

## CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GOD - NUMBER NINETEEN **HOW SOON WILL THE CONFLICT BE OVER?**

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Number Nineteen: "**How Soon will the Conflict be Over?**" The question this time is not **When?** but **How soon?** The conflict will be over when God's children on this planet have fully responded to His last pleading (conversation 16), are so settled into the truth that they can resist Satan's final effort to deceive (number 17) and as grown-up believers can not only survive the time of trouble but, like Job, speak well and truly of our Heavenly Father (number 18).

"How soon?" the disciples asked Jesus. "Tell us, when will this happen? What will be the signal for your coming and the end of the world" (Matthew 24:3). Jesus spoke of alarming disturbances in earth and sky, of growing distrust between the nations, the rise of false religious leaders--and the Good News going to all the world. He said the end was near--more than 1900 years ago! But how near is "near?" Not long before he died John wrote, "Children, it is the last hour, we know that it is the last hour" (1 John 2:18). Was he wrong? When John arises at the Second Coming he will be surprised to find how long he has been asleep. He may have some questions but surely no complaints! And there will be earth-shaking events for him yet to see.

About a century and a half ago there arose in various parts of the world the growing conviction that the time had come for Jesus to return. Thousands of Christians the world around still agree that those early adventist believers had indeed seen God's signal that Christ was coming soon. But this was not a signal to withdraw from the world and pack for the trip up to Heaven. It was a call from God to finish the work of preparing the world for His coming.

It is true that time has continued much longer than early adventists expected. The signs that so stirred them are now well over a hundred years old. But are we surprised, even ashamed, that our God has been willing to wait? Are we concerned about *our* reputation or *His*? If by our failure to complete our task we may have contributed to the delay, then we deserve to be ashamed. But the longer God waits, the more gracious He looks. His delay only confirms the Good News!

How much longer do you think God will have to wait? We can trust Him to wait as long as there is hope for anyone. But the One who reads our every thought will know when all final decisions are made. "So then," Jesus advised, "you must always be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you are not expecting him." (Matthew 24:44). To which Paul added, "But you, brothers, are not in darkness, and the Day should not take you by surprise." (1 Thessalonians 5:4) What should we be looking for?

Welcome to the nineteenth of our conversations about God--another look at our Heavenly Father in the larger setting of the great controversy over His character and government. The topic for our conversation this time is, "**How Soon will the Conflict be Over?**"

During the last three conversations we have talked about **when** the conflict will be over. We discussed how it would be over when God's children on this planet have fully responded, yes or no, to His final pleading. The conflict will be over when His loyal children on this planet have become so settled into the truth that they will be ready to resist Satan's final efforts to deceive. The conflict will be over when, like grown-up believers, they not only know the truth well enough to survive themselves, but like Job, they know it well enough to speak well and truly of their Heavenly Father. So the question for tonight is not **when** will the conflict be over, but

rather **how soon** will it be over?

Do you think the end will come, the conflict will be over, Christ will return in our own lifetime? The disciples wondered about this, you remember, and they asked Jesus. Look at Matthew 24:3 (Beck).

"Tell us, when will this be and how can we tell when You're coming back and the world will come to an end?"

And Jesus replied that even the angels do not know. In fact, He added, that while He was still in His humble, human form on this planet, that even He did not know, only the Father. Look again at Matthew 24:36 (NEB). "But about that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, not even the Son; only the Father."

But Jesus went on to indicate that there was something much more important than knowing the exact time. He indicated that it was far more important to trust Him enough to be willing to wait. You recall our conversation--"**All God Asks Of Us Is Trust?**" For if only we trust Him enough to be ready for His coming--whenever that should be--we really don't need to know the exact time. If we trust Him, all will be well. Jesus indicated this in John 14:1,3 (NEB).

"Set your troubled hearts at rest. Trust in God always; trust also in me...I shall come again and receive you to myself, so that where I am you may be also."

But He did give them some details by which they could tell the approximate time. As they sat together one day on the Mount of Olives, Jesus spoke of many signs by which the disciples could tell when the end was getting nearer. These are very familiar passages to all those who believe in the advent. He spoke of alarming disturbances in earth and sky. He spoke of growing distrust between the nations. He spoke of the rise of false religious leaders--a subject we have discussed before. He particularly warned of those who would arise and teach that His second coming was to be in secret. "Don't believe that," Jesus said.

Look at Matthew 24:26,27,30,and 31 (GNB).

"Don't believe it. (That is, don't believe that I will be coming in secret.) For the Son of Man will come like the lightning that flashes across the whole sky from the east to the west...And all the peoples of earth will weep as they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The great trumpet will sound, and he will send out his angels to the four corners of the earth, and they will gather his chosen people from one end of the world to the other." (Parentheses supplied).

Now that is hardly the description of an invisible event. Quite on the contrary, John affirmed very clearly in the last book in the Bible, Revelation 1:7 (RSV), "Every eye will see him."

Now in the passage from Matthew we read above, He speaks of all the people on the earth weeping as they see the Son of Man coming back. But as we read other passages, we note that not everyone will be weeping. Those who have learned to trust Him, will be very glad to see Him come. Way back in the days of Isaiah, this was clearly predicted. Look at Isaiah 25:9 (NIV).

"In that day they will say, 'Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.'"

But as we have considered in recent discussions, Revelation 13 explains that most of the world, in the end, will have turned against God. Because they have not learned to trust Him (even though Jesus comes back in His human form) they flee from Him in terror. Look at Revelation 6:16 (NIV).

"They called to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!'"

How could they possibly flee from "gentle Jesus, meek and mild", as the little children often like to pray to Him? Although it is true that He does come back in His unveiled majesty and power, still there is no need to be afraid. But Satan has so convinced his followers that God is arbitrary, vengeful, and severe, that those who have not learned to trust in God will actually flee from Him as He cries after them, Why will you die? "How can I give you up? How can I let you go?" (See Hosea 11:8) That's how thoroughly Satan has convinced all these people that his lies about God are the truth.

In the court of the high priest Annas, both Peter and Judas looked at that same gentle, but powerful and majestic face. One of them was moved to repentance. The other one was moved to go out and take his own life. Now, our Lord is not two-faced. The difference is in us. Those who have learned to welcome the Good News, the Gospel, the truth about our God, have learned to trust and admire God's wise and gracious ways. They will be ready to see Him come, even to see Him in His glory and not be afraid--awestruck to be sure--but not scared of our God. Those who have despised and rejected this good news, will actually look at the one who died for them and like Judas, be driven by that sight to suicide.

Of all the things Jesus said that must and will happen before the conflict is over, He especially mentioned one. He said the gospel--the good news, the true picture of God--simply **must** go to the whole world before the end will come. We can trust God to wait until His children all over this planet have had a chance to make an enlightened choice and decision. As we have discussed before, in view of the awesome events to come--the confusion and the deception--God would not ask anyone to pass through that period without sufficient information upon which to base an intelligent choice.

This is only consistent with the way God has treated angels and men ever since the great controversy began. He has always waited patiently for His children to make up their own minds. Think of how many centuries He waited for Israel to respond to the information brought by the prophetic messengers that He sent one after the other. Not until the children of Israel had resisted the truth so long, that they were beyond even the Creator's power to restore, did He finally and reluctantly give them up.

But after the Israelites had been taken off to Babylonian captivity, God inspired the writer of 2 Chronicles to explain why He could no longer protect them--why He had to let them go. Look at 2 Chronicles 36:15,16 (RSV).

"The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people; (you know from the

Biblical record how grossly many of them were misbehaving) but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, till the wrath of the Lord (and we know that means His sadly giving people up--see Romans 1 and Hosea 11) rose against the people, till there was no remedy." (parentheses supplied)

It was not an arbitrary decision. He simply could not do anything more for them. He had to let them go into the discipline of captivity.

Fortunately, it was not the final awful destruction at the end of the world. But it still was discipline. And though God seemed to have abandoned them, He went with them, didn't He? He blessed Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, Esther, Mordecai, and Ezekiel. Think of the distinguished saints that grew up there in Babylonian captivity. But, by and large, God could not work through His people as a nation at that time. He had to give them up into the discipline of captivity.

Sometimes, this patience of God that is mentioned so many, many times in the 66 books, has been misunderstood to mean that we can go on sinning with impunity because our God is simply too kind and too patient to discipline us or to turn us over to destructive consequences. You remember how Paul warned how serious an error that can be--this error of presuming on the kindness of God. Look at Romans 2:4 (Phillips).

"Are you, perhaps, misinterpreting God's generosity and patient mercy toward you as weakness on his part? Don't you realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" That is an excellent translation of that famous verse.

Now sometimes God's patience has even puzzled His trusting children. You recall that in the days of Habakkuk, they cried out to God, "Why don't you do something? Why don't you come and rescue us and help us in our predicament?" (See Habakkuk 1:2-4) They were in despair that God seemed to be doing nothing. And so the prophet Habakkuk was sent to urge them not to give up their faith, but to trust God enough to be willing to wait and let God work out His plans in His own good time. As Micah said, the problem often is that we simply don't understand God's plan. (See Micah 4:12) Let us trust Him as we seek to understand it more and give Him time to do it in His own time and in His own way. I wish we could have included all of Habakkuk in our discussion, but just look at Habakkuk 2:3 (GNB). The prophet summed up his message by saying,

"It may seem slow in coming, but wait for it; it will certainly take place."

In fact, God's first message to Habakkuk was, "I am doing something, but you wouldn't believe it if I told you." (see Hab. 1:5) Habakkuk said, "Try me, Lord. Tell me." (see Hab. 3) And the Lord did. And Habakkuk indicated that he was willing to wait. That is the source of that great verse (Romans 1:17),

"The just (the righteous ones who are God's friends) will live in faith, in trust."

