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“BEHOLD, I SEND YOU ELIJAH!”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #1: IS THERE A CONSPIRACY BEHIND HISTORY?

Introduction

As we look out at the world with bloodshot eyes, everything seems to be in disarray. Wars and rumors of wars, even a world nuclear war, the disintegration of the traditional family, unprecedented inflation, global pandemics, social unrest, racism, floods, droughts, famine, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, political strife, political assassinations, riots, crime, mass shootings, armed robberies, and suicides. Everything seems to be spinning out of control. The demons appear to be at the wheel. But are they really? What on earth is happening to our planet?

The Bible provides the unequivocal answer. After Jesus won the decisive battle of the war on the cross and Satan was cast out of heaven as the representative and ruler of this world (John 12:30-33), he was filled with vitriolic hatred, the desperate rage of a mortally wounded warrior.

The inhabitants of heaven could rejoice because the accuser of the brethren had been cast out (John 12:30-33). However, the earth could not rejoice because it was now the target of Satan's great wrath. Like a wounded lion he went out to wreak havoc on the earth (1 Peter 5:8). As Ellen White expressed it, '*Satan's angels went forth like roaring lions, seeking to destroy the followers of Jesus*' (EW, p. 191). As we approach the final crisis, Satan will make one last, desperate attempt, to hang on to his kingdom. What we are seeing is the last gasp of a defeated foe!

Revelation 12:12

"Therefore rejoice, O heavens [plural], and you who dwell in them! [plural] Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For [the reason for the woe] the devil has come down [because he was cast out of heaven at the cross; John 12:30-33; cf. Luke 10:18] to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."

Horizontal and Vertical History

For many years I have been keenly aware of the importance of understanding history because it foreshadows what will happen once again in the future. History repeats itself because God does not change (Malachi 3:6), Satan does not change and unregenerate human beings don't change either. Solomon expressed it this way in his so called 'Humanist Manifesto':

Ecclesiastes 1:9

"That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun."

Ecclesiastes 3:15, NIV

*“What happens now **has happened** in the past, and what **will happen** in the future has **happened before**. God makes the same things happen **again and again**.”*

The history that we see with the **naked eye** is only a **small fraction** of the **real** history that is being written in the **invisible world**. **Secular Historians** can only describe what I call ‘horizontal history’—**overt** events that transpired in the past with certain **persons**, at a **certain time**, in a **certain way** and in a **certain place**.

However, there is a history that is being written in **the invisible** world that cannot be seen with the **physical eyes**. It is a war **for world dominion** between Christ and Satan behind the veil—what I call ‘vertical history’. Behind the **visible historical events**, there is an **invisible hand** guiding them to their intended end. The apostle Paul vividly described this invisible war or ‘vertical history’:

Ephesians 6:13

“For we do not wrestle against **flesh and blood** [human beings], but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against **spiritual hosts** of wickedness in the **heavenly places**.”

Regarding the repetition of the crisis in the days of Esther **at the end**, Ellen White wrote:

*“**History repeats itself**. The **same** masterful mind that plotted against the faithful in ages past **is now** at work to gain control of the fallen churches, that*

through them he may condemn and put to death all who will not worship the idol sabbath. We have not to battle with mortals, as it may appear. We war not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places.” Manuscript 51, 1899.

There is a conspiracy behind the events of visible history! What is a conspiracy? Webster’s 1828 Dictionary provides the following definitions:

“A combination of men for an evil purpose; an agreement between two or more persons, to commit some crime in concert; particularly, a combination to commit treason, or excite sedition or insurrection against the government of a state; a plot as a conspiracy against the life of a king; a conspiracy against the government. In law, an agreement between two or more persons, falsely and maliciously to indict, or procure to be indicted, an innocent person of felony.”

The word ‘conspiracy’ conjures up the image of Judas Iscariot who overtly seemed to support Christ and yet in the shadows stealthily conspired with the religious leaders to betray him. He even had his colleagues fooled until the very end (John 13:27-29). The visible actions of Judas were inspired by an invisible foe and for this reason, Jesus referred to him as ‘a devil’ (John 6:70) The apostle John wrote that Satan put the idea into the heart of Judas to betray him (John 13:2).

The Invisible Battle

How can one fight against an invisible foe? It seems impossible. However, the good news is that God has removed the veil so that believers can peek into the

battle in the 'vertical history' that cannot be seen with the **physical eyes**. **The Bible alone** accurately describes the history behind history.

God gave Ellen White the discernment to glimpse the 'invisible' history. After all, her most important work on final events was titled *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan* where she described the stealth movements of Satan behind the veil.

In the book, *Education*, she wrote about the **relationship** between the events of **visible** 'horizontal' history and **invisible** 'vertical' **history**:

Education, p. 173

*"In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, **appear [to the naked eye]** to depend on the **will and prowess of man**. The shaping of events **seems**, to a **great degree**, to be determined **by man's** power, ambition, or caprice. But in the **word of God** the **curtain is drawn aside**, and we behold, **behind**, **above**, and **through** all the **play** and **counter play** of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, **silently**, **patiently** working out the counsels of **His own will**." *Education*, p. 173*

A Game of Chess

We can compare the development of historical events with a **game of chess** where the movement of the **pawns** represents the **events of history**. In the course of the game, each player moves with the intention of **frustrating the moves** of the other with the **ultimate purpose** of putting the other at **checkmate**.

The strategic 'chess game' between Christ and Satan is for **all the marbles**. In the '**play** and **counter play**' of historical events, God has a **distinct advantage** over Satan because He knows how **the game will end** before it starts. God makes no mistakes because He already knows all the moves that Satan will make and therefore can 'play' to counteract them. It is **impossible** for God to lose. On the other hand, Satan makes **mistakes** because he has to **guess** how God will play.

An example of Satan's miscalculations is the **400-year prophecy** of Genesis 15:13-15. God told Abraham that his descendants would be strangers in a land not theirs for 400 years and after they would return to Canaan. Notably, God did **not identify which land**. When Satan influenced Joseph's brothers to sell him as a slave to Egypt, little **did he know** that he was actually cooperating with God for the fulfillment of this prophecy. God knows the end from the beginning and therefore He can frustrate Satan's 'detours' to fulfill His purpose.

Isaiah described what distinguishes the **only true God** from all false pretenders:

Isaiah 46:9-11

*"Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and **there is no other**; I am God, and there is none like Me, ¹⁰ **declaring the end from the beginning**, and from ancient times things that are **not yet done**, saying, 'My counsel **shall stand**, and I will do **all My pleasure**.' ¹¹ Calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed, **I have spoken it**; I will also **bring it to pass**. I have **purposed it**; I will also do it."*

An Old Testament Example: The Death of Ahab

On a certain occasion there was a meeting of **Ahab** and **Jehoshaphat** in Samaria and Ahab suggested that they **join forces** to battle against their common enemy, **the Syrians**. Jehoshaphat, being a good king, asked Ahab if he had **any prophets** who could advise them whether going into battle was the **Lord's will**. Ahab responded that he not only had one prophet, but **four hundred of them**.

Upon calling them into his presence, Ahab asked them if it was **God's will** to join forces to go into battle. In response, the four hundred false prophets told Ahab **what he wanted to hear**, that they should go into battle together and the Lord would give them a **signal victory**. Jehoshaphat was not convinced so he asked Ahab whether he had a **prophet of the Lord** around? Ahab replied that he had one, but he had cast him into the **dungeon** because he always prophesied **evil and not good**. Jehoshaphat thought to himself, 'this has to be a prophet of the Lord because true prophets usually **hang out** in prison'.

So, at Jehoshaphat's request, Ahab had **Micaiah** brought from the dungeon and asked him the **same question** he had asked the false prophets. Micaiah's answer seemed to **digress** from the question. Let's go to the **end of the story** and then return to Micaiah's answer. What happened when Ahab followed the counsel of the false prophets and went to battle?

2 Chronicles 18:33-34

*"Now a certain man drew a bow at random, and **struck the king of Israel** between the joints of his armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and take me out of the battle, for **I am wounded**." ³⁴ The battle increased*

*that day, and the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot facing the Syrians until evening; and about the time of sunset **he died.***"

Now let's go back to where we left off in the story. According to 2 Chronicles 18, King Ahab went to battle and **was killed** on the battlefield. The death of Ahab might have appeared simply as a casualty of war. However, according to Micaiah, Ahab's death had **already been** determined in a meeting of the **heavenly council** before he went to battle:

*"Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I **saw the Lord sitting on His throne**, and all the host of heaven standing on His right hand and His left.¹⁹ And the Lord said, '**Who will persuade** Ahab king of Israel to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner.²⁰ Then **a spirit came** forward and stood before the Lord, and said, '**I will persuade him.**' The Lord said to him, 'In what way?'²¹ So he said, '**I will go** out and be **a lying spirit** in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the Lord said, 'You shall persuade him and also prevail; **go out and do so.**'²² Therefore look! The Lord has put **a lying spirit** in the mouth of these prophets of yours, and the Lord has declared disaster against you."*

You see, the Bible **removes the veil** and helps us see what is going on **behind**, **above** and **beyond** visible history. The visible events of history are **only a sliver** of the battle that transpires behind the scenes.

We can **compare** the play and counter play of historical events to a seemingly **harmless iceberg** that floats leisurely in the **north Atlantic**. The **Titanic** tragedy demonstrated that the **hidden part** of the iceberg was the **most dangerous**. The visible part was a mere fraction of the danger **lurking below**.

Likewise, the greatest dangers in history are **hidden** from **human sight** and can only be understood by the testimony of the **Bible**.

The Stories of Esther and Job

Another story in the **Old Testament** that illustrates the **conspiracy** behind history is the book of Esther. Esther is the **only** book in the Bible that fails to mention the **name of God**. For this reason, along with Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs, it was one of **the last books** to be included in the Old Testament canon. However, although the **overt name** of God does not appear in the book, **the text screams** that an invisible hand was **guiding events** to deliver Israel from genocide. The story does not overtly **mention Satan either** but the play and counter play of events clearly reveals two antagonistic invisible powers that are orchestrating the movements of **'horizontal history'**.

Ellen White removed the veil and explained who was behind the plot and why:

***"Satan instigated** the scheme in order to rid the earth of those who preserved the knowledge of the true God. But his plots were defeated by a **counter power** that reigns among the children of men." 5T, p. 450*

Thank God for the Spirit of Prophecy where the veil between visible and invisible history is **removed** so that we can discern the great controversy between Christ and Satan in historical events.

We could add the **story of Job** to illustrate the **play and counter play** of history. The book tells us that all heaven was keenly aware of the events that were occurring in 'vertical history' but **no one on the horizontal level** had the benefit of that knowledge until the very end of the story. If a **mere historian**

had written about the calamities that befell Job, he could only have described what was happening on earth. However, the **Bible removes the veil** and describes the real battle between the Lord and Satan in the realm of ‘vertical history’.

At the Birth of Jesus

Another example of this invisible struggle between Christ and Satan is the story of the **birth of Jesus**. Matthew wrote that **Herod conspired** to kill Jesus as soon he was born because he considered him a **rival to his throne**:

Matthew 2:16

*“Then **Herod**, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and **he sent forth** and put to death all the **male children** who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.”*

Any good **historian** could have written what Matthew wrote. The account tells us **where** the event occurred (in the confines of Bethlehem), **when** it occurred (during the reign of Herod), **with whom** it occurred and **why** (because Herod feared a rival would take his throne). However, the book of **Revelation** removes the veil and reveals who really wanted Jesus dead **for fear** of losing his throne—**Satan**:

Revelation 12:4

*“And the **dragon** stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to **devour her Child** as soon as it was born.”*

The Early Church Persecutions

Historians tell us that the emperors of the Roman Empire mercilessly persecuted and imprisoned Christians. However, the Bible removes the veil and tells us that the devil was behind the persecution. God encouraged the church of Smyrna to be faithful even though Satan would cast some of them into prison:

Revelation 2:10

“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Clearly, the devil did not personally cast any of the members of Smyrna into prison. He did it by influencing the emperors of the Roman Empire. Ellen White explained that the dragon is a symbol of Satan but in a secondary sense, represents the rulers of the Roman Empire whom Satan used to slay Christians:

“The dragon is said to be Satan (Revelation 12:9); he it was that moved upon Herod to put the Savior to death. But the chief agent of Satan in making war upon Christ and His people during the first centuries of the Christian Era was the Roman Empire, in which paganism was the prevailing religion. Thus while the dragon, primarily, represents Satan, it is, in a secondary sense, a symbol of pagan Rome.” GC, p. 438

Likewise, Satan used pagan Rome to hand off power to papal Rome:

*"In the sixth century the papacy had become firmly established. Its seat of power was fixed in the imperial city, and the bishop of Rome was declared to be the head over the entire church. **Paganism** had given place to the **papacy**. The **dragon had given to the beast** "his power, and his seat, and great authority." [Revelation 13:2]." GC, p. 54*

The 1260 Years

According to Daniel 7, the **little horn** persecuted and prevailed against the saints of the Most High for 'time, times and the dividing of time':

Daniel 7:21, 25

*"He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, **shall persecute the saints of the Most High**, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the **saints shall be given into his hand** for a time and times and half a time. . . I was watching; and the same **horn** was making **war against the saints**, and **prevailing** against them."*

Revelation 13 tells us that the sea beast did the same thing to the saints for **42 symbolic** months:

Revelation 13:2, 7

*"It was granted to him to make **war with the saints** and to **overcome** them."*

Thus, Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 tell us that the little horn/the beast persecuted the saints and prevailed against the saints for 1260 years. However,

there is more to the story. Revelation 12 tells us that **the dragon** was the driving force that persecuted the saints for ‘*time, times and the dividing of time*’:

Revelation 12:6, 13, 14

*“Now when the **dragon** saw that he had been cast to the earth, **he persecuted [the dragon]** the woman who gave birth to the male Child. ¹⁴ But **the woman** was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a **time and times and half a time**, from the presence of **the serpent [the same as the dragon, Revelation 12:9]**.”*

Notably, sometimes Satan **plays** and then **counter plays** in the drama of history. For 1260 years the papacy **forbade the reading** of the Bible or kept it in a **language** that the people could not read. As a result, people perceived that the God of the papacy was the God of the Bible. **Then, in the French Revolution, Satan influenced** the populace turned against God and the Bible. According to the Spirit of Prophecy, the Revolution was a new manifestation of satanic power:

*“In many of the nations of Europe the powers that ruled in church and state had for centuries been **controlled by Satan** through the medium of the papacy. But here is brought to view a **new manifestation of satanic power**.”* GC, pp. 268, 269

The Dragon in the End Time

At the end of the 1260 years of persecution, the little horn/beast received a **deadly wound**. However, when the wound heals, the same **dragon** that persecuted for ‘*a time and times and the dividing of time*’ **will vent his hatred**

against the remnant of the woman's SEED, that is, the remnant of Jesus. The dragon, Satan, will not do this **personally and visibly** but rather by recruiting the **two beasts** of Revelation 13, both of which will **speak on behalf** of the stealthy dragon:

Revelation 12:17

*"And the **dragon** was enraged with the woman, and he went to **make war** with the **remnant of her Seed**, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."*

When the deadly wound of the beast **heals**, the populace will not only worship **the beast** but also the **dragon** who **gave authority** to the **beast**.

Revelation 13:3-4

*"And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. 4 So they **worshiped the dragon** who gave authority to the beast; and they **worshiped the beast**, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"*

These verses make a **clear distinction** between the beast and the dragon who gave authority to the beast. By worshiping the beast, the populace will **unknowingly** be worshiping the dragon who influenced **the actions of the beast** from the 'vertical realm' of history:

Likewise, the beast that will rise from the earth **to restore power** to the sea beast will become the spokesperson for the dragon:

Revelation 13:11

*“Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and **spoke like a dragon**.”*

The Relevance of Revelation 19:19, 20

Revelation 16:13

Revelation 16:13 describes a **trilogy** of powers that will unite to persecute God’s people:

*“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the [1] **dragon**, out of the mouth of the [2] **beast**, and out of the mouth of the [3] **false prophet**.”*

The same trilogy of powers is described in Revelation 19:19, 20 in a slightly different way as the **kings** of the earth, the **beast** and the **false** prophet. The dragon seems to **disappear** from the picture and is replaced by the kings of the earth:

Revelation 19:19, 20

*“And I saw the [1] **beast**, the [2] **kings** of the earth, and their armies [the wicked subjects of the kings], **gathered together** [cf. Revelation 16:14] to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. ²⁰ Then the **beast** was captured, and with him the [3] **false prophet** who worked signs in his presence [cf. The earth beast, Revelation 13:13 14], by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.”*

Why do the kings replace the dragon in Revelation 19? Ellen White provides the answer. The DRAGON (Satan) in the invisible realm, influences the ‘dragon’ (the kings in the visible realm):

*“**Kings and rulers and governors** have placed the brand of antichrist upon themselves and are **represented as the dragon** who goes to make war with the saints—with those who keep the commandments of God and who have the faith of Jesus.” TM, p. 39*

Before and After the Millennium

As we have seen, both **Satan** and the **civil rulers** are described as the dragon—Satan THE DRAGON and the civil rulers, THE DRAGON’S ‘dragon’. Before the second coming, Satan works **by stealth, under the radar**, by subterfuge. So to speak, he **throws the stone** and hides the hand. Before the millennium, the kings of the earth are **oblivious** to the fact that THE DRAGON—Satan—is inspiring their actions **from behind the veil**. Having rejected the Bible’s ‘vertical’ world view they will look at historical events only on a ‘horizontal level’.

Satan will **remain in this ‘stealth mode’** until after the millennium. The kings who died before the second coming, were **willingly ignorant** that it was Satan who influenced them to persecute God’s people.

After the millennium all the wicked kings of history will resurrect, the veil between the visible and invisible world will be removed and they will see Satan with their physical eyes for the first time. At that point, Satan will no longer be in stealth mode, behind the veil. He will be clearly visible, orchestrating the

armies of the world. At that point, Satan will claim that he is the legitimate ruler of the world whose position has been usurped by Christ:

*“The wicked are Satan's captives. In rejecting Christ, they have accepted the rule of the rebel leader. They are ready to **receive his suggestions** and to **do his bidding**. Yet, true to his **early cunning [in Eden]**, he does not acknowledge himself to be Satan. He **claims to be the prince** who is the **rightful owner** of the world and whose inheritance has been **unlawfully wrested** from him. He represents himself to his **deluded subjects** as a redeemer, assuring them that his power has brought them forth from their graves and that he is about to rescue them from the cruelest tyranny. The presence of Christ having been removed, Satan works wonders to support his claims. He makes the weak strong and inspires all with his own spirit and energy. He proposes to lead them against the camp of the saints and to take possession of the City of God. With fiendish exultation he points to the unnumbered millions who have been raised from the dead and declares that as their leader he is well able to overthrow the city and **regain his throne** and his kingdom.” GC, p. 663*

Because Satan was invisible to the kings before the millennium, **they were oblivious** that he was **behind the veil** influencing their decisions while they lived. Therefore, they will **buy into Satan's lie**. At this point Satan is THE DRAGON inspiring and leading the ‘dragon’—the kings of the earth and the whole world.

But then, when Satan and the wicked are **prepared to attack** the city, God will reveal, in **panoramic view** above the city, the **true history of Satan** and the role that the lost played in doing his bidding. For the **first time**, the wicked will

understand who **Satan really is**, and how they followed his bidding, but it is **too late**. They are filled with **fury** against Satan now that they know who he really is and they will turn against him:

*“He rushes into the midst of his subjects and endeavors to inspire them with his own fury and arouse them to instant battle. But of all the **countless millions** whom he has allured into rebellion, there are none now to acknowledge his supremacy. **His power is at an end**. The wicked are filled with the same hatred of God that inspires Satan; but they see that their case is hopeless, that they cannot prevail against Jehovah. Their rage is kindled against Satan and those who have been his agents in deception, and with the fury of demons they turn upon them.”*
GC, p. 671

The Problem with Civil Leaders Today

Unfortunately, **politicians**, rank and file **Protestants** and Roman **Catholics** discern only what they read in the **newspapers**, on **social media** and watch on **television**, that is, ‘horizontal history’. They attribute the **disintegration** of society and the **meltdown** in nature to **human factors** such as climate change, the need for **social justice** and the lack of **Sunday enforcement** when the true cause lies elsewhere. They have **cast aside the Bible** and therefore have a **superficial view** of history. They **willfully forget** that the two greatest climate changes in Bible history were the **flood** and the drought in the days of **Elijah** and that the cause was he **wickedness** of man. Ellen White perceptively wrote:

*“The restraining Spirit of God is even now being withdrawn from the world. Hurricanes, storms, tempests, fire and flood, disasters by sea and land, follow each other in quick succession. **Science seeks to explain all these**. The signs*

*thickening around us, telling of the near approach of the Son of God, are attributed to **any other than the true cause**. Men cannot discern the sentinel angels **restraining** the four winds that they shall not blow until the **servants of God are sealed**; but when God shall bid His angels loose the winds, there will be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture.” 6T, p. 408*

The **political left** claims that climate change is an **existential threat** and is due to **human factors** such as climate change and a lack of social justice. On the other hand, the **political right** denies that there is climate change. **Both sides** of the political spectrum **miss the point** because they are merely looking at ‘horizontal history’! To deny that there is climate change is to be **willfully ignorant** and to attribute it to human factors is **misguided**. Having **cast aside the biblical world view**, neither side of the political spectrum is addressing the real issue, Satan’s **desire to scapegoat** those who are faithful in observing God’s Sabbath.

Only the **Bible** and *The Great Controversy* can **remove the veil** that hides the invisible, ‘vertical realm’ from the visible ‘horizontal’. **Matthew 24:6-8** describes the disasters in the natural and social world but does not tell us **who** is behind them and **why**. However, Ellen White removes the curtain and reveals **who** is behind the meltdown of society and **what** his ultimate agenda is:

*“While appearing to the children of men as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, he will bring **disease** and **disaster**, until **populous cities** are reduced to ruin and desolation. Even now he is at work. In **accidents** and calamities by sea and by land, in great **conflagrations**, in fierce **tornadoes** and **terrific hailstorms**, in **tempests**, **floods**, **cyclones**, **tidal waves**, and*

earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence. These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous. . . And then the great deceiver will persuade men that those who serve God are causing these evils. The class that have provoked the displeasure of Heaven will charge all their troubles upon those whose obedience to God's commandments is a perpetual reproof to transgressors. It will be declared that men are offending God by the violation of the Sunday sabbath; that this sin has brought calamities which will not cease until Sunday observance shall be strictly enforced; and that those who present the claims of the fourth commandment, thus destroying reverence for Sunday, are troublers of the people, preventing their restoration to divine favor and temporal prosperity." GC, pp. 589, 590

No wonder Satan attempted to kill Ellen White after she received 'the great controversy vision'! She laid out in detail the stratagems of Satan working behind the veil.

What should we do?

"God has revealed what is to take place in the last days, that His people may be prepared to stand against the tempest of opposition and wrath. Those who have been warned of the events before them are not to sit in calm expectation of the coming storm, comforting themselves that the Lord will shelter His faithful ones in the day of trouble. We are to be as men waiting for their Lord, not in idle expectancy, but in earnest work, with unwavering faith. It is no time now to allow our minds to be engrossed with things of minor importance. While men

are sleeping, Satan is actively arranging matters so that the Lord's people may not have mercy or justice. The Sunday movement is now **making its way in darkness**. The **leaders are concealing** the true issue, and many who unite in the movement do not themselves see whither the undercurrent is tending. Its **professions are mild** and **apparently Christian**, but when it shall speak it will reveal the spirit of the dragon. It is our duty to do all in our power to avert the threatened danger. We should endeavor to **disarm prejudice** by placing ourselves in a proper light before the people. We should bring before them the real question at issue, thus interposing the most effectual protest against measures to **restrict liberty of conscience**. We should search the Scriptures and be able to **give the reason for our faith**. Says the prophet: "The wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." 5T p. 452



“BEHOLD, I SEND YOU ELIJAH!”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #2: THE ELIJAH STORY AND MATTHEW 24

Introduction

In the two concluding verses of the Old Testament, God promised to send Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5, 6). Clearly, that day has not yet come, so the Elijah prophecy must still await its final fulfillment:

*“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the **great and dreadful** day of the Lord. ⁶ And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and **strike the earth with a curse.**”*

According to Jesus, this prophecy was **partially** fulfilled by **John the Baptist** (cf. Luke 1:16, 17; Matthew 17:10-13; 11:11-13) but the complete, greater, and final fulfillment awaits the future.

