

# The Eschaton:

A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST  
PERSPECTIVE OF THE SECOND COMING

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## PROLOGUE

Eschatology is concerned with the ultimate destiny of mankind and the world. For the individual, this is death, resurrection, final judgment, and the afterlife. For the human race, it consists of the transition from the present age to the future age and the consummation of God's redemptive purpose. We are concerned with the universal aspect of the eschaton.

## ESCHATOLOGY AND WELTANSCHAUUNG

The shape and texture of eschatology, the final component of one's world view, or *weltanschauung*, are largely determined by one's concept of the entire human event preceding it. By *world view* I mean a philosophy of human existence — its origin, nature, purpose, and destiny. In order to function intelligently and purposefully, we need to know something about where we have come from, where we are and why we are here, and whither we shall be tending in the future.<sup>1</sup>

In concert with the historical Judeo-Christian world view, Seventh-day Adventists conceive of the universe, including planet Earth, as the work of a master craftsman-Creator, omniscient and omnipotent, whose intention it was to people his universe with rational, moral, responsible beings who would voluntarily choose to cooperate with his infinite and beneficent purpose. The Creator's attitude toward and dealings with his creatures are governed by *hesed* or *agapē* — an infinite, benign, ardent concern for their well-being and happiness.

Eventually, however, an alien philosophy — a self-centered ambition to take advantage of others in order to benefit oneself — found its way into

this perfect universe. Under the leadership of Lucifer, this adventitious belief alienated the affection and allegiance of many from their Creator, and it became their fixed and irreformable policy and way of life. Converted to this philosophy, Earth people likewise revolted against their Creator.

Divine providence foresaw this predicament and provided a way by which those who had been infected by the virus of sin might return to their original state of moral health. To this end God communicated a knowledge of his will to men, and at the appropriate time deity became incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ. This intrusion by deity into the world of men identified salvation history with secular history, with the result that the latter can be fully understood only in terms of the former. The objective of salvation history is to restore man to the perfection of character with which the Creator originally endowed him and to condition him to participate in the Creator's original plan for the universe.

Although the divine will is paramount in the plan of salvation, the human will determines each person's destiny. God's dealings with men corporately are based on the covenant relationship into which a person enters voluntarily and is at once, by the grace of Christ, accepted back into the community of heaven in good and regular standing. God permits those who elect not to enter into this covenant relationship to go their own way. He took the initiative in reconciling men to himself, but he allows every man to accept or reject his gift of grace. At an appropriate time known only to God, when all have had an opportunity to make an intelligent and definitive choice, the eschaton will arrive, and God will again intervene in history to purge the universe of evil and to establish his eternal, universal reign of righteousness.

#### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Because the future is beyond human ken, we are wholly dependent on God's revelation. Passages of Scripture relating to the eschaton are of three general categories: prophecies of the Old Testament, prophecies of the New Testament, and apocalyptic passages in the Old and New Testaments.

Old Testament eschatological passages given within the context of God's covenant relationship with Israel were to have been fulfilled to ancient Israel, the chosen instrument of the divine purpose in Old Testament times. The fact that there will be an eschaton — that the present state of affairs will not continue indefinitely — remains valid, but the time in history when the eschaton would be accomplished was contingent on the response of Israel to its covenant obligations. Their rejection of the Messiah postponed the

eschaton and transferred the role of chosen instrument to the Christian Church. The eschaton will still come; but the time, the people, and the historical circumstances under which it will occur have all changed.

Accordingly, Old Testament prophecies concerning that event are applicable to Christian times only in principle and not in details. Such passages are relevant today only to illustrate the principles on which the divine purpose operates within history with respect to men and to illuminate analogous New Testament passages in which the writer speaks of the Christian eschaton in terms of the Jewish eschaton set forth in the Old Testament.

New Testament eschatological prophecy was given with the concept that the eschaton was imminent and would occur in New Testament times. But nineteen centuries have elapsed, and our Lord has not yet come. Nevertheless, the Church is still the chosen instrument of the divine purpose, and we therefore assume that these passages still constitute a valid preview of the eschaton. The passing of time makes the New Testament sense of imminence even more relevant today than it was two millennia ago.

Seventh-day Adventists assume that the historical process which produced the canon of Scripture reflects the divine intention that it be accepted as the authentic revelation of divine will and purpose, although they do not deny the obviously human elements in Scripture itself or in the historical process. The inclusion of the apocalypses of Daniel and John, therefore, sets them apart from the other apocalyptic literature of the day and implies that they contain information God intended his Church to have and to understand. (See below, "Intertestamental Apocalyptic Literature.") A valid interpretation of apocalyptic symbols is considered attainable on the basis of certain hermeneutical principles:

1. In some instances, notably in the book of Daniel, a symbolic vision is followed immediately by a literal explanation.
2. In other instances, especially in the book of Revelation, there is a sufficient admixture of literal language in the symbolic narrative to provide a reasonable clue to the interpretation of the symbols.
3. Key symbols are often explained during the course of a symbolic narrative.
4. The import of the symbols is often clarified by analogous literal passages of Scripture, in which case the literal passages provide an acceptable norm for interpreting otherwise obscure apocalyptic symbols.
5. In some instances, figures of speech that occur elsewhere in Scripture or that comport with the language and thought forms of the ancient cultural milieu are a guide to the meaning of otherwise obscure symbols.

In every essential respect, Seventh-day Adventist eschatology reflects that of the New Testament. Within this basic New Testament framework, additional details are provided by the writings of Ellen G. White, especially in the book *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*. Some points of interpretation are also drawn from this source.

#### BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

The Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the eschaton grows out of certain basic assumptions:

1. God is an infinite, yet personal, being — all-wise, all-able, all-good.
2. The Scriptures are the Word of God in the words of men; and they communicate an understanding of truth about our origin, nature, duty, and destiny that is clear enough to enable us to relate wisely to the circumstances in which we find ourselves.
3. Prophecy, including apocalyptic prophecy, is an authentic and at least reasonably intelligible expression of the divine will and purpose.<sup>2</sup>
4. The language of the Bible is literal except where context or literary form or both indicate the employment of figures of speech.
5. Seemingly divergent points of view expressed by various writers concerning important points can be reconciled when they are considered as components of a greater whole.
6. Secular history is the outworking of salvation history.
7. The writings of Ellen G. White convey information and instruction from God for Seventh-day Adventists that is designed to enable us to relate wisely to the problems and challenges of our day and to cooperate intelligently and effectively with his purpose in events leading up to the Second Coming of Christ.

