

Pulling the Trigger

SOMEBODY'S GOING TO DO IT

Two Stories

“The kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish..... And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’”

— Matthew 25:1-6

“‘Watchman, what of the night?’ The watchman said, ‘The morning comes, and also the night.’”

— Isaiah 21:11-12

There are going to be “issues”

“While appearing to the children of men as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, [Satan] will bring disease and disaster, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation.”

— *Great Controversy*, 589

“The Lord gives warnings to the inhabitants of the earth, as in the Chicago fire and the fires in Melbourne, London, and the city of New York. When God’s restraining hand is removed, the destroyer begins his work. Then in our cities the greatest calamities will come.”

— *Manuscript 127*, 1897

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“The wrath of God is preparing to come upon all the cities —not all at once but one after another. And if the terrible punishment in one city does not cause the inhabitants of other cities to be afraid and seek repentance, their time will come.... The destruction will begin in certain places, and the destruction of life will be sudden and but few will escape.”

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“I have been shown that most of the rising generation will be swept off by death prior to the time of trouble. Some will live, but most children of believing and unbelieving parents will be spared the day of trial for God’s people.”

— Letter 51a, 1878

“Ere long we are to be brought into strait and trying places, and the many children brought into the world will in mercy be taken away before the time of trouble comes.

— Manuscript 152, 1899

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“The Lord has often instructed me that many little ones are to be laid away before the time of trouble. We shall see our children again. We shall meet them and know them in the heavenly courts. Put your trust in the Lord, and be not afraid.”

— Letter 196, 1899

But there is a plan

“Let little companies go forth to do the work to which Christ appointed His disciples. Let them labor as evangelists, scattering our publications, talking of the truth to those they meet, praying for the sick, and, if need be, treating them, not with drugs, but with nature’s remedies. Let the workers remember always that they are dependent on God. Let them not trust in human beings for wisdom.”

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But there is a plan

“Let our ministers who have gained an experience in preaching the Word learn how to give simple treatments and then go forth as medical missionary evangelists.

“Workers—gospel medical missionaries—are needed now. We cannot afford to spend years in preparation. Soon doors now open to the truth will be forever closed. Carry the message now. Do not wait, allowing the enemy to take possession of fields now open before you.”

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“As if we meant to...”

“As Lucifer sees that we are making efforts to work the cities as if we meant to give the last message, his wrath will be aroused, and he will employ every device in his power to hinder the work.”

— Letter 74, 1910

“As if we meant to...”

“Henceforth medical missionary work is to be carried forward with an earnestness with which it has never yet been carried. This work is the door through which the truth is to find entrance to the large cities.”

— *Testimonies*, vol. 9, 167

Why so nervous, Lucifer?

“The burden of our cities has rested so heavily upon me that it has sometimes seemed that I should die. The work in the cities is the essential work for this time, and is now to be taken hold of in faith. When the cities are worked as God would have them, the result will be the setting in operation of a mighty movement, such as we have not yet witnessed. May the Lord give wisdom to our brethren, that they may know how to carry forward the work in harmony with His will.

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— *Review and Herald*, November 17, 1910

Still Important

“To say that a passage means just this and nothing more, that you must not attach any broader meaning to the words of Christ than we have in the past, is saying that which is not actuated by the Spirit of God.... The truth, as it is in Jesus, is capable of constant expansion, of new development.”

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“I am often referred to the parable of the ten virgins, five of whom were wise, and five foolish. This parable has been and will be fulfilled to the very letter, for it has a special application to this time, and, like the third angel’s message, has been fulfilled and will continue to be present truth till the close of time.”

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“Prepare for the call, ‘Behold the Bridegroom cometh! Go ye out to meet Him.’”

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“The ten virgins are watching in the evening of this earth’s history. All claim to be Christians. All have a call, a name, a lamp, and all claim to be doing God service. All apparently watch for his appearing. But five are wanting.”

— *Review and Herald*, October 31, 1899

Still Important

“My mind was carried to the future, when the signal will be given. ‘Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.’”

— *Review and Herald*, February 11, 1896

“We cannot be ready to meet the Lord by waking up at the last minute, when the cry is heard, ‘Behold, the Bridegroom cometh,’ gathering up our lamps, from which the oil has burned away, and thinking then to have them replenished.”

— *Signs of the Times*, August 6, 1894

Still Important

“With mighty power the cry is again to be sounded in our large centers of population, ‘Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.’

— Manuscript 13, 1910

“Medical missionaries are to go forth; workers in every line are to proclaim, ‘Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.’”

— *Review and Herald*, September 28, 1911

Still Important

“I seemed to have my mind carried to the future when the signal will be given announcing, ‘Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.’ [Matt. 25:6.] But some had delayed to obtain the oil to replenish their lamps and too late they find that character, which is represented by the oil, is not transferable.”

— Manuscript 61b, 1895

Still Important

“The parable of the ten virgins is given to us that we may understand that there is an hour when the gates are closed.”

— Letter 25, 1895

“When the foolish virgins reached the banqueting hall, they received an unexpected denial. The master of the feast declared, ‘I know you not.’ They were left standing without, in the empty street, in the blackness of the night.”

— Letter 161, 1903

Still Important

“This is no time for the messengers of God to stop to prop up those who know the truth, and who have every advantage. Let them go on to lift the standard and give the warning, ‘Behold, the Bridegroom cometh! go ye out to meet him.’”