That verse was not written about forgiveness. It was written about trusting God enough to be willing to wait. That great verse that Paul quotes in Romans 1:17 is a most appropriate

one for those who wonder why the Lord still waits.

In these last days, God's patience even gives His enemies an opportunity to misinterpret his graciousness as weakness, even to scoff at God's apparent inability to bring the conflict to a successful conclusion. How I wish we could have included the whole of 2 Peter 3. Look first at 2 Peter 3:3,4 (NEB). This is where Peter warns that

"In the last days there will come men who scoff at religion and live self-indulgent lives, and they will say: `Where now is the promise of his coming? Our fathers have been laid to their rest, but still everything continues exactly as it has always been since the world began.'"

Doesn't that sound like the familiar doctrine of uniformitarianism. Nothing has ever changed and nothing ever will.

But Peter goes on to explain the real reason for the delay. In 2 Peter 3:9 (NEB), we read,

"It is not that the Lord is slow in fulfilling his promise as some suppose, but that he is very patient with you, because it is not his will for any to be lost, but for all to come to repentance."

Then Peter, if you read on in the chapter, refers to Paul's earlier advice in Romans 2:4. He writes in his letter,

"Bear in mind that our Lord's patience with us, is our salvation. Our beloved Paul wrote this in his letter. (2 Pet. 3:15, NEB)

I'm sure Peter is referring to Romans 2:4.

But more seriously, sometimes God's incredible graciousness has even been an embarrassment to some of His people. Do you remember when the prophet Jonah was asked by God to go and give a serious message of warning to Nineveh? At first he ran away. Later, under considerable pressure, he went and delivered his message--hardly a "missionary volunteer!" Think of the pressure the Lord had to put on Jonah to get him to go up to Nineveh and deliver a very serious message--and to a very dangerous people, to be sure. Jonah walked the streets and said, "Forty days and Nineveh will be destroyed." (Jonah 3:4) Then he went out and sat down on a hillside nearby to watch the city come to its end. But it didn't. The people of Nineveh repented and the city was not destroyed. And Jonah complained angrily to God. He said, "God, that is why I ran away. I knew you were far too kind to go through with that threat, with that prediction. You have made me look like a false prophet. I am humiliated enough to die." (See Jonah 4)

Look at his words in Jonah 4:2,3 (GNB). (Imagine saying this to God!)

"Lord, didn't I say before I left home that this is just what you would do? That's why I did my best to run away to Spain! I knew that you are a loving and merciful God, always patient, always kind, and always ready to change your mind and not punish. Now then, Lord, let me die. I am better off dead than alive."

Think of this man knowing God that well in Old Testament times. Those are words that

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Moses, or Abraham would have been proud to speak. They never used better words than that about our God. But Jonah was ashamed. This had caused him embarrassment. He was humiliated. He felt that his reputation had been so destroyed that he was prepared to die!

God reasoned with frustrated Jonah. "Have you no pity for these people? Aren't you glad that they have chosen to repent?" He even mentioned the cattle in the city, "Don't you even care about them?" (see Jonah 4:4)

But Jonah was much more concerned about his own reputation as a reliable prophet. Moses, Abraham, Jeremiah, and Paul all announced themselves as proud to know God as they did. They were proud of Him and proud of the Good News. Jonah also knew God, but he was ashamed.

About a century and a half ago, there arose in various parts of the world the growing conviction that the coming of Christ was very near. You know the history about how Bible students in many different churches began to see in certain remarkable events the fulfillment of some of the signs that Jesus had given to His disciples in Matthew 24. Among other things, they looked for the fulfillment of those famous signs listed in Matthew 24:29 (NIV).

"The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky."

They saw the darkening of the sun on May 19, 1780, and the remarkable falling of the stars on November 13, 1833. They combined their knowledge of these events with their study of certain other lines of prophecy in Daniel and Revelation--lines that pointed to the years 1798 and 1844 as being the dates of certain important events. In all these things they saw an accumulation of evidence, signs, and indications that the long-looked-for advent was very near.

We do know that it is a historical fact that the great second advent movement began at that time. Though some are now puzzled about the signs and the dates, it is an incontrovertible fact of history that that was when the great second advent movement did begin. The time when it began is the time when all those remarkable signs and prophetic periods seemed to come together. It is not just one date, one event, one piece of evidence. It is all that evidence combined. That is the way God has always sought to convince us throughout the history of the conflict. Not to have a little here and a little there, but an accumulation of evidence.

Now some of those eager Adventists were led by their study of the times and the evidences to begin giving special attention to the messages of the three angels in Revelation 14. They came to the conclusion that the time had arrived for these three messages of warning and invitation to be given to the whole world. So they undertook a very bold venture. And the excitement and the disappointment of those days is all part of religious history. There are still thousands and even millions of Christians the world around who agree that those early adventists had indeed seen God's signal that the second coming was near. They didn't read it correctly at first. It was not a signal to pack for the trip up to heaven. It was rather a call from God to prepare the whole world for His coming. That is why we are still here; because we haven't done it yet.

Now, it is true that time has continued much longer than early adventists expected. The signs that so stirred them are now well over a hundred years old. In fact, the first of the signs,

the darkening of the sun and the turning of the moon to blood on May 19, 1780 is now more than 200 years old. But are we surprised? Are we even ashamed that our God would be willing to wait this long?

Are we concerned about **our** reputation or **His**? The good news--the gospel--is not about **us**. Sometimes I think we make that mistake. The good news is **not** about us. The good news is about our God. Now if by our failure to complete our task we may have contributed to the long delay, then we deserve to be ashamed. But the longer God waits, the more gracious He looks. His delay only confirms the good news. I think the delay should lead us to speak with pride of our God and not to make the awful mistake that Jonah made.

You see, God needs better spokespersons than Jonah proved to be. Reluctant teachers of the truth, moved only by fear or obligation are themselves a very sad denial of the good news. God is waiting for people who look eagerly for the coming of the day of God and work to hasten it on. Look at 2 Peter 3:12 (NEB). He advised way back in the first century,

"Look eagerly for the coming of the Day of God and work to hasten it on."

So now the question is, how much longer do you think God will have to wait? Well, we can trust God to wait just as long as there is hope for anyone. You know He will do that. We can also trust God not to wait forever. He will not wait a moment longer than it makes sense to do so. Who longs more than God to bring evil to an end, recreate this world, and give it to His trusting saints?

Then, when *will* it end? Only God, the one who reads our every thought, will know when all final decisions have been made. That is why Jesus gave the serious advise in Matthew 24:44 (GNB).

"So then, (disciples) you also must always be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you are not expecting him." (parentheses supplied)

But unless that should leave us with the impression that we are entirely in the dark about this, we should also add Paul's counsel in 1 Thessalonians 5:4 (Kleist and Lilly).

"But you, brothers are not living in darkness, and so the day will not like a thief take you by surprise."

You see, like the angels, we too do not know the exact day or hour. But we do know what must take place and what will take place before the end comes. We can count on it. After all these years and after paying such a price, God is not about to change his way of leading the family. Nor is he about to fail. Consistent with the way God has always handled this conflict in the family, He will never ask us to believe without evidence. He does not use claims, but demonstration, and this takes time. We know that God will not come until the world has been warned and He will not come until His children are ready. But when they are ready, He will waste no time. He will come.

So how soon do *you* think the conflict will be over?

## ***Conversations About God - Tape 19B***

Venden: Are we ready? This first one has to do with Christ's return: "Do you believe that Jesus will come when He knows - that's underlined - when He knows there are 144,000 of His people, who are so settled in the truth that they will be able to go through the time of trouble?"

Maxwell: Ah, isn't that interesting. I like to read that chapter. John asked how many there were of these saints. And he was told 144,000. Then he says, "I turned and looked at them, and I couldn't begin to count them." So I don't think 144,000 is one more than 143,000 - I can't finish that! What would that come out to be, anyway?

I like the advice that was given us some years ago regarding that number: "Silence is golden." I think that twelve times twelve times a thousand just invites us to consider it as a whole number, and not a literal number. If you take it as a literal number, you get into all kinds of unreasonable, arbitrary predicaments.

For example, the Lord now has 143,999. And unfortunately, there are 27 people studying. So He'll have to send the word out: "Slow down on 26; because we've only got room for one more." You know, He won't do that. He'll let everybody in that wants to come in. So I think one can use that number in support of a rather arbitrary picture of God. No, there's room for everybody and anybody who is willing to trust Him. But twelve tribes, too, suggests that it won't all be physical descendants of Abraham, will it? You know. Not literal tribes.

No, I rather think there, that this was a picturesque way of representing the whole group at the end. And I like the fact that when he looked at them he said, "I couldn't count them." Now, some say the group he couldn't count was a different group. He does say— he says, "Who are these that I can't count?" "Oh, these are the ones who have passed through the great time of tribulation," it says. So this large group passes through the time at the end.

So I really don't worry about the number at all. I am concerned that we meet the description, you know, and be people like that. See, anybody who is like that will be a member of the group. Maybe that would be the safest thing to say. If you meet the description, you'll be a member of the group.

I wonder, though, if the person who asked the question would like to ask more about that.

Comment: In respect to all the urgency that we've been told about - about this Good News - do you think everybody should just stop doing everything you're doing and just go out and talk about this Good News?

Maxwell: Well, then we'd all starve to death. We'd have to do it between meals, almost. And there'd be nobody to pay for all the technology to get it to the world. I think we have to carry on while we do it.