Principles of Interpretation

When we study the Elijah prophecy, there are certain governing principles of typology that we must take into account:

The historical Elijah was a literal **individual**, with literal personal **enemies**, in the literal **land** of Israel, who denounced literal **Israel** for worshiping the literal **sun**. The message of literal **Elijah** had little impact until it was joined by literal **fire** from heaven that persuaded literal **Israel** that the Lord was the true Creator God. In the end, the literal **king**, the literal **harlot** and the literal **false prophets** suffered an ignominious death!

In contrast to the historical Elijah, the end time **Elijah** is not a literal person, **Israel** is not literal, the **enemies** are not literal persons, the **fire** from heaven is not literal and the apostasy does not involve the worship of the literal **sun**. The final fulfillment of the Elijah story will involve **spiritual and global systems** that behave like the literal and typological actors in the Old Testament story.

The historical Elijah story describes a three-fold alliance composed of a **spineless king**, a strong-willed **harlot** and a **group of false prophets** who did the harlot's bidding. The three enemies deceived **God's people** and enticed them to **worship** the **sun god** Baal. In response, God commanded **Elijah** to denounce this apostasy and to call God's people back to true worship and the observance of His commandments.

The character of the historical Elijah and his three enemies foreshadows the character of the end time generation and their three enemy systems. The **dragon** represents the kings of the earth (TM, p. 39), the **beast** represents the

Roman Catholic papal system and the **false prophet** (not a single individual but a system of ministers who prophesy falsely) represents the apostate protestant churches (Revelation 16:13; 19:19, 20).

The New Testament Elijah (John the Baptist) is also a literal **individual**, with literal **enemies**, in the literal **land** of Israel with literal **Israel** in apostasy and practicing **false worship** (Mark 7:6, 7).

There are many **striking parallels** between the historical Elijah and Matthew 24 (cf. the parallel passages in Mark 13 and Luke 21). Both **begin with deception** and **end** with the **translation of the elect**. In **between**, we find a portrayal of the **trials** that God's people will go through in the **last remnant** of time. It bears noting that **not all the details** of the Elijah story are **repeated in Matthew 24** (and parallel passages). Matthew 24 contains details that are not in the Elijah story and vice-versa. For example, the Matthew 24 story describes Satan's personation of Christ's coming while the historical Elijah's story does not. The **two sources build** upon each other and when we add the perspective of the **book of Revelation**, additional details surface that give us the complete picture of how final events will flow.

Elijah's Enemies

Let's begin by analyzing the character of **Elijah's three enemies**:

- ✓ **King Ahab** was a king who had **no backbone**. He was easily controlled and **manipulated** by a testy, malevolent and determined harlot (1 Kings 16:30, 31; 1 Kings 21:8-10; 1 Kings 21:25; cf. Revelation 17:2; 18:3, 9).

“Ahab was weak in moral power. His union by marriage with an idolatrous woman of decided character and positive temperament resulted disastrously both to himself and to the nation. Unprincipled, and with no high standard of right doing, his character was easily molded by the determined spirit of Jezebel.” PK, p. 115

- ✓ **The harlot Jezebel** was the dangerous and **central figure** of the story. She pulled **all the strings** by using the **executive power** of the weak king and the extensive influence of her **false prophets** to spread the religion of the sun god and **persecute** whoever did not go along. She is described as a ‘**harlot**’, a ‘**mother**’ and a ‘**witch**’ and she **adorned** herself to incite the ruler to fornicate with her (2 Kings 9:22; cf. Revelation 17:4, 5, 18; 18:20, 23).
- ✓ **The false prophets** did the bidding of the harlot Jezebel because **she fed them**, and you **do not bite** the hand that feeds you! (1 Kings 18:19; cf. Revelation 13:11-18; 17:4; Mark 6:14-28 (where the mother bids her daughter to plead for the king to give her the head of John the Baptist, the New Testament Elijah)).

The Nature of the Apostasy

Israel in Elijah’s day had embraced a **syncretistic religion**. They claimed to serve **two masters** at the same time—the LORD and Baal. They limped between **two opinions** (1 Kings 18:21 cf. Matthew 7:21-23; Ezekiel 8:16). The apostasy centered on the **worship** to the literal sun god Baal (1 Kings 16:30-

33) who was believed to be the **creator** and the source of **prosperity** (Hosea 2:8; cf. Matthew 24:15, 16; Ezekiel 8:16-18 cf. Revelation 7:1-4).

*"Their [the prophets of Baal] pleadings are mingled with cursings to their **sun-god** that he does not send fire for their altars." Testimonies for the Church, volume 3, p. 282*

The Message of Elijah

Elijah was called to **restore** all things that had been torn down (1 Kings 18:37; Matthew 17:11) and he called the people to turn their **hearts back** to the Lord (Luke 1:16) and to prepare for the ministry of Elisha. Here are the highlights of his message:

- ✓ Elijah witnessed boldly before **the ruler** at the **risk of his own life** (cf. Luke 21:12; Mark 13:9; Revelation 10:11)

*"Elijah traveled day and night until he reached the palace of Ahab. He solicited no admission, and waited not to be formally announced. All unexpectedly to Ahab, Elijah **stands before the astonished king** of Samaria in the coarse garments usually worn by the prophets. He makes no apology for his abrupt appearance, without invitation; but, raising his hands to heaven, he solemnly affirms by the living God, who **made the heavens and the earth**, the judgments which would come upon Israel: "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."
3T, p. 273*

- ✓ **Elijah denounced** Israel's false worship to the **sun God** and restored **true worship** (1 Kings 18:21; 18:17, 18; 16:30-33; cf. Revelation 14:6, 7, 9-11)
- ✓ Elijah called the people to worship to **true creator God** (cf. Hosea 2:8).
- ✓ Elijah restored the true gospel by rebuilding the **altar** of sacrifice (1 Kings 18:30-32) with its **twelve stones** representing Israel and he invoked the **God of Abraham**, Isaac and Jacob thus renewing the **covenant** of the fathers (1 Kings 18:36; cf. Matthew 24:14; Revelation 14:6, 7).
- ✓ Elijah rebuked the transgression of the **commandments** of God (1 Kings 18:18; cf. Matthew 24:12; Revelation 12:17; 14:12)
- ✓ Elijah denounced the **fornication** of king Ahab with the harlot Jezebel (1 Kings 16:30-33; cf. Revelation 14:8; 17:2, 4; 18:3, 9; 19:2).

Calamities, Flight and Blame

There was a **drastic climate change** in Israel because of **their apostasy** and the result was **famine and pestilence** (1 Kings 17:1, 7 in the light of the immediately preceding verses of the previous chapter, 16:30-33; 1 Kings 18:5; cf. Matthew 24:6-8)

"After a few months the earth, unrefreshed by dew or rain, becomes dry, and vegetation withers. . . An entire year passes, and another commences, and yet there is no rain. The earth is parched as though a fire had passed over it. The flourishing fields are as the scorching desert. The air becomes dry and suffocating, and the dust-storm blinds the eyes and nearly stops the breath. The groves of Baal are leafless, and the forest trees give no shade, but appear as skeletons. Hunger

and thirst are telling upon man and beast with fearful mortality.” 3T, pp. 275, 276

The reason for the climate change and calamities in society was due to the **apostasy** of those who claimed to be God’s people. God had predicted the reason for the calamities and **how they could be turned away** (2 Chronicles 7:13, 14).

Elijah was blamed for the famine and upheaval of society (1 Kings 18:5, 10, 17; cf. Matthew 24:9; GC, pp. 589, 590).

*“Baal’s prophets, Ahab, Jezebel, and **nearly the whole of Israel**, charge their calamity upon Elijah.” 3T, p. 276*

*“Jezebel and the prophets of Baal hated Elijah with a **deadly hatred**, and they spared no effort to bring him within reach of their power. And still there was no rain.” PK, p. 137*

*“Jezebel utterly refused to recognize the drought as a judgment from Jehovah. Unyielding in her determination to defy the God of heaven, she, with **nearly the whole of Israel**, united in denouncing Elijah as the **cause of all their misery**. Had he not borne testimony **against their forms of worship**? If only he could be put out of the way, she argued, the **anger of their gods would be appeased**, and their **troubles would end**.” PK, p. 126*

A **‘little time of trouble’** ensued for Elijah. During this time, **Jezebel murdered** some of the prophets of the Lord. However, there was a **faithful remnant** who remained alive, the **7,000** who had not bent the knee to Baal (1 Kings 18:4; 19:18; cf. Matthew 24:9; John 16:2; Revelation 17:6).

*“Jezebel then decides that as she cannot make Elijah feel her murderous power, she will be revenged by **destroying the prophets** of God in Israel. No one who professed to be a prophet of God shall live. This determined, infuriated woman **executes her work** of madness by **slaying the Lord's prophets**.” 3T, p. 276*

During the ‘little time of trouble’, Elijah was persecuted and **had to flee** to desolate places (cf. Matthew 24:16-19; 1 Kings 17:1-7).

God provided **bread and water** for Elijah where he fled (1 Kings 17:4-6; cf. Revelation 7:16; Isaiah 33:14-16)

Elijah had the **Spirit and power** in his preaching. We know this because the New Testament Elijah, John the Baptist, spoke in the Spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:16, 17; cf. Mark 13:11; Luke 21:14, 15)

Elijah brought the **final test** by calling for a clear cut decision on Mt. Carmel. However, at this point, the people **remained neutral** and did not answer him a word (1 Kings 18:21)

“If God abhors one sin above another, of which His people are guilty, it is doing nothing in case of an emergency. Indifference and neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded of God as a grievous crime and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God.” 3T, p. 280

On Mt. Carmel Elijah’s call swelled to a **loud cry** and when his message was **accompanied by fire** from heaven, the **people awakened** from their deception and came over to the Lord’s side (1 Kings 18:37-39; cf. Revelation 18:1-6).

After the signal victory on Mt. Carmel, Elijah **fled for a second time** and became the subject of the **harlot's death decree**. (1 Kings 19:1, 2, 10; cf. Jeremiah 30:5-8; Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21; Revelation 13:15). In the midst of the flight, Elijah **got discouraged** and went through a time of **severe anguish** and trouble.

God protected Elijah from Jezebel's decree (1 Kings 19:1, 2, 10).

God avenged the blood of the martyrs at the hand of Jezebel (2 Kings 9:7; cf. Revelation 6:9-11; 16:5-7; 19:2)

There appeared **a sign in heaven** about half the size of a man's palm as a sign that prosperity was about to return (1 Kings 18:43, 44; cf. Matthew 24:30).

God **translated Elijah** to heaven from among the living in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:11, 12 cf. Matthew 24:31; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

*"On each side of the **cloudy** chariot are wings, and beneath it are living wheels; and as the chariot rolls upward, the wheels cry, "Holy," and the wings, as they move, cry, "Holy," and the retinue of angels cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." And the redeemed shout, "Alleluia!" as the chariot moves onward toward the **New Jerusalem**." GC, p. 645*

John the Baptist also had **three enemies**. The first was a **spineless king**. The second was a determined **adulterous woman** and the third **a daughter** who did the bidding of her mother. Likewise, the end time three-fold coalition is described as the **mother** of harlots, who influences her **daughters** to do her bidding by getting the **kings** of the earth to enforce the harlot's word

(Revelation 17:1-5). These three relate to each other much like **Herodias**, **Salome** and **Herod** did in the death of John the Baptist (Mark 6:14-28).



“BEHOLD, I SEND YOU ELIJAH!”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #3: SATAN’S PERSONATION OF CHRIST: WHEN AND WHY?

In recent times there has been an increasing discussion in Adventist circles about the timing and purpose of Satan’s personation of Christ’s second coming (Matthew 24:23-27). Some believe that it will happen before the close of probation with the purpose of persuading a hopelessly divided world to keep Sunday as God’s day of rest. Others believe that it will occur after the close of probation and will be Satan’s last ditch effort to deceive the elect who up to this point have refused to honor the Sunday.

In recent weeks I have received numerous emails asking which position is correct. For this reason, I have dedicated many hours to study the matter and in this article I will share the results of my own research on the subject. From the start I want to make it clear that I believe the evidence is overwhelming that the personation of Christ’s coming by Satan will take place after the close

of probation. As we shall see, Satan's primary purpose will **not be to unite** and deceive a hopelessly divided **world**, but rather to persuade **the elect** to come on board in the observance of Sunday.

One **well-known expositor** has suggested that **nothing less** than Satan's personation of Christ's coming before the close of probation would be able to **unite and persuade** a **hopelessly divided** world of Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, animists and even atheists to come together to keep and enforce Sunday as the global day of rest. This scenario, however, must be put to the **stringent test** of Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy because a belief in a pre-close of probation personation might **lead some to think** that they can **wait until** Satan's personation of Christ to make a decision to be faithful to Jesus, when the door of probation **has already closed**!

According to those who hold the pre-close of probation view, some of the elect **might conceivably** be deceived into keeping Sunday as they behold Satan's counterfeit second coming. After all, didn't Jesus **leave the door open** to such a possibility when He said that Satan's personation of Christ would deceive, **if possible**, even elect? (Matthew 24:24) Doesn't 'if possible' mean that it is possible?

God showed Ellen White repeatedly that the study of Matthew 24 should occupy the attention of all God's people. She admonished ministers and teachers to **leave out of their discourses** matters of minor consequence and to focus on truths that will decide the destiny of souls:

*"The twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew is presented to me **again and again** as something that is to be brought to the **attention of all**. We are today living in the*

time when the predictions of this chapter **are fulfilling**. Let our **ministers and teachers** explain these prophecies to those whom they instruct. Let them leave out of their discourses matters of **minor consequence**, and present the truths that will decide the **destiny of souls**. Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 148

Ellen White also underlined that Matthew 24 had only a **partial fulfillment** in the past and that the **more direct** and complete application is still future:

*“The ruin of Jerusalem was a **symbol** of the **final ruin** that shall overwhelm the world. The prophecies that received a **partial fulfillment** in the overthrow of Jerusalem have a **more direct application** to the last days. We are now standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. A crisis is before us, such as the world has never witnessed.”* Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 120, 121

Furthermore, Ellen White wrote that **all** of Matthew 24 is a prophecy about events that will occur before, and at, the second coming:

*“**The whole** of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew is a prophecy concerning the events to **precede** this event [**the second coming**], and the destruction of Jerusalem is used to **typify** the last great **destruction** of the world by fire.”* Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 18

So let's examine the biblical and Spirit of Prophecy evidence to determine **when** and **why** Satan will personate Christ's second coming. Let's begin with Matthew chapter 24.

The Word *tóte* ('then') in the Gospel of Matthew

There are two primary biblical passages that describe Satan's personation of Christ's second coming (Matthew 24:23-27; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-13). Of these two, I believe that Matthew 24 best helps us understand when and why Satan will attempt to overcome the elect with his final and most cunning deception which Ellen White described as the '*almost overmastering delusion*'. As we move along in our study, it behooves us to carefully analyze the biblical text and the Spirit of Prophecy statements lest we dwell on the sensational rather than on a sober and levelheaded understanding of the subject.

Matthew 24:4-31 contains several temporal expressions that indicate that the events in these verses are in chronological order. The most important of these temporal terms is the adverb 'then'. The Greek adverb *tóte* appears 160 times in the New Testament and 90 of those are in a single book, the gospel of Matthew. In the NKJV, the word is translated 'then' 87 times and 'from that time' (4:17; 16:21; 26:16) three. Without exception, the word in the gospel of Matthew describes one event that occurs temporally after another.

The Definition of *tóte* in the Lexicons

It is helpful to consult the experts of the Greek language to determine the meaning of the adverb *tóte*. Here are some definitions from reputable lexicons:

The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament:

"Tóte in the sense of thereafter introduces that which (immediately) follows temporally."

Louw and Nida:

‘A point of time subsequent to another point of time.’

Arndt and Gingrich:

“to introduce that which follows in time. . . immediately thereafter”.

Time Expressions in Matthew 24

The word ‘then’ appears eight times in Matthew 24:4-31. However, there are also other temporal expressions in these verses that help us understand the sequential flow of events. Here are the words and expressions with my own explanatory notes:

✓ **Verses 4-6:**

‘the end is not yet’: In Matthew 24 **the word ‘end’** (verses 6, 13, 14) refers to the moment when **Jesus comes** on the clouds and sends His angels to gather the elect. When we read about the rise of **false christs** and we hear the **drumbeat of wars** and rumors of wars in verse 6, ‘the **end is not yet**’. These signs are going to **intensify**. Verse 7 tells us that wars and ‘natural’ disasters will increase with the passing of time. Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom and there will be pestilences, famines, earthquakes and tumults (cf. Mark 13:8).

✓ **Verse 8:**

‘the beginning of sorrows’: The false christs, wars, rumors of wars, pestilences, famines, earthquakes and tumults (cf. Mark 13:8) in verses 6, 7 are only the **‘beginning** of sorrows’. The word ‘sorrows’ refers to the

birth pangs of a woman in travail (cf. Revelation 12:2). As with a woman in travail, the signs of verses 7, 6 are only the beginning of birth pangs. With the passing of time the pain is going to get a lot worse.

✓ **Verse 9:**

'then': Satan's purpose in causing the calamities in verses 6, 7 is to scapegoat God's people and blame them for the calamities. They will be **hated** by all nations. The result will be **tribulation**, and in the case of some, **martyrdom**. Clearly, verse 9 refers to a tribulation **during probationary time** because after the close of probation there will be no martyrs.

✓ **Verses 10-13:**

'then': **When persecution** against God's people comes, many who **appeared to be genuine** believers will be offended and **abandon** the faith. The love of many will **grow cold** but there will be a group that will keep the faith until the end.

✓ **Verse 14:**

'then': The **end will come** when the proclamation of the gospel concludes. However, verse 15 takes us back to probationary time before the end.

✓ **Verse 15:**

'therefore': The word 'therefore' at the beginning of verse 15 takes us back to the time when the gospel is being preached before the end comes.

According to the *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, the word therefore, ‘resumes the previous train of thought after a parenthetical remark.’ *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* © 1990 by William B. Eerdmans Publishing. Company). The **previous train** of thought is the preaching of the gospel and the **parenthetical remark** is ‘*then the end will come*’. Clearly, the ‘abomination of desolation’ in verse 15 occurs before the end comes at the end of verse 14. Ellen White explicitly identified the abomination of desolation as the National Sunday Law before the close of probation.

✓ **Verse 16:**

‘then’: The setting up of the abomination of desolation will be the sign for God’s people to flee to desolate places because the close of **probation** is at hand and the great tribulation is about to begin.

✓ **Verse 19:**

‘those days’: Things will be particularly difficult for women who are pregnant and nursing during ‘those days’, of flight from the cities.

✓ **Verse 21**

‘then’: Shortly after God’s people flee to desolate places, the **great** tribulation will begin. Some may question **why I apply** the great tribulation to the end time when Ellen White applied it to the papal persecutions of the faithful during the **1260 years**. The reason is simple. Ellen White understood the great tribulation as **past and future**! We

shall see later in our study that there is a **single great tribulation** in two stages with a **pause** in between.

Ellen White applied the expressions ‘*great tribulation*’, ‘*cut short*’ and ‘*the elect’s sake*’ to the great tribulation during the 1260 years:

*“The **persecution** of the church did not continue throughout the entire period of the **1260 years**. God in mercy to His people **cut short** [language of Matthew 24:22] the time of their fiery trial. In foretelling the ‘**great tribulation**’ to befall **the church**, the Savior said: ‘Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for **the elect’s** sake those days shall be shortened.’ Matthew 24:22.” GC, pp. 266, 267*

Ellen White also applied the expression ‘*great tribulation*’ to the end time tribulation:

*“These are they which came out of **great tribulation** [literally: ‘**the tribulation, the great one**];” they have passed through the **time of trouble** such as never was since there was a nation; they have endured the anguish of the time of **Jacob’s trouble**; they have stood **without an intercessor** through the **final outpouring** of God’s judgments. But they have been **delivered**, for they have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” GC, p. 649*

Ellen White also used the expressions ‘*for the elect’s sake*’ and ‘*will be shortened*’ for the future tribulation:

Regarding those who will go through the final time of trouble she wrote:

*“As they [**the elect**] endeavor to wait trustingly for the Lord to work, they are led to exercise faith, hope, and patience, which have been too little exercised during their religious experience. Yet for the **elect's sake** the time of trouble will be **shortened**.” GC, p. 631*

✓ **Verse 22:**

‘those days’ twice: If God does not shorten ‘those days’ of the great tribulation no one would survive, but for the elect’s sake He will shorten ‘those days’ of the great tribulation.

✓ **Verses 23, 24:**

‘then’: As his **crowning act** of deception **during the great tribulation**, Satan will personate Christ’s second coming (GC, pp. 624, 62). Indisputably, in the **order of events** of Matthew 24, Satan’s personation of Christ will take place **after the close** of probation **during the great tribulation**.

Although **verses 21, 22** had a **past fulfillment** during the 1260 years, there is **no evidence** that **verses 23-31** had any past fulfillment. In fact, Ellen White indicated that verses 23-31 **apply exclusively** to events relating to the **second coming**. There is **no evidence** that Satan **personated** Christ’s coming during the 1260 years. Furthermore, there is no evidence that during that period the **heavenly powers** were

shaken, the **sign of the Son of Man** was seen in heaven, the **wicked mourned** or the elect **were gathered** from the four winds of heaven:

*“Now [quoting verses 23 and 24], in **unmistakable language**, our Lord speaks of **His second coming**, and He gives warning of **dangers to precede** His advent to the world. ‘If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.’ DA, p. 631*

✓ **Verse 29:**

‘immediately after the tribulation of those days’: The **shaking of the powers of heaven** will mark the **conclusion** of the great tribulation. At that point, God’s people will be delivered at the **seventh plague** by the voice of God (Revelation 16:16, 17). Thus, Ellen White wrote: *“That voice shakes the heavens and the earth”* GC, p. 636

✓ **Verse 30:**

‘then’: **After** the sun, moon and stars are shaken, **the sign** of the Son of Man will be seen in heaven.

✓ **Verse 30: ‘then’**: When the sign of the Son of Man is seen, *‘All of the tribes of the earth **will mourn**’.*

✓ **Verse 31:**

‘then’: **When** (‘then’ used in the parallel passage in **Mark 13:27**) the powers of heaven are shaken, the sign of the Son of Man is seen in heaven

and all the tribes of the earth mourn, **Jesus will send His angels** to gather together His elect into the clouds (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17) from the four winds of heaven.

The Use of *Tóte* in Mark 13 and Luke 21

Even in the parallel passages of Luke 21:10, 20, 21, 27 and Mark 13:14, 21, 26, 27, the word *tóte* describes sequential events one following the other.

The use of the word *tóte* in Mark 13:

Mark 13:14

*"So **when you see** the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), "**then** let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."*

Mark 13:21

*"**Then** if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it."*

Mark 13:26

*"**Then** they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory."*

Mark 13:27

*"And **then** He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven."*

The use of the word *tóte* Luke 21:

Luke 21:10

*“**Then** He said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.”*

Luke 21:20

*“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, **then** know that its desolation is near.”*

Luke 21:21

*“**Then** let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her.”*

Luke 21:27

*“**Then** they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”*

The Conjunction Kai

The Greek conjunction **kai** (‘and’) is quite **versatile** and is used most frequently to **connect** single **words** or **sentences**. Occasionally it does link one event with another **temporally**. Here is an example from Matthew 24 of *kai* linking words and sentences;

*“For nation will rise against nation, **and** kingdom against kingdom **and** there will be famines, pestilences, **and** earthquakes in various places” (Matthew 24:6, 7).*

Sometimes *kai* **does link** one event to be followed by another such as in **Revelation 13:11** where the earth beast rises **after the fall** of the sea beast

and in **Revelation 6:14** where the heavenly signs **at** the second coming **follow** the signs of His **soon** coming in **Revelation 6:12, 13**. However, *kai* does **not** necessarily denote as **strong a temporal link** between one event to be followed by another as does *tóte*.

