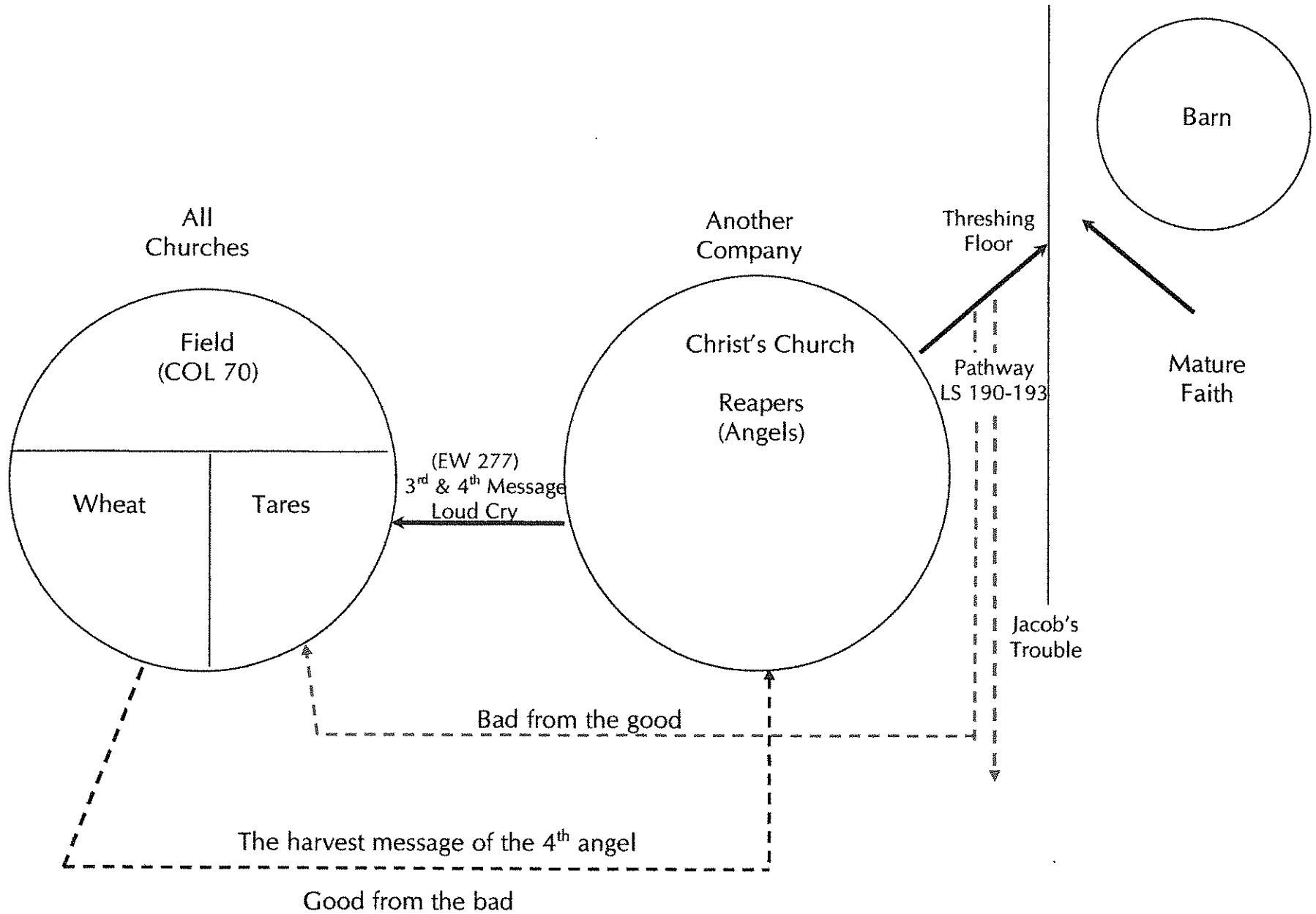


WHEAT & TARES PARABLE



The Wheat and Tares Parable

Welcome to what I truly hope will be a life changing experience for each one of us this morning. What I'm going to be sharing with you today is present truth and it will be present truth until human probation closes. And there is no other truth more important than the truth that I'm going to be sharing with you today.

To begin with I'd like for you to recall with me what the prophet said in *Early Writings* page 63.

"There are many precious truths contained in the Word of God," And that's true, isn't it! There are many, many precious truths in God's word. But what is that the flock needs now?

"but it is "present truth" that the flock needs now."

If that statement was true in 1882 when it was first written, certainly it's true today, wouldn't you say? And I can assure of one thing for sure, the things that I'm going to be sharing with you today you will never hear in any denominational church. And the reason I say that will become apparent as we get into the message.

I have a lot of inspired statements to share with you this morning and I'll be putting them up on the screen so you can read right along with me. That way I think you'll be able to retain the information a little bit better and then in turn be able to share that information more intelligently with other people.

We're going to begin with a few elementary points. And then as we go deeper into the subject as we progress through the material this morning, you're going to see how important it is. And so, stick with me on this, OK? Because I'm quite sure that by the time we're through you'll begin to see things a bit differently than what you've always thought.

The Apostle Paul said spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and that is especially true with the subject that I'm presenting to you this morning. Let's pray that God will give us the mind of Christ as we delve into this most important subject this morning.

Today we're going to study mainly about the parable of the wheat and the tares. However the parable that precedes it, the parable of the sower, is also important because it will help prepare our hearts to receive the truth of the wheat and tares. The parable of the sower begins in Matthew chapter 13 and verse 3.

Matthew 13:3-9 – "And He spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up; some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith the sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

"And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

And then later on when Jesus was alone with His disciples, He began to explain the parable to them.

Beginning with verse 18, He said, "Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." And so right from the start we want to understand that the soil that the seed fell into represents the heart. It's very important.

