

"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

JUST SUPPOSE

Just suppose you had been living in the days of Jesus, and were a citizen of Jerusalem. You were well versed in the prophecies of the Old Testament. You were zealous for the religion of your fathers. You firmly believed in the triumph of Judaism over all of her enemies. You looked forward to the day when the mountain of the Lord's house would be established in the tops of the mountains, and would be exalted above the hills, and all nations would come and bow down before the God of Israel.¹ But you were aware that there were some very disturbing prophecies which didn't bear out all of these expectations. How would you have related yourself to these prophecies? Let us note these seemingly contradictory prophecies:

Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and stars for a light by night. . . . If these ordinances depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever.²

Judah shall dwell forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.³

For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. . . . For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.⁴

The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil shall come upon us. Therefore will Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.⁵

The people of the prince shall come and destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.⁶

Having been conditioned by the religious hierarchy of Jerusalem to believe, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we"⁷ which set of the preceding predictions would you have believed were to be fulfilled?

Then you were listening one day to Jesus as He was telling the hierarchy whom you revered and respected a story about a vineyard. You heard Jesus say to them after He had finished the story - "I say to you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."⁸ Would you have believed Jesus, or would you have been inclined to think that He was an impostor? Then before you could make a final judgment, you were hearing another story, and the words - "He sent forth His armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city."⁹ - startled you, but looking around at the massive, and impressive edifice that was the very temple of God, you reasoned, this Man just can't be teaching the truth. He must be insane and hallucinating. So you decided then and there - this Man they call Jesus is not the Messiah.

Interestingly, the prophecy of Daniel⁶ which foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, also contained the very time prophecy as to when the Messiah was to appear; but blind prejudice and selfish pride withheld from the laity that all-important truth because with that truth was a revelation which struck directly at the establishment and power of the hierarchy. This failure to let the light of truth reach the laity of Jerusalem caused them to unite their voices in the cry - "Crucify Him, Crucify Him."

This "just suppose" situation which I have asked you to visualize was indeed a reality to many in the days of Jesus. We read:

The Jews had misinterpreted God's promise of eternal favor to Israel: (Jer. 31:35-37 quoted) The Jews regarded their natural descent from Abraham as giving them a claim to this promise. But they overlooked the conditions which God had specified. . .

To a people in whose hearts His law is written, the favor of God is assured. They are one with Him. But the Jews had separated themselves

from God. Because of their sins they were suffering under His judgments. This was the cause of their bondage to a heathen nation. Their minds were darkened by transgression, and because in times past the Lord had shown them so great favor, they excused their sins. They flattered themselves that they were better than other men, and entitled to His blessings.

These things "are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."¹⁰

Note carefully - the servant of the Lord quoting I Corinthians 10:11 indicates emphatically that this situation in Jerusalem in the days of Jesus is for us upon whom the ends of the world have come!

We, too, face two sets of statements. Let us line them up:

While there have been fierce contentions in the effort to maintain our distinctive character, yet we have as Bible Christians ever been on gaining ground.¹¹

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 the Spirit and counsel of the Lord of hosts to the end of time.¹²

That which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish through His church on earth today.¹³

[The word "church" in this last quotes is interpreted by many to mean the corporate, institutionalized church.]

Spiritual death has come upon the people that should be manifesting life and zeal, purity and consecration, by the most earnest devotion to the cause of truth. The facts concerning the real condition of the professed people of God, speak more loudly than their profession, and make it evident that some power has cut the cable that anchored them to the Eternal Rock and that they are drifting away to sea, without chart or compass.¹⁴

The church is like the unproductive tree which, receiving the dew and rain and the sunshine should have produced an abundance of fruit, but on which the Divine Searcher discovers nothing but leaves. Solemn thought for our churches! Solemn, indeed, for every individual! Marvelous is the patience and forbearance of God; but, "except thou repent," it will be exhausted; the churches, our institutions, will go on from cold formality to deadness; while they are saying, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing."¹⁵

These two sets of statements, while contradictory in import, do not make Ellen G.

White a false prophet; but rather they point up the fact stated by her in 1883 -

"It should be remembered that the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional."¹⁶ Which then will be fulfilled?

Jesus gave a prophecy which stated that when a certain event should occur, "the times of the Gentiles" would be fulfilled.¹⁷ To the Seventh-day Adventist church as a corporate body was committed the trust of the unique message of Revelation 14:6-12 which was to go to every nation, tongue, and people. If then the times of the Gentiles are up - the prophecy of Jesus was fulfilled in 1967 - then the trust given by God has been withdrawn. It is just that simple, - a faith in the prophetic words of Jesus even as our spiritual fathers manifest a faith in what took place in Heaven in 1844 following the disappointment, though they could not see with the natural eyesight. Another prophecy indicates that God has arisen from the cherub whereupon He was, and has taken things into His own hands, ordering a sealing work to commence in Jerusalem, the church.¹⁸ Again, this "mark of redemption" will not be visible to "human eyes."¹⁹ This fact will not, however, alter the reality of the experience.

