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The Three Angel's Messages Revisited

From the time Adam and Eve sinned and had to leave their beautiful garden home, man has been estranged from God's original purpose of open communion with Him. As soon as man sinned, God immediately provided a way to maintain communication between Himself and every person who would avail themselves of the rudimentary sacrificial system that was set up at the gate of the Garden of Eden. God created mankind in His image, and His desire is to be in constant communication with us. Likewise, He has placed within us a deep need to maintain loving relationships with Him and with each other as we receive and respond to God's love for us and then share it with everyone around us in a never-ending flow.

The great problem now is that our brains and our emotions have been hijacked by the great deceiver, and we hear his voice above all other voices, for his voice is louder and more insistent than the quiet voice of God speaking to our inner heart. The devil is an intruder, and he can force his way uninvited into our minds if we are not aware of his tactics or recognize the tenor and content of the thoughts and feelings that come from him. The Bible tells us to resist the devil and he will flee from us [James 4:7]. But first we must know the thoughts and feelings that are coming from him and turn immediately to God for help. Jesus said: "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.... "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." John 10:1-10.

"It is only by personal union with Christ, by communion with Him daily, hourly, that we can bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit.... Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness, all depend on our union with Christ and the degree of faith we exercise in Him." SD 290.

When He was on earth, Jesus spoke so much about having this personal, interactive, indwelling relationship with Himself and with His Father in order to produce the righteous life that God promises to everyone who will come to Him through Jesus. Here are some examples from Scripture and from the Spirit of Prophecy of this grand truth:

"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." John 14:23.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.... Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.... If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you." John 15:1, 4-7.

"I saw that one saint, if he were right, could move the arm of God." EW 120.

"If we believe in the power of Jesus' name, and present our petitions to God in His name, we shall never be turned away.... When we surrender all we have and are to God, and are placed in trying and dangerous positions, coming in contact with Satan, we should remember that we shall have victory in meeting the enemy in the name and power of the Conqueror. Every angel would be commissioned to come to our rescue when we thus depend upon Christ rather than that we should be permitted to be overcome." KH 265.

"God knows our wants and has provided for them. The Lord has a treasure house of supplies for His children and can give them what they need under all circumstances.... There is not a burden, but He can remove, no darkness but He can dispel, no weakness but He can change to power, no fears but He can calm, no worthy aspiration but He can guide and justify." KH 224.

"The life of Christ has shown what humanity can do by being partakers of the divine nature. All that Christ received from God we too may have. Then ask and receive with the unswerving faith of Jacob, with the unyielding persistence of Elijah, claim for yourself all that God has promised." COL 149.

"It is the privilege of Christians to know that Christ is in them of a truth. 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.' All things are possible to him that believeth; and whatsoever things we desire, when we pray, if we believe that we receive them, we shall have them. This faith will penetrate the darkest cloud and bring hope to the drooping, desponding soul. It is the absence of this faith and trust which brings perplexity, distressing fears, and surmising of evil. God will do great things for His people when they will put their entire trust in Him. Christ will prove a never-failing source of strength, a present help in every time of trouble." ST 9-2-97.

Hearing the still small voice of God precedes the complete cleansing of our lives and the heart preparation that is necessary for the reception of the Latter Rain.

"O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you. Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden

no more; with your own eyes you will see them. 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.' Then you will defile your idols.... You will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them, 'Away with you!' He will also send you rain for the seed in the ground, and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful." Isa. 30:19-23.

The necessary preparation for hearing the voice of God and receiving instruction and guidance from the Holy Spirit is to live up to all the light that we know, and keep our hearts soft to the impressions of the Holy Spirit by spending time with God in His word and through prayer. In every age in history, those who followed this prescription for holiness were the ones to whom God could reveal Himself and use them to be His representatives.

God is looking for such people today, and you and I can be among that chosen number. The prescription is the same as it has been in every age of history. We must live up to all the light we have available, and constantly seek for advancing light as we come to the end of probationary time for this world.

"Through the ministry of the angels the Holy Spirit is enabled to work upon the mind and heart of the human agent and draw him to Christ.... The Holy Spirit is our efficiency in the work of character building, in forming characters after the divine similitude. When we think ourselves capable of molding our own experience, we make a great mistake. We can never of ourselves obtain the victory over temptation. But those who have genuine faith in Christ will be worked by the Holy Spirit. The soul in whose heart faith abides will grow into a beautiful temple for the Lord. He is directed by the grace of Christ. Just in proportion as he depends on the Holy Spirit's teaching he will grow." KH 57.

"God requires us to prove our loyalty to Him by unquestioning obedience. In deciding upon any course, we should not ask merely whether we can see harm to result from it, but whether it is contrary to the will of God. We must learn to distrust self and to rely wholly upon God for guidance and support, for a knowledge of His will, and for strength to perform it. We must be much in communion with God. Prayer in secret, prayer while the hands are engaged in labor, prayer while walking by the way, prayer in the night season, the heart's desires ever ascending to God -- this is our only safety. In this manner Enoch walked with God. In this manner our Exemplar obtained strength to tread the thorny path from Nazareth to Calvary." KH 252.

There are many in the Christian world today who believe that as long as they have accepted Christ as their Savior and live a good life according to human standards, that Jesus makes up for any discrepancies between their lives and His life by attributing to them His perfect righteousness to cover their imperfections of character. This they believe to be righteousness by faith. But Jesus' righteous character is to be assimilated into our character by an ongoing communication with Him. What He loves we are to love; what He hates we are to hate. His thoughts and feelings are to become our thoughts and feelings. Thus, by a constant love relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit, His life is assimilated into our life. This cannot happen unless we have a daily, hourly, minute-by-minute relationship with Him. Of ourselves we can do nothing toward true holiness of character, for 'holiness is agreement with God' [5T 743], and 'without

holiness no one will see the Lord' [Heb. 12:14]. Only by knowing Him and how He feels and thinks about everything can we come into agreement with Him, for our natural hearts are depraved and cannot know the will of God, or perform it acceptably, even if we do know it on a superficial level.

"The union with Christ must be maintained.... This is no casual touch, no on and off connection.... The life... received... can be preserved only by continual communication. Without Jesus you cannot overcome one sin or resist one temptation.... The channel of communication must be open continually between man and his God." DA 676.

