

[This paper has been reformulated from old, unformatted electronic files and may not be identical to the edited version that appeared in print. The original pagination has been maintained, despite the resulting odd page breaks, for ease of scholarly citation. However, scholars quoting this article should use the print version or give the URL.]
Journal of the Adventist Theological Society, 7/2 (Autumn 1996): 125-141.
Article copyright © 1996 by Norman R. Gulley.

Good News About the Time of Trouble

Norman R. Gulley
School of Religion
Southern Adventist University

Near the beginning of a recent semester a student blurted out in my “Last Day Events” class, “I want to go to heaven via the resurrection!” Another student told me, “I don’t want to run to the mountains in the great time of trouble!”

In an anonymous questionnaire taken by students in Last Day Events classes at Southern Adventist University the following data surfaced:

1. 49% worried about the present pre-advent judgment.
2. 56% were scared of last day events.
3. 41% would rather die than go through last day events.
4. 37% believed we gain entrance to heaven through Christ’s sacrifice plus our human works.
5. 50% were not sure if they would be saved if they died today.
6. 88% claimed they know Christ as a personal friend.

This is a stunning revelation, when you realize these students represent a cross section of Seventh-day Adventist youth, from around the States and other countries, studying a variety of majors. These may be among the final generation, yet do not want to be. There is something radically wrong here.

The Great Time of Trouble

When the Sunday law is enforced by a death decree (Rev 13:12-15) Seventh-day Adventists will be in the Great Time of

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Trouble. Daniel 12:1 says, “At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.”

This text speaks of two things: 1. The greatest time of trouble ever! 2. The greatest deliverance ever! These two need to be held together. If we study this verse in its biblical context in Daniel and Revelation, then there is no need for Seventh-day Adventists to be afraid of the great time of trouble.

The Greatest Time of Trouble Ever. This period begins with the close of human probation. It is a time when Christ’s mediation is finished in heaven (Dan 12:1): “the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor,” and the Spirit of God is withdrawn from the wicked world. It is a time when nation will rise against nation, and the whole world will be “in confusion.”¹

“Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old.

A single angel destroyed all the first-born of the Egyptians, and filled the land with mourning. . . The same destructive power exercised by holy angels when God commands, will be exercised by evil angels when He permits. There are forces now ready, and only waiting the divine permission, to spread desolation everywhere.”²

“The angel of mercy is folding her wings, preparing to step down from the throne and leave the world to the control of Satan.”³ Then “Satan has entire control of the finally impenitent.”⁴ It is a time when there is no goodness in the wicked. It is a time when “Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the Lord, but they will not find it” (Amos 8:12). It is a time when the whole world is wondering after and worshipping the

GULLEY: GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE TIME OF TROUBLE

beast (Rev 13:3-4). It is a time when America leads the rest of the nations to give homage to the papacy (Rev 13:11-12). It is the time when Satan is here on the planet pretending to be Christ.⁵ It is the time of Jacob's trouble, when a wrestling with God akin to Jacob's will be experienced (Gen 32:22-32). It is the time of the last seven plagues that will decimate and destroy (Rev 16:1-21). It is the time of Armageddon, the final preadvent battle in the great controversy, when Satan plans to annihilate Sabbathkeepers and become supreme ruler of the world, a dream he has had for millennia (Rev 16:12-16; 19:11-21).

It is the time when a death decree is issued to enforce Sabbathkeepers to conform or die (Rev 13:15). "Says the great deceiver. . . 'Our principle concern is to silence this sect of Sabbathkeepers. . . We will finally have a law to exterminate all who will not submit to our authority.'"⁶ "It is the purpose of Satan to cause them to be blotted from the earth in order that his supremacy of the world may not be disputed."⁷

This is the time when "many of all nations, and of all classes, high and low, rich and poor, black and white, will be cast into the most unjust and cruel bondage. The beloved of God pass weary days, bound in chains, shut in by prison bars, sentenced to be slain, some apparently left to die of starvation in dark and loathsome dungeons. No human ear is open to hear their moans; no human hand is ready to lend them help."⁸

It is the time when "Fearful sights of a supernatural character will soon be revealed in the heavens, in token of the power of miracle-working demons."⁹ It is the time when spirits of devils will go to the whole world, using miracles to deceive (Rev 16:12-16). It is the time when fire falls from heaven (false Mt. Carmel, 1 Kings 18:16-40) to deceive the world to worship of the papacy (Rev 13:13-14). These items listed above are numerous. No wonder Daniel 12:1 calls it the worst time of trouble ever! But these events are only one side of the

story. Daniel 7 begins to open up the other side of the great time of trouble.

