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WEEK OF PRAYER 2026

The Church Before the Final Crisis

WEEK OF PRAYER – DECEMBER 4-13, 2026

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A crisis! Who likes such a dreadful idea? Who looks forward to such a thing? Yet, how thankful we can be that our heavenly Father plainly tells us the reality:

“The time will come when we shall be brought before councils, and every position of truth which we hold will be severely criticized. The time that we are now allowing to go to waste should be devoted to the charge God has given us, of preparing for the approaching crisis. Much time should be spent in prayer, that our garments of character may be washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.”[1]

“The Lord will fit men, women, and youth, yes, even children, as He did Samuel, for His work, making them the repositories of sacred truth. He who never slumbers or sleeps watches over each one, selecting their spheres of labor in His broad missionary field.”[2]

How crucial it is that we gather for this Week of Prayer! How essential it is that we press together in the fear of God! Spiritual preparation is vitally important right now. These readings on the theme, The Church Before the Final Crisis, remind us of the wonderful hope and strength that our God is willing to shower upon the faithful few seeking to stand for Him against the swelling current. Let us also share these precious readings with others with the same desire who may be isolated or homebound, and kindly remember these dates:

- Prayer with fasting: Sabbath, December 12
- Offering for missions: Sunday, December 13

May the tender mercy of the Lord be upon us in the urgent preparation we so greatly need and which He is so kind to bestow!

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Come Up Into the Mount

We are invited to experience the peaceful haven found in knowing the Almighty.

Editorial

A great crisis awaits the people of God. A crisis awaits the world. The most momentous struggle of all the ages is just before us."[1]

When we think of a crisis, the temptation of many is to panic. But is that why we have been graciously provided with so many details about it in advance? Wouldn't you rather be aware of impending difficulty than to be caught by surprise? God has not shone so much light on the final events to frighten us into a state of paralysis.

On the contrary, "the Lord wants us to come up into the mount, more directly into His presence. We are coming to a crisis which, more than any previous time since the world began, will demand the entire consecration of every one who has named the name of Christ."[2]

"Now, brethren, we are coming to the crisis. Let us stand the test manfully, grasping the hand of Infinite Power. God will work for us. We have only to live one day at a time, and if we get acquainted with God, He will give us strength for what is coming tomorrow, grace sufficient for each day, and every day will find its own victories, just as it finds it trials. We shall have the power of the Highest with us; for we shall be clad with the armor of Christ's righteousness. We have the same God that has worked for His people in ages past. Jesus stands by our side, and shall we falter?—No, as the trials come, the power of God will come with them. God will help us to stand in faith on His word, and when we are united, He will work with special power in our behalf."[3]

The safeguard of our souls

"As the sinner looks to the law, his guilt is made plain to him, and pressed home to his conscience, and he is condemned. His only comfort and hope is found in looking to the cross of Calvary. As he ventures upon the promises, taking God at His word, relief and peace come to his soul. He cries, 'Lord, Thou hast promised to save all who come unto Thee in the name of Thy Son. I am a lost, helpless, hopeless soul. Lord, save, or I perish.' His faith lays hold on Christ, and he is justified before God.

"But while God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ's righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul."[4]

“The evils that have been gradually creeping in among us have imperceptibly led individuals and churches away from reverence for God, and have shut away the power which He desires to give them.

“My brethren, let the word of God stand just as it is. Let not human wisdom presume to lessen the force of one statement of the Scriptures. The solemn denunciation in the Revelation should warn us against taking such ground. In the name of my Master I bid you: ‘Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.’ ”[5]

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3 The Review and Herald, April 29, 1890.
4 Selected Messages, bk. 1, pp. 365, 366.
5 Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 711. [Emphasis added.]

The Coming Crisis

An issue of no small magnitude is soon to confront the entire human race

Compiled from the writings of Ellen G. Whit

On the horizon . . .

The crisis is now upon us. The battle is to be waged between the Christianity of the Bible and the Christianity of human tradition.[1]

In the future, men claiming to be Christ's representatives will take a course similar to that followed by the priests and rulers in their treatment of Christ and the apostles. In the great crisis through which they are soon to pass, the faithful servants of God will encounter the same hardness of heart, the same cruel determination, the same unyielding hatred.

All who in that evil day would fearlessly serve God according to the dictates of conscience, will need courage, firmness, and a knowledge of God and His word; for those who are true to God will be persecuted, their motives will be impugned, their best efforts misinterpreted, and their names cast out as evil. Satan will work with all his deceptive power to influence the heart and becloud the understanding, to make evil appear good, and good evil. The stronger and purer the faith of God's people, and the firmer their determination to obey Him, the more fiercely will Satan strive to stir up against them the rage of those who, while claiming to be righteous, trample upon the law of God. It will require the firmest trust, the most heroic purpose, to hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints.[2]

Those who exercise but little faith now, are in the greatest danger of falling under the power of satanic delusions and the decree to compel the conscience. And even if they endure the test they will be plunged into deeper distress and anguish in the time of trouble, because they have never made it a habit to trust in God. The lessons of faith which they have neglected they will be forced to learn under a terrible pressure of discouragement.

We should now acquaint ourselves with God by proving His promises. Angels record every prayer that is earnest and sincere. We should rather dispense with selfish gratifications than neglect communion with God. The deepest poverty, the greatest self-denial, with His approval, is better than riches, honors, ease, and friendship without it. We must take time to pray. If we allow our minds to be absorbed by worldly interests, the Lord may give us time by removing from us our idols of gold, of houses, or of fertile lands. . . .

The "time of trouble, such as never was," is soon to open upon us; and we shall need an experience which we do not now possess and which many are too indolent to obtain. It is often the case that trouble is greater in anticipation than in reality; but this is not true of the crisis before us. The most vivid presentation cannot reach the magnitude of the ordeal. In that time of trial, every soul must stand for himself before God.[3]

The issue at hand

God has revealed what is to take place in the last days, that His people may be prepared to stand against the tempest of opposition and wrath. Those who have been warned of the events before them are not to sit in calm expectation of the coming storm, comforting themselves that the Lord will shelter His faithful ones in the day of trouble. We are to be as men waiting for their Lord, not in idle expectancy, but in earnest work, with unwavering faith. It is no time now to allow our minds to be engrossed with things of minor importance. While men are sleeping, Satan is actively arranging matters so that the Lord's people may not have mercy or justice. The Sunday movement is now making its way in darkness. The leaders are concealing the true issue, and many who unite in the movement do not themselves see whither the undercurrent is tending. Its professions are mild and apparently Christian, but when it shall speak it will reveal the spirit of the dragon. It is our duty to do all in our power to avert the threatened danger. We should endeavor to disarm prejudice by placing ourselves in a proper light before the people. We should bring before them the real question at issue, thus interposing the most effectual protest against measures to restrict liberty of conscience. We should search the Scriptures and be able to give the reason for our faith. Says the prophet: "The wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand."

Those who have access to God through Christ have important work before them. Now is the time to lay hold of the arm of our strength. The prayer of David should be the prayer of pastors and laymen: "It is time for Thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void Thy law." Let the servants of the Lord weep between the porch and the altar, crying: "Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach." God has always wrought for His people in their greatest extremity, when there seemed the least hope that ruin could be averted. The designs of wicked men, the enemies of the church, are subject to His power and overruling providence. He can move upon the hearts of statesmen; the wrath of the turbulent and disaffected, the haters of God, His truth, and His people can be turned aside, even as the rivers of water are turned, if He orders it thus. Prayer moves the arm of Omnipotence. He who marshals the stars in order in the heavens, whose word controls the waves of the great deep, the same infinite Creator will work in behalf of His people if they call upon Him in faith. He will restrain the forces of darkness until the warning is given to the world and all who will heed it are prepared for the conflict.

"The wrath of man shall praise Thee," says the psalmist; "the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain." God means that testing truth shall be brought to the front and become a subject of examination and discussion, even if it is through the contempt placed upon it. The minds of the people must be agitated. Every controversy, every reproach, every slander, will be God's means of provoking inquiry and awakening minds that otherwise would slumber.[4]

Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures and who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive. By the Bible testimony these will detect the deceiver in his disguise. To all the testing time will come. By the sifting of temptation the genuine Christian will be revealed. Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible and the Bible only? Satan will, if possible, prevent them from obtaining a preparation to stand in that day. He will so arrange affairs as to hedge

up their way, entangle them with earthly treasures, cause them to carry a heavy, wearisome burden, that their hearts may be overcharged with the cares of this life and the day of trial may come upon them as a thief.[5]

How shall we respond?

God has given to every man his work. Let us each wait on God, and He will teach us how to work and what work we are best adapted to perform. Yet none are to start out in an independent spirit to promulgate new theories. The workers should be in harmony with the truth and with their brethren. There should be counsel and cooperation. But they are not to feel that at every step they must wait to ask some higher officer if they may do this or that. Look not to man for guidance, but to the God of Israel.[6]

The less we make direct charges against authorities and powers, the greater work we shall be able to accomplish, both in America and in foreign countries. Foreign nations will follow the example of the United States. Though she leads out, yet the same crisis will come upon our people in all parts of the world.

It is our work to magnify and exalt the law of God. The truth of God's holy word is to be made manifest. We are to hold up the Scriptures as the rule of life. In all modesty, in the spirit of grace, and in the love of God we are to point men to the fact that the Lord God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and that the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord.

In the name of the Lord we are to go forward, unfurling His banner, advocating His word.[7]

In the closing work of God in the earth, the standard of His law will be again exalted. False religion may prevail, iniquity may abound, the love of many may wax cold, the cross of Calvary may be lost sight of, and darkness, like the pall of death, may spread over the world; the whole force of the popular current may be turned against the truth; plot after plot may be formed to overthrow the people of God; but in the hour of greatest peril the God of Elijah will raise up human instrumentalities to bear a message that will not be silenced. In the populous cities of the land, and in the places where men have gone to the greatest lengths in speaking against the Most High, the voice of stern rebuke will be heard. Boldly will men of God's appointment denounce the union of the church with the world. Earnestly will they call upon men and women to turn from the observance of a man-made institution to the observance of the true Sabbath.[8]

The rebuke of God is upon us because of our neglect of solemn responsibilities. His blessings have been withdrawn because the testimonies He has given have not been heeded by those who professed to believe them. Oh, for a religious awakening! The angels of God are going from church to church, doing their duty; and Christ is knocking at the door of your hearts for entrance. But the means that God has devised to awaken the church to a sense of their spiritual destitution have not been regarded. The voice of the True Witness has been heard in reproof, but has not been obeyed. Men have chosen to follow their own way instead of God's way because self was not crucified in them. Thus the light has had but little effect upon minds and hearts. . . .

If you wait for light to come in a way that will please everyone, you will wait in vain. If you wait for louder calls or better opportunities, the light will be withdrawn, and you will be left in darkness. Accept every ray of light that God sends. Men who neglect to heed the calls of the

Spirit and word of God, because obedience involves a cross, will lose their souls. When the books are opened, and every man's work and the motives that prompted him are scrutinized by the Judge of all the earth, they will see what a loss they have sustained. We should ever cherish the fear of the Lord and realize that, individually, we are standing before the Lord of hosts, and no thought, no word, no act in connection with the work of God, should savor of selfishness or of indifference.[9]

Physical and mental preparation

In every important work, there are times of crisis, when there is great need that those connected with the work should have clear minds. There must be men who realize, as did the apostle Paul, the importance of practicing temperance in all things. There is work for us to do—stern, earnest work for our Master. All our habits, tastes, and inclinations must be educated in harmony with the laws of life and health. By this means we may secure the very best physical condition, and have mental clearness to discern between the evil and the good.[10]

God desires His people to prepare for the soon-coming crisis. Prepared or unprepared, they must all meet it; and those only who have brought their lives into conformity to the divine standard, will stand firm at that time of test and trial. When secular rulers unite with ministers of religion to dictate in matters of conscience, then it will be seen who really fear and serve God. When the darkness is deepest, the light of a godlike character will shine the brightest. When every other trust fails, then it will be seen who have an abiding trust in Jehovah.[11]

The work which the church has failed to do in a time of peace and prosperity she will have to do in a terrible crisis under most discouraging, forbidding circumstances. The warnings that worldly conformity has silenced or withheld must be given under the fiercest opposition from enemies of the faith. . . . The members of the church will individually be tested and proved. They will be placed in circumstances where they will be forced to bear witness for the truth. Many will be called to speak before councils and in courts of justice, perhaps separately and alone. The experience which would have helped them in this emergency they have neglected to obtain, and their souls are burdened with remorse for wasted opportunities and neglected privileges.

