

## HEART TO HEART TALKS

Till heaven is astir with ecstasy,  
And its portals and arches ring.

So I journey on, and my step grows light,  
With my heart abound and my soul afire  
To reach the land, for I have journeyed long,  
The land of my heart's desire.

MARY VALLIANT NOWLIN

## H. The Coming of the Lord

### THE AFTERMATH OF THE 1840-1844 MOVEMENT

THE effect of the great disappointment experienced by the Advent believers in 1840-44 can be better imagined than described. Thousands had sincerely believed that the Lord was indeed coming to take them from this world of sin. They had demonstrated their faith by their works-in disposing of their property, in laying their all upon the altar of service and sacrifice. From their unbelieving friends and neighbors they had received much opposition and even persecution. In some instances they were counted insane, and were regarded as objects of ridicule and of pity.

The day they had so fondly anticipated and so eagerly looked for had dawned at last. Anxiously they watched and waited, but the Lord did not appear. They kept vigil through the long hours of the night. No celestial glory dispelled either the darkness of night or the gloomy foreboding which were beginning to fill their own hearts. They looked out the next morning upon a cold and desolate world.

The awakening was fearful, and it required a living, practical Christian experience to stand the test; but we are thankful to say that thousands proved loyal to God. They could not go back upon the experience in which they knew Heaven had led. They recognized that in some way they had made a mistake, but the character of that mistake they could not discern. They only knew that the mistake was on their part, and that God still remained true.

#### Praying for Divine Guidance

Many turned against their former brethren and derided the hope they had once cherished. Others engaged in idle speculation, continuing to set times for the Lord to come. But there were others who earnestly reviewed their interpretation of Scripture, to determine wherein they had been in error. To these praying students of the Word, God showed Himself gracious, and in a short time light began to break in upon the Advent believers. They could find no error in their computation of the prophetic period. They found that they were right in their conclusion that the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14 began in 457 BC and ended in 1844. Then they discovered that the sanctuary was not the earth, but rather the temple of God in heaven, and that the so-called cleansing of the sanctuary was the work of the investigative judgment, the closing work of Christ's ministry, preparatory to His Second Advent. This judgment work began in 1844.

#### Light Breaks

This new view of the sanctuary brought in a flood of light. There were revealed the claims of the law of God, as the divine measuring rule in the work of judgment. The study of that law led to a consideration of the claims of the fourth commandment. In contrast with the seal of God as found in the fourth commandment the believers were led to a consideration of what constitutes the mark of the beast, and to a study of the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Revelation.

It was seen that whereas William Miller and his associates gave the first angel's message of Revelation 14, there were a second and a third message to follow the first, and as a result of the third message there would be developed a people not alone holding the faith of Jesus but also keeping the commandments of God, even as Christ Himself kept them. It was this line of study which developed the denomination known as Seventh-day Adventists.

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### “Of That Day and Hour Knows No Man”

Had William Miller and his associates apprehended fully the significance of Christ’s instruction to His church, it is altogether probable that they would not have taught the coming of the Lord in 1844. They would have looked for the application of the sanctuary to something other than this earth, because the instruction which the Lord gave during His earthly ministry was very specific in relation to His Second Advent. Immediately preceding His ascension the disciples came to Him with the query, “Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” Acts 1:6. Their minds were upon the time when the kingdom was to be established, rather than upon the work they were to do preparatory to the establishment of that kingdom. Christ, in His answer, emphasized the work to be done rather than the time.

He replied:

“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But you shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Acts 1:7,8.

This in principle was the same instruction He had, given to them repeatedly before, but instruction which they had failed to comprehend fully. One has only to read the great prophetic discourses of our Lord as recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 to see how pointedly Christ taught His disciples that they were not to know the day or the hour when He would return to the earth. They might know by certain conditions in the world when His coming was near, even at the doors, just as they might know when summer was nigh by the fig tree’s putting forth its leaves in the spring, but beyond this they could not go. The day and hour of His coming had not been revealed to the church.

“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh: so likewise you, when you shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” Matthew 24:32-36.