The Preadvent Judgment and Implementation

Daniel 7: An Additional Insight. Perhaps some Seventh-day Adventists read about certain aspects of the great time of trouble and overlook the full picture of what will happen during that time. It is true that the whole world will be against Sabbathkeepers, but it is also true that God will be against the whole world. God will manifest this fact by bringing a far greater time of trouble upon the wicked than will be experienced by Sabbathkeepers. We need to see the judgments upon the wicked in all their stark reality in order to comprehend the care God will extend over His people during this period. This comparison will enable us to reject the idea that the time of trouble is all bad news for God's saints.

We begin by looking at Daniel 7. This chapter introduces the little horn for the first time in Scripture. Daniel 1-6 is history, followed by 7-12 as prophetic insights into last day events. The facts of history give a sneak preview of what is coming in the future. This is true in Revelation¹⁰ and in *The Great Controversy*.¹¹ God has used the same method in all three: to give insights into the future from the historical accounts.

The historical accounts of Daniel record two decrees about worship: the worship of the image on Dura's plain (Dan 3), and the worship of king Darius (Dan 6). Both worship decrees contained a death decree for non-compliance (Dan 3:6; 6:7). God's saints, the three Hebrew worthies and Daniel, were thrown into their great time of trouble, into a fiery furnace and a lion's den respectively.

But that was not the end of the stories. In both incidents these loyal worshipers of God were gloriously delivered (Dan 3:25-27; 6:21-23). Furthermore, those who conspired to enforce the false worship onto the three worthies and Daniel were themselves destroyed (Dan 3:22; 6:24). These two historical incidents are a

GULLEY: GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE TIME OF TROUBLE

powerful insight into the eschatological scenes of Daniel 7 and Revelation 16-19.

The preadvent Judgment is vital to the context of the great time of trouble. It forcefully shows that the great time of trouble is only bad news for the confederation of the wicked who oppose God's people with a Sunday law and a death decree. Three times the little horn is mentioned (Dan 7:8, 20, 25), and the little horn is mentioned (Dan 7:8, 20, 25), and each time the judgment is immediately mentioned (vss. 9-10, 21-22, 26). So the papacy, whom the whole world will worship (Rev 13:3-4), is itself under judgment. It is important to notice that the little horn is introduced in Scripture as a power that will be judged by God. Any control it may exercise over mankind in the end-time is fleeting, and is doomed to failure.

The first mention of the little horn is in verse 8. "This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully." Then immediately come the words, "As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. . . The court was seated, and the books were opened" (Dan 7:9-10). "Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire" (Dan 7:11).

The second reference is in verses 20-21. "As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom" (Dan 7:21).

The third reference is in verses 25-26. "He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him"

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

(Dan 7:25-27).

Some Seventh-day Adventists are fearful of the preadvent judgment, wondering what will happen when their name comes up. We saw that the students also were afraid in the survey referred to above. I have written on the preadvent judgment in greater detail elsewhere,¹² but for our purposes here, it is important to note that the preadvent judgment in Daniel 7 compares the verdict given to the little horn with the verdict given to God's people. This is the crucial comparison which dominates the chapter.

God's people are vindicated, delivered, and given the kingdom. The little horn is destroyed. Although it is true that the names of all who have ever professed to be followers of Christ will come up for review in the judgment, although it is true that the entire record of their lives will be looked into, it is essential to notice that Daniel 7 compares those who truly are Christ's followers with those who are only so in name. Two groups are contrasted: true Christians versus the counterfeit Christians. The comparison is clear—Christ's saints receive a good verdict, those espousing the papal position will not.

