

*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

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

Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)

EXEGESIS OF REVELATION

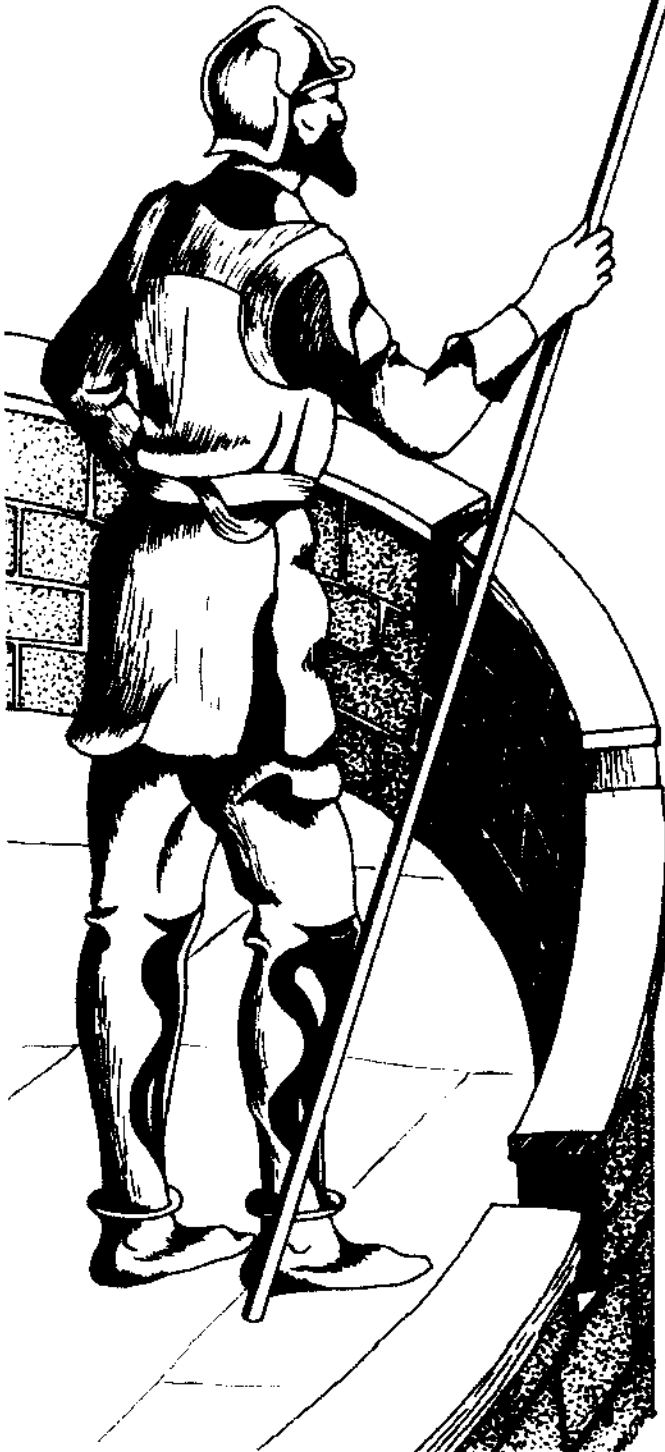
THE TALE OF TWO CITIES

(Part 6)

So much Adventist tradition has been built around the "angel" of Revelation 18, that it is most difficult to analyze just what is written without reading into the text some aspects of that tradition. The message of this angel which comes down from heaven "having great authority" is similar to the message of the second angel of Revelation 14 with certain distinct differences. Babylon has now become "the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird." (ver. 2) Instead of the proffered wine which Babylon made all nations drink (14:8), the nations now have drunk (perfect tense), and the leaders ("kings") of the earth have committed fornication with her and the "merchants of the earth" have profited by their association. (18:3) The union between the combined forces of religion - "Babylon the great" - and the governments of earth is complete. The dire warning is that the power which activates these religious forces is the power of the devil. To all outward appearances, he has become the undisputed sovereign of the earth.