— Letter 64a, 1895

“By failing to lift the cross you lose much in this life and everything in the future life.... You will find yourself in the condition of the foolish virgins, without oil in your vessel with your lamp. Prayers and exhortation, all the good advice in the world, cannot save you.”

— Letter 66, 1899

“Important” is an understatement...

“In quick succession the judgments of God will follow one another—fire and flood and earthquake, with war and bloodshed.

“Oh, that the people might know the time of their visitation! There are many who have not yet heard the testing truth for this time. There are many with whom the Spirit of God is striving. The time of God’s destructive judgments is the time of mercy for those who have had no opportunity to learn what is truth. Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; His hand is still stretched out to save, while the door is closed to those who would not enter.”

— *Testimonies*, vol. 9, 97

“Important” is an understatement...

“I saw the latter rain was coming as suddenly as the midnight cry, and with ten times the power.”

— Manuscript 4, 1852

So... what say we aim at the target?

“Our cities are to be worked. To devote our efforts to other worthy enterprises, and leave unworked our cities, in which are large numbers of all nationalities, is not wise.”

— Manuscript 13, 1910

Timing is key...

“The sin that calls down the wrath of God unmixed with mercy must be of the most heinous character. Is the world to be left in darkness as to the nature of this sin? Most assuredly not. God does not deal thus with His creatures. His wrath is never visited upon sins of ignorance. Before His judgments are brought upon the earth, the light in regard to this sin must be presented to the world, that man may know why these judgments are to be inflicted, and may have opportunity to escape them.”

— *Signs of the Times*, November 1, 1899

Timing is key...

“The whole earth is to be lightened with the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the channels of the great deep. Prophecies are being fulfilled, and stormy times are before us. Old controversies which have apparently been hushed for a long time will be revived, and new controversies will spring up; new and old will commingle, and this will take place right early. The angels are holding the four winds, that they shall not blow, until the specified work of warning is given to the world; but the storm is gathering, the clouds are loading, ready to burst upon the world, and to many it will be as a thief in the night.”

— Manuscript 27, 1892

Planning is good... but God's plans are best

“Let me tell you that the Lord will work in this last work in a manner very much out of the common order of things, and in a way that will be contrary to any human planning. There will be those among us who will always want to control the work of God, to dictate even what movements shall be made when the work goes forward under the direction of the angel who joins the third angel in the message to be given to the world. God will use ways and means by which it will be seen that He is taking the reins in His own hands. The workers will be surprised by the simple means that He will use.”

— Testimonies to Ministers, 299

“Who will go for us?”

How many people built the ark?

How many people left Ur of the Chaldees, or led Israel out of Egypt?

How many people stood up against the Midianites, or fought Goliath?

How many stood on the plain of Dura, or announced the coming of the Lamb of God?

How many nailed Ninety-five Theses on the local church door?

How many started the “Millerite Movement”?

“Who will go for us?”

“There will be religious failures because men have not faith. When they look at the things that are seen, impossibilities present themselves, but God knows nothing of impossibilities. The great work of God will advance only by the push of faith.”

— Manuscript 116, 1897

“Who will go for us?”

“Those in the churches should feel the burden of labor and the work, and ministers should encourage those that feel any burden in that direction.... As soon as they begin to experience a desire to work, our finite minds must not pronounce upon it, and think that they must go through the minister’s ordeal, all the way through, before they can be accepted as laborers. Let them go out. Let them test their power, their ability, and see what they will do, and not go to them and say, ‘You aren’t a minister.’...”

“Who will go for us?”

“We must have more of a missionary spirit; we must be better missionaries, educated so that we shall acknowledge talent where it is. You say such a man has not had an education. So he has not. How big an education did the fishermen have?...”

“Who will go for us?”

“It is not the education that is going to make men laborers. We want to get all the education that we can, but at the same time men who have no education are not to be restricted as though they were not fit to go until they had the education. If they are humble men, if they are God-fearing men, then the Lord can use them to go fishing. He will use men just as He used the fishermen, and if they have vitality and earnestness and devotion, the Lord will give them His power, His grace....”

“Who will go for us?”

“We want our ministers to feel that they are under obligation to God to present individuals that shall go out and that shall work in different places to the very best of their ability. While they are under the ministers’ watchcare, and while the ministers can give instruction and can fit them to go out, let them gather themselves right by their side, and not feel they are ignorant men. They can do more.

...

“Who will go for us?”

“But here is the very thing that needs prudence and carefulness. You say it will make us a lot of trouble. So it will, because some will go before they have any particular burden, and they will want to go. But is not that the very thing we will have to bear? Certainly it is. We have kept our hands too firmly to keep people back instead of urging them forward.”

— Manuscript 75, 1896

But... how?

“When the Lord sees that you are faithful in doing what you can to relieve human misery, He will move upon others to provide means to care for those who need help.”

— Review and Herald, January 15, 1895

“If we make a success, others will follow our example.”

— Letter 42, 1895

But... how?

“The prohibitions that have bound about the labors of those who would go forth to warn the people in the cities of the soon-coming judgments should every one be removed. None are to be hindered from bearing the message of present truth to the world. Let the workers receive their directions from God. When the Holy Spirit impresses a believer to do a certain work for God, leave the matter with him and the Lord. I am instructed to say to you, Break every yoke that would prevent the message from going forth with power to the cities.

But... how?

“This work of proclaiming the truth in the cities will take means, but it will also bring in means. A much greater work would have been done if men had not been so zealous to watch and hinder some who were seeking to obtain means from the people to carry forward the work of the Lord.”

