

LESSON 3

THE DRAGON'S ROAR

By Tim Saxton, Associate Speaker

Many years ago, a shopkeeper in Kenya wished to expand the inventory of his store. At the time, such a venture would require a trip to Nairobi, the capital, to make the necessary purchases. It would also involve one needing to carry a large sum of cash for the transactions.

The man was concerned about the danger of being robbed while carrying so much money, so he decided to wear a disguise to fool any would-be assailant. He would dress down as an ordinary working man and carry his money in an old briefcase to make himself appear as a common traveler, thereby avoiding suspicion.

On the day of his departure, he went to the bank and withdrew a large sum of cash, attempting not to attract attention to himself. After putting his money in the old briefcase, he went to the terminal to take a bus to Nairobi.

He found the bus and took his seat up next to the driver. With so much money, he thought it would be safer if he sat near the front.

Yet, unbeknownst to him, he had been observed and followed from the bank. Two men saw him withdraw the money and followed him to the bus station. Once it was clear which bus he would ride, one of the men approached the driver and said, "Could we have a word with you privately?"

The bus driver exited the bus and spoke

with the two men. One of the men began, "Our relative is the man with the old suitcase sitting next to you. He is mentally deranged, and we are taking him to see a doctor in Nairobi. He seems to have a fascination with that old briefcase and carries it around with him everywhere. We want to assure you, though, he usually does not get violent."

The driver responded, "What do you mean, 'usually'? What if he gets violent today?"

The men pleaded, "Please sir, help us with our relative."

The driver then motioned for the conductor and shared what the men said. The conductor replied, "As long as your relative does not get violent, there will be no problem; however if we have any problems, we will have to throw all three of you off the bus."

"Thank you, thank you," the men said, and went and took up seats at the back of the bus.

After they were underway, the conductor started collecting the fares from the passengers. He started in the back and worked up to the front. When he came to the man with the suit-

case, the man offered him the fare money, but the conductor refused, saying, "There is no need. It has been taken care of."

The businessman was instantly curious and said, "What do you mean it's taken care of? Who took care of it, and why?" But the conductor ignored his question.

The businessman, with a little more concern in his voice, turned to the conductor again and wanted to know who had paid his fare. The driver, getting a worried look on his face, turned and said to him, "If some kind people wanted to pay your fare, don't worry about it, just be grateful."

The businessman laughed the kind of laugh one laughs when they are nervous and confused and not sure what to do. Lifting his hands in the air, he told the conductor and driver that he had no relatives on the bus, and no one had a right to pay for him without his consent.

The passengers who had been told that the man was crazy started telling the businessman not to worry about such things. This puzzled the businessman



even more. Why are all the people on the bus being so unusually nice to him? Not knowing what to make of it, he raised his voice even more and demanded to know who had paid his fare, repeating that he had no relatives on the bus.

The driver and conductor, thinking the businessman was about to become violent, stopped the bus and ordered the two men in the back to take their mentally deranged relative off the bus. At this, the businessman shouted, "Who is mentally deranged? Are you saying I am?"

Suddenly, the two men came forward, grabbed the businessman before he realized what was happening, and pulled him from the bus. Seeing the bus drive away, the businessman found himself alone with the two men, who soon robbed him of everything he had.*

It was a tragic experience for sure, but what can we learn from it?

The businessman had thought he was perfectly safe, resting in his self-confidence, little realizing there was a sinister plan devised against him. Is there a spiritual lesson in this for us? Could a similar thing happen to God's people at the end of time? For the answer, let's look at a story found in the Book of Numbers, chapter 25.

Here is the background:

Israel was camping on the borders of the Promised Land. Finally, after so many years of wandering, the end was in sight. Moses was busy making the final preparations for Israel's crossing over, when the camp was visited by Midianite and Moabite women, appearing to come for a neighborly visit.

These women came under the garb of friendship and invited Israel to attend one of their (pagan) feasts. We might say they used the "good neighbor" approach. "Just come and fellowship with us," they said.

