

*"**Soon there appears** in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man's hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Savior and which seems **in the distance** to be shrouded in darkness. The people of God know this to be the **sign of the Son of man**. In solemn silence they gaze upon it as it **draws nearer** the earth, becoming lighter and more glorious, until it is a **great white cloud**, its base a glory like consuming fire, and above it the rainbow of the covenant. Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 640, 641*

Jesus Descends from Heaven

*"The King of kings **descends upon the cloud**, wrapped in flaming fire. The heavens are rolled together as a scroll, the earth trembles before Him, and every mountain and island is moved out of its place." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 641, 642*

The General Resurrection

*"Amid the reeling of the earth, the flash of lightning, and the roar of thunder, the voice of the Son of God **calls forth the sleeping saints**. He looks upon the graves of the righteous, then, raising His hands to heaven, He cries: "Awake, awake, awake, ye that sleep in the dust, and arise!" Throughout the length and breadth of the earth **the dead shall hear that voice**, and they that hear shall live. And the whole earth shall ring with the tread of the exceeding great army of every nation,*

kindred, tongue, and people. They come from the prison house of death, clothed with immortal glory, crying: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" 1 Corinthians 15:55. And the living righteous and the risen saints unite their voices in a long, glad shout of victory." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 644

Living and All the Resurrected Dead Caught Up

"The living righteous are changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." At the voice of God they were glorified; now they are made immortal and with the risen saints are caught up to meet their Lord in the air [1 Thessalonians 4:17]. Angels 'gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.' Little children are borne by holy angels to their mothers' arms. Friends long separated by death are united, nevermore to part, and with songs of gladness ascend together to the City of God." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 645

The Chronology and Biblical Foundation

"Then we heard the voice of God which shook the heavens and earth [Matthew 24:29], and gave the 144,000 the day and hour of Jesus' coming. Then the saints were free, united and full of the glory of God, for he had turned their captivity. And I saw a flaming cloud come where Jesus stood and he laid off his priestly garment and put on his kingly robe, took his place on the cloud which carried him to the east where it first appeared to the saints on earth, a small black cloud, which was the sign [Matthew 24:30] of the Son of Man. While the cloud was passing from the Holiest to the east which took a number of days, the Synagogue of Satan worshiped at the saints' feet." Ellen G. Harmon, Day Star, March 14, 1846

Another Special Resurrection: Abel and John the Baptist

"As the followers of Jesus should languish in lonely cells, or perish by the sword, the rack, or the fagot, apparently forsaken by God and man, what a stay to their

hearts would be the thought that **John the Baptist**, to whose faithfulness Christ Himself had borne witness, had passed through a **similar experience!**" Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 224

God never leads His children otherwise than **they would choose** to be led, if they could see the **end from the beginning**, and **discern the glory of the purpose** which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. Not **Enoch**, who was translated to heaven, not **Elijah**, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished **alone in the dungeon**. "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." Philippians 1:29. And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, **fellowship with Christ** in His **sufferings** is the weightiest trust and the highest honor." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 224, 225

Matthew 27:51-53

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

The **commentaries** are **fuzzy** about **who** they were, **when** they lived, and if they **died again**. However, **Ellen White** answers all of these questions.

"As Christ arose, He brought from the grave a **multitude** of **captives**. The earthquake at His death had rent open their graves, and when He arose, they came **forth with Him**. **They were** those who had been co-laborers with God, and who at the **cost of their lives** had borne testimony to the truth. Now they were to be witnesses for Him who had raised them from the dead." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 786

"Those favored, risen saints came forth **glorified**. They were chosen and holy ones of **every age, from creation** down even to the **days of Christ**. Thus while the Jewish leaders were seeking to conceal the fact of Christ's resurrection, God chose

to bring up a company from their graves to testify that Jesus had risen, and to declare His glory.” Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p.184

Summary:

- ✓ They were **captives** in the grave.
- ✓ They came out of their graves **when Jesus resurrected**.
- ✓ They were a **multitude**.
- ✓ They received their **glorified bodies**.
- ✓ They were people that lived from **creation** to the **days of Christ**.
- ✓ They died as **martyrs** for bearing witness to the truth.
- ✓ They went **into the city** and testified that Jesus had resurrected and they were proof.
- ✓ They **ascended to heaven** with Jesus forty days after the resurrection.

Most likely among them were **Abel** and **John the Baptist** because they were martyrs from creation to the days of Christ. If so, John the Baptist **did not remain** in the tomb very long.



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

“FROM THE CLOSE OF PROBATION TO THE NEW EARTH: A STUDY OF REVELATION CHAPTERS 15 TO 22”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #13 – The Typology of Sennacherib’s Invasion

In the year **722 BC**, King Shalmaneser came from the north country, besieged Samaria, and took it. Then, in the year 701 BC King Sennacherib came against Judah. Sennacherib swept from north to south and conquered everything in his path and he was certain that Jerusalem and Judah would fall into his hands as well. Isaiah 8:7, 8 compares his invasion of the Holy Land to the overflowing waters of the River Euphrates at flood stage:

*“Now therefore, behold, the Lord brings up over them the **waters of the River**, strong and mighty —the king of Assyria and all his glory; he will go up over all his channels and go **over all his banks**.⁸ He will pass through Judah, he will **overflow and pass over**, he will reach up to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings will fill the breadth of Your land, O Immanuel.”*

The full story of Sennacherib’s invasion of the Holy Land is in Isaiah 36-37 and 2 Kings 18-20.

The key word in the Isaiah narrative is ‘**deliver**’ (36:14, 15 (2x), 36:18 (2x), 19, 20 (2x); 37:11, 12). Sennacherib sought to intimidate those who took refuge in Jerusalem by reviewing his recent successes. He reminded those who fled to the

city that he had already taken the fortified cities of Judah in the Holy Land (Isaiah 36:1) and boasted that Jerusalem would suffer the same fate.

Therefore, Sennacherib sent a great army with Rabshakeh, his field commander, to Jerusalem with horses and chariots (Isaiah 36:2; 37:24) and three representatives from the city went out to meet him, Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, Shebna the scribe and Joah the son of Asaph (Isaiah 36:3).

Rabshakeh delivered a message from Sennacherib referring to him as the **great king**, the king of Assyria (Isaiah 36:4). Only God has the right to claim the title 'Great King' who dwells in Jerusalem in the sides of the north (Psalm 48:1, 2). The Assyrian king was attempting to usurp the position of the legitimate King of the North.

Rabshakeh delivered a message to King Hezekiah mocking him for saying that he had an army with which to make war against the great king of Assyria. He then made fun of Hezekiah for trusting that his ally, Egypt, would lend support to defeat the great king (Isaiah 36:5, 6).

Rabshakeh then attempted to bribe Judah to submit voluntarily to the king by making a peace treaty. In fact, he claimed that Jerusalem would not escape because God Himself had instructed him to march against the city to destroy it. (Isaiah 36:7-10). Sennacherib was saying to Hezekiah, "if the LORD instructed me to destroy the city, how then can you depend upon Him to deliver you?" (Isaiah 36:9, 10). Rabshakeh in a threatening tone bellowed out:

*"Hear the words of the **great king**, the king of Assyria! ¹⁴ Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to **deliver** you; ¹⁵ nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, "The Lord will surely **deliver** us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria."' (Isaiah 36:13-15)*

Again, Rabshakeh called upon Judah to make peace with him so that all would go well with them. He promised that if they submitted to the great king, they

would eat bread and drink wine instead of eating their own waste and drinking their own urine (Isaiah 36:16, 7).

Then Rabshakeh reminded them that the great king had conquered all the nations before he came to Jerusalem (Isaiah 36:18-20; 37:11-13, 18) and that their gods had not been able to **deliver** them (Isaiah 36:19, 20). Three times he used the expression 'from my hand', an expression that we find in Daniel 11 (see Daniel 11:41, 42):

*"Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Indeed, have they **delivered** Samaria **from my hand**?²⁰ Who among all the gods of these lands have **delivered** their countries **from my hand**, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem **from my hand**?"*

The king had conquered everything in his path and Jerusalem was the last stand against his power. If Sennacherib could conquer the city, his triumph would be complete.

Once again, Rabshakeh mocked the possible help of Egypt (Isaiah 36:5, 6) and even went so far as to ask the question, 'will you trust in the LORD? (Isaiah 36:7). In other words, the blasphemous challenge was not only against Judah but also against the LORD! He challenged those who had found refuge in the city telling them that Hezekiah would not be able to **deliver** them (Isaiah 36:14).

Going a step further, he blasphemously claimed that the LORD would not be able to deliver them either (Isaiah 36:15, 18). He pointed out that the gods of the nations (and he mentioned several of them by name, including Samaria) had not been able to deliver them from the great king's power (Isaiah 36:19, 20) and the God of Judah would not be able to deliver them either.

King Hezekiah told the people that they should not answer the king's threats with a single word and it was so (Isaiah 36:21). Then the three representatives from Jerusalem rent their clothes and relayed the message of the field commander to King Hezekiah (Isaiah 36:22).

In response, Hezekiah tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the LORD (Isaiah 37:1). As the story develops, we will see that Hezekiah's affliction was not due to fear of the king but rather holy indignation because the king blasphemed the name of the LORD. Hezekiah did not make it a priority to organize and rally his troops.

Hezekiah sent Eliakim, Shebna, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz for divine direction from the LORD (Isaiah 37:2; a similar case is 2 Chronicles 20:20 when a threefold coalition came against God's people in the days of King Jehoshaphat). The representatives told Isaiah that this was a **day of trouble**, of rebuke and of blasphemy because Sennacherib had reproached the living God (Isaiah 37:3; see also Jeremiah 30:4-9; Genesis 32:6ff; Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21-24). Their hope was that the LORD had heard the blasphemous words and would intervene to deliver his remnant:

*"It may be that the Lord your God will hear the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to **reproach the living God**, and will rebuke the words which the **Lord your God has heard**. Therefore, lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left." (Isaiah 37:4, 5)*

Isaiah the prophet then delivered a message from the Lord to King Hezekiah:

*"And Isaiah said to them, 'Thus you shall say to your master, thus says the Lord: 'Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have **blasphemed Me**.⁷ Surely I will send a spirit upon him, and he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.'" (Isaiah 37:6)*

Rabshakeh then returned and gave a report to the king of Assyria (Isaiah 37:8, 9) to which the king responded by defying the God of heaven:

*"Thus you shall speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying: 'Do not let **your God** in whom you trust **deceive you**, saying, "Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand*

*of the king of Assyria." ¹¹ Look! You have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by utterly destroying them; and shall you be **delivered**? ¹² Have the gods of the nations **delivered** those whom my fathers have destroyed, Gozan and Haran and Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? ¹³ Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?" (Isaiah 37:10-13)*

When Hezekiah received the defiant message from Sennacherib, he went into the temple, laid the king's letter before the LORD, and prayed a beautiful prayer (Isaiah 37:14-20). In his prayer he addressed God as the One who dwells between the cherubim (see Psalm 80:1 and its context), the God of all kingdoms who created heaven and earth. Hezekiah then pleaded for God to open His eyes and ears to see and hear all the words that Sennacherib spoke to 'reproach the living God'. He 'reminded' the LORD that the kings of Assyria had laid waste all nations and their lands and cast their gods into the fire 'because they were not gods but the work of men's hands' and that, for this reason, they destroyed them.

At the climax of his prayer, Hezekiah pleaded, 'Lord God, **save us** from his hand (a synonym of 'deliver us'). The expression 'save us from his hand' appears in Daniel 11:41 where Edom, Moab and Ammon escape or are delivered from the hand of the king of the north. However, Hezekiah was not so much concerned with deliverance to escape destruction as 'that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you are the LORD, you alone'.

In response to Hezekiah's prayer, Isaiah relayed a message from the LORD assuring him that, because he had prayed, God was going to deliver Judah from the hand of Sennacherib. In the first part of the message, God challenged Sennacherib:

*"Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice, and lifted up your eyes on high? **Against the Holy One of Israel.**" (Isaiah 37:23)*

A similar occurrence took place when Israel left Egypt. When Pharaoh pursued Israel into the Red Sea, God caused the wheels of Pharaoh's six hundred chariots to fall off and Pharaoh exclaimed, 'Let us flee from the face of Israel, for **the Lord fights for them** against the Egyptians.' (Exodus 14:25). In other words, the war against the people of the LORD was a war against the LORD of the people (Isaiah 37:22, 28, 29). God assured Sennacherib that He knew all about his going out and coming in and his rage against Him:

*"But I know your dwelling place, your going out and your coming in, and your **rage against Me**.²⁹ Because **your rage against Me** and your tumult have come up to My ears, therefore I will put My hook in your nose and My bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way which you came." (Isaiah 37:28, 29).*

Then God assured Sennacherib that He would save a remnant in the city in His Holy Mount and promised that Sennacherib would not come into the city:

*"The remnant of those who have escaped shall take root for out of **Jerusalem** shall go a remnant, and those who **escape** from **Mount Zion**. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.³³ "Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria: 'He shall **not come into this city**, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor build a siege mound against it.³⁴ By the way that he came, by the same shall he return; and **he shall not come into this city**,' Says the Lord.³⁵ 'For I will defend this city, to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.'" (Isaiah 37:31-35).*

The very evening that Sennacherib gathered his troops to attack the city, God intervened to deliver it:

"Then the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead".

Sennacherib, so to speak, with his tail between his legs, returned to Niniveh, the capital of his empire where his own sons killed him:

“So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh. ³⁸ Now it came to pass, as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god that his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat.” (Isaiah 37:36-38)

Isaiah 30:26ff describes the destruction of Sennacherib’s army. Ellen White specifically quotes Isaiah 30 in an eschatological context when God will deliver His people from the flooding of the symbolic River Euphrates:

*“The people of God—some in prison cells, some hidden in solitary retreats in the forests and the mountains—still plead for divine protection, while in every quarter companies of armed men, urged on by hosts of evil angels, are preparing for the work of death. It is now, in the hour of utmost extremity that the God of Israel will interpose for the **deliverance of His chosen**. Saith the Lord; "Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth . . . to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the Mighty One of Israel. And the Lord shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of His arm, with the indignation of His anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones." **Isaiah 30:29, 30.***

With shouts of triumph, jeering, and imprecation, throngs of evil men are about to rush upon their prey, when, lo, a dense blackness, deeper than the darkness of the night, falls upon the earth. Then a rainbow, shining with the glory from the throne of God, spans the heavens and seems to encircle each praying company. The angry multitudes are suddenly arrested. Their mocking cries die away. The objects of their murderous rage are forgotten. With fearful forebodings they gaze upon the symbol of God's covenant and long to be shielded from its overpowering brightness.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 635, 636



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Lesson #14 – Isaiah 24:21-23: The Millennium
in the Old Testament

The Little Apocalypse

Theologians have referred to Isaiah 24-27 as ‘the little apocalypse’ because it has many affinities with the book of Revelation, particularly the last three chapters. In this study will focus particularly on chapter 24 as the backdrop for Revelation 20.

A Global Cataclysmic Catastrophe

Isaiah 24 describes the cataclysmic events that will occur during the outpouring of the last three plagues of Revelation 16:

Isaiah 24:1-4

“Behold, the LORD makes the earth empty and makes it waste, distorts its surface and scatters abroad its inhabitants. And it shall be: as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with

the borrower; as with the creditor, so with the debtor. The land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered, for the LORD has spoken this word. The earth mourns and fades away, the world languishes and fades away; the haughty people of the earth languish.”

The Roman Catholic scholar, Frederick Moriarty wrote about the cataclysmic events in these verses:

“God’s word had once established order in the world (Genesis 1); the picture is that of a return to primeval chaos.” Frederick Moriarty, The Jerome Biblical Commentary, volume 1, p. 277

This chapter describes the de-creation of planet earth. The end of the chapter continues the description of the devastating effect of the global earthquake that will shake the earth when God pours out the seventh plague (Revelation 16:17-21).

Isaiah 24:18-20

“And it shall be that he who flees from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit, and he who comes up from the midst of the pit shall be caught in the snare; for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth are shaken. The earth is violently broken, the earth is split open; the earth is shaken exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall totter like a hut; its transgression shall be heavy upon it, and it will fall, and not rise again.”

This description reminds us of Revelation 6:15-17 where the wicked will be searching for places to hide and crying out for the rocks to fall on them as Jesus descends from heaven.

How many are Left?

Verse 6 describes the devastating impact of the earthquake upon the inhabitants of the planet:

Isaiah 24:6

*“Therefore the curse has **devoured** the earth, and those who **dwell in it are desolate**. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and **few men** are **left**.”*

This verse leaves us with a question. Who are the men that will be left when this global catastrophe occurs? We know for a fact that when Jesus comes, all the wicked inhabitants of the earth will perish so this must mean that those who are left are the righteous.

It is commonly believed that those who are ‘taken’ when Jesus comes are the righteous and those who are ‘left’ are the wicked; however, the opposite is true. The word ‘left’ refers to a remnant that **remains alive** after a cataclysm (see my book, “Taken or Left?” at SecretsUnsealed.org). When the flood came, only Noah and his family were left:

Genesis 7:22, 23, NKJV

*“So He destroyed **all living things** which were on the face of the ground: Both **man** and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were **destroyed** from the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark **remained** alive.”*

Genesis 7:23: ESV

*“Only Noah was **left**, and those who were with him in the ark.”*

Isaiah 24:6 tells us that when the global cataclysm comes, ‘few’ men will be ‘left’. 1 Peter 3:20 tells us that the ‘few’ who remained alive at the flood were Noah and his family:

1 Peter 3:20

*"... in which **a few**, that is, **eight persons**, were brought safely through water."*

It is curious that every time that Ellen White quoted Isaiah 24:6 she left out the last sentence in the verse that says 'few men are left'. Here is one example:

"The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this word." "Because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore, hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned." Isaiah 24:1, 3, 5, 6." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 657

Perhaps Ellen White did not want anyone to assume that when the cataclysm comes some wicked people will survive.

Heavenly Hosts and Kings of the Earth Punished

As noted before, Isaiah 24:18-20 describes the seventh plague. When Jesus comes, He will punish **two groups** of wicked beings, the **exalted ones** and the **kings of the earth**.

Isaiah 24:21, NKJV

*"It shall come to pass in that day that the LORD **will punish** on high the host of **exalted ones**, and on the earth **the kings of the earth**."*

Isaiah 24:21, RSV

*"In that day the Lord will punish the **powers in the heavens** above and the kings on the **earth below**."*

The first group to be punished is **heavenly** and the second is **earthly**. We know that the kings of the earth are the earthly group (Revelation 19:19) but who is the heavenly group? The New Testament provides the answer:

Ephesians 6:12

*“For we do not wrestle against **flesh and blood** [human beings] but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against **spiritual hosts** of wickedness in the **heavenly places**.”*

In Scripture the **heavenly hosts are angels** (cf. 2 Chronicles 18:18; Luke 2:13, 14) and the expression ‘**flesh and blood**’ refers to human beings (Hebrews 2:14). The apostle Paul assures us that we are not warring against mere human **beings** but rather against **heavenly powers**. Elsewhere the apostle Paul calls Satan “*the prince of the power of the air.*” (Ephesians 2:2). Thus, the host of heaven here refers to **Satan and his angels**.

Who are the kings of the earth that will be punished when Jesus comes? Revelation 19 provides the answer:

Revelation 19:19

*“And I saw the beast, the **kings of the earth**, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.”*

The punishment of the heavenly and earthly groups will consist of **two stages**. The first stage will be imprisonment in the bottomless pit.

First Stage of Punishment

Isaiah 24:22, first part

*“They will be gathered together, as **prisoners** are gathered in **the pit**, and will be shut up in **the prison**.”*

The ‘pit’ is a place where dead people are cast and living persons are incarcerated. When Joseph arrived in **Dothan**, his brothers cast him **alive** into a pit:

Genesis 37:24

*“Then they took him and cast him **into a pit** and the **pit** was empty; there was no water in it.”*

Likewise, the enemies of **Jeremiah** cast him **alive** into a pit:

Jeremiah 38:6

*“So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the **dungeon** of Malchiah the king's son, which was in the **court of the prison**, and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. And in the **dungeon** there was no water, but mire. So Jeremiah sank in the mire.”*

Both Joseph and Jeremiah were cast alive into **cisterns**. Cisterns were perfect places to cast prisoners when the cisterns were dry. The word ‘pit’ in Isaiah 24 and Genesis 37:24 are identical as is the word ‘dungeon’ in Jeremiah. The pit was a place of **temporary confinement** until a **final decision** could be made on what to do with Joseph and Jeremiah.

However, the pit was not only a place of confinement for the living. Dead people were also cast into cisterns:

Isaiah 38:18

*“For **Sheol** cannot thank You, **death** cannot praise You; those who go down to **the pit** cannot hope for Your truth.”*

In this text, the word ‘pit’ is used synonymously with **death** and **the grave** (see also Jeremiah 41:7, 9). We shall see below that **Satan and his angels** will be confined to the pit in a **living state** while the **kings of the earth** will be confined there while they **are dead**.

Satan's Place of Confinement

Where will Satan be cast for a thousand years immediately after the second coming of Jesus?

Revelation 20:2, 3

*"He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and **bound** him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless **pit** [**abussos**], and **shut him up**, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while."*

Revelation 20:7 explains that after the thousand years Satan will be released from his **prison** for the **second stage** of his punishment.

Satan's Wicked Followers

Satan's **wicked followers** will remain dead in the 'pit' during the thousand years:

Revelation 20:5

*"But the **rest of the dead** did not live again until the thousand years were finished."*

Many Days = 1000 Years

Satan, his angels and the kings of the earth will be imprisoned in the pit for many days:

Isaiah 24:22, last part

*"**After many days** they will be **punished**."*

A careful reading of Isaiah 24:21, 22 clearly reveals that the punishment of Satan and the wicked kings of the earth will be meted out in **two distinct**

stages. The first stage will **imprison them for many days** (Revelation's millennium) after which they will **finally and definitively be punished**.

New Jerusalem Descends

At the end of the 'many days', the New Jerusalem will descend from heaven.

Revelation 21:2

*"Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, **coming down** out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."*

The Sun and the Moon

After the millennium, the moon will be disgraced and the sun ashamed in the city:

Isaiah 24:23

*"Then the **moon** will be disgraced and the **sun** ashamed; for the LORD of hosts **will reign** on Mount Zion and in **Jerusalem** and **before His elders**, gloriously."*

Revelation 21:23

*"The **city** had **no need** of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the **glory of God** illuminated it. The Lamb is its light."*

The text does not say that there will **not be** any sun or moon in the new heavens and the new earth. After all, there will be **monthly** and **weekly cycles** there (see Isaiah 66:22, 23; Revelation 22:2). What we are told is that the **city** has no **need** of sun or moon. The light of the sun and moon will be like shining the light of a **flashlight at high noon**.

Satan, his Angels and the Wicked Finally Punished

After the 'many days' of the millennium, the wicked dead are released from their prison because they live again (Revelation 20:5) and Satan is also released because he has his power base back. Revelation 20:7 uses the word 'prison' that appeared in Isaiah 24:22. Satan and the wicked will then suffer the second and final stage of their punishment.

Revelation 20:7-9

"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.⁹ They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them."

The Future Life

Revelation 21:1

"Now I saw a new heavens and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea."

Revelation 21:4

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

Isaiah 25:8

"He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people, He will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken."

Isaiah 24:23

*“Then the **moon** will be disgraced and the **sun** ashamed; for the LORD of hosts **will reign** on Mount Zion and in **Jerusalem** and **before His elders**, gloriously.”*



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Lesson #15 – The Millennium: Changing the Ordinance

Introduction

Some Old Testament scholars have referred to Isaiah 24-27 as the little Apocalypse of the Old Testament because it has many elements in common with the book of Revelation. In this study we want to take a look some elements that we find in Isaiah 24.

A Picture of the Second Coming

Isaiah 24:17-23

“Fear and the pit and the snare are upon you, O inhabitant of the earth. ¹⁸ And it shall be that he who flees from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit, and he who comes up from the midst of the pit shall be caught in the snare; for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth are shaken. ¹⁹ The earth is violently broken, the earth is split open, the earth is shaken exceedingly. ²⁰ The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall totter like a hut; its transgression shall be heavy upon it, and it will fall, and not rise again. ²¹ It shall come to pass in that day that the LORD will punish on high the host

of exalted ones, and on the earth the kings of the earth. ²² They will be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and will be shut up in the prison; after many days they will be punished. ²³ Then the moon will be disgraced and the sun ashamed; for the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before His elders, gloriously.”

Here is a summary of the main details of the verses quoted above:

- A **global catastrophe** or cataclysm—the second coming of Christ.
- God **punishes** Satan, his angels and the wicked kings of the earth by shutting them up in **prison**.
- **They remain in prison for many days**, that is, one thousand years.
- After the thousand years there is the **second and final stage** of punishment.
- After the thousand years the **New Jerusalem** and Mt. Zion come to view.
- In the city, the **sun and moon** are ashamed.
- God **reigns** in Zion and **Jerusalem** before **His ancients** (elders) gloriously.

This entire scene is a description of global events that occur **before, during** and **after** the thousand years. The picture is one of a global cataclysm.

Three Reasons for Defilement

Let's take a look at **Isaiah 24:5, 6**:

*“The earth mourns and **fades away**, the world languishes and **fades away**; the haughty people of the earth languish. The earth is also **defiled** under its inhabitants, **because** they have [1] **transgressed** the laws, [2] **changed** the ordinance, and [3] **broken** the everlasting covenant.”*

The Hebrew word ‘**defiled**’ means ‘to soil, to corrupt, to pollute **morally**’ (cf. Jeremiah 3:9; Jeremiah 23:11).

The earth was defiled by its inhabitants for **three parallel reasons**:

- They **transgressed** the **laws**.
- They **changed** the **ordinance**.
- They **broke** the everlasting **covenant**.

Consequences of the Three Reasons

What are the **consequences** for the three reasons that defiled the earth? The word '**therefore**' in Isaiah 24:6 provides the answer:

"Therefore, the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left."

Let's consider each of the **three reasons** for the defilement of the earth by its inhabitants.

Transgressed the laws

A comparison with other verses of the Bible clearly reveals **which laws** Isaiah refers to. The identical word appears in **Nehemiah 9:13-14** and links **Mt. Sinai, the Law and the Sabbath**:

Nehemiah 9:13, 14

"You came down also on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven, and gave them just ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments. ¹⁴ You made known to them Your holy Sabbath and commanded them precepts, statutes and laws by the hand of Moses Your servant."

Someone might object that the Hebrew *Torah* also describes requirements of the **ceremonial law**. Although this is true, Isaiah 24:5 cannot refer to the transgression of **ceremonial laws** because they passed away when Jesus **died on the cross**. God would **not punish** the world for breaking laws that were no

longer binding! Therefore, these must be **perpetual laws** that apply to the entire human race at all times.

Incidentally, it is possible that originally the word *Torah* was singular because the **Syriac**, the **LXX** and the **Chaldee** all have the word *Torah* in singular.

The New Testament defines sin as ‘transgression of the law’ and predicts that the transgression of the law will characterize the world shortly before the second coming.

1 John 3:4

*“Whosoever committeth sin **transgresseth** also the **law**: for sin is the **transgression of the law**.” [anomías].”*

According to Matthew 24:12 the final generation will be a lawless one. Why would God **condemn** the world for **lawlessness** if the law was **nailed to the cross**? Jesus predicted that the love of many would grow cold in the end time because of lawlessness.

Matthew 24:12

*“And because **lawlessness will abound**, the love of many will grow cold.”*

Not only will secular people be lawless in the end time but also many who claimed the name of Jesus. According to Jesus, these counterfeit believers will even perform **signs and wonders** in His name. However, Jesus will refuse to recognize them as His because they are **transgressors** of the Law.

Matthew 7:23

*“And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who **practice lawlessness** [anomías]!’”*

Hebrews 1:8

The wicked end time generation will stand in **contrast** to Jesus who **hated lawlessness** because the law was in His heart (Psalm 40:7, 8).

*"But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. You have **loved righteousness** and **hated lawlessness** [*anomías*]; therefore, God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions."*

In 2 Thessalonians 2:7 apostle Paul refers to the work of the final Antichrist as the 'mystery of lawlessness' [*anomías*].

Changed the Ordinance

Isaiah 24:6 refers to the change of a particular ordinance because the word is in singular. Let's determine first of all the meaning of the word 'change'?

- **Laban** changed Jacob's **salary** ten times (Genesis 31:7).
- **Joseph** changed his **garments** before he appeared before Pharaoh (Genesis 41:14).
- The Hebrew word is also translated '**abolish**' (Isaiah 2:18) and '**alter**' (Leviticus 27:10)

What is the root meaning of the word '**ordinance**'?

Lexicographers explain that the original Hebrew root of the word **choq** means 'to scratch or engrave **cutting in** or engraving **in stone**.' Thus, according to the best **Hebrew scholars**, the original root means 'to engrave laws upon **slabs of stone** or **metal** to set them in a **public place**.' Jack P. Lewis, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, volume 1, p. 317.

According to **Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon** the word means: "... to cut in, to **cut upon**, to **engrave**, to **inscribe**, to trace and to mark out"

The word frequently appears accompanied by other words for law in the Old Testament such as 'word', 'testimony', 'law', 'judgment' and 'commandment'.

"The word's synonyms are mitswah, 'commandment'; mishpat, 'judgment'; berit, 'covenant'; torah, 'law'; and `edut, 'testimony.' It is not easy to distinguish between these synonyms, as they are often found in conjunction with each other." Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c) 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

The word **choq** describes **unchangeable decrees** that God established **at creation**:

- The creation decree which keeps **the sea** contained within its bounds:

Proverbs 8:29

NIV: ". . . when he gave the sea its **boundary** [**choq: decree, KJV**] so the waters would not overstep his **command**, and when he **marked out** the foundations of the earth."

Job 38:8-11

NIV: "Who **shut up** the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb [**at creation the world was filled with water**], when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick **darkness**, when I **fixed limits** [**choq**] for it and set its **doors and bars** in place, when I said, 'This far you may come and **no farther**; here is where your proud waves halt?'"

