

# Questions Being Asked

## PART ONE OF FOUR

**We hear a variety of questions that Advent believers are wondering about. Here are some answers. Many, many more answers will be found in a continued study of the Spirit of Prophecy, along with your Bible.**

### HAS BABYLON BEEN REBUILT?

**Q.** I heard that Babylon was rebuilt and people live there today. But the Bible says it would remain uninhabited.

**A.** The Bible predicted that Babylon would be destroyed and become uninhabited (*Isa 13:19-22; 14:1-12; Jer 50-51*). The stones would remain. No Arab tents would ever again be there, no sheepfolds, only desert creatures; and it would become partially covered with swamps.

The ancient city of Babylon was built to its full size by Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar. Work on it was completed about the time that the incident in Daniel 4 occurred. The city was later conquered while Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, Belshazzar, was giving a drunken feast (*Dan 5; Isa 44:27-45:5*). On October 13, 539 B.C., Babylon fell to Cyrus of Persia. Later, Xerxes plundered the city, and this work continued in later times. The bricks were taken for distant cities, but the stones were left. Eventually an Arab superstition developed, that it was unsafe to even sleep at night among the devastated ruins of the ancient city. Later still, several miles distant, another town was built, also called Babylon.

"Travelers report that the city is absolutely uninhabited, even by Bedouins. There are various superstitions current among the Arabs that prevent them from pitching their tents there, while the character of the soil prevents the growth of vegetation suitable for the pasturage of flocks."—*Floyd Hamilton, Basis of Christian Faith, 310.*

"Bricks and building materials of many kinds have been salvaged from the ruins for cities round about, but the rocks, which were imported to Babylon at such great cost, have never been moved."—*Peter Stoner, Science Speaks, 94.*

"The great part of the country, in and around most of ancient Babylon, has been for centuries one great swamp . . . The embankments of the rivers, utterly neglected, have broken away, and the

waters have spread over the face of the land."—*Austen Layard, Discoveries Among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon, 490.*

It should be mentioned that the ancient city of Babylon was militarily impregnable to attack. Yet, more than 100 years (*PK 551, 557*) after the prediction was given in Isaiah, it was destroyed. Here is a description of its massive walls:

"The city was 196 square miles, 14 miles on each side, with a 56-mile circumference and surrounded by a 30-ft. wide moat. It had double walls. The outer wall was 311 feet high (approximately the height of a 30-story building), and 87 ft. wide (11 cars could park across the top, or 8 chariots abreast). It had 100 gates of solid brass, as also were the hinges and lintels, plus 250 watchtowers, each 100 feet higher than the outer walls."—*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [source: Herodotus], Bk 1, pp. 178-181.*

### WHAT ABOUT TYRE?

**Q.** The Bible predicted that the coastal city of Tyre, just north of ancient Israel, would be destroyed, never to be rebuilt or inhabited again, and only a place where fishermen's nets would be spread (*Eze 26:3-8, 12, 14, 21*). —Yet Tyre is inhabited today!

**A.** There were several predictions: (1) Many nations would fight against Tyre (*Eze 26:3*). This occurred on several occasions. (2) Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the mainland city (*Eze 26:8*). This was fulfilled when, after a 13-year siege (585-573 B.C.), Nebuchadnezzar II finally broke into the city. He found it almost empty. Most of the people had moved by ship to an island about half a mile off the coast, which they fortified. In 573, he destroyed the mainland city. But the island city of Tyre remained powerful for several hundred years.

(3) It was also predicted that Tyre would be made a bare rock, flat like the top of a rock (*Eze 26:4*); all the debris would be thrown into the water (*26:12*); the city would never be rebuilt (*26:14*) and, in fact, never found again (*26:21*). These are remarkable prophecies! How could they all possibly be fulfilled?

After defeating Darius III at the Battle of Issus (333 B.C.), Alexander the Great marched southward toward Egypt, calling upon the Phoenician cities to

open their gates, so he could deny their use to the Persian fleet. But Tyre refused to do so, and Alexander laid siege to the city. When he finally took it, Alexander found that they had fled to their fortified island fortress off the coast. Possessing no fleet, Alexander totally demolished the city. He dumped all of it (rubble and dirt) into the sea and built a causeway 200 ft. wide out to the island fortress. The Tyrians kept raiding the builders, slowing progress. To protect them, two towers were built on the strip of land. But the Tyrians used fire ships to set fire to it. So Alexander got ships from conquered nations to help him. Eventually, after seven months, the land bridge was completed. The walls were battered down, all the inhabitants were slain, and the island was bared to the rock. The causeway remains.

What was once the site of the ancient mainland city of Tyre was never again inhabited. It is only used by fishermen from a somewhat distant town, also called Tyre, on which to spread nets to dry.

Eighteen years later, Antigonus passed through—and slew the remaining Tyrians who had escaped Alexander's siege.

#### **DID A SEA CREATURE REALLY SWALLOW JONAH?**

**Q.** How could something in the ocean swallow a man? And if it did so, would it not have chewed him up with its teeth before swallowing him?

**A.** The Bible says that the Lord “prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah” (*Jonah 1:17*). Later, the fish vomited out the prophet on dry land (*Jonah 2:10*).

The largest sea creature, able to swallow Jonah, is the sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*). It is the largest of all toothed whales and is the largest toothed animal alive, measuring up to 60 ft. in length. It could easily have swallowed Jonah. In 1820, a sperm whale estimated to be about 85 ft. long attacked the *Essex*, a Nantucket whaling ship. Only 8 out of the 20 sailors managed to survive and be rescued by other ships.

Here is a story of a man swallowed by a toothed whale, who was alive inside of it! In February 1891, the English whaling ship, *Star of the East*, was in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands in the south Atlantic. A sperm whale was harpooned, but it splintered the small boat carrying the men who had been sent out by the ship; and they were thrown into the water. All but two were saved. One was drowned and the other, James Bartley, could not be found.

By this time, the whale was dead; and it took the crew a day and a half to remove its blubber.

Then they hoisted the whale's stomach to the deck. Inside, they found Bartley still alive. He later described his experience; and the story was vouched for by the captain and crew of the ship. It was published by M.P. Courbet on March 7, 1895, in the French magazine, *Cosmos*, and translated for the *Library Digest* of April 4, 1896.

Some smaller whales could also have swallowed a man. Dr. Harry Rimmer, in *Modern Science—Jonah and the Whale*, wrote that the sulphur-bottom whale has a complex stomach having four to six chambers; and in any one of these several men could be accommodated.

In its head is a large air-storage chamber, containing about 700 cubic feet of air space. Rimmer tells of a man who climbed into this space in the mouth of a dead whale. It is known that, if the whale takes into its mouth any object too big to swallow, it thrusts it up into this air chamber, swims to the nearest land, lies in shallow water, and ejects it.

Missionary L.F. Passebols, while in Alexandria, Egypt, saw the complete skeleton of a horse taken from the stomach of a whale shark. These fish are abundant in the Mediterranean, where Jonah was on a ship bound for Tarshish.

In 1912 in Miami, Florida, Charles H. Thompson, with twelve others, was fishing for tarpon in the Gulf, when he saw the fin of a huge monster fish. Later, after a difficult time in which a large ship had to come to their rescue, the fish was dragged to land. Inside its stomach was found an immense 1,500 pound octopus, which was fully alive. It was found that a man could almost stand upright in this fish. The story was reported that year in the *Miami Herald*.

#### **SHOULD WE KEEP THE FEAST OF THE NEW MOON?**

**Q.** Should we keep the feast of the New Moon today?

**A.** Things hardly mentioned in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy are the special target of speculations by some of our people. One of these is, what is called, the “feast of the New Moon.” Some are saying that we must carefully observe it today, or we may not be saved.

First, this new moon feast is not mentioned anywhere in the Mosaic books. It is not found in the list of the feasts (*Lev 23:4-44*), nor anywhere else in Moses' writings. Therefore, it had to have been started later by the Jews.

