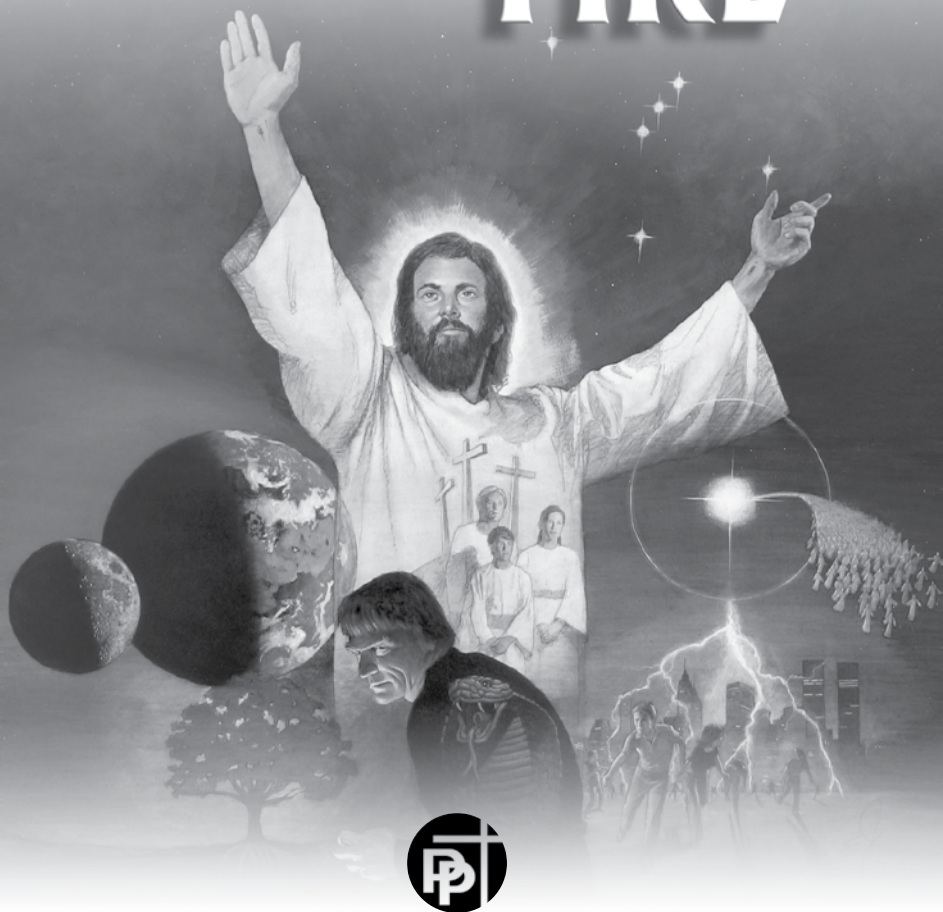


# Love UNDER FIRE



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# Foreword

What is happening to our world? Storms, earthquakes, and tsunamis devastate large areas, with a huge toll of death and injury, loss of property, and ongoing suffering. War and conflict, not only between nations but between ideologies and ethnic groups, seem more and more common and unsolvable. Economic setbacks, even in the richest nations, threaten the security of people everywhere. A decline in morality and—worse yet—a lack of moral awareness seems at the root of an increase of crime and of much social deterioration. Are we on the verge of a global upheaval?

*Love Under Fire* outlines the grand sweep of events that have brought us to this point and will usher in this world's final events. In doing so it emphasizes the authority of the Bible while presenting the underlying cause of the evils we see around us—the ongoing conflict that Satan has waged against Christ. Throughout the history of this earth, Satan has misrepresented God's character of love. He has put "love under fire," especially in the person of Christ, who is love, but also in Christ's true followers. This conflict has affected the whole world. *Love Under Fire* picks up the story where the New Testament leaves it,

tracing the startling account of what has happened to the Christian faith since Bible times and what will soon develop in the great controversy between Christ and Satan. How did we get where we are today? And where are events leading us? Despite difficult days ahead, the book points us to a glorious future, grander than we can imagine.

