

come from." Bates, *A Seal*, p. 17, interprets the first angel of Rev. 14:7 as fulfilled by the "Advent people" preaching in unison from the same chronological charts, in 1842 and 1844.

13 James White, "Our Present Position," *Review and Herald*, Dec., 1850.

14 Joseph Bates, *A Seal of the Living God* (New Bedford, 1849), p. 31.

15 Cf. the title of her earliest booklet, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, long available as the first part of *Early Writings*. Cf. also Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 32, "The Lord gave me the following view in 1847, while the brethren were assembled on the Sabbath, . . ." and *ibid.*, p. 48, "The Lord gave me a view, January 26, 1850, which I will relate."

16 Facsimile available in *Witness of the Pioneers* (Washington: The Ellen G. White Estate, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1961), p. 9.

17 See *Review and Herald*, October 8, 1861.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

19 *Idem.*

20 The anticipated rendezvous at Megiddo never took place.

21 Quoted in a Voice of Prophecy lesson series, No. 7.

22 Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:233-235.

23 Hetty Haskell to Ellen G. White, February 27 and July? (*sic*), 1900, in Laurel Ann Nelson Damsteegt, "Humble Giants: A Study of Stephen and Hetty Haskell," (Term paper, Andrews University, 1977), pp. 24-29.

24 The Greek word translated "generation" in Matt 24:34 is translated "brood (of vipers)" in Matt 23:33.

25 Josiah Litch, *An Address to the Public, and Especially to the Clergy* (Boston, 1841), p. 37, states clearly that "the Scriptures place the judgment" prior to the "resurrection." A year later Litch's *Prophetic Expositions* (2 vols., Boston, 1842), 1:50-54, insisted that "the trial must precede the execution," a proposition "so clear . . . that it is sufficient to state it." Litch cited John 5 and Rev 20, which show that some people will be resurrected "to life" at the second coming, and others will be resurrected "to death" at a later time, indicating that the judgment—which decides who is to be resurrected when—comes before resurrection.

26 LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 4 vols. (Washington: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1946-1954), 2:713-719.

27 *Ibid.*, 2:196, 240.

28 Cf. also John Wesley to "an old friend," November 27, 1750, in Richard P. Heitzenrater and Frank Baker, gen. eds, *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, 20:371, "I am for both [faith and reason]: for faith to perfect my reason, that, by the Spirit of God not putting out the eyes of my understanding but enlightening them more and more, I may 'be ready to give a clear', scriptural 'answer to every man that asketh me a reason of the hope that is in me'."

29 William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 1 (Washington: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1982).

30 James Londis, "Can We Trust the Church's Theologians?" *Slingscope*, April, 1981: "Right now we have a patchwork theology that is inappropriate for the main work of the church." Londis's appeal in this pastoral letter is for a theology that can answer the theological questions of non-Adventist theologians and the practical questions of ordinary people today. There is reason to believe he might now write the article differently.

31 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 423.

32 Gregory the Great, *Commentary on Job*, Dedicatory Letter, in LCC 9:185.

33 Ellen G. White, *Maranatha*, p. 132.

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## DIVINE LOVE, THE DELAY OF THE ADVENT AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

By Mark A. Finley

Speaker, It Is Written Telecast

### Introduction

One hot summer day a thirteen year old boy sat on a wooden barrel in the cool recesses of an old Vermont general store idly whittling on a sprig from a maple tree. At two o'clock the wind-up grandfather clock on the wall began to chime. But the mechanism jammed and the clock continued to strike. On its nineteenth stroke the dreaming lad suddenly aroused and dashing into the street began yelling out, "It's never been this late before!" It's never been this late either for students of Bible prophecy!

In his second epistle, the apostle Peter appeals for a deep heart preparation for the coming of Christ (2 Pet 3:1-13). The apostle makes three significant points: (1) How you live affects what you believe, and what you believe affects how you live; (2) The delay of the Advent has not occurred because of any failure on God's part. (3) It's possible to hasten the Advent.

### Lifestyle Determines Theology

Peter makes his first significant point in vss. 3-4, "Knowing this first that there shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" In effect, they are saying, "He is not coming." That's revealed in the last part of their query: "For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

The question, in their minds, has already been answered. They are not waiting for an answer. They are scoffers and so the question is not raised out of honest, genuine sincerity.