### “At an Hour When You Think Not”

Christ is equally emphatic in His statement relating to the time of the close of probation. This will come upon the world in an unknown hour. He says:

“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and you yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he comes and knocks, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he comes shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be you therefore ready also: for the Son of man comes at an hour when you think not.” Luke 12:35-40.

The admonition Christ gives to His church is for them to watch and be ready. The apostle Paul instructs the church that it is not necessary for him to write regarding the times and the seasons. They may know by the signs that the Lord has placed on record when the day of the Lord is near. Regarding thus the times and seasons, and holding themselves in a state of constant preparedness for the return of their Master, they would not be taken off their guard. But upon the wicked, unbelieving world, that day—the close of probation—would come as a thief in the night.

“Of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden, destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” 1 Thessalonians 5:1-4.

### Watchful, Prayerful Waiting

Again and again we are admonished in the Scriptures of truth to be ready, to keep awake, to be watchful; and when it is recognized that the precise time of the Lord’s coming may not be known to His church, there is special point in this instruction.

If we knew that a long-expected friend was to come at a certain date, why would we need to watch before the expected hour? Why not take our accustomed rest and sleep, so long as we kept in mind the precise hour of his coming? Why need we worry over eventualities? But if he writes us that he is about to

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come, that we may expect him soon, that he may arrive any day on any train, then we know that we must maintain a spirit of constant watchfulness. We must be ready always to receive him. His entertainment must be prepared. In heart and in home we must stand ready to welcome our coming guest.

### **Waiting for the Tarrying Vision**

Thus must it be with the church of Christ. The vision has tarried long beyond the expected time. For many years the hearts of God's waiting children have been throbbing with the hope of greeting their Lord. He tells us that if the vision tarries, we are to wait for it; and He tells us not to grow weary or lose heart in this waiting period.

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For you have need of patience, that, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Hebrews 10:35-37.

## **JESUS IS COMING AGAIN**

WILL Jesus return to this earth? Will He come the second time, personally, visibly, even as He came at His first advent? These are questions which have concerned the church of Christ through the ages. Many at different times have thought the Lord was about to appear. Some even thought this in the days of the apostle Paul. But these expectant ones have been disappointed.

Have we any evidence today that the church has not had in past ages that the second coming of Christ is near? These are interesting questions for the consideration of every sincere disciple, because all true children of God long for the presence of their Lord. They long for personal association with Him the same as they long for personal association with absent friends.

That Christ will come the second time we have positive assurance in the Word of God. Declares the apostle Paul, "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Hebrews 9:28.

Christ came the first time as a sin offering. He will come the second time to complete the work which He so well began, to bring to a glad and glorious fruition the plan of salvation. The gospel message today is gathering out of all nations a people for His name. This is the work of the kingdom of grace. When the kingdom of glory is established at the coming of the Lord, then will the true Israel of God be gathered from every nation and kindred to dwell with the Lord forever.

That Christ will come the second time we are assured by His own statement. The evening of His betrayal He told His disciples that He was about to go away. Sorrow filled their hearts. They grieved sorely that they were to be deprived of that blessed companionship that had meant so much in their experience. The Savior in loving sympathy ministered the balm of healing. Listen to His words:

"Let not your heart be troubled: you 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 you may be also." John 14:1-3.

### **In What Manner Will Christ Return?**

How will Jesus return to this earth? In what manner will He come back to take His children home to the mansions which He has gone to prepare? Some teach that He comes in the spiritualistic seance. Others tell us that He will come in some remote section of the earth. This is not the teaching of His Word. In fact, He warns us against these false theories: "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not." Matthew 24:26.

We are told by some that Christ comes at death to take His children home; by others that He comes at conversion. He does indeed come near to the believer at conversion, but He comes in the presence of the blessed Holy Spirit, His representative, the Comforter whom He promised to send to make up in His church the lack of His own personal presence. But this is not the coming of Christ.

He comes near to His children in the hour of death. How many blessed deathbed scenes have been witnessed! In the hour of darkness, when human help has failed of its endeavor, when earthly scenes are fading from the dimming vision of the afflicted one, the presence of Christ by His Holy Spirit has been felt. Some have seen angel forms about their bed. Some have seen the face of the Master bending over them in pity and tenderness. We do not doubt the reality of these experiences. They are assurances of divine

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acceptance. But these visitations do not constitute the second coming of Christ.

