

⇐Back to The Future-- Foreward to the Past⇒

by

Steven E. Behrmann

**© by Steven E. Behrmann,
All rights reserved.**

2007

Second draft copy

The author acknowledges the presence of many grammatical and transcriptional errors in this personally edited document. He asks the forbearance of the reader while the editing process continues.

Additional copies of this book may be obtained at www.lulu.com/sbehrmann.

Dedication

This book is dedicated the faithful Adventist pastors of my experience who faithfully pointed out the importance of the themes addressed in this book in their conversations and sermons. Some of the pastors of my youth who faithfully proclaimed the last warning message are Elder Leon Cornforth, Elder Fred Wagner, Elder Raleigh Garner, Elder C.C. Rouse, Elder Elwood Boyd, and Elder Harold McKay. May the “blessed hope” soon be fully realized by them! To them goes much of the credit for the inspiration that produced this book.

Table of Contents

<i>Back To Genesis, Back to the Bible</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>The Beginning and the End.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Patriarchs For the Present--Seth to Methuselah</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>As It Was In The Days of Noah.....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Towers in Our Time</i>	<i>61</i>
<i>Sodom Still Smokes.....</i>	<i>72</i>
<i>Jacob's Time of Trouble.....</i>	<i>82</i>
<i>Deliverance at Midnight</i>	<i>88</i>
<i>Exodist to Adventist.....</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>The Last Trump.....</i>	<i>110</i>
<i>Typological Relationships Between the Elijah Story and Eschatological Schema.....</i>	<i>119</i>
<i>Dare to be a Daniel</i>	<i>130</i>
<i>For Such a Time as This.....</i>	<i>138</i>
<i>Jesus and Jerusalem</i>	<i>149</i>

Foreward (... to the Past)

Back To Genesis, Back to the Bible

Every last-day Christian should be able to recognize and understand one of the greatest of all historical and scriptural principles. This is the operative principle that certain aspects of life and society inevitably repeat themselves. It is the principle that God somehow summons back in turn what has gone before.

The wisest of all men stated it in brilliant terms when saying “there is nothing new under the sun.” He contends that it has all happened before. Repeatedly, with drumming regularity, history seems to meet itself again.

However, while many blankly acknowledge this principle, seldom is it given adequate consideration. But for a few careful, analytical historians, it is only vaguely entertained. Modern thinking supports a random, evolutionary process as dominant in our world. God is not seen as ordering events. Naturalistic reasoning purports that cause and effect repeat indefinitely, aimed at some nebulous, non-determined outcome.

Back to Genesis, Back to the Bible

However, to be faithful to the biblical perspective, it is not consistent for the modern Christian to take such an accidental and fatalistic view. The Scripture claims are clear on at least one thing: that there is a God, and that this God has all things under his control. He is a God who has knowledge of the future, and who authors the course of history.

It is permissible for one to reject this viewpoint if he chooses. One may do so, and join the ranks of multiplied millions of others who hold this popular world-view. But the informed Christian cannot consistently hold such a view and at the same time profess to believe the biblical claims that are boldly and clearly manifest throughout the Scripture.

In our time, the prophetic schemes of the Old and New Testament have seen a revival of interest directed toward them. Since the Advent Movement of the early 1800's, the claim has been heralded by Adventists and others that Jesus Christ will soon return. Especially has the content of the books of Daniel and Revelation been consulted and elucidated on this subject. Various books and treatises have been devoted to this subject. Significant churches and religious movements have been founded as a result of these same prophetic themes.

Yet, as a whole, when considering the entire population of the earth, the biblical testimony revealing the anticipated endgame for this planet has made relatively little impact. While this attitude is troubling to many of us in certain respects, it really after all is not surprising or unusual. This disinterest is to be expected; indeed it has been consistently predicted and anticipated for centuries on end.

However, what seems particularly alarming and perilous to the writer of these pages, is the general attitude of many who profess, or at least once professed, to believe the "message" of a soon-coming Savior. Many now tend to doubt or de-emphasize the teachings that many used to consider great light. Sentiments are emerging that claim that it would be impossible for the seventh-day Sabbath to ever be a defining issue in the last days, or

BACK TO THE FUTURE

that it is unlikely that fellow Christians could ever enact laws that would compromise religious liberties, or that things could really happen according in the ways they are described in the book *Great Controversy* and other like scenarios. This is sad for many reasons. But the worst part of this circumstance is that it may create a fatally dangerous position for many people, if indeed the light gathered for the last several years is most certainly the truth and light it claims to be.

The purpose of this series of sermons is to teach that the predictions of eschatological things made in the Bible and in the “Spirit of the Prophets” find validation and surety in the stories of the Bible themselves. Especially in those narratives coming out of the commencement of the great conflict is found an accurate prophetic tool exposing the future conflict and final dissolution of all things. God, it seems, chooses to write the best prophecy with history itself.

Many historical characterizations, correlations, types, and symbols are simply too harmonious, numerous, or providential to be accidentally accurate. In the stories of Genesis and Exodus, the Judges and the Kings, we can find exciting knowledge about our future. The past is prologue. What has happened will happen again. The new is in the old contained, the old is in the new explained. We can go “back to the future.” God summons everything back in its turn. God “requireth that which is past.”

Skeptics of this supposition warn us that such an idea is fanciful and dangerous. They charge that such prophetic representations are at most only symbolic. They remonstrate skeptically that such a use of Scripture is little more than allegorical story-telling. They reason that such scriptural events are only innocent “types,” and nothing more. The seeming, modern counterparts, they hold, exhibit merely accidental similarities.

It is true that when abused, the principle of future application of prophecy from the Bible and other historical sources can lead to error. The mistake

Back to Genesis, Back to the Bible

of many, however, is that they too readily dismiss the God-given evidence couched in these prophetic passages, passages that not only inform us as to future events, but provide corroborative validations of the promises and predictions made in other places.

The Bible itself teaches that certain stories of the Scripture are given for the very purpose of providing examples of what is to come upon last day Christians. Following are but a few of the Scriptural passages that generally teach this. Anyone is challenged to read these passages carefully and ask whether or not there is scriptural permission given to extract later application from at least certain historical materials:

The Reduplication of History And Prophecy (KJV)

"Produce your cause, saith the Lord, bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and show us ***what shall happen***: let them show ***the former things***, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or ***declare us things for to come***." Isa. 41:22

"The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. **Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us.**" Eccl. 1: 5-10

BACK TO THE FUTURE

(NEB "What has happened **will happen again**, and what has been done **will be done again**.")

"That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past." Eccl. 3:15 (NEB "Whatever has been already, and whatever is to come has been already, and **God summons each event back in turn**.")

"For **whatsoever things were written aforetime** were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Rom. 15:4

"But there **were** false prophets also among the people, **even as there shall be** false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." 2Pet. 2:1

"Now all these things happened unto them **for ensamples**: and they are written **for our admonition**, upon whom the ends of the world are come." 1Cor. 10:11

While in a technical sense history does not repeat itself; that is, the very same people and places do not reoccur in later history, the Bible teaches that there is to a degree, a solid, reliable, reduplication of the past. Whether this is merely a natural historical cycle, or the simple outworking of cause and effect, one is free to argue, and summon his best reasons. Most certainly to what degree history repeats itself, and *how*, is the subject of another book. But at least to some measurable degree, the character of certain events or themes return again. Modernly, the anecdote is often shared that if you keep your once fashionable clothes long enough, they

10

Back to Genesis, Back to the Bible

will eventually come back into style. And somehow this indeed happens. History too is sometimes like this.

In all, the scriptural idea clearly exists that there is a purpose in history that surpasses naturalistic evolution; that there is a supreme God, superintending all things, who works out the counsel of his own will. This higher, more elevating theme is much closer to the claims of general inspiration, and much more satisfying, I believe, to the human spirit. Man may attempt to explain why certain things happen as they do, but when they do not include in their reasoning the real, personified powers of good and evil; notably God and Satan, they are largely lost in most of their conclusions. God even challenges such to “produce their cause” for why certain things happen. And, in fact, men tend to invent some flimsy explanations. But only one being can rightly claim authority over the future, and that One is the God who not only *knows* the future, but *builds* it in his own laboratory.

Yet there are some anxious to jettison the traditional prophetic expectations held by Adventists for well over a hundred years (and for others, back farther). Some desire to totally abandon the traditional prophetic scheme, others wish to make more realistic and believable adjustments to it and make the scheme more acceptable to their “biblical” or ‘post-modern’ philosophy.

The thinking in recent years has been among some Adventists that the light given in the *Spirit of Prophecy* or the writings of Ellen White is fast becoming obsolete, and in some cases should be adjusted or refined. The claim usually takes the tone that in her writings we have good, devotional material, but that now, in light of current world trends and events, her predictions and treatment of the biblical materials are outdated and inaccurate. Voluminous works are compiled to attempt to discredit her prophetic ability. Searches are made of her writings for “so called” mistakes. Other works seek to question or berate her prophetic claims on the basis of her natural humanity.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

It is truly a wonder that in the millions of words, critics cannot really find more false indications than they do. And when they do find something suspicious, the proof of such a “mistake” is dubious or unclear. The reason that they do not find more than they do is that they are probably on a misguided endeavor to begin with. Such critical opponents are likely engaging in a pathetic waste of time. Instead of searching the writings for contradictions, they should be more like the Bereans “who searched *the Scriptures* to see whether *those things were so.*” They should aim rather at validating the prophetic voice rather than discrediting it, the very thing that godless men have done for centuries with the Scriptures themselves. They seem to be seeking instead what is “not so.” While queries and questions are good and necessary, they should not be an end in themselves.

While anything that has been touched by humanity is never free from mistakes or imperfections, the overall purposes and trends of all true prophetic materials are clearly reliable, profitable, and inspirational to the truly honest in heart. The arrogant and persistent whining of most of these critics accomplishes little good in the end anyway. They are sometimes actually working the enemy’s schemes, erroneously thinking they are theologically rescuing people, when these people actually do not really need to be rescued.

The apostle Paul indicates that the narratives and experiences of Old Testament are to be view as “ensamples”(KJV) of things to come. Notice the prophetic nuance of the word, “ensample.” In a technical sense such a word is stronger in meaning than a mere example, a metaphorical comparison. An “ensample” is a “sample within,” that is, a sample part of the very same substance to be revealed later. A sample is part of the true and original product, not a facsimile, or vegetarian substitute. It is an outgrowth that partakes and draws from the original trunk. It is a rib from Adam’s side. It is part of the original paint and canvass, the primary art

Back to Genesis, Back to the Bible

form, ready to be reworked or redrawn into a modern and more elegant masterpiece.

The conclusion of the writer of this simple work is that a great and brilliant harmony exists between the truly biblical, as well as the modern prophetic materials---and the expected outworking of future events. Therefore, such things as the “Adventist” version of last day events, the Time of Trouble, the Sabbath/Sunday issue, the continuing battle over the Law of God, the counsel as pertains to country living, diet, modesty, issues of worship, the investigative judgment, and numerous other themes, should, I believe, most definitely be retained in their place as issues of importance to modern Adventists and to the world. One powerful reason is that they all have definite and oft repeated biblical and historical precedents.

Not only should the general expectations of what is to happen in the future be maintained, they should in fact be *demand*ed of the future. For since they have occurred in the past with consistency, we have every reason to expect that they will be fulfilled in the last great times just as thought. God says these things are “required” to happen again. They may not happen as *some* expect, in that some proponents may never have made an accurate assessment to begin with, but they will occur consistent to the prophetic and historical datum.

A great need of the church today, then; if it wishes to be prepared for what is soon to break upon the earth; is to go back to the Bible, back to Genesis. These historical books and documents serve as a “Foreward to the Past.” In the beginning scenes of the “Great Controversy” are found the seeds of the future. In these scenes are seen the patterns of God’s ways, and the designs of God’s enemy (and our enemy as well). In these narratives one may find a prophetic template for the future. Here, of all places, is the information needed to apply to our day! Here are valuable lessons for all Christians interested in fulfilling the divine destiny marked out for them. To this overall purpose these chapters are written. Here are presented

BACK TO THE FUTURE

“ensamples” appropriate, I believe, for consideration by those upon whom the end of the world has come.

The Beginning and the End

Introduction

“And I saw four angels, standing upon the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. . . . Saying, ‘Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, or the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.’”

Already in our world, these winds that represent strife and unrest are blowing. What is the fuller meaning of these awesome events?

Some time ago this author listened to the testimony of a young schoolteacher who had lived on the island of Kauai, one of the Hawaiian Islands, during the year of the American super storms, *Iniki* and *Andrew*.

The teacher told of his experience as a survivor of Hurricane *Iniki* and how the tropical island that was his home could be seen as a microcosm of disastrous events that will no doubt descend upon planet earth before human probation finally closes.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Wind forces up to 165 M.P.H. inflicted disastrous consequences to virtually the entire island. Trees, glass, and debris traveled at fatal speeds through the air. Luxurious complexes were leveled, half million dollar homes were totally destroyed in a matter of minutes; leaving their owners, if they survived, with little more than the equivalent of a pile of matchsticks. People, who only hours before had been reveling in the lap of luxury, found themselves with no home, food, power, or convenience. For several weeks all earthly support was virtually “cut off.”

The Christian schoolteacher, while his island was being leveled, spent several hours under a mattress. The eye of the storm gave the islanders but a short time to regroup before the second wave of weather slammed them. For weeks all roads were closed, blocked by trees and rubble. Many, if they had fled from what was remaining of their homes, were not able, or simply were not allowed, to return to their houses. No flights left the island, except a few emergency ones. The situation was so desperate that the only injured passengers were allowed to go out or come in on the airlines. The exceptions were those who possessed cash money, or at least promised to return with cash money.

The need for basic amenities was desperate. Men and women, formerly benign and friendly, were willing now to nearly kill for food. 2,000 residents lined up at one little market. Even the women were fighting for places in the line.

Fortunately for the teacher, his house still stood, with minimal damage on the bedroom side of the complex. But this blessing was even turned into a curse. He and his wife felt despised because their house was spared. Also spared was the Seventh-day Adventist high school where they taught. Instead of being a cause of thankfulness, some residents seemed to be angry that the school and homes were spared when their places were not.

The Beginning and the End

According to one resident only two telephone poles were left standing on their part of the island. At first there were three, but it was left at such a precarious angle that it finally toppled to the ground. In all, the island experienced its own, local, "Time of Trouble."

The same year, Florida and Louisiana were also hammered with notorious hurricane *Andrew*. One couple, we are told, left their home in the South to travel to Hawaii and escape the weather. But upon seemingly avoiding one hurricane, they were quickly victimized by the other, and in the end, both!

Throughout the world the winds of disaster and trouble are blowing. In a thousand forms distress is on every hand. Terrorism, Tornados, Tempests, and Tsunamis leave a wake of destruction behind them. Added to Hugo, Iniki, and Andrew are new names, Katrina, Rita, and many others. In some seasons the weather service is nearly forced to start the alphabetical listing of storms over anew.

While trouble and distress are not new to our planet, the scale of the modern counterparts are more deadly and repetitive than ever. Miraculously, only four people were killed in Hurricane *Iniki*. Such merciful consequences will not always exist. The only way to account for why the results are sometimes not more devastating than they are is that in these events God is giving warning. But the trumpets of judgment are indeed blowing.

There are but a handful of human beings who understand the true meaning of these events. They appear to most to be random acts of violence. Little is known as to their cause, though scientists offer naturalistic explanations such as *global warming*, or *El Nino*, or *plate tectonics*. While such natural or scientific explanations no doubt have *some* validity, they do not explain the entire picture. Reports one prophetic writer:

BACK TO THE FUTURE

“The restraining Spirit of God is even now being withdrawn from the world. Hurricanes, storms, tempests, fire and flood, disasters by sea and land, follow each other in quick succession. Science seeks to explain all of these. The signs thickening around us, telling of the near approach of the Son of God, are attributed to any other than the true cause. Men cannot discern the sentinel angels restraining the four winds that they shall not blow until the servants of God are sealed; but when God shall bid his angels loose the winds, there shall be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture.” 6T 408

“Satan has control of all whom God does not especially guard. . . . Even now he is at work. In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes, and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence. These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous.” GC 589,590

Modern Problems, Ancient Issues

These modern manifestations of supernatural wrath are in reality part of a very old struggle. To understand more about them one must first go back to Genesis. Particularly Gen. 3:15. Genesis 3:15 summarizes in one short verse the history of the world.

“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed, and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

Gen. 3:15--is called the *protoevangelium*--meaning literally, the “first gospel.” But it is really also a summary statement of the first, biggest, and longest of all “fights.”

The Beginning and the End

Enmity is a word for “opposition.” It comes from the same root as “enemy,” and is defined as: antipathy, hostility, animosity, rancor, and antagonism.

The word for “seed,” in this passage can be taken as both singular and plural. It is a word like: “sheep,” or “fruit.” The choice of such a word is intentional.

The “seed” or “offspring” of the serpent can be understood as “seed,” singular, that is, *one* person; or; “seed,” plural, referring to *many* offspring. The same double meaning is true also of the offspring of the woman. Notice the interesting shift from the singular plural forms in the first part of the verse, to the following singular pronominal forms in the second part (or doublet):

“He (singular) shall bruise thy head---(singular).”
You (singular) shall bruise his heel (singular).

This informative verse refers to the age-long conflict between good and evil. Singularly, it points to Jesus---and Satan. Satan’s kingdom, Satan himself being the head of the snake, is to be ultimately crushed. But not without a fatal snakebite to the heel of the righteous seed, Christ. Such symbols are very appropriate and typical of Christ’s crucifixion as well as the final dissolution of evil when Satan is to be destroyed. But when the plural forms are used, it ably describes the age-long conflict between the later, multiplied, righteous and the wicked offspring.

Indeed this “oldest” of all “Gospels” (Genesis 3:15) is considered by the writer of the book of Revelation to point way beyond Eden, and even beyond the Cross of Christ to the end times. In Revelation, this prologue of all things then is connected to the epilogue of all things, the latter times. This woman and her Seed, the Serpent and his seed, are not only first things, but in continuation, “last things” as well.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Says Revelation 12:17:

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus.”

Revelation, the last book of the Bible is thus related to Genesis, the first book of the Bible, in many ways. In both we find trees of life, a serpent, a woman, paradise, and many other corresponding themes as well.

Since we first find this symbolic woman in the person of Eve, then later in Mary the mother of Jesus, yet finally in a “prophetic” woman that existed for at least 1,260 years in the wilderness and awaiting the final attack of Satan (a consistent symbol stemming from the very beginning of time yet existing to the close of time); we cannot assume that this woman in Revelation is a literal or solitary person. Since the war with the remnant is between the woman’s seed and the Serpent’s seed we must see nothing other in these figures than the battle between the forces of evil and good in the professed *church* of God.

The final war then is between the same principal foes seen at the beginning---the true church---and the false church, masquerading as the gloriously attractive, powerful, yet deceptive offspring of the Serpent. Being the counterpart of the true church or woman, necessitates that the deceptive power there described as a serpent is a *false religious system*, manipulated, as was the serpent in Eden by Satan himself.

This ancient story reveals the *modus operandi* of Satan in the final conflict. The Devil will try to pull off another similar subterfuge--another deception. Revelation, chapter 12, when carefully explicated can lead to no other conclusion than that the Roman system, the same system that rose up against the Prince of Princes, is the principle system through which the dragon is to work and speak. However, the modern Roman system denies

The Beginning and the End

that they are this apostate system, despite the clarity in which prophecy identifies it.

One direct way in which Satan masks his true purposes is in the popular veneration of Mary, the mother of Jesus. The Catholic position is that Mary is the true woman of Revelation 12. Most recently this claim has been strengthened by Marian apparitions and other phenomena, and particularly in the *Fatima* visions given to certain children in the tiny village of Fatima, Portugal, in 1917. In these visions, a bright heavenly figure miraculously appeared in the air above these witnesses in a series of seven visions. The messages claimed to be from the Virgin Mother. Certain phenomena accompanied these visions. While some significant differences are to be observed from the sign in Revelation 12:1-3, nevertheless the Catholic system openly acknowledges their dedication to the Mary of the Fatima visions. Pope John Paul II dedicated his papal mission to them, and her, and apparently these visions found much of their fulfillment in the downfall of Iron Curtain. This is well documented in books such as Malachi Martin's *The Keys of This Blood*:

“The Fatima visions were “intended for papal action at a certain time in the future; and she ended her visits in October with a miracle that recalled for many the Bible verse that tells of a ‘Woman Clothed with the Sun, and giving birth to a Son who will rule the Nations with a scepter of iron.’”

p. 48, *The Keys of this Blood*

“This Pope desires to commit the Church in a special way to Mary in whom the stupendous and total victory of good over evil, of love over hate, of grace over sin, is achieved. . . .”

“This Pope commits himself to her [Mary], and to all those whom he serves, and all those who serve him. He commits the Roman Church to her as the token and principle of all the churches in the world in their universal unity.” p. 68

BACK TO THE FUTURE

There is substantial difference between the woman seen in Revelation and the various Marian apparitions, however. Even if a being claiming to be Mary should appear in the heavens the message of Revelation would still be clear. The battle outlined there is clearly between a false religious system and a persecuted remnant few who KEEP GOD'S COMMANDMENTS. The woman is the true church of prophecy, whereby the claims of the papal system are clearly anti-gospel. The papal system is more clearly identified with Satan that speaks blasphemies through a false system (a snake, or dragon), just as he spoke through the original serpent/dragon. There is a flood of evidence to substantiate this. And there are other "dragons" that Satan speaks through as well.

Therefore, to this day the lines are still drawn. But the foe isn't always clear to the worldling. And no one openly claims to be on the Dragon's side. But the final conflict and its development are almost perfectly laid out in the original Edenic story. The purpose in all of this being recorded for us, is that it has implications for today. What has happened before will happen again!

Satan knows that he has but a short time. To do what? To repeat and bring to maturity the same specious lies told to Eve. He is trying to secure his victims so that he can alleviate his own suffering in the future. He is intent on securing his own victory in the historic struggle. For the most part he is lulling millions to sleep in carnal security, or strategically deceiving the religious world to assure his own success. With each victim taken in his snare he rejoices and heaves a sigh of relief:

"When the angel of mercy folds her wings and departs, Satan will do the evil deeds he has long wished to do. Storm and tempest, war and bloodshed---in these things he delights, **and thus he gathers in his harvest.** And so completely will men be deceived by him that they will declare that **these calamities are the result of the desecration of the first day of the week.** From the pulpits of the popular churches will be heard the statement that the world is being punished because Sunday is

The Beginning and the End

not honored as it should be. And it will require no great stretch of the imagination for men to believe this.” 9-17-1901

It may seem like an old-fashioned idea to see a personal Satan as the direct perpetrator of these natural disasters. But those who refuse to believe this possibility are already placing themselves at a disadvantage to the enemy. It is exactly the attitude he enjoys marketing. Yet behind it all is a very simple strategy. Two “D’s.” Deceive and Destroy. He first secures people in deception that ultimately places them beyond the protecting power of God. He then harvests his victims. The only real resistance comes from the true church of God that exposes his devices. This institution he hates, and toward it he aims his final, vicious attack.

“Angels are belting the world, refusing Satan his claims to supremacy, made because of the vast multitude of his adherents. We hear not the voices, we see not with the natural sight the work of these angels, but their hands are linked about the world, and with sleepless vigilance they are keeping the armies of Satan at bay till the sealing of God’s people shall be accomplished.” 7BC 967

“The same destructive power exercised by 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.” GC 614

“The day of test and purification is just upon us. Signs of a most startling character appear, in floods, in hurricanes, in tornadoes, in cloudbursts, in casualties by land and by sea, that proclaim the approach of the end of all things. The judgments of God are falling on the world, that men may be awakened to the fact that Christ will come speedily (RH Nov. 8, 1892) BC 950

“I was shown that the judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord upon them, but in this way: They place themselves beyond his protection. He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then, if those who have been the objects of his special care will

BACK TO THE FUTURE

follow their own course, independent of the Spirit of God, after repeated warnings, if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them ... It is Satan's power that is at work at sea and on land, bringing calamity and distress and sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey. ----14MR3 (1883)

It is no mystery to "Spirit of Prophecy" believers how the final test will be brought about. The actual, physical winds of destruction partly figure into the equation. It may be that God's people will be the actual targets of Satan's work. Indeed he is angry toward them. But God will protect them. It will not be lost upon the inhabitants surrounding them that God has especially sheltered them. In all, disaster, war, terrorism, and trouble will create a scenario that will ultimately threaten God's people:

"It will be declared that men are offending God by the violation of the Sunday sabbath; that this sin has brought calamities that will not cease until Sunday observance shall be strictly enforced." GC 590

But God's children need not be troubled. They are not to be children of fear. The natural disasters are not the real problem. The answer to this whole dilemma is for Christians to know God now, at the present time. It is this security and confidence that will see the faithful remnant through the last great conflict. When it is finally over, the seed of the woman will most surely triumph.

