

## The Seal of God

### Preparing for the judgment

I'd like to begin our time together this morning by reading one of the most sobering portions of Scripture you'll ever read; it's found in **Ezekiel chapter 9**.

And while you're finding your place there, let me give you a little background about Ezekiel. Ezekiel was a priest during the time when some of the Jews were carried off to Babylon; and while Ezekiel was there, he was called by God to be a prophet, and to warn His people of coming judgment, and that those left in Jerusalem were about to be destroyed because of their idolatry and rebellion against God's commandments.

Actually, I believe God allowed some of the Jews to be carried off to Babylon in order to save them from the apostate church back in Jerusalem, and Ezekiel was one of them. You know, sometimes it's better to be removed from God's professed people in order to be spared from the prevailing iniquity and its consequences. Elijah is a good example of this when God sent him to the widow of Zarephath. She wasn't an Israelite, but when there was no safety for Elijah among his own people, he found an asylum in the home of one that the church leaders back home considered a heathen. But in reality, she was more godly than the leaders of God's professed people, and as we put on our spiritual eye glasses this morning, I think we can see a parallel here of what's happening today, but I'll let you think about that for awhile.

These Bible stories we read about, are much more than historical facts; they're spiritual lessons and warnings of coming judgment that's to come upon modern Israel because of the same disregard of God's explicit instructions.

In other words, history is being repeated today! And when I say modern Israel, I'm not talking about the literal Israel of today, but spiritual Israel, or the Church. **Galatians 3:29** says, if we belong to Christ, then we are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise of eternal life through faith in Jesus.

And so, as we read, let's keep in mind that there's valuable instruction here about the coming judgment of God's professed people today, and how they will be destroyed unless they're found with God's mark.

**Ezekiel 9:1-6** [READ] **PRAY**

1 He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man [with] his destroying weapon in his hand.

2 And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them [was] clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar.

3 And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which [had] the writer's inkhorn by his side;

4 And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

5 And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity:

6 Slay utterly old [and] young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom [is] the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which [were] before the house.

Friends, Jesus is about to leave the mercy seat of the heavenly sanctuary to put on garments of vengeance and pour out His wrath in judgments upon those who have turned their backs on the truths that He has been pleased to give them. And because of God's longsuffering, and the fact that He's not willing that any should perish, people think that His promised judgments will never come.

**Ecclesiastes 8:11** says, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

Instead of being softened by the patience and longsuffering that the Lord in mercy has exercised toward them, those who don't fear God and love the truth are only strengthened in their evil course. But know this, there are limits even to the forbearance of God, and there are many today that are exceeding these boundaries. That's why we see so much crime and immorality and plain craziness in the world today.

Unbeknown to most people, human probation is closing for individuals and even entire nations, and soon it will become apparent that God will no longer be trifled with, and this is nothing new: notice what it says in **Genesis 15:16** [READ].

But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites [is] not yet full.

It was obvious to just about everyone that the Amorite nation was idolatrous and corrupt, but it had not yet filled up the cup of its iniquity, and so God would not give the command for it to be destroyed. Because of the compassion of God, He was willing to bear with their iniquity until the fourth generation; that's a long time! But after four more generations, if no change was seen for the better, then God's judgments were to fall upon them; which they finally did.

We learn from this that God keeps an accurate account with all nations and with all individuals. As long as His mercy continues to be freely offered with calls to repentance, the account remains open; but when things reach a certain point that God has fixed, mercy ceases and His wrath begins. When God determines it's time, the account is closed. Divine patience ends, and there's no more pleading of mercy in behalf of sinners; and believe me, you don't want to be found without the garment of Christ's righteousness when your probationary time closes.

Ezekiel was given the privilege of looking down through the ages to the time in which we live. Yes, he saw prophecy fulfilled regarding his own nation, but really, he spoke more about our day than he did his own, and this is true with all of the Old Testament prophets. Remember what Paul said in **1 Corinthians 10:11**, "All these things happened unto them (during OT times) for examples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

The nations of today have received mercies from God that are almost unheard of in past generations, especially here in America, but because God's wrath against evil has not yet been poured out; because the sun still comes up every morning; and because we have material blessings, it seems to have only emboldened people to continue, and even increase in their rebellion against God. But while all this is going on, and while people are all caught up with the cares of this life, and satisfying the lusts of the flesh, nations all around the world are fast closing up their account with God.

