

A Time of Reckoning

MEMORY VERSE: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6, first part).

“In every age, transgression of God’s law has been followed by the same result.”—Prophets and Kings, p. 297.

Suggested Reading: Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, pp. 604–609. (At the bottom of this page)

1. A HOST OF PERVERSIONS

Sun, Jan 4

a. While God has long had a message of mercy, what else did He bid Hosea to declare—to be applied more than once in human history? Hosea 4:1.

Hosea 4:1

Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

“When the people of Israel, in their worship of Baal and Ashtoreth, paid supreme homage to the forces of nature, they severed their connection with all that is uplifting and ennobling, and fell an easy prey to temptation.”—Prophets and Kings, p. 281.

“The noon of the papacy was the midnight of the world.”—J. A. Wylie, The History of Protestantism, b. 1, ch. 4. The Holy Scriptures were almost unknown, not only to the people, but to the priests. Like the Pharisees of old, the papal leaders hated the light which would reveal their sins. God’s law, the standard of righteousness, having been removed, they exercised power without limit, and practiced vice without restraint. Fraud, avarice, and profligacy prevailed. Men shrank from no crime by which they could gain wealth or position. The palaces of

popes and prelates were scenes of the vilest debauchery. Some of the reigning pontiffs were guilty of crimes so revolting that secular rulers endeavored to depose these dignitaries of the church as monsters too vile to be tolerated. For centuries Europe had made no progress in learning, arts, or civilization. A moral and intellectual paralysis had fallen upon Christendom.

“The condition of the world under the Romish power presented a fearful and striking fulfillment of the words of the prophet Hosea [Hosea 4:6, 1, 2 quoted]. Such were the results of banishing the word of God.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 60.

2. LIKE THE DAYS OF NOAH

Mon, Jan 5

a. How did the alarming message of Hosea mention specific sins God hates—and how does this echo down to our day? Hosea 4:2; Luke 17:26, 27.

Hosea 4:2

By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

Luke 17:26, 27

And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. 27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

“The iniquity in Israel during the last half century before the Assyrian captivity was like that of the days of Noah, and of every other age when men have rejected God and have given themselves wholly to evil-doing. The exaltation of nature above the God of nature, the worship of the creature instead of the Creator, has always resulted in the grossest of evils. . . . With the defenses of the soul broken down, the misguided worshipers had no barrier against sin and yielded themselves to the evil passions of the human heart.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 281, 282.

“Very plainly Christ saw what the condition of society would be in the future. He saw that self-indulgence would control men and women. What of the marriage relation today? Is it not perverted and defiled, made even as it was in Noah’s day? Divorce after divorce is recorded in the daily papers. This is the marriage of which Christ speaks when He says that before the flood they were ‘marrying and giving in marriage.’”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 7, p. 56.

“This very sin, fornication, prevailed among ancient Israel, which brought the signal manifestation of God’s displeasure. The judgments of God followed close upon their heinous sin. Thousands of them fell, and their polluted bodies were left in the wilderness.”—*A Solemn Appeal*, p. 142.

b. Name some bitter consequences that result from rebellion—and the vast blessings to be reaped by submission to God’s will. Hosea 4:3-5; John 17:3.

Hosea 4:3-5

Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away. 4 Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people are as they that strive with the priest. 5 Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.

John 17:3

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

“The Lord gave His people commandments, in order that by obeying them they might preserve their physical, mental, and moral health. They were to live by obedience; but death is the sure result of the disobedience of the law of God.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 413.

“He who chooses a course of disobedience to God’s law is deciding his future destiny; he is sowing to the flesh, earning the wages of sin, even eternal destruction, the opposite of life eternal. Submission to God and obedience to His holy law bring the sure result. ‘This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.’ ”—*Ibid.*, p. 376.

3. CHERISHING GOD’S SPIRIT

Tue, Jan 6

a. Why is it so important for each of us to take earnest heed to every ray of light graciously provided to us? Hosea 4:6.

Hosea 4:6

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

“The words of God to ancient Israel have a solemn warning to the church and its leaders today. Of Israel the Lord said, ‘I have written to him the great things of My law; but they were counted as a strange thing.’ Hosea 8:12. And to the priests and teachers He declared, ‘My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee; . . . seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.’ Hosea 4:6.

