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LIFT UP A BANNER AGAINST BABYLON!
DANIEL AND THE SECOND ANGEL'S MESSAGE

By **Félix H. Cortez**

I WILL GO: Proclaim the Three Angels' Messages
Annual Council, Devotional October 13, 2020, Silver Springs, MD

Bible reading: Jer 50:1–5.

Introduction

Good morning, my brothers and sisters. It is a great joy and privilege for me to share the word of God with you this morning. Let's pray...

Dear God, as we study the life and ministry of Daniel and reflect on our own calling as a church, we ask your guidance and blessing. Amen.

One hundred and seventy–seven years ago, on July 26, 1843, Charles Fitch preached what became one of the most famous and influential Millerite sermons, “Come Out of Her, My People,”¹ where he invited Millerite believers to leave behind churches that had become corrupted in their beliefs and actions. William Miller had never intended for his followers to leave their churches; however, the assertiveness of the message that Jesus's second coming was imminent, and the popular success it enjoyed, had cornered the protestant churches into a boundary crisis. Unwilling to embrace the Advent message wholeheartedly, but also unable to prevent its dissemination, protestant churches increasingly opposed the Millerite proclamation. First, religious and non-religious publications ridiculed Millerites. Then, churches closed their pulpits to Millerite preachers. Finally, prohibitions and disfellowships were instituted against Millerite believers. When the Protestant churches finally made a stand, Millerite Adventist

¹ See George R. Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1993), 141–158.

believers faced a defining moment. It was at this momentous juncture that the message of the second angel of Revelation 14, “Babylon has fallen,” was first preached.²

“The message of the second angel [of Revelation, however,] did not reach its complete fulfillment in 1844.”³ The churches experienced then a moral fall, but that fall was neither complete nor global.⁴ The Book of Revelation tells us that the apostasy will reach its culmination at the end of time, when the power of the preaching of the gospel will illuminate the earth with its glory, and the story of this planet will come to its final juncture. Adventists believe that it is a central aspect of our mission to preach this message to the world. With this in mind, I want to suggest to you today, that the life and ministry of Daniel holds important lessons that we need to learn. Daniel fearlessly and powerfully proclaimed that Babylon would fall, in Babylon itself, in the height of its splendor, and to the greatest of its rulers. We have been called to do the same.

Daniel did not perform powerful miracles as Elijah did, or preach powerful evangelistic sermons as Peter did. Nevertheless, his faithful and wise life and ministry brought kings and subjects alike to know and trust the God of Israel. If the conversion of Paul, chief of sinners,⁵ is the greatest conversion in the NT, the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon and epitome of Lucifer’s pride,⁶ is, perhaps, the greatest evidence of God’s power to transform people. Let me suggest four lessons we can learn from the life and ministry of Daniel.

² EGW, *Great Controversy*, 389.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ 1 Tim 1:15.

⁶ Merodach Baladan, a “wily, stubborn, and arrogant” leader (John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, WBC 24 [Dallas: Word, 1985], 204), was the King of Babylon when Isa 14 was written. Nevertheless, the strength of this kingdom and the pride of its king reached its apex during the rule of Nebuchadnezzar. According to the prophecy, however, the true king of Babylon was Lucifer (Isa 14:4–21).

First Lesson: Effective Witnesses Are Faithful

God's most powerful witnesses are forged in the crucible of the crises of God's people.

Daniel was born probably around 622 BC, the most critical moment in the history of Israel in the OT. One hundred years earlier,⁷ the tribes of the north had been taken captive by Assyria and dispersed among the nations because of their unfaithfulness. Judah barely escaped destruction then, but a few years later sunk into terrible apostasy during the reign of Manasseh.⁸

God, however, did not abandon his people. Approximately seven years before Daniel's birth, the young king Josiah began a work of reform in Israel trying to purge idolatry from the land of Israel. Around two years later, God called Jeremiah, a young Levite from the priestly line, to a prophetic ministry that would last more than 40 years.⁹ Daniel was born a few years later, about the moment when the book of the law was found. This finding marked a critical moment in the life of the nation. The book was the Book of Deuteronomy where the covenant of God with the nation was recorded and its blessings and curses described. The document promised that if Israel would "obey the voice of the LORD ... keeping his commandments and his statutes,"¹⁰ He would set them "high above all the nations of the earth" and multiple and abundant blessings would come upon them and overtake them.¹¹ If the nation did not obey, however, curses and calamities would come upon them and overtake them.¹² It was at this

⁷ 723/722 BC

⁸ His reign was from around 697 to around 642 BC. SDABD, 703. Manasseh's apostasy resulted in God's decree that the temple and Jerusalem would be destroyed and Judah taken captive to Babylon.

