



# READINGS

for the Week of Prayer

Friday, December 1 to  
Sabbath, December 9, 2023

**"WHEN SHALL  
THESE THINGS  
BE?"**

Matthew 24:3

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# INTRODUCTION

In studying the signs of the times, Matthew 24 is the best place in the Bible to begin, pinpointing the two questions that the disciples asked Jesus. "When will these things be?" and "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Verse 3. The relationship between these two issues is very strong, laying out the time, facts, and events that will precede Jesus' second coming. Time and events are the elements that make up the development of human history, and Jesus laid them out in prophecy for all to discover at this very moment in time. "The twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew is presented to me again and again as something that is to be brought to the attention of all. We are today living in the time when the predictions of this chapter are fulfilling." —*Gospel Workers* (1915 ed.), p. 148.

History is being made all around us as a flood of information and media resources available today confirms, without a shadow of a doubt, what Jesus Christ traced out in Matthew 24:5-8 concerning the conditions reigning in the world before His coming. "For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows."

It is fascinating to see how Jesus categorized the last events. Religious confusion was the first one that was on His list—a lack of understanding of salvation and the Saviour. Next was armed conflict, and then spiritual conflict associated with social upheaval. Political instability, diseases, and epidemics would be a result of the other destructive influences. Food shortages, famine, and natural

disasters, including earthquakes, are reported almost every day in the news, while religious persecution and apostasy lead to global division and intolerance. "For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." Verse 5. Widespread deception is now seen in the multitudes of doctrines and denominations as well as in prophecies proclaimed.

In the face of religious intolerance, extreme inhumanity to man is becoming stronger and stronger, "And because iniquity [lawlessness] shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Verse 12. Seeing so much misfortune and devastation in the centuries ahead, Jesus highlighted the perseverance of the faithful remnant, "... But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" verse 13, as well as the rapid advance of the final gospel message.

"The twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew gives an outline of what is to come upon the world." —*This Day with God*, p. 153. The religious, political, social, and environmental signs of the times surround God's people in every country. Therefore, in this Week of Prayer 2023, the warning is sounded: "Watch," "be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Matthew 24:42, 44.

The meetings during the Week of Prayer should be organized in the churches, in homes, and virtually. The last Sabbath will be dedicated to fasting, prayer, and giving. The final reading is planned to be presented as a sermon for the service, followed by the gathering of the special offering for the General Conference to be used in opening and supporting new fields. Let everyone write a Bible verse on the envelope containing his offering to express his spiritual desires and gratitude. "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:57.

—*The brothers and sisters of the General Conference*

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## READINGS

for the week of Prayer

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# Signs of the Times

E. G. White

In unmistakable language, our Lord speaks of His second coming, and He gives warning of dangers to precede His advent to the world. "If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." As one of the signs of Jerusalem's destruction, Christ had said, "Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many." False prophets did rise, deceiving the people, and leading great numbers into the desert. Magicians and sorcerers, claiming miraculous power, drew the people after them into the mountain solitudes. But this prophecy was spoken also for the last days. This sign is given as a sign of the second advent. Even now false christs and false prophets are showing signs and wonders to seduce His disciples. Do we not hear the cry, "Behold, He is in the desert"? Have not thousands gone forth into the desert, hoping to find Christ? And from thousands of gatherings where men profess to hold communion with departed spirits is not the call now heard, "Behold, He is in the secret chambers"? This is the very claim that spiritism puts forth. But what says Christ? "Believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

## Visible signs

The Saviour gives signs of His coming, and more than this, He fixes the time when the first of these signs shall appear: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they

shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

At the close of the great papal persecution, Christ declared, the sun should be darkened, and the moon should not give her light. Next, the stars should fall from heaven. And He says, "Learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that He is near, even at the doors."

Christ has given signs of His coming. He declares that we may know when He is near, even at the doors. He says of those who see these signs, "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." These signs have appeared. Now we know of a surety that the Lord's coming is at hand. "Heaven and earth shall pass away," He says, "but My words shall not pass away."

Christ is coming with clouds and with great glory. A multitude of shining angels will attend Him. He will come to raise the dead, and to change the living saints from glory to glory. He will come to honor those who have loved Him, and kept His commandments, and to take them to Himself. He has not forgotten them nor His promise. There will be a relinking of the family chain. When we look upon our dead, we may think of the morning when the trump of God shall sound, when "the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." A little longer, and we shall see the King in His beauty. A little longer, and He will wipe all tears from our eyes. A little longer, and He will present us "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." Wherefore, when He gave the signs of His coming, He said, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

But the day and the hour of His coming Christ has not revealed. He stated plainly to His disciples that He Himself could not make known the day or the hour of His second appearing. Had He been at liberty to reveal

this, why need He have exhorted them to maintain an attitude of constant expectancy? There are those who claim to know the very day and hour of our Lord's appearing. Very earnest are they in mapping out the future. But the Lord has warned them off the ground they occupy. The exact time of the second coming of the Son of man is God's mystery.

Christ continues, pointing out the condition of the world at His coming: "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." Christ does not here bring to view a temporal millennium, a thousand years in which all are to prepare for eternity. He tells us that as it was in Noah's day, so will it be when the Son of man comes again.

### ***How was it in Noah's day?***

"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Genesis 6:5. The inhabitants of the antediluvian world turned from Jehovah, refusing to do His holy will. They followed their own unholy imagination and perverted ideas. It was because of their wickedness that they were destroyed; and today the world is following the same way. It presents no flattering signs of millennial glory. The transgressors of God's law are filling the earth with wickedness. Their betting, their horse racing, their gambling, their dissipation, their lustful practices, their untamable passions, are fast filling the world with violence.

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

judge the world." Christ tells us when that day shall be ushered in. He does not say that all the world will be converted, but that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." By giving the gospel to the world it is in our power to hasten our Lord's return. We are not only to look for but to hasten the coming of the day of God. Had the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would before this have been warned, and the Lord Jesus would have come to our earth in power and great glory.

### ***The time is near***

After He had given the signs of His coming, Christ said, "When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." "Take ye heed, watch and pray." God has always given men warning of coming judgments. Those who had faith in His message for their time, and who acted out their faith, in obedience to His commandments, escaped the judgments that fell upon the disobedient and unbelieving. The word came to Noah, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before Me." Noah obeyed and was saved. The message came to Lot, "Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city." Lot placed himself under the guardianship of the heavenly messengers, and was saved. So Christ's disciples were given warning of the destruction of Jerusalem. Those who watched for the sign of the coming ruin, and fled from the city, escaped the destruction. So now we are given warning of Christ's second coming and of the destruction to fall upon the world. Those who heed the warning will be saved.

Because we know not the exact time of His coming, we are commanded to watch. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching." Those who watch for the Lord's coming are not waiting in idle expectancy. The expectation of Christ's coming is to make men fear the Lord, and fear His judgments upon transgression. It is to awaken them to the great sin of rejecting His offers of mercy. Those who are watching for the Lord are purifying their souls by obedience to the truth. With vigilant watching they combine earnest working. Because they know that the Lord is at the door, their zeal is quickened to co-operate with the divine intelligences in working for the salvation of souls. These are the faithful and wise servants who give to the Lord's household "their portion of



meat in due season." They are declaring the truth that is now specially applicable. As Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses each declared the truth for his time, so will Christ's servants now give the special warning for their generation.

But Christ brings to view another class: "If that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him." Matthew 24:48-50.

The evil servant says in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming." He does not say that Christ will not come. He does not scoff at the idea of His second coming. But in his heart and by his actions and words he declares that the Lord's coming is delayed. He banishes from the minds of others the conviction that the Lord is coming quickly. His influence leads men to presumptuous, careless delay. They are confirmed in their worldliness and stupor. Earthly passions, corrupt thoughts, take possession of the mind. The evil servant eats and drinks with the drunken, unites with the world in pleasure seeking. He smites his fellow servants, accusing and condemning those who are faithful to their Master. He mingles with the world. Like grows with like in transgression. It is a fearful assimilation. With the world he is taken in the snare. "The lord of that servant shall come ... in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites."

### **Watch!**

"If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." The advent of Christ will surprise the false teachers. They are saying, "Peace and safety." Like the priests and teachers before the fall of Jerusalem, they look for the church to enjoy earthly prosperity and glory. The signs of the times they interpret as foreshadowing this. But what saith the word of Inspiration? "Sudden destruction cometh upon them." Upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth, upon all who make this world their home, the day of God will come as a snare. It comes to them as a prowling thief.

The world, full of rioting, full of godless pleasure, is asleep, asleep in carnal security. Men are putting afar off the coming of the Lord. They laugh at warnings. The proud boast is made, "All things continue as they

were from the beginning." "Tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." We will go deeper into pleasure loving. But Christ says, "Behold, I come as a thief." At the very time when the world is asking in scorn, "Where is the promise of His coming?" the signs are fulfilling. While they cry, "Peace and safety," sudden destruction is coming. When the scorner, the rejecter of truth, has become presumptuous; when the routine of work in the various money-making lines is carried on without regard to principle; when the student is eagerly seeking knowledge of everything but his Bible, Christ comes as a thief.

Everything in the world is in agitation. The signs of the times are ominous. Coming events cast their shadows before. The Spirit of God is withdrawing from the earth, and calamity follows calamity by sea and by land. There are tempests, earthquakes, fires, floods, murders of every grade. Who can read the future? Where is security? There is assurance in nothing that is human or earthly. Rapidly are men ranging themselves under the banner they have chosen. Restlessly are they waiting and watching the movements of their leaders. There are those who are waiting and watching and working for our Lord's appearing. Another class are falling into line under the generalship of the first great apostate. Few believe with heart and soul that we have a hell to shun and a heaven to win.

The crisis is stealing gradually upon us. The sun shines in the heavens, passing over its usual round, and the heavens still declare the glory of God. Men are still eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying, and giving in marriage. Merchants are still buying and selling. Men are jostling one against another, contending for the highest place. Pleasure lovers are still crowding to theaters, horse races, gambling halls. The highest excitement prevails, yet probation's hour is fast closing, and every case is about to be eternally decided. Satan sees that his time is short. He has set all his agencies at work that men may be deceived, deluded, occupied and entranced, until the day of probation shall be ended, and the door of mercy be forever shut.