A story is told of a certain Christian who was brought before Pliny, the Roman governor of Asia Minor, for trial. Finding no fault with the man, he proceeded to threaten him: "I will banish you."

"You cannot," was the reply, "for all the world is my Father's house."

"Then I will slay you," the governor cried out.

The Beginning and the End

“You cannot,” the Christian answered again, “for my life is hid with Christ in God.”

“I will take away your possessions,”

“You cannot, for my treasure is in heaven.”

Finally Pliny shouted out in exasperation, “I will drive you away from man and you shall have no friends left.”

The Christian calmly replied, “You cannot, for I have an unseen Friend from whom you are not able to separate me.”

(It is Written Telenotes, p. 16, (month and year unknown ---C.E. Macartney)

This faithful disciple knew the secret of survival. This same *ultimate* immunity to the enemy’s onslaughts is available to every modern believer as well. When the past atrocities are repeated in our time there can be found the same “shelter in the time of storm.” It is time for every spiritually wise man and woman to lay hold of the Anchor of the Their Soul, who will secure them safely through the last great conflict.

Patriarchs For the Present--Seth to Methuselah

In the previous chapters we commenced to argue that what is past is prologue to the future. The signs and tests given early on in the conflict between good and evil are to be repeated at the end of time. Satan early on attacked with deception, self-promotion, false worship, and with the perversion of the institutions laid out at creation. This strategy will be repeated in precise fashion toward the end of the conflict as well.

The Final Beginning

Few are truly aware of the fierceness and wrath of the enemy, nor how deep and determined Satan is in his attacks and his plots. Little do most men properly estimate the depth of the struggle:

“While hunting deer in the Tehema Wildlife Area near Red Bluff in northern California, Jay Rathman climbed to a ledge on the slope of a rocky gorge. As he raised his head to look over the ledge above, he sensed movement to the right of his face. A coiled rattler struck with

Patriarchs For the Present

lightning speed, just missing Rathman's right ear. The four-foot snake's fangs got snagged in the neck of Rathman's wool turtleneck sweater, and the force of the strike caused it to land on his left shoulder. It then coiled around his neck. He grabbed it behind the head with his left hand and could feel the warm venom running down the skin of his neck, the rattles making a furious racket. He fell backward and slid headfirst down the steep slope through brush and lava rocks, his rifle and binoculars bouncing beside him. "As luck would have it," he said in describing the incident to a Department of Fish and Game official, "I ended up wedged between some rocks with my feet caught uphill from my head. I could barely move." He got his right hand on his rifle and used it to disengage the fangs from his sweater, but the snake had enough leverage to strike again. "He made about eight attempts and managed to hit me with his nose just below my eye about four times. I kept my face turned so he couldn't get a good angle with his fangs, but it was very close. This chap and I were eyeball to eyeball and I found out that snakes don't blink. He had fangs like darning needles...I had to choke him to death. It was the only way out. I was afraid that with all the blood rushing to my head I might pass out." When he tried to toss the dead snake aside, he couldn't let go—"I had to pry my fingers from its neck."

Rathman, 45, who works for the Defense Department in San Jose, estimates his encounter with the snake lasted 20 minutes. Warden Dave Smith says of meeting Rathman: "He walked toward me holding this string of rattles and said with a sort of grin on his face, I'd like to register a complaint about your wildlife here."¹

The experience of Mr. Rathman is not unlike the situation in which modern humanity finds itself. From the beginning of biblical history men have found themselves caught in such a deadly struggle with the enemy. The intensity only increases now as the end time approaches, and the

¹ "Terror on the side of a steep slope---Eyeball-to-eyeball with a rattler," Los Angeles Times, Nov. 4, 1987. (Also quoted by C. Swindoll, *The Quest for Character* (Portland, Oregon, pp. 17-18.)

BACK TO THE FUTURE

deadly Serpent and his allies are fighting with similar tenacity and desperation, for they know that their time is short. Those who live in the end time are in the very death grip of our enemy, and ought to know it as distinctly as did Mr. Rathman, who stared his own serpent foe directly in the face.

The present conflict simply mirrors what started at the beginning, and that which continued through the first centuries of this planet's history. Yet God has always had his people set in place to counteract the enemy's plots. The age-old struggle between God's people and Satan's people unfolded then, and in like manner continues to this day.

Beyond Eden

Genesis 4 and 5 describe some of the oldest history of our planet. Early on a polarization developed between the sons of God, the faithful, and the followers of the Serpent. Examples of the faithful are found in the lives of Abel, Shem, Enoch, and Methuselah. Cain, Lamech, and their descendents represent well the system of rebellion.

An important distinction to be observed early on, is that the two separate lines that polarized were not, at least at first, what is normally thought; enmity between the faithful righteous and the overtly godless wicked. The descendants of the sons of men virtually all "believed" in God, for the evidence was too overwhelming and obvious that he existed and interacted with men. The real enmity developed then between not so much the righteous and the wicked, but between the truly righteous and the professedly righteous. Later, overt rebellion and denial against God took place. But for a time the issues were between the "true church" and the "false church." This phenomenon is extremely important in terms of last-day significance.

"Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." (4:26)

Patriarchs For the Present

We know, that this statement, offered in the context of Seth's offspring, is about the practice of worship. This expression is used of Abraham, several times later in the book of Genesis as what happened when he set up altars from place to place. It is not simply referring to the practice of prayer. It is clearly speaking of religious worship and practice. A good translation might be: "at that time men began to practice religion." They made religious profession. And some were genuine in their faith, and some were not.

Here are almost exact echoes of what Jesus said thousands of years later: *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven...."* (Matthew 7:21). "Calling upon the name of the Lord" is not then what indicates true religion. It only indicates religious *profession*.

The most interesting indication of the early admixture of true and false "Christianity" is found in the names of the Patriarchs. The two lists, the descendents of Seth and the descendants of Cain are eerily similar. This is intentional and not accidental. Both groups were apparently professing to be the church of the promised seed. Both were apparently acting upon some kind of prophetic information:

<u>Seth</u>	<u>Cain</u>
Enos	Enoch
Cain(an)	Irada (Jared)
Mahalaleel	Mehujael
Jared	Methusael
Enoch	Lamech
Methuselah	
Lamech . . .	

(Gen 4:16-26; 5:1-32)

BACK TO THE FUTURE

This is precisely the picture to be expected in the last days. Modern proponents wish to promote the idea that the entire church is headed toward salvation while the host of the wicked will be lost. It is taught that simple belief in Christ will save all who wish. The church is never admitted to be corrupt in itself, but religionists blame any corruption on its proximity to the secularity of the earth and its encroaching worldliness. Seldom will it be admitted by churchmen that the church itself, with its darling doctrines and practices is evil and apostate.

While at the final end there can ultimately be but two groups, the righteous and the wicked, in a qualified sense, it will never appear so leading up to the end. There are, and will be until the end of time really *three* groups. The godlessly wicked, the professed righteous, and the truly righteous. The proper understanding of this simple generalization cannot be overestimated in importance. The Bible has actually little counsel or information directed toward those who are totally without God. But the Bible contains an enormous amount of directives and counsel regarding the conflict between the other two groups, both of which are openly and avowedly religious. There is a reason for this.

These two distinct classes were first represented in Cain and Abel.

“The murder of Abel was the first example of the enmity that God had declared would exist between the serpent and the seed of the woman. . . PP77”

In the first conflict at least three primary issues immediately emerge:

- *Persecution* of the faithful
- *Worship* and the Sabbath,
- The placing of *marks*.

In Genesis 4:3-5, a marginal reading appears in some Bibles. It reads that when Cain and Abel came to sacrifice, that they came “at the end of the days.”

Patriarchs For the Present

Certain commentators point out that this sacrifice was likely carried out for the purpose of honoring the Sabbath institution. Writes F.C. Gilbert:

“It is clear that the two sons of Adam each brought an offering unto the Lord at the close of the week, on the seventh day, or the Sabbath of the Lord.” Messiah in His Sanctuary, p. 76 (FC Gilbert).

God accepted the worship of Abel, but did not accept the worship of Cain. The favor thus shown to the faithful brother ultimately and quickly led to the persecution and death of Abel. Now this is interesting, isn't it?

The only material difference between the offering of Cain and the offering of Abel is that Abel was the only one of the two that worshipped exactly as God specified. Abel brought the required (Sabbath?) Lamb. While Cain's sacrifice, taken from the fruit of his field was quite beautiful, noble, and even sincere, it was not in the form *God had specified*. Cain felt that the fruit of his own works was adequate, and substituted a form of worship slightly different from what God had commanded and had clearly and strictly specified. It looks like Cain in harvesting and presenting his fruit might have violated even the Sabbath in doing so and certainly violated it in bringing his “own work” to the service. Indeed one can never be redeemed by his own efforts, works, or even worship. All seekers, rather, must be redeemed “by the blood of the Lamb.”

Of the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil”(in the garden for Adam and Eve) one could argue that materially it was just another tree, in like appearance to others. It promised, and no doubt advertised wonderful qualities. But God “declared” it to be forbidden. Likewise Cain reasoned that his adjustment to “worship” was full of merit and ought to receive equal recognition. How like the substitute day of worship, and forms of worship, offered by the modern Christian world! The principle argument is, “what difference could the day, or style of worship make?” The answer is quite simple: Because the popular worship day is not the day God has

BACK TO THE FUTURE

specified as a test of worship. Neither are many other forms of worship typically offered on Christian altars today equally acceptable in God's sight.

God greatly longed to accept Cain's offering. In conversation with him later God says, "If you will only do what is right, will I not accept you?" But Cain wished to have it *his* way and not God's way. What every Christian should ask about everything he does is not, "What do I think should be done?" but rather "What does God think should be done?" Every major religious issue could be settled immediately if this simple dictum were taken seriously. Jesus says that if we love God, we *will* keep his commandments. Cain's offering was marred with too much of self-convenience and self-preference.

The Mark of Cain

Another interesting scenario relating to final events comes as a result of Cain's murder of his brother. A mark is placed upon Cain to protect him. It is known as the "Mark of Cain."

Under normal circumstances, Cain should have received capital punishment for the murder he had committed. But in this particular case God does NOT direct bloodguilt revenge upon Cain and his followers. Instead he places a mark of protection upon them. While puzzling to some, this prerogative of God teaches an enormous, redemptive principle.

Many religious zealots would have had Cain executed immediately. And indeed Cain was a branded heretic. He was a liar and a murderer. He didn't have the right beliefs.

But God does not authorize his death. Why?

First of all, think of what could be said if God had executed him. The inference would then be that if we don't worship God according to his

Patriarchs For the Present

liking he would quickly penalize us or even strike us dead. We would then worship God in only fear and with a bound will. Yet this is not the worship God desires. If Cain's act had been committed under different circumstances, and not related to the issue of worship, the case might have received a different treatment. But it was not.

The principle of religious liberty is waved like an enormous white banner in this story. Just because the worship principles of some are contrary to the truth, and unacceptable to God, no one should ever be punished on the basis of their religious beliefs. The mark placed upon Cain was not only aimed at avoiding the out of control bloodshed generally caused by the warring factions of religion, but to protect the religious liberty that should be awarded to every human being to worship as he pleases. Anything else demands a religion of forced values and limits the exercise of free will in worship. What God wants is genuine, heart-felt delight in doing his precise will.

The counterfeit of *God's* "protecting" mark is one where certain religious requirements are legislated and forced. Such a twist is to be expected when the final drama takes place. The mark of the beast predicted in Revelation places religious restrictions upon those who will *not* worship the beast and his image. If such do not worship the beast, they are not able to buy or sell, and such who do not receive the mark are to be killed. Unlike Cain's mark, it is *designed as* a mark of protection to only those who submit to the religious pressure of the apostate system. Ultimately it is a loathsome and dishonorable mark, a mark of slavery. The clearest mark of false religion is found in the notion that dissenters and heretics are to be killed or persecuted for their dissension, and even their faith. It is the foundation of Satan's system of terror and deception.

The issues of persecution and religious intolerance, the commandments of God and worship, the "marks" of true and false religion, brothers set against brothers *in the church*, and many other such issues are yet to loom largely in the latter times. For thousands of years these issues have been

BACK TO THE FUTURE

at the center of religious conflict. They have all happened before. They are happening and the WILL happen again!

Fortunately, God has had faithful ones in all ages. While the names and faces on each side of the conflict change with each generation the conflict itself remains the same. One of the greatest myths entertained by moderns is that there have been huge gaps in history where issues such as the Sabbath, holy worship rites, prophetic emphasis, pure and holy living, judgment, Bible integrity, and other doctrines were totally lost. But this is not exactly so.

While apostasy from the divine ideal at various times in history reached incredible proportions, God always had his faithful ones. Elijah felt that he alone was left in upholding the pure religion of the patriarchs and the prophets. Yet God had at least seven thousand in Israel, faithful, despite one of the lowest times spiritually in the entire history of Israel. It should never be thought that because at times certain issues may have appeared to go underground, that they are not important to God. Just because they are not always publicly acknowledged does not mean that they are not important as issues in the great controversy between good and evil.

Seth, the holy patriarch raised up by God and appointed to take the place of Abel, was according to tradition a faithful follower of the true God. After him comes a prestigious list of priests of the Most High God. Little is known about the interactions and lives of these great men. But because their names are preserved in the list of the holy line, we know that they were faithful witnesses for the truth during the time that the descendants of Cain, and some of their own descendants were taking the road of ever-increasing wickedness and apostasy.

Reckoning by the genealogical information supplied in Genesis it only requires one additional name to ensure the preservation of the faithful from Adam to the time of the flood. That is the name of Methuselah, the son of Enoch who by the reckoning lives until the year of the flood. In

Patriarchs For the Present

fact, through calculation one can determine that of the ten patriarchs before the flood, Noah is the only one for whom it would have been impossible to have had direct conversation with Adam himself. It is mathematically possible that perhaps all the rest of the patriarchs were born early enough that Adam and Seth were still alive at least in some part of their life.

Enoch

The early record momentarily focuses on the notable life of Enoch. Enoch was the *seventh* from Adam. This in itself is significant.

The number seven is often associated with the fulfillment of prophetic time. It is also often associated with prophetic movements, and probationary time. It should not be a reach to expect that God's last-day church should have the number seven somewhere in its name and theology.

Enoch is the "Sabbath" representative of the first patriarchs. As the polarity between the righteous and the wicked increased, and the world progressed in rebellion and wickedness, God saw fit to call a prophet to bring about a spiritual reprieve and rest. It was time for a reform movement, and it was time to give warning lest God should be forced to act if man did not reform his ways. Enoch was called for the purpose of calling men to holy living in the context of impending judgment.

According to certain expositors Enoch's name means exactly this. Keil & Delitch associate his name with the word, *Hanoch*, meaning, "consecration." Luepold suggests that the *hithpael* stem signifies "to walk about," or "to live." Whatever the meaning, the forms seem to consistently suggest the idea of "a sanctified life." Consecration to God, sanctification, walking with God, was the theme of his life.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

The *Sabbath* is not devoid of these same meanings. It is given, according to God himself, as a “sign between me and you, throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord thy God that doth *sanctify* you” (Ex 31:13). It was created as an opportunity for companionship with God so that we may walk *with* him, and not just ourselves. The observance of the seventh-day Sabbath is an indicative test that demonstrates that if we wish to please him and walk in fellowship with him, we will always gladly do whatever he asks.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”

Hebrews 11:5

Genesis 5:24 reports the simple fact that “Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”

To walk with someone means to have a direct, personal, relationship with that person. Amos 3:3 says, *“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”* It means there is a common awareness, a similar aim, purpose, and direction, and a common regard, one for the other. It is what happens when a young couple fall in love and marry. The lovers walk hand in hand down the flower-strewn path, committed together to the same goal.

Walking with someone is highly conducive to communication. Sometimes verbal communication is not even required. There is a special communion between two souls, bound for the same destination, or wherever they might go. Walking with God indicates an incessant, continual, integral friendship with God and his ways.

Prayer was the breath of the soul to Enoch. He spent hour after hour alone with God, perhaps, at times, literally walking; God unseen with the eyes beside him. We are told that when he came forth from these divine

Patriarchs For the Present

communings that a holy light rested upon his face, a witness to all who saw him of his friendship with the God of Creation.

Yet it is an important observation that Enoch was not a hermit or a monk. He wasn't so heavenly minded, that he was of no earthly good. On the contrary he was a faithful evangelist and a dedicated preacher and welfare servant. Like Jesus, he went from the mountain to the multitude, and then back again. I believe, from my reading in non-biblical sources, that Enoch was also a brilliant scientist, particularly using astronomy to teach spiritual lessons.

“And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these things, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” Jude 14,15.

From this application it is also apparent that Enoch was an “Adventist,” as well as a prophet of judgment. Particularly was he active in combating secular skepticism about God, and calling humanity back to holy living, directly opposing the reckless sins of mankind both within and without the church.

His “conversation (was) on heavenly things” (2T 122). His “face bore calm serenity under trial and affliction” (2T 92). In so many ways Enoch's life typifies the (reasonable) “perfection” and spiritual maturity demanded of God's people in the last days. Nothing bad is said about him. While this is not to be taken that Enoch was sinless and without human imperfections, the Bible records these positive facts to highlight the divine ideal needed for both his time and ours. He is a “patriarch for the present.” People like Enoch are greatly needed today.

“Enoch's walk with God was not in trance or vision, but in all the duties of his daily life.” PP 85

BACK TO THE FUTURE

This is truly a grand thought. Imitation of Enoch's wonderful life testimony is not found in penance and the infliction of pain; it is not found in a cloistered holiness, it is not found in unusual accomplishments, in fame, fortune, or even in great intelligence or learning. It is not in supernatural demonstration. No, it is within reach of all. It is simply a complete surrender of the soul to the Grace of Christ, continual consecration to God in every aspect of life. Those who do this are in verity walking with God, as did Enoch. Practicing the presence of Christ, following his commandments, doing his work, in all the activities of the day is what qualifies the modern Enoch.

A deepening experience with God came for Enoch in the birth of his children, especially one named METHUSELAH, a name that means-- "a pause when he dies."

Prophets like Isaiah and Hosea used their children, or other people's children, for prophetic messages. Emmanuel, "God with Us," was not in the *primary* sense speaking of Jesus, but was probably the king's son. His name was a message proclaiming a coming king and deliverer from sin, who indeed was to be named Jesus, and was to be "Immanuel, God with Us." Likewise Enoch and Methuselah were faithful witnesses to those about them of the approach of the flood. They were active in warning the world of coming judgment. So faithful was Enoch, that after 300 years on earth, God allowed him to walk right in to heaven.

Enoch's life comes as a bridge, in the antediluvian world, between the past and the future. Enoch's son, Methuselah, was a continual "future" witness to his message about the close of that age and the Flood. Yet Enoch lived during the life of the first man, Adam, a past witness. Mathematically, Enoch would have been translated just *seven*, short years before the end of Adam's temporal life. It is fascinating to think on, and to speculate, what impact this knowledge, if it was known, might have had on Adam, the

Patriarchs For the Present

repentant, yet mourning man of the first sin, aged and deteriorating, on his deathbed.

Enoch's influential life still radiates its character even today. Enoch's life is an important *type* of those living in the last days of this world's history. The amazing correlations are powerful enough, and should convince and convict any honest, spiritual person.

- Enoch's world was extremely wicked as is our world today.
- Enoch lived a holy, sanctified life in the midst of evil
- Enoch gave a message of judgment to come
- Enoch predicted the earth would be destroyed by water and God's modern people predict the destruction of the world by fire.
- Enoch was translated without seeing death, as will those people who are taken to heaven at the end of time (1Thess 4:16 ff.).

If one is willing to think about it, the same issues divide the righteous and the wicked today as back then. The past is prologue. Enoch is a patriarch for the present. He is a model of what every last day Christian should be.

It cannot be true that everyone loved Enoch, and that he easily convinced others of their need to prepare for judgment. He was persecuted and ridiculed for his faith, and suffered humiliation and disappointment like all witnesses of the faith have received down through history. But Enoch just kept walking with his Lord.

Enoch felt it necessary to withdraw at times from secular society, and while he worked for his fellow man, he did not inhabit the asphalt jungle or the towering high-rises. It is interesting that Enoch, a man who lived in the pre-flood ancient world has been noted as a model example of where God's people are to dwell in the last days:

BACK TO THE FUTURE

As God's commandment keeping people, we must leave the cities. As did Enoch, we must work in the cities but not dwell in them. Ms 85, 1899. EV 78

God's people are called to live as much as possible in country settings for reasons of freedom, safety, sustenance, and spirituality. While this counsel is often repudiated today, those who wish to be like Enoch will give honest and prayerful thought to how God would have them relate to this counsel. Again, the past *ensamples*, are for our later admonition.

Of interest are the trends and customs of early civilization compared with those of today. Early on were the same two groups that have existed from the beginning of the conflict. In Enoch's day the key issues become apparent in even the few words supplied in the accounts.

While the sons of God are said to be "walking with God," the Bible alludes that the descendents of Cain pursued secular interests and selfish pursuits:

- Immorality became rampant, and the marriage institution was dishonored. Prominent for his boldness was Lamech who boasted that he got by with murdering another man so he could practice polygamy.
- His wives have appropriate names, Adah; which means "the adorned," and Zillah; which means "the shady, or the tinkling." What is significant is how early the issue of excessive adornment and jewelry is attached to the women of Cain's bloodline. This may have been among the first instances of body piercing and mutilation of the body to denote sexual ownership. Is it a wonder that God discourages such things today in the sons and daughters of God? God alone should be acknowledged as the owner of his created beings.
- Also mentioned is the creation of musical instruments and their use. While music and musical instruments are not evil, it is

Patriarchs For the Present

evident that they became particularly popular among those who did not honor God. There can be no doubt that the antediluvian church faced worship issues similar to modern times.

There is nothing new under the sun. What has happened will happen again. Indeed it is happening again.

In the time of Seth, Enoch, and Methuselah there were two marks. The Mark of Cain; and the Seal of God, the Sabbath.

“Before the fall our first parents had kept the Sabbath, which was instituted in Eden: and after their expulsion from Paradise they continued its observance. . . . the Sabbath was honored by all the children of Adam that remained loyal to God. But Cain and his descendants did not respect the day upon which God had rested. They chose their own time for labor and for rest, regardless of Jehovah’s express command.” PP 80,81

In the book “With Jesus in His Sanctuary,” Dr. Leslie Hardinge provides comment regarding the Hebrew etymology of the word Sabbath. The word, “Sabbath” is a very ancient word. Some of the best information from ancient authorities seems to indicate that it breaks down as follows:

s---(abbrev. for sir, masc.) respected sir
ab--- Father
b-- at
oth---sign, house

Therefore the word would translate something like, “at the sign of the revered Father” (Hardinge--p.415). Anyone can see even today that the word “abba,” “father,” is the center of the word, “Sabbath.” Why then couldn’t the word mean: “the sign, or seal of God?” Ex. 31:13 and other texts call the Sabbath just that.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

But Cain and his descendents we are told did not respect the day upon which God rested. This has its modern counterpart. The Sabbath is trampled upon by nearly every faith, especially those keeping Sunday. A spurious day will have a spurious attitude directed toward it. So dreadful is the current world attitude toward respecting any worship day in the way that God intended them to be respected that calls have been made by religious leaders to restore the sanctity of the Sunday/Sabbath:

Writes one reporter:

“In one of his most important encyclicals last May (1991) Centissimus Annus, the pope called for governments to “ensure the holiness of Sunday as a day of worship, especially industrialized societies.” (Quoted in *Southern Tidings*, Jan. 1992, (OFF, Vol 7, No. 10.)