— Letter 172, 1908

But... how?

“As we do this work, we shall find that means will flow into our treasuries, and we shall have means with which to carry on a still broader and more far-reaching work. Shall we not advance in faith, just as if we had thousands of dollars? We do not have half faith enough. Let us act our part in warning these cities. The warning message must come to the people who are ready to perish, unwarned, unsaved. How can we delay?”

— Manuscript 53, 1909

What would that even look like?

“I want to tell you, dear friends, we can do ten times more than we do.... Some may say, Sister White, what does this mean, ‘Go out into the highways and the byways?’ How are we going to accomplish it? By trying. Go right to work, and as you begin to try, you will feel the presence of angels right around you, and you will have the interpretation yourselves of what this means.”

— Manuscript 76, 1910

What would that even look like?

“That which we might have done twenty or thirty years ago [130–140 years ago now] will have to be done and carried forward in a very different manner than it could have been then. But do your best now. Do not delay....

“You just go to work, and you see if you do not have ways open before you and if the hearts of the people are not moved. You tell them the simple story of the cross, and lay it right out before them that the salvation of their souls is hanging in the balance; and if you do this, the God of heaven will make the impression. He will do it.”

— Manuscript 72, 1910

What would that even look like?

“Our danger does not arise from the opposition of the world; but it is found in the liability of our being in friendship with the world, and imitating the example of those who love not God or His truth.”

— Review and Herald, February 5, 1895

“The disciples were not afraid to proclaim the truth. They expected that they would be persecuted. ‘Whom ye crucified.’ Why did they not keep that back? Because it was a testimony that they were to bear before the great men of the earth.”

— Review and Herald, April 22, 1890

“Ohh! Sounds exciting!”

[God wants His people to] “be out of the cities. There will be places where we cannot inhabit the cities. Our lives will be in danger if we do.

“And this is why I have kept before you for years that the cities must be worked without delay....

“God... intends that you shall open these cities and go very guardedly. If you do not, you will lose your lives before you know it. It is no small work that is now resting upon us.

“Ohh! Sounds exciting!”

“But someone will say, ‘Suppose I give away all that I have, and then become dependent on others. It would be said, “That man was a fool to do as he did”; and what shall we do then?’”

“Ohh! Sounds exciting!”

“That is not the way the Majesty of Heaven talked. He did not count the cost of saving sinners. He became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and had not where to lay His head, that you might be saved. But we seem to think that if we make a little sacrifice, we have done a great deal, when we should say with David, ‘All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.’”

— *Signs of the Times*, December 10, 1885

That's kind of hard core...

“Tidings of the wilderness prophet and his wonderful announcement, spread throughout Galilee.... In Nazareth it was told in the carpenter shop that had been Joseph’s, and One recognized the call. His time had come. Turning from His daily toil, He bade farewell to His mother, and followed in the steps of His countrymen who were flocking to the Jordan.”

— Desire of Ages, 109

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“The poor widow gave her living to do the little that she did. She deprived herself of food in order to give those two mites to the cause she loved. And she did it in faith, believing that her heavenly Father would not overlook her great need. It was this unselfish spirit and childlike faith that won the Saviour’s commendation.”

— *Desire of Ages*, 615

Surprise!

“I speak not my own words when I say that God’s Spirit will pass by those who have had their day of test and opportunity, but who have not distinguished the voice of God or appreciated the movings of His Spirit. Then thousands in the eleventh hour will see and acknowledge the truth.... These conversions to truth will be made with a rapidity that will surprise the church, and God’s name alone will be glorified.”

— Letter 43, 1890

Get ready for strange things!

“Many who are standing aloof from the Seventh-day Adventists are living more in accordance with the light they have received than are many Seventh-day Adventists. This may seem strange to you, but strange things will have to be demonstrated to show the foolishness of the wisdom of those who judge others who have not seen the light.”

— Letter 59, 1900

Two Stories

“Watchman, what of the night?” The watchman said, ‘The morning comes, and also the night.’”

— Isaiah 21:11-12

Two Stories

“As the watchmen are accosted, ‘What of the night?’ the answer is given unfalteringly, ‘The morning cometh, and also the night.’... The morning and the night are both at hand—the opening of endless day to the righteous, the settling down of eternal night to the wicked.”

— *Great Controversy*, 632

Not the same-old, same-old

Which is why I've long kept my eye on these statements:

“When the cities are worked as God would have them, the result will be the setting in operation of a mighty movement such as we have not yet witnessed.

— Medical Ministry, 304

“Henceforth medical missionary work is to be carried forward with an earnestness with which it has never yet been carried. This work is the door through which the truth is to find entrance to the large cities.”

— Testimonies, Vol. 9, 167

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— Matthew 25:1-6

“‘Watchman, what of the night?’ The watchman said, ‘The morning comes, and also the night.’”

— Isaiah 21:11-12

One from the New Testament and one from the Old.

CLICK for first text:

I’m sure the story is familiar, so we won’t go through all of it.

And, somewhat similar, here’s the Old Testament story:

CLICK for second text:

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“While appearing to the children of men as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, [Satan] will bring disease and disaster, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation.”

— Great Controversy, 589

“The Lord gives warnings to the inhabitants of the earth, as in the Chicago fire and the fires in Melbourne, London, and the city of New York. When God’s restraining hand is removed, the destroyer begins his work. Then in our cities the greatest calamities will come.”

— Manuscript 127, 1897

What qualifies as a “populous city”?