- The creation decree that keeps the **heavenly bodies** in their orbits:

Psalms 148:3, 6

NKJV: "Praise ye him, **sun** and **moon**: praise him, all you **stars** of light . . . Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. Let them praise the name of the LORD for he commanded and **they were created**. He **set them in place** for ever and ever; he gave a **decree** [**choq**] that will never pass away."

- God's decree that causes the **rain to fall** in its due season:

Job 28:25, 26

*NIV: "When he **established** the force of the wind and **measured out** the waters, when he made a **decree** [**choq**] for the rain and a **path** for the thunderstorm."*

- God's decree which guarantees the **regularity of the seasons** of harvest:

Jeremiah 5:24

*NIV: "They do not say to themselves, 'Let us fear the LORD our God, who gives autumn and spring rains in season, who assures us of the **regular** [**choq**] weeks of harvest.'*

- The word *choq* describes how God made an **everlasting covenant** with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, an **oath** that could **not be changed**.

1 Chronicles 16:17

*NIV: "The covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as **a decree** [**choq**], to Israel as an **everlasting covenant**."*

Psalms 89:34: Later, God promised to **David**:

*NKJV: "My **covenant** I will not **break**, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips."*

God **engraved** the Ten Commandments upon **tables of stone** with His own finger to emphasize their **permanence** and unchangeable nature.

Exodus 32:16-17

*"Now the **tablets** were the **work of God**, and the writing was the writing of God **engraved** on the tablets."*

The change of the ordinance reminds us of the little horn in Daniel 7:25 who intended to **change** God's Law. We are reminded that the root meaning of the word **choq** is 'to etch or engrave'. What change did the papacy attempt to make in the law that God **engraved** on tables of stone? What divine ordinance that God established at creation and engraved in the Ten Commandments did the papacy attempt to change? The answer is the Sabbath. Actually, the present day papacy is also guilty of accepting another change in God's creation order, marriage!

The first ordinance that God established at creation was **marriage** between a man and a woman and the second was the **Sabbath**. Regarding the origin of these two institutions Ellen White wrote:

*"Marriage was **from the creation** constituted by God a **divine ordinance**. The marriage institution was made **in Eden**. The **Sabbath** of the fourth commandment was instituted **in Eden**, when the foundations of the world were laid, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. Then let this, **God's institution of marriage**, stand before you **as firm as the Sabbath** of the fourth commandment." Ellen G. White, Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery and Divorce, p. 159*

*"The Sabbath was hallowed at the creation. As **ordained** [key word] for man, it had its origin when 'the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' Job 38:7. Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 281*

*"I was shown that the **law of God** would stand fast **forever**, and exist in the new earth to **all eternity**. At the creation, when the **foundations of the earth were laid**, the sons of God looked with admiration upon the work of the Creator, and all the heavenly host shouted for joy [Job 38:4-7]. It was then that the **foundation of the Sabbath was laid** . . . I saw that the Sabbath **never will be done away**; but that the redeemed saints and all the angelic host, will observe it in honor of the great Creator **to all eternity**." Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 217*

*"Like the Sabbath, **the week** originated **at creation**, and it has been preserved and brought down to us through Bible history. God Himself **measured off** [God not only measured the geography of the earth but also the chronology] the first week as a **sample** for successive weeks to the close of time. Like every other, it consisted of seven literal days. Six days were employed in the work of creation; upon the seventh, God rested, and He then blessed this day and set it apart as a day of rest for man. Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 111*

*"All those who hold the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end will keep the seventh-day Sabbath, which comes to us as **marked by the sun**." Ellen G. White, Selected Message, vol. 3, pp. 318, 319*

*"The Creator of the heavens and the earth commanded, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work." This command was **enforced by the example** of its Author, **proclaimed with his own voice**, and placed in the very **bosom** of the Decalogue. But the **papal power** has **removed** [or changed] this **divine ordinance** [key word] and **substituted** a day that God has not sanctified, and upon which he did not rest, the festival so long adored by heathens as the "venerable day of the sun." Ellen G. White, The Signs of the Times, September 14, 1882*

*"The prophet thus points out **the ordinance** [key word] which has been forsaken: 'Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.' Verses 12-14. This prophecy also applies in our time. The breach was made in the law of God when the **Sabbath was changed** [notice the terminology] by the **Roman power**. But the time has come for that divine institution to be **restored**. The breach is to be repaired and the foundation of many generations to be raised up. Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 452, 453*

Conservative Christians today **fight tooth and nail** to defend marriage between a man and a woman because God ordained it that way **at creation**. They cry out against **liberal culture's** attempt to **change** the marriage institution from **heterosexual to homosexual**.

However, it is inconsistent to **restore one** creation ordinance—marriage—and not the other—the Sabbath. It is contradictory to say that marriage must be between a man and woman because God made it so at creation and in the same breath say that Sabbath observance has been changed to Sunday. This kind of **double talk** must come to an end. I **challenge** Bible believing Christians to **restore both** creation institutions as God originally made them. After all, both of these institutions **are symbols** of the **relationship** between God and His people! If marriage is still a symbol of that relationship, why not the Sabbath?

Broken the Everlasting Covenant

The third sin that will defile the world and cause its destruction is breaking the everlasting covenant. There is only **one everlasting covenant** that the Father made with the Son in eternal ages past. The **agreement** was that if man sinned, God would **provide a substitute** to restore man to his original condition.

The covenant has **two aspects**: [1] covenant law and [2] covenant sacrifice. The violation of **covenant law** made the **covenant sacrifice** necessary.

Deuteronomy 4:12-13 describes covenant law:

*“And the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice. ¹³ So He declared to you His **covenant** which He commanded you to perform, that is, the **Ten Commandments**; and **He wrote** them on two **tablets of stone**.”*

The covenant sacrifice in the Old Testament consisted of rites and ceremonies that pointed forward to the one and only sacrifice of Christ. When have faith in the sacrifice of Christ, He will work to write the law in our heart.

Hebrews 8:10-12

*"For this is the **covenant** that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws **in their mind** and write them **on their hearts**; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹¹ None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. ¹² For I will be **merciful** to their unrighteousness, and their **sins** and their **lawless deeds** I will **remember no more.**"*

Isaiah 26:12: God works in us

*"LORD, You will establish peace for us, for **You have also done all our works in us.**"*

Philippians 2:12-13

*"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is **God who works in you** both to will and to do for **His good pleasure.**"*

Ephesians 2:8-10

*"For **by grace** you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ **not of works**, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which **God prepared beforehand** that we should **walk in them.**"*

Hebrews 13:20, 21

*"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the **blood of the everlasting covenant,** ²¹ make you complete in every **good work to do His will**, working in you what is **well pleasing** in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."*

How Can This Be Done?

Isaiah 26:1-3 and emphasize the word ‘stayed’ or fastened to:

*“In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: “We have a **strong city**: God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks. Open **the gates** that the righteous nation that **keeps the truth** may enter in. You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is **stayed** on You, because he **trusts** in You.”*

Our mind must be stayed on Him. We do not become like Jesus by merely **glimpsing** or **glancing** at Him once in a while but by **lingering** and **dwelling** on Him.

2 Corinthians 3:18

*“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed** into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”*

*“By beholding Christ, by talking of Him, by beholding the loveliness of His character we become **changed**. **Changed** from glory to glory. And what is glory? Character—and he becomes **changed** from character to character. Thus we see that there is a work of **purification** that goes on by beholding Jesus.” Ellen G. White, Sons and Daughters of God, p. 337*

Revelation 22:14, 15

*“Blessed are those who **do His commandments** [Revelation 12:17; 14:12], that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.”*



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
“FROM THE CLOSE OF PROBATION TO THE NEW EARTH:
A STUDY OF REVELATION CHAPTERS 15 TO 22”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #16 – The Four Cycles of Revelation’s Millennium

The Millennium’s Beginning and Structural Matters

Revelation 19:11-21 describes the seventh plague followed by the second coming of Jesus. By this time, the plagues have **decimated the population** of the planet and only a few survivors are left.

Revelation 19:21

*“And the **rest** [what remained after the plagues] were slain with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse.”*

When Jesus arrives, he will send His angels to catch up the faithful into the cloud and take them to heaven, a journey that will last **seven days**. Ellen White vividly described the arrival in heaven:

*“Here they stand, and the finishing touch of immortality is put upon them, and they go up to meet their Lord **in the air**. The gates of the city of God swing back upon their hinges, and the **nations** that have kept the truth enter in. There are the **columns of angels** on either side, and the ransomed of God walk in through the cherubim and seraphim. **Christ bids them welcome** and puts upon them His benediction. “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy*

*of thy Lord." What is that joy? He sees of the **travail of His soul**, and is satisfied."*
Ellen G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 1093

The second coming of Jesus is followed by the millennium described in Revelation **20:1-21:8**. It is important to remember that the events this passage are **not in strict chronological order** but rather run in **four repetitive cycles** with each repetitive cycle reaching the **same climax**. Although there are four repetitive cycles, each cycle has a **different center of focus** or emphasis:

- ✓ **Revelation 20:1-3**: Center of Focus: **Satan and the condition of the earth**.
- ✓ **Revelation 20:4-10**: Center of Focus: **The saints in heaven**.
- ✓ **Revelation 20:11-21:1**: Center of Focus: The **judgment of the wicked**.
- ✓ **Revelation 21:2-8**: Center of Focus: **Future life in the Holy City**.

Cycle #1: Satan and the Earth (20:1-3)

When probation closes, God will allow Satan to have entire control of the finally impenitent. At this point God will give Satan free rein to wreak havoc on the earth:

*"As Jesus moved out of the most holy place, I heard the tinkling of the bells upon His garment; and as He left, a cloud of darkness covered the inhabitants of the earth. There was then no mediator between guilty man and an offended God. While Jesus had been standing between God and guilty man, a restraint was upon the people; but when He stepped out from between man and the Father, the **restraint was removed** and Satan had **entire control** of the finally impenitent."*
Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 280

However, at the end of the time of trouble, a powerful angel will come down **from heaven** with the key to the **bottomless pit** and a chain in his hand to bind Satan for one thousand years. Having lost his followers to death, Satan will be powerless:

Revelation 20:1

*“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the **bottomless pit [abussos]** and a **great chain** in his hand.”*

We must link Revelation 20:1 with Genesis 1:2 (in the LXX) because the same Greek word is used to describe the chaotic condition of the earth before creation in Genesis and after the seven plagues in Revelation.

Genesis 1:2

*“The earth was **without form, and void**; and darkness was on the face of the **deep [abussos in the LXX]** and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”*

The translation ‘bottomless pit’ in Revelation 20:1 is **unfortunate**. There is nothing literally bottomless about the pit. The Greek word is *abussos* from where we get the English word ‘**abyss**’. As mentioned before, the Greek translation (LXX) of the Old Testament word ‘deep’ (*tehom*) is the same as the one in Revelation 20:1 (*abussos*).

This word in Genesis describes a planet in a **disorderly and empty** state before creation week. In Revelation, just before the binding of Satan, the **plagues of Revelation 16** will **reverse creation** and **return** the earth, in a great degree, to pre-creation chaos. The plagues will afflict the very things that God made during creation week. We might say that the plagues cause **de-creation**!

- The planet returns to **darkness**.
- The surface of the earth is **broken up**.
- The **sun, moon and stars** are moved from their places (EW, p. 41; Matthew 24:29).
- The intense heat of the sun scorches all the **vegetation**.
- The **water of the seas** are turned into with blood.
- All the **fish die**.
- All the **birds die**.
- All **human beings** die!

- The earth is **empty, disorderly and lifeless**.

In vision, Jeremiah saw the condition of the earth **at the second coming**:

Jeremiah 4:19-26

*"O my soul, my soul! I am pained in my very heart! My heart makes a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because you have heard, O my soul, the sound of the **trumpet**, the alarm of **war**.²⁰ **Destruction upon destruction** is cried, for the **whole land is plundered**. Suddenly my tents are plundered, and my curtains in a moment.²¹ How long will I see the standard, and hear the sound of the **trumpet**?²² "For My people are foolish, they have not known Me. They are silly children, and they have no understanding. They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge."²³ I beheld the earth, and indeed it was **without form, and void**; and the heavens, they had **no light**.²⁴ I beheld the mountains, and indeed they **trembled**, and all the hills moved back and forth.²⁵ I beheld, and indeed there was **no man**, and all the **birds** of the heavens had fled.²⁶ I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land was a **wilderness [the vegetation]**, and all its cities were broken down at the presence of the Lord, by His fierce anger."*

However, God told Jeremiah that the desolation of the earth at the second coming would **not yet be the full end**:

Jeremiah 4:27

*"For thus says the Lord: "The **whole land** shall be **desolate**; yet I will not make a **full end**."*

In the passage that follows, Jeremiah saw the Lord coming with a **shout** (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16) treading the **winepress** (cf. Revelation 14:17-20; 19:15) at His coming and then predicted that those slain with the Lord's **sword** (cf. Revelation 19:21) would not be lamented, gathered or buried but would be as refuse upon the ground:

Jeremiah 25:30-38

*"Therefore prophesy against them all these words, and say to them: 'The Lord will **roar from on high**, and utter **His voice** from His holy habitation; He will **roar mightily** against His fold. He will give a **shout**, as those who **tread the grapes**, against **all the inhabitants** of the earth. ³¹ A noise will come to the ends of the earth—for the Lord has a **controversy with the nations**; He will plead His case with all flesh. He will give those who are wicked to **the sword**,' says the Lord." ³² Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Behold, disaster shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the farthest parts of the earth. ³³ "And at that day the slain of the Lord shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth. They shall **not be lamented**, or **gathered**, or **buried**; they shall become refuse on the ground."*

The '**Little Apocalypse**' in the book of Isaiah describes the devastation of the earth at the second coming:

Isaiah 24:1-6

*"The land shall be entirely **emptied** and utterly **plundered**, for the Lord has spoken this word. ⁴ The earth mourns and **fades away**, the world languishes and **fades away**; the haughty people of the earth languish. ⁵ The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have **transgressed** the laws, **changed** the ordinance, **broken** the everlasting covenant. ⁶ Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left. . . The earth is **violently broken**, the earth is **split open**, the earth is **shaken exceedingly**. ²⁰ The earth shall **reel to and fro** like a drunkard, and shall **totter** like a hut; its transgression shall be heavy upon it, and it will fall, and not rise again."*

The mighty angel **chained Satan** in the abyss so that he could not **deceive** the nations **during** the millennium:

Revelation 20:2-3

*“He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and **bound him** for a thousand years; ³ and he cast him into the **bottomless pit**, and **shut him up**, and set a **seal on him**, **so that [the reason]** should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be **released for a little while**.”*

God will bind Satan on an earth that has returned to pre-creation disorder and emptiness. How could human beings live on the planet when the seas and fresh waters are all blood, the air has the stench of the dead, the planet is pitch dark because God has moved the heavenly bodies out of their places and there is no plant or animal life? The binding of Satan means that he cannot deceive the nations because there are no nations to deceive. However, after the millennium God will release Satan for a little while. It remains to be seen what releasing Satan means.

The punishment of Satan reminds us of the fate of the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement. The scapegoat was bound by a fit man and then taken to the wilderness where there were no inhabitants:

Leviticus 16:21, 22

*“Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the **wilderness** by the hand of a suitable man. ²² The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an **uninhabited land**; and he shall release the goat in the **wilderness**.”*

The first cycle (20:1-3) runs full circle because it describes events at the beginning, during and after the millennium. However, questions remain after the first outline. Some of the questions are these:

1. What happened to **the righteous** during this period?
2. Were the righteous on **earth or in heaven**?
3. What did the righteous **do during** the thousand years?
4. What does it mean to '**bind**' and '**unbind**'?
5. What happened to the **wicked persons** who died at the second coming?
6. What did Satan **deceive the nations** to do after the thousand years?
7. What will happen to Satan **after** He deceives the nations?

Cycle #2: The Saints (20:4-10)

The **second millennial cycle** focuses on what happens to the righteous before, during and after the millennium.

The apostle Paul explained that the dead in Christ would **rise first** and then those who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord **in the air**:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

*"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise **first**.¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up** together with them in the clouds to **meet the Lord in the air**. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."*

Revelation 20:6 describes the resurrection of the righteous at the second coming as the **first resurrection**:

Revelation 20:6

*"**Blessed and holy** is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the **second death has no power**, but they shall be **priests** of God and of Christ, and shall **reign** with Him a thousand years."*

Jesus then takes His people **to the Father's house** in heaven:

John 14:1-3

*"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² 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. ³ And if **I go** and prepare a place for you, I will **come again** and **receive you to Myself**; that where I am, there you may be also."*

During the thousand years the righteous will perform a work of **judgment** and **reign with Jesus**:

Revelation 20:4

*"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and **judgment was committed to them**. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands **[these are the martyrs that died during the little time of trouble just before the close of probation—see Matthew 24:9].** And **they lived and reigned** with Christ for a thousand years."*

Note: The question is this: Who are the righteous going to judge during the thousand years? Clearly, they will not judge the righteous because they are already in heaven. Moreover, they will not judge the holy angels because holy beings do not need to be judged. This must mean that they will judge Satan and his angels as well as the wicked who remained on earth during the thousand years.

The apostle Paul wrote that he and the Corinthians will judge the **world and angels**. Clearly, not only the end time martyrs will perform the work of judgment but also all the saved, including the Corinthian church and the apostle Paul:

1 Corinthians 6:1-3

*“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? ² Do you not know that the saints will **judge the world**? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? ³ Do you not know that **we shall judge angels**? How much more, things that pertain to this life?”*

The righteous who resurrect in the first resurrection will not be subject to the **second death** after the thousand years:

Revelation 20:6

*“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the **second death has no power**, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”*

Revelation 20:5

*“But the **rest of the dead** did not live again until the thousand years were **finished**.”*

Note: All beings in this world have experienced a first birth and life. When the millennium begins, those who died in Christ will resurrect to their ‘second life’ never to die again. On the other hand, the wicked will resurrect to their ‘second life’ after the thousand years, the saints will judge them and then they will suffer second death.

However, the translation of Revelation 20:5 in many Bible versions is problematic. As is well known, the ancient New Testament manuscripts did not have punctuation marks so the translators have added them where they think they belong. The King James and New King James translation of Revelation 20:4-6 is confusing because it leaves the impression that those who resurrect at the end of the thousand years will resurrect in the first resurrection. Here are verses 4-6 as they stand in the NKJV:

*“And I saw thrones, and they **sat on them**, and **judgment was committed** to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to*

*Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they **lived and reigned** with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the **second death has no power**, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."*

This seeming problem is easily resolved by placing parentheses around the part of verse 5 that reads, 'the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished'. This is not some Adventist solution to the problem. Many modern versions do just this, including the New International Version, Today's English Version, the New Living Translation, the New Revised Standard Version, the Phillips Version, the Complete Jewish Bible, the Good News Bible and the New Century Version: Here is how verses 4-6 look when we skip the sentence in verse 5 that says, "But the **rest of the dead** did not live again until the thousand years were **finished**."

*"And I saw thrones, and they **sat on them**, and **judgment was committed** to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they **lived and reigned** with Christ for a thousand years. **[skipping the last part of verse 5]** This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the **second death has no power**, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."*

At the end of the millennium God will release Satan from his prison:

Revelation 20:7, 8

*"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be **released from his prison**⁸ and will **go out to deceive the nations** which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to **gather them together to battle**, whose number is as the sand of the sea."*

This might be a good place to explain what is meant by the 'binding and unbinding' of Satan. Another reference to 'captivity' in Revelation will help us understand the meaning.

During the 1260 years, the papacy used the power of the kings of Europe to accomplish her purposes. However, at the end of this period, the papacy received a deadly wound when the kings of Europe withdrew their support. This withdrawal of support is referred to as the papacy going into **captivity** (Revelation 13:9, 10). That is to say, when the papacy had the support of the kings of Europe, she had power and was free. However, when the kings no longer supported her, she was bound and in captivity.

Something similar will happen to Satan during the millennium. During the time of trouble, Satan will be free and powerful because he has the support of the civil powers of the world to implement his agenda. However, at the second coming Satan's power base will all die and as a result he will be in captivity. In other words, Satan is loose when his power base is alive, he is bound when his power base is dead, and he will be loose again when his power base resurrects. Thus, Revelation 20:5 **contains the key** that explains the binding and unbinding of Satan.

There is a striking parallel between the events before and after the millennium. Before the thousand years God's people will be in spiritual Jerusalem (Revelation 14:17-20) and after in literal Jerusalem (Revelation 20:7-9). Both before and after the cards will appear to be stacked against those who are in Jerusalem—the hordes of the wicked will be like the sand of the sea (Revelation 17:15; 20:8).

Both before and after, God's people will appear to be in jeopardy. Both before and after the wicked will prepare for battle against the city (Revelation 16:12, 16; 20:7-9). Both before and after the battle never takes place. Before the thousand years God will reveal in the heavens to the wicked multitudes that the religious leaders have deceived them and the same will happen after with Satan (Revelation 16:1, 2; 20:13). Both before and after the multitudes will turn

against the deceivers—the religious leaders before and against Satan after (Revelation 16:12; Ezekiel 28:1-9). Both before and after God will deliver His people.

Revelation 20:9, 10

*“They went up on the breadth of the earth and **surrounded the camp of the saints** and the beloved city and fire came down from God out of heaven and **devoured them**. The **devil**, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”*

The second cycle in Revelation 20:4-10 focuses on the role of the saints at the beginning, during and after the millennium. That does not mean that Satan and the wicked are not mentioned in the second cycle because they are. However, Satan and the wicked are mentioned only as they relate to the righteous. When the second cycle ends, several **questions remain** unanswered:

1. What was the **judgment process** during the one thousand years like?
2. **Why** were those inside the city saved and those outside lost?
3. What is the **name of the city** that the wicked surrounded?
4. Did Satan and the wicked ever **attack the city**?
5. Were the wicked **ever convinced** that they were wrong and God was right?
6. When did the **saints enter the city**?

Cycle #3: The Wicked (20:11 - 21:1)

Revelation 20:11-21:1 contains the **third cycle** of millennial events. This passage goes over the **same ground** as the previous two outlines but the central concern is with the judgment of the **wicked after** the millennium. However, events before, during and after come into view as well.

After the thousand years the **rest of the dead live** again and Satan has his power base back (Revelation 20:5). The **third cycle** begins with the **second**

coming of Jesus right before the millennium begins. Jesus comes sitting on a white throne:

Revelation 20:11

*"Then I saw a great **white throne** and Him who sat on it, from whose face the **heaven and the earth fled away** and there was **found no place** for them."*

Revelation 20:11 is parallel to Revelation 6:14-17. In both Jesus is sitting on a throne and in both the heavens recede as a scroll and the earth flees away:

Revelation 6:14-17

*"... then the **sky receded** as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every **mountain and island** was **moved out of its place**.¹⁵ And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,¹⁶ and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him **who sits on the throne** and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"*

Revelation 20:12

*"And I saw **the dead**, small and great, **standing before God**, and **books** were opened and **another book** was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the **dead were judged** according to their **works**, by the things which were **written in the books**."*

This text describes the **millennial judgment** of the wicked. At this point the righteous will be in heaven and the wicked will all be dead on earth. The apostle Paul wrote that the **saints will judge** the world as well as Satan and his angels (1 Corinthians 6:1-3). In the second cycle we saw that **judgment was committed** to those who came forth in the first resurrection. Revelation 20:12 describes how that judgment transpired during the millennium.

It is obvious that dead people cannot literally stand before God in the judgment. The text explicitly states that the wicked dead stood before God through the

record of their lives in the books. In the fourth outline we will see a sampling of the wicked things in the books that condemned the wicked.

A few years ago when I taught that Revelation 20:12 refers to the millennial judgment of the wicked someone objected saying that Ellen White applies this verse to the pre-Advent investigative judgment rather than the millennial judgment. I pointed out that Ellen White does indeed apply this verse to the pre-Advent judgment (GC, p. 480) but she also applies it to the post-millennial judgment because the process will be similar (GC, pp. 665, 666).

Revelation 20:13 describes the post-millennial resurrection of the wicked to witness the reason why God excluded them from the city:

Revelation 20:13

*"The sea **gave up** the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades **delivered up** the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works."*

The expressions 'gave up' and 'delivered up' refer to the resurrection of the dead who were judged *in absentia* during the thousand years. Isaiah 26:19 uses a similar expression to refer to the resurrection:

Isaiah 26:19

*"Your **dead shall live**; together with my dead body **they shall arise**. Awake and sing, you who **dwell in dust**; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall **cast out** the dead."*

We know that the judgment in Revelation 20:13 occurs on earth because, according to verses 7-9 the wicked will surround the New Jerusalem on earth after the millennium.

Although we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8, 9), we are judged by works because our works reveal whether our faith is genuine. In the judgment, the entire universe will see that not only were the incorrigibly

wicked condemned by their works, but also many who claimed to follow Jesus and said, 'Lord, Lord' but whose lives contradicted their profession.

The book of life contains the names of all the saved (Revelation 3:5; 13:8; Philippians 4:3; Exodus 32:32; Daniel 12:1 and the reason why the book of life is brought to view in the post-millennial judgment is to show the wicked that their names are not in it (see Revelation 20:15).

The names of the lost will not be in the Book of Life because of the record of their lives that were written in the books. In the third cycle we do not yet know what those works were. The fourth cycle will reveal some of the sins that excluded the wicked from the Book of Life. It is remarkable that God will not destroy the wicked until they have had their day in court and agree that God was right in excluding them from the Book of Life.

After the wicked have had their day in court, God will cast them into the lake of fire and they will suffer **second death**:

Revelation 20:14-15

*"Then **Death and Hades** were cast into the lake of fire. This is the **second death**.¹⁵ And anyone **not found** written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."*

Revelation 20:14, 15 reaches the same climax as we saw in Revelation 20:8, 9. After all, there are not two lakes of fire! **After** Satan and his angels, the wicked, and death and the grave are consumed in the lake of fire, God will create a new heaven and a new earth because the first heaven and earth have passed away:

Revelation 21:1

*"Now I saw a **new heaven** and a **new earth**, for the first heaven and the first earth had **passed away**. Also there was no more sea."*

The chapter division at the end of verse 15 is unfortunate. The original writers of Scripture did not include chapters and verses in the text; for our convenience, they were added much later. Revelation 21:1 should really be the concluding

verse of chapter 20. In other words, after the destruction of Satan, his angels, the wicked, the grave and death, God will make a new heaven and a new earth. In short, Revelation 21:1 is the conclusion of chapter 20 and not the introduction to chapter 21.

"The sea divides friends. It is a barrier between us and those whom we love. Our associations are broken up by the broad, fathomless ocean. In the new earth there will be no more sea, and there shall pass there "no galley with oars." In the past many who have loved and served God have been bound by chains to their seats in galleys, compelled to serve the purpose of cruel, hardhearted men. The Lord has looked upon their suffering in sympathy and compassion. Thank God, in the earth made new there will be no fierce torrents, no engulfing ocean, no restless, murmuring waves" Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases, vol. 33, 1911.

The apostle Peter described the cleansing of the world by fire followed by the creation of a new heaven and a new earth:

2 Peter 3:10-13

*"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will **pass away** with a great noise, and the elements will melt with **fervent heat**; both the **earth** and the **works** that are in it will be **burned up**.¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be **dissolved**, what manner of persons ought you to be in **holy conduct and godliness**,¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be **dissolved**, being on **fire**, and the elements will **melt** with fervent heat?¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for **new heavens and a new earth** in which righteousness dwells."*

After the conclusion of the third millennial cycle, **questions still remain**:

1. What qualified **the righteous** to be in the city?
2. What did the **books contain** that condemned the wicked?
3. Were the righteous **in heaven** or **on earth** during the millennium?

If the saints will judge and reign for one thousand years but the city **does not descend until after** the 1000 years then the saints must have been in heaven in the holy city during the 1000 years).

4. What will it be like to live in the **New Jerusalem**?

The **last millennial cycle** will answer these questions.

Cycle #4: Promises to the Overcomers (Revelation 21:2-8)

Revelation 21:2 begins the **final cycle** of post-millennial events. This outline begins when John sees the New Jerusalem descend from heaven to earth:

Revelation 21:2

*“... holy city, New Jerusalem, **coming down out of heaven** from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”*

Revelation 20:7-9 tells us that the New Jerusalem is on the earth when the wicked surround it. This means that the New Jerusalem must have descended from heaven to earth before the wicked surrounded it. This being the case, Revelation 21:2 occurs chronologically before Revelation 21:1. In the fourth cycle the city is finally described by name. Before, Revelation referred to it as the city (Revelation 14:20) and the beloved city (Revelation 20:8).

There are **two clear reasons** why we know that the saints will come down from heaven with the city at the end of the millennium:

- ✓ 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17 and John 14:1-3 tell us that Jesus will take His people to heaven at the second coming. This being the case, they must come down from heaven with the city after the thousand years.
- ✓ The condition of the earth during the millennium would make it impossible for the saints to survive here.

All the promises that we find in verses 3-8 are future from the point of time the city descends from heaven. In other words, when the loud voice makes these promises, the post-millennial judgment has not occurred neither the

destruction of the wicked. The destruction of the wicked does not transpire until verse 8.

*"And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God **is with men**, and He **will** dwell with them, and they **shall** be His people. God Himself **will** be with them and be their God. ⁴ And God **will** wipe away every tear from their eyes; there **shall** be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There **shall** be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."*

"We are homeward bound. He who loved us so much as to die for us hath built for us a city. The New Jerusalem is our place of rest. There will be no sadness in the City of God. No wail of sorrow, no dirge of crushed hopes and buried affections, will evermore be heard. Soon the garments of heaviness will be changed for the wedding garment. Soon we shall witness the coronation of our King. Those whose lives have been hidden with Christ, those who on this earth have fought the good fight of faith, will shine forth with the Redeemer's glory in the kingdom of God."
Ellen G. White, The Adventist Home, p. 542, 543

Revelation 21:6

*"And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I **will give** of the fountain of the **water of life** freely to him who thirsts."*

Once again, the verbs are in the future tense which means that at this point the millennial judgment has not taken place and the wicked have not yet been destroyed.

