

## Chapter 1

### A Cause-Effect Chronology of the Coming Crisis

The purpose of divine prophecy

I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning.-Isa. 46:9,10, RSV.

Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.-Amos 3:7, NIV.

I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.-John 14:29, NIV.

Extent of information available

In the prophecies the future is opened before us as plainly as it [Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection] was opened to the disciples by the words of Christ. The events connected with the close of probation and the work of preparation for the time of trouble are clearly presented. But multitudes have no more understanding of these important truths than if they had never been revealed. Satan watches to catch away every impression that would make them wise unto salvation, and the time of trouble will find them unready.2-GC 594.

2. Although we may not know exactly when the Second Coming will occur (Matt. 24:36; Acts 1:6,7; 2 Thess. 5:1,2), we can know when it is near and can understand the relationships of coming events to each other.

Not one of us is immune to the danger of letting the evil one catch away impressions that can prepare us for what is coming. Hence, the information contained in this book should be studied humbly and prayerfully with a mind open to accept that which God has provided for us in the inspired writings. Although a careful attempt has been made in preparing the compilation, this compiler does not claim it is error-free. It is very probable that all of us will be surprised by the way some future events unfold.

The broad framework of coming events

I saw that Jesus would not leave the most holy place until every case was decided either for salvation or destruction, and that the wrath of God could not come until Jesus had finished His work in the most holy place, laid off His priestly attire, and clothed Himself with the

## THE SHAPE OF THE COMING CRISIS

garments of vengeance. Then Jesus will step out from between the Father and man, and God will keep silence no longer, but pour out His wrath on those who have rejected His truth. I saw that the anger of the nations, the wrath of God, and the time to judge the dead were separate and distinct, one following the other, also that Michael had not stood up, and that the time of trouble, such as never was, had not yet commenced. The nations are now getting angry, but when our High Priest has finished His work in the sanctuary, He will stand up, put on the garments of vengeance, and then the seven last plagues will be poured out.<sup>3</sup>

3. This broad outline is a framework into which other inspired information can be incorporated. The great, broad events of the future are: (1) the anger of the nations, (2) the wrath of God, and (3) the time to judge the dead.

“The nations are now getting angry.” This links the present with the future events outlined. While the anger of the nations undoubtedly refers to troubles among the nations, it more particularly has to do with the persecuting attitude of the nations toward God’s people, as will be shown. “The time to judge the dead” refers to a judgment that takes place after the wrath of God. This judgment takes place during the millennium, when “the saints will judge the world” (1 Cor. 6:2; 4:5; and Rev. 20:4).

The statement that “Jesus [does] not leave the most holy place until every case is decided” refers to the close of probation. This is a watershed event and is referred to by various terms: (1) “Jesus... [has finished] His work in the most holy place”; (2) “Jesus... [steps] out from between the Father and man”; (3) “Michael... [stands] up”; (4) “Our High Priest... [has finished] His work in the sanctuary; and (5) [Our High Priest] will stand up [and] put on the garments of vengeance.”

I saw that the four angels would hold the four winds until Jesus’ work was done in the sanctuary, then will come the seven last plagues. These plagues enraged the wicked against the righteous; they thought that we had brought the judgments of God upon them, and that if they could rid the earth of us, the plagues would then be stayed. A decree went forth to slay the saints, which caused them to cry day and night for deliverance. This was the time of Jacob’s trouble. Then all the saints cried out with anguish of spirit, and were delivered by the voice of God.-EW 36, 37, emphasis supplied.

## THE SHAPE OF THE COMING CRISIS

Other events that fit in the broad framework

At the commencement of the time of trouble, we were filled with the Holy Ghost as we went forth and proclaimed the Sabbath more fully.-EW33.

“The commencement of that time of trouble,” here mentioned, does not refer to the time when the plagues shall begin to be poured out, but to a short period just before they are poured out, while Christ is in the sanctuary.<sup>4</sup> At that time, while the work of salvation is closing, trouble will be coming on the earth, and the nations will be angry, yet held in check so as not to prevent the work of the third angel. At that time the “latter rain,” or refreshing from the presence of the Lord, will come, to give power to the loud voice of the third angel, and prepare the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out.-EWS5, 86.

4. There are two times of trouble. One occurs before the close of probation; the other occurs after the close of probation. The first period is often called “the little time of trouble.” Perhaps a more accurate term would be “the early time of trouble,” in view of the fact that the great time of trouble, when the plagues are poured out, comes later. The early time of trouble continues for a “short period.” It is followed by “the time of trouble such as never was” (EW 36), which will be “very short” (7T204), possibly by comparison.