My brother, my sister, ponder these things, I beseech you. You have each a work to do.[12]

The great crisis is just before us. To meet its trials and temptations, and to perform its duties, will require persevering faith. But we may triumph gloriously; not one watching, praying, believing soul will be ensnared by the enemy. . . .

Let none now tamper with sin, the source of every misery in our world. No longer remain in lethargy and stupid indifference. Let not the destiny of your soul hang upon an uncertainty. Know that you are fully on the Lord's side. Let the inquiry go forth from sincere hearts and trembling lips, "Who shall be able to stand?" . . . Are you letting your light shine to illumine the nations that are perishing in their sins? Do you realize that you are to stand in defense of God's commandments before those who are treading them underfoot?

It is possible to be a partial, formal believer, and yet be found wanting and lose eternal life. It is possible to practice some of the Bible injunctions and be regarded as a Christian, and yet

perish because you lack qualifications essential to Christian character. If you neglect or treat with indifference the warnings that God has given, if you cherish or excuse sin, you are sealing your soul's destiny. You will be weighed in the balance and found wanting. Grace, peace, and pardon will be forever withdrawn; Jesus will have passed by, never again to come within reach of your prayers and entreaties. While mercy lingers, while the Saviour is making intercession, let us make thorough work for eternity.[13]

By means of the angels there will be constant communication between heaven and earth. And Satan, surrounded by evil angels, and claiming to be God, will work miracles of all kinds, to deceive, if possible, the very elect. God's people will not find their safety in working miracles, for Satan will counterfeit the miracles that will be wrought. God's tried and tested people will find their power in the sign spoken of in Exodus 31:12–18. They are to take their stand on the living word: "It is written." This is the only foundation upon which they can stand securely. Those who have broken their covenant with God will in that day be without God and without hope.

The worshipers of God will be especially distinguished by their regard for the fourth commandment, since this is the sign of God's creative power and the witness to His claim upon man's reverence and homage. The wicked will be distinguished by their efforts to tear down the Creator's memorial and to exalt the institution of Rome. In the issue of the conflict all Christendom will be divided into two great classes, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and those who worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark. Although church and state will unite their power to compel all, "both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond," to receive the mark of the beast, yet the people of God will not receive it. . . .

Fearful tests and trials await the people of God. The spirit of war is stirring the nations from one end of the earth to the other. But in the midst of the time of trouble that is coming—a time of trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—God's chosen people will stand unmoved. Satan and his host cannot destroy them, for angels that excel in strength will protect them.[14]

Heart preparation

While God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ's righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul.[15]

Let a living faith run like threads of gold through the performance of even the smallest duties. Then all the daily work will promote Christian growth. There will be a continual looking unto Jesus. Love for Him will give vital force to everything that is undertaken. Thus through the right use of our talents we may link ourselves by a golden chain to the higher world. This is true sanctification, for sanctification consists in the cheerful performance of daily duties in perfect obedience to the will of God.[16]

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. While he seeks to unite his agents in warring against the truth he will work to divide and scatter its advocates. Jealousy, evil surmising, evilspeaking, are instigated by him to produce discord and dissension. The members of Christ's church have the power to thwart the purpose of the adversary of souls. At such a time as this let them not be found at variance with one another or with any of the Lord's workers. Amidst the general discord let there be one place where harmony and unity exist because the Bible is made the guide of life. Let the people of God feel that a responsibility rests upon them to build up His instrumentalities.

God wants us to do much more praying and much less talking. The threshold of heaven is flooded with the light of His glory, and He will let this light shine into the heart of everyone who will stand in right relation to Him.[17]

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The Three Unclean Spirits

Only the power of God has been holding back the fierce winds soon to blow

BY ETIENNE LOMBARD -FRENCH POLYNESIA

When love is measured by feelings

While at my previous post serving in Montreal, Canada, I was invited to meet with a group of believers who were very enthusiastic about revival. I knew one of their prominent members from childhood—and though he had grown up in the present truth, he had instead decided to follow this particular group. They spoke constantly about feeling the Spirit, about how warm their hearts became during worship, and about the beautiful atmosphere of love they shared. When he heard that I still belonged to the church, a movement that emphasizes obedience, doctrine, and reform, his smile faded.

“You people don’t have love,” he complained. “When we are around you, we can’t feel the spirit. There’s no emotion, no joy.”

His words stung—not because I doubted God’s love in our midst, but because I saw how easily feelings had replaced faith among those in his group. They had no teachings, no solid meat, only moments of celebration. They equated the presence of God with emotional excitement, as if truth were measured by sensation. And when my friend could not feel what he referred to as “love,” he concluded that we were not God’s people.

That encounter gave me some food for deep thought. I asked myself, Is it possible that in the last days, entire movements will reject the truth because it doesn’t make them feel good?

The book of Revelation answers that question clearly. John saw three mysterious powers uniting—confederating—to lead the world astray before the final crisis: “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. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Revelation 16:13, 14).

The prophetic picture

In these few verses, John summarizes the closing drama of human history. The dragon represents the enticement of spiritualism, the open rebellion of Satan through false manifestations of the supernatural.

The beast symbolizes the papacy, a system that unites spiritual and civil power to enforce human authority above divine law.

The false prophet refers to apostate Protestantism, which once protested Rome with all its myths and dogmas, but finally joins her in exalting human ideas above obedience to God as revealed in His Word.

Together these "unclean spirits" form a counterfeit triad, uniting the world in a false revival. Sound biblical doctrine will be twisted:

"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."[1]

But these symbols are not mere theology—they reveal three spirits that also try to enter the church and the heart of every believer. So, it is important to be keenly aware of how this could adversely affect us, too.

The spirit of the dragon – The seduction of feeling

The spirit of the dragon is the spirit of spiritualism, the same power that deceived Eve in Eden with the promise, "Ye shall be as gods." It teaches that truth is discovered within us rather than received from God's Word—that we can trust our emotions more than divine revelation. The mind is beguiled: The tree looks good, the serpent looks good, the fruit tastes good, so how can the words be wrong?

Today this spirit manifests itself in subtle ways, even among sincere believers. It is found when worship depends on atmosphere instead of conviction, when believers judge spiritual life by how much they enjoy it rather than by obedience.

Inspiration warns: "A mere profession of faith in Christ, a boastful knowledge of the truth, does not make a man a Christian. A religion that seeks only to gratify the eye, the ear, and the taste, or that sanctions self-indulgence, is not the religion of Christ."[2]

The charismatic church I encountered had replaced Scripture with sensation. Their love may have been sincere, but sadly, it was misguided. They had forgotten that the Holy Spirit does not always make us feel comfortable; He often must "reprove, rebuke, exhort," for "when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (2 Timothy 4:2; John 16:8), leading us to the cross before filling us with joy.

If our faith depends on what we feel, then when feelings change, our faith collapses. But if our faith rests on the unchanging Word of God, then even in darkness we can still say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15).

Atheism is another snare from Satan. It stands in direct contradiction to Scripture, which declares, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 14:1). Ellen G. White observed the spiritual climate of her time and wrote plainly: "Atheism and infidelity prevail in every land. Bold blasphemers stand forth in the earth, the house of God's own building, and deny the existence of the Creator, and challenge the God of heaven to strike them dead on the spot if their position is wrong. Behold the societies of infidels everywhere forming to devise means to spread their hellish poisons!"[3] This statement reminds us that disbelief in God is not a harmless intellectual position, but a growing influence that distances people from the Source of truth.

Today, multitudes exalt their own feelings above the Word of God, trusting the impulses of the heart instead of the clear voice of Scripture. Yet Christ lovingly calls each soul to leave the broad, easy road and enter the narrow path that leads to life.

The first unclean spirit whispers, “Follow your heart.” . . . But Christ says, “Follow Me.”

The spirit of the beast – The temptation to surrender our thought

If the dragon deceives through emotion, the beast enslaves through authority. The papal system represents religion that dictates rather than educates, commanding the conscience instead of enlightening it.

I once faced this same spirit—not in Rome, but within our own fellowship. Some members approached me and said, “Pastor, just tell us what to do. We’ll obey.” At first, that sounded like loyalty. But looking deeper, I realized it was dangerous. They wanted to replace personal conviction with pastoral direction. It is always easier to have someone else think for us—to let the church or the leader decide every detail.

But faith that is not rooted in personal conviction becomes mechanical. It may look obedient, but it lacks heart. When persecution comes, borrowed faith collapses because it was never owned.

“It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help we are to form our opinions for ourselves as we are to answer for ourselves before God.”[4]

True Christianity does not produce blind followers, but rather thinking disciples. When we demand to be told what to do, we unknowingly echo the spirit of the beast that enforces worship by decree.

I remember another occasion that illustrated this same danger. Some believers insisted that I should shave off my beard because, according to local custom, a beard was considered disrespectful. Others from a neighboring island told me it was more respectful to keep it because all the patriarchs in the Bible had one! Still others debated how women should wear their hair: In one country, loose hair was modest because showing the neck was sensual; in another, loose hair was considered immoral and only prostitutes left it untied. I had grown up between these two cultures, hearing ministers from both sides speak with conviction. For a long time, it was confusing. I asked myself, “Who is right?” Finally, I realized that the question itself was wrong. The issue was not about copying a rule but about understanding the principle—modesty, respect, and simplicity in all cultures.

The messenger of the Lord admonishes:

“Do not encourage a class who center their religion in dress. Let each one study the plain teachings of the Scriptures as to simplicity and plainness of dress and by faithful obedience to those teachings strive to set a worthy example to the world and to those new in the faith. . . .

“There are few of my brethren and sisters who maintain plainness of dress as I do. My writings are pointed on this subject; but I do not carry it in the front. It is not to be made of greater importance than the solemn, testing truths for this time. There is in the very composition of some a criticizing spirit, and this they cultivate as a precious acquisition.

“We must present the principles of truth, and let them work upon the hearts of the people. We may pick the leaves from a tree as often as we please, but this will not cause the tree to die; the next season the leaves will come out again as thick as before. But strike the ax at the root of the tree, and not only will the leaves fall off of themselves, but the tree will die. Those who accept the truth, in the love of it, will die to the world, and will become meek and lowly in heart like their divine Lord. Just as soon as the heart is right, the dress, the conversation, the life, will be in harmony with the word of God.”[5]

The spirit of the beast leads people to surrender conscience to custom, or to the authority of men. But the Spirit of Christ teaches us to think, to study, to apply eternal principles wisely in every context.

What is not born of conviction, Paul says, “is sin” (Romans 14:23). Obedience without conviction is not faith—it is fear.

The spirit of the false prophet – The illusion of freedom

The false prophet represents apostate Protestantism—a religion that began by proclaiming liberty but ends by rejecting divine law. It says, “We are free from every ruler,” yet becomes enslaved to pride of self.

