

# "Watchman, what of the night?"

"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,  
the hour and the end!"

Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)

## Parallels

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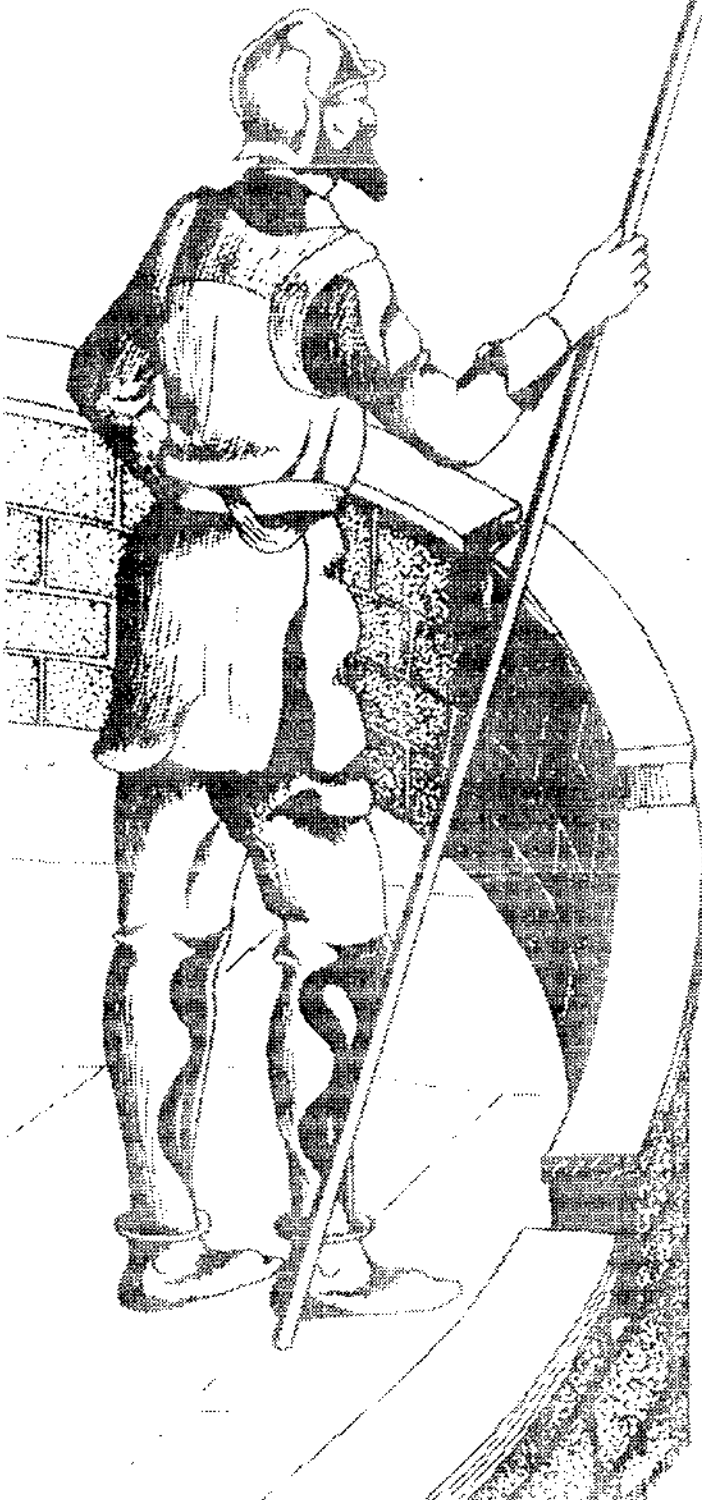
## REVELATION 11:2

