



*"Watchman,  
what of the night?"*

*The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12*

# THE HIDING OF THE ARK

## An In-Depth Analysis

After the publication of the last Thought Paper which exposed the manifestation of Spiritism in the supposed discovery of the hidden Ark of the Covenant, I was challenged by a reader to give all the information available on the hiding and finding of the Ark. When writing the Thought Paper, I was aware of what Ellen G. White wrote about the subject, but purposely avoided any direct reference to these statements. Because I did this, the reader suggested that I was seeking to "cover up" some supposed contradictions between what she wrote and the silence of the Scriptures in regard to the hiding of the Ark. The problem is not what Ellen G. White wrote, but how what she wrote is interpreted. It really comes down to the bottom line in these interpretations as whether we accept the primacy of the Bible or seek to set forth a third Canon of Inspired Writings. In this Thought Paper, we shall attempt to give as full an account of all the factors as we can in the space available in one issue.

### The Times of Jeremiah

Josiah had led Judah in a reformatory work. The Scripture states that no king before him, nor after him "turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to the law of Moses" as did Josiah. (II Kings 23: 25) Outward changes in the behaviour of people were effected. "In Jeremiah's time, the Jews believed that the strict observances of the divinely appointed services

of the temple would preserve them from the just punishment of their evil course." (4T:166) The people thronged the temple services. In fact, Jeremiah used these days of religious service as an occasion for the giving of his messages from God. (Jer. 36:4-6) But much of what resulted by the zeal of Josiah was a mere pretense on the people's part. Even before the untimely death of Josiah, Jeremiah accused the inhabitants of Judah of not turning to God with their whole heart, "but in sheer hypocrisy. . . feigned obedience to King Josiah's reforms." (Jer. 3:10 Amp.)

Few are so prone to arrogant pride as those who declare that they are "reformed." Jeremiah had this to say of such self-righteous practitioners of the faith: "Prophets and priests are frauds, everyone of them; they dress my people's wound, but skin deep only, with their saying, 'All is well.' All well? Nothing is well!" (6:13f. NEB) (David F. Payne, The Kingdoms of the Lord, p. 254)

The priests with their prophet cohorts used the reformatory spirit to bind the people to the temple. Jeremiah found it necessary to tell the people not to trust in the lying words, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." (Jer. 7:4) To speak against the temple was considered an high crime of treason. When Jeremiah declared the Temple would become as Shiloh, "the priests and the prophets" declared before the princes - "This man is worthy to die." (Jer. 26:6; 10-11) It is against this backdrop that one must seek a solution to the problem of the hiding of the Ark of the Covenant "just before the destruction of the temple." (SP, I, p. 414)

### The Claims of Tradition

In the non-canonical book of II Maccabees (2:1-8), the claim is set forth according to "the records" that Jeremiah "found a chamber in the rock, and there he brought the tabernacle, and the ark, and the altar of incense; and made fast the door." It is further stated, that this chamber was in "the mountain where Moses went up and beheld the inheritance of God." (See Deut. 34:1) It must also be kept in mind according to the record in II Maccabees, Jeremiah gave "the law" to those being carried captive to Babylon. In the tradition it is strongly suggested that this hidden Ark will be restored to Israel when God will gather the people. The prophetic claim is that God will manifest at that time His glory as He did at the consecration of the Mosaic sanctuary at Sinai, and the dedication of Solomon's Temple.

In an over-all view of this legendary history, one must consider that to take the tabernacle, the ark, and the altar of incense out of Jerusalem, and not be stopped would be quite a feat. Those in charge of the religious services, aided by the prophecies of the false prophets were in no mood to recognize the impending destruction of either the city or the temple. To have moved this much furniture and effects by night would have required a number of persons. The "theft" would have been noted the next morning when the lamps were trimmed and incense offered. A swift contingent of horsemen could have overtaken the ones carrying these things. However, the taking of the Ark would not have been perceived so quickly because of the restrictions on going into the Most Holy Place. Various other factors could have been by-passed in the taking of a single article of furniture, such as avoiding making arrangements to leave through one of the gates. (See Joshua 2:15; Acts 9:25) Fewer persons would need to be involved, and thus greater secrecy maintained.

