

10. Rome and Antiochus

Biblical material: Isa. 55:11; Matt. 13:10-13; Luke 2:1; Luke 21:20, 21; John 11:48; John 16:12; 2 Pet. 1:19.

Quotes:

- The truth is always exciting. Speak it, then. Life is dull without it. *Pearl S. Buck*
- Truth will always be truth, regardless of lack of understanding, disbelief or ignorance. *W. Clement Stone*
- Those who know the truth are not equal to those who love it. *Confucius*
- All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident. *Arthur Schopenhauer*
- Truth is so rare that it is delightful to tell it. *Emily Dickinson*

Questions

Why is this important? Does it affect our every day life? How do these concepts affect our understanding of truth, especially relevant truth? Is it disturbing to realize that the majority of others think differently? How do concepts of truth affect our understanding about God and his nature? How does this fit into the great controversy model?

Discussion

Much of this lesson centers on understanding of truth. For example:

“This week we’ll continue to look at more Bible texts that will help solidify us in our understanding of this key teaching [the sanctuary], which, when properly understood, reveals to us in grander light the wonderful saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in light of what He has done for us at the Cross and is doing for us now in heaven.” (Sab. pm lesson) One immediate comment might be, “But what about great controversy?”

“God doesn’t reveal all truth to all people at once. Light is often given in a progressive manner; more and more truth unfolds in accordance with God’s perfect timetable.” (Tuesday’s lesson).

The information about the Antiochus interpretation is spelled out in the lesson and does not need to be belabored. Much of the emphasis on this interpretation comes from the insistence of scholars who do not believe in prediction. For this reason they are forced to believe in a late date for the book of Daniel. However this perspective surely produces more problems than it solves for those who believe in the inspiration of the Bible. How is it possible to accept a book that is basically “fictional” in the canon of Holy Scripture? If the book really was written after the event by an unknown author who passes his writing off as that of Daniel, what we are reading are lies. How does that square with inspiration? It is interesting to note that Ellen White never felt it necessary to deal with this topic, and the word “Antiochus” never occurs in her writings.

However the whole concept of the sanctuary needs far greater attention. The “defilement” of the sanctuary (pig’s blood in the earthly sanctuary by Antiochus) is hardly significant compared to the way in which God and his name in his sanctuary has been defiled by the charges and malign accusations of the Devil. Add to this our misrepresentations and evil acts, and the

whole great controversy perspective is the only way to rightly understand the symbolic language of the sanctuary.

Even in our sanctuary message we have at times misrepresented God as if the members of the Godhead are set in opposition. It is not a question of a gracious God pleading with a hostile God to be kind to us. The true sanctuary message is that all are working together to save us and to answer all the charges of the great controversy.

Comment

“What do we have to bring to God? How shall we approach Him? And Micah says, “You know well enough, man, what is good. For what does the Lord require from you, but to” bring the right blood? What should we think about that? Is that what He wants? “What does the Lord require from you, but to be just, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God?” And if the blood of Christ does not bring that about in us, it won’t help us to offer the blood of Jesus to the Father. It isn’t that He has been turning us down because we’ve been bringing the wrong blood. Now we’re bringing the right blood. He says, “Good, that’s what I’ve been waiting for; you can come in.” No, it’s new hearts, right spirits, humility, integrity. All these qualities that all of these Old Testament Prophets mention, let alone the Sermon on the Mount, and I find it in Romans, Galatians and everywhere else...

“Blood doesn’t save. Not even the blood of Jesus saves. Jesus saves, and it cost His death to clarify everything, to meet Satan’s charges, to win us back to humility and trust. And if it has won us back to repentance and faith, God will save all who trust Him.” A. *Graham Maxwell, Tape ‘Leviticus’ (Riverside), The Picture of God in All 66*

Ellen White Comments

In patriarchal times the sacrificial offerings connected with divine worship constituted a perpetual reminder of the coming of a Saviour, and thus it was with the entire ritual of the sanctuary services throughout Israel’s history. In the ministration of the tabernacle, and of the Temple that afterward took its place, the people were taught each day, by means of types and shadows, the great truths relative to the advent of Christ as Redeemer, Priest, and King; and once each year their minds were carried forward to the closing events of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, the final purification of the universe from sin and sinners. {LHU 26}

