

THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

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February 2, 2010

How long has it been since you sat down and read Second Chronicles in the Bible?

There are some happy things in it, like King Jehoshaphat sending the choir out to sing in front of the army that had to meet the huge armies of Moab, Ammon, and Edom (ch. 20). God wonderfully delivered His people. Jehoshaphat led out in wonderful revivals and reformations, but “the people still did not wholeheartedly turn to the worship of God” (20:33), and the Lord destroyed the ships that the king had built (vs. 37). His son Jehoram rebelled against the Lord (ch. 21). His son Ahaziah was also evil (ch. 22).

Next came the reign of terror under Queen Athaliah (22:10). Then the beautiful story of how the priest Jehoida saved the royal infant Joash and put him on the throne (23). And guess what King Joash did when he grew up? Turned away from the godly example of Jehoida, and murdered Jehoida’s son Zechariah (24:17-22; this was in the 8th century before Christ, yet He fixed the guilt for that murder on the Jewish leaders of His day, Mt. 23:35). Joash’s son Amaziah was also an evil king (2 Chron. 25), followed by a good king, Uzziah. What a welcome relief to have a king who did what was right and whom God blessed! “But when King Uzziah became strong, he grew arrogant, and that led to his downfall” (26:16). He was stricken with leprosy for his arrogance (19-21). King Hezekiah

next was a welcome relief from the almost endless litany of rebellion against the Lord, but at the end, he too was out of harmony with God’s blessed will for him, and he left the most awful legacy on the nation—gave them his son Manasseh, the most wicked king Judah ever had (Jer. 15:4). King Josiah was Hezekiah’s grandson, and he was a “perfect” king, did everything exactly right, followed the Spirit of Prophecy meticulously (chs. 34-35), but ended up rejecting the living demonstration of the Spirit of Prophecy because it came to him from an unlikely source—the mouth of the King of Egypt (35:20-24). He died in the battle that God expressly told him not to go into, and from then on it was downhill all the way for Jerusalem, the Temple, and for David’s Kingdom until King Zedekiah and the burning of the Temple and the city, “there was no remedy” (36:15, 16). What went wrong? Why were all those revivals and reformations so short-lived? Why are ours today.

The answer: they were all based on Old Covenant principles. Yes, the Old Covenant was good; but not good enough!

The story of Joseph in the Bible is no fairy tale; Egyptian history and archeology attest how true to historic life the details are.

It fits well in the Hyksos era, for the Pharaohs were not native Egyptians. They could well have employed a Hebrew in a high government post.

Egyptian records show how there came a change in national economy when all the land except in temples was acquired by the crown. We can trust our Bible story!

Is Joseph a type of the church that will proclaim a message that “lightens the earth with glory” in our last days?

This special church is given “the spirit of prophecy” as Joseph was gifted (see Rev. 12:17; 19:10).

It must pass the test of moral purity, as Joseph passed the test with Potiphar’s wife tempting him. “Fornication” or “adultery” is not to be even mentioned among that people who “overcome even as Christ overcame” (Rev. 3:21).

The church that proclaims a message that lightens the earth with glory will suffer persecution, as Joseph suffered it from his brothers and even his father.

The last-days’ message will save people; lives will be changed; characters will become “at one” with God. Joseph saved many people’s lives; the “remnant church” will proclaim a message that will lead many souls to eternal life.

But every one who will partake of the blessing will know first-hand “the chastening of the Lord” (Heb. 12:5-12). That will make more distinct how much the Lord loves him/her! That *agape* will be the dominant element of the final message.

Jesus Christ was emphatically clear about the future: this sinful, painful world is not to continue on and on *ad infinitum* for ages to come. “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1-3, KJV).

Note: He receives His people unto Himself, not vice versa. He has taken the initiative all the way through: a conjugal love has motivated Him.

Love is always the desire to be one with the beloved. Jesus is no different!

The story of the second coming of Christ is a love story; there is a Bridegroom involved and a Bride. The drama is played out on planet earth in view of the vast universe of God, as though this planet were the stage. The second coming of Christ is the denouement of history, the one grand event toward which through the ages humanity has moved steadily.

The prophet Daniel describes the Last Generation as “the time of the end” (11:35; 12:4). Jesus told His disciples, speaking of specific events, “Then shall the end come” (Matt. 24:14). There will be a Last Generation! Six thousand plus years of history cannot be for nothing!

The apostles had a clear understanding: “This we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep [not everybody is going to pass through death!]. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:15-17).

