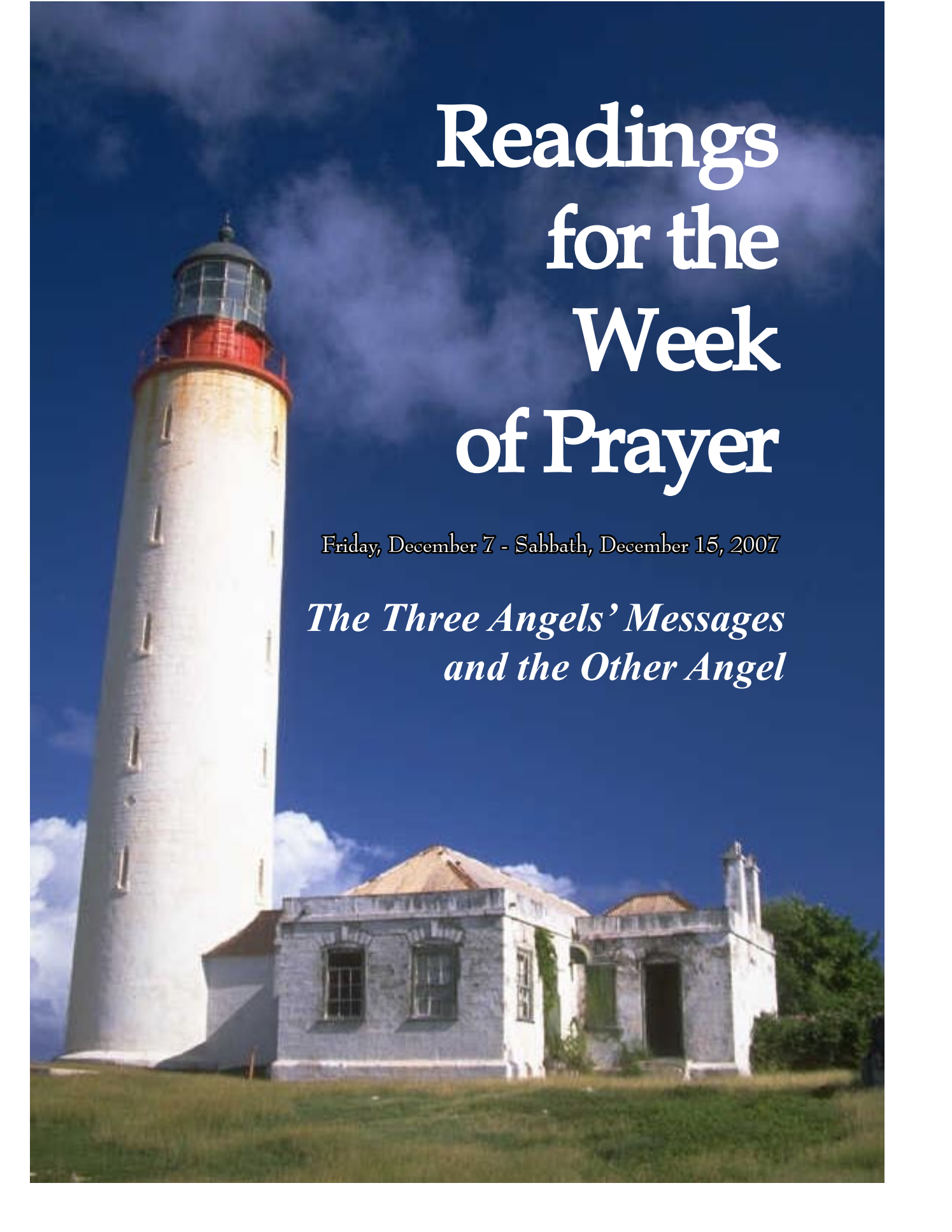




Readings for the Week of Prayer

Friday, December 7 - Sabbath, December 15, 2007

*The Three Angels' Messages
and the Other Angel*

Introduction

“Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.”

Revelation 14:12.

The theme for the 2007 Week of Prayer is *The Three Angels' Messages and the Other Angel*.

“Those who had accepted the light concerning the mediation of Christ and the perpetuity of the law of God found that these were the truths presented in Revelation 14. The messages of this chapter constitute a threefold warning which is to prepare the inhabitants of the earth for the Lord’s second coming. The announcement, ‘The hour of His judgment is come,’ points to the closing work of Christ’s ministration for the salvation of men. It heralds a truth which must be proclaimed until the Saviour’s intercession shall cease and He shall return to the earth to take His people to Himself. The work of judgment which began in 1844 must continue until the cases of all are decided, both of the living and the dead; hence it will extend to the close of human probation. That men may be prepared to stand in the judgment, the message commands them to ‘fear God, and give glory to Him,’ ‘and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.’ The result of an acceptance of these messages is given in the word: ‘Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.’ In order to be prepared for the judgment, it is necessary that men should keep the law of God. That law will be the standard of character in the judgment.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 436.

During the Week of Prayer, take time to reflect on a personal, family, and community level about the year that is soon to end. Let us establish new spiritual goals and lift up our hearts to the Lord in prayer. Let us humiliate our souls before Jesus for vows unfulfilled, goals not reached, defects still undefeated, and our overall neglects. Finally, let us find consolation for our spirits in the loving arms of our tender Saviour, who bestows on us one more opportunity to grow into

His image, to enjoy His love, to know His truth, to overcome evil with His power, and to impart to others His good news of salvation.

Let us commit ourselves to advance together in God’s cause, to help one another grow and gain more souls for His eternal kingdom. In this way, we will accomplish Acts 1:14—“These all continued with one accord in prayer.” The Spirit of Prophecy emphasizes the same thought: “The disciples prayed with intense earnestness for a fitness to meet men and in their daily intercourse to speak words that would lead sinners to Christ. Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship....”

“These days of preparation were days of deep heart searching.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 37.

From the beginning of the Week of Prayer, the church elder or other local leader should announce the special offering to be collected on the last Sabbath of the readings. This offering is devoted entirely to the advancement of the work on a worldwide level. Remember that “spiritual prosperity is closely bound up with Christian liberality. The followers of Christ should rejoice in the privilege of revealing in their lives the beneficence of their Redeemer. As they give to the Lord they have the assurance that their treasure is going before them to the heavenly courts.” —*Ibid.*, pp. 344, 345.

It should also be announced that the last Sabbath of the Week of Prayer is a special day of fasting.

“Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.” Ephesians 3:20, 21.

—*The brothers and sisters of the General Conference*

Readings for the Week of Prayer

Friday, December 7 -
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12631 East Imperial Highway, B 202
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670-4710
USA
Telephone (1) 562-863-7188
Fax (1) 562-863-7559
eMail: imssdarmgc@yahoo.com
Internet: www.imssdarm.org

“Fear God and give glory to Him”

By Ellen G. White

By the first angel, men are called upon to “fear God, and give glory to Him” and to worship Him as the Creator of the heavens and the earth. In order to do this, they must obey His law. Says the wise man: “Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” Ecclesiastes 12:13. Without obedience to His commandments no worship can be pleasing to God. “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.” 1 John 5:3; Proverbs 28:9.

The duty to worship God is based upon the fact that He is the Creator and that to Him all other beings owe their existence. And wherever, in the Bible, His claim to reverence and worship, above the gods of the heathen, is presented, there is cited the evidence of His creative power. “All the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens.” Psalm 96:5. “To whom then will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things.” “Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it: . . . I am the Lord; and there is none else.” Isaiah 40:25, 26; 45:18. Says the psalmist: “Know ye that the Lord He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.” “O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.” Psalms 100:3; 95:6. And the holy beings who worship God in heaven state, as the reason why their homage is due to Him: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and

honor and power: for Thou hast created all things.” Revelation 4:11.

In Revelation 14, men are called upon to worship the Creator; and the prophecy brings to view a class that, as the result of the threefold message, are keeping the commandments of God. One of these commandments points directly to God as the Creator. —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 435-437.

Preaching the everlasting gospel

John in the Revelation foretells the proclamation of the gospel message just before Christ’s second coming. He beholds an angel flying “in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come.” Revelation 14:6, 7.

In the prophecy this warning of the judgment, with its connected messages, is followed by the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven. The proclamation of the judgment is an announcement of Christ’s second coming as at hand. And this proclamation is called the everlasting gospel. Thus the preaching of Christ’s second coming, the announcement of its nearness, is shown to be an essential part of the gospel message.

The Bible declares that in the last days men will be absorbed in worldly pursuits, in pleasure and money-getting. They will be blind to eternal realities. Christ says, “As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah

entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” Matt. 24:37-39.

So it is today. Men are rushing on in the chase for gain and selfish indulgence as if there were no God, no heaven, and no hereafter. In Noah’s day the warning of the flood was sent to startle men in their wickedness and call them to repentance. So the message of Christ’s soon coming is designed to arouse men from their absorption in worldly things. It is intended to awaken them to a sense of eternal realities, that they may give heed to the invitation to the Lord’s table.

The gospel invitation is to be given to all the world—“to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” Rev. 14:6. The last message of warning and mercy is to lighten the whole earth with its glory. It is to reach all classes of men, rich and poor, high and low. “Go out into the highways and hedges,” Christ says, “and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled.”

The world is perishing for want of the gospel. There is a famine for the word of God. There are few who preach the word unmixed with human tradition. Though men have the Bible in their hands, they do not receive the blessing that God has placed in it for them. The Lord calls upon His servants to carry His message to the people. The word of everlasting life must be given to those who are perishing in their sins.

In the command to go into the highways and hedges, Christ sets forth the work of all whom He calls to minister in His name. The whole world is the field for Christ’s ministers. The whole human family is comprised in their congregation. The Lord desires that His word of grace shall be brought home to every soul.