### How Does Tradition Relate to Scripture?

The final siege of Jerusalem was in two phases. Nebuchadnezzar lifted the siege upon hearing that an Egyptian army was coming to the aide of Judah. (Jer. 37:5) After defeating the Egyptians, he returned and resumed the siege which resulted in the final overthrow of Jerusalem and the

destruction of the Temple. During the time of the first phase, Jeremiah was free to move about the city of Jerusalem. Zedekiah, the king of Judah, even sent asking that Jeremiah pray to God on behalf of the King and the people. (Jer. 37:3-4) Between the two phases of the siege, Jeremiah attempted to leave the city and go to his home town of Anathoth in Benjamin. (Jer. 37:12) He was stopped at the gate of the city by "a captain of the ward" who took and charged him with seeking to defect to the Babylonians. The princes of the realm before whom Jeremiah was brought "smote him and put him in prison." (ver. 15) It is evident that his movements were being carefully watched, and at the first opportunity Jeremiah was seized, and charged with a treasonable act. There is no suggestion that Jeremiah was involved in the taking of the Ark, or that he had been away from the city for a period of time. From Jerusalem to where the cave is said to be located is some thirty miles the way the crow would fly, and would have required at least a three day's absence from the city.

It must also be kept in mind that Jeremiah was of the priestly line of the house of Abiathar who had been removed by Solomon from the priestly ministrations. This connection, and the opposition Jeremiah received from the prophets of the kingdom allied with the priests of the temple (Jer. 26:11) would have made it doubly difficult for him to have been in the actual party who took the Ark from the Temple and secreted it across the Jordan River.

However silent the Scriptures, the events which they record involving Jeremiah at the time of the final siege, open up another distinct possibility. At the time Jeremiah was apprehended, it could have been known that the Ark was missing. He could have been under suspicion and surveillance. The captain who apprehended him was a brother of one of the men sent by Zedekiah to ask that Jeremiah pray for the city and the King. (Cmp. Jer. 37:3 & 13) But for the populace to be informed that the Ark was gone would have caused the morale of the people to collapse, and panic to have seized them. Such an event if known to them would have been interpreted as the departing of the glory from Israel. The sudden change of attitude

toward Jeremiah, as noted in the 37th Chapter, and the charge brought against him could be explained by the discovery that the Ark was missing, and he was suspect due to the message he had given. (See 37:6-10) However, due to the possibility they had no solid evidence linking him to its disappearance, and to publically make the fact known would produce pandemonium among the populace, there was no mention made of the Ark. Jeremiah was not going to implicate himself, nor the others involved in carrying out such a feat. The canon of Scripture does not sustain the legendary account of the book of II Maccabees.

#### How Do the Writings of Ellen G. White Relate to This Data?

From a casual reading of the various statements to be found in the writings of Ellen G. White, it would seem on the surface the source of her information is based on the non-canonical reference in II Maccabees. This surface approach has been followed by those who have sought to make headlines of the supposed finding of the Ark. A closer reading of the available sources indicate some distinct differences between the account found in the non-canonical source and the Writings.

First, nowhere, in harmony with the Biblical silence, does Ellen G. White suggest that Jeremiah hid the Ark. Her statements indicate "a few faithful servants" to whom God had made known the coming destruction of Jerusalem - in other words, a few who believed what Jeremiah prophesied - "just before the destruction of the temple, removed the sacred ark containing the tables of stone and . . . secreted it in a cave." (SP, I, p. 414) This would pinpoint the time the removal took place to the brief respite which occurred between the two phases of the final seige by Nebuchadnezzar.