Vernon—70 K

Kelowna—165 K

Calgary—1.65 M

Vancouver—2.65 M

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“The wrath of God is preparing to come upon all the cities—not all at once but one after another. And if the terrible punishment in one city does not cause the inhabitants of other cities to be afraid and seek repentance, their time will come.... The destruction will begin in certain places, and the destruction of life will be sudden and but few will escape.”

— Manuscript 233, 1902

4

This sounds really bad, and I’m pretty sure it will be. But there’s one particular detail that’s important to notice:

There’s still opportunity for repentance. So this is before the close of probation. That means there’s value—the kind of value that can save souls—in understanding what’s going to be happening at that time.

If anything, the next detail is a bit more somber even than this one.

There are going to be “issues”

“I have been shown that most of the rising generation will be swept off by death prior to the time of trouble. Some will live, but most children of believing and unbelieving parents will be spared the day of trial for God’s people.”

— Letter 51a, 1878

“Ere long we are to be brought into strait and trying places, and the many children brought into the world will in mercy be taken away before the time of trouble comes.

— Manuscript 152, 1899

What could selectively target the younger population?

I could think of a few things, but I don’t have any inspired information on that, so I won’t guess on this one.

But it’s worth noting that this wasn’t just some one-off aberration.

CLICK for second text:

Yeah... that’s somber. But we still have this:

CLICK for next page:

There are going to be “issues”

“The Lord has often instructed me that many little ones are to be laid away before the time of trouble. We shall see our children again. We shall meet them and know them in the heavenly courts. Put your trust in the Lord, and be not afraid.”

— Letter 196, 1899

But there is a plan

“Let little companies go forth to do the work to which Christ appointed His disciples. Let them labor as evangelists, scattering our publications, talking of the truth to those they meet, praying for the sick, and, if need be, treating them, not with drugs, but with nature’s remedies. Let the workers remember always that they are dependent on God. Let them not trust in human beings for wisdom.”

— Manuscript 141, 1903

That is a very good thing! This is a war that we just happen to be caught up in, and going into a war without some plan of action is a really bad idea.

So... what's the plan?

CLICK for item:

But there is a plan

“Let our ministers who have gained an experience in preaching the Word learn how to give simple treatments and then go forth as medical missionary evangelists.

“Workers—gospel medical missionaries—are needed now. We cannot afford to spend years in preparation. Soon doors now open to the truth will be forever closed. Carry the message now. Do not wait, allowing the enemy to take possession of fields now open before you.”

— Manuscript 141, 1903

Notice that idea of doors that will be forever closed. That may sound like some communist or maybe Muslim country in the 10/40 window, but actually, she's mostly talking about cities. Just file that thought away for now.

So that's more or less the Lord's plan for a counter attack. It may not sound like much, but it's enough to get the devil's attention!

But that brings more issues

“As if we meant to...”

“As Lucifer sees that we are making efforts to work the cities as if we meant to give the last message, his wrath will be aroused, and he will employ every device in his power to hinder the work.”

— Letter 74, 1910

Ellen White speaks of working the cities “as if we meant to give the last message.” It’s subtle, but don’t you detect just a touch of sarcasm there? It’s kind of like she’s saying, “C’mon, guys! Get serious!”

And that raises an interesting question. What would “working the cities” look like if we ever did get serious about it? Well, if getting serious can be taken to mean, “Let’s try following directions this time,” then it’s going to look like—you guessed it!—medical missionary work.

“As if we meant to...”

“Henceforth medical missionary work is to be carried forward with an earnestness with which it has never yet been carried. This work is the door through which the truth is to find entrance to the large cities.”

— Testimonies, vol. 9, 167

10

In connection with this statement, it's worth noting that after a series of highly successful “Your Best Pathway to Health” free medical missionary mega clinics in San Francisco, Oakland, San Antonio, Spokane, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Beckley, and Dallas-Fort Worth—all of which are “cities”—after all that came more than two years of “two weeks to flatten the curve” and the effectual splintering of the Adventist medical community over the question of mandated treatments. Where did that come from?

I don't think I'm over dramatizing it a bit to say that it came straight from Lucifer.

Why so nervous, Lucifer?

“The burden of our cities has rested so heavily upon me that it has sometimes seemed that I should die. The work in the cities is the essential work for this time, and is now to be taken hold of in faith. When the cities are worked as God would have them, the result will be the setting in operation of a mighty movement, such as we have not yet witnessed. May the Lord give wisdom to our brethren, that they may know how to carry forward the work in harmony with His will.

The devil seems worried about cities!

I like that. It helps me know what we need to be doing. Of course, it doesn't hurt to have it spelled out in black and white in statements like this:

CLICK for text:

There's one more sentence at the end of this paragraph, and it will give us a lot to think about. See if you can spot the significant point:

CLICK for highlighting:

Why so nervous, Lucifer?

“The burden of our cities has rested so heavily upon me that it has sometimes seemed that I should die. The work in the cities is the essential work for this time, and is now to be taken hold of in faith. When the cities are worked as God would have them, the result will be the setting in operation of a mighty movement, such as we have not yet witnessed. May the Lord give wisdom to our brethren, that they may know how to carry forward the work in harmony with His will. **With mighty power the cry is to be sounded in our large centers of population, ‘Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.’**”

— *Review and Herald*, November 17, 1910

12

It may not be immediately obvious, but this might be considered a monkey wrench in the gears of some theological views. The problem is that the Bible verse she quotes is what Adventists know as the “midnight cry,” and it was “fulfilled” back in 1844.

