

Lesson 20 – The World Before the Plagues

1. What will evil in the world cause? **Matthew 24:12**

EGW: In the closing work of God in the earth, the standard of His law will be again exalted. False religion may prevail, iniquity may abound, the love of many may wax cold, the cross of Calvary may be lost sight of, and darkness, like the pall of death, may spread over the world; the whole force of the popular current may be turned against the truth; plot after plot may be formed to overthrow the people of God; but in the hour of greatest peril the God of Elijah will raise up human instrumentalities to bear a message that will not be silenced. In the populous cities of the land, and in the places where men have gone to the greatest lengths in speaking against the Most High, the voice of stern rebuke will be heard. Boldly will men of God's appointment denounce the union of the church with the world. Earnestly will they call upon men and women to turn from the observance of a man-made institution to the observance of the true Sabbath. "Fear God, and give glory to Him," they will proclaim to every nation; "for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. . . . If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation." Revelation 14:7-10. {PK 186.3}

2. What will the wicked do and what will they lack? **Daniel 12:10**

EGW: The future is before us, and unforeseen events will surely take place, changing the present aspect of things in the world. Lust and greed are striving for the supremacy. Oppression and hatred will be exercised to destroy. Inspired by a power from beneath, Satan's instrumentalities will work with intensity to carry out his will. "The wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." Every truly converted soul will put on the whole armor of God, and will bravely face the unseen for God's servants will realize the necessity of partaking of the divine nature. {SpM 369.6}

Those who do the will of God shall know of the doctrine. "The wise shall understand;" but "the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand." [Daniel 12:10.] {GW92 27.3}

3. What will many be involved with (3 items)? **Matthew 7:22**

EGW: At the final day, many will claim admission to Christ's kingdom, saying, "We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets." "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in

Lesson 20 – The World Before the Plagues

Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" But the answer is, "I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from Me." Luke 13:26; Matthew 7:22; Luke 13:27. In this life they have not entered into fellowship with Christ; therefore they know not the language of heaven, they are strangers to its joy. "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." 1 Corinthians 2:11. {COL 412.3}

4. In excusing a number of sins among church people, what do they put on? **2 Timothy 3:1-5 (answer is at beginning of verse 5)**

EGW: The class represented by the foolish virgins are not hypocrites. They have a regard for the truth, they have advocated the truth, they are attracted to those who believe the truth; but they have not yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit's working. They have not fallen upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and permitted their old nature to be broken up. This class are represented also by the stony-ground hearers. They receive the word with readiness, but they fail of assimilating its principles. Its influence is not abiding. The Spirit works upon man's heart, according to his desire and consent implanting in him a new nature; but the class represented by the foolish virgins have been content with a superficial work. They do not know God. They have not studied His character; they have not held communion with Him; therefore they do not know how to trust, how to look and live. Their service to God degenerates into a form. "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." Ezekiel 33:31. The apostle Paul points out that this will be the special characteristic of those who live just before Christ's second coming. He says, "In the last days perilous times shall come: for men shall be lovers of their own selves; . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." 2 Timothy 3:1-5. {COL 411.1}

5. In the last days, what will many give heed to? **1 Timothy 4:1**

EGW: In the epistle of Paul to Timothy, he foretells what will be manifested in the latter days. And this warning was for the benefit of those who should live when these things should take place. God revealed to his servant the perils of the church in the last days. He writes, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron." {RH, April 15, 1875 par. 10}

6. What will many Christians not endure, and what will they turn to? **2 Timothy 4:3**

Lesson 20 – The World Before the Plagues

EGW: By the pride of human wisdom, by contempt for the influence of the Holy Spirit, and disrelish for the humbling truths of God's word, many who profess to be Christians, and who feel competent to teach others, will be led to turn away from the requirements of God. Paul declared to Timothy: "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;" {LP 322.3}

7. What will they not want to hear and what will be put in its place? **2 Timothy 4:4**

EGW: Says the apostle, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." On every side we see men easily led captive by the delusive imaginations of those who make void the word of God; but when the truth is brought before them, they are filled with impatience and anger. {RH, January 10, 1888 par. 4}