But note that these "scoffers" walk "*after their own lusts.*" Men and women pursuing their own desires, raise the question, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Their lifestyle determines their theology. Their morality (or lack of it) dictates what they believe, and they deny the imminence of the Advent.

This passage introduces the fact that *how* we act often will determine what we believe, while it is also true that we sincerely believe determines how we act. Thus, if I am fascinated by the lusts that captivate me on television, if sports dominate my thinking, if materialism grips me, or if my main object in life is to make money, these interests will affect my attitude toward a soon return of Christ. In addition to that, of course, what I believe about the second coming should have an impact on my lifestyle.

There is a subtle way of thinking about the Advent that can also weaken our ardor and zeal for the return of Jesus as much as a worldly lifestyle. The reasoning goes something like this: It doesn't make any difference whether Christ comes in 25 years or 50 years or 100 years or a 1,000. That's not your concern. Your concern is simply to be ready.

Now, that may sound good on the surface, but its effect can weaken church morale. It's like saying to a medical student, "Your state boards may come this year, or next year, or the year after. They may even come five years from now; just get ready." There is something about the rearranging of priorities when you look at the imminence of an event! The fact of the event conditions your behavior.

A sense of the Advent near has always spurred the church on. A sense that Christ is coming soon has always led to prayer, and commitment, and revival. The church senses an urgency and channels its time and energy and funds into evangelism and missionary activity. It channels its energy into prayer and soul winning. There is something about urgency. There is something about imminence. There is something about a soon coming Savior.

Notice who say, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Scoffers. Notice who says, "My Lord delayeth His coming" (Matt 24:48).

The evil servant, not the wise servant. So those among us who say that time makes no difference, and the Lord is delaying His coming, and He may not come in 50 years or 100 years—they are not classed with the wise servant in Scripture.

### Why the Delay?

Peter discusses in clear terms the delay of the Advent. He says, "But beloved be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." God's evaluation of time is different than mine.

Peter is saying that God does have a divine timetable. If you study the prophecies relating to the first coming of Jesus, you will see that Jesus came on time. "When the fullness of time was come, God has sent forth His Son" (Gal 4:4.) "In due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom 5:6). When Jesus is baptized in fulfillment of Daniel 9, He says, "The time is fulfilled" (Mark 1:14-15). When the prophetic clock struck the hour the Messiah came the first time. Peter says in effect, God has a prophetic time table, and when the clock strikes the prophetic hour, Christ will come.

Now Peter explains the apparent delay of the Advent, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (vs. 9). Peter says the reason there has been a delay is the long suffering nature of God.

I would like you to consider the delay of the Advent in the light of a suffering God and in the light of suffering love. When Jesus hung on Calvary, He revealed that God would rather suffer than to let you or me be lost. The cross is a revelation to our dull senses that God would rather suffer the agony of sin Himself, suffer the curse of sin Himself, suffer the second death Himself, than to let us be lost. The delay of the Advent reveals a God who suffers in love.

Too often we think of the delay of the Advent in terms of our suffering in a world of wickedness, a world where there are Bosnias and Hertzegovinas and Somalias, in a world where there is famine and heartache and children are blown up. We say, We want to be free from this suffering. But the delay of the Advent reveals that God is willing to suffer rather than to allow one person to be lost.

Think of it this way: We pass one another and often say, "How's

your day?" "Oh, my day's fine." How was God's day today? God went to 10,000 funerals today or more, and He will go to 10,000 more tomorrow. And He loves every one of those people more than you can possibly love your son or your daughter. God's heart of love suffers with every person lying in a hospital dying of cancer. In a way that I can never understand, Jesus in His sanctuary ministry above, bears our afflictions.

God bears the pain of every woman who's husband has run off with somebody else. God bears the agony of every woman who is being battered and beaten until her eyes are blackened and her nose is bloody, because her husband is an alcoholic. God bears the pain of every couple whose child is born dead. God bears the pain in a way that I can never understand of every teenager who smashes through the window of a wrecked car. And the Advent is delayed, because He would rather go on suffering than to cut short the salvation of any who could be saved. The delay of the Advent affects us, but think how it affects God.