If we understand the symbolism of this angel the same as the symbolism of the three angels of Revelation 14, it represents a "movement" under the direction of this assigned angel of heaven who is given great authority to carry out his mandate. But when will this take place? Obviously from the text, it is just prior to the pouring out of the Seven Last Plagues, because these are spoken of as still future in the context (18:8). Yet the message declares that the forces of evil have fixed their abode in Babylon - "Babylon...is become the habitation of devils." (18:2) This prior event noted in the prophecy is the working of "the spirits of devils" as they gather "the kings of the earth and the whole world" to "the battle of that great day of God Almighty." (Rev. 16:14) (Keep in mind that Revelation 16:13-16 describes activity in "the last remnant of time" which is the justification of the sixth plague, verse 12. See WWN, 8/95, pp 3-4; also note Great Controversy, pp. 561-562)

The revelation of what the Harlot says in her heart -



"I sit a queen, and am no more a widow..." (18:7) - clearly defines the time of the message of this fourth angel as congruent with the "harlot" riding forth out of the wilderness on the scarlet colored beast. (17:3-5) While yet future, it is the immediate future! We can even now see the beginnings of this final confrontation.

Within the two chapters - the 17th and the 18th - certain time references are given. The ten horns "receive power as kings one hour with the beast." (17:12) While the harlot's plagues "come in one day" (18:8), in "one hour is [her] judgment come" (v. 10). "In one hour" her "great riches is come to nought" (v. 17). "In one hour is she made desolate" (v. 19). A close comparison of the wording would indicate that the same time allocated to the reign of the ten horns, is the same amount of time that these horns use to turn on the harlot and make her "desolate." (Compare 17:12, 17 with 18:19) While a prophetic day equal one year (Eze. 4:6), the hour, if reckoned as a 24th part of the prophetic day, would be 15 literal days. However, hora, the Greek word for hour, can mean a short period of time, rather than a literal 24 hours. Whatever reckoning of time is used, there is one thing certain - "the final movements will be rapid ones."

It is indicated that those on the side of the Lamb "are called, and chosen, and and faithful" (17:14) Little do we realize what faithfulness in that hour will mean. To all appearances, Christ has come. Spiritual wonders convince the eye. The third millenium projects unity, peace and prosperity. For the human instruments to give the warning of the fourth angel will require an absolute confidence in the revelation of the Word contrary to all outward appearances. For those on the side of the Lamb will have to call the great return to "moral values" the working of Satan disguised as an angel of light. Those who cannot stand for truth now, how can they expect to stand then?

The 18th Chapter closes with an illustration. A mighty angel takes a millstone and casts it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence shall the great city be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all" (18:21) Pen cannot describe, the carnage, the anarchy - "the violence" - which will ensue when the inhabitants of earth awaken to the fact that through religious deception they have lost all in the battle of life and have joined forces with Satan against Christ.

The 19th Chapter of Revelation opens with the

third interlude (vers. 1-5) of this second section of the book. The first interlude was placed between the description of the work of the "false prophet" and the the Three Angels' Messages (14:1-15). The second interlude was interfaced with the announcement and the carrying out of the Seven Last PLAGUES (15:2-5) Now the final interlude marks the transition from the end of the prophecy concerning the "Harlot," the wife of the dragon-beast, to the call to "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (19:9). The basic message of this interlude is praise to God for His judgment on "the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication." (v. 2)

There is heard "a voice" which "came out of the throne, saying, 'Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear His name, both small and great.'" (ver. 5) The One in the midst of the throne is the Lamb "as it had been slain" but is "alive for evermore." (5:6; 1:18) He who sent the message on that resurrection morning through Mary Magdalene, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to your God, and my God" (John 20:17) now calls for universal praise to "our God." He still identifies Himself with the sons of men who look to the One God and Father of us all. He who emptied Himself for the redemption of man now eternalizes the Example set in time that "God may be all in all." (I Cor. 15:28)

In the prophetic imagery of the call to the marriage supper of the Lamb, because of its brevity (19:6-9), we should not overlook its momentous significance. This is one of the seven Beatitudes of the book of Revelation, and is declared to be along with the promise of "making all things new" (21:5), as "the true sayings of God." Why are these uniquely marked as the "true sayings of God"? Making "all things new" marks the end of the incident of sin. The pain and anguish which this interlude of sin has brought to the heart of God is past, all things can become new, and new in a new dimension. The Lamb has accomplished His objective to seek and save that which was lost. Now His marriage is come.