Solemnly there come to us down through the centuries the warning words of our Lord from the Mount of Olives: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 631-636.

# Rome in the Prophecy

A. Di Franca, Italy

Prophecy is a very important part of the Holy Scriptures. It is a proof of its divine inspiration and an evidence of the light that the Lord has given to searchers for truth. There are prophecies of the Messiah, His first and second comings, Israel and the church, various groups, and Rome. Some prophecies refer to the past; others, to the present and future. Some present the signs of the times of the earth's last days. Because of the darkness and confusion existing in the world and the messages contained in the inspired word, we can justly say that the prophetic word is "a lamp shining in a dark place." 2 Peter 1:19.

Concerning prophecy that illuminates the path of the believer, the Testimonies state: "History and prophecy testify that the God of the whole earth revealeth secrets through His chosen light bearers to the world." —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 180.

"The light of prophecy still burns for the guidance of souls, saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' It shines on the pathway of the just to commend, and on the way of the unjust to lead to repentance and conversion. Through its agency sin will be rebuked and iniquity unmasked. It is progressive in the performance of its duty to reflect light on the past, the present, and the future." —*My Life Today*, p. 42.

## Legs of the image in Daniel 2

Although not given directly by name, one power that appears frequently, clearly, and unequivocally in the Scriptures is Rome. The first mention of it is in connection with the statue of Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic dream, which depicted the world empires as different metal body parts. The legs of iron represented Rome.



In describing the enormous image, the prophet Daniel said—"the legs of iron." Daniel 2:33. He underscored the consistency and character of that kingdom in dominating over the previous ones. "And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise." Verse 40.

## The fourth beast and the little horn

The next mention of Rome in Scripture is one of the most descriptive. "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns." Daniel 7:7. In presenting this power and its actions, the prophet explained, "The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces." Verse 23.

But it was not just the beast itself, which represented the pagan Roman Empire, that stood out for its character. There was also the "little horn." It had "eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things." Verse 8. What was the meaning of this? The prophet added that "he shall speak great words





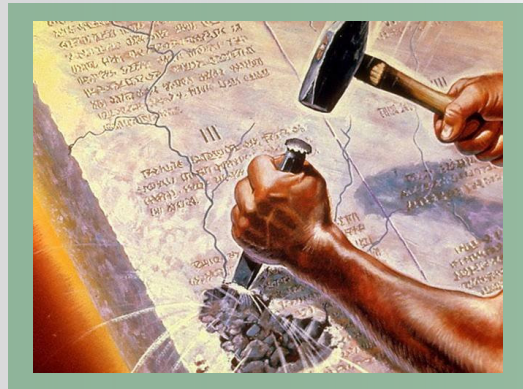
against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time." Verse 25. The little horn was the power that persecuted the saints of the Most High terribly during the Middle Ages and thought "to change times and laws." A religious power was in the spotlight here, and there is more evidence that the Bible was pointing to Rome.

### ***It rose up against the Prince of the host***

Daniel 8:9 also mentions "a little horn," this time to represent both pagan and papal Rome, which "waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host,..." Daniel 8:9-11. The "Prince of the host" can be only the Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered and died under Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. Luke 3:1; 1 Timothy 6:13. In the prophecy, a saint asked how long it would be given for "both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot" (Daniel 8:13) by the same power. This referred to pagan Rome, which destroyed the Jewish temple in the year 70, and also to "Christian" Rome, which persecuted the "host"—"the saints of the Most High" (cf. Daniel 7:25)—for a very long time.

### ***Would destroy the city and the sanctuary***

The fourth mention of the power that is identified as Rome is in the prophecy of the seventy weeks. "... And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary: and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.... And for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." Daniel 9:26, 27. Combining the destruction of the temple with that of the city and the deportation of many Jews, there is evidence to understand what took place in the year 70 under the leadership of Titus, the Roman general.



In addition to the long list already given—persecuting the saints, attempting to change times and laws, attacking the "Prince of the host," and destroying the city and the sanctuary—Rome fulfilled even more prophecies. It "shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the ... sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate." Daniel 11:31. When the temple was destroyed, the offerings there were stopped. As for profanation and the abomination that made desolate, flags (military insignia) were raised in the temple during the war fought from A.D. 66 to 70. After that (in 132-135), when the rebellion led by Bar Kochba was suppressed, on the very place where the temple once stood the Romans erected a temple dedicated to Jove Capitoline. A pagan temple for idolatrous worship being put in the place where God was supposed to be worshipped was a great profanation and "abomination."

### ***Jesus' prophecies relating to Rome***

Following the prophecies that Daniel conveyed concerning Rome—again without mentioning the empire by name—were those of Jesus. He referred to the destruction of the temple. "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and His disciples came to Him for to shew Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I saw unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Matthew 24:1, 2; Luke 21:5, 6. He also spoke of "the abomination of desolation" standing "in the holy place" (Verse 15) and to the flight that the Christians should take to avoid serious suffering and danger. Verses 16-20. Luke recorded the Saviour's messages about the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, the flight of the Christians, the suffering that would befall the Jewish people, the eviction of the Jews from Jerusalem, and the city's repopulation by pagans.

"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Luke 21:20-24. Forty years after the Saviour spoke these words, all of the events occurred exactly as He said. However, there was a big difference between what happened to those who believed and followed His prophecy and those who did not. The latter suffered in the crossfires of conflict, and some lost their lives.

Concerning this, the Spirit of prophecy declared: "Christ gave His disciples a sign of the ruin to come on Jerusalem, and He told them how to escape: 'When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.' This warning was given to be heeded forty years after, at the destruction of Jerusalem. The Christians obeyed the warning, and not a Christian perished in the fall of the city." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 630.

It was because of His warning that the Christians fled from the area of conflict and escaped from the destruction and suffering that fell upon the Jews. How important Jesus' prophecies were for them; more than their just being informed, their very lives were saved! Like them, we will be blessed by appreciating the value of the prophecies!

## Assuming the titles of God

While the above prophecies relating to the sanctuary in Jerusalem belong to the past, they also provide evidence for the reliability of the Bible prophecies. Since doctrinal dangers still exist and will continue to do so in the future, the Lord in mercy also warned about the antichrist, a subject that is critically important today.

"... For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4. The warning is about not only false doctrines and practices but also miracles that are produced to seduce those who "received not the love of the truth." Verse 10.



## Rome as the beast from the sea

In Revelation 13:1-8 is a description of a beast that rose from the sea. "And there was given unto him [the beast] a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them:..." Verses 5-7.

Although in some aspects the portrayal of the beast in Revelation 13:1, 2 seems different, others are strikingly similar to what is given in Daniel (see Revelation 13:5, 6). In both cases, the beast rises from the sea (Daniel 7:3, 7; Revelation 13:1) and has ten horns. In Daniel, the fourth beast was different from the previous beasts, while in Revelation it was like a leopard. Verse 2. Furthermore, in Daniel 7:25, the little horn spoke blasphemous words against the Lord, while in Revelation the beast itself did so. It made war against the saints, while in Daniel the little horn did that. In Daniel the beast had one head, while in Revelation it had seven heads. The little horn of Daniel 7 and the beast of Revelation 13 both fought against God and His people. History recorded that during the Middle Ages, the Inquisition and the crusades perpetrated by Rome caused the deaths of millions of people.



## ***Rome represented as a woman drunk with the blood of the saints***

In Revelation 17 is another symbol representing Rome—a woman, or rather, a prostitute that committed immoralities with the kings of the earth and by whom “the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.” Verse 2. The woman was “drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.” Verse 6. Those actions matched those of the little horn, that “shall wear out the saints of the most High” (Daniel 7:25) and the beast with seven heads and ten horns to whom it was given “to make war with the saints and to overcome them.” Revelation 13:7.

Something that leaves no doubt about the woman's representing Rome appears in the explanation of the seven heads of the beast. In the Bible verse, at the beginning John wrote, “I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.” Revelation 17:3. He also wrote that “the seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth” (verse 9), revealing the headquarters of the symbolic woman on “seven hills,” where Rome is built. The names of those hills are Quirinal, Viminal, Capitoline, Esquiline, Palatine, Caelian, and the Aventine, corresponding perfectly with the other prophecies related to this subject.

## ***Appreciating the light of prophecy***

Jesus stressed the importance of prophecy. He referred to it over and over again and encouraged His disciples to apply it so that they would be prepared and not surprised or caught unawares by what would happen as time passed.

“The time of Christ's coming, His anointing by the Holy Spirit, His death, and the giving of the gospel to the Gentiles, were definitely pointed out.... Christ urged upon His disciples the importance of prophetic study. Referring to the prophecy given to Daniel in regard to their time, He said, ‘Whoso readeth, let him understand.’ Matthew 24:15. After His resurrection He explained to the disciples in ‘all the prophets’ ‘the things concerning Himself.’ Luke 24:27. The Saviour had spoken through all the prophets.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 234.

“It was His purpose to enlighten their understanding and to fasten their faith upon the ‘sure word of

prophecy.’ He wished the truth to take firm root in their minds, not merely because it was supported by His personal testimony, but because of the unquestionable evidence presented by the symbols and shadows of the typical law, and by the prophecies of the Old Testament. It was needful for the followers of Christ to have an intelligent faith, not only in their own behalf, but that they might carry the knowledge of Christ to the world. And as the very first step in imparting this knowledge, Jesus directed the disciples to ‘Moses and all the prophets.’ Such was the testimony given by the risen Saviour to the value and importance of the Old Testament Scriptures.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 349.

This is how it should be with us: “As we see the fulfilment of prophecy, our faith in the final triumph of Christ's kingdom should strengthen; and we should go forth with renewed courage to do our appointed work.” —*Gospel Workers*, pp. 26, 27.

Dear brothers and sisters throughout the world, after we pass through a long tunnel, we breathe a sigh of relief when we see the light at its end. The shining light of prophecy is just like that. It gives hope and perspective. Without vision—prophecy—we have no guidance or orientation. Proverbs 29:18. But prophecy supplies wonderful guidance, just like Israel in the wilderness had “a pillar of a cloud, to lead them in the way.” Exodus 13:21.

