

The Seal of God

A study from the Testimonies for the Church Vol. V

(Annotated by Wm. H. Grotheer)

Introduction:

This is one of the most important chapters to be found anywhere in the Testimonies. Not only is the subject itself - "The Seal of God" - important, but also the setting of the action as described in this chapter of vital concern to every member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The time elements are clearly defined. The last remnant of time has been reached. The judgment of the living is in progress, for the sealing of the servants of God constitutes the judgment of God upon them.

As one reads the chapter carefully, two sets of three words and phrases need to be carefully noted. These sets of words are inter-related. One set is - "few," "some," and "many." The other set is - "the little company," "the church," and "the remnant." These sets when related and understood give a full and complete picture of our duty in this present hour. We will find ourselves in one of these categories, either with "the few," or among "the many," or we will respond as "some" did. Because of this, we will be either numbered in "the little company" and finally designated as "the remnant" or we will be found still in the "church" from which "the glory of the Lord had departed." "Our own course of action will determine where we will be.

5T.207.002 -

"He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand."

And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; and the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids, and

little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house."

Jesus is about to leave the mercy seat of the heavenly sanctuary to put on garments of vengeance and pour out His wrath in judgments upon those who have not responded to the light God has given them. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Instead of being softened by the patience and long forbearance that the Lord has exercised toward them, those who fear not God and love not the truth strengthen their hearts in their evil course. But there are limits even to the forbearance of God, and many are exceeding these boundaries. They have overrun the limits of grace, and therefore God must interfere and vindicate His own honor.

The verses quoted in the first two paragraphs are from Ezekiel 9:1,3-6. Take your Bibles and read the whole chapter. Observe carefully to see if any of the verses mention the words, "nations," or "Gentiles." This is vital to an understanding as to what the Testimony states in the paragraphs which immediately follow.

The time element of the Testimony is clearly noted - "Jesus is about to leave the mercy seat of the heavenly sanctuary." God the Father has already risen from "where He was" and gone to the entrance of the Tabernacle. He has taken the work for "Jerusalem" into His own hands. This work is defined in another Testimony as "the closing work for the church," and "the last work." (Vol.3 p.266)

3T.266.002 -

The true people of God, who have the spirit of the work of the Lord and the salvation of souls at heart, will ever view sin in its real, sinful character. They will always be on the side of faithful and plain dealing with sins which easily beset the people of God. Especially in the closing work for the church, in the sealing time of the one hundred and forty-four thousand who are to stand without fault before the throne of God, will they feel most deeply the wrongs of God's professed people. This is forcibly set forth by the prophet's illustration of the last work under the figure of the men each having a slaughter weapon in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side. "And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof."

3T.267.001 -

Who are standing in the counsel of God at this time? Is it those who virtually excuse wrongs among the professed people of God and who murmur in their hearts, if not openly, against those who would reprove sin? Is it those who take their stand against them and sympathize with those who commit wrong? No, indeed! Unless they repent, and leave the work of Satan in oppressing those who have the burden of the work and in holding up the hands of sinners in Zion, they will never receive the mark of God's sealing approval. They will fall in the general destruction of the wicked, represented by the work of the five men bearing slaughter weapons. Mark this point with care: Those who receive the pure mark of truth, wrought in them by the power of the Holy Ghost, represented by a mark by the man in linen, are those "that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done" in the church. Their love for purity and the honor and glory of God is such, and they have so clear a view of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, that they are represented as being in agony, even sighing and crying. Read the ninth chapter of Ezekiel.

But the general slaughter of all those who do not thus see the wide contrast *between sin and righteousness*, and do not feel as those do who stand in the counsel of God and receive the mark, is described in the order to the five men with slaughter weapons: "Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary."

5T.208.001 -

Of the Amorites the Lord said: "In the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Although this nation was conspicuous because of its idolatry and corruption, it had not yet filled up the cup of its iniquity, and God would not give command for its utter destruction. The people were to see the divine power manifested in a marked manner, that they might be left without excuse. The compassionate Creator was willing to bear with their iniquity until the fourth generation. Then, if no change was seen for the better, His judgments were to fall upon them.

