

# Sabbath School Lessons

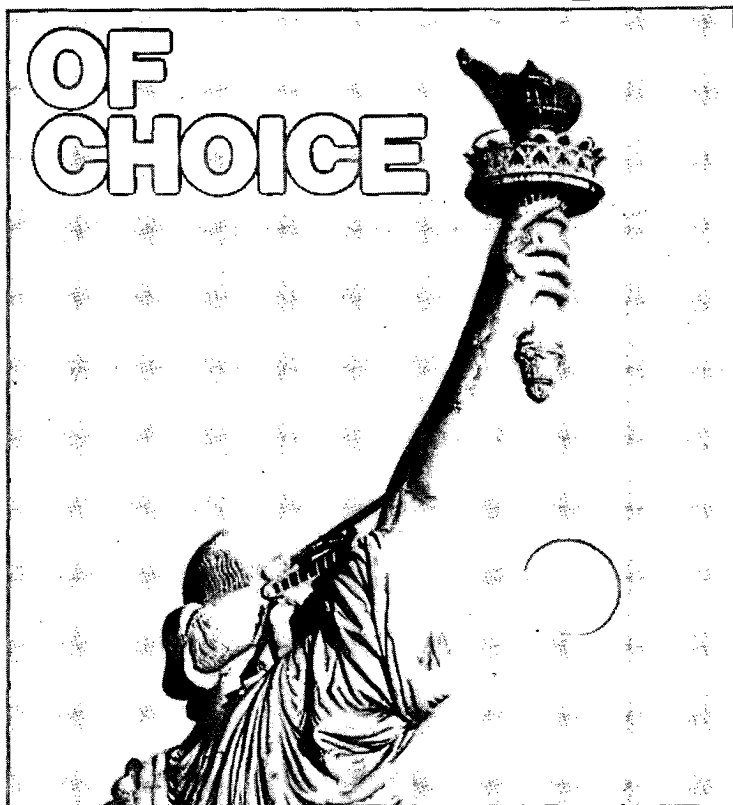
## God Reveals His Love

### *What Seventh-day Adventists Believe*

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# Meet the Writers

## Of This Quarter's Lessons

Dr. Erwin R. Gane is the new editor of the Adult Sabbath School Lessons. While he has pastored several churches on two continents, most of his service has been in the field of education. He taught at Avondale College in his native Australia, and at Union and Pacific Union Colleges in the United States. He received his M.A., M.Div., and M.Th. degrees from Andrews University, and a Ph.D. degree from the University of Nebraska. Dr. Gane and his wife, Winsome, have two grown sons.



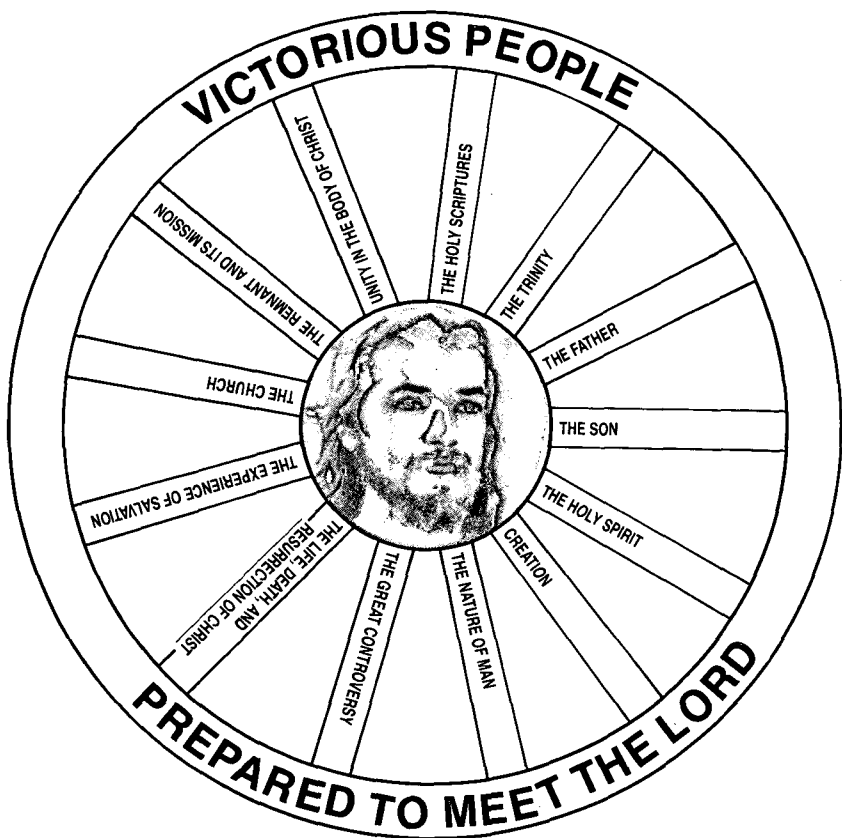
Elder J. Robert Spangler is associate secretary of the Ministerial Department at the General Conference and is editor of *Ministry Magazine*. He received his B.A. from Columbia Union College and his M.A. from Andrews University. He served as pastor and conference evangelist for eleven years before moving to the Far East Division, where he worked as ministerial secretary for eight years. Elder Spangler has written three books, *First Things First, Marked!* and *Healthy, Happy, Holy*, which he co-authored with Leo R. Van Dolson. The Spanglers have two grown daughters.



Leo R. Van Dolson has recently retired as editor of the Adult Sabbath School Lessons. His career has included pastoral work in the U.S. and Japan, teaching at Pacific Union College and the Loma Linda University School of Health. He holds a Ph.D. in educational administration from Claremont College. Dr. Van Dolson has served as an editor on *Ministry*, *Life and Health*, and the *Adventist Review* magazines. He has authored or co-authored 18 books and has written several adult teachers' aids. He and his wife, Bobbie Jane, have two grown sons.



*Acknowledgment:* Others whose contributions have been used in preparing these lessons are Dr. Norman Gulley, Kenneth McFarland, and the writers of the articles that appeared in the special doctrinal issue of the *Adventist Review* published in 1981.



## Christ the Center of Truth

These lessons begin two quarters of study dealing with the twenty-seven fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

During these two quarters, it will be of utmost importance to understand that every teaching of the church centers in Jesus Christ. "Christ, His character and work, is the center and circumference of all truth, He is the chain upon which the jewels of doctrine are linked. In Him is found the complete system of truth."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, August 15, 1893.

As each doctrine is studied we need to ask ourselves how this doctrine centers in Christ. Another question that should be addressed is, "How does belief in this doctrine affect me today?" These two questions will require meditation, prayer, and discussion if we are to receive a rich reward from our study.

# God Tells Us About His Love



**MEMORY TEXT:** "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

**CENTRAL TEACHING:** "The Holy Scriptures. The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history."—Fundamental Belief No. 1.

## OUTLINE:

- I. God's Two Words.
- II. Evidences of Inspiration.
- III. How to Understand the Bible.
- IV. The Importance of Bible Study.
- V. The Word Reveals the Word.

**INTRODUCTION:** The God of the Bible is a God who reveals Himself to us. He does not leave us alone in our state of lostness, alienated from Him because of sin. He comes to us, showing us His character, revealing His will, offering us the salvation He has provided.

God did not send the Bible to us by overnight express from heaven. He did not hire a staff of temporary secretaries to take word-for-word dictation. Instead, He inspired the Bible writers with His thoughts and messages by such means as visions, dreams, angelic conversations, and special revelations to the mind of the prophet. The prophets then wrote these revelations in their own words. Thus, while many people wrote the Bible, it had only one Author.

The central personality of the written Word is the Living Word—Jesus Christ. And the central theme of the Bible is God's love as demonstrated in the life, death, and teachings of Jesus.

Being a large book, the Bible deals with many subjects. It contains history, prophecy, doctrine, biography, poetry, and counsel. But, for God's true followers, the chief motive for reading the Bible is not so much to learn its facts as to get acquainted with its Author. The ultimate purpose of Scripture is to lead us into a personal relationship with God.

The old adage "we are what we eat" can apply to the spiritual dimensions

of life as well as to the physical. If because our spiritual diet is impoverished we try to feed our souls on the husks of the commonplace and uninspired, our minds and souls will become dwarfed.

Do you not know someone who in the last few years has demonstrated striking Christian growth? If you check the reason for it, you will discover that deep, daily, and prayerful Bible study underlies all such spectacular Christian development.



## **I. GOD'S TWO WORDS.**

**What claim do Bible writers make concerning the source of their messages? What does the Bible do for those who accept its inspiration? 1 Thess. 2:13.**

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The Bible does not attempt to prove that it is the Word of God. It claims divine authorship. The proof of this claim lies in what it is able to do for those who accept its claim.

**What other "Word" is pointed to as the revelation of God? John 1:1, 2, 14.**

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Seventh-day Adventists believe in the two-sided, divine-human nature of revelation. "The Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that 'the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' John 1:14."—*The Great Controversy*, p. vi.

**ILLUMINATION:** "It seems in harmony with the revealed truth of God to suggest that a similarity in principle prevails between the manner of the birth of the incarnate Word of God and the method of the composition of the written Word of God. Scripture was, so to speak, 'conceived or inspired of the Holy Ghost, and thought and uttered by human prophets.' Scripture is obviously the work of human writers; and yet it is still more the product and result of a special and supernormal activity of the Spirit."—Alan N. Stibbs, *Revelation and the Bible*, ed. C. F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1949), p. 111.

**How does 2 Peter 1:19-21 make it clear that the Bible has a divine Author even though it was written by selected prophets?**

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**COMPLETE:** The Bible is a collection of many ancient books, its first books having been written about 1500 B.C. and its last book about A.D. 100. There are \_\_\_\_\_ books in the first section, which is known as the Old Testament, and \_\_\_\_\_ books in the New Testament, making a total of \_\_\_\_\_ books in this collection. (Answers for these questions will be found by studying the table of contents of your Bible.) The Bible is unique, how-

ever, in that the men who wrote it did not merely write their own ideas. The text above states that these holy men of old “spake as they were moved by the \_\_\_\_\_.” About 40 different writers served as God’s penmen in the production of the Bible. These individuals lived and wrote in such widely scattered localities as Sinai, Babylon, Jerusalem, and Rome. God inspired various classes of writers. He used princes and paupers, heroes and herdsmen.

Have you ever tried to jump to heaven from your back yard? There is no way we can make it to heaven on our own. That is why God took the initiative and came down to us. *For revelation to be revelation it must have supernatural quality.* It comes as something from outside our world. It is not merely the product of history. It does not spring from human creativity. It is a message from beyond the human realm and therefore comes to inform, motivate, and change us. It comes as the purpose of God’s seeking—to tell us how we can be saved. Salvation does not have its origin on our side. It comes from His side. But it has been worked out on our side; coming to fruition, or meaning in Christ. Christ came from heaven, was born into the human family, and worked out salvation within human history. In the same way divine thoughts have come to this earth, born into the minds of prophets, who gave them to us in human expression.

The Holy Spirit is able to preserve the divine within the human. In the same way that the divine and human natures were united in Jesus, divine thoughts were kept preserved by the Spirit within human expressions. Thus the Bible is at once fully human, but more than human. Through its human words, thoughts, patterns, ideas, concepts, and history, God speaks.



## II. EVIDENCES THAT THE BIBLE IS INSPIRED.

The Bible’s impressive harmony, in spite of its great diversity in authorship, time, and places written, is one of the unmistakable evidences that it is what it claims to be—the Word of God.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** How do the following Bible passages indicate that the Bible is inspired?

1. 2 Tim. 3:16 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Rom. 1:16 \_\_\_\_\_
3. 1 Peter 1:24, 25 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Jer. 28:9 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Isa. 40:8 \_\_\_\_\_

**ILLUMINATION:** “The apostle Peter says that there are in Scripture ‘things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest . . . unto their own destruction.’ 2 Peter 3:16. The difficulties of Scripture have been urged by skeptics as an argument against the Bible; but so far from this, they constitute a strong evidence of its divine inspiration. . . .



The very grandeur and mystery of the themes presented should inspire faith in it as the word of God.

“The Bible unfolds truth with a simplicity and a perfect adaptation to the needs and longings of the human heart, that has astonished and charmed the most highly cultivated minds, while it enables the humblest and uncultured to discern the way of salvation. . . . Thus the plan of redemption is laid open to us, so that every soul may see the steps he is to take in repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, in order to be saved in God’s appointed way; yet beneath these truths, so easily understood, lie mysteries that are the hiding of His glory—mysteries that overpower the mind in its research, yet inspire the sincere seeker for truth with reverence and faith. The more he searches the Bible, the deeper is his conviction that it is the word of the living God, and human reason bows before the majesty of divine revelation.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 107, 108.

Because God changes not, the revelation of His character in the Scriptures is unchanging. Because He has one way of saving lost men and women, the portrayal of that way in the Scriptures never can be changed or superseded. Because they are the word of God, they summon each of us to salvation and obedience. In a world of flux and change, of shifting values and conflicting claims of truth, they remain the one unerring standard.



### **III. HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE.**

Tremendous joy comes in discovering the hidden treasures of the Word of God. The reward we receive is worth far more than the effort it takes to discover it. And the effort itself becomes joyful, just as with the man in the parable of the hidden treasure who became so thrilled with his discovery that in his joy he sold all that he had. The effort and trouble that it took to sell his things quickly, even at a loss, was no bother to him, but was exciting in itself as he anticipated the final results.

**What attitude is essential to understanding the Bible? Prov. 28:5.**

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**ILLUMINATION:** “Never should the Bible be studied without prayer. Before opening its pages we should ask for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and it will be given.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 91.

As we open our Bibles to study, we should lay aside all preconceived opinions and allow the Holy Spirit to guide us into truth. (See John 16:13.)

**Why is the guidance of the Holy Spirit so essential in Bible study? 1 Cor. 2:11-14.**

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As we approach the study of the Scriptures, we must remember their unique character. Ordinary means of investigation are inadequate. Many have seen the three-dimensional motion pictures that require special glasses

to bring each scene into focus. God provides special glasses for us through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In a special way the Spirit of truth focuses our attention on the plan of salvation.

**What indication do we have that scripture needs to be compared with scripture in order for us to get all God's counsel on a topic being studied? Isa. 28:10, 13.**

Although we must compare scripture with scripture, we must seek to understand fully what a passage says before we move on to other passages. We should not take it out of context, making the passage say something that God never intended it to say.

**ILLUMINATION:** "We should take one verse, and concentrate the mind on the task of ascertaining the thought which God has put in that verse for us. We should dwell upon the thought until it becomes our own, and we know 'what saith the Lord.'"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 390.

**As we become better acquainted with God's will, what can we expect to happen in our lives? Heb. 4:12.**

If the study of the Bible does not change our lives, we can be certain there is some fault in us. We cannot blame God. If we expect God to continue to guide us into additional revelations of His will, we must accept and put into practice the light He already has given us. (See John 7:17.)

**What value is there to be found in memorizing portions of the Bible? Psalm 119:11.**



#### IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF BIBLE STUDY.

**Why is daily Bible study so important to the Christian? Jer. 9:23, 24; Acts 17:10, 11.**

**ILLUMINATION:** "Every day you should learn something new from the Scriptures. Search them as for hid treasures, for they contain the words of eternal life. Pray for wisdom and understanding to comprehend these holy writings"—*My Life Today*, p. 22.

**SEARCH AND LEARN: What do the passages that follow teach about the importance of Bible study?**

1. Psalm 119:105 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Psalm 119:165 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Matt. 4:4 \_\_\_\_\_
4. John 5:24 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Rom. 10:17 \_\_\_\_\_

**COMPLETE:** Those who \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that which Christ teaches are like the man who built his home on the solid rock (Luke 6:46-49). The floods mentioned in these verses represent the tests and trials of life. Faith that stands life's tests is built on careful and prayerful study of the Word of God.



## V. THE WORD REVEALS THE WORD.

Wrongly viewed, even a Bible doctrine (for example, the destruction of the wicked) can present a false picture of what God is like. But studied with prayer and humility and with the Holy Spirit's immediate guidance, each Bible teaching becomes a picture that helps us see God more clearly. In a special way the Bible reveals God to us in Christ. Christ in turn is the clearest revelation of God's character that the world has ever seen. He is God's thought made audible. He is God's character made tangible. He is God's mind made understandable.

**What invitation does Christ extend to us through the Scriptures?  
Matt. 11:28.**

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Christ suggests that as we "diligently study," we will find that "these are the Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39, NIV). We find Him to be the core, content, and context of these writings. If we take Jesus and His salvation out of the Bible nothing substantial is left. All focuses on Him as the central good news. All Scripture is given by divine inspiration, and is able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Him (2 Tim.3:15, 16).

In coming to the Bible, we discover the Holy Spirit's mission is to lead us to Jesus, to glorify Him, and not the Holy Spirit Himself (John 16:13, 14). Because Biblical writers wrote under inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21), their focus also is on Jesus. Yet, to one unenlightened, or not guided by the Spirit, the Bible remains closed. To experience the purpose of the Scriptures, we must allow the Holy Spirit to lead us to encounter Christ therein, and be led to glorify Him.



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read the introduction to *The Great Controversy*, pp. v-ix. (If available to you read the excellent article in *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 15-23.)

**WHAT OTHERS TEACH:** The subject of inspiration and revelation remains an issue of much theological discussion. Seventh-day Adventists reject the concept of a double source of revelation—the Bible and tradition. We Adventists accept the Bible only as the rule of our faith and practice.

On the various methods used in approaching the Scriptures, and the one

that we believe to be correct, we suggest that those deeply interested secure a copy of the 1986 Annual Council action dealing with Methods of Bible Study. Write the Biblical Research Institute, 6840 Eastern Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20012 for a copy.

**HOW TO SHARE THIS TRUTH WITH OTHERS:** Set yourself a goal of sharing what you are learning about what Seventh-day Adventists believe with someone else every week this quarter. People with whom you share this teaching about the Bible most likely will fit into one of the following categories:

1. Those who do not believe that the Bible is inspired. With such people you should emphasize the Bible's claims and the evidences for them. Particularly emphasize such evidences as the Bible's power to change lives through its presentation of Christ, its fulfilled prophecy, its unity of teaching, and its timeless relevance for the problems of humanity.

2. Those who believe that only portions of the Bible are inspired. Ask these people, Who is to decide which portions are inspired? Cite the claims to full inspiration in 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20, 21. Show how Jesus and New Testament writers accepted and used the Old Testament as inspired.

3. Those who accept the Bible as fully inspired. With these people you are on common ground. Reinforce their beliefs as you demonstrate from the Bible the truth of the Adventist message.

4. Those who believe that every word in the original manuscripts was dictated by God, and that it is completely inerrant. Explain that there would not be the variety in style of writing or differences in recounting events if the Holy Spirit had dictated every word of the Scriptures.

**SUMMARY:** In two or three brief sentences, summarize what you have learned from this lesson and what it means to you personally:

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#### APPLICATION

- Do I spend more time studying the Scriptures or looking at television?
- Do I study the Bible in order to prove a point or to strengthen my relationship with its Author?

Watch at your local Adventist Book Center for the supplemental book.

# God Tells Us About the Godhead



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:4, 5).

**CENTRAL TEACHING:** "The Trinity. There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation." —Fundamental Belief No. 2.

## OUTLINE:

- I. There Is Only One God.
- II. Jesus Christ Is Deity.
- III. The Holy Spirit Is a Person and Deity.
- IV. There is Only One Creator—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- V. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit Have the Same Characteristics.

**INTRODUCTION:** A woman in Sabbath School once asked her teacher, "To whom do I pray, to the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit?" With some feeling she explained that when she prayed to the Father, it seemed that she was not communicating with Jesus. But when she spoke directly to Jesus, it seemed that she was ignoring the Father.

The teacher explained that orthodox prayer is speaking to the Father, in the name of the Son, through the power of the Holy Spirit. He went on to explain, however, that Jesus may be addressed and worshiped directly. Paul taught that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" (Phil. 2:10).

When Stephen was dying he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59).

If you think of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as One, you know that when you are speaking to Christ, you are also speaking to the Father and the Spirit. Certainly they are three divine Persons; but they are One God who loves you infinitely and wishes to have oversight of your entire life.

In every age some people have believed in the existence of many gods. Unlike the nations around them, the ancient Israelites were monotheists—they believed in only one God. This belief brought them into direct conflict with the religions of other nations. The Psalmist wrote: "For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens" (Ps. 96:5). Jacob

urged his household to put away the “strange gods” that were among them, “and be clean” (Gen. 35:2). Jeremiah was instructed to proclaim: “The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens” (Jer. 10:11).