The first time in the Bible that it is mentioned is in *1 Samuel 20:5, 18, and 24*. King Saul had a special meal on that occasion, and it was expected

that David would be there.

The “new moon” is also mentioned five more times in the Old Testament. Should it be a special day for us now? The answer is given by Paul in Colossians, where he specifically mentions the feast days—and also that new moon gathering. He says they were all nailed to the cross.

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross. And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days [note that this is plural, “days”; therefore “days” means the feast days of Leviticus 23:4-44 and does not include the Bible Sabbath]; which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”—*Colossians 2:14-17*.

Another example of a feast started later by the Jews, after the time of Moses, was the feast of Purim. It was instituted by them after they were delivered from their enemies (*Esther 9:26-28*) and was observed on the 14th and 15th of Adar (*Esther 9:17-28*). If we should keep the feast of the New Moon today, we should also keep the feast of Purim, which is also mentioned in the Bible. (It was called “Purim” [“lots”], because the date for the execution had been selected by casting lots.)

Another example would be the feast of Hanukkah (Chanukah), or “Feast of Lights,” celebrated for eight days in December by Jews down to the present time, commemorating the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem, after the victory of the Maccabees over the king of ancient Syria. It is kept by the Jews in honor of a superstition, that the lamps in the Temple continued burning without oil for eight days at about the time of that victory.

Ellen White only mentions the “new moon” four times in her writings. All are quoted below. Notice that we are never commanded to now observe that time as special,—but that we will do so in heaven (in accordance with *Isaiah 66:23*).

The first mention is of “special offerings” made at the time of the new moon. The “new moon” is not mentioned anywhere in the Mosaic books; so these “offerings” at the time of the new moon may have been added later by the Jews.

“The daily service consisted of the morning and evening burnt offering, the offering of sweet incense on the golden altar, and the special offerings for individual sins. And there were also offerings for sabbaths, new moons, and special feasts.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 352.

The second passage is in regard to the first mention of the new moon in the Bible (*1 Sam 20:5*,

*18*, and *24*). By the time of Saul (nearly 500 years after the time of Moses), the Jews were observing a “sacred festival” to the new moon. But we are not told to observe it today.

“At the time of the new moon a sacred festival was celebrated in Israel. This festival recurred upon the day following the interview between David and Jonathan. At this feast it was expected that both the young men would appear at the king’s table; but David feared to be present.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 654.

The third mention is in agreement with *Isaiah 66:23*, that a special time of praising God will occur in heaven at the time of the new moon. It will be a time for singing. There is no mention of a feast.

“[In heaven] they will assemble in the sanctuary from Sabbath to Sabbath, from one new moon to another, to unite in loftiest strains of song, in praise and thanksgiving to Him who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever.”—*6 Testimonies*, 368.

The fourth and last mention describes how it was noticed during a boat trip up an Australian river.

“The water of the bay was as smooth as an inland lake. The night was perfect. The air was mild, and the new moon shone out sufficiently to give us an outline of the mountain scenery on either side. Steady rowing by the two strong men who had often made this trip brought us to Bro. Joseph Hare’s landing in about two hours; his comfortable home is but a few steps from the landing.”—*Review*, May 30, 1893; *4 EGW Biography*, 75.

It is of interest that there are four quarters in each lunar cycle: first quarter, full moon, last quarter, and new moon. The new moon is between us and the sun, so it cannot be seen. Therefore, the “new moon” in the Bible, and the above passage, must have been the full moon.

### ARE SPECIAL EVENTS PREDICTED TO OCCUR IN THE NEAR EAST?

It is being variously taught by some of our people that some great event is going to happen in or near Jerusalem, or that we need to return there, or that the faithful will soon go there to meet Christ, or some such theory.

All of these ideas are based on the error that the Near East will in some way be important in the final working out of the end-time prophecies and/or events.

I do not have space to go through this in detail here. This error, which is so popular in modern Protestant churches, entered our denomination through the theorizing which Uriah Smith wrote into

his book, *Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation*. The book is a good one, except for its interpretation of portions of Daniel 11 (the King of the North) and Revelation 16 (Armageddon). Both of Smith's applications are keyed to the error of literal fulfillments of prophecy in the Near East in the future.

But we do not find this concept of future events occurring in the literal Near East—anywhere in the Spirit of Prophecy! It is just not there. God gave you the Spirit of Prophecy to protect you; will you let it do that? Will you keep reading it, instead of the wanderings of the latest new prophets?

#### WHAT ABOUT ARMAGEDDON?

This is treated in the Spirit of Prophecy as symbolic of the final battle between the forces of good and evil, which occurs between the National Sunday Law and the Second Advent of Christ.

For detailed quotations on this, read *7 Bible Commentary, 982-983*, and *My Life Today, 308*. The statements are clear.

Here are some of them:

“The battle of Armageddon is soon to be fought. He on whose vesture is written the name, King of kings and Lord of lords, leads forth the armies of heaven on white horses, clothed in fine linen, clean and white.”—*Manuscript 172, 1899; 7 Bible Commentary, 982*.

“Every form of evil is to spring into intense activity. Evil angels unite their powers with evil men, and as they have been in constant conflict and attained an experience in the best modes of deception and battle, and have been strengthening for centuries, they will not yield the last great final contest without a desperate struggle. All the world will be on one side or the other of the question. The battle of Armageddon will be fought, and that day must find none of us sleeping. Wide awake we must be, as wise virgins having oil in our vessels with our lamps . . .

“The power of the Holy Ghost must be upon us, and the Captain of the Lord's host will stand at the head of the angels of heaven to direct the battle. Solemn events before us are yet to transpire. Trumpet after trumpet is to be sounded, vial after vial poured out one after another upon the inhabitants of the earth. Scenes of stupendous interest are right upon us.”—*Letter 112, 1890; 7 Bible Commentary, 982*.

“Two great opposing powers are revealed in the last great battle. On one side stands the Creator of heaven and earth. All on His side bear His signet. They are obedient to His commands. On the

other side stands the prince of darkness, with those who have chosen apostasy and rebellion.”—*Review, May 7, 1901; 7 Bible Commentary, 982-983*.

Just as the rivers in Revelation 16 are not literal waterways in the Near East, neither is the battle of Armageddon a literal war between two wicked powers. That predicted final battle is to be fought between good and evil, not between evil and evil.

#### WHAT ABOUT THE KING OF THE NORTH?

In a separate tract study, I will cover this topic in detail.

#### WILL NOT THE JEWS BECOME GOD'S SPECIAL PEOPLE IN THE LAST DAYS?

A related error is that the Jewish people will once again become God's favored people in the last days. Modern Protestant theorists cherish this error. Although individual Jews can be saved, Heaven is done with the Jewish nation! It brought upon itself its own ruin (*PK 712-713; DA 737-739*). By rejecting Christ they were divorced from God (*DA 29*) and are a dead branch severed from the vine (*DA 739*).

#### HAVE THE JEWS RETURNED TO JERUSALEM?

For a rather complete set of studies on Jerusalem in Bible prophecy and today, read my book, *The Jews and Jerusalem (36 pp., 8½ x 11, \$4.00 + \$2.50)*.

The Protestant world went into a fever pitch of excitement when the Israelis retook Old Jerusalem during the 1967 Six-Day War. They have predicted all kinds of things about the Israelis at the end of time, at about the time of the “rapture.”

Several of our own people have based startling predictions on that 1967 war. One writer theorizes that this event marked some kind of “close of probation,” so that it is no longer necessary for Adventists to warn the world about coming dangers. Beware of false teachers; they are the ones who do not totally base what they have to say on plain, obvious statements in the Spirit of Prophecy.