It continues by saying. "This is he which received seed by the way side." Now do you know what the wayside is? The wayside was a pathway around the perimeter of a field or a pathway through the center of the field to get to another field. And you know what happens when many people walk over the same pathway. The ground becomes very hard and if seed were to fall on that kind of soil, it would be almost like throwing seed on concrete. It wouldn't be able to take root. And so that is what the condition of this first person's heart is like—it's like seed that fell by the wayside.

"But he that received the seed into stony places, . . ." Elsewhere in the Bible it talks about the stones representing the worldly people, or the heathen; keep that in mind.

"he that received seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon [immediately] with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth [endures] for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."

And so this type of person is a person that sees the truth, he accepts it gladly, but then because he is surrounded by worldly people, pretty soon those people begin to persecute, and tribulation arises in that person's life and he figures it's just easier to go along with the crowd than to follow the truth that he learned. We don't want to be like that.

"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

"But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." (Matthew 13:18-23)

And so as we consider the parable of the wheat and tares we want to make sure that our heart, the soil of our heart, is like the good ground. We will not only hear it, but we will understand it, and then we will bear fruit.

I would say that of all the parables Jesus told, this parable is probably one of the most misunderstood, misinterpreted, and misapplied parables within Adventism. And the reason why I say that you will understand as we go into this parable more thoroughly and more deeply. And something else we need to understand: The Spirit of Prophecy is to be studied just like we study the Bible, and it's to be applied in the same way as we study the scriptures.

In 2 Peter 1:20, 21 Peter says, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." Now that's a very important point. We are not to put our own interpretation upon God's word. This is the exact reason why there are so many different teachings out there today, why there are so many different denominations and churches. They seize upon a Scripture and somebody says, "I think this is what it means." And somebody else says, "Well, I think this is what it means." Pretty soon you've got a dozen different interpretations of the same scripture. Peter says we are not to do that; we are not to interpret the scriptures according to our own ideas.

In Revelation chapter 12 there's depicted a woman there that is clothed in white with a crown with twelve stars on her head. We know from previous study that this represents a pure church; this represents the apostolic church at the beginning. But then over in Revelation 17 we get a picture of a different woman and this woman is sitting upon a scarlet colored beast all decked out with jewels and so forth and holding a golden cup of abominations in her hand. And we know from our previous study that that represents an apostate church or a corrupt church. But how do we know that? Do we just put our own interpretation on it and decide that's what we think it means? No! We come to that conclusion because in Jeremiah 6:2 it says that God likens Zion to a beautiful and delicate woman. And then in Isaiah 51:16 it says Zion is God's people, or His church. And so we know that in the Bible, in prophecy, when it's talking about a woman, we know that it's representing some kind of a church, either a good church or a bad church.

There are other scriptures we could go to, Ephesians 5, 2 Corinthians 11:2, that speak of a woman representing the church also. So that is how we are to interpret scripture, we are to allow the scriptures themselves to interpret what it says.

And then Peter goes on in verse 21 and says, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

And so we want to make sure that when we open God's word that we pray and ask for the Holy Spirit to give us wisdom and understanding, because we want the same spirit that inspired holy men of old to inspire us so we can rightly divide the word of truth.

Also in Isaiah 28:9, 10. Isaiah says, "Whom shall he teach knowledge? [That is, Who shall God teach knowledge] And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts." Now, I don't know about you, but I know of many Christians who have been Christians for twenty, thirty, forty years, maybe their whole lives. Maybe they go back four or five generations as Christians, but they are still sipping on the milk. They haven't yet been weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts. God wants us to be able to become mature in our Christian faith. He doesn't want us always to be drinking milk. He wants us to start eating solid food.

"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."

When we study the scriptures we want to not just take one or two verses of Scripture and then draw our conclusion. We want to take a little bit from over here, a little bit from over there and we want to compile all the different scriptures on one subject. Then and only then is it safe to draw our conclusion as to what that scripture means.

In *Selected Messages*, Book 1, pg 42, very interesting statement: "The testimonies themselves will be the key that will explain the messages given, as scriptures is explained by scripture."

Did you know that? I didn't know that until recently. I found this statement and I thought, How important and how interesting this is! We know that we're suppose to study the Bible and let the Bible interpret itself and let the Bible be the key to understanding the different passages there. But it's the same way with the Spirit of Prophecy. "The testimonies themselves will be the key that will explain the messages given, as scriptures is explained by scripture."

Also *Great Controversy*, pg. 599 – “The language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning, unless a symbol or figure is employed.”

Of course, the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning. We shouldn't try to spiritualize the Bible away. However, if a symbol or a figure is employed then we are not to take it as the obvious meaning. For instance, what we already talked about, how a woman in Bible prophecy represents a church. It's not a literal woman that it's talking about, but it's talking about a church—either a pure or an apostate church.

And also, if a figure is employed. These parables that Jesus told are told in figurative language. And so there is a deeper truth here. We're not to just take it on the surface as to what it means, there is a deeper truth and we should understand it that way.

So here we go. In the *Review & Herald*, April 1, 1902, it says, “Read this instruction carefully, doing all in your power to understand the parable [if you read the context of this article it's talking about the parable of the wheat and tares]. The Holy Spirit will impress the minds of those who desire a clear comprehension of this parable.”

So here we're given a promise right from the start that if we really want to understand the truth, God will help us to understand. So that's what we're going to do this morning. First of all we're going to read the parable as Jesus told it. Then we're going to allow the Spirit of Prophecy to explain and magnify the truth it contains as we compare inspired statement with inspired statement.

The parable of the wheat and tares begins in Matthew chapter 13 and verse 24. “Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:”

Now before we go any further let me ask you a question. What did Jesus mean when He said the kingdom of heaven is likened unto? He used this phrase in many of His parables; what did He mean? What He meant is: first of all there's something important about this parable He's sharing and what He is saying is that this parable that I am sharing with you right now can be likened or compared to the experience that My people are going to go through on their way to obtain the kingdom. And so the kingdom of heaven, Jesus said, “is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

“But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?”