These very prophecies which would warn the laity and cause them to follow the leadings of the Lord for this time are discredited by the hierarchy because such prophecies strike directly at the establishment and their power over the laity. We are thus brought directly to the same situation - and decision - that the people of Jerusalem were brought in the days of Jesus as they evaluated the prophecies of the Old Testament in regard to their city and nation. To us the fateful words have been written - Their experience was "written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."¹⁰

¹Micah 4:1-2

²Jeremiah 31:35-36

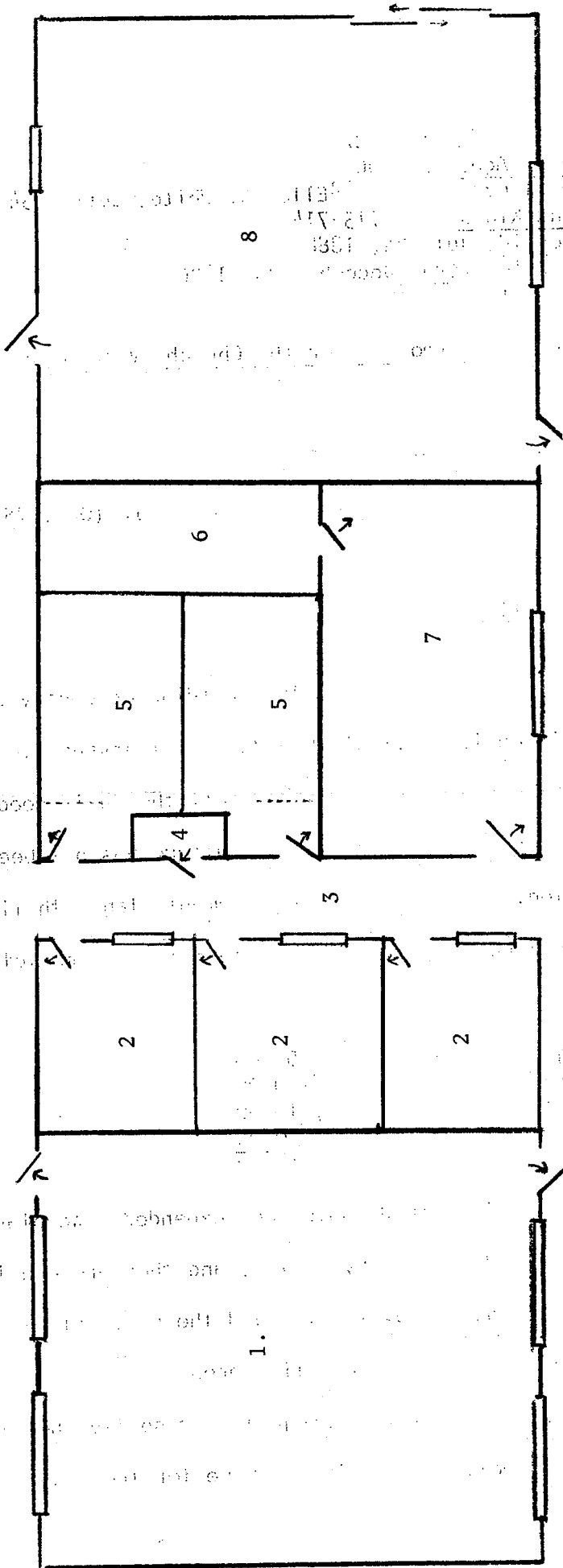
³Joel 3:20

⁴Isaiah 54:7,9

⁵Micah 3:11-12

⁶Daniel 9:26

⁷Jeremiah 7:4; Ellen G. White, Fundamentals of Christian Education, pp. 397-398:- "The teachers of the Jewish nation professed to educate the youth to understand the purity and excellence of the laws of that kingdom which is to stand forever and ever, but they perverted truth and purity. Though they said of themselves, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we,' yet they crucified the Originator of all the Jewish economy, Him to whom all their ordinances pointed."



Scale 1" = 10'

- 1. Meeting Room (Class, Seminar, etc.)
- 2. Guest Rooms
- 3. Breezeway
- 4. Utility Room
- 5. Rest and Shower Facilities
- 6. Dining area
- 7. Work Office
- 8. Dining area

A Covered Walk-Way is planned across the front. To the East, an outside patio, and to the West, a Chapel. All of these additional features are based on time and the Providence of the Lord.

to study deeply in the Word of God. Secondly, the Mississippi Foundation plans to establish on the campus a college level program to be known as the Institute for Doctrinal Inquiry (IDI). Mature young people would be given the opportunity to acquire the techniques of research and documentation through actual work experiences. It has been suggested by one of the editors of the Review & Herald that there is a need for a research manuscript on our doctrine of the Sanctuary and the Atonement, similar to the one produced on the doctrine of the Incarnation. [See - An Interpretive History of the Doctrine of the Incarnation as Taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, October, 1972] This could become one such project of I. D. I., along with the publication of other papers of current interest and need.

The plan would call for the development of working papers developed by a resident staff plus student assistants in training. Then men with special study backgrounds in these theological areas would be invited to come, pray, and study to perfect the working papers so that they would represent as far as humanly possible, the truth as found in Jesus Christ our Lord. The final draft of such studies would be made available to every member of the Adventist family who would wish to study these topics. The charge for these final drafts will be held near cost levels. All gifts toward this project are tax deductible, and should be sent to the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi, P. O. Box 237, Florence, Miss., 39073. Such gifts should be marked - "For IDI".

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IMPORTANT - A NEW PUBLICATION WILL BE OFF THE PRESS THIS MONTH. WATCH FOR THE ANNOUNCEMENT IN NEXT MONTH'S THOUGHT PAPER. THE THOUGHT PAPER ITSELF WILL BE A REPRINT OF A SECTION OF THE MONOGRAPH.