It is also interesting to observe these "faithful servants" are not noted as returning to Jerusalem following their hiding operation. It is evident from the Bible that enough of a stir had been made that a special captain with connections with the princes of the realm was at the "gate of Benjamin," the most obvious gate for Jeremiah to use in his attempt to go

to his home in Anathoth. The removal of the Ark would mark one of the greatest clandestine operations of all time. It cannot be doubted that Jeremiah knew something about this operation - he may even have masterminded it - since to him it had been revealed that the end of Jerusalem had come. No evidence could be produced linking him to the "theft" - he had been in the city all during the first seige, and during the interlude up to the time of his attempt to go to Anathoth. However, the testimony of tradition stating that Jeremiah actually hid the Ark in a cave, could indicate that he did have some part to play in removing the Ark from the Temple. Though a suspect, his continued presence within the city made it difficult - the few who knew were gone - to link him to the "crime."

Secondly, the legend in Maccabees indicates that the Ark will be restored to the nation of Israel again. The writings state emphatically - the ark was "hid from the people of Israel. . . and was to be no more restored to them." (Ibid.) Thirdly, the writer of Maccabees stated that not only was the Ark taken and hidden, but also the Altar of Incense, plus "the tabernacle" while Ellen G. White only indicated the Ark of the Covenant. (This factor should have had some bearing in evaluating the reports of the supposed find of these artifacts. But keep in mind that "headline grabbers" or "opportunists" spend little time with evaluation of facts or truth.)

And fourth, the non-canonical book of II Maccabees stated the law was given to the exiles as they were led away captive, while the messenger of the Lord stated that the tables of stone as given to Moses were in the Ark when hidden. (Ibid. See also, Ms. 122, 1901: 1BC, 11109)

#### What Did Ellen G. White Really Write?

It has been assumed from the writings of Ellen G. White that the bringing forth of the Ark from the place where it was hidden by "a few faithful servants" will mark the beginning of the judgment of the living. How valid is such an assumption? Here are the statements in the writings which link the event with a concept of judgment: 1906 - ". . . the law was traced by the

finger of God upon the tables of stone, which are now in the ark, to be brought forth in that great day when sentence will be pronounced against every evil, seducing science produced by the father of lies." (Letter 90, 1906; CM, p. 126) Does this reference say, "the law," or "the ark" is to be brought forth? Compare with next reference.

1908 - "The tables of stone are hidden by God, to be produced in the great judgment day, just as He wrote them." (R&H, March 26, 1908.)

1909 - "When the judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened, and every man shall be judged according to the things written in the books, then the tables of stone hidden by God until that day, will be presented before the world as the standard of righteousness." (R&H, Jan. 28, 1909)

1917 - "At the judgment, this covenant will be brought forth, plainly written with the finger of God; and the world will be arraigned before the bar of Infinite Justice to receive sentence." (PK, p. 187)

#### An Analysis of the E. G. White Statements

The expressions - "the great judgment day" - "that great day when sentence will be pronounced" - "at the judgment. . . the world will be arraigned" - cannot honestly be assigned to "the judgment of the living" by any stretch of the imagination. It becomes apparent that to do so reveals how little of the rationale regarding the Adventist concept of judgment is perceived by those advocating such a connection. We believe - at least the historic position so affirmed - that the Investigative Judgment which began in 1844 considered the case of those who died making a profession of faith in God, and the Lord Jesus Christ - a confession marked by either baptism after the Cross, or the offering of the sin-offering prior to the Cross. The "judgment of the living" would concern only those who had related to the truth of the Third Angel's Message - or as Ezekiel describes the sealing - a mark upon those in Jerusalem who sigh and cry for the abominations done in the midst thereof. (Eze. 9:4) However, the references noted above taken from the Writings talk about a judgment when "the world will be arraigned before the bar of Infinite

Justice." Is such a judgment the Adventist concept of "the judgment of the living"? If it is, it must be a neo-Adventist teaching unrelated to the historic position.