To a great degree this must be accomplished by personal labor. This was Christ's method. His work was largely made up of personal interviews. He had a faithful regard for the one-soul audience. Through that one soul the message was often extended to thousands.

We are not to wait for souls to come to us; we must seek them out where they are. When the word has been preached in the pulpit, the work has but just begun. There are multitudes who will never be reached by the gospel unless it is carried to them. —*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 227-229.

The Sabbath

This message, if heeded, will call the attention of every nation and kindred and tongue and people to a close examination of the Word, and to the true light in regard to the power that has changed the seventh-day Sabbath to a spurious sabbath. The only true God has been forsaken, His law has been discarded, His sacred Sabbath institution has been trampled in the dust by the man of sin. The fourth commandment, so plain and explicit, has been ignored. The Sabbath memorial, declaring who the living God is, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, has been torn down, and a spurious sabbath has been given to the world in its place. Thus a breach has been made in the law of God. A false sabbath could not be a true standard.

In the first angel's message men are called upon to worship God, our Creator, who made the world and all things that are therein. They have paid homage to an institution of the Papacy, making of no effect the law of Jehovah, but there is to be an increase of knowledge on this subject.

The message proclaimed by the angel flying in the midst of heaven is the everlasting gospel, the same gospel that was declared in Eden when God said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). Here was the first promise of a Saviour who would stand on the field of battle to contest the

power of Satan and prevail against him. Christ came to our world to represent the character of God as it is represented in His holy law; for His law is a transcript of His character. Christ was both the law and the gospel. The angel that proclaims the everlasting gospel proclaims the law of God; for the gospel of salvation brings men to obedience of the law, whereby their characters are formed after the divine similitude.

In the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah, the work of those who worship God, the Maker of the heavens and the earth, is specified: "They that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations" (Isa. 58:12). God's memorial, His seventh-day Sabbath, will be uplifted. "Thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath [no longer trample it under your feet], from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him,... I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isa. 58:12-14).

The history of the church and the world, the loyal and the disloyal, is here plainly revealed. The loyal under the proclamation of the third angel's message have turned their feet into the way of God's commandments, to respect, to honor, and glorify Him who created the heavens and the earth. The opposing forces have dishonored God by making a breach in His law, and when light from His Word has called attention to His holy commandments, revealing the breach made in the law by the papal authority, then, to get rid of conviction, men have tried to destroy the whole law. But could they destroy it? No; for all who will search the Scriptures for themselves will see that the law of God stands immutable, eternal, and His memorial, the Sabbath, will endure through eternal ages, pointing to the only true God in distinction from all false gods.

Satan has been persevering and untiring in his efforts to prosecute the work

he began in heaven, to change the law of God. He has succeeded in making the world believe the theory he presented in heaven before his fall, that the law of God was faulty, and needed revising. A large part of the professed Christian church, by their attitude, if not by their words, show that they have accepted the same error. But if in one jot or tittle the law of God has been changed, Satan has gained on earth that which he could not gain in heaven. He has prepared his delusive snare, hoping to take captive the church and the world. But not all will be taken in the snare. A line of distinction is being drawn between the children of obedience and the children of disobedience, the loyal and true and the disloyal and untrue. Two great parties are developed, the worshipers of the beast and his image, and the worshipers of the true and living God. —*Selected Messages*, Book 2, pp. 105-107.

God has a special work for everyone to do, and each one of us may do well the work which God has assigned him. The only thing we have to fear on our part is that we shall not keep our eyes continually fixed upon Jesus, that we shall not have an eye single to the glory of God, so that if we were called to lay down our armor and sleep in death we might not be ready to give an account of our trust. Forget not for a moment that you are Christ's property, bought with an infinite price, and that you are to glorify Him in your spirit, and in your body, which are His. —*Selected Messages*, Book 2, p. 273. Amen.



The Judgment Hour and the Worship of God

By Antonino Di Franca, Italy

Among the visions and prophecies in the Holy Scripture, we find the glorious image of angels flying through space, broadcasting messages to human beings!

Revelation 14 presents three angels, one following the other. Then, in chapter 18, still *another* angel flies through the sky, further empowering the messages of the first three angels. They all carry warnings from God to the world, urging all to accept salvation. Let us consider the first angel's message.

The first angel

"I saw another angel [the first in this chapter] fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice: 'Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters'." Revelation 14:6, 7. These verses are full of interesting elements, some real and some symbolic. First, we meet an "angel," a glorious heavenly being acting as a messenger. Earthly messages, spoken and written, are delivered by human beings; but the messenger in Revelation 14 is a holy being, pure and glorious. This angel, like the others, all flying in midair, is a symbol. In reality, it is God's people. "The three angels of Revelation 14 represent the people who accept

the light of God's messages and go forth as His agents to sound the warning throughout the length and breadth of the earth." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 455, 456.

A divine message

The second point is that the "angel" is not a silent one. He has a special message, called "the everlasting gospel," the good news of salvation. Besides preaching the gospel, the angel warns about the seriousness of the time and invites everyone on earth to come to God. "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Revelation 14:7.

This message has been preached since the beginning of the Advent Movement. The Lord has entrusted it to His people to give to the world in this time. "The angels are represented as flying in the midst of heaven, proclaiming to the world a message of warning, and having a direct bearing upon the people living in the last days of this earth's history. No one hears the voice of these angels, for they are a symbol to represent the people of God who are working in harmony with the universe of heaven. Men and women, enlightened by the Spirit of God, and sanctified through the truth, proclaim the three messages in their order." —*Life Sketches*, p. 429.

A missionary people

God's people do not live for themselves only but especially to be a

blessing to others. Our gathering together, visiting, preaching, preparation and distribution of literature, and all other work is not to be limited to our own church members. If it were, we could not be represented by an angel, a messenger to others. The Lord represents the work of this time through a heavenly herald to impress us with the need to be a missionary people. He has entrusted us with a message for the entire world. To preach the gospel should be our first priority at every level—the General Conference, as well as every union, field, church, institution, and individual member.

John the Baptist ministered by preaching to the people; Jesus did the same. Matthew 3:1; 4:17. During His three-and-one-half-year mission, He traveled and preached in Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. During His ministry, He chose and instructed twelve disciples. Matthew 10. Next, He sent seventy others to go before Him into every town and village of Israel, the chosen people, to prepare hearts for His message. The result? Even the disciples performed miracles! Luke 10:1, 17.

The gospel, Jesus announced, is for every country, people, and tongue. Before the end of the world, the good news would be preached everywhere. Matthew 24:14. His last reminder, before His ascension, was the same great missionary mandate: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Mark 16:15. This commission should therefore be the center of our ministry. Time and energy, gifts and service, funds and printing—everything—should be employed for this purpose.

Counsel for our mission

Sometimes we don't know exactly how to reach certain people, to speak to their hearts. This is why the Lord has promised his Spirit. We can begin missionary work in the simplest way, speaking words of faith and hope while going about our daily work among our family, friends, and coworkers. Hand them a nice magazine, book, or leaflet full of good, inspired counsel about the love of God. Never argue about Jesus! First, let others see Jesus in us. At home and in the homes of others, share the Bible's sublime promises. Introduce people to the Lord Himself. Cooperate with other brothers and sisters of experience. Learn from the blessed counsels of the Spirit of Prophecy, such as the following:

"I remember when the converting power of God came upon me in my childhood. I wanted everyone else to get the blessing that I had, and I could not rest till I had told them of it. I began to visit with my young companions and went to their houses to talk with them and tell them my experience, how precious the Saviour was to me, and how I wanted to serve Him, and how I wanted them to serve Him also. So I would talk of the preciousness of Christ, and I would say, 'Won't you kneel down and pray with me?' Some would kneel and some would sit in their chairs, but before we gave up, everyone would be on her knees and we would pray together for hours, till the last one would say, 'I believe that Jesus has forgiven me my sins.'" —*Welfare Ministry*, p. 99.

There is great power in Jesus. "Now when we go into the house we should not begin to talk of frivolous things, but come right to the point and say, I want you to love Jesus for He has first loved you.... Take along the publications and ask them to read. When they see that you are sincere they will not despise any of your efforts. There is a way to reach the

hardest hearts. Approach in the simplicity, sincerity, and humility that will help us to reach the souls of those for whom Christ died. We do not want to be negligent in this work." —*Ibid.*, p. 91.

The blessing of preaching

In preaching the message, there is blessing—blessing for the preachers, blessing for the hearers, and blessing for the entire church. On the contrary, if we don't share the gospel, we will become like stagnant water, causing problems for both ourselves and others. Hearers but not doers can hardly be compared with a glorious angel heralding the gospel to the world. How does the Spirit of Prophecy describe those who reflect the angel's light? "The faces of men and women who walk and work with God express the peace of heaven. They are surrounded with the atmosphere of heaven. For these souls the kingdom of God has begun. They have Christ's joy, the joy of being a blessing to humanity. They have the honor of being accepted for the Master's use; they are trusted to do His work in His name." —*The Adventist Home*, p. 535.

"Work is a blessing, not a curse. A spirit of indolence destroys godliness and grieves the Spirit of God. A stagnant pool is offensive, but a pure, flowing stream spreads health and gladness over the land." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 352, 353.

People who are not working for the Lord sooner or later become gloomy, critical, and faultfinding, unable to share the joy of the Lord. "When our church members during the week act their part in the service of the Lord, they will be roused from the despondency that is ruining many, body and soul. As they work for others, they will have much that is helpful to speak of when they assemble to worship God. The Sabbath meeting will be like meat in due season; for all will bring precious offerings to the Lord. When God's people see the great need of sinners being converted, turned from the service of Satan to serve the living God, the testimonies they bear ...

will not be dark and gloomy, but full of joy and courage, life and power. Instead of thinking and talking about the faults of their brethren and sisters, and about their own trials, they will think and talk of the love of Christ, and will strive earnestly to become more efficient workers for Him." —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9, p. 92.