The warning was not heeded by the Jewish people. They forgot God, and lost sight of their high privilege as His representatives. The blessings they had received brought no blessing to the world. All their advantages were appropriated for their own glorification. They robbed God of the service He required of them, and they robbed their fellow men of religious guidance and a holy example. Like the inhabitants of the antediluvian world, they followed out every imagination of their evil hearts. Thus they made sacred things appear a farce, saying, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these” (Jer. 7:4), while at the same time they were misrepresenting God’s character, dishonoring His name, and polluting His sanctuary. {COL 291-2}

God commanded Moses for Israel, “Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them” (Ex. 25:8), and He abode in the sanctuary, in the midst of His people. Through all their weary wandering in the desert, the symbol of His presence was with them. So Christ set up His tabernacle in the midst of our human encampment. He pitched His tent by the side of the tents of men, that He might dwell among us, and make us familiar with His divine character and life. {DA 23-4}

11. The Sanctuary and the Little Horn

Biblical material: Exod.27:20; 29:42; Num.4:7; 28:6; Rom.8:34; Heb.7:24-27; 8:1-5; 9:1-14,24.

Quotes:

- True religion is real living; living with all one's soul, with all one's goodness and righteousness. *Albert Einstein*
- Man is the religious animal. He is the only religious animal. He is the only animal that has the True Religion—several of them. He is the only animal that loves his neighbor as himself and cuts his throat, if his theology isn't straight. He has made a graveyard of the globe in trying his honest best to smooth his brother's path to happiness and heaven. *Mark Twain*
- It is easy enough to be friendly to one's friends. But to befriend the one who regards himself as your enemy is the quintessence of true religion. The other is mere business. *Gandhi*

Questions

Why are the attacks of the little horn so significant? What do they illustrate? How would you define and contrast true and false religion? Why is the sanctuary important here? What is important in the attack on the "daily"? How does this relate to the great controversy? How would you try and make this lesson relevant to the "man on the street"?

Discussion

The attacks of the little horn on the sanctuary, and on the people of God, bring into focus the real issues in the great controversy. This is no abstruse theological debate, this is the heart of the universe-wide war. Remind yourself what the war is all about, and where it began. "Thus, more than anything else, it's the religious attack by the little horn that plays great prominence here, and that's the focus of the vision." Sunday's lesson.

So it is still the same attack on principles of truth and right, brought right into the "sanctuary of God"—where God dwells.

The Good News translation of Daniel 8:12 speaks of *true religion* being thrown to the ground. It is interesting to think of how to define true religion (aside from the usual definition that true religion is whatever I believe!) What is at the heart of false religion? How do we explain this? What implications are there for us today?

The sacrificial system that was instituted in the Old Testament (note some of the texts listed for this week's lesson) had already been the subject of Satan's campaign of distortion and misinformation. The direct attacks of the little horn reveal the same desire to mar and destroy. The Devil's smear tactics, his misrepresentation of God, and in the end his outright attacks on God come right home where God "dwells." His utter hostility becomes clear, and the end result of his chosen course of belief and action is made plain. In this, as in all of God's dealing with his supreme critic, God exhibits truth and right, allowing the evidence to speak for itself.

Romans 8:34 references Christ's interceding ministry in heaven. How are we best to explain this? For sometimes our attempts to speak well of Jesus place our Heavenly Father in a bad light—as if he is opposed to us, hostile, unwilling to help us unless Jesus pleads for us. Such a mistaken concept means we must be very careful to explain wisely and well what this intercessory ministry is all about, and what Jesus is truly doing on our behalf. Similarly Hebrews

7, following the whole of Hebrews in its use of sanctuary and priestly imagery, meant much to those to whom it was written, but in today's world without priests and such rituals can be easily misunderstood. We must be careful not to read into the passage our own presuppositions. For is it not true that all the members of the Godhead are equally loving, righteous, and trustworthy, all working for the demonstration of truth in the great controversy and our salvation in particular?

Comment

What is God really like? That's been the question for a long, long time! Before our world was created the argument raged in the heavens—God is unjust, hostile, cruel. Lucifer, the great Deceiver, accused God and set himself up as the great “Liberator” from the divine tyrant.

The controversy could not be settled by charge and counter-charge like two adversaries in a battle of words. The only way God could clearly show what he was really like was through his actions. That's what the Bible is all about. It demonstrates the way God thinks, acts and behaves in dealing with those who are rebelling against him. The Bible is the proof of God's true character, ultimately demonstrated in the record of how he came and lived with us and died at our hands—Jesus, the Son of God, the Crucified.

