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“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition
by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #1 - SEVEN GREAT TRUTHS
ABOUT MATTHEW 24

Introduction

There are different ways of approaching the study of end time prophecy:

- ✓ **Thematic** approach (as in Ellen White’s book, Last Day Events).
- ✓ **Genesis** and Revelation (Stories such as Genesis 3:15; Cain and Abel, the Flood, the destruction Sodom and Gomorrah are typological).
- ✓ **Daniel and Revelation** (the literary structure is tricky).
- ✓ Most of the **parables** of Jesus have an end time dimension (virgins, talents, sheep and goats, wedding garment).

However, there is only **one place** in the Bible where the **major end time events** appear in strict **chronological** order, Matthew 24. In this introductory lesson, we will look at **seven great facts** regarding Matthew 24.

Fact #1: The study and teaching of Matthew 24 is of vital importance.

*“The twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew is presented to me **again and again** as something that is to be brought to the attention of all. We are today living in the time when the predictions of this chapter **are fulfilling**. Let our **ministers and teachers** explain these prophecies to those whom they instruct. Let them leave*

out of their discourses matters of minor consequence, and present the truths that will decide the destiny of souls. Ellen G. White, Gospel Workers, p. 148

Fact #2: Matthew 24 is not primarily a message for the world in general but rather for those who claim to be God's own people.

The main purpose of Matthew 24 is not to convince secular people that Jesus is coming soon because of the signs that are transpiring in the political, economic, social and religious world. The central purpose is to keep God's own people faithful in the midst of Satan's end-time deceptions and persecutions.

Jesus told His followers that Satan is going to exert all his efforts to deceive, discourage, persecute and kill with the intent of leading God's people to lose their faith. The purpose of the chapter is to encourage the faithful to hang in there!

Matthew 24:4: Jesus was speaking to His own disciples:

"And Jesus answered and said to them: 'Take heed that no one deceives you.'

Matthew 24:5: (the expression "in My name." indicates that they are Christians).

"For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many."

Matthew 24:15, 16: Only believers would be able to understand the sign that Daniel spoke about:

"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), ¹⁶ "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house."

Matthew 24:23-25: Jesus was speaking to His disciples:

*“Then if anyone says to **you**, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. ²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, **even the elect**. ²⁵ See, I have **told you** beforehand.”*

Romans 8:33, 34: Who are **the elect**?

*“Who shall bring a charge against God's **elect**? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for **us**.”*

Fact #3: We must study all three accounts together in order to get the complete picture

The Olivet Discourse is in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. In order to get the complete picture of end time events we must study all three together because each has its own particular details. Matthew describes earthquakes but Luke wrote about great earthquakes:

Matthew 24:7: Earthquakes

“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.”

Luke 21:11: **Great** earthquakes

*“And there will be **great** earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.”*

Matthew and Luke refer to pestilences, famines and earthquakes but Mark adds ‘troubles’ to the list of events at the ‘beginning of sorrows’:

Mark 13:8: Troubles: *“disturbances/troubling of the waters”*. The troubling of waters in the pool of **Bethesda** (John 5:4, 7). In the context of Mark, it means social turmoil and unrest.

*"For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and **troubles**."*

Matthew 24:9, 10: Matthew refers to betrayal but does not mention who does the betraying:

*"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. ¹⁰ And then many will be **offended**, will betray one another, and will hate one another."*

Mark 13:11-13: Mark explains that family members and friends will betray one another:

*"But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate **what you will speak**. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the **Holy Spirit**. ¹² Now **brother will betray brother** to death, and a **father his child**; and **children will rise** up against parents and cause them to be **put to death**. ¹³ And you will be **hated** by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved."*

Each of the three Synoptic gospels adds its own touch to the abomination of desolation:

Matthew 24:15

Abomination of desolation stands in the **holy place**:

*"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the **holy place**" (whoever reads, let him understand)"*

Mark 13:14

The abomination of desolations stands where it **ought not**:

*"So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing **where it ought not**" (let the reader understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."*

Luke 21:20

The abomination of desolation is when the **Roman legions** besieged Jerusalem:

*"But when you see Jerusalem **surrounded** by armies, then know that its desolation is near."*

Important details in Luke:

- ✓ The 'holy place' is the area **outside the city walls**.
- ✓ The 'abomination of desolation' **is the siege, not the destruction**.
- ✓ Desolation is what **results** from the abomination. 'When you see the Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know that its desolation **is near**.'

Fact #4: Matthew 24 has a two-fold Fulfillment

The disciples asked Jesus two questions and in his answer, Jesus used the events that led up to the destruction of the city as a type of the events that will lead up to the destruction of the world:

Matthew 24:1-3

*"Then Jesus went out and **departed from the temple**, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. ² And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down." ³ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, [QUESTION #1]: '**when will these things be?**' [QUESTION #2]: And what will be the sign of **Your coming, and of the end of the age?**"*

Ellen White wrote repeatedly that the **entire chapter** points forward to events that precede the second coming and the destruction of the world:

*"Christ forewarned His disciples of the destruction of Jerusalem and the signs to take place **prior to the coming** of the Son of man. The **whole** of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew is a prophecy concerning the events to precede **this event**, and the destruction of Jerusalem is used to **typify** the last great destruction of the world by fire." Ellen G. White, Last Day Events, p. 18*

*“The prophecy which He uttered was **twofold** in its meaning; while foreshadowing the destruction of Jerusalem, it **prefigured** also the terrors of the last great day. Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 25*

*“From the fall of Jerusalem the thoughts of Jesus passed to a **wider judgment**. In the destruction of the impenitent city He saw a **symbol** of the final destruction to come upon the world.” Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 743*

*“Jesus did not answer His disciples by **taking up separately** the destruction of Jerusalem and the great day of His coming. He **mingled** the description of these two events. Had He opened future events to His disciples as He beheld them, they would have been unable to endure the sight. In mercy to them, He **blended** the description of the two great crises, leaving the disciples to study out the meaning for themselves. When He referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, His prophetic words **reached beyond that event** to the final conflagration in that day when the Lord shall rise out of His place to punish the world for their iniquity, when the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain. 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.” Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 628*

*“Christ saw in Jerusalem a **symbol** of the world hardened in unbelief and rebellion, and hastening on to meet the retributive judgments of God.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 22*

*“Jesus, looking down to the last generation, saw the world involved in a **deception similar** to that which caused the destruction of Jerusalem. The **great sin** of the Jews was their rejection of Christ [**the embodiment of the law**]; the **great sin** of the Christian world would be their rejection of the law of God, the foundation of His government in heaven and earth.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 22*

*“The Savior's prophecy concerning the visitation of judgments upon Jerusalem is to have **another fulfillment**, of which that terrible desolation was but a **faint shadow**. In the fate of the chosen city we may behold the **doom of a world** that has rejected God's mercy and trampled upon his law.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 36*

*"The ruin of Jerusalem was a **symbol** of the final ruin that shall overwhelm the world. The prophecies that received a **partial fulfillment** in the overthrow of Jerusalem have a **more direct application** to the last days. We are now standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. A crisis is before us, such as the world has never witnessed." Ellen G. White, Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, pp. 120, 12*

*"The warnings that Christ gave to Jerusalem were not to end with them. The judgments upon Jerusalem were a **symbol** of the events of Christ's coming to judgment in the last day, when before Him shall be gathered all nations. "He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 232*

Fact #5: The Events of Matthew 24 are in strict chronological order as we can see by the continued use of "temporal" expressions.

- ✓ **Verse 6** ['the end is not yet']
- ✓ **Verse 8** ['the beginning of sorrows']
- ✓ **Verse 9** ['then']
- ✓ **Verse 10** ['then']
- ✓ **Verse 14** ['then']
- ✓ **Verse 16** ['then']
- ✓ **Verse 19** ['those days of the flight']
- ✓ **Verse 21** ['then']
- ✓ **Verse 22** ['those days of the tribulation cut short' 2 times]
- ✓ **Verse 23** ['then']
- ✓ **Verse 29** ['immediately **after** the tribulation of those days']
- ✓ **Verse 30** ['then' 2 times]

The *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* explains the meaning of the Greek word *tote*, 'then':

*"In the sense of **thereafter** introduces that which (immediately) **follows temporally**."*

The parallel chapters in Mark (13:14, 21, 26, 27) and Luke (21:20, 21, 27, 28) use the word 'then' but much **less frequently** and in places where one event **clearly follows** the other in chronological sequence.

Fact #6: The book, *The Great Controversy* follows the same order of events as Matthew 24 and therefore we must study it alongside this chapter.

The Great Controversy **fills in the gaps** of Matthew 24. In fact, the entire book is an expanded **commentary** on Matthew 24 in chronological order.

Matthew 24 begins with the **destruction of Jerusalem** and ends with the second coming. Likewise, *The Great Controversy* begins with the destruction of Jerusalem and ends with the second coming. Further, we shall see that Ellen White presents the signs of Matthew 24 in the same order.

Fact #7: The 'you' of Matthew 24 includes all believers from all ages.

In Matthew 24:4, 6, 9, 15, 20, 23, 25, 26, 33, 42, 44 Jesus was speaking to His disciples. However, the entire chapter is for all the followers of Jesus of all ages. When Jesus used the word 'you', He meant all believers:

*"And Jesus came and spoke **to them**, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded **you**; and lo, I am with **you** always, even to the end of the age." Amen."*

John 14:1-3

*"Let not **your** heart be troubled; **you** believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for **you**. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for **you**, I will come again and receive **you** to Myself; that where I am, there **you** may be also."*

John 16:1, 2

*"These things I have spoken to **you** that **you** should not be made to stumble. ² They will put **you** out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills **you** will think that he offers God service."*

John 17:20, 21

*"I do not pray for **these alone**, but also for **those who will believe** in Me through their word; ²¹ that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."*

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LESSON #2 – THE EAGLES OF BABYLON

God’s Covenant with Israel

Exodus 19:4-8

- ✓ God **offered** to make a covenant with Israel.
- ✓ **Moses relayed** God’s desire to the people.
- ✓ The people responded **‘yes’ to God**.
- ✓ Moses relayed the response of the people **to God**.

*“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. ⁵ Now therefore, **if** you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, **then** you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. ⁶ And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which **you shall speak to the children of Israel**. ⁷ So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and **laid before them** all these words which the Lord commanded him. ⁸ Then all the people answered together and said, “All that the Lord has spoken **we will do**.” So Moses **brought back the words** of the people to the Lord.”*

The Shekinah Entered the Sanctuary/Temple

Exodus 25:8

God **promised to enter** the sanctuary to **dwell** with Israel:

*“And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may **dwell** among them.”*

Exodus 40:34, 35: The **Shekinah** entered the **tabernacle** built by Moses:

*“Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the **glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.**”*

1 Kings 8:10, 11: The **Shekinah** entered the **temple** built by Solomon:

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

A Marriage Covenant

The covenant between God and Israel at Mt. Sinai was a **marriage covenant**:

Jeremiah 31:31-32

*“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— ³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, **My covenant which they broke**, though **I was a husband to them**, says the Lord.”*

Eight Hundred Years of Apostasy

After the Shekinah entered the wilderness sanctuary, Israel’s history was one of constant apostasy. Israel **broke her marriage covenant** with the Lord:

2 Chronicles 36:14-16

*“Moreover all the leaders of the priests and the people **transgressed** more and more, according to all the **abominations** of the nations, and **defiled** the house of the LORD which He had consecrated in Jerusalem. ¹⁵ And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His **messengers**, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. ¹⁶ However, they **mocked the messengers** of God, despised His words, and scoffed*

at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy."

Israel became a Harlot and Committed Abominations

God's very own people apostatized from the Lord and payed the harlot with other lovers. They forgot the God of their youth. Ezekiel referred to them as a harlot and accused them of committing the abominations of the nations.

Ezekiel 16:15, 22, 30

"But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who would have it. ²² And in all your abominations and acts of harlotry you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, struggling in your blood. ³⁰ How degenerate is your heart!" says the Lord GOD, "seeing you do all these things, the deeds of a brazen harlot."

Ezekiel 16:2

Israel committed the abominations of the surrounding nations:

"Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations."

The Greatest Abomination: Sun Worship

Ezekiel 8:16-18

Ezekiel 8 is the 'abominations chapter'. Just before the first destruction of Jerusalem, there were two groups within the city. The first were the sun worshipers and the second were those who sighed and cried because the religious leaders worshiped the sun. This apostasy was taking place among those who claimed to be God's people. Most were in apostasy; the majority was not on God's side.

"So He brought me into the inner court of the LORD's house; and there, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward

the east, and they were **worshipping the sun toward the east**.¹⁷ Then He said to me, "Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to commit the **abominations** that they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger. Indeed they put the branch to their nose.¹⁸ Therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them."

The Religious Leaders and the People

Jeremiah 5:31

The **leaders** spearheaded the apostasy but the people loved to have it so:

*"The he **prophets** prophesy falsely, and the **priests** rule by their own power; and My people **love to have it so**. However, what will you do in the end?"*

The Investigative Judgment

Because of her unfaithfulness to her husband, God came to the temple **from the north** to do a work of **investigative judgment** of those who lived in the city:

Ezekiel 1:4

*"Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the **north**, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness was all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire."*

Destruction from the Four Corners

Ezekiel 7:1, 2

God predicted that the end would come upon the **four corners** of the land:

*"Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² "And you, son of man, thus says the Lord God to the **land of Israel**: 'An end! The **end has come** upon the **four corners of the land**.³ Now the end has come upon you, and I will send **My anger** against you; I will judge you according to your ways, and I will repay you for all your **abominations**."*

The Sealing: Two Groups in the City

Ezekiel 9:1-7

Not everyone in the city was practicing the abominations. There were **two groups** of people in Jerusalem and both of them claimed to serve God:

- ✓ Those who practiced the **abominations**.
- ✓ Those who **sighed and cried** because of them.

In the city, there was a **people within the people**. Likewise, at the end there will be a **small remnant** who are faithful to the Lord. The sighing and crying of the faithful is equivalent to the loud cry of **Revelation 18:1-6**.

The faithful will **sigh and cry** because of the **abominations** that are being committed in **the church** (Revelation 18:2, 3). Revelation describes the sealed ones as the **144,000**.

*"Then He called out in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, "Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each with a **deadly weapon** in his hand." ² And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his battle-ax in his hand. One man among them was **clothed with linen** and had a **writer's inkhorn** at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar. ³ Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer's inkhorn at his side; ⁴ and the LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of **Jerusalem**, and put **a mark on the foreheads** of the men who **sigh and cry** over all the abominations that are done **within it**." ⁵ To the others He said in my hearing, "Go **after him** through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. ⁶ Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but **do not come near** anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at **My sanctuary**." So they began **with the elders** who were before the temple. ⁷ Then He said to them, "Defile the temple, and fill the courts with the slain. Go out!" And they went out and killed in the city."*

The Departure of the Shekinah

Ezekiel 10:18,19

When the work of investigative judgment concluded, the **Shekinah left** the temple:

*“Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim. ¹⁹ And the cherubim lifted their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight. When they went out, the wheels were beside them; and they **stood at the door** of the **east gate** of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.”*

The Shekinah Lingered on the Mt. of Olives

Ezekiel 11:22, 23

The glorious **Shekinah lingered** on the **Mt. of Olives** and then left:

*“Then the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was high above them. ²³ And the glory of the LORD **went up from the midst** of the city and **stood on the mountain**, which is on the **east side of the city** [Mt. of Olives].”*

Lamentations describes the events that led up to the destruction of the city. Jeremiah wrote the book of **Lamentations** in **Qinah** meter, a literary style used for **funeral dirges**. Its tone is that of a **lamentation** for the **dead**. The **captives** sang this song as they went captive to **Babylon**.

The Eagles came to Desolate the City

Jeremiah 4:13

Jeremiah compared the Babylonians as **eagles** coming to destroy the city:

*“Behold, he shall come up like clouds, and his chariots like a whirlwind. His horses are swifter than **eagles**. Woe to us, for we are plundered!”*

Lamentations 4:19

The Babylonians came as **swift eagles** to destroy the city:

*“Our pursuers were swifter than the **eagles** of the heavens. They pursued us on the mountains and lay in wait for us in the wilderness.”*

Habakkuk 1:8

The Babylonian troops compared with **swift eagles**:

*“Their horses also are swifter than leopards and more fierce than evening wolves. Their chargers charge ahead; their cavalry comes from afar; they fly **as the eagle** that hastens to eat.”*

Daniel 7:4

The Babylonian lion of Daniel 7 had the **wings of an eagle**. At the main **entrances** to the ancient city of Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar placed lion sphinxes with eagles' wings:

*“The first was like a lion, and had **eagle's wings**.”*

The Three Scourges in the City

Jeremiah 32:24

Jeremiah predicted three scourges that would afflict Jerusalem when the Babylonians besieged the city: **famine**, **sword** and **pestilence** (the same three scourges afflicted Jerusalem before its second destruction by Titus Matthew 24:6, 7):

*“Look, the **siege** mounds! They have come to the city **to take it**; and the city has been given into the hand of the Chaldeans who fight against it, because of the **sword [war]** and **famine** and **pestilence**.”*

The Abomination of Desolation

2 Chronicles 36:17-21

The **abominations** that God's professed people practiced in the city led to desolation:

*"Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on **young man or virgin**, on the **aged** or the **weak**; He gave them all into his hand. ¹⁸ And all the articles from the house of God, great and small, the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his leaders all these he took to Babylon. ¹⁹ Then they **burned** the house of God, **broke down the wall** of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with **fire**, and **destroyed** all its precious possessions. ²⁰ And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became **servants** to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, ²¹ to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay **desolate** she kept Sabbath, to fulfill **seventy years**."*

- ✓ The terminology in this passage is similar to **Ezekiel 9:1-6**.
- ✓ Those who had the **mark** on their foreheads **did not perish**.
- ✓ Verse 21 tells us that the **desolation** came because of the abominations.
- ✓ Thus, we have the **abomination of desolation** in the first destruction of Jerusalem.

According to **Josephus**, the Jews sang the book of **Lamentations** in **both destructions** of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 25: 8, 9, 11, 18

The abominations that God's professed people committed in the city led to **desolation**:

*"Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Because you have not heard My words, ⁹ behold, I will send and take all the **families of the north**,' says the LORD, 'and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, **My servant**, and will bring them against*

*this land, against its inhabitants, and against these nations all around, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual **desolations**.¹¹ And this whole land shall be a **desolation** and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.¹⁸ Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, its kings and its princes, to make them a **desolation**, an astonishment, a hissing, and a curse, as it is this day.”*

Messages of the True Prophets Slighted

Jeremiah 25:3-4

God’s prophets warned God’s people of the coming doom. Jeremiah emphasized repeatedly that **false prophets** would try to **counteract** the true by saying that the city **could not fall** because it was **God’s city**. **Matthew 24:11** describes false prophets before the second destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 AD.

*“From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day, this is the twenty-third year in which the word of the LORD has come to me; and I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, but **you have not listened**.⁴ And the LORD has sent to you all **His servants the prophets**, rising early and sending them, but **you have not listened** nor inclined your ear to hear.”*

Desecration of the Sabbath

Jeremiah 17:24, 25, 27

The **worship of the sun** and the desecration of the **Sabbath** were the two main reasons for the destruction of the city:

*“And it shall be, if you heed Me carefully,’ says the LORD, ‘to bring no burden through the gates of this city on the **Sabbath day**, but **hallow the Sabbath** day, to do no work in it,²⁵ then shall enter the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, accompanied by the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall remain forever.²⁷ But if you will not heed Me to hallow **the Sabbath day**, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the*

Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.'"

Nehemiah 13:15-18

After Israel returned from captivity, they once again began to desecrate the Sabbath and Nehemiah reminded them that the Babylonians destroyed the city for this very reason:

*"In those days I saw people in Judah treading wine presses **on the Sabbath**, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on **the Sabbath day**. And I warned them **about the day** on which they were selling provisions. ¹⁶ Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold them **on the Sabbath** to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. ¹⁷ Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, "What evil thing is this that you do, by which you **profane the Sabbath day**? ¹⁸ Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by **profaning the Sabbath**."*

Restoration after Captivity

Daniel 9:1, 2

Jerusalem remained **desolate for 70 years**. At the end of this period, Daniel prayed that **God would restore** them to their land (Daniel 9:1-23).

*"In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans-- ² in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish **seventy years** in the **desolations** of Jerusalem."*

Daniel 9:25-27

God answered Daniel's prayer by telling him that the Jews would rebuild Jerusalem after which the city would be destroyed a **second time**. Once again,

the **abominations** in the city would lead to **desolation**. This clearly indicates that there is link between the first and second destructions. The story of the fall of Jerusalem in **586 BC** would **repeat in 70 AD**. Notice the key words: Abomination and desolation:

*"Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. ²⁶ "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and **the people of the prince** who is to come shall **destroy the city and the sanctuary**. The end of it shall be with a flood, and until the end of the war **desolations** are determined. ²⁷ Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering and on the wing of **abominations** shall be one who makes **desolate**, even until the consummation, which is determined is poured out on the **desolate**."*

The Rebuilding of the Temple

2 Chronicles 36:22, 23

After the seventy-year captivity, Cyrus gave the decree for the people to return to the land to rebuild the temple:

*"Now in the first year of **Cyrus king of Persia**, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of **Cyrus king of Persia**, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it **in writing**, saying, ²³ Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to **build Him a house** at Jerusalem that is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!"*

The Second Temple

Haggai 2:6-9 (in the light of **Matthew 6:29; 12:42**): Temple **finished**:

In the year 515 BC, the Jews finished building the temple. Some of the **elder statesmen** that had seen the temple built by Solomon, **cried** at the dedication

of the second temple because its external glory was so inferior to that of the first temple (Haggai 2:1-3):

*"For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; ⁷ and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the **Desire of All Nations**, and I will **fill this temple with glory**,' says the LORD of hosts. ⁸ 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the LORD of hosts. ⁹ The **glory of this latter temple** shall be **greater than the former**,' says the LORD of hosts. 'And in this place I will **give peace**,' says the LORD of hosts."*

Yet the prophet Haggai, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, predicted that the second temple would far excel the former in glory. The Jews are still trying to understand this prediction because the second temple was not even the shadow of the glory of the first temple.

Jesus, the Shekinah in the Temple

John 1:14

The second temple was more glorious than the first because, Jesus, the living Shekinah ministered in it:

*"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld **His glory, the glory** as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."*

Luke 19:37, 38

Just before the death of Jesus, He came down the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives and entered Jerusalem through the Golden Gate. This was the last coming of the Shekinah to the second temple:

*"Then, as He was now drawing near the **descent of the Mount of Olives**, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, ³⁸ saying: " 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!' Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"*

Matthew 21:12, 13

Upon entering the Golden Gate, Jesus, the living **Shekinah**, entered the temple and referred to it as 'the temple of God' and 'My house':

*"Then Jesus went into the **temple of God** and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. ¹³ And He said to them, "It is written, '**My house** shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"*

Matthew 21:18, 19

Jesus acted out the parable of the barren fig tree that illustrates the close of probation for the Jewish Theocracy:

*"Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. ¹⁹ And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, "Let no fruit grow on you **ever again**." And immediately the fig tree **withered away**."*

Matthew 21:33-43

In the parable of the vineyard workers Jesus illustrated, in a different way, the close of probation for the Jewish Theocracy. The parable explains that God took away the kingdom from the literal Jewish nation because they rejected the Messiah:

*"Hear another parable: There was a certain **landowner** [**God the Father**] who planted a **vineyard** [**Israel**] and set a **hedge** around it [**the law**], dug a winepress in it and built a **tower** [**the temple**] and he leased it to **vinedressers** [**the Jewish leaders**] and went into a **far country** [**heaven**]. ³⁴ Now when vintage-time **drew near**, he sent his servants to the **vinedressers** [**before the Babylonian captivity**], that they might receive its fruit. ³⁵ And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another [**what they did to the prophets**]. ³⁶ Again, he sent **other servants** [**after the captivity until John the Baptist**], more than the first, and they did likewise to them. ³⁷ Then **last of all he sent his son** [**Jesus**] to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ³⁸ "But when the*

vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'this is the **heir** [see **Galatians 3:16**]. Come, let us **kill him** [the death of Christ] and seize his inheritance.' ³⁹ "So they took him and cast him **out of the vineyard** [Jesus died outside of Jerusalem] and killed him. ⁴⁰ Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" ⁴¹ They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably [the destruction of Jerusalem], and lease his vineyard to **other vinedressers** [the Gentiles] who will render to him the fruits in their seasons." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone [Jesus] which the **builders** [the Jewish nation] rejected has become the chief **cornerstone** [see **Ephesians 2:19-22**]. This was the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? ⁴³ "Therefore I say to you, the **kingdom of God** will be **taken from** you [the kingdom would no longer belong to literal Israel] and given to **a nation** [ethne, the gentiles] bearing the **fruits** of it. ⁴⁴ And whoever falls on this stone will be broken [whoever receives Jesus as Savior]; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder [those who reject Jesus]." ⁴⁵ Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was **speaking of them**."

Matthew 23:37-39

As Jesus left the temple for the last time he spoke the awesome words, 'your house is left unto you desolate'. The Shekinah then departed the temple. Christ's use of the word '**desolate**' indicated that the doom of Jerusalem was inevitable.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! ³⁸ See! **Your house** is left to you **desolate**; ³⁹ for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' "

Jesus Left the Temple

Matthew 24:1-2

After Jesus, the living Shekinah, departed the temple, He lingered upon the Mount of Olives as if loath to leave. He then spoke of the destruction and desolation of the city and the temple.

*"Then Jesus **went out and departed** from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. ² And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, **not one stone shall be left here upon another**, that shall not be thrown down. Now as He **sat** on the **Mount of Olives**, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"*

The Abomination of Desolation

The greatest abomination of the Jewish Theocracy was the rejection of the Messiah:

*"Jesus declared to the listening disciples the judgments that were to fall upon apostate Israel, and especially the retributive vengeance that would come upon them **for their rejection and crucifixion** of the Messiah." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 26*

Matthew 24:15

Daniel referred to the abomination of desolation in the 'holy place', the area **just outside** the city walls:

*"Therefore when you see the '**abomination of desolation**,' spoken of by **Daniel** the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand)."*

Luke 21:20

The gospel of Luke explains the abomination of desolation differently than Matthew. The **abomination** of **desolation** was when the **Roman legions** besieged the city in the year **66 AD**:

*"But when you see Jerusalem **surrounded by armies** then know that its **desolation is near.**"*

Luke 19:41-44

Jesus **prophesied** the destruction of Jerusalem and the **reason** for its destruction. In the **year 70 AD** a **pagan king** came with **eagle standards** (**Matthew 24:28**) to **destroy Jerusalem** with fire. Once again, in the siege, there was **hunger, pestilence and sword** and once more, the Jews sang the book of **Lamentations** as they went into dispersion and captivity:

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

“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

**LESSON #3 – MATTHEW 24: THE HISTORICAL
FULFILLMENT**

Matthew 24:5-8: Preliminary signs

“For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ’ and will deceive many. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of sorrows.”

False Christs

Scripture:

Acts 5:36, 37: Theudas and Judas of Galilee:

“For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. ³⁷ After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed.”

Acts 8:9, 10: Simon Magus:

“But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone

great, ¹⁰ to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is **the great power of God.**"

Ellen White:

"Many **false messiahs** will appear, claiming to work miracles, and declaring that the time of the **deliverance** of the **Jewish nation** has come. These will mislead many. Christ's words were fulfilled. Between His death and the siege of Jerusalem **many false messiahs** appeared." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 628

Josephus:

"Moreover, **impostors** and **deceivers** called upon the mob to follow them into the desert. For they said that they would show them unmistakable marvels and signs that would be wrought in harmony with God's design." Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 20:5:6

"**Deceivers** and **impostors** under the pretense of **divine inspiration** fostering revolutionary changes, they persuaded the multitude to act like madmen, and led them out into the **desert** under the belief that God would there give them **tokens of deliverance.**" Flavius Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 2:13:4

"In Judea matters were constantly going from bad to worse. For the country was again infested with bands of brigands and **impostors** who deceived the mob." Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20:5:5

Wars, Rumors of Wars and Social Unrest

Jesus was born in a time of **unparalleled peace** in the history of the Roman Empire. The **Pax Romana** (Roman Peace) began with **Augustus** in **17 BC** and continued until the time of Nero.

Nero, in **67 AD** commissioned the Roman General **Vespasian** to quench the revolt of Israel that eventually ended in the destruction of Jerusalem in **70 AD**.

According to **Josephus**, **Vespasian** destroyed **everything** in his path before he arrived in Jerusalem, because **his strategy** was "to leave nothing outside of Jerusalem behind him that might interrupt in the siege." (*Wars of the Jews* 4:7:3).

Thus, there were **many wars** outside Jerusalem before the siege. **Ellen White** wrote:

*“Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, men wrestled for the supremacy. **Emperors** were murdered. Those supposed to be standing next the throne were **slain**. There were **wars** and **rumors of wars**.” Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 628*

The **Jews had battles** with the **Askelonians**, the **Samaritans**, the **Alexandrians** and the **Syrians** during the period that led up to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Regarding the period **after Nero**, the Roman historian, **Tacitus** (55-117 AD) wrote:

*“The history on which I am entering is that of a period rich in disasters, terrible in **battles**, torn by **civil struggles**, horrible even in peace. Four emperors failed by the sword; there were **three civil wars**, more **foreign wars** and often both at the same time.” Tacitus, Histories 1:2*

Josephus remarked, “all was in disorder after the death of Nero.” (**Wars** 1:1:2)

Famines

Scripture:

Acts 11:28: **Agabus** and the **great famine**:

*“Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a **great famine** throughout all the **world**, which also happened in the days of **Claudius Caesar**. “*

Josephus called this “the great famine” Antiquities of the Jews 20:5:2. **Josephus** mentioned **other famines** as well (Antiquities 20:2:6; 20:4:2; **Wars** 6:3:3)

Ellen White wrote about famines and pestilence during this period:

*“Thousands perished from **famine and pestilence**. Natural affection seemed to have been destroyed. Husbands robbed their wives, and wives their husbands.*

Children would be seen **snatching the food** from the mouths of their aged parents.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 32

OT Prediction of Famine and Hunger

Scripture:

Deuteronomy 28:56, 57

In the curses of the covenant, **Moses** had predicted that **mothers** would **eat** their own **children**:

*“The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because of her delicateness and sensitivity, will refuse to the husband of her bosom, and to her son and her daughter, 57 her placenta which comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears; for **she will eat them secretly** for lack of everything in **the siege** and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you at all your gates.”*

Lamentations 4:10: Mothers ate **their children** in the first destruction of Jerusalem:

*“The hands of the compassionate women have **cooked their own children**; they became food for them in the destruction of the daughter of my people.”*

Josephus wrote:

*“In the meantime, countless thousands of Jews **died of hunger**. In every house where there was the least morsel of food, **relatives fought over it** gaping with **hunger**, the outlaws prowled around like mad dogs, **gnawing at anything**, belts, shoes, and even the leather from their shields. Others devoured **wisps of hay** and then there was the incredible horror of Mary of Bethzuba.” Wars of the Jews, VI, 193.*

Josephus then tells the story of how a woman named **Mary ate** her own baby.

Ellen White wrote:

*“So fierce were the pangs of hunger that men would gnaw the **leather of their belts and sandals** and the covering of their **shields**. Great numbers of the people would steal out at night to gather wild plants growing outside the city walls, though many were **seized and put to death** with cruel torture, and often those who returned in safety were **robbed** of what they had gleaned at so great peril.”*
Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p 31

Pestilence

The only other place in the New Testament where the word ‘pestilence’ appears is in **Acts 24:5** where Paul’s enemies accused him of teaching **pestilential doctrines** that spread like a **pandemic** throughout the whole world:

Acts 24:5

*“For we have found this man a **pestilent** fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout **the world**, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.”*

Regarding the siege of Jerusalem, **Ellen White** wrote:

*“**Thousands** perished from famine and **pestilence**.”* Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 32

Earthquakes and Supernatural Phenomena

In his *Annals*, **Tacitus**, describes **earthquakes** in **Crete**, **Rome**, **Apamaea**, **Phrygia**, **Campania**, **Laodicea** and **Pompeii** just before the destruction of Jerusalem. (Tacitus, *Annals* 2:47; 12:43, 58; 14:27; 15:22).

He described a series of earthquakes during the reign of **Claudius**:

*“Houses were flattened by **repeated earthquakes**, and as terror spread, the weak were trampled to death by the panic stricken.”* (Tacitus, *Annals* 12:58)

Seneca, the Roman philosopher and diplomat, wrote that earthquakes occurred in **Asia**, **Achaia**, **Syria** and **Macedonia** (*Epistles*, 91).

The Bible commentator **Ellicott** wrote:

*“Perhaps **no period in the world’s history** has ever been so marked by these convulsions [**earthquakes**] as that which intervenes between the Crucifixion and the destruction of Jerusalem.” (Ellicott’s Commentary, volume 6, p. 146)*

During the **first phase** of the Jewish war with Rome, **Josephus** explained:

*“There broke out a prodigious storm in the night, with the utmost violence, and very strong winds, with the largest showers of rain, and continual **lightnings**, terrible **thunderings**, and amazing concussions and **bellowings** of the earth, that was in an earthquake.” Flavius Josephus, **Wars of the Jews** 4:4:5*

Josephus could read the signs of the times. He knew that these things were must the ‘beginning of sorrows’:

*“These things were a manifest indication that some **destruction was coming** upon men, when the system of the world was put into this disorder; and anyone would guess that these wonders foreshadowed **some grand calamities that were coming**.” (Wars 4:4:5)*

“Jesus ben Ananias, a 'foolish peasant' predicted the coming destruction 4 years before the outbreak of the revolt, 'A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!’” (War 6.301).

Civil Unrest

Mark 13:8

*“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and **troubles**. These are the beginnings of sorrows.”*

Leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem there was great **turmoil in society**. The word ‘troubles’ refers to a disturbance, commotion or tumult in society. **John 5:4** uses the word metaphorically to describe the **stirring** of the waters

in the pool of Bethesda. **Acts 12:18** refers to a tumult among the soldiers and **Acts 19:23** describes a disturbance or riot over 'the Way' (read the entire context in verses 23-41).

Leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem there was a tremendous increase of **messianic movements** in the **Judean Wilderness**. For example, Josephus wrote that under the reign of **Felix**, a succession of 'deceivers and impostors' who "*fomented **revolutionary changes** under the pretext of divine inspiration.*"

Ellen White described the turmoil within the city when the Romans besieged it:

*"Satan aroused the fiercest and most debased passions of the soul. Men did not reason; they were beyond reason--controlled by **impulse** and **blind rage**. They became **satanic** in their cruelty. In the family and **in the nation**, among the highest and the lowest classes alike, there was **suspicion, envy, hatred, strife, rebellion, murder**. There was **no safety anywhere**. Friends and kindred betrayed one another. Parents slew their children and children their parents."*
Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 28

Jesus the said that these things were just the '**beginning** of sorrows.' In other words, the **worst was still to come**. A **greater trial** would come when the populace blamed God's people for the calamities! Satan had a **hidden agenda** behind all these problems. What was his secret agenda?

"Then" God's People Blamed

Matthew 24:9

Remember that the events of Matthew 24 are in chronological order. Immediately after describing wars, pestilence, famine and earthquakes Jesus spoke about the persecution of His faithful followers. The Jews **blamed** God's people for the calamities in **verses 6-8**:

*"**Then** they will deliver you up to **tribulation** and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for **My name's sake**."*

After the crucifixion of Christ, the Jewish Theocracy persecuted the followers of Jesus.

Acts 5:41

The **Jewish Sanhedrin** beat **Peter and John** for the sake of the name of Jesus:

*"And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame **for his name**."*

Acts 7:59

The **Jewish Sanhedrin** pronounced the death sentence against **Stephen** for the sake of the name of Jesus:

*"And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "**Lord Jesus**, receive my spirit."*

Acts 8:1

Saul of Tarsus launched a severe persecution against Christians in Jerusalem for the sake of the name of Jesus:

*"Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time **a great persecution** arose **against the church** which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles."*

Acts 9:4

Saul persecuted Jesus in the person of His witnesses:

*"Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you **persecuting Me**?"*

John 16:1, 2

Jesus had already predicted that the Jews would persecute His followers even to the point of killing them:

*"These things I have spoken to you that you should not be made to stumble.² They will put you **out of the synagogues**; yes, the time is coming that whoever **kills you** will think that he **offers God service**."*

The Roman historian **Tacitus** wrote:

*"First, Nero had self-acknowledged Christians arrested. Then, on their information, **large numbers of others** were condemned." (Tacitus, *Annals* 15).*

The tribulation mentioned in verse 9 occurred **before the close of probation**. This was a **little time** of trouble. However, the great tribulation mentioned in **verses 21 and 22** occurred after the Christians had left Jerusalem and the apostates were still inside. Verse 9 describes a 'tribulation' but verses 21, 22 describe a '**great tribulation**'!

The Romans crucified **Peter** and decapitated **Paul**.

Before Rulers and Kings

Mark 13:9

The faithful suffered persecution and had to testify before **rulers and kings**:

*"But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to **councils**, and you will be beaten **in the synagogues**. You will be brought before **rulers and kings** for My sake, for a testimony to them."*

Acts 24:24, 25

The apostle Paul testified before **Felix**:

*"And after some days, when **Felix** came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.²⁵ Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you."*

Acts 26:1-3

The apostle Paul testified before King **Agrippa**:

*"Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." So Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself: ² I think myself happy, **King Agrippa**, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, ³ especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews. Therefore I beg you to hear me patiently."*

Paul also appeared before **Festus**, the procurator of Judea. Ellen White adds that **Paul** also witnessed before **Nero** (AA 492-497)

Aided by the Holy Spirit

God poured out the Holy Spirit on the day of **Pentecost** to enable the disciples to witness (Acts 1:7, 8).

Mark 13:11: Jesus promised the aid of the **Holy Spirit in witnessing**:

*"But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is **not you who speak**, but the **Holy Spirit**."*

Luke 21:14, 15: God promised to give **wisdom** that enemies would not be able to contradict:

*"Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; ¹⁵ for I will give you **a mouth and wisdom** which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist."*

Friends and Relatives Betray

Mark 13:12

Family members and friends betrayed the faithful:

"Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death".

Luke 21:16

“You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death.”

Matthew 10:34-36

Jesus predicted the betrayal of the faithful by their own family and friends:

*“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to 'set a man **against his father**, a **daughter against her mother**, and a **daughter-in-law** against her mother-in-law'; ³⁶ and 'a **man's enemies** will be those of his own household.'*

Ellen White about betrayal just before the destruction of Jerusalem:

***“Fathers and mothers** betrayed their children. Children betrayed their parents. **Friends delivered their friends** up to the Sanhedrin. The persecutors wrought out their purpose by killing Stephen, James, and other Christians.”* Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 629

Falling Away of Believers

Matthew 24:10

Due to persecution, many of the faithful **fell away**:

*“And then many will be **offended**, will betray one another, and will hate one another.”*

2 Timothy 4:10

Demas apostatized:

*“... for Demas has **forsaken me**, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica...”*

2 Timothy 4:16

No one was present to encourage Paul during his second imprisonment:

*“At my first defense no one stood with me, but **all forsook me**. May it not be charged against them.”*

1 John 2:19

Many forsook the cause because they did not really belong to the Christian fellowship:

*“They went **out from us**, but they were **not of us**; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that **none of them were of us**.”*

False Prophets

Matthew 24:11

*“Then many **false prophets** will rise up and deceive many.”*

We are to understand these false prophets in the light of the false prophets that arose just before the **first destruction** of Jerusalem. They spoke ‘**peace, peace**’, when there was no peace. Those who said otherwise, like **Jeremiah, were considered alarmists** (see Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11; Ezekiel 13:9, 10).

Ellen White wrote:

*“**False prophets** did rise, deceiving the people, and leading great numbers into the desert. **Magicians** and **sorcerers**, claiming miraculous power, drew the people after them into the mountain solitudes.” Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 631*

The **religious leaders** “bribed **false prophets** to proclaim, even while Roman legions were besieging the temple, that the people were to **wait for deliverance** from God.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 29

Josephus:

*“Now it came to pass, while Fadus was procurator in Judea, that a certain magician, whose name was **Theudas**, persuaded a **great part of the people** to take their effects with them, and follow him to the river Jordan; for he told them*

he was **a prophet**, and that he would, by his own command, divide the river, and afford them passage over it; and many were deluded by his words.” Flavius Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 6:5:2

Acts 13:6

The book of Acts mentions a false prophet named **Bar-Jesus**:

*“Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, **a false prophet**, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus”*

2 Peter 2:1: False prophets and teachers arose among believers who taught destructive heresies:

*“But there were also **false prophets** among the people, even as there will be **false teachers** among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.”*

1 John 4:1

Many **false prophets** arose in the times of John:

*“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many **false prophets** have gone out into the world.”*

Lawlessness Abounded

Matthew 24:12

*“And because **lawlessness** will abound, the love of many will **grow cold**.”*

Lawlessness abounded in the city before its destruction. The first chapter of *The Great Controversy* describes an environment of anarchy.

The word ‘lawlessness’ here is **anomías**. The same word appears in **1 John 3:4** and the King James Version translates it ‘transgression of the law.’ **Agape** must have been hot before it grew cold. These people must have rejoiced in the truth and **turned away** from it. This indicates apostasy. **Matthew 7:21-23** describes a group of believers who **practice lawlessness** and yet profess the name of Jesus.

Salvation for the Perseverant

Matthew 24:13

Salvation will come only to those who persevere until the end:

*“But he who **endures** to the end shall be saved.”*

The immediately preceding **context** is important here. There are **three things** in the previous context keep believers from enduring:

- ✓ **Persecution** by kindred (24:9, 10)
- ✓ **Deception** by false prophets (24:11)
- ✓ Love **growing cold** because of lawlessness (24:12)

Luke 21:19: Patience:

*“By your **patience** possess your souls.”*

Preaching the Gospel to the World

Matthew 24:14

*“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in **all the world** as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”*

The word ‘world’ here is **oikouméne** and refers to the **inhabited Roman world**. The same word appears in **Luke 2:1** where **Cesar Augustus** gave a decree that the **whole world** should be taxed (see also, Acts 17:6; Revelation 3:10; 12:9; 16:14).

Colossians 1:23

The gospel did indeed go to the **whole world** before the destruction of Jerusalem:

“... if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

Romans 1:8

The whole world knew about the **faith of the Romans**:

*“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout **the whole world**.”*



“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #4 – THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION IN HISTORY

Review of Previous Lesson

Review of the chronological order of events in **Matthew 24:5-14**

- False christs and false prophets deceive many.
- Disasters (Satan’s stealth plan was to blame God’s people).
- Tribulation during which some die (not the great tribulation).
- Many fell by the wayside when persecution came.
- Families turned on family members and friends on friends
- The faithful witnessed before kings, presidents and magistrates.
- The Holy Spirit gave the faithful wisdom and words to speak.
- False prophets predicted peace when there was no peace.
- Because of transgression of the law, the love of many grew cold.
- The faithful needed Patience or perseverance.
- The gospel went to the entire inhabited Roman world.

Daniel and the Abomination of Desolation

Matthew 24:15

"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand)."

There are several important points in this verse:

- ✓ Daniel predicted the abomination of desolation so we must **return to the book of Daniel** to understand its meaning.
- ✓ The abomination of desolation was a sign that the followers of Jesus **could see**.
- ✓ The '**holy place**' was not located **within the city** because the followers of Jesus could **see it** and then **escape**. How could they escape if the Romans were already destroying the city?

Daniel 9:26, 27

We must go **back to Daniel** to understand the abomination of desolation. After the Babylonian captivity, God **restored Israel** to its city. The people rebuilt the **city**, the **temple** and the **walls**, and reestablished their **civil and religious** society. God gave the Jewish theocracy **seventy weeks** of grace to shape up:

*"And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be **cut off**, but **not for Himself**; and the **people [the Jews] of the prince [Jesus]** who is to come **shall destroy** the city and the sanctuary [**did the Jews destroy their own city?**]. The **end** of it shall be with a **flood**, and till the end of the war **desolations** are determined. ²⁷ Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the **middle of the week**, He shall bring an end to **sacrifice and offering**. And on the wing of **abominations** shall be one who makes **desolate**, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the **desolate**."*

- ✓ **After the captivity**, God gave the Jewish nation 70 weeks—**490 years**—to fulfill their mission.
- ✓ At the **end of the 69th** week the 'anointed One' would come, **confirm** a covenant for one week, be **cut off** in the middle of the last week, and **bring an end** to sacrifices and offerings.
- ✓ After these events, the 'the **people of the Prince** who was to come' would destroy the city and the sanctuary once more.

✓ Who destroyed Jerusalem the first time? It was a combination of three:

- **God** (Daniel 9:14)
- **Nebuchadnezzar** (2Chronicles 36:17-20)
- **Israel** (Daniel 9:11, 14, 15; Jeremiah 38:23, 17, 18)

We can put it this way: Because of Israel's sins, God employed His servant Nebuchadnezzar to destroy the city and the temple. Something similar happened with the second destruction of Jerusalem:

*"The Jews had forged **their own fetters**; they had filled for **themselves** the cup of vengeance. In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the woes that followed them in their dispersion, they were but reaping the harvest which **their own hands** had sown. Says the prophet: 'O Israel, **thou hast destroyed thyself**;' 'for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.' Hosea 13:9; 14:1. Their sufferings are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work. By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, **the Jews had caused** the protection of God to be withdrawn from them, and **Satan was permitted** to rule them according to his will." The Great Controversy, pp. 35-36*

In the parable of the wedding garment, **God** used **His armies** to destroy those **murderers** (Matthew 22:7):

*"But when the king heard about it, he was furious and **he** sent out his **armies**, destroyed those **murderers**, and burned up their city."*

Rejection, Desolation, Destruction

- ✓ Rejection of the Messiah (Matthew 23:37; Luke 19:41, 42)
- ✓ The Temple left desolate (Matthew 23:38)
- ✓ Jesus refers to the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:1-3)
- ✓ The abomination of desolation signs (Matthew 24:15)
- ✓ The destruction of the city and temple (Luke 19:43, 44)

Matthew 23:38, 39

*"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often **I wanted to gather** your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but **you were not willing!** ³⁸ See! **Your house** is left to you **desolate.**"*

Jesus then immediately referred to the **destruction of Jerusalem** and its **temple** in Matthew 24:1-3.

Mark 13:14

*"So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where **it ought not**" (let the reader understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."*

Luke 21:20

*"But when you **see** Jerusalem **surrounded** by **armies**, then know that its **desolation** is near."*

Notice that the abomination was the **siege of the city** by the Roman legions. Thus, the expression 'holy place' must refer to a location outside the city walls rather than the temple or the city itself.

Jesus told His followers to flee from the city. They could not do this if the Romans were already destroying the city! The siege of the city was the **harbinger or omen** of the impending desolation of the city.

Josephus explains that **Titus** actually built "a wall round about the whole city." (**Wars** 5:12:1)

Ellen White confirmed that the abomination of desolation took place when the Roman legions besieged the city and nailed their idolatrous standards in the ground:

*"When the **idolatrous standards of the Romans** should be set up in the **holy ground**, which extended some furlongs **outside the city walls**, then the followers*

*of Christ were to find safety in flight. When the warning sign should be seen, those who would **escape must make no delay**.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy p. 26*

The idolatrous Roman standards contained the insignia of the eagle:

*“It [the gospel] penetrated into regions that were inaccessible even to the **eagles of Rome**.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 41*

History of the Roman Standard

The official standard of the **Roman legions** when they surrounded Jerusalem was the **eagle**. Until the **year 104 BC**, various animals appeared on the standards, including the **bull**, the **snake**, the **lion** and the **vulture**. However, in 104 BC Marius, general of the Roman legions, adopted the eagle as the sole creature on the standard.

In the **year 63 BC**, the Roman general **Pompeii deified** the standards. The eagle standard honored the **sun-god Mithra**, whom Pompeii adopted during a military campaign in **Asia Minor**.

Constantine the Great worshipped this god under the name, **Deus Sol Invictus**. The eagle standard became a symbol of the **invincibility of Rome**. As the sun **defeated darkness**, so Rome defeated their enemies.

Contents of the eagle standard (Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, volume 1, p. 347):

- ✓ Head **facing right**
- ✓ **Wings outstretched**
- ✓ **Golden wreath** surrounding it (representing the **orb of the sun**)
- ✓ **Arrows** in its talons

Josephus tells us that when the Romans surrounded Jerusalem they **offered sacrifices** and rendered worship to their eagle/sun standards.

*“Then came the ensigns encompassing **the eagle**, which is at the **head of every Roman legion**, the king, and the strongest of all birds, which seems to them a signal of dominion, and an omen that they **shall conquer all** against whom they march.”* Flavius Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 3:6:2

1 Peter 5:13

*“She who is in **Babylon**, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son.”*

Here Peter refers to Rome as Babylon. Therefore, a **new Babylon** destroyed Jerusalem in **70 AD** just as Babylon had destroyed Jerusalem in **586 BC**. The **eagles gathered** in both destructions.

Matthew 24:28

*“Where the **carcass** is, there will the **eagles** be gathered together”.*

A temporary retreat

Flavius Josephus who was born in 37 AD and was an eyewitness of the destruction of Jerusalem. He wrote that when all appeared propitious for the destruction of the city in AD 66, the Roman legions retreated for **no explainable reason**:

*“. . . without having received any disgrace, he [**Cestius**] **retired** from the city, **without any reason** in the world.”* Flavius Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 2:19:7 (chapter 2, page 19, paragraph 7)

The Jews then **pursued the Roman legions** thinking that God had miraculously intervened in **their favor** and the Roman legions suffered many loses. The **false prophets** were telling the people “*we told you that God would deliver us from our enemies!*”

Matthew 24:16-22

God’s people were **able to flee** from the city **unhindered** by the Jews or the Romans:

*"**Then** let those who are in Judea **flee** to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let him who is on the housetop **not go down** to take anything out of his house. ¹⁸ And let him who is in the field **not go back** to get his clothes. ¹⁹ But woe to those who **are pregnant** and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ²⁰ And pray that your flight may not be in **winter** or on **the Sabbath**. ²¹ For then there will be **great tribulation**, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²² And unless those days were **shortened**, no flesh would be saved; but for the **elect's sake** those days will be shortened."*

Luke 17:28-32

Jesus admonished His followers flee and not look back:

*"Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; ²⁹ but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. ³⁰ Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. ³¹ "In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, **let him not come down** to take them away. And likewise, the one who is in the field, let him **not turn back**. ³² **Remember Lot's wife**."*

*"Lot chose Sodom as a place of residence because he looked more to the **temporal advantages** he would gain than to the **moral influences** that would surround himself and his family. **What did he gain** so far as the things of this world are concerned? **His possessions** were destroyed, **part of his children** perished in the destruction of that wicked city, **his wife** was turned to a pillar of salt by the way, and **he himself was saved** "so as by fire." Nor did the evil results of his selfish choice end here; but the moral corruption of the place was so interwoven with the **character of his children** that they could not distinguish between good and evil, sin and righteousness." Ellen G. White, *Messages To Young People*, p. 419*

*"But God's **merciful providence** was directing events for the good of His own people. The **promised sign** had been given to the waiting Christians, and now an opportunity was offered for all who would, to obey the Savior's warning." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 30*

The sequence:

- The sign
- The flight
- The tribulation

The Desolation

Later, Vespasian and Titus returned to Jerusalem with the Roman legions and there was no retreat. God's people had already escaped when they saw the Roman legions with their eagle/sun standards.

The abomination of desolation sign was the final test for those who were in the city. The sign separated the righteous from the unrighteous. Shortly after God's people escaped, there was a terrible time of tribulation. Josephus explained that 1.1 million Jews perished in the destruction of Jerusalem (Wars 6:9:3) and yet not one Christian perished:

"Not one Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 30

Josephus described the desolation of Jerusalem in similar terms that Jesus used:

"The misfortunes of all men, from the beginning of the world, if they be compared to these of the Jews, are not considerable as they were." (Wars, Preface, 4).

Jesus used the expression "from the beginning of the world" in Matthew 24:21.

Matthew 24:20

One cannot miss the fact that those who saw the sign and fled were observers of the Sabbath.

"And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath."

Luke 19:41-44

National apostasy led to **national ruin**:

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

Let me get **ahead of myself** for a moment:

When the **final test** came to Jerusalem, the sign of the Roman eagle/sun **divided** the inhabitants of the city into **two distinct groups**. In the eschatological fulfillment, the sign will be worship on **the day of the sun**, the abomination of desolation that the papacy set up **during the 1260 years** when it thought to change the Fourth Commandment (Daniel 7:25). When God's people see the Sunday sign at the end, they **will flee** from the cities and the whole world will divide into **two groups**. Most of those who claim to follow Christ will be deceived and end up on the wrong side.

*"As the **Sabbath** has become the special point of controversy throughout Christendom, and **religious and secular** authorities have combined to enforce the observance of the Sunday, the persistent refusal of a **small minority** to yield to the popular demand will make them objects of **universal execration**. It will be urged that **the few** who stand in opposition to an institution of the church and a law of the state ought not to be tolerated; that it is better for them to suffer than for **whole nations** to be thrown into **confusion and lawlessness**. The **same argument** many centuries ago was brought against Christ by the 'rulers of the people.' 'It is expedient for us,' said the wily Caiaphas, 'that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.' John 11:50. This **argument will appear conclusive**; and a decree will finally be issued against those who hallow the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, denouncing them as deserving of the*

*severest punishment and giving the people liberty, after a certain time, to **put them to death**.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 615, 616*

After Jesus resurrected Lazarus, the Sanhedrin met to decide how to face the growing problem of the multitudes following Jesus. In the meeting, Caiaphas made a suggestion on how to save the nation:

John 11:48-51

*“If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.” ⁴⁹ And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, ⁵⁰ nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that **one man should die** for the people, and not that the **whole nation should perish**.”*

Ellen White explained Caiaphas’ rationale:

*“They hated Christ because his **purity and holiness** revealed their iniquity; and they accused him of being the **cause of all the troubles** which had come upon them in consequence of their sins. Though they knew him to be sinless, they had declared that his death was necessary to their **safety as a nation**. ‘If we let him thus alone,’ said the Jewish leaders, ‘all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.’ [John 11:48.] If Christ were sacrificed, they might once more become a **strong, united people**. Thus, they reasoned, and they concurred in the decision of their high priest, that it would be better for one man to die than for the whole nation to perish.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 27*

However, instead of saving the nation, national apostasy caused national ruin. The Sanhedrin thought that by getting rid of Jesus and His followers they would save Jerusalem but instead, by slaying Jesus and his followers, they caused what they wished to prevent, the destruction of their nation.

