

WHY WE CANNOT AFFORD TO IGNORE THE SANCTUARY I

1. Seventh-day Adventist theology is a “*complete system of truth*”¹ as Ellen White labels it, and this whole system of truth is rooted in one all-absorbing theme—**end time events!**
 - a. **Eschatology** is the term used to refer to the study of last things or “*last day events*”
2. Central to Adventist eschatology are three extremely important, foundational beliefs; they rise above the Adventist theological landscape like three prominent pillars:
3. When speaking of Adventist eschatology, we are essentially limiting our area of coverage to the final generation; as none of these foundational truths apply to those living in previous generations



THE FIRST PILLAR: The Time of Trouble

4. The first foundational pillar has to do with the idea that the last generation of God’s people will live through a time, after the close of human probation, in which there is no more intercession going forward in the heavenly sanctuary—
5. Since Jesus ascended to heaven and began His ministration as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, He has been continuously interceding for the human race for many centuries, but this work does not last forever;
6. The bible does teach about a time of trouble and refers to it under several expressions:
 - a. “**the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation**” (**Dan 12:1**); in other words, no generation in the past ever went through it; troubles in the past have been tempered with divine mercy because of Christ’s intercession (EW 280)
 - b. “**time of Jacob’s trouble**” (**Jer 30:7**)--but God’s people will be saved out of it
 - c. “**the great tribulation**” (**Rev 7:14**)
 - d. also called the “**day of the Lord**”; the “**day of the Lord’s vengeance**”, “**the day of wrath**,” etc.
7. Intercession in the heavenly sanctuary finished (**Rev 15:5-8**)—no more high priestly work of intercession in the sanctuary in heaven allowed;
8. Occurs when the 7th trumpet blows and the (**Rev 11:15-17** cf **Rev 5:8** and **Rev 8:3**)
9. Occurs after the heavenly is cleansed (**Dan 8:14**)—once the heavenly sanctuary is cleansed, the work of intercession will cease and Jesus leaves the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary

¹ Ev 222

10. God's unmingled wrath poured out--The time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, corresponds to the time of the outpouring of God's wrath without mixture of mercy (**Rev 15:1**)

11. The Spirit of Prophecy sums it all up with the following sobering words:

As Jesus moved out of the most holy place, I heard the tinkling of the bells upon His garment; and as He left, a cloud of darkness covered the inhabitants of the earth. There was then no mediator between guilty man and an offended God. While Jesus had been standing between God and guilty man, a restraint was upon the people; but when He stepped out from between man and the Father, the restraint was removed and Satan had entire control of the finally impenitent. It was impossible for the plagues to be poured out while Jesus officiated in the sanctuary; but as His work there is finished, and His intercession closes, there is nothing to stay the wrath of God, and it breaks with fury upon the shelterless head of the guilty sinner, who has slighted salvation and hated reproof. In that fearful time, after the close of Jesus' mediation, the saints were living in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor. Every case was decided, every jewel numbered. . . **EW 280.**



THE SECOND PILLAR: A Perfected Last Generation

12. The second foundational pillar has to do with the idea that since God's people who are alive when the time of trouble comes will have to stand before a holy God without an Intercessor, they will need to have a much more advanced and much higher level of spiritual development than seen in any previous generation, if they are to survive; i.e., their characters must be fully developed; they must be perfect in character like Jesus; this concept is called the Last generation theology (LGT)

13. The experience God's people who are alive at this time are required to possess is described in the following verses:

- a. **Rev 14:5**—no fault before the throne of God, no guile upon their lips
- b. **1 Pet 2:21-22**—same expression used to describe the sinlessness of Jesus, which means the 144,000 reflect the sinless character of Jesus
- c. **Zeph 3:13**—the last generation is called the “remnant” will do no iniquity (faultless) and will speak no lies (no guile upon their lips)
- d. **Rev 12:17; Rev 14:12**—in other places, the remnant is described as keeping the commandments of God and having the testimony of Jesus and the faith of Jesus

14. In Ellen White's words, they must reflect the image of Jesus fully:

I also saw that many do not realize what they must be in order to live in the sight of the Lord without a high priest in the sanctuary through the time of trouble. Those who receive the seal

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of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must **reflect the image of Jesus fully**.
EW 71.

15. **TWO QUESTIONS:** 1) What does it mean to reflect the image of Jesus fully? 2) Why do many not realize that this is what they need to be if they are to receive the seal of God and be protected in the time of trouble?

