Issue # 19 ◆ Oct. / Nov. 2016

"Watchman, what of the night ?"

" The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you, the hour and the end!" Ezekiel 7:6 (Moffatt)

▶ THIS ISSUE'S READING

LUKE 21: 24 – A CONTINUING CONUNDRUM ... WHY?

Editor's Preface

Recently, a subscriber to the thought paper emailed us a question on Luke 21: 24. She and her husband, both Adventists, had been sharing some information on this text with an Adventist sister. They related to us that this "sister felt that the prophecy in Luke 21: 24 (Jerusalem trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled), as far as time, corresponded with the 1260 days, because of the similar language found in Rev. 11: 2." Accordingly, they asked if we had any thoughts concerning this to which we emailed them back our reply.[1]

Upon reflection, what arrested our attention the most was not the actual interpretation put forward by this sister, but the fact that any inquiry on this prophecy of Jesus was even being discussed among some Seventh-day Adventists at this time. Frankly, it has been several years since the Iowa Foundation has received any mention of it from the general S.D.A. community. Study of this prophecy as time moves forward is becoming increasingly non-existent! Seldom is it mentioned in any of our prophetic expositions and attempts to generate interest in understanding its significance by the few who recognize its importance are simply ignored or dismissed. Consequently, most Adventists view this matter as a new, strange, peripheral, and offshoot teaching that is outside the realm of Adventism's 28 fundamental statements of ("official") belief.

Nearly 20 years ago, Elder William H. Grotheer, the founder of Adventist Laymen's Foundation and "Watchman, what of the night?", penned an

article in WWN in which he addressed this sad affair. Entitled: *Why the Ignorance?* (parts 1 and 2),[2] we believe this question is even more pertinent today, two decades later, than what it was back in 1997.

This is the context that we are devoting the entire present issue of WWN toward. The following presentation of discerning articles are intended as a testimonial primer / review of Luke 21: 24 intended to stimulate awareness, interest, and urgency. It is our earnest desire that the Holy Spirit will lead the reader into a deeper search for the true meaning and implications of this prophecy. We believe an in-depth investigation of the material that Elder Grotheer wrote on this subject will prove invaluable to this search.

TESTIMONIAL ARTICLES ON LUKE 21: 24.

Article 1 : Elder William H. Grotheer's Calling and Testimony.

Those who had been closely acquainted with Elder Grotheer realized that he firmly believed the work the Lord had called him to do in establishing the Adventist Laymen's Foundation was primarily raised up in light of the fulfillment of Luke 21: 24. Periodically during the early-mid 1990's he discussed this with me (the present editor of WWN) and at the close of 1996 he wrote a testimonial article for WWN, entitled: *I Remember*, outlining events in regard to his calling and experience.[3] The following excerpt from this testimonial is how he summed up the events surrounding his call to the ministry embodied in the work of the Foundation:

"While at Andrews taking class work during the school year 1964-1965, I could not erase from my mind the conviction that the major part of my ministry from that point on would be writing ... Then came 1967.

"Immediately following the Seven Day War *[Note: More commonly referred to as the "Six-Day War of June 5-10, 1967]* which once more placed Jerusalem under Israeli jurisdiction, I received a letter from a brother in Indiana who ... asked me what that meant in the light of Jesus' prophecy ... I wrote back to the brother that there was no significance to the event ... However during the Fall the conviction to write bore heavily on my mind .. and I began writing at the close of 1967, and released the first issue of WWN as the January 1968, issue. It was not until some five years later that I sensed the significance of the prophecy of Jesus as given in Luke 21: 24.

"God, in Whose hands are the times and seasons, needed a voice to sound the meaning of a fulfilled prophecy, and He ordered a life, and experiences needful in that life, to begin a work at the very time another work was commencing called a New World Order - an Order in which Satan seeks to implant his will upon the nations. God had given the signal that the probationary time of the nations was fulfilled. A voice needed to be sounded interpreting the significance of the event which marked that time."

Clearly, Elder Grotheer believed that the writing ministry which the Lord "bore heavily" upon him to begin in 1967 was rooted in the conviction that it came about as the result of the fulfillment of Luke 21: 24. For 37 years (from 1973 to his death in 2009), Elder Grotheer wrote and taught extensively on the significance and meaning of this prophecy of Jesus' and its relationship to many of the present truths of our day. To the honest seeker of truth, his expositions on this subject are something that we dare not continue to disregard.

Article 2 : The Present Editor of WWN's Testimony.