In his rebellion against the perfect government of God, Lucifer used this same argument in Heaven:

“Satan was warring against the law of God, because ambitious to exalt himself and unwilling to submit to the authority of God’s Son, heaven’s great commander.”[6]

“From the very beginning of the great controversy in heaven it has been Satan’s purpose to overthrow the law of God. It was to accomplish this that he entered upon his rebellion against the Creator, and though he was cast out of heaven he has continued the same warfare upon the earth. To deceive men, and thus lead them to transgress God’s law, is the object which he has steadfastly pursued.”[7]

This same deceit appeared in Eden—and later in modern humanism. True Protestantism once stood for the freedom of conscience to obey God, but false Protestantism now preaches freedom from God’s commandments. But if the moral law written by the finger of God is abolished, how can there be any stability?

“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 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.”[8]

This spirit also seduces the church from within. It tells believers, "Do whatever feels right to you; you don't need reproof or correction." The result is moral anarchy dressed in Christian language.

But genuine freedom is found only in submission to Christ. The psalmist said, "I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts" (Psalm 119:45). Freedom without obedience is anarchy; obedience without love is slavery; but obedience born of love is liberty indeed.

We live in an age that despises authority and celebrates personal choice. Many call it self-expression—but it is often just self-worship. The final conflict will be between those who exalt self and those who surrender self.

The gathering to Armageddon – The final unity of deception

John says these three unclean spirits "go forth unto the kings of the earth . . . to gather them." What unites them? Not doctrine, but an emotional experience—a shared excitement, a sense of unity that feels spiritual but rejects truth.

Through media, music, entertainment, politics, and even religious movements, the same spirit calls for a global fellowship without distinction of belief. The world longs for peace, but peace without repentance is impossible.

"The line of distinction between professed Christians and the ungodly is now hardly distinguishable. Church members love what the world loves and are ready to join with them, and Satan determines to unite them in one body and thus strengthen his cause by sweeping all into the ranks of spiritualism. Papists, who boast of miracles as a certain sign of the true church, will be readily deceived by this wonder-working power; and Protestants, having cast away the shield of truth, will also be deluded. Papists, Protestants, and worldlings will alike accept the form of godliness without the power, and they will see in this union a grand movement for the conversion of the world and the ushering in of the long-expected millennium."[9]

We are witnessing this union already: mystical experiences promoted as revival, churches uniting around emotions, and civil powers inviting the notion of a forced state religion to dominate politics. But the greatest danger is not outside—it is within us. Whenever we value harmony more than holiness, or comfort more than conviction, we invite these unclean spirits into our hearts.

The church before the final crisis will be tested not only by persecution but by seduction. The devil no longer says, "Deny Christ." He says, "Redefine Him. Make Him sound more tolerant, more popular." But a Christ who no longer calls to repentance is not the Christ of the Bible.

The call to spiritual discernment

The only protection against deception is a living connection with Christ through His Word. Not merely reading Scripture but letting Scripture read us. Not only knowing prophecy but allowing prophecy to purify the heart.

"None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict."[10]

Discernment is not doubt; it is spiritual sensitivity trained by obedience. When the Holy Spirit dwells in us, He produces clarity, not confusion; courage, not compromise.

We must learn to test every voice—whether it appeals to emotion (the dragon), demands submission without thought (the beast), or exalts personal freedom without obedience (the false prophet). In contrast to all these influences, genuine truth instead leads to a distinctive result: humility, critical thinking, and obedience.

This discernment begins with repentance. Many of us need to confess that we have sometimes judged our brethren by feelings, obeyed rules without conviction, or resisted counsel in the name of freedom. But Christ longs to cleanse us from every false spirit and fill us with His own.

The Spirit of Christ – Heaven's antidote

Each unclean spirit has its opposite in the Spirit of Christ:

The true Spirit of God does not control or coerce; He enlightens. He does not intoxicate the emotions but renews the mind. He does not abolish the law but writes it upon the heart.

When Jesus stood before Pilate, the powers of the dragon, beast, and false prophet were united against Him. Pilate, as a pagan Roman citizen, was listening to the dragon. The Pharisees and Sadducees, as religious rulers, were accustomed to dictate to the conscience of people, as the beast does. The people, wanting to get rid of the Roman rule and initially wanting to see Jesus liberate them were now led by the popular call to free Barabbas, an anarchist. This was the voice of the false prophet.

Yet Jesus conquered not by force but by faithfuly accomplishing His duties, loving humanity enough to lay down His life for us. That same Spirit will sustain His remnant in the final crisis.

The final test — and the sealing

The time is near when every soul will be sealed—either by the Spirit of truth or by the spirit of error. The sealing is not a visible mark but the settling into truth so that we cannot be moved.

"Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved—just as soon as God's people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already. "[11]

That sealing cannot take place in an atmosphere of shallow emotion or blind obedience. It occurs when believers personally experience conversion, conviction, and courageous love for God's law. Our greatest need is not more excitement or more rules but more of the Spirit of Christ. He alone can give us discernment to recognize the counterfeit and courage to stand for the true.

Standing with the Lamb

As I look back on three personal experiences—the emotional church that rejected truth, the members who wanted me to make decisions for them, and the cultural debates over outward

customs—I realize that each was a small rehearsal for the final conflict. In every case, the battle was the same: Will we live by conviction or by convenience?

Soon the whole world will be gathered to one side or the other. The three unclean spirits will unite the nations under a banner of deceptive love and counterfeit liberty. But amid that gathering, another group will stand apart—the ones who "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

Where are you going to be? What do you tend to follow? Are you among those who read this text today for the wrong reason? Are you listening to one of the three unclean spirits? My hope is that, if you do, you may recognize that God's small, still voice is always here by your side, wanting to steer you away from the enemy. May you seek not the spirit of the dragon that flatters emotion, nor the spirit of the beast that demands conformity, nor the spirit of the false prophet that glorifies freedom without obedience—but the Spirit of the Lamb, who humbled Himself to obey His heavenly Father even unto death.

The church before the final crisis must be a church of discernment and courage. The hour is late. The battle lines are forming. The sifting has begun. But Christ still calls:

"Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4).

Let us answer that call—not with fear, not with pride, but with the calm assurance that truth is stronger than deception and that listening to the Spirit of Christ is stronger than listening to any unclean spirit.

May the Lord fill us with that Spirit!

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The Law of God and the Law of Man

Both laws regulate human conduct, but only one is born of love and lasts forever

FRANCK BELINI VITORASSI - ITALY

“We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29), last part.

Our world has about 195 officially recognized countries. All make laws designed to provide for an organized social life and adequate coexistence to protect their citizens, their rights, their property, and for resolving conflicts and ensuring justice.

When we analyze history, we see some important landmarks regarding codified laws. For example, there is the famous Code of Hammurabi (1,750 B.C., in Babylon), which established laws that applied throughout his empire. His main contribution was to establish that laws should not be just an oral tradition, but that they should be written and public.

Within the legal field, we find several types of laws—civil, tax, commercial, and more. However, a question arises: Are all these laws good? Is it possible that there also may be unjust laws? Being made by erring humans, sometimes these laws might not be perfect. Some could be oppressive, unequal or even unjust. In view of this, the question remains: Should we obey the laws established by men?

The answer is yes. We have a moral obligation, strengthened by our faith, to obey the laws of men! God established the authorities, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same” (Romans 13:1–3). We obey the authorities and submit to the laws established by them, being told: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well” (1 Peter 2:13, 14).

This is true even if one might think, for example, that the tax laws are unfair. But regardless of anyone's opinion on the matter, I must pay my taxes correctly, following the example and words of Jesus, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17). The pen of Inspiration explains: "The government under which Jesus lived was corrupt and oppressive; on every hand were crying abuses—extortion, intolerance, and grinding cruelty. Yet the Saviour attempted no civil reforms. He attacked no national abuses, nor condemned the national enemies. He did not interfere with the authority or administration of those in power. He who was our example kept aloof from earthly governments. Not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and external measures. To be efficient, the cure must reach men individually, and must regenerate the heart."[1]

But is there any time or circumstance that justifies not obeying the laws of men? This is an extremely significant question because it involves not only a moral issue, but also a spiritual one. Yet before giving a correct answer to this question, it is necessary to highlight some historical aspects about the law of God.

The origin of God's law

When I was a teenager, a concern began to arise in my mind. The question arose: "If the law of God has always existed, how did the angels obey commands such as to honor your father and your mother; not to covet your neighbor's wife or his ox?" The angels had no parents, and they were not married. It was a little confusing for me to understand all of this; I could not comprehend the nature of God's law. But one day, I shared my concern with my father, and he answered me in a simple but deeply enlightening way: "The law of God is eternal, but the commandments of that holy law have been adapted; The principle is the same, but the Ten Commandments were adapted to man." This helped me begin to have a deeper insight into God's law and I began to understand that indeed "the law of God existed before man was created. It was adapted to the condition of holy beings; even angels were governed by it."[2]

"God's law is the transcript of His character."[3]

God's law is eternal and reflects His own disposition! In His wisdom, He adapted it to the condition of created beings, so that they could live in harmony with the principles that manage His government.

Questioning in Heaven

Lucifer occupied an exalted position among the angels. He was a covering cherub, endowed with glory, wisdom, and was widely esteemed and respected in the heavenly courts. The Lord has declared, "Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire" (Ezekiel 28:14). Yet, in the mystery of iniquity, sin welled up in his heart. What began as a subtle discontent was transformed into a shrewd work of deception and rebellion, whereby he sought to cast doubt upon the character and authority of God and the justice of His law.

His false insinuations boiled down to three main complaints:

- There is a law that governs us;
- This law is not perfect and must be improved;
- I (Lucifer) possess enough wisdom to improve it.

"The discord which his own course had caused in heaven, Satan charged upon the government of God. All evil he declared to be the result of the divine administration. He claimed that it was his own object to improve upon the statutes of Jehovah. Therefore God permitted him to demonstrate the nature of his claims, to show the working out of his proposed changes in the divine law."[4]

Thus, the one who was created to exalt and reflect the light and glory of God, began to question the law of his Creator. In doing so, he stood in opposition to God Himself, for His law is the expression of His character and His will.

"[Lucifer] worked with mysterious secrecy, and for a time concealed his real purpose under an appearance of reverence for God. He began to insinuate doubts concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings, intimating that though laws might be necessary for the inhabitants of the worlds, angels, being more exalted, needed no such restraint, for their own wisdom was a sufficient guide. They were not beings that could bring dishonor to God; all their thoughts were holy; it was no more possible for them than for God Himself to err. The exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was also entitled to reverence and honor."[5] (See Ezekiel 28:17.)

The controversy between Christ and Satan revolves around the immutability of the divine law and faithfulness to the government of God.

Opposition to God's law

Lucifer acted with cunning and subtlety, working in secret to influence the angels to rebel against God and His Law. His performance was so cunning that, initially, a large number from among the angels gave credence to his words. But what seemed to be logical and well-founded concerns soon showed their true nature.

"[Satan] flattered himself that he should yet have all the angels on his side, and that he would be equal with God Himself, and his voice of authority would be heard in commanding the entire host of heaven. . . .

"The mighty revolter then declared that he was acquainted with God's law, and if he should submit to servile obedience, his honor would be taken from him."[6]

The result of the rebellion

The doubts cast by Lucifer spread discontent among some of the angels, fueling conflicts and paving the way for rebellion. The result of this work of deception was devastating; he who was once the covering cherub became God's adversary, and along with him the third part of the angels fell into apostasy.

God was patient; He graciously granted opportunities to Satan and the angels who had allied themselves with him. However, the rebellion persisted, and finally "God declared that the

rebellious should remain in heaven no longer. Their high and happy state had been held upon condition of obedience to the law which God had given to govern the high order of intelligences. But no provision had been made to save those who should venture to transgress His law. Satan grew bold in his rebellion, and expressed his contempt of the Creator's law. This Satan could not bear. He claimed that angels needed no law but should be left free to follow their own will, which would ever guide them right; that law was a restriction of their liberty; and that to abolish law was one great object of his standing as he did. . . .