“He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”

And then later on, once again when Jesus was alone with His disciples, He began to explain what that parable meant.

In verse 37 (Matt. 13) He said, “He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;”

And so here we want to recognize the fact that Jesus Himself is the one who sowed the good seed. He's the one who sowed the truth while He was here. Not only was He the one who sowed the truth while He was here, as a human being, but He is the one who sowed the truth even in Old Testament times. Because Jesus was the God of the Old Testament. So He is the one who sowed the good seed.

"The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

"As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity."

And friends, please don't conclude here that the kingdom Jesus refers to is the Seventh-day Adventist corporation and that God is going to somehow clean up the church. That's not what we're talking about here.

In Luke 17:21 Jesus said "the kingdom of God is within you." That's where He wants to clean it up. It's in you. Also in John 18:36 He says, "My kingdom is not of this world." And so the kingdom here cannot possibly be the church—it's the individuals. So keep that in mind because that will become clearer as we go along.

"And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Anciently a man who was called a householder would purchase a field and have it prepared by plowing and by removing all the rocks and weeds. Once that was done, he would then sow the field with wheat seeds. But it says in the parable that the caretakers of the field went to sleep, and while they slept an enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat.

Because the caretakers were sleeping, they didn't even realize what had happened until much later. They had no idea the tares were even there at this point in the parable.

In the process of time, the early rain fell and all the seeds sprouted, but could they then be distinguished—one from the other? NO, It was too early!

In the early stages, all the green blades that sprung up looked the same—only the eye of God could tell the difference. This look-alike growth process continued on then until the latter rain fell. Once the latter rain fell, then both the wheat and tares produced their respective fruit, and only then could you tell the difference.

In *Testimonies to Ministers*, pg. 506, it says – "The latter rain, falling near the close of the season, ripens the grain and prepares it for the sickle." Notice the underlining here. It's the later rain falling near the close of the season that ripens the grain. Keep that in mind because we'll come back to that later.

"The Lord employs these operations of nature to represent the work of the Holy Spirit."

When the wheat was ripe it produced a light golden grain color and when the tares were ripe they produce small black seeds—and within these seeds is a poison that is sleep producing.

In *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, it gives the definition for the word "tares". It says, "The bearded darnel, mentioned only in Matthew 13:25-30. It is the *Lolium temulentum*, a species of rye-grass, the seeds of which are a strong soporific poison. It bears the closest resemblance to wheat till the ear appears, and only then the difference is discovered. It grows plentifully in Syria and Palestine."

When I read that I wanted to know what "soporific" meant. And so I went to the dictionary and I found that it comes from a Latin word "Sopor" meaning deep sleep.

So, the tares have seeds that produce sleep, and if enough tares are ingested they can even produce the sleep of death.

Anciently, once the latter rain fell and matured the crop, then the harvest would begin. Reapers were then hired to come in and cut down both the wheat and the tares and put them in separate piles within the same field. The wheat was gathered up and tied in bundles and stood upright in sheaves. The tares were also bound in bundles and just thrown in piles to burn.

Once the wheat was all bound in bundles, the reapers would then take the sheaves of wheat out of the field to the threshing floor, which was a violent process designed to break away the outer covering of chaff so the wheat could then be taken to the barn and saved from the winter blasts. But the question we want to answer is this; who or what would this field of wheat and tares represent today?

We don't have to guess at the answer because it's given to us in *Christ's Object Lessons*, pg. 70 – "The field,' Christ said, 'is the world.' But we must understand this as signifying the church of Christ in the world".

Also in *Review & Herald*, August 8, 1893 – "... The church is a place represented by a field in which grow tares and wheat."

So it's clear that the field represents the church. But what we need to determine is, which church! Is it the Catholic Church? Is it the Baptist Church? Is it the Methodist Church? Is it the Mormon Church? Or the Jehovah's Witness? Or the Pentecostal church? Or the Lutherans? Or could it possibly be the Seventh-Day Adventist Church? Yes; there are good and bad in all churches.

In *Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 2, pg. 253 it say, "The parable of the sower and that of the wheat and tares, applied to all."

So, it's clear that the field represents the church; it represents all the churches in the world. Now, we've already determined that in the early stages of growth we can't tell which is which. Only by their fruit can we tell the difference.

And it wasn't until the latter rain fell on the field that fruit was produced. Once the latter rain fell and matured the crop; that would then signal the harvest to begin. So, what we need to know is: What is represented by the Latter Rain, and could it actually be falling today?

And while you're thinking about that, think about this: In Zech 10:1 it tells us that we should pray for the latter (which we should), but at the same time many have been taught not to expect their prayer to be answered until sometime in the future (isn't that odd?)—Perhaps at the Sunday law, or at some other future event. But I ask, does it make sense that God would tell His people, even from Old Testament times, to pray for something that only the last generation would receive?

As we progress we're going to see that the Latter Rain is connected to two messages that are combined into one that centers in Christ. And by accepting these messages you would be accepting the outpouring of the Holy Spirit into your life. Or by rejecting these messages you would be rejecting the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in your life. In other words, the latter rain is connected to a Christ centered message that will ripen the field and bring on the time of harvest.

Deuteronomy 32:2 says, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew."

According to this verse, the early and latter rain must be accompanied by true doctrine, or a true message. We'll want to keep that in mind.

In *Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 4, 211, 212 – "To John were opened scenes of deep and thrilling interest in the experience of the church. He saw the position, dangers, conflicts, and final deliverance of the people of God. He records the closing messages which are to ripen the harvest of the earth, either as sheaves for the heavenly garner or as fagots for the fires of the last day."

Earlier, in TM 506, we read that it is the latter rain that ripens the harvest, and here we see it's the closing messages of Revelation that ripens the harvest. Do you see that? We're talking about the same thing here. It's very important for us to understand that point.

Just as it was the latter rain that ripened the field anciently, so it's the latter rain connected to the closing messages of Revelation that ripens the field today.

And what are the closing messages the Apostle John wrote about? Well, firstly it's the third angels message, and secondly it is the fourth angel.