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### Editor's Preface

Cicero, the Roman orator who lived in the first century BC, is credited with saying that "not to know what has been transacted in former times is to be always a child." Paul wrote to the Corinthians - "Brethren, be not children in understanding:...but in understanding be men" (I Cor. 14:20). We need not only to know what has transpired in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but to understand its significance. This is especially true of the decades which have followed the death of Ellen G. White and even more so the last five decades. In this period of time - 1915 to the present - there has been two different statements of belief approved by the Church in General Session; two Bible Conferences have been convened, one in 1919, and another in 1952; a prophecy of Jesus has been fulfilled to which the ministry of the church was alerted at the 1952 Conference. What is all of this saying? Are there no lessons to be learned? Is there a parallel between our history and the history of the Jewish nation in the time of Christ? Have we done to the truth of Jesus what the Jews did to Jesus, the truth? This is the major question, along with the historical data, which is addressed in this issue of WVN. Facing the reality of fact is not pleasant, and the conclusions to be drawn from the data of history are not the most palatable. Pablum is not what is needed at the present time, but "strong meat" (Heb. 5:14). There are too many "babes" sitting in the pews of the Church and on the chairs in the "home churches" of the independent ministries. Compounding this tragedy, there are "babes" in the pulpits and behind the lecterns placed in the homes.

Whenever the prophecy of Jesus as recorded in Luke 21:20-24 is discussed, there are those who blind their eyes because of what its fulfillment is actually saying. They cite Revelation 11:2 as its explanation which, because of its symbolism, requires further interpretation. This verse we analyze in context as well as citing definitive references in the book, which can lead to further in-depth study. Surely as the Writings witness - "We do not go deep enough in our search for truth," and refuse to accept that which is plain and simple.



# Parallels

This historical review will be based upon two premises:

**Premise One:** To give the last final message "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," as set forth in the Revelation of Jesus Christ which God ordained, a people were called and given a sacred trust even as Israel of old were entrusted of God with the covenants, the law, the typical mediatorial services, and the promises. (Rom. 9:4)

**Premise Two:** Jesus Christ and truth, pure and unadulterated are inseparable. The rejection of one is the rejection of the other.

To this second premise, there is a corollary: The same Revelation which identifies the final message, pictures in symbolism the close relationship between "the Lamb as it has been slain," and "the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." (Rev. 5:6) In the rejection of this Spirit of truth, men cross the unseen line knowing not "the time of their visitation." In the acceptance of the Spirit of truth men will receive "the fullness of divine power," often noted as "the latter rain."

To guide the last "Israel," God provided the renewal of the prophetic gift to lead that Israel to "the Land of Promise." Clearly it is set forth in the "gift" that the Three Angels' Messages of Rev. 14:6-12 is the sacred trust committed to the "last Israel" and that "Israel" alone. It reads:

*In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light-bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning message for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import, -- the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention.*

*The most solemn truths ever entrusted to mortals have been given us to proclaim to the world. The proclamation of these truths is to be our work. The world is to be warned, and God's people are to be true to the trust committed to them. (9T:19)*

Briefly we need to review aspects of the "trust." It is first and foremost "the everlasting gospel" (Rev. 14:6). This proclamation did not cease with the coming of the second angel whose message only added a dimension to the first angel's message. Likewise the third, for the gospel does not cease to be proclaimed until the hour when all human probation closes. The "everlasting" gospel is the core of this final warning.

The second angel announced "the fall of Babylon." The

third comes as the controversy between truth and error reaches its final stage - the beast, his image and mark. (Of interest is the fact that of all three messages, only the third is described in the present tense in the Greek text. This has not been duly considered)

The first parallel between ancient Israel and modern "spiritual" Israel that needs to be noted is that even as God placed a time on the probation of His ancient people, He warned its modern counterpart, that they too faced a judgment with similar consequences.