As a church, the Jewish Sanhedrin could not execute the death penalty so they appealed to the sword of the state to send Jesus to the cross.



“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

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LESSON #5 – MATTHEW 24: THE END TIME FULFILLMENT

Review

Review of the chronological order of events in **Matthew 24:5-20**

- ✓ Many deceived by false christs and false prophets
- ✓ Wars, rumors of wars, nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom, pestilences, famine, earthquakes, troubles
- ✓ Satan’s **stealth plan** was to blame God’s people that he could not deceive
- ✓ Tribulation during which some died (not the great tribulation).
- ✓ Many fell by the wayside when persecution came.
- ✓ Families turned on family members and friends on friends
- ✓ The faithful witnessed before kings, presidents and magistrates.
- ✓ The Holy Spirit gave the faithful wisdom and words to speak.
- ✓ False prophets predicted peace when there was no peace.
- ✓ Because of transgression of the law, the love of many grew cold.
- ✓ **Patience** or perseverance needed
- ✓ The faithful needed patience or perseverance.
- ✓ The gospel went to the entire inhabited Roman world.
- ✓ The **Abomination of desolation** that divided Jerusalem into **two groups**.
- ✓ The **flight** from the city to **desolate places**.
- ✓ Those who flee from Jerusalem were **Sabbath keepers**.

- ✓ The **great tribulation**.

A Partial Fulfillment

As we saw in lesson #1, Matthew 24 found a **partial fulfillment** in the events that led up to the destruction of Jerusalem. However, the complete fulfillment will occur in the end time:

*“The ruin of Jerusalem was a **symbol** of the final ruin that shall overwhelm the world. The prophecies that received a **partial fulfillment** in the overthrow of Jerusalem have a **more direct application** to the last days. We are now standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. A crisis is before us, such as the world has never witnessed.” Ellen G. White, Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, pp. 120, 12*

Ellen White presents the same sequence of events in the end-time with God’s spiritual Israel who are members of spiritual Jerusalem in every corner of the earth. Notice how she portrays the identical sequence of events as we studied in Matthew 24:5-20

Read each individual verse as you move along, beginning with verse 4

False Christs (verses 4 and 5)

- ✓ False christs have risen in the last few decades:
- ✓ Jim Jones
- ✓ David Koresh
- ✓ Jose Luis de Jesus Miranda (Puerto Rican with headquarters in Miami. His pulpit has SSS that is the number 666. He has told his followers to tattoo the number 666.

Wars, pestilence, earthquakes, hunger (verses 6-8)

The turmoil among nations and the natural disasters occur **before the close** of probation in what Ellen White called the **little time of trouble**:

*"I saw that God had children who do not see and keep the Sabbath. They have not rejected the light upon it and at the commencement of **the time of trouble [the little time of trouble before the close of probation]** we were filled with the **Holy Ghost [the latter rain]** as we went forth and proclaimed the **Sabbath more fully [the Loud Cry]**. This enraged the churches and nominal Adventists, as they could not refute the Sabbath truth. At this time, God's chosen all saw clearly that we had the truth, and they **came out [the answer to the call to come out of Babylon] and endured the persecution** with us **[the tribulation of Matthew 24:9]**. I saw the **sword, famine, pestilence [the very three signs mentioned in Matthew 24:7]**, and **great confusion** in the land. The wicked thought that we had brought the judgments upon them, and they rose up and took counsel to rid the earth of us, thinking that then the evil would be stayed." Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 33*

Someone later wrote to Ellen White confused about what she meant by 'the time of trouble'. After all, was not the 'time of trouble' after the close of probation? Ellen White then explained the timing of the 'time of trouble' saying that it was a short time of trouble just before the close of probation:

*"The commencement of that time of trouble', here mentioned **does not refer** to the time when the plagues shall begin to be poured out, but to a **short period just before** they are poured out, while Christ is in the sanctuary. At that time, while the work of salvation is closing, **trouble will be coming on the earth**, and the nations will be angry, **yet held in check** so as not to prevent the work of the third angel. At that time the 'latter rain," or refreshing from the presence of the Lord, will come, **to give power** to the loud voice of the third angel, and prepare the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out." Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, pp. 85, 86*

The Reason for the Disasters

God has a **causative** will and a **permissive** will. God permits Satan to cause the turmoil and the disasters of verses six and seven as He did in the case of Job. Ellen White amplified the disasters in verses six and seven:

*“In the last scenes of this earth's history **war** will rage. There will be **pestilence**, **plague** and **famine**. The waters of the deep will overflow their boundaries. Property and life will be destroyed by **fire** and **flood**.”* Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 24

*“It is his [Satan’s] object to incite the **nations to war** against one another, for he can thus divert the minds of the people from the work of preparation to stand in the day of God. . . While appearing to the children of men as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, he will bring **disease** and disaster, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation. Even now, he is at work. In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great **conflagrations**, in **fierce tornadoes** and **terrific hailstorms**, in **tempests**, **floods**, **cyclones**, **tidal waves**, and **earthquakes**, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and **famine** and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the **pestilence**. These visitations are to become more and more **frequent** and **disastrous**.”* Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 589

The **Covid19** Pandemic is only one of many disasters that will afflict the world before the second coming. So to speak, the Coronavirus is merely the **beginning** of the **beginning** of sorrows. Things are going to get a **lot worse**.

The Blame Game (verse 9; Mark 13:12, 13; Luke 21:16)

The question is why Satan will cause all of these calamities. Immediately after the last quotation above, Ellen White explains the reason:

*“And **then** the great deceiver will persuade men that **those who serve God** are **causing these evils**. The class that has provoked the displeasure of Heaven will charge all their troubles upon those whose **obedience to God’s commandments**”*

[Revelation 12:17] is a perpetual reproof to transgressors.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 590

*“Satan puts his interpretation upon events, and they think, as he would have them, that the **calamities** which fill the land are a result of **Sunday-breaking**. Thinking to **appease the wrath of God** these influential men make laws enforcing Sunday observance.” Ellen G. White, Last Day Events, p. 129*

The story of Elijah will repeat on a global scale. When the Elijah requested that God close the heavens, Ahab blamed the prophet for the drought and pestilence. Jezebel suggested that by killing Elijah the problems would cease.

There is a lot of discussion these days about the causes of climate change. Scientists share their theories about the causes of the increasing and more intense global disasters. However, the reasons they give are misguided. The two greatest climate changes in history were the flood and the drought in the days of Elijah. The reasons were not the use of fossil fuels and air conditioners but rather the wickedness of man. Ellen White explained:

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

Ellen White wrote about how family and friends will betray one another in the crisis to come:

*“**Friends** will prove treacherous and will **betray us**. **Relatives**, deceived by the enemy, will think they **do God service** in opposing us and putting forth the utmost efforts to bring us into hard places, **hoping we will deny** our faith.” Ellen G. White, Last Day Events, p. 150, 151*

“Those who are true to God will be menaced, denounced, proscribed. They will be ‘betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends,’ even unto death.” Luke 21:16.” Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings, p. 588

*“Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number **take their stand** upon the Lord's side.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 612*

According to Matthew 24:9, during this little time of trouble, some of God's people will suffer martyrdom (see Revelation 20:4).

Standing before rulers and magistrates (Luke 21:12, 13)

One detail that we do not find in Matthew 24 but we find in the parallel passage of Luke 21 is the witness of God's people before the intelligentsia of the earth:

*“We shall have to stand before **magistrates** to answer for our allegiance to the law of God, to make known the reasons of our faith. And the youth should understand these things.” Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, pp. 128, 129*

*“Many will have to stand in the **legislative courts**; some will have to stand before **kings** and before the **learned** of the earth, to answer for their faith. Those who have only a **superficial understanding** of truth will not be able clearly to expound the Scriptures, and give definite reasons for their faith.” Ellen G. White, Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 217*

*“It does not seem possible to us now that any should have to **stand alone**, but if God has ever spoken by me, the time will come when we shall be brought before **councils** and before thousands for His name's sake, and each one will have to give the reason of his faith. Then will come the **severest criticism** upon every position that has been taken for the truth. We need, then, to study the Word of God, that we may **know why we believe the doctrines** we advocate.” Ellen G. White, Last Day Events, p. 209*

Empowered by the Holy Spirit (Luke 21:14, 15; Mark 13:11)

Another detail that we find in Mark and Luke but not in Matthew is the latter rain power of the Holy Spirit that will enable God's people to witness before the great men of the earth:

*"Those who receive Christ as a personal Savior will stand the test of trial in **these last days**. . . The Lord Jesus will give the disciples a **tongue and wisdom** that their adversaries can neither **gainsay nor resist** [words from Luke 21:15]. Those who could not by reasoning overcome satanic delusions will bear an affirmative testimony that will baffle supposedly learned men. Words will come from the lips of the unlearned with such **convincing power and wisdom** that conversions will be made to the truth [at this point probation is open]. Thousands will be converted under their testimony." Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases, vol. 8, p. 187*

Forsaking the Faith (verse 10)

When the tribulation of verse 9 comes, many will forsake the faith they once embraced. The word '**offended**' in verse 10 appears repeatedly in the gospels for **turning ones back** on the truth (see Matthew 13:21; 26:31; Luke 7:23; John 16:1, 2).

Ellen White wrote that a large class of influential Seventh-day Adventists who once embraced the third angel's message would abandon their post and join the ranks of the opposition:

*"As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, **abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition**. . . Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the **bitterest** enemies of their former brethren. When Sabbath keepers are brought before the courts to answer for their faith, these **apostates** are the most efficient agents of Satan to misrepresent and*

accuse them and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the **rulers against them.**” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 608

“Whenever **persecution** takes place, the spectators make decisions either **for or against** Christ. **Because of persecution**, many will be **offended**. The principles of the truth cut directly across their practice, and they will stumble and fall, **apostatizing** from the faith they **once advocated**. Many who have **professed to love** the truth will then show that they have no vital union with the True Vine. They will be cut away, as branches that bear no fruit, and will be bound up with unbelievers, scoffers, and mockers.” The Review & Herald, December 20, 1898

False Prophets (verse 11)

In order to understand the character traits of these false prophets we need to consider the legislation of Moses about false prophets:

Deuteronomy 13:1-5

“If there arises among you a **prophet** or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder,² and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’—that you have not known—‘and let us serve them,’³ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.⁴ You shall **walk** after the Lord your God and **fear** Him, and **keep** His commandments and **obey** His voice; you shall **serve** Him and **hold fast** to Him.”

“False prophets did rise, deceiving the people, and leading great numbers into the desert. Magicians and sorcerers, claiming miraculous power, drew the people after them into the mountain solitudes. But this prophecy was spoken **also for the last days.**” Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 631

“These **false prophets** will have to be met. They will make an effort to **deceive many**, by leading them to accept **false theories**. Many scriptures will be **misapplied** in such a way that deceptive theories will apparently be based upon the words that God has spoken. Precious truth will be appropriated to

substantiate and establish error. These **false prophets**, who **claim to be taught of God**, will take beautiful scriptures that have been given to adorn the truth, and will use them as a robe of righteousness to cover false and dangerous theories. And even some of those who, in times past, the Lord has honored, will **depart so far from the truth** as to advocate misleading theories regarding many phases of truth, including the sanctuary question.” Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 11*, 1906.

Love Waxes Cold (verse 12)

Ellen White quoted this verse and connected it with the shaking:

“There will be a **shaking** of the sieve. The **chaff must in time be separated** from the wheat. Because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold. It is the very time when the genuine will be the strongest.” Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 173

“I was shown that the Spirit of the Lord is being withdrawn from the earth. God will soon refuse His keeping power to all who continue to **disregard His commandments**. The reports of fraudulent transactions, murders and crimes of every kind are coming to us daily. **Iniquity is becoming so common a thing** that it no longer shocks the senses as it once did.” Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 27

Ellen White wrote that those whose love grows cold fell from a high state of spirituality. This means that they fell in love with the world and apostatized:

“The Lord Jesus, on the Mount of Olives, plainly stated that ‘because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.’ He speaks of a class who have **fallen from a high state of spirituality**. Let such utterances as these come home with solemn, searching power to our hearts. Where is the fervor, the devotion to God that corresponds to the greatness of the truth that we claim to believe? The love of the **world**, the love of some **darling sin**, has **weaned the heart** from the love of prayer and of meditation on sacred things. A **formal round of religious services** is kept up but where is the love of Jesus? **Spirituality is dying**.” Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up*, p. 310

Ellen White also wrote that verse 12 refers to the great proportion of those who appear to be genuine Seventh-day Adventists:

*"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." The very atmosphere is polluted with sin. Soon God's people will be **tested by fiery trials**, and the **great proportion** of those who now appear to be genuine and true will prove to be **base metal**. Instead of being **strengthened and confirmed** by opposition, threats, and abuse, they will **cowardly** take the side of the opposers... To stand in the defense of truth and righteousness when the **majority forsake us**, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few--this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason." Ellen G. White, Sons and Daughters of God, p. 201*

Endurance to the End (verse 13; Luke 21:19)

The word **hupoméno** means 'endurance, perseverance'. The NIV translates 'he who remains faithful'. According to the context, three factors will challenge the fidelity of God's people: Persecution, false prophets and the attractions of the world.

The Final Preaching of the Gospel

Matthew 24:14

*"And this **gospel** of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the **nations**, and then the **end** will come."*

There are three links between **Matthew 24:14**; **28:19, 20** and **Revelation 14:6, 7**. All three texts contain three elements:

- ✓ **Preaching** the gospel
- ✓ To **all nations**
- ✓ Then the **end comes**

Revelation 14:6, 7

*"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting **gospel** to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to **every nation**, tribe, tongue, and people—⁷ saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."*

However, Revelation 14:6 describes the preaching of the gospel **at the end** of the gospel dispensation during the period of the **latter rain and the Loud Cry**. Ellen White wrote about the difference between the preaching of the gospel in apostolic times and the preaching of the gospel in the time of the end:

*"The message of salvation has been preached in all ages; but this message is a part of the gospel which could be proclaimed **only in the last days**, for only then would it be true that the hour of judgment had come." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 356*

Ellen White wrote that the preaching of the gospel in the past would occur once more:

*"In the prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction Christ said, 'Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. However, he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.' This prophecy will **again be fulfilled**. The abounding iniquity of that day finds its counterpart in this generation. **So with the prediction in regard to the preaching of the gospel**. Before the fall of Jerusalem, Paul, writing by the Holy Spirit, declared that the gospel was preached to 'every creature which is under heaven.' Colossians 1:23. **So now**, before the coming of the Son of man, the everlasting gospel is to be preached 'to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.' Revelation 14:6, 14." Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 633*

“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

**LESSON #6 – THE ABOMINATION OF
DESOLATION: THE END TIME FULFILLMENT –
PART 1**

Events in Matthew 24:4-14

- ✓ False christs and false prophets will deceive many.
- ✓ Wars, rumors of wars, nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom, pestilences, famine, earthquakes, troubles:

*“These visitations are to become more and more **frequent** and **disastrous**.”
Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 590*

- ✓ **The beginning of sorrows: WE ARE HERE IN THE PROPHETIC FLOW.**
- ✓ Satan’s **stealth plan** is to blame those whom he could not deceive.
- ✓ Tribulation during which some will die (not the great tribulation).
- ✓ Many will fall away when persecution comes in the little time of trouble.
- ✓ Families will turn on family members and friends on friends.
- ✓ The faithful will witness before kings, presidents and magistrates.
- ✓ The **Holy Spirit** in **latter rain** power will give God’s faithful children **wisdom** and words to speak.
- ✓ False prophets will predict peace in disobedience to God’s law and will deceive many.
- ✓ Because of the **transgression** of the law by those who were once on **a high spiritual level**, their **love** will grow cold.

- ✓ **God's people will need patience** or perseverance.
- **Preaching** the gospel in the context of the **first angel's** message will bring attention to the judgment and the Sabbath.

Events in verses 15-22

- The **Abomination of desolation** will divide the world into **two groups**.
- God's people will flee to desolate places when they see the abomination of desolation.
- God's people will experience the great **tribulation**.
- Those who flee will be **Sabbath keepers**.

The Legionary Standard

Let us review the characteristics of the abomination of desolation in the history of the destruction of Jerusalem because it is the type of the end time.

The **Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible**, volume 1, p. 347 has a picture of the Standard of the Roman legions:

- ✓ The standard contains **an eagle**.
- ✓ The head of the eagle was **facing right**.
- ✓ The **wings** were outstretched.
- ✓ The eagle had **arrows** in its talons.
- ✓ A **golden wreath** surrounded the eagle (representing the **sun god Mithra**).
- ✓ The Roman legions placed the standards in the ground and bowed in **worship** before them.
- ✓ The Bible links the **sun** and the **wings of an eagle** (**Malachi 4:1**)

The Sign and the Retreat

In the fall of the year 66 AD, Cestius Gallus and the Roman legions surrounded Jerusalem for nine days and it looked like there was **no escape**. God's people **could not flee** as long as the Roman legions had the city surrounded. However, according to both **Josephus** and Ellen White, Cestius

withdrew the Roman legions for what appeared to be no reason at all. When the Christians in the city saw the sign of Cestius' retreat for what appeared to be no reasons, they fled the city leaving everything behind.

In the year 70 AD, Vespasian and Titus came to the city with the Roman legions and desolated it. Thus, national apostasy led to national ruin. However, not a single Christian perished in the destruction of the city.

The Great Seal of the United States

The siege, the sign, the retreat and the final destruction of Jerusalem foreshadows events on a global scale at the end of time. In harmony with the type, the end time fulfillment of the abomination of desolation bear a relationship somehow with the eagle and the sun.

The backside of the one-dollar bill contains both sides of the Great Seal of the United States. How important is this seal? An expert on national insignia responds:

"The Great Seal or State of Arms is the official emblem of the United States. All judicial, legislative and executive [the three branches of government] proclamations bear this seal. It certifies and authenticates all official acts of the Federal government. It must appear on all its authoritative laws and statutes." Quaipe, Weig and Appleman, The History of the United States Flag, p. 115

Let us consider a little history about the seal. On July 4, 1776, the very day of the signing of the *Declaration of Independence*, a Great Seal Committee met to create a national seal. Among the members of the Committee were Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. Benjamin Franklin suggested a turkey as our national symbol and I am glad that the committee did not follow up on his suggestion.

The committee tabled its proceedings after a lengthy discussion but three additional committees met and on June 28, 1782, the committee adopted our present seal as it appears on the one-dollar bill. The Great Seal is not a recent

innovation but goes back to the very roots of the republic even before the ratification of the Constitution in 1787 and the Bill of Rights in 1791.

The Obverse (Front) Side of the Seal

On the obverse side (front side) of the Seal, we find:

- ✓ A native bald eagle
- ✓ The eagle has outstretched wings
- ✓ Above the eagle's head is a circular sunburst breaking through the clouds
- ✓ The eagle has 13 arrows in its talons (notably, muskets were the weapon of choice at this time, not bows and arrows).
- ✓ Above the eagle's head is the Latin inscription, *E PLURIBUS UNUM*—out of the many, one.

The Meaning of the Sun

Why did the committee place a sun on the obverse side of the seal? Whitney Smith answers:

"In a large number of lands the sun is associated no so much with independence but with the promises it brings in the 'dawn of a new day.'" Whitney Smith, Flags, p. 314

Toward the end of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787, George Washington sat in a special chair where he presided over the convention. The chair came to be known as '*the rising sun chair*' because on the backrest is a beautifully carved sun.

Benjamin Franklin made an interesting comment about the chair at the conclusion of the convention:

"I have often. . . looked at that (sun) behind the president without being able to tell whether it was rising or setting; but now at length I have the happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting sun."

Thus, according to Franklin, the rising sun represented dawn of a new era of peace and prosperity for the newborn nation.

Let me get ahead of myself for a moment. Ellen White wrote that near the end of probationary time, the United States, the nation represented by the eagle, would impose worship on the day of the sun thinking that it will bring back the peace and prosperity that it enjoyed when it was founded. Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 588-589.

Four Reasons for the Connection

Some might think that the similarities between the contents of the ancient pagan Roman standards and the contents on the Great Seal are merely coincidental. After all, the two empires differ so much in time, culture, language and religion.

However, there are four reasons that connect the eagle and sun of Rome with the eagle and sun of the United States:

1) Matthew 24 has a dual fulfillment. If the eagle and the sun were a sign for the first Christians to flee Jerusalem, then the eagle and the sun must, in some sense be a sign to end time Christians.

2) The United States itself testifies that it got its emblems from the Roman Empire:

"The neo-classical spirit of America at the end of the eighteenth century looked to the ancient Roman Republic for many symbols, including the name of the Upper Chamber of Congress (the Senate). In Rome the eagle began as a republican symbol; hence Americans chose their native bald eagle for the National Arms in 1782." Whitney Smith, Flags through the Ages and Across the World, p. 314

3) In 1891 A. T. Jones published a very important volume of almost one thousand pages where he drew a remarkable parallel between the Roman Republic and the Republic of the United States. The title of the book was, *The Two Republics or Rome and the United States of America*.

4) As we shall see, Ellen White explicitly linked the Roman legionary standards that surrounded Jerusalem with the Sunday law at the end.

The Reverse Side of the Seal

The contents on the reverse side:

- ✓ An unfinished ziggurat and above it is the all seeing eye of providence with sunrays bursting from it through the clouds. The eye of providence is a Masonic symbol representing Lucifer, the great architect of the universe.
- ✓ The unfinished pyramid represents the idea that the American project remains to be completed.
- ✓ Henry Wallace was vice-president during the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt. He was a 32nd degree Free Mason. Wallace suggested minting a coin containing the Great Seal.
- ✓ Instead, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was also a 32nd degree Free Mason, placed the Great Seal on the one-dollar bill in 1935.
- ✓ The inscriptions on the reverse side of the seal are eye opening. Both inscriptions are in Latin, the language of the ancient Roman Empire:
 - *NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM: 'a new world order'*
 - *ANNUIT COEPTIS: 'he has favored our undertaking'*
- ✓ The year 1776 is in Roman numerals at the base of the pyramid.

Washington Architecture

When one visits Washington, DC, it is striking that the most important government buildings (the Capitol, the White House, the Supreme Court, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Jefferson Memorial) all have a Roman architectural style:

*“The definitive architectural style on Capitol Hill is neoclassical, inspired by the use of **ancient Greek and Roman styles** in the design of great public buildings. These styles are recognized by the use of **tall columns**, **symmetrical shapes**, **triangular pediments** [triangular top of the building] and **domed roofs**.” Thomas Jefferson wanted Congress housed in a replica of an **ancient Roman temple**. Since the capitol in Richmond, Virginia, was an example of Roman ‘cubic’ architecture, he thought the federal Capitol should be modeled after a ‘spherical’ **temple**. The U.S. Capitol's designs, derived from ancient Greece and Rome, evoke the ideals that guided the nation's founders as they framed their new republic.” https://www.aoc.gov/capitol-hill/architecture_styles/neoclassical_architecture-capitol-hill*

Washington D. C. is full of **monuments** and **statues** in honor of the founders and important **historical events** as existed in ancient Rome. The **inscriptions** and **dates** on the **buildings** and monuments is frequently in **Latin**. The name of the **Upper Chamber** of Congress is the **Senate** and the name of its representatives is **Senators**.

The Legions

In the **wars of independence**, the name for the **troops** of the United States was not armies but rather **legions**. The **American Legion** still exists in the United States.

*“The **Legion of the United States** was a reorganization and extension of the **Continental Army** from 1792 to 1796 under the command of Major General **Anthony Wayne**. It represented a political shift in the new United States, which had recently adopted the **United States Constitution**. The new Congressional and Executive branches authorized a standing army composed of professional soldiers, rather than relying on state militias.” Kochan, James (2001). *United States Army 1783–1811. Men-at-Arms Series. Osprey Military. pp. 13–15.**

- At this time, **General Knox** suggested weaving a **super flag** with a **life-sized eagle** having the name, ‘**the Standard of the Legion**.’ Although the

flag never came into existence, it shows the fascination of the early United States Republic **with Rome**.

- In **1791**, a similar flag was created and given the name, '**The Standard of the Eagle**'. It had an eagle with wings outspread, head **facing right** with **arrows** in its talons, and a **huge sunburst** flashing forth **from its body**. There are **dozens of flags** in early **constitutional America** with eagles and sun bursts.

Objections

Someone might object: **What right** do we have to link the **Roman Eagle** with the **United States eagle**? They are so **distant in time** and **place**. After all, **Mexico** has an eagle as its national emblem as well! Would we not have to connect the **English lion** with the **Babylonian lion**, the **Russian bear** with the **Medo-Persian bear** and the **Chinese dragon** with the **Roman dragon**, etc.?

This assumption is wrong on **four counts**:

- ✓ First, England, Russia and China **do not claim** to have gotten their **mascots** from Babylon, Medo-Persia and Rome.
- ✓ There is **no historical connection** between the **religion** of ancient **Babylon and England**, the religion of **Russia and ancient Medo-Persia** and the religion of **Rome and China**.
- ✓ **A. T. Jones** wrote a massive book, *The Two Republics or Rome and the United States of America*, where he described, in minute detail, the similarity of the Republic of Rome and the **Republic of the Unites States**.
- ✓ Matthew 24 makes it clear that there is a **two-fold fulfillment to the chapter**. Therefore, if the Roman standard had an **eagle and a sun** as the sign of the abomination that led to desolation, we would expect the **same at the end** because the prophecy demands it. Ellen White clearly linked the Roman siege with the national Sunday law:

*"As the **approach of the Roman armies** was a **sign** to the disciples of the impending destruction of Jerusalem, so may **this apostasy** be a **sign to us***

that the limit of God's forbearance is reached, that the measure of our **nation's iniquity is full**, and that the angel of mercy is **about [probation still open but soon to close]** to take her flight, **never to return**. The people of God will then be plunged into those scenes of affliction and distress which prophets have described as the **time of Jacob's trouble**." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 451

"It is no time now for God's people to be fixing their affections or laying up their **treasure in the world**. The time is not far distant, when, like the early disciples, we shall be forced to **seek a refuge** in desolate and solitary places. As **the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies** was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree **enforcing the papal sabbath** will be a **warning to us**. It will **then be time** to **leave the large cities**, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains. And now, instead of seeking **expensive dwellings** here, we should be preparing to move to a **better country**, even a heavenly. Instead of spending our means in self-gratification, we should be studying to economize." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 464, 465

In these two statements, the order of events that Ellen White provides is the same as in the historical fulfillment:

- The **sign**
- The **flight**
- The **tribulation**



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LESSON #7 – THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION: THE END TIME FULFILLMENT – PART 2

Protestantism and the Eagle

In our last study, we saw that Ellen White compared the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman legions with the future national Sunday law in the United States.

This leads us to ask a very important question: Is it really the same for the Roman legions to worship the literal sun god as it is for Protestants in the United States to worship on the day of the sun?

The answer is, in principle, yes! You see Protestants in the United States embraced Sunday (worship on the day of the sun) from Papal Rome as Papal Rome had previously embraced it from Pagan Rome. Thus, there is an unbroken chain that joins pagan Rome, papal Rome and apostate Protestantism in the United States.

Space will only allow me to provide an outline of the historical process of transmission (for a fuller study see my notes on Daniel 8):

- ✓ Ancient Babylon transferred sun worship to Pergamum in Asia Minor
- ✓ Pompeii, on a military expedition to Asia Minor in 63 BC adopted the sun god Mithra as the protector of the Roman legions.

- ✓ In spite of the fact that the **New Testament** teaches that Jesus and the apostles kept the seventh day Sabbath, the **early church fathers** began to celebrate the resurrection of Christ on Sunday in the **early second century**.
- ✓ **Constantine**, who worshiped the sun god as **Deus Sol Invictus** (the invincible sun) **merged** the worship of the sun god with the observance of Sunday in honor of the resurrection. Being a shrewd and opportunistic **politician**, he merged the two in order to **unify the Empire**. He proclaimed the first civil Sunday law in **321 AD**:

*"One the **venerable day of the Sun** let the magistrates and people residing in cities **rest**, and let all workshops be **closed**. In the country, however persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits because it often happens that another day is not suitable for grain-sowing or vine planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost. (Given the **7th day of March**, Crispus and Constantine being consuls each of them the second time." Codex Justinianus, lib. 3, tit. 12, 3; translated in History of the Christian Church, Philip Schaff, D.D., (7- volume edition) Vol. III, p.380. New York, 1884*

- ✓ This civil law became religious law in the Council of **Laodicea** in **336 AD**:
*"Christians must not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but **must work on that day**, rather **honoring the Lord's Day**; and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be Judaizers, let them be **anathema** from Christ."*
- ✓ Papal Rome then fully embraced Sunday as the day of worship. Roman Catholics have **sunbursts everywhere**, on churches, statues, works of art, chalices, vestments, etc. The Bible refers to this transfer of Sunday from Pagan Rome to Papal Rome and eventually to Protestants in the United States.
- ✓ Protestants claim to keep Sunday in honor of the resurrection of Christ. The **Puritans** transferred this observance of Sunday from **Europe to the**

United States. Colonial America strictly enforced Sunday observance enacting **Blue Laws** that punished those who did not comply with **civil penalties**. Thus Protestants did exactly what they **learned from the papacy** in Europe—the church employing the power of the state to legislate religious observances.

- ✓ The United States **will repudiate** its Constitution and once again **enforce a national Sunday law** as happened during the Colonial period. You are probably thinking, ‘this could never happen’. If you do not think so, do not miss **lecture #16** in this series!

Here is the biblical evidence for the transfer of Sunday observance from pagan Rome to papal Rome, to apostate Protestantism:

Revelation 13:1, 2: The dragon (pagan Rome who attempted to kill the male child) gave the **beast his throne**:

*“Then I stood on the sand of the sea and I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. ² Now the beast that I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The **dragon gave him [same dragon that attempted to kill the male child]** his power, his throne, and great authority.”*

Revelation 12:13, 14: The beast/little horn then **assumed the power of the dragon** and ruled for **1260 years**. During this time, the little horn thought to change God’s law by replacing the Sabbath with Sunday:

*“Now when the **dragon [Satan working through papal Rome]** saw that he had been cast to the earth, he **persecuted the woman** who gave birth to the male Child. ¹⁴ But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a **time and times and half a time**, from the presence of the serpent.”*

Revelation 13:11: The **beast from the earth** (symbol of the United States) will yet exercise all the authority of the first beast (little horn) and speak **like a dragon**:

*“Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a **dragon**.”*

It bears noting that the land beast does everything to honor and **impress the first beast**.

- ✓ It ‘exercises **all the authority** of the first beast in its presence,’ (verse 12)
- ✓ It ‘causes the earth and those who dwell in it to **worship the first beast**’ (verse 12)
- ✓ It performs signs ‘**in the sight of the beast**’ (‘on behalf of’ in the NIV verse 14).
- ✓ It makes an image **of** the first beast (3 times in verse 15)
- ✓ It makes an image **to** the first beast (‘in honor of’ NIV verse 14).
- ✓ It imposes the **mark of the beast** (verses 16, 17)

Protestants **never totally severed** their relationship with the Mother church from which they came. Thus, **John O’Brien**, the author of **45 books** and for many years a theology professor at the University of **Notre Dame** challenged Protestants:

*“But since Saturday, not Sunday, is specified in the Bible, isn’t it curious that non-Catholics who profess to take their religion directly from the Bible and not from the Church, observe Sunday instead of Saturday? Yes, of course, it is inconsistent; but this **change** was made about fifteen centuries before Protestantism was born, and by that time the custom was universally observed. They have continued the custom, even though it rests upon the **authority of the Catholic Church** and not upon an explicit text in the Bible. That observance remains as a reminder of the **Mother Church** from which the non-Catholic sects broke away—like a boy running away from home but still carrying in his pocket a picture of his mother or a lock of her hair.” John O’Brien, *The Faith of Millions* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1974) p. 400, 401.*

Ellen White agreed with O'Brien that the Roman Catholic papacy bequeathed Sunday worship to Protestantism:

*"But the question of Sabbath and Sunday observance is to be agitated everywhere and the deceptions of Satan will flood the world. The man of sin has instituted a spurious sabbath, and the **Protestant world** has taken this **child of the papacy** and **cradled** and **nurtured** it. Satan means to make all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of the fornication of Babylon." The Review and Herald, April 15, 1890.*

*"When **the land** which the Lord provided as an asylum for his people, that they might worship him according to the dictates of their own consciences, the land over which for long years the **shield of Omnipotence** has been spread, **the land** which **God has favored** by making it the depository of the pure religion of Christ—when **that land** shall, through its **legislators**, abjure the principles of Protestantism, and give countenance to **Romish apostasy** in tampering with God's law,—it is then that the final work of the man of sin will be revealed. Protestants will throw their whole influence and strength on the side of the Papacy; by a **national act** enforcing the false Sabbath, they will **give life and vigor** to the **corrupt faith of Rome**, **reviving** her tyranny and oppression of conscience. Then it will be time for God to work in mighty power for the vindication of his truth." The Signs of the Times, June 12, 1893*

The Final Sign and Idolatry

In the final fulfillment of the abomination of desolation, the sign for God's people to flee from the cities will be the national **Sunday** law. The nation whose emblem is the **eagle** with a **sunburst** above its head will impose the day of worship that it received from the papacy and the papacy from pagan Rome. This decree will bear the Great Seal of the United States.

When God's people see this sign, they **will flee** from the cities and the whole world will choose to be in one of **two groups**. Sadly, **most of those who claim to follow God** will end up on the wrong side. Idolatry will be the great sign of the rebellious world.

The Idol Sabbath

Ellen White refers to Sunday as the idol Sabbath. In what sense is this true?

*“Among professed Christians there are **idolaters**, men and women who are not sealed by God. Many have subverted the Christian faith into **idolatry**, giving to a **man-made institution** the glory and honor that God requires for His Sabbath day, and compelling others to **worship this idol**. Such ones will surely be visited with God's retributive judgments, which are to be poured out without mixture of mercy upon the unrepentant despisers of God's law.” Ellen. G. White, Manuscript Releases, vol. 19, p. 244*

God is particular about His day of worship. Man cannot treat with impunity the **holy as if it were common** and the **common as if it were holy**. When God says that the **seventh day** is the Sabbath and that we must keep it holy, He **means the seventh**, not the first! Jesus said to the religious leaders of His day, “in vain to they worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” (Mark 7:7)

The following stories illustrate how zealously God regards the distinction between the holy and the common:

- ✓ **Nadab and Abihu** (who offered common fire in place of holy)
- ✓ **Uzzah** (who touched the holy ark albeit with good intentions)
- ✓ **Ananias and Sapphira** (who kept back a portion of holy money)
- ✓ **Korah** (who coveted a holy vocation that God had not called him to)
- ✓ **Ieroboam** (who ‘sanctified’ a rival priesthood and worship center)
- ✓ **Belshazzar** (who used holy sanctuary vessels for a common banquet)

National Apostasy and Ruin

Like Israel, God chose the United States to fulfill His plan of **guarding** and **spreading of God's truth**. It is a nation with **worldwide influence** capable of taking the truth to **every nation** on earth. It has a **Constitution** that guarantees **civil and religious** liberty to facilitate preaching in full freedom. However, when this nation **will repudiate** the principles of the First Amendment to the

Constitution and commit the greatest abomination, the **enforcement of Sunday** as the national day of rest, God will write ‘national apostasy’ in the heavenly books.

*“The people of the United States have been a **favored people**, but when they restrict religious liberty, surrender Protestantism, and give countenance to popery, the measure of their guilt will be full, and ‘**national apostasy**’ will be registered in the books of heaven.” The Review and Herald, May 2, 1893.*

*“When our nation, in its **legislative councils**, shall enact laws to bind the consciences of men in regard to their religious privileges, **enforcing Sunday** observance, and bringing oppressive power to bear against those who keep the Seventh-day Sabbath, the law of God will, to all intents and purposes, be made void in our land, and **national apostasy [the abomination]** will be followed by **national ruin [desolation]**.” Ellen G. White, Last Day Events, pp. 133, 134*

*“Roman Catholic **principles [union of church and state]** will be taken under the **care and protection** of the state. This **national apostasy** will speedily be followed by **national ruin**.” The Review and Herald, June 15, 1897*

*The Sunday movement is now making **its way in darkness**. The leaders are **concealing the true issue**, and many who unite in the movement do not themselves see whither the **undercurrent** is tending. Its professions are **mild and apparently Christian [the two horns like a lamb]**, but when it shall speak it will reveal the spirit of the dragon **[speak like a dragon]**.” Ellen. G. White, Counsels for the Church p. 335.*

The Sin of the Christian World

The same capital sin of Jerusalem will characterize the Christian World:

*“The **great sin** of the Jews was their **rejection of Christ**; the **great sin** of the Christian world would be their **rejection of the law** of God, the foundation of His government in heaven and earth.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 22*

At first glance, the sin of the Jews and the sin of end time Christians is different. However, they really are the same sin. The Jews were in love with the law but

hated Christ. Christians will claim to love Christ but will hate the law. The law is a transcript of Christ's character:

*"Christ is revealed in the law, which is a **transcript of His character**." Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 240*

How can you say that you love Jesus and at the same time say that you hate the transcript of His character? Sadly, the Jewish nation thought that by getting rid of Christ, they would save their nation but by this act, they caused what they wished to prevent. They used the civil power of Rome to get rid of Christ and the Romans they used, later turned against them. The same will happen at the end.

Ellen White compared the desolation of Jerusalem with the desolation of the world:

*"As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The **whole world** will be involved in ruin **more terrible** than that which came upon **Jerusalem of old**." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 614*

Following are a series articles and comments that link the Coronavirus pandemic with climate change and the need for Sunday as a day of rest.

The Pandemic and Sunday

Religious and secular leaders have linked the Coronavirus pandemic with the need to observe of Sunday. Here are some examples:

From <https://tnebc.nwaonline.com/news/2020/apr/15/will-we-learn-anything-from-time-of-dis/>:

"Years ago, Sunday was a different day than the other six days of the week. Church parking lots were full. Store parking lots were empty and stores were closed. Occasionally a gasoline station (we called them filling stations) was open, but it was the exception instead of the rule. Even people who didn't go to church used **Sunday for a day of rest** and relaxation. Today, Sunday is not

much different than the work week except many stores don't open until noon. *Maybe this time of **enforced isolation** will teach us something."*

Roman Catholic brother Michael Valenzuela:

*"This pandemic is the first calamity of global magnitude to have shaken the world this badly since the Second World War. And yet...a friend drew my attention today to reports that due to less travel and public activity there is a lot less trash accumulating on streets, a lot less polluting in the air and water and that for these few days, as the engines of manufacturing grind to a halt, the earth is getting the first real chance for rest and renewal that it has not had in decades. So maybe one way to look at the current crisis is to see it as **the planet's desperate demand for a Sabbath**, a cessation from unbridled **consumerism** and the **parasitic activity** that work becomes when the pursuit of profit becomes its primary goal. Pope Francis has warned us that the global economy as it operates today often ends up generating **profits at the expense of planet and the poor**. So for this season of Lent as we reflect on our sins and shortcomings in the light of God's mercy, we can ponder whether there are better ways of living and working that do not tax people and planet to their breaking point."*

Article by Leah Schade

Leah D. Schade (Assistant Professor of Preaching and Worship at **Lexington Theological Seminary** in Kentucky 'a deeply ecumenical seminary'). "When Earth Demands Sabbath: Learning from the Coronavirus Pandemic" **Eco Preacher** April 1, 2020.

The **Disciples of Christ** Church in **2008** had 679,000 members. In **2015**, it had 497,000. In **2018**, it had 380,000.

*"There are foundational questions we need to raise about our refusal to give the land and people rest (**Sabbath**) and the unrelenting demands we make without consideration of the consequences (**ecological plagues**). Would it be unbearable to have **one day a week when everyone**—workers and consumers alike—**gets***

a day to rest? Can we understand the prudence of leaving forests and natural lands alone to live as God designed?"

*"Phrases like 'planned economic slowdowns' and 'intentional de-growth' are coming to the fore. For those of us in the Judeo-Christian tradition, we know the Bible was way ahead of the game with this concept of 'planned economic slowdown.' It's called **SABBATH**."*

Remarks by Mayor Cam Guthrie of Guelph, Ontario.

*"Families are eating meals and together, that rarely did before. Cities known for constant noise and chaos are quiet. Birds can be heard singing in the streets of Hyderabad, India. The waters around Venice are clear. You can actually see the fish and swans are returning. The air quality in major cities such as Los Angeles in London has improved 80%. It is no longer visible but rather clean and breathable. Perhaps the Creator is telling us that society and the planet needs to keep **a Sabbath every week?**"*

Ellen White predicted that the religious world would **blame God's people** for the calamities that afflict the earth. She also predicted that nations would propose a Sunday law to restore divine favor and temporal prosperity:

*"The class that have provoked the displeasure of Heaven will charge all their troubles upon those whose obedience to God's commandments is a perpetual reproof to transgressors. It will be declared that men **are offending God** by the violation of the Sunday sabbath; that this sin **has brought calamities** which will not cease until Sunday observance shall be strictly enforced; and that those who present the claims of the fourth commandment, thus destroying reverence for Sunday, are troublers of the people, **preventing their restoration to divine favor and temporal prosperity.**" Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 590*

Why God Took Away Sunday

Title of the article: "Why God took Sunday away". By Pastor Robert Field, Bethel Baptist Church in Montreal.

When we see a virus affecting the entire world we know that **He wants to get our attention** in a very big way. This is a **worldwide announcement** from heaven. Yet rather than look at this infection as it affects the unsaved world I want us to take a moment to consider what God may be preaching to His church, His people. **Sunday, the Lord's Day, is gone. God has taken it away.**

Understand, God is in control of it all. It is during times like these that I like to ask the question 'why God'? What are you trying to teach your church? You see we have to learn to turn away from our own needs and desires and fears for the moment and start a try to see things from God's perspective. **Why would God take away Sunday? Yet why God? Why have you taken Sunday away?**

In looking upon our present condition, I believe we should understand that the **virus is a judgment upon the Lord's day.** There are many reasons from God for the infection in our midst yet I believe that this is one glaring fact to be seen in this trial. The church is closed. We are out of business. God has eradicated worship **on His day. He has taken Sunday away.** Yet for what reason? Surely, He would want us together, singing, praying and hearing the word preached—doing all the things we used to do. Is this not what He desires from His people? How can He close down our corporate worship? I believe He is sending us the message that He has not been pleased with what we have been doing to **His day of worship.** Therefore, He has shut it down for the time being and perhaps we might get His message.

Looking back on our past behavior, do you think we have really been **honoring the Lord's Day and keeping it holy?** Do you really think that God is pleased with our obedience to His **fourth commandment?**

Many in the church have eradicated the **fourth commandment** from thoughts. We do not remember the **Sabbath day to keep it holy as God commands.** Israel did this to **their Sabbath** in the Old Testament and found themselves under the judgment of God. **He took away their day of worship** by sending them away into exile. Therefore, in seeing what is presently happening to the church, do we really think that God is pleased with the way we respond to **His day?** Try to see this from His perspective.

What used to be the Lord's Day has now turned into the Lord's hour. We race to church, do our Christian duty then head back into the world to enjoy ourselves with what is left of the day. Gone are the times of evening services, afternoon fellowships, solid and consistent and constant preaching, **abstaining from work and play on Sunday** so that we can enjoy the people of God and the Lord. Pastors reduce their preaching to once a week when the church is screaming for food as they starve. **Sunday has become optional for Christians.**

If there is a party, a sporting event, a TV special a baseball or hockey game, lawn to cut or windows to wash, then sure, we can opt out of church because we think that those events are more important and vital to our own pleasure. Surely, God would not deny us just a little bit of fun, a little bit of pleasure or business on **His day**. I hope you realize that the world, the flesh and the devil have made a concerted effort in eradicating the importance of the Lord's Day from the church and we have gone along with it. Business thrives, sports events flourish. Christians think nothing about running after the things of the world on **His day**. After all, one service a week is sufficient, is it not? I have done my duty to God now let me do my thing. Thus, our compromises have led us into judgment. The spiritual life of the church nowadays is full of compromises. Our people walk like the world and these compromises, these weaknesses, are accepted by the church.

You may not be convinced that **Sunday is our Sabbath for the Lord**. You may think that the **fourth commandment** has been **abrogated, tossed away, and of no concern** to the Christian in this century. Yea, we fiddle around with arguments about the validity and application of the fourth commandment while the church burns to the ground under God's judgment. We try to convince ourselves that it is an **outdated commandment**, inapplicable to us, unnecessary in these modern times, too constraining, asking too much of us. So, with our superior excuses we sit back and tell ourselves and God that we are going to do as we please. He can have me for an hour, for one sermon, and that is enough even though **He demands the day**. If that is our choice, then God will agree with us and give us up to our own lusts and desires.

He has taken Sunday away. If we will not see the importance of His day, then He will eradicate it for us and the next generation just as He did with Israel."

Mary Healy Article

Is the Coronavirus Pandemic a Judgment From God?

National Catholic Register

April 8, 2020

Mary Healy

"Half the human race is under some form of lockdown, as if suddenly consigned to an involuntary retreat. Have we sometimes failed to honor the Lord by keeping the Lord's Day? Have we treated Sundays just like any other day, as a time to go shopping, get work done and pursue our own agenda, instead of taking time to deepen our relationship with Jesus and relax with family and friends? In the Old Testament, God decreed that Judah would go into exile for a time corresponding to all the sabbaths they had broken, "until the land has retrieved its lost sabbaths" (2 Chronicles 36:21). So now, perhaps our frenetic society is retrieving its lost sabbaths."

A radical environmental proposal: A day of rest

By Will Hall, *Message* Executive Editor

May 1, 2020

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM)

Last week as environmentalists around the world celebrated Earth Day, I was intrigued by the potential of a biblical solution to the problem of air pollution: a day of rest.

The concept of a day of rest is nothing new to people of faith. We are familiar with God's six days of creation — His forming the heavens and the earth and fashioning all the creatures of the air, land and sea, as well as molding man into His image. Likewise, we know our Heavenly Father established the seventh day as a time of rest.

But two points about the nature of that first week stood out for me:

First, God did not need six days to complete His creation. He did not need to give multiple commands to establish light, the earth's atmosphere, etc. He simply could have said, "Let there be all" and everything would have been in its place at once. It is obvious that He was providing a cycle, a recurring schedule for mankind.

Second, God had no reason to rest. He was not exhausted from His creative endeavors. Nor was He in need of refreshment or restoration of His energy. But He established a day of cessation of work in part for man's benefit. The day off is meant to be a holy time, set apart to worship the Creator. Yet, Exodus 23:12 also emphasizes that a weekly day of rest allows the beasts of burden and the workers of the field to be "refreshed." And, it bears pointing out that when the farm workers rest on the seventh day so does the land.

Now, newly published information seems to bear out what should be obvious: A weekly day of rest could help keep the balance in the environmental system that God established to sustain man's physical existence.

Scientists have made multiple serendipitous discoveries about the impact of shutdowns around the world during the novel coronavirus pandemic:

- NASA satellite images have documented a 30 percent decline in nitrous oxide levels (an air pollutant produced by industries and cars burning fossil fuels) in China (China has confined only certain cities and not the entire country).

- Carbon monoxide emissions (mainly from cars and trucks) are down 50 percent in New York City, according to researchers at Columbia University.

- The EPA has recorded the best air quality in Los Angeles than at anytime during the last 40 years.

Meanwhile, a recently completed study confirmed that pollutants at ground level are diminishing globally (based on a two-week surveillance of 27 countries):

- Nitrous oxide is down 29 percent;

- Ozone, a byproduct of the chemical reaction when pollutants interact with sunlight, is off by an average of 11 percent; and,
- Fine particulate matter (a leading cause of death), which is most notable in the form of haze or smog, is lower by an average of 9 percent.

These are staggering numbers published by a joint team of Norwegian and German researchers.

But it was something else they said that really should cause everyone to pause and reflect.

Essentially, they lamented that the global lockdown was not sustainable (due to the financial catastrophe it would perpetuate) because of “the potential health benefits gained from reducing ‘business as usual’ air pollutant emissions from economic activities.”

So, what if a lockdown on major activity was sustainable for a time each year – just not all at one time?

Imagine the possible ecological improvements if there was an annual pause of 52 days as compared to the two weeks of inactivity measured for the study; and, instead of 52 days straight, what if the interruption was only one day each week?

Could something as simple as observing one day of rest for every six days of work make a difference in air quality and thus reduce the dire ecological impacts from pollution that many scientists predict for our world?

The numbers produced by this one study (with only about a third of the global population under a partial or full lockdown) seem to suggest the impact would be statistically and practically significant.

As for the economic impact on businesses from being closed one day of the week — Chick-fil-A has done quite well by closing on Sundays, generating more sales per store in six days than its three closest competitors, combined, achieve in seven.

A day of rest is not a solution for the proliferation of plastics in the oceans, etc. But when it comes to reducing airborne pollutants, one day off in seven seems to more than make sense, it is wisdom from above.”



“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #8 – THE SABBATH/SUNDAY QUESTION

Introduction

The great Aristotle lived around the year 350 BC. Besides being a renowned philosopher, he was also a naturalist. He defined a spider as a small insect that has six legs.

For two thousand years, people accepted his definition without question. After all, who would question the authority of the great Aristotle?

Then, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck decided to examine a spider for himself. Lo and behold, he discovered that a spider is not an insect (it is an arachnid) and that it actually has eight legs. We learn several lessons from this story:

- ✓ For over two thousand years, people had passed on an erroneous tradition based on the opinion of an expert. This proves that depending on the statements of an authority cannot be the test of truth. We must examine things for ourselves!
- ✓ The passing of time does not make error truth or truth error. The spider did not grow two legs after Aristotle.
- ✓ The beliefs of the majority does not make error the truth.

In our previous studies, we noticed that the **faithful Christians** who **fled** Jerusalem in **AD 70** kept the seventh day **Sabbath**. Jesus Himself told them to pray that that their flight not be in winter or on the Sabbath (Matthew 24:20). This proves that Jesus **did not nail** the Sabbath to the cross when He died.

However, **most Christians** today claim that Sabbath observance was **for the Jews** and that **Sunday** is the **new day** is the Christian Sabbath. This makes it necessary to consider what the **New Testament** has to say about Sabbath and Sunday.

Planetary Names

There are **only eight texts** in the New Testament that mention the '**first day of the week**'. If we are going to find evidence for Sunday observance, it must be in one of **those eight texts**.

The word 'Sunday' **never appears** in the New Testament although the **Romans** did use the name **dies solis** to refer to the first day of the week. The Bible **numbers** the **first six days** of the week but does not **give them a name**. Only the seventh day has a **number and a name**—the Sabbath. The **Brazilians** follow the Bible pattern by numbering the days from Monday to Friday and name only two of them, Domingo and Sábado)

Latin was the language of the Romans. Although the Bible numbers the days, the **pagan Romans** gave the days **planetary names** in honor of their gods. Here are the names that the Romans gave to the days of the week:

- ✓ Dies solis (sun)
- ✓ Dies lunae (moon)
- ✓ Dies martis (mars)
- ✓ Dies mercurii (mercury)
- ✓ Dies Iovis (Jovi or Zeus)
- ✓ Dies veneris (venus)
- ✓ Dies saturni (sabbath)

Eight References to the First Day

We are going to study all eight references to the first day of the week in the New Testament and ask four questions of each:

- Does the text state that the first day is the Lord's Day?
- Does the text tell us that the first day of the week is holy?
- Does the text tell us that we are supposed to go to church on the first day?
- Does any text tell us that we are to keep Sunday in honor of the resurrection?

We will also consider Revelation 1:10, a verse that Christians have used as a proof text for the observance of Sunday.

Text #1: Matthew 28:1

"Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb."

This text does not say that the first day of the week [1] is the Lord's Day, [2] that we must keep it holy, [3] that we are supposed to attend church on it [4] or that we must keep it in honor of the resurrection.

Furthermore, the text clearly states that Sunday is not the Sabbath because it tells us that Jesus resurrected '*after the Sabbath*'.

The Sabbath is the seventh day while Christ resurrected on the first day (Exodus 20:8-11).

Some calendars today in various parts of the world muddy the waters by making Monday the first day of the week and Sunday the seventh. This is a crafty way of making people think that Sunday is the seventh day of the week. For example, Avianca, the airline of Colombia (Septimo Día, AVIANCA).

Text #2: Mark 16:1, 2

*“Now when the **Sabbath was past**, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. ² Very early in the morning, on the **first day of the week**, they came to the tomb when **the sun had risen**.”*

This text does not say that the first day of the week [1] is the **Lord's Day**, [2] that we must **keep it holy**, [3] that we are supposed to **attend church** on it [4] or that we are to keep it in **honor of the resurrection**. The text simply states that **Jesus resurrected** the first day of the week.

Furthermore, the text makes it clear that **Sunday is not the Sabbath** because the first day is the day **after** the Sabbath.

Pope **John Paul II**, in his pastoral letter *Dies Domini* attempted to prove that Sunday is the Christian Sabbath because of **everything that occurred** on that day:

- Jesus **resurrected** on Sunday.
- Sunday Jesus walked and talked with **two disciples** on the road to Emmaus on Sunday (Luke 24:36).
- He appeared to the **eleven apostles** on the evening of Sunday (John 20:19).
- A **week later** he appeared to the apostles again on Sunday (John 20:24-28).
- God poured out the **Holy Spirit** on the Day of Pentecost on Sunday.
- The **first proclamation** of the gospel took place on Sunday.
- The **first baptisms** happened on Sunday.

Why did Jesus resurrect on Sunday? What people do not realize is that He resurrected on Sunday because of what He had to do on the Sabbath! He resurrected on the first day because He had to **rest in the tomb** on the seventh.

- ✓ **At creation**: He **finished** on the sixth day (Genesis 2:1), and **ceased** on the seventh day.

- ✓ **At redemption:** He said ‘it is **finished**’ (John 19:31) and **ceased** in the tomb on the Sabbath.
- ✓ **At the restoration:** He will **recreate** the world in six days, say ‘it is **done**’, (Revelation 21:6) and then **cease** on the seventh.