In reality, the Jews have not really “returned to Jerusalem,” in a Bible-fulfilling sense. This is because they do not control the Temple Mount and are unable to build a Temple on it. As soon as the

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Continued from the preceding tract in this series

Six-Day War ended (June 5-10, 1967), fearing that all the Arabs in the Near East would mount a war to retake their sacred Temple Mount, the Israeli general immediately gave governmental and territorial control of the Temple Mount to the Palestinians! See my book, *The Jews and Jerusalem*, for a complete historical analysis of that city.

## **SHOULD WE STUDY THE APOCRYPHA?**

I covered this topic rather thoroughly in our tract study, *The Apocrypha [WM-1005]*. Later, it was included on pp. 190-195 of my book, *The King James Bible and the Modern Versions*. You will there find a nice overview of what is in each of those Apocryphal books and their history.

Should we study those books? Here is the answer: First, with the exception of Second Maccabees, all of the Old Testament apocryphal books are not worth reading. Second Maccabees is considered to be a fairly good historical account of the Maccabean revolt. However, that information is summarized quite well in other history books.

Second, with hardly an exception, all the Protestant churches rejected the Apocrypha. Men of God in past centuries saw its utter worthlessness. The exception is Rome. They value the Apocrypha, because it teaches purgatory, praying for the dead, atonement for the dead, and intercession by humans for others.

The Spirit of Prophecy hardly mentions the Apocrypha. If it had been worth reading, she would repeatedly have told us, in many of her writings, to do so.

## **ARE THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS IMPORTANT?**

Years ago, I met a retired nominal Advent believer who spent his spare time reading, not the Spirit of Prophecy but, the “Early Church Fathers.”

The Early Church Fathers (also called the Apostolic Fathers) consist of several professed Christian writers who wrote in the first two centuries after the death of John (c. A.D. 95). During that period of time, the church was gradually going into apostasy; and their writings frequently support the slow descent into error. The worst of these was Clement of Alexandria. You will find a rather complete ac-

count of this apostasy in my book, *The Fabulous First Centuries of Christianity* (pp. 326-434). Origen and Tertullian were also teachers of error. Both spiritualized away Scripture.

Some of these so-called “Fathers” include false books which are actually New Testament Apocrypha. They are purported to have been written by Barnabas, Peter, etc., and contain weird stories and claims.

It is significant that we would not have some of these fallacious books—if they had not been included in the infamous *Codex Alexandrinus* and *Codex Sinaiticus*, which were produced by gnostic Christians in Alexandria, who first introduced Sundaykeeping into the early Christian Church.

If you look in a concordance, you will find that Christ repeatedly referred to God as His “Father” (over 30 times). He told us to pray to “our Father” in heaven (*Matt 6:6, 9*). He warned us not to call anyone on earth our spiritual “father.”

“And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.”—*Matthew 23:9*.

The “Later Church Fathers” consist of the writings of professed Christians living from the time of Constantine (early fourth century) onward for several centuries. They were generally concerned about quarreling, in defense or against the increasing number of doctrinal errors entering the church.

## **HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE WRITINGS OF THE PIONEERS?**

In the first fifty years of our denomination (1850 to 1900), various workers and laymen wrote articles and books. There are those among us who revere those writings. But the truth is that they were just regular humans, like you and me. The great mine of truth—filled with gemstones, diamonds, gold, and precious pearls—is to be found in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, not in the writings of any Advent believer living or dead. You can only trust what is in Inspired Scripture: The Bible and Spirit of Prophecy.

Beware of men who come to you, and want you to regard their ideas and theories as equal to the Spirit of Prophecy! They will not say it that plainly, but that is the idea. Flee from such men, and take your family with you. Do not read their writings, listen to, or view their videos or DVD tapes.

If you want to get ready for the crisis ahead and heaven beyond, *read God's Inspired Books!*

Our so-called “pioneers” wrote all kinds of things; some of these were simply not true. Just because an Adventist wrote something over a hundred years ago—does not make it correct!

However, the experiences which the early pioneers went through are very much worth reprinting.

“The record of the experience through which the people of God passed in the early history of our work must be republished. Many of those who have since come into the truth are ignorant of the way in which the Lord wrought. The experience of William Miller and his associates, of Captain Joseph Bates, and of other pioneers in the advent message, should be kept before our people.”—*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 145.

“When perils arise which try the faith of God’s people, these pioneer workers are to recount the experiences of the past, when in just such crises the truth was questioned and strange sentiments, proceeding not from God, were brought in. Today Satan is seeking opportunities to tear down the waymarks of truth,—the monuments that have been raised up along the way; and we need the experience of the aged workers who have built their house upon the solid rock, who through evil report as well as good report have been steadfast to the truth.”—*Gospel Workers*, 103.

### WAS CHRIST REALLY LIKE US?

Did Christ have a human nature that is like ours? Could He really have been tempted? Could He have fallen? All are agreed that He was totally sinless and never once yielded, in thought, word, or action to wrongdoing.

But the new theology advocates are desperate to maintain that Christ was *not like us!* This is because they want to remain in their cherished sins; and their excuse for doing so is the error that we today cannot stop sinning. Their evidence for this is the error that Christ could not have avoided sinning—if He had really been like us and fully taken our human nature.

You will find a rather thorough study on this in my 84-page, 8½ x 11 book, *The Nature of Christ* (\$7.00 + \$2.50). A brief overview, with several supporting Bible and Spirit of Prophecy quotes, is in my book, *Solving Our Church Crisis* (pp. 141-147).

*Desire of Ages*, pp. 49 and 117, along with *Hebrews 2:14-18*, nicely summarizes the situation. Using them, you can always explain the truth of Christ’s human nature to others.

“Christ alone had experience in all the sorrows and temptations that befall human beings. Never

another of woman born was so fiercely beset by temptation; never another bore so heavy a burden of the world’s sin and pain. Never was there another whose sympathies were so broad or so tender. A sharer in all the experiences of humanity, He could feel not only for, but with, every burdened and tempted and struggling one.

“What He taught, He lived. ‘I have given you an example,’ He said to His disciples, ‘that ye should do as I have done.’ ‘I have kept My Father’s commandments.’ John 13:15; 15:10. Thus in His life, Christ’s words had perfect illustration and support.”—*Education*, 78.

### WHERE WAS JESUS CRUCIFIED?

This is a matter which Christendom has argued over for centuries. Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants have quarreled for centuries over the location of the crucifixion of Christ.

We have two sources which tell us a lot: First, we know that He was crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem (*Heb 13:12-13*). Therefore it occurred outside the city wall.

Second, we are told in *Desire of Ages* that Christ passed through the “sheepgate” on His way to Calvary! This is a major discovery; and it is fully inspired!

“Just before Him was Gethsemane, where soon the horror of a great darkness would overshadow Him. The sheepgate also was in sight, through which for centuries the beasts for sacrificial offerings had been led. This gate was soon to open for Him, the great Antitype, toward whose sacrifice for the sins of the world all these offerings had pointed. Nearby was Calvary, the scene of His approaching agony.”—*Desire of Ages*, 576.

You will find a photo of the sheepgate in my book, *Fabulous First Centuries of Christianity* (p. 108), and a map showing its location on the northeastern corner of the city, on p. 109.

On that map, place your finger on the middle of the city. That is approximately where the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is located—which Catholics and Orthodox claim is where Christ was crucified and buried. Yet it is inside the walls and gates.

Next, on that map, place your finger on the northern wall line, close to the ancient fish gate. That is where the Damascus Gate was later placed. Just beyond it is Gordon’s Calvary, where Protestants claim that Christ was crucified. (Today, it is a little rock-outcropping on the edge of a busy bus station parking lot!)

Since the location of Christ’s crucifixion was beyond the sheepgate, it was probably somewhat farther east of Gordon’s Calvary.

The true location of Christ’s burial place is not

1 known. Orthodox and Catholics claim the Church  
4 of the Holy Sepulchre (pictures on pp. 234-235 of  
9 my *First Centuries* book) covers the spot where  
3 Christ was buried; and Protestants favor the Garden Tomb (first identified in 1849).