You make me think of the story my Dad told me long ago, when - maybe I told you this already - that he and my mother were engaged to be married during World War I, and friends of theirs were engaged to be married; and the newspapers were announcing World War I as Armageddon. They even had Turkey in the newspapers. "The sick man of the East," you remember, and all those things. And so the four of them talked about whether they should carry on or maybe not get married and just hurry to finish the work before the Lord would come. And

my Dad liked to cite the verse, "Occupy till I come," on the basis of which he and Mother married; and the six of us children have been grateful ever since, that they went ahead. I never did get the final story about the other couple as to what they did. They probably missed several good years.

No, I think we have to carry on. In fact, our very work brings us the kind of contacts that we need. You know, the informal contact, the friendly contact. That's why one of us can't do it. We need hundreds and thousands of people doing this with their friends, next door neighbors. One person isn't going to take this message to the whole world. It's all the loyal people of God who are going to spread the word to the people with whom they have contact.

Now, some brave souls go out to the corners of the world. Like some we could name. I think of Kenneth Hart out there in Africa, and others. Ah, it takes a special kind of person to do it; and we have those, and they go out and they search for people.

I think that every man where he is, he should be sure that he's passing on the Good News as the opportunity comes. Then I think these "acts of God" will come; meaning opportunities unexpected, undreamed of may develop. You think of the changes World War II and some skirmishes since then have caused to our world. Countries that were quite closed became open. You think of the changes in the world. The General Conference could never engineer, say, the change in Korea, you know, which became so favorable to Christianity. The General Conference: We will have a revival in Korea. You know. No, it took the war over there to open things up in various ways, didn't it? Think of other places in the world.

I think there'll be earth-shaking events that will open up the way. But what's the use of opening up opportunities, if we're going to go in there and give people the narrow view preoccupied with their own salvation, and continue their being little children needing lots of protection; when they're going to face the time of trouble when there is no protection? It's a growing-up message.

So, I believe God will open the way as soon as we have something worth saying and can represent it aright. Then it will take all of us. This is one of the functions of every member of the church. It's best done that way. Don't you find that?

Venden: All right. We have a question right here.

Comment: You referred in there to - what I don't know; that's what I want to find out. But you talked about on the one side freedom, independence, maturity, I guess. On the other side control. And it sounded as though you were referring to maybe something that you said "we" as though maybe a church or a denomination; maybe all Christian churches and denominations are doing; that we're trying to control and maintain an order instead of letting people be free and independent. Do you have specific situations in mind, or maybe some specific suggestions?

Maxwell: You provoke all kinds of thoughts that come to mind. Let me think of the one that first came to mind, and we could understand each other on this: One of the greatest evangelistic avenues of our Seventh-day Adventist Church is our great educational system. I mean, you think how many members of our church are members because they grew up in the system and were instructed. Isn't it a large proportion? We have countries in the world where the Adventist Church is not so prosperous, and no educational system. And I think they're very closely tied together. I think this is one of the difficulties that England experiences. We have hardly any Adventist schools. There was one little tiny one when I was a boy, in all of England.

Well, let's say: What do we do with our own children, say, as we grow up? We're so concerned that our children be good, and so concerned that they be saved, and that they believe, and they do the right and proper thing, and that they avoid doing the wrong things, and so on; that we send them to havens of refuge. And we hedge them about. And they sign in, and they sign out. And there are rules and regulations. And we carry this right on through the grade school, into academy, into college, into university; and some want to even do it down here.

I remember once we had some leaders come, and wondering what we were doing for the medical and dental students on this campus to be sure they came to meeting Friday night. So I got some statistics together for them, which I used to announce annually from then on. The last time I took these statistics, the average student on this campus was 25 years old, and was married. And together they had 857 children. You see, many people think we're running a junior academy here, you know. The boys and girls need to come to meeting Friday night. A lot of these students who are in their labs day and night all week long - that's one night some of them need to be home with their wives and children. You know. So the church recognizes that here and leaves much freedom.

You know, one problem here is families sometimes don't stay together too well under the stresses of professional training. Would the families would get together at such time. This is a place of adult students. It's not a Missionary Volunteer society here. This is adult. And we have to recognize that. And when the students come down here, they're on their own. They're paying their way, and they go and come as they wish. That's what makes it so good that so many are willing to come to service, you know, and to worship, and join in the way they do.

Well, we do have some requirements. We expect them to come to Chapel. And if they don't, we indicate maybe they are getting their mail at the wrong address. We say, "You knew this was a religious institution, and we want you to come together once a week in Chapel - just once a week. The president has an opportunity to see everybody, and we'll try to make it very much worth your while." So we have some structure there. Students applying know that. But we don't put too much pressure on people here. You can't anyway. They're not having worship in the dormitory. They're having worship in their homes, if they're having them at all.

Well, if we have waited until now to give them freedom to do things on their own; then they haven't learned how to do it. And I just love Ellen White's advice on this. When she says that, "In some homes and schools the children seem to be so well behaved, until they become old enough to go out on their own." And then they leave. And we wonder why. She said, "We have got to set our children free as fast as possible. But it must be done appropriately, and they must be given feelings of self respect, and learn to exercise judgment on their own."

Oh, it's marvelous! You know all those statements in Fundamentals of Christian Education. You know, it's her influence that produced this whole marvelous system more than any other one person. And if we did it her way ideally, we would set our children free as fast as would be appropriate. Well, we'd have to explain to them: We're all going to live in the same dormitory, we've got to have some law and order around here. But many of these rules are emergency rules for some students who simply won't behave.

And that dawned on me, and I was happy for it, when I lived in Grainger Hall. There were some very irritating rules there. But without those rules, there were some who would have abused the situation, and the rest of us couldn't have studied. So we said, "All right, as long as we live in the

dorm we'll go by those rules."

Rules are emergency measures. And we need to explain though, if our children are in the dormitory: We have to have these rules under the circumstances. When you're in charge, you may think up some better ones. Let them realize they're not arbitrary. It's not an attempt to restrict their freedom. We want them, actually, to grow up, and learn to do what's right because it is right.

And that's a very exciting thing to do with children. It's always risky. Maybe when they find their freedom, they'll go their own way. Maybe when they find their freedom, they'll choose to stay. Then that's really staying. And that's terrific.

So that's God's delicate task, isn't it, to give His children freedom and lose a lot? And so we've got to do the same as parents, and teachers. How do we give our children freedom? We will lose a lot. God has. He lost a third of His angels. And so rather than lose the angels, God should have had more rules and regulations! Angels should have signed in and signed out, and taken a Bible Doctrines exam every week to be sure they were in the faith. No, He didn't do that. He said, "You know the truth. I'll even reason with you. I'll show you more evidence. But you're free to leave." And a third of them left. That is the price of freedom, it's true. Are we willing to pay that price? It's kind of exciting, kind of breathtaking.

So, your dad felt very much that way, I know, when we talked about general education; that it's time we allowed the students to grow up and think for themselves. That was the whole idea of that great general education program that some of us spent many years thinking about.

Comment: I have a little comment on three different verses quickly. One is in Romans 9:25.

Maxwell: Oh, yes.

Comment: And he said also Hosee. Who? What? Where is Hosee?

Maxwell: That's Hosea. Yeah, sometimes you know, they'll cite the Greek name, sometimes the. . .

Comment: Thank you for that, and a couple more here. One is Romans— You slightly touched Romans 10:4 tonight; but I thought maybe you might. . . No, this is the [?].

Maxwell: [unintelligible] 9:25 one more time.

Comment: [Quoting Rom. 10:4] "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." Could you touch on that just a little bit? Romans 10:4.

Maxwell: OK. Oh, you're picking great verses. I want to be sure on the other one that that's not the verse -- you see, Isaiah discusses — Oh yes, see, mine even helps: "As indeed He says in Hosea." See, a modern version may do that. But it is Isaiah in [verse] 27. "The Lord will finish the work."

Now on the other one, 10:4. Now, that's He will -- that Christ is the end of the law. . .

Comment: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth."

Maxwell: All right. Sometimes we are so concerned to preserve the Ten Commandments, because we feel nobody else is, that we don't like the sound of that: "Christ is the end of the law." And so we look up a rarer meaning of "end," which is "purpose." Christ is the purpose of the law. Which is not a bad teaching, but I don't think is the subject that Paul is dealing with. Now, there's a technical thing here that may or may not be significant. There's no definite article with law. Now that may or may not be significant, depending on the context. I think here it does fit in well.

"Christ is the end of law" as a way of being saved. Now it never was a way of being saved; but He came to bring to an end the idea. So I love Phillips' Translation: "Christ is the end of the struggle for righteousness by works of law, that everyone who has faith may be set right." So I would say it's the end of law as a way of being saved. Law is an emergency measure, not a way of being saved. So in the context of Romans, where he's contrasting the obedience that springs from love and trust, and the obedience that comes from law and fear; he's saying, "Christ came with a true picture of God, and that ought to mark the end of the obedience that springs from law as a way of being saved."

Comment: [. . .] would you turn us back then to ceremonial law? I mean, would that be the end of that law?

Maxwell: Any law. Law as a system. Law as a way of handling things. All law was added as an emergency measure. By the way, that doesn't mean the law has no continuing function. Like the Ten Commandments. If I need the Commandment: "Thou shalt not murder," for my mother-in-law to survive another night, then I need that law, and so does she. But when the law is written in my heart so I wouldn't think to murder her, I haven't done away with the law. It's just I've relocated it. I've taken it off the wall and off the tables of stone, and put it in my mind and heart, which is where it ought to be.