It’s a long story, but one of the side effects of the Desmond Ford apostasy back in the 1980s has been a tendency amongst more “conservative” theologians to hold to a strong, “historicist” approach to interpreting the Bible.

I have no problem with that as long as historicism is applied to the specific, “time span prophecies” of Daniel and Revelation. But to say that some “hermeneutical principle” rules out a second, future fulfillment of this “already fulfilled” parable, is... wrong.

Still Important

“To say that a passage means just this and nothing more, that you must not attach any broader meaning to the words of Christ than we have in the past, is saying that which is not actuated by the Spirit of God.... The truth, as it is in Jesus, is capable of constant expansion, of new development.”

— *Review and Herald*, October 21, 1890

OK... I like “constant expansion” and “new development.” But is this statement talking about the parable of the Bridegroom?

I have no idea what specifics Ellen White may have had in mind when she wrote these words, but there are plenty of direct comments on the parable itself.

Still Important

“I am often referred to the parable of the ten virgins, five of whom were wise, and five foolish. This parable has been and will be fulfilled to the very letter, for it has a special application to this time, and, like the third angel’s message, has been fulfilled and will continue to be present truth till the close of time.”

— Review and Herald, August 19, 1890

Still Important

“Prepare for the call, ‘Behold the Bridegroom cometh! Go ye out to meet Him.’”

— Letter 160, 1903

“The ten virgins are watching in the evening of this earth’s history. All claim to be Christians. All have a call, a name, a lamp, and all claim to be doing God service. All apparently watch for his appearing. But five are wanting.”

— *Review and Herald*, October 31, 1899

That sounds future to me. And this next one conveniently uses the word itself.

CLICK for two items:

Still Important

“My mind was carried to the future, when the signal will be given. ‘Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.’”

— *Review and Herald*, February 11, 1896

“We cannot be ready to meet the Lord by waking up at the last minute, when the cry is heard, ‘Behold, the Bridegroom cometh,’ gathering up our lamps, from which the oil has burned away, and thinking then to have them replenished.”

— *Signs of the Times*, August 6, 1894

All sounds future to me. But not only is it sometime in the future, it's at a specific time in the future!

Check out this next statement:

Still Important

“With mighty power the cry is again to be sounded in our large centers of population, ‘Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.’

— *Manuscript 13, 1910*

“Medical missionaries are to go forth; workers in every line are to proclaim, ‘Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.’”

— *Review and Herald, September 28, 1911*

When does this happen?

When somebody gets around to working “our large centers of population.”

And who would that be? “Medical missionaries,” of course!

When that message is proclaimed, the “mighty movement” takes off.

But half the virgins are left behind.

Still Important

“I seemed to have my mind carried to the future when the signal will be given announcing, ‘Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.’ [Matt. 25:6.] But some had delayed to obtain the oil to replenish their lamps and too late they find that character, which is represented by the oil, is not transferable.”

— Manuscript 61b, 1895

That “not transferable” comment doesn’t sound good.

It isn’t good at all, actually, and some of the other “bridegroom” quotations make it clear that, for the foolish virgins, this is the end of the line.

Still Important

“The parable of the ten virgins is given to us that we may understand that there is an hour when the gates are closed.”

— Letter 25, 1895

“When the foolish virgins reached the banqueting hall, they received an unexpected denial. The master of the feast declared, ‘I know you not.’ They were left standing without, in the empty street, in the blackness of the night.”

— Letter 161, 1903

That’s a picture that I find hard to shake. It’s just a very graphic depiction of exactly where I don’t want to end up.

But why is this all associated with the large cities? This kind of hopelessness sounds a lot like the close of probation, and surely that comes a little further on down the “closing events chart.”

Indeed. The “general close of probation” comes later, after the people of the cities have heard God’s message. But the foolish virgins have already heard that message, and they failed to take it up and share it.

That is a serious milestone, a fork in the road, so to speak. Five of the virgins are on one side of that door, and five are on the other. That’s a big deal.

Still Important

“This is no time for the messengers of God to stop to prop up those who know the truth, and who have every advantage. Let them go on to lift the standard and give the warning, ‘Behold, the Bridegroom cometh! go ye out to meet him.’”

— Letter 64a, 1895

“By failing to lift the cross you lose much in this life and everything in the future life.... You will find yourself in the condition of the foolish virgins, without oil in your vessel with your lamp. Prayers and exhortation, all the good advice in the world, cannot save you.”

— Letter 66, 1899

20

Doesn't that seem kind of heartless? Like just walking away from the local synagogue and only preaching to the Gentiles. Who would do something like that?

Yeah. His name was Paul. You can find the story in Acts chapter 13. He said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.”

But it's not because God is mad at the foolish virgins. It's because, at that stage of things, they're just too far gone to pull back.

CLICK for text:

“Important” is an understatement...

“In quick succession the judgments of God will follow one another—fire and flood and earthquake, with war and bloodshed.

“Oh, that the people might know the time of their visitation! There are many who have not yet heard the testing truth for this time. There are many with whom the Spirit of God is striving. The time of God’s destructive judgments is the time of mercy for those who have had no opportunity to learn what is truth. Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; His hand is still stretched out to save, while the door is closed to those who would not enter.”

— Testimonies, vol. 9, 97

21

There’s a passage in volume 9 of the Testimonies that I’ve heard spoken of as “the close of probation for Adventists.” I’ve heard that for years, but I was never really able to figure out where it fit into the overall scheme of things.

