



My Bible School Lessons

Exploring the Word of God

Lesson #9: "Amazing Time Prophecy"

When Will the Judgment Begin?

When does investigation of the cases of each human being who has ever lived begin? Is it going on now? We are told the day will come. Does it make any difference when it begins? Our first story illustrates the fact that our knowledge or ignorance does not hasten or delay the work of judgment.

Silencing the Messengers

An African chief had done something for which the English government wished to punish him. A gunboat had been sent out for this purpose. Upon arrival, a runner brought the first word of warning to the chief that the boat had entered the river. If the chief knew in time, the people could be warned. They would have time to gather their belongings and hide deep in the jungle far from the reach of the cannon balls which would then destroy only their simple mud huts.

Instead of appreciating the warning, the haughty chief had the courier killed. The next day a second runner arrived to tell him how far the boat had come up the river. This poor fellow also lost his life. Day after day, other couriers met the same fate.

When the last messenger arrived, the people had time only to flee for their lives. It was already too late to save their belongings. But still the warning was rejected and scorned by the native chief. The people remained in their village unaware of the impending disaster.

Of course, the chiefs rejection and the people's ignorance did not keep the English boat away nor delay the day of judgment. Suddenly the jungle echoed with the thunder of cannons. The huts of the kraal collapsed as if made of cardboard. Terrified shrieks filled the air as the villagers scrambled for a place to hide from the horrible judgment falling on their unprotected village.

Thus the judgment was executed. It should be pointed out here that there are three parts to a judgment. The first is the investigation, the second is the sentencing, and the third is executing the sentence that has been set. In the above story, the British government had already investigated the deeds of this chief and decided the sentence. Now they were executing the judgment.

The Day of Atonement

Late in the summer of 1844, those who had been pioneering the message that Jesus was soon to return, came to the conclusion that Jesus was to come on the 10th day of the 7th month in the year 1844—October 22, 1844. One of the chief leaders of this "Advent" movement was a lay Baptist preacher by the name of William Miller. Repeatedly preachers and laymen alike checked and rechecked every step in their calculation of the time of the beginning and ending of the 2300 years prophecy of Daniel 8:14 and every verse of Scripture that seemed to relate to it. Yes, they decided, it had to be. Jesus would appear that very year.

Lesson 9: Amazing Time Prophecy

"How do they know the date, Father?" Mr. Miller's oldest daughter questioned.

Patiently, Miller explained to his waiting family how they had arrived at such a startling conclusion. "God gave the Jews certain ceremonies associated with their sanctuary that were predictions of the future. In the spring was a ceremony called 'Passover.' This predicted Jesus' crucifixion. It is an historical fact that Jesus died on the very day of the Passover. A few days after Passover, was the 'Wave-sheaf ceremony. It symbolized the first fruits of the harvest and predicted Jesus resurrection. Christ became the 'first fruits' of the grave, and arose on the very day predicted.

"But in the fall of the year was another ceremony which represented judgment. We usually think of the judgment as associated with Jesus second coming. This ceremony came on the 10th day of the seventh Jewish month.

"On the Day of Atonement, the Jewish priest cleansed the sanctuary of sin by taking blood from the sacrifice into the Most Holy Place of the Temple. Remember, the twenty-three-hundred-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14 predicts that the sanctuary would be cleansed around 1844. If the judgment takes place on the Day of Atonement in 1844, it will come on October 22, 1844. I believe Jesus will come on that date."

"But, Father, what about the scripture that says, 'For ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.?' " she asked persistently.

Father explained to her that while a man among men, Jesus did not know the time. Even the angels didn't. But Jesus said that the Father did know the time, and He would reveal it at the right time. Surely they felt, now was the time.

Thus, propelled by a sense of duty and filled with unspeakable joy, the Millers joined other believers in preparing for their Lord and in seeking to warn the world.

Visits to the family grave plots were no longer sad. Each visit only made them more eager to see the coming of Jesus. How precious it seemed as they looked forward to being reunited with their three little ones who had passed to their rest.

Time was spent by each family member, old and young alike, searching their hearts to be sure that they were ready to see Jesus. Thousands upon thousands were converted to Jesus. It is estimated that over 100,000 people believed the "Advent" message that Jesus was coming soon.