We can even **now drink** from the fountain of spiritual water (John 4:13, 14; 7:37-39) freely. God's people, during the time of trouble, will suffer literal thirst but in the city God will give them literal fresh water from the river of life that flows from His throne. That is to say, in the present dispensation of the Holy Spirit the water is spiritual and in the future dispensation the water is literal. The same is true of the **Manna**. We can even now partake spiritually of the Manna (John 6:48-51) but there we will sit around the silver table where Jesus will serve us literal Manna. Likewise, we can now spiritually partake of the fruit

tree of life (My Life Today, p. 50) but then we will partake of its literal fruit (Revelation 2:7)

Verses 7 and 8 contrast the character of those inside the city with those who are outside:

Revelation 21:7

*“He who **overcomes** [this is why the saints are in the city] **shall** inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.”*

*“In order to inherit all things, we must resist and **overcome sin**.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p.540*

Revelation 21:8 provides a sampling of the sins that barred the wicked from entering the city.

Revelation 21:8

*“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars **shall have** their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”*

A Fifth Cycle?

We might say that there is a **fifth cycle** in chapter 21 because John again sees the city descending from heaven (21:9, 10) and then describes all the beautiful physical characteristics of the city in verses 9-26 ending in verse 27 with a contrast between those who are in the book of life inside the city with those who are outside the city because they defile and cause an abomination and a lie.

Revelation 21:27

*“But there shall by **no means enter** it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but **only those who are written** in the Lamb's Book of Life.”*

Revelation 21:14, 15 once again contrasts those inside with those outside:

Revelation 22:14, 15

*'Blessed are those who do his commandments that they may have the right to the tree of life and may **enter** through the gates into the city. But **outside** are the dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.'*

The Importance of this Subject

Dispensationalist theologians teach the **rapture doctrine** because they believe that the millennium will be a period of **peace and prosperity on earth**. Their argument goes something like this:

1. Jesus promised to come a second time to take His people **to heaven**.
2. Jesus also promised that the meek will **inherit the earth**.
3. The only way that Jesus can fulfill **both promises** is if He comes to **rapture** His church to heaven **seven years** before the millennium and then returns with the church seven years later to set up His millennial kingdom on earth.

However, there is **another way** Jesus can fulfill both promises:

- Jesus comes to take His people to **heaven** for a **thousand years**.
- At the end of the millennium Jesus returns with His people and the meek will inherit the earth.

By teaching that Jesus will set up His kingdom on earth at the second coming, the apostate churches are leaving themselves **wide open to accept the counterfeit Christ!** The Bible teaches that when Christ comes the second time, He will **not touch** the earth. But if Christians are expecting **Jesus to come back to earth** to set up His millennial kingdom then Satan could walk up and down the earth, speak many of the things Jesus spoke, perform many of the miracles Jesus performed and thus deceive those who are expecting Jesus **to come in this way!**



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
“FROM THE CLOSE OF PROBATION TO THE NEW EARTH:
A STUDY OF REVELATION CHAPTERS 15 TO 22”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #17 – Sins of Commission and Omission

According to the Bible, there are two categories of sin. One is the sins that we commit and the other the responsibilities that we omit. In this lesson we will see that both kinds of sins will keep us from entering the New Jerusalem. Let's read first Matthew 25:31-46 where the sin of omission is described.

Matthew 25:31-46

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.³³ And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.³⁴ Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;³⁶ I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'³⁷ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?³⁸ When did we see You a stranger

and take You in, or naked and clothe You?' ³⁹ Or **when did we** see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, **you did it to Me.**' ⁴¹ "Then He will also say to those on the **left hand**, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the **everlasting fire** prepared for the **devil and his angels:** ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave Me **no food**; I was thirsty and you gave Me **no drink**; ⁴³ I was a stranger and **you did not** take Me in, naked and **you did not** clothe Me, sick and in prison and **you did not** visit Me.' ⁴⁴ "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, **when did we see** You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' ⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as **you did not do it** to one of the least of these, **you did not do it** to Me.' ⁴⁶ And these will go away into **everlasting punishment**, but the righteous into **eternal life.**"

Three Questions About This Passage

- **To whom** did Jesus address this parable?
- **When and where** will this judgment take place?
- What will be the **standard** of the judgment?

To Whom Did Jesus Direct These Words?

Did Jesus direct this parable to **believers** or to **unbelievers**?

In Matthew 24 Jesus spoke about the **signs** of His coming. After describing the signs, He told four parables on the importance of watching and being ready for His coming. The content of these parables indicates that Jesus did not speak these parables to unbelievers but rather to those who profess to believe in Him:

- The **good and faithful servant**
- The **ten virgins**
- The **talents**
- The parable of the **sheep and the goats**

When Will This Judgment Scene Occur?

When will the **separation** of the sheep from the goats take place? The passage provides several clues:

- The Son of Man sits on a great **white throne**.
- This throne is the **throne of His glory**. (Now He sits with His Father on the throne of grace—Revelation **3:21**).
- **All nations** will gather before the throne so all who have lived in human history **must have resurrected**.
- There is an **examination of the evidence**.
- After the evidence is examined the **verdict is given**.
- The sentence is then **executed in the lake of fire**.
- The lake of fire was prepared for the **devil and his angels**.

A Similar Passage in Revelation

Now let's examine a parallel passage in the book of Revelation. **Revelation 20:7-9, 11-15** contains the same basic elements as Matthew 25. In **The Great Controversy**, p. 322 Ellen White applies the parable to the second coming. However, she presents a greater fulfillment after the millennium (**EW**, pp. 53, 54). In both sources we find:

- A great **white throne**

"Far above the city, upon a foundation of burnished gold, is a throne, high and lifted up. Upon this throne sits the Son of God, and around Him are the subjects of His kingdom." Ellen G. White, **The Great Controversy**, p. 665:

- The Son of God is sitting on the **great white throne** (Revelation 20:11)
- **All nations** are **gathered** before the throne: **All who lived** in human history have resurrected (Revelation 20:5, 7, 8)
- There is an **examination of the evidence** (Revelation 20:13)
- After the evidence is examined the **verdict** is given (**GC**, p. 666; **EW**, p. 53)

- The sentence is then **executed in the lake of fire** (Revelation 20:10)
- The lake was prepared for the **devil and his angels** (Revelation 20:10)

What is the Criterion of the Judgment in Revelation?

Even though Matthew and Revelation portray the same judgment scene after the millennium, their emphasis is different. Matthew focuses on the sin of omission and Revelation on the sins of commission.

The record in **Revelation is clear**: Those who are **outside** the city are there because they **transgressed** the Commandments of God:

Revelation 21:7, 8

*"He who **overcomes** shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. ⁸ But the **cowardly**, **unbelieving**, **abominable**, **murderers**, **sexually immoral**, **sorcerers**, **idolaters**, and **all liars** shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*

Revelation 21:27

*"But there shall by no means enter it anything that **defiles**, or causes an **abomination** or a **lie**, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."*

Revelation 22:14, 15

*"Blessed are those who **do His commandments**, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ But outside are dogs and **sorcerers** and **sexually immoral** and **murderers** and **idolaters**, and whoever loves and practices **a lie**."*

The **emphasis** in the book of **Revelation** falls upon the **sins that the wicked committed** and did not repent of and forsake.

The Criterion of the Judgment in Matthew

The criterion of the judgment in Matthew is different yet complimentary. Whereas Revelation emphasizes the sins of commission, Matthew underlined the sins of omission.

What do I mean? The emphasis in Revelation falls upon what the wicked did that they should not have done. The emphasis in Matthew falls upon what the wicked did not do and should have done.

Ellen White perceptibly wrote:

"The condemning power of the law of God extends, not only to the things we do, but to the things we do not do. We are not to justify ourselves in omitting to do the things that God requires. We must not only cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well. God has given us powers to be exercised in good works; and if these powers are not put to use, we shall certainly be set down as wicked and slothful servants. We may not have committed grievous sins; such offenses may not stand registered against us in the book of God; but the fact that our deeds are not recorded as pure, good, elevated, and noble, showing that we have not improved our entrusted talents, places us under condemnation." Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 220

Let us look more closely at the judgment scene in Matthew 25

Jesus will place the righteous at His right hand and the goats to His left (DA, p. 644). In the Bible, the right hand is the side of God's favor. Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father. At the last supper, Judas was on the left side of Jesus and John on the right. When the fishermen did not fish anything all night, Jesus told them to cast the net on the right side of the boat (John 21:6). An archaic meaning of the word 'sinister' is, 'toward the left-hand side', when a person gets up in a bad mood we say that 'he woke up with his left foot'.

This passage in Matthew 25 reminds us of Isaiah 58:6, 7:

"Is this not the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? ⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?"

However, the parable of Jesus is not simply telling us that we should be active in **Dorcas work**. There is a **spiritual dimension** to the parable:

- **Hungry** (the Bible is the food; Matthew 4:4)
- **Thirsty** (thirsty, the Holy Spirit is the drink; John 7:37-39)
- **Stranger** (strangers to the covenants, without hope; Ephesians 2:12, 19)
- **Naked** (destitute of Christ's righteousness; Isaiah 61:10)
- **Sick** (with the virus of sin; Isaiah 1:6)
- **Prison** (prisoners of Satan and sin; Isaiah 61:1, 2)

It is fashionable today for Christians to visit the 'holy land,' to walk where Jesus walked and to experience baptism where John baptized Him. Regarding this, Ellen White wrote in The Desire of Ages, p. 640:

*"Many feel that it would be a **great privilege** to visit the scenes of Christ's life on earth, to walk **where He trod**, to look upon **the lake** beside which He loved to teach, and the **hills and valleys** on which His eyes so often rested. But **we need not** go to Nazareth, to Capernaum, or to Bethany, in order to walk in the steps of Jesus. We shall find His footprints beside the **sickbed**, in the hovels of **poverty**, in the **crowded alleys** of the great city, and in every place where there are **human hearts in need** of consolation. In doing as Jesus did when on earth, we shall **walk in His steps**."*

In the parable, the sheep **did not care** who got the **credit**. They did not serve in order to receive **accolades and applause**, nor in **order to be saved**, nor **for money**. The righteous performed these actions **spontaneously and naturally** because they had the love of Jesus in their hearts, a love that flowed into their

hearts and then outward toward others. Are we aware that when we do these things, we are **doing them to Jesus**? Do we see the face of Jesus in others?

The goats **did not mistreat** those in need. Perhaps like the rich man, they even allowed the hungry and sick to eat the crumbs that fell off their tables. Their grievous sin was that they **ignored them** and by doing so, they **ignored Jesus**. The story of the **two debtors** teaches us about how we should treat others.

During His ministry, Jesus spoke words of love and compassion for those in need. On the other hand, he had strong words of rebuke for those who make a profession of religion that does not act in favor of others. The words of Jesus to the goats are unusual. We are not used to hearing Jesus speak in this manner.

The Rich Young Ruler

The story of the rich young ruler is an illustration of those who claim to have one side of perfection (the don't do side) but are severely lacking of the other side. Here is the passage with explanatory notes in brackets:

Matthew 19:16-22

*"Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what **good thing shall I do** that I may have **eternal life**?" ¹⁷ So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God [**do you call me good because you believe that I am God?**]. However, if you want to enter into [**eternal**] life, **keep the commandments** [**a good SDA answer**]. ¹⁸ He said to Him, "**Which** ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' ¹⁹ 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall **love your neighbor as yourself**.'" [**Jesus replaced the tenth with this one because benevolence is the opposite of covetousness**] ²⁰ The young man said to Him, "All these things **I have kept** from my youth. **What do I still lack?** [**he knew that something was missing**]" ²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you **want to be perfect** [**or have eternal life**], go, **sell** what you have and **give** to the poor, and*

you will have **treasure in heaven**; and come, follow Me." ²² But when the young man heard that saying, he **went away sorrowful** for he had great possessions."

The problem with the rich young ruler is that, outwardly at least, he abstained from evil but he did not perform the good. His sin was not one of commission but rather of omission. God will judge him in the final day for what he did not do.

The Story of the Good Samaritan

The story of the Good Samaritan is similar in many ways to the story of the rich young ruler. In the story of the Good Samaritan, a theologian asked Jesus the same question that the rich young ruler asked Him, 'what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' When Jesus challenged the theologian to answer his own question, Jesus told him that his answer was correct.

At first sight, Jesus' answer to the rich young ruler and the theologian's answer to his own question are not the same. However, upon closer inspection we shall see that the answer is identical in both cases. Here is the parable of the Good Samaritan with explanatory notes in brackets:

Luke 10:25-37

*"And behold, a **certain lawyer** [an expert in the writings of Moses] stood up and **tested** Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I **do** to inherit **eternal life**? [The identical question of the rich young ruler to which we would expect the same answer]" ²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the **law** [the writings of Moses]? What is **your reading of it**?" ²⁷ So he answered and said, "'you shall **love** the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and **'your neighbor as yourself**.'" ²⁸ And He said to him, **"You have answered rightly; do this** [not 'believe this' but rather 'do this'] and you **will live** [eternal life]." ²⁹ However, he, wanting to **justify himself** [because he was not practicing what he preached] said to Jesus, "And **who is my neighbor** [trying to change the subject]?" ³⁰ Then Jesus answered and said:*

"A certain man went down [a desolate road] from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves [Satan and his angels], who stripped him of his clothing [took away his righteousness], wounded him [a wounded and hurting humanity], and departed, leaving him half dead [without outside help he would have died].³¹ Now by chance a certain priest [symbolizing the religious leaders] came down that road and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.³² Likewise a Levite [symbol of the deacons] when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.³³ However, a certain Samaritan [a man from a foreign country], as he journeyed, came where he was and when he saw him, he had compassion.³⁴ So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine [two remedial agencies, the blood of Jesus and the Holy Spirit]; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn [the church], and took care of him.³⁵ On the next day, when he departed [the ascension of Christ], he took out two denarii [gave resources to the church to care for the lost], gave them to the innkeeper [the pastors], and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again [the second coming], I will repay [He will bring His reward] you.'³⁶ So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"³⁷ And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Matthew 5:38-48

The religion of Jesus does not consist merely of ceasing to do evil but in doing good. Jesus did not say 'do not do unto others as you would not have them do unto you'. He said 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' True religion is not merely believing right but rather acting right.

Here is another biblical passage that uses the word 'perfect' as in the story of the rich young ruler and the Good Samaritan:

Matthew 5:38-48

*"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' ³⁹ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. Rather, whoever **slaps** you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. ⁴⁰ If anyone wants to **sue you** and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. ⁴¹ And whoever compels you to go **one mile**, go with him two. ⁴² Give to him who **asks you**, and from him who **wants to borrow** from you do not turn away. ⁴³ **"You have heard"** that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, **love** your enemies, **bless** those who curse you, **do good** to those who hate you, and **pray** for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, ⁴⁵ **that you may be sons** of your Father in heaven; for He makes His **sun rise** on the evil and on the good, and **sends rain** on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, **what reward have you?** Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet your brethren only, **what do you do more than others?** Do not even the tax collectors do so? ⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be **perfect**, just as your Father in heaven is **perfect**."*

The parallel passage in the gospel of Luke explains that the other side of perfection is to be **merciful**:

Luke 6:27-36

*"But I say to you who hear: **Love** your enemies, do **good** to those who hate you, ²⁸ **bless** those who curse you, and **pray** for those who spitefully use you. ²⁹ To him who strikes you on the **one cheek**, offer the other also and from him who **takes away** your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. ³⁰ **Give** to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods **do not ask them back**. ³¹ And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. ³² "But if you love those who **love you**, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you **do good** to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ And if you **lend** to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. ³⁵ But **love** your enemies, **do good**, and lend, hoping for*

nothing in return; and your **reward will be great**, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. ³⁶ Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is **merciful**.”

James 1:27 has **both dimensions** of perfection:

“Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to **visit orphans and widows** in their trouble, and to keep oneself **unspotted** from the world.”



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
“FROM THE CLOSE OF PROBATION TO THE NEW EARTH:
A STUDY OF REVELATION CHAPTERS 15 TO 22”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #18 – Reflections on Second Death

What is second death? Over the years, this question has engaged both Seventh-day Adventist and Protestant theologians. Although both groups believe that second death involves the eternal punishment of sinners, they disagree in what sense the punishment is eternal.

Both agree that second death involves conscious torment. However, while a preponderance of Protestant theologians believe that sinners will suffer conscious torment forever in the flames of hell, Adventist theologians believe that after a period of conscious torment, sinners will cease to exist. That is to say, the punishment of lost sinners will be eternal in its results because they will die and never live again.

Now we must ask a second, yet equally important question. Did Jesus suffer second death? A strictly ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer to this question creates seeming problems for both Protestants and Seventh-day Adventists.

From a Protestant perspective, a ‘yes’ answer leads one to ask, if Jesus suffered second death, why is he not presently burning in the fires of hell? Why does He now enjoy intimate fellowship with the Father in the heaven of heavens? Furthermore, from an Adventist perspective, if Jesus suffered second death,

why was He not blotted out of existence after drinking the cup of His Father's wrath in Gethsemane and dying on the Cross? Obviously incisive questions!

On the other hand, if Jesus did not suffer second death, how can He save us? Does not God's justice require second death as the final penalty for our sins?

So, to answer this question 'yes' or 'no' creates a seemingly unsolvable dilemma for both Adventists and most Protestants. It is the purpose of this study to propose a solution to this seeming difficulty.

Vital Questions

The first question we must answer as we seek a solution to this seemingly unsolvable impasse is this, what is sin? The Bible has a ready answer to the question:

*"Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the **transgression of the law**." (1 John 3:4)*

A second question that we face is this, how many human beings have sinned—transgressed the law? Once again, the Bible provides a categorical answer:

*"There is **none** righteous, no, not one . . . for **all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:10, 23).*

A third question comes to the fore. What are the wages of sin? Again, the Bible provides an unambiguous answer:

*"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and **death through sin**, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned . . . for the wages of sin is **death**." (Romans 5:12; 6:23)*

Ellen White commented on Romans 6:23:

*"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." **Romans 6:23**. While life is the inheritance of the righteous, death is the portion of the wicked. Moses declared to Israel: "I have set before thee this day*

life and good, and death and evil." Deuteronomy 30:15." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 544

Still a fourth question stares us in the face. Is the death referred to in Romans 6:23 the first or the second?

Ellen White provides the unequivocal answer:

*"The death referred to in these scriptures [**Romans 6:23; Deuteronomy 30:15**] is **not that pronounced upon Adam**, for all mankind suffer the penalty of his transgression. It is 'the second death' that is placed **in contrast** with everlasting life." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 544*

Two Stages of Second Death

Clearly, the final penalty for sin is second death. So, we must answer the question, what is second death? As noted before, both Adventists and Protestants **agree** that second death involves **conscious** anguish and suffering, as sinners are keenly aware of **eternal banishment** from God's presence. However, while most **Protestants** believe that the lost will suffer eternal, conscious, alienation from God, Adventists believe that the lost will suffer the distress and despair of separation from God that will end in a death from which there is **no resurrection**. That is to say, for the wicked, the conscious anguish and agony of separation from God will finally end in "saying goodbye to life forever."

The First Stage of Second Death

The third angel's message in Revelation 14:9-11 describes the punishment of those who worship the beast and his image. In vivid language, the text describes the **conscious stage** of the second death experience:

"Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full

strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be **tormented with fire and brimstone** in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.”

Although the third angel’s message does not specifically refer to the conscious suffering of the wicked in the fire as second death, Revelation 20:14, 15 does:

*“Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the **second death**. And anyone **not found written** in the Book of Life was cast into **the lake of fire**.”*

Clearly, the second death experience involves conscious suffering in the fire **before** the sinner ceases to exist.

The Second Stage of Second Death

The second stage of second death is the final extinction of life. That is to say, the end-result of the second death is saying **goodbye to life** forever, sleeping a **perpetual sleep** from which there will be no resurrection. Thus, the prophet Jeremiah wrote concerning the final destiny of the wicked Babylonians:

*“And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men [Revelation 6:15-17]: and they shall sleep **a perpetual sleep**, and **not wake**, saith the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts.” (Jeremiah 51:57)*

The Two Stages Related

For Seventh-day Adventists second death means much more than just the final and eternal deprivation of physical life. The most agonizing aspect of second death is the **spiritual** suffering and agony that immediately precedes it. It includes the terrible realization of **eternal separation** from God and a sense of **hopelessness**. The first stage of the second death experience transpires while a person is **still alive** and facing the prospect of **dying and never living again**.

We usually think of **torment** (*basanizo*) in terms of **physical pain and suffering**. The Greek word *basanizo* can certainly refer to physical pain and suffering such as **the woman** who was in labor pains to bring the Messiah into

the world (Revelation 12:2). However, this word can also describe profound **psychological and spiritual anguish**.

Examples:

- The **wicked populace** during the French Revolution celebrated the death of the two witnesses that had tormented them for 1260 years (Revelation 11:10).
- The **evil spirits** suffered torment when they were in the presence of Jesus (Matthew 8:29; Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28).
- **Lot** was tormented by the evil behavior of the Sodomites (2 Peter 2:8).

The **spiritual and psychological** torment of the lost will **by far surpass** their physical suffering. It will be **torment** to see the one that they have come to despise and to know that they are **eternally lost** as the result of their **own choice**. They would love to fight against Him but they know that they cannot prevail.

Jesus Felt the Pangs of Second Death

We cannot even begin to comprehend the depths of the first, conscious, stage of the second death experience unless we visit the Garden of Gethsemane and the Cross.

As Jesus was about to bear the sins of the world upon Himself He said, ‘my soul is sorrowful, even unto **death**’ (Matthew 26:38). The death that Jesus referred to here was not physical but deeply spiritual. It was a feeling of alienation from His Father because of the burden of sin that He was bearing, an agonizing feeling that He would never again see the face of the One He deeply loved.

During His ministry, Jesus could confidently say, ‘the Father has **not left Me alone**, for I always do those things that please Him.’ (John 8:29). However, in the Garden of Gethsemane his mood changed. As Jesus sweated great drops of blood (Luke 22:44), three times He begged the Father, that if it were possible, He remove the cup of His wrath from His trembling hand (John 18:11).

Even further, on the cross, with profound angst, Jesus cried out, ‘my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ (Matthew 27:46). Hebrews 5:7 tells us that in the Garden Jesus ‘offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from **death**’. Once again, the death referred to here are the pangs of the second death with no anticipation of a resurrection.

Why did Jesus suffer this intense spiritual agony **before** His actual physical death? The answer is in Hebrews 2:9:

*“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the **suffering of death** crowned with glory and honor, **that He**, by the grace of God, might **taste death for everyone**.”*

Jesus was bearing the sins of the world and it is patently obvious that a person cannot ‘taste’ death after he is dead! The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament explains that the Greek word ‘taste’ (*gueúomai*) ‘implies the **moment of suffering**’

The gospel prophet Isaiah explained how Jesus **felt** the pangs of second death as the Father placed on Him the iniquity of us all:

*“Surely He has borne **our** griefs and carried **our** sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, **smitten by God**, and **afflicted**. However, He was wounded for **our** transgressions, He was bruised for **our** iniquities; the chastisement for **our** peace was upon Him, and by His stripes **we** are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and **the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all**.” (Isaiah 53:4-6)*

Ellen White amplified these verses in Isaiah:

*“Hating sin with a perfect hatred, He yet gathered to His soul **the sins of the whole world**. Guiltless, He **bore the punishment of the guilty**. Innocent, yet offering Himself **as a substitute** for the transgressor. The **guilt of every sin** pressed its weight upon the divine soul of the world's Redeemer. The evil thoughts,*

*the evil words, the evil deeds of **every son and daughter of Adam**, called for **retribution upon Himself**; for He had become **man's substitute**. Though the guilt of sin was not His, His spirit was torn and bruised by the transgressions of men, and He who knew no sin **became sin for us**, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 321*

Ellen White was correct when she wrote that the suffering and anguish that Jesus **felt** in Gethsemane and on the Cross was similar to what **lost sinners** will feel after the close of probation—eternal alienation from God with no hope of a resurrection:

*“Christ **felt** much as sinners **will feel** when the vials of God's wrath shall be poured out upon them. **Black despair**, like the **pall of death**, will gather about their guilty souls, and then **they will realize** to the fullest extent the sinfulness of sin. Salvation has been purchased for them by the suffering and death of the Son of God. It might be theirs, if they would accept of it willingly, gladly; but none are compelled to yield obedience to the law of God. If they refuse the heavenly benefit and choose the pleasures and deceitfulness of sin, they have their choice, and at the end receive **their wages**, which is [1] **the wrath of God** and [2] **eternal death**. They will be **forever separated** from the presence of Jesus, whose sacrifice they had despised. They will have lost a life of happiness and **sacrificed eternal glory** for the pleasures of sin **for a season**.” Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 210*

The reader will notice that that second death involves two stages, the **wrath of God** and **eternal death**. Although there is an intimate link between the two stages, they are not the identical.

M. L. Andreassen gave an analogy that explains the two stages of second death: *“A man is sentenced to be hanged three weeks from the time the sentence is pronounced. Those three weeks are a vital part of his punishment. Every day he is one day nearer the fatal date, and his **anxiety and torture** daily increase. When at last the moment arrives, when the trap springs, when the neck is broken, his*

sufferings are over. **Death is both the climax of, and the release from, suffering.** No evaluation of the sufferings of death is adequate that takes into account only the moment of death. **What goes before** must be given due consideration.” M. L. Andreassen, *the Book of Hebrews*, p. 112.

Did Jesus bear the full penalty for the transgression of the Law in Gethsemane and on the Cross or did He suffer only a small portion? Ellen White eloquently responds:

“Some have limited views of the atonement. They think that Christ suffered only a **small portion** of the penalty of the law of God; they suppose that, while the wrath of God **was felt** by His dear Son, He had, through all His painful sufferings, the evidence of His Father's love and acceptance; that the portals of the tomb before Him were illuminated with bright hope, and that He had the abiding evidence of His future glory. **Here is a great mistake.** Christ's **keenest anguish** was a sense of His Father's displeasure. His **mental agony** because of this was of such intensity that man can have but faint conception of it.” Ellen G. White, *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 171

Ellen White described the alienation from His Father that Jesus **felt** during the first stage of the second death:

“Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Savior could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that their **separation was to be eternal.** Christ **felt the anguish that the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race.** It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 753

Once again, Ellen White described how Jesus **felt** in Gethsemane:

“The sins of the world were upon Him, also the sense of His Father's wrath as He suffered the penalty of the law transgressed. It was these that crushed His

divine soul. . . The **separation that sin makes** between God and man was **fully realized** and **keenly felt** by the innocent, suffering Man of Calvary. He was oppressed by the powers of darkness. He had **not one ray of light** to brighten the future. . . . It was in this terrible hour of darkness, **the face of His Father hidden**, legions of evil angels enshrouding Him, the sins of the world upon Him, that the words were wrenched from His lips: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" . . . Ellen G. White, *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 171

Notably, the spiritual anguish that Jesus **felt** during His trial and crucifixion was so keen that He could **hardly feel the physical pain**:

"The **wrath of God** against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. However now, with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, **He cannot see the Father's reconciling face**. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Savior in this hour of **supreme anguish pierced His heart** with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was **this agony** that His physical pain was hardly felt. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 753

Feelings or Promises?

Clearly, in Gethsemane and on the Cross Jesus keenly **felt** the pangs of the first stage of second death and those **feelings** assured Him that He was saying goodbye to life forever! In this sense, Jesus felt much like lost sinners when they realize that their probation has closed and they are lost.

However, there is also a marked difference between Jesus and the lost. Jesus was **personally innocent** yet **reckoned** guilty by His Father for bearing sins that were not His. He hated sin and loved His Father and He feared that the sins He was bearing would separate Him forever from the One He loved. Not so, with the wicked who love sin and hate the Father.

It is true that Jesus could not see beyond the portals of the tomb. It is true that He did not feel that He would come forth from the tomb a conqueror. It is true that He felt that the sins that He was bearing were so abhorrent to His Father that He would never see Him again. Yet, contrary to lost sinners, Jesus did not lose hope. In His agonizing ordeal, He trusted His Father's promises and not His feelings. His Father had promised to call Him from the grave if He remained faithful. His final parting cry to life reveals that He died in the hope of the resurrection, when He cried out, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit'.

Hebrews 5:9 tells us that when Jesus cried out in Gethsemane, the Father heard Him and saved Him from death 'because of His godly fear'. Obviously, the Father did not save Him from mere physical death—because He died—but rather from the end-result of the second death experience, eternal separation from God!

Ellen White explained what sustained Jesus as he drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe:

*"Amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours, He had relied upon the evidence of His Father's acceptance heretofore given Him. He was acquainted with the character of His Father; He understood His justice, His mercy, and His great love. **By faith He rested** in Him whom it had ever been His joy to obey and as in submission He committed Himself to God, the sense of the loss of His Father's favor was withdrawn. **By faith, Christ was victor.**" Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 756*

Did Jesus Suffer Second Death?

The question remains, did Jesus suffer second death? A preponderance of **Adventist** and **Evangelical** scholars would answer this question with a categorical '**yes**'. However, based on the previous discussion in this article, we must answer the question with both a 'yes' and a 'no'.

In Gethsemane and on the Cross Jesus did **experience** the pangs of second death. Although He felt the deep chasm of separation from His Father, He was **willing** to obey Him at the risk of saying goodbye to life forever never to see His Father again. However, though Jesus **felt** the pangs of the first stage of second death, the separation from the Father was not eternal because He is presently in heaven at the right hand of the Father!

Two Complex Problems

The scenario that we have presented above seems to create two problems that we must now address.

The first problem that we must address is this: If Jesus suffered the **pangs** of second death and the end-result of second death is eternal separation from God, then, why did the Father call Him forth from the grave on the third day? Why did Jesus not sleep a perpetual sleep but rather is now very much in fellowship with His Father in heaven? We can summarize the first problem in the following way:

- The **penalty for sin is second death** in both its stages, which involves a deep sense of conscious anguish followed by eternal separation from God, a sleep from which there is **no resurrection**.
- The Father **imputed the guilt** for the sins of the world upon Jesus.
- This being the case, **logic would tell us** that Jesus must have suffered both stages of second death for those sins.
- However, if Jesus suffered both stages of second death, **why did He resurrect** from the dead? Why did He not say **goodbye to life forever**? Why is He now in **fellowship with the Father**?