### WHAT HAPPENED TO THE JAMES BOX?

We first reported on the James Box in 2002, shortly after the discovery came to light. This is probably the most sensational New Testament report, confirming archaeological discovery in the past 200 years. (The Dead Sea Scrolls were about the Old Testament.)

Not only is it the earliest archaeological artifact ever found that mentions Jesus, but it is the only one so close to the time in which He lived on earth.

There are twenty letters, written in Aramaic, engraved on one of the long sides of this burial box. This is a transliteration of the inscription:

Ya' akov bar Yosef akhui diYeshua

This is its English translation:

James (Ya' akov), son (bar) of Joseph (Yosef), brother of (dhui) Jesus (Yeshua)

The word used here for "James" is "Jacob." Our word, "James," is the standard variant found in all English Bibles. But, in the Greek New Testament, the word was written "Jacob."

This type of burial box is generally dated between about 20 B.C. and A.D. 70. This practice was widespread among the Jews of Judaea, from about A.D. 1 to A.D. 70.

Not only do the letter shapes have to fit into the time period, but the lettering (spelling) must match also. In order to confirm that fact, it must be compared with every other inscription from that period. The language and historical context are also important.

The distinctive shape (orthography) of the Aramaic letters, engraved on the box, closely agrees with this time period. None of these letters have any of the characteristics of lettering in a later period of time.

But three letters are special. These are the *dalet*, *yod*, and *aleph*. All three are somewhat slanted (curved). As a result, these special letters and the overall pattern of the sentence date this inscription to the last few decades prior to A.D. 70, when Jerusalem was destroyed.

After careful examination, experts date this burial box to A.D. 63. There is evidence that James, the brother of Jesus, died only one year earlier.

You will find a complete presentation of the subject in four of our tracts: *Burial Box of James, Brother of Jesus* [WM-1118], and two tract up-

dates, entitled *Battle over the James Box* [WM-1169-1170 and WM-1264].

Here is the situation: Oded Golan was 52 years old and a soft-spoken engineer who lived in Tel Aviv, Israel. He had, for decades, privately collected antiquities. In the 1970s, he purchased an ossuary from an antiquities dealer for a few hundred dollars.

The Israeli government became utterly furious over the possibility that the existence of Jesus might be established from archaeological evidence. So they confiscated the box and charged its owner with an unspecified crime. My reports (listed above) describe the various mechanizations and strategies of the Israeli Antiquities Administration to somehow devise a way to disprove the writing on that bone box.

But, so far, they have been uncertain how to do it. Experts in antiquities and ancient inscription, in various parts of the world, declare that the ossuary is genuine.

The Israeli government still has the bone box, refuses to let anyone examine it anymore, and has no idea where to proceed from here. As far as they are concerned, the world will never see that box again.

### WHO ARE THE 144,000?

People have been trying to figure out this one for years, yet we are plainly given the answer in one passage in the Spirit of Prophecy.

There are a variety of speculations about this. Some claim that the number has nearly been made up; but if you will join their group—you can still become a member of the 144,000.

Others wonder what they must do to make sure they will be included in it.

The truth is that all of us who believe, practice, and share the Third Angel's Message are eligible to become part of the 144,000,—but only those of the faithful who are alive during the Final Crisis will actually become part of that group. This is because of the special experience they will undergo.

The proof of this fact is found in one lengthy paragraph near the back of *Great Controversy*. You will find it on p. 649:0. Six identifying points are mentioned: They have an experience no one else has ever had. They are translated without seeing death. They undergo great tribulation. They live during Jacob's Trouble, without an Intercessor. They are without fault. They are alive during the falling of the plagues.

Many of God's people, down through the ages, have experienced some of those six points. But the distinctive points concern those who are alive after

the general close of probation, and thus during the falling of the plagues and the terrible difficulties of Jacob's Trouble when Christ is no longer interceding in the Sanctuary above (*GC 613-634*). In addition, because they have lived all the way through the Final Crisis without having died, they are the only ones who are translated to heaven without seeing death.

This view of the 144,000 explains the passage that Ellen White, if faithful, would be able to visit other worlds *with* the 144,000 (*2SM 263*). Because she died in the faith, but did not live through the Final Crisis, she will not be included in the 144,000.

Because there have been so many claims and counterclaims in regard to the composition of the 144,000, the following statement was made:

"It is not His [God's] plan that His people shall present something which they have to suppose, which is not taught in the Word. It is not His will that they shall get into controversy over questions which will not help them spiritually, such as, Who is to compose the hundred and forty-four thousand? This those who are the elect of God will in a short time know without question."—*1 Selected Messages, 174*.

The 144,000 will experience difficulties of the worst possible kind; yet, amid it all, they will remain true.

"Those who exercise but little faith now, are in the greatest danger of falling under the power of satanic delusions and the decree to compel the conscience. And even if they endure the test they will be plunged into deeper distress and anguish in the time of trouble, because they have never made it a habit to trust in God. The lessons of faith which they have neglected they will be forced to learn under a terrible pressure of discouragement . . .

"The 'time of trouble, such as never was,' is soon to open upon us; and we shall need an experience which we do not now possess and which many are too indolent to obtain. It is often the case that trouble is greater in anticipation than in reality; but this is not true of the crisis before us. The most vivid presentation cannot reach the magnitude of the ordeal. In that time of trial, every soul must stand for himself before God."—*Great Controversy, 622*.

#### WHO WILL SEE JESUS COME?

I have good news for you! Although we are told that God will lay some of the faithful to rest, because they were not physically able to pass through

the Final Crisis,—you and I can see Jesus return amid radiant clouds of angels, and we can be taken to heaven! We are told that all who have died in the faith of the Third Angel's Message will come up in the special resurrection—and be alive to see Christ return, and then be translated! This is a most precious promise, my friend! You and I must claim it! Here are two statements:

"It was at midnight that God chose to deliver His people . . . There was a mighty earthquake. The graves were opened, and those who had died in faith under the third angel's message, keeping the Sabbath, came forth from their dusty beds, glorified, to hear the covenant of peace that God was to make with those who had kept His law."—*Early Writings, 285*.

"Graves are opened, and 'many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth . . . awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.' Daniel 12:2. All who have died in the faith of the third angel's message come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God's covenant of peace with those who have kept His law. 'They also which pierced Him' (Revelation 1:7), those that mocked and derided Christ's dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people, are raised to behold Him in His glory and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient."—*Great Controversy, 637*.

We do not have to be alive during the Final Crisis, or be part of the 144,000, in order to see Jesus return and go to live with Him forever! I plan to be part of that number! Join me!

#### WHICH GREAT CONTROVERSY IS BEST?

**Ellen White's first full-size book was the 1884 *Great Controversy*; and, although it was an outstanding volume, the Lord guided her—before she could write any other books—to set to work to make it larger.** Page for page, the 1888 edition is essentially the same as our 1911 edition—with two exceptions: (1) In 1909, when the printing plates were wearing out, she was asked for permission for references to be added to her quotations from historians. A search was made, and the 1911 edition was the result. (2) Most of her quotations were from the historians, J.A. Wylie and J.H. Merle D'Aubigné; but because, about the turn of the century, D'Aubigné had endorsed a different English translation of his *History of the Reformation*, quotations from that translation were used instead

# Questions Being Asked

**PART THREE  
OF FOUR**

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

of the ones in the 1888 edition. Other than this, the two editions are identical. (See our book, *Editions of Great Controversy*.)

**All three editions are excellent and equally inspired. The 1888 and 1911 editions have the advantage of being larger and more complete, while the 1884 is shorter and thus more quickly read.** (It was primarily the earlier historical chapters which were enlarged in the 1888 edition.)

**Great Controversy is the most important book for these last days. Satan hates it more than any other book because it fully reveals his plans, as well as warning the world of future events.** Therefore, he has instigated men to revile and slander it more than any other Spirit of Prophecy book.