First some details: One of the angels of the seven last plagues shows John, the wife of the Lamb - "that great city, the holy Jerusalem." (21:9-10) But as with the "wife" of the dragon-beast, "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth" (17:18), people are involved. While the cities are used symbolically, they are also literal, and made up of people. A marriage supper includes not only the "wife" but also "guests." In this brief call there is "a great

multitude," as well as the wife "arrayed in fine linen." (19:6, 8)

God's original plan called for man to be only "a little while inferior to the angels." (Heb. 2:7, margin) Created in the image of God, "designed to be a counterpart of God," a high destiny awaited man. He, however, sinned and fell prey to the dragon's "wrath" and jealousy. Now through the "redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24), not only can man to be restored, but a group, designated in Revelation as the 144,000, is to be the "wife" of the Lamb, sharing His throne. Lest we read into the description - "his wife hath made herself ready" - a salvation-by-works theology, we need to recall that "those arrayed in white robes" have "washed" them and "made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (7:13-14)

What then could the expression mean - "the fine linen (in which the wife is arrayed) is the righteousness of saints"? Is this the full realization of "imparted righteousness"? If so, then if we desire to be among that group, should we not study to know exactly what it means - "His wife hath made herself ready"? What is that "readiness" by which the righteousness of Christ can become ours in a personal possessive sense?

John next sees "heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war." (19:11) This description and that which follows when Christ rides forth as King of kings and Lord of lords is not only replete with Old Testament imagery of the conquering Christ, but also brings together various symbols used in Revelation itself.

When the Lamb opened the book sealed with seven seals, the first seal revealed "a white horse" with a rider who receiving a bow, and a crown, went forth "conquering and to conquer." (6:2) There were arrayed against him, the forces of evil - human strife, poverty, pestilences, hunger and death. A price was paid in this warfare. John sees "souls under the altar" who cry unto God, "How long, O Lord?" (6:10) When the sixth seal is opened, the signs which would herald the coming response of God are noted. Interjected into the vision is the first introduction of the 144,000, followed by the seventh seal - "silence in heaven." Now in the final confrontation portrayed in the 19th Chapter, all "the armies in heaven followed Him on white horses." (19:14) There is silence in heaven, but not so on earth.

"Out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations. ... And He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." (19:15) A description of this winepress closed the vision connected with the six angels of Revelation 14. "The vine of the earth" - those whose roots have been of the earth earthly - weeds and tares - face the wrath of Him whom they have rejected that He should not rule over them. He now rules them with a rod of iron, and the sword of His mouth destroys them. (See II Thess. 2:8) The "violence" in the overthrow of "Babylon the great" (18:21), the "wrath of Almighty God" (19:15), and "the wrath of the Lamb" (6:16) produce a "blood-letting" unparalleled in time. (14:20)

The "names" noted in this revelation of the Lamb provoke thought. He has a personal name engraved on His crowns, that He himself alone knows. (v. 12) His vesture dipped in blood has inscribed upon it the name, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." (vers 13, 16) He is also called the Word of God - the Logos. Once in the book of Revelation, Jesus Christ speaks as "the Son of God" (2:18). Now as He comes forth to "judge and make war" He returns to His original relationship in the Godhead - "the Logos of God" - He who was in the beginning with God. (John 1:1-2)

The language and thought describing the "conquering" King of kings and Lord of lords is found in Isaiah 63:1-6. A thoughtful reading of these verses reveals the "tension" between what He provided as He tread "the winepress alone" and the judgment upon those who reject this great provision of salvation.

As the Word of God rides forth to "judge and make war," He does not come unopposed. "The beast and kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army." (19:19) They had been gathered together by "spirits of devils" to "a place called in the Hebrew, Har-Mo'ed," for "the war (Gr.) of the great day of God Almighty." (16:13-14, 16) The "beast" and "the false prophet" are taken and cast "alive" into "the lake of fire." (Gr. 19:20) Daniel speaks of the "beast" which had "the little horn" as being "given to the burning flame." (7:11)

The problem which arises is that "the lake of fire" in which the dragon and the lost are cast does not come till the close of the Millennium (20:9-10). Must a symbolic meaning be given to its use in 19:20, even as the "beast" and "false

prophet" are symbols of systems. The "lake of fire" represents "total annihilation." Is this telling then that with the close of human history at the Second Advent, the systems of earth through which the Devil deceived mankind are ended? After the 1000 years, Satan in person goes "out to deceive the nations of the earth." (20:8)