You see, when the law has really accomplished its purpose, it will be enshrined in people's minds. They will agree with it and do what's right because it is right. You don't destroy it. But it's the end of the legal system as an emergency measure. It's the end of loving because God says you have to. I mean, what kind of a love is that? And yet God says, "I command you to love Me, and I wince every time I tell you that." But that is an emergency measure.

Comment: One more. "And so all Israel shall be saved."

Maxwell: Yes. That's a great one, isn't it, in there?

Comment: You touched on this tonight just slightly? But that's a pretty strong verse, isn't it?

Maxwell: Well, an interesting thing in there - we follow the argument that I used in there in connection with the other question about Israel, that not all descendants of Abraham physically are true Israelites. But to use it in this passage is not to answer Paul's question. At the beginning of this chapter, he says, "I am concerned about Israel, my kinsmen according to the flesh." He's not concerned about spiritual Israel. He's concerned about his fellow Jews. He said, "I mean my fellow Jews with whom the prophets came - the ones who had the word of God and of whom came Christ. I want to know about them." He says, "I love them so much, I'd be willing to give my life to save my fellow Jews, if it would help. So let me discuss the problem of my fellow Jews."

And as he goes on with that, you know, in those three chapters, he finally says, "I have good news for you. Finally! When bringing the Gentiles in may have provoked a few Jews to kind of a holy jealousy, and they'll want to come back in too and be grafted into that olive tree." He says, "Then eventually all Israel will be saved." And his question was, "What about the physical descendants of Abraham?" Now, the other's true; all spiritual Israel. But that doesn't answer the question. So all we have left is to consider the word "all."

Now, in the Bible, how many are included in "all"? Do you remember when the plague of murrain smote the cattle in Egypt, how many were killed? All of them. Then they had a plague of hail. How many cattle did the plague of hail kill? All of them. Well, there shouldn't have been any left, if they all died the first time. And then do you remember when Rehoboam was crowned king? How many went to the coronation? "All Israel." Nobody home to prepare the food. I mean, they'd all gone. In the Bible, "all" often means no more than a significant representative number. It's a special use of the term "all."

Now, what's the message in Romans? I think Paul is saying there's going to be finally a great work among the Jews, the physical descendants of Abraham. And they will take a look back at their heritage. They will realize they had it before we did. And they will realize that the true Christ came from them. And they will go back and pick up their Old Testaments. And like Paul, they will find the New Testament is in perfect harmony with the Old. And they'll begin to read the Bible as a whole. They had read the Bible long before any Christians came along. Really, they have the roots of this tree.

Well, Ellen White's comment is great in Prophets and Kings. She says, "In the last days there will be a great work done among the Jews." And as a result, she says, "Many Jews mighty in the Scriptures will come in." And maybe some of us will have to move over, because they will know their Bibles better than we do. You know, a real Jewish Biblical scholar knows his Bible inside out. And it takes some grace on our part, maybe, to move over and have some of those Old Testament scholars come in.

Well, this is one group we have not had this experience with yet. Someday this will occur, will it not? I know you've thought about it a lot.

Comment: Two weeks ago, Elder Wilson was in the Kansas Avenue Church among the black people. And in the afternoon one [?] asked: "Elder Wilson, how many Jewish people do we have among the Adventists?"

And he said, "I have to bow my head in shame; maybe 200 in the Adventist Church, out of 14 million Jews. When will the last days be? The last days for some Jews came in Germany -- six million of them. It can be the last days soon. Israel has the atomic bomb. And if they're going to use it, the world is going to blame them; they're bringing in the atomic destruction. But they have to defend themselves. They are there.

Maxwell: Brother Jacobsen made an interesting discovery recently. F. C. Gilbert's articles numbering - how many? You remember Elder F. C. Gilbert, who was a Jew, and he was a great leader in this. As a boy, my father took me to hear him preach. He says, "You got to hear Elder Gilbert." You found how many articles that he'd written? Two hundred articles. I didn't know he'd written that many! So some of us who want to read those when we can find time to make copies of those. Something much more will be done before the end.

Comment: I read an article recently that's the anti-Christ; or was originally used "anti" as opposed to "in place of" or "for Christ" or "in place of Christ," as opposed to "anti" meaning "against Christ."

Maxwell: Well, now, that would fit very well. You see, this is precisely what the adversary wants to do. He wants to take His place. Yes. He is the substitute.

Comment: He won't be against Christ, or. . . [unintelligible]

Maxwell: Yes. Although the word implies opposition. Of course, his opposition is so subtle, he makes it look almost like support. You know, it is that devious, that he actually comes as Christ. So the closing message to the world, is a great Christian message, a great revival. And it has to be Biblical to have the right sound to it. So we expect to hear the Bible quoted, but it will not be quoted correctly. And so what's going on these days, is much mention of the importance of Bible study; but strictly here a little and there a little; not the Bible as a whole. Our only safety lies in taking it as a whole, in balance, all the parts together.

Venden: There's a hand over here.

Comment: The Hebrew for "all" -- what's it like? Is it as, you know, as indefinite as the [. . .]?

Maxwell: I don't think that the Hebrew in itself contains that idea. No, it would have to be in context there.

I saw a book once I wish I had bought. It was in Blessings Book Store in Chicago; and it was entitled Oriental Hyperbole. Oriental exaggerations, you know. I didn't have the money in my pocket at the time, and when I went back the next time it was gone. But I stood there in the store and looked it through. (You likely would have picked it up, Mrs. K. [?].) Anyway, as I looked through, I could see illustrations not only from Scripture, but elsewhere. The tendency to overstate something. And if everybody understands that, then it isn't misleading. You know.

Like Dr. Quimby saying, "I hope you'll come and visit me in my humble little shack; and I'll take you in my little humble car." You know. And he has a nice house and nice car. He's also very humble. His experience in the Orient had led him to talk like this. Haven't you heard him do that, Margaret? Yes. But everybody understands everybody else.

Or, "I am absolutely unworthy." If the other person says, "Yes, I agree," you say, "Wait a minute; you're not supposed to do that! I'm engaging in hyperbole." Isn't that true?

Venden: In Japanese, when you go to visit a home, the customary greeting at the door is - you come into this filthy place, and - you know - it's "absolutely spotless." That's the way you. . .

Maxwell: Everybody understands that everybody that way.

Venden: That's right.

Maxwell: But I think the plagues of Egypt are a good illustration there. All the cattle were killed, and all the cattle were killed again, twice.

Venden: Did I hear a question break out over here? Oh, a laugh. I see. All right. Now here's one on the card that perhaps we should turn to:

A thought came to me this week about Sunday versus Saturday observance in the last days. Is it possible that the real issue, which stems from this controversy, is the character and methods used by the respective groups? For example, those who observe Saturday Sabbath are also the ones who use God's method of persuasion. Those who observe Sunday as Sabbath will be the ones who use Satan's methods; Saturday keeps the ones who defend and support and say what is right about God, Sunday keeps the ones who support and say Satan's lies about God."

Now the writing gets even finer down here.

"If so, then the issue is really over the character of God vs. Satan's character."

Maxwell: Well, ultimately but not now, and not historically.

Venden: Certainly. I was going to say, how would you make that division now? Because I would guess that a person might press the idea of seventh-day Sabbath in ways that would be more along the line of the coercive, harsh, arbitrary ways that Satan uses.

Maxwell: And isn't that true in Biblical history? Look at the cruelty exercised toward Sabbath-breakers. Maybe the contrast in Saul's own life as he changed from Saul to Paul: Before he saw the truth about God, he kept the seventh-day Sabbath, but for the wrong reason. And it led him to use very harsh methods. So he kept the Sabbath, but didn't know the truth about God.

Then after the Damascus road experience and fourteen years to think that through, he emerged as the greatest apostle of freedom and grace, and "Christ as the end of law as a way of being saved."

"And when a man disagrees with you, let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." And they said, "Do you mean the Sabbath?" "Yes," he said. "One man esteems one day above another. Another man esteems all days alike. Let everyone be fully convinced in his own mind."

And the brethren then wondered if he was becoming rather liberal and loose. "No, no," he says. "If even an angel from Heaven should disagree with me on the message, he's wrong. Don't think I lack conviction. But I am convinced about freedom, and grace, and that's the way God is. And he would say to Sabbath-keepers, 'May you be fully persuaded in your own mind, or the observance of the days is of no use to you.'"

So I'm afraid the day we keep does not indicated the position we've taken about God in and of itself. Keeping seventh day could mean I'm His worst enemy. Keeping seventh day could mean I'm His best friend. So you have to ask a Sabbath-keeper, "Why are you keeping this day?" And I think it's important to ask ourselves why we do it, you know. Is it from fear or obligation? Then that will spill over - because it means we don't know God too well - into the way we treat people and the way we persuade. Certainly our evangelistic methods are influenced by the kind of Person we believe our God to be. And that is also shown in the way we keep Sabbath and everything else that we do.

Is it possible, though, to be a real blueprinting saint? You really espouse the whole program as you understand it, with enthusiasm, but rigor -- I mean, you know, you discipline yourself -- and

still have a sense of freedom and grace; and you don't do it from obligation or fear? Is it possible to be obedient and free at the same time? Well, only if you have the right picture of God. See, so the ultimate truth is the one about God.

Now, how about some Sunday-keepers? Do you know some folk who keep Sunday who are among the nicest folks you know on the face of the earth? Wouldn't you say so? They might have a much nicer picture of God. So I really believe not until the issues are clearly seen; not until the Biblical significance that is attached to the seventh day Sabbath— not until that is perceived, would the rejection of the seventh day Sabbath and preference for a substitute have other undesirable connotations. And for us now to say: "You're a Sunday-keeper, so you don't love God; I'm a seventh day Sabbath-keeper. I do." Ah, that's an assumption you cannot make.