It's time to preach the message

Dear brethren and sisters, young and old, now is the time to let the light shine. Don't wait, thinking that others will do your work. Get busy now; work for the Lord and for the beloved souls for whom He has given His life. If every one of us would be a little light, how blessed the world and the church would be.

"Church members ... are to be ever ready to spring into action in obedience to the Master's commands. Wherever we see work waiting to be done we are to take it up and do it, constantly looking unto Jesus.... If every church member were a living missionary, the gospel would speedily be proclaimed in all countries, to all peoples, nations, and tongues." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 32.

"My brethren and sisters, it is too late to devote your time and strength to self-serving. Let not the last day find you destitute of the heavenly treasure. Seek to push the triumphs of the cross, seek to enlighten souls, labor for the salvation of your fellow beings, and your work will abide the trying test of fire." —*Ibid.*, p. 56.

The judgment hour

Another serious point in the first angel's message is that "the hour of His judgment has come"—in heaven and on earth. Judgment began in 1844. Since then, cases are being judged one after the other. How long will the judgment continue? Here on earth, natural, social, and religious catastrophes claim the attention of unbelievers, who ask their meaning. The horrible September 11 twin towers attack and fall have exposed the insecurity of even the richest and,

before that, most secure country in the world. Far East tsunamis, with all their devastations, have shaken not only the affected countries but also the rest of the world. Flooding in North America has found people unprepared for such emergencies. The war in Lebanon reveals how easily conditions change and illustrates the chances of a small war escalating into a world-wide crisis. Continuous attacks in Iraq, with daily loss of human life, and wars in other places reveal that without Jesus there is no respect for life. Even as the climate changes around the world, spiritual life becomes more and more superficial. Another year will soon end. Human history is almost over. God is speaking to us. His judgment hour has come, dear brothers and sisters. It is time to wake up and let the light shine! Messages from the Spirit of Prophecy leave no doubt about what we should be doing. “There is an earnest work of preparation to be done by Seventh-day Adventists if they would stand firm in the trying experiences just before them. If they remain true to God in the confusion and temptation of the last days, they must seek the Lord in humility of heart for wisdom to resist the deceptions of the enemy.” —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 347.

“We are not, as a people, sufficiently aroused to the short time in which we have to work, and we do not understand the magnitude of the work for the time.

“The night soon cometh, in which no man can work. God calls for men and women to qualify themselves, by consecration to His will and earnest study of the Scriptures, to do His special work for these last days. He calls for men now who can work. As they engage in the work in sincerity and humility to do all they can, they will be obtaining a more thorough experience. They will have a better knowledge of the truth and better know how to reach souls and help them just where they need to be helped. Workmen are needed now, just now, to

labor for God. The fields are already white for the harvest, and yet laborers are few.” —*Life Sketches*, pp. 211, 212. In the time of Noah, the flood did not immediately follow the flood message. The Lord first announced the end of civilization, then mercifully granted one hundred and twenty years of grace. Noah’s preaching and faithful example urged people to change their lives and prepare to meet the Lord, but they wasted the time. We also have been given ample time to prepare for the Lord’s coming, but grace will not last forever. How are we using our time? How are we helping others to prepare to meet Jesus?

Worship Him

The first angel’s message ends with an invitation: “Worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” Revelation 14:7. Such a call indicates that people are neither worshiping nor obeying God. As in the past, today men, women, and children look away from God and worship and serve their modern idols. Idols, of course, are not only statues or pictures in a temple or the sun or stars in the heavens. Idols may be interests, customs, ideas, habits, feelings—anything that leads the mind from the worship of God.

For many people, the first god is money; others idolize amusements; still others focus, to the exclusion of God, on travel, culture, sports, fashions, the media, a new car or an old one, their house or houses, or even furniture. You name it—someone has made an idol of it. God showers us with blessings every day, yet often we don’t even think about them, let alone thank Him for His gifts. We rob God by withholding thankfulness, obedience, honor, and glory. Humanity seems to have lost its way, like an off-course ship.

One day a ship went down on the coast of Ireland. Nobody knew how the vessel could have gone so far off course—until a diver plunged into the water and recovered the ship’s compass. Careful investigation revealed a strange bit of steel in a column of the box. How

could the piece have gotten there? Shortly before the ship sank, one of the sailors had been asked to clean the compass. He used his penknife during the cleaning. A tiny bit of the tip of the knife blade broke off, but the sailor left it in the sensitive compass. Can you imagine? Such a little piece of steel influenced the magnetic needle so much that the ship was steered off course. It ran right into a cliff and sank.

That little piece of steel was insignificant to the sailor—but very significant for the compass and even more for the direction of travel, the security of the ship, and the lives of the passengers. It’s the same with the sin that challenges us human beings. At the beginning, it seems so insignificant to us and billions of others also; but little by little it leads people away from God, in the opposite direction, and eventually to shipwrecked, ruined lives.

Dear brethren and sisters of the entire world, let us not permit sin to destroy our lives. As long as we cultivate and idolize sin, God will be in second, third, or even the last place in our affections. We cannot truly worship Him. God is love, grace, justice, goodness, the source of true happiness. In the person of Jesus Christ, God sacrificed everything for us. Year after year, we receive uncountable signs of His mercy. Let us give Him His due—our faith and love, our obedience and service, our worship and gratitude. Let Him lead our lives as we preach to others the glorious “everlasting gospel,” then lead us all to the eternal harbor of peace and happiness. Amen.



“Babylon Is Fallen, Is Fallen”

By Alfonso Reto, Peru

The term ‘Babylon’ is derived from ‘Babel,’ and signifies confusion. It is employed in Scripture to designate the various forms of false or apostate religion. In Revelation 17 Babylon is represented as a woman—a figure which is used in the Bible as the symbol of a church, a virtuous woman representing a pure church, a vile woman an apostate church.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 381.

The great Babylon has been identified through the ages as the greatest enemy of the gospel, the worship of God, and the remnant. How did this Babylon emerge? What is her dominion? What message from heaven is addressed to this earthly power? The prophecy about the fall of Babylon is found in Revelation 14:8, as part of the three angels’ messages, and in the message of Revelation 18:2, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.” When does her fall take place? Let us study, both in history and prophecy, this enemy of God’s people in ancient and modern times.

The emerging of Babylon

Babylon was gradually formed by unfaithful children who ceased to glorify God.

In the Epistle to the Romans 1:21–23, the apostle Paul emphatically describes the people who form part of Babylon: “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to

birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.”

The people here described do not glorify God as He deserves, but serve Him according to their own confused ways of reasoning. They are ungrateful for blessings, vainly self sufficient, living in darkness, and bound to err easily. While believing themselves perfect, they actually commit spiritual idolatry.

God cannot be glorified in such a way. Let us wake up! Let us allow the light of the truth to illuminate our lives! “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” Isaiah 9:2.

“Babylon as a religious community has fallen because of its doctrines and traditions.” —*Ibid.*, p. 383.

We must be able to identify churches that mix the doctrine of salvation with specious deceptions of human invention, presenting the Creator, the Saviour, the Mediator, the Priest as a created being, who saves people in their sins and grants forgiveness through men. In addition, these churches have changed God’s law.

Because of their differences, faithful believers have been tortured and persecuted like wild beasts—their blood, by God’s grace, giving birth to more Christians.

What else did Babylon do?

Rejection of the gospel and the investigative judgment of 1844.

“All heaven watched with the deepest interest the reception of the first angel’s message. But 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 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 into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. And 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.” —*Early Writings*, pp. 260, 261.

The first angel’s message warns about the investigative judgment in the heavenly sanctuary, implying acknowledgment of the true Advocate as well as “the claims of God’s law, and the obligation of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. Here was the secret of the bitter and determined opposition to the harmonious exposition of the Scriptures that revealed the ministration of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 435.

The daughters of Babylon make “illegal alliances with the world.” —*Ibid.*, p. 383. How do the people and churches that fall from the platform of the gospel ally with the world? What does God have to say about worldly alliances?

Christ’s church is in great danger when it uses worldly guidelines in God’s work. “Those employed in any department of the work whereby the world may be transformed, must not enter into alliance with those who know not the truth. The world knows not the Father or the Son, and they have no spiritual discernment as to the character of our work, as to what we shall do or shall not do. We must obey the orders that come from above. We are not to hear the counsel or follow the plans suggested by unbelievers. Suggestions made by those who know not the work that God is doing for this time will be such as to weaken the power of the instrumentalities of God. By accepting such suggestions, the counsel of Christ is set at nought.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 463.

The true church would become Babylon if it took part in politics to fulfil some of its projects. “Do not take part in political strife. Separate from the world, and refrain from bringing into the church or school ideas that will lead to contention and disorder. Dissension is the moral

poison taken into the system by human beings who are selfish. God wants His servants to have clear perceptions, true and noble dignity, that their influence may demonstrate the power of truth.” —*Gospel Workers*, p. 395.

“The principles set forth in Deuteronomy for the instruction of Israel are to be followed by God’s people to the end of time. True prosperity is dependent on the continuance of our covenant relationship with God. Never can we afford to compromise principle by entering into alliance with those who do not fear Him.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 570.

The complete fall of Babylon

A step-by-step study of Babylon’s fall reveals injustice and error carried to where there is no more love for God’s truths. On the contrary, Babylon openly supports unity with the state as well as participation in politics under the cover of religion. It argues that, once in power, it will work to benefit the church.

