

*“Watchman,
what of the night?”*

*“The hour has come, the hour is striking and striking at you,
the hour and the end!”* Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)



The New Year

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**An Interpretive History of the Doctrine of the Incarnation
as Taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church - III (pg. 2)**

Editor's Preface

With this issue, we begin our 38th year of continuous publication. We thank the Lord for His guidance during these years and will seek to be so led in the months ahead. Each month of this year, we shall continue to revise and edit a chapter from the first manuscript we published in 1972 on the history of the doctrine of the Incarnation as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Time has not lessened such a need, only intensified it.

In the final article, while using the report in *Adventist Today* on the problems currently plaguing 3ABN as a take off point, our primary focus is on the meaning of the "end" as indicated by Jesus in Matthew 24:14. Is the "end" a period of time, or a point in time? Besides the statement of Jesus, we also note two references in the Writings which relate to the nature of the "end" and the message to be given at that time and to whom. Are we in that period of time "after the truth has been given as a witness to all nations?" If we are, then some "independent" ministries had better rewrite their "job description." If not, then we all had better get into "high gear" for the end hasteth greatly.

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Special OPS Forces

The Lord is looking for an all-volunteer army - no conscription. He is looking for a few good men and women whose motto is "semper fidelis;" who are willing to be true to duty as the needle to the pole; who are willing to fight the battles of the Lord when the champions are few; who will learn to gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice and loyalty from their treason.

- Allan Hamm

An interpretive history of the doctrine of the Incarnation as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church – 3

III

Ellen G. White on the Incarnation 1888-1915

The presentations of Dr. E. J. Waggoner and Elder A. T. Jones on the subject of righteousness by faith during the last decade of the 19th century included of necessity a discussion of the nature of the humanity which the Son of God took upon Himself. Their concepts on the subject of the doctrine of the Incarnation produced opposition. Some of those who were opposed wrote to Ellen White. These did not write simply to obtain the light she had been given in regard to the humanity of the Son of man, but to assert their doubts as the basis of their questioning. To these questioners she replied in a morning talk given at Battle Creek on January 29, 1890. She revealed that letters had been coming to her "affirming that Christ could not have had the same nature as man, for if He had had He would have fallen under similar temptations." To this reasoning, she replied:

If He did not have man's nature, He could not be our example. If He did not partake of our nature, He could not have been tempted as man has been. If it were not possible for Him to yield to temptation, He could not be our helper. It is a solemn reality that Christ came to fight the battle as man, in man's behalf. His temptation and victory tell us that humanity must copy the Pattern; man must become a partaker of the divine nature (*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 408).

These letters reveal that among the rank and file of Adventists, there was as much a need to clarify the doctrine on the Incarnation, as to understand the 1888 message on righteousness by faith. The two go hand in hand. In this brief answer, which Ellen White gave to the questioners, there is summarized the same position as found in her writings prior to 1888, and until her death in 1915. While it is true that

during this period - 1888-1915 - many more statements on the subject of the Incarnation came from her pen than prior to 1888; however, there was no altering of the basic position as first stated in 1858 - that Jesus would take "man's fallen nature" (*Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. I, p. 25).

There are two approaches which can be used in presenting the material on the Incarnation in the writings of Ellen G. White during the period covered in this chapter: 1) We could simply list by year what was penned; or 2) We can bring together in an interpretive analysis of the statements irregardless of the year sequence. Since this is an "interpretive" history, we shall use the second approach.

To Ellen G. White, the Incarnation "is a great mystery, a mystery that will not be fully, completely understood in all its greatness until the translation of the redeemed shall take place. Then the power and the greatness and efficacy of the gift of God to man will be understood;" however, she cautioned that "the enemy is determined that this gift shall be so mystified that it will become as nothingness" (Letter 280, 1904; 5BC:1113).

The magnitude and the depth of the condescension revealed by the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, leaves the student "breathless." In 1896, Ellen White wrote:

In contemplating the incarnation of Christ in humanity, we stand baffled before an unfathomable mystery, that the human mind cannot comprehend. The more we reflect upon it, the more amazing does it appear. How wide is the contrast between the divinity of Christ and the helpless infant in Bethlehem's manger! How can we span the distance between the mighty God and a helpless child? And yet the Creator of worlds, He in whom was the fullness of the Godhead bodily, was manifest in the helpless babe in the manger. Far higher than any of the angels, equal with the Father in dignity and glory, and yet wearing the garb of humanity! Divinity and humanity were mysteriously combined, and man and God became one (*Signs of the Times*, July 30, 1896).