The second problem we face is this: The Bible clearly teaches that the principles of God's character do not allow Him to justify a wicked person nor to condemn a righteous one:

*"He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an **abomination** to the Lord." (Proverbs 17:15)*

How then could God impute the sins of a guilty world upon innocent Jesus? We will find, in the course of our study, that the second problem will actually help us resolve the first.

The Scapegoat Solution

I believe that the scapegoat ceremony in Leviticus 16 solves these two theological conundrums. The central theme of Leviticus 1-15 is that the penitent sinner or priest **daily** placed their sins upon the head of the victim and then the priest transferred the sins through the victim's blood to the sanctuary. This, of course, defiled the sanctuary and made its cleansing necessary.

According to Leviticus 16:20-22, **once a year** at the end of the year, **after** the blood of the Lord's goat had cleansed the sanctuary, the high priest bore the sins of the penitent to the entrance of the tent and placed them on the head of the scapegoat. A fit man then took the goat to a desolate, uninhabited wilderness and exiled him forever from the camp of the saints. Here is the biblical record:

*"And when he has made **an end of atoning** for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. Aaron shall lay **both his hands on the head of the live goat**, **confess over it** all the **iniquities** of the children of Israel, and all their **transgressions**, concerning all their **sins**, putting them on the **head of the goat**, and shall send it away into the **wilderness** by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an **uninhabited land**; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness."*

Who is the Scapegoat?

Some Protestant scholars believe that the two goats that the high priest chose on the Day of Atonement represent two complementary functions of Jesus. Other scholars teach that the Lord's goat represents Christ, and the goat that the high priest exiled to the uninhabited wilderness represents Satan. I believe that the second group of scholars is correct for the following reasons:

First, Leviticus 16:7, 8 clearly **contrasts** the Lord's goat with the scapegoat—they are **radical opposites**:

*“He shall take the two goats and present them before the Lord **at the door** of the tabernacle of meeting. Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot **for the Lord** and the other lot **for the scapegoat**.”*

Second, the **Jewish religious calendar** will not allow the scapegoat ceremony to refer to Jesus. Why not? The sacrifice of the Lord's goat represents the death of Jesus on the Cross and that took place in the **spring** of the year at Passover.

However, the cleansing of the sanctuary by the blood of the Lord's goat took place on the Day of Atonement in the **fall**, at the **end** of the Hebrew religious year. There is no evidence that Jesus will bear upon Himself the sins of the righteous to a non-inhabited wilderness at the **end of history**. He bore the sins of the world at the beginning of the Christian dispensation, not at its end.

Third, the **literary structure** of the book of Revelation clearly reveals that the scapegoat ceremony will occur when God exiles Satan to a desolate and uninhabited earth during the millennium. The book of Revelation follows, in precise order, the geography of the sanctuary:

- Jesus shed His **blood** on the Cross in the sanctuary court (Revelation 1:5, 6).
- The churches: Jesus ministers among the **seven lamps** in the holy place (Revelation 2, 3).
- The seals: Jesus ministers at the table of the **showbread** in the holy place (Revelation 4-8:1).
- The trumpets: Jesus ministers at the **altar of incense** in the holy place (Revelation 8:2-11:17).
- Jesus' **most holy** place ministry begins (Revelation 11:19).
- Jesus' most holy place ministry **concludes** (Revelation 15:5-8).
- The seven last **plagues** come forth from the ark in the most holy place (Revelation 16-18).

- The **second coming** of Jesus occurs (Revelation 19:11-21).
- Azazel is sent to a **desolate world** without inhabitants (Revelation 20).
- Jesus creates a **New heavens** and **new earth** (Revelation 21, 22).

Finally, as stated before, not only Adventist but also various non-Adventist scholars agree that Azazel represents Satan. Here are two examples:

*‘ . . . the **devil himself**, the head of the fallen angels, who was afterwards called **Satan**; for **no subordinate evil spirit** could have been placed in antithesis to Jehovah as **Azazel** is here, but only the ruler or head of the kingdom of demons.’ (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, bk. 1: The Pentateuch, ‘The Third Book of Moses,’ 10 bks. [no date], p. 398.)*

The Jewish authority, **Dr. M. M. Kalisch** is categorical:

*“There can be no doubt whatever that Azazel is a **personal**, a **superhuman**, and an **evil being**—in fact a **wicked demon**. . . . It was approved of by early Christian writers who identified **Azazel with Satan** (Origen, C. Cels. VI. 43, p. 305 ed. Spencer; Iren. Adv. Haer. 1. 12; Epiphany. Haeres XXXIV. 11), and by **many** later and modern scholars. (A Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 2, pp. 328, 329).*

Is Satan Then Our Savior?

Various Protestant apologists have accused Adventists of teaching that Satan is their savior because they say that he will suffer the **final execution** of the second death sentence for the sins that he has led God’s penitent people to commit. However, this is not true for several reasons of which we will mention only three.

First, Leviticus 16:20 makes it abundantly clear that the blood of the Lord’s goat cleansed the sins of God’s penitent people from the sanctuary **before the scapegoat** ceremony took place. The blood of the Lord’s goat cleansed the sanctuary from sin, not the blood of the scapegoat.

*"And when he has made **an end of atoning** for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, he shall bring the live goat."*

Second, Hebrews 9:22 assures us that 'without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins'. Nowhere does Leviticus 16 tell us that the high priest offered the scapegoat as a sacrificial victim. The high priest presented the scapegoat **alive** before the Lord at the entrance to the tabernacle of meeting and placed the **sins of penitent** Israel upon him. The fit man then **exiled** the scapegoat **alive** to a desolate and uninhabited wilderness.

Third, Revelation 20:1-3 indicates that an angel from heaven will bind Satan and **force him** to remain **alive** on a desolate and uninhabited planet for one-thousand years **at the end** of the Christian dispensation. In contrast, Jesus offered his life as a **voluntary** sacrifice, not at the end, but **at the beginning** of the Christian dispensation.

If the scapegoat represents Satan and Jesus will place upon him the sins that His blood has already cleansed from the sanctuary, then Satan must have something to do with the final execution of the second death sentence.

Clearly, at the conclusion of the antitypical Day of Atonement, Christ will roll over upon Satan the sins of the saved that He has cleansed from the sanctuary through His blood. Satan will then suffer both stages of second death.

As the millennium begins, 'the event takes place foreshadowed in the last solemn service of the Day of Atonement' (*The Great Controversy*, p. 657). Christ will transfer to Satan all the sins that He cleansed from the sanctuary and Satan will begin to suffer the pangs of the first stage of second death. 'During this time his [Satan's] **sufferings are intense.**' (*The Great Controversy*, p. 660). Obviously, the sufferings that Ellen White describes are not physical but rather intensely psychological. God will compel Satan to remain on a ruined planet for a thousand years 'to look forward with **trembling and terror** to the **dreadful future** when he must suffer for all the evil that he has done and be punished for the sins that he has caused to be committed' (*The Great Controversy*, p. 660).

After the millennium, Satan's agony will intensify in the fire until he finally suffers the final stage of second death when God will blot him out of existence, never to live again! As the **originator**, instigator and **perpetuator** of sin he will suffer the final penalty for his own sins and for the sins that he has led God's people to commit and God will execute the final penalty upon him in the fire:

*"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire **prepared for the devil and his angels.**" (Matthew 25:41)*

Ezekiel 28:18, 19 vividly describes the final stage of second death that Satan will suffer not only for his own sins but also for those he has led God's faithful people to commit—God will reduce him to ashes and he will cease to exist forever:

*"You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading; therefore, I brought fire from your midst; it **devoured you**, and I turned you **to ashes** upon the earth in the sight of all who saw you. ¹⁹ All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you; you have become a horror, and **shall be no more forever.**"*

The Wicked Will Suffer Second Death

However, Satan will not suffer second death for the sins of the wicked; they will suffer their own second death. Those who have joined Satan in rebellion against God and have willfully refused to receive the atonement that Jesus provided will suffer their own second death in the lake of fire along with Satan and his angels:

*"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with **fire and brimstone**, which is the **second death.**" (Revelation 21:8)*

Ellen White wrote, "the **full penalty** of the law will be executed upon the transgressor if he does not receive Christ as his atoning sacrifice and personal Savior." (*Bible Echo*, August 4, 1902).

It is significant that the book of Revelation describes impenitent sinners after the millennium as surrounding 'the camp of the saints' (Revelation 20:9) intending to attack the holy city.

When the lost are prepared for the onslaught, God will show the entire universe above the city in panoramic view, the contrast between the character of Christ and the character of Satan (Revelation 20:13; The Great Controversy, pp. 666-671). The wicked will then fully understand the issues in the great controversy. They will understand that Satan, not Christ, is guilty for the existence of sin. They will suffer intense anguish, fully aware that they have forfeited the right to eternal life by their own choice, and 'the sentence of eternal death is pronounced against them' (The Great Controversy, p. 668). They are conscious that they will suffer the final execution of second death from which there is no resurrection, eternal banishment from the presence of God.

When all the facts of the great controversy come into view, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that God's decisions are loving and just:

*"With **all the facts** of the great controversy in view, the whole universe, both loyal and rebellious, with one accord declare: "Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 671*

Fire will then descend from heaven and the lost will suffer for a period the intense agony of separation from God that ends in saying goodbye to life forever, a death from which there will be no resurrection. During this period of conscious suffering, their spiritual anguish will by far surpass their physical pain.

The punishment of Satan, his angels, and the lost will vary in length and intensity because in strict justice, God will execute the sentence according to their degree of guilt. In earthly tribunals, sentences vary according to the crime committed. Some convicts receive a fine, others spend time in prison for a few years and still others receive several consecutive life sentences. Even so, Satan will not only suffer for all the sins that he committed but also for all the sins of

the righteous, that Jesus placed on him. The intensity and length of his anguish will far outlast that of his angels and wicked followers (see the Ellen White passages below).

Outside the Camp

Notably, the book of Revelation describes the lost who will suffer second death as being **outside the camp** of the saints! What does it mean to be ‘outside the camp’?

In Old Testament times, a person who sinned against the Lord ‘with a high hand’ suffered punishment **outside the camp**:

*“And the Israelite woman's son blasphemed the name of the Lord and cursed; and so they brought him to Moses. . . and the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Take **outside the camp** him who has cursed; then let all who heard him **lay their hands on his head**, and let all the congregation stone him.” (Leviticus 24:14, 23)*

Likewise, God cut off from the congregation and destroyed the Israelites who did not afflict their souls on the Day of Atonement:

*“For **any person** who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be **cut off** from his people. And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will **destroy from among** his people.” **Leviticus 23:29, 30***

What does the expression ‘cut off’ mean? It means two things. First, it means exclusion from God’s covenant people, and second, it refers to blotting out their names from the book of life never more to be remembered. Psalm 109 describes in advance the destiny of the betrayer, Judas:

*“Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the Lord, and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be continually before the Lord that He **may cut off the memory** of them from the earth.” (Psalm 109:14, 15)*

The enemies of Jeremiah plotted to ‘cut him off’ from the land of the living that ‘his name may be remembered no more’:

*“But I was like a docile lamb brought to the slaughter; and I did not know that they had devised schemes against me, saying, “Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us **cut him off** from the land of the living, that **his name may be remembered no more.**” (Jeremiah 11:19)*

Concerning the destiny of the wicked, the prophet Isaiah wrote:

*“They are dead, they will **not live**; they are deceased, they will **not rise**. Therefore You have punished and destroyed them, and made all their **memory to perish.**” (Isaiah 26:14)*

Thus, the wicked will not only **feel** the agonizing pangs of what it means to be eternally separated from God but their names will also be blotted out from the book of life never more to be remembered, severed forever from the camp of the saints.

Solution to the Two Problems

Now we return to the two perplexing problems that we mentioned before. First, if Jesus suffered second death in Gethsemane and on the Cross and the end-result of second death is eternal separation from God, why is He presently in fellowship with the Father in the heaven of heavens? Second, how could the Father punish Jesus who was innocent, for the sins of the guilty? Does not God’s character forbid Him from punishing the innocent?

When the antitypical Day of Atonement ends, God will finally solve these two **seeming** problems. First, the sentence of second death be will be executed upon those who are truly guilty—Satan, his angels and the wicked—while Jesus and the righteous will be exonerated. Second, Jesus, having rolled over the final penalty for the sins of the righteous upon Satan, he will suffer the final execution of the second death sentence, eternal banishment from the presence of God and a death from which he will never resurrect.

The following chart illustrates the flow of the sins of penitent sinners before and at the close of probation:

Before Probation's Close:

Penitent Sinner —————→ *Victim* —————→ *High Priest* —————→ *Sanctuary Defiled*

At Probation's Close:

Scapegoat ←———— *High Priest* ←———— *Sanctuary Cleansed by Victim's Blood*

Ellen White on the Scapegoat Ceremony

Ellen White has some very interesting things to say about the scapegoat ceremony. In the chapter *"The Earth Desolated"*, (Early Writings, pp. 290, 291) we find the following incisive remarks (the texts in brackets I have added to provide the biblical foundation for her commentary). During the millennium, Jesus together with God's people, will examine the cases of Satan, his angels and the lost and pronounce sentence according to their works:

*"Then I saw thrones, and Jesus and the redeemed saints sat upon them [Revelation 20:4]; and the saints reigned as kings and priests unto God [Revelation 20:4]. Christ, in union with His people, **judged the wicked dead**, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Word of God, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body [Revelation 20:11, 12; 1 Corinthians 6:1, 2]. Then they meted out to the wicked **the portion** which they must suffer, **according to their works** [1 Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 20:11, 12] and it was written against their names in the book of death. **Satan also and his angels** were judged by Jesus and the saints [1 Corinthians 6:3]. **Satan's punishment was to be far greater** than that of those whom he had deceived [Leviticus 16:20-22: in terms of length and intensity because he suffers the final penalty for his own sins and those of God's people]. His suffering would **so far exceed** theirs as to bear **no comparison** with it [Revelation 20:9]. After all those whom he had deceived had perished, Satan was still to **live and suffer on much longer**." Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 290*

In the chapter titled "*The Second Death*" (Early Writings, pp. 293-295), Ellen White added some significant information about what will transpire at the end of the millennium:

*"[After the millennium] Satan rushes into the midst of his followers and tries to stir up the multitude to action, but fire from God out of heaven is rained upon them, and the great men, and mighty men, the noble, the poor and miserable, are all consumed together. **I saw** that **some were quickly destroyed**, while others **suffered longer**. They were punished **according to the deeds** done in the body. Some were **many days** consuming, and just as long as there was a portion of them unconsumed, **all the sense of suffering remained**. Said the angel, "The worm of life shall not die; their fire shall not be quenched as long as there is the least particle for it to prey upon."*

*Satan and his angels **suffered long**. Satan bore not only the weight and punishment of **his own sins**, but also of the **sins of the redeemed host**, which had been **placed upon him**; and he must suffer for the ruin of souls that he had caused. Then I saw that Satan and all the wicked host were consumed, and the **justice of God was satisfied**; and all the angelic host, and all the redeemed saints, with a loud voice said, "Amen!" Said the angel, "Satan is the root, his children are the branches. They are now consumed root and branch. They have died an **everlasting death**. They are **never to have a resurrection**, and God will have a clean universe." Ellen G. White, Early Writings, pp. 293-295*

Some Adventist scholars have claimed that Ellen White's comments in Early Writings are a reflection of the 'early' Ellen White and that later in The Great Controversy she softened her description of the punishment of Satan and the wicked. However, is this really so? In The Great Controversy (written by the so called 'late' Ellen White) she described the **three stages** of Christ's work as **sacrifice** (on the cross), **intercessor** (in the heavenly sanctuary) and **eradicator** of sin (the scapegoat ceremony):

"It was seen [by the pioneers], also, that while the [1] sin offering pointed to Christ as a sacrifice, and [2] the high priest represented Christ as a mediator, [3] the scapegoat typified Satan, the author of sin, upon whom the sins of the truly penitent will finally be placed. When the high priest, by virtue of the blood of the sin offering, removed the sins from the sanctuary, he placed them upon the scapegoat. When Christ, by virtue of His own blood, removes the sins of His people from the heavenly sanctuary at the close of His ministration, He will place them upon Satan, who, in the execution of the judgment, must bear the final penalty. The scapegoat was sent away into a land not inhabited, never to come again into the congregation of Israel. So will Satan be forever banished from the presence of God and His people, and he will be blotted from existence in the final destruction of sin and sinners." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 422

Here are two further quotations from The Great Controversy:

"They who have been "accounted worthy" of the resurrection of life are "blessed and holy." "On such the second death hath no power." Revelation 20:6. However, those who have not, through repentance and faith, secured pardon, must receive the penalty of transgression--"the wages of sin." They suffer punishment varying in duration and intensity, "according to their works," but finally ending in the second death. Since it is impossible for God, consistently with His justice and mercy, to save the sinner in his sins, He deprives him of the existence that his transgressions have forfeited and of which he has proved himself unworthy. Says an inspired writer: "Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be." And another declares: "They shall be as though they had not been." Psalm 37:10; Obadiah 16. Covered with infamy, they sink into hopeless, eternal oblivion." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 544, 545

"The sins of the righteous having been transferred to Satan, he is made to suffer not only for his own rebellion, but for all the sins which he has caused God's people to commit. His punishment is to be far greater than that of those whom he has deceived. After all have perished who fell by his deceptions, he is still to live and suffer on. In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and

*branch--Satan the root, his followers the branches. The **full penalty of the law has been visited**; the demands of justice have been met; and heaven and earth, beholding, declare the righteousness of Jehovah.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 673*

Someone might ask how a God of love can punish lost sinners in the fire when He could have relieved their suffering. Here is the answer:

*“The plea may be made that a loving Father would not see His children suffering the punishment of God by fire while He had the power to relieve them. However, God would, for the good of His subjects and for their safety, punish the transgressor. God does not work on the plan of man. **He can do infinite justice** that man has no right to do before his fellow man. Noah would have displeased God to have drowned one of the scoffers and mockers that harassed him, but God drowned the vast world. Lot would have had no right to inflict punishment on his sons-in-law, but God would do it in strict justice”. Ellen G. White, Last Day Events, p. 241*

However, the good news is that God’s people, who have overcome through the blood of the blood of the Lamb, will not be subject to the second death. Jesus, having experienced and intensely felt the pangs of second death for their sins, will roll over the final penalty upon the one who ultimately responsible for them and infinite justice will have been served:

*“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes, shall not be hurt by the **second death**.” (Revelation 2:11)*

*“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the **second death has no power**, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. . .” (Revelation 20:6)*

“The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of

illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 678



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
“FROM THE CLOSE OF PROBATION TO THE NEW EARTH:
A STUDY OF REVELATION CHAPTERS 15 TO 22”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

**Lesson #19 – Revelation 21:9-22:21: Like a Bride Adorned for
Her Husband**

Some ‘sophisticated’ twenty-first century minds have considered the language of Revelation 21,22 as symbolic like most of the rest of Revelation. They say, ‘come on, do you really believe that there is a city in the sky that has pearly gates, a golden street, foundations of precious stones, a literal tree of life with literal water flowing from a literal throne? Childlike faith answers yes! Ellen White had such faith:

*“A fear of making the future inheritance seem **too material** has led many to **spiritualize away** the very truths which lead us to look upon it as our home. Christ assured His disciples that He went to **prepare mansions** for them in the Father's house. Those who accept the teachings of God's word will not be wholly ignorant concerning the heavenly abode. And yet, ‘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. **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.”*
Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 674, 675

*"Heaven is **not a vapor**. It is **a place**. Christ has gone to **prepare mansions** for those who love Him, those who, in obedience to His commands, come out from the world, and are separate. The principles of heaven must be brought into our experience, that we may be distinguished from the world. There must be a marked contrast between us and the world; for we are God's **denominated** people." Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 4, p. 60*

In fact, the description of the city in the last two chapters of Revelation is but a dim representation, in human language, of what the city is really like! It is so much more glorious than the sinful human mind can even begin to conceive:

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

On what basis can we say that Jerusalem today is spiritual and worldwide whereas the heavenly New Jerusalem is literal and local? Let us illustrate the principle that answers this question.

In Eden, the literal and spiritual were together. The spiritual robe of righteousness that covered Adam and Eve internally was made visible by a literal robe of light that was visible. When Adam and Eve sinned, they first lost their invisible spiritual robe of righteousness and then the literal robe of light left them. The purpose of the plan of salvation is to restore both robes. Jesus covers us first with the spiritual robe of His righteousness when we receive Him as Savior. Then, when He returns He will cover us with the literal robe of light. Thus, in the kingdom come, the spiritual and the literal will meet once more!

When we accept Jesus as Savior we become citizens of the New Jerusalem and our name is written in heaven (Hebrews 12:22-24). Even though we live physically on this earth, we are strangers and pilgrims, seeking our **homeland**

because our citizenship is in heaven from where we expect Jesus to come (Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16; Philippians 3:20, 21). This earth is a ‘foreign country’ to which we do not long to return. In fact, on earth we have no permanent city (Hebrews 13:14). We long for a city that has foundations whose builder and maker is God.

Hebrews 11:16

*“But now they desire **a better**, that is, **a heavenly country**. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has **prepared a city for them**.”*

The apostle Paul put it aptly when he wrote that the Jerusalem above is the mother of all who are free (Galatians 4:25, 26). We no longer worship in literal Jerusalem but rather we worship all over the world in spirit and in truth where two or three are gathered together in Christ’s name (John 4:20-24; Matthew 18:20).

In a certain sense we are there, although we are physically here. We can even now drink the **spiritual waters** of the heavenly Jerusalem (John 4:13, 14; 7:37-39; 1Corinthians 10:3, 4); we can here and now partake spiritually of the fruit from **the tree of life** (Heaven, p. 72) We can now be nourished by **spiritual Manna** (John 6:48-51; 1 Corinthians 10:3, 4). However, when Jesus comes, we will be physically in the New Jerusalem, feed physically on Manna, drink literal H2O, and partake physically of the tree of life. That is to say, the spiritual and the literal will meet there!

Ellen White provides a vivid description of the heavenly city that she saw in vision in *Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 674-678.*

“With Jesus at our head we all descended from the City down to this earth, on a great and mighty mountain, which could not bear Jesus up, and it parted asunder, and there was a mighty plain. Then we looked up and saw the great City, with twelve foundations, twelve gates, three on each side, and an angel at each gate. We all cried out, “The City, the great City, it’s coming! it’s coming down from God

out of heaven!" And it came and settled on the place where we stood. Then we began to look at the glorious things outside of the City. There I saw most beautiful houses, that had the appearance of silver, supported by four pillars set with pearls, most glorious to behold, which were to be inhabited by the saints, and in them was a golden shelf. I saw many of the saints go into the houses, take off their glittering crowns and lay them on the shelf, then go out into the field by the houses to do something with the earth; not as we have to do with the earth here. A glorious light shone all about their heads, and they were continually offering praises to God.

And I saw another field full of all kinds of flowers, and as I plucked them I cried out, 'they will never fade'. Next I saw a field of tall grass most glorious to behold; it was living green, and had a reflection of silver and gold, as it waved to the glory of King Jesus. Then we entered a field full of all kinds of beasts--the lion, the lamb, the leopard and the wolf, all together in perfect union. We passed through the midst of them, and they followed on peaceably after. Then we entered a wood, not like the dark woods we have here; but light and beautiful. The branches of the trees waved to and fro, and we all cried out, "We will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods." We passed through the woods, for we were on our way to Mount Zion. As we were traveling along, we met a company who were also gazing at the glories of the place. I noticed red as a border on their garments; their crowns were brilliant; their robes were pure white. As we greeted them I asked Jesus who they were. He said they were martyrs that had been slain for him. With them was an innumerable company of little ones; they had a hem of red on their garments also. Mount Zion was just before us, and on the mount was a building which looked to me like a temple, and about it were seven other mountains, on which grew roses and lilies. And I saw the little ones climb, or if they chose, use their little wings and fly to the top of the mountains, and pluck the never-fading flowers. There were all kinds of trees to beautify the place; the box, the pine, the fir, the oil, the myrtle, the pomegranate, and the fig-tree, bowed down with the weight of its timely figs, that made the place all over glorious. And as we were

about to enter the temple, Jesus raised his lovely voice and said, 'Only the 144,000 enter this place', and we shouted Alleluia.

The temple was supported by seven pillars, all of transparent gold, set with pearls most glorious. The things I saw there I cannot describe. O that I could talk in the language of Canaan, then could I tell a little of the glory of the better world. I saw there, tables of stone in which the names of 144,000 were engraved in letters of gold. After we beheld the glory of the temple, we went out, and Jesus left us, and went to the City. Soon we heard his lovely voice again, saying, "Come, my people, you have come out of great tribulation, and done my will; suffered for me; come in to supper; for I will gird myself and serve you." We shouted Alleluia, glory, and entered into the City. And I saw a table of pure silver, it was many miles in length, yet our eyes could extend over it. I saw the fruit of the tree of life, the manna, almonds, figs, pomegranates, grapes, and many other kinds of fruit. I asked Jesus to let me eat of the fruit. He said, 'Not now. Those who eat of the fruit of this land, go back to earth no more. But in a little while, if faithful, you shall both eat of the fruit of the tree of life, and drink of the water of the fountain'. And he said, 'You must go back to earth again, and relate to others what I have revealed to you.' Then an angel bore me gently down to this dark world." Ellen G. White, Spiritual Gifts, vol. 2, pp. 52-55

The Light of the City (Revelation 21:9, 10)

"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal."

The angel who comes back to John is most likely the sixth angel who announced the fall of the great city, Babylon (Revelation 16:19). In contrast to the great city Babylon he will now show John the great city, the New Jerusalem. Babylon is

composed of the beast's followers and the New Jerusalem is composed of Christ's followers:

*"The heavenly city is Christ's Bride, not on account of what makes it a city, but on account of the sanctified and glorified ones **who inhabit it**. Without the saints, whose home and residence it is, it would not be the Lamb's Wife; and yet it is the Lamb's Wife in a sense which **does not exclude** the foundations, walls, gates, streets and constructions which contribute to make it a city. Mere edifices and avenues **do not make a city**; neither does a mere congregation or multitude of people make a city. You cannot have a **living city without people** to inhabit it; and you cannot have a city without the edifices and avenues arranged in some fixed shape for the accommodation of those who make up its population. It is **the two together**, and the order in which the parts are severally disposed, the animate with the inanimate, which constitute a city. And while this holy Jerusalem is the Bride and Wife of Christ with reference to **its holy occupants**, it is still those occupants as disposed and arranged in that city. So that the **city as a city**, as well as its **people as a people**, even the whole taken together, is embraced in what the angel calls 'the Bride, the Lamb's Wife,' as she finally appears in her eternal form and completeness." J. A. Seiss, The Apocalypse: Exposition of the Book of Revelation, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1998, 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft*

The Wall of the City (Revelation 21:12-14)

*"Also she had a great and **high wall** with **twelve gates**, and **twelve angels** at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the **twelve tribes** of the children of Israel: ¹³ three gates on the **east**, three gates on the **north**, three gates on the **south**, and three gates on the **west**. ¹⁴ Now the wall of the city had **twelve foundations**, and on them were the names of the **twelve apostles** of the Lamb."*

The city is composed of Old and New Testament believers. We know this because the gates have the names of the twelve tribes and the foundations of the wall have the names of the twelve apostles. Ellen White wrote:

*“As in the Old Testament the **twelve patriarchs** stood as representatives of Israel, so the **twelve apostles** stand as representatives of the gospel church.” Ellen G. White, Acts of the Apostles, p. 19*

The Materials of the Walls, Gates and Street (Revelation 21:18-21)

*“The construction of its wall was of **jasper**; and the city was **pure gold**, like clear glass.¹⁹ The **foundations of the wall** of the city were adorned with all kinds of **precious stones**: the first foundation was jasper **[red]**, the second sapphire **[blue]**, the third chalcedony **[translucent grayish white]**, the fourth emerald **[green]**,²⁰ the fifth sardonyx **[reddish brown]**, the sixth sardius **[red]**, the seventh chrysolite **[young grass green]**, the eighth beryl **[transparent]**, the ninth topaz **[can be orange, brown or pink]**, the tenth chrysoprase **[apple green]**, the eleventh jacinth **[orange]**, and the twelfth amethyst **[reddish purple]**.²¹ The twelve gates were **twelve pearls**: each **individual gate** was of one pearl. And the **street** of the city was **pure gold**, like transparent glass.”*

The Size of the City (Revelation 21:15-17)

The city is arranged as a perfect cube:

*“And he who talked with me had a gold reed to **measure the city**, its **gates**, and its **wall**.¹⁶ The city is laid out as a square; its **length** is as great as its **breadth**. And he measured the city with the reed: **twelve thousand furlongs**. Its length, breadth, and height are **equal**.¹⁷ Then he measured its wall: **one hundred and forty-four** cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.”*

“Thus, this city is a solid cube of golden constructions, 1,500 miles every way. The base of it would stretch from furthest Maine to furthest Florida, and from the shore of the Atlantic to Colorado. It would cover all Britain, Ireland, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Austria, Prussia, European Turkey, and half of European Russia, taken together! J. A. Seiss, The Apocalypse: Exposition of the Book of Revelation, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1998, 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft)

The Glory of the City (21:22-27)

“But I saw no temple in it [in the city], for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. ²⁴ And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth [the redeemed at this points are kings] bring their glory and honor into it. ²⁵ Its gates shall not be shut [at this point those who enter do not have to present ID—EW, p. 39] at all by day (there shall be no night there). ²⁶ And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. ²⁷ But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.”

The sun and the moon will exist when God makes all things new because there will be months (Revelation 22:2) and days (Isaiah 66:22, 23). However, the city has no need for them because the glory of God eclipses them. In metaphorical language the prophet Isaiah described the light of the sun and moon:

Isaiah 24:23

“Then the moon will be disgraced and the sun ashamed; for the Lord of hosts will reign On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before His elders, gloriously.”