The Christian church generally has accepted the Bible teaching that there is only one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Most Christians agree that the Bible teaching of one God in three divine Persons is a deep mystery that no human mind can understand.

God’s people are the first to admit that they cannot explain His nature. Human wisdom, regardless of how penetrating and brilliant, is totally incapable of penetrating God’s “hidden wisdom” (1 Cor. 2:7). Speaking of this wisdom, Paul declared, “None of the rulers of this age has understood: for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8, NASB). That which God has revealed about Himself in the Bible has to be accepted by faith. But the most important issue is to know Him as a Saviour from sin, who will give eternal life to those who believe.



## I. THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD.

**How did Moses express the confidence of Israel in their one God? Deut. 6:4; 4:35.**

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The Hebrew of Deut. 6:4 reads literally: “Jehovah [or Yahweh] our God, Jehovah [is] One.” Consistently God revealed Himself to the prophets as One. (See Ps. 83:18; 86:10; Isa. 43:10; 44:6.) No god ever preceded the one true God, and no other has ever come into existence to share His glory.

**According to Jesus, how many God’s are there? Mark 12:28-34.**

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Jesus emphasized the Old Testament teaching that there is only one God. His apostles taught the same truth. (See 1 Cor. 8:4; Eph. 4:5, 6; James 2:19.)

We are confronted by infinite mystery when we study the nature of God. Even so, there are a few truths on this subject that are revealed clearly. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever” (Deut. 29:29).

Nothing else that the Scriptures teach about the nature of God contradicts the truth that there is only one God. The doctrine of the Trinity does not teach that there are three separate Gods who are united only morally and spiritually. Jesus said, “I am in the Father, and the Father in me” (John 14:10). He explained to Philip, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). No human analogy is adequate to explain this mystery, and no human relationship completely parallels it.

**ILLUMINATION:** “Unmistakable evidence is given that the Creator of the universe, the One infinite in wisdom and love and truth, is the Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth, and that none can with impunity defy His power”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 123.

“Jehovah, the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One, Himself the Source and Sustainer of all, is alone entitled to supreme reverence and worship.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 305.

“The Father is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and is invisible to mortal sight.

“The Son is all the fullness of the Godhead manifested. . . .

“The Comforter that Christ promised to send after He ascended to heaven, is the Spirit in all the fullness of the Godhead, making manifest the power of divine grace to all who receive and believe in Christ as a personal Saviour. There are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will cooperate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ.”—*Evangelism*, pp. 614, 615.



**II. JESUS CHRIST IS DEITY.**

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He is equal with the Father in authority and power, and mysteriously One with Him. Christ is not another God, or an inferior God. He is Deity. He is so bound to the Father in nature and attributes that to know Him is to know the Father.

**SEARCH AND LEARN: How do the following Bible passages indicate that Jesus is God in the fullest sense?**

1. John 5:18 \_\_\_\_\_
2. John 8:58 \_\_\_\_\_
3. John 10:30-33, 38 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Col. 1:19; 2:9 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Isa. 9:6 \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus claimed equality with God. He referred to Himself as the “I AM” (John 8:58), the name given to Himself by Yahweh in the time of Moses (Ex. 3:14). His countrymen, who rejected His claim, took up stones to cast at Him. To them this was supreme blasphemy because no one could make a more exalted claim for Himself.

The Jews reacted in the same way when Jesus claimed: “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). “The Father is in me, and I in him” (verse 38; compare John 14:9, 10).

Paul’s statements in Col. 1:19 and 2:9 establish that the full and complete nature of the Deity dwells in Christ. The word “fulness” means “completeness, full measure.” The word “Godhead” (Col. 2:9) translates the Greek word that means “Deity.”

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem the God of the universe came to dwell with humanity (Matt. 1:23). Beyond our comprehension is the truth that the babe in the manger was “The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). “And yet the Creator of worlds, He in whom

was the fullness of the Godhead bodily, was manifest in the helpless babe in the manger.”—*The Signs of the Times*, July 30, 1896.

This does not mean that the Father and the Son are the same Personality. It means that, although having a distinct personality, Jesus was, and still remains, the “express image” of the Father (Heb. 1:3). The Son of God who came to earth first to show us how to live and then to die for our sins was the One “whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2). As the Deity, Christ, like the Father, has existed from the days of eternity. (Compare Heb. 7:2, 3.)

Thomas claimed Jesus Christ as his Lord and God (John 20:28). Paul taught that the One manifest in the flesh was God (1 Tim. 3:16), and that “the great God and our Saviour” is “Jesus Christ” (Titus. 2:13).

**SEARCH AND LEARN: Compare the following pairs of texts as evidence that Jehovah (Yahweh or Lord) of the Old Testament is Jesus Christ of the New Testament:**

1. Isa. 40:3 and Matt. 3:3 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Isa. 8:13, 14 and 1 Peter 2:7, 8 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Isa. 6:5 and John 12:41 \_\_\_\_\_



### III. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON AND DEITY.

The Holy Spirit is not presented in the Bible merely as God’s influence on human hearts. He is a Person who in nature, authority, and power is equal with the Father and the Son.

**SEARCH AND LEARN: What three marks of personality are possessed by the Holy Spirit?**

1. John 14:26; 16:13 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Acts 16:6, 7; 1 Cor. 12:11 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Acts 15:28; Eph. 4:30; Isa. 63:10 \_\_\_\_\_

Because the Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher, we know that He has intellect. Because He can forbid God’s servants to do certain things or to go to certain places, and because He can give spiritual gifts to whom He wishes, we know that He has a will. The fact that the Spirit can be pleased, grieved, and vexed demonstrates that He is capable of emotion.

Intellect, will, and emotion are major evidences of personality. No mere influence can do the things that the Holy Spirit does.

The Holy Spirit assumed the form of tongues like fire on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:3, 4). The experience demonstrated that the Spirit is a divine Person who comes into people’s lives. At the baptism of Jesus the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and rested upon the Saviour (Matt. 3:16). No mere influence would be represented in these ways.



**SEARCH AND LEARN:** How do the following texts indicate the Deity of the Holy Spirit?

1. Acts 5:3-5 \_\_\_\_\_
2. 2 Sam. 23:2, 3 \_\_\_\_\_
3. 2 Peter 1:21 compared with 2 Tim. 3:16 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Eze. 8:1, 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Ananias and Sapphira lied “to the Holy Ghost” (Acts 5:3), or “unto God” (verse 4). Only God has the right to withdraw His life-giving power from a person” (verse 5). The point is that the Holy Ghost is God. “The Spirit of the Lord” who spoke by David (2 Sam. 23:2) is the same Person as “the God of Israel” (verse 3). Holy men of old (the prophets) were inspired by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:21), who is God (2 Tim. 3:16).

The “hand of the Lord God,” which fell upon Ezekiel, was the hand of the Holy Spirit, who lifted him up and took him in vision to another location (Eze. 8:1, 3).

These are a few examples of the many that could be given from Scripture indicating that the Holy Spirit is Deity. He is spoken of as “the eternal Spirit” (Heb. 9:14). He is the Source of spiritual power for God’s people (Micah 3:8; Acts 1:8; Rom. 15:18, 19).

**ILLUMINATION:** “The Holy Spirit has a personality, else He could not bear witness to our spirits and with our spirits that we are the children of God. He must also be a divine person, else He could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God.”—*Evangelism*, p. 617.



#### **IV. THERE IS ONLY ONE CREATOR—FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT.**

**How many Creators does the Bible speak of? Mal. 2:10; 1 Peter 4:19; compare Gen. 1:26.**

\_\_\_\_\_

The use of the plural in Gen. 1:26 suggests that all three members of the Deity were involved.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** According to these passages, who was the Creator?

1. Gen. 1:1 \_\_\_\_\_
2. 1 Cor. 8:6 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Col. 1:16 \_\_\_\_\_

4. Heb. 1:2, 3 \_\_\_\_\_

5. Job 26:13; 33:4; Psalm 104:30 \_\_\_\_\_

The Creator, who is one Deity, not three, includes three divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is such a close and mysterious bond between them that it is never correct to regard them as three separate Gods.

Christ and the Holy Spirit exercise all the same powers and prerogatives as does the Father. There is no suggestion in Scripture that the Son and the Holy Spirit are subordinate or inferior to the Father. Those passages that speak of the Father as greater than the Son (John 14:28), or as knowing more than the Son (Mark 13:32) refer to the limitations that Christ imposed upon Himself as a man while here on earth. When Christ accepted a subordinate and dependent role He did not cease to be Deity. He wished to demonstrate to us how a human being could live in complete obedience to God's will by relying upon Him for power.



#### V. THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT HAVE THE SAME CHARACTERISTICS.

Because they are each "the fulness of the Godhead" (Col. 2:9), the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have certain identical characteristics. It is encouraging for believers to know what these characteristics are. The infinite abilities that God possesses make it possible for Him to protect and guide His people.

**What does the Bible teach about the power of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? Job 42:1, 2; Matt. 28:18; Rom. 15:19.**

**What other abilities does God have?**

1. Psalm 147:5; John 16:30; 1 Cor. 2:10 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Psalm 139:7-10 \_\_\_\_\_

**ILLUMINATION:** "All created beings live by the will and power of God. They are dependent recipients of the life of God. From the highest seraph to the humblest animate being, all are replenished from the Source of life."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 785.

An infinitely powerful being who did not love others would be someone to be afraid of. Our God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) loves so infinitely that He was prepared to suffer intensely to save us from sin and eternal death.

When we accept Christ as Saviour and Lord, the love of God is "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). Jesus explained that the Holy Spirit's presence in our hearts is the presence

of both the Father and the Son (John 14:18, 23). The all-powerful, all-knowing, infinitely-loving Creator promises to dwell within each of us, living out His life through us (Gal. 2:20). In this way the divine life and love fill our souls.



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** In the light of the truth revealed in this lesson, how would you interpret the following Bible passages? John 1:1; Col. 1:15-17; Rev. 3:14.

**WHAT OTHERS TEACH:** In A.D. 325, the Council of Nicea condemned Arianism, a heresy that denied the full Deity and eternal pre-existence of Christ. Arius taught that, back in the eternal ages, Christ was brought into existence by the Father. Therefore, Arius depicted Christ as an inferior deity. Some modern religious groups have followed Arius quite closely.

Another false view of the Godhead is known as modalism. Adherents of this view think of each member of the Godhead as another mode or form which the one God assumes at different times. A modern form of modalism is unitarianism.

**HOW TO SHARE THIS TRUTH WITH OTHERS:** It is important to emphasize what the doctrine of the Trinity has to do with our spiritual life and our salvation. The concept that Christ is a created being, minimizes the majestic truth that one equal with God, Jesus Christ, died for humankind on the cross of Calvary. The effect is to reduce our appreciation for the ultimate sacrifice that God paid to redeem us. "The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 530.

If we regard Christ and the Holy Spirit as less in power and authority than the Father, our relationship with Them will be less than it should be. How excited would you be if the ruler of your country invited you to dinner? Would you be just as excited if the vice-president or some cabinet member invited you to dinner? In the Trinity we have three Persons of equal power and authority knocking at our heart's door and offering to dwell within us.

**SUMMARY:** Seventh-day Adventists are trinitarian monotheists. They believe that our *one* God includes *three* distinct Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This mystery must be accepted by faith. Only in the heavenly kingdom will we understand the nature of God more fully. In this life every believer has the exciting privilege of having God live in His life.

#### APPLICATION

- Am I willing to believe that God is my loving heavenly Father?
- Am I willing to accept Jesus Christ as supreme Lord?

**NOTES:**

# God Tells Us What He Is Like



**MEMORY TEXT:** "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him" (John 14:7).

**CENTRAL TEACHING:** "The Father. God the Eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also revelations of the Father."—Fundamental Belief No. 3.

## OUTLINE:

- I. Limits to Our Understanding of God.
- II. God the Eternal Father.
- III. What Creation Reveals About God.
- IV. What God Is Like.
- V. God Revealed in the Son and Holy Spirit.

**INTRODUCTION:** Bored with the cult of self, many people today are looking for something better. And there *is* something better, something more satisfying—knowing God. Because God wants us to know Him, He has revealed Himself in many ways—first of all, in the Bible.

The Bible makes no direct attempt to prove God's existence—it assumes it. The first words of the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1), indicate that before the world was, He was. He is the Creator and Source of matter and life.

However, there is much about the essential nature of God that we do not know, because He has not revealed it to us. Among those items that are not revealed are the nature of His essence and how He can be eternal, infinite, and omnipresent. But God's nature is understood to some extent through the way that He deals with us, as well as in what He tells us about Himself. He has revealed that which is important for our salvation.



## I. LIMITS TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF GOD.

Picture Albert Einstein trying to explain the theory of relativity to a 3-year-old. There is no way that a 3-year-old could begin to grasp the complexity of all that was going on in the mind of the great scientist. We are in that position when it comes to trying to understand the mind of God or even what He is like. The lowliest angel is far superior to Einstein in intellect and brilliance. If we cannot understand the nature and power of an angel, how

much less can we understand the nature and magnificence of God the Father.

**SEARCH AND LEARN: How do the following scriptures reveal the limits to our understanding of God?**

Job 11:7 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 145:3 \_\_\_\_\_

Isa. 55:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Rom. 11:33 \_\_\_\_\_

Human words cannot convey the content adequately when speaking of God; they merely point beyond themselves in the direction of God. Man stutters when he tries to speak about God. One of the reasons that Jesus lived among people for more than thirty years was to demonstrate God in actions that would speak more clearly than words. That's why He said: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him" (John 14:6,7 NIV).

**Even though we cannot understand God fully, what thrilling aspect of our relationship with Him does He make possible when we choose to believe in Him? Heb. 11:1, 6.**



## II. GOD THE ETERNAL FATHER.

### 1. The Personhood of God.

**How did Jesus describe God to the Samaritan woman at the well? John 4:24.**

Jesus' statement to the woman at the well of Sychar was not intended to indicate that God is without form or center of being or activity. Christ's statement has to do with power and quality rather than with essence of being. The nature of the infinite God is far beyond that of finite humans and not to be confused with our nature. He is supernatural and exalted, beyond our ability to conceive. He exists on a plane, or dimension, that is incomprehensible to us.

Yet the Hebrew concept of spirit is more concrete than abstract. God occupies space even though He is unseeable as far as humans are concerned. We are formed in His image (Gen. 1:27), indicating that He has a specific form. Throughout the Bible God is described as a person. He speaks, hears, sees, and writes. He regrets, is grieved, and displays anger and joy. Yet the human manifestations of such actions and emotions are very imperfect illustrations of the infinitely righteous manner in which God acts and feels.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** What other aspects of God as a Person are indicated in the texts that follow?

2 Cor. 1:1; Psalm 40:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Rom. 2:16; Psalm 7:11 \_\_\_\_\_

Isa. 55:7 \_\_\_\_\_

Deut. 29:29 \_\_\_\_\_

We need to counterbalance these statements with an understanding that God's personhood is not limited to our conceptions of personhood. He is above all, He created all, and He upholds all. He is omnipotent (Rev. 19:6), high and holy (Isa. 57:15), omniscient (1 John 3:20), has infinite wisdom (Eph. 1:8), is eternal and immortal (1 Tim. 1:17), and omnipresent (Psalm 139:7; Jer. 23:24)—free from all limitations of space in His activities.

Beyond this, God is the self-determining and self-directing center of what is happening in our universe. He conceives purposes, and works to see that His purposes are ultimately carried out and accomplished.

## 2. God as Father.

Jesus' favorite way of identifying God was as Father. In the Lord's prayer Jesus indicates that God *wants* us to call Him "Father."

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** Study the passages that follow in order to learn what you can about Jesus' use of the term *Father*.

1. Matt. 11:25-27 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Mark 14:36 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Luke 10:22 \_\_\_\_\_

4. John 5:19-26 \_\_\_\_\_

5. John 17:5 \_\_\_\_\_

Through adoption by Christ, we become His sons and daughters (John 1:12, 13). God our heavenly Father is not just some sort of impersonal force or universal energy.



## III. WHAT CREATION REVEALS ABOUT GOD.

Someone has said, "God has two books—the Bible and the book of nature."

**To what extent does nature reveal God to us? Rom. 1:20.**

\_\_\_\_\_

At the time of Creation, all things, in their original perfection, were an

expression of God's thought and, as such, mirrored clearly the divine nature and goodness of the Creator. Nature was full of the knowledge of God, and all about was the evidence of His wisdom and love. But as soon as Adam and Eve sinned the consequences of sin became evident in a marred and defiled world. "Yet even in its blighted state, much that is beautiful remains. God's object lessons are not obliterated; rightly understood, nature speaks of her Creator."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 18.

**According to the psalmist, how widespread is nature's revelation of the Creator? Psalm 19:1-4.**

R. J. Voskuyl, formerly professor of chemistry and dean of Wheaton College, states: "One cannot rightly know God from the natural world alone. The scientist may work for an eternity, but he will never come to know God and all His attributes. . . . Man is but a creature of a Creator; therefore, man cannot learn about God by investigation of His creation alone, but he needs a special revelation. That special revelation is God's Word, which has been given in the Scriptures."—Members of the American Scientific Affiliation, *Modern Science and Christian Faith* (Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen Press, 1950), p. 4.

Because the Author of the Bible is the same as the Author of the book of nature, there can be no discrepancies between these two forms of revelation when rightly understood. Apparent discrepancies can be explained alone on the grounds of the limited ability of finite human minds to grasp fully the nature of God or the workings of His infinite mind.

We have to repress consciously God's revelation of Himself through His Word and through nature in order to take the position that He does not exist. One Nobel prize winning scientist reasoned that, since his mind was incapable of conceiving of a being with the enormous wisdom and power to design and create this universe, he settled the matter by simply denying the existence of God.

The Scriptures declare; "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God' " (Psalm 14:1, NASB.)

But to those who learn the proper use of God's revelation of Himself in nature, "the earth will nevermore be a lonely and desolate place. It will be their Father's house, filled with the presence of Him who once dwelt among men."—*Education*, p. 120.



#### **IV. WHAT GOD IS LIKE.**

##### **1. The Old Testament Picture of God.**

There are those who make an attempt to picture the God of the Old Testament as stern and frightening. But when properly understood the Old Testament God can be seen to be a loving, merciful God, as well as a God of justice. He expects obedience but paid an infinite price to make obedience possible.

**SEARCH AND LEARN: How do the psalmists portray the goodness and greatness of God?**

1. Psalm 33:5 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Psalm 103:8 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Psalm 111:9 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Psalm 147:5 \_\_\_\_\_

God's love is not conditioned, but springs forth spontaneously through His free decision and is thus a manifestation of His sovereignty. (See Jer. 31:3.) The prophets cite various reasons given by God for His love for Israel, such as: God chose Israel for the Father's sake or for David's sake (Deut. 7:8; Isa. 37:35), or He chose them for His own credit's sake or for His own name's sake (2 Kings 19:34; Eze. 20:9), or He chose them in order to punish the wicked surrounding nations (Deut. 9:4, 5). But the reasons given are incomplete. In God's actions and love there is mystery beyond human understanding.

## 2. The New Testament Picture of God.

In the Old Testament we sense God's eagerness to reveal that which we find almost impossible to understand fully about Him—His amazing trustworthiness and love. But in the New Testament we have the event toward which the Old Testament has been moving. It reveals God's unfathomable love, as nothing else ever has or could.

**What characteristic of God is stated clearly in the New Testament? 1 John 4:8, 16.**

These verses imply that there never has been or ever will be a time when God is *not* love. Here is revealed a unique and distinctive understanding of God that human minds unaided could not possibly have achieved. God's revelation was necessarily progressive, reaching its climax in the greatest possible manifestation of divine love at Calvary. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, RSV).

**God's love extends even beyond the heights of Calvary. How does John describe our ultimate understanding of the love of God? 1 John 3:1, 2.**



## V. GOD REVEALED IN THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Not only do the powers and qualities exhibited by God the Son and God the Spirit reveal to us what the Father is like, but both also are involved in teaching us about the Father.

**What did Jesus say about people being able to know God through Him? John 14:9.**



Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6, NIV). Not only did Jesus come to reveal the Father but also to become our way to the Father.

**How did Jesus assess His success in revealing the Father to His followers? John 17:4, 6.**

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When Jesus stooped down and washed the feet of His betrayer (John 13:11-14) He demonstrated what the Father is like. He is love. When He fed the hungry (Mark 6:39-44; 8:2-9), healed the deaf (Mark 9:25-27), dumb (Mark 7:33-37), blind (Mark 8:23-26), palsied (Luke 5:18-26), and lepers (Luke 5:12, 13), cast out demons (Matt. 15:22-28; 17:14, 21), raised the dead (Mark 5:35-42; John 11:17-45), and forgave sinners (John 8:4-11) He enabled people to see the Father mingling among humanity, bringing them His life, setting them free, giving them hope, and pointing them to a restored new earth to come.