It is in this union "that we find the hope of our fallen race" (*ibid*). "The humanity of the Son of

God is everything to us. It is the golden linked chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study" (Ms. 67, 1998: 7BC, p. 904). Therefore, we need to "fix our minds on the most marvellous thing that ever took place in earth or heaven – the incarnation of the Son of God" (Ms. 76, 1903; 7BC:904). "We must come to this study with the humility of a learner, with a contrite heart. And the study of the incarnation of Christ is a fruitful field, and will repay the searcher who digs deep for hidden truth (Ms. 67, 1898; 7BC:905).

Where is one to begin in the study of the Incarnation? The counsel indicates that ---

There are light and glory in the truth that Christ was One with the Father before the foundation of the world was laid. This is the light shining in a dark place, making it resplendent with divine, original glory. This truth, infinitely mysterious in itself, explains other mysterious and otherwise unexplainable truths, while it is enshrined in light, unapproachable and incomprehensible (R&H, April 5, 1906).

As "One with the Father," "the Lord Jesus Christ . . . existed from eternity a distinct Person (*ibid*). This distinct Person became the man, Christ Jesus. While Ellen G. White definitely stated that "we cannot explain how divinity was clothed with humanity" (R&H, Oct. 1, 1889), her writings during this period unfold various fundamental aspects of what took place when Christ became man. In 1899, she wrote:

Christ at an infinite cost, by a painful process, mysterious to angels as well as to man, assumed humanity. Hiding His divinity, laying aside His glory, He was born a babe in Bethlehem (Ms. 29, 1899).

In creation, Christ had given "to humanity an existence outside of Himself;" but "in redemption He takes humanity unto Himself. He makes it a part of His own being" (M. L. Andreasen Collection #2, "The Word Made Flesh"). We might then ask – "Was the human nature of the Son of Mary changed into the divine nature of the Son of God? No; the two natures were mysteriously blended in one person, the man Christ Jesus" (Letter 280, 1904). Or we might ask the question in another

way – Was the divine nature degraded by accepting the human nature formed in the womb of Mary? The answer is again – no! "In Christ, divinity and humanity were combined. Divinity was not degraded to humanity; divinity held its place, but humanity by being united with divinity withstood the fiercest test of temptation in the wilderness" (SM, bk 1, p. 408). What then is meant when the expression – Christ "united humanity with divinity" – is used by Ellen White? Observe this definitive reference:

He [Christ] united humanity with divinity: a divine spirit dwelt in a temple of flesh. He united Himself with the temple (*Youth's Instructor*, Dec. 20, 1900; 4BC:1147).

The nature of this "temple of flesh" is also clearly defined in this same article. It reads:

Think of Christ's humiliation. He took upon Himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin (*ibid*).

Again:

Christ did in reality unite the offending nature of man with His own sinless nature, because by this act of condescension He would be enabled to pour out His blessings in behalf of the fallen race (R&H, July 17, 1900).

Lest it be misunderstood what she meant by the term, "human nature," or when she wrote that Christ became "flesh," she emphasized that it was "in the likeness of sinful flesh." In an article in the *Youth's Instructor*, "The Privileges of Childhood (August 23, 1894), she counselled, "Let children bear in mind that the child Jesus had taken upon Himself human nature, and was in the likeness of sinful flesh, and was tempted of Satan as all children are tempted." [This should dispel forever the deception that Christ bore our fallen nature only at the time of the wilderness temptation, and then merely vicariously.] On another occasion, she wrote – (Christ) "was not only made flesh, but He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh" (W-106-1896). Some might quibble that because she used the language of Scripture, "likeness of sinful flesh," the use of "likeness" meant that the nature that Christ assumed was not really sinful fallen nature, but only something which

physically resembled it. However, in two published sources it is plainly stated that "He took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature" (*Medical Ministry*, p. 181); and "He took upon Him our sinful nature" (*R&H*, Dec. 15, 1896).

While being specific as to the nature that Christ assumed in becoming incarnate, Ellen White was just as pointed as to the effect of such a union upon Him. She declared that "in His human nature, He maintained the purity of His divine character" (*Youth's Instructor*, June 2, 1898); and "in taking upon Himself man's nature in its fallen condition, Christ did not in the least participate in its sin" (*Signs of the Times*, June 9, 1898). "No taint of sin was found on Him" (*ibid.*, January 16, 1896).

