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Commentary — From the Margins

Signs of the End of the Age

As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?” And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. (Matt 24:3-8 emphasis added)

When asked by His disciples of what would be the sign of (1) the end of the age and of (2) His return, Jesus said specifically not to be alarmed or concerned about the physical occurrence of war, famines, earthquakes, and by extension, any natural disasters. All of these things were but the false labor pains of the last Eve.

Will disciples believe what Jesus said? If they will, then they will not be concerned about wars and rumors of wars between the United States and Iran, or the United States and Russia, or a United Europe and the modern nation of Israel. They will not be alarmed by Palestinians escaping across the border into Egypt. Nor will they be alarmed by a meltdown of the stock market, or by Katrina or another hurricane of similar size. They will not be alarmed by shrinking icecaps or ozone holes or mutant frogs in Oregon. All of these things must take place, but they are not signs of the end—if Jesus is to be believed.

The problem is that Christians do not believe Christ. They will believe a rumor about a red heifer finally being found; they will believe Ellen G. White, or Herbert W. Armstrong, or Perry Stone, but they will not believe Jesus of Nazareth. They will believe that the creation of the modern state of Israel fulfills biblical prophecies about the return of Israel to the Promised Land, that the recovery of Russian Jews fulfills prophecies about God bringing His people out of the North Country, that an Islamic alliance is the evil king of the South, but they will not believe that Israel is now a nation circumcised of heart, not a nation with clipped foreskins. They will not believe that the Son of Man will be revealed suddenly—as suddenly as the flood came upon world in the days of Noah, who entered the Ark on the

10th day of the second month, the day when the Passover lambs are selected and penned for the second Passover. Noah and his sons and their wives and seven pairs of every clean animal and a single pair of every common species were sealed in the Ark on the 17th day of the second month, the day when, centuries in the future, Israel rose in the morning to gather manna for the first time.

Superstitious disciples now believe that the world will end on December 21, 2012, when the earth and the sun align with the black hole at the center of the Milky Way galaxy ... is there any physical sign or occurrence that disciples do not interpret as proof that the end of the age is upon humankind? Is there any war or rumor of war in the Middle East that does not now alarm disciples?

Understand, no physical sign will be given concerning the coming of Christ except the sign He gave: “As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept the all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man” (Matt 24:37-39). The person who looks at events that have already happened looks at the wrong events. The sign of the coming of Christ is as are the labor pains of Zion, who before “she was in labor / she gave birth; / before her pain came upon her / she delivered a son” (Isa 66:7). When the sign of Noah is given, the end of the age is already upon humanity. The hard labor pains of childbirth will follow the delivery of two sons, a spiritual Cain and a spiritual Abel.

Is there any disciple who has difficulty understanding that he or she should not be alarmed by wars and rumors of wars, even if these wars involve the modern state of Israel?

If not alarmed, why do so many disciples scour the world’s news for tidbits about what’s occurring in the modern state of Israel? Is it because they really believe that what happens in Israel reveals where disciples are in biblical prophecy? Is it because they really believe that a physical temple must be built in present day Jerusalem before Christ returns? Is it because they believe they possess secret knowledge not revealed by Christ, knowledge such as the United States and Great Britain are endtime Israel, knowledge that whether true or not isn’t germane to salvation or relevant to understanding prophecy?

Most likely, there is nothing that can be said or written that will belay the fears many disciples have regarding the happenings in the Middle East, these fears arising from unbelief. This unbelief will prevent these disciples, regardless of whether they keep the Sabbath, from entering into God’s rest; for unbelief is the defining characteristic of the flesh, of the old self that left spiritual Babylon as the physically circumcised nation of Israel left Egypt, of the many prophecy pundits that would have endtime disciples subscribe to the Jerusalem Post. Does a member of the former Worldwide Church of God living in Tennessee need to be better informed about daily occurrences in the present day city called Jerusalem? Knowledge doesn’t hurt anyone, unless that knowledge is used to mislead the person.

Does a pregnant woman know that she is pregnant? Certainly by the seventh or eighth month (if not long before) she knows she will shortly have a baby. Likewise, disciples can read the signs of the times and know that the season for the return of Christ is near. It does not take much biblical understanding to know that once human genes have been mapped and once human stem cells are used to produce organs, it will not be long before scientists attempt to create intelligent life from inorganic elements. It does not take much understanding to know that once animal genes are placed in plants, the potential for biological abuse threatens destruction of critical seed stocks. Nor does it take much understanding to know that the battle between fundamentalist Muslims and pluralistic nations of the West will not end when a new American presidential administration takes office: the battle will not end until democracy prevails throughout the Middle East region. Nor does it take much understanding to know that once the search giant Google indexes the books of this world that there will be a democratization of knowledge that reduces the advantage the privileged of this world have had over the deprived. Nor does it take much understanding to know that the conscious reduction of carbon dioxide emissions will level the economic advantage the industrialized nations have had over impoverished nations, while still leaving the computerized superpowers on top and the iron smelters having to pay what these nations thought the United States would pay.

