SPIRIT BAPTISM AND CHRIST'S RETURN

The good news for today is that Jesus is coming soon! I don't say this only because of terrorist attacks, world conflicts, epidemic outbreaks, or natural disasters, all these certainly indicate Christ's return is soon. However, there is something else that convicts me more that Christ's return is eminent. It is his moving among us to understand and to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The last verses of Revelation 6 describe Jesus' coming and asks the question, who shall be able to stand? Meaning, who will be able to survive the event? The answer is found in Revelation 7: 1-3: "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads."

Only those who have the seal of God will be able to survive the second coming of Christ. In fact, God is holding back many destructive forces in this earth until God's people are sealed. An important question, then, is how are we sealed? The Bible says we are sealed by the Holy Spirit: "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Ephesians 4:30)

That is what the baptism of the Holy Spirit is all about. It is as we daily receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit that we are sealed and prepared for Christ's second coming.

God is not waiting for more terrorist attacks, disease outbreaks, or natural disasters. Ellen White tells us what Christ is waiting for: "Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of himself in his church. When

the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in his people, then he will come to claim them as his own" (Christ Object Lessons, p. 69).

Only by the baptism of the Holy Spirit can this happen in our lives. And only by the baptism of the Holy Spirit can we be ready when the angels let go the winds of destruction. Ellen White writes: "Nothing but the baptism of the Holy Spirit can bring up the church to its right position, and prepare the people of God for the fast approaching conflict" (2 Manuscript Releases, p.30).

We have a danger, as Seventh-day Adventists. We think we are secure and will be ready for Christ's return because we know about the Sabbath, the state of the dead, the mark of the beast, and the manner of Christ's second coming. This is a deadly error. These teachings are important; however, this knowledge alone will not save us. Remember, it was tithe-paying, Sabbath-keeping, health reformers who crucified Jesus. No; it is not what we know; it is who we know that will enable us to be saved (John 17:3). We must have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ if we are to be ready for His return.

Today God is calling a people to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit in preparation for becoming just like Christ, in order to receive the latter rain of the Spirit, and to be ready for Christ's return: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

However, the church has a problem today. God tells us that we are in a Laodicean condition and if we don't change, we will not be ready for Christ's return. God also gives us the solution: let Jesus into our lives more fully: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

How do we let Jesus in and have the intimate relationship with him that we must have? Ellen White tells us: "We must have a living connection with God. We must be clothed with power from on high by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that we may reach a higher standard; for there is help for us in no other way" (Review and Herald, April 5, 1892).

Personal Reflection and Discussion

Why are the angels holding back the winds of destruction on this earth?

Is knowing the doctrines of the Bible all we need in order to be saved? Why, or why not?

According to the Bible, how are we sealed?

What does the baptism of the Holy Spirit do for our relationship with Christ?

What only will prepare us for the final crisis?

**All scriptures are from the King James Version of the bible.*
From "40 Days of Prayer and Devotions on the Nature and Ministry of the Holy Spirit" by Dennis Smith