Knowing what God is truly like and wanting to trust this wonderful Person is the key to salvation. All other aspects of what Adventists believe have their origin in this central truth: “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”(John 17:3NIV). We know that the Devil has been ‘a liar from the beginning’. We know that God's true character of love has been defamed: ‘an enemy has done this’. And we know that only as the real “Face of God” is shown to the world will the great controversy be settled. As the final decisions are made, as people choose whether to accept this wonderful God or to reject him, the last act in the drama will come to an end.

At the heart of what we want to say about God is this: God truly is good, kind, loving, open, honest, trustworthy... He is the total opposite of the uncaring, unjust ogre the Devil has made him out to be. God is not out to terrify us. On the contrary, our privilege is to call God “Friend.”

Ellen White Comments

Only by faithfulness in the little things can the soul be trained to act with fidelity under larger responsibilities. God brought Daniel and his fellows into connection with the great men of Babylon, that these heathen men might become acquainted with *the principles of true religion*. In the midst of a nation of idolaters, Daniel was to *represent the character of God*. How did he become fitted for a position of so great trust and honor? It was his faithfulness in the little things that gave complexion to his whole life. He honored God in the smallest duties, and the Lord co-operated with him. To Daniel and his companions God gave “knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” Dan. 1:17.

As God called Daniel to witness for Him in Babylon, so He calls us to be His witnesses in the world today. In the smallest as well as the largest affairs of life He desires us to reveal to men *the principles of His kingdom*. {COL 356-7}(My emphasis).

Daniel and his companions... avoided that which would weaken their powers, and improved every opportunity to become intelligent in all lines of learning... They sought to acquire knowledge for one purpose—that they might honor God. . . . In order to stand as representatives of true religion amid the false religions of heathenism they must have clearness of intellect and must perfect a Christian character. And God Himself was their teacher. {CC 247.2}

12. The Pre-Advent Judgment

Biblical material: Deut. 25:1; 1 Kings 8:32; Ps. 51:1-4; Matt. 22:1-13; Heb. 9:22-24; Rev. 20:12, 22:12.

Quotes:

- We are all inclined to judge ourselves by our ideals; others, by their acts. *Harold Nicolson*
- Don't wait for the last judgment –it takes place every day. *Albert Camus*
- Our brains are no longer conditioned for reverence and awe. We cannot imagine a Second Coming that would not be cut down to size by the televised evening news, or a Last Judgment not subject to pages of holier-than-thou second-guessing in The New York Review of Books. *John Updike*
- Men judge us by the success of our efforts. God looks at the efforts themselves. *Charlotte Bronte*

Questions

Why is the pre-advent judgment necessary? For whose benefit? How does this illustrate the openness and transparency of God's government? How does judgment also include vindication? What are the positive aspects of judgment? How can this teaching about the pre-advent judgment be misused?

Discussion/Comment:

"The court sits in judgment, and the books are opened." There's reference to books elsewhere, not that God needs books, but evidently there's knowledge made available. Decisions are to be made, in the eyes of the whole on-looking universe. It's not private. It's not a secret matter. The whole great controversy has been public. The charges against God were public; the answers were public. "If I be lifted up, I will draw all unto me"—angels and men. But now the question here doesn't seem to be about God. It seems to be about us. And as you know, there are other places coming up shortly, in Zechariah 3, which we'll look at soon. There's a picture of God's people, standing before God, represented by their high priest, Joshua. But he's not interceding. He's the one who's being accused. God's people being accused before God. And Satan standing at His right hand to accuse him. We need to include him in these pictures, also.

When we get to the Book of Revelation, which belongs with Daniel, is not the accuser specifically mentioned and described as "the accuser of the brethren who accuses them day and night before God." (Revelation 12:10)

How about Job 1 and 2? Who's accusing? Who's defending? And before who's eyes is this all taking place? Remember in Job the sons of God assembled, and God defends His servant, and says, "I trust this man. He'll not let Me down."

And the devil says, "Ah!" You remember his whole argument, in the Book of Job. "You've bribed him, either by reward or by threat of punishment." That's what the three theologians thought, you remember, That was their picture of God.

And God says, "No, Job knows Me better than that, In fact, He's so settled into the truth about Me, you can do anything you like to him short of taking his life. He will not let Me down." And He said this in the hearing of the counsel, the family of God. They have met many times

through the years. They've heard the accusations of Satan. They heard Christ on resurrection day ask them, "Was it enough?"