Text #3: Mark 16:9

*“Now when He **rose early** on the **first day** of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.”*

This text does not say that the first day of the week [1] is the **Lord’s Day**, [2] that we must **keep it holy**, [3] that we are supposed to **attend church** on it [4] or that we are to keep it in **honor of the resurrection**. The text simply states that Jesus resurrected the first day of the week. Once again, it tells us that Jesus resurrected the **day after the Sabbath**.

Some Christians use a **psychological argument** in favor of Sunday. They say:

*“The Sabbath was a **sad day** for the disciples because Jesus was dead in the tomb. However, **Sunday was a day of joy and victory** because Jesus resurrected. Therefore we Christians keep the joyful and victorious day!”*

This argument, based on **human reason** and logic **contradicts the Bible**. First, there was no reason why the disciples should have been sad. **Jesus had told them** multiple times that He was going to die and resurrect the third day (see Matthew 16:21). If the disciples had listened to Jesus, the Sabbath would have been a day of **joyous expectation**. Second and most devastating to the argument, on **Sunday evening** the disciples were **still sad** because they did not believe that Jesus had resurrected.

Mark 16:9-13

*“Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. ¹⁰ **She went and told those who had been with Him**, as they **mourned and wept**. ¹¹ And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, **they did not believe**. ¹² After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the*

country.¹³ And they went and told it to the rest, but **they did not believe them either.**

Text #4: John 20:1, 2

*“Now the **first day of the week** Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was **still dark**, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.² Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.”*

According to scholars the Gospel of **John** and the book of **Revelation** were written by the **same person** at about the **same time**—the end of the **first century**. By this time, **more than sixty years** had passed since the resurrection.

Neither book refers to Sunday [1] as the **Lord’s Day** [2] or as a **memorial of the resurrection**. Neither book [3] attributes **any holiness to Sunday** [4] nor are Christians encouraged to **go to church** on the day.

In fact, **Matthew, Mark and Luke** wrote their books at least **30 years after** the resurrection and none of them single out the first day of the week **as a special day**. They **simply tell us** that Jesus resurrected on the first day of the week.

Text #5: Luke 24:1-3

*“Now on the **first day of the week**, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.² But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.³ Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.”*

This text does not say that the first day of the week [1] is the **Lord's Day**, [2] that we are to **keep it holy**, [3] that we are supposed to **attend church** on it or [4] that we are to keep it in **honor of the resurrection**. The text simply states that Jesus **resurrected** the first day of the week. Furthermore, the text tells us that Jesus resurrected the day **after the Sabbath** so Sunday is not the Sabbath.

As we examine the **sequence of days** in **Luke 23:50-24:1** we see clearly that Jesus died on **Friday** (the sixth day, the preparation), rested in the tomb on the **Sabbath** (the seventh day), and resurrected on what we today call **Sunday** (the first day). Therefore, **Sunday cannot be the Sabbath.**

Luke 23:54-24:2

*"That day was the [1] **Preparation**, and the Sabbath **drew near** ⁵⁵ and the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. ⁵⁶ Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils and they [2] **rested on the Sabbath** according to **the commandment**. ^{24:1} Now on the [3] **first day of the week**, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. ² But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.*

Luke wrote these verses about **30 years after** Christ resurrected and he clearly stated that the women **rested on the Sabbath**, according to **the commandment**. This proves that believers kept the Sabbath **after Christ died**. Therefore, Jesus did **not abolish** the Sabbath at the cross.

The **Hebrew festivals** predicted Jesus' death, burial and resurrection one thousand four hundred years before the events occurred. **Leviticus 23:4-11** mentions three spring feasts: Passover, Unleavened Bread and first fruits. Jesus **fulfilled all three right on time**. He died on the **fourteenth day** of Nissan, remained in the tomb on the **fifteenth** and resurrected the **sixteenth**.

Christians celebrate the events of 'Holy Week' **once a year**. These include the entrance of Jesus to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, his agony in Gethsemane on Holy Thursday and His death on Good Friday. Why then do Christians celebrate resurrection **Sunday every week** instead of once a year like the rest of the days of 'Holy Week'? The Jews observed these festivals once a year, including First fruits that pointed to the resurrection of Jesus. It is ironic that Christians **observe Holy Week** that the Bible **never commands** and they refuse to keep the Sabbath that the Bible clearly commands.

Text #6: John 20:19

This text describes an event that occurred on Sunday evening of resurrection Sunday:

*"Then, the same day at evening, being the **first day of the week**, when the **doors were shut** where the disciples were assembled, **for fear of the Jews**, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."*

This text does not say that the first day of the week [1] is the **Lord's Day**, that [2] we are to **keep it holy**, [3] that we are supposed to **attend church** on it or [4] that we are to keep it in **honor of the resurrection**. The text simply states that Jesus resurrected the first day of the week. Once again, it tells us that Jesus resurrected the **day after the Sabbath** so Sunday is not the Sabbath.

Many Christians use this text in an attempt to prove that Sunday is **the Christian Sabbath** because, so they say, the disciples gathered on the first day of the week to **celebrate the resurrection**.

The **argument** goes something like this:

The disciples **gathered** in the Upper Room to **celebrate communion** in remembrance of the resurrection and Jesus actually **joined them** for the celebration. Thus, following Christ's example, Christians must meet every Sunday to **celebrate communion** in honor of Christ's resurrection.

This argument has several flaws:

- ✓ The text clearly tells us **why** they gathered in the Upper Room. It was not to celebrate the resurrection but rather for **fear of the Jews**. They were scared to death and in **hiding**.
- ✓ Jesus **could not have joined them** to celebrate communion because the day before His death (Thursday) He told His disciples that He would not drink it with them again until he drank it with them in His **Father's kingdom**:

Matthew 26:29

*"But I say to you, I will **not drink of this fruit** of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."*

- ✓ The Bible tells us explicitly **what Jesus ate** in the Upper Room the evening of resurrection day:

Luke 24:42, 43

*"So they gave Him a piece of a **broiled fish** and some **honeycomb**.⁴³ And He took it and ate in their presence."*

- ✓ Communion commemorates the **death** of Jesus, **not Sunday**:

Matthew 26:28

*"For this is **My blood** of the new covenant, which is **shed** for many for the remission of sins."*

1 Corinthians 11:26

*"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, **you proclaim the Lord's death** till He comes."*

- ✓ The disciples broke **bread every day**, not only on Sunday:

Acts 2:44, 46, NIV

*"All the believers were together and had everything in common. . . **Every day** they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They **broke bread in their homes** and ate together with glad and sincere hearts."*

- ✓ Jesus instituted communion on **Thursday night** of Passion Week (1 Corinthians 11:23). If this is the case, why did He institute it on Thursday if He wanted Christians to celebrate it on Sunday? He would have had the **excellent opportunity** to institute the Lord's Supper **on the Sunday night** of the resurrection but He did not.

- ✓ The **greatest blow** against this entire argument is that the disciples did not gather to celebrate the resurrection because they **did not even believe** that Jesus had resurrected:

Luke 24:9-11: The **morning** of the resurrection:

"Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles. ¹¹ And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them

Mark 16:10-13: The **evening** of the resurrection:

*"Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to **Mary Magdalene**, out of whom He had cast seven demons. ¹⁰ She went and told those who had been with Him, as **they mourned and wept**. ¹¹ And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, **they did not believe**. ¹² After that, He appeared in another form to **two of them** as they walked and went into the country. ¹³ And they went and told it to the rest, but **they did not believe them either**. ¹⁴ Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He **rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart**, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen."*

Text #7: 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2

These verses describe an offering for the poor saints in Jerusalem. The offering was not for the local church budget (Romans 15:25-28) Here Paul is not speaking at all about a gathering of Christians **at church** on the first day of the week. **Every Bible version** I have consulted states that this offering was to be **set aside** on a weekly basis. Why would members set it aside at home, if they were going to church on Sunday? Should they not rather have taken it to church? Not one Bible translation instructs believers to take the money to church. However, some Bible commentators insert Sunday observance into the equation.

Adam Clarke's Commentary embellishes the text with human opinion:

*"He was to do this at the conclusion of the week, when he had cast up his weekly earnings, and had seen how much God had prospered his labor. He was **then to bring it** on the first day of the week, as is **most likely** to the church or assembly, that it might be put in the **common treasury**."*

On the other hand, the Presbyterian commentator Albert Barnes was more faithful to the text:

*"Let him lay up at home, treasuring up as he has been prospered. The Greek phrase, 'by himself,' means, probably, the same as **at home**. Let him set it apart; let him designate a certain portion; let him do this **by himself** when he is **at home**, when he can calmly look at the evidence of his prosperity."*

Here are several Bible versions that are faithful to the text:

New International Version:

*"Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. ² On the **first day of every week**, each one of you should **set aside** a sum of money in keeping with his income, **saving it up**, so that when I come no collections will have to be made."*

New American Standard Bible:

*"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. ² On the **first day of every week** each one of you is to **put aside and save**, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come."*

English Standard Version:

*"Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ² On the **first day of every week**, each of you is to put **something aside and store it up**, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come."*

Revised Standard Version:

*"Now concerning the contribution for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ² On the **first day of every week**, each of you is to **put something aside and store it up**, as he may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come."*

Weymouth Version:

*"On the first day of every week let each of you put on one side and **store up at his home** whatever gain has been granted to him; so that whenever I come, there may then be no collections going on."*

Wuest Version:

*"On every first day of the week let each one of you have the habit of putting **aside at home** whatever he may be prospered in, **accumulating and keeping it in reserve**, in order that when I may come, then there may not be any collections."*

It is **dishonest** to use this text to 'prove' that Sunday is holy and people were going to church on that day. The text is not speaking of a meeting at church but rather a **private setting apart** of money at home to send to the poor in Jerusalem with Paul.

However, we might legitimately ask **why Paul commanded** them to set it aside on **Sunday**. The reason is simple. The workweek ended on Friday and Sunday would give them the first opportunity to sit down and figure out how much they should set aside. They would not do this on Sabbath because it is holy and not a day to take care of our personal finances.

What does this text teach us? It does not teach us Sunday observance but rather **faithful stewardship**:

- ✓ Not suggested but **commanded** ('I gave orders and you must do').
- ✓ Not for **church operations** but to send to the needy in Jerusalem.
- ✓ It was the practice in **other churches**.
- ✓ **Regularly** (every payday).

- ✓ **Personally** ('each one of you').
- ✓ **Privately** ('set aside at home').
- ✓ **Amount** according to God's blessings.

Text #8: Acts 20:7-12

The all-time favorite proof-text of Sunday keepers is in Acts 20:7-12:

*"Now on the **first day of the week**, when the disciples came together to **break bread**, Paul, ready to **depart the next day**, spoke to them and continued his message **until midnight**.⁸ There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. ⁹ And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a **deep sleep**. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. ¹⁰ But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him." ¹¹ Now when **he** had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and **talked** a long while, even **till daybreak**, he **departed**.¹² And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted."*

Verse 7 tells us that this meeting took place in **the evening** of the first day of the week. The evening of the first day would be what we call **Saturday night** (Genesis 1 teaches that the dark portion of the day comes before the light portion). **Mark 1:32** indicates that the evening begins when the sun sets.

This was an **out of the ordinary** meeting in that it was a **farewell** for the apostle Paul (20:7, 25, 36-38) who was to travel the next day. Paul had probably preached **all day Sabbath** and the brethren, knowing that he would **leave the next morning** asked him to speak on Saturday night, the evening portion of the first day.

Paul's Sabbath Custom

This passage gives **no justification** for a **regular observance** of the first day of the week. The book of Acts repeatedly tells us that the apostles went to church on Sabbath.

Acts 13:14, 42, and 44

*“However, when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue **on the Sabbath day** and sat down. . . So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the **Gentiles** begged that these words might be preached to them the **next Sabbath**. . . ⁴⁴ On the **next Sabbath** almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.”*

Notice that the Gentiles requested that Paul preach to them on the next Sabbath. As gentiles, why would they have to wait until the **next Sabbath day**? Paul could have preached to them on any day of the week.

Acts 16:13

*“And **on the Sabbath day** we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.”*

This meeting took place by a riverside, not in the synagogue. Clearly, Paul met with believers on the Sabbath.

Acts 17:2, 3

*“Then Paul, as **his custom** was, went in to them, and for **three Sabbaths** reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.”*

Notice in this text that Paul had the custom of going to the synagogue on the Sabbath. He was a Sabbath keeper.

Acts 18:1-4

When Paul met Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth, he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath:

*“And he reasoned in the synagogue **every Sabbath**, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.”*

Acts 18:11

*“And he continued there **a year and six months, [78 Sabbaths]** that is teaching the word of God among them.”*

To **ignore these clear texts** and try to make Luke say something that he did not intend is **dishonest**.

It is worthy of note that the apostle Paul walked **35 miles** (Acts 20:13) to **Assos** the next day, on Sunday morning. If Sunday was the day of worship at that time, **should not Paul have been in Church?** The simple fact is that the church was not meeting on Sunday at this time.

More than once, I have had similar experiences. I once visited the city of Quibdó in the tropical rainforest of Colombia. After speaking all day Sabbath, the members, knowing that I would be leaving on Sunday morning, asked me to speak on **Saturday night** and the meeting lasted until **3 AM**. If we are going to use Acts 20:7-9 as a justification to observe Sunday, we must do it on **Saturday night** and have the service **all night!**

We have examined **every single text** in the Bible that mentions the **first day** of the week and have **found nothing** that even hints that Sunday is the day of worship for Christians. However, there is **one more text** that Christians use to justify the observance of Sunday, Revelation 1:10.

Text #9: Revelation 1:10

Sunday keeping Christians frequently refer to Sunday as the Lord's Day. However, Patristic literature never uses the name 'Lord's Day' for **Sunday** until the end of the **second century** in the **Apocryphal Gospel of Peter**. It is **not valid** to say that the use of the name at the end of the second century is proof that John used it with the same meaning in the book of Revelation one hundred years earlier.

Frequently I **ask** Christian friends of **other denominations** **three questions**:

First, to whom (go one by one) do the **light**, the **firmament**, the **vegetation**, the **heavenly bodies**, the **fish**, the **birds**, the **land animals** and **human beings** belong?

Their immediate answer is that all of these belong **to God**.

Second, I ask them **why** these things belong to God.

Their answer is immediate: “**Because** God created them.” They are, of course, biblically correct because Psalm 24 tells us as much:

Psalm 24:1, 2

*“The earth is **the Lord's**, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.² **For** He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters.”*

I then ask them a **third question: For whom** did God make all these things?

Once again, there is no hesitation in giving the answer: For all human beings!

However, these **same Christian friends** fail to take their answers to their **logical conclusion**. If everything that God made during creation week is His because he made it then the **Sabbath must be His** as well because He **made it** for man at the conclusion of creation week (Mark 2:27).

To say that all that God made the first six days is **His and he gave it to man**, but the Sabbath belongs to the Jews is **absurd**. This is why the Bible refers to the Sabbath with expressions such as:

- ‘the Sabbath **of the Lord** your God’ (Exodus 20:11)
- ‘you shall keep **my** Sabbaths’ (Ezekiel 20:12, 20)
- God refers to it as ‘**my** holy day’ (Isaiah 58:13, 14)
- The Son of man is **Lord of the Sabbath** (Mark 2:27)

Never once in the Old or New Testament, not even once, do the writers refer to the Sabbath as the **Jewish Sabbath** or the **Sabbath of the Jews**. However, John refers to the **feasts that passed** away when Jesus died as ‘feasts of the Jews’.

- Jesus is the **king of the Jews** (Matthew 2:2; 27:11). Is He King **exclusively** of the Jews and not of Christians?
- John 2:13: The **Passover** is called the ‘Passover of the Jews’
- John 5:1: ‘a **feast** of the Jews’
- John 6:4: ‘the **Passover**, a feast of the Jews’
- John 7:2: ‘the Jews’ Feast of **Tabernacles**’
- John 11:55 ‘the Jews **Passover** was nigh at hand’

Conclusion

We have studied all the texts that mention the first day of the week and not one of them even hints that Sunday is the **Lord’s Day**, that we are to **keep it holy**, that it is the day to **gather in church**, or that we are to keep it in **honor of the resurrection** of Christ.

We also studied **Revelation 1:10** and found no evidence that Sunday is the Lord’s day. Twenty-three times the Bible refers to the Sabbath as the Lord’s Day and not once does it call Sunday by this name. The Bible in both Testaments is clear. Exodus 20:8-11 states that the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD and in Mark 2:27 Jesus tells us that He is the Lord of the Sabbath.

“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

**LESSON #9 – MATTHEW 24 AND
THE FALSE PROPHET**

False Prophets in the End-time

Matthew 24 refers to false prophets **twice** (verses 11, 24). The first time is in the context of a **tribulation** before the close of probation. The second is during the **great tribulation** after probation closes.

In order to understand these references to false prophets in verses 11 and 24, we need to look at the immediate **context** of these verses as well as the **Old Testament definition** of a false prophet. Here is the first reference:

Matthew 24:9-13

*“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake and then **many will be offended**, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹ Then many **false prophets** will rise up and deceive many.”*

Here is the second reference:

Matthew 24:24

*“For **false christs** and **false prophets** will rise and show **great signs and wonders** to **deceive**, if possible, even the **elect**.”*

These false prophets do not appear in a vacuum; neither are they secular prophets who prognosticate silly secular events that have nothing to do with biblical prophecy. What kind of false prophets are they? Are they the Jean Dixon or David Koresh types or will they be far more deceptive? In order to know, we must return to the Mosaic legislation where we find the characteristics of false prophets.

The Mosaic Legislation on False Prophets

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 defines the distinction between true and false prophets:

Deuteronomy 13:1-5: Today's English Version:

"A prophet or an interpreter of dreams may promise a miracle or a wonder,² in order to lead you to worship and serve gods that you have not worshiped before. Even if what he promises comes true,³ do not pay any attention to him. The Lord your God is using him to test you, to see if you love the Lord with all your heart.⁴ Follow the Lord and honor him; obey him and keep his commands; worship him and be faithful to him.⁵ However, put to death any interpreter of dreams or prophet that tells you to rebel against the Lord, who rescued you from Egypt, where you were slaves. Such a man is evil and is trying to lead you away from the life that the Lord has commanded you to live. He must be put to death, in order to rid yourselves of this evil."

Let us summarize the characteristics of false prophets:

- ✓ Both the true and the false prophet arise among the people of God.
- ✓ The false prophet performs signs and wonders as evidence that what he says is true.
- ✓ The false prophet encourages God's people to practice false worship.
- ✓ The false prophet seeks to entice God's people to break the commandments.
- ✓ The false prophet entices the faithful from the way that the LORD commanded them to walk.

- ✓ On the other hand, the true prophet rebukes sin, and teaches the people to 'walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments [notice the key expression] and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.'" (verse 4)

The Role of a True Prophet

In contrast to the false prophets in Israel, true prophets were the conscience of Israel. They were not revolutionary innovators bringing in new truths but rather restorers of the ancient landmarks from which the people had gone astray. True prophets called God's apostate people back to the old time religion. So to speak, they were God's attorneys in divorce court.

Elijah is the prime example of the faithful quintessential prophet. He called God's people back to the way that they had forsaken. He repaired the altar of the Lord that the sun worshiping false prophets had torn down, and then he prayed:

1 Kings 18:37

"Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again."

Jesus also spoke of Elijah as the great restorer. Elijah did not come to bring new truth but to bring the people back to the truths they had forsaken:

Matthew 17:10

"Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things."

When Elijah sought to restore the truth of God, his enemies, particularly Jezebel, who was the leader of the false prophets, persecuted him mercilessly. It bears noting that Jezebel had a group of 400 false prophets that did the bidding of the harlot Jezebel. They ate at Jezebel's table and you do not bite the hand that feeds you!

Keep in mind for future reference that God vindicated Elijah's message by **sending fire** from heaven to consume his sacrifice. This is important because at the end, the **false prophet** of **spiritual Jezebel** will bring fire down from heaven in the sight of men (more on this later).

The False Prophets and the First Destruction of Jerusalem

It is helpful to examine the message of the **false prophets** that arose among God's professed people shortly before the **first destruction** of Jerusalem in the year **586 BC**. It bears noting that Jeremiah was God's true prophet **immediately before** the Babylonian captivity.

As we examine the book that bears his name, we find **repeatedly** a **denunciation of the false prophets** whose main trait was that they prophesied '**peace, peace**' in the **name of the LORD** and confirmed the people in their **disobedience** to the law of God and in their practice of **false worship**. Jeremiah lived through the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC.

Jerusalem was full of **abominations** and yet the false prophets cried '**peace, peace**' and predicted that the city would **never fall** to the Babylonians:

Jeremiah 6:13-15

*"Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to **covetousness**; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone **deals falsely**.¹⁴ They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying, '**Peace, peace!**' when there is no peace.¹⁵ Were they ashamed when they had committed **abomination**? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time I punish them, they shall be cast down," says the LORD.*

The false prophets **promised peace** to those who **despised** the LORD. They assured those who followed the impulses of their **own hearts** that **no evil** would come upon them:

Jeremiah 23:17

*"They continually say to **those who despise Me**, 'The LORD has said, "You shall have **peace**"'; and to everyone who walks according to the **dictates of his own heart**, they say, '**No evil** shall come upon you.' "*

Jeremiah wrote that the false prophets **spoke in God's name** (see also Jeremiah 29:8-9) and yet they were **liars**. They assured the people that **no evil** would come upon Jerusalem:

Jeremiah 14:13-16

*"Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, **the prophets** say to them, 'You shall **not see the sword**, nor shall you have **famine**, but I will give you assured **peace** in this place.' " ¹⁴ And the LORD said to me, "The prophets **prophecy lies** in **My name**. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a **false vision**, divination, a worthless thing, and the **deceit of their heart**. ¹⁵ Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who **prophecy in My name**, whom **I did not send**, and who say, 'Sword and famine **shall not be in this land**'—'by sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed! ¹⁶ And **the people to whom they prophecy** shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the **famine** and the **sword**; they will have **no one to bury them**—them nor their wives, their sons nor their daughters—for I will pour their wickedness on them.'"*

The false prophets prophesied what the people **wanted to hear**. They lied and God warned the people not to trust them:

Jeremiah 27:9-10, 14-15

*"Therefore **do not listen** to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who speak to you, saying, "You shall not serve the king of Babylon." " ¹⁰ 'For they **prophecy a lie** to you, to remove you far from your land; and I will drive you out, and you will perish. ¹⁴ Therefore **do not listen** to the words of the prophets who speak to you, saying, 'You shall not serve the king of Babylon,' for they **prophecy a lie** to you; ¹⁵ for **I have not sent them**," says the*

LORD, "yet they prophesy a **lie in My name**, that I may drive you out, and that you may perish, you and the prophets who prophesy to you."

The false prophets **strengthened evil doers**:

Jeremiah 23:14

*"Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem: They commit adultery and walk in lies; they also **strengthen the hands of evildoers**, so that no one **turns back from his wickedness**. All of them are like Sodom to Me, and her inhabitants like Gomorrah."*

Jeremiah wrote that the false prophets **did not turn** the wicked from their evil ways:

Jeremiah 23:20-22

*"The anger of the LORD will not turn back until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly. ²¹ "I have **not sent these prophets**, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. ²² But if they had stood in My counsel, and had **caused My people to hear My words**, then **they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doings**."*

The false prophets did not turn Israel **from their wickedness**:

Jeremiah 23:14, 31-32

*"Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem: They commit **adultery** and walk in **lies**; they also strengthen the hands of **evildoers**, so that no one **turns back** from his wickedness. All of them are like Sodom to Me, and her inhabitants like Gomorrah. . . Behold, I am against the prophets," says the LORD, "who use their tongues and say, 'He says.' ³² "Behold, I am against those who **prophesy false dreams**," says the LORD, "and tell them, and **cause My people to err** by their **lies** [2 Thessalonians 2 speaks of lying wonders] and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all," says the LORD."*

The false prophet **Hananiah** taught **lies and rebellion** and he came to an ignominious death:

Jeremiah 28:15-17

*"Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, 'Hear now, Hananiah, the LORD has not sent you, but you make **this people trust in a lie**.¹⁶ Therefore thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will cast you from the face of the earth. This year you shall die, because you have **taught rebellion** against the LORD.' " ¹⁷ So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month."*

Those who **professed to be** the people of God, practiced **abominations** in the house that was called by God's name and built the high places for the worship of the **sun-god Baal**:

Jeremiah 32:31-35

*"For this city has been to Me a provocation of My anger and My fury from the day that they built it, even to this day; so I will remove it from before My face³² because of all the evil of the children of Israel and the children of Judah, that they have done to provoke Me to anger—**they**, their **kings**, their **princes**, their **priests**, **their prophets**, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.³³ And they have turned to Me **the back**, and not the face; though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not listened to receive instruction.³⁴ But they set their **abominations in the house** that is called by My name, to defile it.³⁵ And they built the **high places of Baal** which are in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I did not command them, nor did it come into My mind that they should do this **abomination**, to cause Judah to sin.'*

On the other hand, **true prophets** called upon Judah to **walk in the law**, to heed the **words** of the true prophets and **turn** from their wicked ways:

Jeremiah 26:4-6

*"And you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD: "If you will not listen to Me, to **walk in My law** which I have set before you, ⁵ to **heed the words of My servants the prophets** whom I sent to you, both rising up early and sending them (but you have not heeded), ⁶ then I will make this house like Shiloh, and will make **this city a curse** to all the nations of the earth."*

Jeremiah 35:15-16

*"I have also sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, '**Turn** now everyone from his evil way, **amend** your doings, and **do not go after other gods** to serve them; then you will dwell in the land which I have given you and your fathers.' But you have not inclined your ear, nor obeyed Me."*

The prophet **Ezekiel**, who was a **contemporary** of the prophet Jeremiah, wrote his book just a **few years before** the Babylonian captivity. He portrayed a people who were in open rebellion against God:

Ezekiel 22:25-26

*"The **conspiracy of her prophets** in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have **devoured people**; they have **taken treasure** and **precious things**; they have made many widows in her midst. ²⁶ Her priests have **violated My law** and profaned **My holy things**; they have **not distinguished** between the **holy and unholy**, nor have they made known **the difference** between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My **Sabbaths**, so that I am **profaned** among them."*

Ezekiel 8:16

*"So He brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house; and there, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their **backs toward the temple** of the Lord and their **faces toward the east**, and they were **worshipping the sun** toward the east."*

At the end of the Babylonian captivity, **Daniel explained** that the people **did not obey** the voice of God nor **walk in His laws**:

Daniel 9:10

*“We have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in **His laws**, which He set before us by His servants the **prophets**.”*

The prophet **Zechariah**, who helped build the temple after the captivity, explained that the captivity was due to the **refusal of the people** to listen to the **former prophets**:

Zechariah 7:12-13

*“Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the **law and the words** which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the **former prophets**. Thus great wrath came from the LORD of hosts.”*

Lest we blame the false prophets for the captivity, we need also to take into account the guilt of the people. Yes, the false prophets prophesied falsely but the people **loved to have it so**:

Jeremiah 5:31

*“The **prophets** prophesy **falsely**, and the priests rule by their own power; and **My people love to have it so**. But what will you do in the end?”*

The prophet **Isaiah** explained that the reason why the false prophets prophesied falsely was that they imbibed **intoxicating drinks** that did not allow them to **think straight**:

Isaiah 28:7

*“But they also have erred through **wine**, and through **intoxicating drink** are out of the way; the priest and the **prophet** have erred through **intoxicating drink**, they are swallowed up by **wine**, they are out of the way through **intoxicating drink**; they **err** in vision, they **stumble** in judgment.”*

The False Prophets of Matthew 24

Matthew 24 describes the work of the **false prophets** who spoke their false message before the second destruction of Jerusalem. These prophets, like those before the first destruction, were **comforting the people** with the idea that the city of Jerusalem would **never fall** because it was **God's City**.

Matthew 23:37-24:3 directly links the destruction of Jerusalem with the rejection of the Messiah, a similar sin that will characterize the world shortly before the second coming. Ellen White wisely wrote:

*"The great sin of the Jews was their **rejection of Christ**; the great sin of the Christian world would be their **rejection of the law** of God, the foundation of His government in heaven and earth." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 22*

These two sins **appear to be different** but they are actually the same. You see, the law is a reflection or **transcript** of God's character and therefore to reject the transcript is to reject the person revealed by the transcript:

*"Christ is revealed in the law, which is a **transcript** of His character." Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 240*

The problem with the Jews of Christ's day is that they **claimed to love the transcript**—the law—but they despised the Lord revealed in the transcript. On the other hand, professed Christians at the end of time will **claim to love the Lord** but they will despise the transcript.

The Jewish nation thought that by getting rid of Christ, they could save their nation but they caused what they wished to prevent. Likewise, at the end, the United States, by the influence of apostate Protestantism, will think that by getting rid of Sabbath keepers they will save the nation but the result will be national ruin.

False Prophets according to Jesus

Matthew 7:15, 16, 21-23

Jesus had some very important things to say about false prophets. When we put all of the **evidence together**, we find that the false prophets of the New Testament bear the **same characteristics** as the false prophets of the Old. The foundational passage to understand the character of the false prophets is in Matthew 7:

*"Beware of **false prophets**, who come to you in **sheep's clothing**, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. ²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not **prophesied in Your name**, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who **practice lawlessness!**'"*

Let us summarize the characteristics of the false prophets in Christ's day:

- ✓ False prophets give the **appearance** of being true prophets and yet they are ravenous wolves.
- ✓ False prophets prophesy in the **name of Jesus** so they must claim to be Christians.
- ✓ They do **not do the will** of the Father in heaven.
- ✓ They perform **signs and wonders** as proof that their message is true.
- ✓ False prophets encourage people to **transgress the law** of God.

We immediately see in this list a **parallel to the Mosaic legislation** in Deuteronomy 13. In His **Olivet Discourse** Jesus warned about the **deceptive character** of the false prophets and one salient characteristic is lawlessness—**confirming the people in their sins**. The word lawlessness is the same that the King James Version translates 'transgression of the law' in **1 John 3:4**.

Matthew 24:11-13

*“Then many **false prophets** will rise up and **deceive** many. ¹² And because **lawlessness** will abound, the love of many will grow cold.”*

Matthew 24:24 tells us that during the final time of trouble after the close of probation, the false prophets will perform **signs and wonders** to deceive, if possible, the very elect. The Christian world will embrace **Satan’s counterfeit** second coming of Christ:

Matthew 24:24

*“For false christs and **false prophets** will rise and show great **signs and wonders** to **deceive**, if possible, even the **elect**.”*

In **Luke 6:26** Jesus warned the religious leaders that prophesied like ‘their fathers’ in the days of the Old Testament false prophets. These prophets spoke what the people wanted to hear and the people ‘loved to have it so!’

*“Woe to you when all men speak **well of you**, for so **did their fathers** to the false prophets.”*

The Bible commentator **Albert Barnes** described these false prophets:

*“Men who **pretended to be of God**—who delivered their ‘**own’ doctrines** as the truth of God, and who **accommodated themselves** to the desires of the people. Of this number were the prophets of Baal, the false prophets who appeared in the **time of Jeremiah**, etc.” (Barnes’ Notes, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc.)*

The **Jemieson, Fausset and Brown** commentary linked this text with the work of the false prophets in the Old Testament:

*Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets—paying court to them because they flattered them **with peace** when there **was no peace**. See Mic 2:11. For the principle of this woe and its*

proper limits, see Jn 15:19.” (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc.)

In the Old Testament, the professed people of God **loved the false prophets** because they told them what they **wanted to hear**. The people hated true prophets because they were **politically incorrect**. When a true prophet tells it like it is, the world despises him:

John 15:19

*“If you were of the world, the **world would love** its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world **hates you**.” (see also Luke 6:22, 23; 13:34; Acts 7:52)*

Ellen White was right on target when she wrote about false prophets:

*“Those who seek to **cloak sin** and make it appear **less aggravating** to the mind of the offender are doing the work of the **false prophets** and may expect the retributive wrath of God to follow such a course. The Lord will **never accommodate** His ways to the **wishes of corrupt men**. The **false prophet** condemned Jeremiah for afflicting the people with his severe denunciations, and he sought to reassure them by **promising them prosperity**, thinking that the poor people should **not be continually reminded of their sins** and threatened with punishment. This course strengthened the people to resist the true prophet's counsel and intensified their **enmity toward him**.” Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. T 185*

The apostle Paul warned that just **before the close of probation** false prophets would be announcing ‘peace and safety’:

1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3

*“For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. ³ For when **they** say, “**Peace and safety!**” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman and they shall not escape [see Luke 21:36].”*

The False Prophet of Revelation

We must now turn to the book of Revelation, 'the testimony of Jesus Christ'. The book of Revelation, without exception, uses the plural word '**prophets**' to refer to true prophets. On the other hand, the singular word 'prophet' appears only three times and all of them are in the context of the '**false** prophet' (Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). Four questions face us at this point:

- ✓ Is the 'false prophet' a single individual or a system?
- ✓ Who is this 'false prophet'?
- ✓ Does the 'false prophet' claim to be '**Christian**'?
- ✓ What characteristics does the false prophet have?

The false prophet is not an individual but rather a prophetic system composed of many individual false prophets. How do we know this? We know that the false prophet is a nation with many spokespeople because the false prophet is a beast and a beast represents a kingdom.

Revelation 16:13 explains that Babylon is composed of three parts: The dragon, the beast and the false prophet:

"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the [1] dragon, out of the mouth of the [2] beast, and out of the mouth of the [3] false prophet.¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

In order to understand this trilogy of terror, we must go back to **Revelation 12 and 13** where it first appears and forward to **Revelation 19:20**. Revelation 12 describes the dragon, a symbol of Satan working through the civil power of Rome. Revelation 13:1-10 then describes a beast from the sea, a symbol of the Roman Catholic papacy. Revelation 13:11-18 then describes a beast that rises from the earth and at first has two horns like a lamb but ends up speaking like a dragon, a symbol of apostate Protestantism in the United States. A

comparison of Revelation 12 and 13 with Revelation 16:13 and Revelation 19:20 gives us the following perspective:

Revelation 12 and 13	Revelation 16:13	Revelation 19:20
Dragon	Dragon	Kings
Sea Beast	Sea Beast	Sea Beast
Earth Beast	False Prophet	False Prophet

This parallel indicates that the earth beast **is** the false prophet and the dragon represents the kings of the earth. Concerning the meaning of the dragon, Ellen White wrote:

***"Kings and rulers and governors** have placed upon themselves the brand of antichrist, and are **represented as the dragon** who goes to make war with the saints--with those who keep the commandments of God and who have the faith of Jesus." Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 39*

Now, in Bible prophecy, a beast **does not** represent a **single individual** but rather a **nation**. Thus, the **false prophet is a nation**. In line with the Mosaic legislation, and the testimony of Jesus, the False Prophet must **claim to be Christian** while it **acts contrary** to its profession. After all, it has two horns like a lamb (always a symbol of Christ in Revelation) but it speaks like a dragon (like Satan through the civil powers). The earth beast is actually the **spokesperson for the first beast** as true prophets were spokespersons for God. How do we know this? Simply because everything this land beast does, it does to please the first beast:

- ✓ It speaks like a dragon and the dragon is a symbol of Rome, both pagan and papal (Revelation 12:4, 13-15).
- ✓ It exercises all of the **authority** of the first beast.
- ✓ It commands every person on the earth to **worship** the first beast.
- ✓ It performs all of its actions in the **presence** of the first beast.
- ✓ It makes **an image** of the first beast and to its honor.
- ✓ It imposes **the mark** of the first beast.

- ✓ It worked **signs and wonders** in the presence of the first beast and the purpose of the signs was **to deceive** people to worship the image of the beast and to receive its mark (Revelation 19:20). We remember that the Mosaic legislation referred to false prophets performing signs and wonders and at the same time, leading Israel to transgress God's law.



“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #10 – THE GREAT TRIBULATION

There is a sequence of events in Matthew 24:15-21:

- ✓ The abomination of desolation (the national Sunday Law) that divides the world into two groups.
- ✓ The flight from the large cities preparatory to leaving the smaller ones.
- ✓ The close of probation—everyone has taken sides.
- ✓ The great tribulation ‘such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.’

In order to understand the ‘great tribulation’, we must first understand that there is only one tribulation composed of two stages with a pause or respite in between. When a person watches a movie on a DVD player and presses the pause button, the movie stops. When the person presses the play button again, the movie picks up where it left off. This illustrates the two stages of the great tribulation. The first phase of the great tribulation is past and was the worst when it comes to length and the second when it comes to intensity.

Which are the two stages of the great tribulation? The first was the period of papal supremacy during the 1260 years from 538 to 1798 AD. God shortened that period with the Protestant Reformation. The second will be a short period of severe persecution after the close of probation and God will cut it short by the second coming of Christ.

One Tribulation with a Pause in Between

What is the biblical evidence for this scenario? The answer is that the book of Revelation portrays two stages of papal supremacy with a pause in between. The beast of Revelation 13:1-10 oppressed the people of God for 42 months, after which the deadly wound would be healed and the whole world would wonder after the beast (Revelation 13:3).

We can see the same two periods of papal persecution in the fifth and sixth seals of the book of Revelation (for a complete study of the fifth and sixth seals read my study notes, 'The Seven Seals of Revelation, pp. 205-280). Revelation 6:9-11 refers to a group of martyrs of the past and a group of martyrs of the future who are crying out for justice.

Revelation 6:9-11 and the martyrs of the past:

"The mangled forms of millions of martyrs cried to God for vengeance upon that apostate power." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 59

Revelation 6:9-11 and the martyrs of the future:

"The cries of the faithful, persecuted ones ascend to heaven. And as the blood of Abel cried from the ground, there are voices also crying to God from martyrs' graves, from the sepulchers of the sea, from mountain caverns, from convent vaults: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 451

Daniel 11 portrays a similar scenario. The king of the north persecuted God's people in the past (verses 30-39) and will persecute them in the future (verses 40-45). Regarding these two stages, Ellen White wrote:

"We have no time to lose. Troublous times are before us. The world is stirred with the spirit of war. Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place. The prophecy in the eleventh of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfillment. Much of the history that has taken place in fulfillment of this prophecy

will be repeated. In the thirtieth verse, a power is spoken of that "shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant." [Verses 31-36, quoted.] Scenes similar to those described in these words will take place." Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases, vol. 13, p. 394

Both stages of tribulation are the worst in history. The first is so because of its length and the second, because of its intensity.

Toward the conclusion of the first period, there were signs in the heavens (Revelation 6:12, 13) announcing that God was about to pronounce a judgment in favor of the martyrs (see the parallel in Daniel 7). Toward the conclusion of the second period, there will be global signs in the heavens announcing the coming of Jesus to avenge the blood that the papacy shed in both stages of dominion (Revelation 6:14-17; Matthew 24:29, 30).

Both stages have a relationship with the Sabbath. During the 1260 years the papacy thought it could change the Sabbath to Sunday (Daniel 7:25). In the end-time the false prophet will impose the papacy's change in the law (the mark of the beast) by enforcing Sunday observance (Revelation 13:11-18).

Ellen White wrote about the two periods of tribulation:

Matthew 24:21 as past:

"Then shall be great tribulation," He said, "such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened [Matthew 24:21, 22]. For more than a thousand years, such persecution as the world had never before known was to come upon Christ's followers. Millions upon millions of His faithful witnesses were to be slain. Had not God's hand been stretched out to preserve His people, all would have perished. 'But for the elect's sake,' He said, 'those days shall be shortened.'" Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 631

Matthew 24:21 as future:

"We are to realize that the judgments of God are about to fall upon the earth, and we should most earnestly present before the people the warning that the Lord has commissioned us to give: 'For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be [Matthew 24:21].'"
Review and Herald, November 22, 1892

Sequence in Matthew 24 and Revelation

Ellen White compared the ruin of Jerusalem with the ruin of the world:

"The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 614

- **Preaching** the gospel to all the world—the three angels' message (Matthew 24:14; Revelation 14:6-12).
- World divided into **two groups** by the seal of God and the mark of the beast—the abomination of desolation (Matthew 24:15); Revelation 14:14-19).
- The **close of probation**—those who flee and those who stay (Matthew 24:16-20; Revelation 15:5-8).
- The **great tribulation** (Matthew 24:21; Revelation 16-18).
- The **second coming** (Matthew 24:29, 30; Revelation 19:11-19).

Sequence of Events in the Synoptic Gospels

- Social turmoil, wars, **epidemics**, famine, earthquakes—the beginning of sorrows (verse 8).
- God's people **blamed** for the convulsions in society and the natural world (verse 9).
- Many of those who appeared to be genuine believers will apostatize—the **shaking** (verse 10). Relatives and friends turn on each other (Mark 13:12)

- Help of the **Holy Spirit** when taken before councils and kings to witness—the latter rain (Mark 13:11).
- **False prophets** rise, lawlessness increases and the love of many grows cold (verses 11, 12).
- Whoever **endures** until the end will be saved (verse 13).
- Preaching **the gospel** to the world—the three angels' message to every nation, kindred, tongue and people (verse 14).
- The **abomination** of desolation separates humanity into two groups—those who give heed to the sign and those who ignore it (verse 15).
- The **abomination of desolation** is the equivalent of the **mark of the beast**. Both have to do with **the sun**—the object and the day.
- The lost stay in Jerusalem and the saved **flee**—the flight from the large cities preparatory to leaving the smaller ones (verses 16-20).
- **Not one** of God's people **perish** during the time of trouble
- The **sun and moon** darken and the stars fall from heaven—the darkness of the fifth plague (Matthew 24:29; Revelation 16:10). At this point God delivers His people from the death decree (Daniel 12:1).
- The **sign** of the Son of Man seen in heaven (Matthew 24:30)
- The **second coming**. Jesus sends His angels to gather His people from the four winds (Matthew 24:30; see 1Thessalonians 4:15-17)

Daniel 11 follows the same sequence

- At the end, we have the **loud cry** through the power of the latter rain (tidings from the north and the east (from spiritual Jerusalem). At this point, the king of the north is in Egypt, Ethiopia and Libya).
- The tidings **enrage the wicked** (troubles the king of the north, he goes out to destroy many).
- The **abomination of desolation** set up (the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain)
- The **time of trouble** follows (Daniel 12:1)

- God **delivers** His people when the king of the north comes to his end with none to help him (Daniel 12:1)
- The **resurrection** at the coming of Jesus (Daniel 12:2).
- Thus Daniel 11:44-12:1 follows the same sequence as Matthew 24:14ff in the **identical order**.

The Flight in Matthew 24

Matthew 24:21

“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.”

The word ‘**then**’ at the beginning of verse 21 indicates that when God’s people flee they will experience the most intense time of trouble in history.

In volume 5 of Testimonies for the Church, p. 451 Ellen White explained that the national Sunday law—the abomination of desolation—is the sign for God’s people to flee after which they will be plunged into the time of trouble.

During the first stage of the tribulation, God’s people **fled to the Piedmont** and during the second stage, they will flee to the **desolate places of the earth**. Regarding this, Ellen White wrote:

*“The people of God--some in prison cells, some hidden in **solitary retreats in the forests and the mountains**—still plead for divine protection, while in every quarter companies of armed men, urged on by hosts of evil angels, are preparing for the work of death.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 635*

Tribulation Shortened

Matthew 24:22 explains that God will shorten the time of trouble:

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

The **Protestant Reformation** cut short the first stage of persecution and the **voice of God** will put an end to the second (Revelation 16:17). If God did not intervene to deliver His people in the time of trouble, not one of them would remain. The **death decree** would uproot every one of them.

It is important to realize that the 'elect' will **go through the tribulation**; God will not take them to heaven in a **pre-tribulation rapture**. When Jesus comes, he will send His angels to gather his elect from the **four winds**. If they already went to heaven before the tribulation, why would He come to gather them? Clearly, Jesus will come for His elect **at the end** of the great tribulation, which means that they went through it.

Satan will use **false teachers** to persuade Christians that they will **not go through** the tribulation because he knows that believers will need a **special quality of faith** in order to stand. Now is the time to develop this faith because when the tribulation begins it will be too late.

Let me illustrate what I mean. Would a person prepare for a **hurricane in California** if the weathercasters predicted that it was going to hit **Florida**? If, as futurists believe, all of the events of **Revelation 4-22** occur after the rapture, why would Christians even bother to study these chapters?

Who are the elect? Romans 8:33-37, explains that they are those who have accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord (see also 1Peter 2:9; Colossians 3:12) Revelation 17:14 refers to these as the '**chosen**'.

The parable of the **persistent widow** applies to the tribulation period. In this parable, the judge represents God, the widow represents the elect, and the adversary symbolizes the devil. The **plea of the widow** for the judge to avenge her over her adversary symbolizes the elect who cry out day and night for God to deliver them from the hand of their enemies (Luke 18:1-8). We know that this parable applies directly to those will go through the final time trouble because of the context. Immediately before and after the parable are references to the second coming.

In The Great Controversy, p. 631 (the chapter on the time of trouble) Ellen White **universalized** the meaning of the **tribulation** and alluded to Matthew 24. She referred to the **shortening** of the tribulation for the sake of the elect and to the **flight** of God's people from the cities.

*"Yet for the elect's sake the time of trouble will be **shortened**. . . The heavenly sentinels, faithful to their trust, continue their watch. Though a **general decree** has fixed the time when commandment keepers may be put to death, their enemies will anticipate the decree in some cases, and before the time specified, will endeavor to take their lives. However, none can pass the mighty guardians stationed about every faithful soul. Some are assailed in their **flight** from the **cities and villages**; but the swords raised against them break and fall powerless as a straw. Others are defended by angels in the form of men of war." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 631*

The Counterfeit Second Coming

Matthew 24:23

"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it."

At some point after the close of probation and during the tribulation period, Satan will **counterfeit** the second coming of Jesus, to deceive, if possible, the **very elect**. The word '**then**' at the beginning of verse 23 indicates that this counterfeit will take place **after the close** of probation during the time of trouble.

There has been some discussion in Adventist circles about **when the counterfeit** second coming occurs. Some scholars believe it will be **before the close** of probation and others **after**. The evidence indicates that Satan's counterfeit is his **last attempt** to deceive the elect during the time of trouble after probation closes.

There are **two reasons** for this timing. First, the **chronological sequence** of events in Matthew 24 and second, the fact that Ellen White placed the event in the chapter on the **time of trouble**. Ellen White referred to this event as 'the

strong, almost overmastering delusion.” *Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 624.*

Scholars who believe in the counterfeit second coming before the close of probation have a **seemingly good argument**. Why would Satan attempt to deceive the elect after the close of probation **if he knows** from prophecy that he will be unable to do so? In other words, why would Satan attempt to deceive the elect if he knows that probation has closed and the elect are sealed?

The answer to the question is simple. Although Satan **knows from Scripture** that he will not be able to deceive the elect, he **harbors the hope** that he will be able to counteract the word of God. Satan does not **simply give up**. He is relentless. God’s people will be **crying out day and night** for deliverance from their Adversary. Satan takes advantage of the situation and counterfeits the second coming claiming that he has come to **answer their pleas**.

Perhaps a **parallel** will help us understand how Satan reasons. Does Satan know that he will not be able to conquer the Holy City **after the millennium**? If he does not, he is not very smart. No doubt, Satan has read **Revelation 20:7-9**. Therefore, the question is why Satan would gather all the wicked after the millennium for an attack on the city if he knows that prophecy says that he cannot prevail. Simply because he **harbors the hope** that he might be able to counteract the word of God this one time.

Matthew 24:24-26

*“For false **christs** and false **prophets** will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”²⁶ Therefore if **they [the false prophets]** say to you, ‘Look, **He** is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, **He** is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it.”*

2 Thessalonians 2 describes **two Parousías**. The first is Christ’s *Parousía* in **verse 1** and the second is Satan’s counterfeit in **verse 9**. Clearly, the counterfeit *parousía* will take place **before the genuine** and seeks to preempt it. The words ‘power, signs, and lying wonders’ are the very ones that appear in **Acts 2:22** to describe the works that Jesus performed while on earth.

Matthew 24:25

“Behold, I have told you beforehand.”

Jesus explained all these things **to His followers** to keep them from being deceived. This shows that the central purpose of Jesus’ sermon in Matthew 24 was to keep His **own people** from deception.

Ellen White described vividly Satan’s counterfeit:

*“As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will **personate** Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Savior’s advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will **make it appear** that Christ has come. In **different parts** of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of **dazzling brightness**, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. Revelation 1:13-15. The **glory that surrounds him** is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out upon the air: “Christ has come! Christ has come!” The people prostrate themselves in **adoration** before him, while he lifts up his hands and pronounces a blessing upon them, **as Christ blessed His disciples** when He was upon the earth. His voice is **soft and subdued**, yet full of **melody**. In **gentle, compassionate tones** he presents **some** of the same gracious, heavenly truths which the Savior uttered; **he heals** the diseases of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have **changed the Sabbath to Sunday**, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. He declares that those who persist in keeping holy the seventh day are **blaspheming his name** by refusing to listen to his angels sent to them with light and truth. This is the strong, **almost overmastering delusion**.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 624*

*“But the people of God will not be misled. The **teachings** of this false christ are not in accordance with the **Scriptures**. He pronounces his blessing upon the worshipers of the beast and his image, **the very class upon whom the Bible declares that God’s unmingled wrath shall be poured out**.*

Furthermore, Satan is **not permitted to counterfeit the manner of Christ's advent**. The Savior has warned His people against deception upon this point, and has clearly foretold **the manner** of His second coming. "There shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. . . . Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth; behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24:24-27, 31; 25:31; Revelation 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. **This coming there is no possibility of counterfeiting**. It will be **universally known—witnessed by the whole world**." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 625

God's people will not trust their **ears**, their **eyes**, their **feelings**, their **emotions** their **impressions** or the testimony of **others**. The faithful will detect the counterfeit in two ways:

- The **manner** of Satan's coming is not in harmony with Scripture. Matthew 24:30 tells us that Jesus will send His angels to gather His elect from the four winds. **1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17** tells us that the faithful will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and **2 Thessalonians 2:1** states that at the *Parousia* we will be gathered to Him, not He to us. **John 14:1-3** explains that Jesus will take His people to His Father's house in heaven.
- The **content** of his teachings is contrary to Scripture. Satan will persuade the world that the desecration of Sunday is causing the global problems.

Matthew 24:28

*"For wherever the carcass is, there the **eagles** will be gathered together."*

One cannot help but remember that the **eagles of Rome** brought desolation to Jerusalem and the **eagle of the United States** will do likewise to the nation and the world.

“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #11 – THE CLOSING EVENTS OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Signs in the Heavens, When?

Matthew 24:29

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

There has been some confusion about the heavenly signs in this verse. Some have claimed that this verse is not in chronological order because it refers to the darkening of the sun and the moon becoming like blood in 1780 and the falling of the stars in 1833. However, this assumption is wrong. The signs in the heavens in 1780 and 1833 are not the same as the signs in the heavens at the end of time. As I mentioned in the previous presentation, the martyrs cried out for two things, justice and vengeance.

If we remember, the papacy has two stages of dominion and therefore the tribulation has two stages. The martyrs under the fifth seal cried out for two things, justice and vengeance. The signs in heaven in 1780 and 1833 announced that the judgment stage was soon going to begin and the signs in the heavens at the end announce that the avenging stage has arrived. A careful study reveals that the signs in Joel 2:31; Acts 2:20 and Revelation 6:12, 13 are

different from those in Matthew 24:30; Joel 2:10, 11; Joel 3:15, 16 and Isaiah 13:10ff.

Functions of the Signs

The signs of Revelation 6:12, 13 play several specific functions:

- **First**, they announce that the **first stage** of the great tribulation is ending (Matthew 24:21).
- **Second**, they serve as an **omen** of the fall of the **papal power**.
- **Third**, they serve to draw **attention** to the approaching judgment in **1844**.
- **Fourth**, they serve as indicators of the beginning of the **time of the end**.
- **Finally**, they announce the **soon coming of Jesus** (see below on the meaning of 'soon').

Critics of the Soon Coming

Critics both **within** and **without** the Seventh-day Adventist Church argue thus:

'How is it possible to believe that events that took place **over 250 years ago** are signs of the **soon coming** of Jesus? Isn't this stretching **credulity to its limit**?'

On the surface, this argument appears persuasive until we look at the number of these years in a **broader perspective**.

Let us suppose, for the sake of argument that I am going to take a **six thousand-mile trip**. When I start the trip, we would all agree that my destination is **very distant**. When I am **halfway there**, the destination is still a long way off. However, would you not agree that when I am **250 miles** from my destination, my arrival is near? After all, 250 of 6,000 years of history is only **4%**!

The late **C. Mervyn Maxwell** in his excellent book, **Magnificent Disappointment**, pp. 91, 92 (published in 1994) puts 1844 and the nearness of the second coming in perspective:

*“We need a **change of perspective**. Instead of looking back to 1844 and finding it around 150 years in the past, let us go back to the **beginning of human history** and view 1844 as almost six thousand years in the future. . . From the perspective of Eden at the beginning of earth’s six thousand years, the remaining distance between 1844 and the 1990s is hardly discernible. These 150 years between 1844 and the 1990s represent only **one-fortieth, 2.5 percent** of human history. More than 97 percent of human history took place prior to 1844. Yes, we are indeed in the end time. The final judgment began only yesterday, as it were. Christ’s second advent is coming soon.”*

Why These Particular Signs?

The **enemies** of traditional Adventism and of Ellen White have frequently pointed out that there have been **other great earthquakes, dark days** and **star showers** in history. They argue: ‘*what makes the Lisbon Earthquake of 1755, the signs in the sun and moon in 1780 and the Leonid Star Shower of 1833 so unique?*’

The answer is fourfold: The **location**, the **order**, the **timing** and the **intensity**.

- **The location**

It is not coincidental, that these signs occurred in **Europe** and the **United States**. Europe was significant because there the **papacy would receive** the **deadly wound** that would mark the end of the **1260-year tribulation**. The United States was significant, (especially **New England**) because there the message of the **judgment would be proclaimed** powerfully by the Millerites beginning in the 1830s.