Dies Domini, the modern encyclical of Pope Paul II argues at length for the return of Sabbath observance, but exactly as expected, Sunday is promoted as the day to be venerated, and not the day, which God has blessed and sanctified. In other places the claim is made that it (Sunday) is the “mark” of her (Roman Catholic Church) ecclesiastical authority in religious things.

But this Sunday-keeping emphasis is nothing new. It is only an *old* doctrine clothed in modern ecclesiastical robes. It is nothing new at all, and anyone can know from the past, exactly, that there will be a coming out on this issue in modern times. It has happened before, and it WILL happen again! The Sabbath/Sunday issue is not, therefore, a pet issue trumped up by Adventists for the last days. It started early in the ancient world and has appeared many times in history since then.

God needs Seths, Enochs, and Methuselahs today. Methuselah, whose name essentially meant, “It comes when he dies,” or “a pause comes when he dies,” lived longer than any other patriarch. This simply and powerfully demonstrates the long-suffering nature of God (2 Peter 3:21).

Patriarchs For the Present

What a message was couched not only in just only Methuselah's name, but in his age as well! How people who lived near him must have regularly inquired about his health!

God has another people who have a similar message *in their very name*, a message about a "soon coming Savior coming for a fully sanctified people." He has a people who are to be pure, holy, and prayerful like Enoch. He would have a faithful remnant, who will have God's seal placed upon them, a sign of his ownership and his pleasure. Never should this people abandon their high calling, their message, and their hope. They should continue to walk with God, until someday soon they too will walk right into the heavenly realms of holiness and light.

As It Was In The Days of Noah

“But as the days of Noah were so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall the coming of the son of man be.” Mat 24:37-39

The morning sun rose as usual on December 7, 1941 over the tropical luxuriance of the Hawaiian Islands. It was Sunday and many of the inhabitants of Honolulu and the surrounding environs were looking forward to the ventures of a new day.

Breakfast was being served in the Navy mess hall out at the harbor and in the cafes and restaurants, homes and hotels along the waterfront.

In Washington, D.C. the day was already well in advance. That morning, the army chief of staff, George C. Marshall had gone on his customary horseback ride and had not returned as soon as expected. An intelligence officer had looked for him in vain with an important message.

As It Was in the Days of Noah

When at last he returned to his house the officer still had to wait while Marshall showered and changed and came to his office in his limousine. From the message it had been determined that the Japanese Imperial Navy was in the near future going to attack American forces somewhere in the Pacific. (Read, “The Broken Seal”)

But for reasons, seemingly ridiculous in retrospect, adequate warnings were not sent to the Hawaiian based fleet. The messages that were sent were either ignored or were not passed on swiftly enough to do any good.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt had stayed in bed all morning of Dec. 7 suffering from sinus troubles. At noon he was wheeled to the oval office where he was given his dinner tray and devoted the rest of the afternoon to his stamp collection. He also was well aware of the reality of an impending conflict. But he did not believe that the Japanese would dare risk war with the United States. They just wouldn’t.

The American military leaders believed that the Japanese would back out. And even though intercepted messages clearly indicated that the Japanese were especially interested in Pearl Harbor, none of the high-ranking officials suspected the attack seriously. One said, “The Japanese will never air raid Hawaii.”

And so as men and women of the United States were peacefully basking in the warmth of a placid Sunday morning there came with the suddenness of a flash of lightning the attack which inaugurated the *Day of Infamy*.

At 7:55 A.M. there came in the northern sky the roar of a host of dive-bombers and screaming *zeros* that for the next hour raked and bombed and obliterated much of the Pacific fleet. The helpless American forces were helplessly pinned to the ground; stunned, scattered, and disorganized.

The unlikely had occurred. The impossible had come to pass.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

More than 2,400 Americans were killed. 8 battleships, 3 cruisers, 3 destroyers, and 4 other vessels were sunk or damaged. 77 aircraft were destroyed.

No one thought that the Japanese would really come. But they did come, and to the unprepared it was a dreadful surprise. There was warning, but it went unheeded.

Neither in the realm of spiritual things, or regarding particularly the great events that have come to place on this earth has God neglected to give proper warning.

God, who sees the end from the beginning, never has withheld adequate and proper warnings from the people of the globe.

He could hide his purposes from the view of finite man if he chose. He wouldn't need to share the knowledge of his omniscient mind. But no century has passed that the merciful and loving God has not presented through his messengers the light of the future. He reminds man that the decisions of this life are the decisions of destiny. He reminds man that allegiance to him or to Satan constitutes a life and death matter. (Think of, for example: Pharaoh in plague-ridden Egypt, many of the kings of Israel, the Jews and Jerusalem, etc.).

Time and time again in solemn regularity God sends a warning, cautioning men to heed the call lest he be caught guiltily in the approaching doom. And so it was in the day of Noah.

In Jesus' words are found distinct validation that past events are informative for our future. The prediction is clearly made that the last days will be like Noah's days. All one needs to do is identify when the exact symptoms of Noah's era recur in modern times and we can know for certain we are living in the last and final days of this earth.

As It Was in the Days of Noah

The attitude of the military leaders of the United States in the events leading up to Pearl Harbor is strikingly similar to the present attitude of those in the church as well as those without.

Early on Enoch and others warned the world of its soon demise (Jude 14,15). Probably many voices were raised in warning. However, as would be repeated many times later down through history, God's prophets and warnings largely were ignored. If the world was in the need of spiritual regeneration in Enoch's day, how much more was it in need by the days of Noah? How much more is the present generation in such need!

But the people of Noah's day saw no such need. Their minds only contemplated the concerns and pleasures of the here and now.

Says Jesus---

"For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark." Matthew 24:38.

The point that Jesus wishes to make here is not that eating and drinking and marrying are bad.

Healthy food and drink were created by God for man's benefit. Marriage was another God ordained institution proceeding from Eden. The point Jesus intended is that despite warnings, the flood came unexpectedly to most. The people were going about their daily routines, living one day like the last. Other than the preaching of Noah there were no significant indications that things would not continue exactly as they had from the beginning. The people were simply in the groove of life, seeking wealth and pleasure. They were busy and occupied.

The problem with the antediluvians was that in their eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage they forgot God. They lived only for

BACK TO THE FUTURE

themselves. The things that God had provided for their enjoyment they twisted and distorted out of their natural proportions and boundaries. That which “was lawful in itself was carried to excess.” And here is where the line is drawn between sinfulness and righteousness.

It is not wrong to eat--

but it is wrong to eat too much (or too little).

It is not wrong to drink--

but it is wrong to drink too much, especially of some things.

It is not wrong to marry--

but it is wrong to distort marriage into merely a selfish relationship or one that is perverted from the original intention for which it was created.

The world before the flood became so enrapt in its own selfish pleasure, that it became a dangerous place to live and there came an era characterized by a strange mix of festivity and fear.

The Bible speaks vividly of those foreboding times.

“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. . . .

And God looked upon the earth, and , behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

And God said to unto Noah, the end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.” Gen 6:5, 12,13

To Noah was given the warning to share with the world around him. But not alone was the warning communicated orally, but also in the physical proportions of a public spectacle.

As It Was in the Days of Noah

Noah was instructed to build a ship, an unprecedented achievement. Every day the passerby would see the structure in progress, and would be reminded of the message of Noah in much the same way as the conscience of a godless man may be pricked at the sight of grand and beautiful church or cathedral. In fact, the premises on which the ark was being built was no doubt used as a meeting place for public worship and instruction. It was more than a boat---it was a complete evangelistic package. It was a church.

God announced that it was going to rain. Noah said it was going to rain. However, the intellectuals and the scientists of the day said that it could not rain. "Now come on, Noah, old fellow," they would say, "What is rain?" "Are you crazy?" For hundreds, more than a thousand years no such thing has occurred. A flood? The rivers have never overflowed their banks. History proves that. Don't be stupid, Noah!"

To others they would say, "Don't be alarmed by this deluded man." "I fear he is somewhat touched," "We have heard alarmists before. Let's be off to our festivities and sports."

And others would challenge Noah, "So you say God is going to destroy us because of what we are doing, huh?" "I think your God is too arbitrary. I like doing these things. What is wrong with them? They taste good, they feel good. They are fun. Our fathers and forefathers did them and they didn't get destroyed. Why should we?"

But Noah stood solid as a rock through the jest and ridicule. We are told that he was regarded as a fanatic. Some felt convicted but their daily cares turned away their thoughts from God. When they approached God, they would say to Noah. "Maybe I'll come around to it some today, but right now I am too busy. My business is taking my time. I have bought some land; I am building a new house; right now I'm too busy."

BACK TO THE FUTURE

While continuing to live for their own pleasure their probation gradually yet most surely drew to a close. For 120 years Noah preached and warned, as well as overseeing the building of the great ship. Year after year it came nearer and nearer to completion, but Noah and his ship by now were only the subject of jokes.

Noah, by direction of God, made one final, earnest, appeal. In vain he pleaded with the people, but they turned away the convicting power of God. Even some who had helped daily with the project, even in proclaiming its message, left the faith.

Yet another chance was given them. By a manifestation of his power God directed that the animals and birds of every color and description appear from every direction with immaculate orderliness and enter the ship. This circumstance was really a “loud cry” message, and should have sparked reform and change.

But although astonished and perplexed as to how to explain this phenomenon, the people were so hardened to the voice of God toward their conscience that it only made a momentary, and light impression.

What a dreadful thought! That man’s sensibilities can become so hardened by sin that they are no longer able to discern the obvious power of God. This too is not an ancient phenomenon, but a modern one as well.

Noah, Emzara, their three sons and their wives entered the boat and for seven days their faith was tested. The door of probation was shut, not by Noah, but by the angels of God. Finally, on the 8th day (Sunday?), the shouts of the mockers outside were quieted by the first raindrops. The sky turned dark, thunder rumbled and lightning flashed, to the fear of those to whom these things were entirely unbeknown. In desperation they saw too late their mistake, and frantically sought to save their lives. As the water rushed about them in torrents they were swept away. Many tried to cling to the ark, or to gain admittance, only to be torn away by the mighty

As It Was in the Days of Noah

currents. The storm continued long after the last cries of terror had ceased and thus the earth was purged.

“But by faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household.” Hebrews 11:7.

Of interest is the fact that Noah’s age at the time of the flood is repeated more than once in the biblical text (Gen 7:6,11). Most assume that the purpose in giving Noah’s age is merely to report routine chronological information. This however, is not the sole reason it is given. There is a theological purpose as well, and in this book on last day events we must acknowledge it.

The flood came in the six-hundreth year of Noah’s life. In fact, the account could infer that the seventeenth day of the second month was on or near Noah’s personal birthday.

In any case, one must ask what the chances are that this super-historical event occurs in Noah’s 600th year? Why not 300, 500, 700, or whatever? Why not 599, 601, or some other random year? Yet it is not connected to these other mathematical numbers with their odds. It is exactly 600.

Six is the biblical number for probationary incompleteness; the number of humanity in its sinful and evil condition (Rev. 13:18). It falls just one short of the perfect seven, the number of probationary completeness, which is itself the number of perfectly elapsed, successive, and cyclical time. Noah’s age marks the end of six full units of time, and the beginning of a new sector of time. It symbolically equates with the expiration of time for man’s works and endeavors. This certainly fits the context of the flood narrative. The flood was sent because man’s work of wickedness is there described (in the text), as having reached its full limit, consequently a Sabbath for the world was required.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

It cannot be that the present world, first destroyed after a few hundred years, will survive several more thousand years without God stepping in and repeating the judgments that match and even surpass these same crimes committed by the ante-diluvians. It would seem that about six thousand years is long enough, and the world now demands its Sabbath.

Noah's name is important also when going "back to the future." His name is derived from the Hebrew, *noach*, which means, "rest." Noah's name, then, has the same meaning as the word "sabbath." Noah's flood brought a Sabbath pause for the ancient world. His experience, it follows, can be none other than a relative type of the future destruction of this world (and the salvation of the righteous). His experience also infers that the sabbatical principle will be operative in the last and final dissolution of this earth. It has happened before---and it will happen again!

Modern science teaches that Noah's flood did not occur. Great efforts are made to explain the geological condition of our earth in every other, if possible, way. Preposterous statements of so-called fact are made about the age of the earth, and the probable origins of today's earth forms. Recently, my wife and I watched a media special where scientists, presumably otherwise intelligent beings, explained that the aggregation of dinosaurs in burial fields came about because an asteroid splashed them out of a lake and they conveniently all landed in one place! Our own fourth-grader questioned the wisdom of this conclusion, there perpetrated as proven scientific fact by the scientific community.

The sometimes ridiculous reaches of "science" are really desperate attempts to invalidate the reality of the past. Satan wishes men to believe that they have no responsibility to the past, and that moral regeneration is not necessary. He does not want modern man to learn from the past, or go "back to the future." Therefore he blurs the real issues as much as possible, to discourage any moral reform or thoughts about a creator/redeemer God.

As It Was in the Days of Noah

One of the reasons we can predict the future out of the past is because the two sides (God and Satan) always make consistent moves and counter moves regardless of the current situation. God will start a reform movement and Satan will make direct efforts to counteract it. Inevitably a showdown or crisis occurs; there is a time of trouble, God's people are threatened, and if they are faithful God brings about some form of deliverance or escape. The issues are nearly always the same because God's truth is unchangeable, yet Satan hates those particular truths because they contradict the foundation of his illegal system. The truths Satan hates most are the Perpetuity of God's Law, the Sabbath and Creation, the right of Religious Freedom to worship God, the teaching of a coming Judgment on Sin (death), and so on. These issues will always be on the table while the Great Controversy continues.

Centuries have passed since Noah and his family left the ark and went forth to start life again on this earth. And nearly every year since has marked a steady increase in the tide of evil. Man's determination to do evil has spread like a plague.

A check was temporarily placed upon man's rapid decline with the coming of Christ to the world. Yet because of the hardness of men's hearts many did not recognize him as the promised Savior and God, and could only tolerate his presence for 3 and ½ years. He was put to death by the hands of ruthless murderers of the "false" church.

But Jesus and his apostles pointed forward to another day, a day when Christ would reappear on the earth to judge the world for the last and final time.

Again God's people are not left without warning. Various signs point unmistakably to the condition of the world at the second coming of Christ as being like Noah's day:

BACK TO THE FUTURE

- The days of that generation will be characterized by a people whose thoughts are only evil continually.
- They will be a people who are so involved with the pleasures of this world that they will dismiss all thoughts of God. The concerns of this world will occupy their attention. To them life will seem to continue as it always has, and they will not recognize the impending doom.
- They will be days of violence and scoffers.

Truly today is an age of violence: murders, terrorists, hostages, wars, and trouble are not only happening, but happening constantly in the world around us. They are happening in our own living rooms.

An average child, age 6 to 11 watches more television than attending school. The child attends school approximately 980 hrs. a year, and watches television 1,340 hours. By the time the youth is 18 years old he will have watched television about 22,000 hours, yet attended school only 12,000 hours. And what constitutes the diet on television and in movies videos and DVD's? One surveyor makes the conservative estimate that a child will see in one hour at least five significant acts of violence. Another survey says that the average American child between the ages of five and fourteen will witness 13,000 violent deaths during those ten years, usually in some detail; and frequently with sadistic or sexual overtones.

Several years ago Richard L. Tobin took an informal survey of the assorted weaponry and the general treatment toward human beings one might see featured on the television during the hours that children might be watching. The list he compiled is rather startling. A current survey would only supply more bizarre and technologically advanced instruments of torture and terror. Here is what he saw, even years ago, during a few hours of a typical Saturday viewing:

As It Was in the Days of Noah

Encountered were “seven different kinds of pistols and revolvers, three varieties of rifles, three distinct brands of shotguns, half a dozen assorted daggers and stilettos, two types of machetes, one butcher’s cleaver, a broadaxe, rapiers galore, and ancient broadsword, a posse of sabers, and electric prodder, and a guillotine. Men (and women and even children) were shot by gunpowder, burned at the stake, tortured over live coals, trussed and beaten in relays, dropped in molten sugar, cut to ribbons (in color), repeatedly kneed in the groin, beaten while being held defenseless by other hoodlums, forcibly drowned, whipped with a leather belt, and dealt with in many other ways before our very eyes---and the eyes of thousands of children who must have been watching some part of what we saw.”

This is only the beginning of what the modern generation has become used to. In other words, the current generation is an incredibly violent generation, both in what crimes are committed, but also in the preferred entertainment diet daily consumed by millions, and experienced vicariously through the media and other channels. Such daily exposure cannot but help to have a tremendous effect on the general behavior of young and old alike.

Some question whether this is really cause for alarm. However, it is becoming more and more evident that there is a direct correlation between the general media diet and the subsequent behavior of both children and adults.

In one instance, in Chicago, a 4-year old boy tried to kill the family dog after a violent television episode.

In Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, a 13-year old boy kicked his 6-year old sister in the stomach and hit her. The child died a few hours later. The mother testified that he had learned this specific act from his father, whose almost every action and viewing subject was one of violence. The child was raised that way, always in a context of violence.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

In Tacoma, Washington, a nine-year old girl was hospitalized with 32 stab wounds after a dispute with her brother over which television program to watch.

Video and computer games feed off of repetitive violence, fighting, shooting, and vicarious rampage. Video machines market demons chasing skeletons and exhibit and glorify all kinds of predatory killing. Many games and movies are based on the concepts of *Spiritism* and the demonic.

Like never before the present era has reached and even has most certainly surpassed the world of Noah in immorality and violence. Pleasures of the world are holding people captive. The pursuit of gain and pleasure revolves around amusements and entertainment of every possible description. Cars, pugilistic games, fashions, media stars, sports, amusement parks, and a thousand other distractions occupy the attention. Many of these feature or market violence and sexual perversion.

The riotous and defiant attitudes of the present world are antediluvian as well. Atheism, agnosticism, and skepticism are fast taking over the majority. The biblical apostle, Peter, says that in the last days there will come scoffers following their own passions and saying, “where is the promise of his coming, for ever since the fathers fell asleep all things have continued as they were since the beginning of creation” (2 Peter 3:3,4).

This prophecy is daily fulfilled. Religion is poked at in the media, in the home, and everywhere. Atheism and skepticism have nearly taken over our universities, and is on the rise.

Warns Paul, “But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress, for men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of

As It Was in the Days of Noah

God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it.”

Do the newspapers of today paint a similar picture? A thousand times yes!

Jesus warned that to such a world he would suddenly appear coming like a thief in the night. The point is that the days of Noah ended with a surprise ending. It was largely unexpected.

The people were eating and drinking, continuing the normal pursuits of life with regularity, “until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away.”

“So shall the coming of the Son of man be.”

- When life is going on in its usual course (for the ungodly) Christ will suddenly approach from the heavens.
- When the investor on Wall Street is watching the monitors of the stock market, he may start to feel the earth quaking beneath him.
- When the housewife is downtown shopping for the latest fashion, the Lord of the heavens will appear.
- When the businessman is counting his profits, he will be swept away in a moment.
- When the crowds are flocking to the stadiums,
- When the nightclubs are in full swing,
- When huge airliners are unloading pleasure seekers in Las Vegas:

“Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven and all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Matthew 24:30,31.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

“For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”

“He cometh with clouds and every eye shall see him.”

“But of that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, not the Son, but the Father only.”

“Watch therefore, for you do not know what day your Lord is coming, but know this, that if the householder had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have watched---therefore, you also must be ready for the son of Man is coming in an hour that you do not expect.”

“Lord Shackleton relates this experience concerning his first great adventure, his expedition to the Antarctic. On one occasion he had to turn back and leave some of his men on Elephant Island, amid snow and ice. They were in desperate need of food and other supplies. He realized that his only hope was for him to go get help for them. By heroic efforts he reached the island of South Georgia, made a perilous trip over snowy mountains, and finally came to a settlement, where he obtained another ship and the needed supplies. Then he started back for the men. He tried again and again to reach Elephant Island, but failed every time. Fog, storm, and ice blocked the way.

Suddenly one day there appeared an opening through the ice leading to the island. Quickly he ran his ship through this channel, got his men on board, and came back out just before the ice closed together again. The whole thing was done in half an hour.

When the excitement was over, Lord Shackleton asked one of the men who had stayed on the island, “How did it happen that you were packed and ready for my coming. You were standing on the shore ready to leave on a moment’s notice.”

As It Was in the Days of Noah

The man replied, “Sir, you said that you would come back for us, so we never gave up hope. Whenever the sea was partly free of ice, we rolled up our sleeping bags and packed our things, saying, “Maybe Shackleton will come today. We were always ready for your coming.” (Taken from H.M.S. Richard, *The Bible Says*).

“Watch therefore, for you know not what hour your Lord doth come.” (Mt.24:42)

Do the types and symbols point to what we see repeated today?:

Noah	Today
Earth filled with violence	Earth filled with violence
Immoral society, polluted, corrupt (Gen. 6:12)	Immoral, polluted, corrupt
Small group preaches warning message (8)	Small group proclaims warning message
Noah was a “herald of righteousness,” 1 Pet. 2:5	Adventists proclaim pure and holy living, righteousness
A specified period of preparatory probation (120 years)	An investigative judgment period beginning in 1844.
Close of probation (Door was shut)	Close of probation predicted when door of mercy will be shut.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Final days of earth; Destroyed by Water	Final Days of Earth; To be Destroyed by Fire
Seven final days	Seven final plagues

As it was, so shall it be!

History is prophecy in advance. Prophecy is history in advance. What has happened before will happen again. Let all take heed!

Towers in Our Time

In this chapter let us take a close look at Genesis 11: 1-9:

“Now the whole earth had one language and few words. And as men migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.’ And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.’ And the lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the sons of men had built. And the Lord said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.’ So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth” (Gen. 11: 1-9 RSV).

After the flood, God renewed his covenant with Noah and his family. For a brief moment of history there was one language² and one faith. With the

² Verse one reads, “one language and few words.” “Few words” falls short of the Hebraic expression which is literally, “one [set of] words” or “one kind of.”

BACK TO THE FUTURE

exception of the first days of Adam and Eve this was the only time in the history of mankind that the faith was pure, and there was one true denominated church. But it did not take long for sin and rebellion to burgeon and grow again, starting with Noah's own son Ham.

Genesis 11:1-9 is one of the most important historical documents in all of religious and secular history. It gives clear information regarding the purposes of God following the Flood; it marks the cradle of civilization, and documents the rise of false religion.

As men were moving in a nomadic fashion about in the country of the east³ they came to the plain of Shinar. Here in the Fertile Crescent civilization flourished.

The time here considered was probably the first century after the flood or a little beyond. Historically, according to the Genesis account the tower episode occurs approximately 100 years or more after the flood if one is willing to correlate the birth of Peleg (whose name means "division."----- "For in his days the earth was divided"(10:25), with the traditional date of the flood (1656 A.M.). Calculation makes Peleg's birth come at around 1757 A.M. Therefore, the passage represents and describes the development of civilization following the Great Deluge.

The structure built on the plain of Shinar has been called "The Tower of Babel" only by later traditions, but appears nowhere in extant Jewish and Christian literature with this exact designation. The narrative itself is repeated in *The Sybilline Oracles* (2nd century B.C), the writing of Alexander Polyhister (1st century B.C.), *The Book of Jubilees*, and the writings of Moses of Chorene (5th century, A.D.). But the tower is never

³ Umberto Cassuto, *Genesis*, wishes to opt for the translation "and as men wandered about in the east," as from the perspective of an Israelite, thus east from the land.

Towers in Our Time

the central focus and so there never really appears a name for the tower such as the “Tower of Babel,” which is popular today.

The indication is that traditionally the emphasis was not (and rightly so) on the building of the tower but rather the boasting and absurdity inherent in the dreams and ambitions of godless man. The tower building, and even the language explanation are “asides,” and “incidental” to the main purpose.

The terms used in this pericope fit the geographical setting with accuracy. Babylon is indeed on a plain. That the builders used bricks rather than stones is demonstrative of the simple fact that the area of Babylon is essentially devoid of stones. The “slime” or “asphalt” used for mortar in Gen. 11:3 is archaeologically attested for in great abundance. Numerous towers and public buildings excavated in recent times are so constructed. The asphalt was likely brought from pitch wells 120 miles north of Babylon at Hit.