Was this their real purpose? Clearly not.

Prior to this time, the prophet Balaam, who had been a servant of God, attempted to curse Israel in exchange for money.

The Lord had intervened, though, and refused to allow it. After Balaam's failure, he had thrown off all his allegiance to God and embraced the power of evil. He aligned himself with Midian and Moab in a diabolical scheme to bring about Israel's destruction. The plan: seduce Israel to sin against God so that God's protection would have to be removed, and once this happened, then destroy them.



The women coming into the camp were part of the plan. Balaam himself used his influence (perceived to be a prophet of God) and encouraged Israel to attend the pagan feast. Balaam's approach: "It's okay; we're only going to watch."

We find this account given in Revelation 2:14:

"Because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication."

Once upon the devil's ground, Israel began to be swayed by the music, and soon after the music, there was the wine, and after the wine, the women, and after the women, then bowing down to the false gods. And the men of Israel were taken. Soon, false worship began creeping into the camp of Israel, and that's when Moses and the godly leaders became aware of it!

Thus, in Numbers 25, we find:

"And Israel . . . began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the

anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel." (Verses 1-3)

Once again, judgment fell upon the disobedient people, with the judgment being termed a "plague." The people of God who were honest in heart fled to the tabernacle and wept, crying, "Spare thy people, O God!" The Lord has always had the faithful within the church, who intercede for others.

In the midst of the confusion, we find:

"And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." (Verse 6)

Keep in mind, this man was not simply walking into camp with a lady; he was actually bringing her there for immoral purposes and flaunting his sin in front of Moses, the people of God, and even in front of God, Himself.

"And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand." (Verses 7-9)

Let's review. Sin had come into God's camp, and God's judgments were falling. As a result, many were dying. Those who had not taken part in the idolatrous worship were seeking the Lord, weeping between the porch and the altar. The people of God were shaken to their very foundation.

Could this be a story of prophetic implication? Where else in Scripture do we find God's people weeping between the porch and the altar? For that answer, let's go to the Book of Joel, chapter 2:

"Therefore also now, saith the

LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.”
(Verse 12)

“Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them.” (Verses 15-17)

What period of time is Joel referring to here? It is the time when God’s last-day remnant church is shaken, when they are right on the borders of the Promised Land. Consider what the servant of the Lord says:

“I was shown the people of God, and saw them mightily shaken. . . . [“Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders . . . Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach.”]
—Testimonies for the Church,
Volume 1, Page 179

We find in this quote that our Scripture texts from Joel 2 are linked with the time when God’s people are shaken, just prior to the falling of the Latter Rain.

In a *Review and Herald* article on December 24, 1889, the servant of the Lord

speaks of a time when:

- “The law of God is made void.”
- “The Bible will be opened from house to house.”
- “The crisis comes.”
- “There are deceptive miracles of Satan.”

In the article, she refers to this time “when ministers should be weeping between the porch and the altar, crying, ‘Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach.’”

She goes on to write of “workers” who will join with Christ “at the eleventh hour” and that “there will be an army of steadfast believers who will stand as firm as a rock through the last test.”

Then notice what she says next:

“But where in that army are those who have been standard-bearers? Where are those whose voices have sounded in proclaiming the truth to the sinning? Some of them are not there. We look for them, but in the time of shaking they have been unable to stand, and have passed over to the enemy’s ranks.”

Notice what time is referred to here: it is the time of the shaking of God’s church and when the “ministers should be weeping between the porch and the altar.”

Returning to our story in Numbers 25:

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was

zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel.” (Verses 10-11)

“Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace.”
“And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.” (Verse 12-13)

Now Phineas was a priest, later becoming the high priest. Here he is blessed with a covenant of peace, even the everlasting priesthood, for he was zealous for his God and made atonement for his people.

In the Bible, who is referred to as “a high priest forever”? Who was zealous for His God (Father) and made atonement for His people? In this story, Phineas is a type of Christ.

