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## **The Great Controversy and the Final Generation**

The great cosmic war that has been raging for unknown eons of time, is about to come to its close. This war began in Heaven itself in the very presence of the King of the Universe and His Son. Lucifer, the highest angel in Heaven, and the leading covering cherub, was given the sacred responsibility of guarding the reputation of the three members of the Godhead and making their loving character and the benevolent principles of their government known throughout the Universe. Instead, Lucifer coveted their position, their power, and their throne. As a result, he fell from the highest position to the lowest.

"How you have 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 height 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. 14:12-15.

We may wonder why God has allowed this terrible struggle to go on for such a long time and at such a high price, even to the sacrifice of the Son of God on the cross of Calvary, as well as the martyrdom of millions of loyal followers of Jesus who were willing to follow in His footsteps.

But though the centuries have seemed long and arduous, the Bible tells us that there will come an end to the great controversy between good and evil. Furthermore, He wants His people to know not only when the time is near, but also when they have come to the final generation. Signs of the end are scattered throughout the Bible, but the most numerous are found in the New Testament. Matthew 24 is a whole chapter dedicated to the description of the signs of the end of time and of the coming of Jesus. Although we are not to know the exact day or hour for Jesus to come, He does want us to know when we are in the final generation.

"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree. As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened." Matt. 24:32-34.

Some of "these things" include:

"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these things are the beginning of birth pains.

"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

"So when you see standing in the holy place the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel – let the reader understand – then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.... Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress unequaled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened....

"Immediately after the distress of those days the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the Heavenly bodies will be shaken.

"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the Heavens to the other." Matt. 24:6-31.

This sermon was given by Jesus to His disciples in response to their question, "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" You see, Jesus had just said some things that were very shocking and disturbing. First, as they were walking along with Jesus near the temple, He had predicted the dreadful end of God's favor upon Jerusalem and the nation of Israel:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate." Matt. 23:37.

Then as they were walking away from the temple, Jesus said something even more disturbing. "Do you see all these things?" He asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." Matt. 24:2. The disciples were very troubled by this prediction, and a little later as Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives resting, they came to Him and questioned Him for further details. Since they could not imagine the destruction of the temple and the end of the special favor that God had bestowed upon the Israelite nation, they assumed that these events would come at the end of the world. Hence their question, "When will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end the age?" Matt. 24:3.

In Jesus' answer to them, He combined instruction and warning not only for the people who would be alive at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, but also for all His people through the ages until the time of His coming.

"Jesus blended in His answer to the disciples' question events leading up to the end of the Jewish nation as God's chosen people, and the end of the world." 5BC 497.

"Jesus did not answer His disciples by taking up separately the destruction of Jerusalem the specific instruction that was needed for their time in history and the great day of His coming. He mingled the description of these two events. [...] This entire discourse was given, not for the disciples only, but for those who should live in the last scenes of this earth's history." DA 628.

Clearly, when Jesus answered the disciples' questions, He was thinking of everyone from that time on, who would read His words and gain enlightenment and instruction from them. These prophetic words of Jesus have been read by God's people through the centuries and applied as the Holy Spirit impressed upon their minds the specific instruction that was needed for their time in history. Just as the sun brings light to the portion of the earth which faces it in its daily rounds, so light beams from the scriptures upon the generation to whom it applies.

Also, there is a purposeful duality throughout Matthew 24 that covers the whole span of history. For example, wars and rumors of wars, the persecution of God's people, the love of many waxing cold, the rise of the abomination of desolation, etc. Nevertheless, Jesus makes it clear that we can know when the final generation has come, for He says:

"When you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened." Matt. 24:33, 34.

At this point I want to turn our attention to another portion of scripture which uses these same events but puts them in the sequence of their occurrence. This is found in Revelation chapters two and three -- the prophetic description of the seven churches. This prophecy covers the experience of the Christian church from the beginning of the Christian era until its close, in the order of which the events took place. Therefore, we can study this prophecy for clues to the countdown of earth's history. (For additional information, see 7BC 752-754.)

Here is a brief synopsis of the significant events and spiritual condition of the people of God in each era of history:

1. **Ephesus** - Full of good deeds but lost their first love.  
Counsel - "Repent and do the things you did at first."
2. **Smyrna** - Heavy persecution, with imprisonment and martyrdom.

Counsel - "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life."