"It is only by personal union with Christ, by communion with Him daily, hourly, that we can bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit.... Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness, all depend on our union with Christ and the degree of faith we exercise in Him." SD 290.

Being a Christian is not to be compared with having a career, such as being a doctor, a nurse, a teacher, or any other profession. Being a Christian means that we now have a personal, ongoing relationship with Jesus in which our entire lives are immersed in His, and that He lives out His life in us. It is a love relationship beyond anything we know upon this earth. It is becoming one with Him so intimately and completely that He is in all our thoughts, our feelings and our behavior. As Paul says, 'we make it our goal to please Him.' 2 Cor. 5:9.

"Look unto Jesus constantly if you would advance step by step in the narrow path cast up for the chosen of the Lord to walk in, saying in your heart, 'Thee will I seek, O God; Thee will I follow; Thee will I serve; under Thy guidance I can and will go forward.'" KH 41.

Jesus said:

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." John 15:4, KJV.

"'Abide in me' are words of great significance.... It means a constant receiving of the Spirit of Christ, a life of unreserved surrender to His service. Where this union exists, good works will appear. The life of the vine will manifest itself in fragrant fruit on the branches. The continual supply of the grace of Christ will bless you and make you a blessing, till you can say with Paul, 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me' (Gal. 2:20).... Those who are continually drawing strength from Christ will possess His Spirit." KH 132.

"There is not an impulse of our nature, not a faculty of the mind or an inclination of the heart, but needs to be, moment by moment, under the control of the Spirit of God.... However great one's spiritual light, however much he may enjoy of the divine favor and blessing, he should ever walk humbly before the Lord, pleading in faith that God will direct every thought and control every impulse." PP 421.

When we have this constant, unbroken relationship with Jesus, we can say with Paul: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled

faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." 2 Cor. 17, 18.

But what happens to our relationship with Jesus when we respond to temptation through our carnal nature rather than from the Holy Spirit? Satan knows our weaknesses and is constantly looking for a chance to cause provocations and stresses to make us fall. Then, if we do yield to temptation, he brings darkness and guilt upon us and tries to tell us that God is displeased with us and has turned His face away from us because of our sins. His purpose is to separate us from Jesus, as long as possible and cause us to abandon the hope of ever reaching the perfection of character that God holds out for us. But Jesus has promised never to leave us nor forsake us, and we must learn that when we fall into sin, or even think about committing a sin, we must turn to Him immediately for help, encouragement, and strength to resist the temptations of the evil one.

"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 his 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.' 'Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' Let none, then, regard their defects as incurable. God will give faith and grace to overcome them." GC 489.

Throughout the history of mankind, God's true followers have longed to be free of the ravages which sin has made upon both our minds and our bodies. For a sincere Christian, or a follower of God of any age in history, it is the deepest longing of the heart to please Him and represent Him in both the inner spirit and soul as well as the outward behavior. But throughout the Bible, the stories of even the best of God's chosen ones reveal a checkered history of both triumph and tragedy. Although the stories of Joseph and Daniel contain no record of departure from integrity and the will of God for their lives, they counted themselves as humble instruments of God for their time in history, and looked forward to the end of the reign of sin and the inheritance of the righteous in the heavenly Canaan.

In every age, God's people have longed to see the day when sin and sinners would be no more, and that God's eternal kingdom would finally be established. Throughout the Bible this longing to know the time of our travail is frequently expressed. The whole book of Habakkuk is based upon this question: "How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?... Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds.... The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted." Hab. 1:2-4.

Then God answers: "Look at the nations and watch -- and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told." Vs. 5.

Daniel also posed this important question to the Lord, concerning the amazing prophecies that were being revealed to him: "My Lord, what will the outcome of all this be?' He replied, '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.... As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.'" Dan. 12:8-13.

In the annals of prophetic history, God always has an appointed time in which He fulfills His word and rescues His people. When Jesus came with two angels and visited Abraham to announce that the time had come for the conception and birth of Isaac, the promised seed, He said to Abraham: "Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son." Gen. 18:14.

When Daniel was given the vision of the 2300-day prophecy concerning the cleansing of the Sanctuary, Daniel was told that it applied to the appointed time of the end: "Then I heard a holy one speaking and another holy one said to him, 'How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled -- the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the Sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot?' He said to me, 'It will take 2300 hundred [days, KJV]; then shall the Sanctuary be [cleansed, KJV]'.... 'Son of man,' he said to me, 'understand that the vision concerns the time of the end.'... 'I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end.'" Daniel 8:13-19.

Notice again the words of the Lord to Daniel when he inquired about the timing of the prophecies which he has seen: "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.

Notice that one of the signs of the close of earth's history is a cleansed remnant, who through an intimate relationship with Jesus will be "purified, made spotless and refined." These are the only ones who will know when the end of time has come, because of the cleansing experience they have gone through with Jesus. When the wicked do wake up, it will be too late to prepare. Jesus illustrates this fact in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. Immediately after giving the lengthy description of the signs of the end of time and of His coming, Jesus gives this parable: "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 meet 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." Matt. 25:1-10.

It is a sad truth that a cleansed and righteous character is not transferable from one person to another. Everyone must make their calling and election sure by a personal relationship with Jesus. We can encourage others, but we cannot transfer holiness to them, nor can we receive it from another person. And yet Paul tells us, "Without holiness no one will see the Lord." Heb. 12:14. Let's consider for a moment the meaning of holiness:

"God has commanded us, 'Be ye holy; for I am holy; and an inspired apostle declares that without holiness 'no man shall see the Lord.' Holiness is agreement with God. By sin the image of God in man has been marred and well-nigh obliterated; it is the work of the gospel to restore that which has been lost; and we are to cooperate with the divine agency in this work. And how can we come into harmony with God, how shall we receive His likeness, unless we obtain a knowledge of Him? It is this knowledge that Christ came into the world to reveal unto us.... Through the merits of Christ, through His righteousness, which by faith is imputed unto us, we are to attain to the perfection of Christian character. Our daily and hourly work is set forth in the words of the apostle: 'Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith.' While doing this our minds become clearer and our faith stronger, and our hope is confirmed; we are so engrossed with the view of His purity and loveliness, and the sacrifices made to bring us into agreement with God, that we have no disposition to speak of doubts and discouragements." 5T 743, 4.