“Now the name of the Israelite that was slain . . . with the Midianitish woman, was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites.” (Verse 14)

“And the name of the Midianitish woman that was slain was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur; he was head over a people, and of a chief house in Midian.” (Verse 15)

Here the Bible mentions the names of the man and woman involved in this flagrant violation of the law of God. In the Scriptures, names denote meaning. If we look at the meaning of the names of the two individuals listed, perhaps we can find an added dimension to the story.

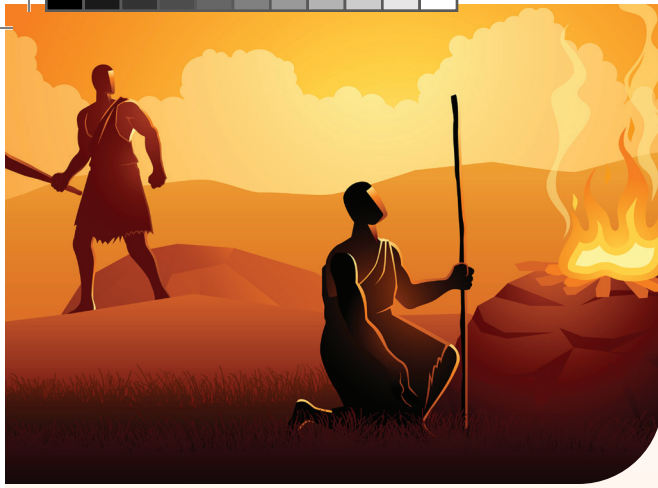
In Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, we find the following meanings in the Hebrew text:

Zimri = Musical or Music
Cozbi = False

So, what do we have? “False Music” comes into God’s camp as God’s people are on the borders of the promised land, and Phineas (representing Christ) stands up and stops it.

That is a heavy statement!





Notice also when Phineas stopped it: when the people were weeping between the porch and the altar, saying, "Spare thy people O Lord." When is this? During the final shaking of God's church.

Now, false music denotes false worship, which is, "I want to serve God, my way!" A good example of this is the story of Cain and Abel, found in Genesis chpt. 4.

Cain and Abel both knew to offer a lamb, but Cain substituted his fruits in place of what God required. Cain's way was that of false worship, and his actions revealed his attitude, saying, "I will worship God how I please, not how He pleases."

We see the same attitude in many today, as they seek a worship style that "makes me feel good," regardless of principle.

Abel wanted to worship God's way. This is evidence of a heart changed and motivated by love. Abel's worship style was saying, "I will worship God in the way that honors Him and brings joy to His heart." After all, true love always seeks the best for others. If we love God, we will seek to serve Him, in His way alone.

In 1900, Ellen White received a letter of concern from one who had attended a church camp meeting in Indiana. At that camp meeting, a new type of worship style was introduced. It was wild, to say the least. Mrs. White responded with an interesting message regarding what had happened in Indiana. We find it recorded in the book *Selected Messages*, Volume 2, Pages 36-38.

"The things you have described as taking place in Indiana, the Lord has shown me would take place just before the close of probation. Every uncouth

thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing. . . . And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit."

Notice what is predicted in the above quote. That just prior to the close of probation (when God's people are on the borders of the Heavenly Promised Land), there would appear a false style of religious music, with "drums," "shouting," and "dancing"; and this would be attributed to the Holy Spirit. Notice what she says:

"The Holy Spirit never reveals itself in such methods, in such a bedlam of noise."

Continuing the quote:

"Better never have the worship of God blended with music than to use musical instruments to do the work which...was represented to me would be brought into our camp meetings. . . . No encouragement should be given to this kind of worship."

"I was instructed to say that at these demonstrations demons in the form of men are present."

Notice here, this false music is predicted to come in among God's own peculiar people at the very end. People will think it's from the Holy Spirit, but it will actually be demonic.

