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Meet the Principal Contributor to This Quarter's Lessons



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Dr. Gulley's longtime dream is in process of fulfillment—to write a Seventh-day Adventist systematic theology. His hobbies include oil painting, bike riding, ham radio operating, researching, writing, and working with his computer. Dr. Gulley is married to Dr. Leona (nee Minchin), professor of psychology at Southern College. They have four children and six grandchildren.

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End-Time Landmarks

Good News for Our Day

This quarter we will study some of the most important landmarks of the faith taught in Scripture and believed by Seventh-day Adventists. By *landmarks* we mean prominent Bible teachings that have direct relevance to our salvation and that enable us to detect and avoid religious errors and spiritual delusions.

Writing in 1889, Ellen White endorsed the righteousness-by-faith message that had been presented to the church at the Minneapolis General Conference session the year before. She briefly outlined the "old landmarks" to which the Adventist church is committed:

"The passing of the time in 1844 was a period of great events, opening to our astonished eyes the cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven, and having decided relation to God's people upon the earth, [also] the first and second angels' messages and the third, unfurling the banner on which was inscribed, 'The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.' One of the landmarks under this message was the temple of God, seen by His truth-loving people in heaven, and the ark containing the law of God. The light of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment flashed its strong rays in the pathway of the transgressors of God's law. The nonimmortality of the wicked is an old landmark. I can call to mind nothing more that can come under the head of the old landmarks."—*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, pp. 30, 31.

According to this passage, there are five "old landmarks": (1) the pre-advent judgment; (2) the three angels' messages; (3) the law; (4) the Sabbath; and (5) the mortality of the soul. The significant fact is that the message preached in 1888 was intended to place each of these landmarks in the context of righteousness and salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. Christ and His saving grace are central to the Advent message. The landmark truths have relevance to life only as Christ is seen in them.

We begin this quarter's lessons by reviewing Bible teaching regarding righteousness by faith in Christ. We then consider other aspects of the first angel's message: the earthly sanctuary services as types or analogies of Christ's heavenly mediatorial and judgment ministries; the law; and the Sabbath. We study the second and third angels' messages in relation to last-day events and in relation to special counsel given to God's last-day people. The doctrine of the soul's mortality points us to the great truth of the resurrection at the second coming of Jesus.

"Faith in God's word, prayerfully studied and practically applied, will be our shield from Satan's power and will bring us off conquerors through the blood of Christ."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 302.

Christ the Focus of Scripture



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Luke 24:27, 44; Isa. 7:14; 9:6, 7; Ps. 2:1-12.

MEMORY TEXT: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).

KEY THOUGHT: Because all Scripture focuses on Christ, all Bible teaching is best understood in the light of the cross.

CHRIST DEMONSTRATED THAT THE SCRIPTURES POINT TO HIM. His crucifixion shattered the hopes of His disciples. In the afternoon of His resurrection day, two of His followers walked the seven miles from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus (Luke 24:13). Jesus demonstrated that His ministry is the central theme of the Old Testament (Luke 24:27).

Later in the evening, Jesus appeared to the eleven apostles (Luke 24:36). Again He explained that every section of the Hebrew Scriptures points to His life and ministry. The Law of Moses (Luke 24:27) is the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses. The prophets are the four "former" prophets (Joshua, Judges, [1 and 2] Samuel, and [1 and 2] Kings) and the four "latter" prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets considered as one book). The Psalms, or Writings, include the remaining 11 books, of which the book of Psalms was regarded as the first. (See *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 37.)

Christ in all the Scriptures is the theme of this lesson.

CHRIST IN THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES (Luke 24:27, 44).

What passages from the writings of Moses may Jesus have referred to as He taught the two disciples on the way to Emmaus? Study the Christ-centered significance of the following passages:

Gen. 3:15, 21 _____

Exod. 12:1-14 _____

Num. 21:4-9 _____

Num. 24:17 _____

Deut. 18:15 _____

Genesis 3:15 is the first gospel text. Even that first reference to Christ speaks of His death. Christ is the true "seed" of the "woman" (Gal. 3:16, 17). His death provided a mortal wound to Satan and his pretensions (John 12:31; 1 John 3:8).

"As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour. Christ knew that He would have to suffer, yet He became man's substitute."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1084.

Before Israel left Egypt, God initiated the Passover service. The blood of the slain lamb was placed on doorposts and lintels (Exod. 12:5-14) as a type of the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 5:7).

The bronze snake (Num. 21:4-9), held up on a pole to which dying Israelites were to look, symbolized Christ as our sin-bearer on Calvary. He took our place. He became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24).