Over a decade before I became acquainted with Elder Grotheer, I was pondering the meaning of Luke 21: 24. In 1976 I accepted Jesus as Savior, Lord, and became a member of the local Seventh-day Adventist Church in my area. In further prophetic studies, I became aware of the fact that Luke's version of what most refer to as Jesus' great Olivet eschatological discourse, as recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, contained not only a more plain, literal description of some of the details, but also recorded an aspect of those details that Matthew and Mark did not explicitly mention - "the times of the Gentiles" in the 24th verse of Luke 21. Noting this, my curiosity led to a search of Adventist sources for answers to its meaning. At the time (bear in mind this was during the pre-Internet era), the only information I could find was the comment found in The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume five, page 863, article: "*Times of the Gentiles.*" To paraphrase, this simply said that when Jesus gave this discourse, the time allotted to the Jews was about to end (presumably in A.D. 34) and as a result the gospel would be proclaimed to the whole world. And while this was certainly true, I could not shake the conviction that the best light this comment was shedding on the matter was *possibly* a vague implication that the times of the Gentiles may have *begun* in A.D. 34. And, in all honesty, since my research was not as thorough as it should have been (even with the search 'tools' available then), I let the issue rest - though I did not completely dismiss it from my mind.

About four years later, in 1980, while looking through some books on Bible prophecy at an area Christian bookstore, I came across a statement by a dispensational author that instantly caught my attention. In his listing of a number of events that he thought pointed toward the nearness of the "secret rapture," was the brief mention of the fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles referred to by Luke 21: 24 which he stated occurred when National Israel gained governmental control of the city of Jerusalem following the Six Day War of June 1967. There was no further elaboration by the author on this point; however my own examination of the historical facts made in this statement corroborated the truth that for the first time in over nineteen centuries, all of Jerusalem was under the governmental control of the nation of Israel. Based upon what had been revealed to me thus far, I could not escape the conclusion that "the times of the Gentiles" must have begun in A.D. 34 (at the end of the 70 weeks prophecy of Daniel 9: 24-27), and apparently came to an end in A.D. 1967 (with the capture of Jerusalem by modern Israel during the Six-Day War that year). Therefore, I deduced that this was simply another sign that the second coming of Christ (and certainly not the erroneous secret rapture, of course) was getting nearer.

In February of 1991, after ten years of no further enlightenment on this matter, I received a small pamphlet in the mail entitled Jerusalem in Bible Prophecy. Upon first glance, with its silver colored cover with a large Jewish Star of David in the middle, I assumed it was probably from a dispensational Christian organization; but the letter which accompanied it, addressed to me personally, was from a William H. Grotheer of the Adventist Laymen's Foundation. Realizing that the pamphlet was from an S.D.A.

ministry, I immediately thumbed my way through it and was astonished to find that its main focus concerning Jerusalem centered in an examination of Luke 21: 24! Moreover, on the back page, a booklet - THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES FULFILLED, A Study in Depth of Luke 21: 24 was available through a mail-in offer. I could hardly believe it! After years of on and off contemplation and prayer in regard to this prophecy, the Lord had now put me into contact with a source - a fellow brother in the Adventist message no less! - who had extensively studied and researched the history, meaning, and importance of this scriptural topic. The information and spiritual insight provided by Elder Grotheer substantiated the conviction I had always suspected - that there was much more to understanding this prophetic text than what I previously discerned.

The initial contact made at this time rapidly blossomed into a close association between myself (along with the Nora Springs, Iowa, independent S.D.A. congregation) and Elder Grotheer / the Adventist Laymen's Foundation. Consequently: 1) the documented awareness, agitation, and tension over this prophecy that has occurred historically within the Adventist Church; 2) its association and connection with the sanctuary truth, the three angels messages, and the sacred trust committed to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its mission; 3) the broader knowledge of all the facts marking the beginning (1967) and closing (1980) of the time *period* as indicated in the Greek term for "until" ("*achri hou*"), an idiomatic expression; 4) the social, political, financial, spiritual / religious incidents happening in light of the fulfillment of this prophecy, led to a joint undertaking (through a representative committee) in late 1993. Along with another dedicated independent Adventist ministry, it was agreed among us that the time had come to set forth a Statement of Beliefs which accurately reflected the new prophetic paradigm brought forward as a result of Luke 21: 24's fulfillment. The Adventist denominational structure's failure to even acknowledge this truth, and the subsequent implications to the place, position, and work of the Seventh-day Adventist Movement, made the effort all the more imperative.