The reason for the preadvent judgment is to allow the onlooking universe to see that God is just in keeping some people out of heaven while allowing others entrance. The difference is simple. Acceptance or nonacceptance of Christ and His death. The first is the only way to gain entrance. God's saints are far more focused on Christ's work for them in their place than upon their own works, good or bad. They accept that a fitness for heaven is necessary. They believe that the forsaking of all sin is vital. But they cling to Christ as the only One who can make this possible.

By contrast, the papacy, by definition, is a system that refuses to accept Christ as the sole means of salvation. It depends upon its own works and is thus found wanting. The message of Daniel 7 is forceful. Any dependence upon human works, or over-preoccupation with one's own life, is papal, whether one is a Protestant, humanist or a Seventh-day Adventist. Could it be that some who are scared of the great time of trouble are overly preoccupied with themselves—their

GULLEY: GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE TIME OF TROUBLE

own safety, security—instead of focusing on Christ, the only One who can take them through? One thing is sure, the focus in the preadvent judgment affects one's focus about the great time of trouble.

Revelation 16-19: The Implementation of the Preadvent Judgment Verdict. We will focus on Revelation 16-18, leaving chapter 19 to the section on Armageddon. All the events of these chapters take place during the great time of trouble specified by Daniel (Dan 12:1). They give insight into what happens to the whole wicked world who war against Sabbathkeepers. What happens includes the seven last plagues (Rev 16) and the punishment of Babylon (Rev 17-18).

Plagues. The seven last plagues fall on the enemies of God's people, and not on God's people. Joseph instructed his family to settle in the region of Goshen during their stay in Egypt (Gen 45:10). In the last seven plagues that fell on Egypt God said, "I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarm of flies will be there, so that you will know that I, the Lord, am in this land. I will make a distinction between my people and your people" (Exod 8:22-23). In that time "Ruin and desolation marked the path of the destroying angel. The land of Goshen alone was spared."¹³

This Egyptian experience is a type of the coming plagues. While the seven last plagues implement the preadvent verdict against those opposing the saints, God will protect His own. "While the wicked are dying from hunger and pestilence, angels will shield the righteous, and supply their wants. To him that 'walketh righteously' is the promise: 'Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.'"¹⁴ This is why the final invitation to those in Babylon is, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues" (Rev 18:4).

Punishment of Babylon. The punishment of Babylon includes the plagues, and more. In Revelation 17 one of the plague angels shows the judgment (Gr. *krima*, punishment, vs. 1) which implements the judgment process of Daniel 7. The woman, Babylon the great, sits on

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

a scarlet beast, representing the false churches using the government. Babylon is “the mother of prostitutes” (Rev 17:5) because she has united with the kings of the earth (Rev 16:12-16; 17:2; this is global, cf. Rev 18:3) instead of uniting with Christ who is the “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev 19:16). The union of church and state is a wrong union. It is an adulterous union, because it denies the marriage of the church to Christ as the only lawful Bridegroom. This is what the Christian Coalition has not considered in its drive to control the houses of Congress.

This woman is “drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus” (Rev 17:6; cf. Rev 12:17). For in the probationary end-time, martyrs “had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands” (Rev 20:4; see Rev 13:12-17). But now the time has come when ten horns, or kings (Rev 17:12) “will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. . . The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth” (Rev 17:16-17). Thus the woman who rules over the kings of the world, the Babylonian conglomerate that hates God’s people, will not only receive plagues from God, but a devastating divorce and destruction from her illicit lovers.

Revelation 18 looks at both of these judgments upon Babylon, her plagues and destruction. “Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her (cf. “one hour” vss. 10, 17, 19, signifying a quick judgment) death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her” (Rev 18:8). Then the chapter links this double judgment to the way Babylon has oppressed the end-time saints. “Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you” (Rev 18:20). Then Revelation 19 records the response in heaven. “After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: ‘Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has

GULLEY: GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE TIME OF TROUBLE

condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants” (Rev 19:1-2).

Whereas the illicit union between church and kings has ended in utter destruction, the great multitude in heaven shout with a great roar, “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and the bride has made herself ready” (Rev 19:6-7).