**The Holy Spirit's love for us, implied in Romans 8:26, 27, demonstrates God's love for us. What part does the Spirit have in helping us understand the truth about the Father? John 16:13-15.**

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The picture of God developed in the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32 undoubtedly provides one of the clearest pictures ever given the world of the heavenly Father's love for His prodigal children on earth. One fact we do not ordinarily consider is that the Father in heaven lost His Son. He so loved the world that He gave His only Son. Other sons have run away as prodigals. But this Son, Jesus, went into the far country to seek and to save the lost.



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read *Steps to Christ*, pp. 9-15; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 105-107.

**WHAT OTHERS TEACH:** God is often depicted as a harsh Judge, a God of vengeance, One to be afraid of. Such a depiction is foreign to the Bible. (See Psalms 42:1, 2; 55:22; 103:13, 14.)

**HOW TO SHARE THIS TRUTH WITH OTHERS:** There are four general categories of belief relative to the doctrine of God:

1. **Atheists** believe there is no God.
2. **Agnostics** believe that it is impossible to know whether there is a God, a future life, or anything not material.
3. **Deists** believe that God created the world but assumes no control over it or over the lives of its inhabitants.
4. **Believers** in the existence and controlling power of God.

In approaching those in the first three categories, your personal Christ-like character will be more convincing than argument. With believers, you should seek to deepen their conviction of God's greatness, love, trustworthi-

ness, and power. In all cases the following counsel is important: "The Gospel is to be presented, not as a lifeless theory, but as a living force to change the life. God desires that the receivers of His grace shall be witnesses to its power."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 826.

**SUMMARY:** Seventh-day Adventists believe that God the eternal Father, personal God, is all-powerful, all-knowing, and capable of being everywhere at once. His unfathomable love for His fallen human beings led Him to sacrifice infinitely for their salvation. Although the Father's perfect righteousness and justice will never excuse or tolerate sin, He makes supreme efforts to redeem sinners and restore them to a condition of perfect sinlessness.

#### APPLICATION

- What is my honest opinion about God, and how do I relate to Him?
- How much time do I spend on a daily basis in cultivating a friendship with God through study, meditation, and prayer?

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# God Tells Us About His Son



**MEMORY TEXT:** "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself" (Heb. 7:26, 27).

**CENTRAL TEACHING:** "The Son. God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly man, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things."—Fundamental Belief No. 4.

## OUTLINE:

- I. Jesus—the Promised Messiah.
- II. Jesus—Fully God and Fully Man.
- III. Jesus—Sin-bearer for All.
- IV. Jesus—Mediator and Judge.
- V. Jesus—Coming King.

**INTRODUCTION:** What a risk God took when He created angels and humans with the ability to choose or reject His love and manner of life! The enormity of the risk was dramatized when Lucifer, having decided to organize his own government, led one third of the angels to join him in civil war against the government of God. Then God took the further risk of creating our world, inhabiting it with human beings who could choose either His government or Satan's. What would God do if they chose Satan as their ruler? Suppose they had second thoughts and sincerely decided that they wanted to be God's subjects after all? Would God give them another chance or would He destroy them?

Those questions were answered by God Himself long before our world was created. He Himself would pay the penalty for the guilt of every human being, so that all those who wanted to return to His kingdom and be His faithful servants would have the opportunity.

That is why Jesus Christ came to our world. Stepping down from His position as the supreme King of the universe, He became a human being, demonstrated that His law could be obeyed, and bore the penalty for the sin of the entire world. No love can compare with that!

SUN

## I. JESUS—THE PROMISED MESSIAH.

The plan for Christ to die for all human sin was devised by God Himself and announced to our first parents as soon as they fell into disobedience.

**When did God decide that Christ should be our Saviour? 1 Peter 1:18-20.**

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**When was God's plan first announced to humans? Gen. 3:15.**

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**ILLUMINATION:** "The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of 'the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.' Rom. 16:25, R. V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God's throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that he covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, 'that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' John 3:16."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** Compare the following pairs of texts as an indication of how Jesus Christ's birth, life, and death fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah's coming.

1. Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1-9 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Num. 24:17; Matt. 2:1, 2, 7, 9-11—The star in the east.
3. Isa. 42:2-7; Matt. 12:15-22 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Isa. 53:3-5; Matt. 27:29-31—Christ wounded and bruised for us.
5. Isa. 53:7; Matt. 27:12-14 \_\_\_\_\_
6. Isa. 53:9; Matt. 27:57-60—Buried in rich man's tomb.
7. Isa. 53:12; Mark 15:27, 28 \_\_\_\_\_
8. Psalm 22:16-18; John 19:17, 18, 24 (compare John 20:25-27)—Christ's crucifixion and the casting of lots for His garments.

9. Psalm 16:8-11; Acts 2:24-32—The resurrection.

Because of the remarkable way in which Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies, we can have confidence that He is the promised Messiah. The major events of Christ's life were foretold by prophets of the Old Testament. The New Testament writers constantly appeal to Christ's fulfillment of the prophecies as the best evidence for His Deity and Messiahship.



**II. JESUS—FULLY GOD AND FULLY MAN.**

**How did Jesus identify Himself? What did He say about His pre-existence? John 8:58; John 17:5.**

When Jesus came to earth He did not cease to be God. He claimed that He was the I AM of the Old Testament. (Compare Ex. 3:14.) The prophet Micah had predicted that the Messiah would be the One who had existed from the days of eternity (Micah 5:2), and Jesus taught that He was that One.

When here on earth, although remaining fully God, Jesus laid aside the use of His divine attributes for Himself.

**SEARCH AND LEARN: What do the following passages teach us about the Deity and eternal pre-existence of Christ?**

1. John 1:1-3, 14 \_\_\_\_\_
2. John 5:18 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Col. 2:9 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Heb. 7:3 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Col. 1:16, 17 \_\_\_\_\_

**ILLUMINATION:** "By His humanity, Christ touched humanity; by His divinity, He lays hold upon the throne of God. As the Son of man, He gave us an example of obedience; as the Son of God, He gives us power to obey. It was Christ who from the bush on Mount Horeb spoke to Moses saying, 'I AM THAT I AM. . . . Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.' Ex. 3:14. This was the pledge of Israel's deliverance. So when He came 'in the likeness of men,' He declared Himself the I AM. The Child of Bethlehem, the meek and lowly Saviour, is God 'manifest in the flesh.' 1 Tim. 3:16."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 24, 25.

**What assurances are we given that Jesus was fully human? What do these assurances mean to us? Rom. 1:3; Phil. 2:7; Heb. 4:15, 16.**

Jesus Christ did not come to demonstrate how God can obey His own law. His purpose was to show how humans can obey God's law by relying upon their heavenly Father for strength. In so doing, Christ demonstrated

the justice and fairness of God. In Christ, the Deity was manifested in humanity. Jesus was born of a woman (Luke 1:30-35). He was God “manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16). His favorite name for Himself was “Son of man.” (See Matt. 11:19; Mark 2:28; Luke 21:27; John 3:14.)

Although He was fully human, and was tempted just as we are, Jesus never sinned. (See 1 Peter. 2:22, 23; John 8:46; Heb. 7:26.) If Jesus had been a sinner, then Satan would have claimed that his criticism of the law of God was correct. He would have accused God of injustice in expecting His created beings to obey His law. By relying upon His Father for victory, Jesus was able to overcome every one of Satan’s temptations.

**Are we able to overcome temptation as Jesus did? 1 Peter 2:21-23; Rev. 3:21; 1 Cor. 10:13.**

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**ILLUMINATION:** “Jesus left the royal courts of heaven and suffered and died in a world degraded by sin, that He might teach man how to pass through the trials of life and overcome its temptations. Here is a pattern for us.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 312. (See also *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 312; *Councils on Diet and Foods*, p. 186.)



### III. JESUS—SIN-BEARER FOR ALL.

By His death, Jesus paid the price for our guilt; by His life, He showed us how to live.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** What do the passages that follow teach about the significance of Christ’s suffering on the cross?

1. Isa. 53:6, 12 \_\_\_\_\_
2. 2 Cor. 5:21 \_\_\_\_\_
3. 1 Peter 2:24 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Heb. 9:28 \_\_\_\_\_
5. 1 John 3:5 \_\_\_\_\_

The death of Jesus on the cross was the most amazing event in the history of our universe. God Himself bore the punishment for all human sin. How did He do this? When the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are One, were separated because of human guilt, the universe beheld the most awful agony possible. Jesus’ suffering was not primarily physical. His suffering was so intense that it is beyond human understanding. It was the suffering of infinite God, separated from infinite God. That is why it was infinite suffering. And that is why it is sufficient to atone for all human sin. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.)

**How important to every human soul was Jesus’ resurrection from the dead? 1 Cor. 15:17-23.**

If Jesus had not risen from the dead there would be no hope for believers, whether they lived before or after the cross. Abraham will rise from the dead at the Second Advent because Jesus died for his sins on Calvary's cross. Paul's hope was Abraham's hope. Christ died to deliver us from the guilt of sin; He lives to rescue us from the power of temptation. His resurrection makes possible our resurrection from both spiritual and physical death. (See 1 Peter. 1:3-5; Rom. 8:11, 23.)



**IV. JESUS—MEDIATOR AND JUDGE.**

After rising from the dead, Jesus returned to heaven and began His work as High Priest in the sanctuary. His death upon the cross atoned for human guilt. His high-priestly ministry applies the merits of His sacrifice for those who accept Him as Saviour and Lord.

**What is involved in Jesus' work as Mediator? 1 John 1:9; 2:1; Heb. 7:25.**

At the cross, the price of sin for the whole world was paid. Eternal life was guaranteed. But the sacrifice of Jesus is meaningless and of none effect unless His gift of salvation is accepted by the individual. (See Rom. 5:17.) Christ's suffering for human guilt made it possible for those who repent and confess to be forgiven. Forgiveness through Christ was a major part of the apostles' preaching. (See Acts 13:38, 39; 5:31; Eph. 1:7.) No one needs to go through life feeling condemned for the sins of the past. When Jesus forgives, the condemnation is gone (Rom. 8:1).

**What else does the heavenly Mediator do for those who turn to Him? Heb. 9:12-14; 10:19-22.**

Jesus' heavenly mediation not only takes care of past guilt, but it also cleanses the heart from sin. The sacrifice of Calvary made it possible for the heavenly High Priest to "purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. 9:14). The word "conscience" translates the Greek word that means "consciousness." Jesus takes away consciousness of guilt, and the desire for sin.

**SEARCH AND LEARN: What do the passages that follow tell us about Jesus' work as Judge and Advocate?**

- 1. Dan. 7:9, 10, 13 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. John 5:22 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Acts 10:42 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Acts 17:31 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Rom. 2:16 \_\_\_\_\_

There are four major aspects to Jesus' work as Judge. (These four aspects will be dwelt on more fully in future lessons): (1) Christ conducts the pre-advent, investigative judgment. (Compare Dan. 7:9, 10, 13 with Matt. 22:11-14.) (2) Christ executes judgment upon the living wicked at his second advent. (See 2 Thess. 1:7-10.) (3) During the millennium Christ directs His redeemed people in an examination of the life records of the wicked dead. (See Rev. 20:4.) (4) At the end of the millennium Christ pronounces and executes final judgment upon the wicked. (See Rev. 20:11-15.)



#### V. JESUS—COMING KING.

The second coming of Jesus Christ is the blessed hope of every believing Christian. It is spoken of in many passages throughout the Bible.

**What happens to the redeemed when Jesus comes the second time? John 14:1-3; Rev. 7:13-17.**

The second advent will be a glorious public event. (See Rev. 1:7; Matt. 24:30, 31; 2 Peter. 3:10.) Believers who have died will be raised and caught up to meet the Lord in the sky (1 Thess. 4:16). Then the living believers will be reunited with their loved ones, and together they will be taken to be with Christ for eternity (1 Thess. 4:17).

**What spiritual experience does Jesus want His people to have before He comes the second time? Rev. 3:3-5; 2 Peter 3:11-14.**



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Study the following passages for further insight into the kind of spiritual experience that Christ wishes His people to enjoy: 1 Peter 1:15, 16; Rom. 6:18, 22; Eph. 4:13, 14; 5:26, 27; Rev. 3:18; 12:11; 14:4, 5; 19:7, 8.

Read the chapter entitled "The Final Warning" in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 603-612.

**WHAT OTHERS TEACH:** Certain religious leaders during the early centuries taught that Christ lacked full deity. Others denied that Christ was really a human being. They asserted that He only appeared to be a man. While admitting that it is a mystery that must be accepted by faith, Christianity in general has held firmly to the belief that Christ is fully God and fully man.

Throughout the centuries there has been much discussion on the question of the human nature of Christ during the incarnation. Regardless of the position taken, there has always been considerable agreement on certain major points: Christ lived a sinless life; He was tempted in all points as we are; He could have sinned; His secret of victory was total dependence upon His Father; through the same dependence upon Christ, His followers can be overcomers; and victory over sin by faith in Christ's power should be the goal of every Christian.



**HOW TO SHARE THIS TRUTH WITH OTHERS:** The greatest confirmation of this doctrine is for Christ to be dwelling in our hearts constantly. (See Rom. 8:9, 10.) We need to put away all dissension and give ourselves totally to Christ for His use in saving the lost. Then as we pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in apostolic power, souls will be touched by our witness in word and deed and many will be converted.

**SUMMARY:** Seventh-day Adventists believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah promised by the Old Testament prophets. He was born of a virgin and lived a blameless life of unselfish ministry. He was God in the highest sense, and human in every respect, except that He was not a sinner. He suffered for all human guilt, died, and rose again. He ascended to heaven, where He now mediates the merits of His sacrifice for those who believe. His work as Judge will come to an end only when the righteous are given eternal life and the wicked are destroyed eternally.

**APPLICATION**

- Do you believe that Jesus Christ was God as well as man?
- Do you want Jesus to forgive your sins, purify your life, and use you to help others find eternal life?

# What Giving Means to Me

- If I give nothing,  
I cast a vote in favor of closing my church.
- If I give grudgingly,  
I shall neither find joy nor receive God's blessing.
- If I give systematically,  
I make it possible for my church to plan to advance, and I make it easier for myself.
- If I give sacrificially,  
I testify to the high value I place upon Christ and the ministry of His church to the physical and spiritual needs of suffering humanity.

—Thorvald Kristensen.

# God Tells Us About His Spirit



**MEMORY TEXT:** “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16, 17).

**CENTRAL TEACHING:** “The Holy Spirit. God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ’s life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures leads it into all truth.”—Fundamental Belief No. 5.

## OUTLINE:

- I. The Person of the Holy Spirit.
- II. The Work of the Holy Spirit.
- III. The Spirit as Christ’s Representative.
- IV. The Spirit’s Work in Us.
- V. The Spirit’s Work Through Us.

**INTRODUCTION:** The lamps flickered in the upper room as the disciples conversed with their Teacher. The questions they asked Jesus after associating with Him for about three years showed that they did not yet understand fully the reason for His mission on earth. They continued to hope that He would free their nation from Roman domination. As he sought to prepare them for the alarming events that were almost upon them, Jesus could sense their confusion. To allay their fears for the future, He spoke of the gift that He and His Father would give the world—the Holy Spirit. “Don’t worry about the future,” He said, in effect. “You will have My presence with you in the form of the Holy Spirit. He will guide and sustain you through every experience, however difficult and trying.”

As one of the members of the Godhead the Holy Spirit is a person and fully divine. He was active with the Father and Son at Creation and has been closely involved since in the outworking of the plan of redemption.

The Holy Spirit was no stranger to the disciples. Jesus explained, “Ye know him; for he dwelleth with you,” but added a promise that the Holy Spirit “shall be in you” (John 14:17). In a new and exciting way the Holy Spirit was to represent Christ and dwell in and with Christian believers.



**I. THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

**How do Acts 5:3, 4 and 1 Corinthians 2:10, 11 establish the fact that the Holy Spirit is a member of the triune Godhead?**

The three persons of the Godhead are portrayed in the Bible as interrelating to one another in the way expected among persons. They use personal pronouns when speaking of one another. (See Matt. 17:5; John 16:13; 17:1, 5, 6.) They love and glorify one another. (See John 3:35; 15:10; 16:14.) The Father sends the Son (Matt. 10:40), the Son prays to the Father, and the Son sends the Holy Spirit as Their agent (John 14:26; 16:7). The persons in the Godhead are so distinct that They can address one another, love one another, and act in relationship to one another. Each of Them also has a particular work to perform even when They are cooperating together in such activities as Creation and redemption.

**SEARCH AND LEARN: What do the Bible passages that follow reveal about the distinct personhood of the Holy Spirit?**

1. Matt. 28:19 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Matt. 3:16, 17 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Luke 1:35 \_\_\_\_\_
4. John 15:26 \_\_\_\_\_
5. 2 Cor. 13:14 \_\_\_\_\_

**ILLUMINATION:** "The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the three holy dignitaries of heaven, have declared that they will strengthen men to overcome the powers of darkness. All the facilities of heaven are pledged to those who by their baptismal vows have entered into a covenant with God."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1110.



**II. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

It is possible that the person and work of the Holy Spirit are the least understood of any member of the Godhead. One of the reasons is that the nature of His work is to present Christ and the Father rather than Himself.

**When the Holy Spirit is first introduced in the Bible, what is the nature of the work that He is said to perform? Gen. 1:2.**

Not much is said about the Holy Spirit's role in Creation. But a further glimpse into His creative work is given in the re-creative work that He does within each person who is open to God. It is not the Father or the Son but the "Creator" Holy Spirit through whom God executes His work within us. In

Creation, incarnation and re-creation, the Godhead is at work, and always the Spirit brings God's objective to its goal.

**What other special role is filled by the Holy Spirit? 2 Peter 1:20, 21.**

Not only did the Holy Spirit inspire the prophets in producing the Scriptures but He also has helped people through the ages understand what was written. Through His ministry the Scriptures come alive, making Christ real to us today, softening our hearts to the Saviour, and enabling us to live for Him.

**SEARCH AND LEARN: What other indications are given of the Spirit's ministry in Old Testament times?**

1. Gen. 6:3 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Ex. 31:3 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Eze. 36:25-27 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Zech. 4:6 \_\_\_\_\_



### III. THE SPIRIT AS CHRIST'S REPRESENTATIVE.

God's people during Old Testament times looked forward to the coming of two members of the Godhead—Jesus the Messiah and the Spirit as “former rain” (Joel 2:28). This is not to suggest that they usually understood what was involved in this twofold coming, but at least the prophets heralded that future day when both members of the Godhead, in different ways, would come to Planet Earth as they had not come previously.

**SEARCH AND LEARN: In what way was Jesus' mission as the Messiah dependent upon the Spirit?**

1. Matt. 1:18-21 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Mark 1:9, 10 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Luke 4:1 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Matt. 12:24-32 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Heb. 9:14, 15 \_\_\_\_\_
6. Rom. 8:9-11 \_\_\_\_\_

**In what significant way did the work of the Holy Spirit on earth change after Jesus returned to heaven? John 14:26; 16:7-14.**

Herein lies a paradox. In departing, Christ could send the Spirit to bring Himself to be present everywhere. Cumbered with humanity, Christ no longer had omnipresence. This is why it was expedient that He depart. Rather than be limited to one place at a time, through the Spirit He could be everywhere all the time. With this in mind, Jesus said, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor . . . the Spirit of truth. . . . I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:16-18, NIV).

**What new names are given to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament? John 14:16, 17.**

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In the New Testament age the Holy Spirit brings Christ to people in a way not done before. Incarnation has made a decisive difference to God's Son. Now He is human forever. His life and death have made a decisive difference to us. What He has wrought out for us needs now to be applied within us. The Spirit does not add to what Christ has done any more than a mailman adds to the letter he delivers. There still is only one name "given among men whereby we must be saved," and that is Jesus (Acts 4:12). It still is true about Jesus, that " 'no one comes to the Father except through me' " (John 14:6, NIV). The Spirit does not apply Christ's work to people on earth—He brings Christ Himself to make the application.

**What part does the Holy Spirit have in interceding for us before the throne of God? How does this indicate His love for us? Rom. 8:26, 27.**

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#### **IV. THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN US.**

John 14, 15, and 16 record Christ's description of the work of the Holy Spirit. He is called the Spirit of truth (chap. 14:17), who will be sent in Jesus' name (verse 26) to dwell with and in the disciples (verse 17).

**ILLUMINATION:** "During the patriarchal age the influence of the Holy Spirit had often been revealed in a marked manner, but never in its fullness.

