

THE THIRD ANGEL'S WARNING AGAINST SPORT - PART 2

"Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways." (Haggai 1:5)

God, in the tone of a concerned Father, utters the above words especially for this last generation. It would behove all who are stirred to any degree by the love shown them on the cross of Calvary to separate from the things which placed the Son of God on that tree. The principles of sports present to the willing soul a number of reasons that caused Christ to suffer the ignominious death which He did. Understanding the origin of the principles of sports, the manner in which God views the same, and their influence on the character (as is revealed in the first installment of this subject), it becomes apparent why sports contribute largely to the slaying of the innocent Lamb of God that Had to die vicariously years ago to save man from them. Then God comes with a message He would have conveyed to His people in its most telling force. He calls upon every reasoning mind to "consider your ways." He enjoins upon His people the task of evaluating the worth of sporting events in the light of Golgotha's tree. Knowing how serious a matter this is, God repeats His injunction:

"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways." (Haggai 1:7)

The Almighty does not repeat things which are of no great consequence to the crowning work of His creation on earth - man. If the Lord speaks it twice, it is because it is established by Him and He will shortly bring it to pass:

"And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." (Genesis 41:32)

The omniscient One doubled His message to Pharaoh emphasizing not only its importance, but its urgency. We see the Lord applying this principle more than once in His Word. Joseph was given two dreams illustrating a truth that would take place in his experience (see Genesis 37:5-10), and in the message for these last days, the warning of the fall of Babylon appears twice in the Word of Inspiration (see Revelation 14:8; 18:2). Sadly, forasmuch as God goes through the pains of repeating His warnings and admonitions, men comprehend it not.

"For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not." (Job 33:14)

But God is righteous, and notwithstanding the widespread rejection of the warning against sports (amongst other evils), He gives the message still. It will stand on record and be as a witness against all who spurn its present merciful call, and will at the judgment seat of God, give justification to the verdict He will pass on all who would have despised His Words. This second installment serves as a second witness to God's warning against sport through the agency of the third angel's message. And all who heed his voice will be spared from the terrible denunciations that are to fall upon the finally impenitent, who decide to join hands with the Papal beast and her affiliates.

THE LEOPARD-LIKE BEAST - THE ROLE OF ROME IN SPORTS AND THE END TIMES

"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw

was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.” (Revelation 13:1, 2)

The beast that the third angel raises his voice in warning against is this leopard-like beast of Revelation 13. This beast as mentioned in before, represents the Papacy. The fact that it is described as “like unto a leopard” is meant to channel the mind of the Bible student to the leopard of Greece. The first installment identified the Greek kingdom as symbolized in Bible prophecy by this beast of prey. Also, it was shown, that the distinguishing feature of the leopard, is the unchangeable nature of its spots. These spots prophetically represent the world and the things of the world. One of the major roles of Greece in prophetic history was the work of laying a foundation consisting of religion, philosophy, culture and practice, which would be built upon by modern society. Greek mysticism and beliefs pervade our world today. And the best agent of the Devil, that he has used to ensure that the spirit of Greece is perpetuated, is none other than the Papal See. Most if not all of modern practices and cultures find their link with Rome. Thus it is correctly identified by the Holy Scriptures as the leopard-like beast.

“Of the leopard-like beast it is declared: “There was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies.... And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in Heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.” This prophecy, which is nearly identical with the description of the little horn of Daniel 7, unquestionably points to the papacy.” – {The Great Controversy (1888), p.439.1}

This application is confirmed by the historical understanding that one of the chief attributes of Rome was its ability to assimilate religions, practices and cultures.

“One of the most important attributes of the Romans was the ability to assimilate ideas and customs from the cultures and societies which they encountered. Roman sports were highly influenced by the Greeks.” {<http://www.tribunesandtriumphs.org/roman-life/roman-sports.htm>}

The body of the beast is of a leopard, so the composition of the Roman Papal kingdom is largely of Greek origin. She has continued Grecian practice, culture and religion to this day. This is also demonstrated in the description of Papal Rome in the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation, under the symbol of the harlot, mystery Babylon.

“And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.” (Revelation 18:2)

The Papal system is the habitation of devils and the hold of every false spirit, religion and doctrine. With this in mind, it would do well for the candid and willing Christian to note that the Greeks, the institutors of sport into our modern world, considered these activities as religious in nature.