Let's continue:

"The Holy Spirit has nothing to do with such a confusion of noise and multitude of sounds . . . Satan works amid the din and confusion of such music . . . He makes its effect like the poisoning of the serpent."

Have we seen a change over time come to "Christian" music? Does some Christian music appear to resemble a rock concert? Is it often passed off as, "That's just the way they like it" or "It's their style." Does it sound like Cain?

We conclude our quotes on false music with this warning:

"Satan will make music a snare by

the way in which it is conducted. God calls upon His people, who have the light before them in the Word and in the Testimonies, to read and consider, and to take heed." —Letter 132, 1900

Though false worship styles may infiltrate some portion of God's work, like ancient Israel, let's remember this was prophesied in advance, and God's people will go through to the Promised Land, though the unfaithful are shaken out. From *Selected Messages*, Book Two, Page 380, we find:

"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. This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless, it must take place."

Like ancient Israel, God's eye is on His last-day people, and He will deal with the false worship, yet bring His purified and repentant people through to the Promised Land.

In the time of Israel's shaking, what were the faithful doing? They were weeping, praying, and interceding with God for those around them. This is exactly what we are called to do today. Too often, we hear only the voice of criticism, when we should be hearing the voice of prayer.

For a closer look at this time of shaking, let us go to the Book of Zechariah, chapter 3. Here we find an unmistakable link between Numbers 25, Joel 2, and Zechariah 3.

***"And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him."* (Verse 1)**

Commenting on this, the servant of the Lord says:

"Those who are connected with, and are laboring for, the church of God, stand in the same position as Joshua is represented as occupying. As God's servants see the defects of Israel, as they see the sins that are not put away, it calls forth from their sorrowful hearts the prayer, 'Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach.'" —*Review and Herald* September 22, 1896, par. 11

Who does Joshua represent? God's last-day remnant people. What are they doing? The same thing we find in Joel 2, referring to the shaking of the church. They are crying for the Lord to "spare thy people."

"And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." (Verses 2-4)

Like Israel of old, Joshua stands before the Lord in filthy garments, while Satan is there to accuse. The book *This Day With God*, Page 226, tells us:

"Zechariah's vision of Joshua and the Angel applies with peculiar force to the experience of God's people in the closing up of the great day of atonement. The remnant church will be brought into great trial and distress. . . . Their only hope is in the mercy of God; their only defense will be prayer."

"The people of God are sighing and crying for the abominations done in the land. With tears they warn the wicked of their danger in trampling upon the divine law, and with unutterable sorrow they humble themselves before the Lord on account of their own transgressions."

Here we find Joshua being a type and symbol of God's last-day church, and the exact same thing happening to God's people at the end as what happened to ancient Israel.

The true in heart are weeping before the porch and the altar, crying out to God to spare His people and humbling their hearts before Him.

From the book, *Counsels for the Church*, Page 352, we read:

"As Joshua was pleading before the Angel, so the remnant church, with brokenness of heart and earnest faith, will plead for pardon and deliverance through Jesus their Advocate. They are fully conscious of the sinfulness of their lives, they see their weakness and unworthiness, and as they look upon themselves they are ready to despair. The tempter stands by to accuse them, as he stood by to resist Joshua. He points to their filthy garments, their defective characters."

"He endeavors to affright the soul with the thought that their case is hopeless, that the stain of their defilement will never be washed away. He hopes to so destroy their faith that they will yield to his temptations, turn from . . . God, and receive the mark of the beast."

The final shaking of God's church occurs during the early time of trouble, as the mark of the beast is being enforced. At this time, the Latter Rain has not yet fallen and probation has not yet closed. God's people now begin suffering persecution and distress for not accepting the beast's mark as disasters and destruction abound.

The true in heart are weeping before the Lord, crying out for pardon for the unfaithful in the church as well as their own transgressions, as the wicked are gathering themselves against them.

During this time, Satan is casting all his hellish darkness around the praying ones, trying to discourage them so they will give up and accept the mark of the beast. "You can't be saved,"

he tells them. "Your case is hopeless."