But “the Bible declares that before the coming of the Lord, Satan will work ‘with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness,’ and they that ‘received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,’ will be left to receive ‘strong delusion, that they should believe a lie’ [2 Thessalonians 2:9–11]. Not until this condition shall be reached, and the union of the church with the world shall be fully accomplished, throughout Christendom, will the fall of Babylon be complete. The change is a progressive one, and the perfect fulfilment of Revelation 14:8 is yet future.” — *The Great Controversy*, pp. 389, 390.

Characteristics of the union of the church with the world

Worldliness: “Church members are under a solemn pledge to form characters different in every way from the characters of worldlings. If a change does not take place in them prior to their union with the church, there is danger that, though they have joined the church, they will assimilate

with worldlings. Satan triumphs when he sees the heaven of the world working in the church, to the destruction of its purity and holiness.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 123.

Apostasy: “The results of this union were no less pernicious now than in former ages; pride and extravagance were fostered under the guise of religion.... The church was upholding and defending these traditions.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 298.

Attraction to spiritualism: “Papists, Protestants, and worldlings will alike accept the form of godliness without the power, and they will see in this union a grand movement for the conversion of the world, and the ushering in of the long-expected millennium.” —*Ibid.*, pp. 588, 589.

Lack of unity among the brethren: “The world is filled with storm and war and variance.” —*Maranatha*, p. 187. This is Satan’s plan to separate the children of God.

Emphasis by the angel of Revelation 18

The other angel of Revelation 18: 2, 3, repeats what the second angel said in Revelation 14:8, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen,” with the following addition: “and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”

In 1888, the saving message of liberation, “Christ our Righteousness,” was proclaimed so that people could escape condemnation. That message is repeated in our days. It urges people to abandon churches that cover transgression by rejecting God’s law, the measure of righteousness.

Who are the “devils,” “foul spirits,” and “unclean birds” of Revelation 18? Undoubtedly, they are angry demons that come to people not under God’s protection. “An innumerable host of evil angels are spreading over the whole land and crowding the churches. These agents of Satan look upon the religious bodies with exultation, for the cloak of religion covers the greatest crime and iniquity.” —*Early Writings*, pp. 274, 275.

The mission of these “unclean and hateful birds” is to remove peace from people’s hearts, make those people a burden to others, lead them to corrupt the truth, and fill their hearts with prejudice, hate, anger, and revengeful thoughts. The ultimate purpose of these demons is to prevent people from keeping the true day of rest, the seventh-day Sabbath. They try to blind people to the light coming from the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ is our Mediator and Saviour, and to silence the preaching of Christ’s glorious second coming.

The Holy Scriptures cite many examples of spirit possession: “The daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman was grievously vexed with a devil, whom Jesus cast out by His word [Mark 7:26–30]. One ‘possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb’ [Matthew 12:22]; a youth who had a dumb spirit, that oftentimes ‘cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him’ [Mark 9:17–27]; the maniac, who, tormented by ‘a spirit of an unclean devil’ [Luke 4:33–36], disturbed the Sabbath quiet of the synagogue at Capernaum—were all healed by the compassionate Saviour. In nearly every instance, Christ addressed the demon as an intelligent entity, commanding him to come out of his victim and to torment him no more.” — *The Great Controversy*, pp. 515, 516.

Appeal

The people of God must come out of Babylon and prepare themselves to announce the complete message that calls people to acknowledge the Saviour and invites them to keep the Sabbath day. They should enter the heavenly sanctuary, where the investigative judgment is taking place, to receive the power of the Holy Spirit to be ready for the last conflict against the beast and its image. “There is nothing in the popular ministry that stirs the wrath of Satan, makes the sinner tremble, or applies to the heart and conscience the fearful realities of a judgment soon to come.” —*Early Writings*, p. 273.

Do not say, I am not capable: “The Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to his service. The laborers will be qualified rather by the unction of his Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. Men of faith and

prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. The sins of Babylon will be laid open.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 606.

Only the truth will set us free: Let us plead today for the refreshing from the heavenly kingdom, for power to overcome in difficult times. So that we are not deceived, we should know the truth

about grace, the judgment, God’s law, and Christ’s coming. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.” 2 Corinthians 13:14.

Reading 4 – Tuesday, December 11, 2007

The Beast, His Image, and His Mark

By Henry Dering, USA

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

Let us imagine someone walking into a grocery store to buy some food. The owner of the store has replaced the product-scanning machine with a body scanner. The scanner picks up the information stored in the microchip that was recently implanted in the customer’s right hand, following the passing of a new national law. The chip signals whether the customer will be allowed to purchase anything. Like the photograph on a driver’s license, the data on the chip provide information vital to national security: people’s names, addresses, dates of birth, medical histories, church affiliation and, last, whether they support the new world order.

Others speculate that the antichrist will engrave visible marks or tattoos in the foreheads or right hands to identify his subjects. Will social security numbers be used to track down supposed enemies and subject them to imprisonment or death? Could these things actually happen in the future? Is this really what the Bible says about the mark of the beast?

There is so much speculation about the beast, his image, and his mark. What is the truth about this subject? Let us try to unravel some things that appear to be mysteries in the book of Revelation.

Identifying the beast

The last book of the Bible, Revelation, provides sufficient identifying characteristics of the beast. It would:

Arise from the sea—“I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea.” Revelation 13:1. Beasts in prophecy represent nations and kingdoms (Daniel 7:23); and the sea, or water, represents multitudes of people (Revelation 17:15). Here is pictured the papal power that emerged in densely populated, old-world Europe.

Receive its power and authority from the dragon—“The beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.” Revelation 13:2. The dragon represents Satan working through pagan Rome. It was pagan Rome that opened the way for papal Rome to rule the world. In 330 A.D. the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great abandoned his capital, the city of Rome, and moved to Byzantium, later named Constantinople. Thus, the Bishop of Rome was free to expand his authority.

Be a world-wide religious and political power—“All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Revelation 13:8.

The Roman Catholic Church is a system with tremendous world-wide influence on governments and religious and secular organizations. Presently, the Vatican has 175 diplomatic ties to foreign nations. Its overt and covert efforts are aimed at regaining control of the world. At an accelerated rate, the pope is reaching out to both Protestants and non-Christians. Very soon the world will be united on the basis of commonly-held doctrines and beliefs.

Receive a deadly wound—“I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death.” Revelation 13:3. How was this fulfilled? The wound was inflicted when, in 1798, the pope was taken prisoner by Napoleon’s General Berthier, and the papal influence seemed for a time to have ended. Stripped of his power—both civil and ecclesiastical—the captive pope, Pius VI, died in exile in Valence, France, on August 29, 1799. Thus, the papacy for a time lost its influence and power in world affairs.

Be healed—“His deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.” Revelation 13:3. Prophecy also pointed to the papacy’s revival and strengthening of power after its deadly wounding in 1798. In 1929 the independent Vatican reemerged. The “Supreme Pontiff” was restored to temporal power, signaling the rise of papal power—the healing of the deadly wound. On February 12, 1929, the San Francisco Chronicle published an article with the headline: “Mussolini and Gasparri Sign Roman Pact, ... Heal Wound of Many Years.” Soon the whole world, except for a faithful remnant, will “wonder” after the beast.

Be guilty of blasphemy—"There was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies." Revelation 13: 5. Jesus was accused by the leaders of Israel of blasphemy because He forgave people's sins. Did He have the authority to do this? Of course, because He is God. But when any other person or an organization claims the authority to forgive sins, it is blasphemous! The Roman Catholic Church admits and even boasts that it has the right to forgive sins.

Consider the following startling claim: "Seek where you will, through Heaven and earth, and you will find but one created being who can forgive the sinner... That extraordinary being is the priest, the Catholic priest." —*The Catholic Priest*, pp. 78, 79. Besides the counterfeit system of forgiveness by man, the Roman Catholic Church officially claims: "The Pope alone is deservedly called by the name 'Most Holy' because he is the Vicar of Christ, who is the fountain and source and fullness of all holiness." — Bill Stringfellow, *All in the Name of the Lord*, p. 115. The following blasphemy is recorded in Extracts from Lucius Ferraris, "Papa II" (art.), Prompta Bibliotheca, vol. 6, pp. 25–29. "The Pope is of so great dignity and so exalted that he is not a mere man, but as it were God, and the vicar of God."

Dear brothers and sisters around the world, I have some good news for you. Only God, through the blood of Jesus Christ, can—and is willing to—forgive any and all the sins we have committed. We are always welcome to go to our best and most loving friend, Jesus—today and every day in the coming New Year. He is our High Priest and Mediator. He pleads for us in the heavenly sanctuary. Let us go to Him with all our sins and in humility and contrition ask for forgiveness. His blood is all-sufficient. What a great God we serve!

Persecute God's people—"It was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them." Revelation 13:7. The war waged against the saints was terrible! At least 50 million people who believed in the Bible and did not follow church traditions perished at the hands of Rome during the Middle Ages. A faithful record is kept in heaven of the atrocities, too horrible to bear the light of day. The church has finally admitted to this

persecution. "The Church has persecuted. Only a tyro [amateur] in church history will deny that." —*Western Watchman*, December 23, 1908.

Reign for 1260 years—"Power was given unto him to continue forty and two months." Revelation 13:5. How do Bible students explain these forty-two months? It is a prophetic time period that can be unlocked with the key found in Ezekiel 4:6. There we find that one day in prophecy equals one literal year. It's that simple! Therefore, forty-two months equals 1260 days, or years. The Roman Catholic Church reigned supreme from 538 A.D. to 1798 A.D. Then, in 538 A.D., by the decree of Emperor Justinian, the bishop of Rome was chosen to be the head of all churches, definer of doctrines, and corrector of heretics. This papal supremacy came to an end in 1798 when the pope was dethroned and arrested.