I’m pretty sure I know where it fits, now.

CLICK for text:

What strikes me, though, is that now that I know where to fit this statement into the bigger picture, it looks like it’s a lot earlier on that closing events chart than I ever expected.

For me, that’s a wake up call. The announcement of the Bridegroom’s coming that comes from those gospel-medical missionaries working in our large centers of population isn’t the wake up call that will let me be ready. It’s the wake up call to see if I have any oil. My fate is decided already at that point.

“Important” is an understatement...

“I saw the latter rain was coming as suddenly as the midnight cry, and with ten times the power.”

— Manuscript 4, 1852

22

There’s an urgency to this issue. It could all happen very suddenly.

CLICK for text:

This is a direct comparison to the 1844 midnight cry. So how sudden was that?

On August 15, 1844, when S.S. Snow spoke at a Millerite camp meeting in Exeter, New Hampshire, he launched the Midnight Cry. His message explained the disappointment that came from expecting Christ to return in 1843, and set the October 22 date for the end of the prophecy.

That message spread quickly throughout North America, and to a degree in other parts of the world. That all happened in sixty-eight days. And on August 14, no one had a clue.

So... what say we aim at the target?

“Our cities are to be worked. To devote our efforts to other worthy enterprises, and leave unworked our cities, in which are large numbers of all nationalities, is not wise.”

— Manuscript 13, 1910

Aside from fixing an event that identifies the call to go out and meet the Bridegroom, I think this whole line of evidence tells us what we need to be aiming at.

CLICK for text:

Timing is key...

“The sin that calls down the wrath of God unmixed with mercy must be of the most heinous character. Is the world to be left in darkness as to the nature of this sin? Most assuredly not. God does not deal thus with His creatures. His wrath is never visited upon sins of ignorance. Before His judgments are brought upon the earth, the light in regard to this sin must be presented to the world, that man may know why these judgments are to be inflicted, and may have opportunity to escape them.”

— *Signs of the Times*, November 1, 1899

About five slides back, I sort of casually mentioned the “general close of probation,” and the need for the people of the cities to be warned before that would happen.

Let’s just nail that matter down with a little more authority than just me talking.

CLICK for text:

Timing is key...

“The whole earth is to be lightened with the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the channels of the great deep. Prophecies are being fulfilled, and stormy times are before us. Old controversies which have apparently been hushed for a long time will be revived, and new controversies will spring up; new and old will commingle, and this will take place right early. The angels are holding the four winds, that they shall not blow, until the specified work of warning is given to the world; but the storm is gathering, the clouds are loading, ready to burst upon the world, and to many it will be as a thief in the night.”

— Manuscript 27, 1892

Same thought. The “work of warning” has to come first.

Beyond that point, I can relate to that “the storm is gathering” comment. I mean, who can’t? Anyone who can access the internet or even listen to the CBC news....

It’s like, if you’re not three days dead already, you know that something’s about to break.

I am not interested in that happening, and then me looking around like a deer in the headlights, and crying that someone stole my stuff last night.

Planning is good... but God's plans are best

“Let me tell you that the Lord will work in this last work in a manner very much out of the common order of things, and in a way that will be contrary to any human planning. There will be those among us who will always want to control the work of God, to dictate even what movements shall be made when the work goes forward under the direction of the angel who joins the third angel in the message to be given to the world. God will use ways and means by which it will be seen that He is taking the reins in His own hands. The workers will be surprised by the simple means that He will use.”

— Testimonies to Ministers, 299

I find it useful to remember that “any human planning” includes my planning. And without going into all the details on this, it’s worth noting that God’s plan does NOT include a “Wild, Wild West,” every man for himself approach. God is not the author of confusion, and when He takes the reins in His own hands, all the horses are going to be working together as a team.

“Who will go for us?”

How many people built the ark?

How many people left Ur of the Chaldees, or led Israel out of Egypt?

How many people stood up against the Midianites, or fought Goliath?

How many stood on the plain of Dura, or announced the coming of the Lamb of God?

How many nailed Ninety-five Theses on the local church door?

How many started the “Millerite Movement”?

27

From what we’ve seen so far, there’s a mighty movement coming, and that’s great, but it raises a few down-to-earth questions. The obvious starters are, How does it get started? How does it grow? Who makes it happen? And what does it take to make it happen?

Truth be told, those questions are kind of ridiculous. Even a smattering of sacred history makes it all seem obvious.

CLICK for six items:

Now, for anyone who has ever filled any sort of administrative position, one look at that list will be enough to give them a case of the jitters. Why? Because none of that sort of thing is going to fit comfortably with anyone’s master plan for the year. Administrators simply can’t plan stuff like that. Much less can they set up a budget for it!

“Who will go for us?”

“There will be religious failures because men have not faith. When they look at the things that are seen, impossibilities present themselves, but God knows nothing of impossibilities. The great work of God will advance only by the push of faith.”

— Manuscript 116, 1897

And, sure enough, it doesn't always go smoothly.

CLICK for text:

But how is God's church today supposed to relate to that sort of thing?

“Who will go for us?”

“Those in the churches should feel the burden of labor and the work, and ministers should encourage those that feel any burden in that direction.... As soon as they begin to experience a desire to work, our finite minds must not pronounce upon it, and think that they must go through the minister’s ordeal, all the way through, before they can be accepted as laborers. Let them go out. Let them test their power, their ability, and see what they will do, and not go to them and say, ‘You aren’t a minister.’...”