"It is true that disappointments will come; tribulation we must expect; but we are to commit everything, great and small, to God. He does not become perplexed by the multiplicity of our grievances nor overpowered by the weight of our burdens. His watch care extends to every household and encircles every individual; He is concerned in all our business and our sorrows. He marks every tear; He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. All the afflictions and trials that befall us here are permitted, to work out His purposes of love toward us, 'that we might be partakers of His holiness' and thus become participants in that fullness of joy which is found in His presence." 5T 742.

Habakkuk was another ancient prophet who questioned God's tolerance with wicked men and their treachery against the righteous: "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?... "I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint. Then the Lord replied: 'Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.'" Hab. 1:13; 2:1-3.

Notice in these texts that the appointed time is often called the appointed time of the end. It can be the end of a long wait for a prophecy to be fulfilled, such as in the case of Abraham and Sarah. Or it can be the end of a prophetic time period, or a time of punishment or judgment for a nation or a certain segment of people. It can even be a

time of trouble in our individual lives, when we long for deliverance and restoration to healing and peace. Whatever the situation, we may know that God has a purpose for what we are going through, and He also has deliverance for us, in His appointed time.

"In the darkest hours, under circumstances the most forbidding, the Christian believer may keep his soul stayed upon the source of all light and power. Day by day, through faith in God, his hope and courage may be renewed. 'The just shall live by his faith.' In the service of God there need be no despondency, no wavering, no fear. The Lord will more than fulfill the highest expectations of those who put their trust in Him. He will give them the wisdom their varied necessities demand.... We must cherish and cultivate the faith of which prophets and apostles have testified, -- the faith that lays hold on the promises of God and waits for deliverance in His appointed time and way. The sure word of prophecy will meet its final fulfillment in the glorious advent of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as King of kings and Lord of lords. The time of waiting may seem long, the soul may be oppressed by discouraging circumstances, many in whom confidence has been placed may fall by the way; but with the prophet who endeavored to encourage Judah in a time of unparalleled apostasy, let us confidently declare, 'The Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him.' Let us ever hold in remembrance the cheering message, 'The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.... The just shall live by his faith.'" PK 387, 8.

For centuries God's people have been looking forward to the Second Coming of Christ. Especially since 1844, when Jesus revealed to His true followers that He was moving from His First Apartment ministry in the heavenly Sanctuary into the final work of judgment in the Second Apartment, the imminence of Jesus' coming has been proclaimed. But it has now been over a hundred and seventy-five years since our forefathers received this blessed message, and many are growing disheartened and skeptical of the truths that were once held dear and are looking to other denominations for more appealing and attractive beliefs and teachings. It is not uncommon to hear from the pulpit and from recent publications that complete victory over sin is not possible until Jesus comes and removes our carnal nature. Evangelism that reveals the true character of the papacy is being discouraged in many areas around the world. "Jesus only," is a slogan that is being urged by certain groups as an alternative to our original doctrines. It is time for us now, to revisit the important teachings of our past history and to apply them by the Holy Spirit to our present-day message, for the time of His coming is now at hand.

In considering the time in which we now live, it is important to realize that the prophecies of the past, both in the Bible and also in the Spirit of Prophecy, were written more for our time than for theirs.

"Each of the ancient prophets spoke less of their own time than for ours so that their prophesying is in force for us. The Bible has accumulated and bound up its treasures for the last generation. All the great events and solemn transactions of Old Testament history have been, and are, repeating themselves in this last generation." 3SM 338, 39.

Because the signs of the times and the Spirit of God within us are assuring us that we are in the final generation, everything we read is now present truth for us. Thus, instead of becoming discouraged and disheartened and faithless, we should study all the prophecies and apply them to our present experience and our time. Unfortunately, recent studies show that only about 17% of Seventh-day Adventists are reading the Spirit of Prophecy. This in itself is a sign that Jesus' coming is near.

"One thing is certain: those Seventh-day Adventists who take their stand under Satan's banner will first give up their faith in the warnings and reproofs contained in the Testimonies of God's Spirit." 3SM 84.

"The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the Testimonies of the Spirit of God. 'Where there is no vision, the people perish' (Prov. 29:18)." 1SM 48.

It is time for us to raise up the age-old standards and study the counsel and warnings that we have been given, for the time has come for God to call this present generation to account for the knowledge that has been given to us.

"We are standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. Many of the prophecies are about to be fulfilled in quick succession. Every element of power is about to be set to work. Past history will be repeated; old controversies will arouse to new life, and peril will beset God's people on every side. Intensity is taking hold of the human family. It is permeating everything upon the earth.... Study Revelation in connection with Daniel, for history will be repeated." TM 116.

"All these records of the past are seen to have a new significance; and through them a light is cast upon the future, illuminating the pathway of those who, like the reformers of past ages, will be called, even at the peril of all earthly good, to witness for the Word of God, and for the Testimony of Jesus." GC 12.

"In the great final conflict, Satan will employ the same policy, manifest the same spirit, and work for the same end, as in all preceding ages. That which has been will be, except that the coming struggle will be marked with a terrible intensity such as the world has never witnessed." GC 11.

When we take to heart the counsels that have been given us, we will see a mighty revival and the church triumphant will move forward under the Latter Rain, to the final culmination of history and our consummation as the Bride of Christ.

"The perils of the last days are upon us, and in our work, we are to warn the people of the danger they are in. Let not the solemn scenes which prophecy has revealed be left untouched. If our people were half awake, if they realized the nearness of the events portrayed in the Revelation, a reformation would be wrought in our churches and, and many more would believe the message." Ev 195.

When God revealed to our forefathers the truths contained in the book of Revelation, the pathway of knowledge was opened which would prepare a people to be fitted for translation without seeing death. Until that time the wonderful, prophetic books of Daniel

and Revelation had remained shrouded in mystery. But from 1844 onward, the destiny of each succeeding generation has been based upon their reception and propagation of the truths contained therein, for God cannot "finish transgression and make an end of sin" [Dan. 9:24], until He has a people who will cooperate fully and completely with Him in the cleansing of sin in their own lives.