⁹ Jer 1:1-7.

¹⁰ Deut 27:9-10.

¹¹ Deut 28:1-2.

¹² Deuteronomy also described in graphic detail their defeat under foreign nations, the barbarity of the siege and fall of their cities, the bitter subjugation and servitude to other nations and their dispersion, Deut 27:15-68.

moment, when the way of life and the way of death had been clearly set before the nation, that Daniel was born.¹³

Daniel was a Jewish prince, probably a direct descendant of Zedekiah,¹⁴ the last king of Judah. Born into the elite of the nation, Daniel grew up in the midst of a national conversation about the contents and meaning of the book of Deuteronomy and in the context of the powerful messages of Jeremiah, Zephaniah (another member of the royal family¹⁵), and Habakkuk. Daniel must have been around 13 years old when he heard Jeremiah's famous temple sermon warning the nation that unless God's calls for repentance were heard and Israel returned to the covenant with Him, Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed and the land devastated.¹⁶ Four years later, Jerusalem was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel was hand-picked to be taken captive to Babylon.

Daniel came to his personal crisis at the same age and in the same circumstances of Joseph, many centuries earlier. Similarly, as he journeyed in bondage through the desert to the land of his captivity, Daniel "resolved in his heart" to be faithful to God despite the circumstances. Molded, beaten, and tempered in the furnace of affliction, Daniel became a powerful witness for God.¹⁷

¹³ Daniel was between 16 and 18 years of age in 605 bc., when he was taken to Babylon; thus, he was probably born between 623–621, Jacques Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel: Wisdom and Dreams of a Jewish Prince in Exile* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000), 23 n. 2. Josiah was born ca. 648 and ascended to the throne around 641. Around 628, the twelfth year of his reign, he began religious reforms. In 622, the book of the law (Deuteronomy) was found. Josiah was killed in battle in 609 BC. Jeremiah began his ministry around 627/6 BC and Ezekiel in 593/592 BC.

¹⁴ Doukhan, 16; Josephus *Ant.* 10.186.

¹⁵ The Hezekiah mentioned in Zeph 1:1 was probably king Hezekiah.

¹⁶ Daniel must have been around 13 years of age by this time. A few months earlier Josiah had died at the hands of Neco, the Egyptian pharaoh, 2 Kings 23:28–30; 2 Chron 35:20–27. His death was probably unsettling for the faith of Daniel, who must have wondered why a faithful king had been defeated and killed in battle.

¹⁷ Around the same age, Jesus, Mary, and Esther also decided to be faithful to God despite the consequences.

Daniel's ministry came at the lowest point of Israel's history and at a painful moment of his personal experience. Dan 1:1–2 says that Daniel was taken to the “land of Shinar,” which is Babylon. In the Bible, Babylon has always represented the forces of evil, the head of the rebellion against God. The Tower of Babel was erected there and the prophet Isaiah had identified Satan as the true king of Babylon.¹⁸ God had promised Israel that they would be the head of all nations,¹⁹ that Zion or Jerusalem would be the highest of the mountains of the earth, that all the nations would flow to it to learn from God,²⁰ and that the Davidic king would be the “firstborn of the kings of the earth.”²¹ Now, however, after defeating and subjugating Jerusalem, Babylon had replaced Israel as the “head of the nations.” The nations now flowed to the Etemenanki, a ziggurat or artificial mountain with a temple in the top, to learn about Babylon's ways. Babylon had replaced Zion and Nebuchadnezzar had become the “firstborn of the kings of the earth”. The forces of evil were ascendant and triumphant.

The national tragedy was complicated with a personal one. In addition to captivity and exile, it is possible that Daniel was castrated.²² Think about it for a moment. What could a captive from a defeated and despised nation, without control over the food he ate, the liquids he drank, whose name was changed without his permission and who was probably humiliated in his body say *or testify* about the power, love, and promises of God? Our God, however, does not call us to witness for him when it makes sense in terms of our personal experience but when He needs it. He does not demand, however, that we are victorious or convincing or even credible. He only asks us that we are faithful. What does not make any sense from a human point of view,

¹⁸ Isa 14:4–21.