“Shall the warnings from God be passed by unheeded? Shall the opportunities for service be unimproved? Shall the world’s scorn, the pride of reason, conformity to human customs and traditions, hold the professed followers of Christ from service to Him? Will they reject God’s word as the Jewish leaders rejected Christ? The result of Israel’s sin is before us. Will the church of today take warning?”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 306.

b. Explain the danger of rejecting the Holy Spirit. Matthew 12:31, 32.

Matthew 12:31, 32

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. **32** And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

“It is dangerous to utter a word of doubt, dangerous to question and criticize divine light. The habit of careless and irreverent criticism reacts upon the character, in fostering irreverence and unbelief. Many a man indulging this habit has gone on unconscious of danger, until he was ready to criticize and reject the work of the Holy Spirit.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 323.

“It is through the medium of His Spirit that God works upon the human heart; and when men willfully reject the Spirit and declare it to be from Satan, they cut off the channel by which God can communicate with them. By denying the evidence which God has been pleased to give them, they shut out the light which had been shining in their hearts, and as the result they are left in darkness. . . . For a time, persons who have committed this sin may appear to be children of God; but when circumstances arise to develop character and show what manner of spirit they are of, it will be found that they are on the enemy’s ground, standing under his black banner.

“My brother, the Spirit invites you today. Come with your whole heart to Jesus. Repent of your sins, make confession to God, forsake all iniquity, and you

may appropriate to yourself all His promises. ‘Look unto Me, and be ye saved,’ is His gracious invitation.”—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 634.

4. A CALL TO BACKSLIDERS

Wed, Jan 7

a. How has God often described the condition of many who profess to be His followers—including today? Hosea 4:7-11, 16.

Hosea 4:7-11

As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame. **8** They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity. **9** And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings. **10** For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the LORD. **11** Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.

Hosea 4:16

For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place.

“The people of God are unready for the fearful, trying scenes before us, unready to stand pure from evil and lust amid the perils and corruptions of this degenerate age. They have not on the armor of righteousness, and are unprepared to war against the prevailing iniquity. Many are not obeying the commandments of God, yet they profess so to do. If they would be faithful to obey all the statutes of God they would have a power which would carry conviction to the hearts of the unbelieving.”—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, pp. 446, 447.

“Those who profess godliness, yet are not sanctified by the truth which they profess, will not change materially their course of action, which they know is hateful before God, because they are not subjected to the trial of being reproved individually for their sins. They see, by the testimonies of others, their own case faithfully pointed out before them. They are cherishing the same evil. By continuing their course of sin, they are violating their consciences, hardening their hearts, and stiffening their necks, just the same as though the testimony had been borne directly to them. In passing on and refusing to put away their sins and correct their wrongs by humble confession, repentance, and humiliation, they choose their own way, and are given up to the same, and are finally led captive by Satan at his will. They may become quite bold because they are able to conceal

their sins from others and because the judgments of God do not come in a visible manner upon them. They may be apparently prosperous in this world. They may deceive poor, shortsighted mortals and be regarded as patterns of piety while in their sins. But God cannot be deceived.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 447, 448.

b. Describe the longing of God’s heart over this situation. Jeremiah 3:14, 15.

Jeremiah 3:14, 15

Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: **15** And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

“Unbelief in the testimonies has been steadily increasing as the people backslide from God. It is all through our ranks, all over the field. But few know what our churches are to experience. I saw that at present we are under divine forbearance, but no one can say how long this will continue. No one knows how great the mercy that has been exercised toward us. But few are heartily devoted to God. There are only a few who, like the stars in a tempestuous night, shine here and there among the clouds.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 76.

5. THE MOST URGENT PRIORITY

Thu, Jan 8

a. How can one avoid the worst verdict to come to a backslider? Hosea 4:17.

Hosea 4:17

Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.

“Even one wrong trait of character, one sinful desire cherished, will eventually neutralize all the power of the gospel. The prevalence of a sinful desire shows the delusion of the soul. Every indulgence of that desire strengthens the soul’s aversion to God. The pains of duty and the pleasures of sin are the cords with which Satan binds men in his snares. Those who would rather die than perform a wrong act are the only ones who will be found faithful.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 53.