Have the mysterious number 666—"Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six." Revelation 13:18. How can we make sense of this number? The beast is a religio-political system that bears the number of a man—666. What man do we think of when the papacy is mentioned? Its head is the pope—right? What official title does he carry? An inscription that once appeared on the papal triple crown reads VICARIUS FILII DEI. The Catholic publication *Our Sunday Visitor*, of April 18, 1915, states: "What are the letters supposed to be in the Pope's crown, and what do they signify, if anything? 'The letters inscribed in the Pope's miter are these: Vicarius Filii Dei, which is the Latin for Vicar of the Son of God.'"

The letters in this title, when used as Roman numerals, add up to 666.

V = 5	F = 0	D = 500
I = 1	I = 1	E = 0
C = 100	L = 50	I = 1
A = 0	I = 1	
R = 0	I = 1	
I = 1		
U* = 5		
S = 0		

*formerly the same as V.

God's mark, or seal—the Sabbath

A seal confirms legal matters and has three elements. For instance, the President of the U.S.A. uses his presidential seal to authenticate documents. On his official seal we find his name—George Bush; his title—President; and the territory over which he rules—the United States of America. Just as secular rulers have their seals of power, the God of heaven has His seal. It is found in the heart of the Decalogue. In the fourth commandment are all three elements found in a seal.

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is [emphasis supplied], and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." Exodus 20: 8–11. Here are the three elements in the fourth commandment: 1. Name: the Lord; 2. His title: thy God (the Creator); 3. His territory: heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is.

"Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them." Ezekiel 20:12.

God gave the human race the Sabbath as the sign, or mark, of His creative power and authority. He wants to place His distinctive seal upon our hearts and minds.

It is very interesting to read from a noted authority of the Roman church that Saturday is the correct day on which to worship. "If the Bible is the only guide for the Christian, then the Seventh-day Adventist is right in observing the Saturday with the Jew.... Is it not strange that those who make the Bible their only teacher should inconsistently follow in this matter the tradition of the Church?" —Conway, *Question Box*, 1903, pp. 254, 255.

The Catholic Church also has its mark of authority, a counterfeit seal, or mark, in contrast to the genuine seal of God. Let us discover this man-made identification of the church's authority.

The mark of the beast

In reply to a letter of October 28, 1895, to Cardinal Gibbons, asking if the church claimed the change of the Sabbath as her mark, C. F. Thomas, chancellor of the cardinal, wrote the following: "Of course the Catholic church claims that the change was her act.... And the act is a mark of her ecclesiastical power and authority in religious matters."

"Sunday is our mark of authority.... The church is above the Bible, and this transference of sabbath observance is proof of that fact."—*The Catholic Record*, London, Ontario, September 1, 1923.

Here is an explanation from the pen of inspiration that clearly reveals what it means to accept the mark of the beast: "But when Sunday observance shall be enforced by law, and the world shall be enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath, then whoever shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher authority than that of Rome, will thereby honor popery above God. He is paying homage to Rome and to the power which enforces the institution ordained by Rome. He is worshipping the beast and his image. As men then reject the institution which God has declared to be the sign of His authority, and honor in its stead that which Rome has chosen as the token of her supremacy, they will thereby accept the sign of allegiance to Rome—'the mark of the beast.' And it is not until the issue is thus plainly set before the people, and they are brought to choose between the commandments of God and the commandments of men, that those who continue in transgression will receive 'the mark of the beast.'"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 449.

"The change of the Sabbath is the sign or mark of the authority of the Romish church. Those who, understanding the claims of the fourth commandment, choose to observe the false sabbath in the place of the true, are thereby paying homage to that power by which alone it is commanded. The mark of the beast is the papal sabbath, which has been accepted by the world in the place of the day of God's appointment.

"No one has yet received the mark of the beast... But when the decree shall go forth enforcing the counterfeit sabbath, and the loud cry of the third

angel shall warn men against the worship of the beast and his image, the line will be clearly drawn between the false and the true. Then those who still continue in transgression will receive the mark of the beast."—*Evangelism*, pp. 234, 235.

The great issue that will divide this world will be the commandments of God vs. the commandments of men. His people will not receive the mark of the beast, because they will be loyal to all the commandments, including true Sabbath worship. We are swiftly approaching the final contest that will decide our destiny.

Identifying the image of the beast

We have identified the beast as the Roman Catholic system. Another animal, with two horns like a lamb, will be instrumental in forcing the whole world to pay homage to the Roman hierarchy, as presented in Revelation 13:11–14.

This second beast represents the United States of America, which will pattern itself after the papal power. In other words, America will resemble the first beast in its antagonistic activities toward conscientious dissenters. Here are two statements found in the Spirit of Prophecy that clearly describe who the image of the beast is and how it will use persecution to accomplish its ends.

"The 'image to the beast' represents that form of apostate Protestantism which will be developed when the Protestant churches shall seek the aid of the civil power for the enforcement of their dogmas."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 445.

"In order for the United States to form an image of the beast, the religious power must so control the civil government that the authority of the state will also be employed by the church to accomplish her own ends."—*Ibid.*, p. 443.

Apostate Protestants are today joining hands with the government in tearing down the fragile wall of separation between church and state. Soon the final battle will begin.

"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."—*Ibid.*, p. 445.

The two fundamental doctrines that unite mainline Protestant churches and the Catholic Church are the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness. Other divergent and controversial doctrines are lightly treated in ecumenical dialogues.

What current events point to the formation of a single world church body? Here is a portion of an article about the work of the World Council of Churches and its goal for the future:

"In the pews at St. John Chrysostom, usually a place of worship for Catholic parishioners, representatives of almost a dozen Christian denominations gathered to pray for unity among the Christian faiths. As part of the internationally held Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Cardinal Sean O'Malley of the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, [the] Metropolitan Methodios of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston and Rev. Diane Kessler of the Massachusetts Council of Churches led a diverse group of worshipers in the ecumenical prayer service on Jan. 24. Also represented were clergy from various religious organizations, including Lutheran, Episcopalian, Baptist and Armenian Orthodox.

"Organizers and participants hope events such as last week's service will remind members of all faiths of the importance of working toward Christ's will, which is to have one united Christian church. Organized by the World Council of Churches and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, identical services were held throughout the week in churches around the world.

"When you hear Protestants, Catholics saying the same words, you think if everybody's saying it, how are we so different?" said Terry Curran, a member of Sacred Heart Parish in Roslindale. "It is very different from how we were brought up." Ecumenical work between churches is done with the clear goal of one day uniting the diverse Christian denominations into one."—Alyce Nicolo, "A Call for Unity," Wednesday, January 31, 2007 (found on www.townonline.com/roslindale/homepage/8998966588161916927).

Not only is the World Council of Churches active in promoting unity among churches, but the Moral Majority and the Lord's Day Alliance in America also have

strong voices in legislative councils. The desire of these groups is to bring people back to God, back to prayer, and back to church. They realize that there needs to be a spiritual awakening among Americans. A strong appeal for Sunday worship is made by these organizations.

Other significant factors that help set the stage for a national Sunday law are the intensifying threat of terrorist attacks, the escalating crime rate, and the abortion crisis, and as well as political corruption and terrible calamities of nature.

Advocates of a Sunday law believe a weekly day of rest would help restore stability and order to families and society as a whole. It may sound like a good idea, but it will lead to the loss of civil and religious freedom. Are we ready to face the consequences of a Sunday law? It has been predicted by the Word of God, and it will surely come to pass.

“And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” Revelation 13:15–17.

Imagine the day when the United States will turn away from its established principles of civil and religious liberty and become a dictatorship! Force will be used to coerce people to trample on the seventh-day Sabbath and honor a counterfeit day by worshiping on it. Soon you and I will not be able to buy food and other necessities for our families. Selling a car, a bicycle, and furniture will be impossible.

How will we fare when our little children say, “Daddy, Mommy, I’m hungry. I want something to eat!” Will we give up our faith so that we can continue to provide for our families? How will we react when we are forced to leave our tidy apartments or comfortable homes to seek refuge in the mountains or caves? Will we leave our home—or submit to the government? The need to decide will soon become a sober reality. The issue will be, whom will we worship—God or Satan? America will not only use economic pressure but will also ultimately pass a

death decree. It will be the final test for every living person on earth.

“History will be repeated. False religion will be exalted. The first day of the week, a common working day, possessing no sanctity whatever, will be set up as was the image of Babylon. All nations and tongues and peoples will be commanded to worship this spurious sabbath.... The decree enforcing the worship of this day is to go forth to all the world.” *—Last Day Events*, pp. 134, 135.

“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.” *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 18.

The Sunday law will be enacted first in the U.S.A., then will sweep over the rest of the world, and will include all communist regimes, Islamic countries, and Buddhist, Hindu, and spiritualist communities. America will work jointly with the papacy to compel peoples’ consciences. This is definitely not God’s method of working. God uses LOVE, not force, to draw people to serve Him.

When the Sunday law is enforced, what activities should Adventists be engaged in? “The light given me by the Lord at a time when we were expecting just such a crisis as you seem to be approaching, was that when people were moved by a power from beneath to enforce Sunday observance, Seventh-day Adventists were to show their wisdom by refraining from their ordinary work on that day, devoting it to missionary effort.” *—Last Day Events*, pp. 139, 140.

What will we receive—the seal of God or the mark of the beast?

In the very last days of earth’s history, the whole world will be divided into two classes—those who receive the mark of the beast and those who receive the seal of God. Everyone who is faithful to God will be with Jesus in His wonderful kingdom. Today is the time to take our stand on the side of truth and righteousness. By faith, let us accept Jesus into our hearts. He is waiting to be the Lord of our lives and to strengthen and uphold us in the final test. Only Jesus can

help us to be faithful. Let us decide to go to Him today. Let us choose to serve God, as did Joshua:

“If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” Joshua 24:15.