The ruins of several temple-towers (called Ziggurats) existing from ancient times are still to be found distributed throughout the region of Mesopotamia. Certain of these ziggurats have become well known by their association with the biblical tower of Babel.

The archaeological question concerning the identity of the historic tower has never been fully resolved. For centuries the remains of the large tower dedicated to Nebo at Borsippa (Birs Nimrud) were identified with the famous tower. Leupold in his commentary (1956) favors this view but shies away from certainty. But the general majority, especially since the excavations at the newer Babylon, are quite convinced that the actual tower was located there. Within the compound of the temple of Marduk at Babylon (The temple was called Esagila—“house of the high raised head”) lie the remains of the temple-tower that bore the name “E-teman-an-ki,” which is translated, “House of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth.” This is then believed to be the most likely candidate for the site of

BACK TO THE FUTURE

the original tower, though none of the original building materials are yet to be found. Andre Parrot in his book, The Tower of Babel opts for the temple tower at Babylon also as being the genuine site.

The passage contains several instances of subtle and derisive sarcasm directed toward those at cross-purposes with the God of heaven. This argues that the point of the passage is to emphasize the futility and evil inherent in godless humanism.

Particular note is made in this passage of man using “bricks” instead of “stone,” and “asphalt” instead of “mortar.”⁴ Man’s puny devising, “Come, let us . . .” is contrasted with the much superior planning of God who answers back, “Come, let us . . .” etc., etc.

These ancient references are really quite modern in aspect. Amazingly, the technological revolutions of modern times are nothing new. Little has changed. Man still attempts to create lasting and significant monuments with brick, and steel, mined from the earth. The cities of today are little more than an “asphalt jungle,” pathetic attempts to rival the beauties of the true creation. Humanity is mixed into every brick. The towers of our time are still built to glorify man who is the builder. Yet the doom of all these actually fragile buildings is set, as was the tower of old, to crash into ruin at the touch of God’s hand.

The true Israel of old was faced with the same worldly environment, as is the modern Israel. It is important to see in the story of the tower of Babel a precursor of what is to come. This story, given to remind Israel⁵ that

⁴ These substitutions create a striking irony. D. Kidner uses the word “makeshift” to translate the idea intended.

⁵ In this passage is another inference of the purpose for writing of the book of Genesis. It was likely written to encourage and inspire Israel to break their ties with the Egyptians and to leave Egypt. The children of Israel would have been interested particularly in the subject in making bricks, for this was their specialty.

Towers in Our Time

God was still in charge should speak even louder as prophetic material indicative of the modern fulfillment.

The passage offers one particular anomaly that is discussed at length by theologians. It is said that these men attempted to build “a city and a tower.” The puzzle is whether a city with a tower in its midst is meant, or if the city and the tower are to be considered one and the same.⁶ This structure may have been the first high-rise, or the first skyscraper. At any rate, the attempt at standardization, unity in rebellion, is the theme that clearly shines through the rest of the passage. Secondly comes a theme of warning concerning these man-made edifices and the cities that surround them. Like the ancient city, modern ones have the towers in the middle, and the city laid out around them. Thousands of these aggregations of humanity, brick, machinery, and asphalt are most certainly doomed to destruction. God’s people are to work for these cities, but not live in them. The principle reason is that these cities are to receive the same judgment, as did Babylon of old.

Brick-making was one of their major tasks in Egyptian bondage. This subject particularly resonated with them because they were at forced labor, were similarly slaving to achieve the selfish and grandiose dreams of the kings of Egypt.

⁶ As in the parallel phrase, “one language and one word,” a “city and a tower” could be understood likewise; being understood in the sense of a structure serving the purpose of both (see EGW). Verse eight says they left off building the city but omits “the tower.” Expositors reason that “tower” is not used here because it is superfluous to mention that it is also abandoned. Variants add “the tower” which seems to be an obvious attempt to edit and harmonize the passage and was not probably in the original text. Verse eight as it stands could argue for the corresponding identity of the city and the tower. However, the argument need not be forced, for one can well envision the necessity of both elements in the enterprise, which history has born out in the neo-historical city of Babylon.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Purpose of the Tower

History is not clear on what the real purpose of the tower was. All that is stated is that the builders wished to build a tower “with its top in the heavens.”

Again one might here pick out yet again a note of derision, a laugh at the ill-fated attempt to reach heaven. There is a hint that the writer of Genesis seems to know they were attempting an impossibility. Those who see this as a crude, mythical story, though, conclude that the Babel builders actually thought they could reach heaven and that the writer of the narrative also reflects this mentality.

- a) Tradition has equated the tower to an attempt by men to avoid another universal flood. This may well be so. But denying the larger context of the flood narrative there is no hint of this in the text itself and sympathy with this being the chief motive represented in the passage is unfounded.
- b) Some have interpreted it as an attempt to storm heaven. The rabbinic literature speaks of trying to cleave the heavens with axes “that its waters might gush forth” (San 109a).
- c) Most attribute it as an attempt toward fame, “to make a name.” Though this has a certain validity to be sure it does not say enough, at least to stop at this point.
- d) The most astute observers, however, note that building of a tower and the passage points chiefly to the motive as an *insurgent, ecumenical spirit*. They wished to make a name and band together, lest they be scattered. The word “kingdom” now appears with Nimrod (Gen 10:10). This kingdom proposes to oust theocracy. There seems to be an

Towers in Our Time

open attempt to overthrow the rule of God and substitute self-government with its inherent dangers. Thus “making a name” could imply not so much just the pursuit of fame as the pursuit of central control, but a unifying *Machiavellianism*, under one name. As S.R. Driver comments: “the city, and its famous tower, were to form a center and rallying-point, which would hold mankind together.” In addition, however, the passage is religio-centric and is not merely an invective against metropolitanism but also the exploitation of this means to bring to realization organized criminality against God and his just purposes.

It is most important to remember that the biblical “Babylon” is for all intents and purposes identical to “Babel.” “Babylon” is simply the later, Greek form. But consistently the Old Testament refers to Babylon by its original name, “Babel.” Thus when the book of Revelation refers to apocalyptic Babylon, it is finding solidarity with the old Babel, and its neo-Babylonian counterpart. It is attempting to tell us that the spirit and purposes of the Old Babylon are surely destined to reappear at the end of time. This commonality, this distinction, is terribly important to those looking at eschatological or end-time events.

What happened before will happen again. As Babel sought to standardize an insurgent form of religion, so will the modern world. As Babel sought to ecumenize the religious world, so will apocalyptic Babylon do in the latter times. As the principles of sun-worship were promoted by Nimrod and his adherents, so will attempts be made to program the identical principles into those participating in the final end-game. As Babylon sought to urbanize society, so will its end-time counterpart encourage urban living rather than country living (lest they be scattered across the face of the earth!).

The events of September 11, 2001, saw the fateful demise of one the world’s most famous and important symbols of modern economic glory.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

The enemies of America chose the World Trade Center because it represented much of what was intended in the original tower of Babel. Thought to be a safe building, a glory to its owners, and a symbol of world commerce and world dominance of this Christian nation in the world, it quickly fell, killing thousands.

Like so many man-made projects, there are enormous lessons in the fall of towers in our time. They are indications of greater events soon to come. They are warnings to our people to leave these doomed cities. Immediately, if possible. Unfortunately, some of God's people, have fallen along with these "towers." In this is a very direct warning.

The original Babylonian doctrine was counter to God's stated purpose to "multiply and *fill* the earth." History records that Babylon is the original source of all false doctrine, including the doctrines of Sunday sacredness, the immortality of the soul, the veneration of the *prima donna*, the use of images, the veneration of holidays mixed with pagan dogma, the gospel of prosperity, the erroneous gift of tongues, etc., etc. The recognition of these facts should startle modern Christians, lest they should become partakers in these ancient sins, and voluntarily receive of her plagues. The echoing call: "**Come**, let us go out of her (Babylon: Rev. 18:4), my people," confronts us today.

None of these evil and abusive practices are overlooked by the God of heaven. "And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the sons of men had built. (vs. 5)." God said: "Come, let us go down" (vs. 7).

It must not escape our notice that in the phrase, "Come, let us go down," (God) is echoing the "Come, let us" phrases used by the tower builders. Counter to the builder's scheming ("a man to his fellow"), God is engaged

Towers in Our Time

in divine deliberation, an “investigative judgment,” if you please, before he acts.⁷

At any rate, verse four can be viewed as reflecting an intent divine interest, God coming down to investigate or take a closer look, anthropomorphically speaking. The point is not to detail the travels of God, or to suggest that God is so naive that he does not know what is going on, but rather to see God as first judging, and secondly, acting or intervening.

Rashi, in his translation of the Pentateuch refers to a Midrashic statement, which provides a very inviting solution to this strange expression and certainly shines a homiletical light. To quote:

“He did not really need to do this, but Scripture intends to teach the judges that they should not proclaim a defendant guilty before they have seen the case and thoroughly understand the matter in question.”

The truth is that it is a solid and fundamental biblical doctrine that God, in fairness, always investigates or holds an inquest before he acts. He did so with Adam and Eve in the garden. He carries on a similar inquisitive conversation before pronouncing a verdict on Cain. In Noah’s time he comes down before the flood and painfully deliberates what to do. He does the same with Abraham before he gives up Sodom to fire and brimstone. It was not that God did not know the facts. He knows all things. It is that he wishes to share the reason for his acts.

More than simply carrying out an “investigative judgment,” God first and foremost sets up rather a “public inquest.” All parties are free to explain their actions, lest there be a mistake, and God opens up his decisions to the scrutiny of those involved. This important doctrine, vilified by

⁷ The divine “let us” fits the usage of “divine deliberation” better than Leupold’s “fullness of the character of God.”

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Christians across the globe is in verity very biblical. God's use of investigative judgment makes an important statement about his character, who he is and how he acts. Those who so easily denigrate God's perfect, manifest method of judgment are themselves standing on shaky Babylonian ground. They may just as easily be partaking of the "Babylonian" spirit that says, "We will do it our way."

At the foundation of every false religion is the idea that by one's own works, and through his own vain opinions he can save himself. This was the very character of ancient Babel. The men of Babel thought vainly that they could by their own works build their way up to him. They created a rival church system built on this premise. It was all to come to naught. So will it come to naught in the future. It was humanism that corrupted the church then, and so it will corrupt it again in the last remnant of time.

Today, we already recognize the modern counterpart of ancient Babel, or Babylon. The confused tongues of Christendom, the multiplicity of conflicting Christian religions bring us out of the past and forward to the present moment of fulfillment. "Babylon," a kingdom of the past, exists in symbol, today.

The final and climactic word-play between the word "Babel" and the Hebrew "*balal*" (to confuse), is open mockery. The Babylonians themselves believed the name to mean "the Gate of the Gods," from the Akkadian, *Bab-ilu*. The height of the irony is that indeed they made of name for themselves, but the name serves as an embarrassment, rather than a title of distinction. The grandiose dreams of man ended in his being scattered "over the face of all the earth." God ultimately struck down the tower with lightning and earthquake and effectively stunned this religious rebellion.

The modern Christian can gather from this story confidence that the false systems now in place will most certainly receive the same judgment. God's system will win. The ultimate victory of good over evil will come.

Towers in Our Time

God will win in the battle of Armageddon. God's people are called to come out from her lest they be partakers in her sins and receive of her plagues. The call is for everyone, but should never be mistaken by Adventists. Each sincere adherent of God's true faith should align himself clearly with the old truths, the old waymarks that now mark the modern pathway.

Sodom Still “Smokes”

*“And the third angel followed them saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”
Revelation 14:9-11(KJV)*

Many fail to notice that the story of the third angel’s message of Revelation 14 is in fact the very story of Sodom and Gomorrah. The direct reference to fire and brimstone alludes to the fall of Sodom, the most significant precursor in history of this phenomenon.

Some have said that prophecy is history in advance. The same is true of the reverse. History prescribes the fulfillment of prophecy in advance. Our day is bathed in the light of history. Clear signals are given in advance of what is soon to take place.

Sodom Still Smokes

THESE THINGS ARE WRITTEN FOR OUR DAY:

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” 1Cor. 10:11

The story of Sodom is found in Genesis, chapter 19. In the narrative two angels visit Lot, and after prolonged appeals, finally convince the reluctant man and a portion of his family to leave the doomed city. Quite suddenly the city is destroyed. Lot (sans wife) and his two daughters escape the cataclysmic holocaust.

Sodom is a lasting monument to wickedness and the fate of those who live wickedly for themselves, in selfish luxury, and unbridled sensuality.

Where was Sodom? Some have questioned for centuries whether it even ever existed. Many thought it had not. Then, in the last century, the *Ebla* tablets were discovered. A young professor discovered among these 20,000 tablets many common personal and place names such as Abram and Israel, Haran and Ur, etc. While these personal and place names were not always referring to the very persons and places of the Bible, they testified to the veracity of the biblical records and verified as accurate to the times many geographical names, customs, and cultural characteristics typical of the Bible accounts.

One of the most amazing finds were the names of the historical kings mentioned in the Bible at the time of Abraham. Genesis 14 tells how these kings of Mesopotamia, and the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, of Zeboim and Bela, warred against each other. In the Ebla tablets not only are these same kings mentioned, but in some cases they are listed in the very same order as in the biblical account!

Geographically the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are reported as generally located where the Bible locates them, along with certain natural

BACK TO THE FUTURE

elements that exist there to this day. Through the general area at the southern end of the Dead Sea, salt, sulfur, and asphalt are found (in abundance). Geologic disturbances have plagued the area even in modern centuries. The Dead Sea has been known by some in the past as the “lake of fire.”

Gen. 13:10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

Gen. 13:11 Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

While the exact locations of Sodom and Gomorrah may not be important, the factuality of their former existence is important, and is justified historically, geologically, and archaeologically. Certain sites are popularly considered as corresponding to the ancient cities, but such identification of a site that was so completely and devastatingly destroyed would be difficult to prove today. However, apparently much of what is now the Dead Sea was once a fruitful plain, well-watered. The Dead Sea, the lowest of all places on earth would have enjoyed a warm climate. It has no outlet even today so would have trapped the water flowing from the north, then, of course, fresh and invigorating. All the elements were then available for a garden as delightful as Eden.

To Lot living at Sodom angels came in the evening. It was the last evening of Sodom. Lot was in his place in the gate, which in those days was the “municipal office.” It was the courtroom, the chamber of commerce, the tourist information center, and the city hall.

Lot invited the men to stay with him as guests. His intentions are noble, but also show that he was fully aware of the wickedness of his surroundings. Testing him, the angels disguised as men, offered to stay in

Sodom Still Smokes

the street. Lot strongly urged them to stay in his home, yet they were eventually followed by the men of the city who threatened to rape them.

Of great significance are the blatant facts concerning homosexuality in the ancient world. The men of the city wished to violate the “male” visitors, and Sodom has since been known as the symbolic city that represents violence and sexual perversion.

Why this is significant today is that in this story two things are made abundantly clear. 1) The first is that God, contrary to what some claim, clearly does not approve of this odious perversion. Elsewhere it is denominated as an “abomination” (Lev 18:22), the strongest negative available in the Old Testament language. 2) The second thing that appears as significant, is that a society that tolerates the widespread acceptance of this practice is in God’s eyes ripe for destruction. This has incredible import when compared with modern times. This litmus test for estimating the time of God’s final intervention into human society is given us for a purpose.

Society today is coming to the place that it quickly accepts the practice of sodomy as “normal” and as an acceptable “alternative lifestyle.” Politically, much ado is made to protect the rights of lesbians and homosexuals. While all people should have human rights, and should be free to practice and live as they wish, the easy toleration of these sins by even the church is a direct sign that the end of time is fast approaching.

Many argue that homosexuality is innocent and cannot be helped by those who are born with these tendencies. Yet it is still uniformly wrong. Being born with the tendency to sin, as we all are, does not make any sin “right.” While these words will not be popular with those who love or defend these gross perversions, it must be maintained that the practice is clearly unnatural. The basic issue that seems to drive homosexuality is *sexual obsession*. Those practicing homosexuality are excessively selfish (and it certainly shows in their public attitudes), and are more interested in

BACK TO THE FUTURE

feeding their own lusts, however they can, than submitting to the authority of God and his law. In fact, if one is willing to think about it, it is a form of self-idolatry. The desires of those engaging in this perversion are not submissive to the kingly power of reason and conscience, and the Bible is clear in the final pages of the Revelation that if such do not through Grace regain control of these passions they will be left to certain and terrible destruction. This is sad, but true. This is not intended as “hate language” directed at these individuals, but it is a biblically accurate assessment of the general sin of immorality that homosexuals most certainly commit.

The same goes for any sexual obsession, whether in the context of heterosexual unions, or otherwise. If these lusts are not controlled in their natural and holy contexts they will ultimately receive the retributive disapproval of God. In the end, those who inordinately practice these sins will bring destruction upon themselves.

While it is puzzling to us why Lot would offer his own daughters to placate the mob, the act is nevertheless full of instruction. It is true that in the Near East a high value is placed upon hospitality to strangers, even to this day. Stories exist of hosts first providing their enemies with the necessary hospitality in the form of food and drink all the while knowing they will immediately kill them afterwards. Eastern ways may be strange to us Westerners. *But what is most instructive to us today in this story is highlighting the fact that awkward and compromising situations will be demanded of those who remain in places where they and their family probably should not be.* Lot clearly did not wish for his daughters to be violated. It was his last resort. He did not at first pitch his tent “toward Sodom” for this reason. But what a terribly awkward and desperate situation he placed himself in, and what agonizing decisions he was forced to make, by his careless indifference leading up to that point. Here is an enormous lesson for the modern city-dweller. Take heed, for the time to act may be now. Lot “set up” his own dilemma months and years ahead of time.

Sodom Still Smokes

In the end it is the two angels who mercifully rescue the situation and bring Lot in from the threatening mob. Only in this are they revealed as angels. In defense of Lot's family the angels struck the men of the city with blindness. It can only be by the direct intervention of God that the honest who *innocently* find themselves in these situations will be delivered. If these souls have in anyway hesitated or spurned the direction and opportunities given of God previously, their deliverance will come at great cost, if it comes at all.

The angels finally warned Lot of the imminent destruction of the city (vs. 13). But Lot was apathetic. He attempted to warn his extended family, and his daughters who were already married to certain inhabitants of the doomed city.

But...“He seemed as one that mocked”

“But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law” (vs.14). The import of these words cannot be overlooked. Lot's warning to his family seemed like a big joke.

No one can appreciate Lot's effort fully unless they themselves have had a similar experience. But from personal experience some can testify how true this is. For in even suggesting to relatives and friends the dangerous prognosis and doubtful future of the cities of the nations the very same attitude prevails today. Even seemingly dedicated Christians smile wryly when the subject of such warnings is approached. Religious leaders suggest that it is extreme to encourage relocation outside the cities. Many charge that those who faithfully warn others of these things are “crying wolf.”

Lot was strongly urged to leave the very next morning. The fleeing of Lot and his family is a prophetic type of the last days. God's people are warned, “Come out of her, my people, lest you be partakers in her sins, and receive of her plagues” (Rev. 18:4). Revelation 11 speaks in

BACK TO THE FUTURE

allegorical fashion of the cities of Sodom, Egypt, Jerusalem, and Babylon, because these were all cities from which God's people were counseled to flee. In the same passage, "two witnesses" are figuratively "roughed up" in the street of the city. These passages warn of the trauma to be poured out upon the inhabitants of the earth in the last days. The warning is more than a "spiritual" one.

But, it says, Lot "lingered"(Gen 19:16). The dallying attitude cost Lot dearly. Jesus counseled this way:

"Let him which is on the housetop not come down." (Matthew 24:17,18)(Luke 21:20,21).

The disciples at the foreseen destruction of Jerusalem were not to return from the field to get a coat. They were not to go back for anything. This strong hyperbole Jesus used for a purpose. It wasn't *really* that one should not retrieve a coat. Rather he should have it with him, or better yet not be caught in this predicament at all. The point was that the counsel was urgent, and was to be considered seriously and heeded **BEFORE IT BECAME EVEN MORE DIFFICULT** or impossible to obey it.

Prophetic materials inform us that if Lot hadn't delayed he wouldn't have lost his wife (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 161) and many of his family. The prospect is that many will lose loved ones both in these coming times and even before because they have not heeded God's will within the proper time.

Sodom was soon destroyed as the angels had predicted. Fire rained from heaven and destroyed the city. We do not know where these "balls of fire" came from. My personal theory is that meteoric or sulphuric material from space is often aimed at our planet, but seldom reaches it because of the protection of the Almighty. When this protection is removed, such destruction will strike where God wills, and no one will be able to avoid it unless they are guided by heavenly beings to safe retreats.

Sodom Still Smokes

Lot first requested to flee to Zoar, observing to the Lord, that it was just “a little one” (vs. 20). Eventually, however, Lot did not feel safe there either, and so he fled to the more remote mountains nearby. Where have we heard this scenario before?

It is in verity what the counsel of the Lord has written aforetime. God’s people are instructed that a time will come when they will flee the cities to take up residence in the smaller towns and villages. Eventually they are pictured fleeing to the mountains.

While this scenario will not be possible for a large number of God’s people, in that there are not “mountains” in many places where men now live, the trend nonetheless speaks of a general movement from the metropolitan areas to the more sparsely populated parts of the earth. The “mountains of Israel” historically were not in most cases total mountain wilderness, but they were less populated and rural in aspect. This should be the aim and goal of all who read these things, to seek God’s guidance on what they should do about this wise counsel.

Lot’s wife “looked back,” and received the same doom as the city she loved. Let all realize that the danger was not in “looking” at the fire and brimstone. Abraham, from his vantage point saw the conflagration and the smoke from a distance. The error of Lot’s wife was that she stopped, lingered, and probably even returned. This is what the idiom is intended to mean. Jesus said three simple words of instruction. “Remember Lot’s wife.” Jesus exonerates this ancient story as instructive for the future. Truly as the saying goes, “he who hesitates, is lost.” When the world is loved persistently and vainly, and the precious opportunities are wasted, the subject will not be able to let go of it when it counts.

Most readers have heard of the duck on the ice flow headed for Niagara Falls. The water on the ice looked inviting to the duck, so the duck settled

BACK TO THE FUTURE

in there. But the duck stayed too long, and his webbed feet froze in place, and the duck helplessly went over the fearful cataract.

How should one apply these things? Indeed the cities have become wicked beyond comparison. Even smaller towns and communities are ripped with crime and covered in filth. The most important “coming out” is, of course, to come out of false religion in a spiritual sense. The wickedness is not so much in the place as it is in the heart. Greater sins than those practiced in Sodom are now practiced by men and women in a thousand places.

“Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.” Luke 17:28,30

Jude 7 reports that Sodom and Gomorrah are special ensamples of the eternal fire that is to come. As an example of everlasting fire, it cannot mean that the literal fire still burns, for we can verify that it is not. But the smoke still rises (Rev. 14:9-11). What this can only mean is that this story is intentionally laced with potent instruction and warning to those who live in the final moments of this earth’s history. The story is to be remembered, its finality cemented into history. Sodom still smokes.

The smoke is still seen ascending, not to indicate prolonged torment in hell, but rather to illustrate what is called the “perfective force.” What is spoken of is the law of eternal results. The decisions made are lasting and irreversible. The situation of loss and tragic end will remain forever. It is not to be forgotten, for type will soon meet anti-type. What has happened will happen again. These things are written for our admonition upon whom the end of all things has come.

Sodom Still Smokes

“The Redeemer of the world declares that there are greater sins than that for which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. Those who hear the gospel invitation calling sinners to repentance, and heed it not, are more guilty before God than were the dwellers of the vale of Siddim. And still greater sin is theirs who profess to know God and to keep His commandments, yet who deny Christ in their character and their daily life.” PP 165

Sodom is still smoking. Its lesson should be cemented permanently into the minds of every faithful believer. Remember Lot’s wife. Remember the temporary nature of worldly things. Remember what God has taught, before it happens again.