"The Spirit came [at Pentecost] upon the waiting praying disciples with a fullness that reached every heart. The Infinite One revealed Himself in power to His church. It was as if for ages His influence had been held in restraint, and now Heaven rejoiced in being able to pour out upon the church the riches of the Spirit's grace."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 37, 38.

**When John the Baptist pointed forward to Jesus' ministry what did He predict about Jesus and the Holy Spirit? Matt. 3:11.**

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Not until Jesus won back the world from the hands of the usurper by His death, could He pour out the Spirit upon that recovered world. In fact, the acceptance of His sacrifice also was a prerequisite. John states, "Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified" (John 7:39, NIV). This would take place after His ascension. Yet, already,

during the forty post-resurrection days, He breathed the Spirit on them. (See John 20:22). He could not wait. But not until Pentecost, fifty days after Calvary, did the fullness come. Then the new age burst forth with all the power of the Spirit's presence. "Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a wind came from Heaven and filled the whole house where they [the disciples] were sitting. . . . All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:2, 4.)

### **How extensive is the Spirit's ministry for us today?**

The Holy Spirit is involved in every part of our Christian experience. When we come to God it is because the Spirit has been working on our hearts to give us the desire to learn about God and to live as God wishes us to live. When we want to learn more about God through the Bible and ask for understanding, then the Holy Spirit guides us to the texts we should study, helps us gain a clear understanding through our study and through divine impressions of what the texts mean, and helps us apply to our lives what we have read. He then gives us strength to live the truths we have learned. When we feel sorry for our sins and repent it is because the Holy Spirit has been working. Whatever we understand about God and Jesus, we understand more fully because the Holy Spirit, in a gentle, self-effacing way, has been doing the work that He was commissioned to do for each person.

### **What is the result of the Spirit's ministry in our lives? Gal. 5:22-25.**

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**What greater blessing can we expect in the near future when we yield our hearts completely to the work of the Holy Spirit? Joel 2:23, 28.**

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## **V. THE SPIRIT'S WORK THROUGH US.**

**Just before Jesus ascended what instructions did He give His disciples? What were they commissioned to do once they received the promised power of the Holy Spirit? Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8.**

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Besides working with Christ's disciples, enabling them to fulfill their commission, the Holy Spirit would be present among the unconverted, improving them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:8).

**Spiritual Gifts.** The Holy Spirit also strengthens the church and individuals through spiritual gifts, some of which are spectacular in nature, while others are less dramatic but equally essential. Several of the gifts of the Spirit are mentioned in Ephesians 4:11: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." (See also Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11, 28-31; 13:1-3.)

**Are spiritual gifts given only to benefit individuals? If not, then what is the broader purpose of the gifts? Eph. 4:12, 13.**

What is the greatest gift? 1 Cor. 13:13.

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**THINK IT THROUGH:** What is the major purpose of this greatest spiritual gift? What are some practical ways in which I can exercise it?

Jesus offered Himself "through the eternal Spirit" at Calvary (Heb. 9:14, 15). Christ and the Spirit were together in this work. From birth to death the two worked together. Jesus was dependent upon the Spirit to enable Him to function fully as a man while at the same time retaining His divine integrity. His dependent humanity necessitated this. At Pentecost the risen Christ continued to be dependent upon the Spirit; no longer dependent for *power* but dependent for *presence*. The Spirit brings Christ to willing people everywhere.

**How does the Holy Spirit join in the work of Christ portrayed in Revelation 22:17?**

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Mentioned in both the first few and last few verses of the Bible, the Holy Spirit has been active in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. As Jesus' personal representative, He does for people whatever Jesus would do if He Himself were physically present.



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Study carefully the following passages to gain deeper insight into why we must have the Holy Spirit with us and in us: John 3:1-8; Rom. 8:1-16.

Read the chapter entitled, "The Gift of the Spirit" in *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 47-55, and the chapter entitled, "Nicodemus" in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 167-177.

**WHAT OTHERS TEACH:** To the adherents of many religious organizations today, the nature and work of the Holy Spirit are obscure. The contemporary emphasis among charismatics focuses on the Holy Spirit's works, especially the gift of tongues. It is important to consider the Person of the Holy Spirit along with His works, for who He is checks overemphasis on His gifts. The Spirit always is more important than His gifts, because He is the source of them. He dwells within us so that He might use us, not so that we might use Him.

**HOW TO SHARE THIS TRUTH WITH OTHERS:** Discover what the person to whom you are witnessing believes about the Holy Spirit. Charismatics need to be shown with love and kindness the error of believing that a person is not a first-class Christian unless he speaks in tongues. Point out that Peter, the speaker at Pentecost, never once refers to speaking in tongues after the experience related in Acts 2. In only three of Paul's one hundred chapters is the subject mentioned (see 1 Cor. 12-14) and certainly not in support of the phenomenon current in Corinth. He warns against the same problem faced by modern charismatics. Paul teaches that all gifts are

given for the benefit of the church as a whole, not merely to benefit the individual. No one person has every gift. (See 1 Cor. 12:27-31.) Paul declares that he would rather speak five words with understanding than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. (See 1 Cor. 14:19.).

**SUMMARY:** Please summarize this lesson in your own words:

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**APPLICATION**

- Am I walking after the flesh or after the Spirit?
- Do I pray earnestly daily for the power of the Spirit to possess my life and to use me in God's work?

## What Happened to Our Bible Book Studies?

The Bible book curriculum has been interrupted in order to make it possible for the world church to review the 27 fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. We resume our study of the Bible books beginning with the first quarter of 1989.



# God Tells Us How He Created



**MEMORY TEXT:** “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.” “For he spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:6, 9).

**CENTRAL TEACHING:** “**Creation.** God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made ‘the heaven and the earth’ and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was ‘very good,’ declaring the glory of God.”—Fundamental Belief No. 6.

## OUTLINE:

- I. The Entire Bible Teaches Special Creation.
- II. Creation in Six Days.
- III. The Crowning Act of Creation.
- IV. The Sabbath Testifies to Creation.
- V. The Greatest Evidence for Special Creation.

**INTRODUCTION:** Science is at its best when it deals with things that are happening right now, or at least can be made to happen now. But when we get into the area of the origin of matter and life, we go beyond the limits of the scientific method. Even if a scientist were able to produce a three-toed dinosaur out of primordial soup, he still would not have proved conclusively that this was the way dinosaurs initially came into being.

In the long run the choice between which theory of origins we accept boils down to the question of basic assumptions. Here creationists have the advantage. The Bible record of the creation of life comes from the Creator Himself. He was there. He made it happen.

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb. 11:3). Because it is impossible to prove scientifically how and when the earth originated, it is “through faith” that we discern the hand of God in Creation.



## I. THE ENTIRE BIBLE TEACHES SPECIAL CREATION.

The book of Genesis begins with a brief survey of God’s special creation.

Who is the subject of the first statement in the Bible? Gen. 1:1.

The triune Godhead worked together to create the heaven and the earth. The Holy Spirit's part is indicated in verse 2, and the participation of all three members of the Godhead is implied in verse 26.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** Psalm 33:6, 9 mentions God speaking the world into existence. What does the New Testament indicate about which member of the Godhead spoke the worlds into existence?

John 1:1-3 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 8:6 \_\_\_\_\_

Col. 1:13-17 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 1:1, 2, 8-10 \_\_\_\_\_

(See also *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 269, 270.)

**How did the psalmists testify to the truth of the Bible record of Special Creation? Psalms 8:3, 4; 136:5-9; 148:4, 5.**

Isaiah joins the ranks of those who testify to the accuracy of the Creation record when he speaks of "the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens" (Isa. 51:13). Jeremiah adds, "He hath made the earth by his power" (Jer. 10:12). Amos tells us that the Lord formed the mountains and created the winds. (See Amos 4:13.) Malachi concludes the Old Testament witness to the Genesis account by asking, "Hath not one God created us?" (Mal. 2:10).

**What did Jesus say that fully supports the Genesis record? Matt. 19:4.**

The earth is a minute portion of God's creation. "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible" (Col. 1:16). The author of Hebrews states that "he made the worlds" (Heb. 1:2). Whether these other worlds are inhabited is not stated specifically in the Scriptures, but it is implied in the gathering of the "sons of God" in Job 1 and in the Biblical concept of vindicating God's rule and justice before the universe in the judgment (Daniel 7). It is difficult to believe that ours is the only inhabited planet in God's great universe. Even evolutionary scientists speculate that intelligent life exists on other planets.



## II. CREATION IN SIX DAYS.

In spite of attempts to harmonize the Creation record in Genesis with

belief in long ages during which creation came about progressively, only the acceptance of Genesis 1 as an outline of what actually took place during six 24-hour days can harmonize with the full Bible account.

**NOTICE** how the chart that follows outlines a basic plan for Creation. The first three days gave “form” to Creation and the last three days gave “fullness” to the “form.”

<b>Genesis 1.2—GOD CREATED</b>		
<b>Formed</b>	<b>Elements</b>	<b>Filled</b>
<b>Day 1</b> (verses 3-5) Divided light from darkness	LIGHT	<b>Day 4</b> (verses 14-19) Light sources seen in the firmament
<b>Day 2</b> (verses 6-8) Made firmament then divided waters from the waters	FIRMAMENT WATER	<b>Day 5</b> (verses 20-23) Fowl in firmament Water creatures in sea
<b>Day 3</b> (verses 9-13) Divided waters from land Vegetation created	EARTH VEGETATION	<b>Day 6</b> (verses 24-31) Animals, man on earth Vegetation for food
<b>Day 7—GOD RESTED (Gen. 2:1-3)</b>		

At the beginning of Creation week the earth was empty, without form, covered with water, and enshrouded in darkness. What was its condition at the end of the first three days? (Review the center column.)

What happened “in the firmament” on the fourth day of Creation week? What was the significance of what took place?  
Gen. 1:14-19.

Because the Bible implies the existence of other worlds (see Heb. 1:2; 11:3), it is not unreasonable to assume that some of the stars referred to in Genesis 1:16 (and that could include our own sun) existed before the creation of this world. However, speculation on this could obscure Moses’ primary thrust in the Creation record, namely, that God also created the light-giving bodies.

Summarize the creative act of the fifth day of Creation week. Gen. 1:20-23.

The blessing “Be fruitful, and multiply” was realized as the earth began to be filled. The genealogies and the nations are ample evidence of the fulfillment of God’s benediction.

**What three categories of land animals were created on the sixth day before God’s crowning act of Creation? Gen. 1:24, 25.**

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What is important to note here is that these verses contradict in a most decided way the concept that there was a long evolutionary development which many geologists claim they find in the fossil record. Notice that they were brought forth simultaneously at the command of God. Also notice that the order of listing places insects last rather than before amphibians, reptiles, and mammals as the evolutionary hypothesis insists.

**What is significant about the statement in verse 25 that “God saw that it was good”?**

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Evolution is based on the concept of the survival of the fittest and the law of tooth, fang, and claw. But there were no predators and there was no killing in Eden before the Fall. At this point Earth was ready for humankind to be created. It did not take billions of years before God crowned Creation by calling forth the human race.



### III. THE CROWNING ACT OF CREATION.

The first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve, were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation. (See Gen. 1:26, 27.) They were given dominion over the world and charged with the responsibility to care for it. (See verses 28-30.) When the work of Creation was finished, God declared that it was “very good” (verse 31).

**What do the words *our image* and *our likeness* indicate? Gen. 1:26, 27; James 3:9.**

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**ILLUMINATION:** “Created to be ‘the image and glory of God’ (1 Corinthians 11:7), Adam and Eve had received endowments not unworthy of their high destiny. Graceful and symmetrical in form, regular and beautiful in feature, their countenances glowing with the tint of health and the light of joy and hope, they bore in outward resemblance the likeness of their Maker. Nor was this likeness manifest in the physical nature only. Every faculty of mind and soul reflected the Creator’s glory.”—*Education*, p. 20.

God created Adam and Eve in His own image with the capability of enjoying fellowship with Him. When the obedience and allegiance that belong to the Creator alone were yielded to Satan in Eden, the harmonious relationship between God and humans was broken.

How disastrous was the entry of sin to all of God's earthly creation?  
Rom. 5:12, 17, 19.

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Because of the effects of sin, it is only through special revelation that human beings, with the help of the Holy Spirit, can interpret correctly nature's message relative to the origin of our world and the character of its Creator.



#### **IV. THE SABBATH TESTIFIES TO CREATION.**

The Bible links Creation directly with the seventh-day Sabbath, which was instituted as a memorial of Creation by the Creator Himself at the end of the literal Creation week (Gen. 2:1-3). The faithful observance of the Sabbath is commanded by God and serves as a continual reminder of the Creator and Creation week.

**What is the significance to us today of the three means God chose to designate the first Sabbath? Gen. 2:2, 3.**

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**ILLUMINATION:** "In Eden, God set up the memorial of His work of creation, in placing His blessing upon the seventh day. The Sabbath was committed to Adam, the father and representative of the whole human family. Its observance was to be an act of grateful acknowledgement, on the part of all who should dwell upon the earth, that God was their Creator and their rightful Sovereign; that they were the work of His hands and the subjects of His authority. Thus the institution was wholly commemorative, and given to all mankind. There was nothing in it shadowy or of restricted application to any people."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 48.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** How does the Bible relate the Sabbath to the events of Creation week?

1. Ex. 20:8-11 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Ex. 31:16, 17 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Mark 2:27, 28 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Heb. 4:4 \_\_\_\_\_

(See also *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 769, 770.)

Those who wish to harmonize the Creation account of six days with long evolutionary periods are at a loss to explain the fourth commandment and how a weekly Sabbath in literal seven-day cycles could be based on long periods for the events of Creation week.

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**V. THE GREATEST EVIDENCE FOR SPECIAL CREATION.**

Among the strongest evidences for the belief that there is a Creator is the harmony that scientists have discovered to be operating in the universe and the tremendous complexity of life itself. Logic and reason protest against the possibility that a complex organism such as the human body with its large number of intricately related systems and functions could have come into existence through the working of blind chance. The concept of evolution proposes that all complex forms of life developed from simple living cells. Although this idea is accepted almost universally today, it has not been and cannot be scientifically demonstrated or established. It takes a much smaller leap of faith to believe the Bible story of Creation than to believe the origin of life as outlined by evolution.

But an even more telling reason for accepting the Bible teaching on origins is the principle of love and benevolence wrapped up in the Special Creation story. The God of love not only created and sustains, but also re-creates sinners in His own image when they accept His sacrifice for them. (See Col. 1:17; John 3:14-17.)

**What is the Creator able to do for us today that demonstrates Creation power still is at work in our world? Rom. 8:11-16; 1 John 3:1, 2.**

If we owed our origin to primordial ooze or an impossible accident of nature, then we would not need a Saviour. There is no basic compatibility between evolution, which assumes that humanity is getting better and better, and our Lord's command that we must be born again. Dr. Dan Gilbert used to tell audiences about the atheist's club he joined while he was in college. Its motto was: "Sons of apes don't need a Saviour." The evolutionary hypothesis is irreconcilable with the Bible account of Creation, Fall, and salvation through Christ.

Where is the era of evolutionary science leading? Many believe it will end in environmental or nuclear destruction of the earth.

**How will the Genesis story of creation finally end for those who love the One who sacrificed Himself on Calvary? 2 Peter 3:13, 14; Rev. 21:3-5.**

When it comes to deciding on concepts of origin, we need to keep the future in mind. When we do we will see that there is no contest. There is a heaven to win. Our future well-being rests in the hands of our loving Creator.

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**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read the chapter entitled "The Creation" in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 44-51. Using a concordance, search out the texts using the word "Creation" and "Creator."

**WHAT OTHERS TEACH:** Few of the world's inhabitants believe the Creation story as outlined in Scripture. Most of the world's leading thinkers and scientists, even Christian thinkers, hold to some sort of evolutionary

concept. One view is theistic evolution, or progressive creation, which teaches that God was involved through natural processes over long periods of time in bringing our world into being. Another view is the dualistic theory that matter has eternity of existence just as God does. The emanation theory sees the universe as the same substance as God, issuing from Him during an evolving process. The concept of spontaneous generation suggests that under right conditions matter can generate new forms with new functions. Such views do not do justice to the biblical account of the difference between Creator and creature, or the record that God was not dependent upon pre-existing matter in His acts of creation.

**HOW TO SHARE THIS TRUTH WITH OTHERS:** An understanding of the Creation doctrine is fundamental to Seventh-day Adventist belief. It is closely related to the doctrine of the Sabbath. Do not argue with the people with whom you are studying. Calmly and prayerfully present the principles taught in this lesson. Be sure to relate Creation with Christ's work of re-creation.

**SUMMARY:** Our Lord was not dependent upon preexisting matter to create planet Earth. (See Heb. 11:3.) The universe was created by Christ, the eternally self-existent God. Creation of our world occurred during six literal days, followed by a twenty-four hour Sabbath memorial. The Creation doctrine is the foundation upon which rests the sovereignty of God. Christ's love for humankind exhibited in the re-creation process is the greatest evidence that special creation took place as recorded in Genesis.

**APPLICATION**

- Does the Creation account in Scripture give me a sense of security, making it possible for me to know who I am and where I came from?
- Am I willing to allow Christ to re-create in me a new heart by the Holy Spirit, and to use me to lead others to Him?

"The truth is soon to triumph gloriously, and all who now choose to be laborers together with God, will triumph with it." Testimonies to the Church, vol. 9, p. 135.

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# God Tells Us About Ourselves



**MEMORY TEXT:** "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour" (Psalm 8:4, 5).

**CENTRAL TEACHING:** "The Nature of Man. Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position under God. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment."—Fundamental Belief, No. 7.

## OUTLINE:

- I. Human Nature Before the Fall.
- II. The Fall of Our First Parents.
- III. Human Nature Since the Fall.
- IV. How Christ Changes Human Nature.
- V. Glorified Human Nature.

**INTRODUCTION:** As we view our world today and note the way people treat one another, there are many questions that come into our minds. Why is there so much distrust and hatred between nations, between classes in society, between rich and poor, between races, and between people who have differing philosophies and lifestyles?

Why is there conflict within families? Why do so many marriages break up? Why do children and parents become irreconcilably antagonistic to each other?

Some evolutionists in particular, believe that our world is bound to improve. They picture humanity gradually evolving from the primitive to the cultured. Human nature, they think, will improve with education, so that eventually world society will enjoy universal brotherhood. Economic, racial, national, and religious barriers will be torn down, and all will live in peace and contentment.

This is not the Bible picture. Scripture reveals the reverse taking place.



Humans who were created perfect fell into sin. Apart from Christ their descendants progressively will decline spiritually, morally, and physically until the Lord brings the process to an end. Is there any hope that fallen human beings can rise again to the image of God and enjoy a life of uninterrupted purity and peace? That is what this lesson is about.

**SUN****I. HUMAN NATURE BEFORE THE FALL.**

**How does the Bible describe the state of the first human beings to inhabit our world? Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7; Heb. 2:7, 8.**

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Because Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, they were spiritually, intellectually, and physically perfect. There was nothing in human nature, as it came from the hand of the Creator, that was predisposed to sin. Adam and Eve had no tendency to evil. They loved God and enjoyed the best fellowship with Him. Their love for each other was free from any taint of selfishness or evil passion. They were perfect individuals in a perfect world. As long as they remained in perfect union with their Creator no sin, sickness, or death could mar their happiness.

**ILLUMINATION:** "Man was originally endowed with noble powers and a well-balanced mind. He was perfect in his being, and in harmony with God. His thoughts were pure, his aims holy. . . . In his sinless state, man held joyful communion with Him 'in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' Colossians 2:3."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 17.

"Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45.

"God made man upright; He gave him noble traits of character, with no bias toward evil."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 49.

**What event after Adam and Eve had sinned indicates that previously they had enjoyed face-to-face communion with God? Gen. 3:8, 9.**

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Sin always separates from God. (See Isa. 59:2.) Since the Fall, no human being can see God's face and live (see Ex. 33:20), because God's presence is a consuming fire to sinful beings. But before their fall, Adam and Eve were entirely free from sin. They could speak with God face to face without the slightest fear. They constantly received life from the divine life. They suffered no degeneration of any kind, and never had a desire to disobey God.

**What indication do we have that all races of mankind originated from the same roots? Acts 17:24-28.**

**MON****II. THE FALL OF OUR FIRST PARENTS.**

Human nature today is not what it was when God first created it. Because

God gave them the power of choice, Adam and Eve could have chosen to continue serving God, or they could have chosen to disobey Him. Because they chose to disobey Him, they lost their original state of perfection. As a consequence, their children were born with fallen natures that tended toward evil. That is how distrust, hatred, lust, and selfishness of all kinds came into our world.