If we remain faithful to God and receive His seal, we will receive a glorious reward. “I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.” Revelation 15:2.

May the Lord be gracious to us and give us strength to be faithful in the final battle. Amen.



“The Earth Was Lightened with His Glory”

By Idel Suárez Jr., USA

While standing before the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, Orthodox Jews pray and recite the promises of the coming Messiah. There they cry and sigh and plead with God to remember His promise to send the Messiah. They still await the Messianic age, or kingdom of glory, to be established in Jerusalem.

As a Christian, one might want to run up and touch all these Jews and tell them that God did not forget His promise. The Messiah came 2,000 years ago, and this Messiah is Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ.

How would each rabbi and other Jews reply to this message of comfort? They would probably say, “Your Jesus did not fulfill all the prophecies in the Old Testament. He did not become the ‘king upon my holy hill of Zion.’ He did not conquer ‘the heathen ... [nor] the uttermost parts of the earth.’ He did not ‘break them with a rod of iron.’ He did not ‘dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel’ [Psalm 2:6, 8, 9]. Jesus simply did not fulfill all the prophecies of the Messiah!”

Now what would one say? Is it true that Jesus Christ did not fulfill all the Messianic prophecies? The Old Testament actually spoke of three comings of the Messiah. Thus, He would have three phases to fulfill.

His first coming was like a “Joseph Messiah.” He was betrayed by His own and sold for thirty pieces of silver. Then He suffered upon the cross as the Lamb of God and was buried in someone else’s tomb.

His second coming will be like a “David Messiah.” He will come as the King of kings and Lord of lords. He will gather His own.

Yet it will not be till His third coming that He shall reign on “the holy hill of Zion” from the New Jerusalem. He shall then shower fire and brimstone from heaven to destroy the “heathen.” This fire will consume “the uttermost parts of the earth.” He will then

utterly “dash [the wicked] in pieces like a potter’s vessel” in the lake of fire, which is the second death. Revelation 20:9, 10, 14.

Likewise, many nominal and independent Adventists, just like the Orthodox Jews, deny that the Reform Movement is the complete fulfillment of Revelation 18. Where are the miracles? Where is the prophesied unity? Where is the power to shake the world?

As rabbis speak of a two-phase Messiah, so there are two phases in the Reform Movement. The first is in the past; the second is still in the future. There was a reformation in time of war; there will be a reformation in the time of the Sunday Law. As the Messiah is one, so is the reformation. If we can understand this, then the Biblical and *Testimony* prophecies fall into place like a big puzzle, revealing a beautiful scene of salvation in the last days.

The other angel is a movement

First, we need to clarify that when the Bible speaks of an angel, it refers to a “messenger,” or a “people with a message.”

“The three angels of Revelation 14 **represent the people** [throughout this article, emphasis is by the author] who accept the light of God’s messages and go forth as His agents to sound the warning throughout the length and breadth of the earth.”¹

“Christ is coming the second time, with power unto salvation. To prepare human beings for this event, He has sent the first, second, and third angels’ messages. These angels **represent those who receive the truth**, and with power open the gospel to the world.”² “The third angel of Revelation 14 is represented as flying swiftly through the midst of heaven crying: ‘Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.’ Here is shown the nature of the **work of the people of God.**”³

Hence, if each angel represents “the people of God,” or “those who receive” and proclaim “the truth,” then who was the “other” angel? It must be a movement that still bears the name and credentials of the Seventh-day Adventist Church but that has also adopted the name “Reformers.” This movement must undergo different phases, like the Messiah’s comings to earth—first as a humble carpenter and meek lamb, but thereafter as a mighty warrior.

A divine messenger

The angels in Revelation 14 and 18 remind us of the messenger pigeons that were sent from one place to another, with messages attached to their legs. The birds were envoys of news to those who read the messages.

There was once an Arab guide who took tourists into the Sahara Desert. A reporter interviewed him to find out why he never got lost. The reporter was invited to take a tour into the Sahara to learn the secret firsthand.

Once in the Sahara, when there was nothing but scorching sun and dry sand, the guide took out a white messenger pigeon and threw it high into the open air. The pigeon circled two or three times in the air, and then headed home. The Arab guide then followed the direction the pigeon took.

The true leader of our work on earth is the Holy Spirit. He, like a messenger pigeon, points home to the New Jerusalem. He guides us into all truth. He is the promised Comforter. He is to lead the remnant church through the last great desert storm before the return of the Messiah.

“By the Spirit of God a revolution is brought about. The Holy Spirit enlightens, renews, and sanctifies the soul. Angels behold with inexpressible rapture the results of the working of the Holy Spirit in man.”⁴

“There is a work to be done among the **churches of Seventh-day Adventists** that

has not yet been done. Ministering angels are waiting to see who will take up this work in the right spirit. You may ask, 'Where must we change? What have we done?' It is not my work to enter into details. Let all humble themselves before God, asking for grace and wisdom, that they may see wherein they have violated His holy law. Unless His Spirit enlightens them, they will never know, even though it is set before them by their brethren. Those who refuse to come into right relation with God, who will not obey the rules of His government, can not bear His sign.

"No one need walk in darkness. No one need say, 'Specify to me the precise wrongs of which I am guilty,' To all who say this I give the word of the Lord, 'Search prayerfully, and you will know.'

"Let all who claim to be **reformers** be such in the fullest sense of the word."⁵

It is the outpouring of the Spirit of God that the church needs so that the "earth [can be] lightened with [God's] glory." We need the divine messenger to lead us and others to the true light.

The light of the other angel (1888)

The *Testimonies* are clear that the first phase of Reformation was within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The fulfillment of the prophecy of Revelation 18 started at the conference held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in the United States, in 1888. Read the following statements:

"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. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth."⁶

Notice that the message of "the righteousness of Christ ... is the **beginning** of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth," the **angel of Revelation 18**. This other angel is also called "the loud cry of the third angel."

"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 Saviour, 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."⁷

The light of the angel of Revelation 18 started with the presentation of the beautiful message of "the righteousness of Christ" by God's messengers Dr. Ellet J. Waggoner and Alonso T. Jones, who were both pastors.

Like the first angel's message, the first phase of the "other angel" was a call to return to the Creator and to repent because of the coming judgment.

It is sad to say that the message of 1888 was rejected by the church. Nearly all who attended were either indifferent or in some way opposed to the message of "justification by faith."

"That which was presented to me at Minneapolis opened to me the true state of many conference [workers].... I told them plainly [that] the position and work God gave me at that conference was **disregarded by nearly all**. Rebellion was popular. Their course was an insult to the Spirit of God."⁸

Because of that rejection, both the Scriptures and the *Testimonies* foretold that the children of the unbelieving Adventists would "leave a heritage of shame" and be "lost."

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast **rejected** knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy **children**. As they were increased, so they **sinned** against me: [therefore] will I change their glory into **shame**." Hosea 4:6, 7.

"The children of Sabbath-keeping parents, who have had great light, who have been the objects of the tenderest solicitude, may be the ones who will leave a heritage of shame, who will sow to the wind and reap the whirlwind. In the judgment the names of those who have sinned against great light, will be written with those who are condemned to be separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. They will be lost, lost, and will be numbered with the scornors of the grace of Christ."⁹

The *Testimonies* state that it was God's desire to pour out the latter rain during the Minneapolis Conference. This outpouring was to be the power that would lighten the whole earth with its glory. But that light was lamentably resisted.

"An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth, lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord's message through Brethren

[E.J.] Waggoner and [A.T.] Jones. By exciting that opposition Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. **The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted**, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world."¹⁰

Interestingly, in an earlier article cited above, Sister White foretold World War I and its tempest. Because the leaders of the work in 1888 at the Minneapolis Conference rejected the message of Revelation 18, God would send a tempest to earth—and the children of those who rejected the message would "leave a heritage of shame" and be lost in the "whirlwind" of war.¹¹ In the same Minneapolis, twenty-nine years later, one hundred leaders of the General Conference and the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church met to commission their youth to enlist in World War I.¹²

"The prophecy of Isaiah 3 was presented before me as applying to these last days, and the reproofs are given to the daughters of Zion who have thought only of appearance and display. Read verse 25: 'Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war.' I was shown that this scripture will be strictly fulfilled."¹³

Can you see the light of the message?

Surprisingly, few understand even today the meaning of the message of Christ our Righteousness. It is the central message of the "other angel," and it is the needed preparation to receive the latter rain. Jesus is the "light of the world." John 8:12.

"The present message—justification by faith—is a message from God; it bears the divine credentials, for its fruit is unto holiness....

"There is not one in one hundred who understands for himself the Bible truth on this subject that is so necessary to our present and eternal welfare....

"Many are in a lukewarm condition, because they do not live by faith, increasing in the knowledge of the truth, going on from light to greater light. Such have need to be greatly alarmed lest that which the Lord has placed within their reach at infinite cost, should be

taken away, and given to others who will prize the gift and use it for his glory...

"The Lord can do little for his people, because of their limited faith. The ministers have not presented Christ in his fullness to the people, either in the churches or in new fields, and the people have not an intelligent faith. They have not been instructed as they should have been, that Christ is unto them both salvation and righteousness...."

"Our present position is interesting and perilous."¹⁴

Yet this is the message that His messengers must study, live, and share. To be righteous is "to right." We need to be right with God, and He needs to be right with us. We can be right with God only through faith in Christ. It is His perfect obedience to the holy law that is accepted by God on our behalf. Only by faith can today's reformers obtain the precious garments of Jesus' merits, His good works, and right standing with God's holy law and with God. The righteousness of Christ is free—a gift that, when received in the soul, produces works of love for God's glory. The fruit of Christ's righteousness is holiness and a missionary zeal.