C. Mervyn Maxwell well explained:

*“The **location** of the classic signs was highly significant. They happened in **Europe and America** primarily, where people were studying the Bible and pondering the prophecies. A dark day in the **Sahara Desert** or a star shower over **New Guinea** would have said little in those days about the second coming of Christ to cannibal headhunters or Muslim nomads. Events*

***need not be universal** to deliver a global message. A few square miles at **Hiroshima and Nagasaki** were sufficient to announce the atomic age. A **stable in Bethlehem** ushered in the Christian era. Only a few hundred people saw Jesus after His resurrection—but they told others.” **Magnificent Disappointment**, pp. 93, 94.*

- **The order**

These phenomena occurred in history precisely in the **chronological order** described in Revelation 6. The Lisbon earthquake occurred in **1755**, the Dark Day and moon like blood took place in **1780** and the star shower transpired in **1833**. Show me one other instance in human history where these phenomena have taken place in this **precise order** within a period of less than one hundred years! The order of these signs led people to study the prophecies.

- **The timing**

These signs occurred precisely at the **right time**, immediately before the 1260-year tribulation came to an end and just before the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the **fall of the papacy** (1798) and the **beginning of the judgment** (1844).

- **The intensity**

Concerning the **intensity** of these signs, C. Mervyn Maxwell well stated:

*“As recently as 1980, the widely respected seismologist, **G. A. Eiby**, in chapter 11 of his *Earthquakes*, ranked the Lisbon earthquake as ‘the largest shock ever’ and reckoned that it may well have reached an almost incredible **9.0 on the Richter scale, seven times stronger** than the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. . . The dark day of May 19, 1780 has not been equaled in North America in the two hundred years that have since come and gone. The Leonid shower of November 13, 1833 gave birth to a **new branch of astronomy**. . . Like the Lisbon earthquake and the famous dark*

day, it too has not been matched, in spite of the scientific expectations that it would be.” Magnificent Disappointment, p. 93

Scripture References to Heavenly Signs

We find the signs in the heavenly bodies in several places of Scripture. The signs in Revelation 6:12, 13 are parallel to those in Joel 2:31 (and Acts 2:20) where Joel tells us that the sun became dark and the moon like blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. On the other hand, Matthew 24:29 explains that the moon did not give its light. This difference indicates that we are not dealing with the same signs.

Signs at the End of the First Stage of the Tribulation

Revelation 6:12, 13: Signs of the coming judgment:

“I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood.¹³ And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.”

Joel 2:31: Signs of the coming judgment:

“The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.”

Acts 2:20

“The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.”

Signs at the End of the Second Stage of the Tribulation

The heavenly signs in Joel 2:10, 11 are not the same ones as in Revelation 6:12, 13 and Joel 2:31 (also Acts 2:20). In Joel 2:10, 11, the earth and the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark and the stars do not shine. These signs occur immediately before Jesus begins His second coming.

Joel 2:10-11

*The **earth quakes** before them, the **heavens tremble**; the **sun** and **moon** [**not turned into blood**] grow dark, and the **stars** diminish their **brightness**.¹¹ The Lord gives voice before **His army**, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; **who can endure it?**" [same question as Revelation 6:17]*

The signs in **Joel 3:15, 16** are not parallel to the ones in Revelation 6:12, 13 either. Once again, the text states that the heavens and the earth will shake and the sun and moon will be **dark** and the stars diminish their brightness.

Joel 3:15-16

*"The **sun and moon** will grow **dark**, and the stars will **diminish their brightness**.¹⁶ The Lord also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the **heavens and earth will shake**; but the Lord will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel."*

Isaiah 13:10-13 describes signs in the heavenly bodies but these are not the same as the ones in Revelation 6:12, 13. In the Isaiah passage the sun, moon and stars **grow dark** and the **heavens** and the earth tremble. The heavens did not shake and the moon did not grow dark and the stars did not diminish their brightness in 1755, 1780 and 1833.

Isaiah 13:10-13, NIV

*"The **stars** of heaven and their constellations will **not show their light**. The rising **sun** will be **darkened** and the **moon** will **not give its light**.¹¹ I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.¹² I will make man scarcer than pure gold, more rare than the gold of Ophir.¹³ Therefore I will make the **heavens tremble**; and the **earth will shake** from its place at the wrath of the Lord Almighty, in the day of his burning anger."*

The Powers of Heaven Shaken

There is a difference between the expression ‘the time of the end’ and ‘the end of time.’ The signs in Revelation 6:12, 13 announce that history was entering upon the **time of the end**. The signs in Matthew 24:29 reveal that history has reached the **end of time**.

Matthew 24:29 affirms that the **powers of the heavens will be shaken**. What are the powers that rule in the heavens? **Genesis 1:16** has the answer. The sun rules the day and the moon rules the night. Thus, Matthew 24 tells us that the powers of the heaven are the sun, moon and stars.

Ellen White and Verses 14-17

It is noteworthy that Ellen White quotes Revelation 6:12, 13 in her book The Great Controversy, p. 304, and applies the signs to events that transpired in 1755, 1870 and 1833. However, she does not quote Verses 14-17 until pages 641, 642:

“The heavens are rolled together as a scroll, the earth trembles before Him, and every mountain and island is moved out of its place.”

Immediately after this statement, Ellen White **quotes Revelation 6:15-17**.

Why does Ellen White separate verses 12 and 13 from verses 14-17 by almost **three hundred and fifty pages**? Simply because she knew that there was to be a **parenthetical time-period** between the two references. In the series on the **seals**, I prove this point in detail.

The principle here is that there are signs that mark the end of the **two tribulation stages**. In both cases, the signs indicate that God the **oppression of God’s people is nearing an end**—in the first instance from the **tribulation** of the 1260 years and in the second instance from the oppression of the time of the **great tribulation** just before the second coming.

We must understand this from the perspective of the seven seals. The **fifth seal** mentions **two groups of martyrs**, one past and one future. The **signs in the**

sixth seal (6:12, 13) announce that the time has come for a judgment in favor of the martyrs. The signs in Revelation 6:14-17 announce that the time to **avenge** the martyrs has come. When God says 'it is done' his voice moves the sun, moon and stars out of their places and causes the great earthquake. At this point, God delivers His people.

Luke 21:25, 26

Another text that we must take into account is **Luke 21:25, 26**. Preachers frequently use these verses to describe the **present turmoil** of society. However, in actuality, they apply to events that take place as Jesus is about to leave heaven for earth.

Luke 21:25, 26

*"And there will be **signs** in the **sun**, in the **moon**, and in the **stars**; and on the **earth distress** of nations, with **perplexity**, the **sea** and the **waves roaring**; ²⁶ men's hearts **failing them from fear** and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the **powers of heaven** will be shaken."*

Clearly, these verses are parallel to **Matthew 24:29**. Both mention signs in the sun, moon and stars and both predict that the 'powers of heaven will be shaken'. However, **Luke adds** the concept of distress, perplexity, the roaring of the sea and men's hearts failing them for fear.

Clearly, Jesus is not referring to the **present distress** among nations. In context, the focus is on the distress among the nations **because they see** the signs in the sun, the moon and the stars, the great earthquake, and the **roaring waves** of the sea.

In the chapters 'The Time of Trouble' and 'God's People Delivered' in **The Great Controversy**, Ellen White follows the identical order of events as Matthew 24:29, 30.

After describing the great tribulation in the chapter on the 'The Time of Trouble', Ellen White wrote on how God's voice **will shake the heavens and the earth**.

She then describes the **roaring of the sea** in tempestuous fury and the resulting **distress** among nations, a clear allusion to the language of Luke 21:25, 26.

Then, just a few pages later, Ellen White describes the **sign of the Son of Man** when Jesus departs from heaven with **His angels**, His **descent** to the earth, the **white cloud** and the **sending forth** of the angels to gather his elect at the four winds of heaven. Here is the sequence of events:

- ✓ The **time of trouble**, the great tribulation (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 613-634)
- ✓ The **signs** in the sun, moon and stars and the great earthquake (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 636, 637)
- ✓ **Distress** among nations and the lashing of the sea (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 638, 639)
- ✓ The **sign** of the Son of Man (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 640, 641)
- ✓ The **gathering** of the elect (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 645)

A seemingly difficult quotation:

*"Prophecy **not only** foretells the **[1] manner and object of Christ's coming**, but presents **[2] tokens** by which men are to know when it is **near**. Said Jesus: "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars." **Luke 21:25**. "The **sun** shall be darkened, and the **moon** shall not give her light, and the **stars** of heaven shall fall, and the **powers that are in heaven** shall be **shaken**. And then shall they **see the Son of man** coming in the clouds with great power and glory." **Mark 13:24-26**. The revelator thus describes the **first of the signs** to precede the Second Advent: "There was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood." Revelation 6:12." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 304*

A **superficial reading** of this statement in The Great Controversy, p. 304 might leave the impression that **Mark 13:24-26** refers to the signs in 1780 and 1833.

However, a careful reading indicates that Mark 13:24-26 refers to the second coming and Revelation 6:12 refers to the token signs in 1780 and 1833.

You might wonder how I reached that conclusion. First, Ellen White explicitly wrote that the signs in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 do not refer to the signs in 1780 and 1833 but rather to the signs at the second coming:

*“December 16, 1848, the Lord gave me a view of the **shaking of the powers of the heavens**. I saw that when the Lord said ‘heaven,’ in giving the signs recorded by **Matthew, Mark, and Luke**, He meant heaven, and when He said ‘earth’, He meant earth. The **powers of heaven** are the sun, moon, and stars. They rule in the heavens. The powers of earth are those that rule on the earth. The powers of heaven will be shaken at the **voice of God**. Then the sun, moon, and stars will be moved out of their places. They will not pass away, but be shaken by the **voice of God**.”* Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 41

How, then, do we explain what she wrote in *The Great Controversy*, p. 304 where she seems to imply that the signs of Mark 13 refer to what happened in 1780 and 1833? The answer is simple.

At the beginning of the statement, Ellen White mentions **two events**, [1] the **manner and object** of Christ’s second coming and [2] the **tokens** of His coming. She then quotes Mark 13:24-26 to refer to the **manner** and object of the second coming followed by Revelation 6:12 to describe the **tokens** in 1780 and 1833.

The Sign of the Son of Man

Matthew 24:30

*“Then **the sign** of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the **tribes of the earth will mourn**, and they **will see** the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”*

What is the sign of the Son of man? The answer is in the Elijah story in **1Kings 18:41-44**. These verses describe what Elijah saw after **his period of tribulation** at the hand of the **threefold union**. He saw a **sign in heaven** that

looked like a cloud the size of the **palm of a man's hand**. The **chariot** began its descent to take Elijah in a chariot of fire **to heaven**. (2 Kings 2:11). This event reminds us of the great Negro Spiritual 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot'. Ellen White described the sign of the Son of Man:

*"Soon our eyes were drawn to the east, for a **small black cloud** appeared, about half as large as a **man's hand**, which we all knew was the **sign of the Son of man**. We all in solemn silence gazed on the cloud as it **drew nearer** and became lighter, glorious, and still more glorious, 'till it was a **great white cloud**. The bottom appeared like fire; a rainbow was over the cloud, while around it were ten thousand angels, singing a most lovely song; and upon it sat the Son of man." Ellen G. White, Early Writings, pp. 33, 34*

In *The Great Controversy*, Ellen White explained that Christ would take His people to **heaven in a fiery chariot**:

*"On each side of the **cloudy chariot** are wings, and beneath it are living wheels; and as the **chariot** rolls upward, the wheels cry, 'Holy,' and the wings, as they move, cry, 'Holy,' and the retinue of angels cry, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.' And the redeemed shout, 'Alleluia!' as the **chariot** moves onward **toward the New Jerusalem**." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 645*

Gathering the Elect

Matthew 24:31

*"And He will **send** His angels with a great sound of a **trumpet**, and they will **gather together His** elect from the **four winds**, from one end of heaven to the other."*

Matthew 24:30 tells us that the tribes of the earth will mourn as they see Jesus' coming. **Revelation 1:7** adds that those who pierced Jesus will see Him. If those who pierced Him are going to be eyewitnesses of His coming, they must resurrect in a **special resurrection** before He arrives. When Jesus comes, He will not touch the earth. The righteous will be caught up in the clouds to meet Him in the air:

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

*"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up** together with them **in the clouds** to meet the Lord **in the air**. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words."*

2 Thessalonians 2:1

*"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our **gathering together to Him**. . ."*

John 14:1-3

*"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My **Father's house** are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I **go to prepare** a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and **receive you to Myself**; that where I am, there you may be also."*

Jesus promised the **wily Caiaphas** that He would see Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven (Matthew 26:64). **Daniel 12:1, 2** adds that at the time that Jesus delivers His people, many who lie in the dust of the earth will resurrect unto eternal damnation. This cannot refer to the resurrection of all the wicked because that occurs after the millennium.

The Deliverance of God's People

*"The world will then behold, as never before, the results of Satan's rule. However, in that day, **as in the time of Jerusalem's destruction**, God **will deliver** His people, 'every one that shall be found written among the living.' Christ has declared that he will come the second time, **to gather** his faithful ones **to himself**: 'Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his*

angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 37



**“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition
by Pastor Stephen Bohr**

**LESSON #12 – MATTHEW, LUKE AND
THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES**

In previous studies, we noticed that Matthew 24 has a dual fulfillment. The first fulfillment was in the events that led up to the destruction of Jerusalem. The second are the events in the end time that immediately precede the destruction of the world.

However, does Matthew 24 address the period between the destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the world? That is to say, does Matthew 24 address the period of papal supremacy from 538 to 1798 AD?

As we have seen in as previous presentation, there is only one great tribulation composed of two stages with a pause in between. The papacy ruled in the past from 538 to 1798 AD and will rule again, when the ‘pause’ period ends.

Does Matthew 24 address both of these periods? On the surface the answer seems to be no. Matthew 24 appears to bypass the first stage of the tribulation from 538 to 1798 AD and focus only on the second when the ‘pause’ ends.

However, in this lesson we will see that the parallel passage in Luke 21:20, 21 does address the first period directly. This becomes clear when we compare

Luke 21:20 with Daniel 7:25, Revelation 12:6, 12, Revelation 13:5 and Revelation 11:2-6.

Matthew 24 and Luke 21

After the abomination of desolation sign, Matthew 24 has five sequential signs:

- The destruction of earthly Jerusalem (verses 15-20).
- A period of severe tribulation (verses 21-28).
- Signs in the sun, moon and stars (verse 29).
- The shaking of the powers in the heavens.
- The sign and appearance of the Son of Man (verses 30-31).

However, the parallel verses in Luke 21 appear to have only four sequential signs:

- The destruction of earthly Jerusalem (verses 20-24).
- Signs in the sun, moon and stars (verse 25).
- The shaking of the powers of heaven.
- The sign and coming of the Son of Man (verses 25, 26).

The tribulation sign appears to be missing in Luke 21. However, is the tribulation sign really missing in Luke 21? The answer is no. Luke simply describes the tribulation sign differently as the period during which the gentiles would trample upon Jerusalem.

Two Jerusalems

One thing is clear in the first half of Luke 21:24. The Roman legions destroyed the literal city of Jerusalem and its temple and exiled the people to all nations:

“And they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all nations.”

However, the second half of Luke 21:24 is transitional in that it describes:

- ✓ The trampling of **spiritual/symbolic Jerusalem**.
- ✓ By **spiritual/symbolic Gentiles**.
- ✓ For a symbolic **period**.

*“And **Jerusalem** will be **trampled** by **Gentiles** **until** the **times of the Gentiles** are **fulfilled**’ [NLT: until the period of the Gentiles comes to an end].*

Here are the basic elements of Matthew 21:24:

- ✓ **Jerusalem**
- ✓ **Will be trampled**
- ✓ **By the Gentiles**
- ✓ **Until** (denotes an **ending point**)
- ✓ **The times of the Gentiles**
- ✓ **Come to an end** (there is an ending point)

In other words, in Luke 21:24 there are **two cities of Jerusalem**, one literal and one symbolic, **two tramplings** of the city, one literal and one symbolic and **two groups of gentiles**, one literal and one symbolic.

Louis Were expressed a very important principle of prophetic interpretation:

*“When passing over into the Christian Era there is an automatic transition from **literal to spiritual** Babylon; from **literal to spiritual** Jerusalem; from **literal** lands of Israel and Babylon to their **spiritual** antitypes.” Louis F. Were, *The King of the North at Jerusalem*, p. 75*

Jerusalem is the People

When the **second part** of Luke 21:24 describes the trampling of Jerusalem by the Gentiles it is not referring to the **literal city** of brick and mortar. Jesus uses the word ‘Jerusalem’ to refer to the people of the city. Notice the following texts that use the word ‘Jerusalem’ to refer to the people who lived in the city:

2 Kings 24:14-15

*"Also he carried into captivity **all Jerusalem**: all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land."*

Obviously, Nebuchadnezzar did not carry the literal city of Jerusalem—with buildings and all—into captivity.

Luke 19:41-44: As He descended the Mount of Olives, Jesus **personified** the city of Jerusalem:

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

Matthew 23:37-39: Clearly, the brick and mortar in the following verses did not kill the prophets!

*"O **Jerusalem, Jerusalem**, the one who **kills the prophets** and stones those who are sent to **her**! How often I wanted to gather **your** children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but **you** were not willing!³⁸ See! **Your** house is left to you desolate;³⁹ for I say to **you, you** shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' "*

Four Key Elements in Luke 21:24B and Revelation 11:2

Now we want to compare the second part of **Luke 21:24** with **Revelation 11:2**. If we remember, there are **four key elements** in the second half of Luke 21:24:

- 'Jerusalem'
- 'trampling'
- 'gentiles'

- ‘the times of the Gentiles’ (the word ‘until’ specifies a **definite ending point**)

Revelation 11:2, 3

*“However, leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given **[was given]** to the **[1] Gentiles** and they will **[2] tread** the **[3] holy city underfoot** for **[4] forty-two months**.”*

We find in Revelation 11:2 the same elements that we found in the second half of Luke 21:24:

- ‘The **holy city**’
- ‘**trampling** underfoot’
- ‘**Gentiles**’
- ‘**42 months**’ (the duration of the ‘times of the Gentiles’)

Verse 3 then describes the **42 months** of verse 2 as **1260 days**:

*“And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy **one thousand two hundred and sixty days**, clothed in sackcloth.”*

The Literal City Already Destroyed

John wrote Revelation 11:2 at the end of the **first century**. **Twenty-five** years earlier, the Roman legions **had already destroyed** the literal city of Jerusalem. In other words, literal Jerusalem had been in **ruins for 25** years and the **inhabitants** of the city were already in captivity. Thus, Revelation 11:2 cannot refer to the destruction of the literal city of Jerusalem.

The Gentiles and Jerusalem

Who are the **gentiles** and what is ‘**Jerusalem**’ in Revelation 11:2? In a previous lecture, we saw that Jerusalem during the **Christian dispensation** refers to God’s **faithful church** and Gentiles refers to its **enemies**. **Several texts** make this clear (Revelation 3:9; Matthew 18:15-18 tells us that it is possible for a believer to be considered **a Gentile** rather than a spiritual citizen of spiritual

Jerusalem; Romans 9:6-8; Romans 2:28, 29; Galatians 3:26-29; John 1:47-49; John 4:23, 24; John 8:31-58).

Focus on the Heavenly Temple

In Revelation 11:1, the Angel told John to measure the temple and those who worship in it but not to measure the court because 'it was given' to the gentiles for 42 months (the sanctuary and the host). In other words, the court of the temple was given to the Gentiles for 42 months after which the Angel told John to measure the temple.

When John wrote the book of Revelation, Rome had already destroyed the literal temple and the literal Jews had been scattered among the nations. This means that the temple referred to here, must be the one in heaven (Hebrews, Revelation) and the worshippers must be those who worship there spiritually. We are to understand that the temple is the heavenly sanctuary literally and the church spiritually.

The Link between Revelation 11:2, 3 and Revelation 12:6 and 13:5

According to Revelation 11:2, the trampling of the city occurred for a period of 42 months, also described, in the following verse as 1260 days. This links the 42 months of verse 2 with the 1260 days of verse 3. Even further, it links Revelation 11:2, 3 with the 1260 days of Revelation 12:6, the 42 months of Revelation 13:5.

- ✓ 42 months (Revelation 11:2)
- ✓ 1260 days (Revelation 11:3)
- ✓ 1260 days (Revelation 12:6)
- ✓ 42 months (Revelation 13:5)

Back to the Old Testament Roots

In order to fully understand Revelation 11:2, 3 we must not only go to Revelation 12 and 13 but also to the **Old Testament roots** of this prophecy and we find those roots in the little horn prophecies of **Daniel 7:21, 25; 8:11-13**.

In these verses, we find a power that **tramples** underfoot the **temple of God** and its **true worshipers**. This trampling of the temple and the true worshipers in Daniel 7 and 8 does not refer to the destruction of literal Jerusalem and the captivity of the literal Jews at the hand of the **Roman Empire** in AD 70. Rather, it refers to a rebellious little horn that introduced an idolatrous 'Christian' worship that caused desolation after the breakup of the Roman Empire in 476 AD.

The Little Horn of Daniel 7 and the Judgment

According to **Daniel 7:21, 25** this little horn **blasphemed God** and **persecuted His people** for a time, times and the **dividing of times**—three and a half prophetic years:

*"He [the little horn] shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for **a time and times and half a time**."*

However, we must look at Daniel 7:25 **within its immediate context**. Let us consider the chronological **sequence of events** that led to the rise of the little horn:

- Lion: Babylon
- Bear: Medes and Persians
- Leopard: Greece
- Dragon: **Rome**
- 10 horns: **Division** of the Roman Empire in the year **476 AD**
- Little horn: Papacy ('time, times and the dividing of time')

- The **judgment begins** in the heavenly temple

Immediately after the nefarious work of the little horn, the judgment in the **heavenly temple** begins (Daniel 7:8, 9, 13, 14, 21, 22, 25-27; Revelation 11:1). This order of events is very **similar to Revelation 11:1-3** where the measuring of the heavenly temple begins after the Gentiles trample the Holy City for 42 months.

A very important detail in Daniel 7:25 is that the little horn intended to **change God's law**. According to **Ezekiel 8:14-16**, the abomination that topped the list was turning the back on the Lord and **worshipping the sun**. This is the 'abomination of desolation' during the **first stage** of the great tribulation. The papacy claimed to have the power to **change** worship on Sabbath to Sunday. The **enforcement** of Sunday by civil law will be the 'abomination of desolation' in the second stage of the great tribulation.

The Little Horn and the Judgment in Daniel 8

Daniel 8 further amplifies the nefarious work of this little horn power by specifically saying that it **trampled** on the **sanctuary** and the **host** (**Daniel 8:13**), language very **similar to Revelation 11:2, 3** and Luke 21:24.

Daniel 8 describes **two distinct stages** of this little horn power. One stage is **horizontal** and the other **vertical** and both are Roman.

Daniel 8:9: Horizontal on earth:

*"And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the **south**, toward the **east**, and toward the **Glorious Land**."*

Daniel 8:10-13: Vertical toward heaven:

*"And it **grew up** to the host of **heaven**; and it **cast down** some of the host and some of the **stars to the ground**, and **trampled them**.¹¹ He even **exalted himself** as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the **daily sacrifices were taken away**, and the place of His **sanctuary was cast down**.¹² Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices;*

and he **cast truth down to the ground**. He did all this and prospered. ¹³ Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, "How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of **desolation**, the giving of both the **sanctuary** and the **host** to be **trampled underfoot?**"

It is no coincidence that after the little horn trampled on the sanctuary and the host, the **cleansing of the sanctuary begins** (Daniel 8:14). Thus, in Revelation 11:2, Daniel 7 and Daniel 8 we find a trampling of the sanctuary and host followed by the measuring/judgment/cleansing of the same.

Link between Daniel 7 and 8 and Revelation 11 and 13

Revelation 13:5 also mentions the period of **42 months**. There, the beast who received his seat, power and authority from the dragon (Revelation 13:1, 2) **persecuted the saints** and blasphemed the **heavenly tabernacle** and those who dwell in heaven (Revelation 13:6, 7).

The **sequence of powers** in Revelation 13 is **identical** to the one in Daniel 7:

The sequence of powers in Revelation 13:1, 2, 5:

- Lion
- Bear
- Leopard
- Dragon
- 10 Horns
- Beast (42 months)

Revelation 13:5-7

*"And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for **forty-two months**. ⁶ Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His **name**, His **tabernacle**, and those who **dwell in heaven**. ⁷ It was granted to him to make **war with the saints** and to*

overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation."

The inevitable conclusion is that this **Jerusalem** exists during the **Christian era** after the demise of the Roman Empire.

Daniel 7 and Revelation 12

As we have seen, **Revelation 11:3** bears a relationship with **Revelation 12:6** because both refer to **1260 days**. Even further, the terminology of **Revelation 12:6** shares common language with **Revelation 12:14** and **Revelation 12:14** in turn has a connection with **Daniel 7:25** by the common reference to the **'time, times and the dividing of time'**.

Revelation 11:2

*"And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy **one thousand two hundred and sixty days**, clothed in sackcloth."*

Revelation 12:6

*"Then the **woman** fled into the **wilderness**, where she has a **place prepared** by God that they should **feed her** there **one thousand two hundred and sixty days**."*

Revelation 12:13, 14

*"Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. ¹⁴ But the **woman** was given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the **wilderness** to her **place**, where she is **nourished** for a **time and times and half a time**, from the presence of the serpent."*

Daniel 7:25

*"He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a **time and times and half a time**."*

Therefore, we can safely reach the conclusion that the **3.5 times**, the **1260 days**, the **42 months** and the ‘times of the gentiles’ are all **parallel expressions**. A careful study of these time prophecies indicates clearly that their fulfillment took place during a 1260-year period **after** the **disintegration** of the **Roman Empire**. This means that the Jerusalem spoken of is **not literal Jerusalem** but rather, **spiritual Jerusalem** because literal Jerusalem had already been devastated in the year **70**.

The Presbyterian minister, **Albert Barnes** was right on target when he wrote:

*“This [**the 42 months**] would embrace the whole period of the ascendancy and prevalence of **the papacy**, or the whole time of the continuance of that corrupt domination in which **Christendom was to be trodden down and corrupted by it**. . . Thus regarded, this would properly express the time of the ascendancy of the papal power, and the end of the ‘forty-two months,’ or ‘twelve hundred and sixty years,’ would denote the time when the influence of that **power would cease**.”*
(From **Barnes' Notes**, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved).

In Summary:

- ✓ 42 months (Revelation 11:2)
- ✓ 1260 days (Revelation 11:3)
- ✓ 1260 days (Revelation 12:6)
- ✓ 42 months (Revelation 13:5)
- ✓ 3.5 times (Revelation 12:14)
- ✓ 3.5 times (Daniel 7:25)

Thoughts on Daniel 9:26, 27

We have reached the **conclusion** that the **two halves** of Luke 21:24 describe two distinct ‘tramlings’ of two different ‘Jerusalems’. The first half describes **literal Jerusalem** trampled by the **literal Romans** in the year 70 AD. The second half of the verse describes the trampling of **spiritual Jerusalem** (the Church) by **spiritual Rome** (the papacy) from 538 to 1798. Thus, Revelation

11:2, 3 expands upon the second half of Luke 21:24. Now let us take a few moments to focus on the sign of the destruction of literal Jerusalem in Daniel 9:26, 27.

Daniel 9:26-27

*"And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come **shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.** The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war **desolations** are determined. ²⁷ Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of **abominations** shall be one who makes **desolate**, even **until the consummation**, which is determined, is poured out on the **desolate**."*

The Final Abomination of Desolation

These verses describe the trampling of literal Jerusalem in the year **70 AD**. It is significant that the very words **abomination** and **desolation** that appear in Matthew 24:15 appear here. However, there will be a second 'abomination of desolation' at the very end of time. It will occur after the '**pause**' **period** between the first and the second abomination of desolation:

Revelation 17:4-6, 15, 16

*"The **woman** was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of **abominations** and the filthiness of her fornication. ⁵ And on her forehead, a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, 'THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE **ABOMINATIONS** OF THE EARTH'. ⁶ I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement... ¹⁵ Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. ¹⁶ And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her **desolate** and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire."*

“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition
by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #13 – THE BUDDING OF THE FIG TREE

After Jesus described the order of end time events that climax with the second coming, He used an illustration from nature to teach His disciples how to know when His coming was near. He also assured them that the signs of Matthew 24 would take place before that generation passed away (in the destruction of Jerusalem) and that Heaven and earth would pass away but His words would not.

Matthew 24:32-35

"Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.³³ So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!³⁴ Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away 'till all these things take place.³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."

The Dispensationalist View of the Fig Tree

Dispensationalists believe that the fig tree in Matthew 24 is a symbol of Israel and that its budding represents its reestablishment as a nation in **1948**. According to those who have this view, this is the greatest sign that the coming of Jesus is imminent, at any moment, even at the door. Therefore, we must take a closer look at this concept to see if it is true.

It is true that the **Old Testament** uses both the **fig tree** and the **vineyard** as symbols for Israel:

Hosea 9:10

*"I found Israel like **grapes** [**also Isaiah 5**] in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first-fruits on the **fig tree** in its first season. But they went to Baal Peor, and separated themselves to that shame; they became an abomination like the thing they loved."*

The **New Testament** also uses the fig tree and the vineyard as **symbols for Israel**. In this study, we will consider **three episodes** from the New Testament that describe Israel as a **tree**. We will then dedicate some time to consider Israel as a **vineyard** and finally we will examine **other texts** in the New Testament related to our subject of study.

Israel as a Tree (part one)

John the Baptist began his ministry **six months before** Jesus. In his message, he compared the Jewish nation to a tree:

Matthew 3:8-10

*"Therefore bear fruits worthy of **repentance**,⁹ and do not think to say to yourselves: 'We have **Abraham as our father**.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these **stones**.¹⁰ And even now, the ax is laid to the root of the **trees**. Therefore **every tree** which does not bear **good fruit** is **cut down** and thrown into the **fire**."*

The stones mentioned here are **not literal**. The ax, the trees, the fruit and the cutting down of the tree are all symbols. According to *The Desire of Ages*, p. 107 the stones represent the Gentiles:

*"Their hearts might now appear **as lifeless as the stones** of the desert, but His Spirit could quicken them to do His will, and receive the fulfillment of His promise."*

Remember the key elements of these verses because **we will come back** to them in the second and third tree episodes.

Israel as a Tree (part two)

About **two and a half years** into His ministry, Jesus told a **parable** that had many **common elements** with the message of John the Baptist. I add my own remarks in brackets to explain the meaning of each symbol in the parable:

Luke 13:1-9

*"There were present at that season some who told Him about the **Galileans** whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? ³ I tell you, no; but unless you **repent** **[John used this word]** you will all likewise **perish**. ⁴ Or those eighteen on whom the **tower in Siloam** fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you, no; but unless you **repent** **[John used this word]** you will all likewise **perish**." ⁶ He also spoke this parable: "A **certain man** **[God the Father]** had a **fig tree** **[Israel]** planted in his **vineyard** **[the world]**, and he came seeking **fruit** **[the fruit of the Spirit]** on it and found **none**. ⁷ Then he said to the **keeper of his vineyard** **[Jesus]**, 'Look, for **three years** **[John preached six months and Jesus had preached two and a half years]** I have come seeking **fruit** on this **fig tree** and find **none**. **Cut it down** **[just what John said]**; why does it **use up the ground**?' ⁸ However, he **[Jesus]** answered and said to him **[the Father]**, 'Sir, let it alone **this year** **[the last year of Jesus' ministry]** also, until I **dig** around it and **fertilize** it. ⁹ And if it bears **fruit**, well. But if not, after that you can **cut it down**.' "*

The parable **does not mention** whether the fig tree produced fruit or not in that last year. When Jesus told the parable, the story had **not yet reached** its conclusion, much as the story that Jesus told about the **prodigal son**.

Israel as a Tree (part three)

At the very end of the final year of the parable, Jesus saw a fig tree in the distance and suggested that He and His disciples pick some figs to eat. However, when they arrived, the fig tree had no fruit. The gospel of Matthew describes the scene:

Matthew 21:17-19

"Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged there. ¹⁸ Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. ¹⁹ And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, "Let no fruit grow on you ever again." And immediately the fig tree withered away."

The gospel of Mark adds an important detail that is not in Matthew. It was not the season for figs. Those who have orchards of fig trees know that the fruit comes out first and then the leaves announce that the tree has fruit. This fig tree boasted leaves but lacked the fruit:

Mark 11:12-14

"Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. ¹³ And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. And when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." And His disciples heard it."

Ellen White described the ostentatious nature of the tree and the meaning of the expression 'it was not the season for figs':

"It was not the season for ripe figs, except in certain localities; and on the highlands about Jerusalem it might truly be said, 'The time of figs was not yet.' However, in the orchard to which Jesus came, one tree appeared to be in advance of all the others. It was already covered with leaves. It is the nature of the fig tree that before the leaves open, the growing fruit appears. Therefore, this tree

in full leaf gave promise of well-developed fruit. However, its appearance was deceptive. Upon searching its branches, from the lowest bough to the topmost twig, Jesus found 'nothing but leaves.' It was a mass of pretentious foliage, nothing more." Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 581

In harmony with Scripture, Ellen White explained that the fig tree represented the nation of Israel:

"Jesus had come to the fig tree hungry, to find food. So He had come to Israel, hungering to find in them the fruits of righteousness." Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 583

God lavished Israel with blessings and privileges with the specific purpose of sharing them with the world:

"He had lavished on them His gifts, that they might bear fruit for the blessing of the world. Every opportunity and privilege had been granted them and in return. He sought their sympathy and co-operation in His work of grace. He longed to see in them self-sacrifice and compassion, zeal for God, and a deep yearning of soul for the salvation of their fellow men." Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 583

Because it had nothing but pretentious leaves, Jesus cursed the fig tree and it withered away. The next day, Jesus and the disciples passed by the fig tree and found that it withered away from the roots:

Mark 11:20-21

"Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.²¹ And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away."

What did Jesus mean to teach by the cursing of the fig tree, its withering and drying up by the roots?

"The cursing of the fig tree was an acted parable. That barren tree, flaunting its pretentious foliage in the very face of Christ, was a symbol of the Jewish nation."

*The Savior desired to make plain to His disciples the **cause and the certainty of Israel's doom**.” Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 582*

*“Withered beneath the Savior's curse, standing forth sere and blasted, dried up **by the roots**, the fig tree showed what **the Jewish people** would be when the grace of God was **removed from them**. Refusing to impart blessing, they would **no longer receive it**.” Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 583*

*“All the trees in the fig orchard were destitute of fruit; but the leafless trees raised **no expectation**, and caused **no disappointment**. These trees represented the **Gentiles**. They were as destitute as were the Jews of godliness; but they had **not professed to serve** God. They made **no boastful pretensions** to goodness. They were blind to the works and ways of God. With them the **time of figs was not yet**.” Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 583*

John the Baptist had warned that if the Jewish tree did not bear fruit God would cut it down and cast into the fire. This is precisely what **happened to Jerusalem**. The Romans destroyed the city and the temple by fire in **70 AD** and the Jews were scattered to the four winds of heaven.

Nathaniel and the Fig Tree

In the gospel of **John**, we have **another story** that involves a **fig tree**. In this particular story, the fig tree once again represents Israel:

John 1:43-48

*“The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.”⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’⁴⁶ And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, “Behold, an **Israelite indeed**, in whom is **no deceit**!”⁴⁸ Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the **fig tree**, I saw you.”*

If there are **Israelites indeed**, then there must also be Israelites **not indeed**. The Greek word for 'indeed' means **genuine or real**. This is why the **NIV** translates the expression, "a **true** Israelite". The correctness of the NIV translation finds support in the fact that verse ⁴⁷ ends by saying that there was in Nathaniel **no pseudos**.

Why did Jesus single out Nathanael **as an Israelite indeed**? **Verse 49** provides the answer. What made Nathanael an Israelite indeed was that he confessed that **Jesus was the Son of God**, the King of Israel. What, then, is a true Israelite? One who acknowledges **Jesus Christ as the Messiah**!

It appears significant that Nathanael was an **Israelite** indeed and he was **under a fig tree**, a recognized **symbol of Israel**. Thus in this passage we have the **symbol** and what the symbol **represents**. The Israelite indeed sat under a tree that represents Israel. Those who do not recognize Jesus as the Messiah are **physical Israelites** but **not spiritual ones**.

Matthew 24 and the Fig Tree

Now let us **return** to **Matthew 24** to determine if the fig tree in this chapter represents the Jewish Nation. In Matthew 24:32, 33 **the budding of the fig tree** is only **one of the signs** of the imminent coming of Jesus, not THE sign. The chapter makes it clear that **all the signs** that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24 indicate that the coming of Jesus is even at the door:

*"As you see the fig tree bud it is a sign that the **summer is near**. In the **same way** [he is using an analogy] when you see **all these things** [not only the sprouting of the fig tree] know that it is near, even at the doors."*

Jesus did not say that the budding of the fig tree would be **the great sign** of His imminent coming. He stated rather that all the signs together would help His followers know that the end was near.

The parallel passage in **Luke 21:29-31** provides additional details that help us understand what Jesus meant.

*"Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and **all the trees**. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see **these things** happening, know that the kingdom of God is near."*

In the Lucan passage, Jesus did **not single out** the budding of the fig tree as **THE SIGN** above every other sign. In the Lucan parallel Jesus added, '**and all the trees**.' Jesus said, "when you see these **things** [**plural**] happening." To paraphrase the words of Jesus:

*"When you see the fig tree and **all of the trees** bud you know that the summer is near. **Likewise**, when you see **all of these signs** you will know that the end is near."*

Israel as the Vineyard

The **vineyard** also symbolizes **Israel**. Here is the parable of the vineyard with my own explanatory notes in brackets:

Matthew 21:33-46

*"Hear another parable: There was a certain **landowner** [**God the Father**] who planted a **vineyard** [**Israel**] and set a **hedge** around it [**the law**], dug a winepress in it and built a **tower** [**the temple**] and he leased it to **vinedressers** [**the Jewish leaders**] and went into a **far country** [**heaven**]. ³⁴ Now when vintage-time **drew near**, he sent his servants to the **vinedressers** [**before the Babylonian captivity**], that they might receive its fruit. ³⁵ And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another [**what they did to the prophets**]. ³⁶ Again, he sent **other servants** [**after the captivity until John the Baptist**], more than the first, and they did likewise to them. ³⁷ Then **last of all he sent his son** [**Jesus**] to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ³⁸ "But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'this is the **heir** [**see Galatians 3:16**]. Come, let us **kill him** [**the death of Christ**] and seize his inheritance.' ³⁹ "So they took him and cast him **out of the vineyard** [**Jesus died outside of Jerusalem**] and killed him. ⁴⁰ Therefore, when the owner of the*

vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" ⁴¹ They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably [**the destruction of Jerusalem**], and lease his vineyard to **other vinedressers** [**the Gentiles**] who will render to him the fruits in their seasons." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone [**Jesus**] which the **builders** [**the Jewish nation**] rejected has become the chief **cornerstone** [**see Ephesians 2:19-22**]. This was the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? ⁴³ "Therefore I say to you, the **kingdom of God** will be **taken from** you [**the kingdom would no longer belong to literal Israel**] and given to **a nation** [**ethne, the gentiles**] bearing the **fruits** of it. ⁴⁴ And whoever falls on this stone will be broken [**whoever receives Jesus as Savior**]; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder [**those who reject Jesus**]." ⁴⁵ Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was **speaking of them**."

John 8 and True Israel

John 8:37-45: In this passage, Jesus contrasted genuine Israelites with **counterfeit ones**. Once again, I have added my own explanatory notes in brackets:

"I know that you are **Abraham's descendants** [**literally**], but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. ³⁸ I speak what I have seen with **My Father**, and you do what you have seen with **your father**." ³⁹ They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "**If** [**He is implying that they were not**] you **were** Abraham's children, you **would** do the works of Abraham. ⁴⁰ **But** [**the combination of "if . . . but" shows that they were not children of Abraham**] now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. **Abraham did not do this** [**you claim to be the seed of Abraham but you do not act like Him. He saw my day and rejoiced and you want to kill me**]. ⁴¹ You do **the deeds** of your father [**the devil**]." Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "**If** [**once again He denies that they are the children of God because they reject Him**] God **were** your Father [**now He is denying that God is their Father**], you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I

come of Myself, but He sent Me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. ⁴⁴ You are of **your father the devil** [not physically but spiritually], and the desires of **your father** you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" [Nathanael confessed Jesus as Messiah and he was an Israelite indeed. The Jewish leaders rejected Jesus and therefore were not Israelites indeed].

What is notable in this passage is that, according to Jesus, the Jews were **literally** the children of Abraham but **spiritually** they were the devil's children because they wanted to kill Jesus. The apostle Paul taught the same truth in the following texts.

Paul and Israel

Romans 2:28, 29: An **Israelite indeed** receives Jesus as Messiah:

"For he is not a Jew who is one **outwardly**, nor is circumcision that which is **outward** in the flesh; ²⁹ but he is a Jew who is one **inwardly**; and circumcision is that of the **heart**, in the **Spirit**, not in the **letter**; whose **praise** is not from men but from God."

Romans 9:6-8: Not all Israelites are really Israel:

"But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are **not all Israel who are of Israel**, ⁷ **nor are they all children** because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." ⁸ That is, those who are the **children of the flesh**, these are not the children of God; but the **children of the promise** are counted as the **seed**."

Galatians 3:26-29: A child of Abraham is one who has received Jesus as Savior:

"For you are all sons of God through faith in **Christ Jesus**. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on **Christ**. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek,

*there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all **one in Christ Jesus**.²⁹ And **if** you are **Christ's**, **then** you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."*

Philippians 3:3-8: Circumcision is not of the flesh but of the heart:

*"For **we are the circumcision**, who worship God in the **Spirit**, **rejoice in Christ Jesus** and have no **confidence** in the **flesh**,⁴ though I also **might** have confidence in the **flesh**. **If** anyone else thinks he may have confidence **in the flesh**, I more so:⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;⁶ concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.⁷ However, what things **were** gain to me, these **I have counted loss for Christ**.⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the **knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord**, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and **count them as rubbish**, that I may **gain Christ**."*

Does the Church Replace Israel?

A question that engages evangelicals today and some Adventists is whether the Christian Church replaces Israel or continues it. I believe that the correct view is that the church is a continuation of true Israel.

The Old Testament 'church' began with 12 patriarchs that in the course of time multiplied into the twelve tribes of Israel, a mighty nation:

Genesis 49:28

*"All these **[the twelve sons of Jacob]** are the **twelve tribes** of Israel, and this is what their father spoke to them. And he blessed them; he blessed each one according to his own blessing."*

God called Moses to deliver His people from bondage and when Moses was born, the great dragon (Ezekiel 29:3) attempted to kill him. Moses then delivered his people from bondage and the sign was the blood of the lamb on

their doors. Moses then organized the 12 tribes and God's Old Testament Church grew into a great nation.

God chose Israel for a specific purpose. If they did not fulfill the purpose, they would cease to be God's people. Their mission was to prepare the world for the arrival of the Messiah:

Isaiah 49:6

*"Indeed He says, 'It is **too small a thing** that You should be My Servant to raise up the **tribes of Jacob**, and to restore the preserved ones of **Israel**; I will also give You as a light to **the Gentiles**, that You should be My salvation to the **ends of the earth**.'"*

Unfortunately, literal Israel **failed in its mission**. **Before** the **Babylonian captivity**, she embraced the customs of the surrounding nations and **after**, she encased herself in a **self-righteous armor**, **isolating** herself from other nations.

For this reason, Jesus chose twelve **faithful apostles**, **all Jews**, to **continue** the **legacy** of Israel and to **fulfill her mission**. The **twelve preached** Jesus and as a result, the church became, so to speak, a '**great nation**' [see Matthew 21:43]. The **mission of the church is the same** as the mission of Israel—take the gospel of Jesus to the 'ends of the earth' (Matthew 28:18-20).

Revelation 12 is proof that God has only **one true Israel** with **one mission**. **Faithful Israel** of the Old Testament is one with the **faithful church** in the New. A **single woman** represents the church from which Jesus **was born** and the woman who **later fled** to the wilderness. The Church **does not replace** Israel but rather **continues her legacy and mission!**

Ellen White wrote:

*"As in the Old Testament the **twelve patriarchs** stood as representatives of Israel, so the **twelve apostles** stand as representatives of the gospel church." Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 19*

It is no coincidence that the New Jerusalem has **twelve foundations** with the names of the **apostles** and twelve gates with the names of the **tribes**. There is only **one Jerusalem** for both the Old and New Testament heroes, the New Jerusalem. **Abraham looked** for a heavenly Jerusalem whose **builder and maker is God** (Hebrews 11:10).

In fact, **all** of the Old Testament heroes of faith **looked for** a heavenly Jerusalem; they knew that the earthly Jerusalem was merely a temporary shadow of the heavenly:

Hebrews 11:13-16

*“These all died in faith, **not having received the promises**, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were **strangers and pilgrims** on the earth. ¹⁴ For those who say such things declare plainly that they **seek a homeland**. ¹⁵ And truly, if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But now they **desire a better**, that is, a **heavenly country**. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has **prepared a city** for them.”*

The Insignificance of 1948

In **1948**, the Jewish people were **still rejecting the Messiah** and therefore 1948 could not be a fulfillment of prophecy. The Bible clearly teaches that God scattered Israel at the destruction of Jerusalem because they rejected the Messiah. In 1948, the Jewish nation was **still rejecting** Christ and so no fulfillment of the gathering prophecies could have taken place at that time.

Ellen White wrote about earthly Jerusalem and the so-called ‘Holy Land’:

*“The **curse rests upon Jerusalem**. The Lord has obliterated those things which men would worship in and about Jerusalem, yet many hold in reverence literal objects in Palestine, while they neglect to behold Jesus as their advocate in the heaven of heavens.” The Review and Herald, February 25, 1896*

*"How many there are who feel that it would be a good thing to tread the soil of old Jerusalem, and that their faith would be greatly strengthened by visiting the scenes of the Savior's life and death! However, **old Jerusalem will never be a sacred place** until the refining fire from heaven cleanses it. The **darkest blot of guilt rests upon the city that refused the light of Christ**. Do we want to walk in the footsteps of Jesus? We need not seek out the paths in Nazareth, Bethany, and Jerusalem. We shall find the footprints of Jesus by the sickbed, by the side of suffering humanity, in the hovels of the poverty-stricken and distressed. We may walk in these footsteps, comforting the suffering, speaking words of hope and comfort to the despondent. Doing as Jesus did when he was upon earth, we shall walk in his blessed steps. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." When the sin-cursed earth is purified from every stain of sin; when the Mount of Olives is rent asunder, and becomes an immense plain; **when the holy city of God descends upon it—the land that is now called the Holy Land will indeed become holy**. However, God's cause and work will not be advanced by making pilgrimages to Jerusalem. **The curse of God is upon Jerusalem for the rejection and crucifixion of his only begotten Son**. However, **God will cleanse away the vile blot**. The prophet says, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." The Review and Herald, June 9, 1896*

“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #14 – LIKE A THIEF IN THE NIGHT

Introduction

After Jesus gave his followers the signs of His soon coming, he went on **to warn** them that no one knew the **day or hour**. Therefore, He admonished His disciples to **watch** and be **ready** at every moment. When Jesus said that **no one knew** the day of hour of His coming, was He referring to His second coming or is there a **deeper truth** here? Let us first read the passage.

Matthew 24:36-44

*"But of that **day and hour** no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. **As** the days of Noah were, **so also** will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as in the days **before** the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah **entered** the ark, ³⁹ and **did not know** until the **flood came** and took them all away, **so also** will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field: one will be **taken** and the other **left**. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be **taken** and the other **left**. ⁴² **Watch** therefore, for you do not know what **hour your Lord is coming**. ⁴³ But know this that if the master of the house had **known what hour the thief would come**, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also be **ready**, for the Son of Man **is coming at an hour you do not expect**."*

The formula ‘as it was . . . so will it also’ is what **theologians call typology**. Jesus compared the events that led up to the flood with events that will lead up to His second coming. In other words, the **flood story is the type** and the events that lead up to the second coming are the **antitype**. Therefore, if we are going to understand these verses correctly we must **go back to the flood story** in the Old Testament.

There are **four key points** of time in the flood story.

Point #1: Preaching and Building

First, we have a **probationary period** of 120 years during which Noah **preached**, empowered by the **Holy Spirit**. Noah did not preach a **smooth message**. He **denounced the sins** of the antediluvians and called them to **repent** and allow God **to change** their behavior. During this time, the Spirit strove with the antediluvian race, attempting to lead them to repentance:

Genesis 6:3

*“And the LORD said, ‘My **Spirit** shall not **strive** with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet **his days shall be** one hundred and twenty years.’”*

The Hebrew word ‘**strive**’ (*doon*) means ‘*to plead a cause, to contend, to judge*’ (see, Proverbs 31:9; Jeremiah 30:13; Genesis 15:14; Genesis 49:16; Deuteronomy 32:36; I Samuel 2:10; Psalm 7:8; 50:4; 58:1; 72:2; 96:10; 110:6; Isaiah 3:13; Jeremiah 5:28; Zechariah 3:7). The Holy Spirit not only strove with human hearts but in the process the same Spirit was also **judging them based on their response** to his pleading! In other words, Noah’s preaching was a **judgment hour message**.

2 Peter 2:5

*God ‘did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a **preacher of righteousness**, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly.’”*

Noah backed up his words by **his actions**. He had a **faith that worked**. He invested all his **time, efforts, strength, talents and resources** into the

building of the ark while the rest of the people were **saving for a rainy day!** Building the ark was not one job among many; it was his **top priority!**

Hebrews 11:7

*“**By faith** Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, **moved** with godly fear, **prepared an ark** for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.”*

Hebrews tells us that Noah **condemned the world** by his **building, not his preaching!** His **actions proved** that he believed his message! Noah did the **absurd** because he **believed God!** Faith simply means **trusting God enough** to do what He says. However, you cannot **trust** God unless you **love** Him and you cannot love him unless you **know** Him and you cannot know Him unless you **spend time** with Him!

Judged by **numerical standards**, Noah’s ‘evangelistic crusade’ was a **tragic failure**. Just imagine, of the **millions** of people who lived on the planet, only **eight persons responded** and they were all members of his **own family!** If the story of Noah represents what will happen in the end-time, do you suppose that the **majority** will be on God’s side?

Noah’s message was **contrary** to **historical, empirical, sensorial, rational** and **scientific** evidence. The idea of a universal flood was **preposterous** because rain had never fallen from heaven.

- **Before creation week**, the planet was covered with water (Genesis 1:2)
- On the second day of creation God placed water **above and below** the earth (Genesis 1:7).
- The earth was not watered by rain but by a kind of **automatic sprinkler** system (Genesis 2:5, 6).
- God did not have to **create water** for the flood. He simply took the water that he placed **above and below** the surface and brought it back to the planet’s surface. The water came from the fountains of the great deep and the windows of heaven (Genesis 7:11).

The Voice of the Experts

Let us just imagine for a few moments what the experts in the world of academia might have said at the time.

- The Department of Natural Sciences:

"It has never rained before. Everything has continued uniformly as from the beginning. What Noah is preaching is contrary to sound science. It is preposterous to believe that water could fall from heaven and flood the earth."

- The Theology Department:

"Noah focusses too much on our sins. "God is a God of love. He loves the world too much to destroy it. Besides, rain from heaven would require a miracle and nature works on the basis of natural law."

- The History Department:

"There is no historical record of any flood in the past so why should we believe there could be one now?"

- The Behavioral Sciences Department:

"Noah is suffering a mental delusion. He is confusing reality with fantasy. He is mentally deranged."

- The Sociology Department:

"We must not allow a lunatic like Noah to disrupt the stable order of society."

- The Philosophy Department:

"Noah is suffering because of an existential void in his life. Truth is relative and what is truth for Noah is not necessarily truth for everyone else."

Point #2: The Shut Door

When Noah **concluded his preaching and building**, he and his family entered the ark. The Spirit then **ceased to strive** with human hearts and everyone's **choice was final**. The world had only **two groups**, the saved and the lost. However, before the closing of the door, God gave the world **one last sign** that they should find refuge in the ark, the orderly march of the **animals into the ark**.

Genesis 7:16

*"So those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and **the LORD shut him in**."*

*"Noah was **shut in**, and the rejecters of God's mercy were **shut out**. The **seal of Heaven** was on that door; **God had shut it**, and God alone could open it." Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 98.*

The expression 'Lord shut him in' was the moment when **probation closed** for the wicked world. When the door closed before 'the time of trouble', the **sealed were inside** and the unsealed were outside.

God shut Noah and his family in for **two reasons**. First, because the wicked surrounded the ark with 'a daring violence which they had never ventured upon before' and second, because Noah and his family needed to be **shielded from the destruction** to come.

After the door of the ark closed, there was **no chance to switch sides**. Although those outside the ark were lost when the door shut, they **did not know** it until it started to rain.

Point #3: Seven Days of Trial

After the door of mercy closed, Noah and his family remained **inside** the ark and the wicked **outside** for seven days with no sign of rain.

Genesis 7:4

*“For after **seven more days** I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made.”*

Have you ever wondered **why God left Noah and his family** in the ark with all of those animals for seven long days before it started to rain? **God could have** made it rain the very day they entered but He did not. Ellen White explained:

*“For seven days after Noah and his family entered the ark, there appeared **no sign of the coming storm**. During this period, **their faith was tested**. It was a time of **triumph to the world without**. The apparent delay confirmed them in the belief that Noah's message was a delusion, and that the Flood would never come. Notwithstanding the solemn scenes which they had witnessed--the beasts and birds entering the ark, and the angel of God closing the door—they still continued their sport and revelry, even making a jest of these signal manifestations of God's power. They gathered in crowds about the ark, **deriding its inmates** with a **daring violence** which they had never ventured upon before.” Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 98, 99*

During the seven days, God **tested the faith** of Noah and his family to the utmost. They must have wondered whether **God would fulfill His word** and send the flood as He had promised. This was a time of **triumph for those outside** the ark and a time of **apparent defeat** for those inside. We can only imagine the **ridicule and imprecations** of the multitude!

Ellen White compared the shut door in the days of Noah with the shut door when probation closes:

*“Likewise, when Christ shall cease His intercession for guilty men, **before His coming** in the clouds of heaven, the **door of mercy will be shut**. Then divine grace will no longer restrain the wicked, and Satan will have full control of those who have rejected mercy. They will **endeavor to destroy** God's people; but as Noah was shut into the ark, so the righteous will be **shielded by divine power**”.* Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 98

God's people **will remain on the earth** during the tribulation. As this time of trouble unfolds, God will **test the faith** of His people to the utmost. The faithful will feel much like Noah and his family did in the ark. As time transpires, they **will wonder** whether God has forsaken them. However, like Noah, they will **not let go**. They will experience the parable that Jesus told in **Luke 18:1-8**.