3. **Pergamos** - The church became popular under Constantine, allowing for the rise of the papacy, a blend between paganism and Christianity. Some also believed in the Nicolaitan doctrine that the deeds of the body had no effect upon the health of the soul.

Counsel - "Repent!... Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."

4. **Thyatira** - The church during the reign of the papacy and the rise of Protestantism.  
Counsel - "Hold on to what you have until I come."

5. **Sardis** - The stagnation of Protestantism except for a few who maintained their integrity.

Counsel - "If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you."

6. **Philadelphia** - The first church to whom the announcement was given, "Behold, I am coming soon." As a result, there was a great awakening which resulted in the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Counsel - "Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have so that no one will take your crown. Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God."

Up to this point we have seen the beginning of Christianity, the severe persecution of the early church, followed by a time of peace under Constantine, and then the rise of the papacy and the persecution of God's true people through the centuries that followed. In the mid 1500's, God raised up the Protestant reformation under the leadership of Martin Luther. But as the years went by, stagnation took place, and again God raised up William Miller, whose studies in the book of Daniel startled the world with the message that Jesus would come on October 22, 1844.

As the date passed, and Jesus did not come, new light was given to the searchers of God's word that Jesus had passed into the Most Holy Place of the heavenly Sanctuary, there to cleanse the books of Heaven of the records of the sins of His people in preparation for His coming. Without the urgency of a set date, leaders and people turned to the task of establishing the church as a viable denomination.

By the mid to late 1800's, Ellen White was applying the message given by Jesus to church number seven - the Laodicean church - as applicable to the condition of the Adventist church at that time. This message, she stated, was given by Jesus to arouse the slumbering church and to fit His people for the loud cry of the third angel. For the first time in history, God gave a message to His people that could bring them home in one generation. This message was given to the church of Laodicea, the final church on

earth, and those who fully respond to the counsel of Jesus will be those who will live to see Him come.

7. **Laodicea** - The self-satisfied church at the end of time which sees itself as being rich and increased with goods, and having need of nothing, but is judged by God as being "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked."

Counsel - "I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire... and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes so you can see.

"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me."

Below are quotations from Ellen White which show clearly that those who heed the message of the True Witness to the Laodiceans will result in complete cleansing from sin in their lives, and will be those who shall be translated from earth to Heaven without seeing death.

"God leads His people on step by step, he brings them up to different points which are calculated to manifest what is in the heart. Some endure at one point, but fall off at the next. At every advanced point the heart is tested and tried a little closer. If the professed people of God find their heart opposed to the straight work of God, it should convince them that they have work to do to overcome, or be spewed out of the mouth of the Lord. Said the angel, 'God will bring His work closer and closer to test them and prove every one of His people. Some are willing to receive one point, but when God brings them to another testing point, they shrink from it and stand back, because they find it strikes directly as some cherished idol. Here they have opportunity to see what is in their hearts that shuts out Jesus. They prize something higher than the truth, and their hearts are not prepared to receive Jesus. Individuals are tested and proved a length of time to see if they will sacrifice their idols and heed the council of the True Witness. If they will not be purified by obeying the truth, and overcome their selfishness, their pride and evil passions, the angels of God have their charge, 'They are joined to their Idols, let them alone,' and they pass on to their work, leaving them with their evil traits unsubdued, to the control of evil angels. Those who come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and they will be fitted by the latter rain for translation." 1T 187.

"The third angel's message is swelling into a loud cry. {...] Today you are to give yourselves to God, that He may make of you vessels unto honor, and meet for His service. Today you are to give yourselves to God, that you may be emptied of self, emptied of envy, jealousy, evil surmising, strife, everything that shall be dishonoring to God. Today you are to have your vessel purified that it may be ready for the heavenly dew, ready for the showers of the latter rain; for the latter rain will come, and the blessing of God will fill every soul that is purified from every defilement. It is our work today to yield our souls to Christ, that we may be fitted for the time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord -- fitted for the baptism of the Holy Spirit." 1SM 190, 191.

Some believe that because Jesus says nothing positive to the church of Laodicea, we must go back to the church of Philadelphia where only positive things are said to them. But although they had the opportunity to go through to the end, they had many things to learn which took more than a few years (See SG 224). Jesus looked upon their labors and devotion with kindness and compassion, and therefore they were spared from the trials of the last days.

"Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth." Rev. 3:10.