¹⁹ Deut 28:1–2.

²⁰ Isa 2:1–5.

²¹ Ps 89:27.

²² Doukhan 16. For the opposite opinion, see Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel* (NAC 18; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 59.

however, makes perfect sense for God. When our strengths have been overthrown, our wisest arguments silenced, and our confidence has been replaced with self-doubt, when the only thing left is “raw faith”; then, God’s “raw power” can be unleashed. That is what God did for Daniel.

**Lesson 2: Effective Witnesses Win more than arguments,
they Win Favor**

After arriving at Babylon, Daniel and his friends were separated to be high officials in the court of the king. The king gave them all that was needed for them to succeed. In fact, the king even shared with them food from his own table. The problem was that Daniel and his friends could not be sure that the food and drink offered graciously by the king had been chosen and prepared according to the law of God. There was as well another problem. This food had been offered to pagan deities and partaking of them would have been regarded “as offering homage to the gods of Babylon.”²³ Thus, Daniel’s decision “not to defile himself with the king’s food”²⁴ had both physical and spiritual implications.²⁵ But, how do you refuse a gift graciously given without insulting the giver? Were issues of food important to the extent of risking offending the king?²⁶ “In the life of the true Christian[, however,] there are no nonessentials; in the sight of Omnipotence every duty is important.”²⁷ Therefore, Daniel decided to request a vegetarian diet.

²³ PK 481.

²⁴ Dan 1:8.

²⁵ SDABC 4:760;

²⁶ The issue was complicated with the fact that none of the other captives seemed to have raised the issue.

²⁷ PK 488. There is a correlation between our faithfulness to small duties and our faithfulness to larger responsibilities, PK 487.

Daniel's behavior towards the king's official deserves careful reflection. He is humble. He requests "to be allowed" not to defile himself. I wish I was able to hear that request and the rationale for it.²⁸ His goal was not to win an argument but an ally and that is what he got.

Daniel's example shows what the true nature of a righteous and wise person is.²⁹ We often associate righteousness and wisdom with separation and isolation. We tend to think of wise men as living in the world of books absorbed in thought and righteous people absorbed in prayer as if wisdom and righteousness suffered from extensive contact with the mundane. But Daniel was not an ascetic. Daniel was handsome.³⁰ He did not have a stoop. His food and physical regime did not make him emaciated.³¹ He had an erect form, a firm, elastic step, a fair countenance, untainted breath, and undimmed senses.³² Intellectually he did not have a match. Daniel was not a spiritual nerd or a religious bore. The Bible says that he was "skillful in *all wisdom*."³³ His instruction required the learning of three languages and several disciplines. He learned Sumerian, the traditional sacred tongue of the Chaldeans; Akkadian, the national dialect; and, Aramaic, the international language of diplomacy and business.³⁴ His education prepared him to be guardian "of the sacred traditional lore developed and preserved in Mesopotamia over centuries, covering natural history, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, myth, and chronicle."³⁵ It

²⁸ It seems clear that Daniel's explanation for his request did not come through as preposterous or arrogant. Ashpenaz did not feel by Daniel's request and explanation that Daniel dismissed him and his lord, the king, in his mind as ignorant for the food they ate or the gods they worshiped. Daniel was also sensitive of the difficult position in which he was putting Ashpenaz and suggested a course of action that would protect him.

²⁹ Ezekiel considered Daniel a paragon of wisdom, Eze 28:3.

³⁰ Dan 1:4.

³¹ but "better in appearance and fatter in flesh," Dan 1:15.

³² PK 485.

³³ Dan 1:4, emphasis mine.

³⁴ Doukhan, 17.

³⁵ John E. Goldingay, *Daniel* (WBC 30; Dallas: Word, 1989), 16. This was no small task. Babylonians were master astronomers and accomplished mathematicians.

is true that Daniel may have disagreed with much of the traditional lore and myths of the Babylonian wisdom but he became the chief of the experts in the kingdom in all such matters.