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

Four generations have now passed since our forefathers discovered the wonderful truths which are found in Revelation 14. It would be well for us to study these truths until they burn within our hearts as they did when they were lived and preached by the early Advent believers.

Revelation 14 begins with a description of the 144,000 who stand with Jesus on Mount Zion as a representative of all the saved of the earth. They are pronounced to be blameless in character, and fit representatives of the finished work of Jesus in the Most Holy Place. They have His name, representing His character, and His Father's name written on their foreheads: "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. 14:4, 5.

In common language, the 144,000 represent the completed work of Jesus in the Most Holy Place of the Sanctuary in cleansing His people completely from sin and bringing them into harmony with Himself in every area of their lives. They are called the first fruits for they are the first generation who has had all the light necessary to cooperate fully with Jesus in every aspect, and they have nothing in their minds, hearts, emotions or behavior that is not in complete harmony with Jesus in every way. This is why they are called the first fruits of the earth, for all other generations of the saved have laid down to sleep just where they were, in their character development at the time of their death, covered with the perfect righteousness of Christ in every area in which they did not know, comprehend, or understand about God's perfect righteousness.

Unfortunately, too many Christians today, even in our own church, are expecting Jesus to cover them by His righteousness, even while they are living in known sin. These will be terribly disappointed in the day of final judgment.

"The righteousness of Christ will not cover one cherished sin.... But God's law looks into the secrets of the heart. Every act is judged by the motives that prompt it. Only that which is in accord with the principles of God's law will stand in the judgment.... God is

love.... But the love of God does not lead Him to excuse sin. He did not excuse it in Satan; He did not excuse it in Adam or in Cain; nor will He excuse it in any other of the children of men. He will not connive at our sins or overlook our defects of character. He expects us to overcome in His name.... In the parable of the marriage feast, when the king enquired, 'How camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?' the man was speechless. So, it will be in the great judgment day. Men may now excuse their defects of character, but in that day, they will offer no excuse." COL 316, 17.

"We cannot overestimate the value of simple faith and unquestioning obedience. It is by following in the path of obedience in simple faith that the character obtains perfection." 4BC 1137.

After introducing the finished product of Jesus' closing work in the heavenly Sanctuary, John portrays the process by which this group is formed in the final stages of the great controversy. This process is revealed as the work of three angels in succession, who go forth with messages designed to reap the harvest of the earth. During the first angel's message, God's people are cleansed and prepared to go forth to preach the second and third angels' messages which warn the world of coming destruction and judgment upon those who refuse the warnings given by God through His people.

"The three angels of Revelation 14 are represented as flying in the midst of heaven, symbolizing the work of those who proclaim the first, second, and third angels' messages." 6T 17.

"We should now feel the responsibility of laboring with intense earnestness to impart to others the truths that God has given for this time.... Now is the time for the last warning to be given.... All are now deciding their eternal destiny. Men need to be aroused to realize the solemnity of the time, the nearness of the day when human probation shall be ended. Decided efforts should be made to bring the message for this time prominently before the people." 6T 16.

In the light of these statements, I believe that we need to take a closer look at the three angels' messages as they pertain to our specific time in history, for it is time for them to be repeated for the last generation. Jesus gave His generation a warning that they would be held responsible for all the blood that had been shed from the beginning of the world until then. So, it will be for the last generation who will live upon the earth, and who will participate in the final events that will occur at the end of time.

"Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your forefathers who killed them. So, you testify that you approve of what your forefathers did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. Because of this, God in His wisdom said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of them they will kill and others they will persecute.' Therefore, this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world. From the blood of Abel to the blood by Zachariah, who was killed between the altar and the Sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all." Luke 11:47-51.

God measures every generation by the way they respond to the messengers that He sends to bring them the truth for their time. They are then judged based on their response to these messages.

"For His church in every generation God has a special truth and a special work." COL 78.

"In every age there is a new development of truth, a message of God to the people of that generation." COL 127.

"God has always given men warning of coming judgments. Those who had faith in His message for their time, and who acted out their faith, in obedience to His commandments, escaped the judgments that fell upon the disobedient and unbelieving.... Those who are watching for the Lord are purifying their souls by obedience to the truth. With vigilant watching they combine earnest working. Because they know that the Lord is at the door, their zeal is quickened to co-operate with the divine intelligences in working for the salvation of souls.... They are declaring the truth that is now especially applicable. As Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses each declared the truth for his time, so will Christ's servants now give the special warning for their generation." DA 634.

In the days of Ellen White and the pioneers of the Advent message, the three angels' messages were proclaimed as they applied to their experience and their period of history. Their responsibility and message was to announce the opening of the Second Apartment of the heavenly Sanctuary and Jesus' movement into the duties that He would perform there for His people. But four generations have passed since that time, and there are now new duties and further light for our generation to understand, experience, and proclaim. The work of Jesus has not been static since 1844, and our life depends upon following Jesus in His work there and cooperating fully with Him in order to receive the benefits of His mediation.

"In these last days it is our duty to ascertain the full meaning of the first, second, and third angels' messages." LDE 68.

"The proclamation of the first, second and third angels' messages has been located by the word of inspiration.... It is just as essential now as ever before that they shall be repeated to those who are seeking for the truth. By pen and voice, we are to sound the proclamation, showing their order, and the application of the prophecies that bring us to the third angel's message. There cannot be a third without the first and second. These messages we are to give to the world in publications, in discourses, showing in the line of prophetic history the things that have been, and the things that will be." CW 26, 7.

"Many who embraced the third message had not had an experience in the two former messages. Satan understood this, and his evil eye was upon them to overthrow them; but the third angel was pointing them to the Most Holy Place, and those who had had an experience in the past messages saw the perfect chain of truth in the angels' messages, and gladly received them in their order, and followed Jesus by faith into the heavenly Sanctuary. These messages were represented to me as an anchor to the people of

God. Those who understand and receive them will be kept from being swept away by the many delusions of Satan." EW 256.