Matthew could **have used** the conjunction *kai* in chapter 24 to connect events but he did not. Rather, he chose the word *tóte* which strongly links one event to be followed by another (cf. the 25 uses of the word *tóte* in Matthew 25:1, 7, 16, 24, 27, 31, 34, 37, 41, 44, 45; 26:3, 14, 25, 31, 36, 38, 45, 50, 52, 54, 56, 65, 67, 74).

Is Matthew 24 a Chiasm?

Some have claimed that Matthew 24 is a **chiasm**. However, a careful examination of the time related words and expressions in verses 1-31 clearly indicates that the chapter consists of a series of **sequential events**, one following the other. In fact, a careful examination of the chapter indicates that the events from **verses 4-20** occur during probationary time and the events in **verses 21-31** after. Let's consider more closely the sequential events in Matthew 24:4-31.

✓ Verse 4:

Christ warned His followers to shun Satan's end time **deceptions**: '*Take heed that no one deceives you.*' This indicates that the purpose of Christ's discourse in Matthew 24 is to keep **His own followers** from being deceived.

✓ **Verse 5:**

During probationary time many will be **deceived** by **persons** falsely **claiming** to be Christ. These ‘preliminary’ false christs will be followed by Satan’s **personation** of Christ during the **great tribulation** (verses 23-27). Ellen White drew a **clear distinction** between false christs during probationary time and Satan’s personation of Christ after probation’s close. Concerning false christs during probationary time and before Satan’s ‘crowning act’, Ellen White wrote:

*“**Persons** will arise pretending to be Christ Himself, and claiming the title and worship which belong to the world’s Redeemer. They will perform wonderful **miracles** of healing and will profess to have revelations from heaven contradicting the testimony of the Scriptures.”* GC, p. 624

✓ **Verses 6, 7:**

During probationary time there will be wars, rumors of wars, nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be pestilences, famines, earthquakes and tumults (cf. Mark 13:8). Ellen White **expanded upon these disasters** during probationary time:

*“It is his object to incite the **nations to war** against one another, for he can thus divert the minds of the people from the work of preparation to stand in the day of God. . . While appearing to the children of men as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, he will bring **disease** and **disaster**, until **populous cities** are reduced to ruin and desolation. Even now he is at work. In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great*

conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 589

✓ **Verse 8:**

These calamities in nature and society during probationary time are merely the beginning of birth pangs. That is, the pain is going to get much worse! Thus, immediately after the previous statement, Ellen White described the increase of ‘birth pangs’ (cf. Acts 2:24; 1 Thessalonians 5:3):

“These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous.”
GC, p. 590

✓ **Verse 9:**

The upheaval in nature and society in verses 6, 7 will bring the world together with the objective of saving the planet from extinction. It is not Satan’s personation of Christ’s coming that will unite the world to keep Sunday. It will be the disastrous condition of the world that is perceived as threatening the very survival of humanity.

Verse 9 removes the veil and reveals that Satan’s ultimate purpose in causing these calamities in society and nature will be to scapegoat God’s faithful people. All nations will unite to blame the faithful for the demise

of civilization. As a result, a **tribulation** or **little time** of trouble will ensue for the faithful. During this little time of trouble, the **door of probation** will still be open.

Something similar occurred during the **days of Elijah** when he **had to flee** to desolate places from the wrath of Ahab, Jezebel and the populace who accused him of being 'the troubler of Israel' (1 Kings 18:17).

Immediately after describing the disasters in nature and society Ellen White explained Satan's hidden agenda in causing these evils:

*"And **then** the great deceiver will persuade men that those who serve God are **causing these evils**. The class that have provoked the displeasure of Heaven will charge all their troubles upon those whose obedience to God's commandments is a perpetual reproof to transgressors. It will be declared that men are offending God by the violation of the Sunday sabbath; that this sin **has brought calamities** which will not cease until Sunday observance shall be **strictly enforced [up to this point it has not been enforced]**; and that those who present the claims of the fourth commandment, thus destroying reverence for Sunday, are troublers of the people, preventing their **restoration to divine favor and temporal prosperity**." GC, p. 590*

In another place Ellen White linked the calamities in nature and society with Sunday agitation:

*"Satan puts **his interpretation** upon events, and **they think**, as he would have them, that the **calamities** which fill the land are a result of **Sunday-breaking**. Thinking to **appease the wrath** of God, these influential men*

make laws *[the laws are made as a result of the calamities]* **enforcing** Sunday observance. They think that by exalting this false rest day higher and still higher, **compelling obedience** to the Sunday law, the spurious sabbath, they are doing God service." 10MR, p. 239

These two previous statements provide the following **order of events**:

1. The populace will claim that the disasters in society and nature are due to **Sunday desecration**.
2. They will attempt to **appease the wrath** of God by **clamoring** for laws that enforce the observance of Sunday.
3. They will claim that the strict observance of Sunday will **restore** divine favor and temporal prosperity to the nation.
4. In response to the clamor of the people, **influential men** will make laws that strictly **enforce** the observance of Sunday.
5. The people and their leaders will think that by enforcing the observance of Sunday they are doing **God service**.
6. Eventually, after the close of probation, a **death decree** will be given against those who fail to comply.

*"Fearful is the issue to which the world is to be brought. The powers of earth, uniting to war against the commandments of God, will decree that "all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond" (Revelation 13:16), shall conform to the customs of the church by the observance of the false sabbath. All who refuse compliance will be visited with civil penalties, and it will **finally** be declared that they are **deserving of death**."* GC, p. 604

Something similar occurred leading up to the **1888** Sunday Law crisis in the United States. For many years, **Protestants** in union with **Catholics** had **agitated and clamored** in several states in favor of **an amendment** to the Constitution enforcing a National Sunday Law. In fact, **many state legislatures** drafted and enforced Sunday Blue Laws.

In the **1870's and 1880's**, Sabbath keepers were **arrested, fined, imprisoned and persecuted** for Sunday desecration. More often than not, **courts of justice sided** with those who supported Sunday laws and declared those laws constitutional. **Senator Blair** in 1888 advocated for a National Sunday Law but it failed. The important point is that there was agitation and persecution when a Sunday law was being contemplated.

Conclusion: It is not the personation of Christ's coming by Satan that will bring the wicked **world together** but rather the **global meltdown** in nature and society. **Planetary survival** will be the **glue** that will bring the world together!

✓ **Mark 13:9:**

The gospel of Mark tells us that during the little time of trouble, the faithful will stand before **rulers** and **magistrates** to bear **witness** to the truth. Ellen White explained:

*"Many will have to stand in the **legislative courts**; some will have to stand before **kings** and before the **learned** of the earth, to answer for their faith. Those who have only a **superficial understanding** of truth will not be able*

clearly to expound the Scriptures, and give definite reasons for their faith."

Ellen G. White, Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 217

*"It **does not seem possible** to us now that any should have to **stand alone**, but if God has **ever spoken by me**, the time will come when we shall be brought before **councils** and before thousands for His name's sake, and each one will have to give the reason of his faith. Then will come the **severest criticism** upon every position that has been taken for the truth. We need, then, to study the Word of God, that we may **know why we believe the doctrines** we advocate." Last Day Events, p. 209*

✓ **Verse 9; cf. Luke 21:16; Mark 13:12, 13:**

Although the gospel of Matthew does not mention it, the parallel passages in Mark and Luke tell us that during the **little time of trouble**, family and friends will **betray** the faithful:

*"**Friends** will prove treacherous and will **betray us**. **Relatives**, deceived by the enemy, will think they **do God service** in opposing us and putting forth the utmost efforts to bring us into hard places, **hoping we will deny** our faith." Last Day Events, pp. 150, 151*

*"Those who are **true to God** will be menaced, denounced, proscribed. They will be 'betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends,' **even unto death**." **Luke 21:16**." Prophets and Kings, p. 588*

✓ **Mark 13:11:**

The gospel of Mark adds that during the little time of trouble, God will pour out the **Holy Spirit** upon His people and give them **words to speak**. This outpouring will be the **latter rain** that enables them to proclaim the **loud cry**, God's final message to the world before the close of probation. The chapter titled 'The Loud Cry' in *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 4, is titled, 'The Final Warning' in *The Great Controversy*. Here is an excerpt:

*"The sins of Babylon will be laid open [Revelation 18:1-3]. The fearful results of enforcing the observances of the church by civil authority, the inroads of spiritualism, the stealthy but rapid progress of the papal power—all will be unmasked. By these **solemn warnings** the people will be stirred." GC, p. 606*

In another place, Ellen White quoted Luke 21:15 to describe the loud cry:

*"Those who receive Christ as a personal Savior will stand the test of trial in **these last days**. . . The Lord Jesus **will give** the disciples a **tongue and wisdom** that their adversaries can neither **gainsay nor resist** [words from Luke 21:15]. Those who could not by reasoning overcome satanic delusions will bear an affirmative testimony that will baffle supposedly learned men. Words will come from the lips of the unlearned with such **convincing power and wisdom** that conversions will be made to the truth [at this point probation is open]. Thousands will be **converted** under their testimony." Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, volume 8, p. 187*

Ellen White described the **little time of trouble** during which there will be an agitation in favor of a National Sunday Law and God's people will proclaim the **loud cry** with **latter rain** power. In response to the loud cry, God's faithful children will come out of Babylon and join God's remnant people:

*"I saw that **God had children** who do not see and keep the Sabbath. They have not rejected the light upon it and at the commencement of **the time of trouble** [the little time of trouble before the close of probation] we were filled with the **Holy Ghost** [the latter rain] as we went forth and **proclaimed** the **Sabbath more fully** [the loud cry]. This **enraged** the churches and nominal Adventists, as they could not refute the Sabbath truth. At this time, God's chosen [the faithful in other churches] all saw clearly that we had the truth, and they **came out** [from Babylon] **and endured the persecution** [of the little time of trouble] with us. I saw the **sword, famine, pestilence, and great confusion** in the land [the signs of Matthew 24:6, 7]. The wicked thought that we had brought the **judgments upon them** [Matthew 24:9], and they rose up and took counsel to **rid the earth** of us, thinking that then the evil would be stayed." *EW*, p. 33*

Ellen White **later explained** that the 'time of trouble' that she mentioned on page 33 refers to a **short period** just before the close of probation when the latter rain is falling and the loud cry given:

*'The commencement of that time of trouble', here mentioned **does not refer** to the time when the plagues shall begin to be poured out, but to a*

short period just before they are poured out, while Christ is in the sanctuary. At that time, while the work of salvation is closing, **trouble will be coming on the earth**, and the nations will be angry, **yet held in check** so as not to prevent the work of the third angel. At that time the '**latter rain**,' or refreshing from the presence of the Lord, will come, **to give power** to the **loud voice** of the third angel, and prepare the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out." *EW*, pp. 85, 86

"The two armies will stand **distinct and separate**, and this distinction will be so marked that many who shall be convinced of truth will come on the side of God's commandment-keeping people. When this grand work is to take place in the battle, **prior** to the **last closing conflict**, many will be **imprisoned**, many will **flee for their lives from cities** and towns, and **many will be martyrs** for Christ's sake in standing in defense of the truth. They will be brought before **kings and rulers**, and **before councils** to meet the false, absurd, and lying accusations brought against them, but they must stand firm as a rock to principle, and the promise is, 'As thy days so shall thy strength be.' (Deuteronomy 33:25). You will not be tempted above what you are able to bear. Jesus bore all this and far more. The express command of God must be obeyed, for God has been working. Luke 21:8-19. *Ellen G. White, The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 484

✓ **Verse 10:**

The little time of trouble will cause a **shaking** in the Christian world in **general** and in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in **particular**. When persecution rages, many superficial believers will **forsake the truth**, join

the ranks of the opposition and persecute their former brethren. Persecution will **root out** half-hearted Adventists. The **NIV** translates: ‘many will **turn away from the faith** and hate and betray one another’. The **ESV** translates ‘many will **fall away** and betray one another and hate one another’.

Jesus had already predicted this when He said to His disciples:

John 16:2

*"These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made **to stumble** [skandalízo: 'to be offended' 'fall away from the faith']. ² They will put you out of the synagogues [churches at the end time]; yes, the time is coming that **whoever kills you** will think that he **offers God service**."*

Mark 4:16, 17

Those who fall away will have a mere **emotional** and **superficial** religion. They are represented by the **stony ground** hearers of the Word in the parable of the sower:

*"These likewise are the ones sown on **stony ground** who, when they **hear** the word, immediately **receive it with gladness**: ¹⁷ and they have **no root** in themselves, and so **endure** only **for a time**. Afterward, when **tribulation or persecution** arises for the **word's sake**, immediately they **stumble** [skandalízo]."*

✓ **Verse 11:**

There is **no period** at the end of verse 10. Rather, the conjunction ‘and’ denotes a **continuation** of verse 10 in verse 11. According to Ellen White, many of those who come out of Babylon, will **go to their former teachers** and ask them about the Sabbath and their former ministers will become **false prophets** and preach **peace, peace** (cf. Jeremiah 6:13, 14; Ezekiel 13:9, 10; Deuteronomy 13:1-5). Ellen White wrote in the chapter on ‘*The final warning*’:

*“As the people [**church members who come out of Babylon**] go to their former teachers with the eager **inquiry**, are these things so? [**is it true that the Sabbath is God’s day of rest?**] The ministers present fables, **prophecy** smooth things, to soothe their fears and quiet the awakened conscience.”*
GC, p. 607

In the chapter on ‘*The Final warning*’, Ellen White **expanded** upon the time when fellow Seventh-day Adventists—even **men of talent** and pleasing address—will be **shaken out** and betray the faithful:

*“As the storm approaches, a **large class** who have **professed faith** in the **third angel’s message**, but have not been sanctified through **obedience** to the truth, **abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition**. . . Men of **talent** and **pleasing address**, who **once rejoiced** in the truth, employ their powers [**the false prophets of verse 11**] to deceive and mislead souls. They become the **bitterest** enemies of their former brethren. When Sabbath keepers are brought before the courts to answer*

for their faith, these **apostates** are the most efficient agents of Satan to misrepresent and accuse them and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the **rulers against them**.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 608

“The work, which the church has failed to do in a time of peace and prosperity, she will have to do in a terrible crisis under most discouraging, forbidding circumstances. The warnings that **worldly conformity [the conservative class]** has **silenced or withheld** must be given under the **fiercest opposition** from **enemies of the faith**. And at that time the **superficial, conservative [those who put worldly conformity first and God’s cause second]** class, whose influence has steadily **retarded** the progress of the work, will **renounce the faith** and take their stand with its **avowed enemies**, toward whom **their sympathies have long been tending**. These **apostates** will then manifest the **bitterest enmity**, doing all in their power to **oppress and malign** their former brethren and to excite **indignation against them**. This day is just before us. The members of the church will **individually be tested and proved**. They will be placed in circumstances where they will be **forced to bear witness** for the truth. Many will be called to speak before councils and in courts of justice, perhaps separately and alone. The experience, which would have helped them in this emergency, they have **neglected to obtain** and their souls are burdened with remorse for wasted opportunities and neglected privileges.” *5T*, p. 463

Some might wonder what the expression ‘**conservative class**’ means. It is not talking about those who are **theologically conservative**. Ellen

White's use of the phrase elsewhere, indicates that she was referring to those who **compromise the truth** for **popularity** and **financial gain**:

*"Most institutions of the kind [of the world] are established upon different principles and are **conservative**, making it their object to meet the **popular class halfway** and to so shape their course that they will receive the **greatest patronage** and the **most money**." 3T, p. 165*

✓ **Verse 12:**

During this period of shaking (indicated by **the kai** that connects verse 11 with verse 12), the **love** of many church members **will grow cold**. It stands to reason that if their love **grows cold**, then it must **have been hot** at **some time before**. Once again, the emphasis falls upon an **apostasy** from the faith.

What will cause **love to grow cold**? The answer is the abundance of '**lawlessness**'. The word 'lawlessness' (*anómias*) is identical to the one that appears in **1 John 3:4** where the KJV translates the single word *anómias* as, 'transgression of the law'. Thus, love grows cold because of the transgression of the law. At this point we know that transgression will center on the **4th Commandment**. There can be **no love** where the law is transgressed because love is the **fulfilling of the law** (Romans 13:10; cf. 1 John 2:3-5; 5:3; John 14:15, 16). Those who **previously loved** their brothers and sisters will **become cruel** toward them and want to **kill them**. Thus, in the chapter on the final warning Ellen White wrote:

*“Conscientious obedience to the word of God will be treated as rebellion. **Blinded by Satan**, the parent will exercise harshness and severity toward the believing child; the master or mistress will **oppress** the commandment-keeping servant. **Affection** will be alienated; children will be **disinherited** and **driven** from home. . . . To human wisdom all this now **seems impossible**; but as the restraining Spirit of God shall be withdrawn from men, and they shall be **under the control of Satan**, who hates the **divine precepts**, there will be strange developments. The heart can be **very cruel** when God's fear and **love are removed**.” GC, p. 608*

Jesus described Christians who in that day **claim** to be followers of Jesus and yet **transgress the law**:

Matthew 7:21-23

*“Not everyone who says **to Me**, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does the will** of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in **that day**, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied **in Your name**, cast out demons **in Your name**, and done many wonders **in Your name**?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I **never** knew you; depart from Me, you who **practice lawlessness [anomías]**!’*

Ellen White described the **shaking out** of those whose love grows cold:

*“There will be a **shaking** of the sieve. The **chaff must in time be separated** from the wheat. ‘Because iniquity abounds, the **love of many** waxes cold’ **[Matthew 24:12]**. It is the very time when the **genuine** will be the strongest.” Last Day Events, p. 173*

*'And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold' [Matthew 24:12]. The very atmosphere is polluted with sin. Soon **God's people** will be **tested by fiery trials**, and the **great proportion** of those who now appear to be genuine and true will prove to be **base metal [the shaking out]**. Instead of being **strengthened and confirmed** by opposition, threats, and abuse, they will **cowardly** take the side of the opposers. To stand in the defense of truth and righteousness when the **majority forsake us**, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions **are few**—this will be our test. At this time, we must gather **warmth** from the **coldness of others**, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason." *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 201*

✓ **Verse 13:**

The good news is that **in the midst** of this little time of trouble, some will **endure or persevere** until the end.

The **root meaning** of the verb 'endure' (*hupoméno*) is '**to remain**' (cf. Luke 2:43; Acts 17:14). Thus it refers to those who 'remain' and are **not shaken** out during the little time of trouble. The **TEV** translates 'holds out', the **NIV**: 'stands firm' and the **ESV**: 'keeps on being faithful').

According to *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* a related noun, *hupomoné*, means 'independent, unyielding, defiant perseverance in the face of aggressive misfortune, and thus to a kind of courageousness'. *Hupomoné* is the word used in Revelation 13:10; 14:12

to describe the **patience** (NIV: 'endurance', NASB: 'perseverance') of the end time generation.

✓ **Verse 14:**

Verse 14 takes us back to events that will occur before the 'end' of verse 13. That is to say, the end will not come until the **gospel** has been preached in all the world as a witness to all nations. Those who 'endure' until the end will preach the gospel **before the end**.

The **first fulfillment** of the preaching of the gospel took place between **Pentecost** and the destruction of Jerusalem. **Paul** stated that in his own day, the gospel was preached to '*every creature under heaven*' (Colossians 1:23)

Matthew 24:14 contains three concepts:

1. Preaching the **gospel**
2. To all **nations**
3. Then the **end** comes

Revelation 14:6, 7, 14 contains the same **three concepts**. However, there is a difference. While the preaching of the gospel at the beginning of the gospel dispensation was empowered by the **early rain**, the preaching of the gospel at the end will be empowered by the **latter rain**. During this period, the **loud cry angel** (Revelation 18:1) will join the angel of Revelation 14:6 to preach the gospel in the context of the '*the hour of God's judgment*'.

Neither **Paul nor Luther** taught the gospel in this **judgment context** because the judgment did not begin in their day. The final preaching will involve the **seal of God**, the **mark of the beast** and the **judgment of the living**. Thus Ellen White, after quoting Matthew 24:12-14 commented:

*“In the prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction Christ said, ‘Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. However, he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.’ This prophecy will **again be fulfilled**. The abounding iniquity of that day finds its counterpart in this generation. **So with the prediction in regard to the preaching of the gospel**. Before the fall of Jerusalem, Paul, writing by the Holy Spirit, declared that the gospel was preached to ‘every creature which is under heaven.’ Col. 1:23. **So now**, before the coming of the Son of man, the everlasting gospel is to be preached ‘to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.’ Rev. 14:6, 14.” Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 633*

Ellen White wrote about the **uniqueness** of the gospel proclamation at the end:

*“The message of salvation has been preached in all ages; but **this message [Revelation 14:6, 7]** is a part of the gospel which could be proclaimed **only** in the last days, for only then would it be true that the hour of **judgment had come**.” *GC*, p. 356*

✓ **Verse 15:**

Verse 15 **takes us back** to events that will occur while the gospel is being preached before the end comes. The **abomination of desolation** sign will divide the world into **two groups**: Those who heed the abomination of desolation sign will be saved and those who ignore it will be lost. The order of events in Matthew 24:15-27 is as follows:

- ✓ The National **Sunday Law** will be legislated and enforced (Matthew 24:15).
- ✓ God's people will **flee** to desolate places (Matthew 24:16-20).
- ✓ The great **tribulation** will begin (Matthew 24:21, 22).
- ✓ Satan will **personate** Christ's coming (Matthew 24:23-27).

Ellen White made absolutely clear that the abomination of desolation sign is the **National Sunday Law**:

*"The time is not far distant, when, like the early disciples, we shall be forced to seek a refuge in **desolate and solitary places**. As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the **signal** for **flight** to the Judean Christians, **so** the assumption of power on the part of our nation **in the decree** enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us. It will then be time **to leave** the large cities, preparatory to **leaving** the smaller ones for retired homes in **secluded places** among the mountains." 5T, pp. 464, 465*

*"As the approach of the Roman armies was a **sign** to the disciples of the impending destruction of Jerusalem, **so** may this apostasy be a **sign** to us that the limit of God's forbearance **is reached**, that the measure of our*

*nation's iniquity **is full**, and that the **angel of mercy** is **about** to take her flight, never to return. The people of God will then be plunged into those scenes of affliction and distress which prophets have described as the **time of Jacob's trouble**. The **cries** of the faithful, persecuted ones ascend to heaven." 5T p. 451*

There is a **sequence** of events in these two quotations:

1. The National **Sunday Law** will be legislated and enforced.
2. When the Sunday Law is legislated and enforced, probation is **about** to close because '*the measure of our nation's iniquity is full*', '*the limit of God's forbearance is reached*' and '*the angel of mercy is **about** to take her flight never to return*'.
3. The Sunday Law will be the sign for God's people **to flee** to desolate places. At this point, God's people will not be going into the cities to preach but rather fleeing from them.
4. The great tribulation or time of **Jacob's trouble** will ensue.
5. In the Time of Jacob's Trouble, the elect will **cry out to God** for **deliverance**.

✓ **Verses 16-19:**

Verses 16-19 describe the **flight** of God's people from the cities as probation is about to end and the great tribulation begin:

*"The time is not far distant, when, like the early disciples, we shall be forced to seek a refuge in **desolate and solitary places**. As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for **flight** to the Judean Christians, so*

*the assumption of power on the part of our nation **in the decree** enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us. It will then be time **to leave** the large cities, preparatory to **leaving** the smaller ones for retired homes in **secluded places** among the mountains.” 5T, pp. 464, 465*

✓ **Verse 20:**

It is hardly a coincidence that those who will flee from the cities to desolate places will be **Sabbath keepers**.