We all need a new revelation of the Messiah, of Jesus Christ, the "light of the

world," if we wish to be anointed by His Spirit, and participate in the final evangelization of the planet. Jesus, and He alone, is our surety, our right to heaven, and our hope of salvation.

If we neglect to understand and live the new revelations of Christ our righteousness, then we too run the risk of losing not only our souls, but also the souls of our children as "a heritage of shame."

Let the holy Shekinah, which shone in the Most Holy Place over the mercy seat, shine in your heart and mine today. Let His Spirit revive His church—or else our spiritual candlestick will be removed. Let the message of Christ enlighten me first, then my family, and then my local church. We have a great commission: "the earth" is to be "lightened with [God's] glory." This will never happen until it starts with each of us individually.

The Native Americans recite a legend about a conversation between an Indian chief and the Great Spirit when the Europeans came to the New World. The chief inquires of the Great Spirit, "What can we do to stop the white man from polluting our rivers, cutting down our forests, killing our buffalo, and destroying our land?" The Great Spirit responds, "To make a better world, begin by making a better you."

Paul clearly presented the secret of making a better person, a perfect person, when he penned these words:

"Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what [is] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory**: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Colossians 1:26–28. Amen.

References, all by Ellen G. White, except item 12.

¹*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 455, 456.

²*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 978, 979 (Letter 79, 1900).

³*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 206.

⁴*Signs of the Times*, June 9, 1890, par. 10.

⁵*Pacific Union Recorder*, August 14, 1902, pp. 9–11.

⁶*Review and Herald*, Nov. 22, 1892, par. 7.

⁷*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 91, 92.

⁸*Reflections on the Minneapolis Conference*. Manuscript Releases, vol. 12, p. 19, par. 2 and 3.

⁹*Signs of the Times*, April 21, 1890, par. 8.

¹⁰*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, pp. 234, 235.

¹¹*Signs of the Times*, April 21, 1890, par. 11.

¹²Fall Council. *Review and Herald*, November 15, 1917, p. 24.

¹³*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 270.

¹⁴*Review and Herald*, September 3, 1889.

Reading 6 – Friday, December 14, 2007

"Babylon the Great Is Fallen, Is Fallen"

By Tzvetan Petkov, USA

I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven, descending to the earth, and again ascending to heaven, preparing for the fulfillment of some important event. Then I saw another mighty angel commissioned to descend to the earth, to unite his voice with the third angel, and give power and force to his message. Great power and glory were imparted to the angel, and as he descended, the earth was lightened with his glory. The light which attended this angel penetrated everywhere, as he cried mightily, with a strong voice, 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.'"
—*Early Writings*, p. 277.

Why is the call "Babylon is fallen" repeated?

We know of two main reasons: the first one is the increase of Babylon's sins, the impurity existing in all of Christianity as well as the rest of the world.

"The message of the fall of Babylon, as given by the second angel, is repeated, with the additional mention of the **corruptions which have been entering the churches** [all emphasis is by the author] since 1844. The work of this angel comes in at the right time to join in the last great work of the third angel's message as it swells to a loud cry." —*Ibid*.

"Angels were sent to aid the mighty angel from heaven, and I heard voices which seemed to sound everywhere, 'Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her

sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. **For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.**' This message seemed to be an addition to the third message, joining it as the midnight cry joined the second angel's message in 1844." —*Ibid*.

The increase in knowledge and technology has contributed to the spread of sin over the world as never before. The mass media not only benefits man but also appeals to the sinful tendencies of the fallen race. Ninety-eight percent of worldwide television productions, which enter almost every home, portray murder, bloodshed, adultery, and spiritualism. TV and computer games feature weapons, killing, monsters, and spiritualistic rites. Criminality increases alarmingly, among not only men and women but also children,

teenagers, and young adults. The Holy Spirit, grieved and rejected, is withdrawing His protection from sinners.

Today's apostate Christianity has not only kept its relationship with the world and with Babylon (the Catholic Church), but it has gone even further. Specifically, through the influence of the modern religious politics of the Catholic Church, the whole of Protestantism has fallen at the feet of the pope—as, for example, at the funeral of Pope John Paul II. The mass was attended by representatives of all Protestant churches, including the Adventists. Their attendance demonstrated not only their loyalty to the papacy but also their willingness to pray for the forgiveness of the dead, according to Catholic doctrine. Baptists, Methodists, and other Protestant denominations thus officially repented of having worked for the conversion of the Catholics. The Protestant Church of Finland even declared her adherence to Catholicism, saying there is no longer a need to “reform.” Truly, “Babylon is fallen.”

Our question is, how do we fulfill God's commission? Have we also been influenced by the blindness of the world? Today more than ever, the truth about the fall of Babylon should be preached. We must know the last warning message and proclaim it in the power of the Lord. Are we using all our strength now to preach the third angel's message?

The **second reason** for the repetition of the announcement of Babylon's fall is the terrible apostasy among the professed people of God. The chosen people of the time of the judgment, who have received special light, should proclaim not only the first and second angels' messages, but also the third one, with great power. Instead, formalism, legalism, and pride have conquered the hearts of professed Christians.

God wants to grant His children extraordinary power. Christ our Righteousness should be the message that will transform the three angels' messages into a loud cry. That message was given to heal and save the people of God. A people who do not know God cannot introduce Him to others. Only when this message is understood and experienced by God's children are they able to take part in the loud cry. “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.” Revelation 3:18.

Unfortunately, this great privilege was not understood in 1888, in Minneapolis. The Holy Spirit was rejected.

As a consequence of this blindness, the world exerted such an influence upon the Seventh-day Adventist church that during the First World War, the leaders of that church stretched out their hands to the political powers of the world and joined the alliance of apostate churches. Shortly afterwards, the faithful remnant, who had accepted the 1888 message and prepared for imminent crisis, was persecuted, disfellowshipped from churches, and reported to the political powers. The following sad prophecy was fulfilled:

“Those who have had opportunities to hear and receive the truth and who have united with the Seventh-day Adventist church, calling themselves the commandment-keeping people of God, and yet possess no more vitality and consecration to God than do the nominal churches, will receive of the plagues of God just as verily as the churches who oppose the law of God. Only those that are sanctified through the truth will compose the royal family in the heavenly mansions Christ has gone to prepare for those that love Him and keep His commandments.” —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, p. 176.

The Lord warns His people through a vision given to His prophetess that the faithful ones will make the same experience when the Sunday law crisis starts. The Lord showed her a group of Adventists that she calls “nominal Adventists,” who keep Sunday instead of the Sabbath day. “I saw [that] the nominal church and nominal Adventists, like Judas, would betray us to the Catholics to obtain their influence 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.” —*Spalding and Magan Collection*, p. 1. Think about this. There will be Adventists who will receive the mark of the beast and persecute the followers of Christ. That is why the Lord sends another angel, who repeats the message against Babylon. This angel from Revelation 18 works with the faithful remnant. Do you believe you are a part of this remnant?

The sweet message of false prophets

“I saw that since the second angel proclaimed the fall of the churches, they have been growing more and more corrupt. They bear the name of being Christ's followers; yet it is impossible to distinguish them from the world. Ministers take their texts from the Word of God, but preach smooth things. To this the natural heart feels no objection. It is only the spirit and power of the truth and the salvation of Christ that are hateful to the carnal heart. There is nothing in the popular ministry that stirs the wrath of Satan, makes the sinner tremble, or applies to the heart and conscience the fearful realities of a judgment soon to come. Wicked men are generally pleased with a form of piety without true godliness, and they will aid and support such a religion.” —*Early Writings*, p. 273.

To proclaim the message of warning against Babylon is not a simple commission. Therefore many choose not to do it. “Peace, peace; there is no danger” is what the world wants to hear. Many do not want to call sin by its name. The apostate churches preach a Christ who does not respect God's law. They sell a “cheap gospel,” “salvation” that is accepted in the head but not within the heart, that does not set the soul free from sin.

God's true messengers are not influenced by false prophets. On the other hand, the message of Revelation 18 cannot be proclaimed with only human power. Those who receive the Spirit of God will be endowed with power and courage to preach the truth of the three angels' message. Christ our Righteousness is the experience of the remnant. “Babylon is fallen, is fallen” must be preached with great power. “‘When He [the Spirit of truth] is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment’ [John 16:3]. The preaching of the word will be of no avail without the continual presence and aid of the Holy Spirit.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671. Do you want to be part of this message that will enlighten the world? Surrender your heart to Jesus, and He will work in you.

Preparation for the loud cry

“I saw that many were neglecting the preparation so needful and were looking to the time of ‘refreshing’ and the ‘latter rain’ to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight. Oh, how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! They had

neglected the needful preparation; therefore they could not receive the refreshing that all must have to fit them to live in the sight of a holy God.... I saw that none could share the 'refreshing' unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action. We should, therefore, be drawing nearer and nearer to the Lord and be earnestly seeking that preparation necessary to enable us to stand in the battle of the day of the Lord. Let all remember that God is holy and that none but holy beings can ever dwell in His presence." —*Early Writings*, p. 71.

The light of the angel of Revelation 18 began in 1888 with the message of Christ our Righteousness. The outpouring of the latter rain will follow the necessary spiritual preparation. In order to warn others about sin, we ourselves must be purified and sanctified. Before calling others to leave Babylon, we must have left it. The message of the Faithful Witness to the church of Laodicea represents a work that must take place in our churches, in our families, and in our own hearts. The only solution for Laodicea is Christ our Righteousness. We must wear white raiment and buy gold tried in the fire. As long as we do not understand this message and make of it a personal experience, our soul cannot be in harmony with God.

"Thus will the message of the third angel be proclaimed. As the time comes for the loud cry to be given, the **Lord will work through humble instruments**, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service. **The laborers will be qualified**

rather by the unction of his Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. The sins of Babylon will be laid open. **The fearful results of a union of Church and State**, the inroads of **Spiritualism**, the stealthy but rapid progress of the **papal power**—all will be unmasked. By these solemn warnings the people will be stirred." —*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p. 424.