The joy that Jesus will know will be unbounded, for He has personally, individually loved each one of

His saints. The Last Generation will be the reunion. The long delayed wedding of two who have dearly loved each other is an occasion of great joy here on earth; think of a cosmic wedding! Four grand Hallelujah choruses with heaven's symphony orchestras accompanying the massed choirs. "The angel said to me, 'Write this: Happy are those who have been invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.' . . . All those who hold to the truth that Jesus revealed" (Rev. 19:7-10, "the spirit of prophecy," KJV).

You are invited; now "make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10).

We sing a word of praise for an unnamed Israelite heroine, a teenager (maybe even younger) who had been captured in the vicissitudes of war with Syria and made a slave girl to serve the wife of the great Naaman, a Syrian general of war. We will simply call her "Slave-girl."

Slave-girl might have given up to bitter thoughts of hatred and revenge for her captors. Israelites were never supposed to be slaves to anybody! They had come out of slavery in Egypt, supposed now to be free forever. The very word "Israelite" had come to mean "Free-person."

But now things had turned against them, because of the rebellious sins of the people in the kingdom of Judah, and our Slave-girl is a captive.

She could easily have given in to nationalistic pride gone sour, and yielded her heart to hatred-thoughts of her new war masters.

But this girl was an "Israelite-indeed," in that in her heart she believed that she was "free in the Lord,"

no matter what happened to her politically. This indicated on her part some understanding of the Israelite doctrine of righteousness by faith. "Faith" gives you the enjoyment of freedom and every blessing even though just now you have to wait for them.

Her story is in 2 Kings 5:1-14. Her slave-master was a general in the Syrian army, a man up at the top. But there was one problem: he was a leper.

Our "little maid" was bereft of thoughts of hatred and revenge; instead she knew what we call "the love of Christ" (which should fill every Israelite heart).

Her job was to be a slave-girl to Naaman's wife, probably a high-class matron having everything a woman's heart could desire. Someone overheard a conversation and went and told the big boss, the king of Syria, that the girl had said, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy"!

He forthwith wrote a letter to the king of Israel and sent a servant with loads of money and fine clothing, saying, "Please heal my servant, General Naaman."

The king was distraught and "rent his clothes" in despair.

Elisha, "the man of God ... heard [the news]" and sent word for the king to bring the man to him. The innocent little girl was to become very highly honored! We can't say that her faith was "childish," for it was in fact very mature, very real.

Elisha didn't even get up to go to the door to meet Naaman's servants, but told them to tell Naaman to

go immerse himself and “wash” in the Jordan “seven times” and he would be healed.

Naaman was outraged; wash in the filthy river Jordan? “I have nice clear rivers in Syria—I will wash there!” and he left in a rage, still a leper and headed for being one forever.

His servants had some common sense and reasoned with him, for they were impressed that Israel was indeed God’s people. The great Naaman humbled himself to obey the “Spirit of Prophecy,” and was healed.

When the Lord gives someone a message for the people through the gift of the “spirit of prophecy,” it’s a joyous message. And it makes the messenger (the prophet himself) joyous to deliver it.

But there is one outstanding exception: There was one man whom the gift of the spirit of prophecy brought unmeasured sorrow with tears: that was the prophet Jeremiah.

He is known as “the weeping prophet.” He says: “Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth!” (15:10).

It was his misfortune to live in a time of unparalleled apostasy in Jerusalem. The people were in rebellion against the Lord, and since Jeremiah was at-one with the Lord, they were also in rebellion against him.

Yet, in spite of the heart-pain that was his burden to carry all his life, the Lord also managed to give him some delightful joy along the way in order to refresh his spirit and to keep him from perishing. He tells of one experience the Lord let him have: “Thy

words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts” (15:16).

That experience “fed” his soul and kept him from perishing!

Note: the blessing did not come through some epiphany, some special vision that the Lord gave him: it came through his reading the books of the Bible which he had at that time (don’t forget, he had the books of Samuel, of Moses, and the psalms of David).

Now you and I have far more than he had at that time; but kneel and personally thank the Father in heaven for the 66 books of the Bible which you have; let His “Word” be the “joy and rejoicing of [your] heart” now and forevermore.

Have you ever read the intensely interesting story of King Asa? He gets lost in the hoopla of David and Solomon. What’s unique about his story is that on the surface he appears to contradict the Bible truth of righteousness by faith. His reign appears to prove the doctrine of salvation by works; it’s the Old Covenant glorified, salvation by obedience. It appears on the surface to prove that Laodicea is right and the True Witness is wrong. The story appears to support the widely popular doctrine of salvation by obedience under the terms of the Old Covenant—it’s right here in the Bible! Mount Sinai supremely successful.