Events from Sunday agitation to the close of probation amplified

Heretofore those who presented the truths of the third angel’s message have often been regarded as mere alarmists. Their predictions that religious intolerance would gain control in the United states, that church and state would unite to persecute those who keep the commandments of God, have been pronounced groundless and absurd.... But as the question of enforcing Sunday observance is widely agitated, the event so long doubted and disbelieved is seen to be approaching, and the third [angel’s] message will produce an effect which it could not have had before....

As5 the time comes for... [the third angel’s message] to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service- Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. The sins of Babylon will be laid open. The fearful results of enforcing the observances of the church by civil authority, the inroads of Spiritualism, the stealthy but

## THE SHAPE OF THE COMING CRISIS

rapid progress of the papal power,-all will be unmasked. By these solemn warnings the people will be stirred. Thousands upon thousands will listen who have never heard words like these. In amazement they hear the testimony that Babylon is the church, fallen because of her errors and sins... As the people go to their former teachers with the eager inquiry, Are these things so? the ministers present fables, prophesy smooth things, to soothe their fears and quiet their awakened conscience. But since many refuse to be satisfied with the mere authority of men, and demand a plain "Thus saith the Lord," the popular ministry,... filled with anger as their authority is questioned, will denounce the message as of Satan, and stir up the sin-loving multitudes to revile and persecute those who proclaim it.

5. The temporal conjunction "as " which appears in several places in The Great Controversy, 605-612, connects the sequence of future events in chronological order from the present to the close of probation.

As the controversy extends into new fields, and the minds of the people are called to God's downtrodden law,<sup>6</sup> Satan is astir. The power attending the message will only madden those who oppose it. The clergy will put forth almost superhuman efforts to shut away the light, lest it should shine upon their flocks. By every means at their command they will endeavor to suppress the discussion of these vital questions. The church appeals to the strong arm of civil power,<sup>7</sup> and in this work, papists and Protestants unite.<sup>8</sup> As the movement for Sunday enforcement becomes more bold and decided, the law will be invoked against commandment-keepers. They will be threatened with fines and imprisonment, and some will be offered positions of influence and other rewards and advantages, as inducements to renounce their faith. Those who are arraigned before the courts, make a strong vindication of the truth, and some who hear them are led to take their stand to keep all the commandments of God. Thus light will be brought before thousands who otherwise would know nothing of these truths

6. This, apparently, is the beginning of the early time of trouble, when God's servants go forth and proclaim "the Sabbath more fully" (EW 33).

7. The fact that the church appeals to the strong arm of civil power implies that agitation for Sunday legislation is succeeding.

8. This union of "papists and Protestants" helps us locate this event in relation to other events in a cause-and-effect chronology of last-day

## THE SHAPE OF THE COMING CRISIS

events. Thus, for instance, “When... [the United States] shall so abjure the principles of its government as to enact a Sunday law, Protestantism will in this act join hands with popery” (5T 712).

Testimonies for the Church, 5:451, elaborates on this watershed event: “When Protestantism shall stretch her hand across the gulf to grasp the hand of the Roman power, when she shall reach over the abyss to clasp hands with spiritualism, when, under the influence of this threefold union,... [the United States] shall repudiate every principle of its constitution as a Protestant and republican government, and shall make provision for the propagation of papal falsehoods and delusions, then we may know that the time has come for the marvelous working of Satan.”

As the defenders of truth refuse to honor the Sunday-sabbath, some of them will be thrust into prison, some will be exiled, some will be treated as slaves. To human wisdom, all this now seems impossible; but as the restraining Spirit of God shall be withdrawn from men, and they shall be under the control of Satan,... there will be strange developments

As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel’s message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position, and join the ranks of the opposition. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren. When Sabbathkeepers are brought before the courts to answer for their faith, these apostates are the most efficient agents of Satan to misrepresent and accuse them, and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the rulers against them.

In this time of persecution the faith of the Lord’s servants will be tried. They have faithfully given the warning, looking to God and to His word alone. God’s Spirit, moving upon their hearts, has constrained them to speak. Stimulated with holy zeal, and with the divine impulse strong upon them, they entered upon the performance of their duties without coldly calculating the consequences of speaking to the people the word which the Lord had given them. They have not consulted their temporal interests, nor sought to preserve their reputation or their lives.