The one specific reference which pins down the relationship between the revelation of the Law of God on stone, and the judgment is the one given in 1909 - "When the judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened, and every man shall be judged according to the things written in the books, then the tables of stone hidden by God until that day, will be presented before the world as the standard of righteousness." The clauses - "when the judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened, and every man shall be judged according to the things written in the books" - are borrowed Biblical language. Either it is language drawn upon to express a thought unrelated to the actual Scripture itself, or else it is focusing upon a certain passage to magnify its meaning. To adopt the first view - language borrowing to express an idea - and then interpret it to mean that this is referring to "the judgment of the living" - a designation not used in Scripture is to establish a basis for a third canon. The Bible is clear in regard to the judgment of both the living and the dead, but designates the judgment of the living by different terminology. (See Ezekiel 9)

The clauses if considered as direct references to Scripture, point to one of two possible texts. In Daniel 7:10, it reads: "The judgment was set and the books were opened." When we turn to the book of Revelation we find this description of the Judgment of the Great White Throne - "The books were opened: . . . and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." (Rev. 20:11-12) As we seek to ascertain which of these two texts were being used in the statement of Ellen G. White, the weight of evidence tends toward the one in Revelation. The prophecy of Daniel in a time context refers to the opening of the judgment in the heavenly sanctuary in 1844, while the context of the statement of Ellen G. White indicates she was writing about a judgment future to the time of writing in 1909. Further the language to be found in Revelation 20:12, more closely parallels her statement.

## DREAMS

We are now faced with certain choices: 1) The statement - "the tables of stone hidden by God until that day, will be presented before the world as the standard of righteousness" - refers to the day of the Judgment of the Great White Throne. 2) The statements do not focus on any Biblical reference or event, but rather directs our attention to a time of special judgment designated as "the judgment of living." If we should accept this latter choice, as some do, then we are confronted with how to explain the reference as applying to such an event, when the very language Ellen G. White uses states that "the world" will be arraigned before the Judgment Bar of God, and confronted with the Law written with His own finger. In fact the statement released in 1917 so states. (See above where quoted.) Even the 1909 statement in context reads - "By the righteous principles of that law, men will receive their sentence of life or death." (R&H, Jan. 28, 1909) This has reference to an executive judgment, not an investigative session! It is true that those who hold to the second of the above two choices state that this is merely a sign that "the judgment of the living" has commenced. But where is the Biblical basis for this, and where even in the Writings is such a statement to be found?

There is another factor that must be noted in this analysis. The statements from the writings of Ellen G. White clearly indicate that the Ark of the Covenant was "safely hidden from the human family" and that "in God's appointed time He [not man] will bring forth the tables of stone [not the Ark] to be a testimony to all the world against the disregard of His commandments." (Ms. 122, 1901: 1BC, 1109) I am unable to find a single explicit statement in all the writings of Ellen G. White stating that the Ark will be brought forth. Perhaps there is such a statement of which I am unaware.

However, there is another sign - a sign given by Jesus Himself telling us when the Times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, and when the final sealing work commences. That sign is found in Luke 21:24. A study of the comments to be found in the Writings in connection with the sealing of the living in the midst of "Jerusalem" tells us much, but we are unwilling to face up to the implications. (See 5T:207f.)

It seems difficult for some to understand that the devil can use dreams as well as the seance to communicate with human beings. Nowhere in the Scripture do we have any specific word that God reserved dreams as His channel of communication, so that when one has a dream he can always be sure that it is of the Lord. In fact, we do have a warning in the Bible that should one have a dream, and as a result of that dream, "the sign or the wonder come to pass," yet if the counsel which the dreamer gives is contrary to the Law of God, the command is - "Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams." Further, it is stated under the Deuteronomic Code that such a dreamer was to be put to death." (Deut. 13:1-5)

There is another factor by which a dream's origin can be determined. Who appears as the messenger with a message in the dream? If the messenger is one who has died, and seeks to point out something of a hidden nature - the Bible gives us clear guidelines - "The dead know not anything." (Eccl. 9:5) Since the dead know not anything, then who is impersonating that person be it in a dream, vision, or a seance? A dream of a supernatural order would have to be stimulated from without - not one arising from the distresses of his imbalanced physical system. Would God stimulate a visionary picture - a dream - contrary to His word? If so, the very integrity of God would be compromised.