"Then there was war in heaven. The Son of God, the Prince of heaven, and His loyal angels engaged in conflict with the archrebel and those who united with him. The Son of God and true, loyal angels prevailed; and Satan and his sympathizers were expelled from heaven."[7]

Crisis in Eden

After the fall of Satan and his angels, a divine project came into action—a creative project to glorify God. Although the third of the angels who had abandoned loyalty to the Creator no longer belonged to the heavenly hosts, this vacancy would ultimately be occupied by a new order of created beings made in His own image. Divinity acted in perfect unity in the work of creation, and the result was striking and wonderful. The faithful angels and all the inhabitants of the unfallen worlds beheld in wonder the manifestation of the power and wisdom of God.

But could it be that even in this environment of perfection, where "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31, first part), there might still be need for a law? Have you ever thought about it? It is impossible to conceive of a perfect universe without being sustained and governed by the law of God.

For Adam and Eve, the law of God was revealed in an adapted and simplified form in a single commandment. "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16, 17). Was this command something difficult? Not at all. They lived in a perfect environment, where everything was orchestrated and designed for their benefit. They had access to everything to meet their needs, but they had to pass this test, a test of faithfulness and loyalty to God and His law.

Adam and Eve were not alone; they lived in constant company with heavenly beings. On many occasions they were with God and received visits from angels with guidance and warnings about the enemy of Him and His law. So, the enemy presented himself with an attractive and striking appearance.

Have you ever noticed that the enemy seeks to present mildly harmful and even highly harmful things as being positive and good? He whispers, "You must be free, why not give it a try? If you've never used it, how do you know it's bad? Don't be so strict—it's just a little bit. It won't kill you!" Today, in the same way, Satan presents himself differently from the way he truly is. He presents proposals that are apparently interesting, but lead only to violation of the law of God and eventual destruction.

We cannot fall into this trap. Dear teenager, young person, adult, run away from these whispers and artifices that encourage you to violate and disobey the law of God. Such will not lead you

to a good destination. Satan will say, “Go ahead and smoke; you need to look cool. That will that help your prestige,” or “Drink some alcohol to show that you are grown up. Why do you need to be different?” “Wake up! We’re in the 21st century. Don’t be so old-fashioned.” These are subtle but profoundly misleading arguments that lead the soul into dishonoring God and transgressing His law.

The result of disobedience

Satan presented himself to Eve through one of the most beautiful and attractive animals in the garden of Eden as a shining serpent with wings.[8] Deceived by the cunning of the beautiful serpent, Eve allowed doubt about God’s character to penetrate her heart and she transgressed the divine command. “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Genesis 3:6). “Adam was not deceived; but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1 Timothy 2:14). Being aware of what had occurred, Adam deliberately chose to participate in the disobedience, joining in the fate of his companion.

With this decision, the human race that had been created to reflect God’s image and live in perfect harmony with His law, fell into sin. The consequences were immediate and irreversible: The very first man and woman had already lost the privilege of direct communion with God and were deprived of access to the tree of life. God Himself declared, “Now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: . . . the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden” (Genesis 3:22, 23). Thus, they lost access to the tree of life that would have perpetuated immortality.

From that moment on, they would live in a world marked by suffering, pain, and hard work. (See Genesis 3:16, 19.)

And today?

The same strategy used by Satan in heaven and repeated in Eden is still used today! It distorts the truth, weakens the authority of God’s Law, and seeks to induce the human race to rebel against divine principles. Let’s go back to the initial question: Is there any moment or circumstance that justifies not obeying the laws of men? Yes, when these laws come into direct conflict with the law of God, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29, last part).

“In the name of the Lord we are to go forward, unfurling His banner, advocating His word. When the authorities command us not to do this work, when they forbid us to proclaim the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, then it will be necessary for us to say as did the apostles: ‘Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard’ (Acts 4:19, 20).”[9] This is not a hypothesis; it already occurs today and will intensify every day. The closer we get to the final crisis, the attacks against God and His law will increase. His law will be openly and systematically attacked, especially with regard to the fourth commandment, the holy Sabbath of the Lord. “We are standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. Prophecies are fulfilling.”[10] “The world is now realizing the sure results of transgression of the law of God. His

work of creation completed, the Lord rested on the seventh day, and sanctified the day of His rest, setting it apart as the day which man should devote to His worship. But today the world at large is utterly disregarding the law of Jehovah. Another day has been instituted in the place of God's day of rest. The human agent has set his way and his will against the positive teachings of the Word, and the world is plunged in rebellion and sin."[11]

"[Revelation 22:18, 19 quoted.] Such are the warnings which God has given to guard men against changing in any manner that which He has revealed or commanded. These solemn denunciations apply to all who by their influence lead men to regard lightly the law of God. They should cause those to fear and tremble who flippantly declare it a matter of little consequence whether we obey God's law or not. All who exalt their own opinions above divine revelation, all who would change the plain meaning of Scripture to suit their own convenience, or for the sake of conforming to the world, are taking upon themselves a fearful responsibility. The written word, the law of God, will measure the character of every man and condemn all whom this unerring test shall declare wanting."[12]

The law of God, being a revelation of His will, a transcript of His character, must forever endure, 'as a faithful witness in heaven.' Not one command has been annulled; not a jot or tittle has been changed. Says the psalmist: 'Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven.' 'All His commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever.' Psalm 119:89; 111:7, 8."[13]

Conclusion: A calling

In the face of history, prophecy and the spiritual reality in which we live, we can have no doubt that the safest path is to walk with God, follow His will and obey His Law. The Bible tells us that "the law of the Lord is perfect" (Psalm 19:7). "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good" (Romans 7:12).

Obedience should not be a burden, but a loving response to the character of a God who is perfect in justice, goodness, and mercy. God calls you today, not only to know His law theoretically, but to live in fidelity to it. Let us not treat this issue as being of minor importance; it is a profound issue that directly touches on our relationship with God and connects to our eternal destiny. In a world that tries to make everything relative and abandons all absolutes, we must be firm and keenly aware of God's law.

Our Saviour tells us, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). The only way to manifest our love for Christ is through obedience to all His commandments. There is a saying: "It is easy to obey without loving, but it is impossible to love without obeying." Only those who love God with all their hearts will obey His commandments by faith and the grace of Christ. In other words, there is no love without obedience—and this is an individual matter.

"To every soul the question comes home with force: Shall I obey the voice from heaven, the ten words spoken from Sinai, or shall I go with the multitude who trample on that fiery law? To those who love God it will be the highest delight to keep His commandments, and to do those things that are pleasing in His sight."[14]

Let this “highest delight” also be our experience. May we daily choose to obey the Lord out of love, remain loyal by conviction, and honor Him in all things—and faithful when the final crisis demands the highest demonstration of loyalty from each one of us.

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The Tip of the Iceberg

We are just starting to see what happens when the great controversy intensifies

BY SORIN SUCEAVA - ROMANIA

We are truly living in a solemn time in history, when unseen realities become ever clearer, and God's call resounds ever more loudly in our hearts. His grace still envelops us, but Scripture urges us to be awake, steadfast, and anchored in faith, so that when trials intensify, we will remain steadfast in Christ. The apostle Paul expresses exactly this desire:

"Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, . . . that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him" (2 Thessalonians 1:11, 12).

During this time of grace, we are called to make the necessary preparations to face the final events of earth's history, which will come in rapid succession. Now is the time to deepen our roots in God and seek His strength for the days ahead. Jesus was often found in prayer. He would withdraw to quiet groves or mountain heights to open His heart to His Father. When the cares and labors of the day were over and weary men sought rest, the Saviour devoted His time to secret communion with God.

We must not discourage prayer, because there is far too little prayer and too little vigilance with regard to prayer. And even less is prayer understood and lived in the Spirit. We need that fervent, sincere, and effective prayer that strengthens the soul and brings heaven closer to our hearts. Such prayer never tires; on the contrary, it invigorates, inspires, and empowers all who love devotion. In this solemn time, God's call to us is to return to a spirit of deep prayer, so that by His grace we may stand firm in the day of trial.

The Iceberg = Imminent Danger

The term "iceberg" refers to a massive block of ice that has broken off from the Earth's polar ice caps and is drifting towards warmer areas of the globe. Although most of its structure remains hidden underwater, an iceberg can influence the climate of the areas it passes through and poses a real threat to maritime navigation.

The ice mass of an iceberg is extremely compact and durable, strong enough to cause serious damage to any ship that hits it, even to the point of destruction. That is why icebergs are considered among the most dangerous maritime obstacles: What appears small and harmless on the surface hides a huge and lethal reality beneath.

The expression "tip of the iceberg" exactly describes this contrast between appearance and reality. It suggests that what is visible—the small, exposed part—is only a fraction of a much more complex, profound, and often threatening situation. The real problem, the true extent of the danger, lies beneath the surface—unseen, ignored, or misunderstood. Just as a ship can

be deceived by the small size of the tip, so likewise can people be deceived by the reassuring appearances of the times, without perceiving the unseen danger that is accumulating.

The prophetic iceberg

The Lord Jesus Christ warned us about this spiritual reality. The visible signs of the end are only the "tip of the iceberg"—what the eye can see, what the world recognizes. But the real conflict, the full extent of the final battle, is largely invisible, taking place on a spiritual, moral, and prophetic level. That is why Jesus' words carry such weight:

"All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24:8).

He tells us that what we see now—turmoil, crises, unrest—is only the visible part, the beginning, the "tip" of a much deeper process that is leading the world toward final events. The real danger is not only what can be seen, but what is being prepared in silence, what is about to manifest itself with force when humanity suddenly awakens to the full reality. In this context, the iceberg metaphor becomes a solemn call to vigilance, discernment, and spiritual preparation.

The imminent spiritual danger and end-time counterfeits

The Lord's messenger describes: "I was shown that a terrible condition of things exists in our world. The angel of mercy is folding her wings, ready to depart. Already the Lord's restraining power is being withdrawn from the earth, and Satan is seeking to stir up the various elements in the religious world, leading men to place themselves under the training of the great deceiver, who work with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in the children of disobedience. Already the inhabitants of the earth are marshaling under the leading of the prince of darkness, and this is but the beginning of the end."[1]

Throughout history, God's people have often had to face counterfeits in the form of false prophets, false Christs, and false reform movements.

"Counterfeit holiness, spurious sanctification, is still doing its work of deception . . . diverting minds from the Scriptures and leading men to follow their own feelings and impressions rather than to yield obedience to the law of God. This is one of Satan's most successful devices to cast reproach upon purity and truth."[2]

Today, the world is presented with an apparently reassuring message of false security and deceptive optimism with no biblical foundation. Instead of preparing humanity for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory, peace and prosperity are proclaimed everywhere, in direct contrast to the warning of Scripture: "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

The world sees the "tip of the iceberg," but the hidden spiritual reality is incomparably deeper and more dangerous. Counterfeits, crises, and deceptions are not isolated incidents, but signs of a final battle that is quietly intensifying. Therefore, God's people are called to watch, discern, and remain deeply anchored in biblical truth, lest they be caught in the snares of false peace or counterfeit spirituality. People are convinced by philosophical theories to no

longer take God's warnings and judgments seriously; religious leaders claim that humanity is heading toward an era of peace and prosperity. The world, caught up in its daily activities and pleasures, goes about its business unhindered—building, cultivating, organizing celebrations and marriages—ignoring divine calls and ridiculing those sent by God. It is written that destruction from Heaven will ultimately come upon them unexpectedly.

Satan seeks to receive the worship that belongs only to God, using every means possible to draw people into his deceptions. Many will be deceived, and others forced into paths they have not truly chosen. He has divided the broad path that leads to destruction into many directions—some narrower, some wider—so that everyone can seemingly find the "right option" without realizing that the woeful destination is the same for all. His agents work tirelessly to keep people busy, distracted, and subtly led toward exactly what the enemy wants, making them believe they are the ones who are freely choosing.