When our forefathers discovered, received, and preached the three angels' messages, the first angel's message announced the entrance of Jesus into the Most Holy Place to begin the judgment; the second angel's message announced the fall of the Protestant churches who rejected their message; and the third angel announced the understanding of the fourth commandment as applying to the 7th-day Sabbath instead of Sunday. The discovery of the role of the papacy in changing the Sabbath to Sunday was also an important part of the second and third angels' messages.

"The third angel's message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, and this truth must be brought before the world." Ev 184.

"The second angel's message of Revelation 14 was first preached in the summer of 1844, and it then had a more direct application to the churches of the United States.... But the message of the second angel did not reach its complete fulfillment in 1844. The churches then experienced a moral fall, ... but that fall was not complete.... Not yet... can it be said that 'Babylon is fallen, ... because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.' She has not yet made all nations do this.... The work of apostasy has not yet reached its culmination.

"The Bible declares that before the coming of the Lord, Satan will work with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness; ... Not until this condition shall be reached, and the union of the church with the world shall be fully accomplished throughout Christendom, will the fall of Babylon be complete. The change is a progressive one, and the perfect fulfillment of Revelation 14:8 is yet future. ... Revelation 18 points to the time when, as a result of rejecting the threefold warning of Revelation 14:6-12, the church will have fully reached the condition foretold by the second angel, and the people of God still in Babylon will be called upon to separate from her communion. This message is the last that will ever be given to the world; and it will accomplish its work. ... Then the light of truth will shine upon all whose hearts are open to receive it, and all the children of the Lord that remain in Babylon will heed the call, 'Come out of her, my people.'" GC 389, 90.

Thus it becomes clear that the final generation of God's people will preach a message that contains all the truth that was preached by our forefathers, with the additional light that is specifically applicable to those who will live to see Jesus come. With that in mind, let's read the first angel's message, which is found in Revelation 14: "Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the [everlasting, KJV] gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth -- to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him because the hour of His judgment has come. Worship Him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of waters.'" Rev. 14:6, 7.

The first angel's message has its setting in the preaching of the gospel to the entire world. The word "gospel" in Greek is "euangelizo," which means, "to preach (bring) the good news (gospel), often with a focus on the content of the message which is brought.

In the New Testament it always refers to the death, burial, resurrection, and witness about Jesus Christ, including its implications for humankind's relationship to God." NIV Concordance.

The first reference in the New Testament of the word "gospel" is found in Matthew 24:14: "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."

The last use of the word "gospel" is found in Revelation 14:6, to announce the meaning, the importance, and the extent of the three angels' messages. The wonderful news of the gospel is that all that Satan has done to destroy the kingdom of God will finally be defeated by the plan of salvation which is provided by the life, death, resurrection, and intercession of Jesus Christ in the heavenly Sanctuary until the close of probationary time for earth's inhabitants.

When Jesus was on earth, He introduced the message of the beginning of the gospel and prophesied of its end. The three angels' messages come at the end of time, and include vital truths which must be understood, experienced, and preached by God's last-day people as a witness to all the world. Notice carefully that while the first angel's message is planted firmly within the eternal, everlasting gospel, there is a specific message which must be preached before the work of the gospel can be finished. That message is: "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come."

This message of the cleansing of the final remnant of God's people at the end of time has always been a theme running throughout all of Scripture. Here are a few examples:

"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 launderer's 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. ...

"So I will come near to you for judgment." Mal. 3:1-5.

"I will remove from this city those who rejoice in their pride. Never again will you be haughty on my holy hill. But I will leave within you the meek and humble who trust in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel will do no wrong; they will speak no lies, nor will deceit be found in their mouths." Zeph. 3:11-13.

"But in the Lord all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult." Isa. 45:25.

"In those days, at that time, declares the Lord, search will be made for Israel's guilt, but there will be none, and for the sins of Judah, but none will be found, for I will forgive the remnant I spare." Jer. 50:20.

"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." 2 Cor. 7:1.

"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord." Heb. 12:14.

"Holiness is agreement with God." 5T 743.

Paul states that the great men and women of old are now resting in their graves awaiting the last generation who will finish the course for all of humanity: "These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect." Heb. 11:39, 40.

The Spirit of Prophecy is filled with truth concerning the work of judgment in each individual life and the necessity for total cleansing from sin, through the power and work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, as we cooperate with Jesus in the cleansing work that he performs in the Most Holy Place before the close of probation:

"Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil and to impress his own character upon His church. ...The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity. The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people." DA 671.

"When He comes, He is not to cleanse us of our sins, to remove from us the defects in our characters, or to cure us of the infirmities of our tempers and dispositions. If wrought for us at all, this work will all be accomplished before that time. When the Lord comes, those who are holy will be holy still. Those who have preserved their bodies and spirits in holiness, in sanctification and honor, will then receive the finishing touch of immortality. But those who are unjust, unsanctified, and filthy will remain so forever. No work will then be done for them to remove their defects and give them holy characters. The Refiner does not then sit to pursue His refining process and remove their sins and their corruption. This is all to be done in these hours of probation. It is now that this work is to be accomplished for us." 2T 355.

"There is no change of character when Christ comes. The character building is to go on during the hours of probation." 7BC 990.

"Character cannot be changed when Christ comes. ... Character building must be done in this life." TM 430.

"Inherited and cultivated tendencies to wrong must be crucified." MYP 68.

"The work of restoration can never be thorough unless the roots of evil are reached. Again and again the shoots have been clipped, while the root of bitterness has been left to spring up and defile many; but the very depth of the hidden evil must be reached, the moral senses must be judged, and judged again, in the light of the divine presence. The daily life will testify whether the work is genuine. ...If the tempted soul endures the trying process, and self does not awake to life to feel hurt and abused under the test, that probing knife reveals that the soul is indeed dead to self but alive to God." 5BC 1152.

"You have set our iniquities before you; our secret sins in the light of your presence." Ps. 90:8.

"Every follower of Christ should daily examine himself, that he may become perfectly acquainted with his own conduct. There is with nearly all a neglect of self-examination. ... Many see and feel their lack, yet they seem to be ignorant of the influence they exert. They are conscious of their actions as they perform them, but suffer them to pass from their memory, and therefore do not reform. If ministers would make the actions of each day a subject of careful thought and deliberate review, with the object to become acquainted with their own habits of life, they would better know themselves. By a close scrutiny of their daily life under all circumstances, they would know their own motives, the principles which actuate them. This daily review of our acts, to see whether conscience approves or condemns, is necessary for all who wish to arrive at the perfection of Christian character." 2T 511, 12.

