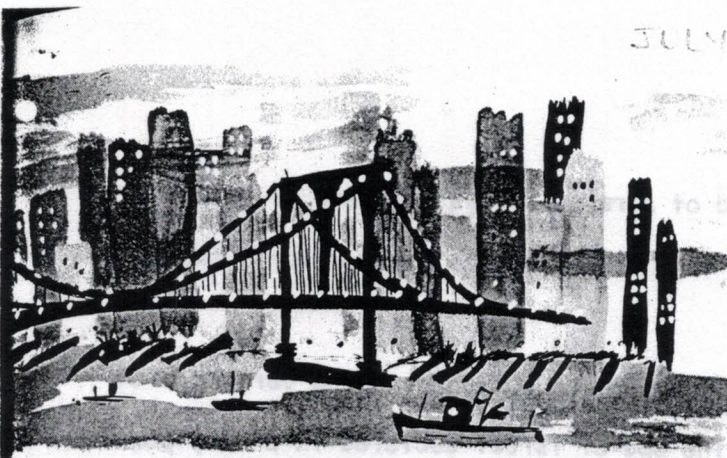


JULY '65



"Watchman, what of the night?"

The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12

ONCE SAVED; ALWAYS SAVED?

A fellow worker in the American Red Cross Chapter House was telling of his college days at Mississippi College, a Baptist institution. He, a Methodist, was fascinated with the discussion between ministerial students concerning a cardinal teaching of the Southern Baptists - once saved; always saved.

Following the conversation, as I sat in my office thinking about what had been said, I asked myself - "What various forms has this teaching assumed over the centuries of time?"

There was the Jewish nation, which proudly proclaimed that "Abraham is our father."¹ They believed that because they were born as children of Abraham according to the flesh, they were slated for the Kingdom of God without question. While in subjection to the Roman yoke - refusing to recognize that fact - they blindly reiterated, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man."² John the Baptist cautioned the Jewish religious leaders not to steel their hearts through a self-complacency which reasoned, "We have Abraham to our father."³

This belief that they were the seed of Abraham, and thus chosen of God, led them to some very serious and disastrous decisions. They professed to keep the law; they venerated Moses. Why then did they, the chosen of God, need any remonstrance from a prophet, or a divinely-sent messenger? Would not the nation of Israel endure forever, and would not the temple ever be recognized by God as the instrument through which He would speak His will to the people? Were not the successors to Aaron sitting in Moses' seat to dispense a correct understanding of truth - why should their inter-

pretation ever be challenged? Once the seed of Abraham; always the seed of Abraham! But in their blindness, and false security, they crucified the lord of glory, the true seed of Abraham.⁴

If challenged, the Jewish leaders could point their finger at the very Word of God to support their convictions. Had not the God of Israel declared in a very positive way through Jeremiah:

Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the Lord of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.⁵

This position of the Jewish leaders was no small question for the early church to meet. Were they merely offshoots, a sect of Judaism, or were they indeed the true Israel? What did Jesus want them to understand about the temple services, when He stated, "Your house is left unto you desolate"?⁶ Yet were they not also instructed to bear witness first in Jerusalem?⁷ Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, whenever possible sought out the Jewish leadership among the Diaspora and the Jewish worshippers in the synagogues to proclaim the Gospel. In Antioch of Pisidia, he found it necessary to tell the Jews that because they put the word of God from them, and judged themselves unworthy, he would have to turn to the Gentiles.⁸ The Scripture notes that in this decision, Paul and Barnabas "waxed bold." On another occasion, at Corinth, Paul found it necessary to separate himself from the Jewish synagogue, and began to worship in a house next door.⁹ How could he justify this conduct; how could it be explained? Was not the nation of Israel to remain forever before the Lord? Would God cast off His people?

This question was sufficiently serious that Paul devotes several sections of the book of Romans to a discussion of the topic.¹⁰ The answer is put this way - "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel."¹¹ There is, however, a holy stock, a root of the Lord's planting, that if one be grafted into it, he too, shall be a part

of the Israel of God.¹² "And so, all Israel shall be saved."¹³ Paul through figures of speech was merely stating the conditions which Jesus Himself set forth to identify the seed of Abraham - "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham."¹⁴

As I contemplated these things written aforetime for our learning, I asked myself another question - "Are we as Seventh-day Adventists guilty of *acting* out this same doctrine, - once saved; always saved?" Do we not believe that we have the truth? Are we not modern Israel? Can we not point to specific references in the Testimony of Jesus and conclude that God is going to take us through to the kingdom of heaven?¹⁵ Do we not reverence organization as did the Jews the temple? Can we not show that the voice of God to His church is suppose to come through its elected leadership?¹⁶ Then why should we have any fears - once saved; always safe! Really?

In 1903, Sister White wrote a very solemn warning to the church. In it she stated:

In the balances of the sanctuary the Seventh-day Adventist church is to be weighed. She will be judged by the privileges and advantages that she has had. If her spiritual experience does not correspond to the advantages that Christ, at infinite cost, has bestowed on her, if the blessings conferred have not qualified her to do the work entrusted to her, on her will be pronounced the sentence, "Found wanting." By the light bestowed, the opportunities given, will she be judged.¹⁷

In all honesty, can we truthfully say, that if we should be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary this day, that the spirituality as found in the church would pass the judgment bar of God? And would not our answer tell us, that once the Israel of God, does not necessarily mean, always the Israel of God? We are further warned that "no stronger delusion can deceive the human mind than that which makes them believe that they are right, and that God accepts their works, when they are sinning against Him."¹⁸ Should we not therefore, fear exceedingly, and repent, lest the True Witness spue us out of His mouth? Our trust dare not be in our "temples", but in the Living God.

How close are we to the fulfillment of this prophecy by Sister White? In 1902 she wrote:

God brings against ministers and people the heavy charge of spiritual feebleness, saying, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with good, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." (Rev. 3:15-18). God calls for a spiritual revival and a spiritual reformation. *Unless this takes place, those who are lukewarm will continue to grow more abhorrent to the Lord, until He will refuse to acknowledge them as His children.*¹⁹

Is there no way to stave off this evil day? Yes, a spiritual revival and a spiritual reformation! Why should we continue in our Laodicean complacency, *acting as if*, once saved; always saved?

¹John 8:39

²John 8:33

³Matt. 3:9

⁴Gal. 3:16

⁵Jer. 31:35-36 (DA 106)

⁶Matt. 23:38

⁷Acts 1:8

⁸Acts 13:46

⁹Acts 18:6-7

¹⁰Romans 9 - 11

¹¹Romans 9:6

¹²Romans 11:16-17

¹³Romans 11:26

¹⁴John 8:39

¹⁵Ellen G. White, Prophets & Kings, pp. 713-714: "That which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish through His church on earth today."

¹⁶Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 3, p. 492: "When the judgment of the General Conference, which is the highest authority that God has upon earth, is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be maintained, but be surrendered."

¹⁷Ibid., Vol. 8, p. 247

¹⁸Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 407

¹⁹Ellen G. White, Selected Messages bk. i, pp. 127-128

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