

Chapter 16—The Close of Probation

No One Knows When Probation Will Close

God has not revealed to us the time when this message will close or when probation will have an end. Those things that are revealed we shall accept for ourselves and for our children, but let us not seek to know that which has been kept secret in the councils of the Almighty.... [LDE 227.1](#)

Letters have come to me asking me if I have any special light as to the time when probation will close, and I answer that I have only this message to bear, that it is now time to work while the day lasts, for the night cometh in which no man can work.—[Selected Messages 1:191 \(1894\)](#). [LDE 227.2](#)

Sunday-Law Enforcement Precedes the Close of Probation

The Lord has shown me clearly that the image of the beast will be formed before probation closes, for it is to be the great test [See the previous chapter, where the great test for the people of God is shown to be Sunday-law enforcement.] for the people of God, by which their eternal destiny will be decided.—[Selected Messages 2:81 \(1890\)](#). [LDE 227.3](#)

What is the “image to the beast”? and how is it to be formed? The image is made by the two-horned beast, and is an image *to* the beast. It is also called an image *of* the beast. [The two-horned beast of [Revelation 13:11-17](#) makes an image to the beast portrayed in [Revelation 13:1-10](#).] Then to learn what the image is like and how it is to be formed, we must study the characteristics of the beast itself—the papacy. [LDE 228.1](#)

When the early church became corrupted by departing from the simplicity of the gospel and accepting heathen rites and customs, she lost the Spirit and power of God; and in order to control the consciences of the people, she sought the support of the secular power. The result was the papacy, a church that controlled the power of the state, and employed it to further her own ends, especially for the punishment of “heresy.” In order for the United States to form an image of the beast, the religious power must so control the civil government that the authority of the state will also be employed by the church to accomplish her own ends.... [LDE 228.2](#)

The “image to the beast” represents that form of apostate Protestantism which will be developed when the Protestant churches shall seek the aid of the civil power for the enforcement of their dogmas.—[The Great Controversy, 443, 445 \(1911\)](#). [LDE 228.3](#)

Probation Closes When the Sealing Is Finished

Just before we entered it [the time of trouble], we all received the seal of the living God. Then I saw the four angels cease to hold the four winds. And I saw famine, pestilence and sword, nation rose against nation, and the whole world was in confusion.—[The S.D.A. Bible Commentary 7:968 \(1846\)](#). [LDE 228.4](#)

I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven. An angel with a writer's inkhorn by his side returned from the earth and reported to Jesus that his work was done, and the saints were numbered and sealed. Then I saw Jesus, who had been ministering before the ark containing the ten commandments, throw down the censer. He raised His hands, and with a loud voice said, “*It is done.*”—[Early Writings, 279 \(1858\)](#). [LDE 229.1](#)

Only a moment of time, as it were, yet remains. But while already nation is rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom, there is not now a general engagement. As yet the four winds are held until the servants of God shall be sealed in their foreheads. Then the powers of earth will marshal their forces for the last great battle.—[Testimonies for the Church 6:14 \(1900\)](#). LDE 229.2

An angel returning from the earth announces that his work is done; the final test has been brought upon the world, and all who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received “the seal of the living God.” Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts His hands, and with a loud voice says, “It is done.”—[The Great Controversy, 613 \(1911\)](#). LDE 229.3

Probation Will End Suddenly, Unexpectedly

When Jesus ceases to plead for man, the cases of all are forever decided.... Probation closes; Christ's intercessions cease in heaven. This time finally comes suddenly upon all, and those who have neglected to purify their souls by obeying the truth are found sleeping.—[Testimonies for the Church 2:191 \(1868\)](#). LDE 229.4

When probation ends, it will come suddenly, unexpectedly—at a time when we are least expecting it. But we can have a clean record in heaven today, and know that God accepts us.—[The S.D.A. Bible Commentary 7:989 \(1906\)](#). LDE 230.1

When the work of the investigative judgment closes, the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death. Probation is ended a short time before the appearing of the Lord in the clouds of heaven.... LDE 230.2

Before the Flood, after Noah entered the ark, God shut him in, and shut the ungodly out; but for seven days the people, knowing not that their doom was fixed, continued their careless, pleasure-loving life, and mocked the warnings of impending judgment. “So,” says the Saviour, “shall also the coming of the Son of man be” ([Matthew 24:39](#)). Silently, unnoticed as the midnight thief, will come the decisive hour which marks the fixing of every man's destiny, the final withdrawal of mercy's offer to guilty men.... LDE 230.3