To Daniel, the angel Gabriel stated - "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city" (9:24). To the Church, the Messenger of the Lord wrote:

*In the balances of the sanctuary the Seventh-day Adventist church is to be weighed. She will be judged by the privileges and advantages that she has had. If her spiritual experience does not correspond to the advantages that Christ, at infinite cost, has bestowed upon her, if the blessings conferred have not qualified her to do the work entrusted to her, on her will be pronounced the sentence, "Found wanting." By the light bestowed, the opportunities given, will she be judged. (8T:247)*

Observe carefully, corporate language is used - "she," and "her." The "church" as a corporate body faces the judgment of the sanctuary. This is language that every member of the Church grounded in the truth can and should understand. It is the sanctuary doctrine which gives uniqueness to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In that setting, the Church "is to be weighed." Neither is the meaning of "the sentence" mysterious. The force of "Found wanting" is clearly described in the book of Daniel. (5:25-28)

The simplest understanding of God's dealings with man tells one that the God who entrusted the Church "with the most solemn truths ever entrusted to mortals," and told them that they would be "weighed in the balances of the sanctuary," is not going to leave that Church in darkness as to the decision rendered. Further, if the trust involves, and it does, the giving of the Three Angels' Messages "to every nation," and "the times of the nations" are "fulfilled" (Luke 21:24), then certain conclusions are inescapable whether we want to recognize them or not. Either the work of the Church has been completed and the "witness" has been given so that the end can come (Matt. 24:14); or else the Church has failed in its trust, and God has found it wanting, and will have a final witness given to individuals of "the nations" through another means. The latter is suggested by Jesus. See Mark 13:9-11. Read these verses carefully and notice the interjected 10th verse which contrasts the corporate "nations" with the individuals - "rulers and kings" - before whom the final witness will be given. Further observe, those who bear the witness will be but mere instruments in the control of "the Holy Spirit." They will have received the Latter Rain!

Both to ancient Israel, and to modern Israel was committed a sacred trust. The facts of history indicate that the event which would mark the "the times of the nations" (corporate entities) fulfilled has occurred. Are there any parallels between the closing history of that nation whose probation was marked in the prophecy of Daniel, and modern spiritual Israel whom God told His "Messenger" would be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary? We believe there are, and shall delineate these events. The major difference, which is in reality no difference, will be the crucifixion of Jesus, the truth, and the crucifixion of the truth as it is in Jesus.

First, let us take a look as the overall import of the prophecy of Jesus as given in Luke 21:20-24. These verses are a unit of thought underscoring two events in the history of a single city, Jerusalem. In these verses, Jesus answered the two questions asked by the disciples: 1) "When shall these things be? (The destruction of the "desolate" temple); and 2) "The sign (singular) of thy coming and end of the world?" (Matt. 24:3). To the first question, Jesus replied - "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies then know that the desolation thereof is nigh" (Luke 21:20) When this event occurred, they were to do something - "Then let them ... which are in the midst of [the city] depart out" (v. 21). To whom did this prophecy of Jesus have meaning, and for whose benefit was it primarily given? The Jewish nation whose probation had closed, or to the followers of Jesus? Should the second event - "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the nations, until the times of the nations be fulfilled" - be any less significant to the follower of Jesus today?

The core of the Three Angels' Messages is "the everlasting gospel." The other aspects of the Messages are adjuncts to this central core. When an adjunct becomes the major theme of emphasis, then the whole message is out of balance. The church in its beginning decades came to the place where it was preaching "the law until we were as dry as the hills of Gilboa that had neither dew nor rain" (R&H, March 11, 1890). To correct this imbalance of emphasis, and to restore the "core" to its rightful place, God sent two "messengers" in 1888 with the message of righteousness by faith. The question, was it accepted, or was it rejected, is still with us. Interestingly, in 1924, Elder A. G. Daniells was commissioned by the Ministerial Association Advisory Council to arrange "a compilation of the writings of Mrs. E. G. White on the subject of Justification by Faith." The result was the book, *Christ Our Righteousness*, which was published in 1926. After noting the 1888 Message as "an awakening message," he writes:

*To this day, many of those who heard the message when it came are deeply interested in it and concerned regarding it. All these long years they have held a firm conviction, and cherished a fond hope, that some day this message would be given great prominence among us, and that it would do the cleansing, regenerating work in the church which they believed it was sent by the Lord to accomplish.*

(p. 35)

Honesty requires that we recognize that Elder Daniells is saying in a nice way the message was rejected. Even though lip service was given to it in the years following the turmoil which surrounded the 1888 GC Session in Minneapolis, it still was shelved as a living reality in the life of the church.