“History of sports can be traced back to the ancient Greeks. During those days admiration for the healthy human body is shown in their sculpture and makes almost a religion of competitive

athletics. It was their custom on solemn occasions, including even funerals, to engage in races. This passion leads to the world's first athletic fixture - the games at Olympia, established according to tradition in the year 776 BC and held every four years. At the beginning this was a one-day athletic meeting with a single competitive event. The entire day is taken up with heats for a running race - a sprint the length of the stadium, the equivalent of about 200 meters. In later years more events are added.

In the sports history, the important events that are included in the Olympic Games are discus throw, javelin throw, long jump, boxing, wrestling, chariots, horse racing and a challenge to test all-round ability - the pentathlon. The pentathlon actually starts with contest in four criteria - running, jumping, throwing the discus and the javelin. The winners from these encounters have to meet in a fifth and exclusive contest, wrestling. However, the winner receives a simple token of their victory, a garland of fresh olive to wear on the head. This is essentially a religious festival, in honor of the greatest of the Greek gods, Zeus whose sanctuary is at Olympia." {<http://www.icnsportsweb.com/a-brief-description.html>}

These sports were a religious festival to Zeus, the highest of all Greek gods, and the principles remain the same at present. Some may claim that sport is no religion today, but indeed it is. The stadiums are the centers of worship - the churches of sport. And it is not a coincidence that the people sing songs therein. Some even go to the extent of changing the words of the sacred hymns of God to suit their occasions! Furthermore, the players are made types of demigods which the supporters adore, dare I say, worship. They are followed, they are praised; their faces are illustrated on billboards, on buses, on shops and even on clothing. Does Christ receive that much attention? Something, therefore, must be amiss.

The question of importance then is: Would the Papacy, a religious entity, be involved with sport? We answer in the affirmative. The increase of knowledge on the third angel reveals that the system of Papal Rome as a combination of an array of pagan religions (see Revelation 18:2). The World Cup that has just ended gives clear testimony to this premise. In illustrating the final of the much loved event, the media chose to employ the current pope of Rome and his predecessor. One being a German, the other being an Argentine, it suited their purpose to show the world in this manner, the control they have over them. As they have succeeded in making the world wonder after the sport, they know of a certainty that soon, the world will be wondering after Rome. It is right in our faces, and yet as Laodiceans, we see it not.

HEBREWS AND SPORTS - ADVENTISM'S DILEMMA

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us," (Hebrews 12:1)

As a people who had been called apart by God to be separate from the world, the Hebrews would not have been expected to be so familiar with Greek practice. But sadly, they were. And Paul in speaking to the Hebrews employed an illustration which would have justifiably been applied to the Greeks as was shown in the first installment. How had this state of affairs come to be? Even in the time of Paul, Israel had become familiar with sporting events, for they also were involved in Greek games:

“The Greek games were performed in Jerusalem itself, and Jewish youth, dressed only in the scarf and broad hat in imitation of the god Hermes, wrestled like the Athenian athletes. It is stated by Dr. Mears that the priests, when the signal was given for the sports, left their work in the temple to watch the games. Greek names replaced the Jewish in many instances, and even priests intermarried with the Greeks. It is no wonder that Gabriel gave specific instruction concerning the name to be given the babe of Zacharias and Elizabeth, for although there was once a time when every child in Israel was named under the inspiration of the Spirit, the Israelites had now chosen Greece in place of God.

“The whole Jewish teaching was Hellenized; and when John the Baptist was born, his mother and father were commanded to leave the city of Jerusalem, and educate the child in the desert, away from the influence of the schools and society of the Jews. Christ himself never entered the schools of his day because of the mixture of the truth of God with heathen philosophy. Greek teaching exalted nature; but the Son of God could not hear the voice of the Father in the teachings of the schools, and he wandered through the woods alone, or in company with his mother. Then it was that nature, the great object lesson of the Creator, was opened to his expanding mind. Other Jewish youth sat at the feet of the rabbis, learning what the spirit of the Greeks taught, and they crucified the Lord of life.” The Story of Daniel the Prophet pg.190-191, by Stephen N. Haskell