Although there is no physical temple within the city because the temple symbolizes Jesus, there is a literal temple on Mt. Zion outside the city and only the 144,000 can enter there:

“Mount Zion was just before us, and on the mount was a glorious temple, and about it were seven other mountains, on which grew roses and lilies. And I saw the little ones climb, or, if they chose, use their little wings and fly, to the top of the mountains and pluck the never-fading flowers. There were all kinds of trees around the temple to beautify the place: the box, the pine, the fir, the oil, the myrtle, the pomegranate, and the fig tree bowed down with the weight of its timely figs—these made the place all over glorious. And as we were about to

enter **the holy temple**, Jesus raised His lovely voice and said, '**Only the 144,000** enter this place,' and we shouted, 'Alleluia.'" Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 18

Ellen White described the temple:

*"This temple was supported by **seven pillars**, all of transparent **gold**, set with **pearls** most glorious. The wonderful things I there saw I cannot describe. Oh, that I could talk in the language of Canaan, then could I tell a little of the glory of the better world. I saw there, **tables of stone** in which the names of the 144,000 were engraved in letters of gold."* Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 19

The River of Life (Revelation 22:1)

*"And he showed me a **pure river** of water of life, **clear as crystal**, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb."*

There will be no Flynt, Michigan, water there. No water bottles, or refrigerator filters will liter the heavenly street. The water will be crystal clear like that that comes from the Sierra Nevada. I suspect that in this world we do not really know what real sweet water tastes like!

The Tree of Life (Revelation 22:2)

*"In the **middle** of its street, and on **either side** of the river, was the **tree of life**, which bore **twelve fruits**, each tree yielding its fruit **every month**. The **leaves** of the tree were for the **healing** of the nations."*

*"I then saw Jesus leading His people to the tree of life, and again we heard His lovely voice, richer than any music that ever fell on mortal ear, saying, 'The leaves of this tree are for the healing of the nations. Eat ye all of it.' Upon the tree of life was most **beautiful fruit**, of which the saints could partake freely. In the city was a most glorious throne, from which proceeded a **pure river** of water of life, **clear as crystal**. On **each side** of this river was the tree of life, and on the banks of the river were **other beautiful trees** bearing fruit which was good for food." Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 289*

*"Here we saw the tree of life and the throne of God. Out of the throne came a pure river of water, and on **either side** of the river was the tree of life. On one side of the river was a trunk of a tree, and a trunk on the other side of the river, both of pure, transparent gold. At first I thought I saw **two trees**. I looked again, and saw that they were **united at the top** in one tree. So it was the tree of life on either side of the river of life. Its branches bowed to the place where we stood, and the fruit was glorious; it looked like **gold mixed with silver**." Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 17*

For additional information on the tree of life, see the two chapters in these study notes titled, 'The Right to the Tree of Life' and 'The Therapeutic Tree of Life'.

No Curse and No Night (22:3-5)

*"And there shall be **no more curse**, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall **serve Him**.⁴ They shall **see His face**, and His name shall be on their **foreheads**.⁵ There shall be **no night** there: They **need** no lamp nor light of the sun, for the **Lord God gives** them light and they shall reign forever and ever."*

The Epilog (Revelation 22:6-13)

*"Then he said to me, "These words are **faithful and true**." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent **His angel** to show **His servants** the things which must shortly take place.⁷ "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who **keeps the words** of the prophecy of this book." (⁸ Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.⁹ Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.")¹⁰ And he said to me, **[1: Revelation is open and can be understood]** "**Do not seal** the words of the prophecy of this book, for **[2] the time is at hand [2: the close of probation]**."¹¹ He who is unjust, let him*

be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still." ¹² *"And behold, [3: the second coming] **I am coming quickly**, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."*

The three stages of Revelation 22:10-12:

- ✓ 'Do not seal': The book of Revelation is open for people to understand and embrace its message.
- ✓ 'The time I at hand': The close of probation.
- ✓ 'Behold I come quickly': The second coming

*"Jesus has left us word: "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." We are waiting and watching for the return of the Master, who is to bring the morning, lest coming suddenly He find us sleeping. What time is here referred to? **Not** to the revelation of Christ in the clouds of heaven to find a people asleep. **No**; but to His return from His ministration in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, when He lays off His priestly attire and clothes Himself with garments of vengeance, and when the mandate goes forth: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, pp. 190, 191*

Verses 8 and 9 must be placed in parentheses because they break the flow of thought. It is quite common for John to make parenthetical statements in Revelation (10:7; 11:18; 15:1; 16:15; 18:1-4; 20:5, last sentence). Ellen White describes the John's encounter with the angel:

"The angel then showed John the heavenly city with all its splendor and dazzling glory, and he, enraptured and overwhelmed, and forgetful of the former reproof of the angel, again fell to worship at his feet. Again the gentle reproof was given,

'See thou do it not for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.'" Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 230

Jesus Testifies to the Churches (Revelation 22:14-17)

"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie. ¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star." ¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely."

A Warning (Revelation 22:18-21)

"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. ²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! ²¹ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
“FROM THE CLOSE OF PROBATION TO THE NEW EARTH:
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by Pastor Stephen Bohr

**Lesson #20 – Keep the Commandments
or Wash their Robes?**

Two Translations

The correct reading of Revelation 22:14 has been a topic of discussion among students of the book of Revelation. There is a significant manuscript difference between the *Textus Receptus* and the Western text and the manuscripts that the translator uses determine the translation. Here are the two translations:

Revelation 22:14-15, KJV (*Textus Receptus*)

*“Blessed are they that **do his commandments** that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”*

Revelation 22:14-15, NIV (*Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*)

*“Blessed are those who **wash their robes**, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”*

Similar Wording

Both textual recensions are similar in Greek:

- *tás entolás autón* = 'do his commandments'
- *tás stolás autón* = 'wash their robes'

Doctrine Not On One Text

It is highly probable that a copyist, perhaps working without due care, substituted one or the other of these readings in place of the original. However, the question is, what was the original reading that John wrote in the book of Revelation? Ellen White wrote:

"Some look to us gravely and say, "Don't you think there might have been some mistake in the copyist or in the translators?" This is all probable, and the mind that is so narrow that it will hesitate and stumble over this possibility or probability would be just as ready to stumble over the mysteries of the Inspired Word, because their feeble minds cannot see through the purposes of God." Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 16

The doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are not built merely on a single text. When the manuscripts disagree on a certain text, Bible students must take into account other similar texts as well as the broader context.

Revelation Uses Both Expressions

The book of Revelation elsewhere uses both expressions, 'keep the commandments' and 'wash their robes'. The great multitude that no one could number washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb:

Revelation 7:14 ('washed their robes')

"So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

The end time generation will 'keep the commandments of God':

Revelation 12:17

*"And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who **keep the commandments** of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."*

In contrast with those who worship the beast, his image and receive his mark, the faithful remnant will 'keep the commandments':

Revelation 14:12

*"Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who **keep the commandments** of God and the faith of Jesus."*

Other Texts in the Writings of John

There are several other texts in the writings of John where the expression 'keep the commandments' is found:

1 John 2:3, 4

*"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we **keep His commandments**.⁴ He who says, "I know Him," and does not **keep His commandments**, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.⁵ But whoever **keeps His word**, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to **walk** just as He **walked**."*

1 John 3:22, 24

*"And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we **keep His commandments** and **do** [similar to Revelation 22:14] those things that are pleasing in His sight."*

1 John 5:2, 3

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.³ For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”

Genesis 1-3

We must also consider the broader context of Revelation 22:14 and that context is in Genesis 1-3. Revelation 20-22 is the return to Genesis 1-3. Let's notice first the context of Genesis:

- Adam and Eve had to continue eating from the tree of life to continue living. The tree was similar to a battery charger.
- Adam and Eve broke God's commandment in Genesis 2:15-17. In principle, all of the commandments were involved. That is why James wrote that whoever breaks one, breaks all.
- Adam and Eve were cast out of the gates of the garden (3:23, 24).
- God placed Cherubim at the gate to bar the entrance (3:23, 24).
- Adam and Eve were not able to eat from the tree of life (3:23, 24).
- The result was the curse (3:14, 17; 4:11).
- The curse finally led to Death (Genesis 3:19).

The book of Revelation reverses the steps of Genesis 2 and 3:

- God's people will keep the commandments (Revelation 22:14).
- They will enter through the gates into the city (Revelation 22:14).
- Angel's at the gates will let them in (Revelation 21:12).
- They will be able to eat from the tree of life (Revelation 22:14).
- There will be no more curse (Revelation 22:3).
- There will be no more death (Revelation 21:4).

Commandment Breakers Outside

The reading 'do his commandments' is most likely the correct one for another reason. Immediately after Revelation 22:14 brings to view the commandment keepers, the very next verse gives a list of commandments that those outside the city broke. In other words, inside are those who 'do His commandments' and outside are those who break them.

Revelation 22:15

*"But **outside** are dogs and sorcerers [#1] sexually immoral [#7] and murderers [#6] and idolaters [#2], and whoever loves and practices a lie [#9]."*

Revelation 21:7-8

"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. ⁸ But the cowardly [Romans 14:23], unbelieving [faithless], abominable, murderers [#6] sexually immoral [#7], sorcerers [#1], idolaters [#2], and all liars [#9] shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Revelation 21:27

*"But there shall by no means **enter** it anything that **defiles**, or causes an **abomination** or a **lie**, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."*

Isaiah 26:1-3

*"We have a strong city; God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks. ² Open the gates, that the righteous nation which **keeps the truth may enter in**. ³ You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."*



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Lesson #21 – The Right to the Tree of Life

The Origin of Life

God did not give man a soul, man does not have a soul, man is a soul:

Genesis 2:7

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”

When we compare Matthew 16:26 with Luke 9:25 we understand that the soul is the total person, body and breath together. According to Matthew, a man can gain the whole world but lose his own ‘soul’. However, Luke tells us that a man can lose ‘himself’:

Matthew 16:26

“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Luke 9:25

*“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is **himself** destroyed or lost?”*

Man’s Original Condition

God created a perfect **body**, in a perfect **environment**, with perfect **laws** of health, and placed a life-sustaining **tree** in the Garden.

Genesis 2:9

*“And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The **tree of life** was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”*

The tree of life had the purpose of teaching man that his life was **contingent** or **dependent, not inherent**. His source of life was outside, not inside. The tree was like a **battery charger**. In order to continue living, man had to continue eating from the tree of life.

Ellen White confirms the record in Genesis:

*“The fruit of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden possessed **supernatural virtue**. To eat of it was to live forever. Its fruit was the **antidote of death**. Its leaves were for the sustaining of **life and immortality**.” Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 288*

*“In order to possess an **endless existence**, man must **continue** to partake of the tree of life. Deprived of this, his vitality would **gradually diminish** until life should become **extinct**.” Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 60.*

Wheeler Robinson wrote about the tree:

*“Paul conceived man to be **mortal by his original nature**, but with the **prospect of immortality**; this, however, he forfeited when he was driven forth from Eden*

and therefore from the **tree of life**, which would have **nourished immortality in him**; thus came death through sin." Wheeler Robinson, *The Christian Doctrine of Man*, p. 122.

The Origin of Death

God told Adam and Eve explicitly that if they ate from the **tree** of knowledge of good and evil they would **surely die**:

Genesis 2:15-17

*"Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil **you shall not eat**, for **in the day** that you eat of it you shall **surely die**."*

Satan assured Adam and Eve that they could eat from the tree and live forever:

Genesis 3:4

*"And the serpent said to the woman, you shall **not surely die**."*

Adam and Eve **ate the fruit** of the forbidden tree:

Genesis 3:6

*"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, **she** took of its fruit and **ate**. She also gave to her husband with her, and **he ate**."*

God assured man that he would return to dust because of sin:

Genesis 3:19

*"In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till **you [not your body but you]** **return** to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust **you [not your body]** are, and to dust **you [not your body]** shall **return**."*

God placed **cherubim** at the entrance to the Garden of Eden to **prevent** humans from partaking of the tree of life:

Genesis 3:22-24

*"Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and **live forever**"—²³ therefore the LORD God **sent him out** of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ So He **drove out the man**; and He placed **cherubim at the east** of the Garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to **guard the way to the tree of life**."*

Thus, human beings **no longer had access** to the tree of life to **recharge their battery** or vital force. Now, a deteriorating **environment** and wrong **personal health habits** would wear down the **battery** resulting in death.

- Human beings **had to continue eating** from the tree of life to in order to **perpetuate life forever**.
- If man were immortal by nature, **what good** would it have done for God to bar him from the tree?
- If man were immortal, **why would Jesus need to die** to give him what he **already possessed**?

Life Spans Before the Flood

Genesis 5

At the beginning, God gave man a **fully charged** battery. During the first **1,600 years** of human history, men lived **930, 912, 905, 910, 895, 962, 969, 777, 950** years. Yet eventually the battery **wore down** and because there was no access to the battery charger, it **died** and man ceased to function. The **Energizer Bunny** eventually does run out of juice!

*“As Adam and Eve ate of this tree, they acknowledged their dependence upon God. The tree of life possessed the power to **perpetuate life**, and as long as they ate of it, they could not die. The lives of the **antediluvians were protracted** because of the **life-giving power of this tree**, which was transmitted to them from Adam and Eve.” Ellen White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 988*

In **Genesis 5:5, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 27, 30; 9:29**, the formula ‘and he died’ appears for every antediluvian patriarch except Enoch whom God translated to heaven.

Romans 6:23

*“For the wages of sin is **death**.” **GOD WAS RIGHT!***

Romans 5:12

*“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus **death spread to all men**, because all sinned.”*

Life Spans Between the Flood and Abraham

According to **Genesis 11** the live span of those who lived between the flood and the time of Abraham was significantly reduced: **600, 438, 433, 464, 239, 239, 230, 148, 205 and 175**. Several factors led to this reduction in the life span:

- ✓ A deteriorating **body**
- ✓ A deteriorating **environment**
- ✓ A violation of the **laws of health**
- ✓ No access to the **tree of life**

The Days of Moses

In the days of Moses, the life span had diminished to **120 years**:

Deuteronomy 34:7

*"Moses was **one hundred and twenty** years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished."*

The Days of David

In the days of David, the life span had reduced to **seventy or eighty** years:

Psalms 90:10

*"The days of our lives are **seventy** years; and if by reason of strength they are **eighty** years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."*

Why No Death That Very Day?

God warned Adam and Eve that they would die the very day they ate from the forbidden tree:

Genesis 2:17

*"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for **in the day** that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

Adam and Eve did not die that very day because that very day Jesus offered to suffer the death that they deserved:

Genesis 3:21

"Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them."

*"The **instant** Adam yielded to Satan's temptation, and did the very thing which God had said he should not do, Christ, the Son of God, stood between the living and the dead, saying, 'Let the **punishment fall on Me**. I will stand in **man's place**. Give him another trial.' Transgression placed the whole world under the death-*

sentence. But in heaven there was heard a voice saying, 'I have found a ransom.'" Ellen G. White, The Bible Echo, May 21, 1900.

1 Peter 1:18-21

"... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. ²⁰ He indeed was **foreordained before the foundation of the world**, but was manifest in these last times for you."

Revelation 13:8

"All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb **slain from the foundation of the world**."

2 Timothy 1:10: Jesus brought life and immortality **to light through the gospel**. Therefore, we are not immortal by nature but only through Christ.

"... but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

Romans 2:6, 7: If man is immortal by nature, **why must he seek** for what he already has?

"... who 'will render to each one according to his deeds': ⁷ eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good **seek** for glory, honor, and **immortality**."

We Still Die

However, even those who have accepted Jesus **still die**. Why? Because we still **do not have access** to the tree of life. When our **battery runs out**, we die. However, all this changes for those who believe in Jesus:

John 6:39, 40, 44

*"This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should **raise it up** at the **last day**.⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will **raise him up** at the **last day**."⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will **raise him up** at the **last day**."*

If we receive Jesus, who is what the tree of life represents, we now have the guarantee of immortality when Jesus returns.

*"To everyone who believes, **He is as the Tree of Life** in the Paradise of God. **His** branches reach to the lower world, in order that the blessings **He** has purchased for us may be brought within our reach. From this tree **we may pluck and eat**, and then guide others to it, that **they also may eat**." Ellen G. White, Bible Training School, August 1, 1905.*

*"After the entrance of sin, the heavenly Husbandman **transplanted the tree of life** to the Paradise above; but its branches **hang over the wall** to the lower world. Through the redemption purchased by the blood of Christ, **we may still eat** of its life-giving fruit." Ellen G. White, Heaven, p. 172*

The Final Touch of Immortality

1 Corinthians 15:52-55

When Jesus returns, the **dead in Christ** will rise and along with the **living saints** will receive the **touch of immortality**. Immortality is not something we inherently possess because we must **put it on**:

*"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised **incorruptible**, and we shall be **changed**.⁵³ For this **corruptible** must put on **incorruption**, and this **mortal** must **put on immortality**.⁵⁴ So when this **corruptible** has **put on incorruption**, and this*

mortal has **put on immortality**, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' ⁵⁵ "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

I once was **talking with a friend** who believes that man is by nature immortal. I asked him, do you believe that man is **omnipotent**, **omniscient** and **omnipresent**? His answer was immediate: 'of course not, only God possesses these qualities'. Then I asked him another question: Why then is man immortal? Is not immortality a quality that belongs only inherently to God? God can communicate immortality to man but it will always be contingent on Him.

1 Timothy 6:13-16

*"I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴ that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, ¹⁵ which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ **who alone has immortality**, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen."*

Restoration to the Tree of Life (restored to the charger)

When God restores all to the way it was in the beginning, there will be no more death:

Revelation 21:4

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

God's people will go **monthly** to worship before the Lord:

Isaiah 66:22, 23

*"For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me," says the LORD, "So shall your descendants and your name remain. ²³ And it shall come to pass that from **one New Moon to another**, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me," says the LORD."*

The reason why the redeemed will go monthly to worship the Lord is to eat from the tree of life:

Revelation 22:1, 2

*"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the **tree of life**, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit **every month**. The **leaves** of the tree were for the **healing** of the nations."*

Ellen White wrote regarding the tree of life:

*"Here we saw the **tree of life** and the throne of God. Out of the throne came a pure river of water, and on **either side** of the river was the **tree of life**. On one side of the river was a trunk of a tree, and a trunk on the other side of the river, both of pure, transparent gold. At first I thought I saw two trees. I looked again, and saw that they were **united at the top** in one tree. So it was the tree of life on either side of the river of life. Its branches bowed to the place where we stood, and the fruit was glorious; it looked like gold mixed with silver. Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 17*

Revelation 2:7

*"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give **to eat** from the **tree of life**, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." '*

There are conditions for entering the city and eating the fruit of the tree of life:

Revelation 22:14, 15 Notice the conditions to be **inside** and **outside**:

*“Blessed are those who **do His commandments** that they may have the **right to the tree of life**, and may enter through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.”*

Must Receive Jesus Now

Now let us complete our reading of **Romans 6:23** of which we quoted only part before:

Romans 6:23

*“For the wages of sin is **death**, but the gift of God is **eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

In order to enter the city, we must be ‘in Christ’:

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

*“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And **the dead in Christ** will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up together** with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”*

God reckons us in Christ when we are baptized:

Galatians 3:26, 27

*“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ have put on Christ**.”*

When we receive Christ we have eternal life as a guarantee:

1 John 5:11, 12

*“And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son **has life**; he who does not have the Son of God **does not have life**.” [Maybe ‘existence’ but not ‘life’]*



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Lesson #22 – The Therapeutic Tree of Life

Before Sin and After the Rebellion of Lucifer

Before the intrusion of sin into the universe Jesus was already subject to the will of His Father:

*“The Father wrought **by His Son** in the creation of **all** heavenly beings. . . The **King of the universe** summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence He might set forth the **true position** [because Lucifer had deceived the angels into thinking and he and Christ were equals] of His Son and show the relation He sustained to **all created beings**. The Son of God **shared the Father's throne**, and the glory of the eternal, self-existent One encircled both. About the throne gathered the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng--"ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (Revelation 5:11.), the most exalted angels, as ministers and subjects, rejoicing in the light that fell upon them from the presence of the Deity. Before the assembled inhabitants of heaven, **the King declared** that none but Christ, the Only Begotten of God, could fully enter into **His purposes**, and to Him it was committed to execute the mighty counsels of **His will**. The Son of God had wrought the **Father's will** in the creation of **all the hosts of***

heaven; and to Him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due. Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants. But in all this He would not seek power or exaltation for Himself contrary to God's plan, but would exalt the Father's glory and execute His purposes of beneficence and love." Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36

The Bible confirms the Spirit of Prophecy scenario that Christ executed the Father's plan in the creation of all things:

John 1:1-3

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was in the beginning with God.³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."

1 Corinthians 8:6

"yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live."

Colossians 1:15-17

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist [hold together]."

Hebrews 1:1, 2

"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,² has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He [the Father] made the worlds."

Before the incarnation the physical height of Jesus was greater than the angels:

*"Before Christ left Heaven, and came into the world to die, he was **taller than any of the angels**. He was majestic and lovely." Ellen G. White, Spiritual Gifts, vol. 4a, p. 115*

How much **taller was taller** than any of the angels?

*"As Adam came forth from the hand of his Creator he was of **noble height** and of beautiful symmetry. He was **more than twice as tall [more than 12 feet]** as men now living upon the earth **[the average now is about 6 feet]**, and was well proportioned. His features were perfect and beautiful. His complexion was neither white nor sallow, but ruddy, glowing with the rich tint of health." Ellen G. White, The Story of Redemption, p. 20*

Permission from His Father to Die

After Adam and Eve sinned, Jesus asked His Father for permission to come to the earth to die in man's place. Clearly, Jesus was still subject to His Father's will:

*"The whole family of Adam **must die**. I then saw the lovely Jesus and beheld an expression of **sympathy and sorrow** upon His countenance. Soon I saw Him approach the exceeding bright light which enshrouded the Father. Said my accompanying angel, "He is in **close converse** with His Father." The anxiety of the angels seemed to be intense while Jesus was **communing with His Father**. **Three times** He was shut in by the glorious light about the Father, and the **third time** He came from the Father we could see His person. His countenance was ___ from all perplexity and trouble, and shone with a loveliness which words cannot describe. He then made known to the angelic choir that a way of escape had been made for lost man; that He had been **pleading with His Father**, and **had obtained permission** to give His own life as a ransom for the race, to bear their sins, and take the sentence of death upon Himself, thus opening a way whereby they might, through the merits of His blood, find pardon for past transgressions,*

and by obedience be brought back to the garden from which they were driven. Then they could again have access to the glorious, immortal fruit of the tree of life to which they had now forfeited all right.” Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 126

The Incarnation

The Father’s took the initiative to send Jesus to this world:

John 3:16

*“For God so loved the world that **He gave His only-begotten Son**, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

The **Father prepared** the body of Jesus at the incarnation and Jesus came to execute His Father’s will:

Hebrews 10:5-7

*“Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body **You have prepared for Me [for me to offer]**.⁶ In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.⁷ Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me —**To do Your will**, O God.”*

The physical stature of Jesus was a little taller than the average **stature** of men at that time:

*“When his ministry commenced, he was but **little taller** than the **common size** of men **[six feet average]** then living upon the earth. Had he come among men with his noble, heavenly form, his outward appearance would have attracted the minds of the people **to himself**, and he would have been received without the **exercise of faith**.” Ellen G. White, Spiritual Gifts, vol. 4a, p. 115*

*“It would have been an **almost infinite humiliation** for the Son of God to take man’s nature, even when Adam stood **in his innocence** in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been **weakened** by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the **great***

law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His **earthly ancestors**. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 49

During His Ministry

During His ministry, Jesus announced that the **Father was greater** than He:

John 14:28

*You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for **My Father is greater than I.**"*

Jesus came to execute the **will of His Father**:

John 5:30; 6:38

*"I can of **Myself do nothing**. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but **the will of the Father** who sent Me."*

*"For I have come down from heaven, not to do **My own will**, but the **will of Him who***

Ellen White agreed that Jesus was subject to His Father's plans:

sent Me."

*"So utterly was Christ **emptied of self** that He made no plans for Himself. He accepted **God's plans** for Him, and day by day the **Father unfolded** His plans." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 208*

At the End of His Ministry

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed that **His Father's will** be done:

Matthew 26:39, 42, 44

*He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, **if it is possible**, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but **as You will**." ⁴² Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, **Your will be done**." ⁴⁴ So He left them, went away again, and prayed the **third time**, saying the same words.*

The Resurrection

Jesus commended His spirit in to the **safekeeping of His Father**:

Luke 23:46

*"And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, '**into Your hands** I commit My spirit.'" Having said this, He breathed His last."*

Jesus resurrected by authorization **from His Father**:

John 10:17, 18

*"Therefore My Father loves Me, because **I lay down My life** that **I may take it again**." ¹⁸ No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. **I have power [authority]** to lay it down, and **I have power [authority]** to take it again. This command I have received **from My Father**."*

*"He who died for the sins of the world was to remain in the tomb for the allotted time. He was in that stony prison house as a **prisoner of divine justice**, and he was responsible to the **Judge of the universe**. He was bearing the sins of the world, and his **Father only** could release him." Ellen G. White, The Youth's Instructor, May 2, 1901*

*"The light of heaven encircled the tomb, and the whole heaven was lighted by the glory of the angel. The angel approached the grave, and rolling away the stone as if it had been a pebble, he sat upon it. Then his voice was heard, **Son of God**, come forth; Thy **Father calls Thee**; and Jesus came forth from the grave with the step*

of a mighty conqueror. There was a burst of triumph, for the heavenly family were waiting to receive Him; and the mighty angel, followed by the army of heaven, bowed in adoration before Him as He, the Monarch of heaven, proclaimed over the rent tomb of Joseph, "I am the resurrection, and the life." Ellen G. White, Sons and Daughters of God, p. 237

Jesus came out of the tomb with the **same physical stature** as when He was buried:

*"When the Life-giver rose from the dead a triumphant conqueror, and made himself known unto his disciples, he was of the **same size** as before his crucifixion. There were **no special marks** which would at once cause the **men of Emmaus** to know that he was the Son of God. They did not know him **until he told them** who he was." Ellen G. White, Spiritual Gifts, vol. 4a, p. 119*

In the Ascension

When Jesus ascended to heaven, **His Father** performed a miracle and restored Him to his pre-incarnate physical stature:

*"But when he **ascended up on high**, and led a multitude of captives, escorted by the heavenly host, and was received in through the gates of the city, with angelic songs of triumph and rejoicing, I beheld with admiration and wonder, that **he possessed the same exalted stature** that he had **before he came into the world** to die for man. Said the angel, **God**, who wrought so great a miracle as to **make Christ flesh** to dwell among men, and will with his almighty power lift up fallen, degenerate, and dwarfed man, and after they are redeemed from the earth, make them 'grow up as calves of the stall,' could in his infinite power **return to his dear Son** his own exalted stature, which was his **before he left** Heaven, and humbled himself as a man, and submitted to the death of the cross." Ellen G. White, Spiritual Gifts, vol. 4a, p. 119*

His Exaltation Upon Arrival in Heaven

When Jesus ascended to heaven He was **still under the authority** of His Father. The Father gave Him **the name** that is above every name and everyone is to bow before Him to the **glory of God the Father**:

Philippians 2:5-11

*"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the **form of God**, did not consider it robbery to be **equal with God**, [did not consider equality with God as something to cling to] ⁷ but **made Himself of no reputation**, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the **likeness of men**. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He **humbled Himself** and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Therefore **God** also has highly **exalted Him** and **given Him the name** which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, **to the glory of God the Father**."*

Acts 5:31

*"Him **God has exalted** to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."*

1 Timothy 3 describes the **descent** and **ascent** of Jesus:

1 Timothy 3:16

*"And **without controversy** [by common consent, according to the agreement of all, without any room for dispute] great is the mystery of godliness":*

- ✓ God was manifested **in the flesh** (the incarnation)
- ✓ **Justified** in the Spirit (the resurrection)
- ✓ Seen by **angels** (the ascension)
- ✓ Preached among the **Gentiles** (the mission to the Gentiles)

- ✓ Believed on in the **world** (those who believed the message)
- ✓ Received **up in glory** (at the second coming)

In Heaven Now

The Father continues to be the head of Jesus in heaven:

1 Corinthians 11:3

*"But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the **head of Christ is God.**"*

For Eternity

In **eternity future** Jesus will subject Himself to the will of His Father:

1 Corinthians 15:27, 28

*"The **last enemy** that will be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For "**He [the Father]** has put all things under **His [Jesus']** feet." But when **He [the Father]** says "all things are put under **Him [under Jesus]**," it is evident that **He [the Father]** who put all things under **Him [Jesus]** is excepted. ²⁸ Now when all things are made subject to **Him [to Jesus]**, then the Son Himself will **also be subject** to Him who put all things under Him, that **God [the Father]** **may be all in all.**"*

The Resurrection Size of the Righteous

The righteous will resurrect with the same physical stature they had when they passed away:

*"All come forth from their graves the **same in stature** as when they entered the tomb. **Adam**, who stands among the risen throng, is of lofty height and majestic form, in stature but **little below** the Son of God. He presents a **marked contrast** to the people of later generations; in this one respect is shown the great degeneracy of the race. But all arise with the **freshness and vigor** of eternal youth." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 644*

After Eating from the Tree of Life

Restored to the tree of life, the redeemed will grow to the size of the original race:

Revelation 22:2

*“In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the **healing [therapeía]** of the nations.”*

There will be no more illness in the earth made new. The leaves are for the redeemed to continue enjoying health and the fruit is to perpetuate life.

*“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. All blemishes and deformities are left in the grave. Restored to the **tree of life** in the long-lost Eden, the redeemed will ‘**grow up**’ (Malachi 4:2) to the **full stature** of the race in its **primeval glory**. 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. Oh, wonderful redemption! long talked of, long hoped for, contemplated with eager anticipation, but never fully understood.”*
Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 644

Jesus Will Bear the Marks

Some might be wondering why the redeemed will resurrect with the same physical stature they had when they died. After all, will not the redeemed receive bodies without any defects? Isn't the reduced size a defect? Not necessarily. The bodies of the redeemed will be immortal and incorruptible such as the glorified body of Jesus. However, Jesus will bear the marks of the crucifixion on His body for eternity! Would this not be a defect on the glorified body of Jesus?