And it's these two messages combined that constitute the loud cry of the third angel, and we'll be reading that in just a little while. The loud cry is the message that contains the outpouring of the Holy Spirit within it, so that by accepting the message, you're also accepting and receiving the latter rain.

In *Early Writings*, 118 it says, "I then saw the third angel. Said my accompanying angel, 'Fearful is his work. Awful is his mission. He is the angel that is to select the wheat from the tares, and seal, or bind, the wheat for the heavenly garner. These things should engross the whole mind, the whole attention.'"

As wheat (children of kingdom), can we be harvested out of the field and sealed without the latter rain? NO! So, the latter rain has to be associated with the loud cry of the third angel. Do you see that? It's very important.

It is the third angel's message coming to the field that separates the wheat from the tares and brings on the time of harvest. This then has to be the message that also contains the

outpouring of the Holy Spirit within it. Let's read a few more statements that will prove this point.

Testimonies to Ministers, 91, 92 – “The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus.” (Can you imagine that? The professed church losing sight of Jesus.) They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.” That is the Latter Rain.

RH Nov. 22, 1892 – “The time of the 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.”

And then in *Early Writings*, 271, Ellen White was in vision and she says, “I asked what had made this great change (she saw a group of people that were bound, but when she looked again they were free in Christ. And she said, “What made the 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.’”

When the latter rain falls and both crops mature and begin to bear their respective fruit, it is then that a crisis develops in the field or in the church, and two separate parties develop.

Selected Messages, Book 2, 114 – “A new life is coming from heaven and taking possession of all God's people. But divisions will come in the church. Two parties will be developed. The wheat and tares grow up together for the harvest.”

So the question is this—Is the third angel's message here today? The answer is, Yes!

This being true, then the latter rain is also available today, because it is inseparably connected to the third angel's message whenever it is proclaimed, understood, and acted upon! Just like the seed that fell into the good ground. They hear it, they understand it and they bear fruit.

And this message, through the power of the Spirit, is either causing God's people to become more like Christ in character, as they look into the perfect law of liberty, or it is exposing those who are not God's people because they bear the works of the flesh rather than the fruit of the Spirit.

It's a fact today that most Adventists are waiting for the Sunday law to signal the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. But when is the latter rain available? When the third angel's message is given. And it was given over a hundred years ago when there was no Sunday Law. And so think about that.

We've already read that it's the third angel's message that separates the wheat from the tares, and you can't have a separation taking place until the latter rain falls, because that's what it takes to ripen the field. And so, we see how the two are inseparable.

Do you remember what year the third angel's message of Righteousness by Faith came with power to Seventh-day Adventists? 1888! But the majority of the leaders rejected it—and considered Waggoner and Jones as enemies of the truth—as apostates, and not of their number.

And the Spirit of Prophecy says, "In rejecting the message, they were rejecting the Holy Spirit and Jesus." Series A#6, pg. 20, 21

Now, since the latter rain is connected to the message of Christ's righteousness, who gives the message today, and from where does it originate? Does the message originate within the field? Or from within the church? NO!

Rain always falls onto the field from outside the field, or from those who are considered to be outside the acceptable guidelines of those in power.

And according to Rev. 3:20, where is Jesus standing when He gives His message to the Laodicean church? He's standing outside, is He not?

In *Notebook Leaflets*, Vol. 1, page 99 it says, "Those who claim to believe the truth do not possess that power that God would bestow upon them if they really believed, and were striving for conformity to His image. The church is in the Laodicean state. The presence of God is not in her midst."

This statement was written in 1898, just 10 years after the third angel's message in latter rain power was rejected, and friend, I have searched and searched for later statements that would remove this fearful designation from the church, but I haven't been able to find even one. On the contrary, through the years I just find more of the same.

Upward Look, page 35 says, "We have abundant evidence that tares grow with wheat in the church of God. There are sincere Christians in the church {wheat}, and there are also lukewarm Christians {tares}."

Since Jesus is outside the church, and the message also originates from outside the church, then there has to be another company made up of The Householder (Who is Christ). And who did Christ say were the ones who would harvest the field? The reapers! And Christ said the reapers are the angels.

We read earlier that it's the third angel's job to separate the wheat from the tares. But is it a literal angel that flies down from heaven and tells the people to separate? Of course not!

Now, it's true that literal angels are commissioned to have involvement in the harvest process—but their job is not to vocalize the message. Their job is to record the responses of those who receive or reject the message, because God has given them the ability to read the heart.

But who does the third angel represent?

Testimonies, Vol. 1, page 77 has the answer. "I was shown that the third angel, proclaiming the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, represents the people who receive this message and raise the voice of warning to the world, . . ."

Remember, Jesus said (Matt. 13:38) the field represents the world. And the Spirit of Prophecy (COL 70) says, it's the church in the world. And so here this statement says that those who receive the message will raise the voice of warning to the world – or to the church in this context.

And so, the third angel's message represents those who receive the message and then in turn give the message to others. But notice, it isn't the messenger that does the separating—it's the message! That's a very important point. Our job is simply to give the message and that's where our responsibility ends. We cannot read character and motive and therefore we are unqualified to determine someone's destiny.

If we pull up the tares, we're going to pull up the wheat also. But if the wheat disentangle themselves from the tares as they hear the message of truth then all is well.

And from where were the reapers hired? Were they sleeping within the field among the wheat and tares? NO! The caretakers of the field (church) fell asleep and allowed the devil to come in and sow his people, mixing them up with God's people. And God has designed that the difference between the two would be manifest by whether or not they receive the third angel's message that comes from outside.

And who were the caretakers, or servants, that fell asleep on the job?

Testimonies, Vol. 2, 439, 440. Isn't it interesting as we're going through these statements that the testimonies themselves will be the key to unlock the messages given. And that's exactly what we're going today.