This is Wedding Day

It should never be forgotten that the great time of trouble is a part of the wedding day which precedes the Bridegroom’s coming to receive His bride. What bridegroom worth his salt would not stand up for his bride, especially on her wedding day. Christ will do so magnificently. Christ’s bride is already sealed when she enters the great time of trouble (Rev 7:1-4). What is that seal? It is “a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved.”¹⁵ The bride of Christ is immovable. The bride can say with Paul, “I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:38-39). Christ, the Bridegroom, has promised His bride, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Heb 13:5), for “I will be with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:20).

A very close relationship between Christ and His bride will exist during the great time of trouble. Yes, they may be in prisons, but “angels will come to them in lonely cells, bringing light and peace from heaven. The prison will be as a palace, for the rich in faith dwell there, and the gloomy walls will be lighted up with heavenly light as when Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises at midnight in the Philippian dungeon.”¹⁶ In fact some events in the book of Acts will be repeated in last day events. God says, “Study carefully in the book of

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Acts the experiences of Paul and the other apostles, for God's people in our day must pass through similar experiences."¹⁷ Just as most of Acts follows after the first Pentecost (Acts 2), so final events come after the second Pentecost and the outpouring of the Latter Rain.

When we read that there will be no mediator in heaven, that is right. But it does not mean that Christ's bride will have to live alone without Him. For He will be with His bride through the Holy Spirit. When it says that the Spirit will be withdrawn from the world, this is true. But it is only from the wicked world that the Spirit is withdrawn. The Spirit is never withdrawn from Christ's bride. In fact, the Latter Rain, with unparalleled power, comes precisely to take the bride through all the final events. So, although the time of trouble is the worst ever, the power of the Holy Spirit is the greatest ever!

In fact, "It is impossible to give any idea of the experience of the people of God who shall be alive upon the earth when celestial glory and a repetition of the persecutions of the past are blended. They will walk in the light proceeding from the throne of God. By means of the angels there will be constant communications between heaven and earth. . . In the midst of the time of trouble that is coming—a time of trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—God's chosen people will stand unmoved. Satan and his host cannot destroy them, for angels that excel in strength will protect them."¹⁸

During the "time of Jacob's trouble" God's people can only cling to Christ, just as Jacob did. Sensing their great need, they cry to Him. "As the wrestling ones urge their petitions before God, the veil separating them from the unseen seems almost withdrawn. The heavens glow with the dawning of eternal day, and like the melody of angel songs, the words fall upon the ear, 'Stand fast to your allegiance. Help is coming.' Christ the almighty victor, holds out to His weary soldiers a crown of immortal glory; and His voice comes from the gates ajar, 'Lo, I am with you. Be not afraid. I am acquainted with all your sorrows; I have borne your griefs. You are not warring against untried enemies. I have fought the battle in your behalf, and in

GULLEY: GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE TIME OF TROUBLE

My name you are more than conquerors.’

The precious Saviour will send help just when we need it. The way to heaven is consecrated by His footprints. Every thorn that wounds our feet has wounded His. Every cross that we are called to bear He has borne before us. The Lord permits conflicts, to prepare the soul for peace. The time of trouble is a fearful ordeal for God’s people; but it is the time for every true believer to look up, and by faith he may see the bow of promise encircling him.”¹⁹

Looking up to their Bridegroom, what do they remember? He too faced a union of church and state. Just as crafty Caiphas said, “It is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish” (John 11:50).²⁰ So in the end-time it will be urged, “It is better for them (God's people) to suffer than for whole nations to be thrown into confusion and lawlessness.”²¹ They realize the parallel. Christ faced a death decree just as they do. . . . But there is a decided difference. He died in place of His bride, crying, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27:46). The bride does not die, and is not forsaken by Christ (Heb 13:5). This is, perhaps, best illustrated by the Battle of Armageddon.

The Battle of Armageddon

The Battle of Armageddon takes place at the end of the great time of trouble. It is prepared for during the sixth plague (Rev 16:12-16) and fought during the seventh plague (Rev 16:19). The fullest record of the battle is found in Revelation 19:11-21. Christ is pictured riding a white horse (Rev 19:11) with the armies of heaven riding white horses (Rev 19:14). “Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations” (Rev 19:15). He comes as King of Kings to smite the nations of the world confederated against Him and His followers. “Then I saw the beast (papacy, see Rev 13:1, 16:13) and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet (apostate

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Protestantism, see, Rev 13:11; 16:13)²² who had performed miraculous signs on his behalf (see Rev 13:12-14). With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh” (Rev 19:19-21).