Slowly but surely, humanity is becoming enchanted by technology. It ends up educating, shaping thinking, and forming habits in accordance with the ever-changing programs of modern society. Instead of turning their eyes to God, many become part of a consumer society where selfishness, comfort, and instant gratification become principles of life. Today, luxury, comfort, and the pursuit of pleasure are flaunted just as they were in Noah's day, when people lived only for themselves, ignoring divine warnings. Jesus said, "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man" (Luke 17:26). History is repeating itself before our very eyes.

Purity in a sinful world

The challenge of being pure in a corrupt world is a solemn calling. God is preparing a people who, in the midst of confusion and abundance of counterfeits, will remain anchored in truth, steadfast in faith, and righteous in their walk.

Consider the white water lily on the surface of a pond. Despite the mud, dirt, and filth around it, the flower remains clean, bright, and beautiful. The water lily is not affected by its surroundings; it opens its petals to the light and remains untouched in its purity.

Likewise, the faithful soul is called to live in a world full of sin, lawlessness, violence, wickedness, and darkness—without allowing these things to defile his spiritual life. God does not ask us to flee from the world, but appeals to us not to allow the world to rule our hearts. We may be amid the moral mud of our time, but through the grace of Christ, we can remain clean, bright, and separate for Him.

Another important truth: we become like the things upon which we fix our eyes and thoughts.

If we constantly look at sin, injustice, the wickedness of others, criticism, and darkness, then our minds will be filled with discouragement and bitterness. But if we lift our eyes to Christ, to the beauty of His character, to His promises, and to things that are pure and noble, then our souls are transformed and uplifted. The apostle Paul said:

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2).

“Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

Signs fulfilled

The pen of Inspiration describes the state of the world as follows:

“A terrible picture of the condition of the world has been presented before me. Immorality abounds everywhere. Licentiousness is the special sin of this age. Never did vice lift its deformed head with such boldness as now. The people seem to be benumbed, and the lovers of virtue and true goodness are nearly discouraged by its boldness, strength, and prevalence.”[3]

Romans 1:18–32 accurately describes the state of the world before the second coming of Christ: moral degradation, the reversal of values, contempt for truth and nature, and the glorification of sin.

Sin—the real cause of separation from God

It is not trials, not deprivation, not tribulations that separate us from God, but sin.

Inspiration explains:

“It is sin, not trial and suffering, which separates God from His people. . . . Sin and vice exist in Sabbathkeeping families.”[4]

This is a serious warning to God’s people: it is not the outside world that is the greatest danger, but compromise from within. In the last days, Satan is focusing his efforts on young people:

“Unless parents keep their children under firm control, with the fear of God before them, Satan will take possession of their young minds, and corrupt them. As they increase in years, the lustful passions grow with their growth and strengthen with their strength.”[5]

Young people are targeted, because if their minds are corrupted, the whole of society will be led astray. But God is calling a young generation that is courageous, pure, anchored in the Word, and filled with the Holy Spirit. His warnings are not to frighten us, but rather a call to prepare. God’s children will go through trials: deprivation, famine, suffering. But the Lord will not abandon you in suffering. He will simply allow your faith to be tested.

The religious world and signs of the final conflict

Before Christ’s return, the religious world will become the scene of a visible separation between those who live by the Spirit and those who have only an outward form of godliness. Some are sanctified by the truth, daily crucifying self and overcoming sin. Others are content with a superficial religion, indulging their desires and unwittingly becoming slaves to Satan. Only grace lived out, not grace spoken, can make the difference.

“Our people have been regarded as too insignificant to be worthy of notice, but a change will come. The Christian world is now making movements which will necessarily bring commandment-keeping people into prominence.”[6]

This means that a time is coming when belief in the Bible, the Sabbath, God’s law, and the everlasting gospel will become central topics of religious and political debate. Every doctrine will be examined, and every believer tested. Unless we are sound, steady students of the Bible, the wisdom of the great influencers of the world will lead us astray.

Changes in nature — Messages from the Creator to mankind

God sends warnings through suffering, sickness, weakness, and turmoil, but man, caught up in his evil habits, continues to go against the created order. This leads to ruined health, a troubled mind, lack of peace, and the inability to serve God fully.

Ignorance and selfishness are often the causes of preventable suffering, but we often fail to see the connection between cause and effect.

Natural disasters — not mere accidents, but divine calls

We live in a world where earthquakes, hurricanes, fires, floods, and other calamities seem to be increasing. Many perceive them as random phenomena, effects of chance or climate change. But the Lord uses these means to awaken men of what is coming. He does not cause evil, but does allow certain natural events to shake the conscience of a world that is a spiritually numb. Calamities are like alarm bells calling us all to wake up, repent, and live in harmony with our Creator.

“The Spirit of God is gradually but surely being withdrawn from the earth.”[7]

This does not happen suddenly. It is progressive and visible in the increase of natural disasters, the amplification of violence, social unrest, political instability, and moral degradation.

In the great prophetic scenes of the end times, there is a critical moment—the close of Christ’s mediation in the heavenly sanctuary. This is not an event visible to the world, but its consequences are seen everywhere on earth. As long as Christ mediates, His grace still holds back the waves of destruction and limits the power of evil. But when His work as High Priest ends, the world enters a phase in which God’s judgment—long held back—is manifested. While science tries to explain everything by natural causes, the Bible and prophecy say otherwise: God’s angels are still holding back the four winds of destruction. But the time will come when God will command the angels to release them—then the world will experience unprecedented chaos.

Humanity, between spiritual blindness and the reality of heaven

At present, people do not see the angels who guard the earth. They do not understand the grace that still restrains the unleashing of evil nor realize that the time of grace is coming to an end.

When the wicked see not only the tip, but the entire iceberg of their lives

In everyday life, the sinner sees only the "tip of the iceberg"—a few external consequences of his choices, small shadows of guilt, fleeting warnings from his conscience. But the true weight of a life lived without God remains hidden beneath the surface, unseen, ignored, or minimized. However, there comes a moment, at the end of history, when the entire hidden structure of their lives—the entire iceberg—is brought to light by the radiance of Christ's presence. The sinner finally sees himself as God sees him.

No distortions. No excuses. No self-justifications. The light of Christ does not condemn arbitrarily—it reveals reality. Neglected warnings appear "written in letters of fire." "The warnings rejected, the waves of mercy beaten back by the stubborn, unrepentant heart—all appear as if written in letters of fire."[8]

Everything that seemed small, unimportant, negligible now becomes clear: sermons listened to without interest, opportunities for repentance ignored, inner reproaches suppressed, appeals of the Holy Spirit postponed. Now each episode is reviewed with accuracy and total responsibility; now is the time to see the whole "glacier," not just the tip of the iceberg.

On Judgment Day, everything is revealed. Nothing is hidden anymore.

But in the day of grace, God calls us to see reality now, before it is too late. Now the Holy Spirit shows us hidden sin, wrong motivations, repeated hardening of the heart, and the direction of our lives. This is not to destroy us, but to save us. God calls us today to look not just at the top, but at the entire structure of our lives—and to let Him transform it by grace.

Hope and salvation

As these things occur, Jesus left us a promise for the time when the world would be filled with turmoil, fear, confusion, and uncertainty: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

These words are a divine antidote to fear. They tell us that when the world is plunged into darkness, God's people must look up—not down, not around, not into a fearful world, but to Christ, the Deliverer.

The signs are not a cause for panic, but a cause for hope. The harvest is ready, the inspired pen writes: "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, already white for the harvest. Praise God that His word has been verified beyond all our conception."[9]

The fact that prophecies are being fulfilled before our very eyes is not only proof that Christ's coming is near, but also a call to get involved in His work. Before deliverance comes, before the doors of grace close, there is work to be done: souls to be won, families to be encouraged, young people to be raised up, churches to be strengthened, the light of the Gospel to be spread. God has already done much, and the fields are "white to harvest"—ready.

This is not a time for discouragement, but for mission. Difficulties? Yes. But we are not alone. There will be difficulties that will test our faith and patience and we are to face them with courage, looking at the bright side of the problem. Real faith is not tested in comfort, but in trial.

But trial is not a sign of abandonment, but as an instrument of maturation: God strengthens through hardship, purifies through fire, perfects through patience. If the work is hindered, make sure it is not your fault, and then move forward, rejoicing in the Lord.

Willpower —the decisive factor in spiritual life

If our spiritual eyes were open, we would see a shocking reality—a scene that would never be erased from our minds as long as we live. We would see countless souls crushed under the burden of cares, overwhelmed by trials, weighed down like a cart loaded with sheaves, souls that seem ready to collapse in discouragement and helplessness. Around these souls we would see angels of God running swiftly to support them on the edge of the precipice of temptation. These people have no power in themselves to escape the danger that threatens them; but God's angels interpose themselves between them and the evil angels, repelling the attacks of the enemy and removing the souls from dangerous places, setting their feet on safe ground. If we could see this reality, we would understand that in the invisible realm of the spirit world, a battle is being waged that is as real as the conflicts that take place between earthly armies. It is a war for man's will, for the direction of his life, for the eternal destiny of his soul. Our desires and inclinations must be consecrated to God. This is, indeed, a crucifixion of self—a total surrender, a conscious renunciation of self to receive the will of Christ.

Conclusion and appeal — A call to draw near to God

Beloved brothers and sisters, looking at the events taking place in the world and the prophetic words left by Inspiration, we see clearly that everything the inspired word has written about the end times is being fulfilled before our eyes. From declining morality, increased natural disasters, the spirit of the religious world, pressure on believers, to spiritual wanderings and the preparation of the final scene—all tell us that the coming of the Lord Jesus in the clouds of heaven is much closer than we think.

We are at the end of the year, a good time for introspection. We do not know what awaits us in the near or distant future; we do not know what challenges, trials, or blessings will come. But we know one thing for sure: The Word of Jesus tells us that we are living in the end times and that each of us needs a deeper, more real, and more vibrant relationship with God. It is time to look back on our lives and ask ourselves honestly: Have we lived according to the Word of God? Have we honored His will in our thoughts, actions, and decisions? Have we surrendered our will to Christ, or have we gone our own way? Have we grown closer to Him or further away from Him during this past year? If we realize that we have not been going in the right direction, if we see things in our lives that have not been in harmony with God's will, let us not be discouraged. This is the time to bow before the Lord and ask Him for forgiveness, healing, strength, and a new heart.

The apostle Peter poses the solemn question to each of us: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless”(2 Peter 3:11–14).

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The Patience of the Saints

An essential Christian virtue is to be plainly distinct among the final redeemed

BY DAVID LOPEZ - U.S.A.

Understanding patience

Patience is defined as the ability to remain calm and composed while awaiting outcomes, enduring difficulties, or facing delays without frustration or giving up. It requires having a clear and fixed goal, as well as the capacity to maintain a steady attitude during times of trial, uncertainty, or slow progress. Patience involves self-control and perseverance, making it both a personal strength and a vital virtue. This quality helps individuals navigate life's challenges with resilience and hope.

In times of trial and service

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

Set your goals and run with patience—for this is indispensable in our Christian life.

Patience takes on particular significance for those who face prolonged trials or profound challenges. Individuals enduring illness, adversity, or seasons of uncertainty are often called to exercise extraordinary patience as they navigate hardships that test both strength and faith. Such journeys demand a steady resolve and the capacity to continue even when progress seems slow or outcomes remain hidden. It is through this steadfast endurance that believers learn to trust God more deeply and to persevere with unwavering hope.

In daily life, caregivers, teachers, parents, and spiritual leaders depend on patience as a foundational virtue. Their roles require them to guide, support, and encourage others through periods of growth and struggle. Patience enables them to nurture those in their care, remaining calm and supportive even when confronted with setbacks or resistance.

For those devoted to spiritual pursuits—such as the saints who strive to maintain their faith and uphold higher principles within a society often marked by moral decline—patience is indispensable. As our Lord taught, "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19). Patience enables believers to hold fast to hope, remain obedient, and stay grounded even amid delays, disappointments, and trials. It strengthens their commitment to spiritual ideals by giving them the endurance needed to persevere. Through patience, they are able to withstand adversity without losing heart and continue walking faithfully in the values they profess.