Daniel was socially adept as well. The Bible says that Daniel was “competent to stand in the king’s palace.”³⁶ This refers to the “proper manner, poise, confidence, and knowledge of social proprieties” that Daniel had, which habilitated him to serve at the royal court.³⁷ As holy and smart as Daniel was, he knew how to care for his body, dress well, enjoy a good meal, share a good laugh, and make people comfortable. Daniel showed us that physical and social appeal do not clash with smarts and holiness.³⁸

Lesson Three: Effective Witnesses Are Loyal Team Members

As great and talented as Daniel was, he was not a one-man force for God. At that crucial time, in a frantic and powerful effort to save the nation from ruin, God did not call one man but at least five. Zephaniah and Jeremiah warned the people of God in the land of Israel and invited them to repent and submit to God. Their ministry targeted especially the unfaithful among the Israelites. Habakkuk, on the other hand, spoke mainly to the faithful in the land of Israel. He brought comfort and a sense that God was in control even in the midst of tragedy. Ezekiel spoke to Israelites who were in captivity in Babylon providing very important guidance and hope. And Daniel spoke to the court and kings of Babylon and Media and Persia.

It is important to note as well, that they collaborated with each other. Daniel studied with care and reflected on the prophecies of Jeremiah.³⁹ Ezekiel considered carefully the life and

³⁶ Dan 1:5.

³⁷ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel* (NAC 18; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 61.

³⁸ The best testimony is that which wins favor without compromising the integrity of its message.

³⁹ Dan 9:2; cf. Jer 25:11–12; 29:10.

example of Daniel and used it as an example of righteousness and wisdom.⁴⁰ Powerful witnesses are team players that know their place and their function in God's plan and that support each other.

I wonder, however, whether we would have trusted Daniel to be part of our team today. Daniel did not dress with the prophet's cloak and the leather girdle around his waist like Elijah and John the Baptist did.⁴¹ He worked for the Babylonian empire and was a chief adviser to the king of Babylon, a type of Lucifer. He was an expert in the traditional myths and lore of the Babylonian religion, including the myths about Tammuz, which were condemned by Ezekiel as one of the main reasons for the apostasy of Jerusalem and its forthcoming destruction.⁴²

The fear of Satan's attacks against the church may tempt us to develop a siege mentality and to retreat into isolation. Conceiving the church as a fortress, we may unwittingly position ourselves as bastions whose mission in life is to identify and shoot down any possible enemy infiltration. We may even consider a virtue to be suspicious of persons who read, meet, and dialogue with other churches. The problem is that in our attempt to weed out the enemy from our midst, we may uproot God's instruments from His team. This is what the Pharisees did in the time of Jesus, the party of the circumcision in Acts 15 and Galatians, and the elders of the church in Acts 21.

The fear that drives us into isolation and suspicion does not come from God. Darkness may be great, but a light that shines, even if weak, will always defeat darkness. The grain of salt may be little, but it will not lose its flavor. The light and the salt, however, cannot withdraw into isolation but must shine and mix. We need to be careful, then, not to second-guess and doubt

⁴⁰ Eze 14:14, 20; 28:3. Ezekiel was a contemporary of Daniel, probably about his same age, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, 353.

⁴¹ 2 Kings 1:8; 2:13, 14; Matt 3:4; 11:8; Mark 1:6; Luke 7:25.

⁴² Eze 8:14.

God’s call to others who, like Daniel, have been equipped with different skills and serve in different environments than we do. It takes a diverse team to reach “every nation and tribe and language and people.” God is the one who chooses the team and he expects us not simply to tolerate His choices, but to embrace one another, just like Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and Daniel did.

Lesson Four: Effective witnesses share a pure gospel

Essential to the power of Babylon was its gospel. Probably, the most paradigmatic expression of this gospel was the *Enuma Elish*, an epic poem that set forth the foundational narrative myth of Babylon.⁴³ The purpose of the *Enuma Elish* was to spread the knowledge of the greatness of Marduk as the king of all the gods and of Babylon as the political and religious center of the universe.⁴⁴ It was a very popular composition that was recited every year on the 4th day of Nisan, during the New Year’s festival, and, possibly, on the 4th day of every month. It was a gospel of Babylonian exceptionalism and the purpose of Nebuchadnezzar’s rule was to make Babylon great and to keep it that way.⁴⁵

Nebuchadnezzar backed up the Babylonian gospel with great military and architectural feats. Babylon was indeed exceptional. The world of mathematics and astronomy owes much to

⁴³ According to this poem, there had been a war between the gods in which Marduk defeated Tiamat, the sea, and the sea monsters it had created. Then, Marduk split the body of Tiamat in two and created the heavens and the earth. He created the celestial bodies and constellations assigning them their courses. He formed rivers, and mountains, and created humankind to serve the gods. Finally, he built temples for the deities but built his own temple in Babylon, the awe-inspiring Esagila, which became the political and religious center of the universe, Beate Pongratz-Leitzen, “Enuma Elish,” *NIDB* 2:267. For the latest translation of the *Enuma Elish*, see “Epic of Creation,” trans. Benjamin R. Foster (*COS* 1.111: 390–402).