Because of Adam and Eve's fall, human bodies and minds degenerate as they grow older and death is experienced by all human beings.

**How do we know that God gave our first parents the power of choice? Gen. 2:16, 17.**

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If Adam and Eve had not had the power of choice it would have been unnecessary for God to warn them of the danger of disobedience. If they had not had the power of choice it would have been unjust for God to punish them when they decided to sin. In fact, if they did not have the power of choice they would not have been able to sin. They would have served God because they were forced to, not because they chose to. That kind of service is unacceptable to God. He wants the willing obedience of loving beings. Throughout history God has continually emphasized that He will accept only service from those who love Him. (See Deut. 6:5, 6; 10:12; 11:1; Josh. 22:5; John 14:15.)

**What unvarying law did God present to Adam and Eve when He warned them of the danger of disobedience? Rom. 6:23; Eze. 18:4.**

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The sin of Adam and Eve was that they distrusted God's word. Such distrust is a lapse from love. If they had retained their love for God, they would never have doubted His word, and Satan's lies would have been repulsive to them.

**Speaking through the serpent, what lie did Satan present to Eve? What wrong choice did Adam and Eve make? Gen. 3:1-7.**

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(See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 55, 56.)



### III. HUMAN NATURE SINCE THE FALL.

The results of Adam and Eve's choice have been devastating for our world. Not only did Adam and Eve experience a change of nature but also it became inevitable that their children would be born with tendencies to evil. They would gradually decline in physical and mental vigor and eventually die. If our first parents had never sinned, they and their children would have enjoyed never-ending life.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** Indicate what the following Bible passages teach regarding the nature of man since the Fall:

1. Gen. 3:19, 22 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Psalm 51:5 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Psalm 58:3 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Rom. 5:12-19 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Rom. 7:15-23 \_\_\_\_\_
6. Eph. 2:1-5 \_\_\_\_\_

A number of truths regarding the nature of fallen humanity are contained in these and other similar passages of Scripture:

- Life for every fallen human being is confined to a limited period of time. During that time there will be gradual physical and mental deterioration.

- From the moment of conception each individual is a new soul in need of a Saviour. This does not mean that anyone is born guilty. It simply means that human beings inherit a spiritually fallen nature.

- In the absence of the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, the life of each individual will be controlled by Satan. There is no neutral territory in the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Fallen human nature is a fruitful field for the evil one to work. People who have not been transformed by the Spirit of God are instruments of unrighteousness. (See Rom. 6:13.)

**ILLUMINATION:** “The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man’s experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist. To withstand this force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can find help in but one power. That power is Christ.”—*Education*, p. 29.

**How does the Bible describe the condition of the fallen human being who has chosen to go on living in sin? Eph. 2:12; Psalm. 66:18; Isa. 64:7.**

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The Epistle of Jude and 2 Peter 2 give a vivid description of people who have allowed Satan to use their fallen humanity to accomplish his demonic designs. They are like “natural brute beasts.” They “speak evil of the things that they understand not” (2 Peter 2:12). They “count it pleasure to riot in the day time. . . . Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children” (verses 13, 14). Satan really makes sport of those who give in to their fallen natures.

**ILLUMINATION:** “Every soul that refuses to give himself to God is under the control of another power. He is not his own. He may talk of freedom, but he is in the most abject slavery. He is not allowed to see the beauty of truth, for his mind is under the control of Satan. While he flatters himself

that he is following the dictates of his own judgment, he obeys the will of the prince of darkness. Christ came to break the shackles of sin-slavery from the soul.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 466.



#### IV. HOW CHRIST CHANGES HUMAN NATURE.

The best news for humanity in every era of history has been that, because of His death on the cross, Jesus Christ is able to deliver from the bondage of sin and create transformed natures.

**How complete is the transformation that Jesus produces in the life of one who accepts Him? 2 Cor. 5:17, 21; Rom. 6:17, 18, 22.**

The Lord's plan is that the old life of sinning should be replaced by a life of commitment to His righteousness. This can happen only if the mind and heart of the individual are purified. Only Christ can accomplish this. Education, culture, the force of the human will may play a part. But, in the final analysis, only when Christ transforms the heart is there possibility of continuing, joyful obedience to the will of God. (See *Steps to Christ*, p. 18.) Then habits and practices that once were part of an individual's lifestyle are given up because they are not consistent with the will of Christ.

**By what means does Jesus bring about the change in an individual's nature? 1 Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:5-7.**

Jesus' message to Nicodemus applies here: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. . . . Ye must be born again" (John 3:3-7). The work of the Holy Spirit on mind and heart produces a new creature in Christ Jesus.

**What is a person like after being transformed by Christ? 1 John 4:7, 8, 11, 20, 21.**

Christ's transforming work by the Holy Spirit changes bitter, prejudiced, dishonest, immoral sinners into loving and lovable Christians. This is the solution to the problems in homes, in society, in the nation, and between nations. Christ's love received into the heart by the Holy Spirit is the only effective answer to the great need of our world.

**What kind of continual struggle does the transformed individual have? 1 Cor. 9:27; Gal. 5:16-18.**

Born-again Christians are not free from temptation. They remain fallen human beings, whom the devil constantly tries to persuade to capitulate to their human tendencies. Insofar as they constantly yield themselves to the power of Christ, allowing the Holy Spirit to control their thoughts, feelings,

and desires, they have victory through His power. (See 1 John 5:3-5.)

**ILLUMINATION:** "The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 172. (See also p. 176.)

"Paul's sanctification was a constant conflict with self. Said he: 'I die daily.' His will and his desires every day conflicted with duty and the will of God. Instead of following inclination, he did the will of God, however unpleasant and crucifying to his nature."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 299.



## V. GLORIFIED HUMAN NATURE.

**When will human nature finally be free from the results of sin? 1 Cor. 15:21-23, 42-49; Rom. 8:19-23.**

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Only when Jesus comes will the effects of sin be removed completely from our bodies and minds. Victory over sin is God's ideal and expectation for His children now. (See Rev. 2:7, 17, 26; 3:21; *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 312.) But freedom from the disadvantages of fallen humanity and from temptation to sin will not be a reality until at Jesus' coming this "corruptible" puts on "incorruption," and this "mortal" puts on "immortality." (See 1 Cor. 15:51-54.)

**What kind of bodies and minds will be given the redeemed at Jesus' second advent? Phil. 3:20, 21; Isa. 33:24; Rev. 21:3-5.**

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**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Study what Paul means by "the new man" and "the old man." Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:1-10. What happens when the "old man" dies? Who is the new man? Compare Romans 7:1-6. Look at the texts in various translations.

Read the chapter entitled "The Temptation and Fall" in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 52-62; *The Great Controversy*, p. 677.

**WHAT OTHERS TEACH:** In contemporary society there is general rejection of the concept of the fallen nature of man. The idea that happiness and success may be achieved by developing the goodness within ourselves is popularly promoted in sermons and seminars. Self-dependence reduces a person's awareness of his need of the Saviour, and he becomes divorced from the source of his power.

**HOW TO SHARE THIS TRUTH WITH OTHERS:** Important though it is to convince a person that he or she inherited fallen nature from our first parents, it is more important to uphold Christ as the One who can bring transformation and victory. A teaspoon of sugar attracts more bees than a barrel of vinegar. The vision of Christ suffering upon the cross for

human sin provides the greatest insight into the human condition and the need of His love.

**SUMMARY:** Seventh-day Adventists believe that God created humanity spiritually, mentally, and physically perfect. The imperfection now so prevalent in the human race resulted from the choice of our first parents to disobey God, and the choices of their descendants to persist in sin. Since then all humanity has suffered the effects of sin and death. By His death on the cross, Jesus Christ earned the right to transform fallen human beings making them new creatures who have victory over sin, and in whose hearts His love reigns.

#### APPLICATION

- Am I willing to admit to myself that I inherited a fallen, sinful human nature from my first parents, Adam and Eve?
- Do I really believe that Christ can make me a new creature who has victory over sin and grace to work for others?

## The Caring Church

“Good deeds are the fruit that Christ requires us to bear. Kind words, deeds of benevolence, of tender regard for the poor, the needy, the afflicted. When hearts sympathize with hearts burdened with discouragement and grief, when the hand dispenses to the needy, when the naked are clothed, the stranger made welcome to his seat in your parlor and a place in your home, angels are coming very near and an answering strain is responded to in heaven.”—*Welfare Ministry*, p. 35.

# God Gives Us A World View



**MEMORY TEXT:** "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Rev. 12:7-9).

**CENTRAL TEACHING:** "The Great Controversy. All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in heaven when a created being, endowed with freedom of choice, in self-exaltation became Satan, God's adversary, and led into rebellion a portion of the angels. He introduced the spirit of rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted in the distortion of the image of God in humanity, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual devastation at the time of the worldwide flood. Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated. To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation."—Fundamental Belief No. 8.

## OUTLINE:

- I. Where Sin Began.
- II. The Cosmic Conflict Extended to Earth.
- III. The Bible's Cosmic World View.
- IV. Why Did Jesus Come?
- V. The Cosmic Issue.

**INTRODUCTION:** Why do rosebuds exist side by side with thorns? Why do animals kill and eat one another? Why do people in some parts of the world have too much food while people in other parts are starving? Why does an innocent child die in an automobile accident while the guilty, drunken driver escapes unharmed?

These questions have been asked in a variety of forms ever since man sinned. Philosophers have offered a variety of answers. Atheists, who hold that the world and all forms of life started by chance, suggest that good and evil are in a kind of "survival of the fittest" competition; eventually only one will survive. Others have suggested that at least two gods govern the world; one is good, the other evil. But such answers are inadequate. The

question of what our world is all about and why it is blighted with evil basically comes down to the question of our world view.

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## I. WHERE SIN BEGAN.

The true world view is found only in the Bible. According to the Holy Scriptures, many thousands of years ago, before this world was created, evil originated mysteriously in the heart of Lucifer, the most exalted of the angels in heaven. The fault was not God's, for Lucifer was created perfect. (See Eze. 28:15.)

### **Why was Lucifer dissatisfied with his status? Isa. 14:12-14.**

Lucifer permitted envious thoughts to control him. He should have recognized that as a created being he had no right to the respect and worship accorded deity. Instead he harbored evil thoughts, even confiding them to his angel companions. He asked questions designed to sow seeds of dissatisfaction.

"Don't you think that heaven is too tightly structured? I don't see why holy beings need laws. I don't think God loves us as He claims; He gets satisfaction out of issuing commands. He's unjust and unfair."

These kinds of suggestions continued until one third of the angels were committed to Lucifer. Misled by his siren song, they felt that he could set up a government superior to God's. With infinite patience God attempted to explain His actions—to persuade Lucifer and his sympathizers to abandon the disastrous course they were following. He attempted to make clear that heaven's laws, grounded in love, were essential to happiness. But Lucifer and his fellow rebels refused to accept God's explanations or to respond to His entreaties.

God did not at once destroy Lucifer and his followers. He gave them time and opportunity to show whether their charges against His character and law were justified.

**What strange event then took place in heaven? What happened to Lucifer (now called Satan) and the angels who took his side? Rev. 12: 7-9.**

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## II. THE COSMIC CONFLICT EXTENDED TO EARTH.

On earth, God created the first human pair, Adam and Eve, and placed them in the Garden of Eden.

**What simple test of character did God set up through which Adam and Eve could demonstrate their loyalty to Him? Gen. 2:16, 17.**

God warned that disobedience would bring death. Satan saw this as an opportunity to tempt the first humans to eat the forbidden fruit and join him



in rebellion. Tragically and incredibly, Adam and Eve yielded to Satan's temptation. In mercy God spared their lives so that they might have opportunity to repent, but the penalty for breaking God's law had to be met. Thus God offered His own Son to come to this earth and die, taking the place of sinners.

**What happy ending did God promise to the continuing conflict between good and evil? Gen. 3:15.**

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As time passed, the effects of sin became more and more evident, not only in the human race but in all of nature. The principles advocated by Satan, at first but dimly seen as dangerous, bore a harvest of evil fruit. Nineteen centuries ago, when Satan inspired human beings to murder Jesus, the beings in other worlds saw clearly that God was right and Satan was wrong. The inhabitants of heaven and the unfallen worlds saw that God is love and that His law is just and necessary. But to give the inhabitants of our world ample opportunity to understand the issues in the great controversy between Christ and Satan and to choose whose side they wanted to join, God permitted the sin drama to continue.

Today the conflict is nearing its close. With great urgency the Holy Spirit and the angels of heaven are seeking to help people choose God's side—even to put loyalty to God, righteousness, and truth above life itself. The Bible makes it clear that the ultimate outcome will be complete victory for God and the vindication of His character and law. Until that day of victory, good and evil will continue side by side. Today supernatural forces are continuing the deadly warfare begun long ago in heaven. Planet Earth is the battlefield.



### **III. THE BIBLE'S COSMIC WORLD VIEW.**

Chronologically the first book of the Bible is Job, not Genesis. Whereas Genesis is Planet-Earth centered, introducing us to the creation of the world and everything in it, the book of Job is cosmic-centered. It is concerned with the universe as a whole. Already in the sixth verse of the first chapter it soars beyond Planet Earth to a cosmic united nations. "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. The Lord said to Satan, 'Whence have you come?' Satan answered the Lord, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it' " (Job 1:6, 7, RSV). These "sons of God" apparently were leaders from other inhabited worlds. Satan appeared as the usurper leader of Planet Earth.

**What did Christ have to say to Satan about Job? Job 1:8-12; 2:1-7.**

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With the cosmic conflict in mind, Christ said: "Satan, look at Job. He keeps my law. He is perfect!" To which Satan countered, "Yes, but he's perfect because it pays to serve you. Don't you protect him?" (See Job 1:9, 10.) Christ then allowed Satan to do what he wanted to Job in order to test

him, short of taking his life. The remainder of the book of Job gives insight into human history from the larger view of what is happening throughout God's universe.

Since Adam and Eve yielded to Satan's temptations, sin has characterized what has been going on in the world. Sin involves a broken relationship between created beings and God as well as transgression of God's laws. Satan broke faith with God. So did Adam and Eve when they ignored God's command not to eat of the fruit in Eden. (See Gen. 3:3-6.) The plan of salvation outlined in the Bible restores the broken relationship between God and humanity, leading instead to the happiness that comes from obedience to the laws of the universe. When we truly love God we will love to do what He knows is best. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments," Jesus says in John 14:15, RSV. At the close of the cosmic controversy all humans will admit, "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. . . . For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed" (Rev. 15:3, 4, NIV).

In a lawless age like ours—a time when absolutes are being thrown to the winds, when divorce gives license to sin, and when both international and personal agreements lie shattered in shreds—it is time to look beyond our desperate, feeble world to a God who loves the unfallen universe, yet left it, to save this one prodigal planet.



#### IV. WHY DID JESUS COME?

**What did Jesus give up and what did He gain by coming to the world and dying for us? Phil. 2:5-11.**

The basic question answered by the Bible world view is "Why did Jesus come to this planet?" Seventh-day Adventists believe that the cross of Jesus has universal, as well as local planet, significance. Jesus came to live and die for more than our salvation. Much more was at stake. He came to answer a charge against the justice of God that preceded our human need for salvation. Even before the creation of this world, Satan's rebellion took place. After the creation of this world, Satan claimed that it is impossible for created beings to keep God's law. This is one of the main reasons why the member of the Godhead we know as Jesus became a human being. Jesus demonstrated that human beings *can* keep the law of God.

**How was Satan's charge proved to be wrong? Rom. 5:17-21.**

In order to demonstrate the possibility of living a sin-free life, Jesus had to live as a human being on earth, and not as a God. Satan had no quarrel with the fact that God could keep His own law. He focused on created beings. Jesus lived as a man, having emptied Himself of the use of His divine powers while here on earth, yet remaining divine. (See Phil. 2:5-7.) He was fully God on earth, but lived as a dependent human, clinging to His Father. This is why He called Himself the "true vine" (John 15:1). Out of human necessity He prayed to His Father.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the created beings from the unfallen populated planets, along with heaven's unfallen angels, watched with intense interest as Jesus came to earth. (See *The Great Controversy*, p. 503.) They too had a stake in His life and death. In Jesus, as a created human, God would demonstrate to them that Satan's charge of injustice is false.

**Why did Jesus die and what does His risen life mean to us? Rom. 5:6-11; John 12:31, 32.**

Christ's victory at the cross had universal significance. Now it would be seen that God was just in removing sin from the universe.



**V. THE COSMIC ISSUE.**

The issue in the cosmic conflict is explained in Scripture as follows. Sin, or rebellion, is "the transgression of the law," or as the Greek of 1 John 3:4 puts it, "lawlessness." It is rooted in rejection of God, His government, and His laws that are designed to protect and bless us. Rather than taking the blame for lawlessness, Satan tries to blame God for giving His law. He challenges the laws of God as being arbitrary, not in the best interests of created beings, and impossible to keep. This issue is at the center of the cosmic controversy. God's law is as eternal as He is and represents His character. Those who oppose God's law really oppose God. (See Matt. 5:17-19; 1 John 2:3-6.)

Insight into this issue is found throughout the Bible. Take the Gospels, for example. In them we read how Christ and Satan came face to face. Satan invited Christ, after His forty days' fast, to change stones into bread in order to satisfy His hunger. Christ replied: "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4, NIV). As He did with Eve in Eden, Satan was urging Christ to take His own initiative—to make His own decision, and not to depend on God's word and will. Christ upheld God's word in every act of His life.

**IN-DEPTH BIBLE STUDY: Read Revelation 12 in more than one Bible version, then match the symbols that follow with their most appropriate fulfillment:**

- |                         |                            |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| ___ The woman           | a. Persecution             |
| ___ The dragon          | b. Types and shadows of OT |
| ___ The man child       | c. A sanctuary             |
| ___ The wilderness      | d. Satan                   |
| ___ The sun             | e. The apostles            |
| ___ The moon            | f. Christ                  |
| ___ The twelve stars    | g. Protestant lands        |
| ___ The flood of waters | h. The church              |
| ___ The earth           | i. The gospel              |

Study verses 7-16 until you are sure you understand their meaning. Indicate *when* the events described took place:

Verses 7-9 \_\_\_\_\_

Verses 10-12 \_\_\_\_\_

Verses 13-16 \_\_\_\_\_

From the information given in verse 17 identify the “remnant” and indicate why this understanding is significant today.

The Bible helps us look beyond the here and now in order to understand that we are caught in the middle of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. It helps us see that we are in the midst of a war that reaches back beyond human time—that reaches out from Planet Earth to the entire cosmos. We are soldiers in the greatest war ever fought. We are actors in the greatest drama ever played. Our earth truly is the battle zone and theater of the universe.

Satan’s studied strategy in this great war is to make God look bad. He hopes that by heaping upon us pain, violence, disease, and death, he can goad us into blaming God for our troubles—into giving God the credit for Satan’s diabolical doings. But for every lie Satan tells about God, Christ responds with an even clearer revelation of God’s love. Lies and love—the contrasting weapons of the two adversaries in the war of the ages.



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Study Romans 1:19-32; Genesis 6-8; 2 Peter 3:6; 1 Corinthians 4:9; Hebrews 1:14. Read the chapter in *Patriarchs and Prophets* entitled “Why Was Sin Permitted?,” pp. 33-43. Read also *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 19, 20.

**WHAT OTHERS TEACH:** Some modern theologians are bound to human theories. They look at Jesus as merely a superman. They do not consider Him to be divine. They seek the truth as it might be found in humanity. The search for truth must begin in Jesus, if it is to be Christian, because the place we begin determines largely the end result.

Some thinkers call on people to look within themselves for truth rather than to look within the Bible. They suggest that if we feel absolute dependence upon God there must indeed be a God. To these thinkers truth is only truth if it can be felt by human beings. Such a starting point leaves us shut up in ourselves, cut off from divine revelation.

Other theologians have revolted against this human-centered emphasis with the cry, “Let God be God and man be man!” They emphasize the great distinction between God and man. But they do not go far enough. In fact they deny those Biblical facts that would enable them to break through to a true cosmic world view. They dismiss the Bible teaching of a cosmic conflict that involved Satan and the fallen angels in controversy with Christ.

What these kinds of world view overlook is how to handle adequately the problem of where sin came from, why God allows it, and what He plans to do about it.

**HOW TO SHARE THIS TRUTH WITH OTHERS:** As you witness to others about our faith, the great controversy theme will inevitably come up

for discussion. For instance, when you explain the sanctuary system you can show how the entire controversy is enacted in types as found in the Old Testament. It is impossible to cover the entire great controversy theme as a single unit of study. The entire plan of salvation incorporates this theme.