### **The Coming of Christ Will Be a Personal Coming**

He will not come in the person of a representative, as He manifests Himself to His children through the presence of the Holy Spirit. He will come in person. He emphatically declares, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again." The personal Christ will return to earth the second time, literally, personally, even as He came two thousand years ago.

### **The Coming of Christ Will Be a Literal Coming**

Some have thought to spiritualize away this blessed truth, claiming that the promise was symbolical, and was not to be believed literally. This idea is entirely contrary to the plain, positive teachings of the Scripture. This is the inspired testimony of the great apostle to the Gentiles:

"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

How comforting is this precious promise, comforting to the church in every age to whom it has been a living hope, comforting to us who live today.

### **The Coming of Christ Will Be a Visible Coming**

He will come even more openly than He came the first time. His first advent was in comparative isolation. For the first thirty years of His life He lived quietly among men, and His public ministry covered only a small portion of the habitable world. But when He returns the second time, all nations will take cognizance of His Advent. He will come in all the glory of His Father, attended by the shining angelic host. This is His own word: "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." Matthew 16:27.

The promise is that Christ will return to earth even as He went away. How did He go away? This is the inspired record: "While they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." Acts 1: 9.

We suppose this was a cloud of angels which constituted His bodyguard, His royal escort to the courts of glory. Two of these angels remained behind to minister comfort to the sorrowing and disappointed disciples, who stood gazing into the heavens; and this is the assurance which these angels gave: "You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1: 11.

So Christ is to come in like manner as He went away. This testimony of the angels is echoed by the beloved disciple, speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in his vision upon the isle of Patmos. "Behold, he comes with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kingdoms of the earth shall wail because of him." Revelation 1:7.

### **The Purpose of Christ's Coming**

For what purpose will Christ return to the earth the second time? This is already indicated in part by the scriptures which we have read. We may say briefly:

1. He comes to reward every man according to his works; those who have done good, with everlasting life; and those who have done evil, with everlasting destruction. (John 5:28, 29.)
2. He comes to give life to the righteous dead. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.)
3. He comes to translate, without their seeing death, the righteous living. (1 Corinthians 15:51-55.)
4. He comes to take His children home. (John 14:1-3)
5. He comes to destroy the finally impenitent. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.)
6. He comes to cleanse this earth from sin, thus constituting it the everlasting home of the redeemed. (2 Peter 3:7-13; Revelation 21:1-7.)
7. He comes to establish His kingdom, in which everlasting righteousness shall exist throughout the endless ages of eternity. (Matthew 16:27; 25:31; Daniel 7:27.)

### **The Time of Christ's Coming**

We cannot tell the hour nor the day nor the year when Christ will come. The Master definitely

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warns us against setting a time for His return. "Of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." Matthew 24:36.

If this warning had been heeded, how many disappointments and heartaches would have been saved some of His misguided followers! But though we may not know the day or the hour when Christ will come, we may know when He is near, "even at the doors." We are given certain signs or conditions by which we may know that the coming of Christ is near, even as when the trees put forth their leaves in the spring we know that summer is nigh. (Matthew 24:32,33.) These signs we may briefly enumerate as follows: In the heavens (Matthew 24:29, 30), in the physical world (Hebrews 1: 11, 12), in the social world (Luke 17:26-30), in the industrial world (James 5:1-8), in the political world (Joel 3:9-16; Luke 21:25-27), in the religious world (2 Timothy 3:1-5; Revelation 1:7), spread of gospel message (Matthew 24:14).

### **Great Chains of Prophecy**

In addition to these evidences which we see all around us that the coming of the Lord is near, we have great lines of prophecy which unmistakably and unerringly declare the same great truth. The prophecies contained in Daniel 2, Daniel 7, Daniel 8 and 9, Daniel 11 and 12, Revelation 1 to 3, Revelation 6, Revelation 8 and 9, Revelation 11 and 12, Revelation 13 and 14, and other prophecies which might be enumerated, bring us down the stream of time step by step, and culminate in their fulfillment in our own day. These all point, as with a great finger, to one focal point-the coming of the Lord-and declare that that coming is near at hand.