And they told Him, "Yes, it is more than enough. You've won Your case." As Paul says, in Romans 3, "God has indeed won His case."

Now the only questions that remain are about candidates for the kingdom. And Satan accuses them before God day and night. When we get to Zechariah 3 we should spend more time on this, but significantly, when Ellen White writes her chapter in Great Controversy entitled "The Investigative Judgment," and in Prophets and Kings, the chapter "Joshua, the High Priest," these are her two most detailed descriptions of what we have let become known as "The Investigative Judgment". That word isn't in the Bible.

But this final meeting of the heavenly family to consider the cases of those who have professed any hope of candidacy in the kingdom, and God in His customary way says, "I did not demand that you angels trust Me without evidence. I don't ask you to accept these candidates for the kingdom without some evidence. I'm not going to force you to welcome them at the gates, when in your hearts you have serious misgivings." Can you imagine the misgivings our guardian angels may have about the wisdom of admitting us? Have you ever thought how often your guardian angel may have requested transfer to a more promising case? I mean, think of the reality of this thing! Well, it's so real that when Satan sought to persuade the angels that God could not be trusted, God--the Perfect One, he persuaded a third of them. How about when he seeks to persuade the angels that we cannot be trusted? How easy that would be! He wouldn't even have to lie about it, as he did about God. And so he presents his case. You've read those two chapters. Ellen White describes them most dramatically. Some say Ellen White has never described the investigative judgment. At length she has, and under the very title. And using such passages as this.

The most important thing for us, though, as we read Daniel, what does it say about God that He would do this so publicly? A hundred million watching! Well, hasn't the Great Controversy been conducted in public? It is this very openness of God that wins to faith and trust. And He even allows the opposition to speak. Look how long He allowed His adversary to speak against Him, personally. Think of the Infinite One allowing a finite creature to mount a great rebellion against Him, insinuate all these evil things about our God. He allowed it, because it's the only way to win to genuine trust. You cannot use force, or the hiding of evidence. God doesn't have to blot out several minutes from the tape of the history of the universe to win His case. There's no cover-up here. It's all in public. God even says, "And I'll provide the books." Think of it! It's all out in open."

A. Graham Maxwell, Tape #26 Daniel (Riverside), The Picture of God in All 66

Ellen White Comments

The subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God... All who have received the light upon these subjects are to bear testimony of the great truths which God has committed to them. The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth. It opens to view the plan of redemption, bringing us down to the very close of time and revealing the triumphant issue of the contest between righteousness and sin. It is of the utmost importance that all should thoroughly investigate these subjects and be able to give an answer to everyone that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them. {GC 488-9}

13. The Gospel and Judgment

Biblical material: Leviticus 16; Rom. 8:1, 34; Heb. 6:20; 7:25; 9:24; 1 Pet. 1:2, 18, 19.

Quotes:

- People hasten to judge in order not to be judged themselves. *Albert Camus*
- Reason sits firm and holds the reins, and she will not let the feelings burst away and hurry her to wild chasms. The passions may rage furiously, like true heathens, as they are; and the desires may imagine all sorts of vain things: but judgment shall still have the last word in every argument, and the casting vote in every decision. *Charlotte Bronte*
- It may be you fear more to deliver judgment upon me than I fear judgment. *Giordano Bruno* (1600AD, to the inquisitors who condemned him to death)

Questions

What role does the judgment play in the gospel, and vice versa? How is the judgment good news? Are some of our depictions of the judgment inappropriate? Is it a conflict of interest for God to be both judge and saviour? How do we explain what God is doing in the judgment? What is the gospel as far as the universe is concerned?

Discussion

In this week's lesson, even the introductory section calls for much comment. For example: "After all, what is atonement other than the work of God saving us through Christ's blood? The law can't atone; obedience can't atone; character can't atone. Atonement comes only one way, through the Cross. If, then, we are living in the Day of Atonement, shouldn't that be good news? Shouldn't any "day" dedicated to atonement, to God's work of saving us, be something we should be thankful for? Shouldn't we be rejoicing in the hope of living in the Day of Atonement rather than being distressed about it?" (Sab. pm lesson).