✓ **Verses 21, 22:**

Then the **great tribulation** such as has never been nor will be, will begin:

*“The people of God will **then** be plunged into those scenes of affliction and distress described by the prophet as the time of Jacob's trouble. "Thus saith the Lord: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. . . All faces are turned into paleness. Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." **Jeremiah 30:5-7**.” GC, p. 616*

✓ **Verses 23-27:**

False christs will arise (GC 624, paragraph # 1) after which **Satan himself** will personate the second coming of Christ as his ‘crowning act’ (GC 624-626). After verse 27, Ellen White follows the identical order of events that we find in Matthew 24:29-31 as follows:

✓ **Verse 29:**

When the tribulation ends, there will be a **global earthquake** and the powers of the heavens—the sun, moon and stars—will be shaken:

*“That voice **shakes the heavens** and the earth. There is a **mighty earthquake**, ‘such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.’ Verses 17, 18.” GC, pp. 636, 637; (cf. EW, p. 41)*

✓ **Verse 30:**

Then the **sign** of the Son of Man will be seen in heaven:

*“Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man's hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Savior and which seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness. The people of God know this to be **the sign of the Son of man**. In solemn silence they gaze upon it as it draws nearer the earth, becoming lighter and more glorious, until it is a great white cloud, its base a glory like consuming fire, and above it the rainbow of the covenant. Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror.” GC, pp. 640, 641*

✓ **Verse 30:**

When the wicked see the sign, they **will mourn** as they see Jesus coming on the clouds of heaven:

*“Christ has declared that He will come the second time **to gather** His faithful ones to Himself: ‘Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.’” GC, p. 37*

✓ **Verse 31:**

Then Jesus will send His angels to **catch up** His elect from the four winds:

“Angels ‘gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.’” GC, p. 645

Two Appearances of the Word ‘Tribulation’

As the previous discussion revealed, the word ‘tribulation’ appears **twice** in Matthew 24 and it is qualified as ‘**great**’ only the **second time**. While the **unqualified word** refers to the little time of trouble while the door of probation is still open, the ‘**great** tribulation’ will transpire only after the National Sunday Law and the flight of the faithful from the cities:

Matthew 24:21-22

*“For then there will be **great** tribulation, such as **has not been** since the beginning of the world until this time, no, **nor ever shall be**.²² And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be **saved**; but for the **elect’s sake** those days will be shortened.”*

Parallel Verses

There are **parallel verses** in the Bible that describe this **great** tribulation after the close of probation. One of these is **Jeremiah 30:7** where the time of **Jacob’s trouble** is described as ‘**great**’:

*“Alas! For that day is **great**, so that **none is like it**; and it is the time of **Jacob’s trouble**, but he **[Jacob]** shall be **saved** [*also translated ‘deliver’, ‘defend’*],*

‘protect’ ‘rescue’. The word frequently describes God delivering and rescuing His people from their enemies] out of it.”

Three details in this verse share a commonality with the great tribulation in Matthew 24:

- ✓ Both describe the time of trouble as **‘great’**.
- ✓ Both underline that the great tribulation is unique, there is **none like it**.
- ✓ In both, God’s people will be **saved or delivered** out of it.

Another parallel verse to Matthew 24:21 is Daniel 12:1 where the prophet describes the time of trouble after the close of probation:

Daniel 12:1

*"At that time Michael **shall stand up** [cf. 11:2, 3, the close of probation], the great prince who **stands watch** [their defender] over the **sons of your people** [spiritual Israel]; and there shall be a **time of trouble** [Jacob’s trouble], such as **never was** since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people [spiritual Israel] shall be **delivered**, everyone who is found written in the book."*

Once again there are **three commonalities** between Matthew 24:21 and Daniel 12:1:

- ✓ There is a tribulation or **time of trouble**.
- ✓ There was **never a time** of trouble such as this one.
- ✓ God’s people will be **delivered** out of it.

The expression '**stand up**' refers to the moment when Jesus **begins to reign** because the investigative judgment is over and the **number of His subjects** has been determined. The identical Hebrew word is used in **Daniel 11:2, 3** for the moment when Persian kings began to reign. This means that the time of trouble will take place after the close of probation. Immediately after quoting **Daniel 12:1** and **Revelation 22:11** at the beginning of the chapter on the time of trouble, Ellen White made the following perceptive comment:

*"Every case **has been decided** for life or death. Christ has made the atonement for His people and blotted out their sins. The **number** of His subjects is made up; 'the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven,' is **about to be** given to the heirs of salvation, and Jesus **is to reign** as King of kings and Lord of lords." GC, pp. 613, 614*

Another parallel verse that describes the great tribulation after the close of probation is Revelation 7:14 where the **great multitude** is described as having come out of '**the** tribulation, **the** great one'.

The New Testament translates the word **thlipsis** as 'affliction, tribulation, trouble and persecution'. However, Revelation 7:14 does not say that the great multitude went through 'tribulation' or 'tribulations' or 'trouble' or 'affliction' or even 'many tribulations' but rather, literally in Greek, '**the** tribulation, **the** great one'. The **definite article 'the'** appears before each of the words 'great' and 'tribulation'. This is not merely **a** great tribulation but rather '**the** tribulation, **the** great one'. It is the **granddaddy** of all tribulations.

In all other New Testament texts, the word *thlipsis* stands **unqualified** by the **definite article 'the'**. It is true that sometimes the New Testament qualifies the

word 'tribulation' with words such as '**much** tribulation' (Acts 14:22; 2 Corinthians 2:4) or '**light** affliction' (2Corinthians 4:17). However, the Greek text indicates that the tribulation of Revelation 7:14 is a **specific one** that a **specific group** will go through at the end of time. It is parallel to the time of trouble such as never was nor ever shall be in Daniel 12:1.

It might be argued that the expression 'great tribulation' refers to the suffering of Israel while in bondage in Egypt (Acts 7:11) and also the French Revolution (Revelation 2:22) However, in each of these references, both the words 'tribulation' and 'great' stand **unqualified** by the definite article 'the'. The tribulation that the final generation goes through is a specific tribulation, '**the** tribulation, **the** great one'. Ellen White agreed that the final remnant, the elect, will come out of the **final** great tribulation after the close of probation. She quoted **Revelation 7:14**, and applied it to those who go through the time of Jacob's trouble and will be alive when Jesus comes:

*“These are they which came out of **great tribulation**”; [Revelation 7:14]” they have passed through the **time of trouble** such as **never was** since there was a nation; they have endured the anguish of the **time of Jacob's trouble**; they have stood **without an intercessor** through the **final outpouring** of God's judgments. But they have been **delivered**, for they have ‘washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’” [Revelation 7:14] GC, p. 649*

Ellen White and Matthew 24:23-27

Ellen White quoted **Matthew 24:23-27** when she described Satan's personation of Christ in the chapter on the time of trouble in *The Great Controversy*. She underlined that the warning of Jesus in these verses was not

for the **world in general** but for the elect. At this point in the sequence of final events, the world is **already deceived** and entrenched on Satan's side. At this point, the latter rain, the loud cry and the little time of trouble are in the past.

Jesus gave the **entirety of Matthew 24** to keep **His own people** from being deceived (cf. Matthew 24:4, 25: "see, I have told you beforehand"). The **parables** of the faithful and unfaithful servants (Matthew 24:45-51), the virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) and the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46) are all addressed as a warning to **God's people**, not unbelievers. Likewise, the target of Satan's personation of Christ is **the elect**, not the world in general. Ellen White wrote about Satan's target audience as he personates Christ:

*"And, furthermore, Satan is not permitted to counterfeit the **manner** of Christ's advent. The Savior has warned **His people** against deception [**this is why they will not be deceived when the time comes**] upon this point, and has clearly foretold the manner of His second coming. 'There shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive **the very elect**. . . Wherefore if they shall say unto **you**, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth; behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.' Matthew 24:24-27, 31; 25:31; Revelation 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. This coming there is no possibility of counterfeiting. It will be universally known—witnessed by the **whole world**." GC, p. 625*

Light from 2 Thessalonians 2

Let's turn now to the other primary passage that describes Satan's personation of Christ's coming to see if we can determine when it will take place:

2 Thessalonians 2:8-12

The first seven verses of 2 Thessalonians 2 describe the papacy's usurpation of Christ's place in the temple of God, that is, in the Church (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 2 Corinthians 2:14-18; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Timothy 3:15; ST, June 15, 1897). However, after the restrainer is removed in verse 7, Satan will personate and attempt to counterfeit Christ's coming. The removal of the restrainer in the end time refers to the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit at probation's close. Thus, Ellen White wrote:

"While Jesus had been standing between God and guilty man, a restraint was upon the people; but when He stepped out from between man and the Father, the restraint was removed and Satan had entire control of the finally impenitent."
EW, p. 280

Here is how Paul described the timing of Satan's personation of Christ after the restrainer is removed with my own explanatory notes in brackets:

"And then [tóte; after the restrainer has been removed] the lawless one will be revealed [apokalúpto: the word used in 2 Thessalonians 1:7 for the second coming of Jesus], whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming [Parousía].⁹ The coming [Parousía] of the lawless one is according to the working [or 'operation'] of

***Satan**, with all **power**, **signs**, and **lying wonders** [the identical three words used of Christ's miracles in Acts 2:22], ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous **deception** among **those who perish**, because they **did not** [aorist, past tense] receive **the love of the truth** [the Loud Cry], that they might be saved. ¹¹ And **for this reason** [kai diá touto; because they **did not** receive the love of the truth] God **will send** [sends the strong delusion after they rejected the truth] them **strong delusion**, that they should believe **the** [with the definite article] lie, ¹² that they all may be condemned who **did not** believe the truth but **had** pleasure in unrighteousness."*

In summary, several important details flow from this passage:

- The word *tóte* indicates that the personation of Christ's coming by Satan will take place **after the papacy** has ruled in the temple of God and the restrainer has been taken out of the way (verses 1-7).
- Satan is described as the **lawless one** (transgressor of the law) which means that in some way he is adversarial to **God's law**. From the Spirit of Prophecy, we know that his adversity is primarily against the Sabbath.
- Satan's personation of Christ's coming is described with **two words** that are used in the New Testament for the second coming of Jesus: *apokálupsis* (2 Thessalonians 1:7; 1 Peter 4:13; 5:1) and *Parousía* (2 Thessalonians 2:1, 8).
- During his personation of Christ, Satan will replicate **the miracles** that Jesus performed while He was on earth (cf. Acts 2:22).
- God will send **strong delusion** to those who perish **because** they had **previously rejected** the truth and had pleasure in unrighteousness.

- The word 'lie' is prefixed by the **definite article 'the'** (**Greek**: 'the falsehood', **ESV**: 'what is false', **NIV**: 'the lie'). In context, it refers to the specific 'lie', of Satan's personation of Christ.

Ellen White confirms that Satan had **already deceived** and **deluded** his followers **before** he personated Christ's coming:

*"Looking down to the **last days**, the same Infinite Power declares, concerning those who '**received**' not the love of the truth, that they might be saved': '**For this cause [because they did not receive the love of the truth], God shall send [the verb is present although the sense is future] them **strong delusion**, that they should believe a lie [the falsehood]: that they all might be damned who **believed [past tense]** not the truth, but **had [past tense]** pleasure in unrighteousness."*** 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12. As they [**those believed not the truth**] reject the teachings of His word, God **withdraws His Spirit** and **leaves them** to the **deceptions** which they love." *GC*, p. 431

*"The Bible declares that **before** the coming of the Lord, Satan will work 'with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness;' and they that '**received not [aorist, past]** the love of the truth, that they might be saved," **will be left [present]** to receive 'strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.' 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11." *FLB*, p. 285*

*"As the second appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ draws near, satanic agencies are moved from beneath. Satan will not only appear as a human being, but he will **personate Jesus Christ**, and **the world** that **has** rejected the truth **will** receive him as the **Lord of lords** and **King of kings**." (1900). *LDE*, pp. 168, 169*

This is the sense of the passage:

Because the lost did not receive the love of the truth in the loud cry empowered by the latter rain during the little time of trouble, God will send them strong delusion that they should believe the lie, that is, Satan's personation of Christ's coming. The tense of the verbs clearly indicates that the world was already deceived and had already rejected the love of the truth before the strong delusion. That is to say, the lost 'did not receive the love of the truth... and for this cause', (not the common connective conjunction *oún* but rather *kai diá touto*) God sends them strong delusion.

Crying out and Delivered

According to Ellen White, the personation of Christ by Satan occurs as the elect are crying out day and night for deliverance from their enemies. This will occur during the Time of Jacob's Trouble after the close of probation. We shall see that this is a vitaly important detail when we consider Ellen White's *Manuscript 16*, 1884 where she pinpoints the precise moment and reason why Satan will personate Christ's coming.

The moment and reason of Satan's personation of Christ is illustrated by the experience of Jacob when Esau was coming against him with 400 armed men. In this time of Jacob's anguish and trouble, he cried out for God to deliver him. Thus, crying out and deliverance occur during the time of Jacob's trouble after the close of probation.

Genesis 32:11

*"Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, 'We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and **four hundred men** are with him.' ⁷ So Jacob was **greatly afraid and distressed**; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies. ⁸ And he said, 'If Esau comes to the one company and **attacks it**, then the other company which is left will **escape**.'" ⁹ Then **Jacob said**, 'O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you': ¹⁰ **I am not worthy** of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies. ¹¹ **Deliver me**, I pray, **from the hand of my brother**, from the hand of Esau; for I **fear him**, lest he come and **attack me** and the mother with the children."*

Jeremiah 30:5-9 picks up on the **crying out** and **deliverance** of the righteous during the **great** 'time of Jacob's trouble':

Jeremiah 30:5-9

*"For thus says the Lord: 'We have heard a **voice of trembling** [the context indicates that it is Jacob who is crying out], of **fear** [because his brother is coming to attack him], and not of peace. ⁶ Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all **faces turned pale**? [4SP, pp. 456, 457: the faces of the righteous] ⁷ Alas! For that day is **great** [the great tribulation], so that **none is like it** [similar to Daniel 12:1 and Matthew 24:21, 22]; and it is the time of **Jacob's trouble**, but he shall be **saved out of it** [in other words 'delivered']. ⁸*

*'For it shall come to pass in that day,' says the Lord of hosts, 'That I will **break his [Esau's] yoke** from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them **[the elect]**.⁹ But they shall serve the Lord their God, and **David their king**, **[at this point literal David was dead]** Whom I will raise up for them.'*

Daniel 11:44 and 12:1 parallel this time. When the **loud cry** from the **north** (Revelation 7:2) and the **sealing message** from the **east** (Revelation 18:1-4) enrage the king of the north, he will come against God's elect with **great fury** intending to destroy and annihilate many (Daniel 11:44). However, at that time, probation will close and **Michael will stand up** to defend them. The time of trouble that ensues will be *'such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time'* which echoes the language of **Matthew 24:21, 22** and **Jeremiah 30:5-9**. The standing up of Michael represents the close of probation (cf. the meaning of 'stand up' in Daniel 11:2, 3) and God's people will be delivered from it.

Daniel 11:44-45; 12:1

*"But news from the **east [the sealing]** and the **north [the loud cry]** shall trouble him **[the king of the north]**; therefore, **he [the king of the north] shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many [those who proclaim the Loud Cry]**.⁴⁵ And **he [the king of the north]** shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him. ^{12:1} "At that time **[when the king of the north comes against God's people] Michael shall stand up [the close of probation]**, the great prince who **stands watch** over the sons of your people; and there shall be **a time of trouble [the great tribulation]**, such as never was since there was a*

nation, even to that time [similar wording to Matthew 24:21, 22]. And at that time [during the time of trouble] your people shall be delivered [delivered from the wrath of the king of the north], everyone who is found written in the book [because their names were retained in the book of life during the investigative judgment].”

Ellen White: Crying Out and Deliverance—When?

Ellen White confirms that the crying out of the saints and their deliverance will occur during the time of trouble after the close of probation:

Early Writings, pp. 36, 37

“I saw that the four angels would hold the four winds until Jesus' work was done in the sanctuary, and then will come the seven last plagues. These plagues enraged the wicked against the righteous; they thought that we had brought the judgments of God upon them, and that if they could rid the earth of us, the plagues would then be stayed. A decree went forth to slay the saints [after the close of probation], which caused them to cry day and night for deliverance [two key words, ‘cry’ and ‘deliverance’]. This was the time of Jacob's trouble. [See Genesis 32.] Then all the saints cried out with anguish of spirit, and were delivered by the voice of God. The one hundred and forty-four thousand triumphed. Their faces were lighted up with the glory of God.” EW, pp. 36, 37

Early Writings, p. 34

“Then we all cried day and night for deliverance, and the cry came up before God. [then she describes the deliverance] The sun came up, and the moon stood still. The streams ceased to flow. Dark, heavy clouds came up and clashed against

each other. But there was one clear place of settled glory, whence came the **voice of God** like many waters, which **shook the heavens** and the earth [**the seventh plague when God delivers His people who cry out to Him—Revelation 16:17**]. The sky opened and shut and was in commotion [**Revelation 6:14**]. The **mountains shook** like a reed in the wind, and cast out ragged rocks all around. The sea boiled like a pot and cast out stones upon the land. And as God spoke the **day and the hour of Jesus' coming** and delivered the everlasting covenant to His people, He spoke one sentence, and then paused, while the words were rolling through the earth. The Israel [**the name of Jacob after his victory**] of God stood with their **eyes fixed upward**, listening to the words as they came from the mouth of Jehovah, and rolled through the earth like peals of loudest thunder. It was awfully solemn. And at the end of every sentence the saints shouted, "Glory! Alleluia!" Their countenances were lighted up with the glory of God; and they shone with the glory, as did the face of Moses when he came down from Sinai. The wicked could not look on them for the glory. And when the never-ending blessing was pronounced on those who had honored God in keeping His Sabbath holy, there was a **mighty shout of victory over the beast and over his image.**" *EW*, p. 34

The Story of Redemption, p. 407 (the chapter immediately after the chapter titled, 'The Time of Jacob's Trouble:

"It [**the time of Jacob's trouble**] was an hour of fearful, **terrible agony** to the saints. **Day and night** they **cried unto God** for **deliverance**. To **outward appearance**, there was no possibility of their escape. The wicked had already begun to triumph, crying out, "Why doesn't your God **deliver** you out of our

hands? Why don't you go up and save your lives?" But the saints heeded them not. **Like Jacob**, they were **wrestling** with God. The angels longed to **deliver** them, but they must wait a little longer; the people of God must **drink of the cup** and be **baptized with the baptism**. The angels, faithful to their trust, continued their watch. God would not suffer His name to be reproached among the heathen. The time had nearly come when He was to manifest His mighty power and gloriously **deliver** His saints. For His name's glory He would **deliver** every one of those who had patiently waited for Him and whose names were **written in the book**. [an allusion to Daniel 12:1]" SR, p. 407

The Relentless Widow in Luke 18

The parable of the relentless widow describes the condition of **God's elect** during the final time of trouble **after** the close of probation:

Luke 18:1-8

"Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, ² saying: "There was in a certain city a **judge** who did not fear God nor regard man. ³ Now there was a **widow** in that city; and she came to him, saying, '**Get justice** for me from my **adversary**.' ⁴ And he would not **for a while**; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, ⁵ yet because this widow troubles me I will **avenge** her, lest by her **continual coming** she weary me.'" ⁶ Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. ⁷ And shall God not **avenge His own elect** who **cry out day and night** to Him, though He **bears long** with them? ⁸ I tell you that He will **avenge [poiéo, 'do, act'] them speedily**. Nevertheless, when the **Son of Man comes**, will He really find faith on the earth?"

Although this parable offers encouragement to all who have been persecuted for righteousness sake, it applies in **special sense** to the elect who will be alive when Jesus comes. We know this because the **preceding and succeeding** contexts link the parable directly to the second coming (Luke 17:26-37; 18:8). Thus, Ellen White wrote:

*“Christ had been speaking of the period **just before** His second coming, and of the perils through which His **followers must pass**. With **special reference** to **that time** He related the parable ‘to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.’ Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 164*

As I have pointed out elsewhere, the details of this parable are **symbolic**. According to Jesus, the **judge** represents God, the **woman** represents the elect from whom Satan has taken all (Luke 18:7; cf. Matthew 24:22, 24), the **adversary** is the devil, the **crying out** day and night for justice is **the plea of the elect** during the time of trouble and the **avenging** is the **deliverance** from the death decree of the adversary. Notably, the words ‘judge’ and ‘avenge’ in the parable describe the moment when God will judge the harlot and avenge His people at the time of the seventh plague (Revelation 19:2). Ellen White applied the crying out day and night and the deliverance of his elect in the parable to a **post-close of probation** context:

*“The people of God must **drink of the cup** and be baptized with **the baptism**. The very **delay**, so painful to them, is the best answer to their petitions. As they endeavor to wait trustingly for the Lord to work they are led to exercise faith, hope, and patience, which have been too little exercised during their religious experience. Yet for the **elect's sake** [Matthew 24:22] the **time of trouble***

[Matthew refers to it as 'the great tribulation', Matthew 24:21] will be shortened [Matthew 24:22]. ⁷ "Shall not God avenge [word in the parable of the relentless widow] His own elect, [the very word used in Matthew 24:23, 24] which cry day and night [for deliverance from the adversary] unto Him? ... ⁸ I tell you that He will avenge them speedily." Luke 18:7, 8. GC, pp. 630, 631

God has promised to deliver His people at the end of the time of trouble because they cried out to Him during the time of trouble after probation's close. Thus, Ellen White wrote:

"It [when the wicked wanted to kill the elect] was an hour of fearful, terrible agony to the saints. Day and night they cried unto God for deliverance. To outward appearance, there was no possibility of their escape. The wicked had already begun to triumph, crying out, "Why doesn't your God deliver you out of our hands? Why don't you go up and save your lives?" But the saints heeded them not, like Jacob, they were wrestling with God. The angels longed to deliver them, but they must wait a little longer; the people of God must drink of the cup and be baptized with the baptism. The angels, faithful to their trust, continued their watch. God would not suffer His name to be reproached among the heathen. The time had nearly come when He was to manifest His mighty power and gloriously deliver His saints. For His name's glory He would deliver every one of those who had patiently waited [like the widow] for Him and whose names were written in the book." [a clear allusion to Daniel 12:1 and the conclusion of the judgment of the living] EW, pp. 283, 284.

There is not a shadow of a doubt that the crying out of the saints to God for deliverance will take place during the time of trouble after the close of

probation and their deliverance will occur at its **end**. We know this because the chapter on the time of trouble in *The Great Controversy* describes the crying out of the saints to God for Him to deliver them and the very next chapter is titled, ‘God’s People **Delivered**’. The **last sentence** of the chapter on the time of trouble had already **introduced** the deliverance of the saints at the beginning of the next chapter:

*“Glorious will be the **deliverance** of those who have patiently **waited** for His coming and whose names are written **in the book of life**.” GC, p. 634*

The beginning of the **next chapter** describes the **precarious condition** of the elect as they cry out to God at the conclusion of the time of trouble just before God delivers them:

*The people of God—some in prison cells, some hidden in solitary retreats in the forests and the mountains—still **plead [the crying out]** for divine protection, while in every quarter companies of armed men, urged on by hosts of evil angels, are preparing for the work of death. It is now, in the hour of utmost extremity, that the God of Israel will interpose for the **deliverance** of His **chosen [synonym of ‘elect’]**.” GC, p. 635*

The Target of Satan’s Personation

As stated before, Satan’s personation of Christ’s coming **will not** have the world as its **prime target** because, when probation closes, the world is **already deceived**. Satan does not need to personate Christ to deceive and unite the world because, at this point, the world is already united and deceived. When probation closes, Satan will already have ‘entire control of the finally impenitent’

(GC, p. 614). If he has entire control over the wicked, then they are **already** fully deceived! Because they are already **fastened in deception**, it is inevitable that they will believe Satan's final delusion. Why would Satan target them if they are **already on his side**? Satan's target at this point is the **small group** of the elect that questions his authority. Ellen White described this group in the **chapter on the time of trouble**:

*"As Satan influenced Esau to march against Jacob, so he will stir up the wicked to destroy God's people in the **time of trouble**. And as he accused Jacob, he will urge his accusations against the **people of God**. He numbers **the world as his subjects**; **but** the **little company** who keep the commandments of God are **resisting his supremacy**. If he could blot them from the earth, his triumph would be complete." GC, p. 618*

If Possible the Very Elect

However, someone might ask, doesn't the sentence 'to deceive, **if possible**, even the elect' mean that it is **potentially** possible for Satan to deceive them? And if it is possible to deceive them, isn't the door of probation at this point **still open**? The answer is no. During the time of trouble, Satan **suspects** that the sins of the elect **have been pardoned** but he does not know for sure that their cases **have been fixed** during the judgment of the living:

*"**He [Satan]** sees that holy angels are guarding **them [the elect]**, and **he infers** that their sins have been pardoned; but he **does not know** that their cases have been decided in the sanctuary above." GC, p. 618*

The expression 'if possible' is **hypothetical**. Satan will not be able to deceive the elect. How do we know this? Matthew 24:31 has the answer:

Matthew 24:31

*"And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together **His elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."*

Clearly, Satan will not be able to deceive the elect because Jesus is going to send His angels **to gather them** from the four winds when He comes. If Jesus will gather the elect at His coming, then they were not deceived during the time of trouble!