So I think we should be very, very careful at the present time how we regard people who worship on another day. I think we have to leave room for those who are not too sure about which day. Because unfortunately, Sabbath-keeping, whether it's Friday, Saturday or Sunday, has become so connected with a legalistic, arbitrary picture of God, that they want to throw out all of that. And out goes the Sabbath too. Throw out the baby with the bath water.

So we have good news for people, that really the Sabbath is a monument to freedom and an antidote to legalism if it's observed the right way. It may also be just the opposite. And that's why in church you look over all the saints; and two folks sitting side by side, in Sabbath School, early for song service, generous offering and tithe, nothing forbidden in their stomachs; and they're on opposite sides of the great controversy, sitting side by side in church. Well, who's going to go down the aisle and say, "You. I'll take you, and you, and you?" Fortunately the Lord reserves diagnosis unto Himself. And nobody else is invited to do that. Fortunately. But we have to be aware that that could be present, and not oversimplify here. It can make persons very cruel and very judgmental.

Now I'm saying all that, believing that the seventh day Sabbath is extremely significant. I really believe it is; and should be a great blessing to us. And it ought to be a privilege to explain it. But I never start with the fourth Commandment: Thou shalt keep the seventh day because God has said it, you should believe it; that's all there is to it.

That smacks so much of the legalism they want to be rid of in this verse, you know, that you just turn people off. You have antagonized the ones you're trying to persuade. Why not do it historically all through Scripture? And then when you've attached all the Biblical significance to the Sabbath, all the greatest events in the great controversy, you say, "By the way, can you see why God put this in the Ten Commandments and said, 'Don't forget this. Remember this; you need it.'"

And come to the Ten Commandments last of all. Because come to the emergency measure last of all, I think. And it's more winsome. At least that's in my experience with presenting the Sabbath.

Comment: In the time of trouble, it keeps coming to mind that Christ said that we should become as little children. Children are so pliable, and so soft, and yet very perceptive, and adults seem to be so rigid and brittle; that I was wondering how we could explore this as little children going through the time of trouble as to the - those that think they know so much about this. And yet the newer ones coming in will be just -almost - introduced as to this making it through.

Maxwell: Well, you've got about three groups here: You've got the self-satisfied people who haven't even made it to the foot of Sinai yet. Then you have the babes in the truth at the foot of Sinai. And then there are the mature folk who have gone up to the mouth of the cave and are ready to survive the devil's last effort to deceive.

The trouble is, that these folk who think they know so much, they think they're up at the mouth of the cave; they've got even to be humbled and come to the foot of Sinai. And it may take all kinds of things to make them aware of the fact that they don't even have the faith of a little child. See, these were the ones Christ had the most difficulty with; not little children, but with the people who thought they were grown up. "We are rich and increased with goods." They're the toughest ones.

So you weren't just talking about the immature and the mature. You were talking about the folk who think they're mature, who haven't even been born again yet. You know, they haven't even been born, as it were. However, the time of trouble is no time for babes in the truth. Now, there is no protection. So that's why our message is not a beginning message; it's a finishing message; it's a maturing message. I think there are many people in the world preaching the beginning message. I think Billy Graham does, don't you? Many people, you know: "Believe in God; believe in His Word; be converted." You know. That's the beginning.

Billy even tries to go a little beyond that and says, "You know, we need some follow-up." They're getting quite involved in that in Christianity Today, where there must be nurture thereafter. But beyond that point, they can't fill it out as fully as - maybe - others have been privileged to see it. And I think, you know, we needed a lot to help to see it in our church. And you know who helped us so much.

And so we have the chance to say, "We're grateful for all those first steps, but don't stop there." Read Ephesians 4; "we should no longer be little children, easily swayed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. But we should grow up, and learn to speak the truth in love, and have our faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil." And stand as Paul did all by himself. Job all by himself.

As I mentioned last week, I really think the book of Job is present truth. It's not a children's story, that's for sure. Even adults have a lot of trouble with that book. They don't know how to accept the very end, where God says "You did splendidly." They prefer the first of the chapter, where Job says, "I repent." They said, "Yes, you should, the way you talked to God." God says, "I was honored by what you said to Me."

I believe that Job is an illustration of the fact that the things we often feel afraid of in the end - you know, opposition, even persecution, loss, deprivation; you know, the pictures. Well, others have suffered that way. - that those are the worst things. As a little child, I thought that would be the worst. You know, we even had visions of being taken down into the basement of a cathedral, and put on the rack, and tortured. You know all those things when you're small. Not that hasn't happened.

But tell me, in the book of Job, what caused him the greatest difficulty?

Comment: His friends.

Maxwell: Yes, the theologians. And they were caring theologians. They were theologians who came and wept with him. And were deeply moved. You see, they really wanted to help him, but they couldn't, because they were totally legalistic in their own understanding. They were little children coming to help a grownup. But you see, little children often think they know a lot. You know, that's another mark of little children: they really know it all. Well, those three were immature. God loved them. He said to Job, "Pray for them; they need help." What a turnaround for them! "Job praying for us? We came to pray for Job." No, God say, "Pray for those three, that maybe they'll grow up and know Me the way you do."

I think that the most difficult thing in the end, would be for caring theologians to come; and it's not the right picture. And unfortunately, we do - we kind of stress that beginning so often. The behavior of the little child that needs much regulation, that that's the ideal. The willingness to believe what people in authority say.

Job says, "I respect you, my friends, but you're wrong. You're really wrong." And they went on and on, and he said, "I wish you'd stop. You're standing between me and God. I need to talk to God. Your theology puts Him in a very bad light." And finally he was moved to say, "You know, your bellies are filled with the East wind! Would you please stop!" I mean, he was the poor man, close to death's door, losing everything; and all he wanted to do was talk to God. And they said, "You can't talk to Him like that. Get down on your knees and repent."

Oh, it was cruel. But the god they knew demanded that. In fact, the reason why Job was suffering so, was he had obviously disobeyed God. Oh, it's cruel. And yet, you know, the picture they paint in the book of Job, is a rather common one, isn't it? "Be good and you'll be blessed. Be bad and you'll be punished. Be good - very good - and you'll be very much blessed. Be very bad, and Ohhh! - look out!" And this was the view held by many in Jesus' day, as you know.

Venden: Here we are; question here

Comment: What's the difference between the last generation and all the generations that have gone before; that the one should be settled into the truth and the others not.

Maxwell: Oh, say, that is a good one, because you know, we could begin to think, "Well if the Lord comes in our time, that's because we will be very superior saints." And that would be just what the Laodiceans have been saying. Which would mean we haven't even been reborn, it seems to me.

My understanding would be, there is nothing more savable about the last generation than any one before. The thief on the cross was just as safe to save as Job, or Moses, or Abraham. Because God can and will save all who trust Him. The difference about the last generation is, they're not only safe to save, but they can survive that awful experience. God would spare us until we're ready. He would not allow us to pass - you see, we humans are going to pass through what angels went through. And a third of them were confused. I mean, how can we think that as humans we will accomplish what brilliant angels failed to do? God will not allow us to be tested more than we're able to bear. And so He waits.

Now, this last generation for many and various reasons, will be stimulated, provoked, prompted, helped to grow up. And the last thing they'll do if they are really grown up is say, "Hey, we made it! We're the mature ones!" Have you ever seen a mature person with his thumb in his lapel? Isn't that what little children do, anyway? You see, it's little children that boast. Love never

boasts. The loving person is the mature person.

So these folk will actually, since they're coming closer and closer to the ideal, feel more grateful and more humble, as far as that's concerned. But they will know the truth, and know that they know it. It's not about them; it's about God. There will come a quiet confidence. You know, "I have many weaknesses, but I tell you, if the devil came as Christ and said, 'God is arbitrary, vengeful and severe,' I think I could tell him he's wrong. And I will not believe it." Are we really settled into that so we could not be moved?

I know a lot of folk who have grown up with other ways of looking at things, and through going through the Bible book by book, have said that they've come to a larger picture of God. And there's one thing they always say: "You know, I could never go back to that other way. I just simply couldn't do it. I couldn't live with it anymore." And I'll run the risk here on a Sabbath evening, a Friday evening: If God is the kind of person His enemies have made Him out to be, His theological representatives have made Him out to be, though He is not; I mean, if God is the wee-est bit arbitrary, vengeful and severe -- call it justice if you wish -- I don't want to live with Him. In fact, I hope He never comes. Because I'm happier living with people like the good pastor here. He doesn't scare me.

All right: "These are the last happy days we're ever going to have, friends; with all the bad habits we have. Because, Ohhh, when He comes, you'll never feel secure again." No, if He is not the kind of Person Jesus made Him out to be, we will not be happy with Him; we will not be comfortable with Him. So I'd stake my life on this picture of God we've discussed in the Conversations. And there's a lot more evidence than there's been time to cite. There's the evidence of all Sixty-six books confirmed by the evidence of experience, you know.

All of that together: I really believe God is like this. At least like that. He's infinite, you know. He's at least like that. I accept the testimony of Jesus. He's just as gracious as the Son. The Son is not pleading with Him in our behalf. He doesn't need to. The Father is our Friend. And all those other things. I absolutely believe that. If He's not like that, then my hopes for the future are enormously diminished; it will be something quite different for Him to come. It makes that much difference to one theologically and in practice, you know, in living, to see Him this way.