“Ordeal.” Who knew?

“Who will go for us?”

“We must have more of a missionary spirit; we must be better missionaries, educated so that we shall acknowledge talent where it is. You say such a man has not had an education. So he has not. How big an education did the fishermen have?...”

“Who will go for us?”

“It is not the education that is going to make men laborers. We want to get all the education that we can, but at the same time men who have no education are not to be restricted as though they were not fit to go until they had the education. If they are humble men, if they are God-fearing men, then the Lord can use them to go fishing. He will use men just as He used the fishermen, and if they have vitality and earnestness and devotion, the Lord will give them His power, His grace....”

“Who will go for us?”

“We want our ministers to feel that they are under obligation to God to present individuals that shall go out and that shall work in different places to the very best of their ability. While they are under the ministers’ watchcare, and while the ministers can give instruction and can fit them to go out, let them gather themselves right by their side, and not feel they are ignorant men. They can do more.

...

“Who will go for us?”

“But here is the very thing that needs prudence and carefulness. You say it will make us a lot of trouble. So it will, because some will go before they have any particular burden, and they will want to go. But is not that the very thing we will have to bear? Certainly it is. We have kept our hands too firmly to keep people back instead of urging them forward.”

— Manuscript 75, 1896

That's an educational program I'd like to see all over the world.

But... how?

“When the Lord sees that you are faithful in doing what you can to relieve human misery, He will move upon others to provide means to care for those who need help.”

— *Review and Herald*, January 15, 1895

“If we make a success, others will follow our example.”

— Letter 42, 1895

Just a thought or two now on how to pull off something like that. It's never going to look like a workable financial model. It's never going to be predictable, and orderly, and dignified. Compared to a regular approach to education, it will never fit into tidy semesters, and class credits.

How could it ever be done?

CLICK for two items:

But... how?

“The prohibitions that have bound about the labors of those who would go forth to warn the people in the cities of the soon-coming judgments should every one be removed. None are to be hindered from bearing the message of present truth to the world. Let the workers receive their directions from God. When the Holy Spirit impresses a believer to do a certain work for God, leave the matter with him and the Lord. I am instructed to say to you, Break every yoke that would prevent the message from going forth with power to the cities.

But... how?

“This work of proclaiming the truth in the cities will take means, but it will also bring in means. A much greater work would have been done if men had not been so zealous to watch and hinder some who were seeking to obtain means from the people to carry forward the work of the Lord.”

— Letter 172, 1908

This is a sensitive issue, of course, since money always manages to attract attention. That last comment is about fund raising, or actually about people who wanted to restrict fund raising.

But... how?

“As we do this work, we shall find that means will flow into our treasuries, and we shall have means with which to carry on a still broader and more far-reaching work. Shall we not advance in faith, just as if we had thousands of dollars? We do not have half faith enough. Let us act our part in warning these cities. The warning message must come to the people who are ready to perish, unwarned, unsaved. How can we delay?”

— Manuscript 53, 1909

37

According to the most legitimate looking site I could find on the internet, 1000 1909 US dollars would be worth about \$35,000 (\$46,000 Canadian) dollars today.

How many thousand was Ellen White talking about when she said “thousands”? At least two, I suppose. And it strikes me as somewhat more adventurous than I’ve been in the past to act like I had \$70,000 (\$92,000) that I can’t actually see at the moment.

This is the sort of thing that would be nice to understand pretty clearly before setting off an such an adventure.

But the way Spirit of Prophecy paints the picture, faith is going to have to trump that kind of understanding.

What would that even look like?

“I want to tell you, dear friends, we can do ten times more than we do.... Some may say, Sister White, what does this mean, ‘Go out into the highways and the byways?’ How are we going to accomplish it? By trying. Go right to work, and as you begin to try, you will feel the presence of angels right around you, and you will have the interpretation yourselves of what this means.”

— Manuscript 76, 1910

What would that even look like?

“That which we might have done twenty or thirty years ago [130–140 years ago now] will have to be done and carried forward in a very different manner than it could have been then. But do your best now. Do not delay....

“You just go to work, and you see if you do not have ways open before you and if the hearts of the people are not moved. You tell them the simple story of the cross, and lay it right out before them that the salvation of their souls is hanging in the balance; and if you do this, the God of heaven will make the impression. He will do it.”

— Manuscript 72, 1910

What would that even look like?

“Our danger does not arise from the opposition of the world; but it is found in the liability of our being in friendship with the world, and imitating the example of those who love not God or His truth.”

— Review and Herald, February 5, 1895

“The disciples were not afraid to proclaim the truth. They expected that they would be persecuted. ‘Whom ye crucified.’ Why did they not keep that back? Because it was a testimony that they were to bear before the great men of the earth.”

— Review and Herald, April 22, 1890

There’s a lot I don’t know about how all this might play out, but when the midnight cry goes to the cities, I’m sure it won’t look just like the world’s approach.

CLICK for text:

And, occasionally at least, it will look pretty bold:

CLICK for second text:

“Ohh! Sounds exciting!”

[God wants His people to] “be out of the cities. There will be places where we cannot inhabit the cities. Our lives will be in danger if we do.

“And this is why I have kept before you for years that the cities must be worked without delay...”

“God... intends that you shall open these cities and go very guardedly. If you do not, you will lose your lives before you know it. It is no small work that is now resting upon us.

Some people love the idea of being brave, speaking boldly, telling it all like it really is.