Therefore, let us take to heart the “more sure word of prophecy.” Let us “take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19), for this is why the Lord gave prophecy to His people. Another reason is because “the time is at hand.” “These words are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to shew unto His servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.” “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” Revelation 22:10, 6, 7; 16:15; 1:3.

May the Lord help us, dear brothers and sisters, that, after receiving this great light, we will be among “the blessed,” who “read” and “keep” the messages that He has given. Amen.

# Globalization

D. Francis, Sri Lanka / USA

**"A**nd be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Romans 12:2.

More than at any previous time, the world is introducing new words and terms into the vocabulary. Lately, we hear about "globalization" virtually every day; and, knowingly or unknowingly, we experience it. The Industrial Revolution (1760-1830) and the Second Industrial Revolution, also known as the Technological Revolution (1870-1920), pushed the concept of globalization with its "Global Village" idea.

The word is used frequently today by political, economic, and financial leaders, so it is becoming more and more familiar. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines it as "the state of being globalized; especially: the development of an increasingly integrated global economy marked especially by free trade, free flow of capital, and the tapping of cheaper foreign labor markets."

Another definition was published by Peterson Institute for International Economics on October 22, 2022: "Globalization is the word used to describe the growing interdependence of the world's economies, cultures, and populations, brought about by cross-border trade in goods and services, technology, and flows of investment, people, and information."

This constitutes a uniting of all areas of society across borders, and that is exactly what is seen in the world's economies today.

## ***Globalization and society***

Goods and services, people, money, weapons, drugs, biological products, Internet traffic, computer viruses, and greenhouse gases are all being transferred across borders today. What is new now is the speed, scale, and ease of transfer. Styles, fashions, tastes, ideas, beliefs, and diseases all spread rapidly and broadly around the world—more than at any other period of world history. Covid-19 and Ebola are exam-

ples of this in recent years. Furthermore, the international supply-chain industry has created a completely new way of doing business on a global scale.

Meanwhile, industrialization and automation have brought about the elimination of entire categories of jobs. The new culture has also created an avenue for recent world crises, such as human trafficking, illegal and legal immigration, and numerous unlawful activities leading to the exploitation of cheap labor.

## ***Globalization in the past and in the Bible***

Historically empires and colonization have played a significant role in shaping the world order by promoting globalization. This interconnectedness and interdependence is not new, for the ancient Roman, Mongol, and Ottoman Empires all expanded their territories through conquest and trade, connecting people across vast distances. European colonization of the Americas, Africa, and Asia further increased global trade, creating new economic, political, and social patterns. But global power dynamics and inequalities persist, with globalization bringing benefits as well as problems of economic growth and environmental issues.

The concept of globalization, as we understand it today, did not exist when the Bible was written. However, the Scriptures contain examples that touch on certain aspects of it, such as the spread of ideas, trade, and cultural exchange.

The New Testament recorded the extensive travels of the apostle Paul as he preached the gospel to and established churches in various Mediterranean cities. His letters helped to spread Christianity across linguistic and cultural borders, thus promoting a form of cultural globalization.

The Old Testament related examples of trade and cultural exchanges among the ancient Israelites and other nations. King Solomon's visit from the Queen of Sheba and the construction of the first temple were



examples of this. Such exchanges were actually early forms of globalization, for the temple's construction required global resources. At the same time, the enemy persisted in sabotaging God's plan of salvation.

## **Globalization leads to unification**

Globalization always caters to unification, while God requires His people to be separate, unique, and different from the world. Genesis 9:1 says, "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." God wanted them to scatter and fill the earth, while the devil did everything he possibly could to consolidate people.

"Those who desired to forget their Creator and to cast off the restraint of His law felt a constant annoyance from the teaching and example of their God-fearing associates, and after a time they decided to separate from the worshipers of God. Accordingly, they journeyed to the plain of Shinar, on the banks of the River Euphrates. They were attracted by the beauty of the situation and the fertility of the soil, and upon this plain they determined to make their home.

"Here they decided to build a city and in it a tower of such stupendous height as should render it the wonder of the world. These enterprises were designed to prevent the people from scattering abroad in colonies. God had directed men to disperse throughout the earth, to replenish and subdue it; but these Babel builders determined to keep their community united in one body, and to found a monarchy that should eventually embrace the whole earth." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 118, 119.

Nimrod was a prominent leader during the post-flood era. His name meant "rebellion," and he was an iconic symbol of an apostate, idolatrous generation. "Thus their city would become the metropolis of a universal empire; its glory would command the admiration and homage of the world and render the founders illustrious." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 119.

Constructing the tower of Babel was a united endeavor, and it was definitely a new world order. The builders of Babel wanted fame and a name. Having a single language in which to communicate was particularly advantageous. "And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as

they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there." "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." Genesis 11:1, 2, 4. At that same location, in later times, King Nebuchadnezzar built Babylon. The people knew that it was not practical for all of them to stay in one place and that the only alternative was for them to scatter. Nevertheless, they chose to remain under one name and banner as a united front. They were designing a one-world government. What did God do about that? He destroyed both their plan and the construction of the tower.

## **God's curse on Babel**

"Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth." Genesis 11:7-9. The Lord intervened. Noah's descendants were thus separated from each other by language. Genesis 10:31.

## **God cared for His people**

Providentially God preserved the remnant people's holy line from which the Messiah would come. In Acts 7:2-4, Stephen's speech referred to Genesis 12:1. "And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, He removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell."

Mesopotamia, the area between two rivers, was none other than Babylon. God told Abram to leave that place. By then, Satan had defiled the potential holy line of the remnant generation. The only way to protect it was for God to take the Messiah's forebears out of the

corrupt society. Joshua explained this. "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac." Joshua 24:2, 3.

"And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord." Genesis 12:7, 8. Abraham sought to honor God's name, while rebels sought their own fame. Although God preserved the nation, it rejected the Messiah. Nevertheless, God spread the gospel worldwide through chosen men and the Holy Spirit, thwarting Satan's attempts to destroy the chosen people. The great adversary persisted, but God always intervened, preserving a remnant.

### ***God undid the curse of Babel***

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1:8. People from some thirteen countries gathered in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. They were all called, addressed, and united in the "name of Jesus." The unity of Christ's church is one of the strongest indications of the gospel's power. The Holy Spirit brings individuals together from diverse backgrounds, cultures, languages, and temperaments into one body in Christ; and the world takes notice.

On the other side, modern technology is trying to unite people by erasing language barriers. For example, Google's CEO Sundar Pichai has spoken positively about Google Translate and its ability to connect people across languages and cultures. On May 11, 2022, he tweeted, "Excited about our advances in natural language understanding, which can do things like solve math word problems and better answer questions in

more languages. Our latest model PaLM [Pathways Language Model] demonstrates breakthrough capabilities in language, reasoning, and code tasks. We're adding 24 new languages to Google Translate, spoken by more than 300 million people. We did it with an A.I. technique called 'zero-shot learning'—the model learned to translate without ever seeing translations in these languages."

### ***Modern Babylon, Revelation, and the United States***

The book of Revelation can be seen as a warning against the dangers of Globalization, particularly in its economic and political forms. Revelation 13 describes a powerful, oppressive world government that will exercise control over commerce and trade, using a system of marks and numbers to regulate buying and selling. Such a system, although it is not the mark of the beast, is interpreted by some as representing the dangers of centralized economic power and the loss of individual freedom and autonomy.

The Bible and the Christian world have a common enemy, the devil, the ancient serpent, the old dragon. Changes are in the works without the knowledge of many of us. The younger generations talk about common enemies forming a united front without realizing that the real enemy is behind every effort to divert the attention of the masses and especially that of the remnant of the Lord.

Pope Francis, the first-ever Jesuit Pope, often talks about common issues in tandem with political leaders. His Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si*, was first published on May 24, 2015, subtitled "On Care for our Common Home." The publication emphasized pollution and climate change, the issue of water, loss of biodiversity, decline in the quality of human life, the breakdown of





society, global inequality, weak responses to "sister earth," and other common subjects.

"And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast." Revelation 13:3. On September 23, 2015, Pope Francis visited the White House; and the next day, he addressed the joint session of the U.S. Congress in Washington, DC. The theme of the speech was climate change and the family.

On September 25, 2015, he delivered a speech during the 70th session of the United Nations, focusing on poverty, immigration, family, and climate change. He received a standing ovation for several minutes from the leaders and representatives of 193 countries. UN News quoted the pope's words and commented as follows: "'The future demands of us critical and global decisions in the face of worldwide conflicts which increase the number of the excluded and those in need,' he declared in an address just ahead of the General Assembly's formal adoption of a new global framework, Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, composed of 17 goals and 169 targets to wipe out poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate over the next 15 years."

The Paris Agreement was another strategic agreement that was signed to combat climate change; and the UN, in its publication, indicated that "Implementation of the Paris Agreement requires economic and social transformation, based on the best available science." "The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was adopted by 196 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, on 12 December 2015. It entered into force on 4 November 2016."

### ***Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate of Pope Benedict XVI, June 29, 2009***

"In the face of the unrelenting growth of global interdependence, there is a strongly felt need, even in the midst of a global recession, for a reform of the United Nations Organization, and likewise of economic institutions and international finance, so that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth. One also senses the urgent need to find innovative ways

of implementing the principle of the responsibility to protect and of giving poorer nations an effective voice in shared decision-making. This seems necessary in order to arrive at a political, juridical, and economic order which can increase and give direction to international cooperation for the development of all peoples in solidarity. To manage the global economy; to revive economies hit by the crisis; to avoid any deterioration of the present crisis and the greater imbalances that would result; to bring about integral and timely disarmament, food security, and peace; to guarantee the protection of the environment and to regulate migration: for all this, there is the urgent need of a true world political authority, as my predecessor Blessed John XXIII indicated some years ago. Such an authority would need to be regulated by law, to observe consistently the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, to seek to establish the common good, and to make a commitment to securing authentic integral human development inspired by the values of charity in truth. Furthermore, such an authority would need to be universally recognized and to be vested with the effective power to ensure security for all, regard for justice, and respect for rights."