With unerring accuracy the Infinite One still keeps an account with all nations. While His mercy is tendered with calls to repentance, this account will remain open; but when the figures reach a certain amount which God has fixed, the

ministry of His wrath commences. The account is closed. Divine patience ceases. There is no more pleading of mercy in their behalf.

The prophet, looking down the ages, had this time presented before his vision. The nations of this age have been the recipients of unprecedented mercies. The choicest of heaven's blessings have been given them, but increased pride, covetousness, idolatry, contempt of God, and base ingratitude are written against them. They are fast closing up their account with God.

The time of this prophetic Testimony is being related to the probationary time of the nations of earth. "The Infinite One still keeps an account with all nations...When the figures reach a certain amount which God has fixed...the account is closed....There is no more pleading in their behalf." Then the relationship of this time to the time of Ezekiel 9 is noted - "The prophet, looked down the ages, had this time presented before his vision," Yet nothing is said about the nations in Ezekiel 9. However, an event which marks the cessation of mercy on the part of God toward the nations, marks the time when God takes into His own hands, and orders a work to be done in behalf of the Church. {See 3T.p.267} Jesus remains momentarily at the mercy-seat in the Most Holy Place. This can refer to but one prophecy - and that is the sign which Jesus Himself gave which marks the close of the Times of the Gentiles or nations. See Luke 21:24. That prophecy met its fulfillment beginning in 1967. With what interest, but with what trembling, we should approach the study of this Testimony which tells us how God is relating to His professed people at this time.

5T.209.001 -

But that which causes me to tremble is the fact that those who have had the greatest light and privileges have become contaminated by the prevailing iniquity. Influenced by the unrighteous around them, many, even of those who profess the truth, have grown cold and are borne down by the strong current of evil. The universal scorn thrown upon true piety and holiness leads those who do not connect closely with God to lose their reverence for His law. If they were following the light and obeying the truth from the heart, this holy law would seem even more precious to them when thus despised and set aside. As the disrespect for God's law becomes more manifest, the line of demarcation between its observers and the world becomes more distinct. Love for the divine precepts increases with one class according as contempt for them increases with another class.

The crisis is fast approaching. The rapidly swelling figures show that the time for God's visitation has about come. Although loath to punish, nevertheless He will punish, and that speedily. Those who walk in the light will see signs of the approaching peril; but they are not to sit in quiet, unconcerned expectancy of the ruin, comforting themselves with the belief that God will shelter His people in the day of visitation. Far from it. They should realize that it is their duty to labor diligently to save others, looking with strong faith to God for help. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

The leaven of godliness has not entirely lost its power. At the time when the danger and depression of the church are greatest, the little company who are standing in the light will be sighing and crying for the abominations that are done in the land. But more especially will their prayers arise in behalf of the church because its members are doing after the manner of the world.

5T.210.001 -

The earnest prayers of this faithful few will not be in vain. When the Lord comes forth as an avenger, He will also come as a protector of all those who have preserved the faith in its purity and kept themselves unspotted from the world. It is at this time that God has promised to avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them.

The command is: "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." These sighing, crying ones had been holding forth the words of life; they had reproved, counseled, and entreated. Some, who had been dishonoring God repented and humbled their hearts before Him. But the glory of the Lord had departed from Israel; although many still continued the forms of religion, His power and presence were lacking.

In the time when His wrath shall go forth in judgments, these humble, devoted followers of Christ will be distinguished from the rest of the world by their soul anguish, which is expressed in lamentation and weeping, reproofs and warnings. While others try to throw a cloak over the existing evil, and excuse the great wickedness everywhere prevalent, those who have a zeal for God's honor and a love for souls will not hold their peace to obtain favor of any. Their righteous souls are vexed day by day with the unholy works and conversation of the unrighteous. They are powerless to stop the rushing torrent of iniquity, and hence they are filled with grief and alarm. They mourn before God to see religion

despised in the very homes of those who have had great light. They lament and afflict their souls because pride, avarice, selfishness, and deception of almost every kind are in the church. The Spirit of God, which prompts to reproof, is trampled underfoot, while the servants of Satan triumph. God is dishonored, the truth made of none effect.