The Greek games were played in Jerusalem itself, the center of Jehovah worship! We understand Seventh-day Adventists to be modern Israel - the modern Hebrews. Therefore, the best illustration of modern Israel would naturally be ancient Israel. Has not sport been assimilated into Adventist churches and schools worldwide in 2014? Some have gone to the lengths of establishing church leagues and inter-school tournaments promoting the religious festivals of Greece that were put in place to further the agenda of Rome! Judge ye, but have modern Israel chosen Greece over God? What is also of great concern in the above quoted passage, is the connection between education and sport. There is mention of the scarf and broad hat such as graduates wear, and a direct mention of Greek philosophy which had found its way into Jewry. And today, the writer knowing mainly about the situation in his country is startled upon realization that the Adventist institutions of today are accredited under the secular government's Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture. How then can we say that this is coincidence?

There is something terribly wrong with our type of education and with our love for sport. (For more information, read "The Broken Blueprint" by Vance Ferrell). Anciently, the priests of Israel would leave their ministrations in the sanctuary to participate in the Greek games. In like manner, the Adventists of today, and even the leaders of the church afford to leave convocation early on the Sabbath day to go and watch their teams play! Will such defend the Sabbath at the Sunday law? No, no, never! Such are piling up wrath against the day of wrath.

THE CUP OF GOD'S WRATH - THE TRUE WORLD CUP

"Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matthew 26:38, 39)

Our Lord Jesus bore the sins of the whole human race upon His shoulders. He faced the unmingled wrath of God on behalf of a world that willed to sin. The symbol of that wrath was a cup which Christ had to drink for all humanity. This cup is the same cup of indignation identified by the third angel in his warning to the world. All the rebellious nations that refuse to heed this call will have to drink of that cup. This is a cup full of wrath for the whole world; it is the true cup that all should diligently be seeking to escape from with all others being counterfeits.

"For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them." (Psalm 75:8)

All the wicked of the earth, or of the world, will have to drink of that cup even to the dregs. They shall have to feel the stroke of God's anger because of slighting His privileges and mercy. Babylon, the enemy of God and all righteousness also has a cup, and all who purpose to drink of its contents will have to drink God's wrath as well.

"Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad." (Jeremiah 51:7)

The wine in the cup of Babylon has made the nations of the earth mad, but mad upon what?

"A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols." (Jeremiah 50:38)

The nations that are mad are mad upon their idols. Whether it is the Egyptian goddess holing up the world (as is depicted on the FIFA World Cup trophy, one of the counterfeit cups), or the different sporting idols illustrated all over the world, Babylon or Rome has met with great success in getting all nations, including Adventism, to become mad upon

these sports and cups. But those who partake of Babylon's sins, those who insist in clinging to sports will have to experience the indignation of an offended God, and drink of His cup.

"For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head. For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been." (Obadiah 1:15, 16)

The heathen, those who engage in pagan practices and religion such as is the practice of sports shall drink of God's cup of wrath and be as though they had not been. It is a serious matter to choose to continue in sporting festivities and events, it will cost the majority their eternal life, for the majority will not heed the warning.

"I have tried in the fear of God to set before His people their danger and their sins, and have endeavored, to the best of my feeble powers, to arouse them. I have stated startling things, which, if they had believed, would have caused them distress and terror, and led them to zeal in repenting of their sins and iniquities. I have stated before them that, from what was shown me, but a small number of those now professing to believe the truth would eventually be saved — not because they could not be saved, but because they would not be saved in God's own appointed way. The way marked out by our divine Lord is too narrow and the gate too strait to admit them while grasping the world or while cherishing selfishness or sin of any kind. There is no room for these things; and yet there are but few who will consent to part with them, that they may pass the narrow way and enter the strait gate." — {Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, p.445.2}

A small number will eventually enter the pearly gates, not because God has willed it so, but because the majority of the professed people of God will not consent to part with this world. The way is too narrow and strait, and cannot allow them to pass because they are holding on to sports among other elements of this world. Only those who follow God's appointed way to separate from the world, and the things of the world, will find admittance into the everlasting kingdom wherein will be no competitive spirits nor events that will necessitate the ascendancy of one class above another. God alone will be exalted and will be the object of attention. His command is simple; break free from sports and live, continue in them and die. The same wrath that Christ, the Son of God, had to drink; which cup made Him tremble, will have to be drunk from the true Cup for world by all who reject His sacrifice and final call of mercy.