Will there be people from the church of Laodicea who respond to the counsel of Jesus, the True Witness to the Laodiceans? Praise the Lord, yes! These will be those who purchase from Jesus the pure gold of His righteousness, and thus can receive the perfect white robe of His character. They apply the eye-salve of the Holy Spirit which enables them to discern the perfection of character which is needed to be among those who overcome as Jesus overcame and sit with Him on His throne. They are the 144,000.

"Then I looked, there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.... And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless." Rev. 14:1-5.

It is by heeding the testimony of Jesus, the True Witness to the church of Laodicea, that the 144,000 will be formed. They are the finished product of the plan of salvation for the complete recovery from sin and rebellion which was caused by Satan against the government of God. Graciously Jesus invites us to sit with Him on His throne throughout eternity as the reward for overcoming sin in all its facets, just as He did when He was upon the earth.

"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Rev. 3:21, 22.

"When Christ bowed His head and died, He bore the pillars of Satan's kingdom with Him to the earth. He vanquished Satan in the same nature over which in Eden Satan obtained the victory. The enemy was overcome by Christ in His human nature. The power of the Savior's Godhead was hidden. He overcame in human nature, relying upon God for power." YI April 25, 1901.

"We are to copy no human being. [...] We are to look to the man Christ Jesus, who is complete in the perfection of righteousness and holiness. He is the author and finisher of our faith. He is the pattern man. His experience is the measure of the experience that

we are to gain. His character is our model. [...] As we look at Him and think of Him, He will be formed within, the hope of glory.

"Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand." 7BC 970.

Since these messages and truths were given to our forefathers, why did they not go into the heavenly Canaan in their generation?

"But the people were not yet ready to meet their Lord. There was still a work of preparation to be accomplished for them. Light was to be given, directing their minds to the temple of God in Heaven; and as they should by faith follow their High Priest in His administration there, new duties would be revealed. Another message of warning was to be given to the church. [Malachi 3:2, 3 then quoted.]

"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. [...] While the investigative judgment is going forward in Heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the Sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon earth. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14.

"When this work shall have been accomplished, the followers of Christ will be ready for His appearing." GC 424, 5.

But the people needed more light, in order to understand and cooperate with the work that Jesus was doing in the heavenly Sanctuary. This light was given to them through the work of A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner, beginning in 1888. \*[See attachment.] By 1892, Ellen White was attempting to wake up the church to their need of responding to the Laodicean message:

"Every individual needs to have a decided interest in the invitation of Christ. Brethren and sisters, are your thoughts after this order? 'These sharp, decided words do not mean me; I am in a fairly good condition spiritually, though I may not have all the fervor and zeal that some have. I believe the truth. Those to whom this message belongs may take it. I think some need it.' You who think and reason thus, be assured that you are the very ones to whom this message belongs." 7BC 964, 5.

By 1903, the tone of Ellen White's comments to the church of Laodicea indicate that the church had largely rejected the messages sent from Heaven that would have enabled their generation to produce the 144,000:

"Much excellent labor was bestowed upon the Laodicean church. To them was given the exhortation, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.' But the church did not follow up the work begun by God's messengers. They heard, but they failed to appropriate the truth to themselves, and to carry out the

exhortation given them. The result that followed is the result always sure to follow the rejection of the Lord's warnings and entreaties." 7BC 964.

And now, 117 years later, God is calling our generation to be the one who responds to the cleansing message of the True Witness--Jesus, our wonderful Savior and Lord. It is our privilege to stand up for Jesus and put an end to the generations of delay. Remember--Jesus said: "When you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened." Matthew 24:33, 34. "These things" include: wars and rumors of wars, natural disasters, the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel, both in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the 1260 years of persecution by the papacy, apostasy and false prophets, signs in the sky, and the preaching of the gospel to all nations.

As the centuries have passed since Jesus was here on earth, we have seen "all these things," and yet Jesus has not come. As a result of this apparent delay, Jesus said that scoffers will arise and say, "My master is staying away a long time," and begin to live worldly lives. But wait! There is one more thing to happen before the Bridegroom comes. Jesus tells us the secret sign of His coming in Matthew 25 in the story of the ten virgins:

"At that time, the kingdom of Heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

"At midnight, the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to greet him!' Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

"But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' They said. 'Open the door for us!' But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour." Matt. 25:1-13.