Balaam's prophecy regarding a "star" that would "come forth out of Jacob" (Num. 24:17, RSV) foreshadowed the birth of the Messiah (Matt. 2:2).

Christ met all the conditions of Moses' prophecy regarding "a prophet" like himself (Deut. 18:15; compare John 6:14; 7:40). Moses was a type of Christ.

In the light of the Messianic prophecies in the five books of Moses, what impression do you think Jesus' words had on the two disciples who were walking to Emmaus? What impressions do the New Testament applications of Moses' predictions have on you? What relationship do you see between Revelation 13:8 and the prophecies in the Pentateuch?

**CHRIST IN THE WRITINGS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT
PROPHETS (Isa. 7:14; 9:6, 7).**

What references from the prophets do you think Jesus could have used during the walk to Emmaus?

Isa. 7:14 _____

Isa. 9:6, 7 _____

Isa. 42:1-7 _____

Isa. 52:13-53:12 _____

Micah 5:2 _____

Sometimes referred to as "the gospel prophet," Isaiah provided many inspired forecasts of the Messiah's ministry and sacrificial death. Isaiah foresaw the miraculous birth of "Immanuel, God with us." (Compare Isa. 7:14 with Matt. 1:22, 23.) Isaiah predicted that the Messiah would be the Deity (Isa. 9:6; compare John 14:8-11) and that He would occupy David's throne for eternity (Isa. 9:7; compare Luke 1:32, 33). Filled with the Spirit, the Messiah would perform a loving ministry of releasing sin-bound people from Satan's dominion (Isa. 42:1-7; compare Matt. 12:18-21). Isaiah forecast the Messiah's sacrifice for all human sin (Isa. 50:5, 6; 52:13-53:12; compare the Gospels' accounts of Jesus' trial and death).

Study the following passages that also speak of the Messiah's ministry and death. Find applications of these passages in the New Testament:

Jer. 23:5, 6 _____

Zech. 9:9 _____

Zech. 13:7 _____

Isa. 50:4-11 _____

Mal. 3:1 _____

Jesus directed attention to the Old Testament as a witness to Himself. He said, "These are the Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39, NIV). Peter reiterated the same point (1 Peter 1:11).

CHRIST IN THE PSALMS, THE WRITINGS (Ps. 2:1-12).

The third section of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) to which Jesus referred (Luke 24:44) was called the Writings (*kethubim*). Since the book of Psalms was the first book of the Writings, the whole section was often called the Psalms. The book of Daniel was included in this section of the Hebrew Bible.

What passages from the Psalms may Jesus have used during the walk to Emmaus? Notice the New Testament application of the following passages:

Ps. 2:1-12; compare Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5 _____

Ps. 16:8-11; compare Acts 2:25-28 _____

Ps. 22:1, 8, 16, 18; compare Matt. 27:35, 43, 46 _____

The Bible study Jesus gave the two disciples on the way to Emmaus must have been very comprehensive. "He interpreted to them *in all the scriptures* the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27, RSV). They didn't complain that Jesus used too many texts! They testified, " 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?' " (verse 32). Undoubtedly He referred to Daniel 9:24-27, which predicted the dates of the Messiah's baptism and crucifixion.

It was easy for Jesus to expound the Scriptures in this way. He had inspired the Old Testament prophets to write their messages, and He had led His people for centuries. "All the communion between heaven and the fallen race has been through Christ. It was the Son of God that gave to our first parents the promise of redemption. It was He who revealed Himself to the patriarchs. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses understood the gospel. They looked for salvation through man's Substitute and Surety. These holy men of old held communion with the Saviour who was to come to our world in human flesh; and some of them talked with Christ and heavenly angels face to face."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 366.

How privileged we are to have New Testament interpretations of the Old Testament messages. The Holy Spirit revealed to New Testament prophets the Christ-centered significance of Old Testament passages.

Have you found Christ in the Old Testament as well as in the New? As you have listened to Christ speak to you in His Word, how has your life been enriched?

CHRIST IS CENTRAL TO THE NEW TESTAMENT (Eph. 4:21).

How does Scripture compare Christ with the prophets? Heb. 1:1, 2.

"In these last days [the gospel age] he has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb. 1:2, NIV). The teachings of Christ were circulated orally for some years after His resurrection. Then the writings of the New Testament prophets (the apostles) began to appear. Every one of these writings contains messages "spoken to us by his Son." The Gospels record the life and teachings of Jesus. The epistles reiterate His teachings, the messages He gave while on earth, and the same basic message that was given in Old Testament times.