Read it: 2 Chronicles 15, 16. The nation enjoyed wonderful security and prosperity. But did you notice that Asa and the people were so strongly

committed to the Old Covenant that they decreed “death, whether small or great, whether man or woman,” to anyone who didn’t join in? Yes, for sure that secured “obedience,” right to the letter (15:12, 13)!

This wonderful Old Covenant rule brought blessings for 35 years (vs. 19). Then “perfect” King Asa did “foolishly” and forsook the Lord (16:9). Hanani, an inspired prophet, rightly rebuked him; then good King Asa lost his temper and threw him into prison, and began oppressing his people (vss. 7-10). He ended his reign stubbornly refusing to humble his heart before the Lord when affliction came on him (vs. 12). “Perfect heart”?

Our problem comes in 15:17: “Nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days.” How can you have a “perfect heart,” then lose your temper at the Spirit of Prophecy, jail the Lord’s true prophet, “oppress” your people, then turn your back on the Lord in your old age? Is it really true that righteousness is not by faith? That you can have faith and still go on sinning? Many worldwide believe so, and here’s proof, they say. How can we understand this? Our time’s up. Maybe we can look at it tomorrow.

WHY WE HUNGER FOR LATTER RAIN TRUTH

Introduction: Or: do we feel “rich and increased with goods in need of nothing”? (Rev. 3:14-21).

Who is “blessed” (Mt. 5:6).

The drought in Jeremiah’s day: 3:2, 3; their famine: 14:1-9. Drought is symbolic of “no word from the Lord” (Amos 8:11-13). The king asks, “Is there any word from the Lord?” (Jer. 37:16, 17).

“Rain” is a symbol of the gift of the Holy Spirit (Zech. 10:1; Joel 2:23, 28).

Early Writings, pp. 269-271: “I saw some, with strong faith and agonizing cries, pleading with God. . . . Angels of God had charge over His people, and as the poisonous atmosphere of evil angels was pressed around these anxious ones, the heavenly angels were continually wafting their wings over them to scatter the thick darkness.

“As the praying ones continued their earnest cries, at times a ray of light from Jesus came to them, to encourage their hearts and light up their countenances. Some, I saw, did not participate in this work of agonizing and pleading. . . . The angels of God left these and went to the aid of the earnest, praying ones. . . .

“I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans. . . .

“I saw that the testimony of the True Witness has not been half heeded. The solemn testimony upon which the destiny of the church hangs has been lightly esteemed, if not entirely disregarded. This testimony must work deep repentance; all who truly receive it will obey it and be purified. . . .

“I was shown those whom I had before seen weeping and praying in agony of spirit. The company of guardian angels around them had been doubled, and they were clothed with an armor from their head to their feet. They moved in exact order, like a company of soldiers. . . . They had obtained

the victory, and it called forth from them the deepest gratitude and holy, sacred joy.

“The numbers of this company had lessened. Some had been shaken out and left by the way. The careless and indifferent, who did not join with those who prized victory and salvation enough to perseveringly plead and agonize for it, did not obtain it, and they were left behind in darkness, and their places were immediately filled by others taking hold of the truth and coming into the ranks. . . .

“I heard those closed with the armor speak forth the truth with great power. It had effect. Many had been bound; some wives by their husbands and some children by their parents. The honest who had been prevented from hearing the truth now eagerly laid hold upon it. All fear of their relatives was gone, and the truth alone was exalted to them. They had been hungering and thirsting for truth; it was dearer and more precious than life. I asked what had made this great change. An angel answered, ‘It is the latter rain, the refreshing from the presence of the Lord, the loud cry of the third angel.’”

In 1850 Ellen White “saw” the 1888 message as it was intended to come 38 years later:

“I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven, descending to the earth and again ascending to heaven, preparing for the fulfillment of some important event. Then I saw another mighty angel commissioned to descend to the earth, to unite his voice with the third angel, and give power and force to his message. Great power and glory were imparted to the angel, and as he descended, the earth was lightened with his glory [note: this

prophecy foresaw what should have happened—it does not take into account the terrible rejection of the 1888 message which took the angels by surprise]. The light which attended this angel penetrated everywhere, as he cried mightily with a strong voice, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.’ The message of the fall of Babylon, as given by the second angel is repeated, with the additional mention of the corruptions which have been entering the churches since 1844. The work of this angel comes in at the right time to join in the last great work of the third angel's message as it swells to a loud cry. And the people of God are thus prepared to stand in the hour of temptation, which they are soon to meet. I saw a great light resting upon them, and they united to fearlessly proclaim the third angel's message.