"This faithful few" - *They have not only preserved the faith in its purity, but they have also kept themselves unspotted from the world. It is not enough to merely sigh and cry over the apostasy and worldliness in the Church, one must also look into his own heart to see if he is doing after the manner of the world. This is a broad area, and involves attitudes and concepts. However, too many interpret a godly life as the adherence to so many outward requirements. They forget that Paul found his glory and victory only in the Cross by which he was crucified unto the world, and the world unto him. See Gal.6:14. Such a crucifixion will not lead to self-exaltation by which one seeks to differentiate between himself and the world by mere outward display. The hidden man of the heart will manifest the characteristics of the One with whom he is crucified.*

"These sighing, crying ones" - *This is another designation of "the faithful few." These hold "forth the words of life; they had reproved, counseled, and entreated." The results were that only "some" responded. The "many" still continued "the forms of religion," not realizing that "the glory of the Lord had departed from Israel."*

"They mourn...They lament and afflict their souls" *This is language used in the Bible to mark those who gathered at the Sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. Any who would not afflict his souls was "cut off from among the people." See Lev. 23:27,29. Why do these mourn and afflict their souls? - "Because pride, avarice, selfishness, and deception of almost every kind are in the church."*

"They are powerless to stop..." *Jesus calls us to an apparent mission of failure. As he was sent, so are we. See John 17:18. The cross was to the world an emblem of defeat. The faithful few face seeming failure in their acceptance of the assignment of Christ. But they "must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason," (5T:136)*

"To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few, - this will be our test." (Ibid.)

5T.211.001 -

The class who do not feel grieved over their own spiritual declension, nor mourn over the sins of others, will be left without the seal of God. The Lord commissions His messengers, the men with slaughtering weapons in their hands: "Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house."

Here we see that the church--the Lord's sanctuary--was the first to feel the stroke of the wrath of God. The ancient men, those to whom God had given great light and who had stood as guardians of the spiritual interests of the people, had betrayed their trust. They had taken the position that we need not look for miracles and the marked manifestation of God's power as in former days. Times have changed. These words strengthen their unbelief, and they say: The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil. He is too merciful to visit His people in judgment. Thus "Peace and safety" is the cry from men who will never again lift up their voice like a trumpet to show God's people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins. These dumb dogs that would not bark are the ones who feel the just vengeance of an offended God. Men, maidens, and little children all perish together.

"The church - the Lord's sanctuary" Why is the church to receive the wrath of God first? "In the balances of the sanctuary the Seventh-day Adventist church is to be weighed." (8T:247) If the Church is to feel the stroke of God's wrath first, she evidently was "found wanting" in the balances of the heavenly sanctuary.

"The ancient men" These are defined as "guardians of the spiritual interests of the people" but who "had betrayed their trust." They are termed "dumb dogs that would not bark." These are made to "feel the just vengeance of an offended God." If these were all that would be involved, then one could rejoice that they were to receive their just dues. BUT - read and weep - others suffer because of their betrayal. "Men, maidens, and little children [of the Sabbath School]. All perish together." How tragic! All because blind confidence in human leadership was fostered.

5T.211.003 -

The abominations for which the faithful ones were sighing and crying were all

that could be discerned by finite eyes, but by far the worst sins, those which provoked the jealousy of the pure and holy God, were unrevealed. The great Searcher of hearts knoweth every sin committed in secret by the workers of iniquity. These persons come to feel secure in their deceptions and, because of His long-suffering, say that the Lord seeth not, and then act as though He had forsaken the earth. But He will detect their hypocrisy and will open before others those sins which they were so careful to hide.

5T.212.001 -

No superiority of rank, dignity, or worldly wisdom, no position in sacred office, will preserve men from sacrificing principle when left to their own deceitful hearts. Those who have been regarded as worthy and righteous prove to be ring-leaders in apostasy and examples in indifference and in the abuse of God's mercies. Their wicked course He will tolerate no longer, and in His wrath He deals with them without mercy.

It is with reluctance that the Lord withdraws His presence from those who have been blessed with great light and who have felt the power of the word in ministering to others. They were once His faithful servants, favored with His presence and guidance; but they departed from Him and led others into error, and therefore are brought under the divine displeasure.