God raised up a Reform Movement, mainly to keep the truth pure, so as to have a people ready for the latter rain. The work of Elijah and John the Baptist was to prepare the way for the first coming of the Messiah. God's people at the end of times will have the same privilege, but this time for the second coming of Christ.

The shake-up

The call "Babylon is fallen" will shake up the whole world.

"Thousands upon thousands have never listened to words like these. In amazement they hear the testimony that Babylon is the church, fallen because of her errors and sins, because of her rejection of the truth sent to her from Heaven. The people go to their former teachers with the eager inquiry, Are these things so? The ministers present fables, prophesy smooth things, to soothe their fears, and quiet the awakened conscience. But many refuse to be satisfied with the mere authority of men, and demand a plain 'Thus

saith the Lord.' **The popular ministry**, like the Pharisees of old, are filled with anger as their authority is questioned; they denounce the message as of Satan, and stir up the sin-loving multitudes to revile and persecute those who proclaim it." —*Ibid.*

"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 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." —*Early Writings*, p. 261.

The glorious work of the third angel, with the help of the angel of Revelation 18, will prepare the whole world for the coming of the Messiah. These are the last rays of grace and love to shine upon fallen humanity, the last chance before the King of kings proclaims, 'It is done.' God's angels rush to and fro looking for faithful believers to be used as instruments.

"To day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Hebrews 3:15. Let us say "yes" to the Lord's call. May the Lord bless His children! Amen.



“Come Out of Her, My People”

By Branko Cholich, USA

Who is Babylon the great, out of whom God calls His people? For the prophet at Patmos, the term referred to the pagan religion that controlled the ancient Roman civil authority and severely persecuted Christians because of their preaching against idolatry. (All Roman religion was nothing but idolatry.) For Protestant churches after the great reformation in the 16th century, Babylon was the Roman Catholic Church. For Millerites, who expected the second coming of Christ in 1844, both Catholic and Protestant churches constituted Babylon.

Revelation 18, especially verse 24, gives the reason for the judgment of Babylon: “In her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.” This statement reveals that the spirit of Babylon originated at the time of Cain, the first one to persecute and kill his brother for righteousness’ sake. From that time to the end of the history of the world, Babylon has multiplied in number. Now, many religious denominations—Christian and non-Christian, all who do not keep the ten commandments of God—constitute Babylon the great. This confederacy is symbolized in Revelation 17 by the woman declared queen of all nations, who sits upon the scarlet-colored beast.

What are the sins of Babylon?

“In the New Testament, language very similar [to that used with wanton Israel in the Old Testament] is addressed to professed Christians who seek the friendship of the world above the favor of God. Says the apostle James [in James 4:4]: ‘Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.’

“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.’ Babylon is further declared to be ‘that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.’ Revelation 17:4–6, 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.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 382.

Who are called out of Babylon?

“Notwithstanding the spiritual darkness and alienation from God that exist in the churches which constitute Babylon, the great body of Christ’s true followers are still to be found in their communion. There are many of these who have never seen the special truths for this time. Not a few are dissatisfied with their present condition and are longing for clearer light. They look in vain for the image of Christ in the churches with which they are connected. As these bodies depart further and further from the truth, and ally themselves more closely with the world, the difference between the two classes will widen, and it will finally result in separation. The time will come when those who love God supremely can no longer remain in connection with such as are ‘lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof’ [2 Timothy 3:4, 5].

“Revelation 18 points to the time when, as the result of rejecting the threefold warning of Revelation 14:6–12, the church will have fully reached the condition foretold by the second angel, and the people of God still in Babylon will be called upon to separate from her communion. This message is the last that will ever be given to the world; and it will accomplish its work. When those that ‘believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness’ (2 Thessalonians 2:12), shall be left to receive strong delusion and to believe a lie, then the light of truth will shine upon all whose hearts are open to receive it, and all the children of the Lord that remain in Babylon will heed the call: ‘Come out of her, My people’ (Revelation 18:4).” —*Ibid.*, p. 390.

Culmination of her sins

“Of Babylon, at the time brought to view in this prophecy, it is declared: ‘Her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.’ Revelation 18:5. She has filled up the measure of her guilt, and destruction is about to fall upon her. But God still has a people in Babylon; and before the visitation of His judgments these faithful ones must be called out, that they partake not of her sins and ‘receive not of her plagues.’ Hence the movement symbolized by the angel coming down from heaven, lightening the earth with his glory and crying mightily with a strong voice, announcing the sins of Babylon. In connection with his message the call is heard: ‘Come out of her, My people.’ These announcements, uniting with the third angel’s message, constitute the final warning to be given to the inhabitants of the earth.

“Fearful is the issue to which the world is to be brought. The powers of earth, uniting to war against the commandments of God, will decree that ‘all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond’ (Revelation 13:16), shall conform to the customs of the church by the observance of the false sabbath. All who refuse compliance will be visited with civil penalties, and it will finally be declared that they are deserving of death. On the other hand, the law of God enjoining the Creator’s rest day demands obedience and threatens wrath against all who transgress its precepts.” —*Ibid.*, p. 604.

Comparison with ancient call

Like other books of the Bible, Revelation gives hope to God’s people. “No

longer have the hosts of evil power to keep the church captive; for ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city,’ which hath ‘made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication’; and to spiritual Israel is given the message, ‘Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.’ Revelation 14:8; 18:4. [In ancient times, the prophet Jeremiah called Israel out of physical Babylon.] As the captive exiles heeded the message, ‘Flee out of the midst of Babylon’ (Jeremiah 51:6), and were restored to the Land of Promise, so those who fear God today are heeding the message to withdraw from spiritual Babylon, and soon they are to stand as trophies of divine grace in the earth made new, the heavenly Canaan.

“In Malachi’s day the mocking inquiry of the impenitent, ‘Where is the God of judgment?’ met with the solemn response: ‘The Lord ... shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant.... But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.’ Malachi 2:17; 3:1–4.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 715.

In the time of Malachi, the priests were charged with many wrongdoings, but they always denied the charges. Although specifically addressed to the priests, the message cited above was the last one to the people of Israel. For four hundred years, God did not directly communicate with them through a prophet. Little by little, the time of mercy for the nation drew to a close.

The main reason for separation

“The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not. While the observance of the false sabbath in compliance with the law of the state, contrary to the fourth commandment, will

be an avowal of allegiance to a power that is in opposition to God, the keeping of the true Sabbath, in obedience to God’s law, is an evidence of loyalty to the Creator. While one class, by accepting the sign of submission to earthly powers, receive the mark of the beast, the other choosing the token of allegiance to divine authority, receive the seal of God.

“Heretofore those who presented the truths of the third angel’s message have often been regarded as mere alarmists. Their predictions that religious intolerance would gain control in the United States, that church and state would unite to persecute those who keep the commandments of God, have been pronounced groundless and absurd. It has been confidently declared that this land could never become other than what it has been—the defender of religious freedom. But as the question of enforcing Sunday observance is widely agitated, the event so long doubted and disbelieved is seen to be approaching, and the third message will produce an effect which it could not have had before.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 605, 606.

The result of this call

The best explanation for the result of the call to come out of Babylon follows: “As the controversy extends into new fields and the minds of the people are called to God’s downtrodden law, Satan is astir. The power attending the message will only madden those who oppose it. The clergy will put forth almost superhuman efforts to shut away the light lest it should shine upon their flocks. By every means at their command they will endeavor to suppress the discussion of these vital questions. The church appeals to the strong arm of civil power, and, in this work, papists and Protestants unite. As the movement for Sunday enforcement becomes more bold and decided, the law will be invoked against commandment keepers. They will be threatened with fines and imprisonment, and some will be offered positions of influence, and other rewards and advantages, as inducements to renounce their faith. But their steadfast answer is: ‘Show us from the word of God our error’—the same plea that was made by Luther under similar circumstances. Those who are arraigned before the courts make a strong vindication of the truth, and some who hear them are led to take their stand to keep all the commandments

of God. Thus light will be brought before thousands who otherwise would know nothing of these truths.” —*Ibid.*, p. 607.

Relationship of the third angel and Babylon

The messages of Revelation 14 and that of Revelation 18:4 are described by Ellen White in a chapter entitled “The Loud Cry”: “I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven, descending to the earth, and again ascending to heaven, preparing for the fulfillment of some important event. Then I saw another mighty angel commissioned to descend to the earth, to unite his voice with the third angel, and give power and force to his message. Great power and glory were imparted to the angel, and as he descended, the earth was lightened with his glory. The light which attended this angel penetrated everywhere, as he cried mightily, with a strong voice, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird’ [Revelation 18:2]. The message of the fall of Babylon, as given by the second angel, is repeated, with the additional mention of the corruptions which have been entering the churches since 1844. The work of this angel comes in at the right time to join in the last great work of the third angel’s message as it swells to a loud cry. And the people of God are thus prepared to stand in the hour of temptation, which they are soon to meet. I saw a great light resting upon them, and they united to fearlessly proclaim the third angel’s message.” —*Early Writings*, p. 277.

Conclusion

The message of Revelation 18:4 follows the three angels’ messages given in Revelation 14:6–12 and the outpouring of the latter rain when the Sunday law begins. As God’s people receive the power of the Holy Spirit, they will give the final call, “the loud cry,” to the fallen world. The message of this angel will enlighten the whole world. It will be more than sufficient to bring all God’s people out of the total darkness of the world. Then the sealing message will be completed, and the time of mercy will end. Revelation 22:11. Then begin the seven last plagues, the punishment of Babylon the great for the sins described in Revelation 18:5–24. Amen.