Global warming or global cooling warms or cools all nations, and it is the dominance of democracy in its many forms—from the evolving structure of long established Latinate languages that now locate modifiers nearer to nouns, verbs, objects to the leveling of knowledge, wealth, and authority worldwide—that reveals the course of a heavenly battle being fought between the princes of Persia and the prince of Greece, the angelic kings that opposed the angel who brought the prophet Daniel knowledge of what was written in the book of truth (Dan chap 10). But democracy in Iraq doesn’t mean the Americanization of Iraq. Nor does democracy in China mean the public election of the central government. In the case of China, democracy is manifest in liberation from foreign rule, especially that of Mongol descendants; in Chinese governance and a return to Chinese greatness, not in a one person/one vote dictum. Even in ancient democratic Athens, slaves had no vote, no voice in their governance. And global warming will bring prosperity to Canada while bringing devastation to Kenya.

How long had the Ark been completed before Noah began boarding on the 10th day of the second month? How long had it sat in his dry-land boatyard being a spectacle to all to see and the cause for mocking and derision? Days? Weeks? Months? Maybe years? It is unlikely that it was any more than barely finished when God, who was sorry that He had made man on the earth (Gen 6:6), told Noah to board.

Noah had righteousness counted to him (Gen 6:9), for Noah believed God and did all that God commanded (v. 22). As Abraham had his belief of God counted to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6), Noah, by faith, believed God when He said that “I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven” (Gen 6:17).

Did God tell everyone what He was about to do, or what He would do in a century, the

apparent length of time it took Noah to construct the Ark? How many others would have set about building a boat larger than any craft seen until the 19th-Century? But how many of these others would have left off working on their arks after a week, a month, a year, a decade? Their unbelief would cost them their physical lives; for Noah alone believed God to the exclusion of all else and began building what must have seemed impossible.

God, who knows the hearts and minds of all people, chose Noah to build the Ark because Noah walked with God before God said anything to him about a flood. Noah believed God before he was selected to do a work for God. And God could have built the Ark for Noah: it was the seemingly endless years of construction that tested Noah's faith as the prophet Jeremiah's faith was tested by the twenty-three years between when he was called by God to deliver a message to Israel and when the fulfilling of that message occurred.

No person is good (Luke 18:19). There is none righteous (Rom 3:10; Ps 14:1, 3; 53:1-3). The best that humankind can do is,

- Not eat upon the mountains [an idolatrous practice] or lift up eyes to idols;
- Not defile his neighbor's wife or approach a woman in her menstrual impurity;
- Not oppress anyone, but restore to the debtor the pledge;
- Commit no robbery;
- Feed the hungry and clothe the naked;
- Not lend at interest or take profit from lending;
- Practice no injustice, but execute justice between men;
- Walk in God's statutes, keeping His rules faithfully.

This person is righteous and shall live (Ezek 18:6-9), but it is the faith of this person that causes this person to believe God and not to run with the lawless culture in which this person lives that is counted to the person as righteousness, not the person's good deeds, which are the expectation of all in the household of God.

The prophet Amos wrote, “For the Lord God [YHWH Elohim] does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets” (3:7) ... will God bring the end of the age upon humankind without revealing when this end will be to His servants? Has He left Israel without a prophet?

Shortly after Jesus began His earthly ministry, He went to Nazareth where He was initially well received, but He turned this favorable reception upside-down: “And he said to them,

'Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, "Physician, heal yourself." What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.' And he said, 'Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown as well'" (Luke 4:23-24). The synagogue at Nazareth would then have killed Jesus if they could have.

Christendom is Christ's spiritual hometown—and Jesus is the prophet that is not accepted in His hometown. Others, coming in their names, are accepted: within Sabbatarian Christianity, Ellen G. White and Herbert W. Armstrong, each coming in her or his own name, are accepted by many although not by the same many. But Jesus is not accepted, and within the modern period, Jesus has never been accepted as a prophet. Oh yes, Jesus is accepted as the Savior of humanity, but His words are suspect. Endtime disciples are certain they know more about what's going to happen than Jesus did two millennia ago. And the unbelief or disbelief of endtime Sabbatarian Christendom is legendary, for many are the false prophets who have waved a cardinal red banner reading Rome in front of alarmed disciples, thereby tricking these disciples into transforming a trickle of tithes into a torrent of offerings given to take warnings to the world about the threat to Christ that the Pope poses as if an old man were an equal to the glorified Son of God.