#### INTERTESTAMENTAL APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

We cannot say whether every eschatological concept expressed in the New Testament reflects the influence of the apocalyptic literature of the intertestamental period. However, the New Testament picture of last events could be reproduced almost entirely by piecing together selected passages from apocalyptic works that antedate the New Testament. For example, the following concepts are expressed in various noncanonical apocalypses:

1. A great eschatological struggle between the forces of good and evil on earth involving a great apostasy; Satan as the dragon; Rome variously as a beast with seven heads and ten horns and as the harlot Babylon; severe tribulation for God's people.

2. A supernatural "Son of man" returning to earth on the clouds of heaven, accompanied by angels, with signs anticipating his coming.
3. A "first resurrection" of all the righteous of all ages and nations, who rise to immortality and reign with Christ in his kingdom.
4. A millennial reign of Messiah and the saints during which Satan is bound and at the close of which the wicked are raised and led by Satan to attack Messiah and his people; judgment of the wicked by Messiah and their annihilation by fire.
5. The New Jerusalem descending to earth, and a new heaven and a new earth.

These and other similarities between apocalyptic eschatology and that of the New Testament are noted at length by Joseph Klausner in *The Messianic Idea in Israel* and by R. H. Charles in *Eschatology: The Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, Judaism, and Christianity*. The situation is very similar to Klausner's comparison of the teachings of Jesus and Paul, point by point, with parallel passages in earlier Jewish literature.<sup>3</sup> Of special interest with respect to New Testament eschatology are 1 and 2 Enoch, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Sibylline Oracles (especially the third), 2 Baruch, and 4 Ezra.

At first glance this relationship between the New Testament and older Jewish writings might seem to indicate a human origin for the teachings of Christ and the New Testament writers, but that is only one side of the coin. Out of the similarities a significant difference emerges, as Charles notes, specifically with reference to New Testament and apocalyptic eschatology:

When we pass from Jewish literature to that of the New Testament, we find ourselves in an absolutely new atmosphere. It is not that we have to do with a wholly new world of ideas and moral forces, for all that was great and inspiring in the past has come over into the present [New Testament times] and claimed its part in the formation of the Christian Church. But in the process of incorporation this heritage from the past has been of necessity largely transformed; it no longer constitutes a heterogeneous mass of ideas in constant flux — a flux in which the less worthy, quite as frequently as the more noble, is in the ascendant, and in which each idea in turn makes its individual appeal for acceptance, and generating its little system, enjoys in turn its little day.<sup>4</sup>

New Testament writers were influenced to some degree, of course, by the thought forms and literary milieu of their time. How could they expect to communicate with men of their era except by utilizing modes of thought and expression with which their intended readers were familiar? Inspiration can operate as effectively in selecting that which is worthy and true from existing sources as in direct revelation. Is not Christianity itself a living witness to the concept that God revealed himself more fully to the Hebrew

people than to any other ancient race or people? Furthermore, there were authentic spokesmen for God whose writings did not find a place in the Old Testament canon. To grant the selective process to which Charles refers — eliminating unworthy and transient notions of apocalyptic literature while retaining that which is of permanent value — can also be to acknowledge the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the selective process. If a person prefers to say that the Holy Spirit led the New Testament writers to utilize forms of expression commonly understood at the time as a vehicle for expressing truth, very well. Either way, the value of the New Testament as the Word of God in the words and thought forms of men is unimpaired. If the Holy Spirit oversaw the historical process by which the New Testament canon came into being, he may well have participated, by a parity of reasoning, in the earlier selective process by which the individual books that compose the canon came into being.

Suffice it to note here that apocalyptic literature over the centuries of the intertestamental period does reflect a definite progression from Old Testament eschatological concepts toward corresponding New Testament concepts, from emphasis on national salvation to that of the individual, from an earthly messianic kingdom to a new heaven and a new earth, from a strictly Jewish messianic kingdom to one composed of all righteous men of all ages, from a relatively gradual process to a catastrophic transition. Christ synthesized the salvation of the individual with that of the righteous community, and the true messianic kingdom of divine grace beginning on earth in the hearts of men and in the community of the faithful with the kingdom of glory in heaven and the new earth at his second advent.

Basic to New Testament eschatology is the concept that "now is the day of salvation," that God "has fixed a day on which he will judge the world," and that "the end [of the present age] will come" when "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations." Then, at "his appearing and his kingdom," Christ will "judge the living and the dead" and will "repay every man for what he has done." The present is thus prologue to "the fullness of time [when God the Father will] unite all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth." The transition from the present age to the age to come will not be a gradual historical process but will be an abrupt historical discontinuity in which "the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up" and replaced by "new heavens and a new earth." "The appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" constitutes "our blessed hope," our *raison d'être* as Christians.<sup>5</sup>

A corollary to the Adventist concept of Scripture as the Word of God in the words of men is the fact that the numerous eschatological passages in the New Testament are understood to comport with each other, and what might be considered differing points of view of the several writers are understood to be either parts of a greater whole or a summary statement that speaks of a series of events as a single event.

Because in all essential aspects Adventist eschatology conforms to the New Testament pattern, it is appropriate to present Adventist eschatology as the Adventist understanding and interpretation of the New Testament.<sup>6</sup> At some points it will be sufficient simply to cite the New Testament evidence. Where Adventist interpretation of a passage is involved, or where this interpretation results from a collage of two or more passages, an explanation is given.

#### SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST UNDERSTANDING OF NEW TESTAMENT ESCHATOLOGY

##### 1. THE ADVENT PROMISE

Approaching the close of his earthly mission, Jesus repeatedly spoke of going away and returning, and at his ascension two angels confirmed this promise: "I go to prepare a place for you," but "I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."<sup>7</sup>

##### 2. THE ADVENT HOPE

Repeated assurances of a second coming made that hope paramount in the minds of all who accepted the testimony of the living witnesses to the risen Christ, who declared that they had heard God and had seen him "manifested in the flesh" and "taken up in glory." This conviction gave force to their message and certainty to their faith in his promised return. They went forth to the world as living witnesses of the historical reality of the first advent and presented Jesus' own promise as certain evidence that there would indeed be a second advent to complete the process of salvation begun at the first advent.<sup>8</sup>

The *kerygma* of the apostolic Church consisted of an appeal to accept the benefits accruing from the first direct personal entrance of deity into the world of fallen man in preparation for the second and final such intervention. Their certainty about the first advent made the second advent equally real and certain; the prospect of a second advent, when Christ would return to judge all men, made their message concerning the first advent relevant

and coercive.<sup>9</sup> Like Mount Fuji in Japanese art, the Second Coming is the leitmotiv of the apostolic *kerygma*. It broods over the landscape of the New Testament like the Parthenon over the city of Pericles.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. IMMINENCE OF THE ADVENT

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The apostolic Church expected the return of Jesus, as he promised, in that generation. Apparently it never occurred to them that his coming might be delayed even one century, to say nothing of nineteen centuries. Jesus himself provided the basis for this expectation. Upon concluding his last day of public teaching prior to the Crucifixion, rejected by the Jewish leaders and having announced the rejection of the Jewish nation as the chosen instrument of the divine purpose, Jesus left the sacred precincts of the temple with the ominous declaration that retribution for their misdeeds as a nation, "from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zecharias," would "come upon this generation." He declared as he departed from the temple, "Your house is forsaken and desolate," and he warned that the next time they saw him would be when he should return in triumph.<sup>11</sup>

The disciples interpreted Jesus' remarks about the desolation of Jerusalem, his return, and the end of the age in terms of Old Testament eschatology. The Old Testament prophets had foretold the desolation of Jerusalem and the temple in connection with eschatological events. Later the disciples came to him with the question, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age." In reply, Jesus quoted Daniel on the desolation of the temple and the eschatological tribulation, associated those events with his own return to gather the elect, spoke of his disciples as eyewitnesses of these events, and declared emphatically: "Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."<sup>12</sup>

This discourse provided a positive basis for the apostles' belief that the Lord would return to earth in their generation. With no inspired caveat to the contrary, they would have been dull indeed to believe otherwise. In the aura of these remarks, they asked Jesus on the day of his ascension, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" But he parried their curiosity with the remark, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority." It was sufficient for them to know that his coming was near, that they should be ready, and that in the meantime they should act the part of faithful servants going about their appointed task of witnessing.<sup>13</sup>



In all the New Testament the only caution about a delay in the fulfillment of the advent promise is actually just a warning against the belief that "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him" and "the day of the Lord" had *already* arrived.<sup>14</sup> There is no suggestion that the event was to be postponed, only that the specific events to be associated with the advent had not yet commenced. Paul's own emphatic statements about the imminence of the advent and those of the other New Testament writers make evident that they understood Christ's eschatological discourse in terms of a return in their day.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4. APPROACH OF THE ADVENT

When the disciples asked Jesus, "What will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?" he named the preaching of the gospel "throughout the whole world" and signs in the sun, moon, and stars as prime harbingers of the end. "Then," he said, "they will see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory." Paul later added that "the last days" would be "times of stress," decadent morals, and formal religion without the saving power of the gospel. Peter said that the last days would be noteworthy for the "scoffers" who would ridicule "the promise of his coming."<sup>16</sup>

Jesus implied that there would be some delay but that this was to be no excuse for concluding that his return would be delayed indefinitely. Eventually the proclamation would be given by land and sea "that there should be no more delay."<sup>17</sup>

#### 5. PREPARATION FOR THE ADVENT

The New Testament is replete with instructions on how to prepare for the advent. The advent hope, particularly awareness of its imminence, is a potent and effective incentive to compliance with the principles of Christian living, to development of a character reflecting the perfect life of Christ, and to concern for the well-being and happiness of one's fellowmen. Those who cherish the advent hope will be motivated by a personal sense of responsibility toward the gospel commission, especially with respect to participating in the proclamation of the return of our Lord.

#### 6. PROCLAMATION OF THE ADVENT

In view of the fact that "the end will come" when "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations," all who eagerly await the return of Jesus will, with corresponding

eagerness, respond to the Lord's commission to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; . . . to the close of the age." Is it conceivable that without the advent hope the apostle Paul would have endured so many hardships and endangered his life on so many occasions in the process of carrying out his commission to the Gentiles?<sup>18</sup>

As the advent approaches, there is to be a special proclamation to the world that the event is near. This is represented in the Apocalypse by "another mighty angel coming down from heaven, . . . his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land." "With a loud voice" he "lifted up his right hand to heaven and swore . . . that there should be no more delay, but that . . . the mystery of God, as he announced to his servants the prophets, should be fulfilled."<sup>19</sup>

This proclamation of the advent is described in more detail in Revelation 14:6-11, where John says that he "saw another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water.' " A second angel followed, announcing the fall of mystical Babylon, and a third angel, warning against worshiping the beast and its image and receiving its mark. As if stressing the supreme importance of this proclamation of the advent, John relates that he "saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority; and the earth was made bright with his splendor." He too warned of the fall of mystical Babylon and summoned all who honor God in their hearts, "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues."<sup>20</sup>

This proclamation of the advent — "no more delay," "The hour of his judgment is come," "Come out of her, my people" — is the final gospel appeal recorded in Scripture, and when it has been "preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations . . . the end will come." The universal proclamation of the advent message is noted in all three passages of the Apocalypse where it is recorded.<sup>21</sup>

The fact that God "has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness" and that Christ "will repay every man for what he has done" when he "come[s] with his angels in the glory of his Father" implies that every person living on earth at that time will hear the message and will have an opportunity to make an intelligent and definitive choice about it. At that

point the character of every man will be eternally fixed. The decree goes forth, "Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy." The close of human probation immediately precedes the second advent, as the context makes evident: in verse 10 "the time is near," and in verse 12 Jesus declares, "I am coming soon."<sup>22</sup>

#### 7. THE COMING OF ANTICHRIST

Both Old and New Testaments envision a great eschatological struggle on this earth between the forces of good and evil.<sup>23</sup> Seventh-day Adventists often refer to this struggle, with its cosmic overtones, as the last battle in the great controversy between Christ and Satan. As the eschaton approaches, this conflict reaches a climax: "Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring."<sup>24</sup> The course of this climactic struggle is described in detail, and the issues involved are set forth in chapters 13 to 19 of Revelation.

