



The Bridegroom is Coming

Throughout the Bible there is one main theme of truth which binds the Scriptures together from Genesis to Revelation. This truth is the restoration of mankind from the fall of our first parents in the Garden of Eden until the finished product described in Revelation 14:1-5 as the 144,000 who are redeemed alive from the earth at Jesus coming.

From the beginning of the war in heaven caused by the rebellion of Lucifer and the angels who followed him into apostasy, the question has been concerning the character of God and His Son, Jesus. Lucifer challenged God's authority, His laws, and His purposes, especially in exalting His Son as co-regent with Himself. Although this had always been so from eternity, Lucifer challenged God's fairness in not allowing him to be in that position. As a result of his jealousy and hatred of Christ, and determination to make himself God, he had to be cast out of heaven, and his sympathizers with him.

"How have you fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit." Isa.14:12-17.

It is impossible for human minds to grasp the depths of suffering this rebellion has caused God and the loyal angels. But God was not unaware that such a situation could happen, for when He created beings with a free will like His own, and gave them the power of choice, the risk that they would use these privileges to rebel against Him had to be taken into consideration. And the higher the intelligence of the created beings, the higher the risk that they would use their God-given abilities to follow their own reasoning, and take a stand against God.

"God had a knowledge of the events of the future, even before the creation of the world. He did not make His purposes to fit circumstances, but He allowed matters to develop and work out. He did not work to bring about a certain condition of things, but He knew that such a condition would exist. The plan that should be carried out upon the defection of any of the high intelligences of heaven--this is the secret, the mystery which has been hid from ages. And an offering was prepared in the eternal purposes to do the very work which God has done for fallen humanity." 6 BC 1082.

Yes, God had a rescue plan in place should any one of His created beings rebel against Him, His authority, and His government. But the enormity of this plan is staggering to think about, for it involved the sacrifice of His beloved Son. Now, thousands of years later, we are coming to the end of this rescue plan. We are living in the final generation of earth's history. Not everyone, even of God's people, believes this. But those who are closest to Him and hear His voice speaking to them, recognize the times in which we are living.

What are the ways that we can hear the voice of God speaking to us? Below are some quotations from Ellen White's writings that give us guidance concerning the need for us to hear God's voice speaking to us personally:

"There are three ways in which the Lord reveals His will to us, to guide us, and to fit us to guide others.... God reveals His will to us in His Word.... His voice is also revealed in His providential workings; and it will be recognized if we do not separate our souls from Him by walking in our own ways, doing according to our own wills, and following the promptings of an unsanctified heart, until the senses have become so confused that...the voice of Satan is so disguised that it is accepted as the voice of God.

"Another way in which God's voice is heard is through the appeals of His Holy Spirit, making impressions upon the heart, which will be wrought out in the character.... You ought to be able to distinguish his voice." 5T 512.

"Everyone needs to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God." RC 118.

"Keep the conscience tender that you may hear the faintest whisper of the voice that spake as no man spake." ML 322.

The Bible also speaks of various ways in which we can hear God's voice:

"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'" Isa.30:21.

For those who do not know Him enough to recognize His still, small voice, God has another voice by which He speaks to people:

"The Lord will cause men to hear his majestic voice and will make them see his arm coming down with raging anger and consuming fire, with cloudburst, thunderstorm and hail." Isa. 30:30.

"God is speaking to us in these last days. We hear His voice in the storm, in the rolling thunder. We hear of the calamities He permits in the earthquakes, the breaking forth of waters, and the destructive elements sweeping all before them.... When the still, small voice which succeeds

the whirlwind and the tempest...is heard, let all cover their faces, for God is very near. Let them hide themselves in Jesus Christ, for He is their hiding place." 2 SM 315, 316.

"Already the judgments of God are abroad in the land, as seen in storms, in floods, in tempests, in earthquakes, in peril by land and by sea. The great I Am is speaking to those who make void His law. When God's wrath is poured out upon the earth, who will then be able to stand?" 5T 136.

"The earth itself is convulsed, the ground heaves and swells like the waves of the sea, great fissures appear, and sometimes cities, villages, and burning mountains are swallowed up. These wonderful manifestations will be more and more frequent and terrible just before the second coming of Christ and the end of the world, as signs of its speedy destruction.... Since the flood, fire as well as water has been God's agent to destroy wicked cities. These judgments are sent, that those who lightly regard God's law and trample upon His authority, may be led to tremble before His power, and to confess His just sovereignty." PP 109.

God is not satisfied to bring upon the world the end of time without giving everyone adequate warnings of His coming. But in spite of this, most of the world's inhabitants will put off His coming until it is too late to prepare. Even God's own people may misinterpret the signs that are all around us in the world today, and feel that our present society could continue for an indefinite period of time. Unfortunately, what so many people do not understand, is that the coming of Jesus is not based upon a set time or world events, but upon the preparation and readiness of His own people. He has already told us that when the harvest is ripe, He will put in the sickle and reap the harvest of the earth. [Rev. 14:15.]

It is definitely true that increasing tragedies and world events are signs of the end of the age. But until Jesus has a people who fully represent His character, probationary time must remain open. Unfortunately, those who are not experiencing this cleansing will not realize that it is taking place until it is too late, for the final cleansing of the righteous is known only to those who are experiencing it. This is why the Lord gave us the story of the wise and foolish virgins. The foolish virgins felt comfortable with having the Bible in their possession. But they did not realize that they were destitute of the Holy Spirit which would have given them the light and inspiration which was necessary for the cleansing of their lives from sin. The Holy Spirit is the revealer of the secrets of our hearts. Without this divine work, we will not even know that we are unready for the coming of the Bridegroom until it is too late.