Testimonies, Vol. 2, 439, 440. "Men who stand in very responsible positions at the heart of the work are asleep. Satan has paralyzed them in order that his plans and devices may not be discerned, while he is active to ensnare, deceive, and destroy.

"Some who occupy the position of watchmen to warn the people of danger have given up their watch and recline at ease. They are unfaithful sentinels. They remain inactive, while their wily foe enters the fort {"the church is God's fortress" AA 11} and works successfully by their side to tear down what God has commanded to be built up."

Anciently, the "marketplace" was a place where men gathered in hopes of getting hired to work for the day, and not necessarily a place where fruit and vegetables were sold. (You can read about this in another parable Jesus told in Matt. 20.) The owner of a field would go to the marketplace to hire men who were outside the field to come in and harvest the crop.

Early on this represented people like the Waldenses, the Protestant Reformers, William Miller and his associates, and James & Ellen White. All of these people (and many others like them through the years) had a message that was not endorsed by their church. It was a message that came from outside their church to the church.

In *Review and Herald*, Oct. 31, 1899 it says, "The first, second, and third angels' messages are to be repeated. The call is to be given to the church: . . .

"We are not to rest in the idea that because we are church-members we are saved."

It was also this way with Jesus and His disciples. The message Jesus gave did not originate from within the Jewish church, did it. It was a message to the Jewish church by those who they considered to be outsiders.

And how many times in the past has an outside message been heeded by the established church as a whole? To my knowledge that has NEVER happened.

And so, the message comes to the church from outside the church and the few who receive it have to leave the church in order to continue to give the message. Never forget it! It's the message coming with power that brings on the crisis in all the churches in the world, and not a crisis in any of the churches that signals the time to give the message.

In Letter 94, July 3, 1900, it says, "We have the truth, which in its proclamation is to bring the crisis for this world's history."

According to this statement, it's you and me and people like us proclaiming a message that will cause a separation to take place. And this has been going on now for quite some time.

- It's not the Sunday Law that brings the crisis.
- It's not an asteroid hitting the earth.
- It's not terrorist attacks.
- And it's not global warming.

It's a message that comes from outside the church to the church that brings a crisis situation that results in a separation taking place.

As the message reaches the field, or as the third angel's message reaches the people in all the churches (including SDA), then the harvest begins.

And since the message reaches individuals at different times, so the harvest is a process that does not reach everyone at the same time. In other words, the harvest begins for you when you decidedly receive or reject the message.

And when did Adventists begin receiving the message in latter rain power? Over a hundred years ago through Elders Waggoner and Jones!

So don't think there's a time coming in the future when the wheat are separated from the tares. The harvest is here brothers and sisters! And it's been here for awhile now.

Ellen White told the people in 1897 that the latter rain could be falling on hearts all around them but they would not discern or receive it unless they were daily advancing in their Christian lives.

In *Testimonies to Ministers*, 507 it says, "Only those who are living up to the light they have will receive greater light. Unless we are daily advancing in the exemplification of the active Christian virtues, we shall not recognize the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain. It may be falling on hearts all around us, but we shall not discern or receive it."

But wait a minute! I thought the latter rain was going to have ten times the power of the midnight cry, as it says in *Spaulding and Megan*, pg. 4.

Surely it should be obvious when it comes, if that's the case. And since we haven't seen it yet, it must be in the future, right?

Let's see if we can figure this out, because there is good reason why the Latter Rain must have ten times the power of the midnight cry.

In Heavenly Places, 344 – “As we approach the perils of the last days, the temptations of the enemy become stronger and more determined.”

Signs of the Times, Sept. 29, 1887 – “A cunning and cruel foe attends our steps, and is working every moment, with all his strength and skill, to turn us from the right way. Ever since he succeeded in overcoming our first parents in their beautiful Eden home, he has been engaged in this work. More than six thousand years of continual practice has greatly increased his skill to deceive and allure. . . . while the power of the human race to resist temptation is continually decreasing, Satan's skill and power to tempt are continually increasing. This is one great reason why the temptations of the last days will be more severe than those of any other age.”

Also in *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 2, 277 – “The power of Satan now to tempt and deceive is ten-fold greater than it was in the days of the apostles. His power has increased, and it will increase until it is taken away.”

Do you get it? Could it be that because temptation is much more powerful today than it was previously, and men more degenerate, that we need much more power in order to resist the attacks of the enemy? Perhaps 10 times the power?

Since it is possible that the latter rain could be falling all around us and we not know it, then it must take some recognizing. It must take some discerning to find out where it is.

And we're told very clearly that it's connected to the third angel's message. This is the message that lifts up the Saviour!

It tells the people to get their eyes—

- Off man
- Off themselves
- Off the world
- Off their church especially
- And on Christ!

And if our eyes are fixed on Him we will join the reapers in giving the message that will swell to a loud cry as more and more people unite their efforts.

In the ancient process, the harvest wasn't complete until the wheat was harvested out of the field. And do you know what message unites with the third angels message and harvests the wheat out of the field and onto the threshing floor after they've been bound in bundles? It's the fourth angel's message of Revelation 18.

Early Writings, 277 says, “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. 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 {written 1882, quite a few years after the Seventh-day Adventist denomination was organized, and so they are included here}. 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.

". . . 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."

Also in *Testimonies to Ministers*, 234, it says, "The time of the judgment is a most solemn period, when the Lord gathers His own from among the tares."

When did the time of judgment begin? Oct 22, 1844. And so this gathering of the wheat from the tares has been in progress for a long time. It's not something that's just going to happen sometime in the future just before the Lord comes. It's in the process

"Those who have been members of the same family are separated." That could be our own families or it could be speaking of the church family here.

Letter 86, June 18, 1900 – "The message of the angel following the third is now to be given to all parts of the world. It is to be the harvest message, and the whole earth will be lighted with the glory of God."

So, it is the third and fourth angels' messages combined that constitutes the loud cry of the third angel, and you can't have the loud cry without the latter rain! So we can see how this all fits together.