While the man of business is absorbed in the pursuit of gain, while the pleasure lover is seeking indulgence, while the daughter of fashion is arranging her adornments—it may be in that hour the Judge of all the earth will pronounce the sentence: “Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting” ([Daniel 5:27](#)).—[The Great Controversy, 490, 491 \(1911\)](#). LDE 230.4

Human Activity After Probation's Close

The righteous and the wicked will still be living upon the earth in their mortal state—men will be planting and building, eating and drinking, all unconscious that the final, irrevocable decision has been pronounced in the sanctuary above.—[The Great Controversy, 491 \(1911\)](#). LDE 231.1

When the irrevocable decision of the sanctuary has been pronounced, and the destiny of the world has been forever fixed, the inhabitants of the earth will know it not. The forms of religion will be continued by a people from whom the Spirit of God has been finally withdrawn, and the Satanic zeal with which the prince of evil will inspire them for the

accomplishment of his malignant designs, will bear the semblance of zeal for God.—[The Great Controversy, 615 \(1911\)](#). LDE 231.2

The wheat and tares “grow together until the harvest.” In the discharge of life's duties the righteous will to the last be brought in contact with the ungodly. The children of light are scattered among the children of darkness, that the contrast may be seen by all.—[Testimonies for the Church 5:100 \(1882\)](#). LDE 231.3

Christ declared that when He comes some of His waiting people will be engaged in business transactions. Some will be sowing in the field, others reaping and gathering in the harvest, and others grinding at the mill.—[Manuscript 26, 1901](#). LDE 231.4

Unbelief and Forbidden Pleasures Continue

Skepticism and that which is called science has to a large degree undermined the faith of the Christian world in their Bibles. Error and fables are gladly accepted, that they may pursue the path of self-indulgence and not be alarmed, for they are striving not to retain God in their knowledge. They say, “Tomorrow will be as this day and much more abundant.” But in the midst of their unbelief and Godless pleasure the shout of the archangel and the trump of God is heard.... LDE 232.1

When everything in our world is busy activity, immersed in selfish ambition for gain, Jesus comes as a thief.—[Manuscript 15b, 1886](#). LDE 232.2

When the professed people of God are uniting with the world, living as they live, and joining with them in forbidden pleasure; when the luxury of the world becomes the luxury of the church; when the marriage bells are chiming, and all are looking forward to many years of worldly prosperity—then, suddenly as the lightning flashes from the heavens, will come the end of their bright visions and delusive hopes.—[The Great Controversy, 338, 339 \(1911\)](#). LDE 232.3

Men Will Be Wholly Engrossed in Business

When Lot warned the members of his family of the destruction of Sodom, they would not heed his words, but looked upon him as a fanatical enthusiast. The destruction that came found them unprepared. Thus it will be when Christ comes—farmers, merchants, lawyers, tradesmen, will be wholly engrossed in business, and upon them the day of the Lord will come as a snare.—[The Review and Herald, March 10, 1904](#). LDE 232.4

When ministers, farmers, merchants, lawyers, great men and professedly good men shall cry, “Peace and safety,” sudden destruction cometh. Luke reports the words of Christ, that the day of God comes as a snare—the figure of an animal prowling in the woods for prey, and lo, suddenly he is entrapped in the concealed snare of the fowler.—[Manuscript Releases 10:266 \(1876\)](#). LDE 233.1

When men are at ease, full of amusement, absorbed in buying and selling, then the thief approaches with stealthy tread. So it will be at the coming of the Son of man.—[Letter 21, 1897](#). LDE 233.2

Religious Leaders Will Be Full of Optimism

When the reasoning of philosophy has banished the fear of God's judgments, when religious teachers are pointing forward to long ages of peace and prosperity, and the world are absorbed in their rounds of business and pleasure, planting and building, feasting and merrymaking, rejecting God's warnings and mocking His messengers—then it is that sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape.—[Patriarchs and Prophets, 104 \(1890\)](#). LDE 233.3

