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"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

THE NOW TIME OF PROPHECY

From Sabbath to Sabbath, the Law and the Prophets were read during the worship service in the Jewish synagogues. The reading from the Prophets, usually chosen from the Messianic sections, stimulated the hope and expectations of the children of Israel. As the words were read, what thoughts ran through the minds of the hearers! Some day, there would be a great deliverance; Israel would be exalted to the apex of human power. Then the poverty, the servitude, and the galling yoke of the oppressor would be broken. What a day to look forward to! The very anticipation of such a day brought complacent satisfaction to the hearers as they dreamed of the coming fulfillment.

One day Jesus returned to His home town of Nazareth, and as His custom was, He went to the synagogue for worship on the Sabbath. He was asked to select the reading from the prophets, and He chose Isaiah where the Messianic hope spoke of "liberty to the captives", and the "opening of the prison to them that are bound."¹ As He read, the minds of the hearers looked forward to the time when they would be freed from the Roman yoke, and their political prisoners would again be returned home to join the routine of the new and abundant life. But suddenly, their dreams were interrupted, for Jesus had closed the book, and declared - "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears."² It was no longer a future dream. The *NOW* time of that prophecy had arrived. But how traumatic for them; it was not as they had expected it to be. He, "Joseph's son" the Messiah, - this cannot be true. How

will He open prison doors; how will He free the captives? Recognizing the jolting reaction that the *NOW* time of prophecy had produced in His hearers, Jesus warned them not to repeat the past history of their nation; but to no avail. It only kindled their wrath, and they sought to destroy Him.³

The *NOW* time of any prophecy is traumatic. It causes the severest of human reactions - there is no middle ground! At the coming of Christ, men will either call for the rocks to fall on them to hide them from the face of Him who sits on the throne, or they will look up with fullness of joy, exclaiming - "This is our God!"⁴

The stability of any established system demands that the prophecies of God's word either be already fulfilled, or yet future. There can be no *NOW* time and the status quo maintained. Thus it was in the Reformation that shook the complacency of the papacy. Prophecy fulfilled - the antichrist fully revealed and identified - sent shock waves through the Roman hierarchy. The counter attack by the Papal theologians was the invention of two schools of prophetic interpretation - the preteristic and the futuristic - by two Jesuits, Alcarsar and Ribera, thus removing the damning finger of prophecy either into the past, or yet to be fulfilled in a future antichrist.

To Judah of old, secured by mutual defense treaties with its neighbors, and resting complacently in the counsels of its false prophets, came the shocking news from Ezekiel in Babylon. The *NOW* time of God's prophecies concerning them had arrived. Said the prophet:

Evil on evil says the Lord the Eternal - it is coming, the hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you, the hour and the end!⁵

How well have we as a church learned this lesson of history? It is fatal to day dream away the messages of warning, and invent our own interpretations of how certain prophecies will be fulfilled, and what results will accrue to us. It is

dangerous to live in calm complacency that all is well, as if the fulfillment of many important events are still future. The hour is here, the hour and the end; it is striking at us!

Consider carefully a testimony which outlines in sequence certain events.

It reads:

After the truth has been proclaimed as a witness to all nations, every conceivable power of evil will be set in operation, and minds will be confused by many voices crying, "Lo here is Christ, lo, He is there. This is the truth, I have the message from God, He has sent me with great light." Then there will be a removing of the landmarks, and an attempt to tear down the pillars of our faith. A more decided effort will be made to exalt the false sabbath, and to cast contempt upon God Himself by supplanting the day He has blessed and sanctified. This false sabbath is to be enforced by an oppressive law.

Satan and his angels are wide awake and intensely active, working with energy and perseverance through human instrumentalities to bring about his purpose of obliterating from the minds of men the knowledge of God. But while Satan works with his lying wonders, the time will be fulfilled foretold in the Revelation, and the mighty angel that shall lighten the earth with his glory will proclaim the fall of Babylon, and call upon God's people to forsake her.⁶

Three conjunctive adverbs of time are used in these paragraphs - "after", "then", and "while". (underscored) The context indicates that "the truth" referred to as having been proclaimed as a witness to all nations is "the Sabbath truth", and the attempted change by "the man of sin." The context further indicates that "at the time of the loud cry of the third angel", those who have been blinded by the enemy, and who have not repented "will be in peril", because they will not be able to discern light from heaven. These will originate theories which they will call "light", but which in the eyes of the Lord will be but "sparks of their own kindling", and by these concepts they will direct their steps, their decisions, and their propositions, and their counsels.⁷

In order to observe carefully the force of this prophetic testimony, let us outline the points, sentence by sentence:

1. After the truth has been proclaimed as a witness to all nations,
2. every conceivable power of evil will be set in motion.
3. Minds will be confused by voices crying, "This is the truth, I have the message from God."
4. Then there will be a removing of the landmarks, and an attempt to tear down the pillars of our faith.
5. A decided effort to exalt the false sabbath by "supplanting" the true Sabbath.
6. This false sabbath is to be enforced by an oppressive law.