"Every act of our lives... is judged by the Searcher of Hearts according to the motives which prompted it." GW 275.

"It is by following the path of obedience in simple faith that the character obtains perfection." 4BC 1137.

"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you -- unless, of course, you fail the test?... Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong. ... Our prayer is for your perfection. ... Aim for perfection. ... And the grace of the God of love and peace will be with you." 2 Cor. 13:5-11.

"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.

What do all these quotations in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy have to do with the first angel's message? I believe that this first angel is calling the people of the world to a judgment experience with Jesus that will cleanse them of all sin and rebellion that resides in the human heart, and prepares them to preach the second and third angels' messages which close the work of the gospel and prepares a people to stand through the time of trouble without a mediator in the heavenly Sanctuary.

When the first angel's message was preached in the 1840's, the purpose was to call the world to a recognition that Jesus was moving from the First Apartment of the Sanctuary to the Second Apartment, or final work of Jesus in the heavenly Sanctuary. But in the last generation who will live to see Jesus come, the work of Jesus is to cleanse and blot out all sin from His people so that a mediator is no longer necessary between God and man. To make this clearer yet, let's take a quick review of the righteousness that was acceptable in each stage of the Sanctuary in order to be considered perfect, or blameless.

Before the coming of Jesus, while the earthly Sanctuary was still in use, the standard of righteousness was found in the first five books of the Bible. Thus, it is recorded of John the Baptist's parents, that they "were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly." Luke 1:6.

When Jesus was on earth, He fulfilled all the Sanctuary rituals as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world to provide an atonement for the sins of every human being and a way back through Him to holiness of character.

After His ascension back into heaven, He began the application of His blood for every repentant sinner so that His perfect righteousness covered for the sins of His people who fell short of the goal of perfection in their process of sanctification.

But the time came in 1844, when Jesus moved into the final work of redemption which would be fulfilled in the Second Apartment, or Most Holy Place, of the heavenly Sanctuary. It would be a work of judgment concerning all who had ever professed to accept God's provisions for salvation. At that time the record books were opened, and the process began which would decide the eternal destiny of every person. Daniel speaks of this work of judgment in Daniel 7:9, 10: "As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. ... Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened."

Ellen White describes in more detail this judgment process:

"As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of all who have believed in Jesus come in review before God. Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate represents the case of each successive generation, and closes with the living. Every name is mentioned, every case closely investigated. Names are accepted, names rejected. When any have sins remaining upon the books of record, unrepented of and unforgiven, their names will be blotted out of the book of life, and the record of their good deeds will be erased from the book of God's remembrance. The Lord declared to Moses, 'Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book.' And says the prophet Ezekiel, 'When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, ...all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned.'

"All who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven;

as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life." GC 483.

But the work of Jesus in the Most Holy Place is not static. As He moves through the cases of the dead and comes to the cases of living, His followers on earth are to be in such close connection with Him that they will know when Jesus comes to their name in the records of heaven, so that they can cooperate with Him in the cleansing and blotting out of their sins, preparatory to the reception of the Latter Rain.

Ellen White gives great detail on this subject:

"It is those who by faith follow Jesus in the great work of the atonement, who receive the benefits 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.

"Jesus told the angels that all who found Him would understand the work which He was to perform." EW 251.

"There must be a purifying of the soul here upon the earth in harmony with Christ's cleansing of the Sanctuary in heaven." Mar 249.

"Those who would share the benefits of the Saviour's mediation should permit nothing to interfere with their duty to perfect holiness in the fear of God. ... The subject of the Sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest. Otherwise it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time or to occupy the position which God designs them to fill." GC 488.

"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 true repentance. There must be deep, faithful searching of heart.... Everyone must be tested and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. ... The judgment is now passing in the Sanctuary above. For many years this work has been in progress. Soon -- none know how soon -- it will pass to the cases of the living. In the awful presence of God our lives are to come up in review. At this time above all others it behooves every soul to heed the Savior's admonition, 'Watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is.' 'If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.' Revelation 3:3. ... 'Watch ye therefore ... lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping.' Mark 13:35, 36" GC 489-491.

Many people feel that these words indicate that we will never know when our names come up in the judgment of the living. But the implications are clear that those who do not know are those who are not watching. The Bible says that "The wise heart will know the proper time and procedure." Eccl. 8:5. Daniel was told in answer to his questions

about 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. 12:10.

Jesus, looking down in history to this same time period, tells the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, and then gives the solemn warning, "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour." Matt. 25:13.

I believe that the wise virgins will know when their names come up in the judgment of the living, for they have kept watching for the signs of Jesus' coming as He has commanded us to do, and they have a personal relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures. In the example of the Israelites on the Day of Atonement, all were obligated to cooperate with the high priest by searching their hearts throughout the day. Those who did not were excluded from God's people. Also, there were ten days of blowing of trumpets before the Day of Atonement, during which the people were examining their hearts in preparation.

It is my experience and conviction that we are now in the time of the judgment of the living, and every soul must have their eyes upon Jesus, and have a personal relationship with Him that will take us through this time victoriously. Jesus cleanses His people by allowing trials to come into our lives to alert us of our weaknesses. How we react to these trials will determine whether we are cleansed through a personal relationship with Jesus, or whether we will fail to overcome, and permit our sins and weaknesses to continue to be a part of our character.

"As fire purifies gold, so Christ purifies His people by temptation and trial." TDG 259.

Those who fail to overcome will be among the wicked, for "the wicked do not know what makes them stumble." Prov. 4:19.

"None will be condemned for not heeding light and knowledge that they never had, and they could not obtain. But many refuse to obey the truth that is presented to them by Christ's ambassadors, because they wish to conform to the world's standard; and the truth that has reached their understanding, the light that has shone in the soul, will condemn them in the judgment." 5BC 1145.