In the great Thanksgiving Day to come God will sit at the head of the table and look for my and your place. And if that chair is empty, there will be an emptiness in His heart that is undescrivable forever. The delay of the Advent is not because God is marking off time, it's because He's reaching out to people. The delay of the Advent is because Jesus in His love would rather suffer as the Intercessor for humanity and experience the corporate pain that cosmic and universal sin brings, than have people who could have been saved to be lost.

When probation ultimately closes, it is not closed because God's mercy has run out. The close of probation is rather a declaration on the part of God that if the door of the sanctuary would remain open, it would make no difference because every person is fully ripe for harvest. He that is righteous, let him be righteous still, and he that is unrighteous let him be unrighteous still (cf. Rev 22:11). Probation's door does not close until everybody has made his/her final, complete, irrevocable decision. The Advent is delayed not because God's promises have failed, but because His love is relentless; His mercy reaches out to save men and women.

### Hastening the Advent

Peter's third point is that it is possible to hasten the day of our Lord's Advent. Notice what he says, Since you are living on the verge of the Advent, since He is coming quickly, rapidly as a thief, seeing that all nature will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be? Peter says, What you believe impacts on your life. "Looking for and hasting (now the KJV is a little awkward, it says hastening *unto* the coming of the day of God). Many translations say looking for and hastening *on* the coming of the day of God. I like the translation "hastening on the coming of the day of God."

Is it possible to hasten the Advent? It is possible, but there comes a point in history when cataclysmic events unfold so that every seed goes to harvest and character more rapidly develops in a crisis hour. So, although the church can hasten the Advent, the church cannot delay the Advent indefinitely. God is sovereign. And ultimately God takes control.

There's a point beyond which the judgments of God cannot be delayed. There was a point in the days of Noah when character was fully developed. Those who were on God's side, remained so; and those that weren't, remained opposed. And the door of the ark that had been open was now shut. That action did not indicate a ceasing of God's mercy, but that every seed had gone to harvest. Every human being had made his/her final, irrevocable decision.

What can the church do to hasten on the coming of the day of God? Scripture teaches three things.

*Prayer.* In the Lord's prayer we are instructed to pray, "Thy kingdom come" (Luke 11:2). Are you praying on your knees every day that Jesus' kingdom will come? The book of Revelation ends with that prayer of John, "Even so, come [quickly], Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20).

Why pray for a speedy return of our Lord? That which you pray for, you desire more. That which you pray for, (under the Holy Spirit) creates in you a desire to accomplish. As we are on our knees opening our hearts before God, there develops a kingdom consciousness. As we are on our knees seeking God, there develops a reorientation of our priorities, and we are lifted from the fog of this world.

*Repentance.* Now, you find the call for repentance in vss. 9, 11. The Lord desires that "all should come to repentance," and to live

godly lives. Repentance is a change of attitude about my personal condition before God. The end time call to holiness is an end time call for repentance that brings me before the Lord and says, "God, without You I'm nothing. God, without You I am going to be filled with self centeredness, and egotism. Without You I am going to be filled with criticism, and gossip, and anger and bitterness and lust. Within me there are seeds that are holding back the Advent. I seek your forgiveness and life-changing grace because I have, inadvertently maybe, perpetuated Your suffering.

*Rearranged Priorities.* Peter says, to rearrange your priorities so that you can reach out to a dying, lost world for Jesus Christ ("hastening the coming of the day of God," NKJV). The Master Himself said, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt 24:14).

The events in Eastern Europe in recent times are not merely fortuitous events in secular history, but are part of a divine plan that indicates this is the time for the church to arise and urgently proclaim its message. This is not the time for the church to settle down in a Laodicean complacency.

In a marvelous manner God has opened doors in the world. And he will open doors in your life. Is there somebody that you are praying for? Is there somebody in the community that you have a passion for their soul? I need to be involved in soul winning, not merely for the other person's soul, but for my own.

Without involvement my own spiritual growth is stunted. Without that my own spiritual life is thwarted. Without that life becomes self centered. God is leading you and me to an end-time holiness. He is leading us to deeper prayer and deeper repentance, and to a deeper passion for souls and a rearranging of our priorities.

## ATS Presents an exciting new book

### *ISSUES IN REVELATION AND INSPIRATION*

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