*Love Under Fire* is an adaptation of *From Here to Forever*, a 1982 condensed edition of Ellen G. White's classic volume, *The Great Controversy*. The condensed volume included all the chapters of the original, using only the author's own words but shortening the account.

The current adaptation goes a step beyond this, using some words, expressions, and sentence constructions more familiar to twenty-first century readers. It does this not only in the portions written by Ellen G. White, but also in the quotations she included from others and in the Appendix material, to enhance readability. Occasionally, it restores a sentence or clause left out of the original condensation. Most of the Bible quotations come from the New King James Version, which closely resembles the King James Version that Ellen White commonly used. It is

hoped that readers who are new to her writings will enjoy this adaptation and that it will encourage them to read the original editions of her works.

This volume presents insights into Bible prophecy, highlighting significant prophecies that have already met their fulfillment and showing what the Bible says is soon to happen. It places these events of the past, present, and future into their larger framework, so that the reader can understand the meaning of history and the purpose for what is yet to come.

Ellen G. White wrote five powerful

volumes that together comprise the Conflict of the Ages series, tracing the conflict between Christ and Satan from its origin in heaven, through the major events of Bible times, and finally in post-Bible times down to the end of the conflict. *Love Under Fire* was condensed and adapted from the last of the five volumes. That many more readers may be drawn to God through these books and their presentation of Bible themes is the hope and prayer of

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# Lifting the Veil on the Future\*

Before sin entered this world, Adam and Even enjoyed open fellowship with their Maker. But since our first parents separated themselves from God by disobedience, the human race has been cut off from this great privilege. The plan of redemption, however, opened a way for those living on the earth still to have a connection with heaven. God has communicated with human beings by His Spirit by giving divine light to the world through revelations to His chosen servants. “Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).

During the first twenty-five hundred years of human history, there was no written message from God. Those whom God had instructed communicated their knowledge to others, and it was handed down from father to son over many generations. The recording of such things in writing began in the time of Moses. Inspired revelations were then put together in an Inspired Book. This work continued during the long period of sixteen hundred years—from Moses, the historian of creation and the law, to John, the recorder of the grandest truths of the gospel.

The Bible points to God as its author, yet it was written by human hands, and in the varied style of its different books it reflects the characteristics of the individual writers. The truths revealed are all “given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16), yet they are expressed in human words. By His Holy Spirit the Infinite One has brought light into the minds and hearts of His servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols and illustrations; and those to whom He revealed these truths have themselves put the thought into human language.

Written in different ages, by men who differed widely in social status and occupation and in their mental and spiritual abilities, the books of the Bible present a wide contrast in style as well as a diversity in the kinds of subjects they treat. The various writers use different forms of expression. Often one will present the same truth more strikingly than another. And as several writers present a subject in different ways and from different perspectives, readers who are superficial, careless, or prejudiced may think they see a discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with

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\* *Author's Introduction.*

clearer insight, recognizes the underlying harmony.

The different authors bring out the truth in its varied aspects. One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of the subject, and he grasps the points that relate to his experience or to his ability to understand and appreciate them. Another relates to a different phase. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, each presents what most strongly impresses his own mind—a different aspect of the truth in each, but a perfect harmony through them all. And the truths revealed in this way unite to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet human needs in all the circumstances and experiences of life.

God has chosen to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies. He Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified these men and women and enabled them to do this work. He guided their minds in selecting what to speak and write. God entrusted the treasure to earthen vessels, yet it is still from Heaven. The message comes through the imperfect expression of human language, yet it is the testimony of God. The obedient, believing child of God sees in this message the glory of a divine power, full of grace and truth.

In His Word, God has committed to us the knowledge we need for salvation. We are to accept the Holy Scriptures as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of Christian experience. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for

doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

Yet the fact that God has revealed His will to humanity through His Word does not make the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit unnecessary. On the contrary, our Savior promised to give the Spirit to open the Word to His servants, to illuminate and apply its teachings. And since it was the Spirit of God who inspired the Bible, it is impossible for the teaching of the Spirit ever to be contrary to that of God's Word.