The focal point of the great controversy is the sin problem, which centers upon the importance of God's law—His character. The basic issue in the controversy revolves around Satan's attempt to do away with God's law and overthrow His government. This controversy reached its peak at Calvary. That is why Christ must be the focal point of your witness to others. (See Eph. 4:21; John 14:6.)

**SUMMARY:** Seventh-day Adventists have a cosmic world view of the great controversy that brought Christ on His costly but successful mission to Planet Earth. The sin problem involves Satan's rebellion, his charge that God made a law that created beings cannot keep, and Christ's coming to earth—in human form—to demonstrate that the law can be lived. The truth as it is in Jesus is broader than many Christians realize. In the same way that science broke beyond the confines of restricting world views, theology needs to advance beyond a humanity-centered, planet-centered world view.

#### **APPLICATION**

- Am I sure that I know where I stand in the great controversy?
- Do I sense what Calvary means to God and the universe?
- What will I do this week to put into practice what I have learned?

## **Give the World a Hug This Quarter**



Jesus said, "Love one another as I have loved you." His love reached everyone. So does He expect you to love like that? The gospel commission implies that your loving isn't done until it encompasses the world. And you best express that kind of love by giving.\*

### **Remember the Weekly Mission Offering**

\* Your weekly Sabbath School Offerings support the World Mission Budget of the church.

# God Tells Us Why Christ Died



**MEMORY TEXT:** "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

**CENTRAL TEACHING:** "The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. In Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering, death, and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may better understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator. This perfect atonement vindicates the righteousness of God's law and the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sin and provides for our forgiveness. The death of Christ is substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling and transforming. The resurrection of Christ proclaims God's triumph over the forces of evil, and for those who accept the atonement assures their final victory over sin and death. It declares the Lordship of Jesus Christ, before whom every knee in heaven and on earth will bow."—Fundamental Belief No. 9.

## OUTLINE

- I. Christ's Perfect Life.
- II. Christ's Perfect Sacrifice.
- III. Christ's Triumphant Resurrection.
- IV. Christ's Perfect Intercession.
- V. Christ in the Believer's Heart.

**INTRODUCTION:** There is no hope for the human race apart from the life, sacrifice, and ministry of Jesus Christ. A faint glimpse of what the entire world would be like if He had not come is seen in those societies that have rejected Him, whether they be Christian in name or not. There is extreme conflict, disrespect for human life, moral degradation, mistreatment of neighbors, dishonesty, and injustice. People without Christ live in bondage to evil. They are victims of their own impulses and fears, and distrustful of those around them.

Christ came to elevate humanity above the depravity and selfishness that characterizes the service of Satan. Where Christ reigns, there is love, respect for the rights and feelings of others, moral purity, honesty, and justice. Christianity has enriched our world because Jesus enables His followers to rise above the desires of their carnal natures, to follow the principles of God's moral law, and to work for the healing and happiness of others.

In what way does the life, death, resurrection, and ministry of Jesus Christ change our lives and change our world?

**I. CHRIST'S PERFECT LIFE.**

Jesus Christ was divine as well as human, but never did he use His divine power to enable Him to overcome sin. By depending upon His heavenly Father, as we may depend upon Him, Jesus was able to live a life entirely free from sin.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** Note what the following passages teach regarding Christ's character:

1. John 8:45, 46 \_\_\_\_\_
2. 2 Cor. 5:21 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Heb. 4:15 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Heb. 7:26 \_\_\_\_\_
5. 1 Peter 1:19 \_\_\_\_\_
6. 1 Peter 2:22, 23 \_\_\_\_\_

In the symbolic sanctuary services of ancient Israel, the sinner was to bring an animal sacrifice that was "without blemish." (See Ex. 12:5; 29:1; Lev. 1:3, 10; 22:21.) Every animal sacrificed represented Christ, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The animal sacrificed by the repentant Israelite was to be "without blemish," or "perfect," because it symbolized the spiritual perfection of Jesus Christ. Peter likened Christ to the "lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19).

Jesus is the only human person who has ever lived a sinless life. His life was acceptable to His Father, and His death a perfect sacrifice for sin because "he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth" (Isa. 53:9).

**How may we copy the life of Jesus? Rom. 8:3, 4; Phil. 2:5-8; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Peter 1:3, 4.**

Through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, believers in Christ may overcome as He overcame. It is a law of the mind that it adapts to what it focuses on consistently.

Let the mind focus on impurity, and it becomes impure. Let it focus on the lovely Jesus, and it becomes like Him. As Jesus' character was entirely without falsehood (see 1 Peter 2:22), so will be the characters of true believers living on the earth when Jesus comes. (See Rev. 14:4, 5.)

**ILLUMINATION:** "None need fail of attaining, in his sphere, to perfection of Christian character. By the sacrifice of Christ, provision has been made for the believer to receive all things that pertain to life and godliness. God calls upon us to reach the standard of perfection and places before us

the example of Christ's character. In His humanity, perfected by a life of constant resistance of evil, the Saviour showed that through cooperation with Divinity, human beings may in this life attain to perfection of character. This is God's assurance to us that we, too, may obtain complete victory."—*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 531.

"He who has not sufficient faith in Christ to believe that He can keep him from sinning, has not the faith that will give him an entrance into the kingdom of God."—*Review and Herald*, March 10, 1904, p. 24.



## II. CHRIST'S PERFECT SACRIFICE.

**How many times was it necessary for Christ to die for human sin? What does that tell us about the effectiveness of His sacrifice? Heb. 7:27; 9:26, 28; 10:10-12.**

Animal sacrifices were offered constantly, year by year, in the Israelite temple, but never was sin atoned for. (See Heb. 10:1-4.) The Lord accepted these sacrifices as acts of faith on the part of His people. Their sins were forgiven and their lives spiritually purified in view of what the Messiah would do for them. It was not until Jesus Christ died on the cross that a real atonement was provided for all sin. (See Heb. 10:5-10.) His death provided "redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament" (Heb. 9:15). Old Testament believers will be saved for eternity, not because animal sacrifices atoned for their sins, but because the death of the Messiah was the object of the faith expressed in their sacrifices.

**For the guilt of how many did Jesus die? How many can come to Him for cleansing? 1 John 2:2; Rom. 10:12; Rev. 22:17.**

**SEARCH AND LEARN: What do the following passages teach regarding the real cause of Christ's suffering on the cross?**

1. Isa. 53:5, 6, 8, 10 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Mark 15:34 \_\_\_\_\_
3. 1 John 3:5 \_\_\_\_\_
4. 1 Peter 2:24 \_\_\_\_\_

Because Jesus was bearing the guilt of humanity, He was separated from His Father. God the Son was separated from God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. This is why on the cross Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). Jesus' separation from His Father caused suffering for the Deity that humans cannot begin to understand. The sacrifice was entirely sufficient to atone for all sin, no matter how long time may last, because it was the infinite suffering of God.



**ILLUMINATION:** "But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 753. (See also, pp. 755, 756.)



**III. CHRIST'S TRIUMPHANT RESURRECTION.**

**Of what great significance for humanity is the resurrection of Christ?  
1 Cor. 15:14-23; 1 Thess. 4:14-16.**

Life after death for human beings is dependent upon Christ's resurrection from the dead. His death made possible our reconciliation with God. His resurrection ensures our eternal salvation. Paul taught that "we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10).

Justified believers who died before Christ died on the cross could not be raised to eternal life unless Christ had risen from the dead. Paul explained that, in the absence of His resurrection, "they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (1 Cor. 15:18).

Job, Miriam, Abraham, Sarah, Joseph, Daniel, and a host of other Old Testament saints would remain for eternity in their graves if Christ had not risen.

Moreover, if Christ had not risen from the dead, we would still be in our sins. (See 1 Cor. 15:17.) Christ bore our guilt on the cross, but without His living intercession and vital saving ministry the benefits of His sacrifice would be lost.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** According to the following passages, what are the specific benefits to humanity of Christ's resurrection?

1. Acts 10:39-43 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Rom. 1:4, 5 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Rom. 10:9 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Eph. 1:19-23 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Phil. 3:10, 11 \_\_\_\_\_

**ILLUMINATION:** "To the believer, Christ is the resurrection and the life. In our Saviour the life that was lost through sin is restored; for He has life in Himself to quicken whom He will. He is invested with the right to give immortality. The life that He laid down in humanity, He takes up again, and gives to humanity."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 786, 787.



**IV. CHRIST'S PERFECT INTERCESSION.**

**What priestly act of Jesus was represented by the sprinkling of blood**

by the Israelite priest after the sin-offering had been slain? Heb. 10:16-22; 9:11-14.

Jesus' heavenly High-Priestly ministry, which began after His sacrifice and ascension, is the reality to which the daily ministrations of the earthly priests pointed. After the sacrifice came priestly application of blood and sanctuary ministry. After Jesus' death and resurrection He presented in heaven the merits of His sacrifice for repenting, confessing sinners. Because of His heavenly ministry, sinners are forgiven and cleansed. Without that ministry, there could be no assurance of forgiveness.

The sacrifice at the cross was vital to our salvation. Jesus' intercession for us in the heavenly sanctuary also is essential. The cross provided a full and complete sacrificial atonement. But "atonement" in the Leviticus sense requires priestly ministry after the sacrifice was made. Jesus provides this ministry in heaven as He forgives sin and cleanses sinners.

**ILLUMINATION:** "The intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven. We must by faith enter within the veil, 'whither the forerunner is for us entered.' Hebrews 6:20. There the light from the cross of Calvary is reflected."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 489.

What happens to the guilt of the sinner whose sins are forgiven by virtue of Calvary? 1 John 4:10; Rom. 8:1, 34; Micah 7:19.

**ILLUMINATION:** "The heaviest burden that we bear is the burden of sin. If we were left to bear this burden, it would crush us. But the Sinless One has taken our place. 'The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.' Isa. 53:6. He has borne the burden of our guilt. He will take the load from our weary shoulders. He will give us rest."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 328, 329. (If you have *Selected Messages*, see bk. 1, pp. 392, 393.)



## V. CHRIST IN THE BELIEVER'S HEART.

The life, death, resurrection, and heavenly intercession of Jesus Christ have saving value only when He is received into the life by faith. The Christian life is a relationship with Jesus. To know what the Bible teaches on doctrinal questions is vitally important; to know Jesus as an indwelling divine Presence is indispensable.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** What do the following Bible passages teach regarding how Jesus lives within us, and what His presence does for us?

1. John 14:18, 20 \_\_\_\_\_
2. John 17:23 \_\_\_\_\_
3. 2 Cor. 13:5 \_\_\_\_\_

4. Eph. 3:16-19 \_\_\_\_\_

5. Rev. 3:20 \_\_\_\_\_

**What special characteristic will be possessed by those whom Jesus takes to heaven? Matt. 25:46; 13:43.**

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**How does that special characteristic become ours? Rom. 8:9, 10.**

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The presence of Christ in our hearts by the Holy Spirit is the qualification for heaven. If sin controls our minds Jesus cannot live out His life through us. But if we allow Him to dwell within, controlling our thoughts, our desires, our motives, and our actions, then our lives will reflect the glory of His character.

W. W. Prescott explained it beautifully: "My own garments are defiled with sin, and my own righteousness is as filthy rags. He provides for me the white raiment, that the shame of my nakedness may not appear. At infinite cost to Himself, but 'without money and without price,' He imparts to me the riches of heaven, the most precious treasure in the universe, His own righteousness. This He does by giving Himself to me. He Himself becomes my righteousness. His righteousness, His life, Himself, are inseparable. This increases my joyful wonder. He does not divest Himself of what he bestows upon me. He Himself is the gift. He asks me to give myself to Him in order that He may give Himself to me.

"The righteousness of Jesus is not a theological creed, but a living experience. It not only changes my standing with God, but it also determines my conduct. The gift of His righteousness is not an entry on the credit side of my ledger account in the books of heaven to balance a troublesome account, a transaction entirely devoid of any personal touch with me. It has to do with my inmost being. It purifies the current of my life, and sweetens my thinking, my speaking, and my doing. It makes me a new creature in Christ Jesus."—*Victory in Christ*, pp. 21, 22.



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** To gain a clearer grasp of Christ's infinite sacrifice for us read *The Desire of Ages*, chapters 74 and 78 entitled "Gethsemane" and "Calvary." As you read consider the real cause of Jesus' suffering.

**WHAT OTHERS TEACH:** Virtually all conservative Christians believe in the great significance of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Along with many other Christian bodies, Seventh-day Adventists believe that these events are historical facts that are foundational for Christianity. The tendency among liberal scholars to deny the historicity of Christ's atoning death and resurrection seriously undermines the very basis of the Christian faith.

**HOW TO SHARE THIS TRUTH WITH OTHERS:** The most important element for success in sharing this message is a personal experience with Christ. As the early disciples, after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus,

meditated upon His pure, holy life, “they felt that no toil would be too hard, no sacrifice too great, if only they could bear witness in their lives to the loveliness of Christ’s character.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 36. (See also p. 37.)

**SUMMARY:** Seventh-day Adventists believe that Jesus Christ lived a perfectly sinless life. Not even by a thought did He yield to the power of temptation. Although He endured much for humanity throughout His lifetime, Jesus’ suffering at the end of life provided a completely sufficient sacrificial atonement for human sin.

Christ’s resurrection from the dead makes possible the spiritual and physical resurrection of those who believe in Him. As the heavenly Intercessor, Jesus forgives the sins and cleanses the lives of those who accept Him. By living in their hearts, He provides the essential qualification for heaven—the righteousness of God.

#### APPLICATION

- Do I understand the significance for me of Christ’s life of perfect obedience to God’s will?
- Have I let go my feelings of guilt, because Christ has suffered for it and forgiven my sins?
- Do I have a relationship with Jesus? Is He living in my heart continually?
- Do I purposely pray in my early morning prayers for a fitness to win souls?

“There is means enough in the hands of believers to amply sustain the work in all its departments without embarrassing any, if all would bear their proportional part.”

Testimonies to the Church, vol. 3, p. 410.

# God Tells Us How to Be Saved



**MEMORY TEXT:** “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

**CENTRAL TEACHING:** “**The Experience of Salvation.** In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ, as Substitute and Example. This faith which receives salvation comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God’s grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God’s sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God’s law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment.”—Fundamental Belief No. 10.

## OUTLINE:

- I. Christ Became Sin for Us.
- II. Delivered From the Lordship of Sin.
- III. Born Through the Spirit.
- IV. Delivered From the Power of Sin.
- V. The Assurance of Salvation.

**INTRODUCTION:** While God has made full provision for us to be saved, He does not thrust salvation upon us. His nature is love, and He longs for a loving response from human beings to His plan of redemption. He has done His part—“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2 Cor. 5:19)—but we must accept His provision. “We pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20).

This lesson deals with the *experience* of salvation. No matter what Christ has done to provide salvation for the world, none of us can enjoy the benefits of His salvation until we accept and experience it ourselves.

Charles V, the sixteenth-century Holy Roman Emperor, owed a large amount of money to a merchant of Antwerp. After it became clear that Charles was unable to pay, the merchant held a huge banquet to which he invited the Emperor. During the meal, in the presence of all the guests, the merchant lit a fire on a platter. Taking from his pocket the promisory note that recorded Charles’ debt, the merchant held it in the fire until it was

burned to ashes. Charles was so moved that he threw his arms around his benefactor and wept.

How foolish it would have been if Charles had not accepted the gift! The good news is that Christ has paid our debt without any work or action on our part. He only asks that we reach out by faith and accept it.



### I. CHRIST BECAME SIN FOR US.

**ANALYZE Romans 5:6-18 by carefully studying the chart that follows. Fill in the missing blanks.**

Verses	Analysis	
6-8	Christ died for _____	
9, 10	Justified by His _____ Saved from wrath through _____	Reconciled by His _____ Saved by His _____
11-18	<b>By Adam</b>	<b>By Christ</b>
	Sin entered	Grace entered
	Death resulted	_____ restored
	By offense of one _____ came	By righteousness of One _____ came!
19	Disobedience of one made _____	Obedience of one made _____

Not only does Romans 5 describe the fact that Christ became sin for us but it also makes clear what His sacrifice accomplished. In response we are filled with "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement" (Rom. 5:11).

Recognizing that He alone could pay the price for our salvation, our part in obtaining it is to accept redemption by reaching out the hand of faith. Faith itself comes from God. Our Lord must be given total credit for all phases of salvation.

**Faith accepts salvation but does not provide it. What alone can save us? Eph. 2:8, 9.**

Our part is in placing our will on the side of God, in being willing to be made willing, in allowing the Holy Spirit to woo us back to God. Even in offering His inestimable gift God honors our freedom of choice. Surrendering to Christ is a work of faith. No work of ours saves us.

**II. DELIVERED FROM THE LORDSHIP OF SIN.**

**As we turn by faith from self-righteousness and accept God's righteousness in Christ, what new standing do we have with God? Rom. 3:23-26.**

Accepting Jesus we are acquitted from the sentence of guilt and death, which we deserve because of our transgressions of God's laws.

Some years ago a home owner on a Pacific island saw a rag-covered being scurry with fright into the jungle. When captured a few hours later, the individual turned out to be a former soldier. He was dressed in the tattered remains of a uniform. His hair was long and matted. His malnourished, emaciated body was covered with scars. For 25 years he had lived more like an animal than a human being, hiding in the jungle. He did not know that the war was over. It was almost impossible to persuade him of that fact. Only when he returned home and fell into the arms of his loved ones and relatives did he realize that the misery of 25 horrible years had been unnecessary.

So it is with earth's multitudes today. They do not know that acquittal from the sentence of eternal death is theirs for the taking. They wallow in the pit of sin, doubt, and despair with no concept of the glorious freedom and joy that can be theirs in Christ Jesus.

**What practical steps do we take in order to receive forgiveness and justification? Acts 3:19; Prov. 28:13.**

What leads to repentance? Our own effort? No! "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). None can truly repent until they sense the righteousness, the goodness, the unutterable kindness and love of God. Then the experience of deep sorrow for sins takes place. This sorrow turns a person around from walking in the pathway of sin to the pathway of obedience. It is the Holy Spirit who creates in the heart a deep desire to be clean, and to be restored to a close fellowship with Jesus.

**SEARCH AND LEARN: What is the result of having been justified?**

1. Rom. 6:17, 18 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Rom. 8:14-17 \_\_\_\_\_
3. 2 Cor. 5:17-21 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Phil. 2:15 \_\_\_\_\_
5. 1 John 2:29; 3:7 \_\_\_\_\_

No longer do we live under the lordship of sin. The key to finding permanent, satisfying peace lies in a single word—justification! Guilt is a killer. It destroys peace of mind. When we are justified by "the washing of regeneration" [Greek: "rebirth"] we are transformed by Christ's grace and

“made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5-7). Our guilt and impurity are taken away. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

**What does a dramatic incident in the life of Jesus teach us about the necessity of faith in spiritual healing? Mark 9:17-27.**

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### III. BORN THROUGH THE SPIRIT.

The Holy Spirit's work for us is not completed when He brings conviction to our hearts. If we are willing He brings about a new birth.

**How did Jesus explain the significance of the new birth in His night-time conversation with Nicodemus? John 3:3-8.**

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**ILLUMINATION:** “The fountain of the heart must be purified before the streams can become pure. He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. There is no safety for one who has merely a legal religion, a form of godliness. The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 172.

**What does David's prayer teach us about how to ask for and receive the new birth? Psalm 51:2, 7, 10-12.**

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**SEARCH AND LEARN: What is “new” in the new birth?**

1. Eze. 36:25-27 \_\_\_\_\_
2. 2 Cor. 5:17 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Heb. 8:7-10 \_\_\_\_\_

Although the change of heart is a creative work that only the Creator can achieve, we have a vital part in making the process possible—we must place ourselves in the channel of the Spirit's creative activity. In other words, by making ourselves available to behold Christ we come under the creative presence of the Holy Spirit. Our part is to study the life of Christ. The Holy Spirit's part is to internalize this study.

**What part does the Word of God have in this experience? 1 Peter 1:23.**





**IV. DELIVERED FROM THE POWER OF SIN.**

The Holy Spirit dwells in us, giving us power for victory over sin and temptation. He instructs and guides us in facing daily decisions, and continually reveals more of God's love and will to us.

**What glorious state do we achieve through the work of the Holy Spirit within us? Rom. 8:1-4.**

As long as we walk "after the Spirit" we are free from both the condemnation of sin and the law of sin and death. Because Christ "condemned sin in the flesh" the righteousness of the law will be "fulfilled" ("fully met," NIV) in us.

**STUDY** the chart of Romans 8:2-17 given below, noting the clear contrast between those who walk in the flesh and those who walk in the Spirit.