But here's the point I want to make; the thing that's really so serious is the fact that those who have been privileged to have the truth for this time have themselves become contaminated and overcome by the very sins they should

be warning the world about! How deluded is that?

The crisis that Ezekiel saw in vision is fast approaching today! The time for God's visitation is about to come. And although slow to punish, nevertheless He will. And so, what should we be doing during this time of the prevailing disregard of God's law? Well, I'll tell you what we should not be doing. If we're walking in the light and see the signs of approaching danger; we shouldn't just sit quietly by, unconcerned and indifferent, comforting ourselves with the belief that God will shelter us in the day when His wrath will be poured out in the seven last plagues.

What we should do is realize it's our duty to give the trumpet a certain sound so people will be aroused and awakened out of their Laodicean slumber, and we need to be praying that the Holy Spirit will open blind eyes. **James 5:16** says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." In other words, God will be able to do for us that which He cannot do if we will but fervently pray.

We need to understand that it's not by human might or power that God's work is accomplished, but by His Spirit! The word "fervent" means "to be hot." Are you a hot Christian? or are you cold; or worse yet, lukewarm? If we pray the way God wants us to pray, He will see to it that great things happen, and it will be to His honor and glory. Even though the world is becoming alarmingly and progressively wicked, the leavening process of a holy life has not entirely lost its power.

Even though people today aren't nearly as interested in discovering the truth as they were a hundred and fifty years ago, there are still a few jewels out there, and we need to be abiding in Christ when we come in contact with them so we can say just what they need to hear. And there are still those within Adventism that would be receptive, but they may need a stronger message, a message like Ezekiel had to bear in order to shake them up and make them think.

Notice what it says in **Testimonies Volume 5, page 209**, "At the time when the danger and depression of the church are greatest, [wouldn't that be about now?], the little company who are standing in the light will be sighing and crying for the abominations that are done in the land. But more especially will their prayers arise in behalf of the church because its members are doing after the manner of the world."

Didn't we read something about "sighing and crying" just a moment ago in **Ezekiel 9:4**? We see here that the parallel is drawn between ancient and modern Israel, or God's professed seventh-day Sabbath keeping church anciently, and God's professed seventh-day Sabbath keeping church today. It's hard to understand why the majority can't see this, but they can't, or won't; because very clearly here, it's the little company who are standing in the light. If this is true, and I believe it is, then that means the majority are standing where? In the darkness! And who's in charge of the darkness? I think you know the answer to that.

In **Romans 12:19**, God says, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." You see, when the Lord comes forth as an avenger, He will also come as a protector of the "little company" who have preserved the faith in its purity and kept themselves unspotted from the world. This is the time when "God will come to avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them", as it says in **Luke 18:7**. It seems to us sometimes like God will never come to vindicate His downtrodden law and those that have faithfully kept it and warned the world of coming judgment, but He will. It may seem like it's taking forever, but He will come, and that speedily, we're told.

In **Ezekiel 9:4** the command is given, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof."

These sighing, crying ones are those who are holding forth the words of life and magnifying the law of God to the people; and as a result, a few that have been guilty of breaking God's commandments will repent and humble their hearts before Him and come out from the majority that are walking in darkness to join the "little company." Unfortunately, and here's the sad truth, the "little company" will always be a little company compared to those that choose to walk in darkness, because those walking in darkness think they're fine. The majority will continue the forms of religion, just like Israel of old, but the glory of the Lord has departed from the professed church today just as it did from ancient Israel. And just as the Jewish church didn't know they were walking in darkness, so the modern church does not know.

During the time when God's wrath goes forth in judgments, the "little company" will be set apart from the rest of the world because their souls are vexed, or pained, because of the wickedness going on.