The article in the *Signs of the Times* from which the last sentence quoted was taken bore the title, "Sin condemned in the flesh." In this article the various Bible texts which refer to Christ's sinlessness were quoted, such as, "that holy thing" (Luke 1:35); "He did no sin" (I Peter 2:22); "knew no sin" (II Cor. 5:21); "in Him was no sin" (I John 3:5); and that Christ was "holy harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners (Heb. 7:26). Then this sentence is written – "This testimony concerning Christ plainly shows that He condemned sin in the flesh" (*ibid.*).

One positive point Ellen White made in reply to the negative assumption that came to her as a result of the preaching on the subject of righteousness by faith was that if Christ "was not a partaker of our nature, He could not have been tempted as man has been" (*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, 408). She recognized that - - -

Unless there is a possibility of yielding, temptation is no temptation. Temptation comes and is resisted when man is powerfully influenced to do a wrong action, and knowing that he can do it, resists by faith, with a firm hold upon divine power (*Ms. 29*, 1899).

Then she declared – "This is the ordeal through which Christ passed." To pass through this experience presented a two-fold risk to the Godhead: 1) A risk to the Son of God personally; and 2) A risk to the unity of the eternal throne unless certain precautions were taken. From the

beginning God had exercised great care lest sin become immortalized. Our first parents were driven from the Garden of Eden so they could not partake of the tree of life following their disobedience (Gen. 3:22-23). Now if Christ came into humanity with the immortal aspect of the Godhead – the glory He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5) – and failed, which had to be a possibility or His temptations would have been meaningless, then there would have been two Beings in eternal antagonism. The Incarnation, of necessity, had to synthesize these two risks.

Ellen White indicated that Christ did accept in Himself this synthesis. He came a "free agent, placed on probation, as was Adam, and as is man" (*Ms. 29*, 1899). Christ also shielded the Eternal Throne. "He humbled Himself, and took mortality upon Him. As a member of the human family, He was mortal." Thus if He sinned, "divine wrath would have come upon Christ as it came upon Adam" (*Signs of the Times*, June 9, 1898). But while Christ yielded up the divine prerogatives, His place in the Godhead was held in sacred trust, and could not be lost, "while He stood faithful and true to His loyalty" (*Signs of the Times*, May 10, 1899; 5BC:1129).

From 1891 to 1900, Ellen White was in Australia. It was there in 1895 that she wrote a letter to an American worker doing evangelism there. This letter to William L. H. Baker has been used extensively to mitigate the force of all that she wrote during this period on the nature which Christ assumed in becoming a man. [See Appendix A for a discussion of this letter]. At this very time, she was writing the book, *The Desire of Ages*, on the life of Christ. Nowhere in the book can there be found statements which would sustain the interpretations being given to the letter which was sent to Elder Baker, but rather contrary wise.

Throughout the book – *The Desire of the Ages* – the description of the humanity which Christ took upon Himself and the victory that He obtained in the flesh reflect the same concepts the author penned in previous publications, and in articles appearing in church papers during this same time period. Of Christ it is stated that He

"accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity." In context, she wrote:

It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race was weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life (p. 49).

A prepublication draft of this paragraph is very expressive. It reads:

Christ was to take humanity upon Him, not as it was when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden, but as weakened and defiled by four thousand years of sin. He was to come as the Son of man, like every child of Adam, accepting the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were, what the inheritance bequeathed to Jesus in His human nature was, Scripture reveals in the history of those who were the earthly ancestors of our Saviour. With such an heredity, Jesus came as one of us, to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life (M. L. Andreasen Collection #2).

In another chapter of the book, Ellen White wrote that "as one of us He was to give an example of obedience. For this He took upon Himself our nature, and passed through our experiences" (p. 24). The expressions – "as one of us," and "our nature" – are clearly defined in the book. In one place it is written – "Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity," which for four thousand years "had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and moral worth" (p. 117). "Our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities" (*ibid.*). Christ knew that it was impossible for man to deny the clamor of his fallen nature, and that through this channel, Satan would seek to take advantage of hereditary weakness to ensnare Him, so "by passing over the ground which man must travel, our Lord has prepared the way for us to overcome" (pp. 122-123). "By His humanity, Christ touched humanity; by His divinity, He lays hold upon the throne of God. As the Son of

man, He gave us an example of obedience; as the Son of God, He gives us the power to obey" (p. 24).