Verse(s)	In Sinful Nature	Verse(s)	In Spiritual Nature
5	Mind things of flesh	5	Mind things of Spirit
6	Results in death	6	Results in life and peace
7	Enmity against God, not subject to law	9	Spirit of God dwells in you
8	Cannot please God	14-17	Children of God, joint-heirs with Christ
15	Spirit of bondage	15	Spirit of adoption

From first to last the experience of salvation is "by grace . . . through faith" (Eph. 2:8). The way we come to Christ is the way we live in Christ: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him" (Col. 2:6). Daily we are to give all and take all—yielding ourselves fully to God and receiving His new life and righteousness. (See Matt. 16:24.) We abide in Christ when we unite with Him in a relationship that strengthens and deepens each day.

**What happens when we abide in or are united with Christ? 2 Cor. 3:18.**

The image of God, defaced and well-nigh obliterated by the Fall, is being progressively restored. (See Col. 3:10.) We no longer defy His law and seek to evade its demands; now it is written within. (See Heb. 8:10, 11.)

**What kind of behavior results when God's law is written on the tables of our hearts? John 14:15; Rom. 13:10.**

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**What does it mean that we become partakers of the divine nature? 2 Peter 1:4.**

---

In the same way that the Holy Spirit enabled the divine Christ to partake of human nature, the Spirit enables us to partake of the divine nature. A mystery is involved here that is similar to the incarnation mystery. (See 2 Cor. 3:18.) Christ became human, but we do not become divine. Rather we partake of the divine nature, becoming Godlike in character. We become a new creation. (See 2 Cor. 5:17.) Our minds are renewed. (See Rom. 12:2.)



## **V. THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION.**

As long as we allow Christ to abide in us and we walk in the Spirit, God will hold us by a hand that never will let go.

**What promise can we claim? John 10:27-29.**

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**What is our hope? Titus 3:7.**

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God's salvation in Jesus Christ gives us strength for today and hope for tomorrow. Our life now is filled with meaning and significance. We belong to God. We can face the future with confidence, knowing that as long as we abide in Him we need fear no evil.

**What gives us confidence as we face the judgment? 1 John 2:1.**

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**What assurance is possessed by those who experience the salvation that Jesus provides by grace through faith? 1 Peter 1:3-9.**

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O, the depths of the love and wisdom of God in providing for our every need, now and eternally! What shall we then say to these things? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** A careful reading of the small book *Steps to Christ* will bring encouragement and reaffirm faith.

**WHAT OTHERS TEACH:** The experience of salvation by faith alone in Christ is a unique teaching of true Christianity. The vast majority of earth's multitudes operate on the principle that people can save themselves by their own works. This evil principle is the foundation of every non-Christian religion. Tragically, the same principle constitutes the foundation upon which many professed Christians operate. However good in themselves, works do not make us righteous, nor do they earn merit in the sight of God. Righteousness and salvation are Christ's free gifts. Works of faith are the result and the evidence of our relationship with Him.

**HOW TO SHARE THIS TRUTH WITH OTHERS:** The best preparation possible for sharing the experience of salvation is a personal experience with Jesus Christ. The presence of Christ in your life is reflected in your piety, goodness, mercy, and love. When opportunity comes, be prepared to give a reason for your experience. One of the best ways to do that is to share with others the book *Steps to Christ*. Tell those with whom you are in contact what precious blessings have been yours as you have gained from that book a deeper understanding of salvation in Christ.

**SUMMARY:** The Holy Spirit makes Christ a reality to the believer. Without the realization of Christ within, human beings are lost. Christ within makes salvation tangible, by restoring the image of God in humanity.

**APPLICATION**

- What steps am I taking in order to experience salvation fully?
- Am I proud of my spiritual achievements, or do I humbly give Christ total credit for saving me and changing me?
- Am I sharing Christ with others, or am I selfishly reserving His blessings to myself?

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# God Tells Us About His Church



**MEMORY TEXT:** And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" Eph. 1:22, 23.

**CENTRAL TEACHING:** "The Church. The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world; and we join together for worship, for fellowship, for instruction in the Word, for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, for service to all mankind, and for the worldwide proclamation of the gospel. The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word, and from the Scriptures, which are the written Word. The church is God's family; adopted by Him as children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant. The church is the body of Christ, a community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head. The church is the bride for whom Christ died that He might sanctify and cleanse her. At His return in triumph, He will present her to Himself a glorious church, the faithful of all the ages, the purchase of His blood, not having spot or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish."—Fundamental Belief No. 11.

## OUTLINE:

- I. The Christian Church Founded by Jesus Christ.
- II. The Organization and Growth of the Apostolic Church.
- III. The Major Characteristics of the Christian Church.
- IV. The Major Functions of the Church.
- V. What Is Involved in Being a Church Member?

**INTRODUCTION:** What is the Christian church? How should it be organized and controlled? Questions such as these have concerned Christian thinkers ever since the apostolic age. A number of different answers have been given.

The church of the Middle Ages was ruled by regional bishops, who were subservient to the leading bishop. The leading Reformers of the sixteenth century regarded the true church as a spiritual fellowship of all believers in Jesus Christ.

The visible church organization was thought important, but it contained some who were not true believers, while others who were true believers were not members. Thus the visible institutional church was not to be equated fully with the spiritual fellowship of all true believers.

This lesson is designed to help us understand the Bible definition of the church and the Bible teaching regarding church organization and leadership.



## I. THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH FOUNDED BY JESUS CHRIST.

Upon whom did Jesus establish the church? What was the significance of that fact? Matt. 16:16-18; 1 Cor. 3:10, 11; 1 Peter 2:3-8.

The Christian church was founded by Jesus Christ upon Himself. He is the "rock" (Greek: *petra*), the great foundation stone upon which His church is built (Matt. 16:18). The name Peter also means "rock" (Greek: *petros*) but a rock that can be moved. By contrast, Christ is the immovable foundation of the church (Matt. 16:16-18). Both Paul and Peter accepted Christ as the one upon whom the church is built. (See 1 Cor. 3:10, 11; 1 Peter 2:3-8.)

Who is the "head" of the church? Eph. 1:22, 23; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18.

What attitudes toward Christ and His people should be adopted by church leaders? 1 Peter 5:1-4; Mark 10:42-45; Matt. 23:8-11.

**ILLUMINATION:** "The church is built upon Christ as its foundation; it is to obey Christ as its head. It is not to depend upon man, or be controlled by man. Many claim that a position of trust in the church gives them authority to dictate what other men shall believe and what they shall do. This claim God does not sanction. The Saviour declares, 'All ye are brethren.' All are exposed to temptation, and are liable to error. Upon no finite being can we depend for guidance. The Rock of faith is the living presence of Christ in the church."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 414.

What did Jesus mean by the "keys of the kingdom of heaven"? To whom did He give them? Matt. 16:19; 18:18; Rev. 1:18; 3:7.

Jesus did not give the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" only to Peter. He gave them to all His followers. (See Matt. 18:18 in context; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 414.) Because of His death and resurrection, Jesus holds in His hands "the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:18). It is the privilege of every Christian to present Christ to those who do not know Him. In this sense, every Christian is a priest (see 1 Peter 2:5) who, under Christ, can open heaven for responding sinners.

Next to Christ, whose teachings are foundational for the Christian church? Eph. 2:19-22; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

The apostles received their messages directly from Christ and the Holy Spirit. Christians accept these messages as the Word of God, endeavoring to

follow their counsels regarding the church, the family, and individual life.

Notice that Paul depicts "the household of God" as "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:19, 20). The "prophets" refer to the writings of the Old Testament which are vital for the spiritual life of Christians. (See Rom. 9:4, 5; 11:1-5; 2 Tim. 3:15-17.)

**What respect should be given to the appointed spiritual leaders of the church? 1 Thess. 5:12, 13; 1 Tim. 5:17.**

**ILLUMINATION:** "Christ and His church are inseparable. To neglect or despise those whom God has appointed to lead out and to bear the responsibilities connected with His work and with the advancement and spread of the truth is to reject the means which God has ordained for the help, encouragement, and strength of His people. To pass these by and think your light must come through no other channel than directly from God places you in a position where you are liable to deception and to be overthrown."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 418, 419.



## II. THE ORGANIZATION AND GROWTH OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

**How did a twofold ministry of the church develop? Acts 6:1- 6; Phil. 1:1.**

The apostles took the lead in the church after the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 1:21-26). As need arose, new positions of responsibility were created within the church. A distinction was made between elders (or bishops) and deacons. Elders, or bishops, were the ministers of the Word, the preachers who were the church's spiritual leaders. (See Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Tim. 3:1-7.) In the New Testament the word *elder* (Greek: *presbuteros*) is used synonymously with the word *bishop* (*episkopos*). Deacons were appointed to care for practical matters that were not to distract the elders from their special task of preaching the gospel. (See Acts 6:1-8.) Like the elders, the deacons were to be above reproach, in charge of their households, and able to command the respect of church members. (See 1 Tim. 3:8-13.)

**Whose judgment was respected in a special way? Acts 15:1-4, 22.**

**ILLUMINATION:** "The entire body of Christians was not called to vote upon the question [at the Jerusalem council]. The 'apostles and elders,' men of influence and judgment, framed and issued the decree, which was thereupon generally accepted by the Christian churches."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 196.

**As the church grew, how did members help one another? Acts 2:40-47.**



**III. THE MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.**

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** What five metaphors help define what the church is?

1. Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:27 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Luke 12:32; John 10:2-5, 11 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Eph. 2:19; 3:14, 15 \_\_\_\_\_
4. 1 Peter 2:5 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Rev. 19:7, 8 \_\_\_\_\_

The metaphors used by the New Testament writers to describe the church indicate that the closest possible spiritual bond exists between Christ and His believing people and among believers themselves. The Bible says that only those in whose hearts the Holy Spirit is living belong to Christ (See Rom. 8:9, 10.) Only they belong to the spiritual communion of Christ.

**Apart from the fact that the church is a spiritual communion of believers, what evidence is there in Scripture that it also is a visible organization? 1 Cor. 1:2; Acts 13:1; 14:23.**

**ILLUMINATION:** "I have been instructed that it is Satan's special effort to lead men to feel that God is pleased to have them choose their own course, independent of the counsel of their brethren.

"Herein lies a grave danger to the prosperity of our work. We must move discreetly, sensibly, in harmony with the judgment of God-fearing counselors; for in this course alone lies our safety and strength. Otherwise God cannot work with us and by us and for us.

"O how Satan would rejoice if he could succeed in his efforts to get in among this people, and disorganize the work at a time when thorough organization is essential, and will be the greatest power to keep out spurious uprisings, and to refute claims not endorsed by the word of God! We want to hold the lines evenly, that there shall be no breaking down of the system of organization and order that has been built up by wise, careful labor. License must not be given to disorderly elements that desire to control the work at this time.

"Some have advanced the thought that as we near the close of time, every child of God will act independently of any religious organization. But I have been instructed by the Lord that in this work there is no such thing as every man's being independent. The stars of heaven are all under law, each influencing the other to do the will of God, yielding their common obedience to the law that controls their action. And, in order that the Lord's work may advance healthfully and solidly, His people must draw together."—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 486, 487.

Give some examples of visible churches that contained members who had lost their spiritual communion with the body of Christ? 1 Cor. 5:1, 11; Gal. 3:1; 2 Peter 2:1.

In every age there have been unfaithful members of the Christian church. The Bible teaches that we should earnestly and lovingly seek to win them back to Christ. But in some circumstances, for the good name of Christ and His church, they are to be asked to relinquish their membership.

What does God ask of His faithful ones who are outside the visible, organized church? John 10:16; Rev. 18:4.

**ILLUMINATION:** “Notwithstanding the spiritual darkness and alienation from God that exist in the churches which constitute Babylon, the great body of Christ’s true followers are still to be found in their communion. . . .

“Revelation 18 points to the time when, as the result of rejecting the threefold warning of Revelation 14:6-12, the church will have fully reached the condition foretold by the second angel, and the people of God still in Babylon will be called upon to separate from her communion.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 390.



#### IV. THE MAJOR FUNCTIONS OF THE CHURCH.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** What functions of the church are emphasized in the following passages?

1. Matt. 28:19, 20 \_\_\_\_\_
2. 1 John 1:7 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Rev. 14:7 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Acts 17:11 \_\_\_\_\_
5. 1 Cor. 11:24-26 \_\_\_\_\_

Only as church members are enjoying close fellowship with Jesus and with one another can they fulfill their mission for the world. Fellowship, worship, Bible study, celebration of the Lord’s Supper, and the practice of baptism are all church functions that are vitally important for spiritual life and growth. A spiritually healthy church will offer unselfish service for the world. It will have a health ministry conducted by believers who themselves practice correct principles of health reform; it will have a teaching ministry for its youth; and it will have a special ministry for the poor. Every church member has a vital role to play in the task of presenting the gospel.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** What practical steps can be taken by your local church to do Christ’s work more effectively?





**V. WHAT IS INVOLVED IN BEING A CHURCH MEMBER?**

We must let the Bible summarize the responsibilities of individual church members.

**What is of first importance in being a member of the body of Christ? John 3:5, 7; Acts 16:31.**

(See also *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 18, 19; vol. 5, p. 278.)

**What must every true member of the body of Christ be willing to do? John 14:15; 15:10.**

**What attitude of heart will motivate the individual church member in his service for fellow Christians and for non-Christians? 1 John 4:7-13; John 17:21-23.**

“Love for God and for those for whom Christ has died will do a work that we can scarcely comprehend.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 84.



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Study further what the Bible says regarding: (1) fellowship: Psalm 119:63; Mal. 3:16; Acts 2:1, 42; Rom. 1:12. (2) worship: 1 Chron. 16:29; 25:6; Heb. 10:25; John 4:24; Phil. 2:8-11; and (3) service: Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:20; Luke 16:13; James 1:27.

Read the chapter entitled “The Great Commission:” in *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 25-34.

**WHAT OTHERS TEACH:** Some churches place great emphasis on the special spiritual privileges and powers of their priests or ministers. Lay people are regarded as spiritually subservient to their priests and dependent upon them for access to God. The New Testament does not teach this exaltation of the priesthood. Because all members are part of the body, each is necessary for the good of the whole. (See 1 Cor. 12:8-31.)

Since the Reformation, Protestantism has splintered into literally thousands of denominations. Differences in theology and Christian practice have produced great division. Today the ecumenical spirit leads many Christians and their denominations to neglect careful attention to Bible truth in the interests of external unity and a new show of church power. Political influence is being exerted in an attempt to enforce certain traditional teachings, to which most established denominations can subscribe.

Bible prophecy indicates that the church-state issue will be a major factor in the final scenes before Jesus comes.

**HOW TO SHARE THIS TRUTH WITH OTHERS:** Pride and intolerance will destroy your effectiveness as a witness for Christ. Telling others that your church is the only true church might antagonize. Invite your non-Adventist relatives and friends to attend church with you. Hope

fully they will be impressed with the loving concern of the church members and will become interested in our message. "The strongest argument in favor of the Gospel is a loving and lovable Christian."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 470.

**SUMMARY:** Seventh-day Adventists believe that Jesus Christ founded the Christian church upon Himself. As the Head of the Church, Christ directs His people through the messages contained in His Word, through the conviction of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, and through the ministry of appointed spiritual leaders. The church is both a spiritual communion of all true believers in Christ and a visible organization in which leaders and people cooperate in carrying out Christ's great commission.

#### APPLICATION

- Do I belong to the spiritual fellowship of all true believers in Jesus Christ?
- Have I identified myself with that church organization that is following most closely the teachings of God's Word?
- Am I willing to use the talents the Lord has given me in serving my church and the people of the world around me?

“I Didn’t  
Know  
Where  
the  
Money  
Was  
Going

So I didn’t start a Sabbath School Investment project. Then God reminded me that He would take care of the money and send the blessings where they belonged. So I invested my talent for teaching Hawaiian guitar. That year I earned \$205 for Investment. I wonder how many I deprived from hearing the gospel during those years I neglected to get involved!”

Church Member, Citra SDA Church, Florida

# God Introduces the Three Angels' Messages



**MEMORY TEXT:** “Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12).

**CENTRAL TEACHING:** “**The Remnant and its Mission.** The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ; but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this witness.”—Fundamental Belief No. 12.

## OUTLINE:

- I. Why a Remnant Is Needed Today.
- II. The Remnant Announces the Judgment Hour.
- III. The Remnant Proclaims Salvation Through Christ.
- IV. The Remnant Heralds the Second Advent.
- V. The Remnant Gives the Loud Cry.

**INTRODUCTION:** Throughout history God has had a people who have remained loyal to Him. No matter how deep apostasy may have been, faithful followers have proclaimed His name and lived by faith in His salvation. At times the number of true believers has been reduced to a small minority, a remnant, as at the time of the Flood (see Gen. 7:7) or in the days of Elijah’s ministry (see 1 Kings 19:18).

Seventh-day Adventists believe that God has people in every denomination and even among the unchurched. We do not subscribe to the idea that salvation is limited to those within Christian churches in general or to those within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in particular. But God has a remnant church, a specially “called out” people, with an end-time message for this age. We believe that Scripture points to the Seventh-day Adventist movement as the fulfillment of the prophecy that there would be a remnant church for this time to proclaim His second coming.



## I. WHY A REMNANT IS NEEDED TODAY.

Disobedience of the divine law is rampant today. The majority flout God's will and spurn His offer of salvation; evil and evil people "wax worse and worse" (2 Tim. 3:13).

**In such a time as this, what challenge does God give His people? Phil. 2:15.**

The *Revised Standard Version* reads: "Without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." In an age of rebellion, they keep God's commandments; in an age of unbelief, they have the faith of Jesus. (See Rev. 14:12.) As the events of earth hasten to their grand finale, the contrast between the remnant and unbelievers will become ever more marked.

**When will the light and glory of the truth of God be most evident in the character of His people? Isa. 60:1, 2.**

**REVIEW** the following prophecies that give insights into the time when it was predicted that the remnant church would begin its work.

**1. Rev. 12:17.** Revelation 12 introduces five major battles of the controversy on earth in which the dragon (Satan, verse 9) fights against the woman (the symbol of God's people): (1) the battle for the minds of people that has continued since Satan deceived the first woman (see verses 4 and 5); (2) the attack upon the "man child" (Christ) when He was born on earth (see verses 4 and 13); (3) the persecutions that began as soon as Jesus left the world and that continued through the Dark Ages (see verse 13); (4) the persecutions during the wilderness period that drove many people to the "earth" (America) for shelter prior to 1798 (verse 6, 14-16); and (5) the last angry attack



against the remnant church. The prophetic sequence indicates that the “remnant” appears sometime after 1798 (see verse 17; compare Daniel 7:24, 25).

**2. Rev. 10:1—11:1.** The year 1844 is most important to Seventh-day Adventists. For a number of years prior to 1844, William Miller preached the imminent return of Jesus, finally setting October 22, 1844, as the Second Advent date. The day passed without Christ’s return. The bitter disappointment described in Revelation 10:9, 10 caused most believers to give up, another smaller group to continue for a few years, and the third handful—“the scattered flock” (so called in 1847)—to form a believing remnant. They still expected the Advent. They rechecked their computations for 1844. It dawned on them that the date was correct, but not the event. Under divine guidance, they concluded that, in 1844, the High Priest went from one ministry to another in heaven rather than from heaven to earth. Thus 1844 was the time when Christ moved His ministry from the first apartment into the second apartment to begin the investigative judgment.

This discovery was based upon the Old Testament sanctuary—temple model. Once each year, during the Day of Atonement, the high priest went into the Most Holy Place. (See Heb. 9:7.) This was judgment day for Israel, and all who did not search their minds and gather around the tabernacle or Temple were cut off. (See Lev. 23:29.) The remnant that survived the 1844 disappointment knew that the investigative pre-advent judgment had arrived. They continued to search the Scriptures. They discovered the Sabbath truth, recognized the prophetic ministry in their midst, and realized that the truth about what was happening in the heavenly sanctuary explained their disappointment.

In 1844 the remnant began to proclaim the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14.



## **II. THE REMNANT ANNOUNCES THE JUDGMENT HOUR.**

Because God in His marvelous love always gives humanity warning and opportunity for rescue before He brings destruction, He commissions the remnant to announce to the world the imminent end of all things. The remnant’s mission is portrayed by the three angels of Revelation 14:6-12. Theirs is a worldwide task, embracing “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” Their message calls attention to the arrival of God’s judgment. God is intervening in the course of human history to bring to a close the great controversy between good and evil.