After the scenes of war and strife, and the final destruction of sin and sinners are revealed to John, he sees "a new heaven and a new earth." He hears from the throne the promise, "Behold I make all things new." He is told - "Write, for these words are true and faithful." (21:5)

Concluded

NEWS PAST & PRESENT

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES YEAR BOOK 1995 has a very interesting "Table of Contents." Besides listing its Member Churches, which does not include the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it gives the Regional Ecumenical Organizations, the National Councils of Churches, Specialized International Ecumenical Organizations, and Christian World Communions. The members of this latter group "are invited to send non-voting representatives to WCC Assemblies and Central Committee meetings." This list of "Christian World Communions" includes the "General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists." (p. 54) It is noted that there have been since 1957 "annual informal gatherings of the secretaries of such organizations." B. B. Beach in So Much in Common wrote that the General Conference "has been actively represented" in these annual meetings since 1968. (p. 100)

A CHANGE OF COURSE - Joseph W. Tkach, Editor in Chief, of Plain Truth, a publication of the World-wide Church of God, introduced his editorial in the August 1995, issue with the following announcement:

"Late last year, the Worldwide Church of God sponsor of The Plain Truth, changed its historical position as a strict seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath keeping fellowship. Although the Church will continue to hold its traditional worship service on Saturdays, it no longer holds to the doctrine that the old covenant Sabbath commandment is binding on Christians." (p. 1)

WAS THIS THE BEGINNING of Adventists and Catholics Together in Medical ministry? "Shady Grove Adventist Hospital in Rockville and Holy Cross Hospital in Silver Spring have signed an agreement for a joint program to train students in health care ministry.

"Holy Cross, operated by the Roman Catholic Sisters of the Holy Cross, will supervise the training of both the supervisor and five students from Shady Grove in clinical pastoral education. The program prepares religious workers for a specialized ministry to the sick.

"After completion of his training at Holy Cross, Shady Grove's chaplain, the Rev. Doug Griffin, will be able to administer a similar program at his hospital. Holy Cross officials said the joint training venture is the first in the area involving hospitals of differing religious affiliations." (Washington Post, "World of Religion," July 30, 1983) [Note the date.]

CABINET MINISTER COMMITS SUICIDE. Mordechai Gur, Deputy Defence Minister in the Israeli government, committed suicide because he could "no longer tolerate the limits enforced upon him by serious illness. Mr. Gur, a career military man, was best known for the words: 'The Temple Mount is in our hands.' He uttered them over the military communications system after he and his paratroop unit captured Jerusalem's Old City, including the Temple Mount and the Western Wall, in the 1967 Middle East war." (Border Mail, Albury, NSW, Australia, July 17, 1995)

"**SECOND VATICAN OF THE WORLD**" - "Most of the nations of today's world refuse to acknowledge Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. They want it to be under international control. The Vatican has demanded the internationalization of Jerusalem for 48 years. Recently the heads of the Christian community in Jerusalem called for its internationalization. The World Council of Churches demands the same. Amazingly, Israel's leaders have secretly offered to hand over sovereignty of Jerusalem's Old City to the Vatican. Jerusalem is to become the 'second Vatican of the world.'" (The Berean Call, July 1995, p. 1)

"Rome would not have made peace with the Jewish state in December of 1993 unless she was certain that Jerusalem would fall from Israeli control and become an international city." - Frank Dimant, Executive Vice-President. B'nai Brith, The Jewish Tribune, April 13, 1995, p. 3)

"BEYOND THE BORDERS"?

Last year, when issues of various Adventist publications were devoted to the 150th anniversary of the Great Disappointment and the Millerite Movement, our Library failed to receive Spectrum's issue (Vol. 24, #2) devoted to the subject. It was not until I was reading a letter to the Editor in a following issue, and wishing to check the article to which the letter referred, that I discovered we hadn't received that issue. It is before me now as I write.

In this issue, Dr. Glen Greenwalt, professor of theology at Walla Walla College, wrote on "The Sanctuary - God in Our Midst." (pp. 42-49) Even though he is writing for and from the liberal perspective of the Adventist Community, the conservative and "historical" Adventist sector should take careful note of a question he asks - "How does a community plot a future course when it has journeyed beyond the borders of its own charts and maps?"