Paul foretold a great "rebellion" preceding "the day of the Lord" in which "the man of lawlessness is revealed, . . . proclaiming himself to be God . . . with pretended signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception." He is closely allied with Satan and is "revealed," or appears, not long before the Lord Jesus is "revealed from heaven," only to be slain "with the breath of his mouth and destroy[ed] by his appearing and his coming." In this climactic struggle between good and evil, those who "refused to love the truth, . . . who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness," choose to "believe what is false" and thus stand "condemned" before God. That this contest culminates in the coming of Christ is evident from the fact that "the Lord Jesus will slay him [the lawless one] with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming."<sup>25</sup>

This last great struggle between good and evil incarnate begins before the close of human probation and brings men to a definitive decision between loyalty to God or to the Prince of evil. It escalates to even greater intensity after the close of probation — during the seven last plagues — as the religious and political forces of earth set about to annihilate the people of God, and it reaches its climax at the coming of Christ, under the seventh plague.<sup>26</sup>

#### 8. THE SEAL OF GOD AND THE MARK OF THE BEAST

With the approach of the advent, the contest increases in tempo as Satan sets out to make war "on those who keep the commandments of God and

bear witness to Jesus." This struggle for men's minds and allegiance is set forth in chapters 13 and 14. Eventually Satan "causes all . . . to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of his name" and "cause[s] those who will not worship the image of the beast to be slain."<sup>27</sup>

Simultaneously, the three angels' preadvent messages recorded in Revelation 14:6-11 are being given to the world, summoning men to "fear God and give him glory" in view of the fact that "the hour of his judgment has come," and to refuse to "worship the beast and its image or to receive its mark." Those who heed this warning have the "Father's name written on their foreheads" and are identified by the symbolic number 144,000. In chapter 7 this same group is said to receive "the seal of the living God," in contradistinction to the mark of the beast. The seal of God and the mark of the beast are symbolic badges of character and allegiance. Those who receive the seal of God are "chaste" and "spotless" in character, by the grace of Christ. They are characterized as having "come out of the great tribulation" and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The climax of this final appeal is presented under the figure of the mighty angel of Revelation 18, with whose "splendor" "the earth was made bright." This angel announces the moral fall of mystical Babylon and summons God's loyal subjects to "come out of her, . . . lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues."<sup>28</sup>

The issue in this final conflict between the forces of good and evil incarnate, as represented by the seal of God and the mark of the beast — both figuratively affixed to the forehead, or mind — is allegiance to Christ or to Satan. The first and third angels of Revelation 14 summon men to accept the "eternal gospel" and to recognize God as the one "who made heaven and earth," to "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus," and to avoid "worship[ing] the beast and its image and receiv[ing]" its "mark."<sup>29</sup>

The issue is clear, and every person on earth must choose for himself, under threat of death either way. The beast decrees death for those who refuse its mark and reject its authority, and God threatens death for those who comply with the beast's demand. Eventually all inhabitants of the earth take sides in this great conflict and receive either "the mark of the beast" or the seal of God. Only when all men have made this irrevocable choice does "the hour of God's judgment" come — when he takes appropriate action with respect to those who have repudiated his authority. The character of every human being has been fixed for eternity, and probation closes.<sup>30</sup>

## 9. THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

Between the close of probation and the appearing of Christ in the clouds of heaven, "the wrath of God" is poured out on the earth in "seven plagues, which are the last." This series of fearful scourges effects the final separation between the "sheep" and the "goats." In the figurative language of Revelation 14:14-20, "The harvest of the earth is fully ripe," and Christ "swung his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped." Simultaneously, the "grapes" of the evil "vine of the earth . . . are ripe" also, and an angel with a sharp sickle "swung his sickle on the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God," which is identified in chapter 15:1 as "seven plagues, which are the last." Thus "the wine press was trodden outside the city." Suffering from these fearful scourges, the wicked remain obdurate of heart and unrepentant, and "curse . . . the God of heaven," reflecting irreconcilable opposition to him.<sup>31</sup>

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## 10. THE BATTLE OF THE GREAT DAY OF GOD

Under the sixth plague the apostate religious powers of earth, represented by "the dragon, . . . the beast, and . . . the false prophet," "go abroad to the kings [political powers] of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty, . . . at the place which is called in Hebrew Armageddon." This battle, into which the religious and political powers of earth enter with the avowed objective of annihilating God's people, ends abruptly with all of the wicked slain by lethal radiation at the appearing of Christ. They will live again a thousand years later (Revelation 20:5), at the second resurrection.<sup>32</sup>

## 11. COMING OF THE KING OF KINGS

Christ and the New Testament writers consistently refer to his coming as an objective, palpable experience — a literal, visible, personal event that brings the present age to an abrupt and cataclysmic close and that ushers in the eternal age to come. They speak of him as appearing, being revealed, being manifested.<sup>33</sup>

## 12. DELIVERANCE AND JUDGMENT

Christ returns to earth as "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords" to deliver his beleaguered people from their foes. As King, he judges the eligibility of all men for admission into his kingdom. "The day of the Lord" is, in essence, a day of judgment. It is the "day" when divine justice, untempered by mercy, metes out to every man his just deserts. Prior to that day, every

man living on the earth will have made his irrevocable choice of loyalty and allegiance, and when the last man on earth has exercised his God-given power of choice, human probation closes and God proceeds to reward or punish every man.<sup>34</sup>

According to Revelation 19 and 20, the process of judgment — “the great day of God” — spans a thousand years. All the living wicked have been slain and the righteous dead resurrected, and the latter together with the living saints are translated and enter upon their eternal reward. During that thousand years in heaven, the righteous participate in examining the cases of the wicked and see for themselves that the lost have spurned divine love and mercy and that divine justice must take its course. At the close of the thousand years, the wicked are raised to life and appear before the Judge to receive sentence.