**“Great Controversy should be very widely circulated. It contains the story of the past, the present, and the future.** In its outline of the closing scenes of this earth’s history, it bears a powerful testimony in behalf of the truth. **I am more anxious to see a wide circulation for this book than for any others I have written; for in Great Controversy, the last message of warning to the world is given more distinctly than in any of my other books.**”—Letter 281, 1905 (*Colporteur Ministry*, 127).

“A few day ago [in 1911] I received a copy of the new edition of the book, *Great Controversy*, recently printed at Mountain View, and also a similar copy printed at Washington. The book pleases me. I have spent many hours looking through its pages, and I see that the publishers have done good work.”—3 *Selected Messages*, 123.

**“The book, Great Controversy, I appreciate above silver or gold, and I greatly desire that it shall come before the people.** While writing the manuscript of *The Great Controversy* I was often conscious of the presence of the angels of God. And many times the scenes about which I was writing were presented to me anew in visions of the night, so that they were fresh and vivid in my mind.”—Letter 56, 1911 (*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 128).

**“The results of the circulation of this book [The Great Controversy] are not to be judged by what now appears.** By reading it some souls will be aroused and will have courage to unite themselves at once with those who keep the commandments of God. But a much larger number of those who read it will not take their position until they see the very events taking place that are foretold in it. The fulfillment of some of the predictions will inspire faith that others will also come

to pass. And, **when the earth is lightened with the glory of the Lord in the closing work, many souls will take their position on the commandments of God as the result of this agency.**”—Manuscript 31, 1890 (*Colporteur Ministry*, pp. 128-129).

“As the spirit of God has opened to my mind the great truths of His Word, and the scenes of the past and the future, **I have been bidden to make known to others that which has thus been revealed—to trace the history of the controversy in past ages, and especially so to shed a light on the fast-approaching struggle of the future.**”—*Great Controversy*, xi.

**All editions of Great Controversy are equally inspired. Give the book to the people, in whichever edition you prefer—but give it to them!** The book provides the reader with the issues and warnings he needs to know just now. The deceptions and events of the future are unveiled; and—before the reader arrives at the last page,—the book will bring him personally to the brink of eternity to make his own life decision.

Much more on the importance and accuracy of *Great Controversy* will be found in two of our books, *Defending the Spirit of Prophecy* and *The Story of Great Controversy*.

## **WHY IS GREAT CONTROVERSY THE MOST IMPORTANT BOOK?**

It reveals Satan’s working in past history. It explains his plans for the future. It reveals the final events to take place in our world. It warns us of special dangers threatening us right now. It explains the issues in the Final Crisis. It provides us with most wonderful encouragement!

Until *Great Controversy* was written, no one had a clear understanding of what was to happen in the future! No other book is like it!

“*Great Controversy* should be very widely circulated. It contains the story of the past, the present, and the future. In its outline of the closing scenes of this earth’s history, it bears a powerful testimony in behalf of the truth. I am more anxious to see a wide circulation for this book than for any others I have written; for in *The Great Controversy*, the last message of warning to the world is given more distinctly than in any of my other books.”—Letter 281, 1905; *Colporteur Ministry*, 127.

“The warning must go where the living messenger could not go, and that it would call the attention of many to the important events to occur in

the closing scenes of this world's history."—*Letter 1, 1890; Colporteur Ministry, p. 128.*

### **WILL WE HAVE A SABBATH MEAL ON ANOTHER PLANET?**

We are told that, immediately after His Second Advent, Jesus will take us on a seven-day journey to heaven.

"We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass, when Jesus brought the crowns, and with His own right hand placed them on our heads. He gave us harps of gold and palms of victory."—*Early Writings, 16.*

Elder G.B. Starr, who knew Ellen White in Australia, said that one day she mentioned that, during that journey, on the Sabbath we would have a meal on another planet and that, in her day, fruit was being gathered for that meal.

There is absolutely no corroboration for this statement, and I doubt if years would be required to prepare a meal.

However, that seven-day journey is, itself, really very interesting. We know, from Daniel 9:3, 23, that angelic beings can journey to our world in a split second. Daniel's prayer only took a few minutes; yet Daniel was told by Gabriel that he was commissioned by God to go to Daniel when he began that prayer. Before the brief prayer was finished (9:21), Gabriel already arrived. Angels can travel very rapidly.

"A mighty angel came flying swiftly from heaven. His face was like the lightning, and his garments white as snow. His light dispersed the darkness from his track and caused the evil angels, who had triumphantly claimed the body of Jesus, to flee in terror from his brightness and glory."—*Early Writings, 181.*

"As God's messengers they go forth, like 'the appearance of a flash of lightning' (Eze 1:14), so dazzling their glory, and so swift their flight."—*Great Controversy, 512.*

In our changed bodies, we will probably be able to travel just as quickly. Yet, on this initial trip to heaven, Jesus is going to take us on a leisurely journey. Very likely we will stop at a number of planets. But, whatever occurs, it surely will be a most glorious journey. Our kind Father has special surprises for us. It will not be long, good friend; it will not be long! Be faithful. Soon we will be with Jesus.

### **WAS MELCHIZEDEK THE HOLY SPIRIT?**

This is another claim made by G.B. Starr. Yet such a Spirit of Prophecy comment would totally conflict with all known facts about the Holy Spirit,

and we have been given many of them.

The Holy Spirit never, never takes human form. There is no evidence that He has ever appeared in the form of an angel. Ellen White warned us against attempting to explain the nature of the Holy Spirit.

Melchizedek is only mentioned in Genesis 14:18, Psalm 110:4, and Hebrews 5:6-10, 6:20, and 7:1-21. Paul's point is that Christ was not of the Aaronic priesthood, but of a different human priesthood, that of Melchizedek. Paul was not implying that Christ was like the Holy Spirit!

Some have said that Melchizedek was Christ in human form. In symbolic language, we are told in *Desire of Ages (578)* that he was a type of Christ, but He was not literally Christ.

"It was Christ that spoke through Melchisedek, the priest of the most high God. Melchisedek was not Christ, but he was the voice of God in the world, the representative of the Father. And all through the generations of the past, Christ has spoken; Christ has led His people, and has been the light of the world. When God chose Abraham as a representative of His truth, He took him out of his country, and away from his kindred, and set him apart. He desired to mold him after His own model. He desired to teach him according to His own plan."—*1 Bible Commentary, 1093.*

### **WHAT CAN WE SAFELY DO ON SUNDAY?**

What should we not do when the National Sunday Law is enacted? A careful study of the Spirit of Prophecy reveals that the essential issue at the time of the National Sunday Law is not cessation of observable labor on Sunday, or shop closing on Sunday,—but holding or attending a worship service on Sunday. We are told that holding evangelistic meetings on Sunday evenings is an acceptable alternative. We can also visit and give Bible studies. But we are not told to hold a service for the weekly worship of God on that day. Carefully read *9 Testimonies, 232-238.*

### **WHEN DOES THE LATTER RAIN BEGIN FALLING?**

Back in the mid-1960s, the report was widely circulated, through our Sabbath Schools and in church papers, that the latter rain was already falling in Korea. It is true that, following the Korean War, many accessions to the truth occurred in South Korea. But it is an error to suppose that a great revival and many conversions, here or there, constitutes the falling of the latter rain! The latter rain does not come in spurts here and there, beginning, stopping, and beginning again. All these, if genuine, may be examples of the early rain. But the latter rain is quite different.

(In reality, on many occasions in various parts

of the world field, a number of people who were not properly indoctrinated or did not practice correct standards have been dunked in mass baptisms at the time that some world leader arrived, so it could later be reported. Most would leave the church within a few months.)

The latter rain only occurs at the end of time, after the National Sunday Law is enacted. My exhaustive Spirit of Prophecy compilation, *The End of Time*, covers all this in great detail. The table of contents in front will guide you in your study.