Zechariah 13:6

*"And one will say to him, '**What are these wounds** between your arms?' Then he will answer, 'Those with which **I was wounded** in the house of my friends.'*

***"One reminder alone remains:** Our Redeemer will **ever bear the marks** of His crucifixion. Upon His wounded **head**, upon His **side**, His **hands** and **feet**, are the **only traces of the cruel work** that sin has wrought. Says the prophet, beholding Christ in His glory: 'He had bright beams coming out of **His side**: and there was the hiding of His power.' Habakkuk 3:4, margin. That pierced side whence flowed the crimson stream that reconciled man to God—there is the Savior's glory, there 'the hiding of His power.' 'Mighty to save,' through the sacrifice of redemption, He was therefore strong to execute justice upon them that despised God's mercy. And the **tokens** of His humiliation are **His highest honor**; through the **eternal ages** the wounds of Calvary will show forth **His praise** and declare **His power**." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 674*

The First and the Last

When the disciples disputed about who of them would be the greatest in the coming kingdom, Jesus made a somewhat paradoxical statement about the first and the last:

Mark 9:33-35

*"Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?" ³⁴ But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves **who would be the greatest**. ³⁵ And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be **first**, he shall be **last** of all and **servant** of all."*

Humbling and Exalting

Jesus taught an important lesson to those who aspired to occupy the highest places:

Luke 14:7-11

*"So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: ⁸ "When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the **best place**, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; ⁹ and he who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the **lowest place**. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and sit down in the **lowest place**, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, **go up higher**.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. ¹¹ For whoever exalts **himself will be** humbled, and he who humbles **himself will be** exalted."*

Matthew 23:11, 12

Jesus described the desire of the scribes and Pharisees to be first:

- ✓ They sit on **Moses seat**
- ✓ They bind **heavy burdens** on the populace
- ✓ They show off their piety by their **phylacteries**
- ✓ They take the **best places** at feasts and the synagogues
- ✓ They love to be **greeted** in the market places
- ✓ They love to be called '**rabbi, rabbi**'

Then Jesus instructed His disciples to have a servant mentality:

*"But he who is **greatest** among you shall be your **servant**. ¹² And whoever exalts **himself will be** humbled, and he who humbles **himself will be** exalted."*

People today tend to rank people according to their:

- ✓ Their **looks**.
- ✓ The **car** they drive.
- ✓ The **house** they live in.
- ✓ The **educational** they have earned.
- ✓ Their **rank** in society.

- ✓ Their **social status** (the haves and the have nots).
- ✓ Their **political party** association.
- ✓ Their gender.
- ✓ Their **nationality**.
- ✓ Their **race**.
- ✓ Their **caste**.

Ellen White wrote about all of these human distinctions:

*“No **distinction** on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of **one** family by **creation**, and all are **one** through **redemption**. Christ came to **demolish every wall** of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that **every soul** may have **free access** to God.” Ellen G. White, Christ Object Lessons, p. 386*

The Central Lesson

James 4:10

*“Humble **yourselves** in the sight of the Lord, and **He will lift** you up.”*

1 Peter 5:6

*“Therefore **humble yourselves** under the mighty hand of God, that **He may exalt you** in due time.”*

*“**Self-surrender** is the substance of the teachings of Christ. Often it is presented and enjoined in language that seems **authoritative**, because there is no other way to save man than to cut away those things which, if entertained, will demoralize the whole being.” Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 523*

Back to Lucifer

The Bible mentions **another mystery**, the mystery of iniquity. Those who exalt themselves will be humbled:

Isaiah 14:12-15

*How you are **fallen** from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are **cut down** to the ground, you who weakened the nations! ¹³ For **[because]** you have said in your heart: 'I will **ascend** into heaven, I will **exalt** my throne **above** the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the **farthest sides** of the north; ¹⁴ I will **ascend above** the heights of the clouds, I will be **like the Most High.**' ¹⁵ Yet you shall be brought **down** to Sheol, to the **lowest depths** of the Pit.*



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
“FROM THE CLOSE OF PROBATION TO THE NEW EARTH:
A STUDY OF REVELATION CHAPTERS 15 TO 22”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #23 – Righteousness by Faith and the Final Conflict

Introduction

When we examine the book of Revelation in the Red Letter Edition of the New Testament we find a very interesting detail. In the first three chapters of the book, Jesus personally speaks to each of the seven churches. However, after Revelation 3:21 (with the lone exception of Revelation 16:15) He does not speak again until Revelation 22:7. This means that Revelation 16:15 must be extremely important:

Revelation 16:15

"Behold, I am coming as a [1] thief. Blessed is he who [2] watches, and [3] keeps his [4] garments, lest he [5] walk naked and they see [6] his shame."

Message for Seventh-day Adventists

This verse is particularly applicable to Seventh-day Adventists because it contains many common elements with the message of Jesus to the church of Laodicea where Jesus warns the Laodiceans that they wear the robe of Christ's

righteousness lest they be found naked after the close of probation:

Revelation 3:18

*"I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and **white garments**, that you may be clothed, that the **shame** of your **nakedness** may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see."*

According to the Spirit of Prophecy, the message to the church of Laodicea applies especially **to Seventh-day Adventists**. This means that the warning of Revelation 16:15 applies to us:

*"The message to the Laodiceans is **applicable to Seventh-day Adventists** who have had great light and have not **walked** in the light. It is those who have made great **profession**, but have not kept in step with their Leader, that will be **spewed out [the shaking]** of His mouth unless they repent." Ellen G. White, Selected Message, vol. 2, p. 66*

Revelation 3:18 and The Shaking

According to the Spirit of Prophecy, the message to the Laodiceans is so **vitaly important** that it will cause the shaking among God's professed people. 'Spewing out of the mouth' is synonymous with being shaken out. Thus, Ellen White wrote:

*"I asked the meaning of the **shaking** I had seen, and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the **True Witness to the Laodiceans**. This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth. Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this will **cause a shaking** among God's people." Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 181*

The Context of Revelation 16:15

In order to understand Revelation 16:15 we must examine the context.

Revelation 16:12 describes the **sixth plague** toward the end of the great tribulation when the persecuting waters (multitudes, nations, tongues and people) of Babylon withdraw their support and turn against her:

Revelation 16:12

*“Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great **river Euphrates** [Babylon’s symbolic river], and its **water** [multitudes, nations, tongues and people] **was dried up** [withdraw their support from Babylon], so that the way of the **kings from the east** [Jesus and His angels] might be prepared.”*

The book of Revelation contains many parenthetical statements that break the flow of thought. Revelation 16:13, 14 is one of those parenthetical statements (see also, Revelation 10:7; 11:18; 15:1; 18:1-4; 20:5, last sentence). These verses take us **back in time** to probationary time when **three counterfeit angels** are gathering the wicked world on Satan’s side for the final battle of Armageddon. Satan’s purpose in gathering the wicked waters is for them to **drown God’s people**. At the same time, three holy angels are gathering God’s people on the Lord’s side. Here is the description of the gathering of the wicked:

*“And I saw **three unclean spirits** [three evil angels] like frogs coming out of the mouth of the **dragon** [the secular powers of the world], out of the mouth of the **beast** [the papacy], and out of the mouth of the **false prophet** [apostate Protestantism].¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the **whole world**, to **gather them** to **the battle** [against God in the person of His witnesses] of that great day of God Almighty [Armageddon].”*

Gathering of the Righteous	Gathering of the Wicked
Three holy angels gather righteous on God's side	Three evil angels gather wicked on Satan's side
The righteous follow the lamb	The wicked follow the beast
The righteous worship God	The wicked worship the beast
The righteous are gathered in spiritual Jerusalem	The wicked are gathered in Babylon
The righteous receive the seal of God	The wicked receive the mark of the beast

The Spirit of Prophecy confirms that the gathering of the wicked in Revelation 16:13, 14 occurs **before** the close of probation:

*"The **present** is a solemn, fearful time for the church. The angels are already girded, awaiting the mandate of God to pour their vials of wrath upon the world. Destroying angels are taking up the work of vengeance for the Spirit of God is **gradually withdrawing** from the world. Satan **is** also mustering his forces of evil, going forth "unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world," to gather them under his banner, **to be trained** for "the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Ellen G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 983*

The Revelation 16:15 Parenthesis

Revelation 16:15 is a **parenthetical statement** that encourages God's people to gather on the Lord's side for the final battle before the close of probation:

*"Behold, I am coming as a **[1] thief**. Blessed is he who **[2] watches**, and **[3] keeps***

*his [4] **garments**, lest he [5] **walk** naked and they see [6] **his shame**."*

This warning would be fruitless after the close of probation because by then all cases have already been decided. The **ESV**, **NASB**, **NET**, **NRSV** and other versions put this verse in parentheses indicating that it **breaks the flow of thought**. The context indicates that the insertion of parentheses around verse 15 is correct. Notice that **verse 14** ends with the word 'gather' and **verse 16** picks up again with the same word 'gather'. Let's link **Revelation 16:16** with **Revelation 16:14** while skipping verse 15:

*"For **they [the three counterfeit angels]** are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to **gather them** to the battle of that great day of God Almighty...¹⁶ And **they [the three counterfeit angels]** **gathered them [the kings of the earth and the whole world]** together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon."*

The Expressions of Revelation 16:15

'I come as a thief'

This expression does not refer to the second coming of Christ but rather to the **close of probation**. Matthew 24:37-39 makes this clear (for more, read the book: **Taken or Left** published by Secrets Unsealed).

Matthew 24:42-44

*"**Watch** therefore, for you do not know what hour your **Lord is coming**.⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour **the thief** would come, he would have **watched** and not allowed his house to be broken into.⁴⁴ Therefore you also be **ready**, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour **you do not expect**."*

Ellen White explained the coming of Jesus as a thief:

*"Jesus has left us word: "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: **lest coming suddenly** He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." **We are [Seventh-day Adventists]** waiting and watching for the **return** of the Master, who is to bring the morning, lest **coming suddenly** He find **us** sleeping. **What time is here referred to? Not to the revelation of Christ in the clouds of heaven** to find a people asleep. **No**; but to His return from His ministration in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, when He lays off His priestly attire and clothes Himself with garments of vengeance, and when the mandate goes forth: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." When Jesus **ceases to plead for man**, the cases of all are forever decided. This is the time of reckoning with His servants. To those who have **neglected** the preparation of purity and holiness, which fits them to be waiting ones to welcome their Lord, the sun sets in gloom and darkness, and rises not again. **Probation closes**; Christ's **intercessions cease** in heaven. This time finally comes suddenly upon all, and those who have **neglected** to purify their souls by **obeying the truth** are found sleeping. They **became weary** of waiting and watching; they became **indifferent** in regard to the coming of their Master. They **longed not** for His appearing, and thought there was no need of such **continued, persevering** watching. They had been disappointed in their expectations and might be again. They concluded that there was time enough yet to arouse. They would be sure not to lose the opportunity of securing an earthly treasure. It would be safe to get all of this world they could. And in securing this object, they lost **all anxiety and interest** in the appearing of the Master. They became **indifferent and careless**, as though His coming were yet in the distance. But while their interest was **buried up in their worldly gains**, the work closed in the heavenly sanctuary, and they were unprepared." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 190-192*

'Watch'

In the New Testament, watching is the opposite of **slumbering and sleeping**. It means 'to be alert, awake, aware, vigilant'. Jesus instructed His disciples in the Garden to watch but instead they slept.

Matthew 26:38, 40

*"Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and **watch** with Me." ⁴⁰ Then He came to the disciples and found them **sleeping**, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not **watch** with Me one hour?"*

In the conclusion of the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus warned His followers to 'watch' because they did not know the day or hour of the Son of Man's coming. The coming of the Son of Man in the parable is **not the second coming**. The coming of the Son of Man takes place in heaven when He goes to His Father to receive the kingdom or marry His bride. The closing of the door in the parable of the virgins represents the close of probation.

Matthew 25:13

*"**Watch** therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."*

Jesus warned the church of Sardis to watch lest he come to them as a thief. This warning cannot apply to the second coming because when He comes the entire world will know it:

Revelation 3:3

*"Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore, if you will not **watch**, I will come upon you **as a thief**, and you will not know **what hour** I will come upon you."*

'Keep'

The word *tereo* means *'to preserve, to protect, to safeguard'*. According to the Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament it means, *"keeping or preserving the unblemished nature of a person or a condition."*

The call here is to remain faithful until the end by **preserving** unblemished the garments they **once received**. It does not refer to the moment a person **received** the garment but rather encourages the person to **'preserve, protect and safeguard'** the garment that they had received in the past. Here are some examples:

- Paul **kept the faith** until the end of his life (2 Timothy 4:7).
- Paul encouraged the Ephesians to **keep unity** (Ephesians 4:3).
- The rebel angels **did not keep** their place in heaven (Jude 6).

White Garments and Walking Naked

It is vitally important to remember that Revelation 16:15 draws a contrast between being **clothed** and **walking** naked. What does the word 'walk' mean, symbolically speaking? Walking is an **action word**. Whenever the Bible uses the word 'walk' in a **figurative sense** it refers to **behavior or conduct**. There are two ways of walking: Walking **naked** or walking **clothed**. Notice the following verses:

Ephesians 2:10

*"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for **good works**, which God prepared beforehand that we should **walk in them**."*

1 John 2:6

*"He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to **walk** just as He **walked**."*

Hebrews 11:5 tells us that Enoch **pleased** God:

*"By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for **before** he was taken he had this **testimony [witness]**, that he **pleased** God."*

Genesis 5:24 clarifies that pleasing God means to walk with Him:

*"And Enoch **walked** with God; and he was not, for God took him."*

In contrast to the righteous who walk with God, the wicked walk according to this world in disobedience to God:

Ephesians 2:1-3

*"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which **you once walked** according to the course of **this world**, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once **conducted** ourselves in the **lusts** of our flesh, fulfilling the **desires** of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature **children of wrath**, just as the others."*

Colossians 3:6-7

*"Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of **disobedience**, ⁷ in which you yourselves **once walked** when you lived in them."*

According to Revelation 3:4-6 the faithful remnant in the church of Sardis did not defile their garments. Therefore, they must have already received garments that they could defile:

Revelation 3:4-6

*"Therefore if you will not **watch**, I will come upon you as a **thief**, and you will **not know what hour** I will come upon you [**this can happen at death or when probation closes**]. ⁴ You have a few names even in Sardis who **have not [past]***

***defiled their garments**; and they **shall [future] walk with Me in white**, for **they are worthy**. ⁵ He who **overcomes shall be** clothed **[when the name comes up in the judgment] in white garments**, and I will not **blot out his name** from the Book of Life; but I will **confess his name** before My Father and before His angels.”*

Verses 3 and 4 describe **three dimensions** to the garments:

- The remnant of Sardis had garments while they lived on earth and did **not defile them**.
- They are clothed in white garments when their **names come up** in the judgment (see Matthew 22:11).
- They **shall walk** with Jesus in white garments in the kingdom.

The Robe of Sanctification

In **Revelation 19:8** the white raiment is defined as the **righteous acts** of the saints so the garment must refer to **sanctification** rather than justification:

*“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” ⁸ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in **fine linen, clean and bright**, for the fine linen is the **righteous acts of the saints**.”*

Ellen White described the garment of Revelation 19:8:

*“By the **wedding garment** in the parable is represented the **pure, spotless character** which Christ's true followers will possess. To the church it is given “that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white,” “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” Revelation 19:8; Ephesians 5:27. The fine linen, says the Scripture, “is the righteousness of saints” Revelation 19:8. It is the righteousness of Christ, His own unblemished character that **through faith** is **imparted** to all who receive Him as their personal Savior.” Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 310*

When probation closes the distinction between the **evildoer** and the **righteous** will be manifest. The evildoer will continue **doing evil** and the righteous **will continue doing right**! The emphasis is on righteousness in **action**.

Revelation 22:11, ESV

*"Let the **evildoer** still **do evil**, and the **filthy** still be filthy, and the **righteous** still **do right**, and the **holy** still be holy."*

The working faith of the righteous is not something they come up with. It is as much the righteousness of Christ as is justification. Ellen White equates the **fig-leaf garment** of Adam and Eve with **nakedness** and the deformity of sin. In other words, to cover **ourselves** with our **own righteousness** is equivalent to **nakedness**. This is the reason why, when Adam and Eve sinned, they still felt **naked and ashamed** even after they had covered themselves with fig leaf garments (see Genesis 3:8):

*"By His perfect obedience He has **made it possible** for every human being **to obey** God's commandments. When we **submit** ourselves to Christ, the **heart** is united with His heart, the **will** is merged in His will, the **mind** becomes one with His mind, the **thoughts** are brought into captivity to Him; we **live His life**. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the **fig-leaf garment**, not the **nakedness and deformity** of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is **perfect obedience** to the law of Jehovah. Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 311*

Righteousness by Faith in Verity

There is much talk these days about the 1888 message. In fact, entire books have been written on the subject. The **1888** message was not complicated. Ellen White explained it in a short paragraph:

*"It [**the 1888 message**] presented **justification** through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the **righteousness of Christ**, which is **made***

manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 91, 92

Some years after the 1888 General Conference, Ellen White explained the indispensability of both justification and sanctification:

*"Righteousness within is **testified** to by righteousness without . . . The righteousness by which we are **justified** is **imputed**; the righteousness by which we are **sanctified** is **imparted**. The first is our **title** to heaven, the second is our **fitness** for heaven."* Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, June 4, 1895

The Third Angel's Message

Some have misunderstood what Ellen White meant when she wrote that the message of righteousness by faith is the third angel's message in verity:

*"Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of **justification by faith** is the **third angel's message**, and I have answered, "It **is** the third angel's message, **in verity**."* Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890

If the third angel's message is righteousness by faith in verity, we need to study the third angel's message to see how this is so. What does the third angel's message say?

Revelation 14:9-12

*"Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships **the beast** and **his image**, and receives **his mark** on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship **the beast** and **his image**, and whoever receives **the mark** of his name. ¹² Here is the **[1] patience** of the saints, here are those who **[2]** keep the **commandments** of God and the **[3] faith** of Jesus."*

One wonders what **relationship** this passage about the beast, his image and his mark has with righteousness by faith? It certainly is not merely describing **forensic justification**!

It is common for many Adventist scholars to define righteousness by faith in the **same way** that Martin Luther defined it, that is, as the imputation of Christ's righteousness to those who trust in Jesus. If this is true, then Martin Luther preached the third angel's message. However, we know that **Luther did not proclaim** the third angel's message because the first angel's message in its entirety was not preached until after **1798**. Furthermore, the second angel's message was not preached until 1844. This means that righteousness by faith as it is defined in the context of the third angel's message must have a **deeper dimension** and **go beyond** the concept that was taught by Luther and the Reformers. In other words, it is righteousness by faith in a **special historical context**.

Regarding the first angel's message Ellen White explained:

*"**No such message [the first angel's message]** has ever been given in past ages. Paul, as we have seen, **did not preach it**; he pointed his brethren into the then far-distant future for the coming of the Lord. The Reformers **did not proclaim it**. **Martin Luther** placed the judgment about three hundred years in the future from his day. But **since 1798** the book of Daniel has been unsealed, knowledge of the prophecies has increased, and many have proclaimed the solemn message of the judgment near." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 356*

Ellen White does not state that the third angel's message **contains** the message of righteousness by faith but rather it **is** righteousness by faith. Righteousness by faith is **not one element** of the third angel's message but rather permeates it all!

There are **three key words** in Revelation 14:12 that identify the faithful remnant: they have the **patience** of the saints, they keep the **commandments** of God and have the **faith** of Jesus. These three concepts must be understood in

the **context of verses 9-11**. Where else do we find the beast, his image and his mark? The answer is, Revelation 13:11-18.

According to Revelation 13:11-18 there is a time coming when a **great trial** will come upon God's people. **God's faithful children** who refuse to worship the beast and his image and receive the mark will not be able to **buy or sell** and they will eventually come under the **sentence of death**. What kind of persons must they be to go successfully through this trial? They must have genuine faith in the surety, a faithful relationship that will withstand hunger, thirst, bondage and the sentence of death.

What will be the **motivating force** for keeping the commandments? Will they be legalists? No. This is where the faith of Jesus comes in. What is the faith of Jesus? Is it faith **in** Jesus or the faith that **Jesus had**?

*"The third angel's message is the proclamation of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ. The commandments of God have been proclaimed, but the **faith of Jesus** Christ has not been proclaimed by Seventh-day Adventists as of **equal importance**, the **law and the gospel** going hand in hand. I cannot find language to express this subject in its fullness. "The faith of Jesus." It is talked of, but not understood. **What constitutes the faith of Jesus** that belongs to the third angel's message? Jesus becoming our sin-bearer that He might become our sin-pardoning Savior. He was treated as we deserve to be treated. He came to our world and took our sins that we might take His righteousness. And **faith in the ability of Christ to save us** amply and fully and entirely **is the faith of Jesus**. Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, volume 3, p. 172*

I believe that it is the same faith that Jesus had. And what was **that faith like**? We must go **to the cross** to understand the reason:

*"Upon Christ as our substitute and surety **was laid the iniquity of us all**. He was **counted a transgressor**, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The **guilt of every descendant of Adam** was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of*

iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, **He cannot see the Father's reconciling face**. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Savior in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt. Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Savior could not see through the portals of the tomb. **Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror**, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that **Their separation was to be eternal**. Christ felt the anguish that the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 753

So **what sustained Jesus** if He felt **forsaken** by the Father as He went through the **time of trouble**? Satan was attempting to **shake the faith** of Jesus in His Father. He was attempting to convince Jesus that the **load of sin** that He bore was so great that there could be **no forgiveness** for Him or for those who He came to save.

"Amid the awful darkness, apparently **forsaken of God**, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours He had relied upon the **evidence of His Father's acceptance** heretofore given Him. He was acquainted with the character of His Father; He understood His justice, His mercy, and His great love. **By faith** He rested in Him whom it had ever been His joy **to obey**. And as in submission He committed Himself to God, the sense of the loss of His Father's favor was withdrawn. **By faith**, Christ was victor." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 756

During the time of trouble God's people will **feel similarly to Jesus**. Satan will make them feel that **their sins** are so great that they cannot be forgiven. But they will conquer because they will have the **same faith** that Jesus had.

The End Time Generation

Revelation has **four portraits** of the 144,000 each with its own particular **emphasis**:

- **Revelation 7:1-8**: The emphasis falls on the **sealing** of the 144,000 for their **protection** during the time of trouble. After the time of trouble, they will sing jubilant enthusiasm because victory has been gained (Revelation 7:9-17).
- **Revelation 14:1-5**: The emphasis falls on the **character** of the 144,000.
- **Revelation 15:2-4**: The emphasis falls on the **victory** of the 144,000 over the beast, his image, his mark and the number of his name.
- **Revelation 19:1-9**: The heavenly **celebration** of the 144,000.

Comments on Revelation 6:17

Revelation 6:14-16 describes the second coming of Jesus and **Revelation 6:17** ends with a question:

“For the great day of His wrath has come and who shall be able to stand?”

What does the word ‘stand’ mean? In several verses of the New Testament, the word appears as an **antonym of ‘fall’**. Examples:

- **Mark 3:24, 25**: A **kingdom divided** against itself cannot stand.
- **John 8:44**: Satan at the beginning **did not stand in the truth**.
- **1 Corinthians 10:12**: He that thinks that he stands let him **take heed lest he fall**.
- **Ephesians 6:11-13**

*“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able **to stand** against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of*

*this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, **to stand**."*

- **2 Timothy 2:19**

*"Nevertheless the **solid foundation** of God **stands**, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ" **depart from iniquity**."*

- **Luke 21:36**

*"Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and **to stand** before the Son of Man."*

The answer to the pointed question in Revelation 6:17 is in the **following** chapter. The 144,000 will be able to stand!

Revelation 7:1-8 describes **the sealing** of the 144,000 but does not bring to view **their character**:

Revelation 7:1-4

*"After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, **holding the four winds** of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having **the seal of the living God** and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the **servants of our God** on their foreheads." And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed."*

The background for these verses is in **Ezekiel 9** where God's own **professed people** were committing abominations. God only sealed on the forehead those who sighed and cried because of the abominations that were being committed

in the city. Those who sighed and cried are referred to in Revelation 7 as ‘the servants of our God’.

Revelation 14:1-5 describes the sterling **character** of the 144,000:

Revelation 14:1-5

*“Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His **Father's name** written on their **foreheads**. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They **sang as it were a new song** [they went through the experience of **Israel at the Red Sea**] before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for **they are virgins**. These are the ones who follow the Lamb **wherever He goes**. These were redeemed from among men, being first fruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found **no deceit**, for they are **without fault** before the throne of God.”*

- They have the **Father's name** on their foreheads (name is an indication of character and the forehead is where the frontal lobe is located).
- They sing a **new song** that only they could learn.
- They are alive during the **great tribulation** and face a death decree.
- They **follow the Lamb** wherever He goes.
- They were **not defiled** with women because they are virgins.
- There was **no deceit** in their mouths.
- They were redeemed from the earth as first-fruits.
- They are **without fault** before the throne of God.

The Same Question in Other Places

Revelation 6:17 is not the only place where the question is asked and answered. There are other texts, and in each case, the answer highlights the sterling conduct of the faithful.

Joel 2:1-10 describes the second coming of Jesus with the armies of heaven followed by the same question as Revelation 6:17.

Joel 2:11

"The LORD gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible, who can endure it?"

The following verses give the answer to the question in terms of the Day of Atonement:

"Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him—a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and nursing babes; let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, and the bride from her dressing room. Let the priests, who minister to the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar; let them say, "Spare Your people, O LORD, and do not give Your heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

A Work Outside the Sanctuary

The **congregation** had a role to play on the Day of Atonement. While the High Priest was cleansing inside the sanctuary the people were to carry on a work of soul cleansing outside:

- The soon coming Day of Atonement was announced by the **sound of the trumpets** (the Millerite movement in 1844 for the judgment of the dead and the loud cry of Revelation 18:1-5 for the judgment of the living).
- All Israelites were required to **assemble** at the sanctuary to **follow** the work of the High Priest—it was a **holy convocation** (Leviticus 23:21, 24, 27).
- While the high priest was **cleansing the sanctuary**, the people gathered outside **afflicting their souls** (Leviticus 16:29, 30, 23:27). The closer we come to Jesus the more sinful we will see ourselves and the more we will want to reflect his image (Hebrews 12:1-3). The further we are from Jesus the better we will feel about ourselves.
- The congregation **fasted** (Isaiah 58; Joel 2:11ff).

“The true fasting which should be recommended to all, is abstinence from every stimulating kind of food, and the proper use of wholesome simple food, which God has provided in abundance.” Ellen G. White, Medical Ministry, p. 283

Isaiah 58:6-7

*“Is this not **the fast** that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? ⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?”*

- The congregation **abstained from work** because their minds needed to be focused on the work of the high priest (**Leviticus 16:29, 30; 23:28**).
- As the high priest blotted out the sins of the people **from the sanctuary**, the people were to **blot out sin from their soul** temple through the power of the Holy Spirit. The message is that we must be **cleansing the soul temple** here while Jesus is cleansing the **heavenly temple** there because Jesus will not cleanse from **there** what we have not cleansed **here** through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- At the end of the Day there were only **two groups**: Those who remained in Babylon and those who came out. Leviticus 23 explains that those who did not afflict their souls were to be **cut off** from the congregation and **destroyed** (**Leviticus 23:28-30**). The meaning of cut off: No longer a member of God's people (Genesis 17:14; Exodus 12:15; Leviticus 20:3; Numbers 15:30, 31; Psalm 34:16; 37:28; 109:13, 15).