He introduced his article with a report of "a few informal surveys" he made "to see if this generation of Adventists shared the same vision as held by their grandparents' or even parents' generation. He used a Sabbath School class made up mostly of retirees, many of whom had been denominational employees, and a class of college sophomores. He discovered that 78% of the Sabbath School class considered 1844 to be important to their faith, while only 9% of the sophomores so related. While 65% of the "senior citizens" still believed that the emphasis on "time prophecies" was important, 95% of the young people said the church should "stop trying to prove time prophecies altogether and move on to bigger, more important issues."

While it is true that after 1844, the time element of prophecy is no longer a test, events fulfilling prophecy still are. Peter declared, "We have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." (II Peter 1:18 ARV) Prophetic light does not cease to guide through the darkness of the night till the day dawns. In placing a false emphasis upon the past, and failing to correct Biblical misinterpretations, has contributed to the theological "generation gap" which the survey revealed.

There is no question but that the sanctuary

teaching and the prophecies connected therewith need to be carefully re-studied and corrected where corrections need to be made without abandonment or denial of the basic truth itself. Beyond that night of disappointment on October 22, 1844, the morning dawn brought light that is basic, and upon which we need to restructure the sanctuary truth.

Greenwalt, in suggesting an answer to his own question, reviews certain pioneer stories and "what they can still mean in our pilgrimage today." Among those whom he chooses is the experience of Hiram Edson. Of Edson's experience, he writes:

"After a night so dark it has forever been remembered as the night of the Great Disappointment, Hiram Edson was crossing a cornfield, returning home from the barn where he and others had spent the night in prayer. There, according to his own words, he 'saw distinctly, and clearly, that instead of our High Priest coming out of the Most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth..., that He for the first time entered on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary.'" (His emphasis)

Herein is fundamental, basic Adventism which has given uniqueness to its message. And it is over the interpretation given this revelation that the relevancy of the Church's basic teaching is today being challenged and questioned by a "new" generation of Adventists. Greenwalt reminds us that it was "some 13 years after the Great Disappointment that the view was established that Jesus had gone into the most holy place, there to begin a work of investigating the books to see who would be saved and who would be lost." He then honestly and accurately comments - "Today this view, like other explanations before it, is losing its persuasive appeal. As time continues, the explanatory power of our interpretation wanes."

The questions facing us today - questions with life and death consequences - are: 1) Do we jettison the fundamental revelation as Desmond Ford and others have done and are doing; or 2) Do we face the fact, painful though it may be, that our interpretation of what this revelation given to Edson meant, may be flawed?

Basic is the simple objective - How can an event which occurred on October 22, 1844, be made relevant, removed as we are, 150 years from that experience? Can we not see that the traditional explanation casts reflection on the omniscience of God? Are we unable to lay aside our

preconceived ideas so as to discover truth? Are we unwilling to accept the dictum - "The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation." (R&H, Dec. 20, 1892) So where do we begin?

The key text upon which the traditional concept of the investigation of books of judgment was based is Daniel 7:9-10. Any review of this text in the light of our traditional perception must first inquire, what is its context? Not only is it sent in the continuum of the symbols of prophetic history which focus on the "little horn," but it is not the end point of the prophetic revelation given to Daniel. Because we placed a period where God only placed a comma, has caused much of our current confusion. How then are we to relate to this text?

First, we must exegetically seek to understand just what was revealed to Daniel in the prophetic detail as well as in the explanation given by the angelic messenger.

Secondly, this must be related to the vision given to Daniel in the third year of Belshazzar (Chapter 8), and the explanation which followed eleven years later (Chapter 9).

Thirdly, this prophetic revelation must in turn be placed in relationship to the typical services of the sanctuary to which it refers. In other words, the services on the typical Day of Atonement of the Hebrew economy must be considered and inter-related.

While all of this may be but review for some, it is, however, dimly comprehended by the many. It is with difficulty that we condition ourselves to think exegetically. We would prefer to approach the prophecy and the type eisegetically because of our long standing traditional concepts of these prophecies and typology.

Besides this type of study, we need to frankly and honestly ask ourselves some questions. How does all of this relate to the final message of God to the inhabitants of earth as found in Revelation 14:6-14? If the hour of God's judgment is come, and it so states, how are we to relate this with Daniel 7:10 - "The judgment was set and the books were opened"? Who is on trial? Why is the whole angelic host assembled at this point in time? How does the cleansing of the sanctuary (Dan. 8:14) relate to this

judgment? What light does the typical service shed upon these questions.