(“Had he (Lot) not cultivated a spirit of courtesy , he might have been left to perish with the rest of Sodom. Many a household, in closing its doors against a stranger, has shut out God’s messenger, who would have brought blessing and hope and peace.” PP, 158)

Jacob's Time of Trouble

(Genesis 32,33)

Jeremiah 30:5-7 (23,24)

“Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” Jeremiah 30:7

Many Adventists, myself included, have puzzled over the meaning of Jacob's time of trouble. What is the meaning of this reference to Jacob's experience in wrestling with the angel? While much of this story we may not understand on this side of eternity, it is recorded especially for the benefit of last-day Christians. This ancient story may have more import for us today than it did to the patriarchal world, perhaps even more than it did for Jacob himself.

Jacob, led by God, was returning to Canaan years after tricking his brother through deceit and strategy. Jacob's family crossed a river and were camped, apparently in a lonely, wilderness area, on the borders of the Promised Land. Esau, his brother in the faith--turned enemy, was coming to meet him with 400 armed men.

Jacob's Time of Trouble

Jacob did all he could. He sent a present. Otherwise he was totally vulnerable. He did not know how the gift would be received. His only hope left was prayer and God's protection. Jacob lingered behind in the darkness to pray. Of all the experiences of Jacob this was particularly his "Gethsemane" experience.

He was soon assailed by an attacker, and an intense wrestling match ensued. As the hours passed, Jacob could feel his body draining of strength. He was fighting for his life. Virtually no conversation between the two wrestlers is recorded, a very interesting circumstance. It cannot be imagined that Jacob said nothing, but apparently the other figure was silent. We can picture Jacob begging his opponent to let him go and to leave him alone. Jacob was not interested in aggression, he just wanted to survive.

Toward dawn the Angel of the Lord touched his hip and it instantly crippled him. This touch could only be recognized as unique when Jacob had totally given up and was virtually non-resistant. He knew something superhuman had taken place. Realizing who it was changed his whole purpose for struggling. This time his great struggle was to know that God had accepted and forgiven him and would stand with him and help him to meet his angry brother. Penitent and broken, guilty and afraid he implored the heavenly messenger to "bless" him. His subsequent name change (Israel, "overcomer") was proof that his prayer was accepted. Peace came to his heart. The meeting with Esau, the next day, saw a remarkable *deliverance* for the frightened company of believers represented by the family of Jacob. But the real victory had come the night before.

"Jacob's experience during the night of wrestling and anguish represents the trial through which the people of God must pass just before Christ's second coming. . . ." PP201

BACK TO THE FUTURE

The experience of Jacob is likened to the experience of God's people after probation closes. In like circumstances, threatened by their enemies, God's people will be called to fulfill the role of the "overcomer."

In essence, the time of Jacob's trouble is the "Time of Trouble for the Righteous." In the Scripture it is given the designation "Jacob's Time of Trouble" to differentiate it from the general time of trouble. While it happens at the same time it tells the people of God today that their focus will be a different focus than that of the world around them. They are to expect that their experience is different, the issues are different, and focus is different.

As probation closes, God will be placing his seal upon the righteous. The experience of Jacob accords in many ways with receiving the seal of God. The righteous do not know that they are sealed, but the test they pass through is the test that makes them overcomers who receive the new name promised to them by God. He that is righteous, remains so, and is approved by God (*Revelation 22:11*).

"Then the restraining Spirit of God is withdrawn from the earth. As Jacob was threatened with death by his angry brother, so the people of God will be in peril from the wicked who are seeking to destroy them. And as the patriarch wrestled all night for deliverance from the hand of Esau, so the righteous will cry to God day and night for deliverance from the enemies that surround them." Ibid., p. 201

Several lessons stand out in Jacob's experience that are important to the last day Christian. Some of these are mentioned as follows:

- When it comes to eternal security, we stand alone, individually. We cannot ride into heaven on the coattails of someone else's experience. Jacob fought alone, he was tested individually. This will be the case for all true believers at the end of time. It won't matter who your father was, or who your grandfather was, or

Jacob's Time of Trouble

anything else. All that matters is your personal standing with God.

- Though it seemed like to Jacob that he was fighting alone, and that his family was defenseless before the threat of Esau, it really wasn't the case. The Angel of the Lord encamps about those who fear him (Psalm 34:7). Jacob's entourage was accompanied by two angel companies. One would be enough, but two emphasizes the depth and surety of God's protection over the righteous (GC 630).
- We must confess our sins NOW (!) to receive pardon then (GC 202:2). If Jacob would have waited until the river Jabbok to plead for God's forgiveness he would not have received it, for in effect probation had already closed. While the righteous may be concerned about any unconfessed sins, there won't really be any, because God doesn't save people in the end who have never previously been concerned about their standing with God. This is why we are given the teaching about Jacob's Time of Trouble. We are told of this future experience to instill in us the need of present preparation. It is not that we are to dread that time, or think that we will rack our brain trying to think of another sin. It is rather to teach us that the saved will carry an attitude of caring about the need of grace and forgiveness. They are naturally this way. Being close to Christ makes us even more aware than others of our human weakness and sinfulness.

In the town of Chelan, Washington, near my own home town I once read in the local paper about a man who about 30 years previously had embezzled money from a bank where he worked. He later moved away, raised a family, and for some reason was never caught by authorities. But the guilt of what he had done never left him. Finally, thoroughly tormented, he eventually moved back to the community and immediately turned himself in. He asked for forgiveness and offered to repay the

BACK TO THE FUTURE

money, and pleaded to make restitution or to fulfill whatever sentence or obligation that would set his case straight. He said he would be happy to go to prison. He only wanted to get the matter off his chest and feel right again.

Of course many things had changed, and the bank had even changed hands. But because of his openness, and the attitude that he had displayed, the city authorities gave him full immunity for his crime, and made him a citizen of their town. Because of his work of voluntary confession BEFORE the crisis totally enveloped him, he made himself eligible to receive full pardon and forgiveness. This is very similar to Jacob's experience, as well as to ours.

- Another truth prominent in the story is that we can't win in our own strength. No work of our own, no matter how agonizing will effect forgiveness. It must be received at the Grace of the Angel of the Lord.

Why is there this story of Jacob fighting with the angel? We must think. Who was he fighting with? ----Jesus. He, for a long night (yea, a life), of sin and selfishness, struggled with letting Jesus win in his life. There are some who when it comes right down to it don't really want the Lord to be the Lord of all things in their life. They keep fighting him off. They often don't know whom they are really struggling with. They fight in their own strength and self-sufficiency. They want to win the struggle of life in their own way, with their own efforts, on their own terms. Fragile, feeble, human wimps that they are, they continue to fight God himself.

But the human spirit is never adequate to over master God's Spirit. Man is not stronger than God. Jacob thought he was clever, but he found out that he was not as clever as God. He had spent his whole life engineering his own success. Getting the birthright, deceiving his father, being "Jacob," the "supplanter." He had finally learned to surrender, to "Let go

Jacob's Time of Trouble

and let God.” This is the lesson every Christian must master before heaven.

This was not Jacob's last victory over self---but it was the watershed of his experience.

The Bible makes it sound like Jacob overcame the angel. But this is only in one sense. For the angel with one touch crippled him, perhaps for life. This “Angel” could easily have wiped him out in a moment. What Jacob overcame was really himself. He gained the victory over self, the hardest and most supreme victory. When Jacob realized the true nature of his antagonist, that he was rather HIS SAVIOR, then he by faith clung to the promise of forgiveness. By true repentance and importunity he prevailed with God. When we struggle with sin and weakness, and ask God for his forgiveness and blessing he is more than happy to supply it. God wants us to not let go until we have received the blessing he wants for us.

When we are true overcomers we will receive the inheritance of Jacob, and righteousness from the God of our Salvation. (Psalm 24:5,6) We will be ones who sought “the face of the God of Jacob. Selah.”

Deliverance at Midnight

No other theme or motif from the Old Testament is used as prolifically in prophetic descriptions as is the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. The theme of the Exodus pervades the book of Revelation, dominates the Psalms of Israel, and even influenced the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The rich typology of the Exodus story is fruitful in several ways, and provides an impressive microcosm of the last great conflict. This marvelous story in its truth is recorded for the purpose of being a fit representation of what is to soon take place upon the earth. It is a direct glimpse of how God works through human affairs to win the conflict of the ages.

Most moderns discount the story as largely fictional. It is the subject of animated movies, Hollywood dramas, and other sensational media. Experts in antiquity simply cannot believe that it is valid historically, and thereby scale down the narrative considerably. In not recognizing that it is written largely to encourage God's faithful today, so much is missed. By not accepting the story in truth, such wondrous benefit eludes them as well.

However, the descriptions are written in historical and factual form, and no reason is given to argue that the story did not happen. So real and

Deliverance at Midnight

significant were the facts of this story that an entire nation was born out of them. One of the major religions of the world, Judaism, finds its roots in the Exodus. Christianity is also indebted in many ways to the Exodus story for its existence, for the New Testament motif was grounded in the fact that Jesus Christ was the Passover Lamb; the living fulfillment of the Passover types. Every time a Christian celebrates the Lord's Supper he is in verity celebrating the Exodus as espoused in the delivering Grace of Christ.

Several major themes relate to last-day events. Some of these are listed below:

- **Falling of the plagues**
- **A call of God's people from earthly bondage**
- **The fleeing of God's people from oppression**
- **The protection of God through trial and religious persecution.**
- **A particular sign of sanctification and deliverance**
- **The formation of a distinct people of God**
- **The direct war and showdown of man against God**
- **The miraculous intervention of God at the stoke of midnight**
- **The ultimate victory of good over evil**

The popular renditions of the Exodus story tend to grossly overlook several important background themes, all of which identify issues of interest to Seventh-day Adventists today. As the theme of this book argues, the issues facing ancient Israel are essentially the same issues that are expected by God's people at their final deliverance.

While deliverance from oppressive bondage seems to be the obvious reason for the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the purposes of God far

BACK TO THE FUTURE

surpassed this. The stated purpose ultimately given by God for the Exodus was to place Israel where they could enjoy freedom to worship him and to keep his laws. This had become nearly impossible in Egypt, because the state had assumed a role that militated against the basic rights of civil and religious freedom. In this central issue the plot was set between Pharaoh along with the hosts of evil, and God along with the host of Israel.

Comments Addendum to the Exodus Motif:

What was one of the real issues precipitating the Exodus?:

"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."⁸

While generally overlooked by popular religion today, the Scriptures themselves indicate the same background issue as precipitating the Exodus:

Exod. 5:1 "And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

Exod. 5:2 And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.

Exod. 5:3 And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto

⁸White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 260.

Deliverance at Midnight

the LORD our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.

Exod. 5:4 And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, **let the people from their works**? Get you unto your burdens.

"In what way were Moses and Aaron hindering the Israelites from their works? It cannot be supposed that they were teaching them not to work at all. No; they were teaching them to keep the Sabbath."⁹

Exod. 5:5 And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them **rest** (Heb. *Shabbath*) from their burdens.

Exod. 5:6 And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying,

Exod. 5:7 Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves.

Exod. 5:8 And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish ought thereof: for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God.

Exod. 5:9 Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and **let them not regard vain words.**" (i.e. the Law of God, cf. Andrews, p. 51)

The real issues then were: 1) the requirements of the Law of God, 2) Particularly, the need to rest on the Sabbath, and 3) The need for religious liberty principles to be rewarded to the minority sect. The non-biblical Book of Jasher (non-biblical, although the Bible twice refers to the Book

⁹ J.N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath*, pp. 50, 51.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

of Jasher) relates an interesting sidelight on what had happened with regard to the religious liberty issue in years previous. It is a fascinating piece, for this source, not at all pre-prejudiced by the last-day issues we now face, clearly describes Moses as a religious liberty advocate before the state in Egypt:

NON-BIBLICAL TESTIMONY REGARDING THE SABBATH ISSUE IN EGYPT

Note: Book of Jasher, a book twice mentioned in the Bible; Josh. 10:12,13 and 2 Sam. 1:18)

"And the day arrived when Moses went to Goshen to see his brethren, that he saw the children of Israel in their burdens and hard labor, and Moses was grieved on their account. And Moses returned to Egypt and came to the house of Pharaoh, and came before the king, and Moses bowed down before the king. And Moses said unto Pharaoh, I pray thee, my lord, I have come to seek a small request from thee, turn not away my face empty; and Pharaoh said unto him, Speak. And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Let there be given unto thy servants the children of Israel who are in Goshen, one day to rest therein from their labor. And the king answered Moses and said, Behold I have lifted up thy face in this thing to grant thy request. And Pharaoh ordered a proclamation to be issued throughout Egypt and Goshen, saying, To you, all the children of Israel, thus says the kings, for six days you shall do your work and labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest, and shall not perform any work; thus shall you do in all the days, as the King and Moses the son of Bathia have commanded. And Moses rejoiced at this thing which the king had granted to him, and all the children of Israel did as Moses ordered them. For this thing was from the Lord to the children of Israel, for the Lord had begun to remember the children of Israel to save them for the sake of their fathers. And the Lord was with Moses, and his fame went throughout Egypt. And Moses became great in the eyes of all the Egyptians, and in the eyes of all the children of Israel, seeking food for his people Israel, and speaking words of peace regarding them to the king."----Book of Jasher 70: 41-51

Deliverance at Midnight

(For the later sinister reversal of this reprieve by the next Pharaoh, one may read Jasher 77: 7-13,21) (Quoted from Andrews, History of the Sabbath, pp. 49,50).

The Sabbath issue is not new. Those who scorn the idea that such liberties could ever be threatened in the future (and there are many, such prominent proponents) are simply wrong. It has happened before, time and again, and Satan will make sure that it happens again. Need more be said?

Through the prophetic call of Moses and Aaron, God moved for Israel to finally leave Egypt. God knew exactly to what extreme the conflict would escalate. The sending of the plagues were not offensive measures preferred by God to destroy Pharaoh. The people of Egypt brought these things upon themselves by their refusal to grant Israel their basic civil and religious rights and by not recognizing the claims of the true God of heaven. (These same attitudes will again prevail in the United States of America and in other nations; cf. *The Great Controversy*, E.G. White, etc.)

God knew that Pharaoh would resist, through all of the plagues. God did not harden Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh did. But God did CAUSE Pharaoh's heart to be hardened so that he could bring about the intended result. God could have in other ways actively, or secretly, led Israel out of Egypt. But according to his supreme purposes, God chose rather to use these events via a passive mode, to occasion Israel's freedom. He thus orchestrated these events to the place that Israel would not be resisted, but even encouraged, to leave.

In like fashion, the seven last plagues will be used by God to bring about the deliverance of his people. God is not the author of the plagues, for such terrible strokes are not really his nature. But because man will resist God's laws and his prerogatives, the impenitent will be left to the mercy of Satan, with no protection. Through these terrible acts God will effect the deliverance of his people.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

In the seven last plagues is a note of comfort for God's people. Of the ten plagues that came upon the Egyptian empire, only the first three reached the land of Goshen where Israel dwelt. The seven "last" plagues were poured out on only the Egyptians, who stubbornly refused to acknowledge God's authority. In like manner, the message comes through that God's umbrella of protection will shelter the righteous in their final deliverance.

One of the final acts before the tenth and last plague was the Passover ritual, that the children of Israel were instructed to celebrate prior to their departure toward the Promised Land. They were to select and slay the required Passover Lamb, and to put the necessary blood on the doorposts of their house. This act of faith was to mark the houses that would be spared the work of the destroying angel. The first born of every household were to be spared or taken, depending upon their strict observance of the Passover instruction.

Again, in like manner, in the last days God's people are to come under the protection of an unseen yet equally significant mark of deliverance. If as formerly observed that the word "Sabbath" can mean "the house with a sign/seal," there is here a visual symbol to be found in the former houses of Goshen, marked with sealing blood. God's last day people are to likewise be sealed with the seal of God and will be protected in safety through the fearful ordeal about them.

It has been observed, that by placing the blood on each doorpost, and the blood on the lintel, with blood dripping down onto the center of the threshold the form of a cross is quickly discerned. The blood is placed in the very position that blood was later found on another wooden structure, called the cross of Calvary. These signs of redemption point to the covering Grace of the True Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ. He is the true deliver from sin and bondage, both then, and now, and in the future. The same configuration and placement emerges when one thinks of the forehead and the hand, or hands. Those who receive God's seal are

Deliverance at Midnight

marked in the same pattern as was the lintel and doorposts in ancient Egypt.

Certainly no Israelite family deliberated long, whether or not this ritual should be carried out. It was not considered “legalism” to do as God had asked. No doubt, the firstborn son was careful to observe whether or not the blood was there, and if it was not, to make sure it was put there. It is doubtful that there was much concern over whether it was a legalistic form of religion or not. The family just wanted to be sure that it was there! The sign, much like the Sabbath, served as a test to Israel whether or not they would strictly obey God and whether they would depend upon his Grace in time of need. Covenants were often sealed in blood, and so the Sabbath too is a seal in Christ’s blood. Marvelous beyond expression is the blindness and ineptness of many who still boldly refuse to follow God’s commands, and devise instead their own flawed, substitute rites of worship.

It was at midnight that the angel of death passed over Egypt, bringing about deliverance for those who had fulfilled the requirements, and bringing death to the families of those who did not. The firstborn were in effect the ministers and priests of their families. The dreadful retribution toward the unfaithful began thus with the *false ministers* of the nation. The tithe or tenth of the land will in like fashion meet with terrible judgments at the end of time (Rev. 11; cf. *GC* “tongues consume away in their mouths,” etc.). This terrible curse was vividly real in Egypt, and there is every reason to believe that at the final demise of those who have taught falsehood and loved it, that the results will be similar. Some wish to make these things “symbolic” or “spiritual” only. Ask the Egyptians someday in the judgment if this was a “spiritual” experience, or a real one!

As the deliverance of Israel in Egypt came at the midnight hour, so will God’s people see their final deliverance. God will work with awesome power and miraculous signs to rescue his beloved people of promise.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

The Red Sea

In haste, the following morning Israel finally left Egypt, going out with the mighty hand of the Almighty. Of all the stories of deliverance, the Red Sea deliverance has to be a favorite. How this was accomplished, and where particularly it was accomplished is very much a matter of discussion. It is taken up in other places. The scriptural songs of deliverance cite that a powerful wind tore through the waters and that the walls of water “congealed,” an ancient reference to the phenomenon of freezing. However it was accomplished, the timing and providence of this miracle is what recommends it as one of the greatest events in human history.

The point that is important here, is that the Exodus is a type of the final deliverance of God’s people. Like Armageddon, the hosts of right and the hosts of evil come together for one last great clash. God comes forth, the gloriously triumphant warrior, who wins decisively in the conflict. His people are rescued from certain destruction, and the forces of evil are utterly broken. In loud strains, the people of God sing of their deliverance in the Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb.

The Song of Moses and the Lamb

The content and historical rendering of the Song of Moses is well known. It is found in Exodus 15 and was sung in celebration of the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage through the experience at the Red Sea. The Exodus motif is found several places in the context of Revelation, but in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the book it is especially typical of the final deliverance of God’s people. Present in the picture are the plagues and the evil forces, a victorious throng beside the sea, singing a song of deliverance, saved by the Passover “Lamb.”

But in actuality the Song of Moses and the Lamb is a song that has two-parts. **It is a double song.** One song celebrates God’s providences in the

Deliverance at Midnight

Old Testament dispensation, the other is deeper and more comprehensive in that it celebrates the greater deliverance wrought by the Son of God at Calvary, that of redemption and salvation, given to all men of all ages. The first song signifies deliverance from the earthly and temporal, the second celebrates the spiritual and divine deliverance of Salvation. This is the rapturous song of the redeemed.

“There is a day just about to burst upon us when God's mysteries will be seen, and all His ways vindicated; when justice, mercy, and love will be the attributes of His throne. When the earthly warfare is accomplished, and the saints are all gathered home, our first theme will be the song of Moses, the servant of God. The second theme will be the song of the Lamb, the song of grace and redemption. This song will be louder, loftier, and in sublimer strains, echoing and re-echoing through the heavenly courts. Thus the song of God's providence is sung, connecting the varying dispensations; for all is now seen without a veil between the legal, the prophetic, and the gospel. The church history upon the earth and the church redeemed in heaven all center around the cross of Calvary. This is the theme, this is the song,--Christ all and in all,--in anthems of praise resounding through heaven from thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand and an innumerable company of the redeemed host. All unite in this song of Moses and of the Lamb. It is a new song, for it was never before sung in heaven.” TM 433 (a unique reference)

The fascinating appropriateness of this all is that in Revelation, the *Song of Moses* first being a celebration of redemption, comes when the throng has a victory over the beast, his image, his mark or sign, and over the number of his name. There is another celebration of redemption given to mankind, which finds some of its roots in the dispensation of Moses, but which has even deeper significance as a “sign” of sanctification and redemption. That is the Sabbath of the Lord God. It is the celebration of rest from our works (bondage), in the justifying and sanctifying work of our Redeemer.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

A certain discovery is particularly interesting when considering how Seventh-day Adventists have taught that the mark of the beast and the victory over that mark will involve Sabbath observance. This discovery is footnoted in the helpful work of Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple; Its Ministry and Services*.¹⁰

"At the evening sacrifice *on the Sabbath* the song of Moses in Exod. xv. was sung."

The song was divided into six parts for as many Sabbaths, and sung interspersed three times, **by three trumpet blasts**. Therefore it was at the **close of the Sabbath**, at the evening sacrifice in the temple that the priestly choir sang the Song of Moses, appropriately celebrating the **completion** of redemption and the saving activity of God. What better time than at the conclusion of the giving of the third angel's message and the coming of Christ could possibly be found in all of salvation history for this! God's people, refusing to bow to the decree of a spurious Sabbath are at last delivered (at Passover midnight), threatened by the angry and plague-ridden worshippers of the beast and his image. The Sabbath of the world has come, and the Sabbath of final deliverance has arrived. Not only will they sing the song of deliverance, but also they will sing the song of redemption of which the Sabbath experience is truly representative.

The final line of the Song of Moses and the Lamb found in Revelation 15 speaks of all nations coming and worshipping before God. These very words are virtually a quote from the particular verses at the end of Isaiah (66:23) where God says that "from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another shall all flesh come and worship before me." This verse which anticipates Sabbath keeping in the new earth as it were, is the very one in the mind of the prophet of the Apocalypse! In fact all the

¹⁰ Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple; Its Ministry and Services*, p. 188.

Deliverance at Midnight

allusions in the passage come from either “Sabbath” passages or “creation” passages in the Psalms and other places.⁸

Type will someday meet antitype. History has written history. There is nothing new under the sun. The past is prologue. It has all happened before and it will happen again. There can be no doubt, that in its particulars the conflict will end in the very character that it began and in the character that it has continued. Let every blood-bought child of God prepare for that glorious day!

⁸ For a fuller explication of this marvelous passage in literary terms, please refer to my book, *The Days of the Seventh Angel*, Vol. 5, “The Song of Moses and the Lamb.”

Exodist to Adventist

Parallels for Modern Adventists: Comparisons Between Israel and the Advent Movement

The calling of a people out of Egypt carries many parallels to the rise of the Advent Movement in our time. It may seem arrogant to read in these similarities that modern “Adventism” is the valid equivalent to “God’s ancient chosen people.” But the comparison isn’t always flattering; in fact, it places greater responsibility and discipline upon those who would claim to be the anti-type, lest they repeat the failures of those before them. And unfortunately, in most cases they are.

The purpose of this chapter is not to make exclusive and boastful claims for Adventism. Its purpose is to remind Adventists who they are and who they are supposed to be. Great lessons are found in the experience of Israel in the wilderness. Camped only days away from the borders of the Promised Land Israel passed through many experiences to be repeated in this latter time by another group seeking the borders of Canaan.

Exodist to Adventist

However, one challenge can easily be made. This challenge goes to anyone. The challenge is to find in the entire modern world a group of people who more readily fulfill the role and calling of modern Israel, as does the Adventist movement. No other group possesses the complete qualifications necessary, as do Seventh-day Adventists. Other movements follow similar themes, but not nearly as often or as comprehensively. The experience of Israel in the wilderness is a *prophecy* like no other.