Isaiah 33:14-16

Verse 14: The question:

*"The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: **Who** among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? **Who** among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"*

Verses 15, 16: The **answer** underlines the **holy lifestyle** of those who will dwell in the presence of God:

*"He who **walks righteously** and **speaks** uprightly, he who **despises the gain** of oppressions, who gestures with his hands, **refusing bribes**, who stops his **ears** from **hearing** of bloodshed, and shuts his **eyes** from seeing evil: ¹⁶ He will dwell on high; his **place of defense** will be the fortress of rocks; **bread** will be given him, his **water** will be sure."*

Psalm 15

Verse 1: The **question**:

*"LORD, **who** may abide in Your tabernacle [**the sanctuary**]? **Who** may dwell in Your holy hill [**Zion**]?"*

Verses 2-5: The **answer** highlights the **holy lifestyle** of those who will dwell in the presence of God:

*"He who **walks** uprightly, and **works** righteousness, and **speaks** the truth in his heart; ³ he who **does not** backbite with his tongue, **nor does** evil to his neighbor, **nor does** he take up a reproach against his friend; ⁴ In whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he **honors** those who fear the LORD; he who **swears** to his own hurt and does not change [**does not break his promises**]; ⁵ he who does not put out his **money at usury**, nor does he take a **bribe** against the innocent. He who **does** these things shall **never be moved** [**who shall be able to stand?**]"*

Psalm 24:3-6

Verse 3: The **question**

*"**Who** may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or **who** may stand in His holy place?"*

Verses 4-6: The **answer** highlights the **holy lifestyle** of those will dwell in the presence of God:

*"He who has **clean hands** and a **pure heart**; who has not lifted up his soul to an **idol**, nor **sworn** deceitfully. ⁵ He shall receive blessing from the LORD, and **righteousness from the God** of his salvation. ⁶ This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face."*

Nahum 1:6, 7

Verse 6: The **question**:

*"**Who can stand** before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out **like fire**, and the **rocks** are thrown down by Him.*

Verse 7: The **answer**:

*The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who **trust in Him**."*

Malachi 3:1-3

*"Behold, I send My messenger, and he will **prepare the way** before Me and the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come **to His temple**, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. "Behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts. ² "But **who can endure the day of His coming** and **who can stand when He appears**? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap. ³ He will sit as a **refiner** and a **purifier** of silver; He will **purify** the sons of Levi, and **purge** them as gold and silver, **that** they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness."*

Ellen White applied this passage to the final generation:

*"Says the prophet: "Who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." Malachi 3:2, 3. **Those who are living** upon the earth when the **intercession of Christ shall cease** in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a holy God **without a mediator**. Their robes must be **spotless**, their characters **must be purified** from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the **grace of God** and their **own diligent effort**, they must be **conquerors in the battle with evil**. While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there*

is to be a special work of purification, of **putting away of sin**, among God's people upon earth. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 425

Ellen White Quotations

“Those who are **distrustful of self**, who are **humbling themselves** before God and **purifying their souls** by obeying the truth--these are receiving the heavenly mold and preparing for the seal of God in their foreheads. When the decree goes forth and the stamp is impressed, their character will remain pure and spotless for eternity. **Now is the time to prepare**. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an **impure** man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the **ambitious, world-loving** man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of **false tongues or deceitful hearts**. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God--candidates for heaven.” Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, p. 288

“Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have **one spot or stain** upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to **cleanse the soul temple** of every defilement. **Then** the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples” Ellen G. White, *Maranatha*, p. 240

“All who have truly **repented** of sin, and by **faith claimed** the **blood of Christ** as their atoning sacrifice, have had **pardon entered** against their names in the **books of heaven; as they have become partakers** of the righteousness of Christ, and their **characters are found to be in harmony** with the law of God, their sins will be **blotted out**, and they themselves will be accounted **worthy of eternal life**. The Lord declares, by the prophet Isaiah: “I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” Isaiah 43:25.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 483

“Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to **become perfect in Christ**. **Not even by a thought** could our Savior be brought to yield to the power of temptation. Satan finds in human hearts some point where

he can gain a foothold; some sinful desire is **cherished**, by means of which his temptations assert their power. But Christ declared of Himself: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." John 14:30. Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father's commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his advantage. **This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble.**" Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 623

"Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a holy God **without a mediator**. Their robes must be **spotless**, their **characters must be purified from sin** by the blood of sprinkling. Through the **grace of God** and their **own diligent effort** they must be **conquerors in the battle with evil**. While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being **removed from the sanctuary**, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among **God's people upon earth**. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14. When this work shall have been accomplished, the followers of Christ **will be ready** for His appearing." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* p. 425

Daniel and His Three Friends

The three young friends of Daniel are **examples** of the final generation. In fact, the story of the three young men will be fulfilled on a **global scale** in the book of Revelation. The third angel's message is the globalization of this story because the same elements are present in both: a **beast**, an **image**, a **command to worship** and a **death decree** against those who fail to comply. Ellen White linked this story with the crisis over the Sabbath in the end time:

"An **idol sabbath** has been set up, as the golden image was set up in the plains of Dura. And as Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, issued a decree that all who would not bow down and worship this image should be killed, **so** a proclamation will be made that all who will not reverence the **Sunday institution** will be

*punished with imprisonment and death.” Ellen G. White, **Manuscript Releases**, vol. 14, p. 91*

How did Daniel’s three friends reveal that they had experienced righteousness by faith? The answer is that their **faithfulness** exhibited their faith. The three young men revealed their trust and allegiance to Christ by their **faithfulness** even in the face of death:

*“The three Hebrews were called upon to **confess Christ** in the face of the burning fiery furnace. It cost them something to do this, for their lives were at stake. These youth, imbued with the Holy Spirit, declared to the whole kingdom of Babylon **their faith**--that He whom they worshiped was the only true and living God. The **demonstration of their faith** on the plain of Dura was a most eloquent presentation of their principles.” Ellen G. White, *The Youth’s Instructor*, July 12, 1904*

Because of their faith, Jesus Himself delivered the three Hebrew worthies. Significantly the word ‘deliver’ is used in **three main contexts** in the book of Daniel: Daniel 3, Daniel 6 and Daniel 12:1, so these chapters must bear a close relationship. Let’s examine the use of the word ‘deliver’ in Daniel 3.

This story illustrates what will occur when the civil power of the United States violates the **Establishment Clause** of the First Amendment to the Constitution.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, built an image and commanded all the very important persons to bow down and worship it. When the music sounded, three young Hebrews refused, so the king called them into his presence and gave them another chance and challenged the ability of their God to deliver them:

*“Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! However, if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace and **who is the god** who will **deliver** you from my hands?” (Daniel 3:15)*

The Hebrew worthies did not hesitate to respond:

*"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to **deliver** us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will **deliver** us from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up." (Daniel 3:16-18)*

At this, the expression on the face of the king changed:

*"Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the **expression on his face changed** toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated." (Daniel 3:19)*

Ellen White described the expression on the king's face:

*"**Satanic attributes** made his countenance appear as the countenance of **a demon**." Ellen G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1169*

The king then cast the three young men into the furnace. Suddenly the king saw four persons in the furnace and the fourth looked like the Son of God:

*"Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." ²⁵ "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is **like the Son of God**." (Daniel 3:24, 25)*

Many Bible versions state that the fourth looked like the **son of the gods**. The translators wondered how a pagan king could know what the Son of God looked like so they assumed that the king thought that he was merely one of the sons of the pagan gods. However, Ellen White explained:

"The Hebrew captives had told Nebuchadnezzar of Christ, the Redeemer that was to come, and from the description thus given, the king recognized the form of the

*fourth in the fiery furnace as the **Son of God**.” Ellen G. White, The Youth's Instructor, April 26, 1904*

There is another very important detail in the story. Nebuchadnezzar recognized that the Son of God that delivered the three young men was the Angel:

*“Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent **His Angel** and **delivered** His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!” (Daniel 3:28)*

At the conclusion of the story, the king extolled the God of the three young men because He was able to **deliver** them from the furnace:

*“Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can **deliver** like this.” (Daniel 3:29)*

Thus, the Son of God is the Angel and the Angel is God. The Angel that delivered the young men was none less than Michael, another name for Jesus Christ!

Hebrews 11 underlines the fact that the three young men quenched the fire **through faith**. This indicates that their faith was **more than intellectual assent**, more than believing something in their heads, **more than** a juridical act of imputation. True faith is exhibited in **faithfulness**. This is **righteousness by faith** in the end time.

Hebrews 11:33-34

*“As in the days of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so in the closing period of earth's history the Lord will work mightily in behalf of those who **stand steadfastly** for the right. He who walked with the Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace will be with His followers wherever they are. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain. In the midst of the time of trouble--trouble such as has not been since there was a nation--His chosen ones will **stand unmoved**. Satan with*

*all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God's saints. Angels that excel in strength will protect them, and in their behalf Jehovah will reveal Himself as a "God of gods," able to save to the uttermost those who have **put their trust** in Him." Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings, p. 513*

Daniel in the Lion's Den

Another passage that illustrates righteousness by faith in the end time crisis is the story in Daniel 6. This story is an illustration of the crisis that will come when the United States government will violate the **Free Exercise** clause of the First Amendment.

Whereas Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3 attempted to establish religion, Darius in Daniel 6 attempted to forbid its free exercise. As in Daniel 3, the issues were obedience to God's Law and worship. The enemies of Daniel could find no dishonesty in his civil responsibilities so they decided to pursue his obedience to His God's Law:

*"Then these men said, "We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the **law of his God**." (Daniel 6:5)*

Daniel's enemies prepared a carefully devised scheme to deceive the king into giving a decree that presumably would lead to Daniel's death. The king, thinking that the princes had the well-being of his kingdom in mind, readily signed the decree:

*"So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: "King Darius, live forever! ⁷ All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever **petitions any god or man** for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. ⁸ Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it **cannot be changed**, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter." ⁹ Therefore King Darius **signed the written decree**." (Daniel 6:6-9)*

Daniel could have been politically correct by closing his windows and practicing his religion in private. However, he felt that although one's religion is personal, it is never private.

*"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his **windows open** toward Jerusalem, he **knelt down** on his knees three times that day, and prayed and **gave thanks** before his God, as was his custom **since early days**." (Daniel 6:10)*

When the king discovered that his advisors had deceived him, he did all in his power to **deliver** Daniel but his advisors reminded him that the laws of the Medes and Persians were unchangeable. Daniel's plight seemed hopeless; it appeared that he would be 'cat food':

*"And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to **deliver** him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him. ¹⁵ Then these men approached the king, and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed." (Daniel 6:14, 15)*

Therefore, the king gave the command to cast Daniel into the lion's den. However, just before the king's servants cast him in, the king spoke to Daniel and said to him, 'I hope that your God whom you continually serve will be able to **deliver** you because I cannot.'

*"So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. However, the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Your God, whom you **serve continually**, He will **deliver** you." ¹⁷ Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed."*

Then the king returned to his palace where there was no music or feasting and where he suffered insomnia all night:

“Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him.” (Daniel 6:18)

The next morning the king rushed to the lion’s den to see if Daniel’s God had been able to **deliver** him from the mouths of the lions:

*Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions.
20 And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you **serve continually**, been able to **deliver** you from the lions?” (Daniel 6:19, 20)*

Daniel’s reply to the king’s question is vitally important. He said, ‘my God sent **His Angel** and shut the lions’ mouths’. It is tempting to think that this Angel was the same that delivered the three young Hebrews from the fiery furnace, Michael:

*“Then Daniel said to the king, “O king, live forever! 22 My God sent **His angel** and shut the lions’ mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found **innocent before Him**; and also, O king, I have done **no wrong before you**.” 23 Now the king was exceedingly 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 injury whatever was found on him, because he **believed in his God**.” (Daniel 6:21-23)*

After Daniel deliverance, the king gave a new decree where he used the word ‘deliver’ twice:

*“Then King Darius wrote: To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. 26 I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel for He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one that shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end. 27 He **delivers** and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has **delivered** Daniel from the power of the lions.” (Daniel 6:25-27)*

Hebrews 11:33 tells us that Daniel closed the mouths of lions **by faith**. Daniel's faith was more than an intellectual assent, more than believing in **something**. It was more than a **judicial act** by God to impute righteousness. It was the **unfolding** of Christ's righteousness in the **practical life**. It was putting **total trust in God**; it meant trusting **in a person** without question or doubt even in the face of death. The definition of faith in Hebrews does not differ from the definition in other parts of Scripture—the emphasis is simply different. Daniel exhibited righteousness by faith!

Paul and James

At this point it might be well to ask: Does Paul's definition of righteousness by faith conflict with that of James? Did Paul believe that man is made righteous by a forensic act of God while James believed that man is made righteous by a holy life? Not at all! Faith and works are a **package deal**. Neither can exist without the other. In order to be genuine, faith must be active, dynamic. Faith is an action word! Paul was looking at the internal **motivating force** for works and James was looking at the external fruit of genuine faith. Paul was speaking of the root and James was looking at the fruit. True **faith** is an uncompromising trust in Jesus that translates into obedient **faithfulness**. Said another way, true faith is faithful.

James presented two examples of faith, Abraham and Rahab. **Abraham** acted on his trust/faitb in God by obeying Him. First, he was willing to reveal his faith by obeying God in leaving Ur of the Chaldeans and then Haran. Then he was even willing to obey God at the cost of the life of the son of the promise.

On the other hand, we have Rahab the harlot. This woman was willing to risk her very life when she received the spies, hid them and sent them out a different way. Along with James, the apostle Paul extolled the faith of this woman in receiving the spies, hiding them and sending them away (see Hebrews 11:31).

"The inhabitants of the city, terrified and suspicious, were constantly on the alert, and the messengers were in great danger. They were, however, preserved by

*Rahab, a woman of Jericho, at the **peril of her own life**. In return for her kindness they gave her a promise of protection when the city should be taken.” Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 482, 483*

The heroes and heroines of Hebrews 11 did not merely believe in **something**. They believed in **someone**. They were acting in trust upon God’s word. Their faith was **made complete** by their works. The emphasis in Hebrews 11 is not primarily upon **imputed righteousness** but rather upon the faithful, obedient life that flows from a saving relationship with Christ. True faith always leads to faithfulness. Faithless works will not save a person and a workless faith will not save him either. Faith is the invisible side of works and works are the visible side of faith. Faith is the internal propelling force and works are the external manifestation. The heroes and heroines of Hebrews 11 not only believed something but also did something:

- Abel **offered** a sacrifice.
- Enoch **pleased** God.
- Noah **built** an ark.
- Abraham **left** Ur not knowing where he was going.
- Abraham **offered** up his own son.
- Isaac and Jacob **blessed** their offspring.
- Moses **was hidden** by his sister.
- Moses **refused** to be called Pharaoh’s son.
- Moses **left** Egypt.
- Moses **kept** the Passover.
- Israel **passed** the Red Sea.
- Israel **marched** around Jericho.
- Rahab **hid** the spies.

Notice the action words in the following passage:

Hebrews 11:34-40

*“And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: ³³ who through faith **subdued** kingdoms, **worked** righteousness, **obtained** promises,*

stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. ³⁵ Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. ³⁶ Still others had trial of mockings and scourings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented ³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. ³⁹ And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, ⁴⁰ God having provided something better for us that they should not be made perfect apart from us."

This is the emphasis of the third angel's message. If you don't worship the beast or his image you will be under a sentence of death just like Daniel and his three friends. An implicit trust in God will be needed in order to remain faithful.

Daniel 12:1

"At that time [1] Michael shall stand up [probation will close], the great prince who stands watch [He will protect His people] over the sons of your people; and [2] there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time [the trial over the beast, his image and his mark]. And at that time your people shall be delivered [as Daniel and his three friends], everyone who is found written in the book."

After the close of probation God's people will go through the same experience as Daniel and his three friends but on a global scale. The faith of God's people will be exhibited by their faithfulness and loyalty to God. Faith without faithfulness is not really faith.

Sometimes Adventist scholars are soteriological dualists and at the same time, anthropological monists. They teach that man is saved by faith alone without works, and almost in the same breath they say that the body alone

cannot live without the spirit. James emphasizes that as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead!

So, is man justified by faith or by works? How do we reconcile these two? The only way is showing that James is teaching that faith is shown by faithfulness and obedience. Justification is exhibited in sanctification. Faith is revealed in Abraham being willing to slay his own son and Rahab being willing to exhibit her loyalty to God even to the point of death.

It is worthwhile for everyone to read the chapter in The Great Controversy titled, *"The Time of Trouble"*. This chapter explains, in luxury of detail the preparation that God's people will need to pass through the time of trouble. They will need the absolute assurance that their sins have been forgiven (justification) and this assurance will lead them to be faithful. Notably, Ellen White begins the chapter by quoting Daniel 12:1. Here are a couple of her statements:

*"As Satan accuses the people of God on account of their sins, the Lord permits him to try them to the uttermost. Their **confidence** in God, their **faith** and **firmness**, will be severely tested. As they review the past, their hopes sink; for in their whole lives they can see little good. They are fully conscious of their weakness and unworthiness. Satan endeavors to terrify them with the thought that their cases are hopeless, that the stain of their defilement will never be washed away. He hopes so to **destroy their faith** that they will yield to his temptations and turn from their **allegiance** to God." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 618*

*"Those who exercise but **little faith now**, are in the greatest danger of falling under the power of satanic delusions and the decree to compel the conscience. And even if they endure the test they will be plunged into deeper distress and anguish in the time of trouble, because they have never made it **a habit to trust in God**. The **lessons of faith** which they have neglected they will be forced to learn under a terrible pressure of discouragement." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 622*

The Armor

The **garment** of Christ's righteousness is also described **as armor** because the final remnant must serve as Christ's army in the final battle against evil. To have the armor is to be covered with Christ (Romans 13:11-14).

*"Clad in the **armor of Christ's righteousness**, the church is to enter upon her **final conflict**. 'Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as **an army with banners**' (Song of Solomon 6:10), she is to go forth into all the world, conquering and **to conquer**. The darkest hour of the church's **struggle** with the powers of evil is that which immediately precedes the day of her **final deliverance**. But none who **trust in God** need fear for 'when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall,' God will be to his church 'a refuge from the storm' (Isaiah 25:4). In that day **the righteous** only are promised **deliverance**." Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, July 1, 1915*

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

The Book of Ephesians

The book of Ephesians illustrates the experience of true believers. There are three key words that give us the structure for the book. We first **sit** with Jesus and rest in what He has done (Ephesians 2:4-6). Once we are seated with Jesus in heavenly places (justification), we **walk** with Jesus (Ephesians 2:10; 4:17-19; 5:2-5) in newness of life on earth (sanctification) and this gives us strength to **stand** (Ephesians 6:11, 13, 14) for Jesus when we are attacked by the enemy. Only as we sit with Jesus can we walk with Him and in the end stand and be faithful in our struggle against the power of the devil.

How?

Immediately after listing the honor roll of faith, the apostle Paul described the secret of their victorious faith:

Hebrews 12:1-2

*"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us **lay aside every weight, and the sin** which so easily ensnares us, and let us **run with endurance** the race that is set before us, ² **looking unto Jesus**, the author and finisher of our faith, who for **the joy** that was set before Him **endured the cross**, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

Ellen White also addressed the secrets of victory:

*"A deadly **spiritual malady** is upon the church. Its members are wounded by Satan but they will not **look to the cross of Christ**, as the Israelites looked to the brazen serpent, that they may live. The **world has so many claims** upon them that they **have not time** to look to the cross of Calvary **long enough** to see its **glory** or to feel its **power**. When they **now and then** catch a glimpse of the self-denial and self-dedication which the truth demands, it is unwelcome, and they turn their **attention in another direction**, that they may the **sooner forget it**." Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 202*

*"All **true obedience** comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out **our own impulses**. The will, **refined and sanctified**, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God, as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of **continual obedience**. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, **sin will become hateful to us**." Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 668*

By **beholding Christ**, we are changed (2 Corinthians 3:18). As our attention is fixed upon Him through **persistent prayer**, intensive **Bible study** and by ministering to Him by acts of love to a **hurting humanity**, we become like Him.

Is it Possible?

Jude 14-15

*"Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, ¹⁵ to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are **ungodly** among them of all their **ungodly** deeds which they have committed in an **ungodly** way, and of all the harsh things which **ungodly** sinners have spoken against Him."*

Genesis 5:24

*"And Enoch **walked** with God; and he was not, for God took him."*

Hebrews 11:5-6

*"By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, 'and was not found, because God had taken him'; for **before** he was taken he had this testimony, that he **pleased** God."*

John 8:29

*"And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I **always do** those things **that please Him**."*

- Turn away your senses from contemplating **worldly things**
- Turn your eyes upon Jesus, his **perfection**, His **sacrifice** for sin and power will flow from the cross.

The Challenge Ahead

*“The work, which the church has failed to do in a time of peace and prosperity, she will have to do in a terrible crisis under most discouraging, forbidding circumstances. The warnings that **worldly conformity** has **silenced or withheld** must be given under the **fiercest opposition** from enemies of the faith. And at that time the superficial, conservative class, whose influence has steadily retarded the progress of the work, will renounce the faith and take their stand with its avowed enemies, toward whom **their sympathies have long been tending**. These apostates will then manifest the bitterest enmity, doing all in their power to oppress and malign their former brethren and to excite indignation against them. This day is just before us. The members of the church will **individually be tested and proved**. They will be placed in circumstances where they will be **forced to bear witness** for the truth. Many will be called to speak before councils and in courts of justice, perhaps separately and alone. The experience, which would have helped them in this emergency, they have **neglected to obtain** and their souls are burdened with remorse for wasted opportunities and neglected privileges.” Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 463*



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
“FROM THE CLOSE OF PROBATION TO THE NEW EARTH:
A STUDY OF REVELATION CHAPTERS 15 TO 22”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

Lesson #24 – The River Dragon: Its Meaning in Scripture
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It long has been known that all cosmic sources of waters were conceived, in ancient Near Eastern mythological imagery, as dragons.¹ Given this type of personification of water bodies in nature, it is easy to understand how ancient man looked upon winding rivers as twisting serpent-monsters.² Overflowing flood waters, stretching out from a raging river torrent, added a further confirming touch to the imagery. Hence, the deluge monster, referred to in cuneiform literature as Abubu, is conceived not merely as a serpent, but as a dragon possessing wings.³ Can this not be the background for the imagery found in Isaiah 8:7-8? ‘The king of Assyria and all his glory’ are likened to an overflowing flood of the (Euphrates) river which ‘will sweep on into Judah. . . reaching even to the neck.’ This river that ‘will rise over all its channels and go

1 William F. Albright, Archeology and the Religion of Israel (Baltimore, 1956), p. 149.

2 See for example the ancient Mesopotamian seal impression which pictures a river as a snake in F. S. Bodenheimer, Animal and Man in Bible Lands: Figures and Plates (Leiden, 1972), p. 33, fig. 19.6.

3 Albright, Archeology, p. 217, n. 68; CAD, sub Abubu.

over all its banks,' seemingly is also a river with 'outspread wings'. If the above imagery is accepted, that which is being described is not simply an up-coming confrontation between Assyria and Judah, but a cosmic confrontation which will take place between the dragon and Immanuel (vs. 8), who is supernaturally described, in 9:6, as the future ruler of Judah.⁴

Daniel 9:26, 27 invokes the identical imagery. In vs. 26 it is 'a flood' which will sweep into Judah, causing destruction to both the city (Jerusalem) and her sanctuary/temple. As in the Isaiah passage, the flood is to be understood in a figurative sense, for the in-coming waters is a human tide, consisting of 'the people of the leader who will come.' The most striking parallel is found in vs. 27 in the phrase 'upon the wing of abominations is one who desolates.' The outstretched (dragon?) wing is once more brought into a confrontation situation with the One who is supernaturally endowed; an Anointed-One who champions the covenant (vs. 27)⁵

4 Mary K. Wakeman (God's battle with the Monster, A Study in Biblical Imagery (Leiden, 1973), p. 129), points out that the head, that which is above the neck, and so kept clear of the engulfing flood (Is 8:8), is 'the remnant that will return' of Is 10:21; cf. Is 43:2. Edwin M. Good (Irony in the Old Testament [London, 1965], pp. 149-150) draws attention to the contrast, in the same passage (Is 8:6-8) between the 'waters of Shiloh, which flow gently' and the 'waters of the river' which will sweep away the nation of Judah. On the controversial subject of Immanuel, may it simply be observed that Is 7:14 is a prophecy concerning a child, Immanuel, whose birth and growth (7:14-16) constituted a sign to king Ahaz and the people of Judah, indicating God's willingness to deliver Jerusalem from its enemies. The prophetic utterances concerning the child in 9:6 indicate that the child will not be an ordinary human being. The use of the name Immanuel, 'God with us, in relationship to the Flood wings does seem to add weight to that observation. Theodor H. Gaster (in Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament [New York, 1969], pp. 568-570) puts forth the thesis that Is 7:14-16 is a reference 'to an ancient myth which told of the birth of a Wondrous Child as a presage of the coming Age of Bliss.' Also compare Is 9:6 with the supernatural role attributed to ancient Mesopotamian kings, Thorkild Jacobsen in Toward the Image of Tammuz and Other Essays on Mesopotamian History and Culture (ed. William L. Moran; Cambridge, 1970), pp. 380-381, n. 51.

5 The imagery of a serpent-dragon vis a vis a Messiah figure is reminiscent of both Gn 3:15 and Rev 12:4-5. The LXX, Theod., and the Vulg., all interpret 'the wing' of Daniel 9:27 as the wing of the temple. Hence the Jerusalem Bible renders '... and on the wing of the Temple will

In order to come to grips with such exotic imagery, both the mythological thinking of the ancient world and the Scriptural use of this eastern imagery need closer analyses. The present article cannot pretend adequately to cover such a complex subject,⁶ but brief observations are herewith offered on how the ancients viewed dragon figures. A few selected Scriptural passages will be used simply for the purposes of illustrating the usefulness of the comparable materials.

For archaic and folk societies, the word 'earth' carries a different connotation than in today's parlance, oriented as it is toward the factual findings of scientific discovery. 'Earth,' for pre-scientific man, was not thought of as the world, let alone our modern concept of the planet. For the ancients, 'earth' designated a limited sphere, the realm of established order; the realm which had been organized by divine acts of creation. Beyond lay another realm, that of the unruly sea, signifying the formless elements which remain uncreated. Preeminent in this pre-scientific cosmology was the notion that the earth constitutes a circular plate, surrounded and engulfed by the surging sea of pre-creation chaos; the uncontrolled Deep/Abyss.⁷

Among the Semitic speaking cultures of the ancient Near East two creatures in particular became the emblems of these two contrasting realms.

be the disastrous abomination. . . ' However, the picture obtained from the MT is that of a desolator (of the Temple) being carried along upon the wing. I suspect that the phrase in vs. 26: 'And the people of the leader, he who will come, shall destroy the city and the Sanctuary, even its end by a flood' is to be taken as a parallel expression to that which in vs. 27 reads: 'And upon the wing of abominations is one who makes desolate' (my own translation). Significantly, after both phrases comes the theme of sentence and desolations.

⁶ Ancient mythological cosmologies were varied, and at times conflicting. Religion was never a simple phenomenon. On the complexity of ancient thought, see for example Mircea Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion (New York, 1963); Theodor H. Gaster, 'Myth and Story,' Numen, 1 (1954), 184-212. Two excellent, recent publications dealing with ancient cosmological speculations are: Luis I. J. Stadelmann, The Hebrew Conception of the World (Analecta Biblica 39; Rome, 1970); and Wakeman's God's Battle.

⁷ Mircea Eliade, Images & Symbols, Studies in Religious Symbolism (New York, 1969), pp. 37-39; Stadelmann, The Hebrew Conception, pp. 126-127.

That which brought life-giving waters to earth (in the form of springs, river-fountains, and especially rain) was personified as a bull-figure. As a creature which brought prosperity to the earth, the bull frequently is seen in glyptic art bearing on his back a fertility god, a rain-river, who carries with him a sheaf of lightning bolts.⁸ In astro-symbolism the celestial bull was envisioned as the starry constellation Taurus, the zodiac patron of the fertile spring season. The bull's appearance in the sky (especially that of his horns), marked the time when earth was to be annually rejuvenated.⁹

While it was this 'cosmic bull' which brought fecundity and life to earth (which then became garbed in living greenery), a dragon figure, the monster of pre-creation chaos, personified the infertile, unregenerated sea which lay beyond earth's borders. Thought of as encircling the disk of the earth, this unruly river, 'the Ocean stream,'¹⁰ is found depicted in Greek, Phoenician, and

8 Cf. the comments of W. F. Albright, Archeology, pp. 149-150; Yahweh and the God's of Canaan (London, 1968), p. 172. The symbol of the fertility god, Baal, is the horned cap; see Yigael Yadin, 'Symbols of Deities at Zinjirli, Carthage and Hazor,' in Near Eastern Archaeology in the Twentieth Century, Essays in Honor of Nelson Glueck (ed. James A. Sanders; Garden City, 1970), p. 214. In one instance, the hero god, pictured in conflict with the serpent-dragon, is seen as a composite being, the top half anthropomorphic, but the lower half in the form of an ox/bull; see Z. Yeivin, "A Silver Cup from Tomb 204a at 'Ain-Samiya," IEJ, 21 (1971), 79, fig. 2. For an excellent picture of Baal, with a three-pronged thunderbolt, riding the cosmic bull, see The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York, 1962), A-D, p. 488.

9 While horoscopic astronomy originated in Babylonia/Chaldea during the Persia reign (539 to 332 B. C.), the concept of a zodiacal constellation arising during each month of the year is very ancient. In antiquity, the constellation Taurus was imagined to be in the shape of a triangular head. The Pleiades, denoting the western end of the bull's long horns, played the role of indicating the start of the agricultural season. See especially Willy Hartner, 'The Earliest History of the Constellations in the Near East and the Motif of the Lion-Bull Combat,' JNES, 24 (1965), 1-16.

10 Odysseus travels to the land of the sun's setting, a land wrapped in mist and cloud. It is here, where the flaming eye of Helios, the sun, never penetrates, that he calls up the spirits of the dead, and made his way along 'the Ocean stream' (Odyssey XI:1-29, 34-43). Herodotus (cir. 450 B. C.), rejected with ridicule the idea of the river Ocean flowing around the earth, and laughed at those who drew maps showing the earth rounder than if it had been struck out with a pair of compasses (The Histories, IV.36, cf. IV.8, II.21, 23). The Hebrew word tbl, which occurs almost exclusively in poetry, may possibly refer to the round orb (in the sense

Egyptian art as a great, cosmic serpent which winds itself around the 'ordered realm'. It is the *Dragon Ouroboros* (the serpent eating its own tail) of the later magical papyri.¹¹

Reflecting the concept of the sea as a serpent-river, is the Canaanite (Ugaritic) text which reads: 'Chase Sea (*Yam*) from his throne, River (*Nahar*) from the seat of his dominion' (UT, 68:13). Note how the two terms form a unit in which one member is used to qualify the other. A striking comparison is found in Hab 3:8 where again 'Sea' is paired with 'River'.¹²

Was thy wrath against *Nahar*, Lord?

Was thy anger against *Nahar*,

Or thy indignation against *Yam*,

When thou didst ride upon thy horses,

Upon thy chariot of victory?

There was, however, a further 'hidden' or 'inner' meaning to this personification of a phenomenon of the natural world—always an outlying ocean beyond the habitat of humanity. Members of folk societies sought to understand their local familiar world, and to justify their own earthly institutions, by seeing themselves as a mirror reflection of what they conceived was the greater macrocosm. In other words, the macrocosm—the sea-serpent

of orbis Romanus) of the habitable earth; beyond which, presumably, lay the river circulating around it. Compare the remarks by Stadelmann, The Hebrew Conception, pp. 129-130.

11 See Clark Hopkins, 'Astrological Interpretations of Some Phoenician Bowls,' JNES, 24 (1965), 31. Hopkins makes the fascinating observation that the great serpent circling the rim of the illustrated 7th cent. B. C. silver bowl from Palestrina, Italy, is equivalent to the river Ocean which adorns the rim of Achilles's shield in the Iliad. Apparently, the serpent-frame is an ancient symbolic device for marking off the outer limits of the ordered universe.

12 See the full and valuable discussion by Wakeman, God's Battle, pp. 92-94, including notes. The word Nahar, 'River,' in Hab 3:8 is to be translated in the singular; reading the final letter as an enclitic mem. Wakeman also discusses the fact that it is Yam who is personified; Nahar is but an alternative appellation of Yam.

threatening the earth—served as a blueprint (an architectural plan) for comprehending the reflected model in miniature, the structure of earthly institutions, societies, and events. In the microcosm the folk community constituted the people, the familiar habitat of ‘the earth’. Beyond the limits of known society lay the figurative sea, the region of the formless. The sun shone upon the ‘earth’ and the ‘people,’ but beyond, in the nethergloom, lurked the denizens of outer darkness. This outlying ‘sea’ was a dangerous realm of evil non-peoples (‘barbarians’), demons, ghosts, and the dead.