Let's turn to **2 Peter 2:8** for a minute, because we need to have the same attitude today as Abraham's nephew Lot had as he had to deal with the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. [READ].

(For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed [his] righteous soul from day to day with [their] unlawful deeds;)

I think this is a good test for us today: do we have the kind of heart that is hurt; is our soul tortured, or pained by the evil things we see and hear going on around us as we go into town, or deal with people in the work place, or listen to the wicked conversation of the average person on the street? Or does it not affect us at all. Are we indifferent to the wickedness we see and hear and just pass it off by pulling our ecclesiastical robes of self-righteousness around us, like the Pharisees of old, and thank God that we are not like them? Have we become desensitized to sin because we have to witness it everywhere we go? I think we need to examine ourselves to see if we are a part of the "little company", or whether we're among the majority that are walking in darkness.

And then there are many today who try to pretend that evil doesn't even exist and excuse the immorality we see all around us, but friends, those who have a zeal for God's honor and a love for souls will not hold their peace because they're afraid of the political correctness police. Like Lot, their righteous souls will be vexed day by day with the unholy deeds and conversation of the wicked.

Even though we may be powerless to stop the rushing torrent of evil, it should still fill us with grief and alarm as we witness what's going on today. Doesn't it at least cause you some anxiety to see the truth degraded by the world, and even despised in the very homes of those who should know the truth for this time?

For me it's such a helpless feeling when you try to reach out to your own loved ones for Christ, but they just don't want to hear it, or they think you're being too critical if you say anything at all about the apostasy in the church.

Friends, let me just tell it like it is; if we are not grieved over our own spiritual backsliding, or mourn over the sins of others, we will be left without the seal of God. I don't know how to say it any other way, and I hope I have your attention, because the men with the slaughtering weapons in their hands are about to go through the city, or the church, and smite; and their eye will not spare, or have pity: they will slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women; and the only way we're going to escape the slaughter is to have God's

mark upon us, and Ezekiel says they're going to begin with the "ancient men", or leaders of the "house"; and if you read **Ezekiel 8** there's no doubt he's taking about the "house as the temple, or the church, and the ancient men as the religious leaders.

In other words, the ministers; those to whom God has given great light and who are supposed to be standing as guardians of the spiritual interests of the people have betrayed their trust. **Isaiah 56:10-12** refers to them, in the context of professed Sabbath keepers, as dumb dogs that will not bark. Watchdogs that lie down and fall asleep and allow the enemy to come in and ravage the flock. Shepherds that have no understanding because they're filled with wine, or the false doctrines of Babylon.

It was professed Sabbath keeping ministers 2000 years ago, and it's professed Sabbath keeping ministers today that Isaiah refers to; and Ezekiel says, "Men, maidens, and little children" all perish together. What a shame, because it doesn't have to end this way. And yet, God says it will, and the Scriptures can't be broken.

You know how **Jeremiah 17:9** says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it"? Well, the hearts of ministers are no different than the rest of us. They will just as quickly sacrifice principle when left to themselves as anyone. In fact, who more than the minister does Satan want to gain to his side than those who are looked up to as worthy, and righteous, and holding sacred office?

Just as ministers who were under the direction of the devil during Christ's day were ring-leaders in apostasy, so it is today! The priests of the sanctuary didn't know they were being controlled by Satan, and their modern-day counterparts don't know it either, but that's what prophecy declares.

God doesn't want to withdraw His presence from those who have been blessed with great light, and who have felt the power of God's word in ministering to others, but when they step off the straight and narrow path and lead others into error, they are going to suffer the consequences for their unfaithfulness; how can it be any other way? **1 Peter 3:12** says, "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

Is it evil to teach a gospel that leaves people saved in their sins? Is it evil to

teach people to honor the papacy by going to church on Sunday, and thereby break the fourth commandment? Is it evil to say one thing and do another in secret? I would submit to you that these things are indeed evil, and even more evil than committing the obvious sins like stealing, killing, and lying; because they're more deceptive.

Again I ask, is it evil to pretend to believe one thing while secretly doing another? And would it be really really evil for ministers to do this since their church members trust them to tell them the truth?