In 1950 two other "messengers" challenged the church alleging that the message of 1888 was rejected, and that there was a need for a restoration of the message to be accompanied by a "denominational repentance." Their presentation to the "brethren" was summarized in the manuscript, *1888 Re-Examined*. The first overt response to the manuscript was a letter to Elders Wieland and Short from the Defence Literature Committee dated December 4, 1951.

The covert response to the manuscript was the 1952 Bible Conference. This conference was a crucial event in the history of the Church as it entered the last half of the 20th century. Elder W. H. Branson who called for this conference, presented near its close a message on "The Lord Our Righteousness." As he concluded this message, he admitted that "to a large degree the church failed to build on the foundation laid at the 1888 General Conference," and as a result "much has been lost." "But," he said, "the message of righteousness by faith has been repeated here... And this great truth has been given here in this 1952 Bible Conference with far greater power than it was given in the 1888 Conference. ..." (*Our Firm Foundation*, Vol. 2, p. 616)

Clearly referencing the challenge of Wieland and Short, Branson declared:

*No longer will the question be, "What was the attitude of our workers and people toward the message of righteousness by faith that was given in 1888? What did they do about it?" From now on the great question must be, "What did we do with the light on righteousness by faith as proclaimed in the 1952 Bible Conference?" (ibid. p. 617)*

If we define "righteousness by faith" as stated in *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 65 as "pure, unadulterated truth," the last question of Branson's is prophetic - the great question "must be" what was done with the truth presented in the 1952 Bible Conference? It was at this conference that Elder Arthur Maxwell declared - "There is one prophecy concerning Palestine that we should all be watching with special care. Said Jesus, 'Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.' Luke 21:24."

I was present as a delegate to this conference from the Southern Union. I attended all the sessions and presentations as well as a "side" session by a veteran minister, W. R. French, who opposed what W. E. Read said in his pres-

entation. I saw the negative reaction of many to the paper given by Edward Heppenstall on "The Covenants and the Law." I listened carefully to Arthur Maxwell's presentation but missed the significance of his reference to Palestine. It was later pointed out to me by Elder D. K. Short who had been reading carefully the published papers presented at this Conference. In all the sessions, I never heard anything that approached the recorded messages of either Jones or Waggoner that I have read since that date. For the most part, the messages were an affirmation of what has been termed "historic" Adventism. Tragically, this affirmation did not keep the Church in the hour of test which lay just before it.

### In "the palace of the high priest"

In the spring of 1955, the Seventh-day Adventist-Evangelical Conferences began and continued into the summer of 1956. Some five years prior, T. E. Unruh, then president of the East Pennsylvania Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, wrote a letter to Dr. Donald G. Barnhouse commending him on a series of radio sermons on righteousness by faith. An exchange of correspondence followed which was abruptly concluded the following year after Barnhouse made an attack in his publication, *Eternity*, on the book, *Steps to Christ*, which Unruh had sent him. On the staff of *Eternity*, was Walter R. Martin serving as a consulting editor. He had been commissioned to write a book against Seventh-day Adventists, and Barnhouse showed him the exchange of correspondence between himself and T. E. Unruh. Desiring to know what Adventist taught first hand, he made contact with Unruh and asked to meet some Adventist leaders including Leroy E. Froom. This was arranged, and in March 1955, the conferences began at the very center of the work, in "the palace of the high priest." (John 18:15)

In July of 1955, Unruh wrote a long letter to Froom and W. E. Read who at Froom's suggestion was asked to join in the discussion with Martin. Later, R. Allen Anderson, Ministerial Secretary, and editor of the *Ministry* magazine, was added as a conferee. This letter requested that if possible the Adventist conferees be relieved of other responsibility so as to devote their time to this developing encounter with the Evangelicals. A copy of the letter was sent to R. R. Figuhr, then president of the General Conference. From this point on, Figuhr gave the support of his office to the conference and the publication in 1957 of the definitive statement of Adventist beliefs, the book, *Questions on Doctrine*.