So, the third angel's message produces a crisis in all the churches, and the fourth angel's message (united with the third) brings on the loud cry which calls the wheat to come out from the tares (or the fallen churches) in order to be with Christ and those who are giving the message to all the churches.

Now, when all the wheat have obeyed the loud cry message, a message that is going forth now, and will continue to go forth until a time determined by God, . . . What will be left in all the churches, or what's going to be left in the field? Only Tares! The wheat have left to be with Christ and to help give the message, and all that's left is a field full of tares.

In this parable, Jesus told the reapers to bind the tares in bundles, but did He say to take them anywhere? NO! Remember we read in Matthew 13:30 where Jesus said, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into My barn." So the tares weren't taken anywhere. The tares are going to remain in the field and they're going to burn up. They're going to remain in their apostate churches and be lost unless they wake up to the message of the loud cry.

This field burning reflects the true process of the harvest. Now I don't want to seem insensitive, but why take them out of the field when it's easier to burn them right where they are. I've lived in a couple different places over the past twenty years or so where they did field burning. The big machines would come in and would chop down the grass seed or wheat seed, whatever the crop was. It would go through the machine and the seeds would go into a big

hopper and all the stalks and things would be spit out the back and it would go through the whole field that way until the job was done. And then when the job was done they would set the field on fire. All the tares, all the refuse, all the stuff that was no good, would just be burned up. This field burning, of course, represents the lake of fire.

Now, let me ask you a question. What would happen to wheat who refused to leave the field, or having once left, return to the field.

Well, *Review and Herald*, Jan. 10, 1893 gives the answer. "The wheat is not to sow itself among the tares, in joining them we are registered in heaven as partakers of their evil deeds, responsible for their works of evil, and bound up in bundles with them as tares."

I have learned over the years that this message is not a popular one. And I have also learned that the devil will invent a multitude of ways to keep people from accepting and giving this message. In fact, he has already invented some very clever ways to put off the harvest till sometime in the unknown future. One way is by:

- Reinterpreting the time prophecies of Daniel 12 and putting them in the future as literal days instead of prophetic days. Perhaps you have heard of this heresy that's being taught within Historic Adventism in some places, some circles.
- The devil has also done it by making people think that the Sunday law signals the time for the latter rain and loud cry, when in reality the harvest is simply when the message reaches the people in the field.
- He does it also by representing the trumpets and seals of Revelation as all being future events and not as our Adventist pioneers taught and as the Spirit of Prophecy endorses. Perhaps you have heard of that one, too.
- And he also does it by getting people sidetracked by various fanaticisms and extremes.
- Or he does it by keeping them in a sleepy Laodicean condition.

No, the loud cry message is not a popular message. In fact, it's so unpopular that very few are willing to give it, and it's certainly not something I enjoy doing.

My personality is such that it would be more pleasing to me to buy a ticket to Tarshish, did I not know the outcome of Jonah's decision not to go to Nineveh.

And so, like it or not, this is a message that must be given, and it will be given by those who understand and know the truth.

There is no lack of Adventists today who are willing to listen to the third angel's message of Righteousness by Faith, but most are unwilling to separate from the field in obedience to the fourth angel's message.

But I'll tell you something, to preach Christ without a message to separate from the field in order to be with Christ, is to preach a message that's a deadly poison to the soul, because the field's going to burn!

However, the reverse is also true, because there are many who have separated from the field without having experienced the righteousness of Christ. This is also a message of destruction because they won't have the faith to see them through to the end of the journey, as we'll see in a few minutes.

Only when both messages are combined with a proper understanding and corresponding works, will you have an experience that will get you to the barn—and a half a gospel won't do it! Because only by heeding this loud cry message in its entirety can we get sin out of our personal life, and also have the courage to walk out of the field of corporate sin to be with Christ.

Now, regarding the wheat that was harvested out of the field, were they forever sealed for heaven just because they left the field? NOT YET!

There was still a whole process to go through before making it to the barn.

Anciently when the wheat was separated from the tares and taken out of the field to the threshing floor, the process continued by separating the chaff from the wheat.

In Bible times the threshing was usually done outside of town on a flat elevated piece of ground about fifty feet in diameter. The people would take the stalks of wheat and place them in the middle of the threshing floor to be threshed. There were several different methods they used to dislodge the wheat from the straw and chaff. Sometimes they used a stick, and they would beat the stalks of wheat to loosen the grain from the straw and then they would discard the straw.

Or sometimes animals would pull sledges or carts over the grain that had sharp pieces of glass and metal attached to the bottom and that would chop up all that stuff into smaller pieces.

Now, when you think about it, this is a violent process for the wheat to go through, especially when you think of the wheat as being the children of the kingdom, or the good seed.

Have you ever felt like you've been threshed? The threshing process represents the trials we go through in order to shape our character. The chaff must be broken away from the kernel to expose what's on the inside, but the process isn't over yet.

Once the wheat had been threshed, it still had to be winnowed. This was done by taking a fork or a shovel and tossing it high into the air. The wind then, would blow away the light chaff, and the wheat and heavier debris would fall back to the ground. As the process continued it would finally be sifted with a sieve, the wheat going through to the floor and the rest would be discarded.

So, if we are not allowing the Lord to dislodge the chaff from our character now, or if we're still sleeping in the field where everything is peace and safety, time to perfect character will eventually run out.

Alright, Lets recap what we've covered so far—

The field, Christ said, is the world, but we must understand this as the church of Christ in the world. And so here, in this illustration, we have all the churches of the world. And in all the churches of the world there are wheat and there are tares.

And then because all the churches in the world are infected with both wheat and tares and Jesus is outside the church knocking, trying to wake people up, that means there has to be another company outside of the field that's represented by Christ and the reapers, or the angels.

And then that message has to go to the churches, because rain always falls on a field from outside the field. The message that is to be given to all the churches is the third angel's message. That's what binds the wheat and the tares in separate bundles.

And then what harvests them out of the field? Or out of their apostate churches? The fourth angel's message. It's a call to come out of Babylon. Those two messages combined represent the Loud Cry of the third angel.