Stunning comparisons between Israel and the Advent Movement have been written in works by Ellen White, Carlyle B. Haynes (*From Exodus to Advent*), Morris Venden, and others. Below are some of the prominent themes. However, these are just a small representation and sampling of the hundreds of worthy parallels:

1. Both groups are “called out” of Egypt (or “Babylon”).
2. They are both are led by a prophet (Moses/ EGW) at inception of the movement.
3. The Sabbath is Restored and rediscovered by each group.
4. The Ten Commandments, the Law of God is given/rediscovered
5. The Truth of God is revealed through the SANCTUARY.
6. They are both called out of a bitter experience/ bondage; disappointment.

a. For example, one can particularly note the experience of Israel at Marah---e.g. a tree (a “rod”) turns the water from bitterness to sweetness; For SDA's, a “reed like a rod” was given to measure the sanctuary (discovery of the sanctuary/judgement truth; Revelation 11:1 ff.); and thus the experience turns from bitterness to sweetness (Also, Rev. 10, etc.).

BACK TO THE FUTURE

7. Each are prepared to be a *distinct* people, a holy nation, royal priesthood, called out of darkness into marvelous light.
8. Each given specific, detailed health guidelines
9. Their distinctness is marked by the surrender and sacrifice to God's cause the need of unnecessary adornment.
10. Both are organized brilliantly as a people, with a distinct priesthood and tithing system.
11. Both stand encamped on border of the Promised Land (time/distance).
12. Israel experienced a delay toward their goal in the wilderness wanderings. The Promised Land was to be a short journey. The original leaders and prophet died before entering, though they are given a vision of the better land. This correlates exceptionally well with the thinking and experience of Adventism.

NO LAST-DAY RELIGIOUS OR NATIONAL MOVEMENT (THAT ANYONE CAN POSSIBLY THINK OF) SO CLOSELY RESEMBLES THE ISRAEL OF OLD AND THEIR SITUATION AS DOES THE RISE AND MOVEMENT OF THE ADVENTIST PEOPLE! There can be no mistake here. Yet this can be no boast, because one must accept the negatives with the positives.

Sadly, for instance, how many of the original Israel entered into the Promised Land, and why did they not enter? The parallel is not flattering. The list of comparisons continue:

13. Both have murmured and complained.
 - a. Complained of the diet--quail

Exodist to Adventist

- b. Complained about the church leaders
- c. Complained about the “prophet” (hello?!)

14. There were “offshoots”---groups trying to go up and take the land before its time (modern examples: ---billboards against the Pope, extremism in promoting certain beliefs, etc.). Others, both ancient and modern have attempted to separate themselves from the main body as a more holy group (numerous examples).

15. Two faithful witnesses talked of "faith" at Kadesh Barnea. There is a direct counterpart in the modern movement from 1888 and forward. Many feel that modern Israel, like Israel of old could have entered Canaan then-- --("Righteousness By Faith" at Minneapolis?). That they “should have entered,” perhaps all can agree on. That “they” did not enter is large with instruction today.

16. Celebration Worship, or “Egyptian style worship” occurred with the golden calf and at Peor: (thus: *Baal-Sinai* and Baal Peor!). Fanaticisms toward "Egyptian" forms of worship transpired. Music was an issue, “dancing and forms of energetic worship was an issue, reverence was an issue, also the form and nature of God became an issue---- (the “alpha apostasy” was Pantheism, many believe in Adventism; and there are several modern parallels on the other matters).

17. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram: Today similar sentiments are manifested in notions such as congregationalism, ordination of women as priests, and the proliferation of independent movements. Many prominent workers likewise have abandoned the message they once loved and taught with energy (Canright, Conradi, Ballenger, Kellogg, Ford, etc.)

18. Spiritual and material immorality: The worst for Israel was the experience at Baal-peor, culminating with the bringing of the Midianite woman “Cozbi” into the camp. This problem has many possible angles--- the ready acceptance of modern media such as questionable DVD’s/videos

BACK TO THE FUTURE

and television (which not only come into the “camp,” but come right into the center of our homes!), compromises in educational standards, the promotion of competitive sports, unequally yoked marriages, etc., etc. These and other compromising standards compare in a multiplicity of ways.

19. Plagues harass God's people in both eras: (Snakes, etc.), that is: (financial fiascos) (cancer) (fires--Battle Creek).

20. Spiritual malaise existed for both: The wilderness---and Laodicea.

The list can continue on and on. Perhaps only one significant comparison still remains unfulfilled when considering ancient Israel and their wandering in the wilderness. Modern Israel still has not yet entered Canaan.

AND WHY DID THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL NOT IMMEDIATELY ENTER CANAAN? Was it the eating of quail? The complaining? Ignoring the health message? The longing after Egypt? The snakes? Even the immorality with Midian? WHY? None of these things alone were the ultimate reason for their failings. All of those things were symptomatic of another, generic, problem. None of them, in themselves could really cause the downfall of that generation. All of them were in themselves forgivable, or avoidable, or were things they could have been passed beyond. But there was one overwhelming problem.

The writer of Hebrews comments that they “entered not because of UNBELIEF.” The real problem was not *WHAT* they did. The real reason is *WHY* they did what they did (Hebrews 3:19)! They lacked faith in God, in his prophets, and his Guiding Spirit. They would not “submit” to the Lordship of their God.

Exodist to Adventist

No wonder Satan has designed that his last deception will be to make of none effect the “Spirit of Prophecy,” and to undermine the authority of church leadership, and to detract from the absolute authority of God and his Word. If Satan can sidetrack the church in their belief in God’s calling and purpose for them: in Christ and his righteousness, and especially in God’s prophetic voice to them, he can effectively destroy the movement of the church.

There could easily be preached 500 separate yet appropriate sermons on the important meaning of the wilderness experience of Israel for modern Seventh-day Adventists and for the Christian world in general. This is why this subject is so important. These things are written for our admonition. They are ensamples. They have happened before, and they ARE happening again!

On the following page or so is a chart that partially diagrams the experience in the wilderness. The scheme is only roughly summarized, for it is difficult to determine the exact chronological order and meaning of the events catalogued in the Pentateuch. Therefore, the chart does not claim to be infallible. However, enough patterning exists to observe some fascinating parallels. Any reader is challenged to study, edit, and add to this document as he or she sees fit. I would that everyone would seek to improve it. But there does seem to be an intrinsic pattern that emerges, that should be of great interest to the modern people of God who can expect certain things to be repeated. *The modern movement is experiencing the very same things, even in the same order it seems as the former movement.* And, of course, this is the premise of this entire book.

The chart is presented in mirror-like fashion. The events on the left begin with the Exodus from Egypt and follow in essential chronological form down to the bottom. Toward the end of the wilderness wandering, the events occurring early on in the Exodus experience seem to repeat themselves, except in reverse order, represented by the column up the right. Thus the right column can be read from the bottom up. A few

BACK TO THE FUTURE

observations are listed below, because one cannot resist making note of them lest the reader quickly overlook their present significance:

- God seems to lead his people in their experience back over the same ground, to give them adequate opportunity to correct their mistakes and to test their faith.
- There is great similarity between the tests given Israel and the tests given the modern church. As Israel received a test of “faith” at the beginning of their sojourn at Kadesh, so the church in modern times was tested in circumstances such as the 1888 controversy, and in the later crises in the early 1900’s (1900-1905, etc.). An approximate estimate of our present position as a church is somewhat ascertainable, full of warning and instruction.
- One can perceive, in a way, part of reason why Moses met with such frustration at the latter end of the journey. His failure, in striking the rock twice in anger, is understandable in that he knew how close the children of Israel were in finally coming to their ultimate goal. He had labored so hard! Yet Israel seemed as if they had learned nothing at all through all of the ordeal of wilderness. Are there lessons here for today?
- The issues that confronted Israel are incredibly similar with the ones being met today. These crisis issues were not subjugated but met openly and precisely. The tendency today is to ignore these very issues, for fear of splitting the church. While great caution must be observed *how* these issues are met, they nevertheless must be met, or the wandering will continue and the losses will be tragic.

Some of the identifiable issues include such things as organization and re-organization, authority and leadership, worship style and reverence, respect toward the prophetic ministry, ordination and the priesthood, diet

Exodist to Adventist

and health, lifestyle and association, dress and adornment, Sabbath reform, and a score of others. *De javu*.

Where are we today? We cannot say exactly, of course, but any astute observer would agree that the modern church is moving right along in time up the right side of the chart and encountering the final tests before entering the Promised Land. The early pioneers have now died, and time lingers. Discouragement, murmuring, even rebellion is found within the walls of the church. Are we now journeying around Edom? Are we between Baal-Peor and the Jordan? Are we on the heights of Pisgah? Careful analysis reveals that the modern people of God may have their feet almost dipping in rolling Jordan itself.

SECONDARY CHIASMUS IN THE WILDERNESS WANDERINGS

PASSOVER consecration-firstborn
(Ex 14)

PASSOVER circumcision
(Joshua 1 ff.)

RED SEA (Ex 14,15)

JORDAN R. (Joshua 1:2)

BITTER EXPERIENCE:
MARA (Bitter) Ex 15:22,2

BITTER EXPERIENCES:
Death of Moses, Aaron, the
journey around Edom

WATER FROM ROCK (Rephidim)
Ex 17:1-7

WATER FROM ROCK
Numbers 20:1ff. (Cf. Kadesh)
Moses chided with/ strikes 2X
Called "Meribah" Num 20:13

(Massah and Meribah, vs. 7)

AMELEK DEFEATED
(Ex 17:18-16)

SIHON AND OG DEFEATED
(Num 21)

LAW AT SINAI
(Ex 19,20)

LAW REPEATED
(Deut.=second law; Dt.5, etc.)

BACK TO THE FUTURE

GOLDEN CALF APOSTASY
(Idolatry, celebrative worship)
(Ex 32)

BAAL-PEOR APOSTASY
(Idolatry, festive worship)
(Num 25)

CENSUS (Num 1)
(Organization)

CENSUS (Num 26)
(Re-organization)

BURNING AND QUAIL-MEAT
(Murmuring)
(Num 11)

FIERY BURNING SERPENTS
(Murmuring)
(Num 21:7-9)

CRITICISM BY AARON & MIRIAM
(Num 12)

DEATH OF AARON AND
MIRIAM (Num 20:1; 21:22-29)

REBELLION AT KADESH-BARNEA
(Spies bring evil report)
(Moses, Caleb, Joshua distraught)

REBELLION AT KADESH
(People discouraged)
(Moses chided, strikes rock)

UNSUCCESSFUL BATTLE
(Num 15)

UNSUCCESSFUL BATTLE
(Num 21)

REBELLION OF KORAH
(Num 16)

REBELLION AT KADESH
(Num 20 ff.)

WANDERING AROUND SEIR AND WILDERNESS 38 YEARS (Deut 2:1)

The lessons of the wilderness are in verity the lessons for today. They are written for this very reason. These things happened for an **example**. An example particularly for those living at the end of time. That is you and I. That is what it says!

It is now time to lay aside every weight, and the sin that does so easily beset us, and march triumphantly into Canaan's land. A great revival of primitive godliness is among our greatest needs. The riches of Grace are close by us. We must go up at once and possess the treasures of promise. With the righteousness of Christ going before us, we are well able *in faith* to overcome the obstacles in the path. The armies of the Lord will put the

Exodist to Adventist

enemy to flight. The time is far spent, the day is at hand. Jordan is now in sight. How long will God's people spurn their great opportunity, and languish in the Moabite plain? "Arise, let us go over Jordan!" is the call.

The Last Trump

“The new is in the old contained, the old is in the new explained.”

Yes! God brings everything back in its turn.

The next example of this historical premise is taken from Joshua, chapter 6. This chapter contains the famous story of the fall of Jericho.

JOSHUA 6:

Josh. 6:1 Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.

Josh. 6:2 And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.

Josh. 6:3 And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.

Josh. 6:4 And seven priests shall bear before the ark **seven trumpets** of rams' horns: and the **seventh day** ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.

Josh. 6:5 And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall

The Last Trump

down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him. . .

Josh. 6:10 And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, **Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout. . . .**

(Note: Here in effect is seven days of silence!)

Josh. 6:15 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.

Josh. 6:16 And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city. . . .

Josh. 6:20 So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. (KJV)

The Scenario

Too often, readers of the story of Jericho get lost over matters of relatively trivial importance. Some debate on whether the trumpet blasts created a phenomenon of physics whereby the vibrations brought down the wall. Others wonder how the millions of Israelites could have practically moved around the city seven times on the final day, even if the army was scaled down to 40,000. Still others accuse that the story is impossibly fanciful and cannot remotely be true. Yet others are troubled by the seeming stupidity of marching around the city seven times in order to take it.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Beyond this, some archaeologists even inform us the city was so small to begin with that the taking of it was hardly a miracle at all.

If all one can arrive at are questions such as these, the story will remain basically meaningless. While these are natural questions and helpful observations in some cases, I suggest the purpose of this story in several ways surpasses these things. I believe this story has incredible information apropos to our day.

For the purposes of this discussion let us limit ourselves to what this story teaches about how God works, and the process he uses to bring about the downfall of evil.

An Example of Times to Come

Eschatologically, the most significant part of the story I believe is the sounding of trumpets and the silent tread of the righteous host about the doomed city.

It is clear upon a proper observation of the events described that the priests were to sound the trumpet at the conclusion of each circuit. Trumpets were always in the days of old symbols of warning and announcement. They were used when something important was about to transpire, such as the beginning of a Sabbath. They were used as a rallying call to war, as announcements regarding the beginning and ending of holidays. They were used in warning. The *Feast of Trumpets* in Israel's history came on the first day of ten days, leading up to the *Day of Atonement*. It was a clarion call to repent, and to prepare for certain judgment. Trumpets were then a call to repentance, and preparation to meet God.

Everyday, the host of Israel went around the city. It should not escape our notice that the only things allowed to make any noise during the first six days were the voices of the trumpets. Except for the appeals of the

The Last Trump

trumpet, and the sight of the Ark of the Covenant, there was silence. Seven *days* of silence.

The Ark of the Covenant itself was not so important as what it represented. The ark was simply a decorated box carrying the Law of God, the description of his will and character. But while the actual contents of the ark may or may not have been known by the inhabitants of Jericho, what the ark represented to them was starkly clear. It was the representative symbol of the God of Israel, who was ever present with them, and who had wrought the mighty deliverances from Egypt and the other enemies of Israel.

In all of these demonstrations, a statement was made. Day after day the ritual continued. The inhabitants of the city watched in wonder and silence, but they did not, as they should have, seek peace with Israel. Upon the final day, the trumpets, in number seven, were blown, and with a final shout, meant to imitate the very voice of the Mighty One, the walls of Jericho came crumbling down.

Seven Trumpets

The seven trumpets are radically important to this story. God could have brought the wall down with one trumpet. The whole thing would have been over in a matter of moments. But there were seven trumpets, blowing over the course of probationary time, seven different times. In fact, we don't know but that perhaps when they were blown, they were blown in sequence, and not all at once in a choir. Such a demonstration spoke volumes.

In ancient Israel, when the Sabbath was about to begin an elaborate sequence of trumpets was planned. The Sabbath was not to be prepared for in only a moment but adequate warning was given. Several minutes transpired between blasts. Sometimes there would be several blasts (3), but these would be followed by other ceremonial blasts. The final blast, in

BACK TO THE FUTURE

most cases would be the actual “seventh” sounding of the trumpet that would announce the official beginning of the Sabbath day.

Other time sequences were practiced in ancient Israel, depending on the development or care that Israel was currently showing toward its religious rituals. Trumpet blasts were heard at the beginning and ending of the temple services on each day. These culminated toward the final Sabbath services. These called to people to holy assembly and pointed to the importance of remembering religious services.

Trumpets were also blown at new moons, or at the beginning of the months of the religious calendar. The climax of the religious year occurred in the SEVENTH month. The first day of the seventh month was the *Feast of the Trumpets*, which was followed in ten days by the *Day of Judgment*, which was finally followed by the victorious festivities of the *Feast of Tabernacles*. All these events crowned the religious year in the seventh month.

The seventh trumpet, therefore, the most important of all the soundings of the horn (*shofar*) has incredible significance. It marks the end of time, the end of probation, and marks the sequence in which probationary time is shut down. The seventh trumpet was the LAST TRUMP (I Thess 4:16ff.). It is used to illustrate the call to the dead at the very end of time, when time for this earth is completely over. It alludes to the Sabbath of time, the *Day of Atonement*, the seventh month, and the entrance of God into judgment.

Thus, the seven trumpets, sounded in appeal to the inhabitants of Jericho, are also reminiscent and symbolic of these same things. These trumpets marked the end of probation for the wicked city whose door of mercy would never open again. God was announcing his intentions as clearly as he could, and working with man in his customary, careful, and merciful fashion.

The Last Trump

The purpose of God is clear in this regard at the very least. No door is ever shut without one final appeal. God will never act without giving ample and unimpeachable opportunity for all to repent.

It is helpful to imagine what was really happening in the story of Jericho. We may assume that God wanted to destroy Jericho. But I don't believe this is the case. Why did God delay the taking of Jericho for seven days? Was it to terrorize and afflict the inhabitants? Think about the army of Israel marching in absolute silence around the city. Only the tread of their feet could be heard. Why this effect?

Was it not a time for those wicked inhabitants to reconsider one last time their stand against God and his people? At any time the city could have surrendered, and it would be interesting to know what God would have done if they had.¹¹ But the point is they **didn't**, and God knew they wouldn't because they were hardened against him. But the silent marching was in every way aimed as an appeal to their hardened hearts.

Like the outsiders of the ark of Noah, their hearts were never broken but persistent unto no repentance, even in the final seven days. Yet God, in his infinite mercy offered the appeal anyway to prove that none were needlessly lost and that every decision had been made on solid and adequate evidence. The ultimate message is that God in his love closes probation with reluctance, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

The scenario in the Jericho story is similar to that of Noah's story except in Noah's story the faithful are "called in" and wicked are "shut out." In the Jericho story the wicked are "shut in" and the faithful are "called out." But the closing of probationary doors are transpiring just the same---

What then was happening at Jericho?:

¹¹ Cf. Deuteronomy 20:10,11.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

- A judgment period---the time for the Canaanites was then fulfilled
- The faithful were called out --- (Rahab, etc.)
- The door of mercy was shut---probation closed in effect
- There were **seven days of silence**---
- Then the judgments of God upon the wicked came accompanied by a loud voice and great noise and commotion.

The startling allusions in the **Seven Trumpets** of *Revelation* and the silence in heaven in *Revelation* 8:1ff., and the **seven days of silence**^{*} noted at Jericho are interesting. Also of significance are the *Day of Atonement* parallels that are resident in these passages. (This is further elucidated in my book, *The Days of the Seventh Angel*, vol.2).

The point is, that information is found in these Old Testament accounts that speak powerfully about the future! The eschatological overtones in these stories are to be understood in all their fullness by the people of God. Unfortunately, these themes, while understood by a few, are not shared with fervency and energy before the people of God. This, at the very least, is tragic. It is irresponsible, and sad beyond words.

Jesus' Ministry and Passion

The appeal to Jericho is essentially the same appeal (in type) that Jesus gave to the Jewish nation in the final seven days of his ministry. On the brow of Olivet, the nation was granted one last appeal; an appeal to a

* Prophetically determined in Rev. 8:2 as about "half and hour." Of interest I have discovered that judging from the approximate size of the ancient city provided to us by archaeology (ca. 12 acres), that the city's circuit can be roughly calculated. Adding a safe perimeter from the theoretical wall the total length of the sides comes close to a mile, plus or minus. From experience I know that it takes "about the space of half and hour" to walk a brisk mile.

The Last Trump

nation that had been entrusted with divine oracles, but were rejecting their own God. Looking one last time from Olivet over the doomed city the Savior said:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem. . . how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chick under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left unto you desolate." Matthew 23:37 NKJV.

The writer of the book *The Desire of Ages*, comments that as Jesus viewed Jerusalem from Olivet at the beginning of that final week, that the sun was setting over the beloved yet troubled city. In that instance, Jesus announced the close of its probation. Indeed, the events of that week solidified and verified that his assessment was accurate, and that as a nation Israel's day of Grace had passed. They crucified their King and Savior.

This information about how God closes probation, and with what attitude he does it is of supreme interest. It is perfectly informative of the close of probation that is to later come upon this earth.

Quoting from the same author in the book Early Writings we read:

*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.* pp. 280,281.

Again, the God who is reluctant to close the door tarries, silently appealing to the last. This is why there is a period of silence. But nothing changes because God has rightly chosen the moment when the minds of

BACK TO THE FUTURE

men are eternally made up. At last the judgments of God fall and there are fireworks and noise, commotion and plague that mark a grand finale and the end of time for the present earth.

While the end of probation may be sudden in time, it is not an attempt by God to cut people “off at the pass.” He is not playing a game of musical chairs, pulling a trick to disqualify anyone he can. Instead he is using the teaching of probation’s closing as a tool to appeal to unready hearts, to grant all an opportunity. He also wishes to show that it is a process that is supremely fair, with no mistakes. God is reluctant to close the door, wanting as many as possible to take his appeals seriously.

When preaching on this subject I (the author) am often impressed in the call at the end of the sermon to have a long moment of silence rather than use my voice to plead with the hearers. I will always believe it is far more effective than anything, I or anyone else, can say at the time. I wish at more times that pastors and evangelists would be silent, after the trumpet blast (!), and let God through his Spirit do the “talking.” Silence speaks louder than words to the conscience. The modern generation makes too much noise, anyway. Satan dreads for anyone to stop, be still, and know that God is God. We need to let God speak, at times, through his gentle and quiet Spirit.

The days of the seventh angel are upon us. The trumpets are sounding. Soon the great voice of God will be heard throughout the earth. It will be the voice of the Archangel, the merciful Jesus of our faith. It is even now the time for the “last trump.” It is time for each disciple to listen to pleadings of Our Great High Priest, and especially *now* obtain the merits of Our Gracious Intercessor.

Typological Relationships Between the Elijah Story and Eschatological Schema

Seventh-day Adventists have for years recognized the typological significance of the Elijah experience. By this we mean that the ministry of the prophet Elijah (I Kings 17 to II Kings 2) in many ways seems to parallel the anticipated experience of the people of God in the latter times. God's people as a whole are to fulfill a prophetic calling and give a message "in the spirit and power of Elias."

Several Bible passages provide seed material for this motif. They are:

BACK TO THE FUTURE

1. Malachi 4
2. Matthew (11:13,14)--17:11-13
3. Revelation 11, 13

Dualistic or Time-Adjusted Prophecy

First a word must be offered in explanation relative to licensing a typological application to the last days from these passages. I wish to challenge one of the cardinal tenets of some historicists---- that prophecy is limited to but one application.

The hermeneutical control on the application of such passages is predicated according to the following considerations:

Further historical fulfillments of prophecy are to be permitted when (1) an inspired writer so applies it and (2) the prophetic description so closely parallels inspired materials that such a determination can be safely made.

The reader is encouraged to note an often-overlooked indication that Jesus himself authorized at times a legitimate double application of the same prophecy:

“And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them” (Matthew 17:10-13).

Here is a summary exegesis of this passage. Jesus takes the original passage of Malachi and applies it both to the ministry of John the Baptist and to the future *eschaton*. He first says that John is the Elijah to come. Then Jesus also says: Elijah does come; that is: Elijah will come as

120

The Elijah Story

prophesied at the end of time. This will transpire immediately preceding the final day of the Lord.

“BUT, he says, I tell you just as certain, Elijah has already come.” John the Baptist’s ministry, Jesus taught, was the *primary*, first advent fulfillment of Malachi 3. The *secondary* (and more complete) fulfillment is to occur just prior to the second advent of Christ.

So we have here not only a typological type in the ministry of Elijah--followed by one anti-type; but rather at least two successive anti-types. We maintain the possibility therefore that Jesus himself authorized in a limited sense the multiple *application* of prophecy.