LIFTING THE TROPHY - THE COUNTERFEIT OF THE LORD'S ENSIGN

"Therefore is the anger of the LORD kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them: and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." (Isaiah 5:25)

The people of God must understand that the His anger is kindled against them. This anger will not be turned away until justice is met. Why will the Lord stretch forth His hand against His own?

“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.” (Isaiah 5:20-24)

His people have come to know evil as good and good as evil. They see nothing wrong with sport (among other things), they do not consider that it is Satan’s invention (see RH September 10, 1901 Par. 5), and they feel justified in engaging in it. They call the Devil’s works good! They zealously defend those who participate in these things, and persecute those who would point out their evils. They have cast away the law of God, the law of love which esteems the other better than oneself (see Philippians 2:3-5). By participating in sports they clearly break all the principles of that law (see first installment). It is for these reasons among others that a flood of wrath is coming their way unless they repent. But while God will punish one class, He will have a small remnant of faithful ones that He will lift up as an ensign and a trophy of His victory over the Great Controversy - the 144000.

“And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” (Isaiah 11:12)

“And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.” (Zechariah 9:16)

Satan has placed his counterfeits in everyone of his inventions, and sports are not an exception. The Lord shows in His word how He will lift up His faithful people as an ensign for all the world to see; but this will only be accomplished when He will have done a work of purifying the church, removing the sinners from its midst (see Ezekiel 9:4-6; Isaiah 4:2-4; 10:20-23; LDE179.2). This process is already ongoing, and will be completed at the soon coming Sunday law. But what Satan has done is to divert the attention of God’s people to zealously seek the lifting up of trophies such as the one recently lifted by the German soccer team. But His people do not understand that in the very near future, God is going to lift up the true trophy of His victory, the 144000. This will spell doom to the impenitent in His church, as they will have to receive their dues according to their works - the cup of God’s indignation.

The enemy of souls for years has mimicked and mocked what God is about to do by having God's plan acted and re-acted in the pitches and courts of the various sports. He has channeled the attention of God's people to the many supposed cups and trophies that have been lifted in apparent victory, and the people of God just cannot discern his deceptions. He truly has them under his control. Long they have neglected their work of personal preparation to meet the Sunday law in this time of the investigative judgment. And one of the reasons for this is that many of them have sacrificed their eternal crowns for the corruptible treasure in the temporary pleasure and the vainglory of sports. What a woeful end to those who will refuse to repent.

IN CONCLUSION

"The Sunday movement is now making its way in darkness. The leaders are concealing the true issue, and many who unite in the movement do not themselves see whither the undercurrent is tending. Its professions are mild and apparently Christian, but when it shall speak it will reveal the spirit of the dragon." – {Counsels for the Church, p.335.2}

God's people forget that the Sunday movement is not in all its phases an open movement. It is making its way in darkness, and is stealing upon us stealthily. And one of the major reasons why we have forgotten is because we are so engrossed in the things of this world! Somehow, we seem to think that all other activity halts because we are enjoying our worldly entertainment or worldly recreational activities. On the contrary, the work of the enemies of righteousness is greatly escalated in a manner we understand not! A look into the current news will prove this to be true. The wars and rumors of wars, the strife and natural disasters continue according to Christ's Word as though no tournaments have been taking place. The 2014 FIFA World Cup, and a whole list of other sports have successfully been used by the Devil to distract many of the Adventist people from studying the events connected with the close of probation, and preparing for the time of trouble. Thus kept under his control, lulled to sleep, the moment of reckoning comes where they will see to late their need of their Savior.

"I lay down my pen and lift up my soul in prayer, that the Lord would breathe upon His backslidden people, who are as dry bones, that they may live. The end is near, stealing upon us so stealthily, so imperceptibly, so noiselessly, like the muffled tread of the thief in the night, to surprise the sleepers off guard and unready. May the Lord grant to bring His Holy Spirit upon hearts that are now at ease, that they may no longer sleep as do others, but watch and be sober. — The General Conference Bulletin, 1893, 132, 133." – {Christian Service, p.41.2}

Will we remain in the Devil's lair until our probation closes? The answer lies in the heart of the individual. The writer acknowledges that the majority of God's people will not consider nor heed this message (see Ezekiel 2 and 3), but this will only increase their accountability at the judgment bar of God for they have received warning from Him. Do not be found on the wrong side of the issue.