### 13. RESURRECTION, IMMORTALITY, AND TRANSLATION

Christ and Paul specifically declare that some of the saints will not pass through death but will remain alive to witness the coming of Christ and will experience translation. When Christ appears, the sleeping saints will be raised to life, and immortality will be bestowed upon all the faithful. They will be gathered to meet the Lord in the air and will accompany him to heaven, there to remain for one thousand years.

### 14. THE THOUSAND YEARS

The twentieth chapter of the Apocalypse presents a period of one thousand years during which Satan is “bound” and unable to “deceive the nations.” It assigns “the first resurrection” — of the “blessed and holy” — to the beginning of the millennium. Martyrs for Christ and those who endured the great eschatological tribulation all “came to life again” at the time “and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” This reign is evidently in heaven, for at the second advent Christ descends from heaven and “gathers his elect,” who are then “caught up . . . in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” to be “with the Lord.” He takes them to be with him where he is.<sup>35</sup>

As for the living wicked, they “were [all, verse 21] slain . . . and all the birds were gorged with their flesh” at the time Christ came forth to defeat the forces of evil on earth and to deliver his faithful ones. “The rest of the dead” — all but those who came forth in the first resurrection, the wicked dead of all ages, including those slain by the brightness of Christ’s coming — “did not come to life again until the thousand years were ended.” Accordingly, the earth is emptied of its inhabitants, the righteous with Christ

in heaven and the wicked all in their graves. Satan is "bound" to this desolate earth by being confined to it, yet he is unable to carry forward his work of deception because there is no one to deceive.<sup>36</sup>

#### 15. THE BATTLE OF GOG AND MAGOG

At the end of the thousand years "the rest of the dead . . . come to life again" in the second resurrection, the resurrection of damnation, to receive sentence and be annihilated. When the wicked of all ages are raised to life, Satan is thereby "loosed from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations" again, now in number "like the sand of the sea." Evidently the New Jerusalem, "the camp of the saints, . . . the beloved city," descends to earth prior to the close of the thousand years, because Satan marshals this mighty host for battle, and they surround the city preparatory to attacking it.<sup>37</sup>

Immediately before the second advent, at the beginning of the thousand years, the forces of evil incarnate had gathered to make war on Christ in the person of his people on earth. As they prepared to strike what they supposed would be the decisive blow against God's loyal people, Christ intervened, shattered the religiopolitical alliance, and slew all of the wicked. Summoned to life in the second resurrection a thousand years later, and unaware of the lapse of time, they rally behind Satan to complete the second phase of the battle of the great day of God, designated the battle of Gog and Magog.<sup>38</sup>

#### 16. THE FINAL JUDGMENT

As the hosts of evil surround "the camp of the saints and the beloved city," Christ appears, seated on "a great white throne" in his role as Judge of all men. The resurrected dead, arrested in the very act of storming the Holy City, find themselves speechless before the Judge of the universe. "And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done." Fire then comes down from heaven and consumes the entire host. The beast and the false prophet had already been consigned to the lake of fire at the commencement of the thousand years. At the close of the thousand years the devil himself, death and hades, and everyone whose "name was not found written in the book of life, . . . [were] thrown into the lake of fire" also.

#### 17. THE NEW EARTH

John turns immediately from the great holocaust that consumes the surface of the earth and all upon it to the new earth. "Then," he says, "I saw a

new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away." The one who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new."<sup>39</sup>

Sin and evil have been eradicated from the universe. Man has been restored to his original state of perfection "in the image of God." God's original purpose for the earth and for man will be resumed at the point at which sin entered and will be carried forward without interruption throughout the ages of eternity. The new earth will be a literal place, but unencumbered by the limitations of mortality.<sup>40</sup>

## EPILOGUE

This completes my summary of the eschatology of the New Testament, in the setting forth of which I have also said what Seventh-day Adventists believe about the "last things" of this world — world in the sense of *aiōn*, *kosmos*, and especially *oikoumenē*. The organization and terminology have often been distinctly Seventh-day Adventist in flavor; here and there, at points where the evidence is not conclusive and where an alternate interpretation may have equal claim to credibility, I have construed the words of Scripture in a distinctly Seventh-day Adventist manner. But within the bounds of the assumptions postulated at the start, I submit that the composite picture I have presented does have a reasonable claim to being what the New Testament has to tell us on the subject of eschatology. I submit that it is internally consistent, coherent, and logical, and that it agrees with the world view of the Bible as a whole.

But there is a further aspect of the matter which it seems appropriate at this point to note — the eschatology of the creeds of Christendom.

## THE CREEDS OF CHRISTENDOM

Seventh-day Adventist eschatology is in accord not only with that of the New Testament but also with the historical tenets of the Christian faith as expressed in the classic creeds of Christendom, catholic as well as Protestant. (That is intentionally — and correctly — a lowercase *c*, and it implies no offense of any kind.) If asked to do so, a Seventh-day Adventist could subscribe without reservation to practically every affirmation of faith in the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Definition of Chalcedon, the Westminster Confession, the Augsburg Confession, the Thirty-nine Articles, and even the much-debated Westminster Confession for Today (what it actually says, though not necessarily all that it may imply). This is not to say that we consider their definitions of the Christian faith to be perfect, that is, com-



plete and without error; it is simply to affirm that our understanding of the Christian faith in general, and eschatology in particular, is essentially that of historical Christianity.

Among these historical beliefs is the concept that the present earthly order is destined to end at the second advent of our Lord, who will then judge the quick and the dead, restore the earth to its pristine state of perfection, and inaugurate his eternal, universal reign of righteousness. All that is historical in the Christian faith, all that was vital in the apostolic *kerygma*, comes to a focus in the second advent and is important to the Christian faith today because of the second advent. As the first angel's message of Revelation 14:6-7 implies, "the everlasting gospel" for our time *is* the advent message, the message that "the hour of his judgment is come." As the apostolic Church realized, the second advent was necessary to complete the work begun at the first advent, for without the second advent the first has little meaning or convincing power. Thus, in proclaiming the second advent, Seventh-day Adventists reaffirm the meaning and relevance of the first advent for men of our day. In declaring that "the hour of his judgment has come," we are at the same time calling men back to the "everlasting gospel" as it was proclaimed to the world by Peter and John and Paul.