The day of God's vengeance is just upon us. The seal of God will be placed upon the foreheads of those only who sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land. Those who link in sympathy with the world are eating and drinking with the drunken and will surely be destroyed with the workers of iniquity. "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

Our own course of action will determine whether we shall receive the seal of the living God or be cut down by the destroying weapons. Already a few drops of God's wrath have fallen upon the earth; but when the seven last plagues shall be poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation, then it will be forever too late to repent and find shelter. No atoning blood will then wash away the stains of sin.

"The Lord withdraws His presence" Once faithful men, who had known the power of God, depart from Him, and lead "others into error." The apostasy in the Church has been introduced by men who have been, and in many instances still

are, looked upon as "faithful " ministers. God sees differently.

"Our own course of action" - The bottom line is that everyone must decide for himself whether he is going to be deceived by "once faithful" men, or whether he is going to know the truth for himself. Corporate involvement means corporate guilt and corporate judgment. We are saved as individuals, not because we have our names on a church record.

5T.212.005 -

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince that standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book." When this time of trouble comes, every case is decided; there is no longer probation, no longer mercy for the impenitent. The seal of the living God is upon His people. This small remnant, unable to defend themselves in the deadly conflict with the powers of earth that are marshaled by the dragon host, make God their defense. The decree has been passed by the highest earthly authority that they shall worship the beast and receive his mark under pain of persecution and death. May God help His people now, for what can they then do in such a fearful conflict without His assistance!

Courage, fortitude, faith, and implicit trust in God's power to save do not come in a moment. These heavenly graces are acquired by the experience of years. By a life of holy endeavor and firm adherence to the right the children of God were sealing their destiny. Beset with temptations without number, they knew they must resist firmly or be conquered. They felt that they had a great work to do, and at any hour they might be called to lay off their armor; and should they come to the close of life with their work undone, it would be an eternal loss. They eagerly accepted the light from heaven, as did the first disciples from the lips of Jesus. When those early Christians were exiled to mountains and deserts, when left in dungeons to die with hunger, cold, and torture, when martyrdom seemed the only way out of their distress, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ, who was crucified for them. Their worthy example will be a comfort and encouragement to the people of God who will be brought into the time of trouble such as never was.

"When this time...comes" *The interrelated action involving "the few" and "the many" ends with the close of probation. Daniel 12:1 is here quoted. It is clearly*

stated: - "there is no longer probation."

"This small remnant" *The "few" and the "some" who repented through their reproof make up this group.*

"The experience of years" *We dare not wait and hop that by some miraculous way, we will receive the "heavenly graces" - "courage, fortitude, faith, and implicit trust in God's power to save" - at the final moment prior to the close of probation.*

5T.213.002 -

Not all who profess to keep the Sabbath will be sealed. 214 There are many even among those who teach the truth to others who will not receive the seal of God in their foreheads. They had the light of truth, they knew their Master's will, they understood every point of our faith, but they had not corresponding works. These who were so familiar with prophecy and the treasures of divine wisdom should have acted their faith. They should have commanded their households after them, that by a well-ordered family they might present to the world the influence of the truth upon the human heart.

5T.214.001 -

By their lack of devotion and piety, and their failure to reach a high religious standard, they make other souls contented with their position. Men of finite judgment cannot see that in patterning after these men who have so often opened to them the treasures of God's word, they will surely endanger their souls. Jesus is the only true pattern. Everyone must now search the Bible for himself upon his knees before God, with the humble, teachable heart of a child, if he would know what the Lord requires of him. However high any minister may have stood in the favor of God, if he neglects to follow out the light given him of God, if he refuses to be taught as a little child, he will go into darkness and satanic delusions and will lead others in the same path.

Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost.

"Jesus is the only true pattern." *We dare not trust human leadership or human*

example. Any minister if he neglects light will go into darkness.