Ultimately, anyone who seeks to build character or cultivate compassion will find patience to be both a guiding light and a gentle strength. It not only helps individuals persevere

through adversity but also fosters personal growth and deepens the capacity for empathy and understanding on their journey. “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope” (Romans 5:3, 4).

We need not only the faith of Jesus, but also His patience to endure the intensified trials that mark the final phase of the great conflict between good and evil. The character we build as Christians must resemble that of the inhabitants of heaven and of our King. Such a character can be developed only through the daily tests and challenges of life. As the Scriptures say: “Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

These words were written during a time of intense persecution against the church of God. Remaining steadfast and patient in the faith during such a period is precisely the kind of preparation the church needs in order to face the challenges that lie ahead. The Spirit of Prophecy exhorts us with these words:

“We are forming characters for heaven. No character can be complete without trial and suffering. We must be tested, we must be tried. Christ bore the test of character of our behalf that we might bear this test in our own behalf through the divine strength He has brought to us. Christ is our example in patience, in forbearance, in meekness and lowliness of mind. He was at variance and at war with the whole ungodly world, yet He did not give way to passion and violence manifested in words and actions, although receiving shameful abuse in return for good works. He was afflicted, He was rejected and despitefully treated, yet He retaliated not. He possessed self-control, dignity, and majesty. He suffered with calmness and for abuse gave only compassion, pity, and love.”[1]

Waiting for the second coming

Patience is also fundamentally necessary for the church as it waits for the second coming of Jesus. “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain” (James 5:7). Just as the farmer waits with expectation and endurance, so believers are called to wait with steadfast faith, trusting that God’s timing is perfect.

The Christian church has long awaited the second coming of Jesus, a hope rooted in biblical prophecy and central to Christian belief. This anticipation calls for deep patience, as believers trust in God’s timing and remain steadfast through generations of waiting. Their enduring faith in this promise serves as a powerful example of patience in spiritual life, motivating communities to persevere in hope, worship, and good works as they look forward to Christ’s return.

At the birth of the Advent movement, from 1833 to 1844, everything seemed near—Christ was at the door. But the years have passed (God knows why), and now, some 193 years later, we are still waiting. The delay of the bridegroom is truly a test for the people of God. The lamps are going out, the virgins are falling asleep, the oil is running low, and the darkness of midnight grows ever denser. The church seems to be in its deepest slumber, and very few are those who anxiously seek and await the midnight cry: “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet

him" (Matthew 25:6). The generation of the church that awaits Christ's second coming in these times needs a faith and patience strong enough to withstand the prolonged delay, the pervasive evil of a godless society, and, above all, the social pressure to transgress the law of God.

Patience in times of uncertainty

Periods of uncertainty—when outcomes are beyond our control or progress seems slow—often demand deeper patience. Times of transition, such as beginning a new job, moving to a new city, or adjusting to changing circumstances, test our ability to remain calm, steady, and persistent. Working with others whose perspectives or pace differ from our own also calls for additional patience, helping us cultivate understanding, harmony, and healthy relationships. Likewise, moments of disappointment or setbacks require patience, enabling us to persevere, learn, and mature rather than react hastily or lose hope.

The apostle James speaks to us about the patience of Job: "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:10, 11).

To Job's physical suffering and pain was added the troubling uncertainty of wondering whether his own sin had brought upon him all the affliction he endured. Moreover, God's silence in response to his earnest pleas tested his faith and patience to the utmost. In his distress he cried, "How many are mine iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?" (Job 13:23, 24).

Understanding what is taking place and being certain of our standing before God is a great comfort in times of trial and suffering. But the experience becomes far more difficult when, in such moments, there is uncertainty about whether we are right with God and whether heaven smiles upon us. These are the circumstances that will test our faith and patience. When the time of probation has closed and persecution reaches its highest intensity, the faithful will not know whether their sins have been forgiven and blotted out in the hour of the Investigative Judgment. It is precisely this uncertainty that will make the trial so much harder. The pen of Inspiration explains:

"As Satan accuses the people of God on account of their sins, the Lord permits him to try them to the uttermost. Their confidence in God, their faith and firmness, will be severely tested. As they review the past, their hopes sink; for in their whole lives they can see little good. They are fully conscious of their weakness and unworthiness. Satan endeavors to terrify them with the thought that their cases are hopeless, that the stain of their defilement will never be washed away. He hopes so to destroy their faith that they will yield to his temptations and turn from their allegiance to God.

"Though God's people will be surrounded by enemies who are bent upon their destruction, yet the anguish which they suffer is not a dread of persecution for the truth's sake; they fear that every sin has not been repented of, and that through some fault in themselves they will fail to realize the fulfillment of the Saviour's promise: 'I will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world.' Revelation 3:10. If they could have the assurance of pardon

they would not shrink from torture or death; but should they prove unworthy, and lose their lives because of their own defects of character, then God's holy name would be reproached. . . .

"Their faith does not fail because their prayers are not immediately answered. Though suffering the keenest anxiety, terror, and distress, they do not cease their intercessions. They lay hold of the strength of God as Jacob laid hold of the Angel; and the language of their souls is: 'I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.' "[2]

The spiritual dimension of patience

Waiting and enduring difficulties may be painful, yet patience can sweeten the experience. It is comforting to remember that if God allows these challenges, He does so with a good purpose. The apostle James reminds us, "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:3).

Ellen G. White beautifully illustrates this principle:

"God has shown me that He gave His people a bitter cup to drink, to purify and cleanse them. It is a bitter draught, and they can make it still more bitter by murmuring, complaining, and repining. But those who receive it thus must have another draught, for the first does not have its designed effect upon the heart. And if the second does not effect the work, then they must have another, and another, until it does have its designed effect, or they will be left filthy, impure in heart. I saw that this bitter cup can be sweetened by patience, endurance, and prayer, and that it will have its designed effect upon the hearts of those who thus receive it, and God will be honored and glorified."[3]

Until God's purpose is fully accomplished in us, we are again reminded to "let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:4).

Patience in Revelation 14:12

In Revelation 14:12, patience refers to the enduring faithfulness and steadfastness of believers who remain true to God's commandments and the faith of Jesus, even in the face of persecution and tribulation. This passage highlights that patience is not merely passive waiting but involves active, resilient trust in God's promises, especially during difficult or uncertain circumstances. Such patience empowers believers to persevere in righteousness and maintain hope, serving as a testament to their unwavering commitment to spiritual principles.

Patience is presented here as a clear sign of a character sanctified by God's power—a living testimony to the transforming work of Christ's gospel.

The expression, "Here is the patience of the saints" is presented as an answer to an unspoken accusatory question that might be: "Where are the saints? Where are the characteristics that give evidence of a character transformed into the holy image of Christ? Where are the people who demonstrate the power of Your gospel?" And then God responds as He did when He spoke of Job: "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause" (Job 2:3, NKJV). In the same way, He now presents not merely one man but an entire church and says, "Here is the patience of

the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12). He presents them as a living testimony that when human beings submit to His power, they can be transformed and become holy as He is holy, and that His power is able to sustain them faithful and obedient to His commandments in times of greatest adversity, persecution, imprisonment, and even threats of death.

The phrase, "Here is the patience of the saints" appears twice in Scripture—Revelation 13:10 and 14:12—and in both cases it is set within the context of intense persecution against those who keep God's commandments. This persecution is carried out by an apostate religious power, and its complete fulfillment still lies in the future. According to prophecy, the time will come when the powers of the earth, united in purpose, will seek to oppress God's people by using civil authority to enforce false doctrines and human commandments, aiming to secure what they believe will be a decisive victory over God's chosen ones. The pen of Inspiration reveals:

"John was now prepared to witness the thrilling scenes in the great conflict between those who keep the commandments of God and those who make void His law. He saw the wonder-working power arise that was to deceive all who should dwell upon the earth who were not connected with God, '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.' [Revelation 13:14.] See Revelation 13:15–17. The prophet heard the solemn warning against the worship of this blasphemous power: 'If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand.' [Revelation 14:9.] See Revelation 14:10, 11. Of the loyal and true who do not bow to the decrees of earthly rulers against the authority of the King of heaven the Revelator says, 'Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.' [Verse 12.] See Revelation 14:1–3, 5; 15:2–4."[4]

At this present time, this statement cannot be applied to God's church in the fullest sense, for the climax of that prophesied oppression has not yet come. The time we now have is granted for preparation—so that God's people can develop a faith capable of enduring such a trial, and cultivate a patience strong enough to withstand delay, social pressure, and the most adverse circumstances.

"The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure weariness, delay, and hunger—a faith that will not faint though severely tried. The period of probation is granted to all to prepare for that time."[5]

Transformation through patience

Patience reflects an individual's ability to remain composed, steady, and hopeful in the face of delays, adversity, or frustration. It demonstrates inner strength and maturity, revealing a person's capacity to manage emotions and respond thoughtfully instead of impulsively. Those who cultivate patience often embody resilience, empathy, and wisdom, which enable them to build stronger relationships and face life's challenges with grace. This virtue not only helps individuals endure difficult circumstances but also enriches personal growth and deepens understanding of others.

Within the context of the third angel's message, transformation is the ultimate goal, representing complete renewal of character and spiritual life. This process calls believers

not only to persist in faith and obedience but also to allow God's grace to reshape their hearts, enabling them to reflect Christ's love and righteousness. As patience sustains hope and perseverance, transformation through the third angel's message leads to a life marked by steadfast faith, moral integrity, and readiness for Christ's return.

Final appeal

God is preparing a church that will honor and vindicate His holy name before being taken to its eternal rest after a long and weary battle against evil. What may seem like a delay in Christ's coming is, in truth, an act of mercy toward you. This moment—your moment—was marked on God's calendar. He will not turn the page without first giving you this chance. He longs to move your heart to accept His gospel of salvation.

Open the door of your heart and welcome in the Beloved Saviour. When you do, you will witness a transforming power unlike anything you have ever experienced. He stands at your door, calling; He comes with a treasure of blessings and yearns to share them with you. This is your opportunity. All heaven has been watching and waiting for this moment. Hear His invitation—and respond:

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20).

The supper He offers is His Word—a daily communion, a steady walk with Jesus—until you become part of His purified church, prepared to face the final conflict with evil and, at last, to enjoy eternity with the saints in light.

My prayer for each one of us is that the Spirit of God will convict our hearts, uphold us in every step of our journey with Christ, and grant us the final victory to receive the crown of life promised by God in Revelation 2:10. Amen.

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The Remnant and the Serpent's Bruised Head

A prophecy given at the beginning stands sure for God's people at the end

BY MAKOSELO BOWA - ZAMBIA

“I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid” (Zephaniah 3:12, 13).

The Holy Scriptures describe in detail the plan of salvation for our race. The attention has been directed in particular to the last remnant people of God, who will be found standing as faithful witnesses for God, when in the glory of the Father and the glory of angels, Christ, the King of kings, comes again. In every age there have been those who have worshipped the Lord according to His divine will.

“The church is God’s fortress, His city of refuge, which He holds in a revolted world. . . . From the beginning, faithful souls have constituted the church on earth. In every age the Lord has had His watchmen, who have borne a faithful testimony to the generation in which they lived.”[1]

The whole world will be engaged in the last conflict between truth and error, bringing about the greatest crisis of all ages. The events preceding that moment are developing in our day. Soon, the remnant people of God will be brought to their final test.

The word “remnant”

According to the dictionary, a “remnant” is a noun that means a small piece or amount of something that is left from a larger original piece or amount. It is a remainder, residue, that is left over.