The Apostles' Creed affirms that "Jesus Christ . . . shall come to judge the quick and the dead." The Nicene Creed states that Jesus Christ "shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end." The Athanasian Creed similarly affirms that Christ "shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies; and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire."

The Augsburg Confession affirms that Christ "shall reign forever, and have dominion over all creatures" and that he "shall openly come again, to judge the quick and the dead." The Confession also affirms that "Christ shall appear to judge, and shall raise up all the dead, and shall give unto the godly and elect eternal life and everlasting joys; but ungodly men and the devils shall he condemn unto endless torments," and specifically rejects the idea "that, before the resurrection of the dead, the godly shall occupy the kingdom of the world, the wicked being everywhere suppressed [the saints alone, the pious, shall have a wordly kingdom, and shall exterminate all the godless]." The Thirty-nine Articles declare that Christ will "return to judge all men at the last day."<sup>41</sup> That is all their creeds have to say on the subject. But the Westminster Confession considers eschatology at greater length:

God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father. In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged but likewise all persons, that have lived upon earth, shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds; and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil. . . .

Then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fullness of joy and refreshing which shall come from the presence of the Lord; but the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, . . . so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come; and may be ever prepared to say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.<sup>42</sup>

The Westminster Confession for Today deals with the resurrection and the last judgment as follows:

At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up with the selfsame bodies, and none other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls for ever.

The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonor; the bodies of the just, by his Spirit, unto honor, and be made conformable to his own glorious body.

God hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father. In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged; but likewise all persons, that have lived upon earth, shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds; and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.

The end of God's appointing this day, is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of his justice in the damnation of the reprobate, who was wicked and disobedient. For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fullness of joy and refreshing which shall come from the presence of the Lord: but the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin, and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity: so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come; and may be ever prepared to say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.<sup>43</sup>

#### EFFECT ON THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH

As the name Seventh-day Adventist implies, belief in the Second Coming of Jesus, particularly an *imminent* second coming, has been the master catalyst in the belief, life, and work of the church from the very first to the present. As a church and as individuals, we live under the deep conviction that the contemporary state of the world portends that awesome event in the near future, and that conviction determines every aspect of our thinking and

living in the present and our planning for the future. In the words of an early advent hymn, "We see the gleams of the golden morning," and seeing them, we believe that "the sun of righteousness" will soon "rise, with healing in its wings," as surely as the dawning light of a new day implies an imminent sunrise. One hundred twenty-nine years after 1844, it is appropriate to assess the assets and liabilities of this belief. A book might be written on this subject, but here a few paragraphs must suffice. What has been the effect of this belief on individuals and on the church?<sup>44</sup>

For more than half a century I have observed and evaluated the effect of belief in an imminent advent on my own life and thinking and that of my fellow Seventh-day Adventists. Like the inertial guidance system locked to a computer aboard a spacecraft headed for the moon, belief in the second advent programs a person's thoughts, words, and actions and conditions him to act and react automatically in keeping with that belief. I do not mean that it instantly transforms him into a sinless saint but rather that the entire life is effectively reoriented, directed, and motivated. As John wrote, "Every one who thus hopes in him [i.e., Christ's appearing] purifies himself as he is pure." It makes his life a response to Peter's question, "What sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God?"<sup>45</sup>

#### THE PROBLEMS AND PITFALLS

Most things in life, including theology and biblical exegesis, have liabilities as well as assets. This is true of belief in an imminent second advent. With over a century and a quarter of experience as source material, no one should be in a better position to evaluate these assets and liabilities than a Seventh-day Adventist, if he takes a sufficiently detached attitude and examines them objectively, despite his personal concern and deep personal involvement. But such a study, which would be of practical value to all of us, to my knowledge has not yet been attempted.

Let us glance for a moment, then, at the debit side of the ledger, on which we might list such things as time setting, fanaticism, otherworldliness, and the protracted delay of an imminent advent, and ask how Seventh-day Adventists have related to these pitfalls and problems. Occasionally belief that the advent is imminent is accompanied by adverse side effects as the result of perverse human nature.

Seventh-day Adventists are by no means the first group to anticipate the imminent end of the age and the return of Christ. In fact, as we have seen, the apostolic Church itself set the precedent for later generations of Chris-

tians in this respect. On one occasion the apostle Paul found it necessary to write some of his converts: "Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him, we beg you, brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either by spirit or by word, or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless . . ." <sup>46</sup> Evidently certain eager believers in Thessalonica had misread the signs of the times. Unfortunately, they were not the last ones to do so.

Ever since the days when the scholarly Rabbi Akiba hailed Bar Cocheba as the Messiah, down to modern times, Jews and Christians have been predicting the year of the advent. Joseph Klausner and Abba Hillel Silver <sup>47</sup> list dozens of dates that have been set and movements that have arisen anticipating those dates. In some instances these persons and groups relied on the same passages of Scripture that led William Miller to the date 1844 and on conditions in the world similar to those to which Adventists point today.

The Montanist movement among Christians of the second to the fourth centuries is one notable example of chiliastic speculation and extremism. One Montanist bishop, declaring that the last judgment would come in two years, advised his followers not to cultivate their fields and to rid themselves of houses and goods. Another bishop led his flock into the wilderness to meet Christ. Believers were urged to be strict in their habits to the point of austerity, to fast, to lead celibate lives, and to welcome martyrdom. <sup>48</sup> Church history points to numerous similar illustrations of time setting and fanaticism of various kinds among both Christians and Jews.

It is common knowledge, of course, that William Miller and others who led the advent movement of 1840-1844 did set a time, but the movement was remarkably levelheaded and free of fanaticism, fabricated reports of such things as ascension robes notwithstanding. From the start, Seventh-day Adventists have considered the advent to be imminent, but they have never set a time for the Lord to come and have taken a positive stand against every kind of extremism. As Christ implied in his intercessory prayer, it is not easy to be *in* this world yet not *of* it at the same time; it is not easy to maintain a balance between good citizenship in this world and in the world to come.