At the same time, Satan accuses the people before God, arguing for the right to destroy them, before the Latter Rain can be given. Notice what the servant of the Lord says:

"Satan urges before God his accusations against them, declaring that they have by their sins forfeited the divine protection, and claiming the right to destroy them as transgressors. . . . 'Are these,' he says, 'the people who are to take my place in heaven and the place of the angels who united with me? While they profess to obey the law of God, have they kept its precepts? Have they not been lovers of self more than of God?' . . .

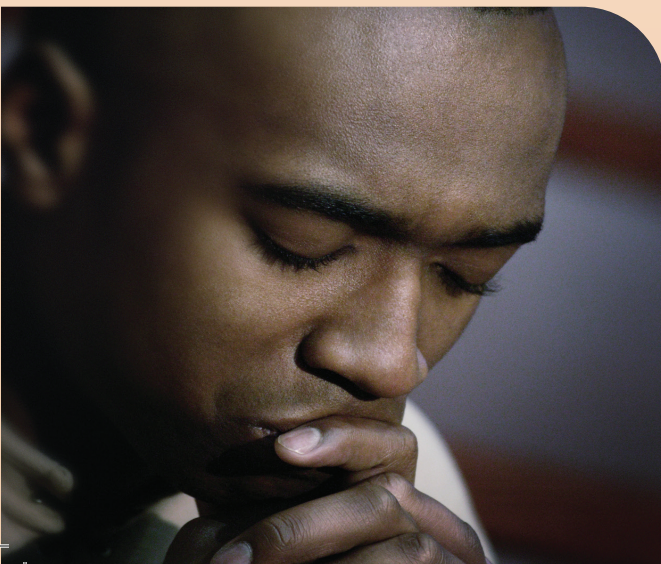
"The people of God have been in many respects very faulty. Satan has an accurate knowledge of the sins which he has tempted them to commit, and he presents these in the most exaggerated light, declaring: 'Will God banish me and my angels from His presence, and yet reward those who have been guilty of the same sins? Thou canst not do this, O Lord . . . Justice demands that sentence be pronounced against them.'"

Like Joshua, God's people in the end have no answer for Satan. As they realize their own wretchedness and sinful condition, they see no hope in themselves. Their quivering lips now claim the promises of Christ, and they look fully upon His righteousness alone as sufficient for them.

Our quote continues:

"But while the followers of Christ have sinned, they have . . . sought the Lord in humility and contrition, and the divine Advocate pleads in their behalf. He who has been most abused by their ingratitude, who knows their sin, and also their repentance, declares: 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. I gave My life for these souls. They are graven upon the palms of My hands.'"

"As the people of God afflict their souls before Him, pleading for purity of heart, the command is given, 'Take



away the filthy garments' from them, and the encouraging words are spoken, 'Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.' The spotless robe of Christ's righteousness is placed upon the tried, tempted, yet faithful children of God."



Now, this last portion of the paragraph is particularly powerful:

"The despised remnant are clothed in glorious apparel, nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions of the world. Their names are retained in the Lamb's book of life, enrolled among the faithful of all ages. They have resisted the wiles of the deceiver; they have not been turned from their loyalty by the dragon's roar. Now they are eternally secure from the tempter's devices. Their sins are transferred to the originator of sin."

Did you see what just happened? As God's repentant people leaned wholly on the righteousness of Christ, a change occurred. Christ steps in and banishes the power of Satan over them. However, this is different than any intervention God has made on behalf of man in the past, for now these living saints are sealed for

Heaven, the final judgment is rendered on their behalf in the Sanctuary above, and Satan can never bring up their sins to them again.

Now, the righteous are ready to receive the Latter Rain and give the Loud Cry! Notice what Zechariah 3 says:

"Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at." (Verse 8)

Why are they wondered at? Because Divine Power has cleansed them from sin and poured upon them the Holy Spirit. Now, reflecting Christ's character, God's people go forth to make Him known.