Walter Martin asked the Adventist conferees a series of questions regarding what the church believed. To these questions, the Adventist formulated answers. These questions and answers formed the basis of the book, *Questions on Doctrine*. To guide the questions and answers through to publication, Figuhr appointed a committee which he chaired. The committee consisted of the administrative officers of the General Conference, the edi-

tor of the *Review & Herald*, and the four Adventist conferees. In September of 1956 the officers of the General Conference, taking a direct hand in planning the book, appointed a small editorial committee. This committee in turn asked the Review and Herald Publishing Association to publish the book "as compiled by a committee appointed by the General Conference." The General Conference officers "approved the title" for the book and "the exact wording" of the introduction that was to appear over the signature of the editorial committee.

Two factors in regard to the theological positions taken in the book, *Questions on Doctrine* need to be kept in mind: 1) According to T. E. Unruh's report on this conference (*Adventist Heritage*, Vol. 4, #2), the Adventist conferees gave as answers to the questions asked by Martin what they considered to be "contemporary" Adventist theology. They appealed to the 1931 Statement of Beliefs as the basis for this teaching. Just three years previously the major theological positions of the Church, save one, had been presented at the 1952 Bible Conference. That would have been truly "contemporary" Adventist teaching. But not even a reference has been found where this conference's presentations were used to substantiate the positions stated by the Adventist conferees, although eleven of the fourteen members of the committee appointed to oversee the preparation of the answers given to Martin into book form had presented papers at the 1952 Bible Conference. Yet this book would be published as "a definitive statement of contemporary Adventist theology."

2) During these conferences with the Evangelicals, the Evangelical conferees coached the Adventists as to how they could express their "beliefs in terms more easily understood by theologians of other communions." The bottom line is, in simplest of terms, that the Evangelicals helped the Adventists write their "new" theology. All of this was done as it were "in the palace of the high priest."

Prior to the publication of the book, *Questions on Doctrine*, the manuscript was quickly sent to 250 ministers of the Church world-wide for their evaluation, asking for a speedy reply. Articles began appearing in the *Ministry* magazine setting forth the new theology which would be expressed in the forthcoming book. Worker's meetings were held at the conference level to explain to the ministry what had taken place at the General Conference headquarters. Then the book was released, and a distribution program was planned whereby the churches were asked to purchase the books for the libraries and the clergy of their communities. This was underwritten so that the cost of a hardcover copy of the book was only \$1.00.

Another factor in this betrayal of its sacred trust, is the fact that the book, *Questions on Doctrine*, was a revision of the answers given to Walter Martin before being released to the Church to read and distribute. Deception was practiced on the rank and file in Adventism. One can check for himself the fact of revision by comparing the

answer given to Question 3 in the book with Martin's quotation from the same answer as given him, in the article appearing in *Eternity*, November 1956, captioned, "What Seventh-day Adventists Really Believe." While the revision in this instance involves only one added word, the addition changes its meaning. The original answer read in reference to the death of Christ on the cross that it was "the complete atonement for sin." The revision in the book reads - "the complete sacrificial atonement for sin." The whole truth of this "betrayal" will never be known until a copy of the original answers is released.

I had an occasion in 1977 to visit with Don F. Nuefeld when he was associate editor of the *Review*. During the conversation, he asked me if I knew that the book, *Questions on Doctrine*, was revised before it was released to the Church. I was dumbfounded, and replied in the negative. He indicated he had a copy of the original answers in his desk drawer but he was not at liberty to release or to show to them to anyone. Upon my return home, I wrote and pled with him to release these answers for the sake of truth, ethics notwithstanding. He replied - "I still feel it would be unethical to make available copies of those original answers sent to Martin and Barnhouse. I received them in confidence and would have to have the permission of the people involved before I could make them available to others. I hope you don't mind." (Letter dated Oct. 28, 1977) I did mind, and still do. Nuefeld has passed from the scene of action, but somewhere those original answers still exist. The original answers and the answers given in the book need to be carefully compared in critical areas so that the full extent of the compromise can be known.