Now, I say, when I'm perfect— the picture in the Bible of the perfection that's needed, is maturity. It's being settled into the truth. It's being grown up. When the Lord comes, I may be an old man sitting on a dung heap covered with boils, like Job was. Couldn't run the four minute mile. Couldn't even make it around the block. We sometimes suggest, you know, if you're not perfect in every respect, you don't qualify for membership in this favored group. You could be old, tired, and covered with boils, and be so settled into the truth you could not be moved. Then you are a mature saint ready to survive the time of trouble. That leaves room for all of us, no matter how old. This gets more important to me with every birthday, by the way!

Venden: I was going to say, as far as living with me, you better check out the evidence with my daughters and with my wife. Now, there was a question back over here; the young man at the back.

Comment: You said that when the devil comes as Christ, he will present the picture of God as being arbitrary and severe; in what way do you think he'll do that?

Maxwell: Oh, he'll dress that up. He won't use those terms at all. And so, - I don't know whether

you have the bulletin for next Friday night; the little summary I put in to invite people to come next week. It's in the bulletin for tomorrow morning. And I list ways in which he will dress things up. See, he'd never say God is vengeful; [he'd say] "He's just." You see. Now, if I go out and give somebody what he deserves, we call that vengeance. When God does it, it's justice. You know. We have ways of dressing it [up].

We even say: "God is arbitrary; but it's different with Him. Because as Sovereign He has a right to be arbitrary." I read that in a very important document that we all study from week to week, not long ago. "Now, that might seem arbitrary in God. But with God, there is no arbitrariness. Why is there no arbitrariness? Because being Sovereign, He can do whatever He wants; and therefore, He's not arbitrary." My mind was spinning when I read that. No, there is no arbitrariness in our God.

One evidence given is: "The Sabbath is totally arbitrary. There is no reason for keeping the Sabbath, other than God said we should. Which makes it a beautiful test of our obedience. Because if you could think of a reason, then that would soften the test. You'd say, 'Well, it's a reasonable thing to do.' But because you can't think of a single reason for keeping the Sabbath, other than that God said you should, it's a beautiful test of your obedience."

And I say that goes absolutely against the grain of the truth about our God. The Sabbath is a monument to just the opposite. There is nothing arbitrary about the Sabbath. Besides, God says, "I want you to call it a delight. And I insist." [Laughter] Right? I mean, if to keep it, it has to be a delight, is there any way to command enjoying something? So that verse in Isaiah which says, "The Sabbath is to be a delight," suggests it can't be arbitrary. Same way with love. Can you order love? Can you order trust?

But there is a picture developing, you know, that real faith requires no evidence. "If God has said it, I believe it; that's all there is to it." And that is extolled as the ultimate faith. "The fact that I can believe without evidence. There even seems to be evidence to the contrary. Isn't that marvelous? I'm still willing to believe." And God comes in the end, and gathers us all around, and says, "You lovely people, all willing to believe without any evidence. I don't know why you do believe in Me, but you did anyway." That makes no sense at all!

We are the ones who have looked over the costly evidence, and have decided that it adds up; and we've made a commitment to it. The devil is the one who wishes to make light of evidence, because the evidence isn't with him. If we start demanding evidence from the adversary, he'll lose. If we investigate the adversary, he loses. If we question him, he loses. So he substitutes miracles, wonder, power, feeling; anything but evidence and truth. And so, if he can find verses in the Bible that seem to support that out of context, he will use them.

Like the way the Holy Spirit is used so widely, as really a substitute for the earnest, careful weighing of the evidence and the truth. The Holy Spirit is so often associated only with great, wonderful, elevating feelings, and miracles of healing, and speaking in remarkable ways. One should read the rest of the story of the Holy Spirit. He's the Spirit of Truth, who will come to guide you into the truth, to settle you into the truth. He inspired the Scriptural record of the truth. His mission, His work, is by means of the truth, which is best apprehended by the mind.

So, I mean, this is the counterfeit. And I see this great religious revival sweeping the world as bypassing God's regular channels of persuasion and conviction. And if the devil can just convince us that this other idea of faith without evidence, this idea of trusting this great feeling

that sweeps through you, is correct, he's got us already. We'll all waiting, vulnerable, for him to gather us all into his camp. And the whole world will welcome him on that basis. Miracles, wonders, power, pomp, circumstance, pageantry. He'll use it all. Music. Everything. And sweep the world into his camp.

And hopefully some little child will say, "How come he hasn't given us a shred of evidence? Why do you believe?" Well, we ought to teach ourselves to do that right now, and not be so quick to believe. Even when a very saintly person says something, respectfully reserve the right to ask, "Where's the evidence? Why?" We have to do that.

Jesus allowed the disciples on the road to Emmaus, to do that. He didn't say, "Tell Me your questions. Here are the answers. I am the Son of God." He didn't reveal who He was, until He'd led them through the Scriptures. You remember that whole story. It's a marvelous evidence. God, in person, answering questions, did not reveal who He was, lest they agree on the authority of His personal testimony. That's a marvelous picture of God there on the road to Emmaus. I will only trust religious teachers and leaders who will go the way of evidence and give me time to weigh it. If they stand on their authority, on their position, and try to take shortcuts that way, then I'm immediately very suspicious.

So it takes a little time, it's true.

Venden: There is a certain amount of arbitrariness that's going to happen right not.

Maxwell: Ah, that's right.

Venden: But I hope it's not harsh . . .

Maxwell: But there's a reason!

Venden: I hope it's not harsh and severe; and that if we had time, I could explain the evidence. There's a very good reason.

Maxwell: Yes. There's a very good reason!

Venden: There are about five people who have had their hands up. What I would like to do, is invite you to write down what you were going to ask, and be here next Friday night, and we'll start out with that group first. All right, would you pray?

Maxwell: Our Loving Father in Heaven, what a privilege to address Thee, the Infinite One, as Father - something that we can understand in our human experience. Happy are those who have had loving, trustworthy fathers. Some have not. And so we see Thy generous way of representing Thyself all through Scripture. If not as Father, then as Mother, Husband, Wife, even as a mother hen gathering chickens. Surely Thou hast tried in every way to picture Thyself as a loving Person, Someone who can be trusted, Someone who does not like to intimidate His children.

We are sorry that Thou hast had to at times intimidate us - thunder on Sinai; send she-bears when we were irreverent; open up the earth one time; surround us with rules and regulations. All these emergency measures; they indict us, not Thee.

Surely we must not in any way lend our support to the devil's misrepresentation of Thy use of emergency measures. These are not the ideal ways. Thou hast been ideal in Thy willingness to use these ways. But we know Thou dost look forward to the day when a still, small voice will be all; when it will be enough for Thee simply to point in the right direction, and invite us to inquire, and find the reasons for going that way.

We love that thought, that though Thou art so infinite, Thy greatest delight is in having us agree with Thee in the highest sense of freedom. In discovering - it would appear sometimes to us - for ourselves: "Ah, this is the way. This is the better way to do things." This pleases Thee even more than our saying: "You've told us. We will do it, for we want to please Thee."

We thank Thee for these ideals that come through in Scripture. We are sorry they come through so rarely. For Thou hast all too rarely had friends to whom Thou couldst talk like this. For we love it in the record, that Thou dost talk to Abraham, and Moses, and Job, and Paul. And others. Jeremiah, and Isaiah, and Hosea. Many others like this. Hopefully, we have sensed this same leadership from Thee, the One who is so powerful as to hang the whole, vast universe in space, not wanting us to feel pressed into what is doing what is right, but doing it because we're convinced it is.

And since the Sabbath has been so often misunderstood, and turned against Thee as evidence of Thy arbitrariness, grant that we who have found it to be such a blessing, may do so again this weekend, and share with others the idea that we can keep the old seventh-day Sabbath of Creation Week and the Ten Commandments, and still feel wonderfully free. For as we keep this day, we are reminded of all those great events in the great controversy that have revealed the truth about Thee most clearly. And that the seventh-day Sabbath has been connected with every one of them.

So in our sense of freedom, we enjoy this Sabbath day; ask Thy blessing on it and upon us. May we in the highest sense of freedom, do what's right because it is right, and look forward to enjoying this kind of freedom, even in Thy very Presence in the hereafter.

We pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

# **CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GOD, #19**

A. Graham Maxwell and Louis Venden

"How Soon Will the Conflict Be Over?"

Venden: Our question tonight, "How Soon Will the Conflict Be Over?", from what you have said, seems to be tied in very closely with the second coming of Christ. And what I'm wondering is, is that really the end of the conflict? Is that what you're saying this evening? Or aren't there some other very important events such as the millennium, and the destruction of the wicked, that are part of what we might call the conflict?

AGM: That's true. There are major events yet to come after. But the Second Coming really does mark the end of the essential conflict, because the conflict is not so much a great war in which the powers of Heaven are arrayed against the powers of earth and God will eventually move in and bring it to an end. The essential conflict is in the minds of His children, of angels and of men. And the Second Coming means it's all over. The loyal are committed forever to loyalty and the disloyal are committed forever to their rebellious rejection. So this is the conflict that really counts.

And that has many significant implications. This is the important conflict that takes place in our minds. We've taught how the most essential thing is for God to demonstrate the truth about Himself, and some would object, "Well, that doesn't make us very important." No, if His demonstration does not lead some of us to conviction in our minds, He has failed. So we're not just pawns. He's trying to win us. We are very much involved in this conflict. This conflict is being fought in the minds of His own children.

Venden: This takes us back to the very beginning, to our first Conversation about the nature of the conflict, doesn't it?

AGM: Yes.

Venden: Really then, it's not a struggle of power and armies and D-Day.

AGM: He could have had all that in one minute.

Venden: But it is a struggle for trust, decisions and that kind of thing.