### **Preceded by a Warning Message**

When Heaven has visited the earth with judgments in the past, these judgments have been preceded by a warning message, giving a call to repentance. Such a message was given by Noah preceding the flood waters. Jonah was sent to give a message of warning to Nineveh. John the Baptist came as the messenger of Christ's first advent. In like manner Christ's second coming will be heralded to the world.

The Master declares that "this gospel of the kingdom [of the establishment and setting up of the kingdom] shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Matthew 24:14. Joel, the prophet, declares that a trumpet shall be blown in Zion, and an alarm shall be sounded in the holy mountain, and that all the inhabitants of the land shall tremble, "for the day of the Lord comes, for it is nigh at hand." Joel 2:1.

This warning message is given in more minute detail in the fourteenth chapter of Revelation. It is a message which calls men away from the worship of self and of the world to the worship of Christ the Lord. It is a message which sounds a warning against the wicked principles and influences which are at work in the world. It is a message which proclaims that the hour of God's judgment is come. It is a message which exalts the law of God as the standard of that judgment, as the rule of life. It is a message which exalts the Lord Jesus Christ and His righteousness as the one power that can transform character and give entrance to the courts of glory. And this message, we believe with all our hearts, is going to the world today. By tongue and pen, by the power of the printing press, the telegraph and telephone, the radio, the living preacher, this message is being heralded in many different languages and dialects to the nations of men. And as soon as it has accomplished its work, Christ the Lord will come.

### **Are We Prepared to Meet Him?**

Are we prepared to greet in peace the Master of life and glory? Can we look up in that day and say with glad acclaim in the words of the prophet, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation"? Isaiah 25:9.

This will be indeed our blessed privilege if we avail ourselves today of the provisions of His grace. The door of mercy stands open. We are invited to enter that door. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17.

Will you not come to Jesus today? Will you not accept His love? Will you not yield your will to Him, and allow Him to come into your heart and transform your life? Will you not take Him as your example, and let the righteousness of His life be exemplified in you? If we learn to live with Him here, we shall love to live with Him through eternity. If we will but take Him as our Friend today, He will be our Friend in the day of judgment. "To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

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### IF CHRIST SHOULD COME TODAY

IF CHRIST should come today, would you be prepared to welcome His return? Could you look up and in the words of the prophet exclaim, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation"? This is the song of triumph which will arise from the lips of the redeemed in that great day, whenever it shall occur.

Could you sing this song today? Is your experience in the Lord of such a character, are you living before Him continually with such a spirit, are your sins so covered with His blood, that you could take part in this glorious anthem?

It is well for us sometimes in our life to face the inevitable. God in His all-wise providence has brought many a man face to face with death at times in his experience, possibly to awaken him to a consciousness of his own condition and of his real unpreparedness to meet the issues of eternity. If we are not actually brought through some crisis like this in our lives, it is well for us in thought to face such a crisis. It will prove most profitable for us to sit down and consider well what we would do if this day were our last on earth, if this were our last day of probation, and tomorrow we had to face the inevitable judgment of God.

We cannot tell when the Lord will come. This has not been revealed in His Word. We cannot tell when probation will close. We cannot say that it will be this year, or next year, or five years hence; nor can we say that it will not be this year, or next year, or five years hence. We know nothing about the precise time. All speculation regarding it is futile. But because we do not know the time, because that event is clothed with uncertainty, we have this earnest admonition from the lord: "Therefore be you also ready: for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes." Matthew 24:44. What can this mean other than constant preparedness for that great event? What can it mean other than that you and I should be prepared today, tomorrow, every day, for the inevitable in our experience? It can mean nothing else, and the child of God who reads anything else into this admonition and similar admonitions in the Word, is putting off the day of salvation, is rejecting for the present the provisions of God's mercies. "To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." And so we go back again to the question with which we started, If Christ should come today, are you prepared to meet Him?