## THE SHAPE OF THE COMING CRISIS

Yet when the storm of opposition and reproach bursts upon them, some, overwhelmed with consternation, will be ready to exclaim, "Had we foreseen the consequences of our words, we would have held our peace." They are hedged in with difficulties. Satan assails them with fierce temptations. The work which they have undertaken seems far beyond their ability to accomplish. They are threatened with destruction. The enthusiasm which animated them is gone; yet they cannot turn back. Then, feeling their utter helplessness, they flee to the Mighty One for strength. They remember that the words which they have spoken were not theirs, but His who bade them give the warning

As the opposition rises to a fiercer height, the servants of God are again perplexed; for it seems to them that they have brought [on] the crisis. But conscience and the word of God assure them that their course is right; and although the trials continue, they are strengthened to bear them. The contest grows closer and sharper, but their faith and courage rise with the emergency

But so long as Jesus remains man's intercessor in the sanctuary above, the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit is felt by rulers and people

While many of our rulers are active agents of Satan, God also has His agents among the leading men of the nation

Thus a few men will hold in check a powerful current of evil. The opposition of the enemies of truth will be restrained that the third angel's message may do its work. When the final warning shall be given,<sup>9</sup> it will arrest the attention of these leading men through whom the Lord is now working, and some of them will accept it, and will stand with the people of God through the time of trouble.

9. Note: The "final warning" has not been given up to this point, but "shall be given." Thus, the "final warning" comes at the end of the sequence of events outlined in *The Great Controversy*, 605-612, whereas the "warning" comes at the beginning of this sequence.

The angel who unites<sup>10</sup> in the proclamation of the third angel's message, is to lighten the whole earth with his glory. A work of worldwide extent and unwonted power is here foretold

The work will be similar to that of the day of Pentecost. As the "former rain" was given, in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the opening of the gospel, to cause the upspringing of the precious seed, so the "latter rain" will be given at its close, for the ripening of the harvest

## THE SHAPE OF THE COMING CRISIS

10. The angel who unites with the third angel and “lighten[s] the whole earth with his glory” is the angel of Revelation 18. He is here associated with the “latter rain,” which Early Writings, 86, says gives “unwonted [i.e., extraordinary] power” “to the loud voice [or loud cry] of the third angel.”

The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening

Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given.<sup>11</sup> Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand.

11. Notice that although trouble will be coming on the earth and the nations will be angry, yet they are “held in check so as not to prevent the work of the third angel,” and that it is during this time that the “latter rain is poured out giving power to the loud voice of the third angel” (EW 86). The restraint of the angry nations is described in Early Writings, 38, as the holding of the four winds after the angels had begun to loosen them. It is this restraint that enables God’s people to give “the final warning” (GC 611). This clearly suggests that there will be a brief respite from the troubles that have been coming on the earth while the “final warning” is given. (See GC 491.)

The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God. The arguments have been presented. The seed has been sown, and now it will spring up and bear fruit. The publications distributed by missionary workers have exerted their influence, yet many whose minds were impressed have been prevented from fully comprehending the truth or from yielding obedience. Now the rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number take their stand upon the Lord’s side.-GC 605-612.

When the third angel’s message closes, mercy no longer pleads for the guilty inhabitants of the earth. The people of God have accomplished their work. They have received “the latter rain,” “the

## THE SHAPE OF THE COMING CRISIS

refreshing from the presence of the Lord,” and they are prepared for the trying hour before them.... An angel returning from the earth announces that his work is done; the final test has been brought upon the world, and all who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received “the seal of the living God.” Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above.-GC 613.

The close of probation

It is in a crisis that character is revealed

..The great final test comes at the close of human probation, when it will be too late for the soul’s need to be supplied.-COL 412.

The righteous and the wicked will still be living upon the earth in their mortal state,-men will be planting and building, eating and drinking, all unconscious that the final, irrevocable decision has been pronounced in the sanctuary above.<sup>12</sup> Before the flood, after Noah entered the ark, God shut him in, and shut the ungodly out; but for seven days the people, knowing not that their doom was fixed, continued their careless, pleasure-loving life, and mocked the warnings of impending judgment. “So,” says the Saviour, “shall also the coming of the Son of man be [Matt. 24:39].” Silently, unnoticed as the midnight thief, will come the decisive hour which marks the fixing of every man’s destiny, the final withdrawal of mercy’s offer to guilty men.-GC 491.