I submit, however, that Seventh-day Adventists have found a reasonable, though doubtless not always perfect, balance between anticipation of an imminent advent on the one hand and a wise and meaningful relationship to the present world on the other. In fact, they have now had well over one hundred years' experience at maintaining this delicate balance. Christ gave

the key to this balance when he counseled his disciples in the parable of the pounds: "Trade with these till I come." The Christian is not only to remain alert, waiting for his Lord to come; he is to labor diligently in his master's vineyard till sunset. While thus engaged, he is not likely to lapse into fanaticism as a substitute for the real religion of concern for and ministry to his fellowmen.<sup>49</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I submit that, granted the basic assumptions, principles of exegesis to which we could probably all subscribe lead logically to approximately the format of eschatology I have set forth. The question, then, revolves around the validity of these basic assumptions. Such a reevaluation of the evidence might prove to be profitable for all of us. If these assumptions are not valid, neither is the eschatological picture I have presented. If they are valid — as Seventh-day Adventists believe — the question resolves itself into: By what criteria may we know when the eschaton is near? A study of the basic assumptions is beyond the topic assigned for this paper, but in conclusion, it may be apropos to state briefly the reasons why Seventh-day Adventists in our day consider the advent to be imminent.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Christians generally believed that the world was getting better. But two world wars have occurred, and inability to restore peace to the world, moral decadence, and crime and other kinds of irrational behavior have reached a pitch and scale never before equaled. This is precisely the picture the New Testament writers foretold would precede the advent. As we have already noted, the advent message is being given in most countries of the world — as Christ and John said would be the case before the end. The interpretation of the Apocalypse as presented in *The Great Controversy* (which was written nearly a century ago) forecast events now transpiring in the religious world as harbingers of the advent — such occurrences as the ecumenical movement and trends and developments in the churches of Christendom, both Catholic and Protestant. Other signs of our time might be mentioned, but this must suffice. In all these things we hear Jesus saying to our generation, "Surely I am coming soon," and we reply, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"<sup>50</sup>

#### REFERENCES AND NOTES

- 1 Abraham Lincoln, A house divided (a speech delivered at Springfield, Illinois, on June 16, 1858), in *Modern Eloquence*, edited by A. H. Thorndike (New York: Modern Eloquence Corporation 1932), volume 11, p. 227.

- 2 Raymond F. Cottrell, *Beyond Tomorrow* (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association 1963), pp. 119-132.
- 3 Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, translated by William F. Stinespring (London: Allen and Unwin 1956).  
Robert H. Charles, *Eschatology: The Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, Judaism, and Christianity* (New York: Schocken 1963).  
Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, translated by Herbert Dandy (New York: Macmillan 1925), pp. 361-412.  
Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul*, translated by William F. Stinespring (New York: Macmillan 1943), pp. 435-599.
- 4 Klausner, *Eschatology*, pp. 362-363.
- 5 2 Corinthians 6:2; Acts 17:11; Matthew 24:14; 2 Timothy 4:1; Matthew 16:27; Revelation 22:12; Ephesians 1:10; 2 Peter 3:10, 13; Titus 2:12.
- 6 Don F. Neufeld, editor, *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association 1966) pp. 1164-1166.
- 7 John 14:2-3; Matthew 16:27, 24:30, 25:31, 26:64; Acts 1:11; Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association 1940), pp. 662-667. For a Seventh-day Adventist exegesis of any passage of Scripture cited, see the *Bible Commentary*, edited by Francis D. Nichol (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association 1957).
- 8 1 Timothy 3:16; compare 2 Peter 1:16-18, 1 John 1:1-3.
- 9 Acts 17:31, 1 Timothy 4:1, Hebrews 9:27-28, 2 Peter 3:3-4.
- 10 *Apokalupsis*: 1 Corinthians 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 2 Peter 1:7, 13; *phanerothe*: Colossians 3:4; 1 John 2:28, 3:2; *phanerotherontos*: 1 Peter 5:4; *epiphaneia*: 2 Thessalonians 2:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 1:10, 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13; *parousia*: 2 Thessalonians 2:8, 1 John 2:28; *ophthetetai*: Hebrews 9:28; *erchetai*: Revelation 1:7; *erchomai*: Revelation 22:20.
- 11 Matthew 21: 43, 23:36-39.
- 12 Daniel 8:9-14, 9:26-27; Zechariah 12:1-3, 14:1-5; Matthew 24:3, 15-35.
- 13 Acts 1:67; Matthew 24:32-34, 36 to 25:30, 28:19-20; Acts 1:8.
- 14 *Enesteken*: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2.
- 15 Romans 13:11-12; 1 Corinthians 1:7-8, 7:29, 10:11; Philippians 3:20, 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 3:13, 4:17; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:2, 9:26, 10:37; James 5:8-9; 1 Peter 1:20, 4:7, 17; 2 Peter 3:11-14; 1 John 2:18; Revelation 1:1-3, 3:11, 22:6-7, 10, 12, 20. See also Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book one (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association 1958) p. 67.
- 16 Matthew 24:14, 30; Mark 13:26; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 2 Peter 3:3.
- 17 Matthew 24:45-51; Revelation 10:1-2, 7. See also Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 627-636; *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* on Matthew 24.
- 18 Matthew 24:14, 28:19-20; 2 Corinthians 4:8-12, 11:23-28.
- 19 Revelation 10:1-2, 5-7.
- 20 Revelation 14:6-11, 18:1-4.
- 21 Matthew 24:14; compare Revelation 14:6.

- 22 Acts 17:31, Matthew 16:27; compare Revelation 22:11-12. See also Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association 1971), pp. 355-390, 437-450; Raymond F. Cottrell, *Crisis and Victory* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association 1952), sections 3-D, 5-ABC. Seventh-day Adventists understood the messages of the three angels of Revelation 14:6-12 to constitute the essence of God's final appeal to the world prior to the second advent of Christ. In the Adventist vocabulary, "three angels' messages," "the Advent message," and sometimes "third angel's message," refer to the proclamation of the advent.
- 23 Ezekiel 37 and 38; Joel 3; Zechariah 12, 13, and 14; Matthew 24:15-27; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Revelation 12 through 19.
- 24 Revelation 12:17.
- 25 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.
- 26 For comment on the origin of the conflict between Christ and Satan in heaven, see Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association 1958), pp. 33-43; and White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 492-504. For comment on the coming of antichrist and the close of the conflict, see White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 582-592; and Raymond F. Cottrell, *Crisis and Victory*, sections 1-BC, 2-ABCD, and 4-ABC.