Point #4: The Destroying Tempest

On the **eighth day**, rain began to fall and destruction ensued:

Genesis 7:11

*"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the **fountains** of the great deep were broken up, and the **windows of heaven** were opened."*

Ellen White described the flood:

*"Water appeared to come from the clouds in **mighty cataracts**. Rivers broke away from their boundaries, and overflowed the valleys. **Jets of water** burst from the earth with indescribable force, throwing massive rocks hundreds of feet into the air, and these, in falling, buried themselves deep in the ground. . . As the violence of the storm increased, **trees, buildings, rocks, and earth were hurled in every direction**. The terror of man and beast was beyond description. Above the **roar of the tempest** was heard the wailing of a people that had despised the authority of God." Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 99*

As I was reading this statement, I remembered the **tsunami** that hit in the **northeastern** area of **Honshu, Japan** on **March 11, 2011**. The waves reached a height of **30 feet** as they barreled across the **18-foot retaining wall** and the floodwaters moved inland as much as **six miles**. The flood swept away buildings, houses, boats, cars, animals and people in a **matter of minutes**. **Twenty thousand** people perished. Now imagine an event like this but on a **global scale** and you will have an idea of what the flood was like!

The normal word for ‘flood’ in the New Testament is pótamos. However, Matthew uses the word Kataklysmos for the flood in Noah’s day. The flood was indeed a cataclysm!

What happened with Satan during the flood? God compelled him to remain on the earth with no one to tempt.

“Satan himself, who was compelled to remain in the midst of the warring elements, feared for his own existence.” Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 99

The earth then returned to a condition similar to what it was before creation week:

- Darkness in the heavens.
- The earth totally covered with water.
- Not one human alive on the planet.

The Application by Jesus

Now let us take a closer look at the flood typology that Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24:36-39. We notice in verse 36 that Jesus assured His disciples that no one knew the day or hour of His coming. When Jesus spoke about the day and hour of His coming, was He referring to His second coming or to the close of probation before His coming? We shall find the answer in the flood typology.

Matthew 24:36-41

*“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as in the days **[1] before** the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah **[2] entered** the ark, ³⁹ and did **[3] not know** until the **[4] flood came** and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be*

taken and the other **left**.⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be **taken** and the other **left**.”

Notice that the word **‘until’ appears twice** in Matthew 24:38, 39. This preposition marks **two punctual points** of time. The first ‘until’ marked the moment when Noah and his family **entered** the ark and God **shut the door**. The second ‘until’ marked the moment when it **began to rain** and the flood took all the wicked away. There was a period of **seven days between** the two ‘untils’. For seven days, the lost were alive but **did not know that probation** for them had closed. Likewise, in the **eschatological period** there will be a period between when the door closes and when destruction comes. In between these two moments of time, the wicked **will not realize that they are lost**.

The coming of the thief

In Matthew 24:22-24 Jesus compared His coming with the arrival of a **thief** and admonished His followers to be **awake and ready**:

Matthew 24:42-44

“Watch therefore, for you do not know what **hour your Lord is coming**.⁴³ But know this that if the master of the house had **known what hour the thief would come**, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.⁴⁴ Therefore you also be **ready**, for the Son of Man **is coming at an hour you do not expect**.”

Like the events that led up to the flood, the coming of the thief has **two key moments** of time. The first is when the **thief arrives** and everyone in the house is **sleeping**. The second is in the **morning** when everyone in the house **wakes up** and realizes that the thief has come. **In between** these two moments, the people in the house **are unaware** that the thief has pillaged the house. Before the flood, there were also two key moments: The **closing of the door** of probation and the **execution** of the punishment. Both came upon the **pre-flood** race as an **overwhelming surprise**.

Open and Closed Doors

There are many other cases where probation closed before the actual destruction:

- ✓ The door closed for **Sodom and Gomorrah** when the angels shut the door in the evening but the destruction did not occur until the next morning.
- ✓ The door **closed for Jerusalem** when the faithful were sealed and the Shekinah departed (Ezekiel 8). Shortly thereafter King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city.
- ✓ The door closed for Belshazzar's **Babylon** when the handwriting appeared on the wall and the execution followed shortly thereafter.
- ✓ The door closed for the **Jewish nation** in the year 34 AD but the execution did not occur until 70 AD.
- ✓ The separation of the faithful from the unfaithful **among God's professed people** takes place during probationary time (Revelation 14:6, 7), then, the Christ's **intercession ceases** (Revelation 15:5-8) and the **plagues** fall.
- ✓ 'The **parables of Jesus** also reveal that there is always an 'investigative judgment' before the destruction. Among those parables are the **wheat and tares**, the **net**, the man **without a garment**, the **ten virgins**, and the **ten talents**.

Ellen G. White described the **antitype** of the closed door:

*"So when Christ shall cease His intercession for guilty men, **before** His coming in the clouds of heaven, **the door of mercy will be shut**. Then divine grace will no longer restrain the wicked, and **Satan will have full control** of those who have rejected mercy. They will endeavor to destroy God's people; but as Noah was shut into the ark, so the righteous will be **shielded by divine power**."*

*For seven days after Noah and his family entered the ark, there appeared **no sign of the coming storm**. During this period their **faith was tested**. It was a time of **triumph to the world without**. The apparent **delay** confirmed them in the belief*

that Noah's message was a delusion, and that the Flood would never come.” Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 98, 99

The **number seven** appears to be significant. This period foreshadows the period of the **seven last plagues**. Interestingly, King Nebuchadnezzar threw the three Hebrew worthies into a fiery furnace heated seven times hotter than ever before. In antiquity, fire purified precious metals **seven times** (Psalm 12:6). According to **Isaiah 48:10** the purifying furnace represents **refining through affliction**. **Job** was certain that after his trial he would come forth from the furnace as gold (Job 23:10).

The Order in Matthew 24 and Revelation

The days of Noah, Matthew 24 and Revelation 14, 15 describe parallel events:

- Matthew 24:14: The **gospel** preached to all nations and then the end will come.

Noah preached a powerful judgment hour message and then the end came (2 Peter 2:5).

Revelation 14:6: The **gospel** preached to every nation, kindred, tongue and people and then Jesus will come (Revelation 14:14).

- Matthew 24:15: The abomination of desolation is set up and the inhabitants of Jerusalem are divided into **two groups**—those who **flee** and those who **stay** (24:15).

Noah's preaching divided the world into **two groups**—those **inside** and those **outside** (Genesis 7:16).

When everyone receives the **Seal of God** or the **Mark of the Beast** the door of probation closes (Revelation 15:5-8) and there will only be two groups.

- Matthew 24:16-21: God's people flee, and go through the great **tribulation** (24:16-28).

The **faith of Noah** and his family was severely tested and the wicked gathered around it with **daring violence**.

The wicked will gather around spiritual Jerusalem in the winepress with the intention of destroying it (Revelation 14:18-20). Daniel 12:1 describes this period as the **time of trouble**.

- Jesus **delivers** His people and **destroys** the wicked at His coming (24:29-31). When destruction comes, one is 'taken' and the other is 'left' (24:40, 41; Genesis 7:22, 23). The ones 'taken' are the lost and the ones 'left' are the saved.

The **flood** took all the wicked away and only Noah and his family **were left** (Genesis 7:11, 23; Matthew 24:39).

The riders on white horses **trample the winepress** outside spiritual Jerusalem to deliver God's people (Revelation 14:20; 19:15).

As stated before, God shuts His people in for two reasons. First, in order to survive the tribulation when the wicked attempt to destroy them and second, to survive the seven last plagues and the second coming.

A Divine Warning for us

Ellen White, firmly based on Scripture, explained that the door of probation would close before the great tribulation and the second coming:

*"When the work of the investigative judgment **closes**, the destiny of all will **have been decided** for life or death. **Probation** ends a **short time before** the appearing of the Lord in the clouds of heaven. Christ in the Revelation, looking forward to that time, declares, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:11, 12.*

The righteous and the wicked will **still be living upon the earth in their mortal state**—men will be planting and building, eating and drinking, all unconscious that the final, irrevocable decision has been pronounced in the sanctuary above. Before the Flood, after Noah entered the ark, God **shut him in and shut the ungodly out**; but for seven days the people, **knowing not** that their doom was fixed, continued their careless, pleasure-loving life and mocked the warnings of impending judgment. "So," says the Savior, "shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24:39. **Silently, unnoticed** as the **midnight thief**, will come the decisive hour that marks the fixing of every man's destiny, the final withdrawal of mercy's offer to guilty men.

"Watch ye therefore: . . . lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping." Mark 13:35, 36. Perilous is the condition of those who, **growing weary** of their watch, turn to the attractions of the world. While the man of business is absorbed in the pursuit of gain, while the pleasure lover is seeking indulgence, while the daughter of fashion is arranging her adornments--it may be in that hour the Judge of all the earth will pronounce the sentence: "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." Daniel 5:27. Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 491

Mark 13:33-37

"Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. ³⁴ It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper **to watch**. ³⁵ **Watch** therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—³⁶ lest, **coming suddenly**, he find you **sleeping**. ³⁷ And what I say to you, I say to all: **Watch!**"

Notice Ellen White's comment on this passage from Mark:

"Jesus has left us word: "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the Master of the house **cometh**, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest **coming suddenly** He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." We are waiting and watching for the return of the Master,

who is to bring the morning, lest **coming** suddenly He find us sleeping. **What time is here referred to? Not to the revelation of Christ in the clouds of heaven to find a people asleep.** No; but to His return from His ministration in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, when He lays off His priestly attire and clothes Himself with garments of vengeance, and when the mandate goes forth: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

When Jesus ceases to plead for man, the cases of all are forever decided. This is the time of reckoning with His servants. To those who have neglected the **preparation of purity and holiness**, which **fits them** to be waiting ones to welcome their Lord, the sun sets in gloom and darkness, and rises not again. Probation closes; Christ's intercessions cease in heaven. This time finally comes suddenly upon all, and those who have neglected to **purify their souls by obeying the truth** are found sleeping. They became **weary** of waiting and watching; they became **indifferent** in regard to the coming of their Master. They **longed not** for His appearing, and thought there was no need of such **continued, persevering** watching. They had been disappointed in their expectations and might be again. They concluded that there was **time enough** yet to arouse. They would be sure not to lose the opportunity of securing an **earthly treasure**. It would be safe to get all of this world they could and in securing this object, they lost all **anxiety** and **interest** in the appearing of the Master. They became **indifferent** and **careless**, as though His coming were yet in the **distance**. But while their interest was buried up in their worldly gains, the work closed in the heavenly sanctuary, and they were unprepared." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 190, 191

Millennial Events

What happened to Satan during the flood?

"Satan himself, who was **compelled to remain** in the midst of the warring elements, feared for his own existence." Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 99

After the second coming, God, as He did at the time of the flood, will once again compel Satan to remain in darkness for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3; Jeremiah 4:23).

During the millennium the earth will be **without form and void** (Jeremiah 4:19-23; Revelation 20:1-3) just as it was before creation week.

At the flood, Satan **lost his power base** because all his followers perished. Likewise, during the millennium, Satan will lose all of his followers and God will force him to remain on a **desolate planet** that will be in a condition similar to the one described in Genesis 1:2.

Notified but Surprised

On **Wednesday, November 13, 1985**, the eruption of the volcano “**Nevado del Ruiz**” caused an avalanche of mud that buried the city of **Armero** in Colombia. Some **22,000** precious souls perished. One wonders whether this devastating loss of life was preventable. Were there no **signs** of the impending eruption of the volcano? The answer to this question is a **resounding yes!** Why, then, did the eruption surprise so many people?

The day after the disaster, the newspaper, **El Espectador**, published an article by **Rodolfo Rodríguez Calderon** that bore the title “Un Desastre Anunciado”. The article makes it clear that every single person could have saved their lives if they had **paid heed to the signs** of the impending doom. However, they chose to **ignore the signs**. The article provides some very telling details:

- **Eleven months** before the disaster, the mountain had begun **spewing out** smoke and ash.
- The **fluffy snow** on the mountaintop had become a **solid sheet of ice** due to the intense heat within the mountain.
- The **water level** of the rivers increased significantly due to the melting snow.

- The **cloud of ash and gases** that was only **15 feet** high at first, increased to **750 feet** the second day, and the day before the eruption it had reached a height of **16,000 feet**.
- On **September 11**, the earth tremors reached an **intensity of three** on the Mercalli scale.
- On occasion, the people could **hear the mountain** rumble.
- The authorities had to **close the access roads** to the mountain's ski resort because **mudslides** totally covered them.
- It was impossible for people to **keep their houses** clean because of the **volcanic ash** that blew into town day in and day out.
- The people could constantly **smell sulphur** in the air.
- A **torrential rain** along with wind of **hurricane proportions** began at around 9:00 PM. According to the handful of survivors, the night was **unusually dark**. Some eyewitnesses who survived said that the darkness was **supernatural**.

Following the Advice of Experts

In spite of these multiple signs, **22,000 perished** on that fateful night. One wonders whether **something similar** could happen leading up to the second coming. Could the second coming catch people by **surprise in spite of all the signs**? Sadly, the answer is yes! Why will people ignore or reject the signs of the soon coming of Jesus?

For the same reason that the people in **Armero ignored** the signs of the imminent eruption! Why did they ignore the signs? Simply because they chose to believe the **experts** instead of paying heed to the signs **for themselves**. In the same article mentioned above, we find the following information:

- A **priest**, Edgar Efren Torres came over the radio at 7:00 PM and told the people: *"There is no reason to panic. Please stay calm."*
- The **Civil Defense**, in an official radio release affirmed: *"There is no reason to be concerned."*

- The bishop of the town, **Augusto Osorio** warned **against fanatics** who were announcing gloom and doom for the city.
- The **mayor** of the town said: *"Don't worry."*
- The **governor of the state of Tolima** later said that *'the disaster could not have been predicted in advance.'*
- Colombian scientist, **Jaime Villegas Velazquez**, confidently predicted, *"This volcano is not going to erupt. Nothing is going to happen. Beware of speculations and exaggerations."*
- The **Secretary of Mines, Ivan Duque Escobar** stated, **"nothing will happen."**
- Even **United States geologist, Darrel Herd**, had said that it was *'very unlikely that the cities could be buried by rocks, lava or mud.'*
- The **Regional Emergency Committee** sent out a message: *"Don't expect your windows to shatter. . . don't expect darkness, don't expect lava to run down the mountain, don't expect large layers of ash, among other things."*
- The people did not know that their door of life had shut until the mud came and took them all away.
- Very **few** were **left**. The ones 'taken away' perished while those who were left "remained alive" (see Genesis 7:22, 23). Likewise, it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. The lost will be marked for destruction but they will not know it until the flood of fire comes from heaven.

When the flood came, there were only **two groups** (those who died and those who survived), not three. Those who teach the rapture theory claim that when Jesus comes to rapture His people there will be three groups—the raptured saints, those who die and those who remain alive during the tribulation. The Noah story **contradicts the rapture** theory where Jesus takes some to heaven, destroys others on earth and a third group remains alive on earth.



“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #15 – THE FINAL ABOMINATION

Introduction

In this series, we have studied two abominations that led to desolation. The first was the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and the second was the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman legions.

The third abomination will come when the United States imposes a national Sunday law. This final abomination will lead to national ruin because human legislation will trump the Sabbath legislation in God’s holy Law. We noticed that in the two destructions of Jerusalem, the eagle and the sun were involved and in this lesson, we will see that the sun and the eagle will also be involved in the final abomination of desolation. In order to understand the final abomination of desolation we must review a series of events before the first destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

An Unfaithful Wife

God married Israel at Mt. Sinai but she was unfaithful to her wedding vows. Just before the Babylonian Captivity God raised up Jeremiah and Ezekiel to rebuke God’s apostate bride for her unfaithfulness:

Jeremiah 31:32

*"... not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt [**the covenant at Mt. Sinai**], My covenant which **they broke**, though **I was a husband** to them, says the LORD."*

Ezekiel 16:32

*"You are an adulterous **wife**, who takes strangers instead of her **husband**."*

Israel's Abominations

Ezekiel 16:1, 2

*"Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ² "Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her **abominations**."*

Ezekiel 8 describes Israel's abominations in **order of severity**. The greatest abomination that Israel committed was turning **her back** on **her husband** and worshiping the **sun**:

Ezekiel 8:15, 16

*"Then He said to me, "Have you seen this, O son of man? Turn again, you will see greater abominations than these." ¹⁶ So He brought me into the inner court of the LORD's house; and there, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their **backs toward the temple of the LORD** and their faces **toward the east**, and they were **worshiping the sun** toward the east."*

A Brazen Harlot

God's own people, Israel, had become a **harlot**:

Ezekiel 16:15

*"But you trusted in your own beauty, played the **harlot** because of your fame, and poured out your **harlotry** [fornications in the KJV] on everyone passing by who would have it."*

Israel behaved as a harlot **with the nations**:

Ezekiel 16:28-30

*"You also played the harlot with the **Assyrians**, because you were insatiable; indeed you played the **harlot** with them and still were not satisfied. ²⁹ Moreover you multiplied your acts of **harlotry** as far as the land of the trader, Chaldea; and even then you were not satisfied. ³⁰ How **degenerate** is your heart!" says the Lord GOD, "seeing you do all these things, the deeds of a **brazen harlot**."*

Israel Clothed Herself as a Harlot

Israel decked herself with jewels to **impress her lovers**:

Ezekiel 16:17

*"You have also taken your **beautiful jewelry** from My gold and My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images and played **the harlot** with them."*

Israel filled herself with ornaments and painted her eyes to impress her lovers:

Ezekiel 23:40

*"Furthermore you sent for men to come from afar, to whom a messenger was sent; and there they came. And you washed yourself for them, **painted your eyes**, and adorned yourself with **ornaments**."*

The Sanctuary, the Sabbath and Bloodshed

Israel defiled the sanctuary and the Sabbath:

Ezekiel 23:28

"Moreover they have done this to Me: They have defiled My sanctuary on the same day and profaned My Sabbaths."

Israel shed the blood of the innocent (Cf. Jesus in Matthew 23 accused them of shedding the blood of His servants and the prophets):

Ezekiel 16:38 (NIV)

"I will sentence you to the punishment of women who commit adultery and who shed blood; I will bring upon you the blood vengeance of my wrath and jealous anger."

The apostate prophets and priests led Israel down the wrong road and the people loved to have it so:

Jeremiah 5:31

"The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so."

Drink from the Cup of God's Wrath

Because of their apostasy, God predicted that Israel would drink of the cup of His wrath:

Ezekiel 23:32

"You have walked in the way of your sister; therefore I will put her cup in your hand." ³² "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'You shall drink of your sister's cup, the deep and wide one; you shall be laughed to scorn and held in derision; it contains much."

Destruction from the Four Corners

God promised that destruction would come from the four corners of the land:

Ezekiel 7:1-8

*"Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ² 'And you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD to the land of Israel: '**An end!** The **end** has come upon the **four corners** of the land. ³ Now **the end has come** upon you, and I will send **My anger against you**; I will judge you according to your ways, and I will repay you for all your **abominations**. ⁴ My eye will **not spare you**, nor will I have pity; but I will **repay your ways**, and your **abominations** will be in your midst; then you shall know that I am the LORD!' ⁵ 'Thus says the Lord GOD: 'A **disaster**, a singular disaster; behold, it has come! ⁶ An **end has come**, the **end has come**; it has dawned for you; behold, it has come! ⁷ **Doom** has come to you, you who dwell in the land; the time has come, a **day of trouble is near**, and not of rejoicing in the mountains. ⁸ Now upon you I will soon **pour out My fury**, and spend **My anger** upon you; I will judge you according to your ways, and I will repay you for all your **abominations**."*

Sealing before the destruction

Before the destruction of Jerusalem God placed a mark on the foreheads of those who sighed and cried because of the abominations in the city:

Ezekiel 9:1-6

*"Then He called out in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, "Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each with a **deadly weapon** in his hand." ² And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his battle-ax in his hand. One man among them was **clothed with linen** and had a writer's inkhorn at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar. ³ Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the **man clothed with linen**, who had the writer's inkhorn at his side; ⁴ and the LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of **Jerusalem**, and put **a mark** on*

the **foreheads** of the men who **sigh and cry** over all the **abominations** that are done within it." ⁵ To the others He said in my hearing, 'Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. ⁶ Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and **begin at My sanctuary.**' So they began with the elders who were **before the temple.**"

Trampling on the Sabbath

God gave Israel the Sabbath as **a sign** between Him and the people and yet they desecrated it. The main reason for the destruction of the city was the violation of the Sabbath:

Ezekiel 20:12, 19-21

"Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be **a sign** between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them."

"I am the Lord your God: Walk in My statutes, keep My judgments, and do them; ²⁰ **hallow My Sabbaths**, and they will be **a sign** between Me and you, that you may know that **I am the Lord your God.**' ²¹ "Notwithstanding, the children **rebelled** against Me; they did not walk in My statutes, and were not careful to observe My judgments, 'which, if a man does, he shall live by them'; but they **profaned My Sabbaths.** Then I said I would pour out My fury on them and fulfill My anger against them in the wilderness."

Jeremiah 17:27

God destroyed Jerusalem because she trampled on the Sabbath:

"But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will **kindle a fire in its gates**, and it shall devour the **palaces of Jerusalem**, and it shall **not be quenched.**" ' ' "

Hated by her Lovers

God promised that all of Israel's lovers would eventually **turn against her**:

Ezekiel 16:39

*"I will also give you into their hand, and they shall throw down your shrines and break down your high places. They shall also strip you of your clothes, take your beautiful jewelry, and leave you **naked and bare**."*

After the rejection of the Hebrew Theocracy, the Christian Church continues the legacy and mission of Israel:

The Church is Christ's Bride

The church is **Christ's bride**:

Ephesians 5:25

*"**Husbands**, love your **wives**, just as **Christ** also loved the **church** and gave Himself for her."*

When John first saw the woman, she represented the **Old Testament Church**:

Revelation 12:1

*"Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a **woman** clothed with the **sun**, with the **moon** under her feet and on her head a garland of **twelve stars**."*

Revelation 12:6

After the child was born and ascended to heaven, the **same pure woman** symbolizes the **New Testament Church**:

*"Then the **woman** fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days."*

The Church became a Harlot

In the **fourth century**, the church **became a harlot** by forsaking her **legitimate husband** and falling in love with the **civil powers** and the pagan customs of the nations. **Revelation 17** describes the characteristics of this unfaithful woman:

*"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the **great harlot** who sits on **many waters**,² with whom the kings of the earth committed **fornication**, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the **wine** of her fornication."⁴ The woman was **arrayed** in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a **golden cup** full of **abominations** and the filthiness of her fornication.⁵ And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, **BABYLON THE GREAT**, THE **MOTHER** OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.⁶ I saw the woman, **drunk** with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement."*

Everything in this chapter revolves around the harlot:

- ✓ A harlot **woman** represents a church that apostatized from the truth.
- ✓ The harlot church **sits** or rules over the waters—multitudes, nations, tongues and peoples.
- ✓ She carries on an **adulterous affair** with the **political powers** of the world thus forsaking Christ, her legitimate husband.
- ✓ She has a **golden cup** in her hand full of **fermented wine** and the wine represents her **abominations**.
- ✓ As she forces **all the nations drink**, they get spiritually drunk.
- ✓ When the nations and people drink the wine, they get angry with God's people.
- ✓ The harlot clothes herself in **purple and scarlet**.
- ✓ The harlot decks herself with **gold, precious stones and pearls** in order to impress her lovers.

- ✓ The harlot has **daughters** who were born from her and do her bidding (the story of John the **Baptist's death** is in the backdrop).
- ✓ The vile woman is drunk with the **blood of the saints** and the martyrs of Jesus.
- ✓ Besides being a church, the harlot is **also a political system** because she is also a city who **reigns** over the kings of the earth (17:18).
- ✓ The kings of the earth will hate her, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire (17:16).

*"The woman, Babylon, of Revelation 17, is described as 'arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness. . . . And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots.' Says the prophet, 'I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.' [Revelation 17:4-6.] Babylon is further declared to be 'that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.' [Revelation 17:18.] The power that for so many centuries maintained despotic sway over the monarchs of Christendom **is Rome**. The purple and scarlet color, the gold and precious stones and pearls, vividly picture the magnificence and more than kingly pomp affected by the haughty **see of Rome**. And no other power could be so truly declared "drunken with the blood of the saints" as that church which has so cruelly persecuted the followers of Christ. Babylon is also charged with the sin of unlawful connection with "the kings of the earth." It was by **departure from the Lord**, and **alliance with the heathen**, that the Jewish church became **a harlot**; and **Rome**, corrupting herself in like manner by seeking the **support of worldly powers**, receives a like condemnation." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 383*

Let us now **unpack the details** that describe this harlot woman.

#1: A woman in prophecy represents a church and a harlot woman represents an **apostate church**:

Revelation 17:1: Great **harlot**

*"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the **great harlot** who sits on many waters."*

#2: The harlot sits on **many waters** and the waters represent nations, multitudes, tongues and peoples. The **act of sitting** upon them represents the fact that she **rules over them**:

Revelation 17:1

*"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who **sits** on **many waters**."*

Revelation 17:15

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

#3: The apostate woman became a harlot by forsaking Christ and carrying on a **love affair** with the **political powers** of the world:

Revelation 17:2

*"... with whom the **kings** of the earth committed **fornication**, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."*

#4: The harlot clothes herself in **purple and scarlet** and adorns herself with **gold**, precious stones and pearls to impress her **illegitimate lovers**:

Revelation 17:4

*"The woman was arrayed in **purple** and **scarlet**, and adorned with **gold and precious stones and pearls**, having in her hand a golden cup full of **abominations** and the filthiness of her **fornication**."*

#5: The harlot is the '**mother**' so she must have **daughters** that reflect her character and do her bidding:

Revelation 17:5

*"And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE **MOTHER** OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."*

#6: The harlot has a **golden cup** in her hand and the cup is full of **fermented wine**. The fermented wine is composed of her abominations:

Revelation 17:2

*"... with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were **made drunk** with the wine of her fornication."*

Revelation 17:5

*"And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE **ABOMINATIONS** OF THE EARTH."*

According the second angel's message, Babylon will fall '**because**' she was a **wine factory** and gave her **fermented wine** to the nations and the wine made them **drunk**. Like everything else in the chapter, the **wine is symbolic**. The question then is what do her wine or abominations represent?

What are her abominations?

Making idols and **bowing** before them is an abomination:

Exodus 20:4-6

*"You shall not make for yourself a **carved image** — any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; ⁵ you shall not **bow down** to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."*

Deuteronomy 7:25, 26

*"You shall burn the **carved images** of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an **abomination** to the Lord your God. ²⁶ Nor shall you bring an **abomination** into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall **utterly detest it** and **utterly abhor it**, for it is an **accursed thing**."*

Deuteronomy 27:14-15

*"And the Levites shall speak with a loud voice and say to all the men of Israel: ¹⁵ '**Cursed** is the one who makes a **carved or molded image**, an **abomination** to the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets it up in secret.' "And all the people shall answer and say, 'Amen!'"*

Delving into the occult is an abomination:

Deuteronomy 18:9-12

*"When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the **abominations** of those nations. ¹⁰ There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices **witchcraft**, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, ¹¹ or one who conjures spells, or a **medium**, or a **spiritist**, or one who **calls up the dead**. ¹² For all who do these things are an **abomination** to the Lord, and because of these **abominations** the Lord your God drives them out from before you."*

One extreme: Turning away from the Law is an abomination (the idea that God will save you in your sins):

Proverbs 28:9

*"One who **turns away** his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination."*

The other extreme: Believing that your own works can save you:

Luke 16:15

*"And He said to them, "You are those who **justify yourselves** before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God."*

Ellen White described **the papacy** as catering to **both groups**:

*"A prayerful study of the Bible would show Protestants the real character of the papacy and would cause them to abhor and to shun it; but many are so wise in their own conceit that they feel no need of humbly seeking God that they may be led into the truth. Although priding themselves on their enlightenment, they are ignorant both of the Scriptures and of the power of God. They must have some means of **quieting their consciences** [**two ways of doing it**], and they seek that which is least spiritual and humiliating. What they desire is a method of **forgetting God** that shall **pass as a method** of remembering Him. The papacy is well adapted to meet the wants of all these. It is prepared for two classes of mankind embracing nearly the whole world--those who would be **saved by their merits**, and those who would be **saved in their sins**. Here is the secret of its power." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 572*

Fornication or adultery is an abomination:

Jeremiah 13:26, 27

*"Therefore I will uncover your skirts over your face that your shame may appear.
²⁷ I have seen your **adulteries** and your lustful neighings, the lewdness of your **harlotry**, your **abominations** on the hills in the fields. Woe to you, O Jerusalem! Will you still not be made clean?"*

Shedding innocent blood is an abomination:

Ezekiel 22:2

"Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² "Now, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Yes, show her all her abominations!"

Proverbs 17:15

"He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord."

Proverbs 6:16-19

"These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: ¹⁷ A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ A heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, ¹⁹ a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren."

Homosexuality is an abomination:

Leviticus 18:2

"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination."

Sun worship is an abomination:

The Roman Catholic Church is **obsessed with the sun**. There are **sunbursts everywhere**. One of the reasons why the papacy adopted Sunday as a day of worship was to make **pagan sun worshipers comfortable** with Christianity.

Ezekiel 8:16, 17: The **greatest abomination** of all (and remember that this is the **backdrop** for the seal of God and the mark of the beast in Revelation 13):

*"So He brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house; and there, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the Lord and their **faces toward the east**, and they were **worshipping the sun** toward the east and He said to me, "Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to*

commit the **abominations** that they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger. Indeed they put the branch to their nose.”

Is it **the same** to worship the sun, as it is to worship on Sunday? In **principle, yes** because both were made by God for secular, not sacred purposes.

*“When faithful teachers expound the word of God, there arise men of learning, ministers professing to understand the Scriptures, who denounce **sound doctrine as heresy**, and thus turn away inquirers after truth. Were it not that the world is **hopelessly intoxicated** with the wine of Babylon, multitudes would be convicted and converted by the plain, cutting truths of the word of God. However, religious faith appears **so confused [the meaning of the word ‘Babylon’]** and discordant that the people know not **what to believe as truth**. The sin of the world's impenitence lies at the door of the church.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 389*

The papacy supports and teaches a **plethora of beliefs and practices** that either are **contrary to the Bible** or **absent from the Bible**. Here are some of them: the sanctity of **Sunday**, the union of **church and state**, the sacrifice of the **mass, infant baptism, lent, canonizing saints**, praying **to and for the dead saints, lighting candles, burning incense**, sprinkling **holy water**, crafting **idols** and bowing before them, the use of **holy vestments**, the **Easter cross** on the forehead, **auricular confession** of sins to a mere man, praying **the rosary**, the **sign of the cross, celibacy, purgatory, convents, monasteries**, among others.

The wine represents all the **false doctrines and practices** that the Papacy has imbibed from the nations **since the Tower of Babel** because the name ‘**Babel**’ **first appears** in the story of **Genesis 11**. The cup not only **intoxicates** those who drink it, but it also causes them to get **mad** with God’s people who refuse to drink:

Jeremiah 51:7

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

*“The fallen denominational churches are Babylon. Babylon has been fostering **poisonous doctrines**, the wine of error. This wine of error is composed of **false doctrines**, such as the natural immortality of the soul, the eternal torment of the wicked, the denial of the pre-existence of Christ prior to His birth in Bethlehem, and advocating and exalting the first day of the week above God's holy and sanctified day. These and **kindred errors** are presented to the world by the various churches, and thus the Scriptures are fulfilled that say, 'For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.' It is a wrath that is created by false doctrines, and when **kings and presidents** drink this wine of the wrath of her fornication, they are stirred with anger against those who will not come into harmony with the false and satanic heresies which exalt the false sabbath, and lead men to trample underfoot God's memorial. Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, pp. 61, 62*

The harlot and her daughters have made the **multitudes spiritual alcoholics** and they are so addicted and intoxicated that it is virtually impossible for them to **think rationally** and to **grasp truth**. The harlot's spiritual **alcohol controls them**. It is impossible to reason with a drunkard. Drunkards are quite sure that they know everything and will **argue with you** until they are blue in the face.

*“Error is **never harmless**. It **never sanctifies**, but always brings **confusion** and dissension. It is **always dangerous**. The enemy has great power over minds that are not thoroughly fortified by **prayer** and established in **Bible truth**.” Ellen G. White, Counsels to Writers and Editors, p. 47*

Spiritual wine does to people **spiritually** what literal wine does to people **literally**; the alcohol **clouds the mind**, makes it impossible to **think straight** and make **right decisions** and to **distinguish** between right and wrong, the **holy and common**:

Proverbs 31:4-5

*"It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for **kings** to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink; 5 lest they drink and **forget the law**, and **pervert the justice** of all the afflicted."*

Leviticus 10:8-11: Offering the **common** as if it was **holy**:

*"Then the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying: ⁹ "Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, ¹⁰ that **you may distinguish** between **holy and unholy**, and between unclean and clean, ¹¹ and **that you may teach** the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them by the hand of Moses."*

Daniel 5:1-4: Treating the **holy** as if it were **common**:

*"Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and **drank wine** in the presence of the thousand. ² **While he tasted the wine**, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels that his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple that had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. ³ Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which that had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. ⁴ They drank wine, and **praised the gods** of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone."*

Regarding the **replacement** of Sunday for the Sabbath Ellen White wrote:

*"But this day [**Sunday**] so universally exalted is a spurious sabbath, a **common** working-day. It is accepted **in the place of** the day that the Lord has blessed and sanctified; but the sure result of this course may be seen in the punishment that fell upon Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron. As priests of God, these men had been commanded to offer always the fire of God's own kindling, which was kept burning before God day and night. This was ever to be **strictly observed**. But **Nadab and Abihu** drank **wine** too freely; and because of this their minds were*

not keen, but **confused**, and they were unable to **distinguish** between the sacred and the common.”

#7: The harlot has a long history of **shedding the blood** of God’s faithful people:

Revelation 17:6

*“I saw the woman, **drunk with the blood** of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.”*

Destruction will come upon those who do not have the seal of God:

#8: Revelation 6:14-17

Destruction will come to Babylon because of her abominations:

“Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. ¹⁵ And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶ and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

God will seal His faithful remnant before destruction comes from the **four winds**:

Revelation 7:1-3

A sealing will take place before destruction comes upon the four corners of the earth:

*“After these things I saw four angels standing at the **four corners** of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. ² Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having **the seal of the living God** and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, ³ saying, “Do not harm the*

earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

Seal of God and Mark of the Beast

The **mark of the beast** is the **opposite** of the seal of God:

Revelation 13:16

*"He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a **mark** on their right hand or on their **foreheads**."*

The faithful have the **seal of God** on their foreheads:

Revelation 14:1

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

The **faithful worship the Creator** while the wicked worship the beast:

Revelation 14:7

"... saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

Those who have the mark of the beast will **drink the wine of God's wrath**:

Revelation 14:9

*"Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and **receives his mark** on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he himself shall also **drink of the wine of the wrath of God**, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation."*

The final conflict has to do with the **first four commandments**:

- ✓ The beast claims to be God.

- ✓ The earth beast makes an image and commands all to worship it.
- ✓ The beast claims to speak in God's name
- ✓ The beast tramples on the sign of the Creator

#9: The kings will **hate** the harlot church, make her naked, and leave her desolate. The abomination of desolation. The kings with which she fornicated will leave her **desolate** and will **burn her with fire** just like happened to Jerusalem in **586 BC** and **70 AD**:

Revelation 17:16

*"And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her **desolate** and naked, eat her flesh and **burn her** with fire."*

Whole earth lightened with this message. This is the **sighing and crying** because of the abominations but now **Jerusalem has become global**

The Call out of Babylon before Destruction

Revelation 18:1

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

At the end, Babylon will be **full of demons**:

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

Revelation 18:3

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

God calls His faithful people out of Babylon just as he called the faithful out of Jerusalem before its destruction.

Revelation 18:4

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

A matter of **authority**, not a matter of **days**.



“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #16 – SUNDAY LAWS: THE 1888 ATTEMPT

Some people think it would be impossible for Sunday legislation to become law in the United States of America. After all, this is the land of the free and the home of the brave. We have a First Amendment in the Constitution that forbids religious legislation! However, the government can suspend constitutional guarantees in times of national emergencies. From 1861 to 1865, there was a national emergency. The Civil War was raging and a movement arose that strongly advocated for a national Sunday law.

Those who forget to learn from the mistakes of history are bound to repeat them. This is why it is indeed dangerous to erase the reminders of the past.

Primary sources for our study:

- *Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5 p. 711-718* (on the National Reform Movement)
- *Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 582-592: ‘The Impending Conflict’*
- **Civil Government and Religion** by A. T. Jones
- **Views of National Reform** (Essays written by A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner)

- **The National Sunday Law** (the minutes of the hearing where A. T. Jones testified before the United States Senate **Education Committee**. This powerful book provides the arguments A. T. Jones used before the committee. **Senator Blair**, one of the strong proponents of the national Sunday law **repeatedly interrupted** Elder Jones. A careful study of this book is a must because **the arguments** that Jones used we will have to use again).

Origin of the National Reform Movement

The National Reform Association came into existence toward the end of the **Civil War** in **1864**. The objective of the organization was to bring **into the Constitution** the idea that the United States was a **Christian Nation**. A kindred idea was to **amend the Constitution** of the United States to enforce a **national Sunday law**. The **First National Convention** of the National Reform Association was in **Allegheny, Pennsylvania** on **January 27, 28, 1864**.

Members of the Association

The Association had **120 vice-presidents**, an interesting fact in the light of the **120 satraps** in the kingdom of **Medo-Persia** who stealthily deceived King Darius to have Daniel thrown into the lion's den (Daniel 6:1).

The **official publication** of the Association was '**The Christian Statesman**'. The **December 24, 1885** issue, stated that among the **120 vice-presidents** were **fifteen** college professors, **sixteen** college presidents, **three** ex-governors, **seven** justices of Supreme Courts, **five** judges of superior courts, **two** judges of the United States district court, **one** judge of the United States circuit court 'with such a number of your honors, reverends and doctors of divinity that they we could not attempt to count them.' By **1888**, the objectives of the Association had developed a strong following and seemed **reachable**.

Henry W. Blair

On May 25, 1888, Senator Henry W. Blair of New Hampshire introduced bill number 2983 into Congress. In it was legislation for a national Sunday law (the bill in its entirety is in Civil Government and Religion, pp. 65-67).

On December 13, 1888, A. T. Jones appeared before the Education and Labor Committee of the 50th United States Congress. You can read his stenographic testimony in the book, National Sunday Law.

Catholics behind Amendment

In 1889, the National Catholic Congress, meeting in Baltimore, resolved to unite with Protestants to secure proper Sunday observance. It is noteworthy that Protestants came up with the idea and the Catholics provided encouragement.

In an Encyclical Letter in 1885, Pope Leo XIII wrote:

"All Catholics should do all in their power to cause the constitutions of States, and legislation to be modeled on the principles of the true church, and all Catholic writers and journalists should never lose sight, for an instant, from the view of the above prescription."

Influential Cardinal James Gibbons agreed with the pope and added his name to the list of those who desired a national Sunday law:

"I am most happy to add my name to those of the millions of others who are laudably contending against the violation of the Christian Sabbath by unnecessary labor, and who are endeavoring to promote its decent and proper observance by judicious legislation." Civil Government and Religion, p. 75

Union of Church and State

Jonathan Edwards, D. D., at the New York City Convention held February 26, 27, 1873 said:

*“We want **State and religion**, and **we are going to have it**. . . The Christian oath and Christian morality shall have in this land ‘an **undeniable legal basis**.’ We use this word religion in its proper sense, as meaning a man’s personal relation of faith and obedience to God.”*

Reverend **M. A. Gault** wrote in the **Christian Statesman**:

*“Our **remedy** for all these **malefic influences** [**liquor, immorality, consumerism, Civil War**] is to have the **Government** simply **set up the moral law**, and recognize God’s authority behind it, and **lay its hand on any religion** that does not conform to it.” **Christian Statesman**, January 13, 1887*

In a speech at the **Elgin** convention, **Dr. Mandeville** expressed his view of the relationship between **church and state**:

*“When the **church** of God awakes and does its duty on one side, and the **State** on the other, we shall have no further trouble in this matter.” **Civil Government and Religion**, p. 10*

Sam Small, secretary of the **National Prohibition Convention** held in **Indianapolis in 1888** preached a sermon in **Kansas City** in **January of 1888**:

*“I want see the day come when **the church** shall be the **arbiter of all legislation**, State, national, and municipal; when the great churches of the country can **come together harmoniously**, and issue their edict, and the **legislative powers will respect it, and enact it into laws**.” **Civil Government and Religion**, p. 63*

Regarding the **duties of the State**, Reverend **J. M. Foster** suggested:

*“That a **constitutional provision** be made for recognizing **God as King of nations**, that a constitutional recognition be made that the **State is the divinely appointed keeper of the moral law**, that a constitutional provision be made detailing the **moral and religious qualifications of those who would occupy an office of trust**, that the nation needed to make a **covenant with God**, that the nation must **guard and protect the church** by **suppressing** all public violation of the moral law; by maintaining a system of **public schools**, **indoctrinating their youth** in morality and virtue; by **exempting church property** from*

taxation; and by providing her funds out of the public treasury for carrying on her aggressive work at home and in the foreign field.” Christian Statesman, February 21, 1884

The Cleveland National Convention adopted the following resolution:

“Resolved, That we re-affirm that this Religious Amendment, instead of infringing on any individual’s right of conscience, or tending in the least degree to a union of Church and State, will afford the fullest security against a corrupting church establishment, and form the strongest safeguard of both the civil and religious liberties of all citizens.” Views of National Reform, p. 33

Dr. McAllister spoke the following words at Lakeside, Ohio in July of 1887:

“Let a man be what he may—Jew, Seventh-day observer of some other denomination, or those who do not believe in the Christian Sabbath—let the law apply to everyone, that there shall be no public desecration of the first day of the week, the Christian Sabbath, the day of rest for the nation. They may hold any other day of the week as sacred, and observe it; but that day which is the one day in seven for the nation at large, let that not be publicly desecrated by any one, by officer in the Government, or by private citizen, high or low, rich or poor.” Civil Government and Religion, p. 100.

At the Elgin Sunday Law Convention, Dr. Mandeville of Chicago used Nehemiah’s Sabbath legislation and applied it to Sunday:

“The merchants of Tyre insisted upon selling goods near the temple on the Sabbath, and Nehemiah compelled the officers of the law to do their duty, and stop it. So we can compel the officers of the law to do their duty.” Civil Government and Religion, p. 103

A Sunday law mass meeting took place in Hamilton Hall, Oakland, California in January of 1887. In a speech, the Reverend Doctor Briggs of Napa, California rebuked the political leaders:

“You relegate moral instruction to the church, and then let all go as they please on Sunday, so that we cannot get at them.” Civil Government and Religion, p. 96

The leaders of this movement wanted the state to **corral** all the people on Sunday so that the **preachers could get at them**. Since when should the **state force people** to go to church so that preachers can get at them? People should go to church **willingly**, not by **compulsion**. What a contrast with Seventh-day Adventists. On any given Sabbath, the members are in church and they never go shopping. Why? Because it is their conviction. **No legislation necessary!**

Reasons for a National Sunday Law

After saying that the **Sunday papers** were full of **crime, scandal, gossip, news and politics**, **Dr. Briggs** said:

*“What a mélange! What a dish to set down before a man before breakfast and after breakfast, to prepare him for **hearing the word of God!** It makes it **twice as hard to reach** those who go to the sanctuary, and keeps many **away from** the house of worship altogether. They read the paper; the time comes to go to church; but it is said, ‘Here is something interesting; I will read it, and **not go to church today.**” *Civil Government and Religion*, p. 97*

There was a strong movement for the abolishment of the **Sunday paper**:

*“The laboring class are apt to rise late on Sunday morning, read the Sunday papers, and allow the hour of **worship to go by unheeded.**” *Civil Government and Religion*, p. 96*

At the **Elgin Convention**, **Dr. Everts** suggested shutting down the **Sunday train**:

*“The **Sunday train** is another **great evil**. They cannot afford to run a train unless they get a great many passengers, and so **break up** a great many congregations. The Sunday railroad trains are hurrying their passengers fast on to perdition. What an outrage that the railroad, that great civilizer, should destroy the **Christian Sabbath!**” *Civil Government and Religion*, p. 97*

The **Reverend M. A. Gault** of the National Reform Association published an article in The Christian Statesman, **September 25, 1884** about the need to **shut down the railroad** on Sunday:

*"This **railroad [the Chicago and Rock Island]** has been running excursion trains from Des Moines to Colfax Springs **on the Sabbath [Sunday]** for some time, and the **ministers complain** that their members go on these excursions."*

Dr. Joseph Cook, in the **Boston Monday Lectures** in **1887** clearly stated that he did not want mere **civil Sabbath legislation** but rather **religious legislation**:

*"The experience of centuries shows, however, that you will in vain endeavor to preserve Sunday as **a day of rest**, unless you preserve it as **a day of worship**. Unless Sabbath observance be founded upon **religious reasons**, you will not long maintain it at a high standard on the basis of **economic** and **physiological** and **political** considerations only." Civil Government and Religion, p. 73*

The **Elgin Convention** voted the following **resolution**:

*"Resolved, that we recognize the Sabbath as an institution of God, revealed in **nature** and the **Bible**, and of **perpetual obligation on all men**; and also as a **civil** and **American** institution, bound up in **vital and historical connection** with the **origin and foundation** of our Government, the growth of our polity, and necessary to be maintained in order for the **preservation and integrity of our national system**, and therefore as having a sacred claim on all **patriotic American citizens**." Civil Government and Religion, p. 94*

The same **Elgin Convention** resolved to curtail **purchasing, business and travel** on Sunday:

*"That we look with shame and sorrow on the non-observance of the **Sabbath [Sunday]** by many Christian people, in that the custom prevails with them of purchasing Sabbath newspapers, engaging in and patronizing Sabbath business and travel, and in many instances giving themselves to pleasure and self-indulgence, setting aside by neglect and indifference the great duties and privileges which **God's day brings them**." Civil Government and Religion, p. 95*

The Idea of a Christian Nation

The movement also expressed a desire to declare the United States a Christian nation:

*“The Women’s Christian Temperance Union, local, State, national, and worldwide, has **one** vital, organic thought, **one** all-absorbing purpose, **one** undying enthusiasm, and that is that **Christ shall be this world’s king**—yea, verily, **THIS WORLD’S KING** in its realm of cause and effect—King of its courts, its camp, its commerce—King of its colleges and cloisters—King of its customs and constitutions. . . The kingdom of Christ must enter the realm of law through the **gate-way of politics**.” W. T. C. U., National Convention, 1887 in A. T. Jones, Civil Government and Religion, p. 60*

*“Give all men to understand that this is a **Christian nation**; and that, believing that **without Christianity we perish**, we must maintain by all right means our Christian character. **Inscribe this character on our Constitution**. . . **Enforce** upon all that come among us the **laws of Christian morality**.” Christian Statesman, October 2, 1884*

*“What the Statesman designates as ‘**political atheism**,’ is nothing more nor less than the present form of Government, and the present Constitution of the United States. To oppose National Reform is to them **sheer atheism**; and to oppose the kind of Government which they indorse is **political atheism**. That no religious test shall be required of a civil ruler, is declared by Reverend M. A. Gault to be ‘**the infidel theory of Government**.’” Christian Statesman, December 24, 1885.*

Voter Guides

The third resolution of the **Elgin Convention** encouraged voters to vote only for **certain candidates**:

*“Resolved, that we give **our votes and support** to those candidates or political officers who will pledge themselves **to vote for the enactment and enforcing of statutes in favor of the civil Sabbath**.” Civil Government and Religion, p. 95*

The **Honorable John Cole, Tingley, Iowa** wrote in the **Christian Statesman, September 16, 1886:**

*“If Congress does not find in our Constitution a basis for **Sabbath legislation**, then **let us elect a Congress** who will find such a basis.”*

Letters to Pressure Legislators

The movement also encouraged citizens to flood the legislature with petitions for a national Sunday law:

*“Let us begin without delay the **circulation of petitions** (to be furnished in proper form by the Association), and let an opportunity be given to all parts of the country to make up **a roll of petitions** so great that it will require a **procession of wheelbarrows** to trundle the mighty mass into the presence of the representatives of the nation in the House of Congress. . . Let **a mass convention of the friends** of the cause be held in Washington, when the Blair resolution shall be under discussion, to accompany with its influence the presentation of the petitions, and to take such other action as may be deemed best to arouse the nation to a genuine enthusiasm in behalf of **our national Christianity**.” Words of John Alexander, father of the National Reform Movement. Christian Statesman, September 6, 1888*

The Reverend **J. C. K. Milligan** wrote in Christian Statesman, July 26, 1888:

*“By **letters** to senators and representatives in Congress, by **petitions** numerously signed and forwarded to them, by local, State, and national conventions held, and public meetings in every **school district**, such an influence can quickly be brought to bear as will **compel our legislators** to adopt the measure, and **enforce it** by the needed legislation. The **Christian pulpits**, if they would; could secure its adoption before the dog-days end.”*

In the same issue of the **Christian Statesman**, the Reverend **J. C. K. Milligan** wrote:

*“The changes will come gradually and probably only after the whole framework of **Bible legislation** has been thoroughly canvassed by **Congress** and **State**”*

Legislatures, by the Supreme Court of the United States and of the several States, and by lawyers and citizens; an outpouring of the Spirit might soon secure it.”

The Lansing Republican rebuked this movement to pressure legislators:

“Thousands of men, if called upon to vote for such an Amendment would hesitate to vote against God, although they might not believe that the Amendment is necessary, or that it is right; . . . such an Amendment would be likely to receive an affirmative vote which would by no means indicate the true sentiment of the people. . . Men who make politics a trade would hesitate to record their names against the proposed Constitutional Amendment, advocated by the great religious denominations of the land, and endorsed by such men as Bishop Simpson, Bishop McIlvaine, Bishop Eastburn, President Finney, Professor Lewis, Professor Seelye, Bishop Huntington, Bishop Kerfoot, Dr. Patterson, Dr. Cuyler, and many other divines who are the representative men of their respective denominations.” Views of National Reform, p. 50

Protestants uniting

“We are different divisions of Immanuel’s army. The Methodists are the charging cavalry, the Presbyterians the fighting infantry, the Covenanters the batteries upon the heights. We have one Commander-in-chief, and under Him we go forward, one united phalanx against the common enemy. And when the victory is gained, the army will be one, and the Leader is one.” Christian Statesman, February 7, 1884

Pastors as the Moral Leaders of the Nation

The Reverend Mr. Milligan described the pastors as the moral conscience of society through the instrumentality of the state:

“The churches and the pulpits have much to do with shaping and forming opinions on all moral questions, and with interpretations of Scripture on moral and civil as well as on theological and ecclesiastical points; and it is probable that in the most universal gathering of our citizens about these, the chief discussions

and the final decision of most points will be **developed there [the churches and the pulpits will determine the laws to be passed]**. ‘Many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion. There certainly is no class of citizens more **intelligent, patriotic, and trustworthy** than the **leaders and teachers** in our churches.” **Reverend Mr. Milligan** in **Views of National Reform**, pp. 9, 10

Redefinition of the Establishment Clause

In the **1874 Pittsburg Convention**, **Professor Blanchard** described his view of the **union of church and state**:

“But union of Church and State is the **selection by the nation of one church**, the endowment of such a church, the appointment of its officers and oversight of its doctrines. For such a union none of us plead. To such a union we are all of us opposed.” **Views of National Reform**, p. 38

W. J. Coleman gave his assessment of the meaning of the **Establishment Clause**:

“The first sentence of Article 1 of Amendments reads, ‘Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.’ This would be made consistent with the proposed Amendment by substituting the words ‘**a church**’ for ‘**religion**,’ making it read, ‘Congress shall make no law respecting an **establishment of a church**.’ This is what the Reform Association believes should be **the rule in a rightly constituted State**. There should be **religion but no church**.” **Christian Statesman**, November 1, 1886

Embracing Roman Catholic Principles

“We cordially, gladly, recognize the fact that in South American Republics, and in France and other European countries, the Roman Catholics are the recognized advocates of **National Christianity**, and stand opposed to all the proposals of **secularism**.” **Christian Statesman**, December 11, 1884

The National Reformers wanted the **same system as Catholicism had in Europe and South America**—a national religion enforced by law. They thus wanted to make an **image to the beast** in the United States!

*“Whenever they [**the Roman Catholics**] are willing to co-operate in resisting the progress of **political atheism** [**secular humanism**], we will gladly **join hands** [**significant expression**] with them.” Christian Statesman, December 11, 1884*

The Reverend **Sylvester F. Scovel**, a **leading national reformer** supported **uniting with Roman Catholics** in a common cause. Surprisingly, the suggestion was that Protestants **recruit the help** of Roman Catholics!

