

## FIRST AND LAST

Revelation 1; Isaiah 44

### EPHESUS & SMYRNA—REVELATION 2:1-11

2 Timothy 3:12.

“Many will be imprisoned, many will flee for their lives from cities and towns, and many will be martyrs for Christ’s sake in standing in defense of the truth.” *Selected Messages*, book 3, 397.

### EPHESUS—CONQUERING AND TO CONQUER

“In His parting conversation with His disciples on the night before the crucifixion the Saviour made no reference to the suffering that He had endured and must yet endure. He did not speak of the humiliation that was before Him, but sought to bring to their minds that which would strengthen their faith, leading them to look forward to the joys that await the overcomer. He rejoiced in the consciousness that He could and would do more for His followers than He had promised; that from Him would flow forth love and compassion, cleansing the soul temple, and making men like Him in character; that His truth, armed with the power of the Spirit, **would go forth conquering and to conquer.**” *Acts of the Apostles*, 23.

“In vision I saw **two armies** in terrible conflict. One army was led by banners bearing the world’s insignia; the other was led by the blood-stained banner of Prince Emmanuel. Standard after standard was left to trail in the dust, as company after company from the Lord’s army joined the foe, and tribe after tribe from the ranks of the enemy united with the commandment-keeping people of God. An angel flying in the midst of heaven put the standard of Emmanuel into many hands, while a mighty general cried out with a loud voice: ‘Come into line. Let those who are loyal to the commandments of God and the testimony of Christ now take their position. Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters. Let all who will, come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.’

“The battle raged. Victory alternated from side to side. Now the soldiers of the cross gave way, ‘as when a standard-bearer fainteth.’ Isaiah 10:18. But their apparent retreat was but to gain a more advantageous position. Shouts of joy were heard. A song of praise to God went up, and angel voices united in the song, as Christ’s soldiers planted His banner on the walls of fortresses till then held by the enemy. The Captain of our salvation was ordering the battle, and sending support to His soldiers. His power was mightily displayed, encouraging them to press the battle to the gates. He taught them terrible things in righteousness as He led them on step by step, **conquering and to conquer.**

“At last the victory was gained. The army following the banner with the inscription, “The commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus,” was **gloriously triumphant**. The soldiers of Christ were close beside the gates of the city, and with joy the city received her King. The kingdom of peace and joy and everlasting righteousness was established.” *Christian Experience and Views*, 228.

“God had placed His people in Canaan as a mighty breastwork to stay the tide of moral evil, that it might not flood the world. If faithful to Him, God intended that **Israel should go on conquering and to conquer**. He would give into their hands nations greater and more powerful than the Canaanites. The promise was: ‘If ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, . . . then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves. Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be. There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the Lord your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as He hath said unto you.’ Deuteronomy 11:22–25.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 544.

#### SMYRNA

“The message came to Smyrna, a church in Asia Minor, and likewise to the Christian church as a whole, during the second and third centuries. It was a time when paganism was making its final stand for supremacy in the world. Christianity had spread with wonderful rapidity, until it was known throughout the world. Some embraced the faith of Christ because of heart conversion, others, because of the might of argument brought to bear, and still others, because they could see that the cause of paganism was waning, and policy led them to the side that promised to be victorious. These conditions weakened the spirituality of the church. The Spirit of Prophecy, which characterized the apostolic church, was gradually lost. This is a gift which brings the church to which it is entrusted, into the unity of the faith. When there were no longer true prophets, false teachings spread rapidly; the philosophy of the Greeks led to a false interpretation of the Scriptures, and the self-righteousness of the ancient Pharisees, so often condemned by Christ, again appeared in the midst of the church. The foundation was laid during the two centuries preceding the reign of Constantine for those evils which were fully developed during the two centuries following. **During this period, martyrdom became popular in many parts of the Roman Empire. Strange as this may seem, it is none the less true. It was the result of the relationship existing between Christians and pagans.**

“In the Roman world the religion of all nations was respected, but the Christians were not a nation, they were but a sect of a despised race. When they therefore persisted in denouncing the religion of all classes of men, when they held secret meetings, and separated themselves entirely from the customs and practices of their nearest relatives and most intimate friends, they became objects of suspicion, and often of persecution, by the pagan authorities. **Often they brought persecution upon themselves, when there was no spirit of opposition in the minds of the rulers. In illustration of this spirit, history gives the details of the execution of Cyprian, bishop of Carthage. When his sentence was read, a general cry arose from the listening multitude of Christians, who said, ‘We will die with him.’**

**“The spirit with which many professed Christians accepted death, and even needlessly** provoked the enmity of the government, probably had much to do with the passage, in 303, a. d., of the edict of persecution, by the emperor Diocletian, and his assistant, Galerius. The edict was universal in its spirit, and was enforced with more or less strenuousness for ten years.