Here are some quotations from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy which emphasize the necessity of this cleansing experience before we are ready for Jesus to come:

"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty. 'But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launder soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and

Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years. So I will come near to you for judgment." Mal.3:1-5.

"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse." Mal. 4:5, 6.

"The days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will plant the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the offspring of men and of animals.'... 'In those days people will no longer say, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.'... 'The time is coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.'... 'This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people

. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,' declares the Lord. 'For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.'" Jer. 31:27-34.

"Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above, are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort, they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away sin among God's people on earth. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14. When this work shall have been accomplished, the followers of Christ will be ready for His appearing." GC 425.

"Through defects in the character, Satan works to gain control of the whole mind, and he knows that if these defects are cherished, he will succeed. Therefore he is constantly seeking to deceive the followers of Christ with the fatal sophistry that it is impossible for them to overcome. But Jesus pleads in their behalf His wounded hands, His bruised body; and He declares to all who would follow Him, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.'... Let none, then, regard their defects as incurable. God will give faith and grace to overcome them.

"We are now living in the great day of atonement. In the typical service, while the high priest was making the atonement for Israel, all were required to afflict their souls by repentance of sin and humiliation before the Lord, lest they be cut off from among the people. In like manner, all who would have their names retained in the book of life, should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and thorough repentance. There must be deep, faithful searching of heart. Everyone must be tested, and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing....

"When the work of the investigative judgment closes, the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death." GC 489, 90.

"The great plan of redemption, as revealed in the closing work for these last days, should receive close examination. The scenes connected with the sanctuary above should make such an impression upon the minds and hearts of all that they may be able to impress others. All need to become more intelligent in regard to the work of the atonement, which is going on in the sanctuary above.... By study, contemplation, and prayer God's people will be elevated above common, earthly thoughts and feelings, and will be brought into harmony with Christ in His great work of cleansing the sanctuary above from the sins of the people. Their faith will go with Him into the sanctuary, and the worshipers on earth will be carefully reviewing their lives and comparing their characters with the great standard of righteousness. They will see their own defects; they will also see that they must have the aid the Spirit of God if they would become qualified for the great and solemn work for this time." 5 B C 575.

"In this age just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare people to stand in the great day of the Lord. Just such a work as that which John did is to be carried on in the last days. The Lord is giving messages to His people, through the instruments He has chosen and He would have all heed the admonitions and warnings He sends. The message proceeding the public ministry of Christ was, 'Repent, For the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Our message is not to be one of peace and safety. As a people who believe in Christ's soon appearing, we have a definite message to bear-- 'Prepare to meet thy God.'" 4 BC 1184.

Additional reading: 5T 467-76; EW 269-73.

It is so easy for us to become absorbed in the things that are happening around the world today which attract our attention, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, unusual amounts and intensities of fires, floods, earthquakes, deadly storms, accidents, and war and bloodshed. All of these are certainly signs of the soon coming of Jesus. But the only true and sure sign that this is the final generation of people upon the earth, is that Jesus has a people who are consciously and knowingly cooperating with Him in His closing work in the heavenly sanctuary of cleansing and blotting out the sins of His people. When this work is finished, probation will close, the plagues will fall upon the impenitent, and then Jesus will come to claim His bride.

In order to be among this number, we must have a personal relationship with Jesus. We must be willing to give up every sin that Jesus brings to our attention as we walk daily with Him. Even one known, cherished sin can keep us out of heaven. It is essential that we do not become so absorbed in the things that are happening in this world that we neglect our quiet time with Jesus. Higher education and a multiplicity of degrees will not save us. Being a Seventh-day Adventist without a personal, daily walk with Jesus will not save us. Keeping up with the signs of the end that are happening around the world will not save us. Only a deep, personal cleansing of our hearts from everything that is unlike Jesus will make us ready for His coming. "Holiness is agreement with God" [5T 743], and "Without holiness no one will see the Lord" [Heb. 12:14]. Unfortunately, many today are believing that we will sin until Jesus comes, and the grace of Christ will continue to cover us after the close of probation until He comes and changes our nature. This is a fatal error. Listen to these quotations from Ellen White's writings:

"I saw a covering that God was drawing over His people to protect them in the time of trouble; and every soul that was decided on the truth and was pure in heart was to be covered with the covering of the Almighty." EW 43.

"I saw that many were neglecting the preparation so needful and were looking to the time of 'refreshing' and the 'latter rain' to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight. Oh how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! They had neglected the needful preparation; therefore they could not receive the refreshing that all must have to fit them to live in the sight of a holy God." EW 71.

"As mercy's sweet voice died away, fear and horror seized the wicked.... Those who had not prized God's word were hurrying to and fro, wandering from sea to sea, and from north to east, to seek the word of the Lord.... What would they not give for one word of approval from God!" EW 281.

"Just before we entered [the time of trouble] we all received the seal of the living God. Then I saw the four angels cease to hold the four winds. And I saw famine, pestilence, and sword, nation rose against nation, and the whole world was in confusion." 7 BC 968.

Dear friends, all the signs of Jesus' coming in this generation are now abroad in the earth. Rampant disease and death, and natural disasters of previously unknown proportions follow one another in rapid succession. In addition, the emphasis upon climate change is opening the way for a rise in papal world influence, in fulfillment of Bible prophecy in Revelation. Unfortunately, as trials worsen, leaning toward government control on many issues becomes more palatable to many people. The stage is now being set which will produce the shaking among God's people that has been prophesied. But those who are connected with Jesus in the most holy place, and who have learned to love him more than life itself, will remain steadfast to Him. May each of us being that among that number is my fervent prayer.

Article by Carol Zarska, MAR, author
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