Long ago, Jesus told His first disciples when the close of the age would be, but for many endtime disciples, "there is not enough Scripture" to confirm what Jesus said so these disciples will not believe Him, believing instead a man or a woman who has come in the person's own name.

Jesus gave one sign that He was from heaven, the sign of Jonah. As the prophet Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, Jesus was three days and three nights in the grave. As the great fish puked Jonah forth and as Jonah went as a recognized spokesman for the god of Nineveh, the fish-god Dagon, Jesus was resurrected from death and went forth as the Word, the Logos, the One who spoke for the Most High. But Nineveh believed the preaching of Jonah whereas Israel, now a spiritually circumcised nation, will not believe Christ. As the physically circumcised nation of Israel would not believe the man Jesus, the spiritually circumcised nation of Israel will not believe either the man Jesus or the glorified Christ. Rather, spiritually circumcised Israel, reading the Jerusalem Post, will believe a Jezebel, or will believe many carnival barkers, each a cog made from splinters of the former Worldwide Church of God.

As the Passover Lamb of God, Jesus was slain at Calvary—and disciples ever since have roasted Him with their fiery sins. They have sprinkled His blood on the entrances to the tents of flesh in which they dwell by drinking of the Cup on the night that Jesus was betrayed. They have eaten of His body by taking the broken bread on the night that He was betrayed. Like the natural nation in Egypt on a long night of waiting and watching with feet shod, lions girded and staffs in hand for its physical liberation, the Church has been anxiously awaiting Christ's return for nearly two millennia. But as the natural nation's liberation came following the death angel passing over the land, slaying all firstborns not covered by the blood of a sacrificed lamb, the Church's liberation from indwelling sin and death will come after death angels pass over all the earth, slaying firstborns not covered by

the blood of the Lamb of God. It is this slaughter of firstborns, approximately a third of humankind, that will begin the seven endtime years of tribulation—and this slaughter occurs on the [second Passover](#), mid-month of the second month.

As it was in the days of Noah, so too will be the days of the Son of Man ... as the natural nation of Israel first received manna on the morning of the 17th day of the second month (possibly the 16th day—assuming that linguistic ambiguity exists), with this manna being a shadow and copy of Christ Jesus, the true bread that has come down from heaven, then in the three day period between the 14th day of the second month and the 17th day, those who are of Israel and who were defiled a month earlier will take the Passover sacraments of bread and wine; death angels will pass over all of the earth slaying firstborns not covered by the blood of Christ; Israel will be liberated from indwelling sin and death by being empowered by or filled with the Holy Spirit; and the seven endtime years of tribulation will have begun. Zion will deliver two sons, one natural as in not righteous and thus hated, one spiritual as Abel was righteous. And disciples will experience tribulation as described by Jesus in His Olivet Discourse, verses 9 through 12.

Seven prophetic years are 2520 days long; seven solar years are 2555 days long, a difference of 35 days, these 35 days accounting for the difference between the selected Passover Lamb is penned on the 10th day of the first month to when the second Passover lamb is roasted and eaten ... Jesus will return on the 10th day of the 1st month, knowledge that has been revealed by the Father. Unfortunately, the year of His return will not be known until the reality of the second Passover occurs.

Jesus tells His disciples when the Tribulation will begin: as it was in the days of Noah! The prophets tell Israel that the nation's endtime recovery from the North Country will cause the natural nation's exodus from Egypt to be forgotten. The Apostle Paul tells disciples that the endtime nation of Israel is circumcised of heart and not of flesh (Rom 2:28-29; Col 2:11). Jeremiah tells Israel that those who are only circumcised of flesh will perish (9:25-26). And much more could be written about what Isaiah and Ezekiel have said about Israel receiving a new heart and a new spirit. So it is only the unbelief of endtime disciples that prevent them from believing Jesus.

But the miracles God performed were not enough to cause the natural nation that left Egypt to believe God—there is nothing that can be said strongly enough today to cause the spiritual nation of believe Christ. Thus, with sadness, the few who do believe must watch the many perish in their unbelief. And this is as hard as anything Noah did when building the Ark.

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