"His sayings were to the disciples as a new revelation. . . . He was but unfolding the old truths, long obscured. . . . He appealed to the Old Testament Scriptures, laying open in a clear light the spiritual bearings of truths that had become obscured through tradition and misinterpretation."—*Signs of the Times*, Feb. 29, 1892, p. 3.

How is Christ depicted in the book of Revelation?

Rev. 1:1 _____

Rev. 1:12-18 _____

Rev. 5:6-10 _____

Rev. 6:15, 16 _____

Rev. 19:11-16 _____

The whole book of Revelation is Christ's testimony about Himself. He is the heavenly High Priest, who, having won victory over sin and death, is able to impart light, strength, and deliverance to His struggling people. He is the victorious Lamb before the throne, the representative of humanity, and the world's Saviour. He is also the Deity who opens the records of the future. He is the coming King, who translates His believing followers to the heavenly kingdom and destroys those who have identified themselves with sin.

As you study the New Testament, what do you see mainly—a set of theological propositions or a Saviour from sin? Why is it important that all our doctrinal understandings be shaped by our realization of their Christ-centered significance?

CALVARY, THE CENTER OF THE NEW TESTAMENT (Gal. 6:14).

What is the central focus of the New Testament? Acts 4:8-12; 5:28-42.

The records of Christ's death and resurrection occupy between a quarter and a third of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and half of John. These events constituted the heart of apostolic preaching. Christ's death and resurrection made salvation available to all humanity. They made possible His intercessory ministry in heaven, His pre-advent judgment ministry, and the eternal reward to be bestowed upon the faithful at His return.

What was the central focus of Paul's teaching? 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2; 15:1-5; Gal. 3:1.

After the brilliant young rabbi had found the Saviour, every Scriptural truth took on new meaning. Paul now saw the Old Testament sanctuary services as foreshadowing the sacrificial, mediatorial, and judgment ministries of Jesus Christ. He saw salvation as God's gift, not the believer's achievement. He realized that sinful human beings can have the present assurance of salvation in Christ because of His grace, counted and bestowed. He saw works of obedience to God's law as flowing from hearts in tune with the Saviour, who bore the penalty for their sin. Paul looked forward longingly to the consummation of all the believer's hopes when Jesus will come the second time.

"The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 315.

What is Christ's central role now that He has borne the penalty for sin? John 12:32.

Since every biblical truth must be studied in the light of the cross, the most important focus in every sermon and Bible study should be Christ and His saving work. As we study some of the landmark truths of the Christian faith this quarter, we will discover Christ at the center of every message.

FURTHER STUDY: Read John 19:1-42 and "Calvary" in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 741-757.

Allow your mind to grasp the glorious fact that Jesus died for you because He loves you—not because you are good, but because He is good. He treats you, not as you deserve, but according to your need. Is there any greater good news than this? Is not this the very heart of the gospel?

Because we have the "everlasting gospel" to take to the world (Rev. 14:6), our mission is to lift up Christ and Him crucified:

"Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ ascended into the heavens, Christ coming again, should so soften, gladden, and fill the mind of the minister that he will present these truths to the people in love and deep earnestness. The minister will then be lost sight of, and Jesus will be made manifest. Lift up Jesus, you that teach the people, lift Him up in sermon, in song, in prayer. Let all your powers be directed to pointing souls, confused, bewildered, lost, to 'the Lamb of God.' Lift Him up, the risen Saviour, and say to all who hear, Come to Him who 'hath loved us, and hath given himself for us.' Let the science of salvation be the burden of every sermon, the theme of every song. Let it be poured forth in every supplication. Bring nothing into your preaching to supplement Christ, the wisdom and power of God." —*Evangelism*, p. 185.

This entreaty is for every believer; all are ministers, or witnesses, for Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Because every teaching of the Bible is intended to be Christ-centered, how would you explain to a questioner the Christ-centered significance of tithing?
2. How does emphasis on the Cross and the subsequent ministry of Jesus Christ relate to a person's struggle to cope with life's challenges from day to day?

SUMMARY: Christ is the center of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. All Bible truth finds its center in the One who is "the truth" (John 14:6). Just as spokes in a wheel meet in the hub, so the Bible teachings we study this quarter find their center in Christ. These doctrines tell us something about Jesus and draw us into closer union with Him. Every Bible truth reveals a facet of Christ's character. As we take our stand at Calvary, the Cross will open before our wondering gaze the deeper meaning of redemption through Christ.



The Closing Door

David Lin

The Spirit of God is working in the hearts of people in China to lead souls to Christ.

Recently Brother Wong of Shanghai visited a group of believers in a city in Honan Province and was asked to speak at a Friday evening service. During the service someone noticed a woman whom they had not seen before come into the meeting. After the meeting he spoke to her and learned that she had been invited to come before, but had never been interested enough to attend. However, this evening she felt a strong inner urge that forced her to come. She listened intently to the evening's message.