The servant of the Lord states:

"When the times of refreshing [Latter Rain] shall come . . . then the sins of the repentant soul who received the grace of Christ . . . will be removed from the records of heaven . . . and be remembered no more." —*Signs of the Times*, May 16, 1895.

"The sins of Israel must go to judgment beforehand. Every sin must be confessed at the sanctuary, then the work will move, it must be done now. The latter rain is coming on those that are pure—all, then, will receive it as formerly."

"Get ready. Set thine house in order." —*General Conference Daily Bulletin*, February 7, 1893

This is also referred to in Jeremiah 50, where it states:

"In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve." (Verse 20)

Now, let's return to the conclusion of our story, given in Numbers 31:

"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterward shalt

thou be gathered unto thy people." (Verses 1-2)

To paraphrase, the Lord says to Moses,

"You have a final work to do." This final work was for a select group of God's people to go to battle. Likewise, they were to be selected equally from each of the twelve tribes.

"Of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war. So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war." (Verses 4-5)

"And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand." (Verse 6)

Now, let us remember that Old Testament physical battles often represent end-time spiritual battles. In this story, God's people were going to battle with Phinehas (Phineas) as their leader. Who was Phinehas a symbol of? Christ.

At the end of time, will God's people have a final work to do? Will it involve a great spiritual battle over the souls of men? Is it symbolized in the Book of Revelation with a certain number from the twelve tribes of the children of Israel? Will Christ direct the spiritual battle, termed the Loud Cry?

From the book *Selected Messages*, Volume Three, Page 426:

"Wide awake we must be, as wise virgins having oil in our vessels with our lamps. The power of the Holy Ghost must be upon us and the Captain of the Lord's host will stand at the head of the angels of heaven to direct the battle."

The stories of Numbers 25 and 31, along with Joel 2 and Zechariah 3, all represent the history of God's church at the end of time. It is the story of a diabolical scheme, deep repentance, and final victory in the most beautiful spiritual

experience in the history of fallen man. It is given to encourage us to hold on and continue seeking the Lord, as earth's final days arrive.

Notice the victory as described in the book *Early Writings*, Pages 277-278:

"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 that was shed upon the waiting ones penetrated everywhere, and those in the churches who had any light, who had not heard and rejected the three messages, obeyed the call and left the fallen churches. . . ."

"Mighty miracles were wrought, the sick were healed, and signs and wonders followed the believers. . . . I saw that this message will close with power and strength far exceeding the midnight cry.

"Servants of God, endowed with power from on high with their faces lighted up, and shining with holy consecration, went forth to proclaim the message from heaven. Souls that were scattered all through the religious bodies answered to the call, and the precious were hurried out of the doomed churches, as Lot was hurried out of Sodom before her destruction.

"God's people were strengthened by the excellent glory which rested upon them in rich abundance and

prepared them to endure the hour of temptation."

Brothers and Sisters, are you preparing to stand in that day when everything around you is shaken? Such a preparation starts with an unreserved commitment to Christ now.

The call to stand for Christ, even when others are falling, includes the recognition of others' needs and the uniting of our prayers and intercessions on their behalf.

It is also a call to be so connected with Christ that daily, we are allowing Him to mold and shape us into His image. Then amidst the darkening days of the shaking of God's church, we will hold onto Christ anyway.

Remember, the Latter Rain is only coming upon those who are "pure", who allow Christ to purify their hearts.

In the end, it will be the faithful of God who will take a stand for Christ, intercede for others, and receive the robe of Christ's righteousness. Through Christ, all this has been made possible. God has given us the opportunity to be part of that faithful group. Are you willing to commit yourself to him today?

During World War I, Romania's Minister of War learned that Seventh-day Adventist young people refused to bear arms, and requested Sabbaths off for worship. So, he ordered all Adventist soldiers punished who would not obey state orders and violate their conscience. Thus, harsh measures were taken against Adventist soldiers in the Romanian military.