12. During the early time of trouble, the four angels holding the winds begin to loosen them, but Jesus sees that not all of His people are sealed and He commissions another angel to bid the four angels to hold the winds until the remnant are sealed (JEW 3%). During the respite that follows, the angels renew their grip on the winds. Thus, “the nations will be angry [against God’s people, yet held in check so as not to prevent the work of the third angel. At that time the latter rain... will come to give power to the loud voice [or loud cry] of the third angel, and prepare the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out.” The wicked attribute this respite to the fact that at last they have passed a universal law against the Sabbath, whereas in reality the respite is the result of Jesus’ restraining order to the angels holding the winds of strife.

I saw that this world was rocked in the cradle of security so that communications might not be cut off from place to place, and that messengers might have full time to carry the message to the children of God, that they receive it and be sealed with the seal of the living God,



## THE SHAPE OF THE COMING CRISIS

and be prepared to pass through the time of trouble such as never was. I saw that it must be a time of peace in order for the servants of God to do their work for souls.-6MR 170.

Probation is ended a short time before the appearing of the Lord in the clouds of heaven.-GC 490.

The great time of trouble and the death decree

The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation; the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn. Unsheltered by divine grace, they have no protection from the wicked one. Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble.<sup>13</sup> As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose.-GC 614.

13. This plunge into the great, final trouble takes place at the end of the brief respite following the close of probation mentioned in *The Great Controversy*, 491.

In quick succession one angel after another will pour out vials of wrath upon the inhabitants of the earth.-ST 17 January 1900.

When Jesus leaves the most holy [place], His restraining Spirit is withdrawn from rulers and people. They are left to the control of evil angels. Then such laws will be made by the counsel and direction of Satan,<sup>14</sup> that unless time should be very short, no flesh could be saved.-IT 204.

14. The “laws” referred to here are the “general [or “universal” (PK 512)] decree” that “fixes the time when commandment-keepers may be put to death” (GC 631).

These plagues enraged the wicked against the righteous; they thought that we had brought the judgments of God upon them, and that if they could rid the earth of us, the plagues would then be stayed. A decree went forth to slay the saints, which caused them to cry day and night for deliverance. This was the time of Jacob’s trouble.-EW36, 37.

Terrible as these inflictions are, God’s justice stands fully vindicated. The angel of God declares: “Thou art righteous, O Lord,... because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy [Revelation 16: 2-6].” By condemning the people of God to death, they have as truly incurred the guilt of their blood as if it had been shed by their hands.-GC 628.

## THE SHAPE OF THE COMING CRISIS

Though a general decree has fixed the time when commandment-keepers may be put to death, their enemies will in some cases anticipate the decree.-GC 631.

When the protection of human laws shall be withdrawn from those who honor the law of God, there will be, in different lands, a simultaneous movement for their destruction. As the time appointed in the decree draws near, the people will conspire to root out the hated sect. It will be determined to strike in one night a decisive blow, which shall utterly silence the voice of dissent and reproof.-GC 635.

It is at midnight that God manifests His power for the deliverance of His people. The sun appears, shining in its strength. Signs and wonders follow in quick succession. The wicked look with terror and amazement upon the scene, while the righteous behold with solemn joy the tokens of their deliverance.-GC 636.

Soon we heard the voice of God like many waters, which gave us the day and hour of Jesus' coming.15-E W 15.

15. "The day and hour of His coming Christ has not revealed.... The exact time of the second coming of the Son of man is God's mystery"(DA 632,633).

Probation is ended a short time before the appearing of the Lord in the clouds of heaven.-RH 9 November 1905.

After the close of Jesus' mediation

.[He] tarried a moment<sup>16</sup> in the outer apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, and the sins which had been confessed while he was in the most holy place were placed upon Satan... Then I saw Jesus lay off His priestly attire and clothe Himself with His most kingly robes.... Surrounded by the angelic host, He left heaven. The plagues were falling upon the inhabitants of the earth.-EW2SQ, 281.

16. Jesus does not immediately leave heaven when probation closes. Instead, He tarries "a moment" in the outer apartment of the sanctuary, while sins that Satan has led God's people to commit, but which previously have been confessed and forsaken, are placed on the head of the scapegoat. It appears that this "moment" of tarrying corresponds to the brief respite before the plagues fall (GC 491). It is after this that Christ lays off His priestly attire and clothes Himself with most kingly robes. While the plagues are falling Jesus leaves heaven, surrounded by the angelic host. The "number of days," during which the cloud bearing Jesus is passing from the Holiest "to the east where it first appeared to the saints on earth" (DS 14 March 1846), appears to

## THE SHAPE OF THE COMING CRISIS

correspond to the “very short” period of time between the death decree and the Second Coming.