In the Hebrew language, the word she’erit denotes explicitly a remnant or residue, often used in prophetic contexts to describe those who survive calamities or remain faithful to God (Isaiah 10:20). Noah and his family were the remnant saved out of the millions on the earth before the flood (Genesis 6). Only Lot and his two daughters survived the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, a very small remnant, indeed (Genesis 19). When Elijah despaired that he was the only one left in Israel who had not bowed down to idols, God assured him that He had reserved a remnant of 7,000—“all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal and every mouth which hath not kissed him” (1 Kings 19:18).

In the New Testament, the Greek word for remnant is leimma, derived from the verb Leipô, meaning “to leave” or “to forsake.” It refers to a remainder or surviving group, often indicating those who remain faithful amidst widespread apostasy (Romans 11:5). “Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a

remnant shall be saved" (Romans 9:27, 28). This indicates that great multitudes from among the original Israel would perish. If only a remnant was to be saved, many must be lost, and this is the point which Paul was trying to convey. While the word "remnant" means "what is left," particularly what may remain after a battle or a great calamity, in this verse, it means "a small part or portion." Out of the great multitude of Israel, there would be so few left as to make it proper to say that it was a mere remnant.

Both Hebrew and Greek terms convey similar ideas of survival and preservation; their slight difference can differ based on context. The Hebrew terms often emphasize physical survival and faithfulness during times of national crisis or divine judgment. The Greek term focuses more on spiritual fidelity and God's grace in preserving a faithful community amid unbelief.

In the last days

Jesus addresses His last-day remnant: "To you, My disciples, I commit this message of mercy. It is to be given to Israel first, and then to all nations, tongues, and peoples. It is to be given to Jews and Gentiles. All who believe are to be gathered into one church."[2]

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:15, 16). "The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. . . . Its mission is to carry the gospel to the world"[3]

The mission of God's church

"[God] will purify His church even as He purified the temple at the beginning and close of His ministry on earth. All that He brings upon the church in test and trial comes that His people may gain deeper piety and more strength to carry the triumphs of the cross to all parts of the world."[4]

Characteristics of the Jewish church

The Lord chose the Jewish people to be His church and gave them the command, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:5, 6). Throughout the many years that followed, they were familiar with the precious promises made to them, but they failed to fulfill the conditions.

At the beginning of the Christian period, the Jewish people claimed to be awaiting the coming of the Messiah, and they expected Him to come and free them from all bondage under the Roman rule and establish His earthly kingdom. Though they declared themselves to be the only true church, the Jewish nation was rejected for living inconsistently in their relation to the coming of the Messiah which they taught so diligently.

Before them was the gift of God; but they did not regard any warnings. They refused to be rebuked or reproved, and finally their hatred of the Son of God became so great that they crucified Him. Their proud declaration was, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew 27:25). Only a remnant accepted Him.

New Testament fulfillment

In the New Testament, the idea of the remnant is extended to include Gentiles who come to have faith in Christ. The apostle Paul speaks of this in Romans chapters 9–11. “At this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace” (Romans 11:5). This remnant is not based on ethnic lineage but on faith in Jesus Christ.

The remnant emphasizes that God’s promises to Israel are not abolished by their unbelief but rather are fulfilled through a small, faithful remnant to include Jews and Gentiles who believe in Christ Jesus.

In Revelation 12:17, the remnant people of the last days are presented to us, “And the dragon was wroth with the woman and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

At the present time, God’s people are entrusted with the truth of the heavenly sanctuary, the commandments of God, especially the Sabbath commandment, and the faith of Jesus. They are blessed with the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy and the light of the three angels’ messages. With such light, there can be no doubt that they are a chosen of God. But sad to say, the same is with them as was with the Jews. They failed to meet the conditions that were demanded; they do not have the characteristics which identify the chosen people of God.

“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:14–19).

“We do not know what great interests may be at stake in the proving of God. There is no safety except in strict obedience to the word of God. All His promises are made upon condition of faith and obedience, and a failure to comply with His commands cuts off the fulfillment to us of the rich provisions of the Scriptures. We should not follow impulse, nor rely on the judgment of men; we should look to the revealed will of God and walk according to His definite commandment, no matter what circumstances may surround us. God will take care of the results; by faithfulness to His word we may in time of trial prove before men and angels that the Lord can trust us in difficult places to carry out His will, honor His name, and bless His people.”[5]

The final remnant

John describes the seven churches in Revelation which cover the era from Christ’s ascension to His second coming. We are living in the seventh period of the Christian church, the period of Laodicea. As there was a remnant from each of the other preceding churches, there is to be a remnant of this church, too. Prophecy reveals that a faithful remnant is to be saved, for not all professed believers in the Laodicean era will be saved. (See Isaiah 10:20–22.)

The Advent movement is prophetic. It is spiritual Israel as well as the remnant of the Philadelphian church which preceded it, following Christ into the holy of holies of the heavenly sanctuary after the great disappointment in 1844. They are not to be content to abide in a Laodicean state or backslidden condition, increased with goods and in need of nothing. But the Laodicean condition is perpetuated in the unconverted heart. Instead of upholding the spirit of brotherly love, the spirit of lukewarmness and indifference permeates the soul until there is no hope for Laodicea. But Jesus does not forsake the sincere seekers after truth in this present age, for He says, "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).

This call for reformation is not to lead us out of the seventh period into the eighth period, but rather to come out of the Laodicean state and become a part of the true remnant in the spirit of unselfish love. The Lord's messenger warns:

"I saw that the remnant was not prepared for what is coming upon the earth. Stupidity, like lethargy, seemed to hang upon the minds of most of those who profess to believe that we are having the last message. My accompanying angel cried out with awful solemnity, 'Get ready! get ready! get ready! for the fierce anger of the Lord is soon to come. His wrath is to be poured out, unmixed with mercy, and ye are not ready. Rend the heart, and not the garment. A great work must be done for the remnant. Many of them are dwelling upon little trials.' Said the angel, 'Legions of evil angels are around you, and are trying to press in their awful darkness, that ye may be ensnared and taken.' "[6]

To this remnant in the Laodicean period is entrusted the message for a work of thorough reformation and to give the message to Laodicea. These will fulfil the verse, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people: that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light," (1 Peter 2:9).

In Revelation 14:12, John describes this remnant which is to be awaiting the coming of the Lord in the clouds of heaven. They are 144,000 in number, overcomers (Revelation 3:21), following the Lamb wherever He goes. In their lives they will have been examples in the principles of Christian character, having shown by their fruits that they are with Jesus. In their mouth is no guile.

The trials of the remnant church

"The remnant church will be brought into great trial and distress. Those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus will feel the ire of the dragon and his hosts. Satan numbers the world as his subjects, he has gained control of the apostate churches; but here is a little company that is resisting his supremacy. If he could blot them from the earth, his triumph would be complete. As he influenced the heathen nations to destroy Israel, so in the near future he will stir up the wicked powers of earth to destroy the people of God. All will be required to render obedience to human edicts in violation of the divine law. Those who will be true to God and to duty will be menaced, denounced, and proscribed. They will be betrayed 'both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends.' Luke 21:16."[7]

With rapid steps we are approaching the time when professedly Protestant churches shall unite with the secular power in sustaining a false religion, for opposing which their ancestors endured

the fiercest persecution, then will the papal Sabbath be enforced by the combined authority of church and state. There will be a national apostasy, which will end only in national ruin.

Since 1844, light from the heaven of heavens has beamed from the open door of the temple of God. But it is to be remembered that the greater the light bestowed, the greater the delusion and darkness of those who reject the Word of God and accept fables, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men.

Satan will excite the indignation of apostate Christendom against the humble remnant who conscientiously refuse to accept false customs and traditions.

As in the days of Esther

The decree which is to go forth against the people of God in the near future is in some respects similar to that issued by Ahasuerus against the Jews in the time of Esther. The Persian edict sprang from the malice of Haman against Mordecai. Not that Mordecai had done Haman harm, but he had refused to flatter his vanity by showing him the reverence which is due only to God. The king's decision against the Jews was secured under false pretenses. Satan instigated this scheme to rid the earth of those who preserved a knowledge of the true God. But his plots were defeated by a counter-power that reigns among the children of men. Angels who excel in strength were commissioned to protect the people of God, and the plots of their adversaries returned upon their own heads.

History repeats itself. The same masterful mind that plotted against the faithful in ages past is now at work to gain control of the professed Christian world, that through them he may condemn and put to death all who will not worship the idol sabbath. We have not to battle with man, as it may appear. 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. But if the people of God will put their trust in Him, and by faith rely upon His power, the devices of Satan will be defeated in our time as signally as in the days of Mordecai.

Christ never purchased peace and friendship by compromise with evil. Though His heart overflowed with love toward the human race, He could not be indulgent to their sins. Because He loved men and women, He was a stern reprover of their vices. His life of suffering, the humiliation to which He was subjected by a perverse nation, show His followers that there must be no sacrifice of principle.

We are to live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:18) yet there is a point beyond which it is impossible to maintain union and harmony without the sacrifice of principle. Separation then becomes an absolute duty.

"Christ's true disciples follow Him through sore conflicts, enduring self-denial and experiencing bitter disappointment; but this teaches them the guilt and woe of sin, and they are led to look upon it with abhorrence. Partakers of Christ's sufferings, they are destined to be partakers of His glory. In holy vision the prophet saw the ultimate triumph of God's remnant church."

As members of God's remnant church, we must pray with firm faith for the gift of the grace of love. Love is the fulfilling of the law and is manifested altogether too little among those upon whom has been shining great light. Genuine religion is life and light to every believer. Christian

dress and deportment are graces given not as ornaments to win admiration, but as talents to be used in accomplishing a work for God.

In this trying time, to promote mental clarity and physical vigor, it is for their own good that the Lord counsels the remnant church to discard the use of alcohol, tobacco, flesh meats, tea, and coffee, and other harmful substances. There are plenty of other things on which we can subsist that are good.

The serpent's bruised head

We now come to the meaning of the bruise that is brought upon "her seed" in Genesis 3:15. He is prophesied to bruise Jesus' heel, meaning the greatest penalty he would inflict on God's Son would only be a temporary "wound" that would be healed. The devil would be allowed to tempt the Lord to sin and to arrange his physical death but nothing more. God heals the bruise he causes by resurrecting his Son from the dead.

Christ, on the other hand, was foretold to bruise Satan's head. He has completed the first breakthrough in this goal by destroying the works of the devil through his life and death (1 John 3:8, Hebrews 2:14, Revelation 20:10).

The next step in this plan is Jesus' return to earth that will forcibly free humans from the kingdom of evil (Revelation 19 and 20). Satan's head (influence), after the Millennium, will be completely bruised (or crushed) when he is executed in the lake of fire. "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Romans 16:20, first part).

All who will cooperate with the Redeemer in bruising the head of the serpent will be doing the work which the Lord has appointed them.

"When Christ hung in agony upon the cross, while evil spirits rejoiced and evil men reviled, then indeed His heel was bruised by Satan. But that very act was crushing the serpent's head. Through death He destroyed 'him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.' Hebrews 2:14. This act decided the destiny of the rebel chief, and made forever sure the plan of salvation."[9]

"The serpent's head will soon be bruised and crushed. The glorious memorial of God's wonderful power is soon to be restored to its rightful place. Then paradise lost will be paradise restored."[10]

It is my prayer, my beloved, that as the remnant strives to come out of affliction a glorious and triumphant church, ready to meet the glorious appearing of our Lord Christ Jesus, we shall also triumph with her. Amen.

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A Happy Ending

The night may appear to linger, but joy comes in the morning

BY DANIEL CONTRERAS - HONDURAS

It is incredible to think that a story so full of misery and sorrow finally has an ending. . . . Even more incredible is it to think that it's a happy ending! But there will indeed be a happy ending, and, by God's grace, you and I are able see it. For centuries, the vast majority of people in this world have not believed it—and when a child of God tells them how this world ends—and that all that exists will be changed into glorious happiness, they mock in disbelief and ridicule all the believers.