However, persecution in the military seemed to spill over into the civilian population. The Adventist church had experienced wonderful success with evangelism there in Romania, and now the leaders of the State Church sought to take

advantage of the opportunity to rid themselves of these Protestants.

The Minister of War, in connection with the officials in the State Church, issued an order that all civilian employees who were Seventh-day Adventists must abandon their faith and join the State Church, or be fired! Many Adventists lost their jobs as a result.

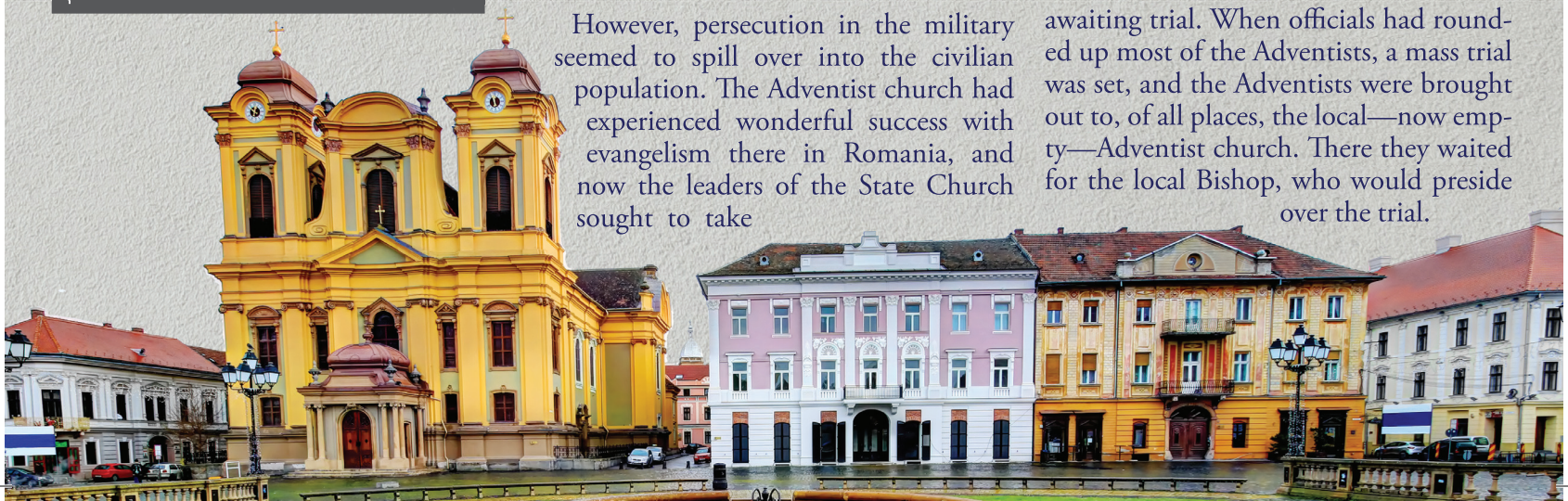
Another decree that went into effect stated that whenever the Bishop would pass by, all must kneel and kiss his ring and that the Bishops' guards were authorized to spit upon anyone who refused to do so.

As if this were not enough, the Minister of Education announced that all Protestants must send their children to the State Church's Catholic schools or face imprisonment. As a result, families were going into hiding to avoid having their children taken from them.

Many of God's church were now suffering hardship. They had no place to live and no way to earn a living. Their properties were taken, and they were brought before judges for their faith, yet still, they rejoiced and continued to win souls for the Kingdom of Heaven.

In one final act of desperation, the authorities ordered the arrest of all Adventist pastors, elders, and Bible workers, and to have them delivered to the government. In some cases, police masqueraded as potential converts to lure out the Adventists and arrest them.