### What Does the Book Teach?

T. E. Unruh in his report of the Conference, cited above, wrote that in replying to Martin's initial questions, "we emphasized those doctrines held by our church in common with Evangelical Christians of all faiths in all ages. We stated our conviction that the Bible is the Inspired Word of God and the only rule of Adventist faith and practice. We affirmed our belief in the eternal and complete deity of Christ, in his (sic) sinless life in the incarnation, in his (sic) atoning death on the cross, once for all and all-sufficient, in his (sic) literal resurrection, and in his (sic) priestly ministry before the Father, applying the benefits of the atonement completed on the cross." What this means, and how the Evangelical conferees helped the Adventists to express it, is found amplified in the book, *Questions on Doctrine [QonD]*.

**The Incarnation:** In the first part of the book, the position is assumed that Christ accepted the fallen nature of man vicariously, even as He bore our sins. (p. 58) Matthew 8:17 is cited which is quoted from Isaiah (53:4). In the LXX, the Greek verb, φερω (bare) is used in stating "He bares our sins." *QonD* reads "so He bore (Gr. *anaphero*) our weaknesses (Matt. 8:17, Weymouth)" Neither the Greek text of Matthew, nor Weymouth reads this way. The word in Mat-

thew is ελαβεν, "He took," not αναφερω, "He bore." There is a difference between, "He bore" and "He took." He bore our sins; He took our weaknesses. This word, "weaknesses" (ασθενειας) was troubling to the Adventist conferees because it is translated elsewhere in the New Testament as "sickness" (John 11:4), and "diseases" (Acts. 28:9). [I have personally sat in the presence of T. E. Unruh and A. V. Olson and witnessed an argument between them over the question, Could Jesus take the common cold?] In *QonD* they questioned:

*It could hardly be construed, however, from the record of either Isaiah or Matthew, that Jesus was diseased or that He experienced the frailties to which our fallen human nature is heir. But He did bear all this. Could it be that He bore this vicariously also, just as He bore the sins of the whole world? (p. 59; emphasis theirs)*

Later in the book, the Conferees became very specific. They wrote - "Although born in the flesh, He was nevertheless God, and was exempt from the inherited passions and pollutions that corrupt the natural descendants of Adam." (p. 383; emphasis supplied) This word, "exempt" has theological connotations. Commenting on the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Cardinal Gibbons in his book, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, wrote:

*Unlike the rest of the children of Adam, the soul of Mary was never subject to sin, even in the first moment of its infusion into the body. She alone was exempt from the original taint. (p. 171, 88th ed., emphasis supplied)*

No matter from what perspective you view the position stated in *QonD*, it is only one step removed from Romanism.

**The Atonement:** This involves two aspects: 1) What was done on the cross; and 2) What Christ is doing as High Priest in the Heavenly Sanctuary. The book emphatically states:

Adventists do not hold any theory of a dual atonement. "*Christ hath redeemed us (Gal. 3:13) "once for all" (Heb. 10:10).* (p. 390; the entire first sentence is italicized for emphasis)

This strikes at a very basic hermeneutic upon which Adventism was founded - typology. There was the individual atonement typified in the sin offering brought by the sinner to the court (Lev. 4: 26, 31, 35), and the final atonement of cleansing ministered on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). In the summary of the major feasts and holy convocations of Israel during a year, "the day of atonement" on the tenth day of the seventh month is expressed in the plural - "day of atonements" (Heb., Lev. 23:27-28). Whether this is the *pluralis majesticus*, or whether the plural is used to cover the multiple cleansings on that day - the most holy, the tabernacle, and the altar (Lev. 16:20) as well as the people - is perhaps an open question. However, on this day "no work," on pain of death, was to be done (23:30), in con-

trast to "no servile work" as prohibited on the other holy days (23:7, 8, 21,25,35-36) It was a distinct day, a day of days. Thus its antitype would also be distinctive. To proclaim this distinctiveness and its meaning was and is the heart of true Adventism.