### Serving Christ in Our Business

Are you conducting your business in His fear? Are you honest in your dealing with your fellow men? Do you pay your debts? Do you keep your promises? Do you render an equivalent for the service you receive from your fellow men? Or do you drive sharp bargains? Do you take advantage of others? Do you cheat and lie and steal when you have opportunity to do so without detection? This is what many in the world are doing at the present time. Thousands are amassing fortunes by just such methods as these. Indeed, some of these methods have become so common that the child of God adopts them almost unconsciously. But there is an all-seeing God who takes account of our business relations. He knows the motives and purposes that prompt our acts, and He will take account of these in the judgment when He passes upon your case and mine.

### Following Christ's Example in Social Life

If Christ should come today, would His coming bring you any pangs of conscience, any regrets as to your social relationships? With what spirit have you mingled with your neighbors and with your associates? Have you been one with them for a good time, bent on draining the cup of pleasure, with little thought of God and little regard for the proprieties which belong to ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ? If Christ should come today, would He find you in a theater, at a moving-picture show, at a card party, at some social gathering where, in excess of pleasure, God is forgotten?

It is absolutely inconceivable that a child of God could emerge from a theater, or a picture show, or from some ungodly social sport, to welcome His Savior whom he might see coming in the clouds of heaven. Nor can we conceive how one who finds his chief pleasure in pastimes of this character could find pleasure in the association of his Savior and of the holy angels. To him heaven would be a place of dead monotony, a place of excruciating agony, because its very atmosphere would be foreign to his desires and purposes.

The time will come, and it must come speedily, when every child of God must make a definite decision between the god of this world and the God of heaven, between the pleasures of this world and the pleasures of eternity. And we believe that the time has fully come when everyone who is looking for the

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coming of the Lord should make that decision, and should no longer delay it. If God be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him. The Lord will accept no halfhearted service. No one who is saved in the kingdom of God can hang onto this world while he lays hold of heaven.

### **The Spirit of Christ in the Church Relationship**

If Christ should come today, would He find you prepared so far as your church relationships are concerned? Think you that the differences with your brethren, which possibly you have nourished through the years, fit you to meet the Lord in peace? Do you feel that the old grudges and animosities which you have cherished, that the evil words you have spoken, the gossip in which you have indulged, the rankling and the discord which you have brought into the church of Christ, give you a fitting for a home in the kingdom of God? Nay, verily. If you have been guilty of these things, be assured that they have been the snares of the enemy to unfit you for the peace and the harmony and the love of heaven.

When you find that peace, and when there comes to your vision that enlarged view which a true estimate of eternal values will give, then you will see how insignificant are some of the paltry things that have held you down and engaged your mind. Then you will begin to think the thoughts of God after Him, and your heart will lay hold of eternal verities, and you will desire the treasures of love and of faith, and count them far above the selfish considerations which have moved you in the past.

### **The Home Life a Great Test of Christianity**

If Christ should come today, would it bring to you any regrets as to your life in your own home? It is here in this relationship, after all, that the great test of your Christianity comes. Many a man can manifest a fair exterior. He can appear to his brethren and to his neighbors all that makes up respectability and nominal Christianity; but the question is, How does he appear in his own home, to his wife, to his children, who know him best, before whom he acts his own self, to whom he speaks when he is not on guard, to whom he reveals the purposes and the motives that move his life? How does his religion appear to them? Have they confidence in his profession? Sad, indeed, if there be any Seventh-day Adventist homes today lacking this love and confidence.

Some time ago we were asked to pray for a sick woman. In arranging the service, she said, I want my husband to engage in this prayer season, because I have confidence in his religion." It was a great compliment that this woman paid her husband. Has your wife confidence in your religion? Has your husband confidence in your Christian experience? Do your children believe that you have true faith in God, and that you are making an earnest, determined struggle for a home in His kingdom? I do not ask, Do you have perfection of character? This does not exist in any human being. We all fail and make mistakes in every one of life's relationships. But I do ask, Do we impress those who know us best with our sincerity? Do they know that even regardless of our imperfections, our chief thought, our great purpose in life, our business, is to serve the Lord? And if we have made mistakes, if we have sinned against our loved ones, have we made those things right, or will these sins rise up to condemn us in the last great day?