In the city of Galati, the persecution was especially severe, where over a hundred Adventists had been arrested and were awaiting trial. When officials had rounded up most of the Adventists, a mass trial was set, and the Adventists were brought out to, of all places, the local—now empty—Adventist church. There they waited for the local Bishop, who would preside over the trial.



Soon, the Bishop came with all his fanfare. Then came the town Mayor with about fifty armed soldiers, who took their places in and out of the building. In addition, a large mob made up of the men of the city had gathered outside. Everything looked hopeless.

The Adventists had already suffered much. Some of their former leaders were now gone, either sent away to harsh imprisonment or taken by death. Those who remained were weary of all the suffering.

As the Bishop took his place in the mock trial, he accused the Adventists of blaspheming God by preaching heresies and not following the dictates of the State Church. He told them that God's curse would be upon them and that their strange beliefs lacked even common sense. He said, "This town has no place for people like you, and I condemn your souls to purgatory and excommunicate you forever from the mother church."

The words of the Bishop didn't bother the Adventists. They were more concerned with the increasing noise of the angry crowd outside. But then the Bishop changed his tactics, and said, "Perhaps in my generosity, I should give you Adventists one last chance of mercy for anyone willing to come up here and kneel before me and kiss my ring and confess your heresies." His voice changed to a voice of kindness.

No one moved, and the Bishop then walked out closer to the Adventists, kindness still in his voice. As the Adventists stared at this man, dressed in his gorgeous robes and offering them mercy, suddenly one of them stood up and walked forward to kneel and kiss the ring of the Bishop. Then, one by one, other Adventists started standing up and coming forward, kneeling and kissing the ring of the Bishop, while a smile spread across the Bishop's face.

In the back was an old woman by the name of Comina. Standing up, she shouted, "This man is not God. Are we going

to pray to a Bishop? We have been taught to only bow down to God!"

Springing to the side of one of the first men to go up and kneel, she said, "In the name of Jesus, I ask you to stand to your feet. All of you," she said, "choose you this day whom you will serve."

By now, everyone was at attention, and suddenly, like a wave, the Adventists started moving away from the Bishop. As they did so, word spread to the mob outside what was happening, and now with a deafening roar, the mob started shouting, "Kill the woman, kill the woman." No one knew what would happen next.

Suddenly, the captain of the soldiers sprang forward. "To arms, men," he said. "Every one of you grab an Adventist. I will take the woman." And it appeared the end had come.

Here we see God's people, some of whom had been caught between true and false worship, others who stood for the right, yet all in great danger.

Then suddenly, the captain turned to the Mayor and said, "You have a job to protect the innocent people. Do it!" And to the Bishop, he said, respectfully, "You have a job to preach the Gospel. Stick to that! And to the rest, he said, "If anyone ever bothers these Adventists again, they will have to answer to me." And with that, he and his soldiers escorted the Adventists out of the building and away from the mob!*

Thus, it is a story of courage and compromise during a time of the shaking of God's people, pointing us to the faithfulness of one person who made a stand, turning many back to the Lord.

God is calling His people today to stand firm, to hold on, and to intercede on behalf of others, for these characteristics reveal the Spirit of Christ in His people.

Do you desire this change in your life, today?

Heavenly Father,

We thank You for revealing the truth of the future in the history of the past. We thank You for granting warnings and admonishes of pitfalls on the way to Your eternal city, and we praise You for the work You will complete in man, to make him more precious than gold.

We confess our need of Your robe of righteousness, which You have promised to those who follow You and of the cleansing that accompanies it.

We also pray for such an outpouring of the Spirit of Christ in our lives, that self will be forgotten and only Christ exalted!

Thank You again for hearing us and for the changes You are making in our lives. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen.

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* "The Man in the Matatu", Saustin Mfune, *African Adventure Stories 2*, Stanborough Press Limited, 2001, in co-operation with Eastern African Publishing Association, Harare Zimbabwe.

** "Kiss the Ring" Bradley Booth, *Fire on the Mountain*, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2012. You may order a copy at adventistbookcenter.com