5T.214.003 -

We are too easily satisfied with our attainments. We feel rich and increased with goods and know not that we are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Now is the time to heed the admonition of the True Witness: "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

5T.215.001 -

In this life we must meet fiery trials and make costly sacrifices, but the peace of Christ is the reward. There has been so little self-denial, so little suffering for Christ's sake, that the cross is almost entirely forgotten. We must be partakers with Christ of His sufferings if we would sit down in triumph with Him on His throne. So long as we choose the easy path of self-indulgence and are frightened at self-denial, our faith will never become firm, and we cannot know the peace of Jesus nor the joy that comes through conscious victory. The most exalted of the redeemed host that stand before the throne of God and the Lamb, clad in white, know the conflict of overcoming, for they have come up through great tribulation. Those who have yielded to circumstances rather than engage in this conflict will not know how to stand in that day when anguish will be upon every soul, when, though Noah, Job, and Daniel were in the land, they could save neither son nor daughter, for everyone must deliver his soul by his own righteousness. No one need say that his case is hopeless, that he cannot live the life of a Christian. Ample provision is made by the death of Christ for every soul. Jesus is our ever-present help in time of need. Only call upon Him in faith, and He has promised to hear and answer your petitions.

Oh, for a living, active faith! We need it; we must have it, or we shall faint and fail in the day of trial. The darkness that will then rest upon our path must not discourage us or drive us to despair. It is the veil with which God covers His glory when He comes to impart rich blessings. We should know this by our past experience. In that day when God has a controversy with His people this experience will be a source of comfort and hope.

"Oh, for a living, active faith! This is what is needed now for we have arrived at the day when God has a controversy with His people, because they have departed

from the faith into error and apostasy. As we see the things we thought so sure breaking up about us, we need not despair, nor be discouraged. God has arisen from "the cherub where upon He was" and has taken things into His own hands. See TM, p. 300

5T.215.004 -

It is now that we must keep ourselves and our children unspotted from the world. It is now that we must wash our robes of character and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. It is now that we must overcome pride, passion, and spiritual slothfulness. It is now that we must awake and make determined effort for symmetry of character. "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." We are in a most trying position, waiting, watching for our Lord's appearing. The world is in darkness. "But ye, brethren," says Paul, "are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." It is ever God's purpose to bring light out of darkness, joy out of sorrow, and rest out of weariness for the waiting, longing soul.

What are you doing, brethren, in the great work of preparation? Those who are uniting with the world are receiving the worldly mold and preparing for the mark of the beast. Those who are distrustful of self, who are humbling themselves before God and purifying their souls by obeying the truth [*Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth. Ps. 119:142*] these are receiving the heavenly mold and preparing for the seal of God in their foreheads. When the decree goes forth and the stamp is impressed, their character will remain pure and spotless for eternity.

Now is the time to prepare. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God - candidates for heaven. Go forward, my brethren and sisters. I can only write briefly upon these points at this time, merely calling your attention to the necessity of preparation. Search the Scriptures for yourselves, that you may understand the fearful solemnity of the present hour.

"Now" - On page 215, this series of "now's" began. If we have not been experiencing these things, we are taking some fearful risks with our eternity.

"The seal of God will never be placed..." The three-fold preparation means simply

to be cleansed from impurity in an immoral age; contented with God's plan for one's life in the midst of an ambitious age; and honest in word and deed before a lying generation.

WHO THEN SHALL BE SAVED?

"A train of cars was shown me, going with the speed of lightning. The angel bade me look carefully. I fixed my eyes upon the train. It seemed that the whole world was on board, that there could not be one left. Said the angel, "They are binding in bundles ready to burn."

I asked the angel if there were none left. He bade me look in an opposite direction, and I saw a little company traveling a narrow pathway. All seemed to be firmly united, bound together by the truth, in bundles, or companies. Said the angel, "The third angel is binding, or sealing, them in bundles for the heavenly garner."

EW.088.002

Published by
Adventist Laymen's Foundation
PO Box 69
Ozone, Ar 72854

Ezekiel 9

Eze.9.1 -

He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.

Eze.9.2 -

And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar.

Eze.9.3 -

And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side;

Eze.9.4 -

And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

Eze.9.5 -

And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity:

Eze.9.6 -

Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.

Eze.9.7 -

And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city.

Eze.9.8 -

And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?

Eze.9.9 -

Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not.

Eze.9.10 -

And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head.

Eze.9.11 -

And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me.