Satan knows that he will not be able to deceive the elect by his personation of Christ. After all, he can read the following statement in *The Great Controversy*:

*"But the **people of God** will not be misled." GC, p. 625*

The question is, would Satan **relent** from his attempt to deceive the elect even **if he did know** that their cases had **already been fixed** in the sanctuary above? Would he simply **fold his hands** and give up saying to himself, 'why bother to deceive them when their destiny is already fixed?' If Satan knows that his personation of Christ will not deceive the elect, why will he try?

We can answer this **question with another**. Does Satan know that he will not be able to prevail against the **New Jerusalem** after the millennium? Of course he does. After all, he can read **Revelation 20:7-10**. Why then will he rally the wicked for an attack on the city? Simply because he **harbors the hope** that he will be able **counteract** the Word of God! Satan is **relentless** and will not give up without a fight!

Robert Olson's Chronology and Matthew 24

Robert Olson, who was the director of the General Conference White Estate from **1978 to 1990** made a helpful compilation of Ellen White statements on the order of end time events. On pages 76 and 77 of *The Crisis Ahead: Answers to Questions about the End-Time*, he wrote that there are two views among Adventists concerning **when** Satan will personate Christ's second coming. Some believe that it will occur before the close of probation and others after. He opted for the first.

Likewise, the popular compilation, *Last Day Events*, which appears to be an expanded version of Olson's compilation, places the chapter on Satan's personation of Christ's coming **before** the shaking, the latter rain, the loud cry, the sealing, the close of probation and the seven plagues. One wishes that the White Estate had given more careful attention to the order of events in Matthew 24, the text of 2 Thessalonians 2 and the 'personation passages' in volume 4 of the *Spirit of Prophecy*, *The Great Controversy* and *Manuscript 16*, 1884.

Let's now compare these three sources. The first is *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 4, pp. 441, 442. The second is *The Great Controversy*, pp. 614, 624, 625 and the third is *Manuscript 16*, 1884. We shall find that **all three** are describing the selfsame event.

Satan's Personation of Christ in The Spirit of Prophecy, volume 4, pp. 442, 443 (published in 1884)

The title of the chapter is, 'The Time of Trouble'.

“The wrath of Satan increases [during probationary time] as his time grows short, and his work of deceit and destruction reaches its culmination [EGW: ‘his crowning act’] in the time of trouble. God's long-suffering has ended. The world has rejected His mercy, despised His love, and trampled upon His law. The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation, and the Lord withdraws His protection, and leaves them to the mercy of the leader they have chosen. . .”
[the close of probation]

After describing the close of probation, Ellen White describes Satan’s crowning act:

“As the crowning act [the culmination] in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will attempt to personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Savior’s advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out upon the air, “Christ has come! Christ has come!”

The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him, while he lifts up his hands, and pronounces a blessing upon them, as Christ blessed His disciples when He was personally upon the earth. His voice is soft and subdued, yet full of melody. In gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the same gracious, heavenly truths which the Savior uttered; he heals the diseases of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have changed the

*Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. He declares that **those who persist** in keeping holy the seventh day are blaspheming his name by refusing to listen to his angels sent to them with light and truth. This is the **strong, almost overmastering delusion**.*

*“But the people of God will **not be misled**. The **teachings of this false christ** are not in **accordance with the Scriptures**. His blessing is **pronounced upon the worshipers of the beast and his image**—the very class upon whom the Bible declares that God's unmingled wrath shall be poured out. And, furthermore, Satan is not permitted to counterfeit **the manner** of Christ's advent. The Scriptures teach that ‘as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be;’ [Matthew 24:27] that he ‘cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him;’ [Revelation 1:7] that he will ‘descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God;’ [1 Thessalonians 4:16] that he will ‘come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him,’ [Matthew 25:31] and will ‘send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect.’ [Matthew 24:31] Those who **have received** the love of the truth [before probation's close] will be shielded from the **powerful delusion** that takes the **world captive**. By the testimony of the Scriptures they will detect the deceiver in his disguise.” 4SP, p. 443*

Here is a summary of the key details in the passage:

- ✓ The **crowning act** or **culmination** (the metaphorical meaning of ‘crowning’ is ‘completion’ or ‘accomplishment’) of Satan’s work of deception will be **during the time of trouble** after the close of probation.

- ✓ Satan's **crowning act** will be the **personation** of Christ.
- ✓ He will appear as a **majestic** being of **dazzling** brightness.
- ✓ His appearance will similar to the description of Jesus by **John in Revelation 1**.
- ✓ His glory will be **unsurpassed** by anything that mortal eyes have seen.
- ✓ When the lost see him they will **shout** that Christ has come.
- ✓ He will **raise his hands** to bless his followers as Christ did while on earth.
- ✓ He will **bless the worshipers** of the beast and his image.
- ✓ His voice will be **soft** and subdued and **full of melody**.
- ✓ He will teach **some of the truths** that Jesus taught while on earth.
- ✓ He will claim that he has **changed the Sabbath** to Sunday.
- ✓ He will accuse the faithful of **blasphemy**.
- ✓ This will be the almost **overmastering delusion**.
- ✓ The elect will **not be misled** because the teachings of Satan are not in harmony **with the Scriptures**.
- ✓ God will not permit Satan to counterfeit **the manner** of Christ's coming.
- ✓ Those who at this point **have received** the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive.

Satan's Personation in The Great Controversy (1911)

The beginning of the chapter '*The Time of Trouble*', p. 614, provides the **reference point** for the moment when Satan personates Christ:

*"When He **leaves the sanctuary**, darkness covers the inhabitants of the earth. In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God **without an intercessor**. The **restraint** which has been upon the wicked is **removed**, and*

Satan has entire control [Satan has full control before he personates the second coming] of the finally impenitent. God's long-suffering has ended. The world has rejected His mercy, despised His love, and trampled upon His law. The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation; the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn. Unsheltered by divine grace, they have no protection from the wicked one. Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion [the removal of the restraint], all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old." GC, p. 614

Satan's personation of Christ's coming in the chapter 'The Time of Trouble' in The Great Controversy, pp. 624, 625:

Immediately before the passage on Satan's personation of Christ's coming, Ellen White described the work of demons attempting to fasten the world in deception and urge it to unite with Satan in his last struggle against the government of heaven. Would the demons urge the kings of the earth to unite with Satan and attempt to fasten them on his side if they were already united on his side and fastened in deception? Of Course not! These preliminary deceptions occur during the gathering time before the close of probation (see the last chapter of these study notes):

"Fearful sights of a supernatural character will soon be revealed in the heavens [this cannot refer to Satan's personation of Christ because Satan's personation takes place on earth, not in the heavens and his 'coming' will

not be fearful to the wicked], in token of the power of miracle-working demons [plural]. The spirits of devils [plural] will go forth to the kings of the earth and to the whole world [allusion to the language of the sixth plague—Revelation 16:13, 14], to fasten them in deception, and urge them on to unite with Satan in his last struggle against the government of heaven [fastening them in deception and urging them to unite with Satan takes place during probationary time]. By these agencies [spirits of devils], rulers and subjects will be alike deceived [they will already be deceived before the crowning act]. Persons [not Satan himself as in the next paragraph] will arise pretending [not personating] to be Christ Himself, and claiming the title and worship which belong to the world's Redeemer. They [the false christs] will perform wonderful miracles of healing [the miracles of Revelation 16:13, 14] and will profess to have revelations from heaven contradicting the testimony of the Scriptures.”

Next, Ellen White describes Satan himself personating Christ after probation's close:

“As the crowning act [the culmination] in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Savior's advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth [not in the heavens], Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. Revelation 1:13-15. The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of

triumph rings out upon the air: 'Christ has come! Christ has come!' The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him, while he **lifts up his hands** and pronounces a **blessing** upon them, as Christ blessed His disciples when He was upon the earth. **His voice** is **soft** and subdued, yet full of **melody**. In gentle, compassionate tones he presents **some** of the same gracious, **heavenly truths** which the Savior uttered; he **heals the diseases** of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have **changed the Sabbath** to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. He declares that those who persist in keeping holy the seventh day are **blaspheming** his name by refusing to listen to his angels sent to them with light and truth. This is the **strong, almost overmastering delusion**.

But the **people of God** [God's people are the focus and target] will not be misled. **The teachings** of this false christ are not in **accordance with the Scriptures**. His blessing is pronounced upon the **worshippers of the beast and his image**, the very class upon whom the Bible declares that God's unmingled wrath shall be poured out.

And, furthermore, Satan is not permitted to **counterfeit the manner of Christ's advent**. The Savior has warned His people against deception upon this point, and has clearly foretold the manner of His second coming. "There shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. . . . Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth; behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24:24-

27, 31; 25:31; Revelation 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. This coming there is **no possibility of counterfeiting**. It will be universally known—witnessed by the whole world. *GC*, pp. 624, 625

Let's **review** the main elements of *The Great Controversy* passage:

- ✓ There will be **preliminary deceptions** where 'the **spirits of devils** will **go forth** to the kings of the earth and to the **whole world**, to **fasten them in deception**, and **urge them** on **to unite with Satan**'.
- ✓ The **crowning act** or **completion** of Satan's work of deception will be **during the time of trouble** after the close of probation:

*"The wrath of Satan increases as his time grows short, and his work of **deceit** and destruction will reach its **culmination** in the **time of trouble**."*
GC, p. 623

- ✓ His **crowning act** will be the **personation** of Christ.
- ✓ He will appear as a **majestic** being of **dazzling** brightness.
- ✓ His appearance will be like description of Jesus by **John in Revelation 1**.
- ✓ His glory will be **unsurpassed** by anything that mortal eyes have seen.
- ✓ When the lost see him they will **shout** that Christ has come.
- ✓ He will **raise his hands** to bless his followers as Christ did while on earth.
- ✓ He blesses the worshipers of the **beast and his image**.
- ✓ He will heal the **diseases** of the people.
- ✓ His voice will be **soft** and subdued and **full of melody**.
- ✓ He will teach **some of the truths** that Jesus taught while on earth.
- ✓ He will claim that he has **changed the Sabbath** to Sunday.
- ✓ He will accuse the faithful of **blasphemy**.

- ✓ This will be the almost **overmastering delusion**.
- ✓ The elect will **not be misled** because the teachings of Satan are not in harmony **with the Scriptures**.
- ✓ God will not permit Satan to counterfeit **the manner** of Christ's coming.

Clearly, the passage in *The Great Controversy* and *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 4, are describing the same event.

Satan's Last Deception from *Manuscript 16, 1884*

Even a cursory analysis of this manuscript (written in the same year as *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 4) indicates that it is addressing the **same personation** of Christ as the passages in *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 4 of 1884 and *The Great Controversy* of 1911. However, the manuscript contains some very valuable information **not found** in the other two sources. I have added my own explanatory notes in brackets:

*"Satan sees that he is **about to lose his case**. [why?] He cannot sweep in **the whole world** [because the elect resist his supremacy—GC, p. 618]. He makes **one more, last, desperate effort** to overcome **the faithful** [the world is not the focus] by deception. He does **this** [his attempt to deceive the faithful] in **personating Christ**. He clothes himself with the **garments of royalty** which have been accurately described in the **vision of John**. He has power to do this. He will appear to his **deluded followers** [at this point his followers are already deluded], the **Christian world** [not the whole world] who **received** [past tense] not the love of the truth [in the loud cry] but **had** [past tense] pleasure in unrighteousness [**allusion to 2 Thessalonians 2**] (transgression of the law), as Christ coming the second time.*

***He** proclaims **himself** Christ, and **he** is believed to be Christ, a **beautiful, majestic** being clothed with **majesty** and, with **soft voice** with **pleasant words**, with **glory unsurpassed** by anything their **mortal eyes had** yet beheld. These, his **deceived, deluded followers**, **[they are already deceived and deluded]** set up a **shout of victory**, ‘Christ has come the second time! Christ has come! He has **lifted up His hands** just as He did when He was upon the earth, and **blessed us**.’*

*Here it was [that] the masterly effort of Satan would have **deceived the very elect** [Matthew 24:24—the focus is the elect]. **But** who were the ones blessed by him? Whom did he [Satan] make glad? Whom did he [Satan] honor? The combined, the **churches fallen** by rejecting light and the messages of mercy Heaven **had sent** to heal Babylon but **she refused** [past tense, the loud cry from heaven; Revelation 18:1-5]. (Christ **had declared** [past tense] the friendship of the world was enmity with God. Whosoever would be a friend of the world was the enemy of God.) The papal power, the man of sin which thought to change times and laws, that **had presented** [past tense] **a rival sabbath to the world** to be worshiped, the **apostate power** who sits in the temple of God showing himself that he is God, the power that drank the blood of the saints is united with the **Protestant churches**, having **two horns like a lamb** but speaks as a dragon; the deceptions of spiritualism which have perpetuated Satan’s lie uttered in Eden, ‘Thou shalt not surely die’ [Genesis 3:4]—all these **are bound up in bundles, a corrupt harmony** under a corrupt leader. **The blessing** is pronounced by this false christ upon the worshipers of the **beast and his image** **[those who were bound up in bundles to be burned]**, who **have received** **[at this point]** the mark of the beast and the mark of the image **[at this point they have already received the mark]** of the beast.”*

The expression, ‘*bound up in bundles*’ is important. When Satan personates the second coming, the tares have already been bound up in bundles to be burned. The word ‘bind’ refers to imprisonment and at this point, Babylon has become a prison and a cage of the lost (Revelation 18:1-3; Matthew 13:30; Luke 8:29; Acts 22:4). In *The Review and Herald*, August 18, 1885 Ellen White explained that the third angel’s message binds the righteous by the cords of truth and love to be taken to God’s garner while Satan binds his followers in bundles to be burned:

*“The **third angel's message** must go over the land, and awaken the people, and call their attention to the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. **Another angel [the loud cry angel of Revelation 18:1]** unites his voice with the third angel, and the earth is lighted with its glory. The light increases, and it shines out to **all the nations** of the earth. It is to go forth as a light that burns. It will be attended with **great power, [the latter rain]** until its golden beams have fallen upon every tongue, every people, and every nation upon the face of the **whole earth**. . . As the truth goes forth, Satan intensifies his zeal to defeat its progress by presenting pleasing delusions. As we urge the truth, he urges his errors. . . Here are two companies; one of them **is being** bound in **bundles to burn**, the other **is being bound by the cords of truth and love**. **Satan is binding** his followers with the work of iniquity; Christ **is binding** together his people in love and faith in the keeping of his commandments.”* *The Review and Herald*, August 18, 1885.

Let’s continue now our analysis of *Manuscript 16*, 1884:

*Here is the **only hope** of **God’s people [in the midst of the personation]**—the **unerring word** of Jehovah that there would be a **remnant only [the remnant***

*are the focus] in this **trying time** [when Satan personates Christ] who would **keep the word** of Christ's patience, who **would not** worship the beast, papal Rome, or his image (Protestants who are represented by the image beast with lamb-like pretensions but speaks as a dragon). "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." Revelation 14:9-11.*

***Appearances** will deceive. The masterly miracle-working power of Satan **has carried [past tense]** the **whole world** with them **and the fallen churches**, and **those only who have [made] the Bible their study, [the elect] who have [already]** the law of God engraved in their hearts, **will stand** the test of **this time [the time when Satan personates Christ]** of satanic delusion and peril. If it were possible, Jesus tells us, they would **deceive the very elect [an allusion to Matthew 24:24]**. Satan in **personating Jesus Christ** is **[in this time] worshiped** as God. **Shout upon shout** of victory is heard in adoration and in praise.*

***Angels of God** are **waiting the mandate** from the divine Advocate which shall place **man above the wrath of Satan** [cf. *The chapters on the time of trouble: EW*, pp. 283, 284: "The time had nearly come when He was to manifest His mighty power and gloriously **deliver** His saints." *GC*, p. 630: "They are waiting the word of their Commander to **snatch them from their peril.**" *GC*,*

*p. 630]]. The Lord of heaven and of earth sorrows and rejoices over His repenting, **believing children** [the focus is on the elect]. Their steadfast [adherence to] principle **was attended** by loss, sacrifice, and peril. Their adherence to the commandments of God **provoked** calumny and [the] hatred of the disloyal and apostate churches. Whatsoever is not sustained by the Bible standard must not be entertained. Those who are the agents of Satan are vindictive, cruel, and like their master. Those who make the Bible their standard must expect abuse, outrage. In the cause of truth there can be no compromise.*

*Jesus is looking from His throne upon His people. His interest is identified with His suffering brethren. With joy the angel hears the word from Jesus, "Take away the filthy garments from him and clothe him with change of raiment." And He said, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." [Zechariah 3:4.] Satan sees that he is about **to lose his last chance** of subverting **these souls** [the elect] and he brings all the powers of his satanic generalship into intense activity. **This last great act** in the drama is in **personating** Jesus Christ. His disguise is discerned by none but those who are **established in the Scriptures** and acquainted [with] the word of God [once, again, the elect are in view]. [possible page missing here]*

***The saints** [once again, the elect are in view] look on with amazement. Will **they also** be deceived? [at this point all the wicked already are deceived] Will **they** worship Satan? Angels of God are about **them**. A clear, firm, musical voice is heard, '**Look up.**' [cf. **GC**, p. 636: 'look up' in the context of the deliverance of God's people] There was one object before the **praying ones**—[the] final and eternal salvation of their souls. This object was before them constantly—that*

immortal life was promised to them who endure unto the end. Oh, how earnest and fervent had been their desires. The judgment and eternity were in view. Their eyes by faith were fixed on the blazing throne, before which the white-robed ones were to stand. This **restrained** them from the indulgence of sin. They **were** ripening for heaven. They **had** been cultivating spiritual mindedness, and striving soul, might, mind, and strength with persevering energy to **copy the Pattern**, that they might be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, and meet their Lord in peace. Their souls **went out** in all the intense longing for to see Jesus, and by beholding by faith the character and purity of Jesus they **were being** transformed into His image. They **were being brought** into close harmony with Jesus Christ, and they **had** indomitable purpose. They **would not** dishonor God; they **would not** receive the mark of the beast or of his image; they **would overcome** as servants and sons of God, that they might inherit all things.

As a child lost weeps and longs for home, so **did** the remnant long to see Him whom their souls loveth, their **Deliverer**, Him in whom their hope of eternal life was centered. Pilgrims and strangers amidst labors, sorrows and conflicts, they turn the eye of faith heavenward, exclaiming, "Come, Lord Jesus, and come quickly." Home—the mansions Christ has gone to prepare for them; how they long for their home in glory, how they long to enter within the gates of the city and dwell in the presence of Jesus forever. Their desires have been cherished long, and as Satan and his angels **inspired** the world, the church, and state against them, their souls with intense longings **have cherished** the soul-inspiring hope of overcoming and wearing the crown of life. Their character **had obtained** the heavenly mold that gave them discernment to see the disguises of Satan. Their understanding of Scriptures **had given them** a fixedness of purpose, an indomitable energy, which

*rendered them impossible to be molded or subdued by earth or hell. If they would be discouraged, Satan would have overwhelmed them. They count all things loss for the excellency of Christ. They **could not** be bribed or seduced or terrified. They **were deaf** to the siren song of pleasure, blind to the dazzling splendors presented before them to confuse, to allure, their senses. Worldly distractions, ambitions, honors **were presented** before them but only to be rejected. Indifferent to the threats and unmoved by terrors of the infernal powers, they **could not** be overthrown by Satan's devices.*

***One effort more**, and then Satan's **last device** is employed. He hears the **unceasing cry [day and night]** for Christ to come, for Christ to **deliver** them. This **last strategy** is to **personate** Christ and make **them [the elect]** think their prayers are answered. But this answers to the last closing work, the **abomination of desolation** standing in the holy place.”*

Some have interpreted the concluding phrase of Manuscript 16, ‘*this answers to the **last closing work**, the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place,*’ to mean that *the manuscript* is describing the **very moment** when the national Sunday law is passed by Congress while the door of probation is still open. After all, Ellen White did define the ‘*abomination of desolation standing in the holy place*’ as the national Sunday law. Therefore, they conclude that Satan’s personation of Christ will take place **during probationary time**.

However, the national Sunday law issue (the abomination of desolation) **does not end** when the law is **legislated** by Congress. **All events after this** will bear a relationship to the Sunday law. The great tribulation, Satan’s personation of Christ’s coming and the death decree after probation’s close are all are related

to the Sunday law. The **great tribulation** comes because God's people refuse to keep the Sunday law. **Satan's personation** of Christ has the purpose of deceiving **the elect** to keep Sunday. The **death decree** is given against those who refuse to keep Sunday.

Furthermore, I searched the published writings of Ellen White and found that she uses the expression 'closing work' several times to refer to the final preaching of the gospel **before the close of probation**. She also uses the expression 'closing conflict' to refer to events during probationary time such as in the following statement:

*"The work of the Holy Spirit is immeasurably great. It is from this source that power and efficiency come to the worker for God. . . As Christ was glorified on the day of Pentecost, so will He again be glorified in the **closing work of the gospel**, when He shall prepare a people to stand the **final test [the Sunday law]**, in the **closing conflict** of the great controversy." Review and Herald, Nov. 29, 1892*

However, only in the following quotation does Ellen White qualify the expression 'great conflict' with the word '**last**' to describe events during the little time of trouble in probationary time. In the following quotation the events of the little time of trouble during probationary time will occur **prior** to the 'last closing conflict' after probation closes:

*"The two armies will stand **distinct and separate**, and this distinction will be so marked that many who shall be convinced of truth will come on the side of God's commandment-keeping people. When this grand work is to take place in the battle, **prior** to the **last closing conflict**, many will be **imprisoned**, many will **flee for their lives from cities** and towns, and **many will be martyrs** for Christ's sake*

in standing in defense of the truth. They will be brought before kings and rulers, and before councils to meet the false, absurd, and lying accusations brought against them, but they must stand firm as a rock to principle, and the promise is, 'As thy days so shall thy strength be.' (Deuteronomy 33:25). You will not be tempted above what you are able to bear. Jesus bore all this and far more. The express command of God must be obeyed, for God has been working. Luke 21:8-19. Ellen G. White, The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, p. 484

There can be no doubt that Manuscript 16 (cursives) is dealing with the same event as *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 4 and *The Great Controversy*:

- ✓ The personation is the culmination of Satan's work of deception.
- ✓ It is his last attempt to deceive the faithful.
- ✓ His last strategy is to personate Christ.
- ✓ His target audience is the elect.
- ✓ He appears with dazzling brightness.
- ✓ His appearance is like the description of Jesus by John in Revelation.
- ✓ He appears in garments of royalty
- ✓ His glory is unsurpassed by anything mortal eyes have seen.
- ✓ He is a beautiful, majestic being clothed with majesty
- ✓ When the lost see him they shout that Christ has come.
- ✓ He raises his hands to bless his followers as Christ did.
- ✓ However, his blessing is for those who have received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.
- ✓ He speaks with soft voice and pleasant words.
- ✓ He teaches some of the truths that Jesus taught.