Come when it may, the day of God will come unawares to the ungodly. When life is going on in its unvarying round; when men are absorbed in pleasure, in business, in traffic, in money-making; when religious leaders are magnifying the world's progress and enlightenment, and the people are lulled in a false security—then, as the midnight thief steals within the unguarded dwelling, so shall sudden destruction come upon the careless and ungodly, “and they shall not escape.”—[The Great Controversy, 38 \(1911\)](#). LDE 233.4

Satan Infers That Probation Has Closed

In the time of trouble Satan stirs up the wicked, and they encircle the people of God to destroy them. But he does not know that “pardon” has been written opposite their names in the books of heaven.—[The Review and Herald, November 19, 1908](#). LDE 234.1

As Satan influenced Esau to march against Jacob, so he will stir up the wicked to destroy God's people in the time of trouble.... He sees that holy angels are guarding them, and he infers that their sins have been pardoned, but he does not know that their cases have been decided in the sanctuary above.—[The Great Controversy, 618 \(1911\)](#). LDE 234.2

A Famine for the Word

Those who do not now appreciate, study, and dearly prize the Word of God spoken by His servants will have cause to mourn bitterly hereafter. I saw that the Lord in judgment will at the close of time walk through the earth; the fearful plagues will begin to fall. Then those who have despised God's Word, those who have lightly esteemed it, shall “wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord and shall not find it” ([Amos 8:12](#)). A famine is in the land for hearing the Word.—[Manuscript 1, 1857](#). LDE 234.3

No More Prayers for the Wicked

The ministers of God will have done their last work, offered their last prayers, shed their last bitter tear for a rebellious church and an ungodly people. Their last solemn warning has been given. Oh, then how quickly would houses and lands, dollars that have been miserly hoarded and cherished and tightly grasped, be given for some consolation by those who have professed the truth and have not lived it out, for the way of salvation to be explained, or to hear a hopeful word or a prayer or an exhortation from their ministers. But no, they must hunger and thirst on in vain; their thirst will never be quenched, no consolation can they get. Their cases are decided and eternally fixed. It is a fearful, awful time.—[Manuscript 1, 1857](#). LDE 235.1

In the time when God's judgments are falling without mercy, oh, how enviable to the wicked will be the position of those who abide “in the secret place of the Most High”—the pavilion in which the Lord hides all who have loved Him and have obeyed His commandments! The lot of the righteous is indeed an enviable one at such a time to those

who are suffering because of their sins. But the door of mercy is closed to the wicked. No more prayers are offered in their behalf after probation ends.—[The S.D.A. Bible Commentary 3:1150 \(1901\)](#). LDE 235.2

Transfer of Character Not Possible

The Lord is coming in power and great glory. It will then be His work to make a complete separation between the righteous and the wicked. But the oil cannot then be transferred to the vessels of those who have it not. Then shall be fulfilled the words of Christ, “Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.” The righteous and the wicked are to be associated together in the work of life. But the Lord reads the character. He discerns who are obedient children, who respect and love His commandments.—[Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 234 \(1895\)](#). LDE 236.1

It is a solemn thing to die, but a far more solemn thing to live. Every thought and word and deed of our lives will meet us again. What we make of ourselves in probationary time, that we must remain to all eternity. Death brings dissolution to the body, but makes no change in the character. The coming of Christ does not change our characters; it only fixes them forever beyond all change.—[Testimonies for the Church 5:466 \(1885\)](#). LDE 236.2

Another Probation Would Not Convince the Wicked

We are to make the best of our present opportunities. There will be no other probation given to us in which to prepare for heaven. This is our only and last opportunity to form characters which will fit us for the future home which the Lord has prepared for all who are obedient to His commandments.—[Letter 20, 1899](#). LDE 236.3

There will be no probation after the coming of the Lord. Those who say that there will be are deceived and misled. Before Christ comes just such a state of things will exist as existed before the Flood. And after the Saviour appears in the clouds of heaven no one will be given another chance to gain salvation. All will have made their decisions.—[Letter 45, 1891](#). LDE 237.1

All will be tested and tried according to the light they have had. Those who turn from the truth to fables can look for no second probation. There will be no temporal millennium. If, after the Holy Spirit has brought conviction to their hearts, they resist the truth and use their influence to block the way so that others will not receive it, they will never be convinced. They did not seek for transformation of character in the probation given them, and Christ will not give them opportunity to pass over the ground again. The decision is a final one.—[Letter 25, 1900](#). LDE 237.2