The Spirit was not given—and never will be given—to replace the Bible, because the Scriptures explicitly say that the Word of God is the standard by which we must test all teaching and experience. The apostle John says, "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). And Isaiah declares, "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

The work of the Holy Spirit has been blamed for the errors of people who claim to be enlightened by the Spirit and then say that they no longer need the Word of God to guide them. They are governed by impressions that they think are the voice of God in the heart. But the spirit that controls them is not the Spirit of God. This following of impressions while neglecting the Scriptures can only lead to confusion, to deception and ruin. It



serves only to aid the plans of the evil one. Since the ministry of the Holy Spirit is vitally important to the church of Christ, it is one of Satan's schemes to use the errors of extremists and fanatics to discredit the work of the Spirit and cause the people of God to neglect this source of strength that our Lord Himself has provided.

In harmony with the Word of God, His Spirit was to continue working throughout the gospel era. During the ages while the Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testament were being given, the Holy Spirit did not stop communicating light to individual minds, even apart from the revelations that were to be included in the books of the Bible. The Bible itself tells how people received warning, reproof, counsel, and instruction through the Holy Spirit in matters unrelated to the giving of the Scriptures. And it mentions prophets in different ages whose messages are not recorded. In the same way, after the Bible was complete, the Holy Spirit was still to continue working, to enlighten, warn, and comfort the children of God.

Jesus promised His disciples, "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." "When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; . . . and He will tell you things to come." (John 14:26; 16:13.) Scripture plainly teaches that these promises, instead of just being limited to the days of the apostles, extend to Christ's church in all ages. The Savior assures His followers, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew

28:20). And Paul declares that the gifts and workings of the Spirit were given to the church "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12, 13).

For the believers at Ephesus the apostle prayed "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the *spirit of wisdom and revelation* in the knowledge of Him, *the eyes of your understanding being enlightened*; that you may know what is the hope of His calling . . . and what is the *exceeding greatness* of His power toward us who believe" (Ephesians 1:17-19). The ministry of the divine Spirit to enlighten the understanding and open to the mind the deep things of God's Holy Word was the blessing that Paul was seeking for the Ephesian church.

After the wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, Peter urged the people to repent and be baptized in the name of Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, and he said: "You shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:38, 39).

Directly connected with the scenes of the great day of God, through the prophet Joel the Lord has promised a special manifestation of His Spirit (Joel 2:28). This prophecy received a partial fulfillment in the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. But

it will be completely fulfilled in the display of divine grace that will accompany the closing work of the gospel.

The great controversy between good and evil will become more and more intense to the very end of time. In all ages Satan has shown his anger against the church of Christ, and God has given His grace and Spirit to His people to strengthen them to stand against the power of the evil one. When the apostles of Christ were to carry His gospel to the world and to record it for all future ages, they were especially given the enlightenment of the Spirit. But as the church approaches its final deliverance, Satan will work with greater power. He comes down "having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time" (Revelation 12:12). He will work "with all power, signs, and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9). For six thousand years that mastermind that once was highest among the angels of God has given all of his energy to the work of deception and ruin. And all the subtle depths of satanic skill he has acquired, all the cruelty he has developed during these struggles of the ages, he will bring against God's people in the final conflict. And in this time of danger the followers of Christ are to carry to the world the warning of the Lord's second advent. Their testimony is to help prepare a people to stand before Him at His coming, "without spot and blameless" (2 Peter 3:14). At this time the church needs the special gift of divine grace and power at least as much as in the days of the apostles.

Through the illumination of the

Holy Spirit, the scenes of the long-running conflict between good and evil have been opened to the writer of these pages. From time to time I have been permitted to see the working, in different ages, of the great controversy between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin, the first transgressor of God's holy law. Satan's malice against Christ has been directed against His followers. In all the history of the past we may trace the same hatred of the principles of God's law, the same policy of deception, by which Satan has tried to make error appear as truth, substitute human laws for the law of God, and lead people to worship the creature rather than the Creator. In all ages Satan has tried continually to misrepresent the character of God, to lead people to cling to a false concept of the Creator, and then to regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love. He has tried to set aside the divine law, leading people to think they are free from its requirements. And he has persecuted those who dare to resist his deceptions. We can see these things in the history of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, of martyrs and Reformers.