The latter rain is closely involved with the sealing, and both will be immediately followed by the start of the loud cry. For more on this, look at the table of contents of my book, *The End of Time*, for quotations clarifying this.

### **CAN WE PRAY FOR THE LATTER RAIN TO BEGIN FALLING?**

We can, and should, pray for the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts and use us to spread the final message to the world. But this involves more than just prayer! It also involves heart-searching and the putting away of sin. There are personal life changes to be made. Begin studying the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy as though your life depended on it. Obtain a copy of our book, *Family Bible Studies*, and begin giving Bible studies. Share the low-cost missionary books. Talk to others about how to come to Christ. All this is covered in some detail in our recent publication, *Praying for the Holy Spirit [WM-1391]*.

### **WHAT ABOUT "GLOBAL RAIN"?**

A related error is the concept that we should pray for 40 days for the latter rain to begin on a certain date. The "Global Rain" idea was to pray that it begin on 7-7-07. But it is for God to set dates for when He wants to initiate final events. It is our work to daily be humble and believing, praying and working for souls.

"We are not to know the definite time either for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or for the coming of Christ."—*Evangelism*, 221.

The disciples did not pray for 40 days. In fact, they did not pray steadily for 10 days! They did not even pray together, steadily, for a full 12 hours at a time! The Lord was guiding them, and they prayed in a balanced manner. The way they prayed is a lesson for us today.

They had definite times for prayer; a variety of purposes they were praying for; and they took definite breaks for conversation with one another, study of God's Word,—and witnessing outside of the Up-

per Room. *Here is what the Bible tells us:*

"And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."—*Luke 24:49-52*.

But do not stop there! Also read the next verse,—the last verse in the book of Luke:

"And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God."—*Luke 24:53*.

They were doing that during those ten days!

For much more on this, read *Praying for the Holy Spirit [WM-1391]*.

Then there are the "anointing of eyes services," held in connection with these 40-day sessions. This is another concept not found anywhere in God's Inspired Writings. The originator of the "Global Rain" concept wrote to a friend that, unless his friend could show him from the Bible that he should not hold anointing eyes services, he was going to go ahead and start doing it. The friend wrote back, warning him not to do it, declaring that this was how the great apostasy started—by adding to the Word!

New doctrinal practices must not be started because they are not mentioned in the Bible! Unfortunately, a number of our churches are now holding "Eye-Anointing Services."

"The English Reformers, while renouncing the doctrines of Romanism, had retained many of its forms. Thus though the authority and the creed of Rome were rejected, not a few of her customs and ceremonies were incorporated into the worship of the Church of England. It was claimed that these things were not matters of conscience; that though they were not commanded in Scripture, and hence were nonessential, yet not being forbidden, they were not intrinsically evil. Their observance tended to narrow the gulf which separated the reformed churches from Rome, and it was urged that they would promote the acceptance of the Protestant faith by Romanists.

"To the conservative and compromising, these arguments seemed conclusive. But there was another class that did not so judge. The fact that these customs 'tended to bridge over the chasm between Rome and the Reformation' (*Martyn, Vol. 5, p. 22*) was in their view a conclusive argument against retaining them. They looked upon them as badges of the slavery from which they had been delivered and to which they had no disposition to return. They reasoned that God has in His Word established the regulations governing His worship, and that men are not at liberty to add to these or

to detract from them. The very beginning of the great apostasy was in seeking to supplement the authority of God by that of the church. Rome began by enjoining what God had not forbidden, and she ended by forbidding what He had explicitly enjoined.”—*Great Controversy*, 289-290.

### GLOBAL RAIN IS AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL PROJECT

This “Global Rain” is an international movement in a wide variety of Christian and non-Christian groups, including our own.

*Here is a small sampling. Only the last two of the following are Adventist:*

1 - The I AM University ([iamuniversity.ch](http://iamuniversity.ch)) says this on its bannerhead: “The I AM University is the Integrated Full Spectrum Prism Synthesis Ascended Master Training Facility for the Aquarian Age!” Below that, it says: “We pray with all our heart that the 7/7/07 - LIVE EARTH event be an absolute global success.” They say they are calling on “God, Christ, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, Allah, Dharmkaya, Cosmic Council of Twelve, Mahatma, all Elohim Councils of the Light of God, all the Monads and Oversouls of the Six Billion Souls incarnated on Earth at this time.”

2 - Eric J. Hall Ministries ([ejhall.org](http://ejhall.org)), of New Zealand, has called for it: “A 40-day fast beginning on May 29th, culminating on the 7/7/07, is being trumpeted across America to labour for the unprecedented breaking in of the power and glory of the King that would deliver this generation.” “There are moments in history when a door for massive change opens and great revolutions for good or evil spring up.” “Could it be that the 40-day fast will precede this explosion of power by the Spirit?”

3 - Lou Engle ([thecall.com](http://thecall.com)), headquartered in Nashville, is calling for a revival of prayer, culminating on July 7: “On the 40th-year anniversary of the ‘Summer of Love’ that occurred in 1967, we are calling multi-generations to Nashville, Tennessee. We are calling you on 07-7-07—the number of covenant renewal, marriage, and the fullness of time—for a day of national repentance, fasting, and prayer for our 40-year-generational rebellion. We are calling elders, pastors, mothers, fathers, college students, children, every race, every denomination, and every age to come and divorce Baal, and remarry the Lord.” “Forty days of fasting, prayer, media turn-off, and intimacy with God—May 29th to 07-7-07 to return to the Lord.”

4 - “Command-2” ([commandtwo.org](http://commandtwo.org)) of Sioux Falls, SD, is calling for “Canopy of Prayer 07” to culminate on July 7. “Building a Fire for 7/7/07.” “A three-day Fast—Beginning on Wednesday, July 4th at 7:00 p.m., through Saturday, July 7th to 7:00 p.m.” “All across South Dakota, believers will be praying to covenant with Jehovah in Solemn Assemblies.” “How to Raise a Canopy of Prayer: . . . Try Sunday school classes on Marketplace ministry.”

5 - “Santa Cruz Revival” ([santacruzrevival.com](http://santacruzrevival.com)) is “Pastor Ron’s Vision for 7/7/07.” It is called the “Open Heavens Festival.” “Location: San Lorenzo Park in Santa Cruz” on July 7. During it, they will be “raffling a Harley [motorcycle] to aid the Boys & Girls Club.”

6 - Pastor Danny Nalliah ([catchthefire.com.au](http://catchthefire.com.au)), of Australia, is also on the July 7 bandwagon. “This year I have been sensing an increased urgency in my spirit that the Lord is preparing the Body of Christ for a radical demonstration of the Supernatural Power and Glory of His Manifested Presence. I have longed to see His Mighty Miracles, Signs and Wonders released across our nation.”

7 - “NE Metro Christian Fellowship of Atlanta” ([nemcf-atlanta.org](http://nemcf-atlanta.org)), directed by Pastor Tony Cavener, “We are of the mind-set that the Lord on 7-7-07 is going to give to a Gideon army that has been tested, consecrated and pruned for His purposes, power over the Midianite spirit in our nation! . . . The Lord is going to give to the ‘Baal contenders’ victory on 7-7-07!”

8 - Praying for the Holy Spirit to be poured out on July 7 is also in Europe ([AustrianMission.at](http://AustrianMission.at)). “Bringing the Heart of God to the Heart of Europe—a Gathering of Worship and Prayer for Revival, to Begin July 7th.” “Believers in Austria and from all over Europe are invited to join together . . . during the Heart of God festival held from the 7th through the 13th. The event will take place in Oberschutzen, and will kick off with a March for Jesus at 12 noon.”

9 - “Operation Global Rain” is our largest Adventist ([operationglobalrain.webdevdepot.net](http://operationglobalrain.webdevdepot.net)) crusade for 40 days of prayer, climaxing in the outpouring of the “latter rain” on July 7.