Looking down in history, Jesus saw the condition of His own people at the time of His coming. According to this story, some will be wise, and some will be foolish. But what will make the difference between these two groups? To understand this story, it is necessary to see the spiritual implications of having the extra oil. There is an excellent illustration of the meaning of this parable in the book of Zechariah:

"Then the angel who talked with me returned and wakened me. [...] He asked me, 'What do you see?' I answered, 'I see a solid gold lamp-stand with a bowl at the top and seven lights on it, and seven channels to the lights. Also, there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on the left.... So, he said to me, 'This is the



word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty.'" Zech. 4:1-6.

In the Old Testament Sanctuary, the seven-branched candlestick was the only light in the holy place. Each bowl on the candlestick was filled with holy oil. This oil was changed morning and evening by the priest on duty. This holy oil represents the Holy Spirit, which every Christian needs to have replenished daily, morning and evening, in order to live a Spirit-filled life.

"We all need to study as never before the parable of the ten virgins. Five of them were wise and five were foolish. The wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. This is the holy oil represented in Zechariah [Zech 4:11-14 quoted]. This representation is of the highest consequence to those who claim to know the truth. But if we do not practice the truth, we have not received the holy oil, which the two golden pipes empty out of themselves. The oil is received into vessels prepared for the oil. It is the Holy Spirit in the heart which works by love and purifies the soul. [...]

"The people of God must cleave to God else they will lose their bearings. If they cherish hereditary and cultivated traits of character that misrepresent Christ, while professing to be His disciples, they are represented by the man coming to the gospel feast without having on the wedding garment, and by the foolish virgins which had no oil in their vessels with their lamps. We must cleave to that which God pronounces to be truth, though the whole world may be arrayed against it." 4BC 1179.

"Joshua [Zech. 3:1-4] is represented as pleading with the angel. Are we engaged in the same work? Are our supplications ascending to God in living faith? Are we opening the door of the heart to Jesus and closing every means of entrance to Satan? Are we daily obtaining clearer light, and greater strength, that we may stand in Christ's righteousness? Are we emptying our hearts of all selfishness, and cleansing them, preparatory to receiving the latter rain from Heaven? Now is the time when we are to confess and forsake our sins, that they may go beforehand to judgment and be blotted out." 4BC 1177, 8.

Here is the clue to knowing when we are in the final generation. Just before Jesus comes, God's true people will go through a judgment experience of cleansing and blotting out of their sins. These are the ones who respond to the testimony of the True Witness to the Laodiceans. These are the ones who go on to perfection because they have the pure gold of Jesus' character, the white raiment of His righteousness, and they have applied the eye-salve of the Holy Spirit to see their defects, and have received correction from Him. Thus, they overcome as Jesus overcame and they will sit with Him upon His throne forever. [Please read the chapter called "The Shaking" in Early Writings, pgs. 269-271.]

Beloved, this process is going on right now among God's true people. It is a quiet work in the individual life. There is no fanfare for those who are going through this experience, but they are obtaining a clearer and clearer understanding of the plan of salvation and of the necessity of being cleansed of every sin that would come between them and Jesus. As they walk with Him in this cleansing experience, He is becoming

their love, their life, their all, and they would rather die than be separated from Him. This is why when the bridegroom comes, they will be invited to the wedding feast, while those who neglected this preparation will be shut out forever, and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"It is those who by faith follow Jesus in the great work of the atonement, who receive the benefit of His mediation in their behalf; while those who reject the light which brings to view this work of ministration are not benefited thereby." EW xxix.

"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.

"The heavenly intelligences will work with the human agent who seeks with determined faith that perfection of character which will reach out to perfection in action. To everyone engaged in this work Christ says, 'I am at your right hand to help you.'" COL 332.

"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.

Yes, this is the time, and we are the people and the generation who will live to see the Second Coming of Christ in all His glory. Other generations have longed to see the culmination of the great controversy. To Daniel's questions about the time of the end, the angel said:

"Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand." Dan. 12:9, 10.

Friend, are you among the wise virgins who are experiencing this cleansing right now? If not, make haste to enter this Sanctuary experience with Jesus before it is too late. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are waiting for the last person to respond who wants to be a part of His eternal kingdom. But we can see around the world the signs that the door of mercy is closing. May God help us to respond to His last call to the world and enter into His Sanctuary and be safe in the time of trouble under the shadow of His wings. [Ps. 91.]

Article by Carol Zarska, MAR, Writer