In the great final conflict, Satan will use the same approaches, reveal the same spirit, and work for the same goal as in all the preceding ages. What has been will be, except that the coming struggle will be marked with a terrible intensity such as the world has never seen before. Satan's deceptions will be more subtle, his attacks more determined. If it were possible, he

would lead astray those whom God is saving (Mark 13:22).

As the Spirit of God has opened to my mind the great truths of His Word and the scenes of the past and the future, I have been told to make known to others what has been revealed in this way—to trace the history of the controversy in past ages, and especially to present it in a way that will shed light on the fast-approaching struggle of the future. In doing this, I have tried to select and group together events in the history of the church in such a way as to show the unfolding of the great testing truths that have been given to the world at different times, that have stirred up the anger of Satan and the hatred of a world-loving church, and that have been preserved by the witness of those who “did not love their lives to the death” (Revelation 12:11).

In these records we may see a preview of the conflict ahead of us. Looking at them in the light of God’s Word and with the illumination of His Spirit, we may see Satan’s deceptions revealed and the dangers we must shun if we want to be found “without fault” before the Lord at His coming (Revelation 14:5).

The great events that have marked the progress of reform in past ages are matters of history, well known and universally acknowledged by the Protestant world. They are facts that no one can refute. This history I have presented briefly, in keeping with the scope of the book and the need to condense the facts into as little space as possible while still giving a proper understanding of their meaning for us.

In some cases where a historian has grouped events together in a way to give a brief yet comprehensive view of the subject, or has summarized details in a convenient manner, his words have been quoted. But for some of these no specific credit has been given, since the quotations are not given for the purpose of citing that writer as authority, but because his statement offers a convenient and forcible presentation of the subject. In telling about the experience and views of those carrying forward the work of reform in our own time, I have made similar use of their published works.

This book is intended not so much to present new truths about the struggles of times past as to bring out facts and principles that relate to coming events. Yet when we view them as a part of the controversy between the forces of light and darkness, we see all these records of the past with a new significance. Through them a light shines on the future, illuminating the pathway of those who, like the reformers of past ages, will be called, even at the risk of losing everything that this world offers, to witness “for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:9).

The purpose of this book is to unfold the scenes of the great controversy between truth and error, to reveal Satan’s deceptions and the means by which we may successfully resist him, to present a satisfactory solution to the great problem of evil, shedding light on the origin and the final end of sin in a way that reveals fully the justice and goodness of God in all His dealings with His creatures, and to show the

holy, unchanging nature of His law. It is my earnest prayer that through the influence of this book, people may be delivered from the power of darkness and become “partakers of the inheri-

tance of the saints in the light” (Colossians 1:12), to the praise of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

E.G.W.

# A Forecast of the World's Destiny

From the crest of the Mount of Olives, Jesus looked at Jerusalem. The magnificent buildings of the temple were in full view. The setting sun lighted up its snowy white marble walls and gleamed from the golden tower and pinnacle. What child of Israel could gaze on that scene without a thrill of joy and admiration! But other thoughts occupied Jesus' mind. "As He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it" (Luke 19:41).

Jesus' tears were not for Himself, even though ahead of Him lay Gethsemane, the scene of His approaching agony, and Calvary, the place of crucifixion, was not far away. Yet it was not these scenes that cast the shadow over Him in this time of gladness. He wept for the thousands of doomed people in Jerusalem.

Jesus saw the history of more than a thousand years of God's special favor and guardian care for the chosen people. God had honored Jerusalem above all the earth. The Lord had "chosen Zion . . . for His dwelling place" (Psalm 132:13). For ages, holy prophets had given their messages of warning. Daily the priests had offered the blood of lambs, pointing to the Lamb of God.

If Israel as a nation had preserved

her loyalty to Heaven, Jerusalem would have stood forever as God's chosen city. But the history of the people God had favored was a record of backsliding and rebellion. With more than a father's tender love, God had "compassion on His people and on His dwelling place" (2 Chronicles 36:15). When appeals and rebuke had failed, He sent the best gift of heaven, the Son of God Himself, to plead with the unrepentant city.

For three years the Lord of light and glory had been among His people, "doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil," setting free those who were bound, restoring sight to the blind, causing the lame to walk and the deaf to hear, cleansing lepers, raising the dead, and preaching the gospel to the poor (see Acts 10:38; Luke 4:18; Matthew 11:5).