“An amazing and perhaps prophetic movement is under way. It is called Operation Global Rain. It started when a few churches in Central California decided to hold a 10-day prayer event after the model of the early church found in Acts 2. There were no keynote speakers, but rather a group of

Continued on the next tract

# Questions Being Asked

**PART FOUR  
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disciples pleading for nothing else but the outpouring of the latter rain.” No prayers for searching our hearts and putting away sins, and covenanting with God to more fully obey His law; but only prayers for the latter rain to fall in its fullness. —And at the same time that many Protestant, New Age, and spiritualistic groups are doing the same. We are surely in unusual company! One of the objectives to pray for, listed on this global rain website, is a “prayer for unity.” “Humanity is called to live in unity, as the Triune God lives in perfect unity.” (The “triune God” concept is not the three Person Godhead of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, but the three-in-one God error, bequeathed to modern Protestantism from Rome. See our book, *Defending the Godhead*, for complete details.)

10 - Lastly, we come to the “3ABN Live Event” (operationglobalrain.webdevdepot.net) for “7-7-07,” preceded by ten days of prayer and programs on 3ABN.

All of these folk may be very sincere and mean well; but we live in a dangerous time, when physical manifestations and apparent miracles will be wrought by Satan. Our safety is in being certain that we are in the center of God’s will for our lives. We must search our hearts, humble our souls before God, and carefully obey His commandments.

In addition, should our people be uniting with Sundaykeepers in what, essentially, is a joint prayer project for a spiritual outpouring to occur on a certain day?

In the mid-1950s, a group of Adventists in southern California determined to pray for the Holy Spirit until they got it. A friend who had joined them for a few hours said that, by this time, they were feeling desperate. One said in prayer, “Give us something, give us anything!” Eventually, they did get spiritual manifestations; but they were not from God. If they had been searching their hearts, putting away sin, and following the balanced program in Luke 24:49-53, they would have been in a safer position. That mid-1950s group had not, as is being done today, demanded that the spirit arrive on a certain day.

## **MISUSING BIBLE AND SPIRIT OF PROPHECY PASSAGES**

It is extremely important that we come to God’s

Inspired Writings with a humble, teachable attitude of mind.

There are several ways that passages can be misused. Here are a few of which you may not be aware:

First, they can be spiritualized away. A passage which is quite literal can be assumed to contain symbolic meanings. A word or phrase in Scripture is said to mean something quite different than the obvious meaning. Origen (A.D. 185-254) greatly injured the early church by his allegorizing of Scripture. He decided that everything had hidden meanings which were quite different than what was literally stated. Using his twisted method, he decided that the devil would finally be saved. Tertullian (A.D. 166-225) used this allegorical method to defend Sunday worship and making “the sign of the cross” at every other step taken.

A second error is to literalize symbolic language in the Bible or Spirit of Prophecy. This has often been done with the book of Revelation. The 1260 days—which Inspiration says stands for 1260 years—are changed into 1260 literal days. The obvious symbolic representations in Revelation 12 through 16 are given literal meanings.

In practice, you will find this done by some speakers and writers in very subtle ways. So be on guard for it.

Third, the passage may be ridiculed, lightly regarded, or ignored by the speaker or writer. He will imply that his ideas are more important than the plain words of Scripture.

Fourth, there is danger in valuing the words of preachers or the statements of church councils as more important than the plain words of Scripture. Church creeds may be issued in order to establish errors or compromised beliefs into positions which must not be opposed or denied.

Ellen White recognized the danger in many of these tactics. In one passage, she provides an overview of several of these dangers:

“Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will . . .

“Christ foresaw that the undue assumption of authority indulged by the scribes and Pharisees

would not cease with the dispersion of the Jews. He had a prophetic view of the work of exalting human authority to rule the conscience, which has been so terrible a curse to the church in all ages . . . The Roman Church reserves to the clergy the right to interpret the Scriptures . . .

“They are taught to accept its teachings as interpreted by the church; and there are thousands who dare receive nothing, however plainly revealed in Scripture, that is contrary to their creed or the established teaching of their church.

“Notwithstanding the Bible is full of warnings against false teachers, many are ready thus to commit the keeping of their souls to the clergy. There are today thousands of professors of religion who can give no other reason for points of faith which they hold than that they were so instructed by their religious leaders. They pass by the Saviour’s teachings almost unnoticed, and place implicit confidence in the words of the ministers. But are ministers infallible? How can we trust our souls to their guidance unless we know from God’s Word that they are light bearers? A lack of moral courage to step aside from the beaten track of the world leads many to follow in the steps of learned men; and by their reluctance to investigate for themselves, they are becoming hopelessly fastened in the chains of error . . .

“It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help we are to form our opinions for ourselves as we are to answer for ourselves before God.

“The truths most plainly revealed in the Bible have been involved in doubt and darkness by learned men, who, with a pretense of great wisdom, teach that the Scriptures have a mystical, a secret, spiritual meaning not apparent in the language employed. These men are false teachers. It was to such a class that Jesus declared: ‘Ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God.’ Mark 12:24. The language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning, unless a symbol or figure is employed. Christ has given the promise: ‘If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.’ John 7:17. If men would but take the Bible as it reads, if there were no false teachers to mislead and confuse their minds, a work would be accomplished that would make angels glad and that would bring into the fold of Christ thousands upon thousands who are now wandering in error.

“We should exert all the powers of the mind in the study of the Scriptures and should task the understanding to comprehend, as far as mortals can, the deep things of God; yet we must not forget that the docility and submission of a child is the true spirit of the learner. Scriptural difficulties can never be mas-

tered by the same methods that are employed in grappling with philosophical problems. We should not engage in the study of the Bible with that self-reliance with which so many enter the domains of science, but with a prayerful dependence upon God and a sincere desire to learn His will. We must come with a humble and teachable spirit to obtain knowledge from the great I AM. Otherwise, evil angels will so blind our minds and harden our hearts that we shall not be impressed by the truth.”—*Great Controversy*, 595-599.

#### **DOES GOD KNOW THE FUTURE?**

There is a teacher at La Sierra University who, since the 1980s, has taught that God can only guess at what is in the future. Here are several statements which will clarify this matter. They are quoted from *God Knows the Future* [WM-1058].

**BEFORE THE PAST, GOD KNEW THE FUTURE**—“God had a knowledge of the events of the future, even before the creation of the world. He did not make His purposes to fit circumstances, but He allowed matters to develop and work out. He did not work to bring about a certain condition of things, but He knew that such a condition would exist. The plan that should be carried out upon the defection of any of the high intelligences of heaven—this is the secret, the mystery which has been hid from ages. And an offering was prepared in the eternal purposes to do the very work which God has done for fallen humanity.”—*Signs, March 25, 1897; 6 Bible Commentary*, 1082.

**HE SEES THE EVENTS OF TOMORROW**—“If you have given yourself to God, to do His work, you have no need to be anxious for tomorrow. He whose servant you are, knows the end from the beginning. The events of tomorrow, which are hidden from your view, are open to the eyes of Him who is omnipotent.”—*Mount of Blessing*, 100.

**GOD CLEARLY SEES THE MOST DISTANT PAST AND FUTURE**—“I AM means an eternal presence; the past, present, and future are alike to God. He sees the most remote events of past history, and the far distant future with as clear a vision as we do those things that are transpiring daily. We know not what is before us, and if we did, it would not contribute to our eternal welfare. God gives us an opportunity to exercise faith and trust in the great I AM.”—*1 Bible Commentary*, 1099 (*Manuscript 5a*, 1895).