In the first report of a five-article series on how the Evangelicals viewed the conferences, Barnhouse noted the teaching of Adventism, that Jesus entered into the Most Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary on October 22, 1844 to begin a final work of atonement, as "the most colossal, psychological, face-saving phenomenon in religious history," and thus "nothing more than a human, face-saving idea!" From the context it can be deduced that the Adventist conferees pled that many of the articles and books written on this subject were the work of "uniformed" extremists. Barnhouse wrote - "Mr Martin and I heard the Adventist leaders say, flatly, that they repudiate all such extremes. This they said in no uncertain terms." This charge by Barnhouse has never been denied, nor have the circumstances surrounding the repudiation by "Adventist leaders" been clarified.

Keep in mind that the publications to which Martin or Barnhouse had access were not flyers written by "independents" but books and articles appearing as recognized publications of the Church. Further, note that Barnhouse did not use the term, "Adventist conferees" in stating who "repudiated" the position, but rather "the Adventist leaders." Until this is clarified, it must be assumed that the repudiation was done by those on a highest level of accountability for two reasons: 1) Unruh in his summary of the conferences noted that "Figuhr [GC president] gave the support of his office to the conferences and the publication of the definitive statement of Adventist belief which resulted;" and 2) "The General Conference officers appointed a small editorial committee," chaired by one of their own, which in turn invited the Review & Herald Publishing Association to publish the book "'as compiled by a committee appointed by the General Conference,' accepting the manuscript in its completed form."

Barnhouse also wrote that "they [Adventist leaders] do not believe as some of their earlier teachers taught, that Jesus' atoning work was not completed on Calvary but instead that He was still carrying on a second ministering work since 1844. This idea is also totally repudiated." *QonD* confirms this repudiation in the statement cited above from page 390 - "Adventists do not hold any theory of a dual atonement."

What does "the definitive statement of Adventist belief" teach on the atonement besides denying its duality?

Under a section heading, "Redemption Absolute by the Victory of Christ," is to be found this teaching -

*How glorious is the thought that the King, who occupies the throne, is our representative at the court of heaven!*

*This becomes all the more meaningful when we realize that Jesus our surety entered the "holy places," and appeared in the presence of God for us. But it was with the hope of obtaining something for us at that time, or at some future time. No! He had already obtained it for us on the cross. And now as our High Priest He ministers the virtues of His atoning sacrifice for us. (p. 381; emphasis theirs)*

How then are we to relate to the published statements prior to this "definitive statement" which speak of a "final atonement"? The book reads:

*When, therefore, one hears an Adventist say, or reads in Adventist literature - even in the writings of Ellen G. White - that Christ is making atonement now, it should be understood that we mean simply that Christ is now making application of the benefits of the sacrificial atonement He made on the cross; that He is making it efficacious for us individually, according to our needs and requests. (pp. 354-355; emphasis theirs)*

All of this compromise of the heart of Adventism occurred now over forty years ago. In the intervening time, a new Statement of Beliefs has been voted by the General Conference in session. Is this to be interpreted as a return to fundamental Adventist principles of truth?

Walter R. Martin also wondered about events in Adventism, and wrote in 1983 to the General Conference "calling for the Conference's public and official statement reaffirming or denying the authority of the Adventist book, *Questions on Doctrine*..." Two months later, W. Richard Leshner, then a vice-president of the General Conference, who was later to become president of Andrews University, replied. He wrote:

*You ask if Seventh-day Adventists still stand behind the answers given to your questions in Questions on Doctrine as they did in 1957. The answer is yes. (The Kingdom of the Cults, p. 410)*

To be continued

Footnote: I used language borrowed from Scripture to caption this last section of the above article - "In the Palace of the High Priest." It was in the palace of the highest authority in Judaism, that the plans were formulated and carried out to crucify Jesus, the Truth. In the highest corridors of denominational authority, the crucifixion of the Truth committed in sacred trust to Seventh-day Adventists was formulated and carried out.