Jesus lived as a homeless wanderer to minister to people's needs and their troubles, to plead with them to accept the gift of life. The waves of mercy, beaten back by those stubborn hearts, returned in a stronger tide of sympathetic, inexpressible love. But Israel had turned from her best Friend and only Helper, despising the pleadings of His love.

The time of hope and pardon was

quickly passing. The cloud that had been building through ages of apostasy and rebellion was about to burst upon a guilty people. They had scorned, abused, and rejected the only One who could save them from their approaching fate, and they would soon crucify Him.

As Christ looked at Jerusalem, He saw before Him the doom of a whole city and a whole nation. He saw the destroying angel with sword uplifted against the city that had been God's dwelling place for so long. From the very spot that Titus and his army later occupied, He looked across the valley at the sacred courtyards and covered walkways of the temple. With tear-filled eyes He saw foreign forces surrounding the walls. He heard the tread of armies marshaling for war, the voice of mothers and children crying for food in the besieged city. He saw Jerusalem's holy house, her palaces and towers, given to the flames, a heap of smoldering ruins.

Looking down the ages, He saw the covenant people scattered in every land, "like wrecks on a desert shore." Divine pity and yearning love found a voice in the mournful words: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37).

Christ saw Jerusalem as a symbol of the world hardened in unbelief and rebellion, hurrying on to meet the judgments of God. His heart was moved with pity for the afflicted and

suffering ones of earth. He longed to relieve them all. He was willing to give His last measure of life to bring salvation within their reach.

The Majesty of heaven in tears! That scene shows how hard it is to save the guilty from the results of violating the law of God. Jesus saw the world involved in deception similar to that which caused Jerusalem's destruction. The great sin of the Jews was their rejection of Christ; the great sin of the world would be their rejection of God's law, the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. Millions in slavery to sin, doomed to suffer the second death, would refuse to listen to words of truth in their day of opportunity.

### **Magnificent Temple Doomed**

Two days before the Passover, Christ went again with His disciples to the Mount of Olives overlooking the city. Once more He gazed on the temple in its dazzling splendor, a crown of beauty. Solomon, the wisest of Israel's rulers, had completed the first temple, the most magnificent building the world ever saw. After Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it, it was rebuilt about five hundred years before the birth of Christ.

But the second temple was not as magnificent as the first. No cloud of glory, no fire from heaven, descended on its altar. The ark, the mercy seat, and the tablets of the law were not to be found there. No voice from heaven made known to the priest the will of God. The second temple was not honored with the cloud of God's glory, but with the living presence of One who

was God Himself revealed in the flesh. The "Desire of all nations" had come to His temple when the Man of Nazareth taught and healed in its sacred courts. But Israel had refused that Gift from heaven. When the humble Teacher went out from its golden gate that day, the glory had forever departed from the temple. Already the Savior's words were fulfilled: "Your house is left to you desolate" (Matthew 23:38).

The disciples had been amazed at Christ's prediction of the overthrow of the temple, and they wanted to understand what His words meant. Herod the Great had lavished both Roman and Jewish treasure on the temple. Massive blocks of white marble, shipped from Rome, formed part of its structure. The disciples had called the attention of their Master to these, saying, "See what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" (Mark 13:1).

Jesus made the solemn and startling reply, "Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2). The Lord had told the disciples that He would come the second time. So when He mentioned judgments on Jerusalem, their minds went to that coming, and they asked: "When will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3).

Christ presented to them an outline of important events before the close of time. The prophecy He spoke had two meanings. While foreshadowing the destruction of Jerusalem, it also predicted the terrors of the last great day.

Judgments were to fall on Israel for rejecting and crucifying the Messiah. "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place' (whoever reads, let him understand), 'then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains'" (Matthew 24:15, 16; see also Luke 21:20, 21). When the pagan banners of the Romans would be set up in the holy ground outside the city walls, then the followers of Christ were to run for safety. To escape, they must not allow any delay. Because of her sins, God had decreed judgment against Jerusalem. Her stubborn unbelief made her doom certain.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem accused Christ of being the cause of all the troubles that had come upon them because of their sins. Though they knew that He was sinless, they declared that His death was necessary for their safety as a nation. They agreed with the decision of their high priest that it would be better for one man to die than for the whole nation to perish (see John 11:47-53).