The answer to that question of course depends on what is being atoned for, and to whom! If we see atone in its current sense of offering conciliatory payment, then surely not, for does God need to be placated as if he were some offended pagan deity? Once again we need to remind ourselves about what went wrong, and how this is remedied. It is not a question of God being "bought off," as modern notions of the word atone suggest. Rather it is the original meaning that needs to be emphasized—the bringing to harmony, the achievement of one-ness.

Oneness. This is essentially non-legal. Rather, it is the state of agreeing with God that he is right, not from compulsion but from free choice. Jesus frees us to make the right choice, freed from the compelling power of sin, free to be free. Harmony is restored, not by creedal assent or the payment of imposed penalty, but through agreement with God over his nature, character and actions—how he runs his government. In the continuing conflict, the Devil has charged God with unfairness, arbitrary laws etc. The atonement also answers those questions, and the onlooking universe sees and understands through demonstration. Now we are in concord with God, no longer in lawlessness as rebels (sin seen as a broken attitude to God more than the actual breaking of laws), but in harmony with all his will and ways.

Similarly, note this: "The judgment is good news because it forms an inseparable part of 'the good news'; it is the climactic application of the Cross in our behalf. This week we'll look at the gospel and the judgment, because it's only through the lens of the gospel that we can fully see just what the judgment means for us." (Sab. pm lesson). The immediate question is "how?"

In Sunday's lesson we are told that Jesus "gets us through the judgment." Is this really the good news about the judgment? It reminds me of a preacher who told me that the judgment was "fixed," because not only do we have a friend in court (Jesus our attorney) but also the judge (God the Father) is consequently biased in our favour! Is this the best way to present the judgment—as a verdict that has been manipulated? How does God in the end demonstrate vindication if the court is not fair?

Comment

Every once in awhile someone will stop and ask me, "Do you believe in the atonement?" And the easy way to answer that, especially if you're in a hurry, is to say, "Yes, indeed, of course I do. It means everything to me." And that may be a very good way to avoid an argument or even a prolonged sermon on the sidewalk, but it may also be quite misleading, for as many of you must know, there are several different understandings of the atonement, some of which I believe put God in a very undesirable light. And so, in effect, when you say, "Yes, I believe in the atonement," you are saying to this individual, "I agree with your understanding," which may not be true at all...

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are as one. There is atonement between the members of the Godhead. And They treat each Other as such, outdoing One another in giving honor to each Other. That's the way trusting friends who are at one with each other behave. That's the ultimate model of atonement and at-one-ment. Pray that we all may be one, even as they are. "The glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them, that they may be one even as We are one, I in them and Thou in Me, that they may become perfectly one."

Now that's perfect atonement, you see. That's the real, original and ultimate meaning of this word "atonement" - at-one-ment. Now, in several places Jesus explained what it would cost to restore His universe, His family to at-one-ment. He mentions His death. He even uses the term that sometimes is translated "ransom."

Then He says in John 12:32: "If I be lifted up," thus signifying the way in which He was to die, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all unto Me." Angels and men were all drawn closer into atonement and at-one-ment. Without His death it could not be possible." A. *Graham Maxwell, Tape "Jesus Talks About Atonement."*

Ellen White Comments

The casting of the net is the preaching of the gospel. This gathers both good and evil into the church. When the mission of the gospel is completed, the judgment will accomplish the work of separation. Christ saw how the existence of false brethren in the church would cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of. The world would revile the gospel because of the inconsistent lives of false professors. Even Christians would be caused to stumble as they saw that many who bore Christ's name were not controlled by His Spirit. Because these sinners were in the church, men would be in danger of thinking that God excused their sins. Therefore Christ lifts the veil from the future and bids all to behold that it is character, not position, which decides man's destiny.. {COL 122-3}

No one who believes in Jesus Christ is under bondage to the law of God; for His law is a law of life, not of death, to those who obey its precepts. All who comprehend the spirituality of the law, all who realize its power as a detector of sin, are in just as helpless a condition as is Satan himself, unless they accept the atonement provided for them in the remedial sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who is our atonement--at-one-ment with God. {6BC 1077.5}

14. The Meaning of the Judgment Today

Biblical material: Job 1:7-11; Ps. 73:1-17; Matt. 5:16; John 14:2; Acts 1:11; 1 Cor. 4:5, 9; Eph.2:8-10; 3:10, 1 Thess. 4:14-18; Rev. 22:12.