**GOD HAS FORESEEN EVERYTHING THAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE**—“Through centuries of persecution, conflict, and darkness, God has sustained His church. Not one cloud has fallen upon it that He has not prepared for; not one opposing force has risen to counterwork His work, that He has

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not foreseen. All has taken place as He predicted. He has not left His church forsaken, but has traced in prophetic declarations what would occur, and that which His Spirit inspired the prophets to foretell has been brought about. All His purposes will be fulfilled. His law is linked with His throne, and no power of evil can destroy it. Truth is inspired and guarded by God; and it will triumph over all opposition.”—*Acts of the Apostles, 11-12.*

**CHRIST READS THE FUTURE**—“ ‘He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.’ Jesus read the future of His disciples. He saw one brought to the scaffold, one to the cross, one to exile among the lonely rocks of the sea, others to persecution and death. He encouraged them with the promise that in every trial He would be with them. That promise has lost none of its force.”—*Desire of Ages, 669.*

**CHRIST KNOWS THE FUTURE**—“Bidding His hearers marvel not, Christ opened before them, in still wider view, the mystery of the future.”—*Desire of Ages, 211.*

**CHRIST LOOKS DOWN THROUGH THE AGES INTO FUTURITY**—“With prophetic eye He looks into futurity, and sees not only years, but centuries and ages.”—*Desire of Ages, 157.*

**CHRIST READS THE FUTURE AS AN OPEN BOOK**—“As Christ’s earthly ministry drew to a close, and He realized that He must soon leave His disciples to carry on the work without His personal supervision, He sought to encourage them and to prepare them for the future. He did not deceive them with false hopes. As an open book He read what was to be. He knew He was about to be separated from them, to leave them as sheep among wolves. He knew that they would suffer persecution, that they would be cast out of the synagogues, and would be thrown into prison. He knew that for witnessing to Him as the Messiah, some of them would suffer death. And something of this He told them. In speaking of their future, He was plain and definite, that in their coming trial they might remember His words and be strengthened to believe in Him as the Redeemer.”—*Acts of the Apostles, 21.*

**IN HIS WORD, GOD HAS REVEALED KEY EVENTS OF THE FUTURE**—“God has in His Word opened before us the great events of the future—all that it is essential for us to know—and He has given us a safe guide for our feet amid all its perils; but it is Satan’s purpose to destroy men’s confidence in God, to make them dissatisfied with their condition in life, and to lead them to seek a knowledge of what God has wisely veiled from them, and to despise what He has revealed in His Holy Word.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets, 686-687.*

**WE NEED NOT FEAR WHAT THE FUTURE MAY BRING**—“In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.

“We are debtors to God to use every advantage He has entrusted to us to beautify the truth by holiness of character, and to send the messages of warning, and of comfort, of hope and love, to those who are in the darkness of error and sin.”—*Life Sketches, 196.*

**TRUSTING OUR FUTURE WITH GOD, WE ARE SAFE**—“We are not to let the future, with its hard problems, its unsatisfying prospects, make our hearts faint, our knees tremble, our hands hang down. ‘Let him take hold of My strength,’ says the Mighty One, ‘that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me.’ Isaiah 27:5. Those who surrender their lives to His guidance and to His service will never be placed in a position for which He has not made provision. Whatever our situation, if we are doers of His Word, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexity, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend.

“If in our ignorance we make missteps, the Saviour does not forsake us. We need never feel that we are alone. Angels are our companions. The Comforter that Christ promised to send in His name abides with us. In the way that leads to the City of God there are no difficulties which those who trust in Him may not overcome. There are no dangers which they may not escape. There is not a sorrow, not a grievance, not a human weakness, for which He has not provided a remedy.”—*Ministry of Healing, 248-249.*

**GOD, WHO KNOWS TOMORROW, WILL CARE FOR YOU**—“If you have given yourself to God, to do His work, you have no need to be anxious for tomorrow. He whose servant you are, knows the end from the beginning. The events of tomorrow, which are hidden from your view, are open to the eyes of Him who is omnipotent.

“When we take into our hands the management of things with which we have to do, and depend upon our own wisdom for success, we are taking a burden which God has not given us, and are trying to bear it without His aid. We are taking upon ourselves the responsibility that belongs to God, and thus are really putting ourselves in His place. We may well have anxiety and anticipate danger and loss, for it is certain to befall us. But when we really believe that God

loves us and means to do us good we shall cease to worry about the future. We shall trust God as a child trusts a loving parent. Then our troubles and torments will disappear, for our will is swallowed up in the will of God.”—*Mount of Blessing*, pp. 100-101.

#### OTHER IMPORTANT MATTERS

In this brief study, I have dealt with a number of questions which are raised from time to time.

But there are several other very important topics which do not need to be covered here, since they are answered very nicely elsewhere. Here is where to find this information in books which we print:

Did Ellen White plagiarize? Here is solid evidence that she did not copy from others. *Defending the Spirit of Prophecy*, pp. 10-118.

Did God protect her writings from tampering? No one else wrote her books or changed any of them. *Ibid.*, pp. 119-210.

Why is *Great Controversy* her most important book, and how can we be sure that we can trust it to have been written by her? *Ibid.*, pp. 211-234.

Why was the Spirit of Prophecy given to us, and why is it so important? *Ibid.*, pp. 235-237, 245-270.

How were we given our doctrinal positions? *Ibid.*, pp. 238-244.

What are the ways in which *Great Controversy* has been the one book especially attacked by Satan for over a hundred years? *The Story of Great Controversy*, pp. 6-191.

How can I begin a personal study program to draw me closer to God? *Solving Our Church Crisis*, pp. 76-80.

Where can I find a brief summary of the closing chapters of *Great Controversy*, which can help guide me as I study them? *Ibid.*, pp. 80-84.

Where can I find very brief explanations and a few key Bible/Spirit of Prophecy quotes for each of the most contested doctrinal points in our church at this time? Here they are:

Introduction to the 15 key points: *Solving Our Church Crisis*, pp. 84-86; Salvation, pp. 86-92; Grace, pp. 92-98; God's Law, pp. 99-106; The Nature of Sin, pp. 106-112; True and False Methods of Salvation, pp. 112-115; Justification by Faith, pp. 115-120; Sanctification, pp. 121-124; Perfection of Character, pp. 124-129; Righteousness, pp. 129-132; Law and Grace, pp. 133-136; Original Sin, pp. 136-141;

The Human Nature of Christ, pp. 141-147; The Atonement, pp. 147-151; The Investigative Judgment, pp. 151-154; The Sabbath, pp. 154-156.

What is the basic objective of the new theology errors and its teachers? *Solving Our Church Crisis*, pp. 157-163.

What does God say is the highest authority in our church? *Ibid.*, pp. 163-169.

What does Inspiration say is the three angels' messages? *Ibid.*, pp. 171-183.

What are we told is Babylon and her daughters? *Ibid.*, pp. 184-190.

Why are Daniel 7 and Revelation 12-13 ignored and forgotten? *Ibid.*, p. 190.

Why are diet and natural remedies also important? *Ibid.*, p. 192.

Are personal standards of conduct important? *Ibid.*, pp. 192-193.

What are some of the urgent warnings given to us, so we will prepare for the coming crisis? *Ibid.*, pp. 193-209.

Where can I find answers to the various charges against the Spirit of Prophecy? *Ibid.*, pp. 225-226.

Where can I find a few brief paragraphs of encouragement right now? *Ibid.*, pp. 229-232.

What do the Inspired Writings tell us needs to be done in order to bring our church back to its original purity of doctrines and standards? *Bringing It Back*, pp. 4-128.

What does the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy teach about the feast days, both before and after Calvary? *The Feast Days*, pp. 5-126.

Does the Bible defend our historic beliefs in the Sanctuary Truth? You will find it all in *A Biblical Defense*, pp. 10-353.

Where can I obtain information on what the Spirit of Prophecy taught about medical missionary work? *The Medical Missionary Manual*, pp. 9-432.

How did accreditation and degrees enter our colleges and universities? As a result, was our mission to the world improved? *The Broken Blueprint*, pp. 11-421.

What are the facts about vaccines? Are they safe? How can I keep my child from receiving them? *The Vaccination Crisis*, pp. 8-295.

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