While they killed their Savior because He condemned their sins, they thought of themselves as God's favored people and expected the Lord to deliver them from their enemies!

### **God's Long-suffering**

For nearly forty years the Lord delayed His judgments. There were still many Jews who were ignorant of Christ's character and work. And the children had not had the light that their parents had rejected. God would cause light to shine on them through

the apostles' preaching. They would see how prophecy had been fulfilled not only in Christ's birth and life, but in His death and resurrection. God did not condemn the children for the sins of the parents, but when the children rejected the additional light He gave them, they became partakers of the parents' sins and filled up the cup of their iniquity.

In their stubborn refusal to repent, the Jews rejected the last offer of mercy. Then God withdrew His protection from them. The nation was left to the control of the leader it had chosen. Satan stirred up the fiercest and lowest passions of the heart. People were beyond reason—controlled by impulse and blind rage, and satanic in their cruelty. Friends and relatives betrayed one another. Parents killed their children, and children their parents. Rulers had no power to rule themselves. Uncontrolled passions made them tyrants. The Jews had accepted false testimony to condemn the innocent Son of God. Now false accusations made their lives uncertain. The fear of God no longer disturbed them. Satan was at the head of the nation.

Leaders of opposing groups attacked each other's forces and slaughtered without mercy. Even the sacredness of the temple could not restrain their fierce fighting. The sanctuary was polluted with the bodies of the dead. Yet the leaders behind this hellish work declared that they had no fear that Jerusalem would be destroyed, for it was God's own city! Even while Roman legions surrounded the temple, many Jews still strongly believed that the Most High would step in to defeat their

enemies. But Israel had turned her back on God's protection, and now they had no defense.

### **Omens of Disaster**

All the predictions Christ had given about Jerusalem's destruction were fulfilled to the letter. Signs and wonders appeared. For seven years a man continued to go up and down the streets of Jerusalem, announcing disasters to come. This strange man was imprisoned and whipped, but in the face of insult and abuse he answered only, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!" He was killed in the siege he foretold.<sup>1</sup>

Not one Christian died in the destruction of Jerusalem. After the Romans under their leader Cestius had surrounded the city, they abandoned the siege unexpectedly when everything seemed ready for the attack. The Roman general withdrew his forces for no apparent reason. The waiting Christians recognized the promised sign (Luke 21:20, 21).

God so overruled events that neither Jews nor Romans would prevent the Christians' escape. When Cestius retreated, the Jews pursued, and while both forces were fully engaged, the Christians throughout the land were able to make their escape without interference to a place of safety, the city of Pella.

The Jewish forces pursued Cestius and his army and attacked the fleeing forces from behind. Only with great difficulty did the Romans succeed in making their retreat. The Jews returned to Jerusalem in triumph with their spoils. Yet this apparent success brought them only evil. It inspired



their spirit of stubborn resistance to the Romans, which soon brought indescribable suffering on the doomed city.

Terrible were the disasters that fell on Jerusalem when Titus resumed the siege. The city was surrounded at the time of the Passover, when millions of Jews were assembled within its walls. Supplies of food had previously been destroyed through the revenge of the warring factions. Now the inhabitants experienced all the horrors of starvation. People gnawed the leather of their belts and sandals and the covering of their shields. Great numbers slipped out at night to gather wild plants growing outside the city walls, though the Romans put many to death with cruel torture. Often those who returned in safety were robbed of what they had found. Husbands robbed their wives, and wives their husbands. Children snatched the food from the mouths of their aged parents.

The Roman leaders made efforts to strike terror to the Jews and so cause them to surrender. Prisoners who resisted capture were scourged, tortured, and crucified before the wall of the city. Along the Valley of Jehoshaphat and at Calvary, the Romans erected crosses in great numbers. There was scarcely room to move among them. These things fulfilled that awful curse spoken before Pilate's judgment seat: "His blood be on us and on our children" (Matthew 27:25).