“God leads His people on, step by step. He brings them up to different points calculated to manifest what is in the heart. Some endure at one point, but fall off at the next. At every advanced point the heart is tested and tried a little closer. If the professed people of God find their hearts opposed to this straight work, it should

convince them that they have a work to do to overcome, if they would not be spewed out of the mouth of the Lord. Said the angel: ‘God will bring His work closer and closer to test and prove every one of His people.’ Some are willing to receive one point; but when God brings them to another testing point, they shrink from it and stand back, because they find that it strikes directly at some cherished idol. Here they have opportunity to see what is in their hearts that shuts out Jesus. They prize something higher than the truth, and their hearts are not prepared to receive Jesus. Individuals are tested and proved a length of time to see if they will sacrifice their idols and heed the counsel of the True Witness. If any will not be purified through obeying the truth, and overcome their selfishness, their pride, and evil passions, the angels of God have the charge: ‘They are joined to their idols, let them alone,’ and they pass on to their work, leaving these with their sinful traits unsubdued, to the control of evil angels. Those who come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and they will receive the latter rain, and thus be fitted for translation.”—*Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 187.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

Fri, Jan 9

1. When God’s Word is banished, denounced, or diluted, what happens?
2. How serious is the marriage commitment exactly as taught in Scripture?
3. What happens when we fail to appreciate messages of present truth?
4. Why should I study **Testimonies for the Church** written to someone else?
5. Why is it dangerous to hold onto even one known sin?

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 604-609.

On the night of April 30, 1871, I retired to rest much depressed in spirits. For three months I had been in a state of great discouragement. I had frequently prayed in anguish of spirit for relief. I had implored help and strength from God, that I might rise above the heavy discouragements that were paralyzing my faith and hope, and unfitting me for usefulness. That night I had a dream which made a very happy impression upon my mind. I dreamed that I was attending an important meeting at which a large company were assembled. Many were bowed before God in earnest prayer, and they seemed to be burdened. They were importuning the Lord for special light. A few seemed to be in agony of spirit; their feelings were intense; with tears they were crying aloud for help and light. Our most prominent brethren were engaged in this most impressive scene. Brother A was prostrated upon the

floor, apparently in deep distress. His wife was sitting among a company of indifferent scorers. She looked as though she desired all to understand that she scorned those who were thus humiliating themselves. (2T 604.1)

I dreamed that the Spirit of the Lord came upon me, and I arose amid cries and prayers, and said: The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me. I feel urged to say to you that you must commence to work individually for yourselves. You are looking to God and desiring Him to do the work for you which He has left for you to do. If you will do the work for yourselves which you know that you ought to do, then God will help you when you need help. You have left undone the very things which God has left for you to do. You have been calling upon God to do your work. Had you followed the light which He has given you, then He would cause more light to shine upon you; but while you neglect the counsels, warnings, and reproofs that have been given, how can you expect God to give you more light and blessings to neglect and despise? God is not as man; He will not be trifled with. (2T 604.2)

I took the precious Bible and surrounded it with the several Testimonies for the Church, given for the people of God. Here, said I, the cases of nearly all are met. The sins they are to shun are pointed out. The counsel that they desire can be found here, given for other cases situated similarly to themselves. God has been pleased to give you line upon line and precept upon precept. But there are not many of you that really know what is contained in the Testimonies. You are not familiar with the Scriptures. If you had made God's word your study, with a desire to reach the Bible standard and attain to Christian perfection, you would not have needed the Testimonies. It is because you have neglected to acquaint yourselves with God's inspired Book that He has sought to reach you by simple, direct testimonies, calling your attention to the words of inspiration which you had neglected to obey, and urging you to fashion your lives in accordance with its pure and elevated teachings. (2T 605.1)

The Lord designs to warn you, to reprove, to counsel, through the testimonies given, and to impress your minds with the importance of the truth of His word. The written testimonies are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed. Man's duty to God and to his fellow man has been distinctly specified in God's word; yet but few of you are obedient to the light given. Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the Testimonies simplified the great truths already given and in His own chosen way brought them before the people to awaken and impress the mind with them, that all may be left without excuse. (2T 605.2)

Pride, self-love, selfishness, hatred, envy, and jealousy have beclouded the perceptive powers, and the truth, which would make you wise unto salvation, has lost its power to charm and control the mind. The very essential principles of godliness are not understood because there is not a hungering and thirsting for Bible knowledge, purity of heart, and holiness of life. The Testimonies are not to belittle the word of God, but to exalt it and attract minds to it, that the beautiful simplicity of truth may impress all. (2T 605.3)