- ✓ He claims to have **changed the Sabbath** to Sunday.
- ✓ God's people will **not be misled** because the teachings of Satan are not in harmony with the Scriptures.
- ✓ Furthermore, Satan will **not be allowed** to counterfeit the **manner** of Christ's coming.
- ✓ Those who received the **love of the truth** will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive.

There are **key expressions** in the manuscript that clearly indicate that the personation of Christ by Satan is his **last attempt** to deceive the elect. Several expressions indicate that this will be Satan's **final attempt** to deceive the elect. After this last attempt, there will be **no more!**

- ✓ The personation is Satan's '**one more, last, desperate effort to overcome the faithful.**'
- ✓ '**last device**'
- ✓ It is '**one** effort more'.
- ✓ It is 'Satan's **last** device'.
- ✓ It is Satan's '**last great act**'.
- ✓ It is his '**last** strategy'.
- ✓ It is 'the **crowning** act'.
- ✓ It is the 'about to lose the **last chance** of subverting these souls'.
- ✓ The faithful 'unceasing **cry** for Christ to come and **deliver** them'.
- ✓ Satan makes the elect 'think their **prayers are answered**' by personating Christ.
- ✓ The work of deceit 'will reach its **culmination**' in the time of trouble.

If, according to Olson's order of final events, Satan's personation of Christ's coming will take place **before** the shaking, the latter rain, the loud cry, the sealing and the close of probation, could we really say that this was Satan's **last** great act, his **last** strategy, his **crowning** act, his **last** chance, his **last** device, his **last** desperate attempt, his **one more** effort to deceive the world? Would he not have any more deceptions after the shaking, the latter rain, the loud cry, the sealing and the close of probation? Would Satan's personation of Christ's coming during probationary time be his last attempt to deceive the elect? Ellen White explained that Satan's work of deceit will reach its **culmination** in the time of trouble, not before the close of probation:

*"The wrath of Satan increases as his time grows short, and his **work of deceit** and destruction will reach its **culmination** in the time of trouble." GC, p. 623*

Three Chapters in The Great Controversy

It will be helpful to take a closer look at the basic content of three successive chapters in *The Great Controversy*:

'The Final Warning' (GC, pp. 603-612)

This chapter describes God's final message to the world. It describes the **latter rain**, the **loud cry**, God's people testifying before **courts**, the **exodus** of the faithful **from Babylon**, the **seal of God** and the **mark of the beast**. When the final message comes to an end, **probation will close**.

'The Time of Trouble' (GC, pp. 613-634)

The next chapter describes the elect **crying out** to God for deliverance during the time of trouble **after** the close of probation. It is in this chapter that Satan

personates the second coming of Christ, to seemingly answer the prayers of the elect.

‘God’s People Delivered’ (GC, pp. 635-652)

The following chapter describes the moment when the voice of God at the seventh plague answers the cries of the elect and delivers them from the death decree.

Specific Details from ‘The Final Warning’

Events in the chapter, ‘*The Final Warning*’ occur during probationary time. They are a commentary on Matthew 24:4-20:

The deplorable condition of Babylon which necessitates the latter rain and the loud cry:

“As the teachings of spiritualism are accepted by the churches, the restraint imposed upon the carnal heart is removed, and the profession of religion will become a cloak to conceal the basest iniquity. A belief in spiritual manifestations opens the door to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, and thus the influence of evil angels will be felt in the churches. GC, pp. 603, 604

The latter rain

“The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. The prophecies which were fulfilled in the outpouring of the former rain at the opening of the gospel are again to be fulfilled in the latter rain at its close. Here are “the times of refreshing” to which the apostle Peter looked forward when he said: “Repent ye therefore, and be

converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus." Acts 3:19, 20." GC, pp. 611, 612

The Loud Cry

"The sins of Babylon will be laid open. The fearful results of enforcing the observances of the church by civil authority, the inroads of spiritualism, the steady but rapid progress of the papal power—all will be unmasked." GC, p. 606

*"The angel who unites in the proclamation of the third angel's message [Revelation 18:1] is to lighten the whole earth with his glory. A work of **world-wide** extent and **unwonted power** is here foretold." GC, p. 611*

The exodus from Babylon

*"But God still **has a people in Babylon**; and before the visitation of His judgments these faithful ones **must be called out**, that they partake not of her sins and 'receive not of her plagues.' Hence the movement symbolized by the angel coming down from heaven, lightening the earth with his glory and crying mightily with a strong voice, announcing the sins of Babylon. In connection with his message the call is heard: "Come out of her, My people." These announcements, uniting with the **third angel's message**, constitute the **final warning** to be given to the inhabitants of the earth." GC, p. 604*

*"Now the rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. **Family connections, church relations**, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more*

precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, **a large number take their stand** upon the Lord's side." GC, p. 612

False prophets in Babylon attempt to quiet the conscience

"As the people go to their **former teachers** with the eager inquiry, are these things so? the **ministers** present fables, **prophecy** smooth things, to **soothe** their fears and **quiet** the awakened conscience." GC, p. 607

Many of God's people will be arraigned before courts to vindicate the truth:

"Those who are arraigned **before the courts** make a strong vindication of the truth, and some who hear them are led to take their stand to keep all the commandments of God. Thus light will be brought before thousands who otherwise would know nothing of these truths." GC, p. 607

During the little time of trouble, children will be betrayed by parents, some will be cast into prison, exiled, and treated as slaves.

"Conscientious obedience to the word of God will be treated as rebellion. Blinded by Satan, the **parent** will exercise harshness and severity toward the believing child; the master or mistress will oppress the commandment-keeping servant. Affection will be alienated; **children** will be disinherited and driven from home. The words of Paul will be literally fulfilled: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12. As the defenders of truth refuse to honor the Sunday-sabbath, some of them will be thrust into **prison**, some will be **exiled**, some will be treated as **slaves**." GC, p. 608

A large class forsake the Seventh-day Adventist Church

*“As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren. When Sabbath keepers are brought **before the courts** to answer for their faith, **these apostates** are the most efficient agents of Satan to misrepresent and accuse them, and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the rulers against them.” GC, p. 608*

The final test will polarize the world into two groups

*“Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the **believers**. **Satan also works**, with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to **take their stand**.” GC, p. 612*

*“While one class, by accepting the sign of submission to earthly powers, receive the **mark of the beast**, the other choosing the token of allegiance to divine authority, receive the **seal of God**.” GC, p.605*

Those who choose to remain in Babylon reject the truth and become entrenched in infidel hardihood:

*“With every rejection of truth the minds of the people will become **darker**, their hearts **more stubborn** until they are **entrenched** in an infidel hardihood.” GC, p. 601*

The Seal of God and the Mark of the Beast

If Satan’s personation of Christ’s coming will be during probationary time, why didn’t Ellen White include it in the chapter on the final warning? Why did she place it in the chapter on the time of trouble after probation has closed? If it was to occur during probationary time, would it not be more logical for Ellen to include it in the chapter on the final warning when the loud cry is being given and multitudes are leaving Babylon and joining God’s people?

Details from ‘The Time of Trouble’

Ellen White described the close of probation in the first paragraph of the chapter ‘The Time of Trouble’:

*“When the third angel's message **closes**, **mercy no longer** pleads for the guilty inhabitants of the earth. The people of God **have accomplished** their work. They have received ‘the latter rain,’ ‘the refreshing from the presence of the Lord,’ and they are prepared for the trying hour before them. Angels are hastening to and fro in heaven. An angel returning from the earth announces that **his work is done**; the **final test** has been brought upon the world, and all who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received ‘the seal of the living God.’ Then **Jesus ceases His intercession** in the sanctuary above.” GC, p. 613*

Later in the chapter, Ellen White describes Satan’s personation of Christ’s coming (GC, pp. 624, 625).

Details from ‘God’s People Delivered’

During the time of trouble, the elect cry out for God to deliver them as their enemies are about to execute the death decree:

*“When the protection of human laws shall be withdrawn from those who honor the law of God, there will be, in different lands, a simultaneous movement for their destruction. As the time appointed in the [death] decree draws near, the people will conspire to root out the hated sect. It will be determined to strike in one night a decisive blow, which shall utterly silence the voice of dissent and reproof. The people of God—some in prison cells, some hidden in solitary retreats in the forests and the mountains—still plead for divine protection [**cry out like Jacob when Esau was coming**], while in every quarter companies of armed men, urged on by hosts of evil angels, are preparing for the work of death.” GC, p. 635*

In the very next sentence God intervenes to deliver His elect:

“It is now, in the hour of utmost extremity, that the God of Israel will interpose for the deliverance of His chosen. . . It is at midnight that God manifests His power for the deliverance of His people.” GC, p. 635



“BEHOLD, I SEND YOU ELIJAH!”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #4: THE SIGNS IN THE HEAVENS IN MATTHEW 24:29

Introductory Problems

It has been claimed that the events of Matthew 24 cannot be in chronological order because the signs in the sun, moon and stars in verse 29 already took place in 1780 and 1833. People wonder how can I say that the signs in heaven will take place after the Sunday law, the flight of the faithful, the great tribulation and Satan’s personation of Christ if they were already fulfilled in 1780 and 1833. This question makes it necessary to do a careful study of the signs in Matthew 24:29 to determine if this claim passes the test.

There is a second issue that we must address as well. Ellen White explicitly stated that the great tribulation of verse 21 was already fulfilled during the 1260 years of papal oppression. If this is true, how can I say that the great

tribulation is **still future** after probation's close? Let's address the timing of the signs in the sun, moon and stars first.

Sequence of Events in Matthew 24:21-31

Matthew 24:21-31

The order of events from the beginning of the great tribulation to the second coming is as follows:

- ✓ The great tribulation **begins** (Matthew 24:21, 22).
- ✓ Satan's **personation** of the coming of Christ (Matthew 24:23-27).
- ✓ **Immediately after** the great tribulation ends, the powers that rule in the heavens will be **shaken** (Matthew 24:29).
- ✓ The **sign** of the Son of Man will be seen in the distance (Matthew 24:30).
- ✓ The wicked will mourn as the **cloud approaches** the earth (Matthew 24:30).
- ✓ Jesus will send His angels **to gather** the elect from the four winds of heaven (Matthew 24:31).

Now let's **zero in** on the sequence of events that occur **immediately after** the great tribulation ends by numbering them as they appear in the text:

Matthew 24:29-31

"[1] Immediately after the tribulation of those days [2] the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven [because the heavenly 'tent' will roll up as a scroll], and the powers of the heavens will be shaken [this cannot refer to 1780 because the powers of heaven were not

shaken then].³⁰ [3] Then the sign [at this point the second coming begins] of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and [4] then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.³¹ [5] And [‘then’; Mark 13:27] He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

The Powers of the Heavens

What are the ‘powers of the heavens’ that will be shaken immediately after the great tribulation ends?

Matthew 24:29

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days [the great tribulation of verse 21] the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”

Genesis has the answer to the question:

Genesis 1:16 (cf. Psalm 136:8, 9):

“Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule [to have dominion over] the day, and the lesser light to rule [to have dominion over] the night.”

God gave Ellen White a vision that **expanded** what will happen to the sun, moon and stars **immediately after** the great tribulation concludes and **just before** Jesus begins His second coming:

“December 16, 1848, the Lord gave me a view [vision] of the shaking of the powers of the heavens. I saw that when the Lord said ‘heaven,’ in giving the signs

recorded by **Matthew, Mark, and Luke**, He meant heaven, and when He said 'earth', He meant earth. The powers of heaven are the **sun, moon, and stars**. **They rule** in the heavens. . . The powers of **heaven [the sun, moon and stars]** will be **shaken** at the **voice of God [this happens at the seventh plague; Revelation 16:17; EW 36, 37]**. Then the sun, moon, and stars **will be [these signs were still in the future] moved out** of their places. They will **not pass away**, but be **shaken** by the **voice of God**." *EW*, p. 41

Without a shadow of a doubt, Ellen White understood that the heavenly signs in Matthew 24:29 do not **point back** to events in 1780 and 1833 but rather **forward** to what will occur immediately after the great tribulation has ended and just before Jesus begins His second coming.

Immediately after the above quotation, Ellen White described the **second coming**:

*"Dark, heavy clouds came up and clashed against each other. The atmosphere parted and rolled back; then we could look up through the open space in Orion, whence came the **voice of God [the voice of God delivers the elect, Revelation 16:17, 18]**. The Holy City **will** come down through that open space **[after the millennium]**."*

The movement of the heavenly bodies out of their places and the global earthquake explain why the earth will be **without form, void** and in **darkness** during the millennium as it was at the beginning of creation week:

Jeremiah 4:19, 23-28

“O my soul, my soul! I am pained in my very heart! My heart makes a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because you have heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. I beheld the earth, and indeed it was **without form, and void**; and the heavens, they had **no light**.²⁴ I beheld the mountains, and indeed they **trembled**, and all the hills moved **back and forth**.²⁵ I beheld, and indeed there was **no man**, and all the **birds** of the heavens had fled.²⁶ I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land was **a wilderness**, and all its cities were **broken down** at the presence of the Lord, by His fierce anger.²⁷ For thus says the Lord: “The whole land shall be **desolate**; yet I will not make **a full end**.²⁸ For this shall the earth mourn, and the **heavens above be black**, because I have spoken. I have purposed and will not relent, nor will I turn back from it.”

The Powers of the Earth

After describing the shaking of the powers of heaven at the end of the great tribulation and just before the second coming, Ellen White went **back in time** (Matthew 24:6, 7) to describe **the signs** that were already **transpiring** in her day among the **powers that ruled on earth**:

*“The powers of earth are those that rule on the earth [**the civil powers**] . . . I saw that the **powers of earth** are **now** [**already in her day**] being shaken and that events come **in order** [**first, the shaking of the powers on earth**]. **War, and rumors of war, sword, famine, and pestilence** are **first** to shake the powers of earth [**already beginning in Ellen White’s day**], **then** [**second, the shaking of the powers of heaven**] the **voice of God** will shake the **sun, moon, and stars**, and this **earth also** [**the global earthquake at the seventh plague—***

Revelation 16:17, 18]. I saw that the shaking of the powers in Europe [republican revolts against European monarchies, beginning in Sicily and spreading to France, Germany, Italy, and the Austrian Empire] is not, as some teach, the shaking of the powers of heaven, but it is the shaking of the angry nations."

In this passage Ellen White describes events that were already transpiring in her day and would intensify as the end draws near. Her description is taken from Matthew 24:6, 7 where we are told that these signs are the beginning of sorrows:

Matthew 24:6, 7

"And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places."

Regarding these signs, she wrote:

"These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous." GC, p. 590.

Clearly, Ellen White understood that the fulfillment of the heavenly signs in Matthew 24:29 did not take place in 1755, 1780 and 1833.

The Token Signs in 1755, 1780 and 1833

The evidence clearly indicates that the signs on earth and in the heavens in 1755, 1780 and 1833 are not the same as those at the conclusion of the great

tribulation. Revelation 6:12, 13 and Joel 2:31 describe the signs of the **soon** coming of Jesus, not the signs at the end of the great tribulation:

Revelation 6:12, 13

*"I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great [1] **earthquake**; and the [2] **sun became black** as sackcloth of hair, and the [3] **moon became like blood**.¹³ And the [4] **stars of heaven fell** to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind."*

The root prophecy for these **token** signs of the **soon coming** of Jesus in Revelation 6:12, 13 is Joel 2:31:

Joel 2:31

*"The **sun** shall be turned into darkness, and the **moon** into **blood**, **before** the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord."*

There are three differences between the heavenly signs in Matthew 24:29 and those of Revelation 6:12, 13 (and Joel 2:31).

- ✓ First, the signs in Joel 2:31 and Revelation 6:12, 13 occur **before** the great and terrible day of the Lord while those in Matthew 24:29 occur **at** the coming of the Lord.
- ✓ Second, the earthquake in Revelation 6:12, 13 occurred only on earth (in Lisbon) but in Matthew 24:29 the earthquake shakes the powers of heaven as well as those on earth.
- ✓ Third, according to Matthew 24:29 the moon will grow dark but Revelation 6:12, 13 and Joel 2:31 state that the moon looked **like blood**.

Ellen White Distinguished the Signs

Some have appealed to a statement in GC, p. 304 to prove that the heavenly signs in Matthew 24:29 took place in 1780 and 1833. However, a careful reading indicates that Ellen White actually **distinguished between** the heavenly signs of 1780 and 1833 (Revelation 6:12, 13) and those of Matthew 24:29. Ellen White began the statement in this way:

*"Prophecy **not only** [it foretells more than one thing] foretells the [1] **manner and object** of Christ's coming, **but** [also] presents [2] **tokens** by which men are to know when it is **near**."*

Here Ellen White speaks of **two types of prophetic signs**. The first foretell the **manner and object** of Christ coming and the second, the tokens that His coming is near. Next, Ellen White provided, in order, **scriptural proof** for the manner and object of Christ's coming (Luke 21:25; Mark 13:24-26) followed by scriptural proof for the tokens of its nearness (Revelation 6:12):

*"Said Jesus: [#1: concerning the manner and object] "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars." Luke 21:25. "The **sun** shall be darkened, and the **moon** shall **not give her light**, and the **stars** of heaven shall fall [because the vault of heaven will roll up like a scroll, cf. Psalm 104:2; Isaiah 40:22], and the **powers that are in heaven** shall be **shaken**. And then shall they **see the Son of man** coming in the clouds with great power and glory." Mark 13:24-26. [#2: regarding the tokens] The revelator thus describes the **first of the signs** to **precede** the Second Advent: "There was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood." Revelation 6:12." GC, p. 304*

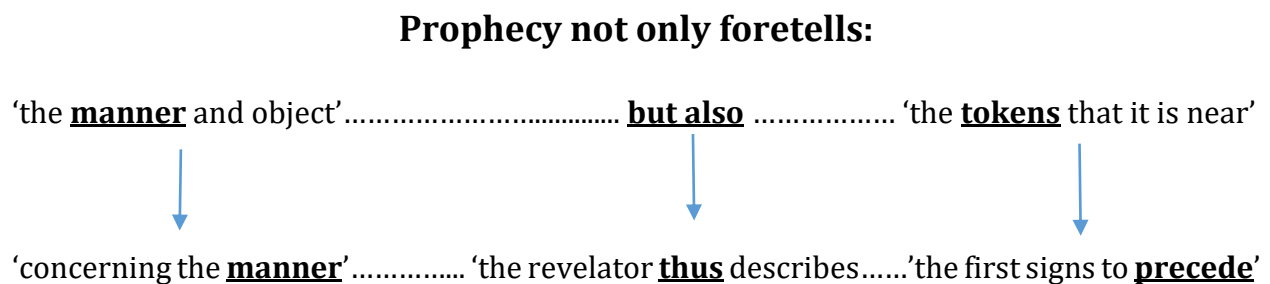
A **hasty reading** of this statement in *The Great Controversy*, p. 304 might give the impression that Luke 21:25 and Mark 13:24-26 refer to the signs in 1780 and 1833. However, Ellen White explicitly stated that the heavenly signs in Matthew, Mark and Luke will take place when the final great tribulation comes to an end. A careful reading of Ellen White's statement in *The Great Controversy*, p. 304 indicates that **Luke 21:25** and **Mark 13:24-26** refer to the **manner and object** of Christ's coming while **Revelation 6:12, 13** refers to the **token** signs in 1755, 1780 and 1833.

At the beginning of the statement, Ellen White mentions two events:

- ✓ The **manner and object** of Christ's second coming.
- ✓ The **token signs** that it is near.

Ellen White then quotes **Luke 21:25** and **Mark 13:24-26** to describe the **manner** of the second coming followed by **Revelation 6:12, 13** to describe the **tokens** in 1755, 1780 and 1833.

The following chart illustrates how Ellen White's statement is structured:



Two Parts of the Sixth Seal

The sixth seal (Revelation 6:12-17) is composed of two stages with a significant time pause in between. The first stage (Revelation 6:12, 13) describes the Lisbon earthquake in 1755 the darkening of the sun and the blood moon in 1780 and the falling of the stars in 1833. These signs were mostly local. However, the second stage of the sixth seal is when the voice of God will cause a global earthquake and greater signs in the sun, moon and stars announcing that Jesus is about to leave from heaven to earth (Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:14-17; cf. Revelation 16:17, 18).

Ellen White distinguished the two stages of the sixth seal. She described the token signs of Revelation 6:12, 13 in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 304-308, 333. However, she did not quote Revelation 6:14-17 until over three hundred pages later on p. 642. One wonders why there is a gap of more than three-hundred pages between her comments on the token signs in Revelation 6:12, 13 and the global signs in Revelation 6:14-17. The reason is simple. She understood that the first part of the sixth seal points to the events in 1755, 1780 and 1833 (verses 12, 13) and the second, to events that will occur when the great day of the Lamb's wrath comes (verses 14-17).

Signs of a Soon Coming?

Critics both within and without the Seventh-day Adventist Church ridicule the idea that the signs of Revelation 6:12, 13 are tokens of the soon coming of Jesus. They say: 'How can one believe that events that took place 275 years ago are

signs of the **soon coming** of Jesus? Isn't this **stretching credulity** to its breaking point?

On the surface, this objection seems persuasive until we reckon the 275 years in a **broader perspective**. The late **C. Mervyn Maxwell** in his excellent book, *Magnificent Disappointment*, pp. 91, 92 (published in 1994) puts 1844 and the nearness of the second coming **in perspective**. Maxwell provides the following analogy:

Let us suppose for the sake of argument that I am going to take a **six-thousand miles trip**. When I **start** the journey, we would all agree that my destination is **very distant**. When I am **halfway** there, the destination is still a **long way off**. However, would you not agree that when I am **250 miles** from my destination, my **arrival is near**? After all, 250 of 6,000 years of history is only **4%**!

Signs Immediately After the Great Tribulation

The Bible describes signs in the heavenly bodies after the great tribulation in other places. The token signs of Revelation 6:12, 13 tell us that the sun became **dark**, the moon became **like blood** and the **stars fell** from heaven. And Joel 2:31 states that these signs happen **BEFORE** the great and terrible day of the Lord—that is, before the plagues and the second coming (Revelation 6:17). However, there are several passages of Scripture that point out that the signs of Matthew 24:29 are different than those in Joel 2:31 and Revelation 6:12, 13.

Joel 2:10-11

*“The **earth quakes** before them [God’s armies], the **heavens tremble**; the sun and moon **grow dark**, and the stars **diminish their brightness**.¹¹ The Lord gives*

voice before **His army**, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; **who can endure it [the same question as in Revelation 6:17]?**"

These signs **did not occur** on earth in 1755, 1780 and 1833. Rather, they portray the same signs that immediately follow the **second stage** of the great tribulation in Matthew 24:29:

- ✓ First, in the signs of Revelation 6:12, 13 **only the earth** was shaken, not the heavens.
- ✓ Second, Revelation 6:12, 13 states that the moon will become **like blood** while Joel 2:10, 11 says that the moon will **grow dark**.
- ✓ Third, in Revelation 6:12, 13, according to many eyewitnesses, the **stars shone** as they fell but in Joel 2:10, 11 they **diminish their brightness**.
- ✓ Fourth, the **context** of Joel 2:10, 11 indicates that the signs occur globally immediately before the second coming begins. In fact, the identical question at the conclusion of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:17) comes from Joel 2:11.

Joel 3:15-16

*"The sun and moon will **grow dark**, and the stars will **diminish their brightness**.
¹⁶ The Lord also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the **heavens** and **earth** will **shake**; but the Lord will be a **shelter for His people**, and the strength of the children of Israel."*

The signs in Joel 3:15, 16, are **not the same** as those in Revelation 6:12, 13 and Joel 2:31 (cf. Matthew 24:29) for the same reasons:

- ✓ First, in the signs of Revelation 6:12, 13 only the earth was shaken, **not the heavens**.
- ✓ Second, Revelation 6:12, 13 says that the moon became **like blood** but Joel 3:15, 16 states that the moon **will grow dark**.
- ✓ Third, in Revelation 6:12, 13, the **stars shone** as they fell, as testified by many eyewitnesses, but in Joel 3:15, 16 they will **diminish their brightness**.
- ✓ Finally, the **context of Joel 3:15, 16** indicates that the signs occur globally immediately before the second coming begins.