And then as the wheat heed that message they come out of their apostate church in order to join Christ and the reapers to help to give the message to those who are still in their churches. This is the first separation that takes place. It is a separation of the good from the bad. It's important that we recognize that the first separation is the good leaving the bad.

Then, once all the good are with Christ, there's nothing left in the field except tares. And again, this is a process and does not take place all at once. We are in the fulfillment of this process even as we speak. It comes to different people at different times.

And so the good that have come out are joining Christ and the reapers to give the message. They get started on a pathway and the beginning of that pathway is the Loud Cry experience. And as they are going up the straight and narrow path, this represents the threshing floor experience. As they're going up this path, they either continue on the path or else they fall down into the dark wicked world below, or else they go back to where they were. This is the second separation that takes place—the chaff from the wheat. And notice the second separation is the bad from the good. The first separation is the good from the bad, the second is the bad from the good.

Our ultimate destination is the barn, or heaven. We will notice that there is no pathway between the time of Jacob's Trouble and the barn. We get there because of the faith that we have built all along the way.

In the book *Life Sketches*, pages 190-193, Ellen White was given a dream, and it is titled "Traveling the Narrow Way." And I want to share that statement with you. She begins by saying—

"While at the Battle Creek in August, 1868, I dreamed of being with a large body of people."

And so here we see that she started out with a large group of people, but only a few were prepared for the journey. This large group of people would be the church they belong to. And the small group that was actually prepared to take the journey were those who actually were separated from that apostate church.

"A portion of this assembly started out prepared to journey. We had heavily loaded wagons. As we journeyed, the road seemed to ascend. On one side of this road was a deep precipice; on the other was a high, smooth, white wall, like the hard finish upon plastered rooms.

"As we journeyed on, the road grew narrower and steeper. [trials became more difficult] In some places it seemed so very narrow that we concluded that we could no longer travel with the loaded wagons. We then loosed them from the horses, took a portion of the luggage from the wagons and placed it upon the horses, and journeyed on horseback.

“As we progressed, the path still continued to grow narrow. We were obliged to press close to the wall, to save ourselves from falling off the narrow road down the steep precipice. As we did this, the luggage on the horses pressed against the wall, and caused us to sway toward the precipice. We feared that we should fall, and be dashed in pieces on the rocks. We then cut the luggage from the horses, and it fell over the precipice.”

And so all along the way they had to get rid of their excess baggage, everything that would prevent them from reaching their destination. All the chaff had to be removed from their character.

“We continued on horseback, greatly fearing, as we came to the narrower places in the road, that we should lose our balance, and fall. At such times, a hand seemed to take the bridle, and guide us over the perilous way.

“As the path grew more narrow, we decided that we could no longer go with safety on horseback, and we left the horses and went on foot, in single file, one following in the footsteps of another. At this point small cords were let down from the top of the pure white wall; these we eagerly grasped, to aid us in keeping our balance upon the path. As we traveled, the cord moved along with us. The path finally became so narrow that we concluded that we could travel more safely without our shoes; so we slipped them from our feet, and went on some distance without them. Soon it was decided that we could travel more safely without our stockings; these were removed, and we journeyed on with bare feet.

“We then thought of those who had not accustomed themselves to privations and hardships. Where were such now? They were not in the company. At every change, some were left behind, and those only remained who had accustomed themselves to endure hardships. The privations of the way only made these more eager to press on to the end.

“Our danger of falling from the pathway increased.”

The pressure to return to the church increased. Or the thought of just giving up increased.

“We pressed close to the white wall, yet could not place our feet fully upon the path, for it was too narrow. We then suspended nearly our whole weight upon the cords, exclaiming: ‘We have hold from above! We have hold from above!’ The same words were uttered by all the company in the narrow pathway. As we heard the sounds of mirth and revelry that seemed to come from the abyss below, we shuddered. We heard the profane oath, the vulgar jest, and low, vile songs. We heard the war song and the dance song. [sounds like celebration, doesn’t it?] We heard instrumental music, and loud laughter, mingled with cursing and cries of anguish and bitter wailing, and were more anxious than ever to keep upon the narrow, difficult pathway. Much of the time we were compelled to suspend our whole weight upon the cords, which increased in size as we progressed.

“I noticed that the beautiful white wall was stained with blood. It caused a feeling of regret to see the wall thus stained. This feeling, however, lasted but for a moment, as I soon thought that it was all as it should be. Those who are following after will know that others have passed the narrow, difficult way before them, and will conclude that if others were able to pursue their onward course, they can do the same. And as the blood shall be pressed from their aching feet, they will not faint with discouragement; but, seeing the blood upon the wall, they will know that others have endured the same pain.

"At length we came to a large chasm, at which our path ended. There was nothing now to guide the feet, nothing upon which to rest them. Our whole reliance must be upon the cords, which had increased in size, until they were as large as our bodies. Here we were for a time thrown into perplexity and distress. We inquired in fearful whispers, 'To what is the cord attached?' [To what is my faith attached?] My husband was just before me. Large drops of sweat were falling from his brow, the veins in his neck and temples were increased to double their usual size, and suppressed, agonizing groans came from his lips. The sweat was dropping from my face, and I felt such anguish as I had never felt before. [Sounds like time of trouble, doesn't it?] A fearful struggle was before us. Should we fail here, all the difficulties of our journey had been experienced for naught.

"Before us, on the other side of the chasm, was a beautiful field of green grass, about six inches high. I could not see the sun, but bright, soft beams of light, resembling fine gold and silver, were resting upon this field."

What do you suppose this field represents? It represents the church triumphant. Remember the other field represented the churches in the world. This field represents the church triumphant that we're all going to be a part of, should we get to the barn.

"Nothing I had seen upon earth could compare in beauty and glory with this field. But could we succeed in reaching it? was the anxious inquiry. Should the cord break, we must perish."