I said further: As the word of God is walled in with these books and pamphlets, so has God walled you in with reproofs, counsel, warnings, and encouragements. Here you are crying before God, in the anguish of your souls, for more light. I am authorized from God to tell you that not another ray of light through the Testimonies will shine upon your pathway until you make a practical use of the light already given. The Lord has walled you about with light; but you have not appreciated the light; you have trampled upon it. While some have despised the light, others have neglected it, or followed it but indifferently. A few have set their hearts to obey the light which God has been pleased to give them. (2T 606.1)

Some that have received special warnings through testimony have forgotten in a few weeks the reproof given. The testimonies to some have been several times repeated, but they have not thought them of sufficient importance to be carefully heeded. They have been to them like idle tales. Had they regarded the light given they would have avoided losses and trials which they think are hard and severe. They have only themselves to censure. They have placed upon their own necks a yoke which they find grievous to be borne. It is not the yoke which Christ has bound upon them. God's care and love were exercised in their behalf; but their selfish, evil, unbelieving souls could not discern His goodness and mercy. They rush on in their own wisdom until, overwhelmed with trials and confused with perplexity, they are ensnared by Satan. When you gather up the rays of light which God has given in the past, then will He give an increase of light. (2T 606.2)

I referred them to ancient Israel. God gave them His law, but they would not obey it. He then gave them ceremonies and ordinances, that, in the performance of these, God might be kept in remembrance. They were so prone to forget Him and His claims upon them that it was necessary to keep their minds stirred up to realize their obligations to obey and honor their Creator. Had they been obedient, and loved to keep God's commandments, the multitude of ceremonies and ordinances would not have been required. (2T 607.1)

If the people who now profess to be God's peculiar treasure would obey His requirements, as specified in His word, special testimonies would not be given to awaken them to their duty and impress upon them their sinfulness and their fearful danger in neglecting to obey the word of God. Consciences have been blunted because light has been set aside, neglected, and despised. And God will remove these testimonies from the people, and will deprive them of strength, and humble them. (2T 607.2)

I dreamed that, as I was speaking, the power of God fell upon me in a most remarkable manner, and I was deprived of all strength, yet I had no vision. I thought that my husband stood up before the people and exclaimed: "This is the wonderful power of God. He has made the testimonies a powerful means of reaching souls, and He will work yet more mightily through them than He has hitherto done. Who will be on the Lord's side?" (2T 607.3)

I dreamed that quite a number instantly sprang to their feet and responded to the call. Others sat sullen, some manifested scorn and derision, and a few seemed wholly unmoved. One stood by my side and said: "God has raised you up and has given you words to speak to the people and to reach hearts as He has given to no other one. He has shaped your testimonies to meet cases that are in need of help. You must be unmoved by scorn, derision, reproach, and censure. In order to be God's special instrument, you should lean to no one, but hang upon Him alone, and, like the clinging vine, let your tendrils entwine about Him. He will make you a means through which to communicate His light to the people. You must daily gather strength from God in order to be fortified, that your surroundings may not dim or eclipse the light that He has permitted to shine upon His people through you. It is Satan's special object to prevent this light from coming to the people of God, who so greatly need it amid the perils of these last days." (2T 607.4)

"Your success is in your simplicity. As soon as you depart from this, and fashion your testimony to meet the minds of any, your power is gone. Almost everything in this age is glossed and unreal. The world abounds in testimonies given to please and charm for the moment, and to exalt self. Your testimony is of a different character. It is to come down to the minutiae of life, keeping the feeble faith from dying, and pressing home upon believers the necessity of shining as lights in the world." (2T 608.1)

“God has given you your testimony, to set before the backslider and the sinner his true condition and the immense loss he is sustaining by continuing a life of sin. God has impressed this upon you by opening it before your vision as He has to no other one now living, and according to the light He has given you will He hold you responsible. ‘Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.’(Zechariah 4:6) Lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgressions, and the house of Israel their sins.” (2T 608.2)

This dream had a powerful influence upon me. When I awoke, my depression was gone, my spirits were cheerful, and I realized great peace. Infirmities that had unfitted me for labor were removed, and I realized a strength and vigor to which I had for months been a stranger. It seemed to me that angels of God had been commissioned to bring me relief. Unspeakable gratitude filled my heart for this great change from despondency to light and happiness. I knew that help had come from God. This manifestation appeared to me like a miracle of God’s mercy, and I will not be ungrateful for His loving-kindness. (2T 608.3)