⁴⁴ W. G. Lambert, “Enuma Elish,” *ABD* 2:526–528. The *Enuma Elish* had been probably composed five centuries before when Nebuchadnezzar I restored the statue of Marduk, which had been taken to Elam, back to Babylon, in the 12th century B.C. J. J. M. Roberts, “Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadrezzar,” *NIDB* 4:245.

⁴⁵ This is evidenced in Nebuchadnezzar making a statue all of gold, in contradiction of his dream and Daniel’s interpretation (Dan 2). Nebuchadnezzar’s rule was the height of the neo-Babylonian empire. Babylon had raised to prominence first during the rule of Hammurabi in the 18th century, and later in the time of Nebuchadnezzar I (12th century) when the statue of Marduk was restored from Elam to Babylon, D. J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 43–44; Joan Oates, *Babylon, Ancient Peoples and Places* 94 (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 43–44.

the Babylonians.⁴⁶ They used the Pythagoras Theorem many centuries before it was formulated by the Greeks. They also used from the beginning of the 3rd millennium an artificial stone, which is considered the forerunner of concrete, to build their ziggurats and temples.⁴⁷ Nebuchadnezzar greatly fortified the city and built the hanging gardens. He also finished the Etemenanki,⁴⁸ the architectural jewel of the Esagila,⁴⁹ a great ziggurat, 91 meters on each side and 91 meters high, with a temple glazed in blue at the top to rival the heavens.⁵⁰ Those who have been able to see the magnificent remains of the Ishtar Gate, with its glazed bricks, in the Pergamon Museum of Berlin, may have an idea of how impressive and breathtaking must have been for Daniel to pass through those walls into the largest and most splendid city in the world at the time.

The problem of Babylon's gospel, however, was not that it was completely false but that it was something worse, a corrupted truth. God himself compared Nebuchadnezzar and his rule to a large tree that dominated the earth. God reminded Nebuchadnezzar, however, what the origin and purpose of the dominion given to him was. He was to give food and protection to all living creatures.⁵¹ But Nebuchadnezzar had corrupted God's gift into a product of his greatness for the glory of his majesty.⁵² Thus, Daniel pleaded with the king with a message of social justice that was practical, direct, and unmistakable: "Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the

⁴⁶ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "The Achievements of Ancient Mesopotamia."

⁴⁷ The secret of this stone, however, was lost in antiquity, *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "The Achievements of Ancient Mesopotamia." On Babylonian science, knowledge, and legacy, see H. W. F. Saggs, *The Greatness that Was Babylon: A Sketch of the Ancient Civilization of the Tigris Euphrates Valley* (New York: Mentor, 1962), 420–474.

⁴⁸ Which means, "the house that is the foundation of heaven and earth", Oates, 157.

⁴⁹ The dwelling place of Marduk, Oates, 156,

⁵⁰ For a description, see Wiseman, 68–73. Nebuchadnezzar, actually rebuilt both the Esagila and the Etemenanki, Oates, 157–158; *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Babylon." The tremendous wealth of the Esagila was recorded by Herodotus in the 5th century BC, Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.192–200; *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Esagila."

⁵¹ Dan 4:12.

⁵² Dan 4:30.

oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.”⁵³ You see, Daniel had not been blinded by the glory of Babylon, he rejected its religion and predicted its downfall; yet, he loved the Babylonians and did everything in his power to prevent, or at least delay, its ruin.⁵⁴

Secular gospels are metanarratives of great, insidious power. They provide the hermeneutical framework through which individuals understand the world in which they live and provide the bases upon which they make decisions.⁵⁵ In his book, *Moral Believing Animals*, the sociologist Christian Smith describes briefly what the modern metanarratives, or what I call secular gospels, are.⁵⁶ Let me introduce you to a couple of them; probably the most common and influential, at least at this time and in this part of the world.

There is the *Capitalist Prosperity Narrative* that relates how enterprising men created in the 18th century an economic and political system in which private individuals control the trade and industry of a nation, rather than the state. This liberation from communalism, slavery, feudalism and, more recently, socialism and communism, has made possible the great wealth, technological advancement, and social mobility that we experience today and, to a large extent,

⁵³ Dan 4:27.