The popes have recently changed their approaches when addressing the public and speak exactly like other politicians and world leaders.

In 2015, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs published the following statement, which Pope Francis referred to in his UN address. "'The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,' adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries—developed and developing—in a global partnership. They

recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth—all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.”

2030 is not very far ahead, and all such systems call for global unity in policy-making soon. All of the forces are working together, hand in hand. “... All the world wondered after the beast.” Revelation 13:3. The rest of the prophecies are well on their way to fulfillment.

According to the ruling powers, achieving their targets will require enormous changes in economies, societies, and school curricula. They see all of this as necessary to save the world—while increasing their own power. Governments will have to prioritize what they have decided is necessary sustainable development, and businesses will have to adopt such practices. At the same time, school curricula will be required to integrate sustainability into the teaching so that the future generations will be trained in the importance of achieving the desired future.

Pope Francis has pushed this agenda and made numerous statements about his support for the plan to protect the planet and decrease poverty. But note: He is not discussing moral subjects—same-sex marriage, homosexuality, and abortion. Instead, he is constantly talking about popular topics, as reported by the Associated Press on January 25, 2023: “Pope Francis criticized laws that criminalize homosexuality as ‘unjust,’ saying God loves all His children just as they are, and called on Catholic bishops who support the laws to welcome LGBTQ people into the church.” The prophet Ezekiel warned: “Her priests have violated My law, and have profaned Mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean,...” Ezekiel 22:26.

Another report from the Vatican (Reuters) on October 4, 2021, stated: “Pope Francis and other religious leaders made a joint appeal on Monday for next month’s UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) to offer concrete solutions to save the planet from ‘an unprecedented ecological crisis.’ The ‘Faith and Science: Towards COP26’ meeting brought together Christian leaders, including Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, as well as representatives of Islam, Juda-

ism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and Jainism.”

The above quotations showed that Satan is setting the stage for his final act. The activities of the beast have a universal approach and global impact—“the inhabitants of the earth ... will be astonished....” Revelation 17:8, New International Version. The beast is both a political and a religious power. “All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast” (Revelation 14:8, New International Version) and the dragon, because there is no one like the beast. The uniqueness of the beast is its authority to impose its will and to please the dragon.

On March 9, 2023, “EarthBeat, a project of National Catholic Reporter,” gave the following title to a story: “At 10-year Mark, Pope Francis Seen As a Global Leader on the Environment.”



### ***A prophesied strategy for globalism***

“Satan therefore decided that he must come in a milder form. He had already corrupted the doctrines of the Bible, and traditions which were to ruin millions were taking deep root. Restraining his hate, he decided not to urge on his subjects to such bitter persecution, but lead the church to contend for various traditions, instead of for the faith once delivered to the saints.” —*Early Writings*, pp. 226, 227.

“There are not many, even among educators and statesmen, who comprehend the causes that underlie the present state of society. Those who hold the reins of government are not able to solve the problem of moral corruption, poverty, pauperism, and in-



creasing crime. They are struggling in vain to place business operations on a more secure basis. If men would give more heed to the teaching of God's word, they would find a solution of the problems that perplex them." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 13.

Pope Francis, a Jesuit, is becoming increasingly popular and recognized as a leader. Sister Ellen G. White described the nature of the Jesuits very clearly. "At this time the order of the Jesuits was created, the most cruel, unscrupulous, and powerful of all the champions of popery. Cut off from earthly ties and human interests, dead to the claims of natural affection, reason and conscience wholly silenced, they knew no rule, no tie, but that of their order, and no duty but to extend its power. The gospel of Christ had enabled its adherents to meet danger and endure suffering, undismayed by cold, hunger, toil, and poverty, to uphold the banner of truth in face of the rack, the dungeon, and the stake. To combat these forces, Jesuitism inspired its followers with a fanaticism that enabled them to endure like dangers, and to oppose to the power of truth all the weapons of deception. There was no crime too great for them to commit, no deception too base for them to practice, no disguise too difficult for them to assume. Vowed to perpetual poverty and humility, it was their studied aim to secure wealth and power, to be devoted to the overthrow of Protestantism, and the re-establishment of the papal supremacy." –*The Great Controversy*, p. 234.

## ***Spiritual warfare today***

"And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, 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. 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." Revelation 18:2, 3.

"A false coloring will be given to their words; the worst construction will be put upon their motives... Political corruption is destroying love of justice and regard for truth; and even in free America, rulers, and legislators, in order to secure public favor, will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance. Liberty of conscience, which has cost so

great a sacrifice, will no longer be respected." –*The Great Controversy*, p. 592.

"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, 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." Revelation 18:4, 5.

The same voice that called Abram out of Babylon is calling His people out of the fallen churches today. "The present age is one of idolatry,... No outward shrine may be visible; there may be no image for the eye to rest upon; yet thousands are following after the gods of this world.... Multitudes have a wrong conception of God and His attributes, and are as truly serving a false god as were the worshipers of Baal. Many even of those who claim to be Christians have allied themselves with influences that are unalterably opposed to God and His truth." –*Prophets and Kings* (1943), p. 177.

We are warned to avoid being like those of the world. Let us come out of Babylon and leave Babylonian practices. "The Lord will have a people as true as steel, and with faith as firm as the granite rock. They are to be His witnesses in the world,... to do a special, a glorious work in the day of His preparation." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 594, 595.

## ***Conclusion***

In this age of Globalization, the message of the remnant people has never been more relevant. As we see the world uniting under one banner, we must remember the call to come out of Babylon and not partake in the transgressions that will bring the plagues upon those who reject God. As Christians, we are called to stand firm in the faith of Jesus and follow His example. We must be vigilant and prepared for His coming. "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Matthew 24:44.

Let us be encouraged by the message of Revelation 14:12. "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." As we look forward to the second coming of Christ, let us be true to our faith and trust in God's promises.

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." Revelation 22:20, 21.

# Ecumenism

H. Avellaneda, Colombia / USA

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent Me." John 17:20, 21.

In His intercessory prayer, the Lord Jesus spoke of unity, but what unity was He talking about? Was He laying the groundwork for ecumenism?

This is the Bible verse that people use to defend ecumenism. But what the Master meant in these verses is the unity of a vital connection of man to God, through the Holy Spirit in faith and through the ministry of the risen Christ. He prayed for a group of men who were still striving for supremacy, for such contention occurred among the twelve disciples. Luke 22:24-30. Jesus Christ prayed to the Father that these men would be united in belief, spirit, and objectives. What He emphasized was not a rapprochement among different religions, for His public prayer was for the disciples. What was foremost was the unity of these ordained men with the Father, the Son, and His church in the true faith.

Living in the midst of the enormous religious divisions of the Jewish world (Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, Herodians, Essenes, etc.), seeing the continual dissension among His own disciples—who were striving for the best positions in the supposed future government of their Master—and foreseeing the future divisions in His church, Jesus prayed for unity, "that they may be one, even as We are one." John 17:22. Today Christianity has taken that prayer as the foundation of the ecumenical movement, which seeks to unite the more than 33,000 Christian denominations in the world. In this reading, we will consider some general aspects of ecumenism in the context of the final prophecies.

In a globalized world, which seeks unity at all levels, it is normal that unity is also sought among religions through the ecumenical movement. One definition of it is "the effort to make the ideal of Christian unity a

concrete reality here in the world through international cooperation and the organic union of denominations."

## The meaning of ecumenis

The Dictionary of the Spanish Language, tercentenary edition, 2022 update, defines ecumenism as follows: "Ecumenism: From the gr. **οἰκουμένη** **oikoumenē**, 'the whole world,' and -ism. Tendency or movement that attempts to restore unity among all Christian churches."

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, defines the movement as follows: "Ecumenism is the trend or movement that seeks to establish Christian unity, that is, the unity of the different 'historical' Christian religious confessions, separated from the great schisms. From ancient Greek **οἰκουμένη** (**oikoumenē**, although it is pronounced [in modern Greek] **ikumeni**, meaning 'inhabited land.' Although the word **oikoumenē** has been used since the times of the Roman Empire to express the totality of the conquered lands, the world as a unit, today the word 'ecumenism' has an eminently religious significance, and is used to refer to the existing movements within Christianity whose purpose consists in the unification of the different Christian denominations that are separated by questions of doctrine, history, tradition or practice."

In other words, ecumenism means the "union of Christian religious confessions in common points of





doctrines." We would consider the great diversity of beliefs in Protestant churches alone as conclusive evidence that this would never happen. But what does prophecy reveal?

Let the servant of the Lord speak to us about this. "But there has been for years, in churches of the Protestant faith, a strong and growing sentiment in favor of a union based upon common points of doctrine. To secure such a union, the discussion of subjects upon which all were not agreed—however important they might be from a Bible standpoint—must necessarily be waived." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 444.

Today Rome advocates and leads an ecumenism that apparently seeks the reconciliation of Christians through the collective rapprochement of the various confessions, but this is only conceived as the return of the separated brethren to the bosom of the mother church.

In this very particular interpretation of the parable of the lost sheep, Rome is considered "the only authentic fold," where the Holy Spirit desires to reintegrate all "the lost sheep" that once abandoned, according to them, the only true Christian church. The pope considers himself the only true shepherd, whom Christ commissioned to search for and return to the true fold. This shows that no matter how much dialogue and ecumenical rapprochement it manifests today, Rome has not renounced one iota of its claims to supremacy, nor will it ever do so.

The servant of the Lord says the following: "And this is the religion which Protestants are beginning to look upon with so much favor, and which will eventually be united with Protestantism. This union will not, however, be affected by a change in Catholicism, for Rome never changes. She claims infallibility. It is Protestantism that will change. The adoption of liberal ideas on its part will bring it where it can clasp the hand of Catholicism." —*Review and Herald*, June 1, 1886.

"Romanism in the Old World, and apostate Protestantism in the New, will pursue a similar course toward those who honor all the divine precepts." America will act in the same way against those who honor all the divine precepts." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 616.