Isaiah 13:4-13

*The Lord of hosts for battle. ⁵ They come from **a far country**, from the **end of heaven** —the Lord and **His weapons of indignation**, to destroy the whole land. ⁶ **Wail**, [all nations mourn] for the day of the Lord is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. ⁷ Therefore all hands will be **limp**, every man's heart will **melt**, ⁸ and they will be **afraid**. **Pangs and sorrows** will take hold of them; they will be **in pain** as a woman in childbirth; they will be **amazed at one another**; their faces will be like flames. ⁹ Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with both **wrath and fierce anger**, to lay the land desolate; and He will **destroy its sinners** from it. "For the stars of heaven and their constellations will **not give their light**; the sun **will be darkened** in its going forth, And the moon will **not cause its light to shine**. ¹¹ "I will punish **the world** for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. ¹² I will make a mortal **rarer than fine gold**, a man more than the golden wedge of Ophir. ¹³ Therefore I will **shake the heavens**, and*

the earth will move out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts and in the day of His fierce anger.”

The signs in Isaiah 13:10-13 are not the same as those in Revelation 6:12, 13 and Joel 2:31. In the Isaiah passage the sun, moon and stars grow dark and the heavens shake. In 1755, 1780 and 1833 the heavens did not shake and neither did the moon and stars grow dark. Rather, in 1833 the witnesses marveled at how bright the Leonid shower shone. Finally, the context of Isaiah 13 is the outpouring of God’s wrath at the end of the great tribulation.

We can safely conclude that there are two sets of signs, one in the past and the other in the future. The signs in Matthew 24:29 are indeed in chronological order! Let’s turn now analyze the timing of the great tribulation. Was it past or is it future?



“BEHOLD, I SEND YOU ELIJAH!”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #5: THE GREAT TRIBULATION: PAST OR FUTURE?

The Sequence of the First Four Seals

Seventh-day Adventists have generally agreed that the seven seals describe seven consecutive stages of Church history:

- ✓ The first Seal (white horse): The Apostolic Church that goes out conquering and to conquer.
- ✓ The second Seal (red horse): The Church persecuted by the Roman Empire.
- ✓ The third Seal (black horse): Apostasy enters the Church in the days of Constantine.
- ✓ The fourth Seal (pale horse, the color of death. The *Liddell and Scott Lexicon* translates: ‘pale, pallid, bleached’). The persecution of the faithful Church by the papacy for ‘time, times and the dividing of time’. Death and the grave followed this pale, deathlike horse.

Two Stages of the Fifth Seal

In the fifth seal the martyrs who were killed during the period of the fourth **pallid horse** cry out for God to **judge** and **avenge** their blood. They cry because they were **unjustly** killed for '*the word of God and the testimony which they held*'. Like righteous Abel, their blood cries out from the ground for **justice** and **vindication** (Revelation 6:9, 10; Genesis 4:10). Here is the first part of the fifth seal:

Revelation 6:9, 10

*"When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who **had been slain** for the **word of God** and for the **testimony which they held**.¹⁰ And they **cried with a loud voice**, saying, "**How long**, O Lord, **holy** and **true**, until You **judge** and **avenge our blood** on those who dwell on the earth?"*

During the first part of the fifth seal, the judging and avenging of the martyrs who died during the fourth seal is still future. The martyrs were told to wait a short time until a second group of martyrs is killed as they were.

Verse 11 describes **the second group** of martyrs. While the martyrs of the past were killed **by papal Rome** during the period of the fourth deathlike pale horse, those of the future will be killed by the same power once it resurrects from its deadly wound. Let's read about the two groups of martyrs with my own explanatory notes in brackets:

Revelation 6:11, Contemporary English Version

*"Then **each** [the conferral of the robe is individual] of those who **had been killed** [during the 1260 years] was given a **white robe** [they died covered with*

the righteousness of Christ] and told to rest for a little while [in the grave for an answer to their cry]. They had to wait [for an answer to their plea] until the complete number of the Lord's other servants and followers would be killed.” [by the same system that killed the first group]

The First Stage of Martyrs: The 1260 Years

The sequence of ruling powers in Daniel 7 reveals that the little horn symbolizes the Roman Catholic papacy:

- ✓ Lion (605-539 BC) = Babylon
- ✓ Bear (539-331 BC) = Medo-Persia
- ✓ Leopard (331-168 BC) = Greece
- ✓ Dragon beast (168 BC-476 AD) = Rome
- ✓ Ten horns (476-538 AD) = Divisions of Rome
- ✓ Little horn (538-1798) = Papal Rome

Daniel 7:21, 22 not only describes the war that the papacy waged against the saints of the Most High for ‘time, times and the dividing of time’ but also immediately after, describes the heavenly judgment that would rectify the unjust sentences pronounced against them in human courts:

Daniel 7:21, 22

"I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, ²² until the Ancient of Days came [for the judgment—Daniel 7:9, 10], and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High [those whom the horn killed], and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom."

Daniel 7:25 also describes the **first stage** of martyrs. During the ‘*time, times and half a time*’, the little horn **persecuted** the saints of the Most High and they were given into its hand:

Daniel 7:25

*“He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall **persecute the saints** of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then **the saints shall be given into his hand** for a time and times and half a time.”*

However, Daniel 7:26, 27 describes the seating of the heavenly court to **judge** the cases of the martyrs and **avenge** their blood against the little horn:

Daniel 7:26-27

*“But the **court shall be seated** [the judging stage in heaven], and they [the heavenly court] shall take away his [the little horn’s] dominion, to consume and destroy it forever [the avenging stage].²⁷ Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the **saints of the Most High** [the same persecuted saints of Daniel 7:25]. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.”*

Revelation 13:5-7 describes this same period as **forty-two months** during which the **beast** made **war with the saints** and **overcame** them:

Revelation 13:5, 7

*“And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for **forty-two months**.⁶ Then he opened his mouth in*

*blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ It **was granted** to him to make **war with the saints** and to **overcome them**. And authority **was given** him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.”*

However, Revelation 14:7 describes the heavenly judgment in favor of the saints and Revelation 16 describes their avenging by God during the seven last plagues.

White Robes for the First Group of Martyrs

The conferral of the white robe to the first group of martyrs means that when they died, they were covered with **Christ’s righteousness**. They died **secure** because they were faithful to Jesus unto death. In this context, the promise of Jesus to the persecuted church of Smyrna is helpful: ‘Be **faithful until death**, and I will give you the crown of life.’ (Revelation 2:10).

During the period of the pallid horse of death, the martyrs were tried in human courts, found guilty, condemned, and slain (Daniel 7:21, 25; Revelation 13:7). To all human appearances, the faithful lost and their oppressors won. At some point God needed to rectify this unjust travesty. Regarding the wrongful human verdicts in earthy courts, Ellen White wrote:

“‘There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book’ (Daniel 12:1). From garrets, from hovels, from dungeons, from scaffolds, from mountains and deserts, from the caves of the earth and the caverns of the sea, Christ will gather His children to Himself. On earth they

*have been destitute, afflicted, and tormented. Millions have gone down to the grave loaded with infamy because they refused to yield to the deceptive claims of Satan. By **human tribunals** the children of God have been **adjudged** the **vilest criminals**. But the day is near when ‘God is judge Himself.’ (Psalm 50:6). Then the **decisions of earth shall be reversed**.” Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 179.*

When the Ancient of Days sat in judgment and the books were opened in 1844, God began the process of **overturning**, in the heavenly court, the unjust sentences of human tribunals (Daniel 7:9, 10, 21, 22, 26). The martyrs already had the unsoiled spiritual white garment of Christ’s righteousness when they died. However, while they rest in the grave, their names come up in the heavenly **judgment** and Jesus confesses **their names** before His Father and their names are **retained** in the book of life. Then, when Jesus returns, He will clothe them with **literal** white robes of light like those that covered Adam and Eve in their innocence.

Although the martyrs already had the white robe of Christ’s righteousness when they died, while they ‘sleep’, the heavenly court will **confirm** before the universe that they died in Christ. Regarding the spiritual and literal robe, Ellen White wrote:

*“The **white robe of innocence [the spiritual robe]** was worn by our first parents when they were placed by God in holy Eden. They lived in **perfect conformity** to the will of God **[the were righteous]**. All the strength of their affections was given to their heavenly Father. A beautiful soft light, the light of God, enshrouded the holy pair **[the literal robe]**. This **robe of light [the literal robe]** was a **symbol***

of their **spiritual garments** of heavenly innocence. Had they remained true to God it **[the literal robe of light]** would ever have continued to enshroud them. But when sin entered, they severed their connection with God **[they lost their spiritual robe]**, and the **light that had encircled them** **[their literal robe of light]** departed. Naked and ashamed, they tried to supply the place of the heavenly garments by sewing together fig leaves for a covering.” Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 310

This statement indicates that when Adam and Eve sinned, they first lost their **spiritual** robe of righteousness and as a result they lost the **literal** robe of light that had enshrouded them. The purpose of the plan of salvation is to restore **both robes**. In this life, Christ covers us with His **spiritual robe** of righteousness and then, when He returns, He will cover us with a **literal robe** of light. It is helpful in this context to consider the promise that Jesus made to the church of Sardis:

Revelation 3:4, 5

“You have a few **names** **[to be examined in the judgment]** even in Sardis who have **not defiled their garments** **[spiritual garments in this life]**; and they **shall** **[in the future kingdom]** walk with Me **in white** **[in literal white robes]**, for they are **worthy** **[their worthiness is revealed in the judgment]**. ⁵ **He** **[the reward is individual]** who **overcomes** **[in this life]** **shall be** **[when Jesus comes]** clothed in **white garments**, and **I will not** **[in the heavenly judgment]** blot out **his** **[individual]** name from the **Book of Life**; but I **will** **[future]** confess **his** **[individual]** **name** **[in the heavenly judgment]** before My Father and before His angels.”

In the parable of the **wedding garment** Jesus taught that the spiritual robe of His righteousness is conferred to believers in this life. However, it also teaches that the heavenly judgment will reveal whether believers were truly covered with the robe.

Matthew 22:11, 12

*"But when the king came in to **see** the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a **wedding garment**.¹² So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a **wedding garment**?' And he was speechless."*

According to the Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament the word 'see' 'connotes intensive, thorough, lingering, astonished, reflective, comprehending observation.'

Thus, as regards the martyrs:

- ✓ They had the unsoiled garments of Christ's righteousness **at death**.
- ✓ The heavenly **pre-advent judgment** will reveal that they were covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness when they died and Jesus will confess their **names** before the Father and the angels and their names will be retained in the book of life.
- ✓ They will resurrect at the second coming and Jesus will cover them with a **literal robe light** (cf. Revelation 7:9, 13).

It is in this life that we must wash our robes of character:

*"When Christ shall come, he will **not change the character** of any individual. Precious, probationary time is given to be improved in washing our **robes of***

character, and making them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Counsels on Education, p. 237

Although it is our **own responsibility** to wash the robes of character in this life, the cleansing agent (the laundry detergent) is the blood of Jesus. It is our role to put our dirty clothes in the washer but it is the job of the detergent in the washer to clean them. Thus, regarding the great multitude, the angel told John:

Revelation 7:9, 13, 14

*“And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, ‘These are they which came out of great tribulation, and [they] have **washed their robes** [stolé], and **made them white in the blood** of the Lamb.’”*

Ellen White explained the relationship between our role and Christ’s:

*“The provision has been made for **us** to wash. The **fountain** has been prepared at infinite expense, and the burden of **washing rests upon us**, who are imperfect before God. The Lord does not propose to remove these spots of defilement **without our doing anything** on our part. **We must wash our robes** in **the blood** of the Lamb. We may lay hold of the merits of the blood of Christ by faith, and through His grace and power we may have strength to overcome our errors, our sins, our imperfections of character, and come off victorious, having washed our robes in the blood of the Lamb.” 3T p. 183*

The Deadly Wound Concluded the First Stage of the Martyrs

The power that mowed down the saints during the ‘time, times and half a time’ received a deadly wound **with the sword** at the end of that period. This concluded the period of the first group of martyrs:

Revelation 13:3, 14, 10

*"And I saw one of his heads as if it had been **mortally wounded**. . . the beast who was wounded **by the sword**. . . He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with **the sword** must be killed with **the sword**. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints."*

According to **Romans 13:1-4**, the **sword** is a symbol of the civil power of the state in the hand of the papacy. During the 'time, times and dividing of times' or 'forty-two months', the little horn/beast used the power of the state **to slay** the first group of martyrs. However, at the end of this period, the civil powers removed the sword from the papacy's hand and gave it a mortal wound which concluded the period of the first group of martyrs.

As the blood of the martyrs symbolically cried out from the grave for God to judge and avenge them, He gave each (in absentia) a white robe and told them to **rest** for a little while till the second group of martyrs is killed.

The word '**rest**' here refers to the **sleep of death**. It is obvious that the martyrs could not literally be sleeping and crying out at the same time unless they were talking in their sleep! The word 'rest' here is a **euphemism** for death. Revelation 14:13 uses the identical word to describe the condition of those who die **in the Lord**:

Revelation 14:13

*"Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the **dead** who **die** in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may **rest** from their **labors**, and their works follow them."*

The word for '**labor**' does not denote **common**, everyday 'desk' work. It is used in the New Testament to describe difficult, hard, taxing, **exacting toil**. It appears sometimes in the context of **travail** (1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8) and describes Paul's **taxing missionary** labor (2 Corinthians 11:23, 27). Certainly, the martyrs toiled for the Lord to the point of death.

The Future Stage of Martyrs

As noted before, the first stage of martyrs ended when the little horn/beast received a deadly wound in 1798. However, the fifth seal tells us that the little horn/beast will persecute once more:

Revelation 13:3

*"And I saw one of his heads as if it had been **mortally wounded**, and his deadly wound **was healed** and all the world marveled and followed the beast."*

The deadly wound did not end the papacy's persecuting career. When the papacy's deadly wound heals, it will **resume** persecution where it **left off**. The great tribulation of the future is not a separate tribulation, but rather a **resumption** and **continuation** of the persecution of the past with a **pause** or respite in between. When the deadly wound of the little horn/beast heals, it will behave once more **as it did in forgone years**. We might say that the little horn/beast will be in 'suspended animation'. Ellen White wrote repeatedly about the **resumption**, **restoration** or **revival** of the papacy's past persecutions:

*"We have no time to lose. Troublous times are before us. The world is stirred with the spirit of war. Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place. The prophecy in the eleventh of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfillment. **Much of the history [the time, times and dividing of times] that has taken place** in fulfillment of this prophecy **will be repeated [when the deadly wound heals]**. In the thirtieth verse [of Daniel 11], a power is spoken of that 'shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant.' [Verses 31-36, quoted.] **Scenes similar** to those described in these words **will take place.**" *Manuscript Releases*, volume 13, p. 394 (*Letter 103*, 1904)*

*"The influence of [papal] Rome in the countries that **once acknowledged** her dominion [during the 1260 years] is still far from being destroyed and prophecy foretells a **restoration** of her power. "I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast." Verse 3. *GC*, p. 579*

*"When our nation [the United States] shall so abjure the principles of its government as to enact a Sunday law, Protestantism will in this act join hands with popery; it will be nothing else that **giving life** to the tyranny [which means that the tyranny must have been dead for a while] which has long been eagerly watching its opportunity to **spring again** into **active despotism.**" [which means that the despotism must have been inactive for a while] *5T*, p. 712*

*“Protestants will throw their whole influence and strength on the side of the Papacy; by a **national act enforcing** the false Sabbath, they will **give life** and **vigor** [which means that the corrupt faith of Rome must have been inactive for a time] to the corrupt faith of Rome, **reviving** her tyranny and oppression of conscience [which means that her tyranny and oppression of conscience were dead for a while]. Then it will be time for God to work in mighty power for the vindication of his truth.” Signs of the Times, June 12, 1893*

*“They [**Protestants**] speak with contempt of the idea that there will be a **revival** of the **past** [during the 1260 years] cruel **persecution** on the part of Romanists and those who affiliate with them. They do not recognize the fact that the word of God fully predicts such a **revival**, and will not concede that the people of God in the **last days** shall **suffer persecution**, although the Bible says, ‘The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.’” Signs of the Times, February 19, 1894*

*“It is impossible to give any idea of the experience of the people of God who shall be alive upon the earth when celestial glory and **a repetition** of the **persecutions of the past** are blended.” Counsels for the Church, p. 39*

The Second Group of Martyrs and their Vindication

Revelation 13:11-18 predicts that the United States of America will exert all influence to restore the persecuting power that the little horn/beast lost. This fact is underlined at least eight times in Revelation 13:11-18:

Revelation 13:11-18

*“Then I saw **another beast** [when the first beast falls] coming up out of the **earth**, and he had **two horns** like a lamb [the guarantee of civil and religious liberty in the Constitution] and [1] **spoke like a dragon** [like Rome] and he [the earth beast] exercises all the [2] **authority of the first beast** [3] in **his presence**, [NET: ‘on his behalf’] and **causes** [forces] the earth and those who dwell in it to [4] **worship the first beast** whose deadly wound was healed. ¹³ **He** [the land beast] performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. ¹⁴ And **he** [the land beast] deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do [5] **in the sight of the beast** [NIV: ‘on behalf of’], telling those who dwell on the earth to [6] make an image **to** [dative case: ‘in honor of’ NIV] **the beast** who was wounded by the sword and lived. ¹⁵ **He** [the land beast] was granted power to give breath to the image [7] **of** [genitive] **the beast**, that the image **of** [genitive] the beast should both speak and **cause** as many as would not worship the image **of** [genitive] the beast **to be killed**. ¹⁶ He [the land beast] **causes** all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, [8] **to receive a mark** [the mark of the beast] on their right hand or on their foreheads, ¹⁷ and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”*

The resurrected papacy and the earth beast of Revelation 13 are also described **as the mother harlots** and her **daughters** who shed the blood of God’s people in Revelation 17:

Revelation 17:1-2, 6

*"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the **great harlot** who sits on many waters,² with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication . . . I saw the woman, **drunk with the blood** of the saints and with the **blood of the martyrs** of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement."*

Regarding the mother and her daughters, Ellen White wrote:

*"And no other power could be so truly declared 'drunken with the blood of the saints' as **that church** which has so cruelly persecuted the followers of Christ." GC, p. 382*

*"Babylon is said to be 'the mother of harlots.' By her **daughters** must be symbolized churches that **cling to her doctrines** and traditions, and **follow her example** of sacrificing the truth and the approval of God, in order to form an unlawful alliance with the world." GC, pp. 382, 383*

Judged and Avenged

When the harlot rises to power once more with the help of her daughters (cf. Mark 9:14-28), she will pick up where she left off. During the **little time of trouble** before the close of probation, she will judge and sentence to death in human courts those who refuse to comply with her orders (cf. Matthew 24:9). Then the **second group** of martyrs will join the first, crying out to God with a loud voice for Him to judge and avenge them. No doubt, the second group of

martyrs were also covered with the white robe of Christ's righteousness at death.

Finally Judged and Avenged

Revelation 19:1, 2 describes the time when God **will have** judged and avenged the cries of **both groups** of martyrs. The heavenly anthem praises God because He **has** judged and avenged the blood of His dear martyrs. The great multitude of the redeemed will sing a song of praise to God because He has judged and avenged the blood of the faithful over the harlot:

Revelation 19:1, 2

*"After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! ² For **true and righteous** are His **judgments**, because He [1] **has judged** the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He [2] **has avenged** on her the blood of His servants shed by her." (cf. Revelation 18:20, 24).*

The words in verse 2 are virtually identical to the cries of the first group of martyrs in the fifth seal. This indicates that the **little horn/beast** that persecuted the saints during the 'time, times and half a time' or 'forty-two months' is the same power as the harlot who will persecute the end time martyrs.

The words 'judge' and 'avenge' do not refer to the same event. While judging implies a **trial and verdict**, the avenging refers to the **punishment** that comes as a result. In the **heavenly judgment** that began in 1844, God will (Daniel 7:22, 26) and when Jesus comes, He will **enforce the verdict** by rewarding the saints

and punishing the harlot (Daniel 7:21, 22, 26; Revelation 18:20, 24). At this point God will have answered the 'silent' cries of both groups of martyrs because He will have judged and avenged their blood.

But the story does not end there. During the heavenly millennial judgment, the two groups of martyrs will judge their judges. During this period, Jesus, in union with those whom the papacy martyred, will meet out the final sentence upon their wicked oppressors and after the millennium the final sentence will be enforced:

Revelation 20:4

*"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and **judgment** was committed to them. Then I **saw the souls** of those who had been **beheaded** for their **witness to Jesus** and for the **word of God**, who had not **worshiped the beast** or his **image**, and had not received his **mark** on their foreheads or on their hands. And **they lived and reigned** with Christ for a thousand years."*

Summary of Both Groups of Martyrs

The little horn/beast slew the saints of the Most High for 'a time, times and the half a time' or 'forty-two months' and God allowed it to do its will 'until' the judge sat in the heavenly court (Daniel 7:8-10, 21, 22).

In 1844, the Ancient of Days was seated on His judgment throne and the process of exonerating the first group of martyrs in the heavenly court began. In the process, the heavenly court will confirm that the martyrs were clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness when they died and their names will be retained in the book of life. However, they are told to rest in the grave until the number

of the future martyrs is complete. When the future group of martyrs is slain by the same power that killed the first group, God will judge and vindicate them in the heavenly court as well. Then, when Jesus comes, He will avenge the blood of both groups on the harlot who killed them.

Where does the great tribulation of Matthew 24 fit in this scenario? The answer is that the slaying of the **first group** of martyrs during the **fourth seal**, the war of the little horn against the saints for '*a time and times and half a time*' (Daniel 7:21, 25) parallels the first stage of the **great tribulation** in Matthew 24:21.

However, the crying out of the martyrs under the first part of the fifth seal, the dominion of the little horn (Revelation 13:3) and the great tribulation of Matthew 24:21 have two stages, one past and the other future. The tribulation of the future is not a separate tribulation but rather a **resumption** of the persecutions of the past with a pause in between. It is like a video camera that recorded the atrocities of the little horn from 538-1798, was put on pause, only to pick up where it left off when the camera begins recording once more.

In the future, the United States government, pressured by apostate Protestantism, will restore power to the papacy. This will lead to the little time of trouble just before the close of probation. During this short tribulation, God's people will be hated by all nations and the papacy, through its proxy, will slay many of those who refuse to worship the beast and his image (Matthew 24:9; Revelation 20:4). Then God will follow the same process with the second group of martyrs as He did with the first.

In the final stages of the judgment, God will reveal before the heavenly court that the second group of martyrs were covered with Christ's robe of

righteousness when they died and their names will be retained in the book of life. Then probation will close and the seven last plagues will **avenge** both groups of martyrs (16:4-6; 18:20) and then, when Jesus comes, both groups will sing the song of victory over the harlot because God has judged and avenged their blood (Revelation 19:1, 2). Finally, during the thousand years, both groups will pronounce the final sentence against their oppressors (Revelation 20:4).