*“This **common interest** [**of all religious people in the Sabbath’--Sunday**] ought both to strengthen our determination to work, and our readiness to co-operate in every way with our **Roman Catholic** fellow-citizens. We may be subjected to **some rebuffs** in our fist proffers, and the time is not yet come when the Roman Church will consent to **strike hands with other churches**—as such; but the time has come **to make repeated advances**, and gladly to accept **cooperation in any form** in which they may be willing to exhibit it. It is one of the necessities of the situation.” Christian Statesman, August 31, 1881*

Religious Instruction in Public Schools

Senator Blair advocated for **religious textbooks** in public schools:

*“I believe that a **text-book of instruction** in the principles of virtue, morality, and of the **Christian religion**, can be prepared for use in the **public schools**, by the **joint effort** of those who represent every branch of the Christian church, both **Protestant and Catholic**, and also those who are not actively associated with either.” Civil Government and Religion, p. 47*

Linked with Good Causes

Sam Jones, a **Third-party Prohibitionist** in **July of 1888** preached in **Windsor, Canada** to an audience composed **mostly of Americans**:

*"Now I tell you, I think we are running the last political combat on the lines we have been running them on. It is between the **Republicans and the Democrats**, this contest, and it is the last the Republicans will make in America. The Democrats are going in overwhelmingly. Four years from now the Prohibition element will break the solid South. The issue then will be, God or no God, drunkenness or sobriety, **Sabbath or no Sabbath**, heaven or hell. That will be the issue. Then we will wipe up the ground with the Democratic Party, and **let God rule America** from that time on." Civil Government and Religion, p. 63*

Women's Christian Temperance Union monthly reading for **September 1886**:

*"A true **theocracy** is yet to come and the enthronement of Christ in law and law-makers; hence I pray devoutly, as a **Christian patriot**, for the ballot in the hands of women, and rejoice that the National Women's Christian Temperance Union has so long championed this cause." Civil Government and Religion, p. 56*

The Desire for a Theocracy like in the Colonial Period

Professor **Blanchard** in the **Elgin convention** shared his view of the **role of the ministers** in this new **theocracy**:

*"In this work we are undertaking for **the Sabbath**, we are the **representatives of God**." Civil Government and Religion, p. 103*

*"The government of Israel was a theocracy; the will of God was made known to the ruler by the prophets; the ruler compelled the officers of the law to prevent the ungodly from selling goods on the Sabbath. This government is to be made a **theocracy**; the **preachers** are the successors of the prophets; and they are to **compel the officers of the law** to prevent all selling of goods and all manner of work on Sunday." (Look for the source)*

Dr. Crafts, General Secretary for the **National Sunday-law Union** stated:

*"The preachers are the **successors of the prophets**." Christian Statesman, July 5, 1888*

In the Cincinnati National Reform convention, Professor J. R. W. Sloane, D. D., stated in 1872:

*“Every government by equitable laws is a government of God. A republic thus governed is of Him through the people, and is as truly and really a **theocracy** as the commonwealth of Israel.” Civil Government and Religion, p. 102*

The President’s Annual Address in the Nashville Convention in 1887:

*“The women’s Christian Temperance Union, local, State, national and worldwide, has one vital, organic thought, one all absorbing purpose, one undying enthusiasm, and that is that Christ shall be **this world’s king**—yea, verily, **THIS WORLD’S KING** in its realm of cause and effect—King of its courts, its camps, its commerce—King of its colleges and cloisters—king of its customs and its constitutions. **The kingdom of Christ must enter the realm of law through the gate-way of politics** . . . We pray Heaven to give [the old parties] no rest. . . until they shall. . . swear an oath of allegiance to **Christ in politics**, and march in one great army **up to the polls to worship God**.”*

Disenfranchising the Opposition

Reverend E. B. Graham at the National Reform Convention held in York, Nebraska stated:

*“We might add, in all justice, if the opponents of the Bible do not like our Government and its Christian features, let them go to some wild, desolate land; and in the name of the devil, and for the sake of the devil, subdue it, and set up a Government of their own on infidel and **atheistic ideas**, and then, if they can stand it, stay there till they die.” Christian Statesman, May 21, 1885*

Reverend John Calvin Knox Milligan wrote in the Christian Statesman:

*“When the Amendment is adopted, how will it act upon the civil and political rights of infidels, Jews, etc.? This depends largely upon themselves. The worst result will be to **disfranchise them**.” Christian Statesman, February 21, 1884*

Reverend **M. A. Gault**, a **district secretary** of the Association stated:

*“Our remedy for all these malefic influences is to have the **Government simply set up the moral law and recognize God’s authority behind it, and lay its hand** on any religion that does not conform to it.” Civil Government and Religion, p. 52*

*“Give all men to understand that this is a **Christian nation**, and that, believing that **without Christianity we perish [the very words of Caiaphas]**, we must maintain **by all means** our Christian character. Inscribe this character on our **Constitution. Enforce** upon all who come among us the laws of Christian morality.” Christian Statesman, October 2, 1884*

Mr. **W. J. Coleman** on **November 1, 1883** answered the question of a person who signed “**Truth Seeker**”:

*“What effect would the adoption of the Christian Amendment, together with proposed changes in the Constitution, have upon those who deny that God is sovereign, Christ the Ruler, and the Bible the law? This brings up the conscience question at once. . . The classes who would object are, as ‘Truth Seeker’ has said, Jews, infidels, atheists, and others. These classes are perfectly satisfied with the Constitution as it is. How would they stand towards it if it recognized the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ? To be perfectly plain, I believe that the existence of a Christian Constitution would **disfranchise every logically consistent infidel.**” Christian Statesman, November 1, 1883*

In a letter dated **December 14, 1887** Reverend **W. T. McConnell** of **Youngstown, Ohio** published in **The Christian Nation** an open letter to the editor of the **American Sentinel**:

“The fool-hardy fellow, who persists in standing on a railroad track, may well anticipate trouble when he hears the rumble of the coming train. If he shall read the signs of the times in the screaming whistle and flaming headlight, he may change his position and avoid the danger; but if he won’t be influenced by these, his most gloomy forebodings of trouble will be realized when the express strikes him. So you, neighbor, if, through prejudice or the enmity of unregenerate hearts,

you have determined to **oppose the progress of this nation** in fulfilling its vocation as an instrument in the divine work of regenerating human society, **may rightly expect trouble**. It will be sure to come to you.” *Civil Government and Religion*, pp. 108, 109

Persecution

The National Reform **W. T. C. U.** Convention at **Lakeside, Ohio in 1887**, someone made the statement:

“There is a law in the State of Arkansas enforcing Sunday observance upon the people, and the result has been that **many good persons** have not only been **imprisoned**, but have lost their **property**, and even **their lives**.”

To which **Dr. McAllister stated**:

“It is **better that a few should suffer**, [interesting in the context of the argument of Caiaphas in John 11:47-52] than that the **whole nation should lose its Sabbath**.” *Civil Government and Religion*, p. 108 (notice the clear allusion to John 11:50-53)

In **556 AD**, **Pope Pelagius** called upon **Narses** to compel certain parties to **obey the pope’s commands**. **Narses objected** to which the **pope responded**:

“Be not alarmed at the idle talk of some, crying out against persecution, and reproaching the church, as if she delighted in cruelty, when she punishes evil with wholesome severities or procures the salvation of souls. **He alone persecutes who forces to do evil**. But to restrain men from doing evil, or to punish those who have done it, is not persecution, or cruelty, but love of mankind.” *Civil Government and Religion*, p. 107

John Cotton, during the **Colonial period** had also said:

“Persecution is not wrong in itself; it is wicked for **falsehood to persecute truth**, but it is the **sacred duty** of truth to persecute falsehood.” *The Saving of America*, p. 30

Thus in the Virginia Sunday Law of 1610 required attendance at the divine service twice a day with economic fines for the first two offenses and ‘to suffer death’ for the third.” The Saving of America, p. 31

A minister in Selma, California stated in September of 1888:

“We have laws to punish the man who steals our property; but we have no law to prevent people from working on Sunday. It is right that the thief be punished; but I have more sympathy for that man than I have for him that works on that day.”
Civil Government and Religion, p. 105

Seventh-day Adventists Persecuted

In Arkansas and Tennessee Seventh-day Adventists were persecuted for not observing Sunday as a day of rest. Their property was confiscated and many paid fines. Others were imprisoned and some even lost their lives.

In the book, Civil Government and Religion, A. T. Jones documents 21 cases with proper names of the accused, places, names of the judges, charges, penalties, etc.

In The Century for April 1888, Mr. Kennan described the statutes of Russia on the subject of crimes against the faith. He quoted statute after statute:

“. . . whoever shall censure the Christian faith or the Orthodox Church, or the Scriptures, or the holy sacraments, or the saints, or their images, or the Virgin Mary, or the angels, or Christ, or God, shall be deprived of all civil rights, and exiled for life to the most remote parts of Siberia. This is the system in Russia, and it is in the direct line of the wishes of the National Reform Association, with this difference, however, that Russia is content to send dissenters to Siberia, while the National Reformers want to send them to the Devil, straight.”

The Soviet Union organized the citizens so that they would snitch on potential enemies of the state. Is it any different for the state to encourage neighbors to snitch on those who do not wear a mask or practice social distancing in a pandemic? Local and state governments even have phone numbers and websites where neighbors can snitch on neighbors, citizens on citizens.

Reverend **W. M. Grier** of **Due West, South Carolina** at the **Philadelphia convention in 1888** stated:

*“Every sin, secret or public, against God, is a sin against our country, and is **high treason against the State.**” Christian Statesman, August 9, 1888*



“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #17 – A BLUEPRINT OF END TIME EVENTS

Review

In one of our earlier studies on Matthew 24, we discussed how the eagle/sun standards of the Roman legions were the sign for Christians to flee the city and we noted that all who fled were Sabbath keepers.

Next, we studied the link between the Roman eagle/sun standards and the Great Seal of the United States that also contains an eagle and a sunburst. We noted that Congress would enact a national Sunday law and the faithful Sabbath-keepers would have to flee from the cities.

In our last lesson, we noticed that although the prospect of a national Sunday law appeared impossible, events in the second half of the 19th century revealed that in a national emergency such a law is not only possible, but also plausible.

In this study, we will examine the blueprint of how the movement for a national Sunday law will succeed in the future. Ellen White wrote much about the end time and she predicted precisely how the Sunday law would meet with success.

Finally, in our next lesson we will see how the political and religious environment in the 1980's and 1990's mirrored many things that occurred in

the second half of the nineteenth century. This makes plausible a repetition in the future.

What Could Have Been in 1888

We might legitimately ask the question, why did the events between **1864 and 1888** not lead to a national Sunday law? There are two reasons. One reason has to do with the **church** and the other has to do with the **world**.

In order to understand why a Sunday law did not materialize, we must go back to meetings that took place in Minneapolis, Minnesota **October 17-November 4, 1888**—the famous Minneapolis General Conference session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The servant of the Lord tells us that the **latter rain began** to fall and the **loud cry** of the third angel began at this conference. **Satan knew** that this was taking place and so he tried to **preempt it** by influencing the churches to impose a national Sunday law.

It was God's plan to bring about the **greatest revival** in the history of the church in the United States. However, the church rejected the message and therefore, the church was not ready so God had to world events on hold. This is how Ellen White explained what happened in 1888:

*"The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through **Elders Waggoner and Jones**. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Savior, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is **made manifest in obedience** to all the commandments of God. . . This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. **It is the third angel's message**, which is to be proclaimed with a **loud voice**, and attended with the **outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure**." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, pp. 91, 92*

*"The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has **already begun** in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning*

*Redeemer [1888]. **This is the beginning** of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill **the whole earth**.” Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 363*

The latter rain is the **power** and the loud cry is the **message**. In 1888, the **loud cry** had already begun and would **swell** to a loud cry. **Satan knew** this and therefore he worked in the church and in the religious and political world to prevent it.

Ellen White’s prophetic scenario

Following is Ellen White’s prophetic scenario of end time events that will lead to the national Sunday law:

- ✓ The United States will embrace Roman Catholic principles, making an image of the papacy by **uniting church and state** thus fulfilling the prophecy of **Revelation 13:11-18**.
- ✓ The Protestant churches of the United States will **unite on common points of doctrine** and waive their theological differences.
- ✓ The **populace**, instigated by **their ministers** will **blame** social and natural disasters such as wars, pestilence, famine and earthquakes on those who keep the Sabbath (Matthew 24:6-9; as **Ahab blamed** Elijah and **Nero** the Christians). In the 1880’s the **social upheaval** was the Civil War.
- ✓ The **legislators** of this country, in order to secure the **favor of the people**, will support the Sunday law. Revelation 13 describes this as the **beast from the earth** that speaks. Politicians fearing that they will lose the support of the people in elections will support Sunday legislation.
- ✓ The political leaders of the Sunday law movement in 1888 **had no idea** who was driving the agenda. Neither did they understand the **consequences** of what they desired. The same will be true in the final fulfillment.

This reminds us of the decree of **King Ahasuerus** in the story of **Esther**. Haman, the king's **advisor**, told the king that the Jews were a menace to his kingdom. The **king bought into** Haman's argument and gave a **decree to exterminate** all the Jews that lived in the kingdom. However, the king had a **rude awakening** when he realized that his advisor had a hidden agenda.

Something similar will happen with the **political rulers** of the world at the end. The **religious leaders will deceive them** into thinking that a Sunday law will save the nation. Rude will be the awakening when the kings realize that their religious advisors deceived them.

- ✓ The religious **leaders will press** for an **amendment** to the Constitution of the United States. What is clearly **unconstitutional** (the establishment of Sunday as the national day of rest) the Supreme Court will declare constitutional.
- ✓ Roman Catholics will unite with Protestants to **lobby** for the national Sunday law. In fact, Catholics will not initially lobby congress for a national Sunday law. Rather, Protestants **will encourage Catholics** to help them enact a Sunday law. The beast from the earth will make an image of the first beast in its honor.
- ✓ Sunday laws will eventually become **anti-Sabbath laws**. (The **mark of the beast** will be imposed—Revelation 13:16, 17)

Sunday laws will require the observance of Sunday while **anti-Sabbath laws** will **forbid Sabbath observance**. Thus, the United States will trample upon both the **Establishment Clause** and the **Free Exercise clause** of the Constitution (**Daniel 3 and 6** are vivid illustrations of what happens when the civil powers establish religion and forbid its free exercise).

- ✓ The **clergy** will use **underhanded** and **devious** methods to secure Sunday law legislation.

- ✓ The **advocates of Sunday** laws will link many **good social causes** with the Sunday law movement. In the 1880's it was **prohibition**. The **W. C. T. U.** and the **Third Party Prohibitionists** who fought for a Sunday law also fought for laws against alcohol. In the future perhaps the issues will be **family, climate** change, **gender, marriage** between a man and a woman and the **sanctity of life**.
- ✓ The religious leaders in the United States will clamor for a **theocratic style of government**. The **ministers** will claim the right to be the **moral leaders** of the nation and will think they have the right to **dictate what the government** should do in religious affairs.

As in Israel in **Nehemiah's day**, the clergy will clamor that there must be a national Sabbath strictly enforced by law.

- ✓ Eventually the **world will follow** in the footsteps of the United States and enforce a **universal Sunday law**. Revelation 13:3 tells us that the **whole world** wondered after the beast. Such a possibility seems improbable and impossible. Will **Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists** go along? The answer is yes. **Miracles** and **global survival** due to natural disasters, wars, terrorism, economic upheaval, climate change, will make it mandatory for all nations to go along.
- ✓ God's people who refuse to keep the Sunday law and insist on keeping the Sabbath will **lose their civil rights, suffer persecution** and eventually be **sentenced to death** (Revelation 13:15). They will not be able to buy or sell.

Now let us take each of these points individually to see how Ellen White perceived the end time scenario.

Union of Church and State

*"Such action [**a national Sunday law**] would be directly contrary to the **principles of this government**, to the genius of its free institutions, to the direct and solemn avowals of the **Declaration of Independence**, and to the*

Constitution. The founders of the nation wisely sought to guard against the employment of **secular power on the part of the church**, with its inevitable result—intolerance and persecution. The **Constitution** provides that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," and that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office of public trust under the United States." **Only in flagrant violation** of these safeguards to the nation's liberty, can any **religious observance** be enforced by **civil authority**. But the inconsistency of such action is no greater than is represented in the symbol. It is the beast with lamblike horns--in profession pure, gentle, and harmless--that speaks as a dragon. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 442

"Let the principle once be established in the United States that the **church may employ or control the power of the state**; that religious observances may be enforced by **secular laws**; in short, that the **authority of church and state** is to dominate the conscience, and the **triumph of Rome** in this country is assured." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 581

"As the Sabbath has become the special point of controversy throughout Christendom, and **religious and secular authorities** have combined to enforce the observance of the Sunday, the persistent refusal of a small minority to yield to the **popular demand** will make them objects of **universal execration**." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 615

"When Protestant churches shall **unite with the secular power** to sustain a false religion, for opposing which their ancestors endured the fiercest persecution, then will the papal sabbath be enforced by the **combined** authority of **church and state**. There will be a **national apostasy**, which will end only in **national ruin**." Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 235

"The National Reform movement, exercising the power of **religious legislation**, will, when fully developed, manifest the **same intolerance and oppression** that have prevailed in past ages. Human councils then assumed the prerogatives of Deity, crushing under their despotic power liberty of conscience; and imprisonment, exile, and death followed for those who opposed their dictates. If

popery or its principles shall again be legislated into power, the fires of persecution will be rekindled against those who will not sacrifice conscience and the truth in deference to popular errors. This evil is on the point of realization." Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 712

Blinded to the Results

"There are many, even of those engaged in this movement for Sunday enforcement, who are blinded to the results which will follow this action. They do not see that they are striking directly against religious liberty." Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 711

"There is a satanic force propelling the Sunday movement, but it is concealed. Even the men who are engaged in the work, are themselves blinded to the results which will follow their movement." The Review and Herald, January 1, 1889

"The Sunday movement is now making its way in darkness. The leaders are concealing the true issue, and many who unite in the movement do not themselves see whither the undercurrent is tending. Its professions are mild and apparently Christian, but when it shall speak it will reveal the spirit of the dragon." Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, p. 452

Protestants will Stretch her Hand to the Papacy

"Protestants will throw their whole influence and strength on the side of the papacy. By a national act enforcing the false sabbath they will give life and vigor to the corrupt faith of Rome, reviving [Revelation 13:3] her tyranny and oppression of conscience." Ellen G. White, Maranatha, p. 179

"Protestants have tampered with and patronized popery; they have made compromises and concessions which papists themselves are surprised to see and fail to understand. Men are closing their eyes to the real character of Romanism and the dangers to be apprehended from her supremacy. The people need to be aroused to resist the advances of this most dangerous foe to civil and religious liberty." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 566

Protestants will take the initiative and the Catholics will tell them to go ahead with it:

"I saw that the two-horned beast [the earth beast of Revelation 13:11-18] had a dragon's mouth, and that his power was in his head, and that the decree would go out of his mouth [a nation 'speaks' through its legislative and judicial authorities]. Then I saw the Mother of Harlots; that the mother was not the daughters, but separate and distinct from them. She has had her day, and it is past [during the 1260 years], and her daughters, the Protestant sects, were the next to come on the stage [the beast of Revelation 13:11-18] and act out the same mind that the mother had when she persecuted the saints [the second beast does everything to honor the first]. I saw that as the mother has been declining in power, the daughters had been growing, and soon they will exercise the power once exercised by the mother.

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

Then the Catholics bid the Protestants to go forward, and issue a decree that all who will not observe the first day of the week, instead of the seventh day, shall be slain. And the Catholics, whose numbers are large, will stand by the Protestants. The Catholics will give their power to the image of the beast and the Protestants will work as their mother worked before them to destroy the saints. But before their decree bring or bear fruit, the saints will be delivered by the Voice of God." Spaulding/Magan, pp. 1, 2.

"Any movement in favor of religious legislation is really an act of concession to the papacy, which for so many ages has steadily warred against liberty of conscience. Sunday observance owes its existence as a so-called Christian institution to "the mystery of iniquity;" and its enforcement will be a virtual

recognition of the principles which are the very cornerstone of Romanism. When our nation shall so abjure the principles of its government as to enact a Sunday law, Protestantism will in this act join hands with popery; it will be nothing else than giving life to the tyranny which has long been eagerly watching its opportunity to spring again into active despotism. Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, pp. 711, 712

Uniting on Common Points of Doctrine

“When the leading churches of the United States, uniting upon such points of doctrine as are held by them in common, shall influence the state to enforce their decrees and to sustain their institutions, then Protestant America will have formed an image of the Roman hierarchy, and the infliction of civil penalties upon dissenters will inevitably result.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, vol. 5, p. 445

“The wide diversity of belief in the Protestant churches is regarded by many as decisive proof that no effort to secure a forced uniformity can ever be made. However, there has been for years, in churches of the Protestant faith, a strong and growing sentiment in favor of a union based upon common points of doctrine. To secure such a union, the discussion of subjects upon which all were not agreed--however important they might be from a Bible standpoint--must necessarily be waived.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, vol. 5, p. 444

“... there is an increasing indifference concerning the doctrines that separate the reformed churches from the papal hierarchy; the opinion is gaining ground that, after all, we do not differ so widely upon vital points as has been supposed, and that a little concession on our part will bring us into a better understanding with Rome.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 563

The Role of the Clergy

“Plans of serious import to the people of God are advancing in an underhand manner among the clergymen of various denominations, and the object of this secret maneuvering is to win popular favor for the enforcement of Sunday

sacredness. If the people can be led to favor a Sunday law, then the clergy intend to exert their united influence to obtain a religious amendment to the Constitution, and compel the nation to keep Sunday.” The Review and Herald, December 24, 1889

Politicians Will Accede to the Popular Demand

“The dignitaries of church and State will unite to bribe, persuade, or compel all classes to honor the Sunday. The lack of divine authority will be supplied by oppressive enactments. Political corruption is destroying love of justice and regard for truth; and even in free America, rulers and legislators, in order to secure public favor, will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance. Liberty of conscience, which has cost so great a sacrifice, will no longer be respected.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 592

“We cannot labor to please men who will use their influence to repress religious liberty, and to set in operation oppressive measures to lead or compel their fellow men to keep Sunday as the Sabbath. The first day of the week is not a day to be revered. It is a spurious sabbath, and the members of the Lord's family cannot participate with the men who exalt this day, and violate the law of God by trampling upon His Sabbath. The people of God are not to vote to place such men in office; for when they do this, they are partakers with them of the sins which they commit while in office.” Ellen G. White, Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 475

Efforts to Introduce Religious Curriculum

“The present effort of the church to get the state to . . . introduce the teaching of Christianity into state schools, is but a revival of the . . . doctrine of force in religious things, and as such it is antichristian.” The Watchman, May 1, 1906

Was Ellen White a secular humanist or atheist because she wrote this? No. She was respecting the first amendment.

“I do not see the justice nor right in enforcing by law the bringing of the Bible to be read in the public schools.” Ellen G. White, Letter 44, 1893

Linked with Good Causes

*“Here the temperance work, one of the most prominent and important of moral reforms, is often **combined with the Sunday movement**, and the advocates of the latter represent themselves as laboring to promote the highest interest of society; and **those who refuse to unite with them are denounced as the enemies of temperance and reform**. However, the fact that a movement to establish error is connected with a work which is in itself good, is not an argument in favor of the error. We may **disguise poison** by mingling it with wholesome food, but we do not change its nature. On the contrary, we render it **more dangerous**, as it is more likely to take people unawares. It is one of Satan's devices to **combine with falsehood** just enough truth to give it plausibility. **The leaders of the Sunday movement may advocate reforms** which the people need, principles which are in harmony with the Bible; yet while there is with these a requirement which is contrary to God's law, His servants **cannot unite with them**. Nothing can justify them in setting aside the commandments of God for the precepts of men.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 587, 588*

God's People Blamed

*“Those who honor the Bible Sabbath will be denounced as **enemies of law and order**, as breaking down the **moral restraints** of society, causing **anarchy and corruption**, and **calling down the judgments of God [Matthew 24:9]** upon the earth. Their conscientious scruples will be pronounced obstinacy, stubbornness, and contempt of authority. They will be accused of **disaffection toward the government**. **Ministers** who deny the obligation of the divine law will present from the pulpit the duty of yielding **obedience to the civil authorities** as ordained of God. In legislative halls and courts of justice, commandment keepers will be misrepresented and condemned.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 592*

Amend the Constitution

She saw the Sunday law as impending in her day:

*"A great crisis awaits the people of God. A crisis awaits the world. The most momentous struggle of all the ages is just before us. Events which for more than forty years we have upon the authority of the prophetic word declared to be impending are **now taking place before our eyes**. Already the question of an **amendment to the Constitution** restricting liberty of conscience has been **urged upon the legislators** of the nation. The question of enforcing Sunday observance has become one of **national interest** and importance." Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 711*

*"They do not see that if a Protestant government sacrifices the principles that have made them a free, independent nation, and through **legislation brings into the Constitution**, principles that will propagate papal falsehood and papal delusion, they are plunging into the **Roman horrors of the Dark Ages**." The Review and Herald, December 11, 1888*

Ellen White realized that Sunday law might not be passed **at that particular time**:

*"It may be that **a respite** may yet be granted for God's people to awake and let their light shine. If the presence of ten righteous persons would have saved the wicked cities of the plain, is it not possible that God will yet, in answer to the prayers of His people, **hold in check the workings** of those who are making void His law? Shall we not humble our hearts greatly before God, flee to the mercy seat, and plead with Him to reveal His mighty power?" Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 713*

She knew that **eventually** it would happen **(in 1905)**:

*"**Sooner or later Sunday laws will be passed**. However, there is much for God's servants to do to warn the people. This work has been greatly retarded by their having to wait and stand against the devisings of Satan, which have been striving*

to find a place in our work. We are years behind. The Review and Herald, February 16, 1905

Pro Sunday and Anti Sabbath

*“The time will come when men will not only **forbid Sunday work**, but they will try to **force men to labor on the Sabbath** and men will be asked to renounce the Sabbath and to subscribe to Sunday observance or **forfeit their freedom and their lives**. But the time for this has not yet come, for the truth must be presented more fully before the people as a witness.” Ellen G. White, The Southern Work, p. 69*

The Whole World will unite

*“The **whole world** is to be stirred with enmity against Seventh-day Adventists, because they will not yield **homage to the papacy**, by honoring Sunday, the institution of this **antichristian power**. It is the purpose of Satan to cause them to be **blotted from the earth**, in order that his supremacy of the world may not be disputed.” Ellen G. White, Maranatha, p. 217*

*“As America, the land of religious liberty shall **unite with the papacy** in forcing the conscience and compelling men to honor the false sabbath, the people of **every country on the globe** will be led to follow her example.” Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 18*

*“The so-called **Christian world** is to be the theater of great and decisive actions. Men in authority will enact laws controlling the conscience, after the example of the papacy. Babylon will make all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. **Every nation will be involved**.” Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, vol. 3, p. 392*

*“**Foreign nations** will follow the example of the United States. Though she leads out, yet the same crisis will come upon our people in **all parts of the world**.” Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 395*

*"The wicked . . . declared that they had the truth, that miracles were among them, that angels from heaven talked with them and walked with them, that great power and signs and wonders were performed among them, and that this was the temporal millennium that they had been expecting so long. The **whole world** was converted and in harmony with the Sunday law." Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, vol. 3, pp. 427, 428*

The Role of our Ministers

*"Not all **our ministers** who are giving the third angel's message really understand what constitutes that message. The National Reform movement has been regarded by some as of **so little importance** that they have not thought it necessary **to give much attention to it** and have even felt that in so doing they would be giving time to questions distinct from the third angel's message. May the Lord **forgive our brethren** for thus interpreting the very message for this time. The people **need to be aroused** in regard to the dangers of the present time. The **watchmen are asleep**. We are **years behind**." Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 715*

What is wrong with the Church using the State?

*"But today in the religious world there are multitudes who, as they believe, are working for the establishment of the kingdom of Christ as an earthly and temporal dominion. They desire to make our Lord the ruler of the kingdoms of this world, the ruler in its **courts** and camps, its **legislative** halls, its **palaces** and **market** places. They expect Him to rule through **legal enactments**, enforced by **human authority**. Since Christ is not now here in person, they themselves will undertake to act **in His stead**, to **execute the laws of His kingdom**. The establishment of such a kingdom is what the Jews desired in the days of Christ. They would have received Jesus, had He been willing to establish a temporal dominion, to enforce what they regarded as the laws of God, and to make them the expositors of His will and the agents of His authority. However He said, "My kingdom is not of this world." John 18:36. He would not accept the earthly throne.*

*The government under which Jesus lived was corrupt and oppressive; on every hand were crying abuses—extortion, intolerance, and grinding cruelty. Yet the Savior attempted **no civil reforms**. He attacked no national abuses, nor condemned the national enemies. **He did not interfere** with the authority or administration of those in power. He who was our example kept **aloof from earthly governments**. Not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and **external measures**. To be efficient, the cure must reach men individually, and must **regenerate the heart**.*

*Not by the decisions of **courts** or **councils** or **legislative assemblies**, not by the patronage of worldly great men, is the kingdom of Christ established, but by the **implanting of Christ's nature in humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit**. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:12, 13. Here is the only power that can work the uplifting of mankind and the human agency for the accomplishment of this work is the teaching and practicing of the word of God. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 509, 510*

Society does not change by what happens on **Capitol Hill** but rather by what happens in the **home**, in the **school** and in the **church**. Human legislation does not change the heart; the Holy Spirit changes the heart and writes God law there.

When the **early church lost the spirit and power of God**, society fell apart. The church, seeing that things were getting out of hand, decided to appeal to the arm of the state to correct the situation and the result was apostasy and **persecution**.



“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #18 – 1888: COULD IT HAPPEN AGAIN? – PART 1

Introduction

In our last lesson, we considered Ellen White's blueprint of final events. The question is, was her view of end time events realistic? After all, the United States in its history has guaranteed full civil and religious liberty. This is the land of the free and the home of the brave! However, as we have seen, the National Reform Movement in the last half of the 19th century proved that such a scenario could take place in a time of national emergency.

In this lesson, we will show that in the latter half of the 20th century religious movements arose in the United States similar to the one in the 19th century.

In the present study, I am going to mention many proper names. However, I want to make it clear from the start that it is not my intention to impugn the motives or question the sincerity of those whom I will mention in this presentation. I can only bring to view what they have said, on the record. Only God, the Judge of the earth, can rightly evaluate their motivations.

Saul of Tarsus is a vivid illustration of one who was very sincere in persecuting the Way. He was certain that he was doing God's will (see John 16:1-3) as he sought out Christians to lead them to trial, and some to death (Acts 26:9-11). His intention was to preserve orthodoxy and he persecuted, in the name of God, those who did not agree with him. He was zealous but misguided.

In the **latter part** of the 20th and **early part** of the 21st centuries, the great religious leaders of the United States were **advocating causes** similar to the National Reform Movement in the in the second half of the **19th century**.

The humanist philosopher, **Friedrich Nietzsche** once wrote some very wise words:

“Be careful when you fight the dragon lest you become a dragon.”

Is it possible that in fighting against the dragon of **secular humanism/secularism**, the **Christian right** will become the dragon that they oppose?

The chief protagonists

Here are some of the renowned **religious leaders** who fought against the evils of secularism, some of them more involved than others:

- The late **Chuck Colson** (president of International Prison Ministries).
- The late **D. James Kennedy** (Coral Ridge Ministries in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida).
- **Pat Robertson** (president of CBN, 700 Club; CEO of Regent University; founder of the American Center for Law and Justice).
- **Keith Fournier** (the first Executive Director of Pat Robertson’s American Center for Law and Justice).
- The late **Jerry Falwell** (long time pastor of the Thomas Road Baptist Church, chancellor of Liberty University in Lynchburg Virginia and founder of the Moral Majority).
- **James Dobson** (President and CEO of Focus on the Family).
- **Rod Parsley** (Harvest Ministries in Columbus, Ohio).
- **Gary Bauer** (President of the Family Research Council).
- The late **Bill Bright** (President of Campus Crusade for Christ).

- **William Bennett** (author of *The Book of Virtues*, Education Secretary during the presidency of Ronald Reagan and Drug tsar during the presidency of George H. W. Bush).
- The late **Tim La Haye** (President of the *American Coalition for Traditional Values*, coauthor of the wildly popular *Left Behind* series which provides the eschatological foundation for the Christian right movement).
- **John Hagee** (pastor of the Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas and prolific author on Bible prophecy from a futurist perspective).
- **Ralph Reed** (first president of Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition).
- The late **John Whitehead** (founder of the *Rutherford Institute*, a conservative think tank).
- **Jimmy Swaggart** (mega church founder and television evangelist).
- The late **William Rehnquist** (Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court).

First Amendment Tampering

Some of the political and religious leaders of the religious right sought to **reinterpret** the First Amendment saying that it forbids a **national religion** or a **national church** but does not forbid the government from aiding **all religions** equally.

In **1994**, the Republican Party in Congress unveiled its **agenda** in the book, **Contract with the American Family**. On pages 4, 5 we find the following interpretation of the Establishment Clause:

*"The founding Fathers intended the establishment clause to insure that America's political institutions would never be used to benefit **one religion at the expense of another**."*

*"They [**Europeans**] believed that the European system of officially sanctioned 'state religions' benefited neither the state nor the religion involved. Indeed, it was*

from such systems that the Pilgrims and Puritans fled. This is what is rightly meant by the phrase, 'separation of church and state.'

William Rehnquist served for **19 years** as **Chief Justice** of the Supreme Court. In **1985**, he dissented with the majority in a **school prayer case** stating that the **framers** of the Constitution intended only:

*"... to prohibit the designation of **any church** as a national one [and] to stop the Federal Government from asserting a **preference** of one religious denomination or sect over others."* *The Saving of America*, p. 61.

This was a **revisionist interpretation** of the Establishment Clause. Nowhere does the Establishment Clause of the Constitution refer to the non-establishment of **a church** or **a religion** but rather of **religion**, period. The **Founding Fathers** certainly knew the history of the **papacy** and the **colonial period** where the state established a specific church at the expense of others. The Founding Fathers could have worded the First Amendment '*Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of **a church or a religion***' but they did not. They did not want the state to meddle in religion.

Rehnquist affirmed that the establishment clause merely "*forbade the establishment of a **national religion** and forbade **preference** among religious sects and denominations.*" Rehnquist believed that the Establishment Clause did not "*prohibit the federal government from providing **non-discriminatory** aid to religion.*" *The Day of the Dragon*, p. 79.

In other words, in his view, it was acceptable for government to **aid religion** as long it provided for all religions equally. Would this mean government aid not only to Christian but also to **non-Christian** religions such as Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism?

Pat Robertson agreed with Rehnquist and added his own touch regarding the states:

*"The first amendment says . . . Congress can't set up a **national religion**. End of story. There is not in the Constitution, at any point, anything that applies that to*

*the **states.***” *Cosmopolitan*, (January) “The Fierce Furious March of Fundamentalists” 1995, p. 160:

In those times, there was a strong movement in favor of **states’ rights**. Those who advocated for states’ rights argued that the Establishment and Free Exercise clauses apply only on a **Federal level** because the First Amendment refers to ‘Congress’ making no law. In other words, the federal Congress cannot make any law that establishes religion or forbids its free exercise but the **individual states can!**

It might sound nice to keep the Federal Government out of the business of the states but there was a **hidden agenda** in the states’ rights movement. If **enough states** can agree on a certain agenda, then they can exert their influence to **force the federal government** to follow their lead by amending the Constitution.

The Strategy of the Religious Right

At the beginning of the religious right movement, they held **massive marches** on **Washington, D. C.** For example, at the “**Washington for Jesus**” rally on **April 29, 30, 1980**, Pat Robertson marched on Washington DC with a large cross on his shoulder surrounded by hundreds of supporters.

However, in the course of time, the movement became much **more sophisticated**. They soon discovered that marches accomplished very little. They discovered that the best way to gain power was to **lobby individual members of congress** as well as network on a **local level**. They realized that they would meet with greater success by organizing on a local level and taking over **local high school boards** and influencing **local governments**. They realized that **all politics is local**. If they could take over enough local precincts, then the **states would be theirs as well**.

Notably, in **1888** those who pressed for a national Sunday law also worked on establishing **local chapters** and influencing **state conventions** before attempting a national Sunday law.

Ralph Reed described the strategy of the religious right.

*“We tried to **charge** Washington, when we should have been focusing on **the states**. The real battle of concern to Christians are in the **neighborhoods, school boards, city councils** and **state legislatures**.” Quoted in *Church and State*, April 1990, p 12*

A Persecution Complex

In the 80's there was also talk of **amending the Constitution** to protect **Christians from discrimination** in the exercise of their religion. The leaders of the religious right movement argued that a **secular humanistic** government **was persecuting them** because it did not allow them to put **nativity scenes** on public government property and because the **Alabama judiciary** did not allow **Judge Roy Moore** to put a **5300-pound** monument of the Ten Commandments in the rotunda of the State Building.

The leaders attempted to convince their church members that government was persecuting them because it **did not support their religion**. However, this was not the case. The government must keep **aloof from religion**. It must neither **support nor oppose** religion. The role of government is to **preserve freedom of speech and freedom of assembly** so that religion can flourish freely. The purpose of government is not to enforce the Ten Commandments, particularly the first four. The **first four commandments** describe our duty to God alone and the state can have nothing to do with these commandments.

The Contract with the American Family, p. 1, complained about the rights of religious Americans and suggested a religious amendment as the solution to the problem:

*“We have witnessed the steady **erosion** of the time honored **rights of religious Americans**. The time has now come to **amend the Constitution** to **restore** freedom of speech for America's people of faith.”*

Leaving the Country

There is no country in the world that guarantees freedom of speech in its Constitution as the United States. The freedoms that we enjoy have made it a pleasure to live in this country. Sadly, some in the religious right at the end of the 20th century were saying that if secular humanists do not like it here, they should move to another country.

Several years ago, Greg J. Dixon, co-founder of the Moral Majority and the organization's leader in the state of Indiana had a prayer hit list where his supporters prayed that the Lord would remove from office anyone who did not confess the Christian religion.

Alaska state senator, Edna DeVries, once stated that non-Christians should *"leave the country."* Clifford Goldstein, The Day of the Dragon, p. 53

The religious right complains that kids can no longer pray in public schools, that liberals have kicked God out of the public square. It is true that schools cannot have state mandated prayer in public schools and that is a good idea because prayer is a duty we owe to God. However, the Constitution does not forbid individual students to pray in school. Students can even take the initiative to organize prayer and Bible study groups on campus. The Constitution guarantees the right of free exercise of individuals even on public school property. The Constitution also guarantees the students the right to take their Bibles to school and to read them.

It is true that a handful of teachers attempted to keep students from exercising their individual rights, but they lost their cases in court. The government must remain neutral in matters of religion.

Voter Guides

What about voter guides? Politicians who wanted to win elections catered to the preachers and the churches. Even Democrats, who used to shy away from speaking about religion in the public arena, began to address publicly moral and religious issues. During the height of the Christian Right movement,

politicians loved to show up at religious right activities because they knew that they could deliver votes by rallying the base to go out and vote for them.

During the presidency of George W. Bush, a leak revealed that Carl Rove and Dick Cheney really had little love for the agenda of the religious right. In private, they referred to them nuts and weird. However, they publicly supported their causes because they knew that the religious right brings out the vote.

During the height of power of the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition, voter guides even provided the names of the candidates and the causes they supported and opposed. The religious right sought to persuade Christians to vote for candidates that supported their causes and vote against those who opposed them.

Tim LaHaye affirmed that 25% of federal jobs should go to Christian conservatives. He also stated that, “*No humanist is qualified to hold any governmental office.*” Time September 2, 1985. This flies in the face of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which states that there can be no religious test to occupy any office of trust in these United States.

Protestants and Catholics Together

During the heyday of the Religious Right, Protestants and Catholics worked together for common social causes.

On August 12, 1993, Billy Graham appeared on the program, Good Morning America. At the time, Pope John Paul II was visiting the United States. Billy Graham said:

“I admire the Pope; we both address the same moral issues.”

Furthermore, on January 21, 1997, when the pope visited Salt Lake City, Larry King interviewed Billy Graham on his program Larry King Live. Here is a portion of the interview:

King: “Do you feel comfortable with Salt Lake City? Do you feel comfortable with the Vatican?”

Graham: “Oh, I’m very comfortable with the Vatican. I have been to see the pope several times, and, in fact, the day that he was inaugurated, made pope, I was preaching in his Cathedral in Krakow. I was his guest.”

King: “You were preaching in his church the day he was made pope?”

Graham: “That is correct, in Krakow.” (Graham chuckled)

King: “You must have been shocked.”

Graham: “Of course I was. There was shouting on the streets, you know, the next day: ‘Polish pope, Polish pope.’”

King: “Do you like this pope?”

Graham: “I like him very much. He’s very conservative . . . He and I agree on almost everything.”

Most people do not know that Billy Graham received an **honorary doctorate** in **1967** from a **Jesuit** Roman Catholic University, **Belmont Abbey College**. Someone wrote the College and asked if this was true and **Cuthbert E. Allen**, executive vice-president of the university responded:

“Billy Graham gave an inspiring and a theologically sound address that might have been given by bishop Fulton J. Sheen or any other Catholic preacher. I have followed Billy Graham’s career and I must emphasize that he has been **more Catholic than otherwise**. I say this not in a partisan manner but as a matter of fact. I would state that **he could bring Catholics and Protestants together in a healthy ecumenical spirit**. I was the first Catholic to invite Billy Graham. I know that he will speak at **three other Catholic universities** next month. I believe he will be invited by more Catholic colleges in the future than Protestant colleges. So I am well pleased then to answer your question: Billy Graham is preaching a moral and evangelical theology **most acceptable to Catholics**.”

Ralph Reed, the **first president** of Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition wrote in his book, **Politically Incorrect**, p. 16:

*"The future of American politics lies in the growing strength of Evangelicals and their Roman Catholic **allies**. If these two core constituencies—evangelicals comprising the swing vote in the south, Catholics holding sway in the north—can **cooperate** on issues and support like-minded candidates they can **determine the outcome** of almost any election in the nation. Nasty nativism and dark distrust about Popery and foreign influence have been swept into the **ash heap of history**. John F. Kennedy's election in 1960 buried the Catholic bogeyman forever. No longer **burdened by the past**, Roman Catholics, Evangelicals, Greek Orthodox and many religious conservatives from the mainline denominations are forging **a new alliance** that promises to be among the most powerful and important in the modern political era."*

Ralph Reed spoke at the **Catholic Campaign for America**, and said:

*"The Catholic vote holds the key to the future and I believe that if they can **unite**, if Catholics can **unite** with the Evangelical Christians, the Protestants who **share their views** on the sanctity of innocent human life and the need for religious liberty, and school choice, and common sense values, I believe if Catholics and Evangelicals can **unite** there is no person who runs for office in any city or any state in America that **can't be elected** and there is **no bill that can't be passed** in either house of Congress or any state legislative chamber anywhere in America. It is the **emerging force** in the electorate today. The Pope does use the term hierarchy of doctrine. Father Robertson said: 'Obviously some teachings are more important than others and there has to be an **agreement on those essential points** while leaving considerable latitude on other points that are **less essential** to the faith."*

Compare this to what Ellen White wrote:

*"When the leading churches of the United States **uniting upon such points of doctrine as are held by them in common** shall influence the state to enforce their decrees and sustain their institutions then Protestant America will have*

formed an image to the Roman hierarchy and the infliction of civil penalties upon dissenters will inevitably result.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 445

Then there is the document, “**Evangelicals and Catholics Together.**” The document was an ecumenical agreement by **40** of the most influential Evangelical and Roman Catholic leaders in the **United States**. Protestant **Chuck Colson** and Lutheran turned Catholic, **John Richard Niehaus**, developed the **25-page document**. When the 40 influential leaders signed the agreement on **March 29, 1994**, Colson and Niehaus remarked:

*“Evangelicals and Catholics have been finding one another as **Christian brothers and sisters** in various activities, notably in the **pro-life** movement and the **charismatic renewal**. Our concern was and is that animosities between Evangelicals and Catholics threatened to mar the image of Christ by turning **Latin America** into a Belfast of religious warfare.”*

One of the notable elements in the document is that it discourages **proselytizing** between Protestants and Catholics, especially in **Latin America** where there are thousands upon **thousands of Catholics who are leaving** the Roman Catholic Church every month and joining various Protestant denominations, including Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, Pentecostals, Mormons, and Baptists.

This **mass exodus** from the Catholic Church to various Protestant organizations has been a matter of great concern for the Roman Catholic Church so in the document the Catholic and Protestant leaders agreed to **stop stealing** one another’s sheep. They agreed that instead of arguing over what they considered insignificant points of doctrine, they should rather unite forces to fight against the **common enemy**, secular humanism. They decided to join forces to fight against abortion, homosexual marriage, euthanasia and pornography.

An article in USA Today described the ecumenical nature of the document:

“The leaders in a statement are urging the nation’s fifty-two million Catholics and thirteen million evangelicals to no longer hold each other at theological arm’s

*length and stop aggressive proselytizing of each other's flocks, in short, to turn their theological swords into a recognition of a **common faith**." **USA Today**, March 30, 1994.*

Keith Fournier was one of the signers of the document. He wrote a book titled, **House United** where he described its incredible **ecumenical implications**:

*"Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox can **come together, must come together, and are coming together**. The **wall of separation is cracking**; portions of the wall are beginning to **fall away**. Christians are waking up and starting to see each other as Family." Keith Fournier, **House United**, p. 336.*



“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #19 – 1888: COULD IT HAPPEN AGAIN? – PART 2

In 1999, Roman Catholic and Lutheran scholars signed the *Joint Declaration on Justification by Faith* where they agreed, after years of study, that the Catholic and Lutheran churches share the same view of righteousness by faith. So to speak, Martin Luther must be rolling in his grave!

Regarding the document, Kenneth Kantzer, a Protestant, wrote:

“Finally we [Catholic and Evangelicals] can work together on those political and social issues where we are in such strong agreement. Our united effort in these areas will do much to influence the world to the good . . . In spite of basic differences we can use our common Judeo-Christian value system to forge moral leadership that will advance the cause of justice and peace through a stable society in our nation and around the world.” Kenneth Kantzer, Christianity Today, “Church on the Move,” November 7, 1986, p. 16:

Pat Robertson added his testimony:

“I believe frankly that the Evangelicals and the Catholics in America, if they work together, can see many pro-family initiatives in our society, and we can be an effective counterbalance to some of the radical, leftist initiatives.” Church and State, August 1988, p. 15

Chuck Colson, an **Evangelical**, made some amazing statements in the introduction to Keith Fournier's book, Evangelical Catholics.

*"It's high time that all of us who are Christians **come together** regardless of the **differences** of our confessions and our traditions and make **common cause** to bring Christian values to bear in our society. When the barbarians are scaling the walls, there is no time for petty quarreling in the camp."*

*"But at root, those who are called of God, whether Catholic or Protestant, are part of the **same Body**. What they share is a belief in **the basics**: the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, His bodily resurrection, His imminent return, and the authority of His infallible Word. They also share the **same mission**: presenting Christ as Savior and Lord to a needy world." p. vi*

*"I pray that this his [Fournier's] book will be read by Catholics and Protestant alike, that it will be **a bridge** across many of the historic divisions in the church that have weakened our stand in today's culture." p. vi*

Keith Fournier, throughout the book, expressed the same ecumenical sentiments:

*"We Christians have **differences**—important, critical differences. But we have far **more in common** both in beliefs and in mission. These believers have built on their **commonalities** without denying their differences." p. 12*

*"But as long as we see ourselves as disconnected, even polarized, communities with some of us adhering to 'the right faith' while the rest of us are languishing in error, we will never receive the incredibly rich benefits of a **worldwide revival**." p. 65*

*"We must see that we were meant to be **one church united** under one Head for the purpose of carrying out a two-fold mission: proclaiming the gospel and maturing in Christ." p. 65*

*"As we prepare to move into the next millennium, will we **do it together**, recognizing that what we have **in common** far exceeds what separates us? Or will*

we allow our internal divisions to hold us back from fulfilling our heritage?” p. 153

The ecumenists refer to the theological differences as ‘**petty quarreling**’. Is the doctrine of the **Sabbath** a petty matter? How about the **state of the dead**?

John Swamley who strongly supported the **separation of church and state** and opposed the ecumenical overtures wrote:

*“The Roman Catholic bishops are also at work **politically to end** separation of church and state. They are working in an **informal alliance** with fundamentalist Protestants not only on the abortion issue, but to get government support of private church schools . . . The major Protestant denominations have been effectively **silenced by ecumenism**, falsely based on fear of offending the Catholic hierarchy.” Quoted in Clifford Goldstein, The Saving of America, p. 77*

Two professors at **Jerry Falwell’s** Liberty Baptist College wrote:

*“We are seeking a **political alliance** between the Roman Catholic church and conservative Protestants that would have a profound impact in the areas of abortion, family life, school policy and public morality.” (Liberty Magazine, March/April 1986) affirmed:*

Ralph Reed, speaking to Catholics at the **Catholic Campaign for America**, described the ecumenical spirit of the time:

*“The truth is, you and I are uniting . . . We are **coming together** because whatever **theological differences** there are, there is far **more that unites us** and **brings us together** than divides us and separates us . . . The good news is the **chasm is being bridged** and that those **walls are crumbling** . . . The truth my friends is this. **Catholicism never has been, is not today, and never will be a threat to American democracy**. It was and remains the most colorful and the most vibrant thread running through the tapestry of American democracy.*

*“Cardinal Gibbons said this: he said, **No constitution is more in harmony with Catholic principles than the American constitution** and no religion is more in accord with that **constitution than the Catholic religion**.”*

*“I want you to know that as Evangelicals we stand **shoulder to shoulder** with you in insuring that never again will **bigotry be directed against Catholics** and their religion be used to try and silence them and drive them from the public square.*

*“I think you know that we have recently launched a division of the Christian Coalition called the Catholic Alliance which is designed to formalize and continue **to build bridges** in our partnership with Roman Catholics. The Catholic Alliance, like the Catholic Campaign, will be a lay movement.”*

One wonders how **Ralph Reed** could have make such remarks when history proves that Roman Catholicism has historically been radically **opposed to the principles of the Constitution**.

Reed added:

*“We can no longer afford to be divided. It is a **luxury** that is no longer ours. The left wants you and I to be divided. Nothing frightens them more than Christians **shattering the barriers of denomination**.” (Ralph Reed, *The Amarillo Sunday News Globe*, December 10, 1995*

Tearing Down the Wall

Keith Fournier, former Executive Director of Pat Robertson’s **American Center for Law and Justice**, compared the Berlin Wall to the wall of separation between church and state:

*“Yet there is a wall which has been **mistakenly erected** in our own beloved country. Its impact on religious freedom has perhaps had an even more devastating effect, it is the so called **wall of separation of church and state**.”*

Pat Robertson also attacked the separation of church and state:

*“They [**liberals and secular humanists**] have kept us in submission because they have talked about **separation of church and state**. There is no such thing in the Constitution. It’s **a lie of the left**, and we’re not going to take it anymore.” (Anti-Defamation League, *The Religious Right: The Assault on Tolerance and Pluralism in America*, p. 4)*

Jerry Falwell, the founder of the Moral Majority wrote:

*“Separation of Church and State has long been the battle cry of civil libertarians wishing to purge our glorious Christian heritage from our nation’s history. Of course, the term **never once appears in our Constitution** and is a **modern fabrication** of discrimination.” Quoted in *Church and State*, June 2006, p. 14*

D. James Kennedy who for years was the senior pastor of the **Coral Ridge church** in Ft. Lauderdale referred to the wall of separation as diabolical:

*“If we are committed and involved in taking back the nation for Christian values ... there is no doubt we can witness the dismantling of not just the Berlin wall but the even more **diabolical ‘wall of separation’** that has led to secularization, immorality, and corruption in our country.” (Quoted in “They Said It! Religious Right Leaders in Their Own Words.”)*

What a contrast with what **Thomas Jefferson**, the architect of the new republic, said in a letter to the **Danbury Baptist Association**:

*“I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building **a wall of separation between church and state**.”*

William Rehnquist, who for **33 years** served on the United States Supreme Court, said that the wall of separation ‘is **based on bad history** and should be **abandoned**’:

***"The wall of separation between church and state is a metaphor based on bad history; a metaphor which has proved useless as a guide to judging; it should be frankly and explicitly abandoned."** The Saving of America, p.*

In her time, **Ellen White** strongly disagreed:

*"The union of the church with the state be the degree **never so slight**, while it may appear to bring the world nearer to the church, does in reality but bring the church nearer to the world." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 297*

W. A. Criswell, who for **47 years** was the senior pastor of the **First Baptist Church in Dallas** and served as president of the **National Baptist Convention** from 1969 to 1970 once stated:

*"I believe that this notion of the separation of **church and state** was the figment of some **infidel's imagination**." The Saving of America p. 59.*

The Baptists arose from the **Anabaptists** who suffered severe persecution for their religious convictions and were in the **forefront** of the struggle for **religious liberty**. Criswell had certainly forgotten his roots!

Arizona state senator **John B. Conlan** once said:

*"The **separation of church and state** is a false issue. It is a slogan created by the **secular humanists** that **sounds legal** but in fact is **a sham**. It does **not appear anywhere in the constitution**, and it is not a concept that our Founding Fathers believed. . . 'Separation of church and state' . . . is simply a line of propaganda created by modern humanists to intimidate Christians and make us believe that we are second-class citizens." The Saving of America, p. 59*

Keith Fournier, spoke at the Second Annual Road to Victory Briefing Conference of the Christian Coalition **September 10-12, 1992** in Washington, D. C. He stated:

*"The **wall of separation between church and state** that was erected by **secular humanists** and other **enemies** of religious freedom has to come down. That wall*

is more of a threat to society than the Berlin Wall ever was. Those opposing our views are the new Fascists.”

David S. Nelson who was the director of Pat Robertson’s Christian Coalition in Colorado stated:

*“The separation of church and state is (1) not a teaching of the founding fathers; (2) not an historical teaching; (3) not a teaching of law (except in recent years); (4) not a Biblical teaching. In summary, there should be absolutely **no ‘separation of church and state in America.’**” Undated flyer in 1992.*

The Desire for a Theocracy

Gary North, a Dominionist and Christian Reconstructionist stated:

*“We must use the doctrine of religious liberty to gain independence for Christian schools until we train up a generation of people who know that there is no religious neutrality . . . Then they will get busy in **constructing a Bible-based social, political and religious order** which finally **denies the religious liberty of the enemies of God.**” Gary North quoted in The Religious Right: The Assault on Tolerance and Pluralism in America, pp. 5, 6*

In other words, his idea was to raise up a whole generation of kids in the Christian system, get them to take over the government and then deny religious liberty to all who disagree with their view of religion.

Journalist, Cal Thomas:

*“If we will not be constrained from within by the power of God, we must be **constrained from without** by the power of the State acting as God’s agent.” Harper’s Magazine, March, 1995, p. 30*

At the height of the religious right movement, Pat Robertson described its ultimate objective:

*“There will never be world peace until God’s house and God’s people are given their rightful place of **leadership at the top of the world.** How can there be peace when drunkards, drug dealers, communists, atheists, New Age worshipers of*

*Satan, secular humanists, oppressive dictators, greedy moneychangers, revolutionary assassins, adulterers and homosexuals are on top? Under their leadership the world will never, I repeat never, experience lasting peace . . . Although I agree that it is unwise for the organized church as an institution to get itself entwined with government as an institution there is absolutely no way that government can operate successfully unless led by godly men and women operating **under the laws of the God of Jacob**.” Pat Robertson, The New World Order, p. 227.*

Robertson’s eschatology fails to square with the Bible. According to **Matthew 24** the world is going to get **worse and worse** and the only thing that will save it is the second coming of Jesus. Those who envision changing the world **through legislation** are attempting **an impossibility**. Only a change within the **heart** can create a society where there is real and lasting peace.