This is the purpose of ecumenism. It appears to be good in the sense of the so-called unity, but it leads to Rome's dogmas being simulated and camouflaged so that it can later deliver a decisive blow against the faithful children of God.

When Jesus began His ministry, the devil tempted him by offering him dominion over that *oikoumenē* (*ikumēni*). Jesus' response was, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Luke 4:8. He ratified this when He said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Mark 12:17. Indeed, dear brothers and sisters, Christians will never accept that which He rejected.

## Modern ecumenism in prophecy

Ecumenism has existed all through time, but modern ecumenism is in the prophecies of the last days.

The modern ecumenical movement began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when Christian churches began to pray and work together across denominational lines. By the end of the 1920s, several pioneer movements had been formed for the purpose of advancing church unity throughout the world.

In 1937, church leaders agreed to form a World Council of Churches; but the outbreak of World War II delayed its official organization until August 1948, when representatives from 147 churches met in Amsterdam, Netherlands, to establish the WCC.

What is the World Council of Churches (WCC)? It is a fellowship of 352 churches from more than 120 countries, representing more than 580 million Christians worldwide. It is the largest and most representative of the many organized expressions of the mod-



ern Ecumenical Movement. Its goal is Christian unity, encompassing most Orthodox churches, large numbers of Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, and Reformed churches, as well as many united and independent churches. While most of the WCC's founding churches were European and North American, today its member churches are mostly in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Pacific. A growing number of churches on all continents have joined the WCC in its efforts for Christian unity.

"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....

"Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome. The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience." —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 445, 588.



Ecumenism is one of the signs of the last time. Satan is using it to work against the children of God. For this reason, it is very important that unity reign within God's church. Here the intercessory prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ is critically important. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." John 17:20, 21.

The Spirit of prophecy stated in this regard: "As we approach the last crisis it is of vital moment that harmony and unity exist among the Lord's instrumentalities. The world is filled with storm and war and variance. Yet under one head—the papal power—the people will unite to oppose God in the person of His witnesses. This union is cemented by the great apostate." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 182.

"A day of great intellectual darkness has been shown to be favorable to the success of popery. It will yet be demonstrated that a day of great intellectual light is equally favorable for its success." —*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p. 390.

## What is behind ecumenism?

"In the movements now in progress in the United States to secure for the institutions and usages of the church the support of the state, Protestants are following in the steps of papists. Nay, more, they are opening the door for the papacy to regain in Protestant America the supremacy which she has lost in the Old World." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 573.

That's right, dear brothers and sisters! The prophecy concerning ecumenism is being quickly fulfilled, and many people do not realize what is behind it. Many centuries before the Dark Ages, the prophet Daniel was shown the deadly actions of Rome: "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;" "and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people." Daniel 7:21; 8:24. Today Rome calls those martyrs "separated brethren" and asks for forgiveness for its past mistakes. But has Rome really changed in its claim to supremacy? No, it puts on a kind face and will continue to do so until it regains its lost supremacy.





"The Roman Church now presents a fair front to the world, covering with apologies her record of horrible cruelties. She has clothed herself in Christlike garments; but she is unchanged. Every principle of the papacy that existed in past ages exists today. The doctrines devised in the darkest ages are still held. Let none deceive themselves. The papacy that Protestants are now so ready to honor is the same that ruled the world in the days of the Reformation, when men of God stood up, at the peril of their lives, to expose her iniquity. She possesses the same pride and arrogant assumption that lorded it over kings and princes, and claimed the prerogatives of God. Her spirit is no less cruel and despotic now than when she crushed out human liberty and slew the saints of the Most High." –*The Great Controversy*, p. 571.

History records what "ecumenism" Rome practiced toward other religions when it wielded its power over all the nations of the old world. None acted with the intransigence and cruelty that the Roman Empire did. Remember what occurred under the Crusades conducted by Rome against all whom it called infidels, resulting in millions of deaths, and the Holy Inquisition that tortured and killed thousands of "heretics" throughout Europe. History will repeat itself when Rome uses ecumenism to deliver its final blow.

"The papal church will never relinquish her claim to infallibility.... Let the restraints now imposed by secular governments be removed and Rome be reinstated in her former power, and there would speedily be a revival of her tyranny and persecution....

"The Roman Church is far-reaching in her plans and modes of operation. She is employing every de-

vice to extend her influence and increase her power in preparation for a fierce and determined conflict to regain control of the world, to re-establish persecution, and to undo all that Protestantism has done. Catholicism is gaining ground upon every side." –*The Great Controversy*, pp. 564-566.

Revelation 13 reveals that in the near future a world confederation will be created which, led by the Protestantism of the United States of America, will unite with the papacy and give it back the absolute persecuting power that it had during the Middle Ages. Verse 15 is explicit in stating that this power will not only speak, but also kill all who do not worship it.

Yes, dear brothers and sisters, we are living in extremely important moments when as a church we must prepare to stand for the truth. Today Satan is working very hard to unite all possible religions so that he will again have power in his hands. Today Protestant churches and the Catholic Church are working together and holding joint events, things that could never have happened years ago. For example, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is celebrated every year by Protestants, Orthodox, and Catholics. Its theme is prepared by the Catholic Commission on Faith and Order and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and promotes a deeper community between churches at the local level. Recognition of the importance of interreligious dialogue and relations with other religions, as well as the responsibility of churches for the integrity of creation, have been hallmarks of the ecumenical movement.

No matter what face Rome adopts today in its ecumenical dialogue, or how attractively ecumenism is viewed by apostate Protestant churches, God's church has only one destination that it is working to reach: the heavenly new Jerusalem. It has only one Shepherd—Jesus Christ. And its decisions are guided by an "it is written." No alliance, courtship, ties, agreements, or commitments can exist between her and the powers of the earth.

May God preserve us from all ecumenical activities, no matter how attractive they may seem. Let us remember Jesus' prayer: "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil." John 17:15. May God keep His church as He prepares it for the Saviour's second coming! Amen!

# America in Revelation

D. Serban, Romania / Germany

Dear brothers, sisters, and friends of the present truth, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are coming to the end of 2023. We have many reasons to approach the throne of mercy and express our praise and gratitude to God for what He has done for us. And as a new year begins, it is our great privilege to examine our lives in earnest prayer and start anew with the eternal perspective in mind—new values, new priorities, and noble goals and purposes.

The greeting that John in the Revelation addressed to the seven churches in the province of Asia is wished to all in the church of God all over the world: "May grace and peace come to you from Jesus Christ." "Glory and power belong to Jesus Christ who loves us! He has set us free from our sins by pouring out His blood for us. He has made us members of His royal family. He has made us priests who serve His God and Father. Glory and power belong to Jesus Christ forever and ever! Amen." Revelation 1:5-6, New International Reader's Version. The good news is that Jesus Christ loves us still; and through His blood, we have redemption, protection, and power for victory in these difficult times.

The purpose of this short reading is to gain a few insights from Revelation 13 in the light of the Bible and Spirit of prophecy and to see the fulfillment of prophecy as we prepare for the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. This will not be an exhaustive study or sequence of future events; but we want to review Revelation 13:11-17 from the historical, prophetic, and theological points of view. Looking at the signs of the times, we must really be earnest in heeding the warning, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Romans 13:11.

## Peace in the time of storm

As the storm of political events comes closer to us, our only hope is in having a deep relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our peace, and He alone can

give inner peace, not what the world gives. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, made an experience in this area when he traveled to America and met the Moravian brethren.

"Violent storms were encountered on the passage, and John Wesley, brought face to face with death, felt that he had not the assurance of peace with God. The Germans, on the contrary, manifested a calmness and trust to which he was a stranger....

"In the midst of the psalm wherewith their service began, the sea broke over, split the mainsail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among the English. The Germans calmly sang on. I asked one of them afterward, 'Were you not afraid?' He answered, 'I thank God, no.' I asked, 'But were not your women and children afraid?' He replied mildly, 'No; our women and children are not afraid to die.'" —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 254, 255.

After that, Wesley became a believer in "constant peace." In the most difficult times that will soon come upon the world, only the grace and Spirit of God will sustain His children. As the apostle Paul wrote: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:7.

## Prophetic symbol

"Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon." Revelation 13:11, English Standard Version.

For a better understanding of the "second beast," it is necessary to know about the "first beast" and to study Daniel and Revelation in this context. "What nation of the New World was in 1798 rising into power, giving promise of strength and greatness, and attracting the attention of the world?... One nation, and only one, meets the specifications of this prophecy; it points unmistakably to the United States of America." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 440. Today it is well-known



that, "The fact is, no country has been as dominant culturally, economically, technologically and militarily in the history of the world since the Roman empire." –Charles Krauthammer, conservative columnist, regarding the superpower status of the United States, in the *New York Times*. Quoted in "Rome, AD ... Rome, DC?" *The Guardian*, September 17, 2002.

"Rising out of the earth" means that it was in the same new, vacant, or sparsely-populated land. "The population of these colonies amounted in 1701 to 262,000; in 1749 to 1,046,000; in 1775 to 2,803,000." –Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, p. 231.

"The current population of the United States of America is 336,067,997 based on Worldometer elaboration of the latest United Nations data." –<https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/us-population/>.

"God bless America" is a well-known slogan and prayer. However, before we continue, let us remember that God is love. He loves the entire world and teaches us to do the same. The apostle Paul wrote: "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." 1 Timothy 2:3, 4.

### ***Like a lamb but spoke like a dragon***

In Revelation 13, every word and phrase has deep meaning, from "like a lamb" to "spake like a dragon." These two phrases describe a change of "personality" in preparation for the fulfillment of the mark and the image of the beast. "Two horns like a lamb" refers to the rise and development of America at its beginning, when it seemed to have little power or authority. When the Protestants suffered terrible persecution in Europe, they immigrated to America to fulfill their dreams of "a state without a king, and a church without a pope." We also notice that the "horns" of the second "beast" had no crowns like the first beast of Revelation 13:1. This is an indication that America is a republic. Its promise of religious and civil liberty in the past attracted many people to America from all over the world. Religious and civil freedom are the greatest privileges in the world and encompass the two fundamental principles of republicanism and Protestantism.