There is a chapter in Early Writings called, "The Shaking," which I believe to be a description of the people of God when their lives come up before Him in the judgment:

"I saw some, with strong faith and agonizing cries, pleading with God.... Firmness and great earnestness was expressed in their countenances... Evil angels crowded around, pressing darkness upon them to shut out Jesus from their view, that their eyes might be drawn to the darkness that surrounded them, and thus be led to distrust God and murmur against Him. Their only safety was in keeping their eyes directed upward. ... I saw angels of God hasten to the assistance of all who were struggling with all their power to resist the evil angels and trying to help themselves by calling upon God with perseverance. But His angels left those who made no effort to help themselves, and I lost sight of them.

"I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans. ... Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this is what will cause a shaking among God's people. ... This testimony must work deep repentance; all who truly receive it will obey it and be purified. ... Said the angel, 'Look ye!' My attention was then turned to the company I had seen, who were mightily shaken. ... The company of guardian angels around them had been doubled, and they were clothed with an armor from their head to their feet. ... Their countenances expressed the severe conflict which they had endured, the agonizing struggle they had passed through. Yet their features, marked with severe internal anguish, now shown with the light and glory of heaven. They had obtained the victory, and it called forth from them the deepest gratitude and holy, sacred joy. ... I asked what had made this great change. An angel answered, 'It is the Latter Rain, the refreshing from the presence of the Lord, the loud cry of the third angel.'" EW 269-271.

Many people today are waiting for the Latter Rain to cleanse them of their defects and prepare them to go through the time of trouble. But this is a fatal mistake, for the Latter Rain is the finishing touch on the characters of those who have been cleansed, by participating with Jesus in His work for us in the heavenly Sanctuary.

"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." GC 489.

As we can see from the quotations above, those who wait until the time of the Latter Rain will have waited too long, and they will awaken from their spiritual lethargy to find themselves among the foolish virgins. This is why a repeat of the three angel's messages for the final generation is absolutely necessary. In order to be ready to preach the message of the third angel, we must have experienced the messages which are found in the first two angels.

"For his church in every generation God has a special truth and a special work." COL 78.

"In every age there is a new development of truth, a message of God for the people of that generation." COL 127.

"The message of the second angel did not reach its complete fulfillment in 1844. The church had then experienced a moral fall... but that fall was not complete. As they have continued to reject the special truths for this time, they have fallen lower and lower. ... God still has a people in Babylon; and before the visitation of His judgments these faithful ones must be called out, that they partake not of her sins and receive not of her plagues. This is the same message that was given by the second angel.... And in the

loud cry of the third angel's message a voice is heard from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people.'" Mar 171.

"The light we have received upon the third angel's message is the true light. The mark of the beast is exactly what it has been proclaimed to be. Not all in regard to this matter is yet understood, nor will it be understood until the unrolling of the scroll." 6T 17.

Why is a repeat of these messages absolutely necessary for the final generation? It is because each message is the experience which God's people will go through, containing the additional light that will be shining at that time.

"The proclamation of the first, second and third angels' messages has been located by the word of inspiration.... It is just as essential now as ever before, that they shall be repeated to those who are seeking for the truth. By pen and voice, we are to sound the proclamation, showing their order, and the application of the prophecies that bring us to the third angel's message. There cannot be a third without the first and second. These messages we are to give to the world in publications, and discourses, showing in the line of prophetic history the things that have been, and the things that will be." CW 26, 27.

"Many who embraced the third message had not had an experience in the two former messages. Satan understood this, and his evil eye was upon them to overthrow them; but the third angel was pointing them to the Most Holy Place, and those who had had an experience in the two past messages were pointing them the way to the heavenly Sanctuary. Many saw the perfect chain of truth in the angels' messages, and gladly received them in their order, and followed Jesus by faith into the heavenly Sanctuary. These messages were represented to me as an anchor to the people of God. Those who understand and receive them will be kept from being swept away by the many delusions of Satan." EW 256.

"Those who rejected and opposed the light of the first angel's message, lost the light of the second and could not be benefited by the power and glory which attended the message, 'Behold the Bridegroom cometh.'" EW 249.

"The midnight cry... was to prepare them to enter with Jesus by faith into the Most Holy Place of the heavenly Sanctuary.... The third angel's message... showed the way into the Most Holy Place." EW 260, 61.

"I know that a work must be done for the people, or many will not be prepared to receive the light of the angel sent down from heaven to lighten the whole earth with his glory. Do not think that you will be found as vessels unto honor in the time of the Latter Rain, to receive the glory of God, if you are lifting up your souls unto vanity, speaking perverse things, and in secret cherishing roots of bitterness." LS 327, 28.

"We are nearing the judgment, and those who bear the message of warning to the world must have clean hands and pure hearts. They must have a living connection with God. The thoughts must be pure and holy, the soul untainted, the body, soul, and spirit be a pure, clean offering to God, or He will not accept it." TM 426.

When Ellen White was writing to her generation, she was appealing them to enter into the experience of the first angel's message as it applies to the personal cleansing that is necessary for God's people to be filled by the Latter Rain and preach with power the second and third angels' messages. As we have already noted, she stated in Great Controversy, page 490: "The judgment is now passing in the Sanctuary above. For many years this work has been in progress. Soon--none know how soon-- it will pass to the cases of the living."

I believe it to be very significant that the first date of the publishing of the Great Controversy was in 1888. It was at that very time that Jesus gave the precious message of righteousness by faith to A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner, accompanied by timely messages from Ellen White to support them in bringing this precious message to God's people to move them forward into the judgment of the living, which would have prepared them for the sealing, and reception of the Latter Rain. Notice these words of instruction by A. T. Jones to the General Conference in 1893:

"[Christ] gave Himself for our sins; but... He will not take away our sins... without our permission.... The choice is forever with me as to whether I would rather have my sins than to have Him.... Then from this time henceforth can there be any hesitation about letting anything go that God shows is sin? Will you let it go when it is pointed out? When sin is pointed out to you, say, 'I would rather have Christ than that.'... If the Lord has brought up sins to us that we never thought of before, that only shows that He is going down to the depths, and He will reach the bottom at last; and when He finds the last thing that is unclean or impure, that is out of harmony with His will, and brings that up, and shows that to us, and we can say, 'I would rather have the Lord than that -- then the work is complete, and the seal of the living God can be fixed upon that character.'" GC Bulletin, pp. 404, 405. 1893.