Now to some specifics in regard to the alleged dream about the finding of the Ark. The Bible is silent on the hiding or the finding of the Ark. The writings of Ellen G. White do not state that Jeremiah hid the Ark. The only source for the assumption that Jeremiah did is the legendary record of II Maccabees which is also doctrinally suspect. If then the supposed revelation is not in harmony with the sacred Scriptures, how is one to relate to it? From whom only could it come? And these are the basic questions which must be answered in this alleged dream, and supposed finding.

So that the "dream" problem might be clearly seen, let me give an imaginary illustration. Suppose that a good friend

of yours - a nominal Protestant who believes in the immortality of the soul - lost his favorite uncle - Uncle John. You expressed your sympathy to this friend both verbally and tangibly. A few weeks pass, and this friend calls you up, all excited, and tells you - "I had a dream last night. My Uncle John appeared to me and told me that he had hidden some money, but because of his sudden death, had failed to tell the family of its whereabouts. But he took me and showed me just where it was hidden." Would you say to that friend? - "God is surely blessing you. There is no other explanation."

We need to keep in mind that besides "Sunday sacredness" as a means of deception, there is another error. We can read if we will - "Through two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions." (GC, p. 588) It is one thing to tape The Great Controversy for broadcasting; it is another thing to know what it states. It is one thing to print Sabbath tracts to coneract "Sunday sacredness;" it is another thing to accept the deceptions of Spiritism, and lead others into this deception of Satan.

++++++

## FLAK

Since the release of the April Thought Paper, I have received about a half dozen letters bemoaning the fact that I was so hard on "poor brother Vance." It seems difficult for our minds to think rationally rather than emotionally. Because of allegiance to personalities rather than truth, we fail to discern the real import of the issues. However, now the evidence is clear-cut, and should be clearly seen. In Pilgrims' Guideposts, this retort is made - "One individual who publishes mimeograph studies called 'Watchman, What of the Night?' recently expressed dissatisfaction over several points that none of the rest of us had given any attention to." (March 1, 1982, p. 3. Emphasis mine) This revealing statement should cause every sincere seeker for truth to pause and ponder. If a man cannot differentiate between what is mimeographed, and that

which is printed; and does not consider all points involved before taking a position, does that person have the spiritual discernment to properly evaluate the present crucial issues which are facing the professed people of God today? Whether you continue to rely on such human discernment, that is your choice; but in the day of judgment, don't tell God you were not warned! (Lest Vance Ferrell should say because he is not on the mailing list, that he didn't know the Thought Paper is being printed - and has been for the past five years - a copy of the April issue, was sent to him first class so that he would know what I had written.)

++++++

"SACRILEGIOUS MINDS AND HEARTS HAVE THOUGHT THEY WERE MIGHTY ENOUGH TO CHANGE THE TIMES AND THE LAWS OF JEHOVAH: BUT SAFE IN THE ARCHIVES OF HEAVEN, IN THE ARK OF GOD, ARE THE ORIGINAL COMMANDMENTS, WRITTEN UPON THE TWO TABLES OF STONE. NO POTENTATE OF EARTH HAS THE POWER TO DRAW FORTH THOSE TABLES FROM THEIR SACRED HIDING PLACE BENEATH THE MERCY SEAT."

(ST Feb 28, 1878 - 7BC:972)

Question - Could not the God who created the Garden of Eden, and Who removed it from the earth prior to the Flood, also remove from the Ark of the Covenant, the Tables of Stone upon which His own finger had written?

Question - Why in the light of this, do we still seek to deceive the people of God with a false waymark?

Question - Further, why are we not willing to admit that we are not infallible interpreters of God's revelations, and cease trying to make "headlines" until we survey all the available data?

++++++