### **The Personal Heart Relationship**

Finally, if you knew Christ was coming today, would you possess the consciousness in your own inmost soul that, aside from every human relationship, in that close, personal, intimate relationship existing between every man's soul and God, you were doing the best you knew, that so far as your motives and purposes were concerned, you were true to the outward profession you made? The judgment of God at the last day will reveal the terrible deception into which some have fallen. It will reveal the terrible hypocrisy that some professed Christians have practiced. It will bring to view the double lives that some are living. It will show the selfish motives and wicked purposes in contrast with the outward life of apparent respectability.

If the devil has ensnared us in this deception, may God awaken us before it is forever too late. May He lead us to sit down today, and by the aid of the Spirit, look at ourselves as God sees us, facing the inevitable, facing what we know will come sometime; and then as we see ourselves in our sin and our impurity, in our unrighteousness, may God help us to cry mightily unto Him for deliverance. And oh, thank God, there is deliverance in the Lord Jesus Christ; there is power in Him to take us out of the pit; there is power in Him to change the current of our thoughts, to create within us clean hearts, to renew right spirits within us. The records of the ages past testify to this fact.

God rescued David from the terrible sins of murder and adultery. He rescued Solomon from his wicked idolatry. He brought Manasseh, the wicked king of Israel, who sold himself to unrighteousness, to a

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realizing sense of his great need, and bestowed upon him the power of deliverance. Why has God left such records as this in His Word? It is to speak comfort to you and me. It is to tell us that God's infinite mercy can save the vilest of sinners. It is to assure us that infinite power will save us, even as it saved them.

"To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." God is pleading with us today. By His Holy Word, through the divine influence of His Holy Spirit, through the admonition of His servants, by the advice and counsel of our friends, by life's experiences, even by the judgments of God which we see abroad in the earth, the Lord is entreating us to turn to Him with all our hearts. May we respond to the divine invitation, so that when Christ shall come, or when our probationary period shall have ended, we may be found clothed with His righteousness and prepared by His grace for a home in His eternal kingdom.

### **"BE YE ALSO READY"**

#### **"In Such an Hour as You Think Not the Son of Man Comes"**

WE HAVE fallen upon evil days. In every part of the world we see the forces of iniquity combining for the last great conflict. The signs of Christ's coming, as given in the Sacred Word, are rapidly meeting their fulfillment. We know not what a day may bring forth. We often wonder, as we turn to the morning paper, what has happened during the night-what fair region of the earth has been brought to desolation through flood or earthquake or fire. What new pestilence has broken forth, taking its toll of human life; what outbreak of hostilities has occurred between nations. What great steamship has gone to the bottom of the sea; what bread riots have occurred in some of our great cities. It is a pleasant surprise indeed when the newspaper records none of these untoward happenings, but it is seldom that this is so. We are faced with a recital of terrible disasters, of horrible crimes. And these are not always featured in glaring headlines, because they are becoming so frequent that they are little thought of, and oftentimes some terrible casualty occupies but a small, unimportant space in the paper.

In the very commonness of these conditions lies our danger. We are coming to regard them so much in the light of the natural course of events that happenings which would have startled and aroused us fifteen or twenty years ago, make but little impression upon us today. And conditions in the world which we recognize as startling signs of the end of all things, have grown so commonplace that we do not think of them in their connection with prophecy.

Recognizing this danger, the Master has given us faithful and definite warning. That warning is sounded in the text which constitutes the heading of this chapter. The last days are likened to the days of Noah, when men were eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage. It has never been wrong to eat and drink, or buy and sell, or to form the marriage relationship. The fault is this that men's hearts would be so set upon these things that God would be forgotten; their whole objective would be the satisfaction of worldly, selfish, carnal desire. To the church is given this solemn warning, "Watch therefore: for you know not what hour your Lord does come. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes."

#### **"Take You Heed, Watch and Pray"**

This warning, only in different words, is sounded in the Gospel by Mark: "Take you heed, watch and pray: for you know not when the time is. Watch you therefore: for you know not when the master of the house comes, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." Mark 13:33-37.

Through Luke the same warning is given in these words: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch you therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." Luke 21:34-36.