⁵⁴ Daniel probably wrote the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s visions and his messages to the king with the purpose that others beyond the king and the court could read them. In fact, it is possible that the prophecy of Daniel 7 was perceived by his Babylonian audience as a critique and corrective of the Enuma Elish. For the points of contact between Dan 7 and the Enuma Elish and other ancient myths, see John Goldingay, *Daniel*, WBC 30 (Dallas, Word, 1989), 151–53, 165; John J. Collins and Adela Yarbro Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, *Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 280–286, 294; Sung Ik Kim, “Missiological Perspectives in the Book of Daniel,” *Message, Mission, and Unity of the Church*, ed. Angel Manuel Rodríguez, *Biblical Research Institute Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology 2* (Silver Springs, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013), 123–124.

⁵⁵ Metanarratives are similar to spells from which it is difficult to break free. In the world of magic, the only thing that is able to break a spell is with a more powerful spell. That is true of the gospel as well. The only way to break the power of the secular gospels, is with the greater power of the gospel of the kingdom of God. See Alister E. McGrath, *Narrative Apologetics: Sharing the Relevance, Joy, and Wonder of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), chap. 5 “Strategies and Criteria for Narrative Apologetics.”

⁵⁶ Christian Smith, *Moral Believing Animals: Human Personhood and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 63–94.

its peace. Thus, this movement preaches the gospel of property rights, limited government, the profit incentive, and the free market as the solution to the problems of humanity.

There is also the *Scientific Enlightenment Narrative* that relates how a few inventive men endeavored to better understand the natural world around us through objective observation, empirical facts, and rational analysis, liberating humanity from the darkness of ignorance, tradition, fear, and superstition. Scientific progress has made possible to transform nature and ourselves, fortify health, and relieve suffering. This movement preaches the gospel of objective observation, empirical facts, and rational analysis as the way that could lead humanity to well-being and eternal life.

We could speak also about the *Progressive Socialism Narrative* that preaches the gospel of the abolition of private property, the socialization of production, and the distribution of goods not according to buying power but according to need as the way to a society of fraternity, justice, and equality.

The power of these secular gospels resides in the fact that they are backed up with wonderful and incredible feats of human achievement. More importantly, their insidious power resides in the fact that they are more than a mix of truth and error, they are corrupted truths. The wine that Babylon has given the world to drink was originally the pure blood of the grape.⁵⁷ The *Capitalist Prosperity Narrative*, for example, is built upon the biblical principle that God created

⁵⁷ Jeremiah describes Babylon as a cup of wine that intoxicates all nations of the earth, Jer 51:7; cf. Jer 25:12–29; 51:39. I consider Babylon in the time of the end a confederation of the forces of evil that fight against God (Ranko, *Revelation*, 457). This confederation involves not only religious entities but also secular ones. Thus, Babylon is also described as Sodom and Egypt in Rev 11:8 (Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 361). Babylon “represents all human attempts to provide the way of salvation, all those plans and programs that, because they are built alone on human reason and devices, attempt to frustrate the divine plan for the world” (William G. Johnsson, “The Saints’ End-Time Victory Over the Forces of Evil,” in Symposium on Revelation—Book 2, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 7 [Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992], 35).

human beings free to think and do⁵⁸ and to enjoy the benefits of their efforts. Jesus died to regain that freedom and is creating a new world where his children “shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.”⁵⁹ The *Capitalist Prosperity Narrative* falls, however, when it forgets that the ability to think and do comes from God and was given with the purpose of service and protection of others.⁶⁰ Thus, the Profit principle, basic for the capitalist system, is corrupted when, forgetting the origin and purpose of creation, becomes Greed.⁶¹

The *Progressive Socialism Narrative* falls in the opposite way when it corrupts the biblical principle of equality and justice by forgetting that God made human beings free and that by smothering personal freedom and responsibility it becomes an oppressive system.

Similarly, the *scientific Enlightenment Narrative* is built on the biblical principle that God created human beings with inquiring minds, with the ability to think and understand nature in order to rule it or manage it. The *scientific Enlightenment Narrative* falls, however, when it forgets that both nature itself and our ability to enquire have their origin in God. Thus, the principles of observation and rational analysis are corrupted when they are set up as judges of those things that cannot be observed or explained and, therefore, deny the creation event and the Creator himself.⁶²

The power of the secular gospels is that they appeal to fallen human nature. The wine of Babylon is greatly intoxicating because it caters to human fallen desires under the cloak of truth

⁵⁸ “Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the creator—individuality, the power to think and to do,” Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 17.