A statement appeared in the *Youth's Instructor* during 1897 which could serve as a summary of all that the inspired writings have declared in regard to the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. It reads:

To human eyes, Christ was only a man, yet He was a perfect man. In His humanity, He was the impersonation of the divine character. God embodied His own attributes in His Son, - His power, His wisdom, His goodness, His purity, His truthfulness, His spirituality, and His benevolence. In Him, though human, all perfection of character, all divine excellence, dwelt (Sept. 16, 1897).

A New Year

Dominating this coming year will be the results of the American election. Already darkening clouds are appearing on the horizon indicating a coming storm of mega intensity. Since the election, the Cabinet shuffle is a cause of deep concern. Michael Ratner, head of the Center for Constitutional Rights stated that in some ways, Alberto Gonzales who is Bush's choice to replace Ashcroft as Attorney General "is more dangerous than Ashcroft" (*Time*, 11/22/04, p. 57). This Center is presently suing the Administration to grant due-process hearings to any foreigners at the U. S. detention center in Guantanamo Bay. Ratner charges that "the person who really took the U.S. outside of the law was Gonzales. He opened the door to inhumane treatment and military commissions" (*ibid.*). The look down the corridor of time only adds to the concern, as Gonzales is on the list for an appointment as Supreme Court vacancies occur.

Rescheduling activities by the Vatican for John Paul II's travel as well as his conduct of important Masses of the Church as the year closed indicated a continued decline in health which could result in a new head of the Papacy in 2005. Commenting, an article in *The Catholic World Report* (November, 2004) stated:

The Vatican has released the pope's schedule for the remainder of 2004. It is a relatively light schedule, with no surprises on the list of public liturgical celebrations. Two possible trips abroad – to Ireland and to Turkey – have been pushed back to the Spring of 2005 at the earliest. . . .

The obvious decline in the Pope's physical health has prompted Vatican planners to cut back severely on his public appearances. When the Pontiff does participate in liturgical ceremonies, he generally "presides" – remaining in place beside the altar – while one or more cardinals celebrate the Mass. On September 28, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger took the Holy Father's place as celebrant of a Mass in memory of Popes Paul VI and John Paul I; Vatican officials explained that the Pope was resting in preparation for the beatification ceremonies a few days later (p. 4).

Some of the final details of prophecy could quickly be fulfilled. We face a momentous year.

A High Flying Organization

The first issue of *Adventist Today (AT)* for 2004 carried as its lead article a forthright and carefully written report on the problems at 3ABN using the suggestion that it was a high flying organization due to the two jets purchased by Danny Shelton to carry him between various appointments. The author, Elder Edwin A. Schwisow, was public relations officer for the North Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Another article followed in the second issue of *Adventist Today* for 2004 written by the Chairman of the Board of 3ABN defending and explaining the activities of the organization.

It is not our objective to enter into the moral questions that have been raised in other releases devoted to 3ABN's difficulties, or the monetary problems noted in *AT*. The purpose of this essay is to consider the basic concept behind the final gospel witnessing. The key text is Jesus' own statement - "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 verb ἤξει is simple future and conveys the concept that when the gospel of the kingdom is proclaimed as a witness to all nations, then the end would come. But is this "end" a point of time, or a period of time? How one answers this question determines one's witness.

Adventism over the decades has promoted the point of time viewpoint. Various "independent" ministries such as 3ABN and "Steps to Life" continue to do so. This is what gives them the basis for support they receive from sincere Adventists disillusioned with the present course of the regular Church. 3ABN goes a step further and connects their outreach with the very message which fundamental Adventists believe was given in sacred trust to the Church to proclaim – the Three Angels' Message of Revelation 14. This has served as a magnet for the drawing of financial support from the laity of the Church who conscientiously feel they can no longer support the regular Church. This still leaves unanswered the question asked above, "point of time" or "period of time," as well as a further question, Is 3ABN proclaiming the Three Angels' Messages as God indicated He wanted it proclaimed for this hour, or have they followed merely the "traditional" view of its final proclamation?

