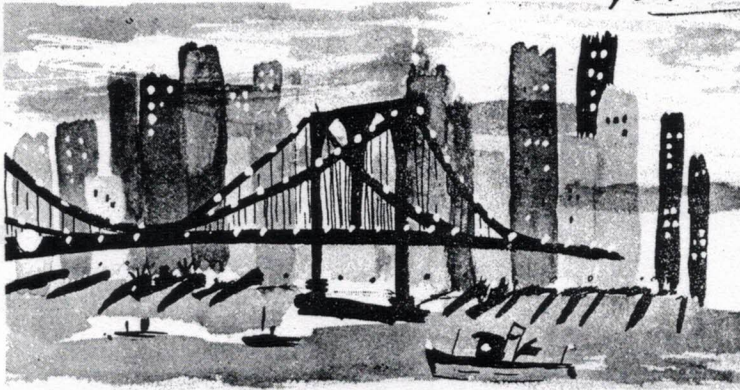


February 1972



"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

"SHALL WE BE FOUND WANTING?"

In the days of Jeremiah the prophet, the Jewish ecclesiastical authorities prided themselves that because they presided over the services of the temple, the Lord had established them forever, and that nothing could remove them from the favor of God. Jeremiah warned these prelates declaring:

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: "This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord."¹

Because Jeremiah dared to prophesy that Jerusalem and the temple would become as Shiloh had become, the priests and elders of Israel charged him with treason and pronounced that he was worthy of death.² But the temple was burned with fire and the city was made a desolation, and the chosen people were carried into captivity. Mere trust in organization and material symbols proved to be the blindest folly.

In the days of Christ, the Jewish leaders demonstrated that they had not learned the lessons of past history. Overlooking the very real and vivid lesson from the experience of Jeremiah, they quoted out of context his words that if the ordinances of the sun, moon, and stars could be destroyed, then Israel would cease to be a nation before the Lord.³ Their animosity toward Jesus reached a fever peak because He dared to declare that they would be set aside as the chosen people of the Lord. He related to them the parable of the vineyard.⁴ Then He asked the question - "What, therefore, shall the Lord of the vineyard do to these husbandmen?" In answering His own question by stating categorically that God would come

and destroy these husbandmen, and "give the vineyard to others", provoked the Jewish leaders to exclaim, "God forbid!" But when these leaders perceived that this parable was directed against them, they "sought to lay hands on Him,. . . and they watched Him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of His words, that so they might deliver Him unto the power and authority of the governor." Such is the blindness and hatred engendered by presumption that claims the promises of God but fails to bring forth fruit in harmony with God's word.

"The Jewish people cherished the idea that they were the favorites of heaven, and that they were always to be exalted as the church of God. They were the children of Abraham, they declared, and so firm did the foundation of their prosperity seem to them that they defied earth and heaven to dispossess them of their rights. But by their lives of unfaithfulness they were preparing for the condemnation of heaven and for separation from God."⁵ The King whose mercies they spurned, and whose servants they treated spitefully, did send "forth His armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city."⁶

The Word of God teaches plainly that into the stock of Israel has been grafted "wild olive" branches which in turn have become partakers of the "root and fatness of the olive tree."⁷ The prophecies of the same Word indicate that in the last days, God would set His hand a second time to gather together a spiritual Israel through whom He purposes to make a final revelation of His name and character.⁸ We, today, believe as firmly as did the Jewish people in the days of Christ, that the Seventh-day Adventist church as a corporate body is that spiritual Israel, and as such, is "always to be exalted as the church of God." Well did Paul write - "Be no highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee."⁹

We quote with great satisfaction certain Testimonies of the gift of prophecy

which indicate that this organization, and this church body as presently constituted will go through to the Kingdom. We read with a self-satisfied confidence the following statements:

We should remember that the church, enfeebled and defective though it may be, is the only object on earth on which Christ bestows His supreme regard. He is constantly watching it with solicitude, and is strengthening it by His Holy Spirit.¹⁰

I am instructed to say to Seventh-day Adventists the world over, God has called us as a people to be a peculiar treasure unto Himself. He has appointed that His church on earth shall stand perfectly united in Spirit and counsel of the Lord of hosts to the end of time.¹¹

There is no question - nor can there ever be a question - but that God did appoint this church - our church - even as He called and appointed ancient Israel. But while we "dote" on certain testimonies, and likewise defy "earth and heaven to dispossess" us from our rights as did the Jewish people, we seek to cover other testimonies that should cause us to tremble to the very ends of our toes. Here is one:

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.¹²

Who from the President of the General Conference to the lowliest layman in our smallest church can say that our spiritual experience as a church - and this statement is speaking of the church as a corporate body, not as individual members - corresponds to the advantages that Christ, at infinite cost, has bestowed on us? There is not one who can so state! Unless, therefore, there is a change, a drastic change, the decree of the heavenly sanctuary will be - "Weighed in the balances and found wanting". And this will be in spite of all our boastings that we as a corporate body are going through to the Kingdom. Lest I be misunderstood, let me write very plainly at this point. God has a Movement - a prophetic Movement defined in Revelation 14:6-14 - which is going through to the Kingdom. BUT, and here is where

we need to anoint our eyes with eye-salve that we might see. God designated a people, and encouraged that people, through the prophetic voice to organize. This was done. The Seventh-day Adventist church was formed in 1863 - 19 years after 1844! To this corporate body God gave many precious promises. He entrusted this people with the Movement of 1844. BUT the same God has also warned that if we do not measure up to the privileges, and advantages bestowed, He is under no obligation to take the organization - the vehicle - through with the Movement. It is high time that we recognize this difference, and repent before God of all our Laodicean boastings. We need to learn the lessons of history, that even though the Jewish people defied earth and heaven to remove them from the favor of God, their own course of action produced its own harvest.

There are other statements that likewise need to be considered, but between now and the next thought paper (March, 1972) in which we will give consideration to some of these, let us do some prayerful reflection on the warning found in the eighth Testimony quoted in this paper.

¹Jeremiah 7:3-4 RSV

²Jeremiah 26:4-9

³Jeremiah 31:35-36 See also Desire of Ages, p. 106

⁴Luke 20:9-20

⁵Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, p. 294

⁶Matthew 22:6-7

⁷Romans 11:17

⁸Isaiah 11:11, 16; Revelation 12:17

⁹Romans 11:20-21

¹⁰Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, bk. ii, p. 396

¹¹Ibid., p. 397

¹²Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 8, p. 247

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Elder Wm. H. Grotheer
P. O. Box 237
Florence, Miss., 39073

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