When we go to **Ezekiel 8**, we find that this is exactly what was going on. We find that God was showing Ezekiel what the professed Sabbath keeping religious leaders were doing secretly. These apostate leaders were upholding the God who created the seventh-day Sabbath to their congregation, while at the same time they were worshiping the sun god of the heathen. You do understand that the origin of Sunday worship comes from the worship of the mythical Sun god, don't you? That's why it's called SUN-DAY! This is the day the papacy is responsible for changing in order to convert the heathen to their form of Christianity.

You'll have to read **Ezekiel 8** on your own when you get the time because we don't have the time to do it today, but I would like to read **verses 15 & 16** because there's a shocking truth here that you need to know about [READ].

15 Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen [this], O son of man? turn thee yet again, [and] thou shalt see greater abominations than these.

16 And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, [were] about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.

I'd like to read you a direct quote from a man by the name of B.E. Jacobs, who was Administrative Assistant to the President of the General Conference, November 1, 1990.

"Here at the General Conference, the highest decision-making committee, of course, is the General Conference Committee. There is a committee that we term 'General Conference Officers' which is made up of about twenty-five or twenty-six individuals—president, secretaries, and treasurers, with a few other invited individuals. This committee is a screening committee that determines the



items that need to go to the General Conference Committee."

Now let me give you a little bit of church history. From 1903-1959 it was the "Executive Committee" that had "about 25" individuals, but when it became necessary to enlarge the Executive Committee to about 400, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church formed another Committee called the "General Conference Committee", keeping it limited to "about 25" individuals.

Now, since this "General Conference Officers Committee" controls the "**items**" which come before the General Conference Committee, they are in fact the real power behind the Conference Committee, and ultimately of the SDA church as a whole. And how many members make up this Officers Committee? "About twenty-five or twenty-six individuals." This is the exact same language of **Ezekiel 8:16**. Coincidence? I'll let you be the judge. All I know is, the Spirit of Prophecy uses the language of **Ezekiel 8 and 9** and applies it to the worldly loving Seventh-Day Adventist Church. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church that is up to its eyeballs in the ecumenical movement, it has been for many years, and this I believe is the vehicle the devil will use to trick Seventh-day Adventist into giving up the true Sabbath for Sunday, the counterfeit day of worship; the "mark of the beast." Sound farfetched? Let me read you a short statement from **RH, March 18, 1884 par. 7:**

"The Lord has a controversy with **his professed people** in these last days. In this controversy (with his professed people) men in responsible positions will take a course directly opposite to that pursued by Nehemiah. They will not only ignore and despise the Sabbath themselves, but they will try to keep it from others by burying it beneath the rubbish of custom and tradition. In churches and in large gatherings in the open air, **ministers** (of God's professed people) will urge upon the people the necessity of keeping the first day of the week."

According to Ezekiel, the seal of God will be placed upon the foreheads of those only who sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land, and the Spirit of Prophecy brings it into the context of the church. And those who link up in sympathy with the world when they should be as watchmen on the walls of Zion are going to be destroyed along with the rest of the workers of iniquity, and it's going to start with the ministers.

Notice what it says in **Testimonies for the Church, Volume 3, page 267:** "Mark this point with care: Those who receive the pure mark of truth, wrought in them by the power of the Holy Ghost, represented by a mark by the man in linen, are those 'that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the church.'"

Now let me take just a minute to explain something to you. When Ezekiel uses the words "sigh and cry", he doesn't mean to sigh in disgust or exasperation and to shed literal tears, although some of us have done just that; he means to

mourn, or grieve, or be in agony over the sins of others, especially the sins of the church, because they're going to end up being lost if they don't change their ways. And rather than shedding tears, we need to "cry aloud and spare not" in an attempt to wake people up to their grave danger.

Let me read further from **3T 267**, "Who are standing in the counsel of God at this time? Is it those who virtually excuse wrongs among the professed people of God, and murmur in their hearts, if not openly, against those who would reprove sin? Is it those who take their stand against them, and sympathize with those who commit wrong? No, indeed! These, unless they repent, and leave the work of Satan in oppressing those who have the burden of the work, and holding up the hands of sinners in Zion, will never receive the mark of God's sealing approval."