Futurist **Tim LaHaye** believed that legislative reform could bring a **national revival** in the United States:

*“While it is true that God has already given America three national revivals in the past, we desperately need another one today. Personally, I am not sure we can have one without **legislative reform**.” The Saving of America, p. 47*

Since when does legislative reform bring about **revival in the church**? Revival comes by the power of the **Holy Spirit** through **Bible study and prayer**. Since when does taking over the government bring about revival? Real change comes, not by legislation from without but rather by a **change from within**. Like leaven, when the Spirit is within, the life changes without.

Jesus told His followers to be the **salt of the earth**. **Tim LaHaye** suggested that Christians could become the salt of the earth by establishing a **political action committee**, encouraging and preaching on **Christian activism**, by organizing a good **government committee**, by **circulating petitions and lobbying**, by conducting **political forums**, and by **introducing candidates** at worship services (The Saving of America p. 59). Is this what Jesus meant when He commanded His disciples to be the salt of the earth?

Richard Hogue, pastor of the **Mt. Bethel United Methodist** Church wrote in his book, **Saints and Dirty Politics**:

*“... if our country survives—and I realize that’s a big IF—it will be because there is an awakening in the lives of committed Christians across our nation who finally begin to realize that it is not only their opportunity but also their absolute responsibility to be **intricately involved in the political process of our country** and use that involvement to turn **this nation once again to the Lord**.”* (Richard Hogue, *Saints and Dirty Politics*, p. 208)

Ralph Reed shared his formula on how to get the country to return to God:

*“What Christians have got to do is **take back this country**, one precinct at a time, one neighborhood at a time, one state at a time. I honestly believe that in my lifetime we will see a country once again **governed by Christians**.”* *Day of the Dragon*, p. 72

Speech by **Randall Terry**, the founder of the anti-abortion organization *Operation Rescue* gave a speech at Willoughby Hills, Ohio in July of 1993 where he stated:

*“Our goal must be simple: We must have a **Christian nation built on God’s law**, on the Ten Commandments. No apologies.”*

Many years ago, **Pat Robertson** expressed the objectives of the Christian right:

*“... we have together with the Protestants and the Catholics **enough votes** to run the country and when the people say, ‘We’ve had enough,’ **we are going to take over**.”* *Conservative Digest*, August 1979.

Robert Grant, president of **Christian Voice**, a branch of the Moral Majority, explained the final objective of the Christian right:

*“If Christians unite we can do anything. We can **pass any law** or **any amendment** and that’s exactly what **we intend to do**.”* Quoted in *Liberty Magazine*, May/June 1980, p. 4

In a television interview, **Grant** boasted:

*"We can do anything. We can **amend the Constitution**. We can **elect a president**. We can **change or make any law** in the land and it behooves us to do it. If we have to live under the law, as well, we should live under **moral and Godly Law**." (20/20 program the week of the Democratic National Convention in 1980)*

In The Great Controversy, p. 297 Ellen White described what happened in **Colonial America** when the church had control over the state:

*"The regulation adopted by the early colonists, of **permitting only members** of the church to vote or to hold office in the civil government, led to most **pernicious results**. This measure had been accepted as a means of **preserving the purity of the state**, but it resulted in the **corruption of the church**. A **profession of religion** being the condition of suffrage and office holding, many, actuated solely by motives of **worldly policy**, united with the church without a **change of heart**. Thus, the churches came to consist, to a considerable extent, of **unconverted persons**; and even in the ministry were those who not only held errors of doctrine, but who were ignorant of the **renewing power of the Holy Spirit**. Thus again was demonstrated the evil results, so often witnessed in the history of the church from the days of Constantine to the present, of attempting to **build up the church by the aid of the state**, of appealing to the **secular power in support of the gospel** of Him who declared: "My kingdom is not of this world." John 18:36. The union of the church with the state **be the degree never so slight**, while it may appear to bring the world nearer to the church, does in reality but bring **the church nearer to the world**."*

This movement at the end of the 20th and early 21st century also pressed for a restoration of **Sunday as the Christian Sabbath**. Thus, **D. James Kennedy** wrote:

*"From the witness of the early Church, from the witness of our disarrayed lives, from the witness of our society as it teeters on the brink of moral collapse, we see that the need to keep the **Sabbath is truly urgent**."*

John Paul II, who was pope during most of this period pleaded for **civil legislation** to assure the observance of Sunday:

*“In the particular circumstances of our own time, Christians will naturally strive to see that **civil legislation** respects their duty to **keep the Sabbath day**.” Dies Domini, 4:67*

The Law of God the Point of Controversy

The Bible passages that describe the end time conflict all underline that the final issue will be over worship and the observance of God’s commandments—divine legislation versus human legislation, the commandments of God and the commandments of men. Sabbath and Sunday are simply the way in which God tests people to see which authority they will obey.

- ✓ In Matthew 7, the false prophets perform signs and wonders in the name of Jesus but He casts them aside saying that He never knew them because they transgressed the law.
- ✓ In Matthew 24 Jesus mentioned the false prophets in the context of love growing cold because of lawlessness.
- ✓ 2 Thessalonians 2 describes the final antichrist power as the mystery of lawlessness and the leader is called the ‘lawless one’.
- ✓ The little horn of Daniel 7 thought that it could change God’s law.
- ✓ Revelation 14:9-11 refers to those who worship the beast, his image and receive his mark. In contrast, the faithful worship the Creator and keep the commandments of God (Revelation 14:7, 12).
- ✓ The climax of the controversy at the end of time is between the dragon and those who keep the commandments of God (Revelation 12:17)
- ✓ Inside the New Jerusalem will be those who do the commandments while outside will be those who transgressed the law (Revelation 22:14, 15)

Ellen White described the nature of the final controversy:

“It will be declared that men are offending God by the violation of the Sunday-sabbath, that this sin has brought calamities that will not cease until Sunday observance shall be strictly enforced, and that those who present the claims of the

fourth commandment, thus destroying reverence for Sunday, are troublers of the people, preventing their restoration to divine favor and temporal prosperity.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 590.

Ellen White wrote about the seriousness of the Sabbath/Sunday issue:

*“Those who ignore the Lord’s Sabbath to keep holy the first day of the week, **offer strange fire** to God. It is a **strange sabbath**, that He has commanded them not. Will He accept it at their hands? Men have sought out many inventions. They have taken a **common day**, upon which God has placed no sanctity, and have **clothed it with sacred prerogatives**. They have declared it to be a holy day, but this does not give it a vestige of sanctity. They **dishonor God** by accepting **human institutions** and presenting to the world as the **Christian Sabbath** a day which has no ‘Thus saith the Lord’ for its authority. As did Nadab and Abihu, they offer **the common in place of the sacred**.” Signs of the Times March 31, 1898*

“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

**LESSON #20 – PARABLE OF THE SHEEP
AND THE GOATS**

Matthew 25:31-46

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.³³ And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.³⁴ Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;³⁶ I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'⁴⁰ And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'⁴¹ "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:⁴² for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink:⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not

clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' ⁴⁴ "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' ⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' ⁴⁶ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Three Questions about this Passage

- To whom did Jesus address this parable?
- When and where will this judgment take place?
- What will be the standard of the judgment?

The Recipients of the Parable

Did Jesus direct this parable to believers or to unbelievers?

As we have seen in our previous lectures, in Matthew 24 Jesus spoke about the signs of His coming. After describing the signs, Jesus told four parables on the importance of watching and being ready for His coming. The content of these parables indicates that Jesus spoke them to those who profess to believe in Jesus:

- The good and faithful servant
- The ten virgins
- The talents
- The parable of the sheep and the goats

When will this judgment scene occur?

When will the separation of the sheep from the goats take place?

The passage provides several clues:

- The Son of Man sits on a great white throne.

- This throne is the **throne of His glory**. Today He sits **with** His Father on the throne of grace—Revelation 3:21).
- **All nations** will gather before the throne so all who have lived in human history **must have resurrected**.
- There is an **examination of the evidence**.
- After the examination of the evidence, the **verdict is given**.
- The sentence is **executed in the lake of fire**.
- The lake of fire was prepared for the **devil and his angels**.

A similar passage in Revelation

There is a parallel passage in **Revelation 20:7-9, 11-15** with the same basic elements. In Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 322, Ellen White applies the parable to the second coming but she presents a greater fulfillment after the millennium:

“While Satan was rallying his army, the saints were in the city, beholding the beauty and glory of the Paradise of God. Jesus was at their head, leading them. All at once the lovely Savior was gone from our company; but soon we heard His lovely voice, saying, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” We gathered about Jesus, and just as He closed the gates of the city, the curse was pronounced upon the wicked.” Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 53

- A great **white throne**

“Far above the city, upon a foundation of burnished gold, is a throne, high and lifted up. Upon this throne sits the Son of God, and around Him are the subjects of His kingdom.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 665:

- The Son of God is sitting on a **great white throne** (Revelation 20:11)
- **All nations** are **gathered** before the throne: **All who lived** in human history have resurrected (Revelation 20:5, 7, 8)
- There is an **examination of the evidence** (Revelation 20:13)
- After the evidence is examined the **verdict** is given (GC 666; EW 53)

- The sentence is then executed in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10)
- The lake was prepared for the devil and his angels (Revelation 20:10)

What is the criterion of the judgment in Revelation?

However, there is a difference in emphasis between the scene in Matthew and the one in Revelation even though both describe the same judgment scene. The record in Revelation is clear: Those who are outside the city are there because they transgressed the Commandments of God:

Revelation 21:27

"But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

Revelation 22:14, 15

"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie."

Revelation 21:7, 8

"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. ⁸ But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

The emphasis in the book of Revelation falls upon the sins that the wicked committed and did not repent of and forsake. The saved who are inside the city kept God's Commandments.

The Criterion of the Judgment in Matthew

The criterion of the judgment in Matthew is different yet complimentary. Whereas Revelation emphasizes the sins of commission, Matthew underlined the sins of omission.

What do I mean? The emphasis in **Revelation** falls upon what the **wicked did** that they **should not have done**. The emphasis in **Matthew** falls upon what the wicked did **not do** and **should have done**.

Ellen White perceptibly wrote about the sin of omission:

*"The condemning power of the law of God extends, not only to the things **we do**, but to the things **we do not do**. We are not to justify ourselves in **omitting** to do the things that God requires. We must not only **cease to do evil**, but we must **learn to do well**. God has given us powers to be exercised in **good works**; and if these powers are not put to use, we shall certainly be set down as wicked and slothful servants. We may not have committed **grievous sins**; such **offenses may not stand** registered against us in the book of God; but the fact that our deeds are not recorded as **pure, good, elevated, and noble**, showing that we have not improved our entrusted talents, places us under condemnation."* Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, volume 1, p. 220

Let us look **more closely** at the judgment in **Matthew 25**

Jesus will place the righteous on His right hand and the goats on His left (DA 644). In the Bible, the **right hand** is the side of God's favor. Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father. At the last supper, Judas was on the left side of Jesus and John on the right. When the fishermen did not fish anything all night, Jesus told them to cast the net on the right side of the boat (John 21:6). An archaic meaning of the word 'sinister' is, 'toward the left-hand side', when a person gets up in a bad mood we say that 'he woke up with his left foot'.

This passage in Matthew 25 reminds us of Isaiah 58:6, 7:

*"Is this not the fast that I have chosen? To loose the **bonds** of wickedness, to **undo** the heavy burdens, to let the **oppressed** go free, and that you **break** every yoke?
7 Is it not to share your **bread** with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the **poor** who are cast out; when you see the **naked**, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?"*

However, the parable of Jesus is not simply telling us that we should be active in **community services work**. There is a **spiritual dimension** to the parable:

- **Hungry** (the Bible is the food; Matthew 4:4)
- **Thirsty** (thirsty, the Holy Spirit is the drink; John 7:37-39)
- **Stranger** (Strangers to the covenants, without hope; Ephesians 2:12, 19)
- **Naked** (destitute of Christ's righteousness; Isaiah 61:10)
- **Sick** with the virus of sin; (Isaiah 1:6)
- **Prison** (prisoners of Satan and sin; Isaiah 61:1, 2)

It is fashionable today for Christians to visit the 'holy land,' to walk where Jesus walked and to experience baptism where John baptized Him. Regarding this, Ellen G. White wrote in The Desire of Ages, p. 640:

*"Many feel that it would be a **great privilege** to visit the scenes of Christ's life on earth, to walk **where He trod**, to look upon **the lake** beside which He loved to teach, and the **hills and valleys** on which His eyes so often rested. But **we need not** go to Nazareth, to Capernaum, or to Bethany, in order to walk in the steps of Jesus. We shall find His footprints beside the **sickbed**, in the hovels of **poverty**, in the **crowded alleys** of the great city, and in every place where there are **human hearts in need** of consolation. In doing as Jesus did when on earth, we shall **walk in His steps**."*

In the parable, the sheep **did not care** who gets the **credit**. They did not serve for **accolades and applause**, in **order to be saved**, or **for money**. The righteous performed these actions **spontaneously and naturally** because they had the love of Jesus in their hearts, a love that flowed into their hearts and then out toward others. Are we aware that when we do these things, we are **doing them to Jesus**? Do we see the face of Jesus in others?

The goats **did not mistreat** those who were in need. Perhaps they even allowed the hungry and sick to eat the crumbs that fell off their tables. Their grievous sin was that they **ignored them** and by doing so, they **ignored Jesus**. The story of the **two debtors** teaches us about how we should treat others.

During His ministry, Jesus spoke words of love and compassion for those in need. On the other hand, he had strong words of rebuke for those who make a profession of religion that does not act in favor of others. The words of Jesus to the goats are unusual. We are not used to hearing Jesus speak in this manner.

The Rich Young Ruler

The story of the rich young ruler illustrates those who claim to have one side of perfection but are severely lacking the other side. Here is the passage with explanatory notes in brackets:

Matthew 19:16-22

*"Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what **good thing shall I do** that I may have **eternal life**?" ¹⁷ So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God [**do you call me good because you believe that I am God?**]. However, if you want to enter into [**eternal**] life, **keep the commandments** [**a good SDA answer**]. ¹⁸ He said to Him, "**Which** ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' ¹⁹ 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall **love your neighbor as yourself**.'" [**Jesus replaced the tenth with this one because benevolence is the opposite of covetousness**] ²⁰ The young man said to Him, "All these things **I have kept** from my youth. **What do I still lack?** [**he knew that something was missing**]" ²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you **want to be perfect** [**or have eternal life**], go, **sell** what you have and **give** to the poor, and you will have **treasure in heaven**; and come, follow Me." ²² But when the young man heard that saying, he **went away sorrowful**, for he had great possessions."*

The problem with the rich young ruler is that, outwardly at least, he abstained from evil but did not perform the good. His sin was not one of commission but rather one of omission. God will judge him in the final day by what he did not do.

The Story of the Good Samaritan

The story of the Good Samaritan is similar in many ways to the story of the rich young ruler. In the story of the Good Samaritan, a theologian asked Jesus the same question that the rich young ruler asked Him, 'what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' When Jesus challenged the theologian to answer his own question, Jesus told him that his answer was correct.

At first sight, Jesus' answer to the rich young ruler and the theologian's answer to his own question are not the same. However, upon closer inspection we shall see that the answer is identical in both cases. Here is the parable of the Good Samaritan with explanatory notes in brackets:

Luke 10:25-37

"And behold, a certain lawyer [an expert in the writings of Moses] stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? [The identical question of the rich young ruler to which we would expect the same answer]" ²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the law [the writings of Moses]? What is your reading of it?" ²⁷ So he answered and said, "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'" ²⁸ And He said to him, "You have answered rightly: do this [not 'believe this' but rather 'do this'] and you will live [eternal life]." ²⁹ However, he, wanting to justify himself [because he was not practicing what he preached] said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor [trying to change the subject]?" ³⁰ Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down [a desolate road] from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves [Satan and his angels], who stripped him of his clothing [took away his righteousness], wounded him [a wounded and hurting humanity], and departed, leaving him half dead [without outside help he would have died]. ³¹ Now by chance a certain priest [symbolizing the religious leaders] came down that road and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² Likewise a Levite, [symbol of the deacons] when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. ³³ However, a certain Samaritan

[a man from a foreign country], as he journeyed, came where he was and when he saw him, he had compassion.³⁴ So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine [two remedial agencies, the blood of Jesus and the Holy Spirit]; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn [the church], and took care of him.³⁵ On the next day, when he departed [the ascension of Christ], he took out two denarii [gave resources to the church to care for the lost], gave them to the innkeeper [the pastors], and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again [the second coming], I will repay [He will bring His reward] you.'³⁶ So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"³⁷ And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Matthew 5:38-48

The religion of Jesus does not consist merely in ceasing to do evil but in doing good. Jesus did not say 'do not do unto others as you would not have them do unto you'. He said 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' True religion is not merely believing right but rather acting right.

Here is another biblical passage that uses the word 'perfect' as in the story of the rich young ruler and the Good Samaritan:

Matthew 5:38-48: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'³⁹ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. Rather, whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.⁴⁰ If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.⁴¹ And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.⁴² Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the

same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet your brethren only, **what do you do more than others?** Do not even the tax collectors do so? ⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be **perfect**, just as your Father in heaven is **perfect**.”

The parallel passage in the gospel of Luke explains that the other side of perfection is to be merciful:

Luke 6:27-36

“But I say to you who hear: **Love** your enemies, do **good** to those who hate you, ²⁸ **bless** those who curse you, and **pray** for those who spitefully use you. ²⁹ To him who strikes you on the **one cheek**, offer the other also and from him who **takes away** your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. ³⁰ **Give** to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods **do not ask them back**. ³¹ And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. ³² “But if you love those who **love you**, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you **do good** to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ And if you **lend** to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. ³⁵ But **love** your enemies, **do good**, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your **reward will be great**, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. ³⁶ Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is **merciful**.”

James 1:27 has both dimensions of perfection:

“**Pure and undefiled religion** before God and the Father is this: to **visit orphans and widows** in their trouble, and to keep oneself **unspotted** from the world.”

How should we live while we wait?

Jesus gave several counsels about how we should live while we wait for His coming:

Noah **invested** all he had in the ark and he used all of his talents to finish the project (time, resources, strength and intelligence).

“All that he possessed, he invested in the ark... Every blow struck upon the ark was a witness to the people. Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 95.

Watch

The parable of the good and faithful servant illustrates the need to watch. The word means “*to be alert, wakeful, to pay attention.*” (Matthew 26:38, 40, 41, 42 [the coming of the thief], 42-44; 25:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; Revelation 16:15; 3:3). If a person leaves his house unlocked for a thousand nights and the thief never comes, the tendency is to become lax, complacent and to lower the guard. Then, on night 1001, the thief comes and inadvertently enters the house because everyone is sleeping.

As Jesus delays His coming, the tendency is not to become more alert but rather to lose anxiety and preparedness. As Jesus delays His coming, the tendency is not to become more alert and expectant but rather to lose anxiety and preparedness. However, as time passes we should live in greater expectancy, not less. I have heard members say, “I have heard about Jesus’ coming from my parents and my grandparents and He has not yet come.” Thus, hope grows dim.

Pray

In Mark 13:33 Jesus told the disciples to watch and pray. Instead, they fell asleep in the Garden three times.

Be ready

The parable of the Ten Virgins illustrates the need to be ready for the close of probation and the second coming (Luke 1:17; Matthew 24:44; 25:10; Revelation 19:7; Luke 22:33; Titus 1:3).

When I was a teenager, my mother travelled from Venezuela to Wisconsin Academy to take my older sister to school. We knew the day and hour of her return. We did not worry about cleaning the house and washing the dishes all while she was gone because we figured we could do that right before she

returned. We should have kept the house clean all the time but we procrastinated. Then lo and behold, she came early and surprised us.

This illustrates the reason why Jesus did not tell us the day and hour of his coming. He knew we would procrastinate until the last minute to clean up our act so He left the element of surprise open. We should be ready all the time. Then it makes no difference whether he comes in one month, one year, ten years or twenty; we will always be ready.

Occupy

Noah had an active faith that worked with the tongue and with the hands. Benjamin Franklin once said, 'well done is better than well said'. Likewise, when the work of building the church is finished and all the faithful have entered, then Jesus will come. **Luke 19:13** tells us to occupy until Jesus comes. As stated before, the word 'occupy' is *pragmateuomai* the root word for 'pragmatic'. A pragmatic person puts theory into practice.

Share example of when I first started to travel and a flight was delayed and I had nothing to do. When we are busy, time flies by in a hurry.

“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #21 – FAITHFUL AND UNFAITHFUL SERVANTS

Jesus described the signs of His soon coming in Matthew 24 and then gave two analogies (the fig tree and Noah’s day) to warn His followers when His coming was near, even at the doors. Then, at the end of Matthew 24 and all of Matthew 25 He spoke four parables to admonish His followers to live in expectancy while they waited for His coming.

The first parable is the faithful and unfaithful servant in **Matthew 24:45-51**:

*"Who then is a **faithful and wise** servant, whom his **master** made **ruler** over his **household**, to give them **food** in **due season**? ⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so **doing**. ⁴⁷ Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him **ruler over all his goods**. ⁴⁸ But if that **evil servant** says in his heart, 'My master is **delaying his coming**,' ⁴⁹ and begins to **beat his fellow servants**, and to eat and drink with the **drunkards**, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a **day** when he is **not looking for him** and at an **hour** that he is not aware of, ⁵¹ and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the **hypocrites**. There shall be **weeping** and **gnashing of teeth**."*

Jesus addressed this parable to the **leadership** of the church. In order to understand the meaning of the parable we must interpret the symbols:

- ✓ The **master**: Jesus (John 13:13, 14)

- ✓ The **household**: The church
- ✓ The **members** of the household: The church members
- ✓ **Rulership**: The task of leadership
- ✓ The **faithful** and wise servant: The faithful leaders of the church
- ✓ The **food**: The word of God (Acts 20:28; John 21:15-17)
- ✓ The **due season**: Present truth for this time
- ✓ The **evil servant**: The unfaithful leaders of the church
- ✓ The **fellow servants** of the wicked servant: His colleagues in ministry
- ✓ **Beating** his fellow servants: Considers himself better than his colleagues
- ✓ The **drunkards**: Worldlings who make no profession of religion
- ✓ **Wailing** and gnashing of teeth: The reaction when leaders know that they are lost. At the flood, the wicked wailed.

Both the faithful and the wicked servant **claimed** to work on behalf of the master. We know this because the story tells us that the evil servant **served the master** and the master is a symbol of Jesus. We also know this because the master put the wicked servant with the **hypocrites**. Every single time that Jesus uses the word 'hypocrite' in Matthew it refers to the leadership of the Jewish nation. The word never refers to an unbeliever (Matthew 8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 25:30).

The word **hypocrite** in Greek means "*an actor under an assumed character.*" That is to say, the wicked servant was **pretending** or putting up a façade. He was a **phony** (see Matthew 6:2, 5).

In **Matthew 15:7** Jesus referred to the Jewish leaders as hypocrites because they honored him with their lips but their heart was far from Him. In **Matthew 23**, Jesus seven times referred to the scribes (the theologians) and Pharisees (the ministers) as hypocrites.

The whole point of this parable is that the close of probation and the second coming will catch these **unfaithful leaders by surprise**. Most Christians think that they can prepare to go to heaven until Jesus is coming on the clouds. They do not realize that if they are not ready for the close of probation, they will not be ready for the second coming either. The message of these parables is for

insiders. Jesus admonished the leaders of the church to be faithful stewards in the present and thus prepare for his coming.

Ellen White gave a profound interpretation of this parable:

*“That evil servant who said in his heart, ‘My lord delays His coming,’ professed to be waiting for Christ. He was a ‘servant,’ **outwardly devoted** to the service of God while **at heart** he had yielded to Satan. He does, like the scoffer, openly deny the truth, but reveals in his life the sentiment of the heart—that the Lords coming is delayed. Presumption renders him **careless of eternal interests**. He accepts the **world’s maxims** and **conforms to its customs and practices**. Selfishness, worldly pride, and **ambitions** predominate. Fearing that his brethren may stand **higher than himself**, he begins to **disparage their efforts** and **impugn their motives**. Thus, he smites his fellow servants. As he alienates himself from the people of God, he unites more and more **with the ungodly**. He is found eating and drinking ‘with the drunken’—joining with the **worldlings** and partaking of their spirit. Thus, he is lulled into a **carnal security** and overcome by **forgetfulness**, **indifference**, and **sloth**.*

*The very beginning of the evil was a **neglect of watchfulness and secret prayer**, then came a neglect of **other religious duties**, and thus the way was opened for all the sins that followed. Every Christian will be assailed by the [1] **allurements of the world**, the clamors of the [2] **carnal nature**, and the [3] direct **temptation of Satan**. No one is safe. No matter what our experience has been, no matter how high our station, we need to **watch and pray** continually. We must be daily controlled by the spirit of God or we are controlled by Satan.” Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, pp. 101, 102*

Ellen White deplored the lackadaisical condition of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in her day.

*“Look into **our churches**. There are **only a few** real workers in them. The **majority** are irresponsible men and women. They feel **no burden** for souls. They manifest **no hungering and thirsting** for righteousness. They **never lift** when the work goes hard. These are the ones who have but **one talent**, and hide that*

one in a napkin, and **bury it** in the world; that is, they use all the influence they have in their temporal matters. In seeking the things of this life, they lose the future, eternal life, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. What can be said and done to arouse this class of church members to feel their accountability to God? Must the mass of **professed Christian commandment-keepers** hear the fearful words, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth?" Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, March 14, 1878

The apostle Peter described the character of a responsible leader:

1 Peter 5:1-4

"The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ² **Shepherd the flock** of God which is among you, serving as **overseers**, not by **compulsion** but willingly, not for **dishonest gain** but eagerly; ³ nor as **being lords over** those entrusted to you, but being **examples** to the flock; ⁴ and when the **Chief Shepherd** appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."

The Parable of the Talents

Matthew 25:14-30

"For the kingdom of heaven is like **a man** traveling to a **far country**, who called his **own servants** and **delivered his goods** to them. ¹⁵ And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each **according to his own ability**; and immediately he **went on a journey**. ¹⁶ Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made **another five talents**. ¹⁷ And likewise he who had received two gained **two more also**. ¹⁸ But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid **his lord's money**. ¹⁹ After **a long time** the lord of those servants came and **settled accounts** with them. ²⁰ "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, '**Lord**, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' ²¹ His **lord** said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you

were faithful over a **few things**, I will make you ruler **over many things**. Enter **into the joy** of your **lord**.' ²² He also who had received two talents came and said, '**Lord**, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained **two more talents** besides them.' ²³ His **lord** said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a **few things**, I will make you ruler over **many things**. Enter **into the joy** of your **lord**.' ²⁴ "Then he who had received the **one talent** came and said, '**Lord**, I knew you to be **a hard man**, reaping where **you have not sown**, and gathering where **you have not scattered seed**.' ²⁵ And I was afraid, and went and hid **your talent** in the ground. Look, there you have **what is yours**.' ²⁶ "But his **lord** answered and said to him, 'You **wicked and lazy** servant, [if] you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. ²⁷ So you ought to have deposited **my** money **with the bankers**, and at my coming, I would have received back **my own** with **interest**.' ²⁸ So take the talent from him, and give it to him **who has ten talents**.' ²⁹ 'For to everyone who has [the original amount plus interest], more will be given, and he will have **abundance**; but from him who **does not have** [the original amount plus interest], even **what he has** [the one talent] **will be taken away**.' ³⁰ And cast the unprofitable servant into the **outer darkness**. There will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**.'

The Symbols of the Parable

The symbols of the parable

- ✓ **The Lord**: Jesus.
- ✓ **His servants**: Professed believers.
- ✓ **His goods**: Talents such as time, money, influence, mental abilities, speech and health to minister to others.
- ✓ **The far country**: Heaven.
- ✓ **Number of talents to each**: According to their ability to use them.
- ✓ **The accounting**: The judgment.
- ✓ **Faithful in few things**: The use of our talents in this life.
- ✓ **Ruler over many things**: Greater responsibilities and talents for service in the world to come.

- ✓ **The unfaithful steward**: Those who talk the talk but do not walk the walk.
- ✓ **The joy of the Lord**: Entering into the joy of Jesus because of the salvation of souls.
- ✓ **Casting into outer darkness**: The final reward of the unfaithful.

For His Own Servants

The parable of the talents applies to those who **claim to follow** Jesus as Savior and Lord. We know this for at least **three reasons**.

- ✓ First, Matthew 24 tells us that Jesus was speaking privately to His **own disciples** (Matthew 24:3, 4).
- ✓ Second, the parable refers to Jesus as Lord and the disciples as 'his **own servants**' (25:14).
- ✓ Third, as we shall see, the expression '**weeping and gnashing** of teeth' always applies to unfaithful people who claim to serve God.

The servants of the parable **all entered the service** of Christ. The word 'own' is **emphatic** in the Greek. Jesus could have **merely said** that the lord 'called his servants'. However, He said that, 'he called his **own** servants.' Ellen White wrote that, '*It is those **who profess** to have accepted Christ's service who in the parable are represented as His own servants.*' Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 326

The Departure of the Master

The **departure** of the Master to a far country represents the **ascension of Jesus** to heaven. The **goods** that the lord lent to His servants **belong to Him** (25:14). At least **five times** the parable tells us that the master delivered **His goods** to **His own servants**.

The Talents

What are the 'goods' that Jesus delivered to His servants? Ellen White answered:

*“The **talents** that Christ entrusts to His church represent especially the **gifts and blessings** imparted by the Holy Spirit.” Ellen G. White, Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 327*

Paul explained that when Jesus went to heaven He gave gifts to men:

Ephesians 4:8

*“When **he [Jesus]** ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and **gave gifts** unto men.”*

Among the gifts that Christ gave to His church when He poured out the Holy Spirit were apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healings working of miracles, discerning of spirits, different kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues, healings, helps, administrations, ministry, exhortation, liberality, leadership and mercy (1 Corinthians 12:8-11, 27-28; Ephesians 4:11-13; Romans 12:6-8).

Christ **did not give** these talents to His servants for **self-improvement**. The talents are **functional**; Christ gives them for a very **specific purpose**, to serve our fellow human beings and to **bring souls** to the feet of Jesus.

What do the **talents represent** in a **broader** sense?

*“The special gifts of the Spirit are not the only talents represented in the parable. It includes all gifts and endowments, whether **original** or **acquired**, **natural** or **spiritual**. All are to be employed in Christ’s service. In becoming His disciples, we **surrender ourselves** to Him with all that we are and have. These gifts **He returns to us** purified and ennobled, **to be used** for His glory in **blessing our fellow men**.” Ellen G. White, Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 328*

The Purpose of the Talents

Talents, time, strength, money, influence, speech, and other endowments will be of **no avail** unless God **sanctifies them** by the baptism of the **Holy Spirit**. A **worldly person** may have abilities and gifts and use them for his **own self-**

interest and glory. However, when the receiver surrenders them to Jesus, they become a blessing to others. A singer may have a beautiful voice that he or she uses for his or her own self-glorification and financial gain. However, when that person surrenders the gift to the Lord, the Holy Spirit sanctifies it for the salvation of souls.

According to Ability

The Lord gives talents according to a person's ability to use them (Matthew 25:15). If God gave more gifts than the person's ability to use them, they would go to waste. It would be unfair for God to expect more where He gave less or less when He gave more.

Not everyone has the same degree of ability. Some people have less talents than others, due, partially at least, to inherited and cultivated tendencies. It would not be wise to put a Porsche engine in a Volkswagen Beetle. However, you would expect a Volkswagen to function as a Volkswagen and a Porsche to perform as a Porsche.

In an unusual twist, the person who received the least talents was unfaithful, not the one who received the most (Matthew 25:16-18). Sometimes we think that the rich are in the greatest danger of misusing what God gives them. However, many who have little talent use the lack as an excuse to 'bury' what they have. So to speak, they bury their Lord's money.

In this parable, Jesus sought to teach that faithfulness in the small things in this life prepares one for greater responsibilities and service in the life to come:

Luke 16:10

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

Regarding this, Ellen White wrote:

"The question that most concerns us is not, how much have I received? But rather what am I doing with that which I have? The development of all our powers is

the **first duty** we owe to God and to our fellow men.” Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 329

Either we **use** what God gives us or we **will lose it**. God **expects more** from those who have **received more** and less from those who have received less. By way of example, God will expect far more from **Seventh-day Adventists** than He will from those who have **not received the light** and the privileges that we have.

Is God a Taskmaster?

The servant who received the one talent looked upon God as a **taskmaster or dictator** who **takes advantage** of his subjects. The servant’s assessment might have been true except for the fact that God gave Him **His resources** in the first place. The **master sowed** by giving his servant the one talent and therefore he **expected to reap** what he sowed. He who sows has every right to expect to reap.

The unfaithful servant was **prevaricating** when he complained that the lord wanted to reap where he had not sown. The owner sowed so he had **a right to demand** a return of ‘**my** money with interest’ (Matthew 25:27).

The Long Delay

The long time between the Lord’s departure and reckoning day represents the period between the **ascension of Christ** and the **judgment**. What are we supposed to be doing while we wait for the Lord to return?

*“The time is to be spent, not in **idle waiting**, but in **diligent working**.” Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 325*

In the parable of the pounds, Jesus told His servants to **occupy** until he returned (**Luke 19:13**). The word ‘occupy’ is **pragmateuomai**. This word appears **only this once** in the New Testament and is the source of our word ‘**pragmatic**’. The word means to be ‘concerned with **actual practice** . . . not with theory or speculation’.

Settling Accounts

The settling of accounts in the parable represents the pre-advent investigative judgment (Matthew 25:19). When our names appear in the judgment we must render an account for how we used the talents we received:

2 Corinthians 5:10

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

Luke 12:48

“For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”

In the judgment, Jesus will not expect as much, say, from Martin Luther as he will from a Seventh-day Adventist. Luther never kept the Sabbath or practiced health reform but he used and multiplied all the resources God gave him to the utmost. He wrote, preached, taught, debated, with all the knowledge, zeal and energy that God gave him.

Why did the Lord give the talent of the unfaithful to the one who had the five talents? The answer is simple. We invest our money where it pays the greatest dividends (Matthew 25:28). If I owned a corporation where a worker multiplies my assets twice as much as another, with whom would I invest my money?

The expression: *‘To everyone who has, more will be given’* means that whoever has the original money plus interest, will receive more. Simply having what the owner gave originally does not guarantee receiving more. The man who had one talent returned the same amount to the owner and therefore he did not receive more. The one who did not have is the one who did not multiply what the lord gave him.

The Joy of the Lord

What is the meaning of the expression ‘enter into the joy of your lord’? Several texts provide the answer. **Isaiah 53** describes the suffering servant who bore the sins of the world upon Himself. **After** His **grueling experience**, the text tells us that He will see the **travail of His soul** and be satisfied:

Isaiah 53:10-11 KJV

*“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall **see his seed**, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. ¹¹ **He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied**: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.”*

Ellen White explained the meaning of the phrase ‘shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied’:

*“Those who walk even as Christ walked, who are patient, gentle, kind, meek, and lowly in heart, those who yoke up with Christ and lift His burdens, who **yearn for souls as He yearned for them**—these will **enter into the joy** of their Lord. They will see **with Christ** the **travail of His soul**, and be satisfied. Heaven will triumph, for the **vacancies made in heaven** by the fall of Satan and his angels will be filled by the redeemed of the Lord.” Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, May 29, 1900.*

The **NIV** and **New Century** translations capture well the meaning of the expression ‘enter into the joy of your lord’.

- ✓ NIV: ‘Come and **share** your master's happiness!’
- ✓ NCV: ‘Come and **share** my joy with me.’

After describing the heroes of faith in **Hebrews 11**, the apostle Paul described the joy that the Father set before Jesus:

Hebrews 12:1-3

*"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for **the joy that was set before Him** endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

What was 'the joy that was set before Jesus'? **Ellen White** explained:

*"The joy that was set before Jesus was that of **seeing souls redeemed** by the sacrifice of His glory, His honor, His riches, and His own life. The **salvation of man was His joy**. When all the redeemed shall be gathered into the kingdom of God, He will **see of the travail of His soul** and be satisfied." Ellen G. White, That I May Know Him, p. 368*

Even the **Lord will overflow** with joy and **singing** when the redeemed gather in the kingdom:

Zephaniah 3:17

*"The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will **rejoice over you with gladness**, He will quiet you with His love, **He will rejoice over you** with singing."*

*"When Christ's followers give back to the Lord His own, they are **accumulating treasure** that will be given to them when they shall hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant; . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Matthew 25:23; Hebrews 12:2. The **joy of seeing souls redeemed**, souls eternally saved, **is the reward** of all that put their feet in the footprints of Him who said, "Follow Me." Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 523*

Faithful in Little and Much

We cannot expect to reign with Jesus in the coming kingdom unless we have been faithful in our responsibilities on this earth. If we have been unfaithful here, how can we expect to rule there?

Daniel and his three friends are an illustration of this principle. The Hebrew worthies were faithful in the matter of diet when they arrived in Babylon and therefore God placed them over greater responsibilities in the kingdom. If they had been unfaithful in the small things, they would never have ruled over much! If we do not develop and multiply the resources God has given us in this life, how can God trust us to do so in the life to come?

Wailing and Gnashing of Teeth

The judgment against the unfaithful servant who buried his talent was drastic. According to Matthew 25:30, his master threw him into outer darkness where *‘there will be the wailing and gnashing of teeth.’*

Jesus always used expression ‘wailing and gnashing of teeth’ to describe what would happen to the unfaithful Jewish nation that received many blessings from the Lord but did not use them to bless others.

We find one example of the meaning of the expression ‘wailing and gnashing of teeth’ in the story of the healing of the centurion’s servant (Matthew 8). The centurion was not a Jew; he was a Roman.

After healing the servant, Jesus gave the experience an ironic twist. At the end of the story, Jesus announced that the gentile centurion would sit with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom while His unfaithful chosen people would be cast where there is *‘wailing and gnashing of teeth’*.

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus teaches the same lesson. Lazarus, who represents the gentiles, ended up in the bosom of Abraham while the rich man (representing the Jewish theocracy), ended up wailing in hades. The

centurion had greater faith in Jesus than most of the Jews. The centurion believed that Jesus could heal his servant by just **speaking the word**.

This parable clearly teaches that although God saves us by **grace through faith**, God will **judge us by our works** because they reveal if our faith is genuine. The parable seems to teach righteousness by multiplying talents. However, such is not the case. If a person really loves the Lord, he will multiply His Lord's resources. However, if the person perceives **God as a taskmaster**, then he will not multiply what belongs to his Lord.

James 2 teaches the same lesson. **Genuine faith produces works**. A workless faith is a counterfeit faith. A **dead faith** will never save anyone. Paul described the **root** of salvation and Jesus described the **fruit**. Jesus did not say, 'by their root shall you know them'. He said, 'by their fruits you shall know them.'



“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #22 – REFLECTIONS ON ECUMENICAL CHARITY

In the first article in this series, we considered the papal strategy to win the support of the Socialist/Globalist powers of the world. In the present article, we will consider the papal strategy to overcome Protestantism.

In order to recuperate the power that it lost, the papacy needs to **do more** than gain the support of the secular powers of the world. On the second front, she needs to gain the support of **Protestants** because the United States is a country built on Protestant principles that stand in stark contrast to papal principles. Once the papacy fells Protestantism, it will have the support of both **Protestants** and **the secular powers** to implement its agenda.

Ellen White warned about the compromises and concessions that Protestants have made to the papacy:

*“Protestants have **tampered with** and patronized popery; they have made **compromises and concessions** which papists themselves **are surprised** to see and **fail to understand**. Men are closing their eyes to the real character of Romanism and the dangers to be apprehended from her supremacy. The people need to be aroused to resist the advances of this most **dangerous foe** to civil and religious liberty.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, 566*

If Protestantism stood on the **firm platform** of Bible truth, it could **never merge** with the papacy. The **freedoms** that we enjoy today in **American society** are due to the spirit of Protestantism. These freedoms include **individualism**, a strong **work ethic**, freedom of **speech**, freedom of the **press**, freedom **enterprise**, freedom of **assembly**, freedom to ask the civil power for a **redress of grievances** and freedom of **conscience** and **religion**. All of these blessings and freedoms stand in stark contrast to papal principles.

Seven Ecumenical Factors

In this article, I would like to bring to view seven factors that have led to the growing love affair between Protestants and the papacy:

- ✓ The election of John Kennedy
- ✓ Vatican Council II
- ✓ Liberal ideas
- ✓ False charity
- ✓ Common Points of Doctrine
- ✓ A common subjective charismatic experience
- ✓ A change in prophetic hermeneutics

The Election of John F. Kennedy

Although a Roman Catholic, President John F. Kennedy upheld the foundational principles of the United States Constitution. In the presidential campaign of 1960, the Protestant pastors in Houston, Texas wondered whether Kennedy would follow the directives of the Constitution rather than the instructions of the pope should he become president. On September 12, 1960, he addressed the Greater Houston Ministerial Association regarding their concerns. In his eloquent and inimitable style, Kennedy told the pastors:

*"I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is **absolute**; where no Catholic prelate would tell the President—should he be Catholic—how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote; where no church or church school is granted any **public funds** or political preference, and where no*

man is denied **public office** merely because his religion differs from the President who might appoint him, or the people who might elect him.

*I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish; where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the Pope, the National Council of Churches or any other ecclesiastical source; where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials, and where **religious liberty is so indivisible that an act against one church is treated as an act against all.***"

Vatican Council II

Clearly, in 1960, Protestants still feared the intentions of the Roman Catholic papacy. However, the election of John Kennedy went a long way toward melting the ice. Vatican Council II from 1962 to 1965 also played a role in dissolving the ambience of suspicion and fear.

At the beginning of the Council, Pope John XXIII invited various Protestant representatives as observers and referred to them as separated brethren. The conciliar documents even went so far as to accept the validity of Protestant baptism. Vatican II gave the Catholic Church a seemingly benevolent facelift under the catchword *aggiornamento*, renewal. In the course of time, this new 'look' led Protestants to lower their guard and to lose their fear of the papacy.

We find an example of this shift of Protestants toward the papacy in an interview that Larry King had with Billy Graham on January 21, 1997, on his program *Larry King Live*. At the time, Pope John Paul II was visiting **Salt Lake City**.

King: "Do you feel comfortable with Salt Lake City? Do you feel comfortable with the Vatican?"

Graham: "Oh, I'm very comfortable with the Vatican. I have been to see the pope several times, and, in fact, the day that he was inaugurated, made pope, I was preaching in his Cathedral in Krakow. I was his guest."

King: "You were preaching in his church the day he was made pope?"

Graham: *"That is correct, in Krakow." (Graham chuckled)*

King: *"You must have been shocked."*

Graham: *"Of course I was. There was shouting on the streets, you know, the next day: 'Polish pope, Polish pope.'"*

King: *"Do you like this pope?"*

Graham: *"I like him very much. He's very conservative . . . He and I agree on almost everything."*

Most people probably do not know how deeply Billy Graham was involved in the ecumenical movement. Just to give one example, in 1967 he received an **honorary doctorate** degree from **Belmont Abbey College**, a Jesuit institution (please do a search on 'Billy Graham and Belmont Abbey' for the multiple contacts that Billy Graham had with Roman Catholic leaders and institutions).

In the decades of the 80's and 90's, Protestants and Catholics joined forces to fight against what they perceived to be the common enemy, secular humanism. **Ralph Reed**, the first president of Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, explained the alliance:

*"The future of American politics lies in the growing strength of Evangelicals and their Roman Catholic **allies**. . . John F. Kennedy's election in 1960 buried the Catholic bogeyman forever. No longer **burdened by the past**, Roman Catholics, Evangelicals, Greek Orthodox and many religious conservatives from the mainline denominations are forging **a new alliance** that promises to be among the most powerful and important in the modern political era." (Ralph Reed, Politically Incorrect, p. 16)*

In the war against secular humanism, Evangelicals and Catholics signed the document, **"Evangelicals and Catholics Together."** The signatories were forty of the most influential Evangelical and Roman Catholic leaders in the United States. Protestant Chuck Colson and Lutheran turned Catholic, John Richard Niehaus, developed the **25-page document**.

An article in USA Today described the ecumenical nature of the document:

*"The leaders in a statement are urging the nation's fifty-two million Catholics and thirteen million evangelicals to no longer hold each other at theological arm's length and stop aggressive proselytizing of each other's flocks, in short, to turn their theological swords into a recognition of a **common faith**."* **USA Today**, March 30, 1994:

In 1995, Keith Fournier, one of the signers of the document wrote a book titled, **House United** where he described the document's incredible **ecumenical implications**:

*"Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox can **come together, must come together, and are coming together**. The **wall of separation is cracking**; portions of the wall are beginning to **fall away**. Christians are waking up and starting to see each other as Family." Keith Fournier, *House United*, p. 336.*

Ralph Reed, speaking to Catholics at the Catholic Campaign for America, described the ecumenical mood of the time:

*"The truth is, you and I are uniting . . . We are **coming together** because whatever **theological differences** there are, there is far **more that unites us** and **brings us together** than divides us and separates us . . . The good news is the **chasm is being bridged** and that those **walls are crumbling** . . . The truth my friends is this. **Catholicism never has been, is not today, and never will be a threat to American democracy**. It was and remains the most colorful and the most vibrant thread running through the tapestry of American democracy.*

*"Cardinal Gibbons said this: he said, **No constitution is more in harmony with Catholic principles than the American constitution** and no religion is more in accord with that **constitution than the Catholic religion**."*

In 1999, Roman Catholic and Lutheran scholars signed the *Joint Declaration of Justification by Faith* where they agreed, after years of study, that the Catholic and Lutheran churches share a common view of righteousness by faith.

Liberal Ideas

Some may wonder how Protestants could ever unite with the papacy when their principles and doctrines stand in **stark contrast** to papal principles and doctrines. Ellen White provided a clue:

*“And this **[Catholicism]** is the religion that Protestants are beginning to look upon with so much favor, and which will eventually be united with Protestantism. This union will not take place, however, by a **change in Catholicism**; for Rome never changes. She claims infallibility. **Protestantism will change**. The **adoption of liberal ideas** on its part will bring it where it **can clasp** the hand of Catholicism.” The Review and Herald, June 1, 1886*

Of special note in this quotation is the phrase, ‘the adoption of liberal ideas’. What did **Ellen White** mean when she wrote that ‘liberal ideas’ would make it possible for Protestantism to ‘clasp the hand of Catholicism’? We must go to other places in her writings to determine her meaning.

Ellen White used the word ‘liberal’ in **different ways**. Most of the time she used it to describe **generosity** in giving. In this sense, her use of the word ‘liberal’ was **positive**. To Seventh-day Adventist ministers she wrote:

*“A responsibility rests upon the ministers of Christ to educate the churches to be **liberal**.” The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 6, p. 1103*

If taken out of context, one might think that Ellen White was admonishing ministers to be **theologically liberal**. However, the context reveals that she was discussing the need for faithful and generous stewardship.

Ellen White also used the word ‘liberal’ in a positive sense to describe the broad and free principles upon which the **United States** was built. Referring to the rise of the United States and its originating principles, she wrote:

“The lamblike horns and dragon voice of the symbol point to a striking contradiction between the professions and the practice of the nation thus represented. The “speaking” of the nation is the action of its legislative and judicial authorities. By such

*action it will give the lie to those **liberal and peaceful principles** which it has put forth as the foundation of its policy.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 442*

The context of this quotation indicates that by ‘liberal and peaceful principles’ she was referring to the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights (see Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 441).

However, Ellen White also used the word ‘liberal’ and ‘liberalism’ in a **negative sense**. According to her, a counterfeit conversion experience can be of two shapes:

*“The **purity and holiness** of God is the great subject that must awaken the senses to the necessity of **true conversion**. While on one hand danger lurks in a narrow philosophy and a **hard, cold rule of orthodoxy**, on the other hand, there is great danger in a **careless, impure liberalism**.”*

In the previous context to this statement, Ellen White described liberalism as a ‘*lax, loose course of action*’. Ellen White here warns against two extremes. One extreme is a lax and loose Christian experience and the other is a narrow adherence to truth without a conversion experience. Ellen White wrote that true conversion involves both faith and practice:

*“Religion comprises **practice** as well as **faith**; the **regulations of the life** as well as the rectification of **the heart**. No man can be a correct citizen without **true piety**—the strictest integrity combined with the purest devotion.*

*Sinners are continually crying, ‘You are narrow, so narrow.’ ‘Liberalism,’ cry the **lawless**; ‘bring not your claims of law upon us.’ ‘The religion of Christ,’ says another, ‘is too hard. I cannot be a Christian; it involves too much.’ Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases, Vol. 20, p. 71*

‘Liberal’, in this sense, leads to a de-emphasis on the importance of lifestyle and an over emphasis on faith. This leads to a **theological ‘flexibility’** that allows Christians to accommodate the Bible to the whims of culture in the name of **diversity, inclusiveness** and theological **pluralism**, without regard to **Bible principles and doctrines**. In some liberal Protestant churches, it has led to accommodating the biblical story of creation and the worldwide flood to the **discoveries of science**, so

called. In many liberal Protestant churches, the rejection of biblical authority has also led to the ordination of women and gay clergy, the approval of gay marriage and support for gender confusion.

False Charity

Another factor that has led to the love affair between Protestants and the papacy is what Ellen White referred to as ‘false charity’.

Ellen White used the expression ‘false charity’ to describe the demise of Protestantism’s protest against evils that the word of God openly condemns. She referred to Protestantism’s liberality as ‘false charity’ or what we today call ‘political correctness’. False charity means ‘turning a blind eye’ to those who practice **open sin** for fear of **offending them**. Ellen White wrote about how false charity will prepare the way for the union of Protestants with Catholics:

“It is not without reason that the claim has been put forth in Protestant countries that Catholicism differs less widely from Protestantism than in former times. There has been a change; but the change is not in the papacy. Catholicism indeed resembles much of the Protestantism that now exists, because Protestantism has so greatly degenerated since the days of the Reformers.

*As the Protestant churches have been seeking the **favor of the world, false charity** has blinded their eyes. They do not see but that it is right to believe **good of all evil**, and as the inevitable result they will finally believe **evil of all good**.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 570, 571*

The prophet **Isaiah** warned that there could be no compromise between good and evil:

“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”

In other places, Ellen White explained what she meant by the expression ‘false charity’.

*"Bible charity is **not sentimentalism**, but love in active exercise. To heal the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, "**Peace, peace**," when there is no peace **is called charity**. To confederate together, to **call sin holiness** and truth, **is called charity**; but it is the **counterfeit article**."*

*"Those who would **cover evil** under **false charity**, say to the sinner, 'It shall be well with thee.' Charity **hates the sin**, but loves the sinner, and will **warn him** faithfully of his danger, pointing him to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." *An Appeal to our Ministers and Conference Committees.*" (1892)*

*"In the work of reform to be carried forward today, there is need of men who like Ezra and Nehemiah, will not palliate or **excuse sin**, nor shrink from vindicating the honor of God. Those upon whom rests the burden of this work will not hold their peace **when wrong is done** neither will they **cover evil** with a cloak of **false charity**." Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 675.*

*"You must have charity," is the cry heard everywhere, especially from those who profess sanctification. However, **true charity** is too pure to cover an **unconfessed sin**. While we are to love the souls for whom Christ died, we are to make **no compromise with evil**. We are not to unite with the rebellious and **call this charity**. God requires His people in this age of the world to **stand for the right** as unflinchingly as did John [the apostle] in opposition to **soul-destroying errors**." Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 554*

Where is the voice of Protestantism today when it comes to open sin in society and in the church, such as gay marriage, gay clergy, abortion, LGBTQ, materialistic greed, and worldly entertainment? Political correctness has muted the 'voice crying in the wilderness'.

Common Points of Doctrine

Another factor that has brought Protestants and Catholics together is the de-emphasis on the importance of sound doctrine. Ellen White warned:

*"The wide **diversity of belief** in the Protestant churches is regarded by many as decisive proof that no effort to secure a forced uniformity can ever be made. However,*

there has been for years, in churches of the Protestant faith, a strong and growing sentiment in favor of a **union based upon common points of doctrine**. To secure such a union, the discussion of subjects upon which all were not agreed—however important they might be from a **Bible standpoint**—must necessarily be waived.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 444

“When the leading churches of the United States, **uniting upon such points of doctrine as are held by them in common**, shall influence the State to enforce their decrees and to sustain their institutions, then Protestant America will have formed an **image of the Roman hierarchy**, and the infliction of civil penalties upon dissenters will inevitably result.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 445

Catholics and Protestants have many doctrines in common. Both believe in basic Christian doctrines such as the virgin birth, the perfect life of Christ, His death, His resurrection and His second coming. However, two doctrines upon which virtually all Catholics and Protestants agree is Sunday sacredness and the immortality of the soul. Ellen White wrote that these two doctrines would bring Catholics and Protestants together:

“Through the **two great errors**, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome. The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 588

In a speech to the Catholic Campaign for America, Ralph Reed, the first president of Pat Robertson’s Christian Coalition, explained that the alliance of Protestants with Catholics would be based on ‘essential points’:

“[The union of Catholics with Evangelicals] is the **emerging force** in the electorate today. The Pope does use the term hierarchy of doctrine. Father Robertson said: ‘Obviously some teachings are more important than others and there has to be an

agreement on those essential points while leaving considerable latitude on other points that are **less essential** to the faith.”