Titus was filled with horror as he saw bodies lying in heaps in the valleys. Like someone under a spell, he looked at the magnificent temple and

gave a command that not one stone of it was to be touched. He made an earnest appeal to the Jewish leaders not to force him to defile the sacred place with blood. If they would fight in any other place, no Roman would violate the sacredness of the temple! Josephus himself begged them to surrender, to save themselves, their city, and their place of worship. But with bitter curses, they hurled darts at him, their last human mediator. Titus's efforts to save the temple were in vain. Someone greater than he had declared that not one stone was to be left on another.

Titus finally decided to take the temple by storm, determined if possible to save it from destruction. But the troops disregarded his commands. A soldier threw a flaming torch through an opening in the porch, and immediately the cedar-lined rooms around the holy house were in a blaze. Titus rushed to the place and commanded the soldiers to put out the flames. His words went unheeded. In their fury the soldiers hurled blazing torches into the rooms attached to the temple and then slaughtered those who had found shelter there. Blood flowed down the temple steps like water.

After the temple was destroyed, the whole city fell to the Romans. The leaders of the Jews abandoned their unconquerable towers. Titus declared that God had given them into his hands, for no war machines, however powerful, could have won against those stupendous defenses. Both the city and the temple were destroyed to their foundations, and the ground on which the holy house had stood was

“plowed like a field” (see Jeremiah 26:18). More than a million people died. The survivors were carried away as captives, sold as slaves, dragged to Rome, thrown to wild beasts in the amphitheaters, or scattered as homeless wanderers throughout the earth.

The Jews had filled for themselves the cup of vengeance. In all the troubles that followed in their scattering, they were reaping the harvest that their own hands had sown. “O Israel, thou has destroyed thyself”; “for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.” (Hosea 13:9; 14:1, KJV.) People often say that the Jews’ sufferings were a punishment by the direct decree of God. This is the way the great deceiver tries to conceal his own work. By stubbornly rejecting divine love and mercy, the Jews had caused God’s protection to be withdrawn from them.

We cannot know how much we owe to Christ for the peace and protection we enjoy. The restraining power of God prevents mankind from coming fully under the control of Satan. The disobedient and unthankful have every reason to be grateful for God’s mercy. But when people pass the limits of God’s patient appeals, restraint is removed. God does not act as an executioner of the sentence against transgression. He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to reap what they have sown. Every ray of light rejected is a seed sown, and it yields its unfailing harvest. The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is finally withdrawn. Then there is no power left to control the evil desires of the heart, no protection from the malice and hatred of Satan.

### **Danger of Resisting God’s Call**

The destruction of Jerusalem is a solemn warning to everyone who is resisting the pleadings of God’s mercy. The Savior’s prophecy of judgments on Jerusalem is to have another fulfillment. In the fate of that chosen city we can see the doom of a world that has rejected God’s mercy and trampled on His law. Dark are the records of human misery that the earth has witnessed. Terrible have been the results of rejecting Heaven’s authority. But a scene still darker is presented in the revelations of the future. When the restraining Spirit of God will be completely withdrawn, no longer holding back the outburst of human passion and satanic anger, the world will see the results of Satan’s rule like it has never seen them before.

In that day, as when Jerusalem was destroyed, God’s people will be delivered. Christ will come the second time to gather His faithful ones to Himself. “Then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:30, 31).

People should be careful not to neglect the words of Christ. As He warned His disciples about Jerusalem’s destruction so that they could escape, so He has warned the world of the day of final destruction. All who choose may flee from the wrath to come. “There will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on

the earth distress of nations" (Luke 21:25; see also Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24–26; Revelation 6:12–17). "Watch therefore," are Christ's words of counsel (Mark 13:35). Those who obey the warning will not be left in darkness.

The world is no more ready to believe the message for this time than the Jews were to receive the Savior's warning about Jerusalem. No matter when it comes, the day of God will come as a surprise to the ungodly.

When life is going on in its usual way, when people are absorbed in pleasure, in business, in money-making, when religious leaders are praising the world's progress, and people are lulled in a false security—then, as the midnight thief slips into the unguarded home, so shall sudden destruction come upon the careless and ungodly, "and they shall not escape" (see 1 Thessalonians 5:2–5).

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1. Henry Hart Milman, *History of the Jews*, bk. 13.