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"There is less excuse in our day for stubbornness and unbelief than there was for the Jews in the days of Christ. They did not have before them the example of a nation that had suffered retribution for their unbelief and disobedience. But we have before us the history of the chosen people of God, who separated themselves from Him, and rejected the Prince of life." (R&H, April 11, 1893)

# Revelation 11:2

"But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."

Invariably when Luke 21:24 is discussed, those opposed to the literal language of Jesus appeal to Revelation 11:2 with its symbolic language to mitigate what Jesus said in His eschatological discourse.

Clearly, Luke 21:20-24 gives Jesus' words in literal language with no symbolism. The city which was to be "compassed with armies" was the same city that was to "be trodden down until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." To read into verse 24, that "Jerusalem" symbolizes the "church" necessitates the same interpretation of "Jerusalem" in verse 20. The absurdity of such an interpretation becomes self-evident.

Revelation 11:2 is set in symbolism. John was given a rod and told to "measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein" (v. 1). Yet no measurements are given. He is told not to measure the court for it is given to the Gentiles, and they shall tread under foot "the holy city" forty and two months. In the book of Revelation, the only use of the designation, "holy city" is for the New Jerusalem (21:2) "The forty and two months" is also symbolic and it is used in only one other reference - 13:5. There it is connected with the blasphemy against God, His tabernacle, and those "that dwell in heaven" which parallels, "them that worship therein."

The only other city discussed in the symbolism of Revelation 11 is designated as "the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." Literally Jesus was crucified at Jerusalem. Symbolically "the great city" is noted elsewhere in Revelation as the "woman" riding the scarlet colored beast (17:18, 3). The prophecy of Revelation has two "Jerusalem" cities, one above, designated as "the holy city;" the other of the earth designated "the great city."

The two prophecies, Jesus' own in Luke 21:22-24, and the prophecy which God gave to Him as recorded in the book of Revelation (11:2) are distinct and separate and talking about two different Jerusalems. We would do well to study more closely the part of chapter 11 which notes "the great city" and ties it with the history of literal Jerusalem, designating it as "spiritually" called Sodom and Egypt. Sodom enters Biblical history as a city ripe for destruction. In Revelation 14:18-20, the city again enters the picture of prophecy where a "winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress." It was without "the city" that a different blood was spilt when "our Lord was crucified." This "city" is also "spiritually" called Egypt. It was Egypt's king - Pharaoh, son of the sun-god

Ra, who defied the God of heaven. It is this same "sun-god" who plans to "sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north." The prophet identifies him as "Lucifer." (Isa. 14:12-13)

We miss much when we fail to do in-depth study of the prophetic Word, letting that Word interpret its own symbolism by carefully comparing text with text. We curse ourselves when we fail to heed the fearful warning God gave in the prophecy of the Messiah to come, because to accept His prophecy crosses our presumptive conclusions of what God has to do, in our judgment, not what He has revealed He will do by His actions in salvation history.

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"By a variety of images the Lord Jesus represented to John the wicked character and seductive influence of those who have been distinguished for their persecution of God's people. All need wisdom carefully to search out the mystery of iniquity that figures so largely in the winding up of this earth's history. ...

"Advance new principles, and crowd in the clear-cut truth. It will be a sword cutting both ways." (TM, p. 118)

"We do not go deep enough in our search for truth. Every soul who believes present truth will be brought where he will be required to give a reason for the hope that is in him. ... They must know that they do know what is truth. God can teach you more in one moment by His Holy Spirit than you can learn from the great men of earth. The universe is looking upon the controversy that is going on upon the earth. At an infinite cost, God has provided for every man an opportunity to know that which will make him wise unto salvation. How eagerly do angels look to see who will avail himself of this opportunity!" (R&H, Feb. 18, 1890)

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