There are times that's needed. And times when it's not.

That's probably why Ellen White helpfully encourages us to work “guardedly.”

CLICK for three items:

And just like in practically everything else in this world, it will boil down to the question of money.

CLICK for next page:

“Ohh! Sounds exciting!”

“But someone will say, ‘Suppose I give away all that I have, and then become dependent on others. It would be said, “That man was a fool to do as he did”; and what shall we do then?’”

There are reasons Jesus advised that we count the cost before jumping into some things:

CLICK for text:

That doesn't sound very encouraging. But the statement goes on.

“Ohh! Sounds exciting!”

“That is not the way the Majesty of Heaven talked. He did not count the cost of saving sinners. He became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and had not where to lay His head, that you might be saved. But we seem to think that if we make a little sacrifice, we have done a great deal, when we should say with David, ‘All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.’”

— Signs of the Times, December 10, 1885

Radical sacrifice—whether of money, or possessions, or of time and talent—is always going to be a touchy issue. There will never be a good replacement for knowing what God wants us as individuals to do.

And it turns out, that even that will change from time to time.

CLICK for next page:

That's kind of hard core...

“Tidings of the wilderness prophet and his wonderful announcement, spread throughout Galilee.... In Nazareth it was told in the carpenter shop that had been Joseph’s, and One recognized the call. His time had come. Turning from His daily toil, He bade farewell to His mother, and followed in the steps of His countrymen who were flocking to the Jordan.”

— Desire of Ages, 109

44

There’s a fine line between imagination and following God’s leading. Jesus worked in that carpenter shop for eighteen years after that first visit to the Temple when He had begun to understand His mission.

I imagine that for eighteen years, He dreamed, and prayed, and studied about what He was supposed to accomplish as the “Lamb of God.” It must have seemed like forever...

And then, one day, everything changed:

CLICK for text:

Now, it’s true that neither you nor I are the Lamb of God. But the followers of the Lamb have often been called to do some pretty radical things.

Notes continue on next page

That's kind of hard core...

“Tidings of the wilderness prophet and his wonderful announcement, spread throughout Galilee.... In Nazareth it was told in the carpenter shop that had been Joseph’s, and One recognized the call. His time had come. Turning from His daily toil, He bade farewell to His mother, and followed in the steps of His countrymen who were flocking to the Jordan.”

— Desire of Ages, 109

On the face of things, Jesus voluntarily opted for a life of unemployment and homelessness. He once mentioned that His financial status was a couple steps below that of foxes and birds.

And for any of us to just up and walk away from a decent job and house and walls that can keep the snow out... well, that looks kind of irresponsible at the very least.

But there's this funny thing called "faith" that can change that whole equation.

That's kind of hard core...

"The poor widow gave her living to do the little that she did. She deprived herself of food in order to give those two mites to the cause she loved. And she did it in faith, believing that her heavenly Father would not overlook her great need. It was this unselfish spirit and childlike faith that won the Saviour's commendation."

— Desire of Ages, 615

It would be nice to know the rest of the story in her case.

Maybe she found four mites lying by the side of the road as she walked home that day. Who knows?

Maybe God simply laid it on the heart of a kind neighbor to give her a food basket to tide her over. Who knows?

My point is simply that, sometimes, some of God's people are going to be called to make some pretty hard core choices. It may not be me who's called to do that, but if not, I think there will be a lot riding on my reaction to those kind of decisions.

Will I say, "That man was a fool to do as he did," or will I say, "Looks like I need to get together another food basket."

Surprise!

“I speak not my own words when I say that God’s Spirit will pass by those who have had their day of test and opportunity, but who have not distinguished the voice of God or appreciated the movings of His Spirit. Then thousands in the eleventh hour will see and acknowledge the truth.... These conversions to truth will be made with a rapidity that will surprise the church, and God’s name alone will be glorified.”

— Letter 43, 1890

Get ready for strange things!

“Many who are standing aloof from the Seventh-day Adventists are living more in accordance with the light they have received than are many Seventh-day Adventists. This may seem strange to you, but strange things will have to be demonstrated to show the foolishness of the wisdom of those who judge others who have not seen the light.”

— Letter 59, 1900

Two Stories

“Watchman, what of the night?’ The watchman said, ‘The morning comes, and also the night.’”

— Isaiah 21:11-12

I remember reading this years ago, and thinking that was a really strange answer. It didn't make any sense. That just goes to show that I'm not the guy to be writing any sort of Bible commentary.

It turns out that that strange answer carries a lot of meaning.

Two Stories

“As the watchmen are accosted, ‘What of the night?’ the answer is given unfalteringly, ‘The morning cometh, and also the night.’... The morning and the night are both at hand—the opening of endless day to the righteous, the settling down of eternal night to the wicked.”

— *Great Controversy*, 632

I remember reading this years ago, and thinking that was a really strange answer. It didn't make any sense. That just goes to show that I'm not the guy to be writing any sort of Bible commentary.

It turns out that that strange answer carries a lot of meaning.

Not the same-old, same-old

Which is why I've long kept my eye on these statements:

“When the cities are worked as God would have them, the result will be the setting in operation of a mighty movement such as we have not yet witnessed.

— Medical Ministry, 304

“Henceforth medical missionary work is to be carried forward with an earnestness with which it has never yet been carried. This work is the door through which the truth is to find entrance to the large cities.”

— Testimonies, Vol. 9, 167

CLOSE WITH VIDEOS