In this investigation, we need to keep in mind that the fundamental objective is to discover the meaning of the light that came at daybreak following the dark night of disappointment October 22, 1844. That light reduced to its basic simplicity was that Jesus Christ as High Priest entered upon His final ministry as revealed in the typical ministry of the Day of Atonement. What does that mean?

Another factor also enters the picture which has been overlooked. Though seemingly irrelevant, it, if understood correctly, could make the experience of 1844 relevant to this generation of Adventism.

In the book of Hebrews, it is stated that man was created "a little while inferior to the angels." (2:7, margin) The same identical language is used in the Greek text to describe Christ in His incarnate state. (2:9) Further, it is emphasized that man in the beginning was created "in the image of God." (Gen. 1:26-27) Insights into the significance of God's design are given in the Writings. Consider the import of the following:

"All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of this world and of man. Human beings were a new and distinct order." (R&H, Feb. 11, 1902)

"God created man a superior being; he alone is formed in the image of God, and is capable of partaking of the divine nature of cooperating with his Creator and executing His plans." (R&H, April 11, 1885)

"Man was the crowning act of the creation of God, made in the image of God, and designed to be a counterpart of God." (R&H, June 18, 1895)

When we understand that rebellion flared into the open over God's intent in the creation of man (SG, 1:17), the necessity for the angelic host to be assembled at the start of the judgment can be better understood. Judgment must begin at the point where sin began so that affliction will not arise a second time. (Nahum 1:9) Will God carry out His original plan in the creation of man? Time has intervened between the original design and the hour of judgment. Man has sinned; the open books reveal the depths to which human beings have sunk. Also in time, God revealed the value He placed upon man - the Cross. Was the price sufficient? All of this must be considered

If we are to build a revelant structure of truth upon the revelation which came to Hiram Edson that Jesus on October 22, 1844, entered upon His final work of ministry for man for whom He gave His all. This we shall do in continuing issues of WWN.

‡

LET'S TALK IT OVER

We have frequently used, and have heard oft times repeated the classic definition of justification by faith found in a testimony written from Adelaide, Australia, dated Oct. 12, 1896. It read:

"It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself. When men see their own nothingness, they are prepared to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ." (emphasis supplied)

Immediately following this answer was another question and answer. It read:

"What is regeneration? - It is revealing to man what is his own real nature, that in himself he is worthless." (emphasis supplied)

This appraisal of our real spiritual potential, in and of ourselves, is not only little thought of, but is in reality unwelcomed. Many refuse, even reject, the idea that our salvation is wholly provided for by God. The concept that it is "the work of God" alone is abhorrent to one who perceives his self as possessing value. But unless we honestly face reality that we have nothing by which to merit God's grace, and that in ourselves we are "worthless," there is no hope.

Does man have no value? Am I valueless? My value must be viewed in the light of Calvary, the costly sacrifice which Jesus made to save me from ruin. Then with Paul, my glory is in the cross, not in myself (Gal. 6:14) This is why the highest place man can attain by his own power, and he must attain that place, is at the foot of the cross. There by beholding and accepting the blood of the slain Lamb of God, he realizes the forgiveness of his sins, and in that forgiveness, a cleansing of his "tongue" with a coal from off the altar (Isa. 6:6-7) so that he can bear witness to Truth, the pure truth as it is in Jesus.

Witnessing ever from the foot of the Cross, he is

willing to bear in his body, "the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest" in his flesh. (II Cor. 3:10) He senses in a new way what the "great controversy" is all about. Emancipated from the slavery of sin to the freedom provided in redemption, he now enters the warfare against sin. He realizes that sin was more than an act; it was a denial of truth, the word of God. In sinning, he united with him, who abode not in the truth. (John 8:44) Now he confesses not only the Truth, but also that truth revealed in Him. Thus he realizes what his "work" is to be, the "works" which God requires of man, and then by faith leaves with God His work, to keep him from falling and to present him "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." (Jude 24)

This is the outline of God for victory - the "brethren" of Christ overcome the evil one "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they (love) not their lives unto the death." (Rev. 12:11) Nothing more, nothing less!

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