No one can deny the great contributions made by America worldwide. And one of the greatest has been its offer of a homeland for those who were persecuted in Europe. Just as Germany is a country where the Protestant Reformation grew strong under men like Martin Luther, so the United States was the country where the "Advent Movement" developed under William Miller, Sister Ellen G. White, and others.

"A nation under God" can remain so only as long as its government upholds the Protestant principles of the Bible. But we will see later what happens when this nation speaks like a dragon.

### ***Great signs, even making fire come down from heaven***

Some interpreters of Revelation 13:13 have stated that America was the first power (hopefully the last, even though more countries have nuclear weapons) to use "fire from heaven," when the United States dropped nuclear bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945. In fact, the front headline of a special edition of *Der Spiegel* in Germany about the attacks of the U.S. and its Allies was "When Fire Fell from Heaven." Might those days of history be repeated? What did humanity really learn from that sad event in history? Let this be an earnest motive for us to pray more and more, and may the Lord protect us.

The above interpretation acknowledges the authority and military power of the United States. But there is another interpretation that indicates a false religious revival. The Spirit of prophecy tells that before the real revival and reformation takes place at the end of time under the latter rain, Satan will counterfeit it with false religious revivals. The manifestations of recent years have included speaking in tongues, prophesying, false baptisms of the Holy Spirit, and healings. When Sister Ellen G. White observed such a thing in an Adventist Church, she considered it a sign of the close of probation, "The things you have described as taking place in Indiana, the Lord has shown me would take place just before the close of probation. Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, drums, music, and dancing. The senses of rational beings will become so confused that they cannot be trusted to make the right

decisions. And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit." –*Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 36. As we see false revivals in many countries around the world today, we have to ask ourselves, What preparations are we making to receive the former and latter rains? Are our vessels clean so that the Lord can pour out His Spirit?

Concerning this same period of time, the Spirit of prophecy wrote the following about the work of the great adversary: "... He will bring disease and disaster, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation.... In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence. These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous." –*The Great Controversy*, pp. 589, 590. How many of these signs of the times have we seen in just the last three years, and how frequent are they becoming?

## ***The mark of the beast versus the seal of God***

Over time there has been a lot of speculation about what the mark of the beast is. Ideas circulate that it could be a microchip implant, a vaccine, an ID card, etc. To have a clear understanding of this, we can ask "the beast" what its mark of authority is. Another way is to determine what the "seal of God" is, and from that to determine analogically what the "mark of the beast" is, since it is the opposite of the "seal of God." Both of them have to do with worship. Thus, when, what, and how we worship determine whom we worship.

One of the most distinctive points in Adventist teaching is that the Sabbath day of the fourth commandment is the seal of the living God. The history of the Sabbath in connection with the plan of salvation from paradise to paradise is throughout the Bible. About the seal or sign of God, we read, "I also told them to observe My Sabbath days. That is the sign of the covenant I made with them. I wanted them to know that I made them holy. I am the Lord." Ezekiel 20:12, New International Reader's Version; see also verse 20.

"The keeping of the Sabbath is declared to be a sign of the loyalty of God's people." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 94.

"The seal of God's law is found in the fourth commandment. This only, of all the ten, brings to view both the name and the title of the Lawgiver. It declares Him to be the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and thus shows His claim to reverence and worship above all others. Aside from this precept, there is nothing in the Decalogue to show by whose authority the law is given." –*The Great Controversy*, p. 452.

About Sunday as a "sign," it is well known that the "Roman Catholics acknowledge that the change of the Sabbath was made by their church." They consider this fact a virtue: "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, Canada, September 1, 1923. See *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 976.

In the history of Sunday, the first Sunday law was issued by the emperor Constantine in A.D. 321. Most Christians keep Sunday as the first day of the week. Since the prophesied Sunday law decree not yet been issued, "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 image of the beast***

"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.

For a better understanding of this issue, we need to know who the "first beast," found in Revelation 13:1-9, is, how it acts, and its connection with the "second



beast" in the historical context (even before Constantine and up to our time), along with the Sunday law movement in the U.S. and elsewhere.

What does it mean to "give life to the image" of the beast, that it "speaks and causes," and when that can happen? Some Spirit of prophecy quotations can be of help here. "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....

"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 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." –*The Great Controversy*, pp. 445, 443.

"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....

"Yet the same crisis will come upon our people in all parts of the world." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 18, 395.

How can that happen? We need to learn a lesson from history. "The national Sunday law movement was born in 1879; Congress debated Sunday laws in 1888 and 1889. Senator Blair, author of the 1888 bill declared, 'Only a homogeneous people can be great.'...

"Between 1885 and 1896 Adventists spent a total of 1,438 days in jail and 455 days on chain gangs for working on Sunday." –See Dennis Pettibone, "*The Sunday Law Movement*," in *The World of Ellen G. White*, Gary Land, ed. Washington, DC: *Review and Herald*, 1987, pp. 113-128.

Since the time of Sister Ellen G. White, "preparations are advancing, and movements are in progress, which will result in making an image to the beast. Events will be brought about in the earth's history that will fulfill the predictions of prophecy for these last days." –*Review and Herald*, April 23, 1889.

Based on our understanding of the last-day events, we do not know when the Sunday law will begin in the

United States; but it will have a global impact all over the world with a progressive persecution. "All who refuse compliance will be visited with civil penalties, and it will finally be declared that they are deserving of death." –*The Great Controversy*, p. 604. It is not simple to understand all of these events; but as soon as the prophecies for this time move toward fulfillment, we will understand more.

In the midst of the greatest storm in the history of this world, we can trust in the Lord Jesus and declare as these things come to pass: "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, that He might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation." Isaiah 25:9, English Standard Version.

### Questions to ponder

1. In light of Revelation 13 and Sister Ellen G. White's writings, what prophecies can be seen coming to pass in front of us?
2. How do we appreciate our time of freedom, and what are we doing to spread the final warning to those around us and in the world?
3. What lifestyle will we follow as we are "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God"? 2 Peter 3:12.

### Conclusion

Many of the final events presented in Revelation 13:11-17 are being shaped right now. Our salvation through Jesus Christ is dependent on our preparation through study, prayer, and sharing the message. A special blessing is pronounced on those who are active in this way. "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near." Revelation 1:3, English Standard Version. The power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of Jesus will be a present help to all who pray and work for Jesus' imminent second coming. The book of Revelation ends with the promise that is repeated three times in the last chapter: "Behold, I come quickly." "And, behold, I come quickly:..." "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly." Let us pray together: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" Revelation 22:8, 12, 20. Amen!

# The False Prophet

Y. Delgado, Peru / USA

**B**eloved in Christ Jesus, thanks be to God, who in His mercy has sustained us to this day with His right hand of righteousness. One of the signs of the end described in Matthew 24 is the appearance of literal false prophets. In addition to this, the Scriptures point in prophecy to a symbolic false prophet.

In this reading, we will identify this false prophet and see how he has acted throughout the ages. It is important to identify the false prophet that is included in Revelation 16:13. "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet."

## A prophet was called for service

We will begin by considering that a true prophet in the Old Testament was the seer to whom God conveyed His will and who acted as His spokesman. The servant of the Lord, Sister Ellen G. White, gave this succinct definition: "In the highest sense the prophet was one who spoke by direct inspiration, communicating to the people the messages he had received from God." —*Education*, p. 46.

A call from God was required for the high responsibility of a prophet, and that is a very important point when considering the existence of false prophets. The warning in Matthew 24:24 includes the fact that false christs and prophets would "shew great signs and wonders" and, "if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." In addition, the apostle Paul warned about the danger of someone declaring himself to be a prophet without being called by God. "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God,..." Hebrews 5:4.

Putting these verses together, we can see the risk of being deceived even though one may occupy a privileged spiritual position, so this applies to every believer. And there is a similar danger that one may assume the honor of a prophet without receiving the authority of God's call.

## Authenticity of the prophet

Before identifying the false prophet, it is necessary to be clear about the characteristics of a real prophet. There are four. The first Biblical evidence is in Isaiah 8:20: "To the law and to the testimony." According to the prophet Isaiah, if this basic proof is lacking, "there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20. "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." The reason is because "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace,..." 1 Corinthians 14:32, 33. The authenticity of the prophet is evident in the harmony of his teachings with those of the prophets who were before him.

The second condition is that what he prophesies comes true, as stated in Jeremiah 28: 9: "... When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him." A third sign of a true prophet is his integrity and fidelity to Christ and His incarnation, according to 1 John 4:2, 3. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

The fourth evidence confirming that a person is a prophet is his life and work. "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." Matthew 7:20. Having a relationship with God and knowing His word of truth produce a life of consecration and holiness. The testimony of his obedience and pious life in the fear of Jehovah reveals that the prophet has authority, beyond the fact that he teaches correctly. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or





figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." In other words, the life and work of the true prophet will be consistent with divine principles.

## **Christ, the true Prophet**

In the Holy Scriptures, Jesus Christ was recognized as a Prophet. "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him." Deuteronomy 18:18. And the New Testament confirmed that in Jerusalem Jesus was recognized as an honorable Prophet on the occasion of the triumphal entry. "And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." Matthew 21:11.

Likewise, the inspired words of the apostle John about Jesus' feeding the multitude by multiplying the barley loaves and little fish contain the convincing affirmation, "... This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world." John 6:14. Sister Ellen G. White wrote that the apostle Paul "showed how Moses had pointed Israel forward to Christ as that Prophet whom they were to hear; how all the prophets had testified of Him as God's great remedy for sin, the guiltless One who was to bear the sins of the guilty." –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 451.

## **Who was the false prophet in history?**

Now, having identified Christ as the true Prophet, the false prophet can be identified by contrast, for he is not legitimately called. The Reformer Martin Luther wrote about those who were not called. "When Paul speaks of those called 'by men,' I take it he means those whom neither God nor man sent, but who go wherever they like and speak for themselves....

"When Paul speaks of those called 'by man' I take it he means those who have a divine call extended to

them through other persons.... Paul declares that the false apostles were called or sent neither by men, nor by man. The most they could claim is that they were sent by others." –*Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* [1519], chapter 1.