The committee began working from a rough draft of 27 statements that all those who attended the Foundation's Annual Fellowship had formulated earlier. After a period of deliberation among us in order to determine how to proceed, it was decided that we would assign each representative attendee one or more of each individual belief to develop into a complete, final statement. The major focus for each of us centered in proper wording with the addition of scriptural documentation along with explanatory notes. Statements # 19 and # 20, which dealt specifically with Luke 21: 24, were assigned to me as I had stated my strong desire to work on these particular beliefs myself. Afterward, when we all had submitted our finished work to the whole committee for a final scrutiny, review, and formulation, these two statements were among the very few that all of us decided needed no further revision. The completed A Statement of Beliefs was published in February 1994.[4] Beliefs # 19 and # 20 (with the subsequent footnotes) read as follows:

19) That Jesus' own prophecy in Luke 21:24 [1] indicated that Jerusalem would be the focus of the final events of this earth's history. [2] It

has already been fulfilled in the recapture of the old city of Jerusalem by Israeli military forces in 1967, and the entire city made the capital of one Israel in 1980. [3] There remains but a single event - Daniel 11:45 - to complete the prophetic picture. [4] Present day events indicate its soon fulfillment. [5] This will be followed by the close of all human probation (Daniel 12:1). [6]

[1] The same Jerusalem which "was compassed with armies" in A.D. 66 (Luke 21: 20), which was laid "even with the ground" along with her "children within" (Luke 19: 43-44), and whose people (the Jews) were "led away captive into all nations" in A.D. 70 (Luke 21: 24a), is the same Jerusalem that would be "trodden down of the Gentiles (*Gr.* - ethnē - "nations"), until the times of the Gentiles (nations) be fulfilled" (Luke 21: 24b). Historically, the capture and destruction of the city by the Romans in A.D. 70 began a centuries long "trodding down" of it by the "ethnē" (nations). This non-Jewish governmental domination of Old Jerusalem would continue throughout this allotted time period until the Jewish people would once again gain governmental control of the city.

[2] The "generation" living at the beginning of the "times of the Gentiles" did not "pass away" until they witnessed the fulfillment of prophesied events which led to the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews. Likewise, the "generation" living at the end of the "times of the Gentiles" will not "pass away" until they witness the fulfillment of prophesied events which will lead to the destruction of the world and the return of Jesus. (Compare Matthew 24: 3 and Luke 21: 7 with Matthew 24: 32-35 and Luke 21: 29-33). As the surrounding of Jerusalem by Roman armies in A.D. 66 was a sign for the early church to flee out of it and Judea (Luke 21: 21), so the end of Gentile (ethnē) control of Jerusalem will bring "upon the earth distress of nations (ethnē) with perplexity; the sea and waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth" (Luke 21: 25-26a) and be a sign for the end time church that the second coming of Christ "draweth nigh." (Luke 21: 27-28).

[3] "In the spring of 1948, however, the opposing armies of Israel and Jordan seized Jerusalem, Israel occupying the western portion of the city, containing the modern residential and business sections, and Jordan occupying the eastern portion, including the Old City ... During the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967, Israeli forces captured the Old City; and the Israeli Knesset unilaterally decreed the reunification of the entire city. This was reiterated by the Knesset in 1980, when the undivided city was declared the eternal capital of Israel." (Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia, volume 15, page 34, Article: "Jerusalem - Later history," copyright 1986). This fulfillment means that the "times of the Gentiles" (nations) are ended, having begun with the rejection of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah by the Jewish nation in A.D. 34 (see Daniel 9: 24-27). As this rejection signaled the end of corporate probation for the Jewish nation, so the retaking of Old Jerusalem by modern Israel signals the end of corporate probation for the non-Jewish nations.

[4] The "he" of Daniel 11: 45 is the same power as "the king" of Daniel 11: 36. Many Bible students have identified this power as the Papacy. This "king" will "plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain." According to Daniel himself, "the glorious holy mountain;" is the city of Jerusalem (see Daniel 9: 16a, 20b). Geographically, the city of Jerusalem lies between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea. We are living between a fulfilled Luke 21: 24 and a yet to be fulfilled Daniel 11: 45.

[5] Papal policy concerning the city of Jerusalem is well documented in "Redemptionis Anno," an apostolic letter of Pope John Paul II addressed "To the bishops, priests, religious families and faithful on the city of Jerusalem, the sacred pat-

rimony of all believers, and the desired meeting place of peace for the peoples of the Middle East." (Issued on Good Friday, April 20, 1984 and published in Osservatore Romano, April 30, 1984). Since then, the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe along with the break-up of the Soviet Union - largely the result of a collaboration between the United States government and the Vatican (see Time, February 24, 1992), the signed agreement opening up diplomatic relations between Israel and the Vatican, the signing of a peace treaty between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel - with the United Nations approval of the United States' enforcement of it if necessary - along with similar peace treaties with Israel by Jordan and Syria under consideration, and the worldwide social, political, religious, and economic advancements toward a "New World Order" are all contributing to shortly bring about the fulfillment of Daniel 11: 45.