It is clear that Jesus was ready at that time to bring His people from the judgment of the dead into the judgment of the living, in preparation for the outpouring of the Latter Rain. But some of the leading brethren opposed the message brought by Jones and Waggoner, and they became discouraged and left the church. From that time God has been waiting for a generation who will take hold of this precious message, experience it, and be a part of the final generation who will preach the message of the second angel, which will be joined by the loud cry of the fourth angel of Revelation 18:1-5: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues. For her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes."

"This Scripture points forward to a time when the announcement of the fall of Babylon, as made by the second angel of Revelation 14, is to be repeated, with the additional mention of the corruptions which have been entering the various organizations that constitute Babylon, since that message was first given, in the summer of 1844. A terrible condition of the religious world is here described." GC 603.

Is it possible for us to be a part of preaching the loud cry if we have not been cleansed of our own sins? Absolutely not!

"We are nearing the judgment, and those who bear the message of warning to the world must have clean hands and pure hearts. They must have a living connection with God. The thoughts must be pure and holy, the soul untainted, the body, soul, and spirit be a pure, clean offering to God, or He will not accept it." TM 426.

Why then has Jesus not come before this? It is because we have not moved on from the early understanding of the three angels' messages and accepted the message of righteousness by faith that includes the cleansing of all of our sins, as Jesus is prepared to do for us, but is waiting for our intelligent cooperation.

"Had Adventists after the great disappointment in 1844 held fast their faith and followed on unitedly in the opening providences of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this to receive His people to their reward. ... It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be thus delayed. ... It is the unbelief, the worldliness, un-consecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years." LDE 37, 38.

"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 and instruction was to be given to the church.

"Says the prophet: 'Who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the Sanctuary above, are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort, they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the Sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon earth. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14.

"When this work shall have been accomplished, the followers of Christ will be ready for His appearing." GC 424, 25.

"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. When this grand truth is seen and

understood, those who hold it will work in harmony with Christ to prepare a people to stand in the great day of God, and their efforts will be successful. By study, contemplation, and prayer God's people will be elevated above the 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 worshippers 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 of the Holy Spirit if they would become qualified for the great and solemn work for this time which is laid upon God's ambassadors." 5T 575.

Notice in the quotations above that it is sin among God's people that has kept Jesus from coming as He might have done, if the cleansing message of righteousness by faith had been fully accepted and experienced in 1888 and onward. But we may now rejoice that Jesus will delay His coming no longer, for this message is now being both experienced and preached, and many are receiving it and sharing it with others around the world. In response, Jesus is letting the winds go, and already we are seeing the rise of the papacy and the acceptance of satanic delusions by the fallen Protestant churches in joining hands with the leadership of the Catholic Church. It is time for God's people to arise and preach the second angel's message with power, which will swell into the third angel's message, which is the last words of truth that the people of the world will ever hear before the close of probation.

At this point I want to emphasize an important aspect of the great controversy that needs be understood concerning the vital importance of this cleansing message being preached and experienced by God's people. This truth is found in both the Old and New Testaments:

"On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness." Deut. 17:6.

"One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." Deut. 19:15. [See also Matt.18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1.]

You see, the work of ridding the world and the universe of sin cannot be accomplished by Jesus' sacrifice only. What He has done by His perfect life, death, resurrection, and ministry in the heavenly Sanctuary must be second-witnessed by the product of His ministry, which proves the efficacy of the completed plan of salvation.

"We cannot do evil, and work wickedness, and yet stand justified before God at last. Now is our day of probation, and we are now to perfect characters that will stand the test of the judgment. When Christ comes, there is to be no change of character... Those who are alive and remain... will be caught up to meet the Lord In the air, if their characters are blameless and pure. Transformation of character must take place during the precious hours of probation." ST 8/29/ 1892.

At the end of the thousand years, Jesus will destroy all the wicked in the fires that will consume and cleanse the world [Rev. 20:7-10]. By His own laws, He could not do this unless He had a cleansed remnant of people who, by their perfected lives, give a second witness before the universe that the blood of Jesus can save to the uttermost all who come to Him in faith, believing in His power to destroy the works of the devil in their lives. Jesus' perfect life and victory over the devil is the first witness, and His cleansed people are the second witness.

This is why there is so much joy in heaven when this victory is complete: "Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: 'Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. Fine linen bright and clean, was given her to wear. Fine linen stands for the [righteousness, KJV] of the saints." Rev. 19:6-8.

The 144,000 are represented as being "blameless," and standing on Mount Zion with Jesus, having His name, or character, and the Father's name written on their foreheads. Rev. 14:1, 5. They are the finished product of the cleansing work of Jesus in the judgment that is referred to in the first angel's message, and they are the ones who preach the final judgments of the second and third angels' messages.

"When the third angel's message shall go forth with a loud voice, and the whole earth shall be enlightened with His glory, the Holy Spirit is poured out upon His people. The revenue of glory has been accumulating for the closing work of the third angel's message. Of the prayers that have been ascending for the fulfillment of the promise -- the descent of the Holy Spirit -- not one has been lost. Each prayer has been accumulating, ready to overflow and pour forth a healing flood of heavenly influence and accumulated light all over the world." Ltr. 96a, 1899, pg. 2; MR #140.

"In this age, just prior to the Second Coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a 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 these 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 preceding 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'.

"In this time of well-nigh universal apostasy, God calls upon His messengers to proclaim His law in the spirit and power of Elias. As John the Baptist, in preparing a people for Christ's first advent, called their attention to the Ten Commandments, so we are to give with no uncertain sound the message: 'Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come.' With the earnestness that characterized Elijah the prophet and John the Baptist, we are to strive to prepare the way for Christ's second advent." 4 BC 1184.

Who is willing to accept this challenge and be among those who preach the last warning message to the world and bear the cross of Jesus faithfully for Him until He comes? If

you respond to the call of Jesus to be among that number, you will receive the commendation of Jesus, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Matt. 25:21, KJV.

Note: All Bible quotes are taken from the NIV unless otherwise noted.

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