It is obvious that #6 is still future, so we need to drop back to #5 - A decided effort to "supplant" God's true Sabbath by the false sabbath. The word, "supplant", means "to take the place of." God made the Sabbath as the seventh day of the week. An effort to exalt Sunday by making it the seventh day, thus "supplanting" the true Sabbath is developing. This has been documented in two articles by Elder R. L. Odom.⁸ He concludes these studies by stating:

The shifting of Sunday from its original position as the first day to that of the seventh day in numerical sequence of the seven days of the week in the calendar may be one of the means employed in producing the last act of the drama.⁹

Thus #5 is beginning to take shape. Such calendars are already in use in some areas of the world. We are approaching the *NOW* time in regard to the final events connected with the Sabbath issue.

In considering #4 - the removing of the landmarks, and the attempt to tear down the pillars of our faith - we have arrived at the *NOW* time of this part of the testimony. This is not future; this is present! The evidence of how our faith is being re-written, and the fundamental doctrines of the church altered is too obvious for contradiction. The books - Questions on Doctrine and Movement of Destiny - stand as number one exhibits in the supporting evidence. The altering of the basic doctrine of the Incarnation has been documented in a research paper.¹⁰

The copyright date of the book - Movement of Destiny - is given as 1971. Thus if language means anything, #1, #2, and #3, have been fulfilled prior to that date. The apostasy in the church - the forsaking of the landmarks, and the re-

moving of the pillars of our faith - follows, comes "after" the proclamation of the Sabbath truth as a witness to all nations. Consider carefully the use of the conjunctive adverbs - "after", and "then" in the testimony.

Number 3 is not too difficult to pinpoint. Minds have been confused, and are still being confused by the abortive movements led by R. D. Brinsmead, and Fred T. Wright. Number 2 can be understood in the light of the charismatic movement that has swept through the "old line" Protestant churches, and has been also a force in the Catholic church since its inception among them in 1967. Our own church has not escaped this inroad of spiritism. Add to this the drugs, the crime, the permissive philosophy that engulfed our Western culture in the last decade, and one can see that every form of evil has been set in motion. In the light of this, there are two statements from the Testimony under analysis that need careful and prayerful study. These are 1) "While Satan works his lying wonders, the time will be fulfilled foretold in the Revelation, and the mighty angel that shall lighten the earth with his glory will proclaim" a specific message. And 2) "After the truth has been proclaimed as a witness to all nations."

If the truth about the Sabbath has been proclaimed as a witness to all nations as indicated, this *NOW* time of prophecy indicates a change in the work of heaven in behalf and for man. Because of the import of this prophetic Testimony, the following is presented for your thoughtful consideration as to heaven's work *NOW* with which we should harmonize.

In Ezekiel 9:3-4, the Ancient of Days is pictured as rising from the cherub "whereupon He was", and going to the threshold of the sanctuary. He orders the sealing work to commence. This sealing and the judgment of the living can be considered as synonymous. In the Testimonies for the Church, this is referred to as "the closing work for the church," not the closing work of the church.¹¹ The

basic work of the church - the proclamation of the Sabbath truth to all nations - is completed prior to the closing work for the church. This concept alters our priorities, and strikes directly at the status quo we are seeking to maintain. The traumatic experience and reaction to prophecy being fulfilled before one's eyes is not limited to the synagogue of Nazareth. It finds a manifestation again in the present hour.

Another significant event has taken place. Jerusalem is no longer in the hands of the Gentiles. This means simply that "the times of the Gentiles" have been fulfilled."¹² This was in 1967. Does this mean then that the cup of the nations has been filled up, and God's restraining hand of mercy to the nations has been removed, and thus every power of evil is permitted to come into action, and Satan is allowed to work his lying wonders without restraint? Perhaps things are not taking place just as we imagined; but neither did Jesus come in the manner and the way that the Jews expected Him to come as the Messiah. We need to take heed lest we make the same mistake - or are we making it?

¹Isaiah 61:1

²Luke 4:21

³Luke 4:23-29

⁴Revelation 6:14-17; Isaiah 25:9

⁵Ezekiel 7:5-6 Moffatt

⁶Ellen G. White, Review & Herald, Dec. 13, 1892

⁷Ibid.

⁸R. L. Odom, "An Attempt to Make Monday the First Day of the Week", Review & Herald, July 19, 1973, pp. 4-5; July 26, 1973, pp. 8-9

⁹Ibid., July 26, 1973, p. 9

¹⁰William H. Grotheer, An Interpretive History of the Doctrine of the Incarnation as Taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. (1972)

¹¹Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 3, p. 266

¹²Luke 21:24

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