It is in this battle that the types of Armageddon in Daniel are realized. Just as the three Hebrew worthies and Daniel were delivered, and those who had put them into the fiery furnace and lions’ den perished, so Christ’s end-time bride will be delivered and her enemies destroyed. This is the final outworking of the double verdict of the preadvent judgment of Daniel 7—destruction of the little horn and deliverance of God’s people.

Revelation gives two presentations of Christ’s coming for His bride in the Second Advent. In Revelation 14 He comes on a white cloud, and comes as a “son of man,” with a crown on His head. This crown is a *stephanos* in the Greek text, that is, a laurel wreath of victory worn by the winner of an Olympic game. Three angels are symbolically linked with Christ’s return. I call these, “the other three angels of Revelation 14.” The first three angels have a message (Rev 14:6-13). These other three angels have a mission (Rev 14:15-20).

Christ and an angel have a sickle. They come to implement the double verdict (deliverance/destruction) of the preadvent judgment. The first angel calls for Christ to take the sickle and reap (Rev 14:15). Christ reaps the harvest of the righteous (Rev 14:16). The second angel is introduced, the one who also has a sharp sickle (v. 17). The third angel calls “in a loud voice to him who has the sharp sickle, ‘Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine’” (Rev 14:18). “The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God’s wrath” (Rev 14:19).

So Christ is pictured as coming to deliver His people, and the

GULLEY: GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE TIME OF TROUBLE

angel is portrayed as coming to destroy the wicked. It is significant that Christ is not presented as destroying the wicked in this scene. Rather, He comes as the Son of Man, as a fellow human, with a laurel wreath reminiscent of His victory over sin to win His bride.

In stark contrast is Revelation 19. Christ comes on a white horse leading an army to make war (Rev 19:11). He has many diadems on His head, crowns worn only by royalty. Here Christ comes as King of Kings (Rev 19:16), and as such He comes to destroy the enemies of His bride.

Two Second Advent scenes. *Christ comes as a fellow human being who has been through the greatest time of trouble* that any human has, or will ever have to endure. He understands the experience of His people in their great time of trouble. He comes to take them home. *Christ also comes as God to defeat the world conglomerate moving to annihilate His bride.* This is the greatest rescue mission of all time, an experience that will be forever unforgettable. Christ comes to deliver His people and destroy their enemies. Christ actively implements the double verdict of the preadvent judgment at His Second Advent.

The Great Time of Trouble as Remembered by Christ's Bride

The good news of Daniel 12:1 is found in the great deliverance, and not in the greatest time of trouble ever. We have noted both the trouble and the deliverance, but how do we know that the deliverance far outweighs the trouble endured. It is true that the reward of being with Christ and in heaven forever does far outweigh any fleeting time of trouble. But the bottom line is, How do those going through the great time of trouble evaluate their experience? After all, their view is more authoritative than any other estimate.

The book of Revelation provides the answer. It depicts Christ with His end-time bride on Mount Zion (Rev 14:1). It is of interest that in the OT Mount Zion was considered a place of deliverance. For

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

example, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance” (Joel 2:32; cf. Isa 11:9-12; Mic 4:6-8). In the NT Mount Zion is in heaven. For example, “You have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God” (Heb 12:22). Thus, Christ’s end-time bride is pictured standing with Christ in heaven, either during the Millennium or in eternity. For, this bride will “follow the Lamb wherever he goes” (Rev 14:4). Whichever you choose, it is a long time after the great time of trouble. Yet, notice what the bride is doing. She sings “a new song before the throne” and “No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth” (Rev 14:3).

We are told that no one else can sing that song “for it is the song of their experience—an experience such as no other company have ever had.”²³ This is because it is a song about their experience during the great time of trouble. This song is recorded in Revelation 15. Notice the focus. “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed” (Rev 15:3-4). There is nothing said about the perils of the great time of trouble. The song concentrates solely upon God and His mighty deeds during the great time of trouble.