The false prophet is characterized by deception, "Ye are of your father the devil,... He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." John 8:44. Thus, he falsifies the truth and mixes it with lies; he uses the truth to try to present himself as authentic.

Going back to Eden, when the deceiver presented himself to Eve as a benefactor, he did not show her his purpose, which was—and still is—to lead humanity to distrust "the more sure word of prophecy." 2 Peter 1:19. When he said, "Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods" (Genesis 3:4, 5), he revealed his evil character as God's enemy, denigrated and degraded the holy character of the Lord, and lied. The false prophet is the representative of "the great dragon,... that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world..." Revelation 12:9.

## **Rise of the false prophet**

The Apostle Paul warned in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 7: "Let no one deceive you in any way; because he won't come without the apostasy coming first, and manifestin the man of sin, the son of perdition ... is already working the mystery of iniquity."

The servant of the Lord asked two questions that help to identify the beginning and development of the apostasy. "What was the origin of the great apostasy? How did the church first depart from the simplicity of the gospel?" And the answer is: "By conforming to the practices of paganism, to facilitate the acceptance of Christianity by the heathen....

"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*, pp. 384, 382.

Similarly, Sister White quoted the following statement from *Ecclesiastical Researches*, by Robert Robinson, p. 51: "... 'Toward the latter end of the second century most of the churches assumed a new form;



the first simplicity disappeared, and insensibly, as the old disciples retired to their graves, their children, along with new converts,... came forward and new-modeled the cause." –*The Great Controversy*, pp. 384, 385.

By the beginning of the fourth century, the church enjoyed a certain policy of tolerance on the part of the Roman emperor, Constantine, who, after assuming the throne with Licinius Augustus in 313, promulgated the Edict of Milan, which reflected the concessions granted to facilitate the rapprochement of church and state. "When I, Constantine Augustus, as well as I, Licinius Augustus,... were considering everything that pertained to the public welfare and security, we thought, among other things which we saw would be for the good of many, those regulations pertaining to the reverence of the Divinity ought certainly to be made first, so that we might grant to the Christians and others full authority to observe that religion which each preferred;... And thus by this wholesome counsel and most upright provision we thought to arrange that no one whatsoever should be denied the opportunity to give his heart to the observance of the Christian religion, of that religion which he should think best for himself,..." –*"The Edict of Milan,"* Internet History Sourcebooks: Medieval Sourcebook.

The rapprochement of the church with the state confirmed the apostasy, as described in the following inspirational statement: "The mingling of church craft and state craft is represented by the iron and the clay. This union is weakening all the power of the churches. This investing the church with the power of the state will bring evil results." –*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, p. 51.

"As the Christian religion secured the favor and support of secular rulers, it was nominally accepted by multitudes; but while in appearance Christians, many 'remained in substance pagans, especially worshiping in secret their idols.' –Gavazzi, *Lectures*, p. 278." –*The Great Controversy*, p. 385.

Then, on March 7, 321, the first Sunday law was decreed, requiring businesses to close on the venerable day of the sun, observing Sunday as a civil day of rest.

In 325, the ecumenical council was held, where a universal creed was established, giving rise to all kinds of heresies, such as Easter on Sunday and the participation of the church in matters of politics and the state. Without a doubt, it was a strategy with a 180-degree turn, making tradition the authority

around which the church turns, "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Matthew 15:9.

"But as persecution ceased, and Christianity entered the courts and palaces of kings, she laid aside the humble simplicity of Christ and His apostles for the pomp and pride of pagan priests and rulers; and in place of the requirements of God, she substituted human theories and traditions....

"The darkness seemed to grow more dense. Image worship became more general. Candles were burned before images, and prayers were offered to them. The most absurd and superstitious customs prevailed....

"That gigantic system of false religion is a masterpiece of Satan's power—a monument of his efforts to seat himself upon the throne to rule the earth according to his will....

"... As it increased in strength and gained control of the minds of men, 'the mystery of iniquity' carried forward its deceptive and blasphemous work." –*The Great Controversy*, pp. 49, 57, 50, 49.

### ***The false prophet and the mystery of iniquity***

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." 2 Peter 2:1.

"Has not the same process been repeated in nearly every church calling itself Protestant? As the founders, those who possessed the true spirit of reform, pass away, their descendants come forward and 'new-model the cause.'...

"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." James 4:4. "Alas, to what a fearful extent is that friendship of the world which is 'enmity with God,' now cherished among the professed followers of Christ!...

"Babylon is said to be 'the mother of harlots.' By her daughters must be symbolized churches that cling to her doctrines and traditions, and follow her example of sacrificing the truth and the approval of God, in order to form an unlawful alliance with the world." –*The Great Controversy*, pp. 385, 383; Revelation 17:4-6, 18.

"Thus Satan usurps the prerogatives of Jehovah. The man of sin sits in the seat of God, proclaiming himself to be God, and acting above God." –*Maranatha*, p. 162.



## ***The false prophet and the image of the beast***

In Revelation 13:15, John wrote that “he had power to give life unto the image of the beast,” showing the relationship that the second beast has with the first. Protestantism, by accepting the doctrines of the papal system, has drunk the wine of the first beast, “This wine of error is made up of false doctrines, such as the natural immortality of the soul, the eternal torment of the wicked, the denial of the pre-existence of Christ prior to His birth in Bethlehem, and advocating and exalting the first day of the week above God’s holy, sanctified day.” —*Review and Herald*, September 12, 1893.

In the light of Revelation 13, the first beast is the Roman papal system, and the second beast represents the United States and its governmental policies. The same chapter shows the link between the image of the beast and the United States. While it is true that this Protestant country will support the first beast with its civil power, it is also clear that the prevailing Protestantism in the United States is the false prophet, for it has apostatized by teaching from its pulpits the doctrines of Rome.

“The ‘image of 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.” —*Maranatha*, p. 169.



So, what relationship exists between the image of the beast and the false prophet? “He exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.” Revelation 13:12. Therefore, who is the false prophet? The image of the beast.

The two symbols—the image of the beast and the false prophet—lead directly to the United States. One refers to the governmental system, and the second

points to the religious, Protestant system. The manifestation of the false prophet is seen in its support of the papacy and falsification of the Christian faith. “It is not without reason that the claim has been put forth in Protestant countries that Catholicism differs less widely from Protestantism than in former times. There has been a change; but the change is not in the papacy. Catholicism indeed resembles much of the Protestantism that now exists, because Protestantism has so greatly degenerated since the days of the Reformers.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 571.

A prophet is a spokesman—one who speaks on behalf of another—so the false prophet speaks on behalf of the first beast, to whom “the dragon gave ... his power, and his seat, and great authority.” Revelation 13:2. “What is it that gives its kingdom to this power? Protestantism, a power which, while professing to have the temper and spirit of a lamb and to be allied to Heaven, speaks with the voice of a dragon. It is moved by a power from beneath.” —*Letter 232*, 1899.

### ***What will the false prophet do in the last days?***

The exercise of power by the image of the beast and the false prophet is about to happen more clearly as the church seeks the support of the civil power and completely controls it. “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.” —*Maranatha*, p. 169.

Then what will happen to the false prophet? “Though professing to be followers of the Lamb of God, men become imbued with the spirit of the dragon. They profess to be meek and humble but they speak and legislate with the spirit of Satan, showing by their actions that they are the opposite of what they profess to be.” —*Maranatha*, p. 191.

This shows that the false prophet and the image of the beast will act together for greater power. “The dignitaries of church and state will unite to bribe, persuade, or compel all classes to honor the Sunday.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 592.

This will culminate in the enforcement of the Sunday law. “As the Protestant churches reject the clear, scriptural arguments in defense of God’s law, they will long to silence those whose faith they cannot overthrow by the Bible. Though they blind their own eyes to the fact, they are now adopting a course which will

lead to the persecution of those who conscientiously refuse to do what the rest of the Christian world are doing, and acknowledge the claims of the papal Sabbath." –*The Great Controversy*, p. 592.

A tool that will be used to persuade or deceive is the performance of signs and great miracles, "For they are spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world,..." Revelation 16:14. The purpose of such miracles is to direct worship to the first beast. "And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live." "And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast,..." Revelation 13:14, 12.

For the false prophet to accomplish his purposes, he is part of a three-way alliance empowered by evil spirits. "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet." Revelation 16:13. "When Protestantism shall stretch her hand across the gulf to grasp the hand of the Roman power, when she shall reach over the abyss to clasp hands with spiritualism, when, under the influence of this threefold union, our country [United States] shall repudiate every principle of its Constitution as a Protestant and republican government, and shall make provision for the propagation of papal falsehoods and delusions, then we may know that the time has come for the marvelous working of Satan and that the end is near.

"Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome. The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience....

"Communications from the spirits will declare that God has sent them to convince the rejecters of Sunday of their error, affirming that the laws of the land should be obeyed as the law of God." –*Maranatha*, pp. 190, 167.

The Scriptures call them "spirits of devils." "Many will be confronted by the spirits of devils personating beloved relatives or friends and declaring the most



dangerous heresies. These visitants will appeal to our tenderest sympathies and will work miracles to sustain their pretensions." –*Maranatha*, 167.

There are two things that will be done by the false prophet. He will try to frighten people and make them deny their faith in God by demanding that a false sabbath be kept; second, he will deceive everyone he can with false wonders and miracles. "As Spiritualism more closely imitates the nominal Christianity of the day, it has greater power to deceive and ensnare. Satan himself is converted, after the modern order of things. He will appear in the character of an angel of light. Through the agency of Spiritualism, miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and many undeniable wonders will be performed." –*The Great Controversy*, p. 588.

## Conclusion

It is up to God's people to hold onto the hand of the Almighty and remain firm, for the false prophet will use every possible means to destroy them. "But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines, and the basis of all reforms.... Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support." –*The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

The following psalm gives a powerful reason for studying God's word with devotion: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Psalm 119:11. Jesus promised in John 14:26, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

Let us turn in prayer to Jesus, who is our only defense, for by His grace He will sustain every faithful, persevering soul to the end. As we near the end of this year, let us renew our commitment to be faithful to the Lord. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." Ephesians 6:10. That is my wish and prayer! Amen.