“Many Christians suffered death. The sacrifice of a child of God opens afresh the wound made in the Father’s heart when Christ was slain. The death of Christ was a sign of separation from sin, on the part of him who accepted the sacrifice. Like the smoke from the altar of incense in the sanctuary service, a life given for the Saviour becomes a sweet savor in the sight of Jehovah. Smyrna means ‘myrrh’ or ‘sweet scent.’ This name is applied to those who willingly offered their lives for their faith. The mercy of God is shown in this message in a most wonderful way; for **although some doubtless suffered needlessly, and brought persecution upon themselves**, yet God does not condemn them for mistaken zeal. This is a message that contains no reproof, and it would seem that the tenderness of our Father causes Him to lose sight of the fact that death was sought; because He sees the earnestness in the heart of the one who offers his life. It is the same in individual experience. **The over-zealous oftentimes suffer when there is no need of suffering**, and yet God reads the motive of the heart, and measures out the reward in accordance with what He finds there. Fellowmen may criticize and condemn, but God accepts any sacrifice made in His name; and He says to such a follower as He did to King David, ‘Thou didst well that it was in thine heart.’” Steven Haskell, *The Story of the Seer of Patmos*, 50–52.

Judges 17:6; 21:25.

#### **PERGAMOS & THYATIRA—REVELATION 2:12–29**

2 Thessalonians 2:3–8; Revelation 13:2; Daniel 8:11, 12; 12:11; 11:30–31.

“We have no time to lose. Troublous times are before us. The world is stirred with the spirit of war. Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place. The prophecy in **the eleventh of Daniel** has nearly reached its complete fulfillment. **Much of the history that has taken place in fulfillment of this prophecy will be repeated.**

“In the thirtieth verse a power is spoken of that ‘verses 30 through thirty-six quoted.

**“Scenes similar to those described in these words will take place.”** *Manuscript Releases*, number 13, 394.

#### **THE THIRD & FOURTH SEAL—REVELATION 6:5–8**

“And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon” (Revelation 5:1–3).

“There in His open hand lay the book, the roll of the history of God’s providences, the prophetic history of nations and the church. Herein was contained the divine utterances, His authority, His commandments, His laws, the whole symbolic counsel of the Eternal, and the history of all ruling powers in the nations. In symbolic language was contained in that roll the influence of every nation, tongue, and people from the beginning of earth’s history to its close.

“This roll was written within and without. John says: [Revelation 5:4, 5, 8–14; 6:8–11; Revelation 8:1–4; quoted.]

**“The same spirit is seen today that is represented in Revelation 6:6–8. History is to be repeated. That which has been will be again.”** *Manuscript Releases*, volume 9, 7.

#### **THYATIRA**

“Today the church of God is free to carry forward to completion the divine plan for the salvation of a lost race. For many centuries God’s people suffered a restriction of their liberties. The preaching of the gospel in its purity was prohibited, and the severest of penalties were visited upon those who dared disobey the mandates of men. As a consequence, the Lord’s great moral vineyard was almost wholly unoccupied. The people were deprived of the light of God’s word. The darkness of error and superstition threatened to blot out a knowledge of true religion. **God’s church on earth was as verily in captivity during this long period of relentless persecution as were the children of Israel held captive in Babylon during the period of the exile.**” *Prophets and Kings*, 714.

#### **THE FIFTH SEAL—REVELATION 6:9–11**

““And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, **How long**, O Lord, Holy and true, doest Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them [They were pronounced pure and holy]; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled’ [Revelation 6:9–11]. Here were scenes presented to John that were not in reality but that which would be in a period of time in the future.

“**Revelation 8:1–4** quoted.” *Manuscript Releases*, volume 20, 197.

“When the fifth seal was opened, John the Revelator in vision saw beneath the altar the company that were slain for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. After this came the scenes described in the eighteenth of Revelation, when those who are faithful and true are called out from Babylon. [**Revelation 18:1–5, quoted.**]” *Manuscript Releases*, volume 20, 14.