A similar story

The story of Job is a story that represents us as God's people. Of Job it is said: "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east" (Job 1:1–3). In these verses, very interesting things are related, because like Job, Adam was a perfect, upright man, fearing God and avoiding evil. It is also said that Job was the richest man in the east because God had filled him with goods, just as Adam had been given all the riches of this world.

Like Adam, the beginning of Job's life had all the ingredients for happiness, but Satan's interference spoiled all that. "And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord" (Job 1:8–12).

Such was the misfortune that Satan brought upon Job's life. He took away practically everything he had; his ten children died in a single day, and that same day he lost all his possessions. From being the wealthiest and most prosperous man in the east, he became the most miserable of all. We do not know how long this seemingly endless trial lasted for him, where the suffering he went through is described in his words, "And now my soul is poured out upon me; the days of affliction have taken hold upon me. My bones are pierced in me in the night season: and my sinews take no rest" (Job 30:16, 17).

It had been similar in the case of Adam. In a single day he lost everything—His Edenic home with access to the tree of life. His family also was affected, and from then on began a story that he never imagined, a story full of misery for him and his descendants, a story that seems to have no truce or end. After more than 6,000 years of history, we are still suffering.

"After beholding for nearly a thousand years the results of sin, [Adam] felt that it was merciful in God to bring to an end a life of suffering and sorrow."[1] Due to his own sin, he was no longer happy to see how his descendants gave themselves up to evil, making this world a frightful theater of spiritual war between good and evil.

The end of a horror story

As long as we are on this earth we can never measure the ravages wrought by sin. From the fall and rebellion of Lucifer, the angelic rebellion, to the age of sin on earth, the number of losses of life that could well have lived eternally has been enormous. In his vision of this immense multitude, John the revelator describes: "the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" (Revelation 20:8).

We are horrified when we see or remember the consequences of wars, acts of cruelty, people horribly murdered, children who perish and others left without parents and a life without hope, cities and towns destroyed and many more atrocities very unpleasant to depict.

"And 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) is related of the history of the antediluvians: "God had given men His commandments as a rule of life, but His law was transgressed, and every conceivable sin was the result. The wickedness of men was open and daring, justice was trampled in the dust, and the cries of the oppressed reached unto heaven. Polygamy had been early introduced, contrary to the divine arrangement at the beginning. The Lord gave to Adam one wife, showing His order in that respect. But after the Fall, men chose to follow their own sinful desires; and as the result, crime and wretchedness rapidly increased. Neither the marriage relation nor the rights of property were respected. Whoever coveted the wives or the possessions of his neighbor, took them by force, and men exulted in their deeds of violence. They delighted in destroying the life of animals; and the use of flesh for food rendered them still more cruel and bloodthirsty, until they came to regard human life with astonishing indifference."[2]

Many do not realize that the cruelest battle in history has been the battle between good and evil. It is not a sword that pierces the flesh; it is not a bullet that takes life; it is not the most lethal weapon or bomb that kills thousands. It is sin that perverts thought, degenerates morals, corrupts principles, and numbs the mind into a deadly lethargy so that it does not perceive its true power. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20).

Like children who venture into danger while dreaming that they will find happiness, many live in this world under the influence of the opium of sin. They imagine that they have a life headed toward some kind of ethereal bliss when they are really on the path of death. Yet just as a father takes decisive action to rescue his child in danger, our Heavenly Father intervened for us even when we did not ask Him, even when we rejected such timely help from Him. Soul asleep in sin, awake! And see Christ your Saviour. He is our only way out. John the Baptist was inspired to

declare plainly: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Yes, He really does take away the sin of the world. He only is the One able to inhibit the deadly power that sin has over us. He is the One who will put an end to this horror story.

The happiest in the world?

According to the statistics, Finland is considered the happiest country in the world for the eighth year in a row (as of 2025). The Finns were followed by other Nordic countries such as Denmark and Iceland, which are also in the top spots. This result is due to factors such as a strong welfare system, high levels of trust in government, low corruption, a good work-life balance, and universal access to quality education and healthcare.[3]

But even in this “happy” country, there are an average of 2 suicides every day. In percentage terms, this means that in Finland the suicide rate is 13.65 per 100,000 inhabitants, which is above the global average of 9.14 per 100,000 inhabitants.[4] This country is also facing a severe crisis due to the consumption of illicit substances and alcohol.

So, one thing is clear: Even in the “happiest” country in the world there is sadness, depression, disease, and death. It is enrapturing to think that there will be a time when it will not just be a country but the whole world where “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain” (Revelation 21:4).

Eternal happiness begins

Jesus gives the assurance: “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1–3).

“All who are doers of the Word of God will be blessed abundantly. Whatever crosses they must lift, whatever losses they must sustain, whatever persecution they may suffer, even if it be to the loss of their temporal life, they are amply recompensed; for they secure that life which measures with the life of God. In losing their lives for Christ’s sake, they gain a life which lasts through the eternal ages. They walk under the direction of the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. They shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads.”[5]

It is difficult to imagine what a joy it will be to know that the worst story ever told has finally come to an end. It is a story that was written on the pages of time and whose ink was the blood of our divine Creator and that of millions of martyrs. Moses is just one example of the faithful, “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward” (Hebrews 11:25, 26).

How wonderful is the thought that eternity is getting closer and closer each day—that glorious day when we will see our Lord face to face, that day when “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:4) The blind will first see

the face of their Redeemer, the paralyzed will run into the arms of their Creator, the mute will praise their God, and the martyr will see the reason for his martyrdom.

The joy of the redeemed

In God's word we find wonderful accounts of the eternal glory that the saints will enjoy throughout the endless ages.

"Before the ransomed throng is the Holy City. Jesus opens wide the pearly gates, and the nations that have kept the truth enter in. There they behold the Paradise of God, the home of Adam in his innocency. Then that voice, richer than any music that ever fell on mortal ear, is heard, saying: 'Your conflict is ended.' 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' "[6]

It was difficult for John to depict in limited human language the glories of that eternal kingdom. It is full of wonders such as streets of transparent gold, foundations of precious stones that shine with the glory of God, beautiful landscapes full of incomparable beauty, the joy of meeting relatives and friends who were separated by death on this earth. But all these wonders are like the mere wrapping on a gift that is even more beautiful—the presence of Christ Himself. Heaven would not be heaven if He were not there.

In the midst of all the celestial beauty, Christ stands out as the main jewel on a crown. His beauty and majesty draw the attention of all the saved. To contemplate the One by whom they all will have obtained the right to be there will be the most sublime vision that can be beheld. Jesus is the One who had pity on our condition. When we were beaten, stripped, and left half dead, Christ did not pass by on the other side (Luke 10:31). Rather, He healed our wounds and cared for us, transforming our lives until we would become fit to be there with Him for eternity. Contemplating God's mercies, David exclaims, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Psalm 103:1, 2).

There is a sublime scene that softens the heart as we ponder it: "As the ransomed ones are welcomed to the City of God, there rings out upon the air an exultant cry of adoration. The two Adams are about to meet. The Son of God is standing with outstretched arms to receive the father of our race—the being whom He created, who sinned against his Maker, and for whose sin the marks of the crucifixion are borne upon the Saviour's form. As Adam discerns the prints of the cruel nails, he does not fall upon the bosom of his Lord, but in humiliation casts himself at His feet, crying: 'Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain!' Tenderly the Saviour lifts him up and bids him look once more upon the Eden home from which he has so long been exiled."[7]

The messenger of the Lord describes: "I saw a very great number of angels bring from the city glorious crowns—a crown for every saint, with his name written thereon. As Jesus called for the crowns, angels presented them to Him, and with His own right hand the lovely Jesus placed the crowns on the heads of the saints."[8]

Then each of us will have the opportunity to commune with the Saviour for eternity: "Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy

shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away" (Isaiah 51:11).

A happy universe

For as long as the great controversy between good and evil shall last, every time a sinner repents, "joy shall be in heaven" (Luke 15:7). But in eternity, the joy to echo throughout the universe will be even greater since there will be no more sinners! The inhabitants of other worlds have watched with intense expectation the catastrophe that occurred on our planet. But now they rejoice that it is finished, and now they will open the doors of their dwellings to receive with great joy the redeemed and show them their precious dwellings—worlds that were never polluted by sin, places that for unfathomable ages have remained in immaculate innocence.

"In all ages, God has wrought through holy angels for the succor and deliverance of His people. Celestial beings have taken an active part in the affairs of men. They have appeared clothed in garments that shone as the lightning; they have come as men in the garb of wayfarers. Angels have appeared in human form to men of God. They have rested, as if weary, under the oaks at noon. They have accepted the hospitalities of human homes. They have acted as guides to benighted travelers."[9] But now we will be able to hear the wonderful stories of how these heavenly messengers have worked on our behalf, and how they cared for and guided our lives. It will be exciting for them to see how we are now the ones who come as visitors to their homes! Warm embraces will be exchanged with each story told. Words of gratitude will emanate from our lips and together with them we will praise God for eternity!

The happiness of Christ

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). This text shows why Christ suffered on Calvary. For the joy that was set before Him, Christ did not focus on the suffering on the cross. Instead, He saw you in the heavenly homeland. Realize that you were the motivation for His sacrifice; you were His joy at the hour of death. In his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, a mighty angel strengthened Him with this thought:

"The angel came not to take the cup from Christ's hand, but to strengthen Him to drink it, with the assurance of the Father's love. He came to give power to the divine-human suppliant. He pointed Him to the open heavens, telling Him of the souls that would be saved as the result of His sufferings. He assured Him that His Father is greater and more powerful than Satan, that His death would result in the utter discomfiture of Satan, and that the kingdom of this world would be given to the saints of the Most High. He told Him that He would see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied, for He would see a multitude of the human race saved, eternally saved."[10]

The happiness of Christ at that moment is similar to that of a father reunited with his lost son. There are no questions, no reproaches, no sorrows—only a deep embrace where love seems to have found the reason for its existence.

Conclusion

"When heaven is won, and we pass through the gates of the City of God to hear the words 'Well done, good and faithful servant;—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,' how small will seem the trials and difficulties that have beset our pathway here."[11]

After reading this article, what greater blessing is there than heaven? If your answer is, "Nothing," then consider carefully what you cling to, lest you lose everything for nothing. This dreadful thought is vividly recounted in the inspired words, "The wicked see what they have forfeited by their life of rebellion. The far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory was despised when offered them; but how desirable it now appears. 'All this,' cries the lost soul, 'I might have had; but I chose to put these things far from me. Oh, strange infatuation! I have exchanged peace, happiness, and honor for wretchedness, infamy, and despair.' "[12]

There is no more pitiful feeling for a person than to know he lost something he already had. But it is even worse to know that he has lost it forever! The only thing that will make the difference between a bitter ending and a happy ending is your decision as to who Christ is to you. Let us be sure to be among those who will rejoice with Jesus in that eternal encounter of the redeemed and their Redeemer. Amen!

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4 https://www.bbc.com/mundo/articles/cv2ynllx8m9o
5 The Upward Look, p. 35.
6 The Great Controversy, p. 646.
7 Ibid., p. 647.
8 The Story of Redemption, p. 413.
9 The Great Controversy, p. 631.
10 The Desire of Ages, p. 693.
11 The Upward Look, p. 245.
12 The Great Controversy, p. 668.

In the Hour of Trial

A powerful hymn expresses the prayer depicting what should be our great concern

— Reformation Hymnal #176

In the hour of trial, Jesus, plead for me,
Lest by base denial I depart from Thee;
When Thou see'st me waver, with a look recall,
Nor, for fear or favor, suffer me to fall.

With forbidden pleasures would this vain world charm;
Or its sordid treasures spread to work me harm;
Bring to my remembrance sad Gethsemane,
Or, in darker semblance, Cross crowned Calvary.

Should Thy mercy send me sorrow, toil, and woe,
Or should pain attend me on my path below,
Grant that I may never fail Thy hand to see;
Grant that I may ever cast my care on Thee.