We need to understand that our own course of action will determine whether we'll receive the seal of God or be cut down by the destroying weapons. As we see all the disasters that have taken place lately, we should know by this that a few drops of God's wrath have already fallen upon the earth; but when the seven last plagues are poured out unmixed with mercy, then it will be forever too late to repent and find shelter, because by then no atoning blood will be available to wash away the stains of sin.

Turn in your Bibles with me to **Daniel 12:1** [READ].

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation [even] to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

When these things happen, human probation will have already closed. The events in the last few verses of **Daniel 11** will have been fulfilled. The deliverance of God's people happens at the second coming of Christ, and by then it's too late for sins to be cleansed from the heavenly sanctuary where Jesus ministers in our behalf. The words in **Revelation 22:11** have already been pronounced. Read it when you get the time.

When this time of trouble comes, every case is decided. The seal of God is upon His people, and the little company; this small remnant, as it says in **Revelation 12:17**, unable to defend themselves in the deadly conflict with the powers of darkness that are marshaled by the dragon host, make God their defense. The death decree has been passed by the highest earthly authority, that they shall worship the beast and receive his mark under pain of persecution and finally death. And my prayer is that God will help His people be overcomers now! Because nothing can then be done by the time all these things come to pass.

Look it, friends; courage, fortitude, faith, and implicit trust in God's power to

save doesn't come in just a few minutes, or when you're in the midst of a crisis, these things are acquired by the experience of years. Even now we're in the process of sealing our destiny by the choices we make, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we must learn to firmly resist temptation or be conquered, because if we die before victory comes, it will be at an eternal loss.

There are many, even among those who teach, and have taught the truth to others, who will not receive the seal of God in their foreheads. Sad but true. Not even all those who profess to keep the Sabbath will be sealed. Why? Because they had the truth, they knew God's will, they understood every point of Bible doctrine, they were familiar with the prophecies, but here's the problem; they didn't carry it out in their lives. They were hypocrites! They were good actors, like those 25 men who worshiped in secret, but they couldn't fool the One who reads the heart.

And do you know why this is so serious, especially when it comes to placing explicit confidence in a minister? It's because, if the minister fails to reach the true standard of righteousness, they will cause others to be content with their own low position and character defects. But here's something we all need to know; Jesus is the only true pattern. No matter how godly you think your minister is, it is not safe for you to use him as your standard. If religious leaders refuse to be taught as a humble little child, and by faith work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, they will go into darkness and satanic delusions and lead others down the same path. Turn with me to **Matthew 18:2-4** [READ].

2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Many of us are like the Laodiceans who were satisfied with their own attainments; feeling "rich and increased with goods" and know not that we are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

If we could just have our eyes anointed with the Holy Spirit, then we would be able to see our character defects and make a course correction, but in order to receive the anointing, we must obey what we already know! Does that make sense? **Acts 5:32** says God gives the Holy Spirit to those that obey Him. And so, don't think you'll be given the heavenly eye salve that will help you see your true spiritual condition unless you do what you already know God wants you to do.

In this life we will have to meet trials head on and make sacrifices that cost us something, but the reward for doing so will be well worth the price, because it

will bring the peace of Christ into your life. Remember when Jesus said to His disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

This kind of peace only comes through obedience and self-denial, and self-denial involves suffering, but what kind of suffering? We're not talking about physical suffering here, although there might be some of that before the great controversy is over; it's a different kind of suffering.

Turn with me to **Hebrews 2:18** and we'll see what kind of suffering Jesus went through His whole life, and what we must go through if we would be ready to meet Him in peace when He comes [READ].

For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

You see, the suffering of Christ was not on the cross alone; He suffered His whole life "being tempted." What does that mean? When we say no to temptation, it causes our sinful nature to suffer. Why? Because our fallen nature is not satisfied until it's gratified; and even then it's never fully satisfied because it will tempt you to indulge over and over again; that's its nature! Jesus never gratified His fallen human nature by yielding to temptation, and that's what qualifies Him to be our Saviour. He always did what His divine nature dictated, and we must learn to do the same.