8. What will people be walking after? **2 Peter 3:3-4, Jude 1:18**

EGW: Looking down through the ages to the close of time, Peter was inspired to outline conditions that would exist in the world just prior to the second coming of Christ. "There shall come in the last days scoffers," he wrote, "walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." But "when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them." Not all, however, would be ensnared by the enemy's devices. As the end of all things earthly approached, there would be faithful ones able to discern the signs of the times. While a larger number of professing believers would deny their faith by their works, there would be a remnant who would endure to the end. {RH, September 26, 1912 par. 6}

9. What type of ignorance will people be in? **2 Peter 3:5**

EGW: When Noah proclaimed the solemn message, yet an hundred and twenty years the judgments of God in a flood of water should destroy the world and its inhabitants, men would not receive it, so it is at the present time. Those who warn the transgressors of law to repent and turn to their allegiance for the Lawgiver is coming to punish the disobedient, will plead and entreat and warn the

Lesson 20 – The World Before the Plagues

majority in vain. Peter describes the attitude of the world in reference to the last message: "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water; whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished; but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." {ST, January 3, 1878 par. 7}

10. What is the most concerning last day event? **Matthew 24:4, 5, 11, 24**

EGW: Turning to the disciples, Christ said, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." Many false messiahs will appear, claiming to work miracles, and declaring that the time of the deliverance of the Jewish nation has come. These will mislead many. Christ's words were fulfilled. Between His death and the siege of Jerusalem many false messiahs appeared. But this warning was given also to those who live in this age of the world. The same deceptions practiced prior to the destruction of Jerusalem have been practiced through the ages, and will be practiced again. {DA 628.2}

11. What shall appear in the "last time"? **1 John 2:18**

EGW: Those who apostatize in time of trial will bear false witness and betray their brethren, to secure their own safety. They will tell where their brethren are concealed, putting the wolves on their track. Christ has warned us of this, that we may not be surprised at the cruel, unnatural course pursued by friends and relatives. "Little children, it is the last time," John writes, "and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." {RH, December 20, 1898 par. 6}

12. What will the desire of the worldly people be towards God's people? **Matthew 24:9-10, Revelation 13:15**

EGW: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted," Christ said, "and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one

Lesson 20 – The World Before the Plagues

another, and shall hate one another." These words will be fulfilled. Those who have been our companions in Christian association will not always maintain their fidelity. Envy and evil-surmising, if cherished, will separate very friends. When a man loses the shield of a good conscience, he loses the co-operation of heavenly angels. God is not working in him. He is controlled by another spirit. {RH, April 19, 1898 par. 2}

13. What will people be preoccupied with as they were in the days of Noah? **Matthew 24:37-39**

EGW: The Bible declares that in the last days men will be absorbed in worldly pursuits, in pleasure and money-getting. They will be blind to eternal realities. Christ says, "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24:37-39. {COL 228.1}

So it is today. Men are rushing on in the chase for gain and selfish indulgence as if there were no God, no heaven, and no hereafter. In Noah's day the warning of the flood was sent to startle men in their wickedness and call them to repentance. So the message of Christ's soon coming is designed to arouse men from their absorption in worldly things. It is intended to awaken them to a sense of eternal realities, that they may give heed to the invitation to the Lord's table. {COL 228.2}

14. What will people be preoccupied with as they were in the days of Lot? **Luke 17:28-32**

EGW: The same sin of gluttony and drunkenness benumbed the moral sensibilities of the inhabitants of Sodom, so that crimes seemed to men and women of that wicked city to be their delight. Christ warns the world. He says, "Likewise, also, as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." {HR, October 1, 1872 par. 10}

15. What are the faithful counseled to do? **Matthew 24:42, Matthew 26:41, Luke 21:36**

EGW: As the message of Christ's first advent announced the kingdom of His grace, so the message of His second advent announces the kingdom of His glory. And the second message, like the first, is based on the prophecies. The words of the angel to Daniel relating to the last days were to be