I saw a flaming cloud come where Jesus stood and he laid off his priestly garment and put on his kingly robe, took his place on the cloud which carried him to the east where it first appeared to the saints on earth, a small black cloud, which was the sign of the Son of Man. While the cloud was passing from the Holiest to the east which took a number of days,<sup>17</sup> the Synagogue of Satan worshiped at the saints feet.-DS14 March 1846.

17. “A number of days” is an indefinite period of time. It affords no encouragement to anyone to try to calculate the day and hour of Jesus’ coming. We have been given an abundance of information that can help us correlate the cause-and-effect chronology of coming events. This information can enable us to “catch the steady tread of events ordained by... [God] to take place” (77 14) and should encourage us to prepare for the soon coming of our Lord.

A suggested integrated sequence of coming events<sup>18</sup>:

18. This sequence of events is merely suggested. Events may not occur in precisely the order suggested, but it represents this compiler’s best effort at this time.

The Spirit of Prophecy seems to suggest the following cause-and-effect sequence of coming events:

1. While the nations are getting angry and during the time they are angry, the elements of strife are held in check by the angels;

a. Agitation begins for a law enforcing Sunday observance in the United States;

b. Men of faith and prayer, constrained by God, lay open the sins of spiritual Babylon and expose the inroads of spiritualism and the stealthy and rapid progress of the papacy;

c. Millions, amazed to hear such words, go to their religious teachers, who try to allay their concerns with lulling words;

d. Many are not satisfied with these soothing assurances and demand a “Thus saith the Lord;”

e. The popular ministry, angered because their authority is questioned, stirs up the sin-loving multitudes to persecute God’s servants;

f. The controversy extends to the law of God;

g. God’s people proclaim the Sabbath more fully;

h. The popular ministry makes strenuous efforts to suppress discussion of the issues raised;

## THE SHAPE OF THE COMING CRISIS

- i. America abjures the principles of its government by enacting a Sunday law as papists and Protestants unite in common cause;
  - j. Apostate American Protestantism appeals to the strong arm of civil power;
  - k. The Sunday sabbath law is invoked against Sabbath keepers;
  - l. Persecution breaks out;
  - m. Worldly Seventh-day Adventists defect to the side of the enemy, and the majority forsake us;
  - n. Sabbath keepers, threatened with destruction, turn to God for help and are strengthened;
  - o. So long as Christ is in the heavenly sanctuary, the Holy Spirit restrains persecution so as not to impede the work of proclaiming the third angel's message, and some of the rulers take their stand under the final warning;
  - p. The descent of the angel of Revelation 18, representing the outpouring of the latter rain, comes to give even greater power to the loud cry of the third angel's message;
  - q. The great, final test comes near the close of probation as the third angel's message is closing in triumph;
  - r. There is a brief respite from calamities accompanying the final test during which the third angel's message triumphs gloriously; s. This respite continues briefly after probation closes, during which Christ is placing the confessed and forgiven sins of God's people on the head of the scapegoat, Satan;
2. After this brief respite, all the elements of strife are let loose, and Satan plunges the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble;
    - a. The seven last plagues fall in quick succession, one after the other without any respite;
    - b. The wicked become enraged because of the plagues and issue a universal death decree against God's people, probably during the second plague;
    - c. This death decree sets the time for execution as midnight on a specified night;
    - d. In retribution for condemning the people of God to death, the wicked are given blood to drink as the fountains of water are turned to blood;
    - e. The interval between the death decree and deliverance is called the "Time of Jacob's Trouble," during which time God's people cry to Him for deliverance;

## THE SHAPE OF THE COMING CRISIS

f. After placing confessed sins on the head of the scapegoat, a number of days elapse while Christ is passing from the Most Holy Place to the east, where the saints first see him;

g. The voice of God is heard at midnight delivering His people;

h. The wicked are arrested red-handed in the mad act of trying to murder God's anxiously waiting people;

i. At midnight the sun suddenly appears shining in its strength, and signs and wonders follow in quick succession;

j. The voice of God announces the day and hour of Jesus' coming;

3. A small black cloud that becomes bright and glorious as it nears the earth appears in the east bearing Jesus.