ESCHATALOGICAL TYPES AND MOTIFS FOUND IN THE ORIGINAL ELIJAH STORY

Several precedents of history found in the Elijah story will be repeated. They will not be repeated in exactness to the original. But the general movements will approximate what has gone before:

1. There will be a general period of trouble and draught. In Elijah’s day this period of no rain was just as tragically a period of famine for the Word of God. In Elijah’s day this specific period was 1,260 days, or three and one half years.
2. This initial time of trouble, though severe, is not as severe as the greater time of trouble that follows.
3. During the first and lesser time of trouble, God’s people will live rurally and will be able to get their basic needs met as Elijah did at the brook Cherith and when he lodged with the widow of Zarephath.
4. During this time false religion will flourish.
5. This false worship will be characterized by the following cultic significances:

BACK TO THE FUTURE

- a. The exaltation of the sun is part of the false cult
 - b. The movement is led by a partly-pagan priesthood.
 - c. Demonstrative and “celebrative” worship style is popular.
 - d. A close alliance between church and state exists.
 - e. Two allied but separate apostate religious systems (400 and 450 prophets of Baal, or Baal and Astarte= such as Catholic and Protestant) exist.
6. A showdown will occur between the abandoned, yet true religion, and the popular religion of the day.
 7. An outpouring of “rain” will come as the result of the showdown and the decisions made or inherent in the crisis (Latter Rain).
 8. A death decree will finally be threatened by apostate powers against the lonely, faithful prophet(s).
 9. The Righteous (Elijah/Sons of the Prophets, etc.) will flee to wilderness (rural domains).
 10. The Righteous experience a time of mental and spiritual anguish (Elijah under broom tree--Jacob’s trouble).
 11. The Righteous are miraculously fed and sustained.
 12. Fire, wind, and earthquake and the voice of God come.
 13. The Righteous are kept safe.
 14. The Living Righteous are finally translated without seeing death.

Elijah and the Voice of God

The story of Elijah’s reform and his flight from the scheming and wicked Jezebel therefore provides an informative historico-prophetical scenario to the eschatological seeker of truth. The lessons are not limited to the Carmel episode, or the famine events, either.

However, there are parts of the Elijah story that to this day are not at all clear to the modern reader. It is of no small interest that in such a case as

The Elijah Story

we will discuss in the next few paragraphs that eschatology as we know it may inform the original story rather than the other way around.

The case that fits this scenario is that of Elijah's flight to Horeb, particularly his experience in the cave. The meaning of this experience leaves one quite baffled and expositors and teachers have left us ambiguous ways of understanding the fire, wind, and earthquake followed by a still, small voice. The author of these words has personally often puzzled over the meaning and significance of this episode. He cannot claim that he has arrived at a complete understanding of it yet. But by looking at the story through eschatological eyeglasses the incident may be elucidated somewhat.

The Eschatological Context of the Story

The story of Elijah retreating to the cave at Horeb occurs, chronologically speaking, just preceding the last significant event in the life of Elijah---his ascension and rapture. Before this, eschatologically speaking, he has witnessed three and one half crisis years of spiritual draught and apostasy, efforts at reform from false worship (Carmel), the latter rain, the decree against his life, fleeing to mountains, and the time of "Jacob's" trouble (despairing of his life---yet "bread and water sure").

In the last days, as the time closes for the people of the world to make a decision between the apostate religion of the land and the reform of Jehovah, God's people (Elijah and the symbolic 7,000) will be forced to retreat to the desolate parts of the earth for safety. Probation will close. Judgment will first come to a conclusion (sealing) for the people of God.

In Elijah's case, when he fled to the cave, he thought (inaccurately) that he was the only one left and in despair anxiously awaited the outcome of the whole matter. Therefore he, like those at the end of time, is tried *individually*, as if there was no other righteous person in the world. This is the close of the investigative judgment.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

In the time to come these same typological events (years of famine, latter rain, fleeing, etc.) will be literally followed by the seven last plagues, the voice of God, and the final deliverance of God's people.

While Elijah was in the shelter of the cave at Horeb, all around him was seen the turbulent clamor of the elements. The shelter of the cave is very significant.[‡] Elijah, though a witness, was not personally affected or damaged by these furious elements. But the greatness of these demonstrations would have seemed to him to have been universal and very destructive. The thoroughness of them in his mind is indicated by his comment that he alone is left.

In these symbolic demonstrations can be seen the outpouring of the final plagues. Wind, fire, and earthquake are consistent with the natural disturbances at the very end of time (Rev 7:1-3; 8:5; 11:17, etc.). While the shelter of God's Grace (the cave) covers the righteous, the plagues "will be falling all around them." It will seem that the terrors of these plagues are about to overwhelm them. But they will be safe and not forgotten. What a wonderful and informative story this is when placed in this light!

God, we are told however, was NOT in the fire, wind, and earthquake!

How we wonder, is God *not* in the earthquake and fire when obviously he *was using* them to impress Elijah? This curious statement repeated through the episode begs for an answer.

[‡] Horeb is the same as Sinai where the Law of God was first given in written form. Elijah is found returning to and hiding in the truth as revealed in God's law. The law in the ark was nestled immediately beneath the Shekinah, or the protective shadow of the presence of God.

The Elijah Story

I now believe that the intention of this phrase was to indicate to Elijah that God, as in the seven last plagues, is not the direct author of these destructive measures. In the final tempest, Satan will actually be the direct source of these deviations in nature. While God is able to create and use natural disasters, it is really the evil work of Satan. This accords with the clear counsel given on this subject. Scripture often uses the expression: “the wrath of God,” for these outpourings. But the prophetic voice again raises its consistent testimony in regard to the seven last plagues and their ultimate causative source:

“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.” *The Great Controversy*, p. 614.

“It is Satan’s power that is at work at sea and on land, bringing calamity and distress and sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey.”---
14MR3 (1883)

To further emphasize this divine attitude by way of contrast, the still, small voice is provided as the more accurate sentiment of God’s attitude at this time. Wrath, fire and earthquake are his “strange work.” He uses them, and finds them necessary, but “**he** is not in it.” We would say in modern vernacular, “he is not into that.”

In a way, when the voice of God is heard (though in the EGW and Revelation “visions” it thunders throughout the realm), it is heard and understood by the faithful in a “benign” sense. The wicked will hear it as a voice of terror and thunder. But the righteous will view it as the voice of peace and deliverance, a “still, small voice” (cf. Psalm 46:10).

Elijah was not as alone as he thought. There were yet seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal (sun worship). These seven

BACK TO THE FUTURE

thousand in many ways correlate to the 144,000 and others who are also faithfully sealed and who have been there all the time, faithful and free from idolatry. But they are tested as if they were the only ones in the world. This precisely fits the expected prophetic scenario.

Following the outpouring of the wrath of God, and the voice of God, God's people will be called home. In the Old Testament narrative Elijah goes back and serves Israel as prophet and extends the call to his successor, Elisha. But Elijah's ministry following his experience at Horeb (symbolic of the final sealing and solidarity with the Law of God that was originally given there) is allotted but a few words. The next truly significant event in his life was his translation without seeing death. This appropriately provides a powerful type of the final deliverance of God's people.

The Elijah narrative approximates expected eschatological events according to the following comparison. The harmonious correlation of events, which follow a specific chronological order, in many ways validates in itself the comparison. This cannot be entirely co-incidental. We can in a valid sense, go back to the future.

The Elijah Story

Last-Day Events	Elijah
Prophetic Warnings	Elijah visits Ahab
Period of National Apostasy	Dominant Baal worship
Testing Time/Natural Disasters	3 ½ year famine
False Revivals	Baal religion flourishes
True Revival Begins	Elijah returns
Time of Decision/Decisive Events	Mt. Carmel
True Revival Peaks/Latter Rain	Elijah prays/rain falls
Wrath Aimed at the True Faith	Jezebel expels Elijah
Close of Probation	Israel cements decision(s)
Crisis Intensifies	Elijah bolts in fear
Decrees and Death Threats	Jezebel authors a decree
Righteous Forced to Flee/Faithful Tested	Elijah languishes under tree
Plagues and Trauma Fall on the Wicked	Wind, fire, earthquake
Voice of God	Still, small, voice
Translation of Faithful	Translated

In the experience of Elijah are therefore found numerous commonalities to the experience prescribed for the people of God in the final showdown. The “Elijah to come” will give a message to the world full of prophetic warning (Three Angels). These people have a similar characterization to Elijah:

1. Bold warnings/public proclamation before king and country
2. Simple dress and diet of reform
3. Message of judgment to come
4. Rural domiciles during natural time of trouble

In the first advent of Christ, John the Baptist (rather, John the Adventist!) largely fulfilled this role and Jesus recognized it as a fulfillment of prophecy. John spoke boldly before Herod and the people of Israel. He wore the clothes attributed to Elijah (1 Kings 1) and ate the diet of Elijah to draw attention to this purpose.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

His message spoke of judgment to come. In fact, like modern Adventists, John made specific efforts to point out the *immediate* presence of judgment. He said: "Even now, the ax is being laid to the root of the tree." The tree (the nation of Israel) had been judged as worthy of destruction. It was to be cut down. The *process* was then to begin and carry on until the tree ultimately fell. Such an expression cannot be more perfect to describe the investigative phase of the first angel's message. "The hour of his judgment IS come." "Even *now*," says John, "the end is beginning."

The root of the tree is where the tree started, and is here probably equated with the trunk. The tree, of course, represented the Israelite nation, and in the latter times represents the Israel of God, the church. However, the trunk is being addressed, thereby its principle leaders. In 1844, judgment began with determining which of the professors or religion, who are now passed, and have lived previous to now; that is, from the inception of God's prophetic movements in history--- are to be saved. With the trunk, however the whole tree is being judged. Normally just the bad branches were pruned off, but in this case the whole tree is indicted and then judged. The judgment of investigation continued in John's day until the nation was fully tested through the ministry of Jesus and the apostles. In a large measure the nation rejected their Messiah and the gospel necessarily went on to the Gentiles.

As Elijah and John preached this message so are God's people to preach it today. It wasn't popular then, and it probably won't be popular now. But the preaching of repentance and reform must be given to the nations. As John prepared the people for the first coming of Christ so the modern church must prepare the people of the world for the Second Coming.

As the national apostasy deepens in the final struggle, the few faithful heralds of reform will receive blame for the very state of which the nation themselves are guilty. Ahab asked Elijah, "Are you the one who is troubling Israel?" Elijah, of course, was not the problem. In the final

The Elijah Story

times, similar blame will be placed on God's faithful people. Movements will commence to root out the hated sect. Like the natural disaster of famine before, natural disaster will figure into the last day scenario as well. God's people, and their practice of worship on the seventh day will be blamed for these events.

But this attention will also fuel the outpouring of the Latter Rain, and though laws exalting sun worship are made, and decrees are decreed, the message of the Sabbath and other forgotten truths will go forth until probation closes. During this time of trouble God's people will flee in effect from the evil woman of "Babylon." They will need help with food and sustenance, as did Elijah, for they are not able to buy or sell (Ravens, the most selfish birds on the planet, brought food to Elijah. The woman of Zarephath, a "heathen," but converted woman, supplied what Elijah's own people would not). They will experience Jacob's time of trouble, a time that is very similar to Elijah's "time of trouble." The plagues will fall, but God is not in them. He gives Satan control of the impenitent and through these terrible manifestations of power God's wrath is appeased.

It is a necessary fact that the "former things" are going to be largely repeated in our day. We can go back to the future. There are simply too many prophetic parallels in these stories of the past to ignore them and discount them. It is foolish to teach that these things cannot happen in the future, because they have happened in the past, and they will inevitably be repeated in a final form that is consistent with the stories referred to in these pages. It will be *de javu*.

At last God's voice will be heard and he will come in power and great glory. The faithful remnant, some who have been unknown as such by their peers, will be called home to glory in the fiery chariot cloud, translated without seeing death, and the faithful from all ages will rise to meet the Lord in the air. "And so shall they ever be with the Lord."

Dare to be a Daniel

Not far behind my (this writer) rural home in North Central Washington State are some steep rocky hills, and some narrow, frightening ravines. I have gone back in this rather desolate area from time to time. It calls to mind several things, especially the early days and the pioneers.

But today it seems more desolate still, a ghost of the past. Found now are abandoned, rotting farmhouses and barns, roads that need attention, restless wind in the sagebrush, and the lonesome call of the mourning dove.

Whenever I do go back to this place I still feel the aura of uneasiness and dread because of one particular spot near the base of Old Dent Mountain. Today is found a Boy Scout monument erected in a small canyon. The locals call it: "Cougar Monument."

Not really that many years ago a young boy who lived nearby had taken a short cut through this canyon because he was trying to reach home before darkness set in---quite early as it does in the snowy winter.

An American lion, called "the mountain lion," or "cougar," apparently hungry and desperate had attacked and killed the young boy.

Dare to be a Daniel

I have therefore, because of this story and others like it, gained a great respect for lions, the giant cats of the world.¹²

What a story of faith, fearlessness, and fortitude we find in the book of Daniel, chapter six! Let's not dismiss it as an overly familiar, nice, fanciful story.

There is a message for every Christian in it. I think particularly for Seventh-day Adventists. Let me show you what I mean.

The story is narrated in Daniel, chapter 6, starting with verses 1-9. To summarize, Daniel, one of three chief executives in the Persian government becomes the target of his jealous political rivals. They trick the king of Persia into making a decree that all in the kingdom must worship only him as god. Daniel, however, fully aware of his enemies' intentions toward him, faithfully continues to openly worship and pray to his God three times a day. This sets the plot for ultimately being thrust into the lion's den.

For some reason the wicked will always hate the righteous. John the Gospel writer says it is because the light of truth exposes their evil deeds (3:19,20).

And so the other governors, and presidents got jealous of Daniel because an excellent spirit (mind, attitude) was in him. So they concocted a plan to

-
- ¹² Lions can weigh as much as 420 lbs., and measure up to 9 ft. long.
 - They can eat at one sitting meat that amounts to 20% of their weight. This is the equivalent of man eating 45 steaks.
 - A lion's roar can last up to 30 or 40 seconds. It is audible at a distance of two miles or more.
 - A lion can attack at speeds reaching 30-35 m.p.h.

National Geo World Ja 85 113:4-8

BACK TO THE FUTURE

get rid of him. They set a trap that would make worship to his God, especially public worship, a legal offense. Satan, of course, was behind the whole thing.

A real test is set up for Daniel.

We must first remind ourselves of a couple of things found in vs. 5:

“We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.”

Notice where the attack is---it has to do with the “Law of God.” Daniel’s enemies cannot find fault with him in diplomatic and business matters. They could not even find fault with his keeping the commandments. Daniel was keeping all of them. What they determined was that they could only indict him by making those commands come in direct conflict with the laws of the state.

I believe this is exactly the accusation that will someday soon be brought against God’s people.

Notice that God’s law is concerned. The Law of God is always where Satan attacks. This is what Satan always does:

1. He attacks God’s law.
2. He incites his followers to make decrees through the government to enforce false religion.
3. He thus causes God’s people to appear as lawbreakers---against the best welfare of the state.
4. He tries to demean the practice of public worship, particularly prayer; public and private.
5. He challenges God’s people in the area of worship. This is always where the *test* is.

Dare to be a Daniel

- The test came very early to Cain and Abel. Here really was a test of worship. Cain reasoned that a small change in the requirements of worship was o.k. “Really,” he reasoned, “why should it make a difference whether it was fruit or a lamb?”
- The three Hebrew associates of Daniel were told to simply bow down and worship the golden image. What would it hurt to simply bow down to it? No one would really know anyway. After all, they didn’t believe in the practice in their heart. But they saw it differently, because it entailed *worship*.
- The Devil took Jesus onto a high mountain and showed him the world he came to die for and save; and presented it to him free of charge, plus some of the glory he left in heaven thrown in. He says “All this I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:9). This, of course, Jesus refused to do.

The test always boils down to one thing---expediency; in putting aside the exact request of God, versus ABSOLUTE OBEDIENCE AND LOYALTY TO GOD. The people of God will face the exact same test as Daniel faced. They will be called to remain loyal to God’s *strict* instructions rather than acquiesce to the Christian world’s more expedient alternative:

“The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted.....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.” *The Great Controversy*, p. 605.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

William Rehnquist, once Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, said this:

“The wall of separation between church and state is a metaphor based on bad history, a metaphor which has proved useless as a guide to judging. It should be frankly and explicitly abandoned.” Quoted in “Church and State,” January, 1991.

Going further the writer Ellen White predicts:

“A decree will finally be issued against those who hallow the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, denouncing them as deserving of the severest punishment and giving people liberty, after a certain time to put them to death.” *GC 616*

Today the boundaries of church interference in the state are being violated.¹³ Only time will tell when these boundaries will be totally torn down.

To return, how did Daniel relate to this test? As the story continues (vs. 9ff.) Daniel is called to make an agonizing decision. The text indicates that Daniel “knew” what the issues were. He was not asked to make an easy decision, nor did he make the decision naively. Daniel’s decision was not popular with the king either, forcing the king into an extremely difficult position, politically. Daniel, no doubt felt that his insistence on worshipping God as he felt right was actually “causing a problem.”

¹³ “Separation of church and state was intended to bar only the establishment of a national church.”

“Nowhere does the Constitution mention a separation of church and state.”

“The Founding Fathers wanted the Ten Commandments to be the foundation of our government.” (D. James Kennedy, Televised, Jan. 23, Coral Ridge, ca. 2000.)

Dare to be a Daniel

Immediately, upon the enforcement of the decree, therefore, the counselors assembled and reported to the king the action of Daniel. Daniel was doomed to die in the lion's den.

Finally the king read the plot. But it was too late. In vain he spent an entire day looking for legal loopholes. But the king was only reminded by Daniel's enemies that the law of the Medes and the Persians could not be changed.

Daniel was thrown mercilessly in the den, and the stone was placed over the den, and sealed. In a sense, Daniel himself was "sealed into the truth," so that he could not be moved, the moment that he was closed into that terrible den.

The king endured a sleepless night, yet through it all demonstrated amazing faith in Daniel's God. This makes the point with clarity that the real evil is not in the state. Like Pilate with Jesus, like the Persian king in Queen Esther's time, like even the wicked Ahab, the state itself seldom wills the persecution of the righteous minority. The problem is not between the church and the state. The problem usually presents itself when the church pressures the state into action (often against another church). The state is often a wonderful protection to religious freedom when it keeps its God-ordained place. But when the state weakens, and becomes the servant of religion, and becomes its whip, then the state becomes responsible of the atrocity as well. The scenario is bound to be repeated yet again. Actually it is occurring today with regularity, though not all recognize it.

Running to the place early the king called to Daniel and asked if Daniel's God was able to deliver him from the mouths of the lions. Daniel answered:

BACK TO THE FUTURE

“My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O King, have I done no hurt” (vs. 22).

The good news in these particular scenarios that have distinct eschatological overtones, is that God *delivers* his people at the crisis midnight hour. Daniel survived the certain fulfillment of the death decree against him. He went through a time of trouble. But the angels of God protected him from the attacks of the lions, clear symbols of Satan himself who walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

Daniel was not spared the lion’s den. He was not “raptured” moments before his time of trouble. How he must have been tempted to think that God had actually deserted him! But God was just as much with Daniel in this trial as when Daniel was standing in honor at the head of state.

Daniel was told he would stand in his lot “at the end of the days” (12:13). The precise wording of the Bible (KJV) does not say “the end of his days,” but “the end of THE days. Therefore in a typological sense many a faithful “Daniel” will too stand his lot at the very end of the days of this world.

“As the saints left the cities and villages, they were pursued by the wicked, who sought to slay them. But the swords that were raised to kill God’s people broke and fell as powerless as straw. Angels of God shielded the saints...EW 284 (cf. also GC 631).

“The precious Savior will send help just when we need it” GC, p. 633.

“The people of God . . . plead for divine protection, while in every quarter companies of armed men, urged on by the 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 the chosen” Ibid, p. 635.

Dare to be a Daniel

Daniel is a model, a living example of how last day Christians are to relate to their world. The issues pervading Daniel's world were really no different than the issues expected before the final climax that is before us. We must "Dare to be a Daniel," whose names means "God is my judge." In this judgment hour may God judge us worthy in our worship of him. May we stand in our place at the "end of the days."

For Such a Time as This

“The new is in the old contained,
the old is the new explained.”

This proverb can make sense either way it is said. It can also be reversed:

“The old is in the new contained,
the new is in the old explained.”

This works because there is a strong correlation between what has happened in the past and what we can expect in the future. God requires everything back in its turn. It is not dangerous to assume that what has gone before will in certain ways be repeated. It is most certain that it will. It has to! There is nothing proposed in the last-day scenario taught by Adventists that does not have precedent. This is very important to recognize.

Many teachers and writers have recognized in the story of Queen Esther a prophetic scenario of future events. While this eschatological focus is not the popular viewpoint drawn from the book of Esther, I think it is a very important one. I believe it is the chief reason why Esther, a Bible book

For Such a Time as This

that does not even mention the name of God particularly, is still miraculously included in our Bibles today.

Familiarity with the story of Esther is essential to understanding its last-day significance. The purpose here, though, is not to recount the story, a marvelous piece of literature featuring numerous plots and counterplots of interest. The story of Esther is easily available to anyone not already familiar with the story. All one has to do is to pick a Bible and read it. It is readable, interesting, and easy to understand. But let us go beyond this.

Certain predictions have already been made based on the events outlined in the book of Esther. The writer Ellen White claims:

“The religious world will see in the small group of Seventh-day Adventists, a Mordecai in the gate” (paraphrased: see *Prophets and Kings*, p. 605).

Rather than address the story itself, let us choose to simply list some of the stunning parallels found in the book that compare with what is expected in the modern day:

- First, the true enemy of Israel in the story of *Esther* is not the Persian Empire, a kingdom that is there actually viewed in a sense as the *deliverer* of Israel. Persia arranged for the Jews to return to Palestine through Ezra and Nehemiah, and set them up in their own somewhat independent state.

The real antagonist of the narrative is none other than Haman, the Agagite.

Most immediately assume that Haman was a Persian nobleman. This view sadly overlooks the real issue. On the contrary, the specific term, “Agagite,” is believed to be indicative of where Haman was actually from. He, like the captive and displaced

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Jews, was probably a native of Palestine. He is believed to have been from the southern part of Palestine known as Edom, later known as Idumea.

Edom was the territory of Esau, the brother of Jacob. Early on the Sacred History is generous toward Edom, even recording considerable detail in both genealogy and in blessing (the whole chapter of Gen 36, for example). Israel was instructed to respect the kingdom of Esau when they came out of Egypt and they passed around its borders. However, later in history the breach widened between Jacob and Esau as God predicted it would. The tribes started with the same “religion,” and culture, but, of course, the brotherhood did not continue smoothly, in any sense.

On God’s instruction, during Saul’s reign, Saul delivered Israel from the oppression of the king *Agag*. Samuel finished the task by slaying him (I Sam 15:1 ff.). *Agag* was the king of the Amelekites, and was from this same general area of Palestine. The Amelekites were the first group to attack Israel right after they had left Egypt during the Exodus. This cruel and aggressive act was not forgotten by God. What made it especially odious to God, was that Amelek was really a close relative of Jacob, or Israel.¹⁴ He was a grandson of Esau (the son of Eliphaz, Esau’s son, by a concubine), whose descendents lived in the extreme southern part of Palestine. Israel was in effect attacked by their own cousins, who were supposed to have the same God, and who might have received the blessing of the true God. As time passed they were considered to be “half-breeds” by the chosen race as it were, a corrupted form of Judaism. Indeed, the Amelikites had become quite wicked and aggressive, and needed to be destroyed, something that never quite occurred in totality it seems. The back and forth struggle that simmered between Israel and her rival and

¹⁴ Genesis 36:12 and context.

For Such a Time as This

bitter enemies on the south was never forgotten by either party. In fact, the struggle probably continues to the present day.

An “Agagite,” then, in everyway was a bitter rival to the Jew, sharing Palestinian political designs and messianic hopes. All that one would ever need for such a great conflict of interest would be a pompous, self-promoting Palestinian, stacked against a stubborn, orthodox Jew. This was the case in the days of Esther and remains to the present. This scenario effectively summarizes the ongoing problems in modern Palestine in a nutshell. This circumstance applies to the story of Esther as well.

Haman was apparently a prince of the Amelekite nation that was during Esther’s time conquered and ruled by the Persians. He too served in the central Persian government. This practice was not uncommon. Daniel and his three friends are an example of this. Haman somehow had ingratiated himself with king Ahasuerus, and saw a marvelous opportunity to advance his own political ambitions, particularly against his old enemies, the Jews.