AGM: So you see again, we're not just spectators of the conflict. We're very much involved, with the most important questions about Him.

Venden: You know, in your introduction here, you quote from 1 John, and here so many years ago the Apostle John writes, "Children, it is the last hour." (1 John 2:18) We know that it is the last hour. As you ask the question here, I have to ask it again: Was John wrong?

AGM: I'd like to trace that all the way through the Bible and note that all the Bible writers who deal with the subject, describe the end as near. Remember Joel and all the rest of them. Jesus Himself; the end is very near. One could look at the statement in Peter that, "with the Lord a thousand years are as a day, and a day is as a thousand years." (2 Peter 3:8) Then also John saw antichrist there, and that led him to believe that the end was near.

And there are other ways in which it's near. John died soon after. As you know, he was in his nineties. And one night, perhaps when he went to bed soon after writing this, he fell asleep. And John awakens the next morning, it would appear, from perhaps the most refreshing sleep he's ever had, and lo, it's the Second Coming. Now, he might have some questions, you know, but I doubt he'll have any complaints. And as far as witnessing all the great closing events, he will witness everything from there on: the millennium, the Third Coming, the re-creation of the world. John won't miss any of that. All he'll miss is really the time of trouble.

Venden: I like the way you put it. He may have some questions, but no complaints.

AGM: I don't think he'll have any complaints. Some of the saints now who fall asleep as we discussed before, before the Lord comes, they will arise in time. They will even rise first.

Venden: John talks about antichrist. Now, what is the antichrist? What do we mean by that term?

AGM: Well, "anti-" suggests opposition, and the opposition is expressed in many ways. The most destructive is not open opposition but subtle misrepresentation. If anyone misrepresents Christ, he is an "antichrist."

Venden: So it's not just one person in all the history of the world.

AGM: There are many, many antichrists. But John says in his day, "Now many antichrists have appeared." (1 John 2:18) By the way, I think he was referring back to what Paul wrote in Thessalonians, that there's more to happen; antichrist will appear. And John says, "Well, now he has." See, antichrist has been working all these hundreds and thousands of years. I believe the end has always been very, very near. If the conditions could have been met--God would have foreseen their being met--and everything would have ended much sooner.

Venden: In Matthew 24:36, Jesus says that He doesn't know the day nor the hour. That statement, of course, was made back on the Mount of Olives as He was talking to His disciples. That statement was true then. Is it still true? Does Jesus not know now?

AGM: I would understand He's taken back all of His kingly power, and He knows. But Philippians 2:6-8 suggests that when He was here He really "emptied Himself." And He lived as a human to show that humans, by the power of God, can lead good lives. And so He used no power that we cannot use. He often spoke and acted as a Prophet. So I accept what He said then. He really didn't know at the time, but He does know now. I am impressed, though, that He says the Father knows. Now, some wonder how much the Father can know about the future. If the conflict is in our minds, if the conflict is over trust, then the conflict is over moral choices...

Venden: What's happening in our minds.

AGM: ...what's happening in our minds. And Jesus says, "The Father knows..." when the world will have made up its mind and will have made these moral choices. This is my basis for believing that God can foreknow our moral choices, or how could He know the day or the hour when the conflict will be over? That's why I take that position.

Venden: Now, you talked about the signs, and some of these signs that many of us here this

evening have lived with and thought about, do do seem a bit far away at times. Didn't He also go on to talk about this generation? The generation that saw some of these signs wouldn't pass away? If you're right about the dates of these other signs--1798, 1833--and some of these other dates, was Jesus wrong about "this generation?"

AGM: I think I know about twelve different explanations of "this generation". And they're all an attempt to extend it longer and longer. I remember when it was such good news to read in the paper that somebody living in Outer Mongolia on Yogurt had made it to his one hundred sixty-seventh birthday and said, "Oh good, the generation is still alive!" I believe that generation is long since gone. I would have to put this with all the other similar places in the Bible. We could have completed the work back in those days. We could have done it. God has always held these things out before us. So I believe the generation that saw those signs that you mentioned should have seen the end.

Venden: Is it possible that there are still some more signs that we're waiting for or should be looking for? For example now, you didn't mention Daniel 12:4.

AGM: That famous one.

Venden: One that I've heard as far back as I can remember, "Knowledge shall be increased, and men and women shall run to and fro."

AGM: Yes, the beauty of that one is that it can be updated all the time and kept current. It is very interesting to look at the pictures on the old Signs of the Times, since Dad edited that for so long. And you see the earlier covers of men running to and fro in antiquated Model-T's and even before that antiquated locomotives. But periodically they had to send the word out to the Art Department, "Update this, because people are now running a little faster to and fro, and knowledge is increasing." And you can see the evolution of the airplane as well as the automobile. And then, of course, when the first rocket went up and Sputnik was going around, the word had to go out to the Art Department, "Update Daniel 12:4." Anything that can be updated all these hundreds of years isn't much use as a sign, if it's an indication that increase of knowledge and transportation says the end is near. So I have to go back and read Daniel 12:4 in Daniel. It's the knowledge of the prophecies of the book of Daniel that will increase as a result of people urgently searching. The words in Daniel are the same as in Amos 8:11,12; there will be a famine of the Word. People will be running to and fro looking for it and will not find it. So in the context of Daniel 12 in the Hebrew, I believe this means that those prophecies in Daniel which were sealed up until the time of the end would in the time of the end be studied, and as a result people would come to an understanding of the predictions in Daniel, and the great Second Advent movement will begin. And this is what happened. So I would date the fulfillment of Daniel 12:4 1798, around the turn of the century. So this belongs with all those other signs at the same time.

Venden: Talking about fulfilled prophecies reminds me of a question one of our listeners who has been here wrote out very nicely for us. He says, "What answer might I give my neighbor who believes that Israel will once again become a great nation?" And there are many unfilled promises to Israel. He believes that these promises have yet to be fulfilled, and he bases his beliefs on Jeremiah 31:35,36; Isaiah 2:2-5; Romans 11, Isaiah 31 and so forth. And this friend of our friend who believes this, does not accept these promises in the Old Testament as conditional and that they ended when Christ died. He says, "God will keep His promises to Abraham." Now, here's someone who thinks that the things that are happening to the country of

Israel must be tied in with the events that have to take place.

AGM: Well, what I like is his selection of verses. They are all excellent verses. And if one were to lay those side by side, all of them express some qualifications. For example, in Romans Paul says, "Not all the physical descendants of Abraham are real Israelites; only the children of the promise." And Isaiah says that though the children be "as the sand of the sea for multitude, only a remnant will be saved," because only a remnant will respond. And Jeremiah says, "Only those in whose hearts My law has been written will be My loyal children." Every one of those writers suggests that many of Abraham's physical children will not be among God's loyal people. Then Paul goes on to say, "But those whose hearts are circumcised," they're \* regarded as true Israelites. So I think if one were to take the passages listed there, one would have the answer. I would not look to what's happening in Israel today as an indication.

Venden: You're saying not a group of prophecies or events that we're waiting for or that kind of thing.

AGM: No. God is looking at the people in Palestine today as He looks at all the other people in the world; if they trust Him, all will be well.

Venden: You mentioned that the Coming in one sense has been near for centuries. Do you think this delay is - I hate to use that word, delay; it really seems like it though - do you think that's caught God by surprise?

AGM: Well, your comment makes me remember, "My lord delayeth His coming." It's thought to be a bad thing to say. But in the story, the lord did delay his coming. What was bad was he began misbehaving as the lord delayed his coming. The Lord has in mercy delayed His coming. But I see the Bible as foreseeing this many, many times. Like Jesus' story of the ten girls. The bridegroom tarried. The bridegroom delayed, and they all slept, even the saintly five. They slept. And then you think of other places, the four winds being held, that we discussed last time. They are held until an angel stands and says, "There shall be no more delay." That Revelation 10:6 verse. I should have had it in the collection. There shall be no more delay. And then the whole chapter in II Peter 3 that explains the delay. And \* enough \*. So the Bible very clearly prepares us for apparent delay, but don't misunderstand it.

Venden: Then God hasn't been caught by surprise.

AGM: He hasn't been caught by surprise. He's even forewarned us of it.

Venden: Looking down through our Bible Reference Sheet, I wonder if some of you had the same problem that I did as I read along. For instance, in the third paragraph there, I came across "early adventist believers," and there's a small "a." I guess I'm so used to seeing with a large A, is that a typographical error here? There's another place in the next paragraph, first line. What happened there?

AGM: Well, I proofread that with care. Deliberately a little "a" because there are many other adventists besides Seventh-day Adventists. We've been rather possessive about that name. Every year my Dad used to go to the Congress on Prophecy and sit with adventists of many different denominations who believe in the Second Advent.

Venden: Now how are you using the word "adventist" there?

AGM: People who are anticipating the \* . Not a denomination.

Venden: You and I are both Adventists with a big "A." That is, we belong to a church that wants to emphasize the return of Christ by including that truth in its name. You grew up, as I did, with our Dads talking about the end being near. I can remember as a small boy reading that magazine that your father edited for so many years so capably, Signs of the Times. And I just can't help but ask you this question: With all of that background, and it's a question I have asked myself too, do you still believe that the end is near? I guess I want to say, you know, do you really think Jesus is coming soon?

AGM: Well, I asked my father that. I heard him preach the nearness of the end for fifty-five years. He worked right up until he died. When I was a small boy too, I used to go around England with my father, and I would sing and read the Scriptures. He would preach on the nearness of the end. He always preached on the nearness of the end. So just before he died, I asked him, "Do you still believe it after all these years?" He said, "Had I seen and known all the things we've seen and learned these last few years, I would have preached it with much greater vigor." I don't know how he could have, if you remember hearing him. \* I remember that. Well, Dad was absolutely convinced. There's more evidence now, but it is true that God is evidently waiting as we could count on Him to. That's even part of the Good News, some of the most important evidence. His willingness to wait, though He's so eager to terminate things.