#### **HOW LONG?**

Isaiah 6:11–13; Psalm 74:1–10; 79:5–10; Zechariah 1:12; Daniel 8:13; Revelation 6:9–11

#### **SARDIS, PHILADELPHIA & LAODICEA**

“Oh, what a description! How many there are in this fearful condition. **I earnestly entreat every minister to study diligently the third chapter of Revelation, for in it is portrayed the condition of things existing in the last days.** Study carefully every verse in this chapter, for through these words Jesus is speaking to you.” *Manuscript Releases*, volume 18, 193.

“In all the land saith the Lord; TWO PARTS therein shall be cut off, and die; but the THIRD shall be left therein. God says he will bring the THIRD PART through the fire, and refine them. They shall call upon him, and he will hear them. He will say IT IS MY PEOPLE; and they shall say the LORD IS MY GOD.’ First part, SARDIS, the nominal church or Babylon. Second part, Laodicea, the nominal Adventist. Third part, Philadelphia, the only true church of God on earth, for they ask to be translated to the city of God. Revelation 3:12; Hebrews 12:22–24. In the name of Jesus, I exhort you again to flee from the Laodiceans, as from Sodom and Gomorrah. Their teachings are false and delusive; and lead to utter destruction. Death! DEATH!!\* eternal DEATH!!! is on their track. Remember Lot’s wife.” Joseph Bates, *Review and Herald*, volume 1, November 1850.

“Sardis not only represents ‘those escaping’ or ‘that which remains’ after the great apostasy and terrible persecutions of the Middle Ages, but some authorities believe that the word *ardis* means ‘remnant’ of ‘an escaped few,’ and therefore represent Protestantism after what was vital in it had evaporated so that there are only a few faithful ones remaining. There would be a ‘remnant’ who would continue the work of reform even after the Reformation had waned and Protestantism in general was dead. There would be ‘a few names,’ or ‘a few souls’ (*Moffatt*), in Sardis who had ‘not defiled their garments.’” Taylor Bunch, *The Seven Epistles of Christ*, 186.

Daniel 11:41.

#### **EPHESUS, PHILADELPHIA & LAODICEA**

*Early Writings*, 259–261; *The Great Controversy*, 611

#### **EPHESUS AND LAODICEA**

“The Scriptures describe the condition of the world just before Christ’s second coming. James the apostle pictures the greed and oppression that will prevail. He says, ‘Go to now, ye rich men, . . . ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton. Ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.’ James 5:1–6. **This is a picture of what exists today.** By every species of oppression and extortion, men are piling up colossal fortunes, while the cries of starving humanity are coming up before God.

“Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey.’ Isaiah 59:14, 15. This was fulfilled in the life of Christ on earth. He was loyal to God’s commandments, setting aside the human traditions and requirements which had been exalted in their place. Because of this He was hated and persecuted. **This history is repeated.**” *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 170.

“The work of John the Baptist, and the work of those who in the last days go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah to arouse the people from their apathy, are in many respects the same. His work is a type of the work that must be done in this age. Christ is to come the second time to judge the world in righteousness. The messengers of God who bear the last message of warning to be given to the world, are to prepare the way for Christ’s second advent, as John prepared the way for his first advent. In this preparatory work, ‘every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain’ for **history is to be repeated**, and once again ‘the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.’

“**In this age**, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord. Just such a work as that which John did, is to be carried on in these last days. The Lord is giving messages to his people, through the instruments he has chosen, and he would have all heed the admonitions and warnings he sends. The message preceding the public ministry of Christ was, Repent, publicans and sinners; repent, Pharisees and Sadducees; ‘for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Our message is not to be one of peace and safety. As a people who believe in Christ’s soon appearing, we have a definite message to bear,—‘Prepare to meet thy God.’

“Our message must be as direct as was that of John. He rebuked kings for their iniquity. Notwithstanding the peril his life was in, he never allowed truth to languish on his lips. Our work in this age must be as faithfully done.” *Southern Watchman*, March 21, 1905.

“Satan is working that **the history of the Jewish nation may be repeated in the experience of those who claim to believe present truth**. The Jews had the Old Testament Scriptures, and supposed themselves conversant with them. But they made a woeful mistake. The prophecies that refer to the glorious second appearing of Christ in the clouds of heaven they regarded as referring to His first coming. **Because He did not come according to their expectations, they turned away from Him**. Satan knew just how to take these men in his net, and deceive and destroy them.” *Selected Messages*, book 2, 111.