⁵⁹ Isa 65:21.

⁶⁰ “The law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven,” Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 19. The Hebrew original word for “work,” “tend,” or “cultivate” in Gen 2:15 is ‘ābad which means to “serve.”

⁶¹ Thus, the *Capitalist Prosperity Narrative* leads to oppression and destruction when the only thing that matters is the short-term bottom-line, regardless of its later effect on others, the social fabric, or the environment.

⁶² Postulating, then, that faith and science are mutually exclusive. The negation of the creation event and the Creator deprives science from the only stable basis to define right and wrong and thus science becomes vulnerable to be used as a tool for oppression.

and legitimacy. They corrupt the truths of God by disconnecting them from their origin and purpose making possible for human beings to become the measure, origin, and purpose of all things, that is to say, to sit in the throne of their life and universe as gods. And that is why all secular, humanistic gospels eventually fail. Secular, humanistic gospels fail because they position human beings at the center, but human beings are corrupted themselves. And human corruption leads to oppression.⁶³

Conclusion

Thus, we, as a movement, have been called to a prophetic ministry at this momentous final juncture in the history of the world.⁶⁴ God needs Jeremiahs, Habakkuks, and Ezekiels to warn his people against the fermented wine of Babylon and against injustice and oppression that may be in their midst. Modern Jeremiahs, Habakkuks, and Ezekiels need to disabuse the people of God from the secret ways in which it may still cherish Babylon's gospel.

But God also needs Daniels, who at the height of Babylon's power, will raise a banner to proclaim to Babylon herself that her gospel is bankrupt, that she has engaged in conflict with the Lord.⁶⁵ But even more than that, at this moment, when the judgment on the secular gods is approaching, God needs this movement to embody the fierce faithfulness and practical wisdom of Daniel. Therefore, we need to have the clarity of Daniel's understanding of the gospel and his team spirit so that we may be one.⁶⁶ We are not Mexican Adventists, or American Adventists, or

⁶³ Therefore, capitalism may lead into obscene disparities between the rich and the poor, and into financial crises, like that of 2008, that endanger the global economy. Likewise, science has facilitated the horrors of the holocaust. This is true as well of the *American Experiment Narrative*, the *Militant Islamic Resurgence Narrative*, the *Expressive Romantic Narrative*, and any other humanistic metanarrative there is.

⁶⁴ And so, God bids his people to exhort to Babylon inhabitants that they need to remember their *origin* and *purpose*, that they need to "worship him, who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water," and to fear him and give him glory because the hour of his judgment has come (Rev 14:6-7).

⁶⁵ Jer 50:24.

⁶⁶ Jesus's desire for the church was "that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they may also be in us" (John 17:21).

African, or capitalist, or Socialist Adventists. We are simply Seventh-day Adventist Christians. Our creed is the Bible, wherever it may lead, and our citizenship is in heaven. Nothing more, nothing less. We need to climb down from any acquired identities and lay them down at the feet of Jesus and His gospel.

But above all, we need Daniel's deep love for those who live in Babylon, so that we may plead with them with a message that does not remain in the realm of religious and theological ideas but a message of righteousness and justice that is clear, practical, and unmistakable: "break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity" (Dan 4:27).⁶⁷

⁶⁷ "The power exercised by every ruler on the earth is Heaven-imparted; and upon his use of the power thus bestowed, his success depends. To each the word of the divine Watcher is, 'I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me.' (Isaiah 45:5). And to each the words spoken to Nebuchadnezzar of old are the lesson of life: 'Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility.'" (Daniel 4:27). EGW, *Ed.* 174.2.

"In the word of God only is this clearly set forth. Here it is shown that the strength of nations, as of individuals, is not found in the opportunities or facilities that appear to make them invincible; it is not found in their boasted greatness. It is measured by the fidelity with which they fulfill God's purpose." EGW, *Ed.* 175.2

"Every nation that has come upon the stage of action has been permitted to occupy its place on the earth, that it might be seen whether it would fulfill the purpose of 'the Watcher and the Holy One.'" EGW, *Ed.* 176.7.