16. Let's tackle the **first question:** What does it mean to reflect the image of Jesus fully?

- a. Jesus had no sin "**on Him**"—Jesus did no sin; His outward behavior was sinless (**1 Pet 2:21-22**)
- b. Jesus had no sin "**in Him**" (**John 14:30; 1 John 3:5-6**)—He cherished no sinful desire in His thoughts; in other words, Jesus always made the right choices and therefore He never developed a defective character

Not even by a thought could our Saviour be brought to **yield to the power of temptation**. Satan finds in human hearts some point where he can gain a foothold; some sinful desire is cherished, by means of which his temptations assert their power. But Christ declared of Himself: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." John 14:30. Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father's commandments, and **there was no sin in Him** that Satan could use to his advantage. **This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble.** GC 623.

17. Our unlikeness to Christ in character stems from the fact that we have sin on us and in us:

Sin on us:

- **1 John 3:4**--Sins of commission
- **Jas 4:17**—sins of omission

Sin in us:

- **Rom 7:14-20**—sin dwelling in me
- **Mark 7:21-22**—out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications. . .

Through sin the whole human organism is deranged, the mind is perverted, the imagination corrupted. Sin has degraded the faculties of the soul. Temptations from without find an **answering chord within the heart**, and the feet turn imperceptibly toward evil. **MH 451.**

18. Therefore, to reflect the image of Jesus fully and receive the seal of God, there must be no more "**sin on us**" and "**sin in us**," period! We are to be perfect in character like Christ, but merely in Christ

The ethics of the gospel acknowledge no standard but **the perfection of the divine character**. The life of Christ was a perfect fulfillment of every precept of the law. He said, "I have kept My Father's commandments." His life is our example of obedience and service. . . **MH 451-452**.

19. The **second question**: Why do many not realize that this is what they need to be, if they are to receive the seal of God and be protected in the time of trouble?
- a. First of all, to receive the seal of God in the forehead, our characters must be perfect!

Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. . . **5T 214**.

20. Many think this level of spiritual development is not possible to attain in this life, therefore they do not realize that this is what they have to be, in order to receive the seal of God and be protected in the time of trouble!
21. This position is reinforced by the fact that nobody has this experience now and no one has attained to it from previous generations, either!
22. None of the heroes of faith in the Old Testament, not even those who are called "perfect," as far as we know, fully reflected the character of Jesus!
- a. **Noah**—called a just man and perfect in all his generation and walked with God, but still sinned (**Gen 6:9** cf. **Gen 9:21**)
 - b. **Job** did not possess it—described as perfect and shunned evil (**Job 1:1**) but later on realized something of the sinfulness of his life and was constrained to repent in dust and ashes (**Job 42:6**)
 - c. **Daniel** did not possess it—still confessing sin at a very old age (**Dan 9:4, 20**)
 - d. **Moses** did not possess it—called the meekest person on earth (**Num 12:3**) but still defective until the day he died (**Exo 2:12** cf. **Num 2-:10-12**)

When the prophet Daniel beheld the glory surrounding the heavenly messenger that was sent unto him, he was overwhelmed with a sense of his own **weakness and imperfection**. **SC 29**.

- e. **Enoch**--One might think Enoch perfected his character which is why he was translated to heaven;
 - i. but then Elijah was also translated to heaven and he was not perfect!

- ii. None of the EGW statements describing the experience of Enoch speak of him as having obtained character perfection; rather, they speak of a sanctified life, which is not the same as character perfection
 - iii. What's more, she also says, "**And there are Enochs even in this our day!**" (**COL 332**)—did she mean there are many today who are walking around already perfect in character? This is highly doubtful; what she means is that there are many today who are living obedient, holy, sanctified lives even as Enoch did, but not necessarily perfect as Christ was perfect and as the 144,000 are perfect!
23. It is therefore, easy to believe that since no one is perfect now and no one ever had it in the past, that obtaining perfect characters in this life, is impossible!
24. This is actually the position of the great majority of Christians today
- a. Many (including Adventists) now believe God's people will always remain defective until Jesus comes!
 - b. Whether one realizes it or not, this is really saying that the Law of God can be perfectly obeyed and that attaining sinless characters is an impossibility! It is the same claim Satan made at the beginning of the great controversy
25. This explains why Ellen White said:
- a. that "Many do not realize what they must be, in order stand before a holy God without an Intercessor through the time of trouble;" (**EW 71**)
26. In **GC 622**, she also says. . .