Quotes:

- God extends his grace to his people (and mankind in general) when he destroys the wicked, because in destroying the wicked, he is averting their evil works that so plague God's children and mankind in general. When he maims and kills cultists and theological liberals, he prevents the spread of heretical doctrine that damns souls...God's judgment—not his favor—leads the world to righteousness. We should petition God's judgment on the wicked because judgment is a form of grace. *Andrew Sandlin*
- Success is the sole earthly judge of right and wrong. *Adolf Hitler*
- Most people have learned to live in the moment. The argument goes that if the past has uncertain effect on the present, there is no need to dwell on the past. And if the present has little effect on the future, present actions need not be weighed for their consequence. *Alan Lightman*

Questions

How do we make the judgment both relevant and appropriate today? How to avoid the mistakes of the past? Is our message about the judgment truly good news? Is this (as some claim) a watering down of the judgment message? What of the concept of God himself being judged? How does our judgment fit into the issues of the great controversy?

Discussion/Comment

The judgment of the righteous precedes the advent—and can easily be seen in the same way as hellfire since we “do not know when our name will be brought into judgment.” Judgment needs to be “preached positive” so that God and his nature are made the primary focus. Our judgment only makes useful sense when it is made part of this larger aspect of judgment—since the most important aspect of judgment is the vindication of God. That is surely the message we need to be sharing today!

In Thursday's lesson we are told that though we are saved by faith, we are judged by works. Where does this leave us? Does it not limit the concept of salvation by grace if we link that to a works requirement?

How do we preach the judgment and the soon coming of Jesus without falling into the trap of scaring people into the kingdom?

Ellen White comments on the tendency to preach the approaching End as a mechanism for gaining conversion and repentance. “The shortness of time is frequently urged as an incentive for seeking righteousness and making Christ our friend. This should not be the great motive with us; for it savors of selfishness. Is it necessary that the terrors of the day of God should be held before us, that we may be compelled to right action through fear? It ought not to be so.” *Lift Him Up*, p.98.

Urging that “Jesus will be here in just a very few short years” could be equated to preaching fire and brimstone. The “selfish” desire to avoid the negative aspects of the judgment is the equivalent of taking out fire insurance.

We need to ask ourselves the question, what is most important here? Is it the time of the advent, or the certainty of the advent? Is it our message to preach dates in the immediate future (whether we give exact dates, or simply say within x years), or to preach the “sure and certain” hope that is fulfilled in the return of “this same Jesus”?

James White wrote of the difficulty of living in the “in-between” times. “The position of suspense is not the most happy one.” [J. White, *Life Incidents, Vol. 1*, (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1868), p.337.] He recognized the problems of maintaining an eager expectancy for the soon coming, without falling into the trap of predicting the date. Yet to do so set us up for a heavy fall.

At a workers meeting, one pastor expressed his disappointed feelings. “Here I am, on the verge of retirement,” he told his fellow ministers. “I have been preaching the Advent message for more than forty years. I argued with the brethren about the need for going to college before entering ministry, because I believed I would not have time to complete the course before Jesus returned. Now I am old, and disappointed. Why hasn’t Jesus come?”

If we are preaching a “coming to judgment within x years” doctrine, that kind of disappointment will be inevitable this side of the coming. For it focuses on the timing, not on the meaning and purpose of the event.

However, “journeys end in lovers meeting,” says Shakespeare, and if we truly love Jesus then his arrival will not be dread event but the day when our Best Friend returns.

We don’t need to date the advent, we need know “this same Jesus” now! For his return is “the blessed hope” only if he is blessed to us in the present, if we have a relationship of love.

“God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:16-19 NIV).

Ellen White Comments

Without Christ there can be only condemnation and a fearful looking for a fiery indignation, and final separation from the presence of God. But he whose eyes have been opened to see the love of Christ, will behold the character of God as full of love and compassion. God will not appear as a tyrannical, relentless being, but as a father longing to embrace his repenting son. The sinner will cry with the psalmist, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him” (Ps. 103:13). All despair is swept from the soul when Christ is seen in His true character. {1SM 371}

God sends you into the world as His representatives. In every act of life you are to make manifest the name of God. {AG 94}

God has enjoined the duty upon His human agents to communicate the character of God, testifying to His grace, His wisdom, and His benevolence, by manifesting His refined, tender, merciful love. . . . Our work is to restore the moral image of God in man through the abundant grace given us of God by Jesus Christ. . . . Oh, how much we need to know Jesus and our heavenly Father that we may represent Him in character! {AG 229}

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