Seventh-day Adventists conceive of the Church invisible as including all dedicated Christians of every faith, and esteem their separated brethren, both Catholic and Protestant, as indeed brothers in Christ. But on the basis of Revelation 13, Adventists anticipate a time when, despite the best efforts of the many dedicated Christians in the various church organizations, men under the control of Satan will infiltrate these organizations and dominate them. The result will be the great apostasy of the last days, represented in the Apocalypse as Babylon the great. God then issues the final call for all of his loyal people to come out of Babylon and to unite with his remnant (Revelation 14:8, 18:1-4; compare 12:17).

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the leopardlike beast of Revelation 13, healed of its mortal wound, represents apostate Catholicism of that future day; and the lamblike beast of Revelation 13 (the "false prophet" of Revelation 16:13 and 19:10) represents apostate Protestantism. With the addition of the "dragon," who represents Satan at work through spiritualism, the "three-fold union" of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (Revelation 16:13) is formed.

Simultaneously, the nations of the earth unite in some form of political union under the aegis of, and in conspiracy with, the universal religious union, to make war on Christ in the person of his loyal people and to obliterate them from the face of the earth. Eventually, under the sixth plague, Satan appears impersonating Christ and assumes leadership of the conspiracy (see Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 561-562, 564).
- 27 Revelation 12:17, 13:15.
- 28 Revelation 14:1-2, 6-11; 7:2, 4; 14:4-5; 7:14; 18:1-4.
- 29 Revelation 14:6-7, 9, 12.
- 30 Revelation 13:7, 15; 14:9-11; 13:3, 7-8, 15; 16:2; compare Revelation 13:17; 14:1; 7:2-4; 14:7; 22:11. See also Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 445-450, 604-605; also Raymond F. Cottrell, *Crisis and Victory*, section 5-D.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the "mark of the beast," the authority that imposes it, and the circumstances under which it is imposed, are all *future*. The seal of God and the mark of the beast are both understood to be marks of loyalty and allegiance — to God and to Satan respectively — in the same sense that respect for a displayed national flag connotes loyalty and allegiance.

The seal of God is a token of character and acceptance with God. Down through the ages God has sealed as his those who followed Christ in sincerity of heart and chose to order their lives in harmony with his will, especially as expressed in "present truth," that is, the testing truth important for each particular era.

In apostolic times acceptance of Christ as the Messiah and God's Son was the special testing truth. In Reformation times that truth was *sola fidei*. Under the future circumstances described in the preceding paragraphs of this section, Seventh-day Adventists believe there will be a great apostasy within Christendom in which the supreme issue will be loyalty to God as demonstrated by willing compliance with all of his requirements, or to church authority contrary to the will of God. In a time of crisis, church and state will unite to compel the conscience by enforcing the observance of the first day of the week by law, as a test of submission to human authority. Then observance of the seventh-day Sabbath will become a special test of loyalty and allegiance to Christ, and the observance of the first day of the week a test of loyalty and allegiance to human authority.

Only when Sunday observance is thus enforced under penalty of death, and the issue is clearly understood by all, will anyone receive the mark of the beast. *No one has it now.*

- 31 Revelation 15:1; Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 14:14-20, 16:8, 11-20. See also Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 613-623, 628-629; and Raymond F. Cottrell, *Crisis and Victory*, section 6-ABC.
- 32 Revelation 16:13-16, 20:5. See also Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 624-627, 629-634; and Raymond F. Cottrell, *Crisis and Victory*, sections 6-C and 7-ABD.
- 33 Colossians 3:4; 1 Peter 5:4; 1 John 2:28, 3:2; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Luke 17:30; 1 Corinthians 1:7; 2 Peter 1:7, 13; Acts 1:11; Matthew 24:30, 26:64; Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:27. Compare Luke 17:24; Matthew 16:27, 24:31; Matthew 26:64; Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:30-31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 5:2-3; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 6:14; Matthew 13:39, 24:3, 28:20, 24:14; 1 Corinthians 15:24. See also Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 640-644; and Raymond F. Cottrell, *Crisis and Victory*, section 7-E.
- 34 Revelation 19:16; compare 1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 17:14, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2 Peter 3:10.
- 35 John 11:26; 1 Corinthians 15:51; 1 Thessalonians 4:15, 17; John 5:25, 28-29; Luke 20:35; 1 Corinthians 15:22-23, 52; John 11:25; Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Revelation 20:4-6; Luke 20:35-36; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; Philippians 3:20; Acts 1:11; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; John 14:2-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Matthew 24:31; Revelation 20:4, 6; Matthew 13:30, 43, 16:27, 25:21, 31, 34, 46; 2 Timothy 4:8; Hebrews 9:29; Revelation 11:18, 14:15-16, 22:12. See also Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 644-652.
- 36 Revelation 20:3-6, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Matthew 24:31, 1 Thessalonians 4:17, John 14:2-3.
- 37 Revelation 19:11, 17-21. Compare 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 20:3-6.
- 38 Revelation 20:5, 7-9.
- 39 Revelation 21:1, 5.
- 40 Genesis 1:27; Matthew 19:28-30; Mark 10:30; Revelation 21:1, 3-5, 27, 22:3-4. See also Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 674-678.



- 41 Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper and Brothers 1919), volume two, pp. 45, 59, 69-70; volume three, pp. 9-10, 18-19, 489.
- 42 Schaff, volume three, pp. 671-672.
- 43 George S. Hendry, *The Westminster Confession for Today* (Richmond: John Knox Press 1960), pp. 247ff.
- 44 Malachi 4:2.
- 45 1 John 3:3, 2 Peter 3:11.
- 46 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2.
- 47 Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, translated by William F. Stinespring (London: Allen and Unwin 1956).  
Abba Hillel Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel* (Boston: Beacon Press 1959).
- 48 Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper and Brothers 1953), p. 129.
- 49 Luke 19:13; Matthew 20:1-16, 25:14-45; James 1:27.
- 50 Revelation 22:20.