Lesson 20 – The World Before the Plagues

understood in the time of the end. At that time, "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." "The wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." Daniel 12:4, 10. The Saviour Himself has given signs of His coming, and He says, "When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." Luke 21:31, 34, 36. {DA 234.4}

16. What will the faithful be faithful at? **Matthew 24:46, Luke 19:13**

EGW: We are walking in the sight of unseen intelligences. A witness is by our side constantly to see how we trade with the Lord's intrusted goods. When the good steward returns his talents with usury, he will claim nothing. He will realize that they are the talents that God delivered unto him, and will give glory to the Master. He knows that there would have been no gain without the deposit, no interest without the principal. He will say, "Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more." Let the church now consider whether they are putting out to usury the capital the Lord has given. Without the grace of Christ, every soul would have been bankrupt for eternity; therefore we can rightfully claim nothing. But while we can claim nothing, yet when we are faithful stewards, the Lord rewards us as if the merit were all our own. He says, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." How many will mourn for lost opportunities when it is eternally too late! Today we have talent and opportunity, but we know not how long these may be ours. Then let us work while it is day; for the night cometh in which no man can work. "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find so doing." Ellen G. White. {SpTA02a 15.2}

17. What will the false servants be stating? **Matthew 24:48**

EGW: Different times were set for the Lord to come, and were urged upon the brethren. But the Lord showed me that they would pass by, for the time of trouble must take place before the coming of Christ; and that every time a date was set, and passed, it would weaken the faith of God's people. For this I was charged with being the evil servant that said, "My Lord delayeth His coming." Matthew 24:48. {LS 89.1}

18. What will those false servants do towards the true servants? **Matthew 24:49**

Lesson 20 – The World Before the Plagues

EGW: They must have truth, present truth, appropriate for the times in which they are living. The message of warning must be given to the world, as Noah gave the message of warning to the antediluvians. "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing"--giving his household "meat in due season." "Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow servants (who are watching and giving meat in due season), and to eat and drink with the drunken (to absorb his mind and time in this world's enterprises and turn away from the service of God); the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:46-51). {19MR 388.3}

19. What is the future of these false servants? **Matthew 24:50-51**

EGW: The evil servant says in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming." He does not say that Christ will not come. He does not scoff at the idea of His second coming. But in his heart and by his actions and words he declares that the Lord's coming is delayed. He banishes from the minds of others the conviction that the Lord is coming quickly. His influence leads men to presumptuous, careless delay. They are confirmed in their worldliness and stupor. Earthly passions, corrupt thoughts, take possession of the mind. The evil servant eats and drinks with the drunken, unites with the world in pleasure seeking. He smites his fellow servants, accusing and condemning those who are faithful to their Master. He mingles with the world. Like grows with like in transgression. It is a fearful assimilation. With the world he is taken in the snare. "The lord of that servant shall come . . . in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites." {DA 635.1}

20. What are the true servants involved in to bring on the end? **Matthew 24:14**

EGW: Long has God waited for the spirit of service to take possession of the whole church so that everyone shall be working for Him according to his ability. When the members of the church of God do their appointed work in the needy fields at home and abroad, in fulfillment of the gospel commission, the whole world will soon be warned and the Lord Jesus will return to this earth with power and great glory. "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Matthew 24:14. {AA 111.1}

21. What do the faithful need to do? **Matthew 24:13**

Lesson 20 – The World Before the Plagues

EGW: So bitter would be the enmity to the gospel that even the tenderest earthly ties would be disregarded. The disciples of Christ would be betrayed to death by the members of their own households. "Ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake," He added; "but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Mark 13:13. But He bade them not to expose themselves unnecessarily to persecution. He Himself often left one field of labor for another, in order to escape from those who were seeking His life. When He was rejected at Nazareth, and His own townsmen tried to kill Him, He went down to Capernaum, and there the people were astonished at His teaching; "for His word was with power." Luke 4:32. So His servants were not to be discouraged by persecution, but to seek a place where they could still labor for the salvation of souls. {DA 355.3}