[6] The end of probation for the Jewish nation as a corporate body in A.D. 34 did not necessarily end probation for the individual Jew. Likewise, the end of probation for the Gentile nations in our day doesn't necessarily end probation for the individual. However, when the third and last step of the final atonement is completed (having started with the individual dead and continuing to the individual living), Jesus' work as High Priest in the Most Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary ceases. This ending of the intercession of Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary also closes all human probation - the cases of all, both corporate groups and individuals, having been decided for all eternity.

20) That "present truth" for today [2] constitutes a study and understanding of the relationship between the fulfilled prophecy in Luke 21: 24 and the agenda of the judgment typified in the services for the earthly Day of Atonement. [1]

[1] The fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in Luke 21: 24 tells us that Christ, our Great High Priest in the Most Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary above, is mediating the last step of the three step agenda performed by the Levitical High Priest in the type on the Day of Atonement. Christ has passed from the cleansing of the sanctuary of corporate guilt and confession to the cleansing of the sanctuary from the guilt and confession of the individual. (See Leviticus 4: 3-35. Compare with Leviticus 16: 14-20, 32-33 and Hebrews 8: 5).

[2] God's "word is truth." (John 17: 17). That truth is recorded in the scriptures (Daniel 10: 21a). The Lord's revealing of the truth to His servants is progressive (Proverbs 4: 18). As history unfolds toward the consummation of all things, each successive generation has had special light from Heaven given - the "present truth" for the time. (See 2 Peter 1: 12). The present truth in Apostolic times did not undermine or destroy the foundation of truth found in the "law, or the prophets" (Matthew 5: 17). Instead, as was the case in earlier ages, it built upon it and advanced it. In the Christian dispensation, this same principle guided the Protestant reformers and later, the pioneers of the Second Advent movement. The present truth for today does not undermine or destroy one pillar or landmark upon which the foundation of the Advent movement was laid. Rather, it builds upon it and advances it.

Article 3 : (An Example Of) A Non-Seventh-day Adventist Testimonial.

The following summary on Luke 21: 24 is an excerpt taken from the James Burton Coffman Commentaries / Luke.[5] Coffman was a well respected, non-Calvinist, non-Dispensational, conservative Bible expositor associated with the Churches of Christ. He penned his commentary set on every book of the Bible between 1964 and 1992, which

qualifies this commentary series as representative of mid to late twentieth century scholarship. Some of his remarks on this passage in Luke 21 are quite insightful, though this editor by no means agrees with every detail in his comments on this, or the surrounding, text:

"A VERY STARTLING FACT"

"Today, after over nineteen centuries of Gentile dominion over Jerusalem, during which the Romans, the Saracens, the Franks, the Mamelukes, the Turks, and the British have, in turn, held authority over Jerusalem, (the city is today controlled by secular Israel.) ... there is a powerful indication in the current status of Jerusalem that suggests the awesome possibility, if not the certainty, that 'the times of the Gentiles' have about expired. The current status of true faith in Christ in our troubled world is weak and precarious... The truth that men cannot foresee the future, and the fact of uncertainty in all such interpretations as those undertaken here, preclude any dogmatism; but the six-day war that lifted the Gentile yoke from Jerusalem in 1967 is in some manner related to this prophecy. The practical applications of his words which Jesus at once propounded should now concern people more than ever, lest 'that day' come upon them unawares." [Note: Emphasis added].

Article 4 : An Appeal to the Remnant.

If we would but soberly and seriously contemplate the meaning and implications of this "sure word of prophecy" (2 Peter 1: 19) given by Jesus Himself, and the fact that it has been fulfilled for the last few decades of *our* time, how much more urgent is it becoming to prepare our hearts and minds accordingly? In light of the warnings given by the Lord's messenger in 8T, pages 247-251, [6] it behooves all who claim to be God's people to do so, *now*! ❖ **GLP**

1. (Part of our answer included the article: *Revelation 11: 2*, found in:) William H. Grotheer, *"Watchman, what of the night?"* (Ozone, AR: Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi, Inc., XXXII - May 1999), 7.

2. Grotheer, *Ibid.* (XXX - Mar. 1997 / XXX - Apr. 1997), 6-7 / 5-6.

3. Grotheer, *Ibid.* (XXX - Mar. 1997), 4-5.

4. (The published copy of *A Statement of Beliefs* can be accessed online from our partner website at the following link) www.adventistlaymen.com/Documents/A Statement of Beliefs.pdf

5. (*Coffman's Commentaries on the Bible* can be accessed online at the following link) www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc.html

6. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church, volume eight* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 247-251.

* All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

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