"Again, in whispered anguish, the words were breathed, 'What holds the cord?' For a moment we hesitated to venture. Then we exclaimed: 'Our only hope is to trust wholly to the cord. [Wholly to our mature faith in Christ.] It has been our dependence all the difficult way. It will not fail us now.' Still we were hesitating and distressed. The words were then spoken: 'God holds the cord. We need not fear.'" These words were repeated by those behind us, accompanied with: 'He will not fail us now. He has brought us thus far in safety.'

"My husband then swung himself over the fearful abyss into the beautiful field beyond. I immediately followed. And oh, what a sense of relief and gratitude to God we felt! I heard voices raised in triumphant praise to God. I was happy, perfectly happy."

In the final analysis, the field represents all apostate churches—otherwise there would be no need to give a call-out message, or to heed the call:

In *Selected Messages*, Book 2, 380, it says, "Satan will work his miracles to deceive; he will set up his power as supreme. The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat."

Where is the church that appears to fall, but does not fall? Is it over on the left in all the other apostate churches? Or is it over there on the threshing floor on that straight and narrow path headed to the barn? Do you see friends? The church that appears to fall, but does not fall, is the one that's on the straight and narrow path. It's not those in all the apostate churches, the only thing left there are tares. So it's very important for us to know who and what the church is, and where the church is in this illustration.

2SM 380 continues: "This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place. None but those who have been overcoming by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony will be found with the loyal and true, . . ."

Also, probably my favorite Spirit of Prophecy quote, *Upward Look*, 315 – “God has [how many churches?] a church. [He only has one.] It is not the great cathedral [it has nothing to do with some fancy building], neither is it the national establishment [it has nothing to do with what the government might establish], neither is it the various denominations [including SDA]; it is the people who love God and keep His commandments. ‘Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them’ (Matt. 18:20). Where Christ is even among the humble few, this is Christ’s church, for the presence of the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity can alone constitute a church.”

Jesus said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto this experience. So the question is; Where are you in this experience? Where are you in the process? Wherever you are in this experience, you will know what your next move should be, and you won’t have a masters degree to figure it out!

God’s ways are simple, friends! But that doesn’t mean they don’t require tough choices.

But just to make doubly sure this entire process is correct, we’ll close by reading a vision God gave Sr. White that backs up what the wheat and tares parable teaches. It’s found in *Early Writings*, pages 88, 89

“A train of cars was shown me, going with the speed of lightning. The angel bade me look carefully. [And we need to consider this statement very carefully.] I fixed my eyes upon the train. It seemed that the whole world was on board, that there could not be one left.”

Notice, she says as she looked at this train it looked like the whole world was on board. And we found out that the world represents, what? The church. It looked like the whole church was on board.

“Said the angel, ‘They are binding in bundles ready to burn.’”

You see how this bring this right into the context of the wheat and tare parable?

“Then he showed me the conductor, who appeared like a stately, fair person, whom all the passengers [all the church members] looked up to and revered. I was perplexed and asked my attending angel who it was. He said, ‘It is Satan. He is the conductor in the form of an angel of light. He has taken the world captive. [He’s taken who captive? He’s taken the church captive, friends.] They are given over to strong delusions, to believe a lie, that they may be damned.’”

I want to stop right there for a moment, we’ll finish that quote in just a minute. But there’s an interesting Bible verse or two that goes along with what Ellen White saw in this vision. It’s in 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12. Notice what she said, she said that they’re given over to strong delusions that they should believe a lie, that they might be damned. Now notice what it says in this verse.

“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: [even him], whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:”

That's what it says in the old King James. But if you go to the original Greek you will find that the word "a" should actually be interpreted as "the".

"that they should believe the lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Pleasure in unrighteousness. And what is unrighteousness? 1 John 5:17 says all unrighteousness is sin.

And so here we have a people who are deceived, and God is allowing them to be deceived, and they're all having pleasure in sin. But the really interesting word here is "pleasure". In the Greek it means "to approve" or "to think well of". In other words, those who are believing the lie believe that they are approved of God even while they are having pleasure in sin. They think they are saved in sin. They think they are still covered with the blood of Christ while they continue in sin. That's the deception.

Now, let me continue on with EW 88, 89: "This agent, the next highest in order to him [the conductor], is the engineer, and other of his agents are employed in different offices as he may need them, and they are all going with lightning speed to perdition."

As I have thought about this, we obviously have a whole train load of church members that are going with lightning speed to perdition. The conductor is Satan. The engineer is the leader of that church, and the agents are all the ministers under him. They're all going with lightning speed to perdition.

"I asked the angel if there were none left."

Are they all going to be lost? God, is the whole church going to be lost?

"He bade me look in an opposite direction, and I saw a little company traveling a narrow pathway. [Just like that dream we were reading about a moment ago.] All seemed to be firmly united, bound together by the truth, in bundles, or companies. Said the angel, 'The third angel is binding, or sealing, them in bundles for the heavenly garner.' This little company looked careworn, as if they had passed through severe trials and conflicts. And it appeared as if the sun had just risen from behind a cloud and shone upon their countenances, causing them to look triumphant, as if their victories were nearly won.

"I saw that the Lord has given the world [the church] opportunity to discover the snare."

Friends, has the church had opportunity to discover the snare of the new theology of salvation in sin? Certainly they have, for many years now.

"This one thing is evidence enough for the Christian, if there were no other; namely, that there is no difference made between the precious and the vile." No difference between saint and sinner. They're all going to heaven, they think.

So, why are the majority of church members on the train heading to perdition? Because in rejecting the loud cry of the third angel, their spiritual discernment has disappeared—they've come to believe the lie—they've been listening to sleepy watchmen and they themselves have gone to sleep. Somewhere along the way they either decided that it cost too much to develop a character that reflects the character of Jesus fully, or they concluded it was just impossible or unnecessary to obey the law of God in every particular.

So, the choice is ours. We have a glorious future waiting for us at the end of the narrow way, or we have a terrible train wreck awaiting us.

Which will it be? Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