It is to be observed how all of this was perceived. Events transpiring outside and within the traditional, familiar community were not spoken of directly, but rather in indirect language. The king, or tribal chief, is referred to as a reflection of the greater victorious spring-sun. When he marches with his army to deal with the unsubjected enemy beyond the boundary line, he is the bearer of light to the wretches in dismal darkness. Furthermore, the victorious ruler reduces the elements of chaos in order to create stable prosperity. The contemporary historical situation thus is transfigured to a mythic plain; the king has become the cosmic hero facing the evil Flooddragon.¹³

Illustrations of this figurative ‘indirect language’ abound. When in A. D. 1206 the infamous Mongol ruler Temujin was elevated to be supreme chief over all the Mongol tribes, he was endowed with the title ‘Chingis Khan.’ Since Khan means ‘chief’ and Chingis means ‘a large body of water, the ocean,’ one could erroneously assume the title translates ‘sea chief, ocean ruler,’ or the like. This, of course, renders little sense. The title is more accurately understood to mean

13 Henri Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods (Chicago, 1948), p. 9. Herkhuf wrote from hinter Africa to Pepi II, the last pharaoh of the Egyptian Old Kingdom, that he was returning from the land of Yam, from the land of ghosts. Pharaoh Senusret I, of the early Middle Kingdom, spoke of traveling southward, past Kush (Nubia), reaching the borders of the earth! A much later Egyptian vassal ruler (23rd Dynasty) spoke of the rescue of his city Herakleopolis, by pharaoh Piakhi, as follows: ‘The Nether World has seized me, and I was submerged in darkness, upon which the light has now shone. . . thou, O mighty king, thou hast expelled the darkness from me.’ (Walter B. Emery, Lost Land Emerging (New York, 1967), pp. 178, 191, 272.

‘the all-encompassing Lord.’ To the Mongols, Temujin was the Khan, lord, of the familiar realm, the habitable ‘earth’. Any extension of Temujin’s position as Khan represented an extension of the realm of fertility and life. Beyond lay the uncontrolled enemy of dragons which compose and make-up the Chingis.¹⁴

A beautiful example of this double significance (the macrocosm ‘sea’ vis á vis the microcosm ‘sea’) is found in two types of visual presentations from the ancient Near East. On the one hand is the celestial portrayal of the cosmic fertility god (the rain-giver) defeating the Sea-Dragon. As recent studies indicate, this type of presentation actually represents an enthronement scene; the defeated Flooddragon making-up the Victor’s throne.¹⁵ A Babylonian text speaks of the victory in this fashion: ‘Tiamat (the Sea-dragon) is the seat of Bel on which Bel sits’.¹⁶ Marduk, the ‘Bel’ (‘Lord’) of Babylon, in fact is pictured in a typical stance of assumed lordship. With a crown of feathers, bearing the accruements of rulership—sword, staff, and ring—Marduk is seen arrayed in

14 The title ‘Dalai Lama’, given to the chief priest prelate of Tibet, also carries the same nuance; dalai meaning ‘ocean’ and lama ‘lord’. See Owen Lattimore, ‘Chingis Khan and the Mongul Conquests,’ Scientific American, August, 1963, p. 64. An excellent discussion on the mythical conception of ‘wilderness’—that which lies beyond the familiar habitat—is provided by Shemaryahu Talmon, ‘The Desert Motif’ in the Bible and in Qumran Literature,’ in Biblical Motifs, Origins and Transformations (ed. Alexander Altman; Cambridge, 1966), pp. 51-52. The empire of Alexander the Great popularized the Greek concept of oecumene signifying the inhabited world, interpreted to mean the world of Hellenistic civilization. Anything beyond the oecumene was considered of no account; an uninhabited sphere of barbarians. Alexander Souter, A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament (Oxford, 1953), p. 173. Dan 4:1 in this connection is of particular interest. When Nebuchadnezzar addresses ‘all peoples’ of the earth, he really is addressing his empire.

15 In the ancient world victory must be achieved over the elements of chaos before kingship can be granted (note, for example, the sequence given in Ps 93 where conflict gives way to kingship and enthronement). In the Babylonian Epic of Creation (ANET, 60-72), Marduk is made king before his conflict, but he is not enthroned in his temple, or is he given the ‘Tablet of Destiny’ until after victory. A particularly good discussion on the meaning of the Flooddragon’s defeat is given by Loren R. Fisher and F. Brent Knutson, ‘An Enthronement Ritual at Ugarit,’ JNES, 28 (1969), 160-161.

16 W. C. Lambert, ‘The Great Battle of the Mesopotamian Religious Year: The Conflict in the Akitu House,’ Iraq 25 (1963), 189-190; as cited from Fisher and Knutson, JNES, 28 (1969), p. 161.

the garment of heaven (studded with jewel-stars). The most significant part of the portrayal is the fact that beneath Marduk's feet lies the subdued and defeated Flooddragon.¹⁷

On the other hand, is the miniature reflection of this great cosmic image. The terrestrial ruler also establishes his throne by the act of subjecting his enemy to a supine position under the soles of his feet. Frequently the conquering monarch is portrayed either with his foot placed upon the back of the neck of the defeated ruler, or a number of prostrated prisoners are depicted forming a foundation base for the king's footstool (cf. Ps 110:1).¹⁸

In one instance, the Assyrian monarch Sennacherib (705-681 B. C.) is pictured seated on a throne composed of and held up by defeated captives. The dominating composition of the throne, which leaps to the eye, is the armrest,

17 Martin A. Beek, Atlas of Mesopotamia (New York, 1962), p. 139, where a picture of Marduk on the dragon is shown along with the storm god dad in similar posture. On the same page, Beek identifies Marduk with the spring sun. Thorkild Jacobsen ('The Battle Between Marduk and Tiamat,' JAOS, 88 [1968] 105-106 identifies the meaning of the name Marduk as signifying either 'Son of the sun' or 'Son of the storm.' The concept of the heavens forming an outer robe for the hero-god is discussed by Albright, Yahweh and the Gods (London edition), pp. 174-177. Note that both God and the righteous trod on the backs of monsters (Job 9:8; Ps 91:13)

18 On Tutankhamun's footstool are representations of foreign captives prostrate with their hands behind their backs. See Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt, Tutankamen (New York, 1963), p. 51, Plate XI. The earliest known statue of a pharaoh is that of Kha-sekhem of the 2nd Dynasty. Under his feet, at the base of the throne, are shown the contorted corpses of his defeated enemies. See Kurt Mendelssohn, The Riddle of the Pyramids (New York, 1974), p. 67, Plate 5. Tribute nations are depicted under the Persian ruler Artaxerxes I, as if they were holding up the whole dais upon which the throne rests. See William Culican, The Medes and Persians (New York, 1965), p. 97, Fig. 27. It is important to realize that when a new king ascended the throne, it was necessary for him to seek to renew all the covenant oaths of loyalty from his vassal rulers. Like the creator-god who must overcome chaos in order to bring forth creation, so, too, the reflected ruler on earth overcomes the political chaos in order to establish his kingdom/empire (cf. above n. 15). See also, in particular Jos 10:24; 1 Ki 5:3.

which is made up of three tiers, each of which is held up by four prisoners.¹⁹ Just as the cosmic ruler above created an ordered realm by subduing the chaotic Sea (the Tiamat of Babylonian mythology), so, too, the terrestrial ruler below creates his empire by driving back and reducing the figurative ‘sea’—the enemy host described as the ‘seed of Tiamat’ in an Assyrian inscription.²⁰

Turning to Scripture, several questions may be posed. Did ancient Israel conceive of the universe in the same way as her neighbors? In answer, it would have to be pointed out that the biblical writers were not content merely to parrot the prevailing view that those without the familiar, inhabited sphere are non-peoples, wretches, dogs, and the like.²¹ For there is the strong theme that Israel is God’s ‘first-born son’ (Ex 4:22-23; Hos 11:1), and the ‘first fruits of his harvest’ (Jer 2:3). The suggested conclusion is that God would make other nations as sons, apart from Israel; that other nations also would constitute the Lord’s harvest. Israel is spoken of as a priesthood that serves a large

19 ANEP, p. 129, No. 371; and D. J. Wiseman, Illustrations from Biblical Archaeology (London, 1958), Plate 57. Discussion by Mitchell Dahood, Psalms III (The Anchor Bible 17A; Garden City, 1970), p. 114.

20 Compare the remarks by George E. Mendenhall, The Tenth Generation, the Origins of Biblical Tradition (Baltimore, 1974), p. 45.

21 The concept that the sphere of God’s community is the sphere of life, beyond lying the realm of the dead, does remain a major biblical theme. David laments that because he is forced to live outside of God’s established kingdom, he has ‘no share in the heritage of the LORD’ (1 Sa26:19b). Those not found in the New Jerusalem are ‘the dogs. . . and idolaters. . .’ (Rev 22:15; cf. Php 3:2). Only those who partake of God’s Covenant ‘live’; see the very useful discussion by J. Wijngaards, ‘Death and Resurrection in Covenantal Context’, (Hos VI 2) VT, 17 (1967), 226-239. But there yet remains a great difference in outlook between Israel and her neighbors. Naaman, the Syrian, for example, took back with him to Damascus two mules’ burden of earth from the soil of Israel (2 Ki 5:17); his idea being that no god could be worshiped apart from the god’s own land. And Naaman was desirous of worshiping Israel’s God at Damascus. Jonah is presented as possessing the same provincial outlook. The prophet felt that Yahweh’s voice only could reach him in the Holy Land. If he just could flee from the Lord’s presence, he need no longer be disturbed by God (Jon 1:3). Not only does the presence of the Lord remain with Jonah—even as far and as deep as the heart of the seas (Jon 2:2-3)—but Jonah goes forth as God’s messenger to non-Israelites, who did not ‘know their right hand from their left’ (Jon 4:11).

congregation—the nations of the world (Ex19:5-6; Hos 4:6; cf. 1 Pe 2:5). Even Israel's rulers are but God's 'first-born' (Ps. 2:7; 89:27), for God also anoints other kings over other nations (1 Ki 19:15; Pr 8:16)

While Israel I likened to the cosmic bull, the fructifying force which brings forth earth's harvest, it is noteworthy that the harvest is not limited to the produce of the Holy Land (cf. Jer 2:3):

“Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make your horn iron, and your hoofs bronze; you shall beat in pieces many peoples, and shall devote their gain to the LORD, their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth” (Mic 4:13).

Israel, the life-giving dispensing bull, for all mankind, is about to trample the sheaves—the nations—into chaff on the threshing floor. The result is a harvest acceptable to God (cf. Is 41:15-16; Gn 49:6; Dt 33:16-17).²²

As to the question of cosmology, it is well known that the Bible is not interested in presenting a systematic and comprehensive cosmology. To wit, heaven may be likened to a solid firmament of iron (Dt 28:23; Lev 26:19); a molten mirror (Job 37:18); as a tent spread out (Ps 104:2); as a curtain (Is 40:22; 64:1); as God's garment (Ps 102:25-26; Heb 1:11-12); or as a scroll that can be rolled up (Is 34:4; Rev. 6:14). Much more significant is the fact that Scripture rejected the prevalent polytheistic view which idolized as personified spiritual forces the sea and other such components which make up the cosmos. The mere fact of rejecting the notion that there was such a thing as a Sea-Dragon to be feared—a deity of darkness and death—amounted to an across the board, non-endorsement of pagan cosmological speculations.²³

But there remains the figurative microcosm in which the ancient view of the universe, the components of which were personified deities, is employed to

²² See the discussion by Calum M. Carmichael on Gn 49:6 ('Some Sayings in Genesis 49,' IBL, 88 [1969], 435-437), where Jacob/Israel is symbolized by an ox/bull.

²³ Cf. the remarks of Austin Farrer, A Rebirth of Images, the Making of St. John's Apocalypse (Boston, 1963), pp. 13-14.

describe the configuration of human society. The king is the 'sun' that 'shines' upon 'the people', his subjects. Without lies the chaotic elements of the 'sea'; an animated dragon of 'non-peoples,' the outside enemy. While the ancients employed the macrocosm as a blueprint in order to understand their own local microcosm, Israel took an opposite approach. Biblical writers utilized the figurative microcosm as a symbolic blueprint to deal with the macrocosm of which 'no eye has seen, or ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived' (1 Cor 2:9; cf. Is 64:4); a greater sphere which terrestrial man could not conceptualize and therefore could only understand through symbols and figures. In sum, Scripture rejected idolatry, but the images of the personified cosmic forces were retained as symbols so that they could declare God.

Is this a working model for understanding the River-Dragon of Scripture? The enemy beyond the boundary line for Israel, God's covenant community (Amos 3:2; Ex 25:8), is, in the Isaiah passage that began this article, an historical situation, the up-coming invasion of Judah by the Assyrian army (Is 8:7). The dimension of as human conflict, however, is transfigured to a second dimension, that of the conflict in nature; the torrent flood that destroys the earth. But the fact that the enemy is in the form of a winged creature (Is. 8:8) shifts the reader's vision to a third dimension; that of the imagery of spiritual powers. The earthly warfare is but a shadow-pattern, conjuring up a greater conflict:

"For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." Ephesians 6:12

Again and again are found poetic parallel cola in Scripture in which the 'sea' in the first colon is identified as the 'nations/peoples' in the second colon (Is 60:5b; Ps 46:3, 6; 65:5-8; cf. Hab 1:14; Dan 7:2-3). The 'sea' is a teeming ocean, animated by chaotic elements of heathen peoples, and multitudes wo

dwell beyond God's 'light'. Israel is surrounded by the river-dragon, the threatening nations.

Ah, the thunder of many peoples,

they thunder like the thundering sea!

Ah, the roar of nations,

they roar like the roaring of mighty waters!

The nations roar like the roaring of mighty waters

but he [God] will rebuke them, and they will flee away (Is 17:12, 13)

It would be a mistake to dismiss this figurative language as mere metaphor. It may be defined as 'metaphor,' but its roots lie more properly in symbolic imagery.²⁴

24 The symbolism of sea and cosmic waters in the OT is ably discussed by Herbert G. May, "Some Cosmic Connotations of Mayim Rabbim, 'Many Waters'", JBL 74 (1955), 9-21. Nicolas K. Kiessling ('Antecedents of the Medieval Dragon in Sacred History,' JBL, 89 [1970], 167-175) believes that later Greek and Latin translations of Scripture changed the basic meaning of OT dragons. In the OT, the monsters 'inhabit the depths of the seas and are often employed as apt metaphors of heathen kings, hostile to the children of Israel', but later translators altered the biblical dragon figure to become a 'metaphor of internal disorder (either in the self or the state).' However, that may be, Abraham J. Malherbe ('The Beasts at Ephesus,' JBL [1968], 71-80 points out that as early as Plato (428-347 B. C.) 'human passions and the pleasures of the flesh are described as beasts which fight against man.' Malherbe speaks of Homer's report (beginning of the first millennium B. C.) that after Circe had drugged the comrades of Odysseus, they became beasts (swine, wolves, and the like); see Odyssey X, 236. Possibly such concepts, an example of which is found in Lk 10:17-19 (where demons who trouble individuals are figuratively equated with snakes and scorpions), are based on imagery reaching back into antiquity. Such imagery would be founded on the notion that the individual himself constitutes as miniature microcosm (cf. 2 Pe 1:19), where the morning star arises in the human heart.

In Hebrew thought, earth's 'light' is the *Torah*, God's revelation found in His word (Pr 6:23; Ps 119:105).²⁵ Hence, the line marking the sun's limit, the boundary between light and darkness, is of a legal nature: (Job 26:10; Pr 8:27);²⁶ the limits of God's stipulated covenant (*hoq*).²⁷ Beyond this limit of creative activity in redemptive history (the formation of God's chosen historic community), sports the sea monster, Leviathan (Ps 104:25-26).²⁸

While the dragon figure of OT literature is frequently equated with historical Gentile kings (Is 27:1; Jer 51:34; Ps 74:13; Eze 29:3; 32:2),²⁹ the NT Apocalypse identifies the monster as Satan (Rev 12:9; 20:2). An insightful OT portrait of the dragon is provided in the book of Jonah. The great fish whom the Lord appointed to swallow up Jonah (1:17) is a symbol of Sheol, the underworld

25 Ps 19 is of particular interest. The first part (vss. 1-6) is a hymn to the sun; God's revelation declared in the heavens. The second part (vss. 7-14) speaks of God's revelation found in the Torah, but in terms descriptive of the sun. See the comments by Dahood, Psalms I (Garden City, 1966), p. 121. Rabbinic Judaism associated the Torah with light (2 Baruch 59:2; 77:16; IV Ezra 14:20-21). Early Jewish synagogues frequently have decorations of Torah scrolls flanking the sanctuary lamp (Menorah). Consult the excellent study by L. Yarden, The Tree of Light, a Study of the Menorah (Ithaca, 1971); also Y. Shiloh, 'Torah Scrolls and the Menorah Plaque from Sardis,' IEJ, 18 (1968), 54-57. In Jn 5:33, 35, 39, Jesus equates the witness of Scripture to the witness of a shining lamp, John the Baptist.

26 Wakeman, God's Battle, pp. 134-135.

27 The 'decree (*hoq*) of Yahweh' (Ps 2:7) is the epitome of the Covenant stipulations. 'And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes (*huqqim*) and be careful to observe my ordinance (*mishpatim*)' (Eze 36:27). In Ps 105:10 (cf. 2 Ki 17:15), the word *hoq* occurs in parallel with the term *berith*, 'covenant'. Note the use of *hoq* in Job 26:10: 'He has inscribed a *hoq* upon the face of the waters at the boundary between light and darkness.'

28 The trilogy of Pss 104, 105, and 106 are not to be treated as independent entities, but are to be taken as one grouping. See G. Ernest Wright, The Old Testament Theology (New York, 1969), pp. 77-78. Ps 104 is to be understood in light of the subject matter of Pss 105, 106. Since the latter two psalms deal with the exodus experience, the formation of Israel into a nation, the creation hymn of Ps 104 is in praise of God's creation of His chosen nation. Cf. The creation language used in Ps 89:9-10 to celebrate the establishment of David's throne.

29 On the interesting serpent-dragon of Is 27:1, see the discussion of Edward J. Young, The Book of Isaiah (Grand Rapids, 1969), Vol. II, pp. 232-235. M. Eliade, Cosmos and History, the Myth of the Eternal Return (New York, 1959), pp. 37-38, contains an illuminating discussion of the transfiguration of history into myth; the transforming of historical foes into dragon creatures.'

(2:2), which in turn is identified as ‘the *Tehom* (the Deep) . . . the heart of the seas, and the flood. . .’ (2:3)³⁰

The bizarre imagery of the Apocalypse, which draws so heavily from OT literature, now can come alive with meaning. The great city Babylon, pictured as a harlot (17:5), is seated upon many waters, the river Euphrates (17:12; cf. 16:12; Jer 51:13). But the snake-like river turns out to be a dragon (17:3). With the smiting of the Euphrates, which then dries up (16:12), the way is prepared for the fall of Babylon. This same event is described in another way in Rev 17:16. There, the seven-headed river-dragon turns against the harlot, thereby preparing the way for her eventual destruction. To put it succinctly, the river drying up, or the monster hating the harlot, are to be interpreted as parallel expressions.

In order to appreciate the depth of symbolism, it needs to be noted that this portrayal of the fall of Babylon (Rev 16:12; 17:16) is based on an historical account, found in classical sources,³¹ of how feudal kings from the east (Jer 51:11),³² led by Cyrus of Persia, caused the defeat of Babylon (cf. Is 45:1). By diverting the river Euphrates, Cyrus enabled his troop to march under the walls and into the inner city through the dried up riverbed. Again, as with the analysis of Is 8:7, 8, the text of Rev 16:12 provides more than one dimension. First, there is the allusion to the historical fall of the great city in 539 B. C. Secondly, the historical event is transfigured to that of mythological imagery. A ruling harlot enthroned above the Flooddragon (17:3; 18:7) is overthrown (18:10). ‘The Word of God’, radiant as the victorious sun (19:11-13; cf. 1:16; 10:1) arising from the east (16:12; cf. 19:14), is the agent that causes her overthrow. However, there is yet a third dimension, the interpretation of the mystical

30 Wakeman, *God’s Battle*, p. 81, n. 2; cf. Mt 12:39-40.

31 Herodotus, *The Histories*, i.177-191; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, vii.5.

32 While the mention of the arrival of the conquering kings from the east in Rev 16:12 most likely is based on the historical allusion to the victorious vassal kings referred to in Jer 51:11, the Revelation passage might also be referring to the kings from the east who brought salvation to Israel (Ezr 6:14).

symbols.³³ The figurative Euphrates, the Flooddragon, is really ‘peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues’ (17:15); the unstable foundation upon which the edifice of mystical Babylon is erected. The harlot woman, composed of three major parts (16:19) represents the antichrist (19:19, 20). The sun-figure, ‘The Word of God’ (19:13) is none other than Christ, the heroic figure of the Apocalypse.

The imagery-pattern is strikingly comparable to that of the ancient world; the spring sun rises from the east to lay low the Flooddragon.³⁴ But the setting and interpretation have been radically reoriented so that these elements of the cosmic struggle of nature, the victorious forces of spring defeating the darkness of winter, are employed as a symbolic vehicle to represent the victory of Christ over Satan (20:3).

The death of the serpent-dragon evokes a fantastic imagery. In the Mesopotamian Creation Epic,³⁵ the sea monster Tiamat is an obstacle which Marduk must overcome before creative acts can take place. The victorious

33 That archaic languages may carry (in poetry, or in a religious setting) a triple significance, see the very brief comments by Gaster, Numen, 1 (1954), 204; and by W. F. Albright, History, Archaeology and Christian Humanism (New York, 1964), pp. 78 (and n. 33), 155 (and n. 41). See also below n. 34.

34 On the spring victory of the hero-god over the forces of winter, see especially Johannes C. de Moor, The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Ba’lu (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 16; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1971). De Moor attempts to demonstrate that the Baal myth is a kind of mythic calendar; a mythic explanation of the annually recurring seasonal changes in nature. Following de Moor’s interpretation, three dimensions emerge: (1) Religious memory centered upon historic formative events when society was ‘created’ by the founding fathers. (2) These events were recounted in mythic terms (at the religious seasons by some kind of ritual cult drama) to the changing events in nature relating to the agricultural year. (3) All of the above were interpreted as major events in the life of the god Baal and related deities. That myth, especially in pre-Hellenistic antiquity, was an expression of man’s understanding of reality, see Brevard S. Childs, Myth and Reality in the Old Testament (Studies in Biblical Theology, No 27; London, 1968), pp. 17-30. Also Kenneth Vine’s study on the meaning and significance of myth (‘The Establishment of Baal at Ugarit,’ unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1965).

35 E. A. Speiser ANET, p. 67. 135-137.

Marduk splits open the personified oceanic-force so that he might bring forth, from the dead carcass, material for his 'artful works,' the building of the structure of the cosmos.

In a Canaanite account (UT, 67:1:1-5), the demise of the sea monster by the hand of Baal seemingly has an opposite effect, the crumbling down of the cosmic edifice. In order to smite the seven-headed Lotan (the Ugaritic cognate for Hebrew Leviathan), Baal must bend down from heaven to administer the fatal blow upon the Netherworld monster. Since Baal's outer garment is the heavenly canopy (which should be imagined as embroidered with stars), the whole cosmos collapses as the god bends downward:

When you smite Lotan, the primeval serpent,
Destroy the twisting serpent
The mighty on of the seven heads,
(Then) the heavens wither and sag
Like the loops of your garment/ephod.³⁶

Knowledge gained from comparative mythology makes it almost certain that the collapse of the cosmos, which reconstitutes the dragon—bringing all its component-parts back together again-- , serves as a prelude to the repetition of the cosmogony. With the resuscitation of the whole monster, the battle between the god-hero and the powers of chaos once more take place, from which ensues a new creation.³⁷

36 On the variant translations of the Ugaritic text, compare Frank Moore Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, Essays in the history of the Religion of Israel (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 119, 150; Albright, Yahweh and the Gods (London edition), p. 175; Dahood Psalms II (Garden City, 1968), p. 205.

37 It was a widespread notion in antiquity that the happenings of the beginning of the world will be reproduced. 'The age to come will be inaugurated in the same way as was the present age—by the Lord's subjugation of the rebellious Dragon of chaos and disorder.' Gaster, Myth.

These mythical motifs, so familiar to ancient man, also find fantastic analogues in Scripture, for the very same imagery of personified cosmic forces are retained, but only to carry a metaphorical interpretation. In Isa 51:9-10, the sea, that is divided asunder for the escaping Israelites, so that they might flee from bondage (cf. Ex 14:2-22), is the sea that plays the role of the smitten dragon.³⁸ The sea monster has been split open and God's creation emerges. The emergent nation of Israel ('the newly created earth') is brought forth by God's creative acts in redemptive history. The animated oceanic-forces, which are smitten, are composed of the Egyptian host:³⁹

Did you not split Rahab [the sea monster] in two,
and pierce the dragon through?
Did you not dry up the sea,
the waters of the great Abyss [tehom],
to make the seabed a road
for the redeemed to cross? (Jerusalem Bible)

Legend, and Custom, p. 575. See also Childs, Myth and Reality, pp. 74-75; Eliade, Cosmos and History, passim. A possible pictorial presentation of the final conflict (a repeat of the slaying of the monster) is found on a Nabataean relief dating from the 2nd cent. A.D. The sun god and the morning star (represented as the mounted bowman) are depicted in mortal battle with an anguiped, a creature part human and part serpent. See Nelson Glueck, Deities and Dolphins (New York, 1965), pp. 490-491.

³⁸ While Is 51:9-10 is alluding back to the exodus experience of Israel escaping from Egypt, the prophet actually is referring to the 'exodus' of Israel from Babylonian captivity. See Bernhard W. Anderson, 'Exodus Typology in Second Isaiah,' in Israel's Prophetic Heritage, Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg (eds. B. W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson; New York, 1962), pp. 177-195.

³⁹ "The waters are God's instrument to punish 'the monster' by his own means.' Wakeman, God's Battle, p. 128. For a recent discussion of Is 51:9-11, see Cross, Canaanite Myth, pp. 107-108; 136-137.

The exodus experience is described elsewhere (Ps 74:13-14) in terms of crushing the several heads of Leviathan. Again, it is the creation motif that dominates the imagery:⁴⁰

... by your power you split the sea in two,
and smashed the heads of monsters on the waters.
You crushed Leviathan's heads. . . (Jerusalem Bible)

Or as it is rendered in Ps 68:21-22:

God indeed smote the heads of his foes;
Split their skulls
As he marched forth from his heavens.
The Lord said:
'I stifled the Serpent,
Muzzled the Deep Sea.' (Anchor Bible)

The crossing of the Red Sea was seen as a baptism (1 Cor 10:2 and rabbinical lore).⁴¹ The Flood-Waters (the personification as envisioned in the macrocosm) swallows the enemy army (the mirror reflection as envisioned in the microcosm). Just as Moses plays the role of God (Ex 7:1), so, too, Pharaoh and his armed might are but a shadow-figure of a greater supernatural foe (Ps 68:22-30; cf. Eze 29:3-4; 32:2). In keeping with the imagery, the smitten and subdued enemy finds its home at the depth of the sea (Ex 15:4-5), where the dragon properly belongs! It is this imagery that again is accentuated in the NT.

⁴⁰ The primeval enemy in the story of Israel's creation (the founding of Israel as a nation) is Pharaoh, King of Egypt. Again, one should note the metaphorical language of the figurative creation.

⁴¹ See the valuable discussion by W. D. Davies, The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 34-37.

The old man of sin is buried in the flood waters and a new creation emerges, that of the spiritual man (Rom 6:4-6; cf. 2 Cor 5:17)⁴²

In Judges 5:19-21, the waters of Megiddo (vs. 19), the name applied to the river Kishon (vs. 21), also is presented as a river-dragon that sweeps away the evil enemy.⁴³ On the historic stage is Barak, general of the Hebrew army, arrayed in battle against Sisera, general of the Canaanite forces. The struggle, however, is perceived as also taking place in the world of nature. High in the heavens, from their orbits, the stars fought against Sisera (vs. 20); even the river Kishon joins in the fray (vs. 21). The character of the warfare undergoes a further transformation when the river torrent is abruptly designated the ‘river *qedumim*’ (vs. 21), that is, the river ‘primordial’.⁴⁴ ‘Megiddo’s waters,’ where the confrontation for the Holy Land takes place, stands unmasked as the pre-creation sea-serpent. As with the exodus experience, once more the defeated foe finds its habitat within the sea-serpent.

Finally, there is the motif of the heavens sagging as the seven-headed monster await the death blow by the god-hero (UT, 67:1:1-5). Here, too, the same theme appears in Scripture. The collapsing cosmos, portrayed in Is 34:4,⁴⁵ reemerges again in Rev 6:13-14. Closely comparing both Scriptural

42 “He reached from on high, he took me he drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from those who hated me; for they were too mighty for me” (Ps 18:16, 17) “events of the past can, in general, be religiously significant and relevant in the present only insofar as they are lifted out of the specific contexts of their occurrence and taken as symbols of continuing, universal situations. And to effect such a translation from the punctual to the ideal is precisely the function of myth.” Gaster, ‘Myth, Mythology,’ The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible (New York, 1962), K-Q, p. 486.

43 Cf. the discussion by Lewis S. Hay, ‘What Really Happened at the Sea of Reeds,’ IBL, 83 (1964), 402-403.

44 The significant use of the term qedumim was drawn to my attention by my former student, Paul Lippi. Qedem literally means ‘before’. Here it is to be understood in the temporal sense of ‘former times, of old’ (as for example its usage in Mic 5:1 [5:2 in the MT]). On qedem possessing the meaning ‘primeval times’, see Albright, Yahweh and the Gods (London edition), p 85.

45 Cf. Cross, Canaanite Myth, pp. 150, 175.

passages, the following picture is reconstructed: 'The sky vanishes,' rolled out of view as though it were parchment. The starry 'host languish,' falling to the earth 'as a fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.' And meanwhile, what is taking place? It is the great day of God's wrath against the enemy foe. When the resultant new creation does emerge, the 'sea' no longer exists (Rev 21:1).

*As a personal note I would like to express, in a volume dedicated to Siegfried H. Horn, my deep-felt appreciation to a teacher who not only was the first to initiate me to the rich world of biblical and ancient Near Eastern studies, but also has become a personal friend whose inspiration and encouragement are cherished.

Contact Information

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