October 22 finally arrived. Believers gathered together. A feeling of suspense filled the air. The usual activities were done with a sense of quiet anticipation. In the evening they gathered together for worship--waiting for the moment when Jesus should appear.

Many repeated the verses they knew by heart:

"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." Matthew 24:27

"Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him... and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." Revelation 1:7

"For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall 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 so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thessalonians 4.16,17

In the Miller home, as in other homes, these texts were repeated and the promises claimed. Each family member was wrapped in thought. Some slipped away to pray alone. They searched the sky for the first sign of Jesus' appearing.

Lesson 9: Amazing Time Prophecy

But the time passed by. Eleven o'clock came, 11:30 p.m, 12 Midnight! But Jesus did not come. Then the realization came that they had been mistaken. The disappointment was intense and bitter. Sounds of sobbing could be heard from some. "Why, oh, why hadn't Jesus come?" They had so longed to see Him.

"Why hadn't He come?" was the question uppermost in everyone's mind. It was hard to pick up their duties the next day. Each task only forced the disappointment deeper into their hearts and minds. Skeptics took opportunity to taunt them, and they had no answer for their jeers.

Some tried to put the experience behind them by simply denying or ignoring it. Others decided they must have made a mistake in figuring the date and continued to search for a new date only to be disappointed again.

But some were determined to find out what their mistake was. They came together to search the scriptures anew pleading with God to show them their error and claiming the promise of the Bible that if we seek with all our hearts, we will find truth. They refused to let their disappointment come between them and the Savior whose Book they loved. Nor could they deny that the Holy Spirit had been with them and given power to their teaching.

As they searched the Word of God their attention turned to one word in Daniel 8:14. It was the word "sanctuary". The prophecy had said that the *sanctuary* was to be cleansed after 2300 days. They had thought that the sanctuary represented the earth, but did it? That was the popular opinion in Bible commentaries of the day, but were they right? In their investigation they learned that there is no Scripture evidence supporting this popular view.

In the old covenant ceremonies, sins were symbolically brought into the *earthly* sanctuary morning and evening, as the blood from the slain lambs was sprinkled before the inner veil. On the Day of Atonement these sins were symbolically removed, and the earthly sanctuary was cleansed from these sins.

The earthly sanctuary was declared by Paul to be the sanctuary of the first covenant. Could it be that the new covenant had a sanctuary too? Paul, in fact, said it did. There is not even a hint that the sanctuary represents the earth, but rather God's throne in heaven. (Hebrews 8:1-5)

Thus a whole new study opened before them. The earthly sanctuary was only a prototype, a symbol, of the real sanctuary in heaven. There is where our sins are really recorded. There is where Jesus pleads His blood for our sins as we kneel in prayer and confess them day by day.

"Could it be," they wondered, "that the Day of Atonement, when judgment began and the sanctuary was cleansed of sin, represents the day when the heavenly judgment begins and the records of sin in that sanctuary will be inspected, cleansed and erased too? And so they studied and prayed. Associated with the text in Daniel 8:14 on the cleansing of the sanctuary, they found this text in Daniel 7:10: "The judgment was set and the books were opened."

Thus is pictured a judgment scene in heaven, not on earth. In that judgment the record books will reveal whether or not the penalty for each sin has been paid. The sins that have been confessed and forsaken will be blotted out forever. They were paid for by Jesus death. When the record of every person who has ever lived has been reviewed by the heavenly court, the books will be cleaned up and Jesus will come to give everyone their eternal rewards. Every person will either have his sins blotted out, or if his sins haven't been confessed and forgiven, his name blotted out of the book of life.

As the people studied, new light came to them. God's Word had not failed. Their disappointment was simply because they had not understood the prophecies completely.

They were comforted as they saw that Jesus' disciples had been similarly disappointed at Jesus' crucifixion because even they had misunderstood the prophecies about the Messiah. Just as God used

Lesson 9: Amazing Time Prophecy

the mistake of the disciples to point the attention of the people to the Savior, God had used their mistake to draw the minds of the many around the world to Jesus' second coming and to the judgment that must precede it.

The day is still coming when we will face our Judge and hear our sentence or reward pronounced. How awful it would be to think you are His and then hear Him say, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" How important it is to be sure we are among those who hear Him say, "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." (Matthew 7:23; 25:34)

May God bless you as you open your heart day by day to your Heavenly Father saying; "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23,24)