As 1892 was closing, this message appeared in the *Review & Herald (Dec. 13)*: "After the truth has been proclaimed as a witness to all nations," - clearly echoing the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:14 – "every conceivable power of evil will be set in operation, and minds will be confused by many voices crying. . . This is the truth, I have the message from God, He has sent me with great light." This statement definitely sets the end, not as a "point" of time, but as a "period" of time. Further it gives descriptive detail as what would take place in that period so that one could clearly identify it. Consider:

- 1) "Every conceivable power of evil will be set in operation."
- 2) "Many voices crying. . . This is the truth, I have the message from God, he has sent me with great light."

3) "There will be a removing of the landmarks, and an attempt to tear down the pillars of our faith."

Keep in mind that these things were to occur "after" the truth had been proclaimed as a witness to all nations.

With this message given in 1892, there is another that must be considered given as the decade closed: It reads:

The first and second angels' messages are united and made complete in the third. [Rev. 14:9-10 quoted] Under the proclamation of these messages the cry was made, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh." The believers in these messages were compelled to go out from the churches because they preached the second appearing of Christ in the clouds of heaven. The whole world was to hear the message, "Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." ...

Had those who claimed to believe the truth acted their part as wise virgins, the message would ere this have been given to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. But five were foolish. The truth should have been proclaimed by the ten virgins, but only five had made the provision essential to join the company that walked in the light given to them.

The first, second, and third angels' messages are to be repeated. The call is to be given to the church: [Rev. 18:2-5 quoted]. (*Review & Herald*, October 31, 1899)

With the prophecy of Jesus (Luke 21:24) indicating in its fulfillment that "the times of the nations" are fulfilled, and with the evidence that the "land marks" and "pillars of our faith" have been tampered with, as indicated would occur "after" the truth had been proclaimed as a witness to all nations," 3ABN began its ministry in the mid-1980s. What was to be their message? If to repeat the Three Angels' Messages as indicated in the masthead, "3ABN," they had to say, the "truth" had not as yet been proclaimed to all nations, when the evidence of fulfilled prophecy both in the Scriptures and in the Writings indicated it had. If then, the messages "are to be repeated," and the truth

has been proclaimed as a witness to all nations, it leaves only the "church" as the one to be the recipient of this repeat. But it is plainly stated that the Fourth Angel's message is to be united with the repeat of the other three and given to the Church. This 3ABN has not done. Perhaps the emphasis needs to be altered from 3ABN to 4ABN, and Rev. 18:1-5 proclaimed as it is indicated should be done.

Into this picture also falls another statement - "The state of the Church represented by the foolish virgins, is also spoken of as the Laodicean state" (*R&H*, Aug. 19, 1890).

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Israel by the vote of the Knesset. Another thirteen years, 1993; and the Papacy recognized Israel as a State and press releases suggested Papal interest in Jerusalem which could mean the fulfilment of Daniel 11:45 if carried through. Another 13 years would bring us to 2006, just ahead of us. But three 13 year increments equal 39 years, just one year shy of a Biblical generation, but exactly equal to the time of AD31 – AD70! However, if you add 40 years to 1967 you get 2007, also “even at the door.”

If God is working in 13-year increments – “3” a perfect number is involved in the events from 1967 to 2006. All of this makes for something to think about, and react to in a full preparation for the coming of Christ with our lamps trimmed and burning for light in the gross darkness of the present time.

Numerology

A Doctor in Canada wrote me a letter in which he asked – “Have you ever commented on the numerology that seems to be consistent in the Bible?” He cited certain common Biblical numbers of time and groups such as three, seven, twelve, forty, seventy and one hundred and twenty. It must be recognized that numerology has problematical factors, and yet certain periods of time are repeated, and others divided into equal increments. To his letter, I replied:

Your letter notes various time periods and dates. I have meditated on some of these myself especially the times involved with the demise of Israel as the people of God. In AD 31, the hierarchy crossed the unseen line and crucified the Messiah. Three and one half years later (AD 34), the nation of Israel fulfilled its allotted “70 weeks.” The times of the Gentiles (nations) began. Thirty six years later in AD 70, judgment fell on the nation, city, and temple. This closely parallels 40 years as a generation. If however, you use AD 31, the time period is 39 years.

In 1967 the “times of the Gentiles” were fulfilled (Luke 21:24); Jerusalem passed once again to Jewish control. Then 13 years later, 1980, Jerusalem was made the capital of all

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