Venden: You know, I had the privilege of being your father's pastor, and he was a member of my church for a couple of years up there in Mountain View, and I was always blessed by the vigorous conviction and confidence in the soon coming of Christ. And I came to the conclusion that your father and my father are looking for the return of Someone they love deeply and trust most profoundly.

AGM: See, my grandfather did the same. He died at ninety-five, and he was this way too. So I've grown up hearing the nearness of the end all my life.

Venden: They're not just looking for something to happen; they're looking for Someone they want to come.

AGM: Very much so.

Venden: And I'm really blessed by them.

AGM: Well, you can tell Uncle Arthur who wrote Bedtime Stories obviously likes God.

Venden: Yes. That's right. Let me ask you this one: Did you expect to be here in 1984?

AGM: Well, we thought it was almost an expression of no faith to even suggest we would maybe five or ten years down the line.

Venden: When you and I were young it didn't seem possible. Well, what leads you to think of the end as near and the Lord's coming as being something soon?

AGM: I've often thought about that. One could go through the biblical description of the events to occur. Another way would be thinking of the larger, great controversy view, you know that

God, to be consistent with Himself, His government, the way He handles things, the way He treats His family, the way He treats the opposition, the way He wants to make things so crystal clear, you know He would end in a certain way. So I'm looking for things to end that way. And they really are, I think. Like the Gospel going to all the world. It's hard to measure that in some ways. There is another, though. The good news is based on the Bible. People have got to get hold of the Scriptures. Now, we don't print many Bibles ourselves. I don't know whether we do it much at all. The Bible Society is doing a tremendous job. These Wycliffe people who go to the corners of the earth and risk their lives to translate the Bible. That's one of the most marvelous things going on. Never has the Bible been so readily available or so readable in the history of the whole planet, you know, as it is now. That has to be. The Bible has got to get out to the world.

Venden: And you're saying then that that would help to heighten the sense.

AGM: That's right. The opportunity is increasing. Another one would be, God will not release the four winds, the final troublous events, until His people are settled. If I should see Him apparently releasing, Him ceasing to restrain, He won't do it until His friends are settled into the truth. Things going on in the world today make one wonder. It may be the four angels are beginning to release their hold. But then there's another thing. The people in the world have got to realize their freedom to ask questions, to make up their own minds. They cannot be dictated to as to the truth about God. And there's a great stirring and desire for freedom all over the world. Often people don't know how to handle it at first, but the sweep of the desire for freedom around the world is an important indication; also important is that there's an attempt to stifle it in certain parts of the world. Freedom is the essence of this thing. People must recognize their right to weigh the evidence for themselves. But maybe most of all the counterfeit. Satan's final effort to deceive will be brilliant counterfeit. I think seeing the counterfeit developing \*

Venden: counterfeit now, what do you see as the most serious threat or counterfeit?

AGM: I don't see it as open opposition or black vs. white. It's going to be something very, very close to the truth. And the Bible speaks of the gospel going to all the world, the Holy Spirit being poured out, people seeing wondrous things. And I think, and I would not want to indict any individual in this, but I think there is a vast counterfeit spiritual revival sweeping the world. There are many innocent people caught up in it, and they're looking for the truth. I wouldn't want to point at any one person. But the emphasis in this counterfeit revival is not on the truth. It's not on weighing the evidence in Scripture. It isn't even about God. It's all about ourselves. It's all about our feelings. And there is great emphasis in this religion on Get in touch with your feelings; Get in touch with your feelings. The good news is Get in touch with God. It's good news about God. We think about ourselves too much and it can be depressing. But there's such an emphasis on feeling the power coming up through you. As I mentioned before, I've noticed it's often described as coming up through the feet, finally arriving at the head. The gospel is best apprehended the other way around. It should come through the head first. The truth is apprehended by the mind, a mind that is sanctified by the Spirit of truth. And there will be great feeling, but to start out with feeling is very hazardous. Now, it is winsome, there's lots of love, and tears are shed, and the miracles of healing and apparent conversion. It will be very close to the truth. But as a friend of ours once said, "I am afraid of anything that would have a tendency to turn the mind away from the solid evidences of the truth as revealed in God's Word. I am afraid of it. I am afraid of it. We must bring our minds within the bounds of reason, lest the enemy so come in as to set everything in a disorderly way." By the way, that's Ellen White. A magnificent statement.

Venden: Just to clarify: at the beginning of your comment there, you said that the conflict wasn't a matter of black and white. You weren't talking about a racial difference.

AGM: No. No. No.

Venden: You were talking about the confusion, the shades of understanding and deception.

AGM: Just as Satan will come as Christ; so the counterfeit will seem Christian.

Venden: What do you think is the greatest cause for delay? Are we contributing to this? You have spoken about God's patience and how the delay really makes God look good. Where might we fit into this?

AGM: Even with relative innocence here, that is, we might be candidates for the Kingdom but not given the message that must be heard, see that's a special assignment that Adventist delay has been given.

Venden: Do you think that's that greatest cause?

AGM: I think the greatest cause is, we're giving a beginning message all the time and not a finishing message. We're giving a narrower view, a somewhat self-centered view. We're leading people to be gratefully preoccupied with their own salvation, gratefully preoccupied--I had to add "gratefully"--for what God has done for me, and you too. Preoccupied with ourselves. The finishing message, the great announcement to the world that will prepare the world for the deception, is about God. We'd better talk about the larger view, the issues in the great controversy. You've got to help people understand the whole picture in Scripture. That's the finishing message. But meanwhile, we're even still using emergency measures to get people to be reverent and to behave. So long as we still have to depend on rules and regulations and authority and pomp and circumstance and all the rest to keep people reverent, we're keeping them as little children. Until we can turn people free, "Look you're going to stand on your own some day; better start doing it now," we're not giving a finishing message.

Venden: What kind of circumstances or situation do you think will eventually move people to get ready to, to get this clarified? Do you think it will take some fearful, fear-producing event, some world catastrophe or something like that?

AGM: That is often used, but fear is more the experience at the foot of Sinai. Fear gets one started. Fear is no way to finish. How the Lord will bring this about, I don't know. We talk of these things as "Acts of God" in insurance policies sometimes. The thing is, when the opportunity comes, are we going to be ready to take advantage of it? When people want to hear the truth about God, the larger view, am I ready to help them find it?

Venden: What's the best way to prepare for this, to take advantage of these opportunities?

AGM: Well, I think understanding the importance of this larger, great controversy view, the truth about our God, and since that is to be found in all Sixty-six Books, there is nothing more practical, more concrete and essential than that we learn to read the Bible as a whole. And there's a major activity of the Church to which we're proud to belong, I can't think of a more important one, than a tremendous revival of study of the entire Bible, all of it, every story, not

just give them to the children. We need to take the Bible back and read it through and through and get this larger view, decide whether we like it or not. And if we're proud of it, it will show through in the way we speak not so much of ourselves but of our God. Then when the opportunity comes, we will be ready.

Venden: You know, our theme tonight, "How Soon Will The Conflict Be Over?" takes me back to an event this week in which you led in our thinking at a funeral service. And I was impressed, Graham, with your assurance to all of us, the family and to those of us who had come, with your conviction about the nearness. He is coming soon. Won't you comment just a bit more on that, review that for us? What do you mean when you say that -- I remember you preaching up at Mountain View when I was pastor there -- how near is near? And this is a number of years later, and here's the same note.

AGM: By the way, I used that title about forty years ago up at Pacific Union College, "How Near is Near?" I think historically the great even that is coming is just around the corner. Because what needs to be done could be done. And I think the increase of knowledge which is in Daniel 12:4 is occurring. Look at the technology now for communicating with the whole world. Incredible technology. The satellites. It may be possible to communicate with the whole world and give them this picture. On the other hand, the Second Coming is as near as our last moment of breath, you know. And that's why I think of it at funerals. When a loved one dies, especially if he or she has been ill and in pain, the next moment of consciousness that person is face to face with the Lord at the Second Coming. And I love that Thessalonians passage which says, "If someone dies before the Lord comes and they feel maybe they have missed something?" No, Thessalonians says, "They will arise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord." So the main thing is, more important than knowing when the end comes, is to trust God. And if I should die tonight, I want to die His trusting child, because then I will arise His trusting child. I'll have no complaints. We'll all have lots of questions. We might even say, "I kind of wanted to live through that." I think Paul did. Remember there, Paul said, "I'm torn between staying with you to help you and my desire to depart and be with the Lord." He didn't believe in the immortality of the soul. He knew that as a Roman citizen, when his head was cut off with that sharp sword, the next instant of consciousness he'd be face to face with the One he'd been preaching about with such pride. So he will have no complaints. So the end is really very, very near. Especially in a Medical Center like this when we see folk come to the end of their lives all the time, sometimes very sad, we have good news for them: "You fall asleep tonight; you will wake up the next moment from a dreamless sleep face to face with the Lord." That's how near it is. But I believe the big event is also near.

Venden: Tonight is number nineteen. We have just one more Friday evening in our series. I want to remind our people here in our congregation and at home and watching through video that this book, [Can God Be Trusted?](#) is a very nice review of our series, not a verbatim report of it, but a review that he wrote a number of years ago. We'd like to invite you to write for it. Just write to: The University Church, Loma Linda, CA 92354, and we'll be happy to send you a copy.