Keith Fournier, who referred to himself as an evangelical Catholic, wrote:

*“We Christians have **differences**—important, critical differences. But we have far **more in common** both in beliefs and in mission. These believers have built on their **commonalities** without denying their differences.” Keith Fournier, *Evangelical Catholics*, p. 12*

In November of 2014, Pastor Rick Warren attended the ‘Complementarity of Man and Woman’ interfaith meeting at the Vatican. Heather Clark reported Warren’s remarks:

*“We have **far more in common** than what divides us. . . They would say: ‘We believe in the Trinity; we believe in the Bible; we believe in the resurrection; we believe in salvation through Jesus Christ, **these are the big issues**. . . Sometimes Protestants think that Catholics worship Mary, like she’s another god, but that’s not exactly Catholic doctrine. . . People say, ‘what are the saints all about? Why are you praying to the saints?’ And when you understand what they mean by what they are saying, there is a **whole lot more commonality** [that we have with Roman Catholics. . . There are still real differences—no doubt about that, but **the most important thing** is, if you love Jesus we are on the **same team**. . . When it comes to family, we are co-workers in the field in this for the protection of the sanctity of life, the sanctity of sex and the sanctity of marriage, so there is **a great commonality** and there is no division on any of those three.” (“Warren’s Call for Christians to Unite with Catholics, ‘Holy Father’ Raising Concerns”, December 2, 2014 filed under ‘Apostasy, Top Stories, World’)*

Is it true that there is ‘more that unites us than divides us’? The answer is a robust, no! Contrary to what many believe, the **main contribution** of Luther to the Protestant Reformation was not justification by faith but rather *Sola Scriptura*. Luther discovered righteousness by faith because he first discovered the Scriptures. Let us formulate a series of questions to see how much Catholics and Protestants really have in common:

Are Protestants willing to accept the idea that the **sacrifice of Jesus** on the cross was **insufficient** and therefore the priest must sacrifice Him anew in every mass?

Are Protestants willing to accept the idea that some persons go to **purgatory** to purge sins that Jesus **already forgave** when they received Him as their Savior?

Are Protestants willing to accept the idea that it is all right to make images and **bow** before them in violation of the Second Commandment?

Are Protestants willing to accept the **primacy of the Pope** as the visible sovereign of the Christian World?

Are Protestants willing to accept the idea that Mary is the **Mother of God**, that her mother conceived her **without original sin**, that she **never sinned**, that she **ascended bodily** to heaven and that she **now intercedes** for us in heaven as our mediatrix?

Are Protestants willing to accept the practice of **canonizing** the saints?

Are Protestants willing to accept the idea that the Bible is not our **only rule of faith and practice** and that the Bible and tradition have the same level of authority?

Are Protestants willing to accept the idea that the Church can give individuals **indulgences for sin** for doing penance?

Are Protestants willing to accept the idea that it is all right to **confess your sins** to a human priest instead of directly to God?

The matters that divide Protestants and Catholics are important. Will these doctrinal differences be resolved when we get to heaven as some have suggested? Is it true that there is **more that unites** us than divides us?

The change in attitude of Protestants was exemplified several years ago by the late **Paul Crouch**, founder of TBN, the largest Christian television network in the world, when he said, *"I'm not protesting anything; I am deleting the word Protestant from my vocabulary"*.

The late **Robert Schuler**, founder of the Crystal Cathedral, once stated that he hoped the day would come when the **entire Christian world** would accept Pope John Paul II as its leader.

A Common Charismatic Experience

Probably most readers of this article have heard of the late Tony Palmer. Palmer was an Anglican clergyman of the **Celtic tradition** whose denomination has fragmented into multiple **offshoots**. For this reason, he **yearned for unity** based, not on doctrine, but on a common **charismatic experience**.

Television evangelist Kenneth Copland invited Palmer to speak at his Southwest Leader's Convention on February 25, 2014. To the hundreds of enthusiastic leaders Palmer claimed to have come **'in the spirit of Elijah'** *to bring the hearts of the sons to the fathers and the fathers to the sons*'. By this, he meant that God called him to **unite all Christians**.

In his talk, Palmer lamented that **after Martin Luther**, Protestantism had splintered into **33,000** denominations. This fact led him to conclude that **'diversity is divine'** and **division is 'diabolic'**.

Palmer affirmed that God gave charismatics the glory so that they could be one. Downplaying the importance of doctrine, Palmer said to the enthusiastic crowd:

*"It is the glory that glues us together, not the doctrine. It is the glory. If you accept that the glory of God is living in me and the presence of God is in you, that's all we need because **God will sort out all our doctrine later upstairs**."*

He continued:

*"Christian unity is the basis of **our credibility** because Jesus said that until we are one the world will not believe."*

In **1999**, Lutherans and Catholics signed a **joint declaration** on righteousness by faith where they claimed to agree on the doctrine of righteousness by faith. **Five**

years later the **Methodists** signed the declaration as well. This led Palmer to say that **Luther's protest was over**. Therefore, he asked the audience:

"Brothers and sisters, Luther's protest is over, is yours?"

Palmer lamented that until 2014 **no evangelical church** had yet signed the Joint Declaration. He told the delegates, that '*this must be fixed.*'

He continued:

*"The protest has been **over for 15 years**. If there is no longer any protest, how can there be a protestant church? **Maybe now we are all Catholics again.**"*

Palmer was a close friend of Pope Francis I and visited him shortly before the convention. During the visit with the pope, Palmer recorded a video message from the pope to the hundreds of leaders at the convention. The pope expressed his innermost feelings:

"I am yearning that this separation comes to an end and gives us communion. I am yearning for that embrace."

At the end of his message, the Pope said:

*'Please **pray for me**, I need your prayers; and I will pray for you, but I need your prayers; and let us pray to the Lord that **He unites us all**. Come on, we are brothers. Let us give each other a **spiritual hug** and let God complete the work that He has begun; and this is a miracle; the **miracle of unity has begun**. I ask you to bless me; I bless you. From brother to brother I embrace you.'*

After playing the pope's message to the convention delegates, **Kenneth Copland** moved slowly to the stage repeating several times: "*Glory, glory, glory!*"

As Copland moved onto the stage, the delegates stood, applauded and raised their hands. Copland then said, "*We do not know how to pray for him as we ought*" and began praying in tongues.

Copland then invited Palmer to **bring his cell phone** to the stage where he sent a glowing message back to the pope:

*"These leaders represent literally tens of thousands that **love you**, that believe that **God is with you**, and in answer to your request we have just prayed for you and with you, and we did so in the spirit. We do **bless you**; we **receive your blessing**. It is very, very important to us. And we bless you with all of our **hearts**, we bless you with all of our **souls**, we bless you with all of our **might**, and we thank you sir, we thank God for you, and so, all of us declare together: **"Be blessed."**"*

Several months later, Pope Francis invited a group of influential Evangelical leaders to meet with him at the Vatican on June 23, 2014.

On another note, an interesting article appeared in the online edition of Christianity Today on **March 10, 2014**. The title read:

"Sweden's Pentecostal Mega-pastor Converts to Catholicism"

The **subtitle** of the article read:

"He stuns his Word of Life mega-church in Sunday sermon: He's crossing the Tiber."

The article explained:

*"Just who is Ulf Eckman? He founded the 3,300-member mega-church in one of Sweden's largest cities. He operated the largest Bible school in Scandinavia. It has educated more than 9,500 students in the period of its existence. On **Sunday, March 9**, he announced to his **stunned congregation** that he was leaving his congregation to join the Roman Catholic Church."*

What reason did Eckman give for his reunion with Rome?

*"I have come to realize that the movement I, for the last 30 years have represented, despite some successes and much good that has occurred on various mission fields, is **part of the ongoing Protestant fragmentation** of Christendom".*

He stated that he would now dedicate his time to **pursue unity** among Christian movements and denominations. He explained that as he became **acquainted with Roman Catholics** over a decade he grew **closer and closer** to them. In his own words:

*"It really challenged our **protestant prejudices**, and we realized that we in many cases did not have **any basis for our criticism of them**." "We needed to know the Catholic faith better. This led us to realize that it was actually **Jesus Christ who led us to unite** with the Catholic Church."*

He also said:

*"We have seen a great love for Jesus and a **sound theology founded on** the Bible **and** classic dogma [**in other words, 'tradition'**]. We have **experienced** the richness of sacramental life. We have seen the logic in having a **solid structure** for priesthood that keeps the faith of the church and **passes it on** from **one generation to the next**. We have met an ethical and moral strength and consistency that dare to **face up to the general opinion** [social factors], and a kindness towards the **poor and weak**. And, last but not least, we have come in contact with representatives for millions of **charismatic** Catholics and we have seen their living faith."*

On May 5, 2014, Tony Palmer was Robison's special guest on his television program "Life Today". Tony Palmer stated:

*"**Diversity** is divine; it is **division** that is diabolic. . . Jesus' theology is that if God is in you, and you are in God and God is in me and I am in God, we are one together in God. . . Our sin is that we do not make our **unity visible** because we allow our **diversities to divide** us and if we elevate anything to divide us, we are elevating it above the cross. So, whether it is a **doctrine or a dogma** or an expression, if you use that to divide our unity you have elevated that doctrine or whatever it may be above the cross. Now we are not saying 'put doctrine aside, certainly not!' Pope Francis recognizes only **two fundamental doctrines**—love for God and love for your neighbor, end of doctrine!"*

Another television personality that visited the pope was James Robison. He met with Pope Francis in June of 2014 with Kenneth Copland. Upon meeting Francis, Robison said:

*"Pope Francis, let me just say to you that **I see Jesus in you**; and in Christ we are **brothers**, we are family. Thank you for speaking **the language of love** that all may come to know him and love him and love one another."*

After Robison spoke these words, Robison gave Pope Francis the first high five in papal history!

Pope Francis also invited megachurch pastor Joel Osteen to the Vatican. After the meeting, Osteen told local television station *Click 2 Houston*:

*“I just felt very **honored and very humbled**”.*

Osteen then gushed about the tour the pope gave him of the Vatican:

*“It was amazing; and even to go back into that part of the Vatican—there’s **so much history** there, the place that they took us through. You feel that deep **respect and reverence for God**.”*

Osteen also met with other **Vatican staff** during his visit, including Secretary of State, Cardinal **Pietro Parolli**, and had dinner with an unspecified staff member.

Prior to meeting with the pope, **Osteen attended mass** in St. Peters and stood in the midst of a crowd of **100,000 people**. He then described what the pope did after mass:

*“Afterward, [the pope] spent an hour and a half going through the crowd with the Pope mobile, greeting people; it was very heartwarming to see him **caring for people**.”*

Osteen went on:

*“I love the fact that’s he’s made the Church **more inclusive**; not trying to make it smaller, but to try to make it larger—to take everybody in. So, that just **resonates with me**.”*

Apostasy in Geneva

On February 29, 2020, for the first time in close to 500 years, the Roman Catholic Church celebrated Mass in John Calvin’s Cathedral of Saint-Pierre de Genève. After the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in 1517, John Calvin’s Reformed Church destroyed the statues and paintings and banned Catholic worship in St-Pierre. The last Mass took place there in 1535. An article in the Christian Post described the ecumenical Mass in the planning stages:

"In a first since the Reformation era, Protestants are set to receive communion during a Catholic mass at a historic Cathedral in Geneva, Switzerland, John Calvin's adopted home."

"Emmanuel Fuchs, president of the Protestant Church in Geneva and a pastor in Saint-Pierre, added that the invitation indicates that 'the climate in Geneva is extremely favorable and fruitful with the Roman Catholic Church. We have made notable progress in terms of ecumenism, especially with the Joint Declaration, signed in 2017, which recognizes our respective ministries.'

"As Pope Francis said, ecumenism is achieved by walking. We are trying to walk together in the hope that when we have made enough progress, the obstacles that seem to us today insurmountable will no longer be," he said."

"In addition to Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, where it is said that Martin Luther posted his 95 theses to the door in 1517, Saint-Pierre Reformed Protestant Church in Geneva is considered one of the most iconic sites of the Protestant Reformation." <https://www.christianpost.com/news/protestants-to-take-catholic-communion-at-calvins-cathedral-in-geneva-on-leap-year-day.html>

So to speak, Luther and Calvin must be rolling in their graves. If they resurrected today, they would be unable to recognize the churches that they founded. Not only have the churches that they sacrificed so much to establish failed to progress but they have actually regressed to pre-reformation times.

Space will not allow me to describe multiple other concessions and compromises that Protestants have made to the papacy. Perhaps one more will suffice.

On June 22, 2015, Pope Francis met with the Waldensians in their temple in Torre Pellice. This was the first visit ever by a pope. Philip Pullella, of the Reuters News Agency described the encounter that took place on June 28, 2015:

"Pope Francis asked forgiveness on Monday for the Roman Catholic Church's 'non-Christian and inhumane' treatment in the past of the Waldensians, a tiny Protestant movement the Vatican tried to exterminate in the 15th century." "The movement, an early precursor of the Reformation in the 16th century, was branded as heretical and

in 1487 Pope Innocent VIII ordered its extermination. Some 1,700 Waldensians were killed in 1655 by Catholic forces commanded by the Duke of Savoy.” (Philip Pullella, “Pope Francis Asks Forgiveness for the Catholic Church’s Persecution of Waldensians”)

Change in Prophetic Hermeneutics

It is a well-known fact that the Protestant Reformers believed that the papacy was the predicted antichrist of Bible prophecy. They reached this conclusion based on their study of the prophecies. They unanimously taught that the papacy was the Man of Sin, the Abomination of Desolation and the Harlot.

However, two Roman Catholic Jesuit scholars of the Counterreformation changed the prophetic hermeneutics from historicism to preterism and futurism.

The Jesuit scholar, Luis de Alcazar, affirmed that the little horn of Daniel 7 and 8 represented Antiochus Epiphanes and the beast of Revelation 13 symbolized Nero. Of course, if this were true, the little horn and the beast have nothing to do with the papacy.

On the other hand, the Jesuit Francisco Ribera predicted that the little horn and the beast represented a nasty individual who would rise to power in the Middle East at the very end of human history. If this were true, then the papacy does not fulfill the antichrist prophecies either.

Church history of the 19th century proves that liberal Protestant churches imbibed Alcazar’s hermeneutic and conservative Protestants imbibed Ribera’s. For this reason, present day Protestantism is unable to discern the role that the papacy has played and apostate Protestantism will play in end time events. If Protestants do not believe that the papacy is the antichrist, then they will not fear the system and will be more **prone** to merge with it. Do you think that if these Protestant leaders understood the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation concerning the identity of the antichrist they would be making ecumenical overtures toward the papacy? I rather doubt it!

For a full development of the counterfeit prophetic hermeneutic of liberal and conservative Protestants, see my book *Futurism's Incredible Journey* available from Secrets Unsealed.

Satan's Two-Fold Attack on Scripture

The reason why Protestantism will end up in the arms of the papacy is that it has **forsaken the Bible as the absolute standard of truth** and has become 'liberal' and **politically correct**, redefining the distinction between truth and error based on **tradition, culture and personal experience**. Liberal Protestants condone and even support open sins such as gay marriage, gender confusion and gay clergy. Post-modern thinking has infiltrated Protestantism like an infectious disease and the consequences have been disastrous.

What Satan did by influencing the papacy to **forbid the Bible** in the past he now accomplishes by **undermining its authority**! Regarding the papacy's concealment and suppression of the Scriptures during the 1260 years, Ellen White wrote:

*"Satan well knew that the **Holy Scriptures** would enable men to discern his deceptions and withstand his power. It was by the word that even the Savior of the world had resisted his attacks. At every assault, Christ presented the shield of eternal truth, saying, **"It is written."** To every suggestion of the adversary, He opposed the wisdom and power of the word. In order for Satan to maintain his sway over men, and establish the authority of the papal usurper, he must keep them in **ignorance of the Scriptures**. The Bible would exalt God and place finite men in their true position; therefore, its sacred truths must be **concealed and suppressed**. The Roman Church adopted this logic. For hundreds of years the **circulation of the Bible was prohibited**. The people were forbidden to read it or to have it in their houses, and unprincipled priests and prelates interpreted its teachings to sustain their pretensions. Thus, the pope came to be almost universally acknowledged as the **vicegerent of God on earth**, endowed with authority over church and state. The detector of error having been removed, Satan worked according to his will." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 51*

However, in this age of great intellectual light, Satan has changed his strategy. He knows that he is not able to forbid the Bible or keep it in an unknown tongue, so his strategy is to undermine its authority and trustworthiness:

*“A day of **great intellectual darkness** has been shown to be favorable to the success of the papacy. It will yet be demonstrated that a day of **great intellectual light** is equally favorable for its success. In past ages, when men were **without God's word** and without the knowledge of the truth, their eyes were blindfolded, and thousands were ensnared, not seeing the net spread for their feet. In this generation there are many whose eyes become dazzled by **the glare of human speculations**, "science falsely so called;" they discern not the net, and walk into it as readily as if blindfolded. God designed that man's intellectual powers should be held as a gift from his Maker and should be employed in the service of truth and righteousness; but when pride and ambition are cherished, and men **exalt their own theories above the word of God**, then **intelligence can accomplish greater harm than ignorance**. Thus the false science of the present day, which **undermines faith in the Bible**, will prove as successful in preparing the way for the acceptance of the papacy, with its pleasing forms, as did the withholding of knowledge in opening the way for its aggrandizement in the Dark Ages.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 572*

A Fierce and Determined Conflict

Ellen White described the papacy's plan to undo what Protestantism has done:

*“The Protestant churches are in **great darkness**, or they would discern the signs of the times. The Roman Church is **far-reaching** in her plans and modes of operation. She is employing every device to extend her influence and increase her power in preparation for a **fierce and determined conflict** to regain control of **the world**, to re-establish persecution, and to **undo** all that Protestantism has done. Catholicism is gaining ground upon every side. See the increasing number of her churches and chapels in Protestant countries. Look at the popularity of her colleges and seminaries in America, so widely patronized by Protestants. Look at the growth of ritualism in England and the frequent defections to the ranks of the Catholics. These things should awaken the*

*anxiety of all who prize the **pure principles of the gospel**.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 565, 566*

What does Ellen White mean by ‘*a fierce and determined conflict*’? She is not speaking of a **military conflict** but rather a spiritual one. The papacy has conquered its first rival, **socialism/communism** without firing a single bullet! It has done this by embracing the **socialist agenda** in order to earn their trust. To Protestants today, the papacy appears harmless, a very dangerous proposition indeed! God has given the warning concerning the papacy:

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

“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #23 – THE MARRIAGE AND THE RECEPTION

Eastern Wedding Customs in Biblical Times

- The **betrothal** or engagement between the bride and the groom took place at the home of the **bride's father**
- There the **groom paid the dowry** (Jesus gave himself to pay the dowry for her).
- The **groom** then returned to **his** father's house to **prepare the home** where he would live with his wife after the marriage (John 14:1-3).
- During the period of **preparation**, the **bride** would remain **in her father's house** preparing for the wedding (Ephesians 5:25-27)
- In the interim, the groom sent out **invitations** to the guests of the wedding.
- The groom sent a **special garment** to the guests that gave them **the right** to attend the wedding as guests. Those who **did not have** the garment had no right to be in the wedding chamber.
- When the **place** and the **bride** were ready, the bridegroom would **return to the bride's home** to take her to **his father's house** where the wedding ceremony took place (John 14:1-3).

- The wedding reception followed in the home of the groom's father.

The Ten Virgins

Matthew 25:1-13

Jesus instructed His individual followers to be ready to go with Him into the wedding chamber, as invited guests.

Symbols of the Parable

- ✓ Lighting the way to the bridal chamber (the preaching the gospel to invite individuals to the wedding).
- ✓ All claimed to be believers. All had lamps and oil in their lamps. However, the wise virgins had reserve supply in their vessels.
- ✓ Five wise were genuine Christians and five foolish were counterfeit.
- ✓ The delay in the coming of the groom for the wedding (delay in Jesus receiving the kingdom from His Father).
- ✓ The midnight cry (the final invitation to the wedding).
- ✓ The door is shut (the close of probation when all cases are final).
- ✓ The wedding takes place (Jesus marries His church/His kingdom as a whole after the door closes).
- ✓ The foolish return and beg entrance but it is too late, the door is closed (too late to prepare after the close of probation).
- ✓ Watch because you do not know when your Lord is coming (in context, the coming of the groom is for the wedding that takes place in heaven. Meanwhile, the garments of the guests are examined in the heavenly books).

Without a Wedding Garment

The parable of the wedding garment of Matthew 22:11-14 is parallel to the parable of the ten virgins.

Matthew 22:1-14

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

- ✓ **The first invitation** for the Jewish nation to come to the wedding.
- ✓ Jesus **dies**
- ✓ **The second invitation** for the Jewish nation to come to the wedding.
- ✓ The **destruction of Jerusalem** in AD 70.
- ✓ Invitation **to the Gentiles** to come to the wedding (all during the Christian era).
- ✓ The wedding hall was **filled with guests** (the proclamation of the gospel).

*"So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was **filled with guests**."*

- ✓ The examination of the **garments**

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

The Groom's Father sent out an invitation to the wedding with a **special garment** for each guest. Once in the wedding chamber, **the Father examined** the garments of **the guests** to determine if **each** was properly attired.

*"Those who in the judgment are 'accounted worthy' will have a part in the resurrection of the just. Jesus said: 'They which shall be **accounted worthy** to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, . . . are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.' Luke 20:35, 36. And again He declares that 'they that have*

*done good' shall come forth 'unto the resurrection of life.' John 5:29. The righteous dead will not be raised until **after the judgment** at which they are **accounted worthy** of 'the resurrection of life.' Hence they will **not be present in person** at the tribunal when their records are examined and their **cases decided**." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 482*

- ✓ The door or probation closes and the **wedding** takes place in heaven.
- ✓ Those who did not have the garment **were cast out** of the wedding chamber into **outer darkness** where they would **wail and gnash** their teeth for not having been able to remain in the wedding hall (Matthew 8:12; 13:41, 42; 13:47-50; 22:13, 14; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:25-30).

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

The Wedding and Wedding Supper

Daniel 7:9, 10, 13, 14: In 1844 Jesus moved from the holy to the **most holy** place of the heavenly sanctuary to **receive the kingdom** from His Father.

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

Luke 12:35-37: Receiving the kingdom from the Father is the same as the wedding between Jesus and the **totality** of the faithful members of His church.

The wedding clearly takes place in heaven because Jesus returns from there to earth where the subjects of His kingdom are waiting:

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

Luke 19:11, 12: In the parable of the pounds, Jesus informed his followers that he was going to a **far country** to receive the kingdom **after which He would return** to this earth:

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

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

The New Jerusalem

Revelation 21:2

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

Jesus marries His bride and receives the kingdom **before His second coming**. In the following statement Ellen White equates Christ receiving the kingdom with Jesus marrying His bride:

[When probation closes] "Every case had been decided for life or death. While Jesus had been ministering in the sanctuary, **the judgment** had been going on for

*the righteous dead, and then for the righteous living. Christ had **received His kingdom**, having made the atonement for His people and blotted out their sins. The **subjects of the kingdom** were made up. The **marriage of the Lamb** was consummated. And the kingdom, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, was given to Jesus and the heirs of salvation, and Jesus was to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords." Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 280*

Jesus does not marry a city of brick and mortar, gold and silver. He marries the New Jerusalem with the redeemed of all ages inside. Jesus spoke of Jerusalem as the people within the city:

Luke 19:41-44

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

Matthew 23:38

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

In **2 Corinthians 11:2** Paul stated that he had **engaged** the church to Christ as a pure bride and in **Ephesians 5:25-27** he wrote that Christ died to make it possible for the church/bride to be without spot or blemish.

The Wedding Reception

Revelation 19:9

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

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

The Composite Picture

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

#2: In **1844** Jesus came to the Father **to begin the process** that would eventually make it possible for Him to **receive the kingdom** or to **marry** His bride—the **church as a whole** (Matthew 25:1-13).

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

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

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

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

#5: When the judgment is over, the bride (the church in its entirety) has **made herself ready** for Him and Jesus will **marry her** (He takes over the kingdom; Daniel 7:13, 14; Luke 19:11, 12).

#6: When every person has either accepted or rejected the invitation to the wedding, the door will close and Jesus will receive the kingdom or marry His kingdom. Any guests who **arrive late** are found unprepared and unworthy and those who are in the wedding chamber without the garment will be **cast out** (Matthew 25:1-14; Revelation 22:11).

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

#8: Jesus **gathers his kingdom/bride** and takes her to the Father's house in heaven. When the faithful arrive in heaven, they sit down with Jesus to eat the **marriage supper**—this is the wedding reception (Revelation 19:9; Matthew 8:11, 12).

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

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

Solving a Problem

The Bible makes it clear that the **wedding** takes place **in heaven before Jesus returns** for the second time. However, many modern versions (for example, the

NIV and the ESV), leave the erroneous impression that Jesus will come to earth to gather his people to Himself after the marriage **supper has ended**. These translations are confusing because other texts clearly affirm that Jesus will literally sit **with his people** at the supper table in His kingdom after He has come for them (see Matthew 8:11, 12).

So the question is this, **when** is the marriage supper? Does it take place **before** Jesus comes for his own or after he takes them to heaven?

Let us compare **Luke 12:35-37** in the **NKJV** with the **NIV**:

NKJV

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

NIV

*"Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to **return from a wedding banquet**, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them."*

It will be noticed that in the **NIV** (and many other contemporary versions), Jesus returns to the earth **from** the heavenly **wedding banquet** to gather his waiting people. In other words, the wedding banquet takes place before Jesus comes to take His people to heaven. However, in the NKJV Jesus returns from **the wedding** (not the banquet) to gather His people to take them to the banquet. **Which translation** makes more sense and fits best with all the Biblical evidence?

In Greek, the words used for **marriage** (*gamos* and *gamoí*) **include both** the wedding and the wedding feast. In our times, we make a marked distinction between the wedding and the reception. However, in biblical times the **covenant vow** took very little time while the **feast was a major community event** that would last **hours** and even **days** or **weeks**. Thus, the wedding was simply a brief ceremony with a celebration that was a big feast after!

The **Greek language** did not have a word that **distinguishes** between the **wedding** and the **feast** as we do today (such as wedding and reception) because people perceived both to be **phases of the same event**. However, although the Greeks did not have a word for the vow as distinguished from the feast, they did have a word for the **feast alone** when that is what they wished to emphasize. That word appears in **Revelation 19:9** where the saints are invited to the wedding **feast**.

Therefore, the process is as follows:

- Jesus will **marry** his kingdom/church **in heaven**.
- Jesus will then **return** from the wedding in heaven to take his waiting people on earth to the heavenly **feast/reception**.

Note: The bride is the **church or kingdom as a whole** while the church members **as individuals** are the guests (clearly shown in Matthew 22). The bride/kingdom is the **New Jerusalem**, the dwelling place of Christ's entire human kingdom (Revelation 21:9, 10). Individual members of the city are not the city itself but **the residents** who have homes there (John 14:1-3)

Ellen White understood this very clearly:

*"I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven. An angel with a writer's inkhorn by his side returned from the earth and reported to Jesus that his work was done and the saints were numbered and sealed. Then I saw Jesus, who had been ministering before the ark containing the Ten Commandments, **throw down the censer**. He raised His hands, and with a loud voice said, '**It is done**.' Then all the angelic host laid off their crowns as Jesus made the solemn declaration, 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is*

righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.'

*"The marriage represents the **reception by Christ of His kingdom**. The Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which is the **capital and representative of the kingdom**, is called 'the bride, the Lamb's wife.' Said the angel to John: 'Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.' 'He carried me away in the spirit,' says the prophet, 'and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God' Revelation 21:9, 10. Clearly, then, the bride represents the Holy City, and the **virgins** that go out to meet the bridegroom are a symbol of the **church**. In the Revelation, the people of God are said to be the **guests** at the marriage supper Revelation 19:9. **If guests, they cannot be represented also as the bride**. Christ, as stated by the prophet Daniel, will receive from the Ancient of Days in heaven, 'dominion, and glory, and a kingdom;' He will receive the New Jerusalem, **the capital of His kingdom**, 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.' Daniel 7:14; Revelation 21:2. Having **received the kingdom**, He will come in His glory, as King of kings and Lord of lords, for the redemption of His people, who are to '**sit down** with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,' **at His table** in His kingdom (Matthew 8:11; Luke 22:30), to partake of the **marriage supper of the Lamb**.*

*'The proclamation, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh,' in the summer of 1844, led thousands to expect the immediate advent of the Lord. At the appointed time the **Bridegroom came**, not to the earth, as the people expected, but **to the Ancient of Days** in heaven, to the **marriage**, the **reception of His kingdom**. 'They that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut.' They were **not to be present in person** at the marriage; for it **takes place in heaven, while they are upon the earth**. The followers of Christ are to 'wait for their Lord, when He will return from the wedding' **Luke 12:36**. However, they are to understand His work, and to **follow Him by faith** as He goes in before God. It is in this sense that they are said to go in to the marriage.'" Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 426, 427*

Notice all the Biblical texts that Ellen White uses to sustain her explanation of the wedding and the reception:

*"In both the Old and the New Testament, the marriage relation is employed to represent the tender and sacred union that exists between Christ and His people. To the mind of Jesus the gladness of the wedding festivities pointed forward to the rejoicing of that day when He shall **bring home His bride [the kingdom in its entirety] to the Father's house**, and the redeemed with the Redeemer **shall sit down to the marriage supper** of the Lamb. He says, 'As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.' 'Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; . . . but thou shalt be called My Delight; . . . for the Lord delighteth in thee.' 'He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing' Isaiah 62:5, 4, margin; Zephaniah 3:17. When the vision of heavenly things was granted to John the apostle, he wrote: 'I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.' "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. Revelation 19:6, 7, 9." Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 151*

Another illustration

- ✓ The **sea**: Humanity
- ✓ The **fish**: Members of humanity
- ✓ The **fishermen**: Proclaimers of the gospel
- ✓ The **net**: The gospel
- ✓ The **casting**: The preaching of the gospel
- ✓ The **boat** (only those in the boat are separated, those who entered the church)
- ✓ The **separation**: The investigative judgment
- ✓ Cast out the bad and gather the good: The **execution** of the judgment

Matthew 4:18-20

*"And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, **casting a net** into **the sea**; for they were **fishermen**.¹⁹*

Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you **fishers of men.**" ²⁰ They immediately left their nets and followed Him."

Matthew 13:47-50

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a **dragnet** that was **cast** into the **sea** and gathered some of **every kind**, ⁴⁸ which, when it **was full**, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the **good into vessels**, but threw the **bad away**. ⁴⁹ **So it will be** at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, **separate** the wicked from among the just, ⁵⁰ and **cast them** into the furnace of fire. There will be **wailing and gnashing of teeth.**"

The Christian world **cannot conceive** of a judgment before the second coming because they believe that God judges a person when he dies or at the **second coming**.

“STUDIES ON MATTHEW 24” – Expanded Edition

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #24 – PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

Matthew 25:1-13

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.² Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish.³ Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them,⁴ but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.⁵ But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.⁶ "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' ⁷ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹ But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' ¹⁰ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came [see Matthew 22:1-14 where the wise virgins are the guests to the wedding; also Luke 12:35, 36; 19:12-26], and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut [God's people are in the wedding chamber not in person but by faith].¹¹ "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' ¹² But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' ¹³ "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."

The Context of the Parable

The 'coming' of the bridegroom here, in context, is not the second coming. The context makes it clear that the bridegroom comes to the wedding chamber for the wedding and the wedding takes place in heaven. We must link the parable of the ten virgins with the previous context in Matthew 24:36-44:

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. ³⁷ But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, [1] until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and did not know [2] until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴² Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

The previous context indicates that the coming is not the second coming of Jesus to the earth His coming to His Father for the marriage to His kingdom/Bride. This is why these verses compare the coming of Jesus to the coming of a thief.

The Days of Noah and the Close of Probation

1A: If we remember, the closing of the [1] door of the ark and the [2] destruction of the wicked were two related yet separate events.

1B: In a similar manner, the closing of the [1] door of probation and the [2] second coming of Jesus are two separate but related events.

2A: The preaching of Noah under the power of the Holy Spirit inviting people to enter the ark.

2B: The virgins lighting the way to the bridal chamber symbolizes the preaching of the gospel to the world inviting guests to enter the wedding chamber.

3A: The midnight cry represents Noah's last call to the antediluvian world at the door of the ark.

3B: The midnight cry represents the final call for the living to accept the invitation into the wedding chamber.

4A: The closing of the door of the ark closed probation for the pre-flood race.

4B: The closing of the door in the parable of the ten virgins is the close of probation for the world.

5A: When the door of the ark closed, the kingdom of the faithful—Noah and his family—was complete. Noah's preaching divided the world into two groups. The saved were inside and the lost outside.

5B: Likewise, when the door closes in the parable of the ten virgins, the saved are safe inside the wedding chamber, and the lost are outside. The reception of the kingdom by Jesus from the Father (Daniel 7) is equivalent to the wedding (in the parable of the ten virgins).

6A: The time of trouble for Noah and his family inside the ark.

6B: The time of trouble for God's faithful remnant.

The return of Jesus from the wedding to take His subjects to the wedding reception is equivalent to Jesus sending the angels to gather the elect to take them to heaven for the celebration.

Symbols of the Parable

The ten virgins: Those who profess to believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord. All of them accepted the invitation of the bridegroom to come to the wedding.

The lamps: The Scriptures (Psalm 119:105).

The **oil**: The Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4).

Lighting the way to the wedding chamber: **Preaching the gospel** in a **dark world** to **guide sinners** to the wedding chamber.

The **wise** virgins: The **genuine** followers of Jesus.

The **foolish** virgins: **Superficial** followers of Jesus. They had **oil** in their lamps but not the **extra supply** in their **vessels**. They are similar to the **stony ground hearers** in the parable of the sower. They have some depth of soil but **the stones underneath** the soil does not allow continued growth. When the sun rises—tribulation or persecution because of the Word—they fall away (**Matthew 13:18**).

The **bridegroom**: Jesus

The **bride**: All His faithful people from all ages **as a group**.

The extra supply of oil in the vessels: The foolish virgins received the **early rain** but not the **latter rain**. They **started well** but the delay **discouraged them**. They allowed their early rain religious **experience to die** and the **latter rain** could not benefit them. When a plant dies, the latter rain will be of **no avail**.

The **delay**: The coming of Jesus to the wedding has delayed longer than expected.

Slumbering: Disappointed because of the delay. The foolish virgins lost faith but the wise virgins did not.

The **Midnight Cry**: The clarion call for the beginning of the **judgment of the dead** in 1844 followed by the judgment of **the living** before the door of probation closes.

Request for oil: We **cannot share the character** formed by the Holy Spirit with others.

The **coming of the bridegroom**: Jesus going to His Father to receive the **kingdom/marry** His bride.

The coming of the bridegroom to the wedding chamber occurs in **two stages**. The first was in **1844** when Jesus moved to the most holy place to begin the examination of the garments of **the dead**. The second is the **return** of Jesus **to His Father** after placing the sins on the head of **the scapegoat** in the court. The coming of the bridegroom is not the second coming of Jesus but rather **His coming to the Father** to receive the kingdom or marry His corporate people.

The righteous going **in to the wedding**: They are **physically** on earth but their names are in the heavenly books. They appear in the judgment, **not in person**, but through their records.

The **shut door**: The close of probation and the time of trouble (verse 13). **Amos 8:11, 12** describes the period when the foolish virgins seek for oil and find none.

Amos 8:11-12

"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord God, "That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. ¹² They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, but shall not find it."

The **wedding**: Jesus receives the kingdom from His Father in heaven when the investigative **judgment concludes** and the number of His people is complete (see Daniel 7:13, 14). Those who were ready went into the bridal chamber for the wedding. The **individuals** are the guests and the **totality** are the bride.

The **cry of the unprepared** when they return to the chamber. **Too late** to be ready:

*"Those professed Christians who come up to that last fearful conflict unprepared will, in their despair, **confess their sins** in words of burning anguish, while the wicked exult over their distress. These confessions are of the same character as*

was that of Esau or of Judas. Those who make them, lament the result of transgression, but not its guilt." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 620

The **voice**: "I do not know you"

To be **ready** is to **pray, watch, occupy, invest, work** and **reveal** the love of Jesus. The cry of the **foolish virgins** saying, 'Lord, Lord' reminds us of **Matthew 7** where those who cast out demons, performed miracles and prophesied in Christ's name say 'Lord, Lord' but Jesus answers 'I do not know you.'

Threefold Application

We shall find that this parable has a **threefold application** to:

- ✓ The literal **Jewish nation**
- ✓ The great Advent Movement in **1844**
- ✓ The **loud cry** of the remnant just before the door of human probation closes.

The first application: The Jewish Nation

Ellen White draws a striking comparison between the messages of **John the Baptist, Jesus and Peter** and the three angels' messages in the great **Advent Movement** of the 1840's:

*"I was pointed back to the proclamation of the first advent of Christ. [1] **John [he was the friend of the groom, John 3:29]** was sent in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way of Jesus [the bridegroom, Matthew 9:15]. Those who rejected the testimony of John were not benefited by the [2] **teachings of Jesus [Matthew 17:12]**. Their opposition to the message that foretold His coming placed them where they could not readily receive the strongest evidence that He was the Messiah. Satan led on those who rejected the message of John to go still farther, to **reject and crucify Christ**. In doing this they placed themselves where they could not receive the blessing on the [3] **day of Pentecost**, which would have taught them the way into the **heavenly sanctuary**.*

The rending of the veil of the temple showed that God would no longer receive the Jewish sacrifices and ordinances. The great Sacrifice had been offered and had been accepted, and the Holy Spirit that descended on the day of Pentecost carried the minds of the disciples from the earthly sanctuary to the heavenly, where **Jesus had entered** by His own blood, to shed upon His disciples the benefits of His atonement. However, the Jews were left in **total darkness**. They lost all the light that they might have had upon the plan of salvation, and still trusted in their **useless sacrifices and offerings**. The heavenly sanctuary had taken the place of the earthly, yet they had **no knowledge of the change**. Therefore, they could not be benefited by the mediation of Christ in the holy place.

Many look with horror at the course of the Jews in rejecting and crucifying Christ; and as they read the history of His shameful abuse, they think they love Him, and would not have denied Him as did Peter, or crucified Him as did the Jews. However, God who reads the hearts of all has brought to the test that love for Jesus that they professed to feel. All heaven watched with the deepest interest the reception of the **[2] first angel's message**. However, many who professed to love Jesus, and who shed tears as they read the story of the cross, derided the good news of His coming. Instead of receiving the message with gladness, they declared it to be a delusion. They hated those who loved His appearing and **[2] shut them out of the churches**. Those who rejected the first message could not be **benefited by the second**; neither were they benefited by the **midnight cry**, which was to prepare them to enter with Jesus by faith **[3] into the most holy place** of the heavenly sanctuary. By rejecting the **two former messages**, they have so darkened their understanding that they can see **no light in the third angel's message, which shows the way into the most holy place**.

I saw that as the Jews crucified Jesus, so the nominal churches had **crucified these messages**, and therefore they have no knowledge of the **way into the most holy**, and they **cannot be benefited** by the intercession of Jesus there. Like the Jews, who offered their **useless sacrifices**, they offer up their useless prayers to the **apartment that Jesus has left**; and Satan, pleased with the deception, assumes a religious character, and leads the minds of these professed Christians to himself, working with his power, his **signs and lying wonders**, to fasten them in his snare.

Some he deceives in one way, and some in another. He has different delusions prepared to affect different minds. Some look with horror upon one deception, while they readily receive another. Satan deceives some with Spiritualism. He also comes as an angel of light and spreads his influence over the land by means of false reformatations. The churches are elated, and consider that God is working marvelously for them, when it is the work of another spirit. The excitement will die away and leave the world and the church in a worse condition than before.

*I saw that God has honest children among the nominal Adventists and the fallen churches, and before the plagues shall be poured out, ministers and people **will be called out** from these churches and will gladly receive the truth. Satan knows this; and before **the loud cry of the third angel [equivalent to the midnight cry]** is given, he raises an excitement in these religious bodies, that those who have rejected the truth may think that God is with them. He hopes to deceive the honest and lead them to think that God is still working for the churches. But the light will shine, and all who are honest will leave the fallen churches, and take their stand with the remnant.” Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 259-261*

The Ten Virgins and the Millerites

It is highly suggested that the student study Ellen G. White, **The Great Controversy**, pp. **391-408** in preparation for this section.

*“Chapter 25 opens with the words: “**Then [emphasis in the original]** shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins.” Here is brought to view the church living in the **last days**, the same that is pointed out in the **close of chapter 24**. In this parable their experience is illustrated by the incidents of an **Eastern marriage**.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 393*

#1: The **going forth** of the virgins represents the **reformation** under the proclamation of the **first angel’s message** announcing the **hour of God’s judgment** in Daniel 8:14:

*"The coming of Christ, as announced by the **first angel's message**, was understood to be represented by the coming of the bridegroom." (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 393-394)*

#2: All who joined the movement claimed to follow the Bible and to have the Holy Spirit:

*"**All** had taken their lamps, the Bible, and by its light had gone forth to **meet the Bridegroom**." (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 394)*

The **error** was that they thought that the coming of the bridegroom to the wedding chamber for the wedding represented the **second coming** of Jesus to marry His **faithful bride**.

#3: The wise virgins had a **profound** experience with the Lord and **longed** for the coming of Jesus:

*"The latter class had received the **grace** of God, the regenerating, **enlightening** power of the Holy Spirit, which renders His word a lamp to the feet and a light to the path. In the fear of God, they had **studied the Scriptures** to learn the truth, and had **earnestly sought for purity** of heart and life. These had a **personal experience**, a faith in God and in His word, which could **not be overthrown** by disappointment and delay." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 394*

#4: The foolish virgins had a **superficial**, **emotional**, **impulsive**, **fearful** relationship with the Lord that expected an immediate reward:

*"They had moved from **impulse**. Their **fears** had been **excited** by the solemn message, but they had depended upon the **faith of their brethren**, satisfied with the flickering light of **good emotions**, without a **thorough** understanding of the truth or a **genuine work of grace** in the heart. These had gone forth to meet the Lord, full of hope in the prospect of **immediate reward**; but they were not prepared for delay and disappointment." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 394*

#5: The **tarrying time** and the delay was the time after the disappointment when Jesus did not come in the **spring of 1844** (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 394). At this time, the **superficial and impulsive** fell by the wayside.

*"By the **tarrying of the bridegroom** is represented the passing of the time when the **Lord was expected**, the **disappointment**, and the **seeming delay**." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 394*

#6: The **slumbering** of both groups during the delay was different:

*"They all slumbered and slept;" one class in **unconcern and abandonment** of their faith, the other class **patiently waiting** till **clearer light** should be given." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 394*

*"In this time of uncertainty, the interest of the **superficial and halfhearted** soon began to waver, and their efforts to relax; but those whose faith was based on a **personal knowledge** of the Bible had a rock beneath their feet, which the **waves of disappointment** could not wash away."*

*"At this time the superficial **could not lean upon** the faith of their brethren. Each must stand for himself." (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 395)*

#7: During this time, **fanaticism** arose among the waiting ones. This led most Christians to **oppose** the Adventist faith:

*"They feared it might be true, yet hoped it was not, and this was the secret of their warfare against Adventists and their faith." (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 395)*

*"About this time, **fanaticism** began to appear. Some who had professed to be zealous believers in the message rejected the word of God as the one infallible guide and, claiming to be **led by the Spirit**, gave themselves up to the control of their **own feelings, impressions, and imaginations**." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 395*

#8: The **midnight cry** was the **7th month movement** (July/August 1844) when **Samuel Snow** discovered a **mistake** in the prophetic reckoning. The 2300 days did not begin in the **spring** but rather in **the fall** of the year 457 BC; therefore, they must **end in the fall** (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 398).

*"In the summer of 1844, midway between the time when it had been first thought that the 2300 days would end, and the autumn of the same year, to which it was afterward found that they extended, the message was proclaimed in the very words of Scripture: "Behold, the **Bridegroom cometh!**" Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 398*

#9: The **faithful slumbering** saints woke up and there was a great **religious revival**. The printing presses rolled again, along with powerful **prophetic preaching** that instructed the people that the Bridegroom was going to come to **pick up His bride** on **October 22, 1844**.

*"Like a **tidal wave** the movement swept over the land. From **city to city**, from **village to village**, and into **remote country** places it went, until the waiting people of God were **fully aroused**. Fanaticism disappeared before this proclamation like early frost before the rising sun. Believers saw their **doubt and perplexity removed**, and hope and courage animated their hearts. . . There was **little ecstatic joy**, but rather **deep searching of heart**, **confession of sin**, and **forsaking of the world**. A preparation to meet the Lord was the burden of agonizing spirits. There was **persevering prayer** and **unreserved consecration** to God." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 400*

*"**Of all the great religious movements** since the days of the apostles, none have been more free from human imperfection and the wiles of Satan than was that of the autumn of 1844. Even now, after the lapse of many years, all who shared in that movement and who have stood firm upon the platform of truth still feel the holy influence of that blessed work and bear witness that **it was of God**." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 401*

#10: They received an **abundant portion** of the Holy Spirit and they let their light shine all the way to the wedding chamber:

*“Like **showers of rain** upon the thirsty earth, the Spirit of grace descended upon the earnest seekers. Those who expected soon to stand face to face with their Redeemer felt **a solemn joy** that was unutterable. The softening, subduing power of the Holy Spirit **melted the heart** as His blessing was bestowed in rich measure upon the faithful, believing ones.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 402, 403*

*“**Every morning** they felt that it was their first duty to secure the evidence of their acceptance with God. Their hearts were **closely united**, and they **prayed much** with and for one another. They often met together in **secluded places** to commune with God, and the voice of intercession ascended to heaven from the **fields and groves**. The assurance of the Savior's approval was more necessary to them **than their daily food**; and if a cloud darkened their minds, they did not rest until it **was swept away**. As they felt the witness of pardoning grace, they **longed to behold Him** whom their souls loved.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 403*

#11: Instead of coming to the earth to marry His bride, Jesus moved into the **most holy place** to **receive the kingdom** from His Father/to marry His kingdom. There, the process of **examining the garments** began.

*“They that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.” They were not to be **present in person** at the marriage; for it takes place in Heaven, while they are upon the earth. The followers of Christ are to “wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding.” [Luke 12:36.] However, they are to understand his work, and to follow him **by faith** as he goes in before God. It is in this sense that they are said to go in to the marriage.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 427*

#12: There was a **shut door** in **1844** against all who were **superficial** and **did not follow** Jesus into the Most Holy Place. Those who **remained in the holy place** received a **counterfeit gift** of the Holy Spirit and were left in **total darkness**. Satan took the throne.

*"I was shown in vision, and I still believe, that **there was a shut door in 1844**. All who **saw the light** of the first and second angels' messages and **rejected that light**, were left in **darkness**. And those who accepted it and **received the Holy Spirit** which attended the proclamation of the message from heaven, and who afterward **renounced their faith** and pronounced their experience **a delusion**, thereby rejected the Spirit of God, and it no longer pleaded with them." Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 63*

When Jesus shut the door in 1844, those who rejected the **first two messages** found themselves in **total darkness**. Most of the Christian world **keep worshipping** in the holy place, oblivious that Jesus had entered the most holy. Satan then took control (*Ellen G. White, Early Writings*, p. 54).

#13: Once the King has **examined every case**, and has determined the **subjects of His Kingdom** He will come to pick up His bride or kingdom.

#14: When Jesus comes to get the bride **he has married in heaven**, he then takes the bride **to the reception** (the marriage supper of the Lamb). We are not going to heaven for the wedding but rather for the **reception and the honeymoon**. After the 1000 years, the husband will bring his bride to her **new home** that will be the New Jerusalem, as a bride adorned for her husband.

The Application to the Second Coming

It is highly suggested that the **student read** *Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 405-421 in preparation for this lesson.

Ellen White vividly described the story of the ten virgins that was transpiring **as He spoke**:

*"Lingering near the bride's house are **ten young women** robed in white. Each carries a **lighted lamp** and a **small flagon** for oil. All are **anxiously watching** for the appearance of the **bridegroom**. However, there is a **delay**. Hour after hour passes; the watchers become weary and **fall asleep**. At **midnight** the cry is heard, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." The sleepers, **suddenly awaking**, spring to their feet. They see the procession moving on, **bright with***

torches and glad with music. They hear the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. The ten maidens seize their lamps and begin to trim them, in haste to go forth. However, five have neglected to fill their flasks with oil. They did not anticipate so long a delay, and they have not prepared for the emergency. In distress, they appeal to their wiser companions saying, "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out." However, the waiting five, with their freshly trimmed lamps, have emptied their flagons. They have no oil to spare, and they answer, "Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves."

While they went to buy, the procession moved on, and left them behind. The five with lighted lamps joined the throng and entered the house with the bridal train, and the door was shut. When the foolish virgins reached the banqueting hall, they received an unexpected denial. The master of the feast declared, "I know you not." They were left standing without, in the empty street, in the blackness of the night.

As Christ sat looking upon the party that waited for the bridegroom, He told His disciples the story of the ten virgins, by their experience illustrating the experience of the church that shall live just before His second coming." Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 405, 406

Link of Matthew 25 with 24

The word 'then' with which Matthew 25 begins is crucial because it indicates that the parable of the ten virgins applies to the church in the last days as can be seen at the end of Matthew 24.

The Virgins

Virgins

2 Corinthians 11:2

"For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

*“The **two classes** of watchers represent the two classes who profess to be waiting for their Lord. They are called virgins because they **profess a pure faith**.” Ellen G. White, Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 406*

The two groups of virgins have several things **in common**:

- ✓ All **went out**,
- ✓ All had **lamps**
- ✓ All had **some oil in their lamps**
- ✓ All **slumbered** when there was a **delay**
- ✓ All **claimed** to be waiting for the bridegroom (*Ellen G. White, Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 412*).

Lighted Lamps and Oil

Lamps: Psalm 119:105

*“By the lamps is represented the **word of God**.” Ellen G. White, Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 406*

Lighting the way to the groom’s father’s home: (*Ellen G. White, Christ’s Object Lessons, pp. 415-419; **Mt. 5:16**; Matthew 22; **Luke 12:36, 37***).

Oil: Zechariah 4:1-6

*“The oil is a symbol of the **Holy Spirit**.” Ellen G. White, Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 406*

The virgins preach the light of God’s Word in a dark world through the power of the Holy Spirit **inviting guests** to the wedding.

Matthew 5:16

*“Let **your light** so shine before men, that they may **see your good works** and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

Luke 12:35, 36

*"Let your waist be girded and your **lamps burning**; ³⁶ and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will **return from the wedding**, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately."*

Extra Oil

One thing distinguished the wise virgins from the foolish. The wise had **extra oil** in their flagon in case the **bridegroom delayed**. The wise virgins had a deep relationship with Christ, a relationship that could not be broken by delay and disappointment. The extra oil and the formation of character (Ezekiel 14:20; Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 412, 419-420)

On the other hand, the foolish virgins were **stony ground** hearers who had a **superficial** and **theoretical** relationship with Christ: (see Ezekiel 33:31; 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

*"In the parable, all the ten virgins went out to meet the bridegroom. All had lamps and vessels for oil. For a time there was seen no difference between them. **So with the church** that lives **just before** Christ's second coming. **All have a knowledge** of the Scriptures. **All have heard** the message of Christ's near approach, and confidently **expect His appearing**. However, as in the parable, so it is now. A time of waiting intervenes, faith is tried; and when the cry is heard, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him,' many are unready. They have no oil in their vessels with their lamps. **They are destitute of the Holy Spirit**." Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 408*

The Delay

2 Peter 3:3, 4

*"... knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, "**Where is the promise** of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, **all things continue** as they were from the beginning of creation."*

The Midnight Cry

The **Midnight Cry**: The **loud cry** of **Revelation 18** announces the beginning of the judgment of the living just as the **midnight cry** announced the beginning of the judgment of the dead. The Loud Cry will force people to **choose sides** while they are alive for the final judgment of the living.

Midnight: (Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 414-415; Isaiah 58:7-8; Isaiah 60:1-2)

*"The great apostasy will develop into darkness **deep as midnight, impenetrable** as sackcloth of hair. To God's people it will be a **night of trial**, a night of weeping, a night of persecution for the truth's sake. But out of that night of darkness **God's light will shine**."* Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 414, 415

Refusal to share the oil

Character worked out by the Holy Spirit is **not transferable** (Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 412, 419-420)

*"No man can receive the Spirit for another. No man can impart to another the **character which is the fruit of the Spirit's working**. "Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it [the land], as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness." Ezekiel 14:20."* Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 412

*"So now, a sudden and unlooked-for calamity, something that brings the soul face to face with death, will show whether there is any real faith in the promises of God. It will show whether the soul is sustained by grace. The **great final test** comes at the **close of human probation**, when it will be **too late** for the soul's need to be supplied."* Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 412

The Shut Door

Shutting of **the door**: (Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 412; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 2, pp. 190-192; Mark 13:33-37)

*“When the work of investigation shall be ended, when the cases of those who in **all ages** have **professed to be followers** of Christ have been examined and decided, then, and not till then, probation will close, and the **door of mercy will be shut**. Thus in the one short sentence, ‘They that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut,’ we are carried down through the Savior’s final ministration, to the time when the great work for man’s salvation shall be completed.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 428*

The **wedding** comes after the judgment of the dead and the living. The **bride is complete** and Jesus can **marry His kingdom**.

Failed to Enter the MHP

The foolish virgins represent **superficial Christians**. At the very end of His most holy place ministry, after Jesus has cleansed the **most holy Place**, the **holy place** and the **court**, He will place the sins of the faithful on the **head of the scapegoat** in the court. Then He will **return from the court** (where he placed the sins on the scapegoat; Leviticus 16:7) **to His Father** and then **change His garments** from priestly to kingly. This is the meaning of Jesus coming **to His Father**.

Obviously, He could not come to His Father for the final judgment of the living if He is still **with the Father** in the most holy place. He must have left the most holy to cleanse the holy and then the court to return then to His Father.

I know you not (Matthew 7:21-23; Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 620-623)

“Those who had not prized God’s Word were hurrying to and fro, wandering from sea to sea, and from the north to the east, to seek the Word of the Lord. Said the angel, “They shall not find it. There is a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but for hearing the words of the Lord. What would they not give for one word of approval from God! but no, they must hunger and thirst on. Day after day have they slighted salvation,” Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 281

*“Those professed Christians who come up to that last fearful conflict unprepared will, in their despair, **confess their sins** in words of burning anguish, while the wicked exult over their distress. These confessions are of the same character as was that of Esau or of Judas. Those who make them, lament the result of transgression, but not its guilt.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 620*

The **Wedding supper** (Revelation 19:7-8)

Once he has examined every case, he has determined the subjects of His kingdom and married them, He comes and **empirically takes the kingdom**. When Jesus comes to get the bride he has married in heaven, he then takes the bride to **the reception** (the marriage supper of the Lamb). We are **not going to heaven for the wedding** but rather for the **reception** and the honeymoon. After the 1000 years, the husband will bring his bride to her **new home** that will be the new heavens and new earth.

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