# The Remnant Church

T. Petkov, Bulgaria / USA

**T**he glorious picture of God's pure church is presented in the Scriptures by the symbol of a woman dressed in white. "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." Revelation 12:1. "Yes, the true apostolic church, so long hidden and scattered, will again be visible upon the earth. The Lord has spoken it, and He is performing the work. She will be distinguished by keeping the commandments of God, and having the testimony of Jesus Christ. She will be a 'glorious church'—having returned from the wilderness, she will again appear clothed with the sun. She will have a sharp conflict with the 'rulers of the darkness of this world,' but the Lord will appear for her deliverance; and she will stand with the Lamb upon mount Zion having the harps of God." —*Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, vol. 25, February 21, 1865, p. 99.

Before reaching this glorious condition, the church will pass through severe tests, trials, persecution, and attacks of the enemy. The prophetic word warns that, in the time of the end, false prophets and teachers will arise. The enemy will use the authorities (governments) to persecute the church; and where today there is democracy—freedom of religion—there will be limitations and persecution.

Remember how quickly the situation changed when the COVID-19 virus began to infect thousands of people. Suddenly travel restrictions and stay-at-home orders were applied in many countries. Demonstrations were to no avail. The constitutions promising freedom were not changed, but the limitation of human rights and freedoms was enforced with a severity reminiscent of World War II. The Bible says: "And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another." "And because iniquity shall

abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Matthew 24:10, 12, 13.

## The church militant

The time of shaking and testing is called the militant time of the church. "... And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born." Revelation 12:4. The great controversy in heaven has continued on earth, where evil and good face each other in terrible confrontation. The church is the militant force on the side of God. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." "And there was war in heaven: Michael and His angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,..." Ephesians 6:12; Revelation 12:7.

The church militant is not perfect. All of the believers and members are in the process of sanctification, fighting the good fight of faith, losing and conquering, falling but rising up again, striving for final victory. The wise Solomon described this process. "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief." Proverbs 24:16. The "just man" is the one who gets up again and again. He never gives up but continues fighting and learning, gaining new experiences, surrendering to the leadership of the Spirit.

I remember how a sister who was receiving Bible studies struggled to become vegetarian. One Sabbath, she told us her experience. For one month she ate no meat, preparing for baptism. One day she passed the meat store and saw the sausages hanging on the shelves. Her appetite was tempted, and she entered the store, grabbed one, bought it, and ran home with the desire to consume it. However, before reaching home, her endurance ran out. She went into the house, pulled the sausage out of the package, and devoured it. But she said that that was the last time in her life



that she consumed meat. She was so ashamed of what she had done that she made a final decision, prayed to God, and received the victory that made her ready for baptism. Many times she remembered that battle and testified of her improved health and the joy of being vegetarian. This is just one of many similar experiences that the people of God have made on their way to the heavenly kingdom.

Do not be discouraged in the time of your militant experience. Rise up, and continue the journey. The Lord has a cure for those who are sick, not for those who are healthy. He came to save sinners, not the self-righteous. To be part of the remnant, we need to depend on Christ's righteousness, power, and salvation.

### ***The spirit and power of Elijah***

"The work of John was foretold by the prophet Malachi: 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers.' Malachi 4:5, 6. John the Baptist went forth in the spirit and power of Elijah, to prepare the way of the Lord, and to turn the people to the wisdom of the just. He was a representative of those living in the last days, to whom God has intrusted sacred truths to present before the people, to prepare the way for the second appearing of Christ. And the same principles of temperance which John practiced should be observed by those who in our day are to warn the world of the coming of the Son of man." —*Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, p. 39.

Not only a personal reformation is expected by the Lord from His church at the end of time, but also a warning message to the world. The fallen churches are giving false hope and partial truth about the plan of salvation. "Babylon is fallen, is fallen," warns the word of God in the last message of mercy that will prepare the field for the harvest. "... Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues," calls the voice from heaven. Revelation 18:4. The spirit and power of Elijah will accompany this message.

The prophet Elijah lived in a turbulent time. In Israel, King Ahab and Queen Jezebel promoted Baal worship and total apostasy from the divine principles. In fact, the prophet honestly believed that he was the only one left of the faithful believers. This will be the experience

of the remnant at the end of time. "... Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Luke 18:8; Matthew 24:12, 13.

The message of Elijah on Mount Carmel was powerful. "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." 1 Kings 18:21. He prepared the sacrifice to be offered to God, and in response to his prayer fire came down from heaven and consumed it. The reformation begun with power, and all of the prophets of Baal were removed. The nation of Israel then understood that Jehovah is the true God. A similar work of purification and reformation is prophesied for God's people of the end of time.

Elijah prophesied the coming rain. "And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain." 1 Kings 18:41. When the true reformation takes place, the rain from the Lord will be poured out.



"It is true that in the time of the end, when God's work in the earth is closing, the earnest efforts put forth by consecrated believers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit are to be accompanied by special tokens of divine favor. Under the figure of the early and the latter rain, that falls in Eastern lands at seedtime and harvest, the Hebrew prophets foretold the bestowal of spiritual grace in extraordinary measure upon God's church. The outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the apostles was the beginning of the early, or former, rain, and glorious was the result. To the end of time the presence of the Spirit is to abide with the true church." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 54.

*Der Sabbatwächter* [*The Sabbath Watchman*] in Germany was published the experience of a German brother from the Czech republic. He refused to be drafted into the military during World War II. After he



was imprisoned, the guards decided to kill him. They stopped giving him food and let him starve. After 20 days, they opened the door to the prisoner's cell, expecting him to be close to death. What they did not know was that God was in charge, and He is the One who decides who will live and who will die. Every day a rat brought bread to the brother in his cell. The guards were so afraid of this supernatural intervention that they let the brother go free. He personally told this experience.

The spirit and power of Elijah will be revived and demonstrated in the remnant church. The apostasy of Babylon will be seen, and many will join the remnant. Are you part of this important work?

## **Running away**

"What doest thou here, Elijah?... I commissioned you to return to Israel and to stand before the idolatrous priests on Carmel, and I girded you with strength to guide the chariot of the king to the gate of Jezreel. But who sent you on this hasty flight into the wilderness? What errand have you here?" (Prophets and Kings, p. 168) the Lord asked when He met Elijah in the cave. Many times, disappointment leads us to wrong decisions. Running away is the easiest way to avoid responsibility—listening to and obeying the voice of fear. In a similar way, the prophet Jonah attempted to run away from a solemn duty. Many are the excuses which the human mind creates, but most are not accepted by God. "So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." Jonah 1:6.

The sleepy condition of the church is its greatest danger at the end of time. The ten virgins of Matthew 25 were waiting faithfully for the bridegroom to come, but they fell asleep. The Spirit of prophecy wrote: "The preached Word will be powerless for the conviction and conversion of souls, while a sleepy, lazy, and backslidden church are all that are left to sustain the efforts of the laborer. The efforts of Christ's ambassadors will be successful only when sustained by an earnest, praying, working people." —*Selections from Testimonies to the Managers and Workers in our Institutions*, p. 31.

The message to the Laodicean church period declares: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Revelation

3:20. It is time for deep contemplation. Do I have Jesus in my heart, or is He standing outside, knocking and seeking to enter? Are we sleeping as was Jonah and ignoring the storm raging in the perishing world? Are we running and hiding in a cave, afraid of consequences and persecution? If we hear the voice of the Lord, His word may be, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"



## **Joining the ranks of the remnant**

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." John 10:27, 28, 16.

Another solemn responsibility of the remnant is for the faithful ones to be united. The Spirit of the Lord calls for the family of the Lord to unite and give the last message to the world. "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." John 17:21.

The spirit of independence is not the spirit of Elijah; it means to follow the wrong path, which is marked out by the enemy. One who works outside of the organization of God's church is not doing His will. The pen of inspiration wrote: "Many have an idea that they are responsible to Christ alone for their light and experience, independent of His recognized followers on earth. Jesus is the friend of sinners, and His heart is touched with their woe. He has all power, both in heaven and on earth; but He respects the means that He has ordained for the enlightenment and salvation of men; He directs sinners to the church, which He has made a channel of light to the world." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 122.

"My dear friend, will you not strive for a membership in this church? The reproach of Christ is greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt or of the whole

world. Those who choose the world to come, in preference to the present, will make a wise choice. Now is the time to make your choice; it is ruinous to delay. Will you give me your hand to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, that you may have right to the tree of life, and enter in, with the church triumphant, through the gates into the city?" —*Review and Herald*, February 21, 1865.

## The final victory

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." Revelation 3:21. The church triumphant is the church of the very end. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." James 1:12. The apostle Paul exclaimed, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." 2 Timothy 4:7, 8.

"We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass, when Jesus brought the crowns, and with His own right hand placed them on our heads. He gave us harps of gold and palms of victory. Here on the sea of glass the 144,000 stood in a perfect square. Some of them had very bright crowns, others not so bright. Some crowns appeared heavy with stars, while others had but few. All were perfectly satisfied with their crowns. And they were all clothed with a glorious white mantle from their shoulders to their feet. Angels were all about us as we marched over the sea of glass to the gate of the city. Jesus raised His mighty, glorious arm, laid hold of the pearly gate, swung it back on its glittering hinges, and said to us, 'You have washed your robes in My blood, stood stiffly for My truth, enter in.' We all marched in and felt that we had a perfect right in the city." —*Early Writings*, p. 16.

The victory is multiple and wonderful. "And 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. The victory is over the world: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world:

and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4.

"... And He said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Revelation 7:14-17.

The redeemed will express their great gratitude, for they know that the Lord gave them the power to overcome. They will bow down and lay their crowns at the Redeemer's feet. "I saw the redeemed host bow and cast their glittering crowns at the feet of Jesus; and then, as His lovely hand raised them up, they touched their golden harps and filled all heaven with their rich music and songs to the Lamb...." —*The Adventist Home*, p. 537.

"And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." Revelation 7:11, 12

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## READINGS for the Week of Prayer

Friday, December 1 to  
Sabbath, December 9, 2023



International Missionary Society  
Seventh-day Adventist Church  
Reform Movement  
General Conference