When we accept Christ into our life, we partake of His divine nature: you can read that in **2 Peter 1:4**. So, once we do that, then we have a choice; we can either submit to the divine nature or to the fallen nature, because now we have both. That's where the human will is to be exercised. And when we choose to obey the dictates of the divine nature like Jesus always did, then notice what happens as we read **1 Peter 4:1** [READ].

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

Do you get it? If we are not causing our sinful nature to suffer, we are giving in to sin. Causing our fallen nature to suffer is the way our character is to be transformed into the image of Christ. And since our character is the only thing we're taking to heaven, we must submit to God instead of yielding to the flesh.

As long as we choose the easy path of self-indulgence, our faith will never become firm, and we will never know the peace that Jesus gives, or the joy that comes through a victorious Christian life, and thus we will not be able to stand for truth and righteousness in the days ahead.

**Ezekiel 14:20** says, though Noah, Job, and Daniel were in the land, they could save neither son nor daughter; all they could do is deliver their own soul by their own righteousness; or their own right doing. Again, this is where our choice to

follow the convictions of the divine nature comes in. **1 John 3:6, 7** says, "the one who abides in Christ doesn't sin." And "He that does righteousness is righteous, even as Christ is righteous." Not as if we can do righteousness on our own, or that we are just as righteous as Jesus is, but that when He lives within, He will live out His life within us. When the decision is made to do what the divine nature tells us to do, then the power to do it will be given.

And so, no one has to come to the conclusion that his case is hopeless, or that he can't live the life of a Christian, because ample provision has been made by the death of Christ for every single person that will take advantage of it, and the Bible says, "Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us." All we have to do is call upon Him in faith, and He has promised to hear and answer our prayers.

Just the other day Cindy and I were reading something in our morning devotions that I'd like to share with you; it's from **Signs of the Times, April 4, 1892**, "We are not to doubt His (God's) mercy, and say, 'I do not know whether I shall be saved or not.'"

Friend, God wants you to have the assurance this very moment that heaven is your home; you can be saved, and you will be if you will follow divine counsel; if you will follow the promptings of the divine nature. The only thing that's keeping you from accepting God's mercy is your own unbelief! Your own doubt! Your own refusal to accept what He offers!

Listen; Jesus died for you, and if He was willing to die for you, He's not going to remove the offer of the free gift of salvation unless you totally reject it, or if you dilly-dally to the point that your probation closes before you surrender all.

And so, **now** is the day of salvation! It's **now** that we must keep ourselves unspotted from the world. It's **now** that we must wash our robes of character and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. It's **now** that we must overcome our spiritual slothfulness. It's **now** that we must awake and make determined effort to develop a righteous character. In **Hebrews 4:7** it says, "Today if you will hear God's voice, harden not your heart."

No one knows better than I do that we are in a very trying position as we're waiting and watching for the Lord's appearing. The world is in terrible darkness today. Sin of almost every description is practiced openly, and without embarrassment. And besides the world being in terrible darkness, the teachings of Babylon have also made fearful inroads into the professed church, as we read earlier, and it's difficult to find others to worship with that aren't involved with error, or fanaticism, or extremes of every stripe, but these things should only cause us to cling more tightly to the mighty arm of the Lord. Jesus said, when we see these things happening all around us, we should, "Look up, and lift up our heads, for our redemption draweth nigh."

We need to be thinking about what we're doing in the great work of preparation?

If we're uniting with the world, we're going to receive the worldly mold and be prepared for the mark of the beast. But if we're distrustful of self, and are humbling ourselves before God and purifying our souls by obeying the truth, we are receiving the heavenly mold and preparing for the seal of God in our foreheads.

And friends, now is the time to prepare, because the seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of anyone who is involved in sin of any kind. All who receive the seal of God must be "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." In other words, we must choose to die to selfish desire, and while dead, allow Jesus to live out His life within us. That's the only way, and I hope you will take that way today.