“Angels were sent to aid the mighty angel from heaven. . . . This message seemed to be an addition to the third message, joining it as the midnight cry joined the second angel's message in 1844. The glory of God rested upon the patient, waiting saints, and they fearlessly gave the last solemn warning, proclaiming the fall of Babylon and calling upon God's people to come out of her. . . .

“The light that was shed upon the waiting ones penetrated everywhere, and those in the churches who had any light, who had not heard and rejected the three messages, obeyed the call and left the fallen churches. . . . I saw that this message will

close with power and strength far exceeding the midnight cry [of 1844].”

Some few recognized the significance of the 1888 message when it came:

“The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth” (RH, Nov. 22, 1892).

In Special Testimonies, Series A, No. 6, p. 19, Ellen White rebukes those who refused to recognize that the 1888 message is “showers from heaven of the latter rain.”

A. T. Jones: “I received a letter a little while ago from Brother Starr in Australia. I will read two or three sentences because they come in well just as this place in our lessons: ‘Sister White says that we have been in the time of the latter rain since the Minneapolis meeting’” (GCB, 1893, p. 377).

“Let us thank the Lord that He is dealing with us still, to save us from our errors, to save us from our dangers, to keep us back from wrong courses, and to pour upon us the latter rain, that we may be translated. That is what the message means—translation—to you and me” (*ibid.*, p. 185).

“Not a soul of us have ever been able to dream yet the wonderful blessing that God had for us at Minneapolis, and which we would have been enjoying these four years, if hearts had been ready to receive the message which God sent. We would have been four years ahead, we would have been in the midst of the wonders of the loud cry itself,

tonight. Did not the Spirit of prophecy tell us there at that time that the blessing was hanging over our heads?” (*ibid.*, p. 183).

“He [the Lord] has been trying these four years to have us receive the latter rain, how much longer is He going to wait before we receive it? . . . A decision will be made by the Lord, by ourselves in fact, at this meeting” (*ibid.*, p. 377).

W. W. Prescott: “It seems to me that right now we are making choices that will determine whether we shall go on with this work through the loud cry and be translated, or whether we shall be deceived by the devices of Satan and be left out in darkness” (*ibid.*, p. 386).

The General Conference president, O. A. Olsen: “We have long been talking about the loud cry of the third angel’s message. . . . Well, has the time come for that loud voice to be heard? . . . It certainly has, brethren Then don’t be looking forward to it any longer; don’t be expecting it at some place way off; realize that it is here, and that it means something” (RH, November 8, 1892).

Writing between 1888 and 1892, Ellen White described the message as: “precious light,” “new light,” “light from heaven for the past year and a half,” “light flashing from the throne of God,” “new settings,” “truths that are entirely new,” “new forms,” “a new framework,” “more light,” “increasing light,” “things new and old from the treasure-house of His word,” “old yet new truths,” “more light for us, “light that is new to us,” “light that is yet to come to us, . . . new ideas,” “much light yet to shine forth,”

“precious old truths in a new light,” “a most precious message.”

The cut-off date was 1896:

“Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. The light that is to lighten the whole earth which its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren, has been in a great degree kept away from the world” (1SM 234, 235; 1896).

“One day at noon I was writing of the work that might have been done at the last General Conference [1901], if the men in positions of trust had followed the will and way of God. . . . The words were spoken to me: ‘This might have been.’ All this the Lord was waiting to do for His people. All heaven was waiting to be gracious.’ . . . An agony of disappointment came over me as I realized that what I had witnessed was not a reality” (7T 104-106).

“We may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination as did the children of Israel, but for Christ’s sake His people should not charging God with the consequence of their own wrong course of action. But if all now would only see and confess and repent of their own course of action in departing from the truth of God, and following human devising, then the Lord would pardon.” (Letter, M 184-1901; Ev 696).

Elder A. G. Daniells, for 22 years General Conference president: “The [1888] message has never been received, nor proclaimed, not given free course as it should have been in order to convey to the church the measureless blessings that were wrapped up within it” (*Christ Our Righteousness*, 1926, p. 63).

There is hope for the future: “Says the Lord of hosts, . . . To you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings. . . . Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers” (Mal. 4:1, 2, 5, 6; cf. 2:13-16).