Later in history, during the time of Jesus, the Herods managed to underhandedly buy the office of “king,” or “tetrarch” over the Judean territory. This was especially bitter to the Jews because Herod was not a real Jew, but was rather from Idumea. Herod was hated not only because of his policies, but also because he was only a quasi-Jew, as it were an “Agagite,” and really a rival enemy of the Jewish people. This was almost more than a Jew could tolerate.

Herod the Great played his part with reckless ambition. Josephus writes about how he had an “eagle” placed over the gate of the temple complex. This icon was considered blasphemous by Orthodox Judaism, and two brave but luckless Jewish zealots tore it down. Herod was so angry, he sought revenge by slaughtering

BACK TO THE FUTURE

certain Jews and by executing the rebels who tore the eagle down. Some reports hint that he particularly arranged the execution (hanging...requires a gallows) of these Jewish zealots to come on the very day that the Jews celebrated the victory of Mordecai over Haman (the feast of Purim). The message of all of this was not lost on the Jewish populace. It was a victory shot for “Agag” in the ongoing feud between the Judaites and the Agagites or “Hamanites.”

Neither at the end of time will the principle conflict really be between Christians and their government. The real conflict will exist between people who claim the same God, and who share similar territory, and calling, as it were. It will be between those who adhere strictly to the pure Christian faith versus those who claim to be of the true faith, yet who tolerate in their midst heathen practices. The greatest resistance will come from those of a man’s own household or “persuasion,” yet who hold as doctrines those things that are really a corrupt admixture of paganism and Christianity. The story of Esther then is incredibly appropriate in considering a last day scenario.

- Another aspect of obvious import in the story of Esther is how the Jews as a unique people group became the targets of persecution and litigation. As a minority, the Jews kept their own unique Sabbaths and traditions, and as a result the Jewish people living within the Persian realm became the focus of hate and execration.

Since New Testament times, and now in the last days, the fact has been accepted in Christendom that one is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but is one who holds the faith of Christ.

No other group can more readily fulfill the role of the “modern Christian/Jew” as can Seventh-day Adventists. They are not literal “Jews,” of course, but they hold to many religious forms

For Such a Time as This

that identify them to many as being “Jewish.” They believe that the same Ten Commandment Law given the Jewish nation is applicable today. They are the only significant “Christian” group that keeps the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. Yet they are a minority group, especially when compared to the religions of the world, even the Christian religions. However, this better qualifies them as the anti-type to the Jews in Esther’s time, rather than disqualifying them.

It is prophetically written that in this significant minority the Christian world will see a Mordecai in the gate because they will not bow to popular dogma and worship any human-made institution. This will incur the wrath of the Christian world who among other things is trying to legislate Sunday as the accepted day of worship.

- Another parallel arises in how the government in Esther’s time was manipulated by religionists in an attempt to persecute and annihilate God’s people. The state was almost totally blind to the real issues at stake, and the recriminating issues involved. It was only after the laws were formed, that the government officials (the king) saw the true direction of the legislation they had allowed to pass. In every way this accords with what we are told concerning events in the last days. The counsel is right on track. It is in harmony with the primary types. We can go “back to the future.” The same scenario will occur at the close of time. Government officials will be largely blind to the purposes of Christian activists; yet will bend for popularities sake to their wishes.
- Further, we find in Esther that a direct decree was made for a time in the future when the hated sect could be attacked. In essence, what the Jews experienced was the issuance of a death decree. The same is predicated in identical terms by the prophets in our midst.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

- A further parallel to the final conflict found in the Esther experience is the sensational rise of a humble, insignificant, and almost forgotten people to a place of national prominence and recognition. The Jews of Esther's time were largely subjugated, little more than captive slaves. Mordecai was not in the gate because of his great nobility, but because he was serving the king, apparently as a guard, or an intelligence official. Esther was a lowly orphan, with no family, and no status. But when the issues ripened, Mordecai and Esther were placed, as were Daniel, Joseph, Samuel, and others, in exactly the place God needed them to be. The same will be the case in the final moments of history. It will come through simple means, and humble instruments.
- The focus of the story, at least eschatologically, is toward the very crisis that came upon the Jewish people in Esther's time. Because we modern readers anticipate the glorious outcome of the story, we perhaps overlook the weight of this threat upon the people throughout the Persian Empire, and how it was felt by the people of that time. We do not know names; we are not taken into the homes of the Jews, at the time of this crisis. But it must have been a truly trying time.

It is mentioned that the people were called to fast and to pray. This immanent crisis was greatly felt, and the people of Jews justly feared for their very existence, and the lives of their families. Their work situations no doubt became difficult. They were chased from the streets and the marketplaces, even though the time of their annihilation had not come. They went through a literal "Time of Trouble."

Yet probably, throughout Judaism, this crisis galvanized their cause, and a great revival resulted. Along with this would have come a sifting and a shaking. Esther was not the only one who

For Such a Time as This

had to go out on a limb to do what was right. Every Jew either had to declare who they were or side with the opposition.

- Another aspect with intonations of the final events is the preparation carried on by Esther herself before she became queen. Esther, in many ways, but particularly as a woman, allegorically represents the church. Before she was chosen as queen, Esther went through an intense period of “purification,” and “beautification,” with oil and with special attentions. She was to be presented perfect, without blemish, to her husband. The preparation necessary for the people of God at the end of time is perfectly analogous to this. In effect, the “early rain” experience of the Holy Spirit must first be received, spiritually preparing them for the final outpouring, found in the glorious entry into the court of the King and concurrent *deliverance* from their enemies.
- Mordecai can also be seen as a fit example of the proper relationship of the true church with the world in which it finds itself. Haman accused Mordecai and the Jews in the following fashion:

“And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king’s laws: therefore it is not for the king’s profit to suffer them.” (3:8)

Haman charged that this group, being non-conformist when compared to the other groups throughout the kingdom, did not keep the king’s laws. That the Jews had their own unique form of religion was true, but it was grossly untrue that they did not as a whole obey the laws of the land. The very same accusation was made toward the noble Daniel, who was a

BACK TO THE FUTURE

perfect, model, citizen. Mordecai was so faithful in his duties as a citizen that he was actually instrumental in saving the life of the king himself, the king to whom he was a captor. Haman was “dead wrong” in the lie he told, and even so Christians will be mis-labeled. But their sweetest exoneration will come in its time as well, if they have accumulated a “file” like Mordecai’s.

The role of every Christian is to faithfully serve his country and rulers to the utmost of his ability. This not only recommends him as a citizen, but also recommends the God he serves. It is perfectly appropriate for God’s people to be involved in civic affairs, in local government, and in whatever activities they can participate in for bettering the land in which they live. Only when the demands come in direct conflict with God’s laws should certain issues be raised.

Haman wished for Mordecai to “make an image” to him. Mordecai would not bow in worship to an equal human being, *only because that official wanted him to*. While Jewish pride was no doubt part of the picture, it is for our instruction that we see Mordecai as a demonstration of spiritual integrity, especially when it comes to the matter of worship.

The account infers, however, that Mordecai did not go out of his way to press the issue. Since he was on duty in the gate he couldn’t entirely avoid Haman. In fact, the story records that Haman himself did not seem to even notice the behavior of Mordecai until Mordecai’s associates pointed it out to the proud official. Quietly, Mordecai held his ground. But his associates kept pressing him, “Why don’t you keep the king’s law and bow to Haman?” At this juncture it became a public issue, when the vain, and soon to become angry Haman, was appraised of the situation by the tattlers (Esther 3:2-5).

For Such a Time as This

In similar manner should Seventh-day Adventists, and all Christians, conduct themselves. They should live their faith consistently; but they should not trumpet it, crusade it, and needlessly draw attention to themselves. Nor should they go out of their way to “evangelistically” “coerce” others into condemnation, seeking to convince others that they are thought of as wrongdoers, beast worshippers, and spiritually inferior. Only when such issues become matters of dispute because of conscience toward God, or when it is taken up by others themselves to publicize the issue, are God’s people called to make such open resistance. The most successful crusaders in God’s eyes, I believe, are those who are “passive aggressive,” as was Jesus.

The reader is challenged to see whether or not this accords with the counsel already given. He is also challenged to watch, if indeed, in the outworking of history, this is exactly what will take place in the days before us. There is a prophetic “guarantee” that we will indeed go back to the future. Human nature, and the nature of the forces of evil are consistent enough in their actions, to expect that certain things will transpire exactly as the Bible predicts.

- Finally, the story of Esther grandly illustrates the final outcome of the conflict, with the triumph of God’s people over the forces arrayed against them.

Not only were the lives of the Jews spared, but their enemies were crushed in a turn-about that no one expected. This will be, of course, the very picture awarded to the faithful remnant. A thousand will fall at their side, but the plague will not come near them, to harm them. God will use the very gallows and the very

BACK TO THE FUTURE

plottings formed against them to bring about his marvelous work of deliverance.

God needs a people for such a time as this. In these stories lies a vision of the future. Each faithful believer must stand in his place, whether it be in palace of government, whether it be in gate, or whether it be in simple co-identity with God's last-day, despised, minority. They must *go unto the King*, and if they perish, they perish. But, though the enemy plots against them, and though the subtle machinations of men seem impossible to overcome, the God of Esther and Mordecai will turn the tables. The scepter of Grace will be held out to them. They will see the deliverance of God. A way through the sea of trouble will open before them, and they will march in triumph to Zion.

Jesus and Jerusalem

The most significant of all maps of the future is the one offered in the very life of our Lord. His incarnation, life, and death offer the searcher of prophetic information a preview of the future. How Jesus was treated, how his life became point of judgment to the Jewish nation, how certain issues coalesced around him, is a subject of powerful interest.

Significant also are the actual prophetic words of Jesus. Several times, and several ways Jesus taught that the things done to him would in like manner be experienced by his later disciples. Jesus made many bold predictions about the future, something only he could do safely. Jesus was the master of all prophecy. In fact, from the beginning, he has been the very author of it.

The life of Jesus follows a pattern that correlates with any major religious crisis:

As the scenario related in the previous chapter on Elijah demonstrates, there is a typical order of events. The life of Jesus started, like the time of Elijah, in a period of national apostasy. Jesus' *official* ministry was the same duration as was Elijah's---3 and ½ years. The nation was particularly tested in this time. The times of Elijah and Jesus were both characterized with false religious movements and with a corrupt priesthood.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

As in the Mt. Carmel episode in the days of Elijah, the conflict between the reform movement and the established movement came to a crisis point in the death of Christ. Similarly to Elijah's experience, this crushing blow threw Christ's disciples into confusion and flight momentarily. But with the resurrection of their Lord, they received the times of refreshing (rain) in the events of Pentecost, ending the spiritual draught.

Because of the zeal of the new movement born out the ministry of Jesus, considerable resistance arose from the established religion, and wrath was directed at the reformed faith. Probation eventually closed for the Jewish nation with the persecutions following the death of Stephen, and the Gospel went to the Gentiles. The crisis intensified, until the beloved city of Jerusalem was utterly destroyed by the Romans.

Every religious crisis follows a similar pattern: apostasy-- prophetic testing-- a decisive event-- true and false revivals-- persecution aimed at the righteous-- and finally, the ultimate destruction and downfall of the wicked. But it is in the specific issues identified by Jesus, that we find that the final events will be more than just an ordinary cycle of history.

Matthew 24 and the passages that parallel it in the Gospels are the most important of all Jesus' words pertaining to the future. Jesus answered the disciples' questions about the future in the Olivet Sermon, and inferred by his comments that the destruction of Jerusalem was a precise type of the final showdown. Few realize how precisely these two events are related. They are to be so close in overall appearance that Jesus mingled the description of the two events to demonstrate this purpose.

Below, certain facts about the fall of Jerusalem are related to emphasize the informative nature contained in its history. Some of these facts are readily known, but certain of them are too often ignored or overlooked:

- ❑ The final and worst time of trouble inflicted upon the Jewish nation at the time of Christ occurred over the space of 3 and ½

Jesus and Jerusalem

years (AD 66-70). Jerusalem finally faced a final siege that brought its ultimate destruction.

Jesus had warned his followers that when they saw Jerusalem encompassed with armies that they were to know that its destruction was imminent. Yet he curiously said that this sign would be the sign that indicated that the few remaining Christians should leave the city. This instruction is strange, yet providential. One would normally expect that a sign should be given before it was surrounded by armies, making the way free to leave.

But the way it happened was exactly in harmony with Christ's prediction. While the city was under siege, Vespasian received intelligence that trouble was brewing in the direction of Egypt that required military intervention. He therefore abandoned the siege and took his army southward to address the dominant necessity. This gave Christians exactly the window they needed to escape the doomed city and flee to such places as Pella, beyond Jordan.

Soon, however, the Roman armies returned, now under the direction of the son of Vespasian, Titus. This all took place in 66 A.D., exactly 3 and ½ years before the final breach of the city in A.D. 70.

- ❑ Few are aware of the various signs that attended the demise of the Jewish state and its capital city, Jerusalem.

Josephus records signs in even the heavens. Many consider that the signs mentioned in Jesus' sermon speak only of the final fulfillment of these words at the time of the end. In this they are very mistaken. With but a few, easily identifiable exceptions, every phenomenon presented by Jesus in the Olivet Sermon happened within the generational time frame from his death up to the destruction of Jerusalem (The sun was darkened, the moon appeared as blood, many false *christs* arose, etc.)

BACK TO THE FUTURE

- ❑ Furthermore, several other signs occurred that are conveniently forgotten by Jewish authorities today, but were not unknown at the time they happened.

The first of these was that the rabbis report that during the forty years leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem that the western lamp of the temple went out every night.

The famous seven-branched *candelabra*, still pictured on the arch of Titus in Rome, was never to go out. It was to continue always, symbolic of the fact that God's presence and particular his prophetic word was always nigh and available to the worshipper. But this one lamp, went out, night after night, despite the great care given to attending it. The lamps were tended regularly, morning and evening, at set times.

The candelabra was positioned in an oblique fashion on the southern wall of the holy place. What was significant about the "western" lamp was that it was the closest to the most holy place of the sanctuary and was a symbol of God's personal, divine presence. In essence, God was the one putting out the light.

The apparent message in all of this can be discerned by even a child. It shouts volumes. The quenching of this light signaled the idea that God held the Jewish nation in disfavor for something, and that the light of truth was going out.

It is not unusual for a lamp to go out, but for the same one of seven lamps to go out consecutively for thousands of successive nights should have made some kind of impression. No doubt, it did, but a priesthood already proven willing to crucify the Son of God, would be extremely difficult to reach effectively by most anything.

Another phenomena that excited the interest of the temple attendants was that one of the doors of the temple complex would repeatedly swing open,

Jesus and Jerusalem

even under the noses of the temple guards. Even though securely latched for the night, the doors would be found ajar in the morning, much to the consternation of the temple authorities. The omen seemed to indicate that God's presence had left and was no longer attendant in the temple rites.

Another phenomenon mentioned in historical sources was the *Day of Atonement* ritual. During the ceremony, lots would be cast to select the "Lord's goat" and the "scapegoat." Supposedly the priest would reach into a pouch for a white or black stone with his right hand, in order to select the "Lord's goat," and took another with his left hand that was to select the "scapegoat." It was considered a good omen if the right hand held the white stone. According to one report the black stone showed up in the right hand of the priest for the forty consecutive years following the death of Christ. This, of course, hinted that the atonement sacrifice had not been fully accepted.

The mathematical odds of this simple ritual happening as it did for forty consecutive times is astronomical.

Likewise, claims were made relative to a cord, or thread that was placed around the neck of the scapegoat. If the white cord was selected it signaled that God had accepted the yearly sacrifice. If the red cord was taken (some claim it "turned" red) then the sacrifice had not been accepted. Supposedly the same fate read from the white and black stones occurred consistently in this ritual also, always turning red, indicating guilt.

Other strange things happened. Ominous voices were heard. A light appeared mysteriously and disappeared as ominously as it had appeared. The lintel, an enormous stone holding up the gigantic curtain that covered the face of the temple fell tragically to the steps below. The timing of this last event, reported as happening 40 years before the destruction of Jerusalem, places it at the very time of Jesus death, when we know the temple veil was torn from top to bottom.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Some doubt that these things really happened. And perhaps they are right. But the interesting thing about the reports is that they come, not from the enemies of the rabbis, but from the rabbis themselves. It was not in their favor to report these things. The fact the stories exist may indicate at least a thread of truth behind them.

- ❑ Jesus referred to the coming downfall of Jerusalem as the “abomination of desolation,” or the “desolating sacrilege,” spoken of by the prophet Daniel (Matthew 24:15; Daniel 9:23,27).

What was the “abomination of desolation?” Jesus seems to indicate in his Olivet discourse that the fulfillment of the desolating sacrilege was imminent---yet future from the time he spoke personally with his disciples.

An “abominable” sacrilege is an offensive act against something sacred. In the word sacrilege are two familiar words, “sacred, and “religious.” Daniel predicted that the holy city, Jerusalem, and its temple would be destroyed. Of course, he does not name the city Jerusalem and the temple, for in Daniel’s day neither one really existed. But the language he uses points clearly to the “trampling under foot” and the treading down of the “holy [thing].”

The temple like no other edifice represented the Jewish economy and faith. It was the center and focus of all Judaism. Jews from all over the world came to Jerusalem to worship at the temple. So intrinsic was its importance that without it there virtually could have not been a Jewish nation.

Jesus seems to have understood that the abominating sacrilege was the destruction of the Jerusalem and the temple for he virtually equates the two in Matthew 24. Jesus read the prophecy right, because the fall of Jerusalem came exactly as he and Daniel predicted. Matthew 24 is very

Jesus and Jerusalem

interesting, for it was probably written before the destruction of Jerusalem. In this special gospel we have a view of the thinking of the time, before the words came true. Today we might overlook the stunning accuracy of Jesus' interpretation. It should give us faith that if he was so right about the destruction of Jerusalem, he will be equally right in the final and more significant fulfillment of this marvelous prophecy.

The question that is significant for today is what is the "abominable sacrilege" that will be perpetrated in the last days of this world's history? For Matthew 24 is not just about the destruction of Jerusalem, but is also about a larger fulfillment in our own time.

To paraphrase, there will be something that is "sacred" and "religious," that will be "trampled under foot." The words of Daniel do not say that it is the "holy city" that is to be trampled under foot. He wrote simply, "the holy," or "the holy place," or "thing." The word "city" was later supplied in some translations. The word city fits the *primary* application, but probably not the secondary application of this prophecy.

Popular theology teaches that the temple is to be rebuilt in Palestine, and that it will be trampled down by the Antichrist. This dispensational fiction, promoted throughout Christendom is another attempt by Satan to divert attention from the real issue at stake in the future.

Literal Israel is no longer God's chosen avenue of revelation. The New Testament clearly teaches that God's purposes for the Jews as a nation and as a cultic center were totally changed at the Cross (Romans 9-11; Gal 2:28,29). As a nation they were rejected, and God's purpose was turned toward the ingathering of the Gentiles. It is of supreme importance for every prophetic student to understand that the promises once given the Israelite nation must be interpreted according to an enlarged understanding, and not in terms of the actual, local times and places of the Old Testament. Modern enthusiasts insanely violate this principle, probably the most cardinal hermeneutic provided by the New Testament

BACK TO THE FUTURE

itself, in teaching that there will be a *personal* antichrist, appearing in *literal* Jerusalem.

But there is an institution that is “religious” and “sacred” and which the Bible warns against putting one’s foot “upon.” God’s people are enjoined to “turn away their foot” from trampling upon the Sabbath (Isaiah 58:13,14). It is a holy “thing.” The New Testament has changed none of the Commandments of God, perpetual statutes of his kingdom. God has asked men to “remember” the Sabbath, and to respect it. It is to be kept as the “holy thing,” “guarded as the eyeball of the eye.”

The aspect that is too often forgotten is that the *institution* is not as important as the God who is represented in it. The true “abominable sacrilege” was never really the trampling of the holy city, but was first and foremost the rejection and murder of the Son of God. He is “the Holy Thing.” The temple was merely a building intended to represent him. Jesus was the sacrifice on the altar, the light and lamp of the world, the shewbread of life, the merit of incense, the living “law” of the testimony. By slaying the one who it represented, the house of the Jews was left to them desolate. The ultimate treading down of the host and sanctuary was only the outworking and result from the rejection of the Messiah of God.

Unfortunately Christians today again focus on the buildings and the places, and forget to respect the God of all the earth. Even the Sabbath is of no use if it is not tied to respect and love toward God. In the Sabbath God has placed his seal, for it is the sign that he is Creator, Sanctifier, and Redeemer. God asks that this institution, entered at Creation, should be respected as a sign of his ultimate Lordship. By trampling on the Sabbath, men are really trampling on God. When it is trampled upon, and “abominable sacrilege” is committed toward it, the world will be served with the desolating result of her crime.

One of the chief reasons given for the Babylonian Captivity and the first fall of Jerusalem was none other than desecration of the Sabbath (Isa 56:1-

Jesus and Jerusalem

3; Ezekiel 20:16, 20, 21). The issue of the Sabbath is not at all new. The violation of it as a sacrilege is all over the Bible. It has been an issue before, and it will be an issue again.

Jesus did not bless any such idea that the Sabbath should be changed. In Matthew 24 he counsels believers to pray that their flight be not on a Sabbath. Here is a hint that the final issues will involve the Sabbath. He wanted nothing to violate its sacredness. The seventh-day Sabbath was never changed by the Lord of the Sabbath. Humanly speaking, the Sabbath might have been a good day to flee on. Their enemies would be occupied in worship and could not detain them. They could not pursue them far, for a Sabbath day's journey would prevent their enemies from doing so, and the people could have got away cleanly. But Jesus anticipated that they would be observing the Sabbath, and would not be in a travel mode. Their movement would be obvious as they carried their burdens, and they might be blocked by closed gates or rabid religionists. The real instruction Jesus was recommending was to leave *before* this, so their flight would not meet with complications and that they would be left with too few options.

As the encompassing armies of Rome were a final signal to the Christians left in Jerusalem to leave, so the institution of a Sunday Law will be the signal for God's people to retreat to the rural areas around them. The horror and holocaust that came upon Jerusalem cannot be expressed. It was a time of trouble that has had but few rivals. Crosses covered the hillsides, examples to the starving inhabitants of the cost of resistance and delay. In the end, the temple was several times defiled by intruders, heathen and orthodox. Valiant efforts were made by even the Roman generals to preserve the complex, but it was not to be. Enflamed with anger and incited by hatred toward the Jews, the soldiers rushed upon the complex and planted fire in its midst. It was pillaged and later reduced to rubble. Blood, fire, devastation, and plague were everywhere.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

The destruction of Jerusalem is but a small shadow of the outcome of the coming conflict. Instead of a small city, the whole earth will be deluged in fire, plague, earthquake, and destruction. What happened in Jerusalem will be visited in the latter times in the destruction of every evil foe. The whole earth will be a scene of desolation.

The Final Beginning

What awesome instruction comes to every believer through all these historical preludes! What preparation, what faith, what fortitude is demanded for the times to which all of them point!

It is time to study and re-study these themes in anticipation of the future. These truths are found in what is already revealed and in what has already occurred. We must go back to the future. God has put all of these things on record for a reason. The supreme reason is that they are ensamples for the last-day servants of the Most High God. They are given for our admonition. The past is prologue. God requires that which is past. There is nothing new. It will happen again. He brings everything back in its turn.

The good news is that the deliverance of God is always at hand. When the Christian carefully observes his pathway, he is not left in fear and ignorance. Fear is seated in that which is unknown. But God has made his ways known, and has let his intentions be known, not only in the stories reviewed in this small book, but in a thousand other ways. The God of the future will never do anything significant without revealing it first to his servants. He has done this, and the pilgrim should not fear as others that have no hope. With quiet confidence the Christian can “be still, and know” that God is God.

The posture of the humble servant of God today should be one of quiet confidence in the Bible and in the *Spirit of the Prophets*. He should have such a personal acquaintance with the God of the universe, so that he shall

Jesus and Jerusalem

not be moved. It is the privilege of every man, woman, and child to know God and to be comforted by him. The believer must hold firmly to the prophetic light of truth as the Day approaches. Let him look for the waymarks. With his hope ever before him, and the truth always behind him, he will find heaven at last!