Now because this song is sung by God’s end-time people in the Millennium and beyond, it must tell us something about the experience of the great time of trouble. It tells us this: *If it’s worth singing about so long after it happened, it must be worth going through!* Surely the song rejoices in the deliverance part of Daniel 12:1, rather than the greatest time of trouble part. Looked at from the perspective of the deliverance, the time of trouble is worth going through. This is because of what Christ does for His bride during the great time of trouble, rather than for what His bride does for Him.

GULLEY: GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE TIME OF TROUBLE

The Final Exodus

The great time of trouble is likened to the Exodus from Egypt. The song of the end-time deliverance is called “the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb” (Rev 15:3). “The eye of God, looking down the ages, was fixed upon the crisis which His people are to meet, when earthly powers shall be arrayed against them. Like the captive exile, they will be in fear of death by starvation or by violence. But the Holy One who divided the Red Sea before Israel, will manifest His mighty power and turn their captivity.”²⁴

The great time of trouble can be likened to the Red Sea and the Egyptian army. The slaves from Egypt felt helpless when they stood in front of the Red Sea with the Egyptian army closing in behind them. But the preincarnate Christ was there with them.²⁵ The song of the psalmist said, “Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen. You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron” (Ps 77:19-20). “Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: ‘I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. . . . Your right hand, O Lord, was majestic in power. Your right hand, O Lord, shattered the enemy’” (Exod 15:1-2,6). Throughout the song there is no mention of the terrible trouble Israel went through. The deliverance far outweighed any fear and trouble at the Red Sea shore and in the passage through it.

So it will be in the future great time of trouble. Christ will open up a way through the final events and will bring His bride safely to the heavenly shore. Even now, those who have their eyes focused on Christ, and depend on Him alone, can sing in the words of Israel after their crossing, and apply it the great time of trouble. “In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling” (Exod 15:13). He says to His bride, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). After finding the lost sheep,

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

the Shepherd carries it all the way home (Luke 15:5-6). That's the final exodus. Whereas the woman rides the state and causes trouble for the saints (Rev 17:1-6), the saints are carried by Christ through this great time of trouble. That's worth singing about forever!

Endnotes

*Biblical citations are from the New International Version.

1 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 614; Id., *Day Star*, March 14, 1846, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 968.

2 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 614.

3 Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 250.

4 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 614.

5 Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, pp. 162-169. Although Satan comes before the close of probation, so that he can deceive if possible the very elect, he may also remain after the close of probation to goad on the wicked to destroy the saints in the death decree.

6 Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 255.

7 Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, *Ibid*.

8 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 626.

9 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 624.

10 The division of Revelation is made at the end of chapter 14 by Kenneth A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, (Worthington, OH: Ann Arbor, 1976), p. 52; and C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, (Boise, ID: Pacific Press), pp. 60-61. Both look at chapters 1-14 as history and 15-22 as last day events. I prefer to make the divide at Rev 11:19, as it looks into the most holy place, signifying a transfer from the historical section (first apartment) to last day events which take place during the second apartment ministry. Chapter 12 is the apex, joining both sections, as it gives an overview of the entire great controversy.

11 In her introduction to *The Great Controversy*, Ellen G. White says, "It is not so much the object of this book to present new truths concerning the struggles of former times, as to bring out facts and principles which have a bearing on coming events" (p. xii). The book is divided as follows: chapters 1-35 are history; 36-42 are final events.

12 Norman R. Gulley, "A Deeper Look at the Investigative Judgment," *Adventist Perspectives*, vol. 3, 1989, pp. 33-40; "Daniel's Pre-Advent Judgment in its Biblical Context," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, vol. 2 #2, Autumn 1991; pp. 35-66; "Focusing on Christ, Not Ourselves," *Ministry*, October 1994, pp. 28-30.

GULLEY: GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE TIME OF TROUBLE

- 13 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 269.
- 14 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 629; cf. *Id.*, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 256.
- 15 Ellen G. White, MS 173, 1902, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1161.
- 16 Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 266.
- 17 Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 148.
- 18 Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, pp. 266-267.
- 19 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 632-633.
- 20 Cf. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 539-540.
- 21 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 615.
- 22 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 588.
- 23 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 649.
- 24 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 634.
- 25 See Exod 14:18, Ps 114:7, Isa 63, Acts 7:30-37, 1 Cor 10:1-4.