And how greatly these admonitions are needed by the church of Christ at the present time! Some of our dear people are losing their Christian perspective. Having waited long and patiently for many years for the fulfillment of their hopes, they are beginning to reason, "My Lord delayed His coming." The cares of this life, the pleasures of the world, the spirit of sleep and indifference, are possessing their hearts. Their great danger is that the day of the Lord will come upon them unawares.

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It might appear at times that the gathering forces in the last final conflict between truth and error are no longer advancing. But such is not the case. If we could look beneath the surface and see as God sees, we would recognize the active processes that are going on, the increasing intensity of passion indicating that at any moment the volcanic eruption may come which will bring the climax.

### **Working of the Gospel Leaven**

And this is true of the progress of the work of God. We are too much inclined, as was David, to number Israel. We sometimes feel that we can sit down and figure out mathematically and geographically just where the gospel message has gone, what has been accomplished, and the work yet to be done. But we cannot in reality do this. While God is recognizing organization in the carrying forward of His work, He is working outside of and beyond the bounds of any organized effort, not in one instance, but in many at the present time. Constantly our workers are finding isolated believers or groups of believers who, by the study of their Bibles, have come to the same conclusions relative to the truth for this time that is held by the church at large.

We can form no conception ourselves as to when the work of God will be completed. We can make no calculation as to when the world will have filled up its cup of iniquity. We cannot tell when the generation of the last message will end. We receive every little while, from some foolish and unwise speculator, a computation as to when probation is to end, when the Lord is to come. All this calculation is idle and foolish. God holds the time of Christ's coming within His own keeping. It is for us to be ready, "for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes."

### **"Time to Awake Out of Sleep"**

In the writings of the apostles this truth is emphasized again and again. Declares the apostle Paul, speaking of this waiting time: "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put you on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Romans 13:11-14.

Again the apostle sounds this solemn warning: "Of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. You are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." 1 Thessalonians 5:1-8.

The apostle Peter sounds the same warning note: "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening 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 dwells righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of, him in peace, without spot, and blameless." 2 Peter 3:10-14.

### **The Real Test**

Will we be admonished? Will we prepare our hearts for the eventualities of the future? Will we put our lives in readiness to welcome the Lord? It is in this that the real test will come in our Christian experience. Persecution tests the church; trials of various sorts come into our lives to test us; but as we regard it, the supreme test of the church of Christ today is to be found in this season of quietness, in this lull before the storm, in this day when apparently things are going on as they have been going for months and years. The inspired penman declares that this is the day of danger. It is the day in which the devil will lull us, if possible, into the sleep of carnal security, the day in which we shall hug to our hearts the delusive hope that all is well. But unless we arouse from our slumber and watch unto prayer, and work as we pray

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for the salvation of others, we shall find that the day of the Lord will come upon us and find us unprepared, and we shall cry in bitter anguish, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

Again we say, we know not what the future has in store for us. We know not how soon the significant events taking place in the world may culminate in the end of all things. "Therefore be you also ready: for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes."

### How Long?

How long, O Lord, ere night shall cease,  
And glorious day be ushered in,  
Before shall end the reign of sin,  
And truth shall wield the scepter peace?

How long shall error forge her chain,  
Deceiving men with subtle lies?  
How long shall fools be counted wise,  
And truth and right be counted vain?

How long shall war, with martial tread,  
With cannon roar, with fire and dearth,  
Destroy sweet peace from off the earth,  
And claim as trophies countless dead?

How long shall poverty and woe,  
And lordly wealth and mammon bold,  
Make slaves of men through power of gold,  
Make each to be his brother's foe?

How long shall death with whitened face  
Defeat fond hope and cherished plan,  
Destroy the light and life of man,  
Before the winning of his race"?

How long? Not long; 'tis shortly now  
Before He comes to reign in might,  
The hosts of sin be put to flight;  
To own His rule shall nations how.

And sorrow soon, and bitter strife,  
And war and death, shall have an end;  
Glad heaven to earth's sad sons shall lend  
The joys of years in endless life.

Then courage take; earth's long, dark night  
Gives way before the heaven of day,  
The signs of God point out the way,  
That upward leads to truth and light.

F. M. W.

## I. The Sabbath Message