The "time of trouble, such as never was," is soon to open upon us; and we shall need **an experience which we do not now possess** and which many are too indolent to obtain. **GC 622**

- a. "**Many are too indolent to obtain it**"-- if perfection of character is not attainable in this life, then why even bother trying to obtain it?
27. And so, this whole debate as to whether character perfection is possible or not in this life, really boils down to whether Christ's sinless example can be reproduced in the lives of believers today or not! Not in the partial sense, but in the fullest sense –reflecting the image of Jesus **fully!**
- a. And so, the question comes, Did the great apostle Peter set the bar a little too high when he exhorted the believers in his day to follow the example of Jesus "*who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth?*" (**1 Pet 2:21-22**)
 - b. Did Ellen White lie when she said in **DA 49** that Jesus "*gave us an example of a sinless life?*" (See also **MH 451**)
28. If Christ's perfect example cannot be reproduced in the lives of His followers, then the idea will be entertained that:

- a. the gospel is ineffective
 - b. God cannot deal with Satan’s rebellion and
 - c. Satan was right—the Law of God cannot be kept! Man will keep on sinning!
 - d. If Satan is right, then God has no legal right to throw him in the lake of fire for disobeying a law that cannot be kept in the first place!!
29. The security of the entire universe hangs on whether God can demonstrate that there is no excuse for sinning; that it is possible to obey His Law perfectly, even in sinful flesh!

. . .The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity. The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the **perfection of the character** of His people. **DA 671.**

30. So for the sake of God’s honor, let’s just stop asking whether this is even possible or not; instead let’s ask ourselves “How do we get there?” “How do we become part of the 144,000?” No sin on them, and no sin in them!
31. The most straightforward answer: “Thy way O God, is in the sanctuary” (**Ps 77:13**)
32. This brings us to the third and most important pillar of Adventist eschatology:



THE THIRD PILLAR: The Sanctuary Service

33. The experience God’s final generation will need in order to survive the fiery ordeal of the time of trouble, God Himself will provide--through the sanctuary service
34. More specifically, character perfection is the benefit of Christ’s final ministration in the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary
35. Character perfection is not something God is asking us to produce of ourselves; He knows we can never produce it!
36. Not by **attainment, but by atonement**, the final atonement, is character perfection going to be achieved for those “**who through faith and repentance, are entitled to the benefit of His atonement**” (**GC 421**)
37. In a nutshell, this special work of making a final atonement results not only in the cleansing of the sanctuary, but also of God’s people (**Mal 3:1-3; Lev 16:30; Zech 3:1-4**)
- a. This work began in 1844 with the dead (**Rev 6:9-11**) and ends with the living (**Rev 19:7-8**)
38. Not only is the character perfected, but the memory of sin is erased from the mind and from the books of heaven—this is known in Adventist circles as “**the blotting out of sins**”

“How Can These Things Be?”

39. With regards to the issue of whether character perfection is even possible or not, there are two classes of professed believers in the church today who are represented by **Zechariah** and **Mary**

40. When the angel Gabriel came to Zechariah with the announcement that his wife Elizabeth was going to have a child, he asked *“How can this be?”* and was struck dumb by the angel
- a. The priest Zechariah had no faith and was basically saying *“Are you kidding me? How can this be even possible!!”*
 - b. Zechariah represents the class of professed believers today who dishonor God by expressing doubt and disbelieving His ability to accomplish what is humanly impossible!
41. When Mary was approached by the same angel and given the same announcement, she asked the same question *“How can these things be, I have never known a man;”* but was not struck dumb! Instead, the angel went ahead and explained the matter in greater detail--
- a. Mary on the other hand, had simple child-like faith and was, essence asking, *“Explain to me how this will actually happen?”*
 - b. She represents the class of professed Sabbath keepers who have implicit faith in God’s word and are sincerely investigating to see whether these things are so
42. The question is, do we have the faith in God’s ability to do what is humanly impossible?

Everyone who by faith obeys God’s commandments will reach the **condition of sinlessness** in which Adam lived before his transgression. **IHP 146**

In the day of judgment, the course of the man who has **retained the frailty and imperfection of humanity will not be vindicated**. For him there will be no place in heaven. He could not enjoy the perfection of the saints in light. **He who has not sufficient faith in Christ to believe that he can keep him from sinning, has not the faith that will give him an entrance into the kingdom of God. 3SM 360.**

43. Why should we as Adventists, believe that God is able to produce a group of perfect saints in spite of 6,000 years of unbroken cycle of sinning, moral degeneracy, weakness?
44. Why should we believe something that no other denomination believes in?
- a. Because the word of God says so!
 - b. God is able to will and to do according to His good pleasure
45. It is clear from the bible that there will be a group of people in the future, who will have this experience—the **144,000** sealed saints! There may not have been a demonstration in the past, none in the present, but there will be in the future, shortly before Jesus comes!
46. Instead of expressing doubt in God’s ability to save, let us instead, show our faith by striving to be among this privileged group.

Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand. **Mar 241.**

47. We cannot afford to keep ignoring the sanctuary message, because it is the only way by which God will bring about the perfecting of the characters of His people to prepare for endure the tests and trials of the time of the end. . .