The cry of the martyrs of the past

Some claim that Ellen White placed the **total** fulfillment of the fifth seal in the future and therefore it cannot have a past stage. Although it is true that most of her references refer to the future, not all do. In GC, pp. 59, 60 she applied the cries of the martyrs in Revelation 6:9-10 to the papal career of the past:

*“In the **thirteenth century** was established that most terrible of all the engines of the papacy—the **Inquisition**. The prince of darkness wrought with the leaders of the papal hierarchy. In their secret councils Satan and his angels controlled the minds of evil men, while unseen in the midst stood an angel of God, taking the **fearful record [to be looked at in the judgment]** of their iniquitous decrees and writing the history of deeds too horrible to appear to human eyes. ‘Babylon the great’ was ‘drunken with the blood of the saints.’ The mangled forms of millions of **martyrs cried to God for vengeance** upon that apostate power.” GC, p. 59*

The cry of the martyrs of the future

In other statements, Ellen White applied the cry of the martyrs to the future which means that the cry of the martyrs has two stages. Here are her statements regarding the cry of the future martyrs:

*“When the defiance of God's law is almost universal, when his people are pressed in affliction by their fellow men, God will interpose. **Then will the voice be heard from the graves of martyrs, represented by the souls that John saw slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ, which they held—** then the prayer will ascend from every true child of God **[the living saints]**: ‘It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law.’ The **fervent prayers of his people [of the living saints] will be answered**; for God loves to have his people seek him with all the heart, and depend upon him as their **deliverer [Daniel 12:1]**. He will be sought unto to do these things for his people, and he will **arise [‘stand up’]** as their **protector [Daniel 12:1]** and **avenger [Revelation 16:4-7]**. ‘Shall not God **avenge** his own **elect**, which **cry day and night** unto him?’ **[Luke 18:7]** *The Review and Herald*, December 21, 1897*

*“Roman Catholic principles will be taken under the care and protection of the state. This national apostasy will speedily be followed by national ruin. The protest of Bible truth will be no longer be tolerated by those who have not made the law of God their rule of life. **Then will the voice be heard from the graves of martyrs, represented by the souls that John saw slain for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ which they held**; then the prayer will ascend from every true child of God **[the living saints]**, ‘It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law.’ *Review and Herald*, June 15, 1897*

*“As the approach of the Roman armies was a sign to the disciples of the impending destruction of Jerusalem, so may this apostasy **[the Sunday Law]** be a sign to us that the limit of God's forbearance is reached, that the measure of our nation's iniquity is full, and that the angel of mercy is about to take her flight, never to*

return. The people of God will then be plunged into those scenes of affliction and distress which prophets have described as the **time of Jacob's trouble**. **The cries of the faithful, persecuted ones ascend to heaven [the cry of the living saints]. And [the cries of the martyrs] as the blood of Abel cried from the ground, there are voices also crying to God from martyrs' graves, from the sepulchers of the sea, from mountain caverns, from convent vaults: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"** *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5, p. 451

Why does Ellen White place the fulfillment of the fifth seal in the past and in the future? The simple reason is that the fifth seal has both **past** and **future** stages just like the Roman Catholic Papacy has two stages of persecuting power, one past and the other future. The past fulfillment was when the martyrs died during the dark ages and the future fulfillment is when persecutions of the past are revived during the short time of trouble just before the close of probation. Likewise, the tribulation of Matthew 24:21 has two stages, but the second stage is a continuation of the first with a pause in between.

Daniel 11 and the Cry of the Martyrs

Ellen White explicitly described two stages of persecution in the experience of God's people:

"It is impossible to give any idea of the experience of the people of God who shall be alive upon the earth when celestial glory [the loud cry of Revelation 18 which will enrage the wicked] and a repetition of the persecutions of the past are blended." 9T, p. 16.

Remarkably, this statement is in the context of Daniel 11 which also refers to two stages of persecution by the papacy. Daniel 11:31-39 (especially verses 33-35) highlights the persecution of God's people during the past period of papal dominion and verses 40-45 (especially verse 44) focus on the persecution of the end-time martyrs when the loud cry is proclaimed. Ellen White explained it this way:

*"We have no time to lose. Troublous times are before us. The world is stirred with the spirit of war. Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place. The prophecy in the eleventh of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfillment. **Much of the history** that has taken place in fulfillment of this prophecy **will be repeated**. In the thirtieth verse a power is spoken of that "shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant." [Verses 31-36, quoted.] **Scenes similar to those** described in these words [in verses 30-36] will take place." Manuscript Releases, volume 13, p. 394 (Letter 103, 1904)*

The Link between the Fifth and Sixth Seals

As I pointed out earlier, both the fifth and sixth seals have two stages. The first stage of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12, 13) announces the nearness of the **judgment** portion of the fifth seal and the second (Revelation 6:14-17) announces the **avenging** part. Let's consider the first part of the sixth seal:

Revelation 6:12-13

*"I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a **great earthquake** [Lisbon, November 1, 1755]; and the **sun** became black as sackcloth of hair [May 19, 1780], and the **moon** became like blood [May 19, 1780]. ¹³ And the **stars** of heaven fell to the earth [November 12, 13, 1833], as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind."*

These **token signs** announce that the **judgment portion** of the fifth seal is soon to come. However, at this point, the avenging portion is still future.

Revelation 6:14-17

These verses describe the **avenging portion** of the fifth seal. None of the signs in these verses took place in 1755, 1780 and 1833:

*"**Then** ['kai' translated 'then' in many versions] the **sky** [rather 'heaven'. The same word as in Matthew 24:29] receded as a **scroll** when it is **rolled up** [this did not happen in 1780], and **every** mountain and island was **moved out of its place** [this did not happen in 1755, 1780 and 1833]. ¹⁵ And the kings of the earth [rulers who govern the nations of the world], the great men [high officers of the state], the rich men [the socially wealthy], the commanders [commanders of armies], the mighty men [the great men in battle], every slave and every free man [regular everyday citizens], **hid themselves** [they are found naked according to Genesis 3:8; Revelation 16:15. Like Adam and Eve after sin, they hide from God because they are ashamed] in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶ and said to the mountains and rocks, "**Fall on us** and **hide us** [Hosea 10:8; Luke 23:30] from the face of Him who sits on the*

*throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! [none of this happened in 1755, 1780 and 1833]¹⁷ For the **great day of His wrath [vengeance]** has come, and who is able to **stand**?”*

The language of Revelation 6:14 echoes Isaiah 34:4 where the prophet described the collapse of the cosmos in the day of God’s wrath (parallel to the powers of the heavens being shaken in Matthew 24:29):

Isaiah 34:4, ESV

*“All the **host of heaven [the sun, moon and stars]** shall **rot away**, and the skies **roll up** like a scroll [**the collapse of the cosmos**]. All their **host [the sun, moon and stars]** shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree.”*

Deuteronomy 4:19, 20 identifies the host of heaven as the sun, moon and stars:

Deuteronomy 4:19-20, ESV; cf. Judges 5:20

*“And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the **sun** and the **moon** and the **stars**, all the **host of heaven**, you be drawn away and bow down to **them** and serve **them**, things that the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.”*

The sixth seal is clearly divided into two parts and both are marked by an **earthquake**. The first earthquake was **local** and occurred at the beginning of the sixth seal in Lisbon (Revelation 6:12). The second will be **global** and will occur at its end (Revelation 6:14). Revelation 16:18, 20 describes the second earthquake as a **cataclysmic** and global event at the outpouring of the seventh plague. Only an earthquake ‘as had not occurred since men were on the earth’

(Revelation 16:20) could literally move every mountain and island out of their places.

Ellen White and the Sixth Seal

In absolute harmony with Scripture, Ellen White understood that the sixth seal has two stages. She quoted the **first part** of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12, 13) in The Great Controversy, pp. 304, 333. However, she did not quote Revelation 6:14-17 (the **second part** of the sixth seal) until pp. 641, 642:

*“The King of kings descends upon the cloud, wrapped in flaming fire. The heavens are rolled together as a scroll, **the earth trembles** before Him, and **every mountain and island is moved out of its place [Revelation 6:14]** . . . ‘And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, ‘fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?’ **[Revelation 6:15-17]**.”*

Why did Ellen White leave a **300-page gap** between her comments on verses 12, 13, and those on verses 14-17? In order to comprehend this long parenthesis between the first and last part of the sixth seal, we must remember some things that we studied under the fifth seal:

- The **papal** persecutions have **two stages**—one **past** (during the 1260 years) and one **future** when the deadly wound is healed.

- The **tribulation** of Matthew 24:21 likewise has **two stages**—one **past** during the 1260 years and the other **future** during the little time of trouble. The past stage of the tribulation was the greatest in history as to **length**. The future stage will be the greatest as to **intensity**. Regarding the first period of persecution Ellen White wrote:

*“For more than a thousand years such persecution **as the world had never before known** was to come upon Christ's followers. Millions upon millions of His faithful witnesses were to be slain.” DA, p. 631*

- The **earthly** and **heavenly** signs in the sixth seal also have **two stages**. The first group of signs announced the end of the first period of tribulation and the soon-to-begin ‘judging’ portion of the fifth seal. The second set of cosmic signs (Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:14-17) will mark the end of the second tribulation period and the ‘avenging’ portion of the fifth seal. Just before the end of the second stage, God will vindicate the second group of martyrs in the heavenly court and seal the 144,000 living saints who will go through the final time of trouble.

Ellen G. White and the Signs

Clearly Ellen White understood that there would be a **long period** between the events of verses 12 and 13 and verses 14-17. The principle at work here is that signs in heaven and earth **mark the end** of the **two stages of the tribulation**. In both cases the signs announce that God has intervened to bring the tribulation to an end. In the first instance the tribulation ends for those who were killed during the 1260 years and in the second instance tribulation will

close for the martyrs of the little time of trouble and also for the living saints who will go through the Time of Jacob's Trouble.

Someone might object that the living saints were not martyred and therefore they are not in the purview of the fifth seal. Although it is true that the fifth seal does not explicitly state that the living saints will be avenged at that time along with both groups of martyrs, Revelation 16:5-7, the parable of the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8) and Ellen White tell us that they will indeed be avenged as well. The book of Revelation describes the reason why the wicked persecutors of God's people during the second stage of the great tribulation will have to drink water turned to blood during the period of the third plague:

Revelation 16:5-7

*"Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. ⁵ And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are **righteous**, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You have **judged** these things. ⁶ For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have **given them blood** to drink. For it is their just due."*

These verses not only describe the avenging of the martyrs, but also of the living saints who have been sentenced to death during the final great tribulation:

*"The angel of God declares: "Thou art righteous, O Lord, . . . because Thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy." Revelation 16:2-6. By **condemning the people of God to death**, they have as **truly incurred the guilt of their blood** as if it had been shed by their hands. In like manner Christ declared*

the **Jews of His time** guilty of all the blood of holy men which had been shed since the days of Abel; for they possessed the **same spirit** and were seeking to do the **same work** with these murderers of the prophets.” *GC*, p. 627

The cry of the persistent widow for the judge to avenge the elect (the very word found in Matthew 24:24) applies to the great time of trouble after the close of probation:

Luke 18:7-8

*“And shall God not **avenge** His own **elect** who **cry out** day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? ⁸I tell you that He will **avenge them** speedily.”*

Order of Events from Matthew 24:21 to 24:29

Matthew 24:21 marks the beginning of the great tribulation and the first part of verse 29 marks its end. This means that **all events** between verses 21 and the first part of verse 29 will occur during the great tribulation after the close of probation. The common theme of verses 21-31 is made clear by the use of the expression ‘those days’ three times (verse 22 twice, verse 29). This is how verses 21, 22 connect with verse 29:

Verse 21: “For then there will be **great tribulation**, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.”

Verse 22: “. . . and unless **those days [of the great tribulation]** were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake **those days [of the great tribulation]** will be shortened. . .

Verse 29: "... Immediately after the tribulation of those days. . ." [of the great tribulation]

In *The Great Controversy*, Ellen White followed the identical order of events as Matthew 24:21-29:

The beginning of the great tribulation at probation's close (GC, pp. 613, 614):

Ellen White began the chapter on the time of trouble by quoting Daniel 12:1: *'there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that time'*, which clearly echoes the words in Matthew 24:21. When probation ends, the time of trouble begins:

"When the third angel's message closes, mercy no longer pleads for the guilty inhabitants of the earth. . . Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above. . . God's long-suffering has ended. . . the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn. . . Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble."

The Personation of Christ by Satan (GC, p. 624):

In the middle of the chapter on the time of trouble, Ellen White described the personation of Christ's coming:

"As the crowning [used elsewhere by Ellen White as a synonym of 'last'] act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ." GC, p. 624

The righteous cry out for deliverance during the great tribulation (GC, pp. 631, 635)

*"Yet for the elect's sake the time of trouble will be shortened. "Shall not God avenge His own elect, which **cry day and night** unto Him? . . . I tell you that He will avenge them speedily." Luke 18:7, 8.*

*"The people of God—some in prison cells, some hidden in solitary retreats in the forests and the mountains—still **plead** for divine protection, while in every quarter companies of armed men, urged on by hosts of evil angels, are preparing for the work of death."*

God delivers the righteous (GC, p. 635 the very next sentence)

*"It is now, in the hour of utmost extremity, that the God of Israel will interpose for the **deliverance** of His chosen."*

The shaking of the powers of heaven (GC, pp. 636, 637; cf. EW, p. 41):

The shaking of the powers in the heavens in Ellen White, parallels the **second part** of Matthew 24:29 where the powers of the heavens will be shaken:

*"That voice **shakes the heavens** and the earth. There is a mighty **earthquake**, 'such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.' Verses 17, 18." GC 636, 637; (cf. EW, p. 41)*

Ellen White next described the **sign of the Son** of Man in heaven which is parallel to the first part of Matthew 24:30:

*"Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man's hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Savior and which seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness. The people of God know this to be **the sign of the Son of man**. In solemn silence they gaze upon it as it draws nearer the earth, becoming*

lighter and more glorious, until it is a great white cloud, its base a glory like consuming fire, and above it the rainbow of the covenant. Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror.” GC, pp. 640, 641

The mourning of the wicked (GC, p. 643)

Earlier, in GC, p. 37 Ellen White described this moment:

*“Christ has declared that He will come the second time **to gather** His faithful ones to Himself: ‘Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.’” GC, p. 37*

Who shall be able to stand? (GC, p. 641, 642)

As Jesus descends from heaven, the living saints ask the question: *‘Who shall be able to stand?’* which is the **question** that ends the second part of the sixth seal. Actually, both the wicked and the righteous ask this question. The question is followed the period of **silence** of the seventh seal (Revelation 8:1). Here is how Ellen White explained it:

*“Before His presence ‘all faces are turned into paleness;’ upon the rejecters of God's mercy falls the terror of eternal despair. ‘The heart melteth, and the knees smite together, . . . and the faces of them all gather blackness.” Jeremiah 30:6; Nahum 2:10. The **righteous** cry with trembling: “**Who shall be able to stand?**” The angels' song is hushed, and there is a **period of awful silence.**” GC, p. 641*

*“The cry bursts forth from lips **so lately scoffing**. “The great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” The wicked pray to be buried beneath the*

rocks of the mountains, rather than meet the face of Him whom they have despised and rejected.” GC, p. 642

Gathering the Elect (GC 645):

A few pages later, Ellen White describes the arrival of Jesus and the **sending of His angels** to gather together His **elect** which is parallel to **Matthew 24:31**:

*“The living righteous are changed ‘in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.’ At the voice of God, they were glorified; now they are made immortal and with the risen saints are caught up to meet their Lord in the air. **Angels “gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”**”*

Conclusion: There is absolutely no reason to **extract** the personation of Christ’s coming by Satan from the chain of events in Matthew 24 and *The Great Controversy* and apply it to events that occur before the close of probation!



“BEHOLD, I SEND YOU ELIJAH!”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #6: THE GATHERING OF THE WICKED: WHEN?

Introduction

As we examine the Red Letter Edition of the New Testament, we discover a very interesting detail. In the first three chapters of Revelation, Jesus repeatedly speaks to the seven churches. However, after Revelation 3:21—with the lone exception of Revelation 16:15—He does not speak again until Revelation 22:7. This means that the insertion of Revelation 16:15 in the sixth plague must be extremely important:

Revelation 16:15

“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”

A Message for Seventh-day Adventists

Revelation 16:15 contains similar terminology to the message of Jesus to the church of Laodicea. Our Lord warned the members of this church to wear the white robe of His righteousness lest the shame of their nakedness be revealed:

Revelation 3:18

"I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see."

The similarity of terminology of Revelation 3:18 and 16:15 indicates that the warning applies particularly to Seventh-day Adventists:

"The message to the Laodiceans is applicable to Seventh-day Adventists who have had great light and have not walked in the light. It is those who have made great profession, but have not kept in step with their Leader, that will be spewed out [the shaking] of His mouth unless they repent." 2SM, p. 66

Revelation 3:18 and the Shaking

According to the Spirit of Prophecy, the message to the Laodiceans is so vitaly important that it will cause the shaking among God's professed people. 'Spewing out of the mouth' is synonymous with being 'shaken out'. Thus, Ellen White wrote:

"I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen, and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans. This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will

*lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth. Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this will **cause a shaking** among God's people." 1T, p. 181*

Revelation 16:15 in Context

Revelation 16:12-16

*"Then the **sixth angel** poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. ¹³ And I saw **three unclean spirits** like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, **to gather them to the battle** of that great day of God Almighty [**Armageddon**]. (¹⁵ "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.") ¹⁶ And they [**the three evil spirits**] **gathered them** [**the kings of the earth and the whole world**] **together** to the place called in Hebrew, **Armageddon**."*

The Bible teaches that when probation closes, every person will have irrevocably chosen sides. All will have gathered on one side or the other. As in the days of Noah, the closing of the door will shut out the wicked and secure the righteous. When Jesus pronounces the awesome words of Revelation 22:11, the destiny of all will be fixed for eternity. The wicked will be irrevocably gathered on Satan's side and the righteous on God's side. At this point, all human beings will have received the Seal of God or the Mark of the Beast and Satan will have entire control of the finally impenitent. After probation's close, Satan will have

no need to deceive those who are **already irrevocably deceived!** His target audience will then be those who did not come on board with his agenda.

All Seventh-day Adventist scholars agree that the plagues will fall after the close of probation. Therefore, one wonders why the gathering of the wicked to Satan's side seems to take place during sixth plague after probation has closed. Are not the wicked gathered during probationary time rather than after?

In order to answer this question, we must carefully consider the context in which Revelation 16:13, 14 appears. Revelation 16:12 describes the **sixth plague** at the very end of the great tribulation when the wicked waters of the world (multitudes, nations, tongues and peoples, Revelation 17:15) will withdraw their support from Babylon and turn against her. Clearly, this will take place after probation's close:

Revelation 16:12

*"Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great **river Euphrates** [Babylon's symbolic river], and its **water** [wicked multitudes, nations, tongues and people] **was dried up** [the multitudes withdraw their support from Babylon], so that the way of the **kings from the east** [Jesus and His angels at the second coming] might be prepared."*

The perplexing question is, why do verses 13, 14 seem to describe the gathering of the wicked at the outpouring of the sixth plague? The answer is that the book of Revelation contains many **parenthetical verses** that interrupt the flow of thought and therefore are out of order with the previous or succeeding context (cf. Revelation 10:7; 11:18; 11:19; 14:6-12; 15:1; 16:15; 18:1-4; the last

sentence of 20:5). Revelation 16:13-15 is parenthetical; it breaks the flow of thought.

Here is how it works out: Revelation 16:12 describes the outpouring of the sixth plague after probation's close. Revelation 16:13, 14 then interrupts the flow and goes back to describe the pre-probationary gathering of the wicked for the final battle. Revelation 16:15 then warns church members to watch their garments during probationary time and then Revelation 16:16 takes us back to the moment when the wicked were fully gathered for the battle at probation's close.

Placing these events in their **textual order** looks like this:

- ✓ **v. 12: Climax:** The outpouring of the sixth plague **after** probation's close.
- ✓ **vs. 13, 14: Anticlimax:** Three evil angels gather the kings of the earth and the whole world on Satan's side for the final battle of during probationary time.
- ✓ **v. 15: Parenthetical** warning for the multitudes to watch their garments **during** probationary time.
- ✓ **v. 16: Climax:** The wicked gathered at Armageddon for the final battle of Armageddon **at** probation's close.

Placing these events in their **chronological order** would look as follows:

- ✓ **vs. 13, 14:** Three evil angels gather the wicked on Satan's side for the final battle of Armageddon during probationary time.
- ✓ **v. 15: Parenthetical** warning for the faithful to gather on God's side **during** probationary time.

- ✓ **v. 16:** The wicked totally gathered for the final battle **at** probation's close.
- ✓ **v. 12:** Climax: Outpouring of the sixth plague **after** probation's close.

Here is a summary of the two gatherings during probationary time:

Gathering of the Righteous	Gathering of the Wicked
Three holy angels gather righteous on God's side	Three evil angels gather the wicked on Satan's side
The righteous follow the lamb	The wicked follow the beast
The righteous worship God	The wicked worship the beast
The righteous worship God	The wicked worship the beast
The righteous are gathered in spiritual Jerusalem	The wicked are gathered in Babylon
The righteous receive the seal of God	The wicked receive the mark of the beast
The righteous are fully clothed	The wicked are naked

During probationary time Satan's three evil angels gather the wicked multitudes, nations, tongues and peoples with the purpose of **drowning the elect** at the time of the sixth plague. In contrast, during the same period, three holy angels gather God's people on the Lord's side (Revelation 14:6-12). Here is the description of the gathering of the wicked during probationary time with my own comments in brackets:

*“And I saw **three unclean spirits** [**three evil angels**] like frogs coming out of the mouth of the **dragon** [**the secular powers of the world**; **TM**, p. 39], out of the mouth of the **beast** [**the papacy**], and out of the mouth of the **false prophet** [**apostate Protestantism**].¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the **whole world**, to **gather them** to **the battle** [**against God in the person of His witnesses**] of that great day of God Almighty [**Armageddon**].”*

The Spirit of Prophecy confirms that the description of the gathering of the wicked and the warning to gather on God’s side in Revelation 16:13-15 will take place **before** the close of probation. When probation closes **all will have chosen** to gather on one side or the other and then Satan will make one **last, desperate attempt** to deceive the elect whom he has not been able to recruit to his side:

*“The **present** is a solemn, fearful time for the church. The angels are already girded, awaiting the mandate of God to pour their vials of wrath [**the plagues**] upon the world. Destroying angels are taking up the work of vengeance for the Spirit of God is **gradually withdrawing** from the world. Satan **is** also mustering his forces of evil, going forth ‘unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world,’ to gather them under his banner, **to be trained** for ‘the battle of that great day of God Almighty.’” **SDABC**, volume 7, p. 983*

*“The **future of society** will be determined by the youth of today. Satan **is making** earnest, persevering efforts to **corrupt the mind** and **debase the character** of every youth; and shall we who have more experience stand as mere spectators, and see him accomplish his purpose without hindrance? Let us stand at our post*

as minutemen, to work for these youth, and through the help of God to hold them back from the pit of destruction. In the parable, while men slept the enemy sowed tares; and while you, my brethren and sisters, are unconscious of his work, Satan is gathering an army of youth under his banner; and he exults, for through them he carries on his warfare against God.” CT, p. 47

The Revelation 16:15 Parenthesis

Revelation 16:15 is a parenthetical statement that encourages church members to watch and keep their garments so that they are on the right side for the final battle:

"Behold, I am coming as a [1] thief. Blessed is he who [2] watches, and [3] keeps his [4] garments, lest he [5] walk naked and they see [6] his shame."

This warning would be fruitless after the close of probation because by then all cases have been decided for life or death. The ESV, NASB, NET, NRSV and other versions place this verse in parentheses indicating that it breaks the flow of thought. The context indicates that the insertion of parentheses around verse 15 is correct.

The key to understand these verses is the word ‘gather’. Verse 14 ends with the word ‘gather’ and verse 16 picks up again with the same word ‘gather’. In verse 14 the three evil spirits go out ‘to gather’ the wicked for the final battle and in verse 16 the wicked are ‘gathered’. Thus, verse 14 describes the process of gathering, verse 15 warns to gather on the Lord’s side and verse 16 describes the end of the gathering. Let’s link Revelation 16:14 with Revelation 16:16 while skipping the parenthetical verse 15:

*“For **they** [***the three counterfeit angels***] are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, **to gather** [***infinitive***] **them** to the battle of that great day of God Almighty . . . ¹⁶ And **they** [***the three counterfeit angels***] **gathered** [***aorist***] **them** [***the kings of the earth and the whole world***] together to the place called in Hebrew, **Armageddon** [***Mount of the Congregation***].”*

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