**SEARCH AND LEARN: What kinds of records are investigated and what kinds of decisions are made during the pre-advent judgment?**

1. Eccl. 12:13, 14 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Dan. 7:9, 10; (compare 12:1) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Dan. 7:13, 14, 21, 22, 26, 27 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Mal. 3:1-4, 16, 17 \_\_\_\_\_

5. Matt. 22:11-14 \_\_\_\_\_

6. Rev. 3:5; 6:9-11; 14:6, 7 \_\_\_\_\_

**How many are involved in the judgment? 2 Cor. 5:10. What is the standard by which we will be judged? James 2:10-12.**

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**ILLUMINATION:** “We are now living in the great day of atonement. In the typical service, while the high priest was making the atonement for Israel, all were required to afflict their souls by repentance of sin and humiliation before the Lord, lest they be cut off from among the people. In like manner, all who would have their names retained in the book of life should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance. . . . Though all nations are to pass in judgment before God, yet He will examine the case of each individual with as close and searching scrutiny as if there were not another being upon the earth. Everyone must be tested and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 489, 490.



### III. THE REMNANT PROCLAIMS SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST.

At the heart of the remnant message is “the everlasting gospel.” God always has had but one way of saving men and women—by faith in His gift provided through Christ. The remnant people are to lift high the cross of Christ that all may look and live. (See John 3:14-18.)

**What clause in Revelation 14:7 indicates that a significant part of the preaching of the “everlasting gospel” involves the keeping of the Sabbath?**

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**How is the Sabbath linked with salvation through Christ? Heb. 4:1-10.**

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Hebrews 4 ties the seventh-day Sabbath as a memorial of Christ’s rest at the end of Creation week into the keeping of the Sabbath as a memorial of Christ’s rest of redemption. Jesus completed the work of redemption on the sixth day (see Luke 23:54) and rested in the tomb on the seventh-day Sabbath. (See Luke 23:56.) The Sabbath “is forever linked” with the rest of completed redemption. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 769.)

**In what way are the second and third angels’ messages of Revelation 14:8-11 tied into the “everlasting gospel”?**

---

The second angel announces the fall of Babylon. The new focus on the

heavenly sanctuary calls in question the work of the little horn of Daniel 7 and 8. Babylon's focus on the earthly priestly system is judged and condemned by God. When first proclaimed, the first angel's message, with its clear upward look, caused many to see beyond the human counterfeit system on earth to the genuine ministry of humanity's only Priest in heaven. This broke the grip of Babylon over many people.

The third angel points to the ultimate showdown between Christ and His enemies at the Second Coming. The three messages thus set the stage for the final battle in the cosmic controversy. The remnant people, or church, have a mission to warn the world that Christ is engaged in pre-advent judgment, which is soon to terminate. Then the Second Advent will take place.



#### **IV. THE REMNANT HERALDS THE SECOND ADVENT.**

The three angels' messages focus on one all-important object—preparing people today for the second coming of Christ. Often we fail to relate Revelation 14:6-12 as clearly as we should with the rest of the chapter. Notice that there are three angels involved in the events that surround the Second Coming. Notice also that there are two beings bearing sickles and two angels who announce to them that the time has come to reap. The chart that follows clarifies this relationship.

<b>Contrast of Harvesters</b>	<b>Christ with Crown on His Head Carrying a Sharp Sickle</b>	<b>"Another Angel" Carrying a Sharp Sickle</b>
<b>What are they doing?</b>	Christ coming in the clouds at His second coming	Angel coming out of temple for judgment
<b>From where did another angel come?</b>	Out of the temple crying with a loud voice to Christ	From the altar crying with a loud voice to angel with sharp sickle
<b>What did the angels invite the harvesters to do?</b>	Thrust in the sickle and reap the (grain) harvest	Thrust in the sickle and gather clusters of grapes ready for the harvest
<b>How did the harvesters respond?</b>	Gathered ripened good grain—the righteous taken to heaven	Gathered fully ripened grapes for the winepress—destruction of the wicked

During the investigative judgment of the righteous, which began in 1844, the determination is made whose names will be retained in the Lamb's book of life. These make up the ripened grain that Jesus harvests at the Second Coming. Those whose names are not found in the book of life will be "cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God" (Rev. 14:19; see also Rev. 20:15).

How will those who are recognized as God's "peculiar people" prepare to participate in the "blessed hope?" What specifically will they do and what will they avoid doing? What will those about them recognize as characterizing their lives? Titus 2:11-14.

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**ILLUMINATION:** "We are living in the most solemn period of this world's history. The destiny of earth's teeming multitudes is about to be decided. Our own future well-being and also the salvation of other souls depend upon the course which we now pursue. We need to be guided by the Spirit of truth. Every follower of Christ should earnestly inquire: 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' We need to humble ourselves before the Lord, with fasting and prayer, and to meditate much upon His word, especially upon the scenes of the judgment. We should now seek a deep and living experience in the things of God."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 601.

In what way is the "patience of the saints" related to the coming of the Lord? James 5:7, 8.

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Recognizing that the harvest of the earth soon will be ripe, we must do our part in sowing the gospel seed and bringing our lives into conformity to God's will. Then we must wait in confident expectation of the coming harvest, when we will receive our reward.



## V. THE REMNANT GIVES THE LOUD CRY.

What do the church and the world face just before Christ returns? Dan. 12:1.

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What keeps the remnant church from fearing this final great test? Rev. 1:13, 20.

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The remnant can take courage in the fact that truth has never been popular. Jesus trod the winepress alone. (See Isa. 63:3.) On the cross He constituted the true remnant of ancient Israel. In Him alone type met antitype. In Him alone was the covenant fulfilled. In Him alone the purpose of the nation reached its goal.

Just as He met the test of the cross, the last remnant will be enabled to meet the final great day of trouble successfully as long as He abides in and with them.

What last great call will the remnant bring to the world under the power of the latter rain? Rev. 18:1-4.

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The remnant people function as a prophetic gathering movement. God has



true believers scattered throughout the world, members of many denominations and religions. Under the pressure of last-day events, however, as the issues in the conflict between Christ and Satan emerge more clearly and the lines between the followers of each side become drawn more sharply, the remnant becomes the nucleus around which cluster the genuine people of God in all lands.

### **What characterizes the “loud cry?”**

The “loud cry” is not so much a description of a worldwide proclamation as it is a description of a worldwide demonstration of Christ’s life through His remnant people. (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 611, 612.)



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** What connection do you see between the three angels’ messages in Revelation 14:6-12 and the righteousness by faith message of Romans 2:13; 3:20-24, 31; 8:9, 10; 10:6-10?

Read the chapter entitled “The Scriptures a Safeguard” in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 593-602.

**WHAT OTHERS TEACH:** No other people in history have preached the three angels’ messages as definitely, widely, and unitedly as have Seventh-day Adventists. Although some organizations have preached parts of these messages, none has ever had the comprehensive understanding of Revelation 14:6-12 possessed among Seventh-day Adventists. This fact must not be a source of pride. It should arouse us to a sense of the great responsibility that God has laid upon us to proclaim His last messages to a perishing world. “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luke 12:48).

**HOW TO SHARE THIS TRUTH WITH OTHERS:** The first angel’s message should be presented as the great gospel message of salvation by faith in Christ. It is the “everlasting gospel” (Rev. 14:6). The judgment and Sabbath messages are inseparable parts of this gospel (see verse 7). The second and third messages (see verses 8-12) are fearful warnings to those who have rejected the previous messages. The aim in presenting the second and third messages should always be to lead souls to the experience described in the first message. In this way Christ and His saving grace will always be central in the presentation of these vital messages.

**SUMMARY:** Seventh-day Adventists believe that the remnant church faithfully observes all of God’s commandments. By faith in Jesus Christ, they seek to conform to all the counsels of the Holy Spirit. They take seriously the commission to proclaim the last-day gospel to the world. This gospel is a repetition of the message of Christ and the apostles with special emphasis upon the three angels’ messages of Revelation chapter 14.

### **APPLICATION**

- Have you accepted the spiritual experience offered in the first angel’s message?
- What practical steps are you taking to unite your voice with others in presenting the three angels’ messages to others?

# God Urges Us to Unite



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1).

**CENTRAL TEACHING:** "Unity in the Body of Christ. The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children."—Fundamental Belief No. 13.

## OUTLINE:

- I. Unity Based on Commitment to Christ.
- II. Unity in Doctrine.
- III. Unity in Character.
- IV. How Church Unity Is Destroyed.
- V. Unity before Jesus Comes.

**INTRODUCTION:** To what extent does God wish to have unity within His church on earth, and what kind of unity is he concerned about?

Some writers throughout Christian church history have proposed that it is sufficient to have a kind of external unity based on authoritarian administrative control over the church. They have suggested that there would be adequate unity if everyone would give loyalty to the individual or individuals appointed to rule the church. Does the Bible indicate that this is the kind of unity that Christ wants among believers?

Others look for a unity of love and tolerance among Christians, despite marked differences of doctrinal belief. They urge that a unity of love should be possible even among those who hold contradictory interpretations of what Jesus and the apostles taught. Does Christian church history indicate that unity of this kind is practicable?

Other Christian thinkers have spoken as if doctrinal unity is all that matters. Christian love is treated as less important than doctrinal agreement.

What kind of unity and cooperation does Christ wish to see in His church? In the Bible alone can we discover God's answer.



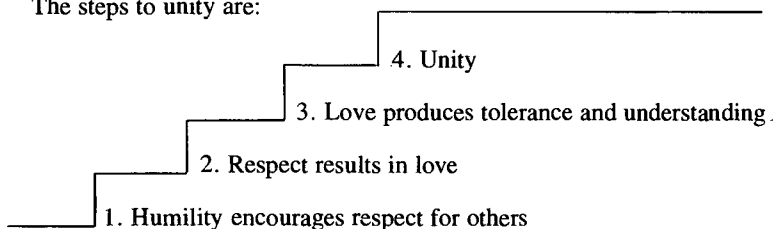
## I. UNITY BASED ON COMMITMENT TO CHRIST.

The first condition to unity within the church is that all its members are born-again Christians who have Christ in their hearts by the Holy Spirit.

**What is the basis of the unity that Christ seeks for His church? Rom. 12:3-5, 9, 10.**

Where there is mutual love and understanding there is unity. Love is based on respect. We cannot respect others if we have an exaggerated idea of our own importance. Paul speaks to the real issue when he urges that no one should think more of himself than is reasonable, and that Christians should show preference for others.

The steps to unity are:



Unity begins in the heart of the individual believer. If Christ is reigning in the life the Christian will be a humble, loving person. If Christ is not reigning there self will be dominant. There will not be appreciation for and agreement with brethren and sisters.

**When Christians are totally committed to Christ, what is their attitude to national and racial differences? Acts 17:26, 27; Gal. 3:27, 28; Eph. 2:14.**

All those who are in Christ have the same Father, Saviour, and Holy Spirit ruling in their lives. They yearn to see every human being become a brother or a sister in Christ. Jesus would have died for any person, irrespective of race, nationality, education, or economic standing. None of these differences form a basis for excluding any willing human being from accepting full fellowship in Christ's church.

**ILLUMINATION:** "No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. . . .

"In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. All are brought nigh by His precious blood. (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:13.)."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 386.

**Who produces the unity in Christ that believers should enjoy? Eph. 4:1-6; 1 Cor. 12:12-17.**

There are issues, that are not matters of Bible principle, on which there

will be disagreement among us. Some differences are questions of taste or culture. But never should these legitimate differences be allowed to destroy our loving relationship with Christ and one another. Christ's attitudes, life, and conduct provide the pattern for our attitudes and actions.



## II. UNITY IN DOCTRINE.

Would there be a Christian church if there were no unity in doctrinal beliefs? If one person believes in the full deity of Christ and His eternal pre-existence, while another person does not so believe, are they worshipping the same Saviour? Christian church history has established that a church can survive as long as its members are agreed on important doctrinal issues. They may disagree on minor or peripheral matters, but on the basics of the faith there must be unity.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** What light do the following Bible passages shed on the question of doctrinal unity?

1. 1 Cor. 1:10 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gal. 1:6-8 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Eph. 4:14, 15 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Phil. 1:27 \_\_\_\_\_
5. 1 Tim. 1:3 \_\_\_\_\_
6. 1 Peter 3:8 \_\_\_\_\_

The divisions within the Corinthian church in the time of the apostle Paul centered on more than matters of Christian practice. They involved variant teachings—doctrinal differences. Paul urged the kind of unity that comes only as each individual accepts the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

**ILLUMINATION:** “But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support.

“Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

“If one man takes his views of Bible truth without regard to the opinions

of his brethren, and justifies his course, alleging that he has a right to his own peculiar views, and then presses them upon others, how can he be fulfilling the prayer of Christ?

“And if another and still another arises, each asserting his right to believe and talk what he pleases without reference to the faith of the body, where will be that harmony which existed between Christ and His Father, and which Christ prayed might exist among His brethren?”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 29, 30.

**Who brings believers into unity of doctrinal understanding? With what will the teaching always be consistent? John 16:13; 14:26; 2 Tim. 3:14-17.**

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Unity of belief comes from the Word of God as interpreted by the Spirit Himself. Any teaching that contradicts the Bible is not of God, and not profitable for doctrine. Because the Holy Spirit inspired the messages of the Bible in the first place (see 2 Peter 1:20, 21), He will never contradict His own messages.

**Who is the center of all Scriptural teaching? John 5:39; Luke 24: 27, 44.**

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**ILLUMINATION:** “Never should a sermon be preached, or Bible instruction in any line be given, without pointing the hearers to ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ John 1:29. Every true doctrine makes Christ the center, every precept receives force from His words.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 54.

### III. UNITY IN CHARACTER.

**How did Jesus emphasize His wish that His people be united in love and character? John 17:21-23.**

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The character that Jesus wishes each of His followers to possess is based on their oneness with God. The glory that He gives to the believer is the glory of His character. There can be unity within the church only as each member reflects the character of Jesus.

**What ideal of character development is upheld before Christians? Eph. 4:11-13; Col. 3:10-15.**

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In his Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul associates “the unity of the faith” with “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Christlikeness in all is the basis of unity among all. In the Epistle to the Colossians, the “image” of Christ “in all” is presented as the source of unity among Christians who have differing cultural backgrounds.

What does individual holiness of life have to do with unity within the church? Heb. 12:14, 15.

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**ILLUMINATION:** “Holiness is wholeness to God. The soul is surrendered to God. The will, and even the thoughts, are brought into subjection to the will of Christ. The love of Jesus fills the soul, and is constantly going out in a clear, refreshing stream, to make glad the hearts of others.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1076.

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#### IV. HOW CHURCH UNITY IS DESTROYED.

The devil is a much greater authority on the subject of disunity than any of us. The Bible unmasks his evil designs and warns us of his activities.

What destroys unity in the church? In a word, the answer is sin. It was sin that first disturbed the unity of heaven. Throughout history sin has been a constant source of disunity among God’s people.

What effect does pride have upon the body of believers? Prov. 28:25; 1 Cor. 4:18, 19; Rev. 3:17.

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What is the effect on the church of persistence in sin by one or a few? 2 Peter 2:18; Jude 4, 11-13; Joshua 7:1.

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**ILLUMINATION:** “The Lord’s people are to be one. There is to be no separation in His work. . . . Satan will invent every device to separate those whom God is seeking to make one. But the Lord will reveal Himself as a God of judgment. We are working under the eyes of the heavenly host. There is a divine Watcher among us, inspecting all that is planned and carried on.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 165.

“It is not the opposition of the world that most endangers the church of Christ. It is the evil cherished in the hearts of believers that works their most grievous disaster and most surely retards the progress of God’s cause. There is no surer way of weakening spirituality than by cherishing envy, suspicion, faultfinding, and evil surmising. On the other hand, the strongest witness that God has sent His Son into the world is the existence of harmony and union among men of varied dispositions who form His church. This witness it is the privilege of the followers of Christ to bear. But in order to do this, they must place themselves under Christ’s command. Their characters must be conformed to His character and their wills to His will.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 549.

What problems were destroying the unity of the Corinthian church of Paul’s day? 1 Cor. 1:12, 13; 3:1-5; 5:1, 2; 6:1, 5-8.

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When a group within the church unites to cause difficulties for the main body of believers there is inevitable division and heartache within the church. When the Gadarenes (KJV: "Gergesenes") united to resist the influence of Jesus in their territory they lost the richest blessing Heaven could bestow upon them. (See Matt. 8:34.) Those Jews who rejected Christ and the Christian message brought division and conflict around the Roman world. Equally destructive were the efforts of those within the church who taught false doctrine and strove to exalt themselves above others. (See Acts 15:1, 24; Gal. 2:4; 6:12.)



**V. UNITY BEFORE JESUS COMES.**

Bible prophets foresaw that before the second advent of Jesus the Christian church would enjoy unity and strength.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** What kind of unity for spiritual Israel is predicted in the following passages?

1. Isa. 11:12, 13; 52:8 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Jer. 50:4 \_\_\_\_\_
3. John 10:16 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Rev. 18:4, 5 \_\_\_\_\_

The Old Testament prophets foresaw that God's people would come together again in a unity of love and devotion to the Lord. Because literal Israel failed to fulfill the divine purpose, these predictions now refer to the Christian church. (See Rom. 9:8; Gal. 3:27-29.) The promises of the Old Testament would have been fulfilled literally had Israel accepted the Messiah. Now these promises apply to the true church of Jesus Christ around the world.

Jesus will have a united church before He comes again. God will call out of "Babylon" those who wish to be true to Him and who follow the counsels of the Holy Spirit. Then God's people will be united in commitment to Christ and to the teachings of the Bible.



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read the chapters entitled "Apollos at Corinth" and "Apostasy in Galatia" in *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 269-280, 383-388. What similar and different problems existed in the churches of Corinth and Galatia? What differences were there in Paul's manner of dealing with the problems of these two churches?

**WHAT OTHERS TEACH:** Some churches insist on unity imposed by authoritarian church rulers. Others see no need for real doctrinal or character unity as long as "love" exists among the members. This so-called love can become an excuse for permissiveness. Such broad tolerance fails to take account of the specific teachings of Jesus.

**HOW TO SHARE THIS TRUTH WITH OTHERS:** The best testimony for the world of the importance and effectiveness of unity is its existence among those who profess to follow Christ. The local churches that have the greatest success in winning souls to Christ are those whose members enjoy a unity of Christian love and understanding. "They will know us by our love" is a profound truth. Jesus prayed for the unity of love in His church, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21).

**SUMMARY:** Write a few sentences stating your understanding of the Bible teaching on church unity.

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#### APPLICATION

- Have I found unity of commitment and understanding with God's people?
- Do I have character faults that tend to undermine the unity of my local church?
- Am I willing to allow Christ to change my attitudes so that I can work cooperatively with my church and witness effectively to those about me?

"God  
could  
have

reached His object in saving sinners without our aid; but in order for us to develop a character like Christ's, we must share in His work. In order to enter into His joy,— of seeing souls redeemed by His sacrifice — we must participate in His labors for their redemption."

The Desire of Ages, p. 142.



# Lessons for Fourth Quarter, 1988

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the fourth quarter of 1988 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of this series is "Doctrines, Part II."

## First Lesson:

### "GOD TELLS US ABOUT BAPTISM"

MEMORY TEXT: Romans 6:3, 4.

FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF NO. 14: Baptism.

#### OUTLINE:

- I. What Baptism Is.
- II. What Baptism Does.
- III. What Baptism Symbolizes.
- IV. What Baptism Involves:

## Second Lesson:

### "GOD TELLS US ABOUT THE LORD'S SUPPER"

MEMORY TEXT: 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17.

FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF NO. 15: The Lord's Supper.

#### OUTLINE:

- I. The Importance of Humble Service.
- II. The Ordinance of Humility.
- III. The Institution of the Lord's Supper.
- IV. The Spiritual Meaning of the Lord's Supper.
- V. The Lord's Supper in the Heavenly Kingdom.

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Unions	Population	Churches	Church Members	Sabbath School Members
Bangladesh	97,072,000	46	5,010	7,205
Burma	35,306,189	122	10,786	12,447
Central Philippine	14,745,840	478	90,405	122,342
East Indonesia	15,106,583	397	49,786	65,592
Japan	120,720,542	102	11,697	2,878
Korean	42,193,137	424	73,548	10,088
North Philippine	43,422,838	938	118,594	65,070
South China Island	25,141,913	53	9,069	95,060
South Philippine	14,814,001	634	158,879	7,818
Southeast Asia	125,604,046	216	36,258	183,199
Sri Lanka	14,859,295	23	1,615	30,105
West Indonesia	148,325,438	413	52,530	1,285
Guam-Micronesia	220,000	11	1,944	65,553
<b>Division Totals</b>	<b>697,531,822</b>	<b>3,857</b>	<b>620,101</b>	<b>666,642</b>

Statistics as of June 30, 1986