Later that same night this woman had a dream in which she heard a voice saying, "Heaven's door is closing soon!" She did not understand what that meant, so she went to her Christian friend to enquire. Her friend told her that God had sent her that warning because He wanted her to be saved. "The closing door is the door of salvation," she explained. "Human probation will soon close, so now is the time to come to Jesus, confess our sins, and enter the door before it is closed forever."

The woman was deeply impressed that God was so concerned for her that He sent her a warning message. From that day on she has attended our meetings regularly to learn more of the gospel of Jesus.

Pray for our believers in China, that they will be faithful to witness to their friends, and for those who have never made a decision for Christ, that they will heed the Holy Spirit's warnings and commit their life to God.

David Lin pastors an Adventist church in Shanghai that has an average attendance of 800 each week.

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Christ Our Righteousness and Salvation



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: John 3:1-21.

MEMORY TEXT: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

KEY THOUGHT: The most important Bible landmark is the truth of righteousness and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

THE MESSAGE OF FAITH PERMEATES THE SCRIPTURES.

The first gospel promise (Gen. 3:14) implies that if the Seed of the woman is accepted by faith, salvation will be readily available. Abraham was saved by faith. Not only was his faith "reckoned [counted, imputed] . . . as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6, RSV), he became the father of the faithful and the example of faith to all future generations.

God repeatedly invited Israel to live by faith in Him and in the coming Messiah. The New Testament teaching of the law written on the heart reiterates Moses' message to his contemporaries. (Compare Deut. 30:11-14 with Rom. 10:6-10.) The New Testament emphasis upon circumcision of the heart was taught throughout the Old Testament period. (Compare Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; Rom. 2:28, 29.) Paul's teaching of justification by faith reflects the injunction of Habakkuk 2:4, "the righteous shall live by his faith" (RSV).

This lesson follows the good news Jesus gave to Nicodemus. He emphasized five important aspects of the life of faith: (1) the Cross; (2) forgiveness; (3) righteousness counted; (4) righteousness bestowed; (5) works.

THE CROSS (John 3:14-16).

The cross was central to Jesus' message to Nicodemus. Those who accept Christ's sacrifice for sin have the gift of eternal life. (Compare John 3:16 with verse 36; 5:24.)

Why does acceptance of Christ's sacrifice result in the immediate gift of eternal life? Isa. 53:6; 1 Peter 2:24.

Jesus suffered the ultimate penalty for all human sin. There is only one God (Deut. 6:4; Mal. 2:10; Eph. 4:5, 6), including the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. On the cross, infinite God the Son was separated from infinite God the Father and infinite God the Holy Spirit. The Deity was divided because of human sin. This is why Jesus cried out in intense agony of spirit: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46, RSV; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 753).

The infinite suffering of the Deity on Calvary was sufficient to atone for all human sin. We have freedom from guilt and the gift of eternal life when we accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

In the following passages, notice how the cross was central to the teachings of the apostles:

1 Cor. 2:2 _____

1 Cor. 15:1-4 _____

Gal. 6:14 _____

1 Peter 1:18-21 _____

1 John 1:7; 2:2; 4:10 _____

Human philosophies are built on human reasoning, which, however logical, fails to answer the deepest human needs. By contrast, the gospel speaks directly to the human dilemma and provides the ultimate answer. On the cross, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). Paul was constrained (2 Cor. 5:14), inspired, and motivated by the fact that Christ "died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (2 Cor. 5:15, RSV).

Is the story of the cross only a historic event for you, or does it have immediate relevance to your daily life?

FORGIVENESS (John 3:18).

What important result of the cross did Jesus uphold to Nicodemus? John 3:18.

Freedom from condemnation implies forgiveness. Because Jesus died for all human sin, He is justly able to forgive those who accept His sacrifice and seek forgiveness. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1, RSV). Paul proceeds to explain what it means to be "in Christ Jesus." It means to be set free by the Holy Spirit from "the law of sin and death" (verse 2). It means that "the just requirement of the law" is "fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (verse 4). Forgiveness, resulting in freedom from condemnation, involves much more than the elimination of guilt incurred by past sins.

What definition of forgiveness would you deduce from the following passages? Luke 1:77; 4:18; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:13, 14.

The Greek word for forgiveness (*aphesis*) used in each of these passages means more than a heavenly declaration of pardon. The word means "release from captivity" (William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*). In Luke 4:18 the "deliverance" of the captives is forgiveness (*aphesis*). The last phrase of the verse translates literally: "to send forth the crushed in forgiveness (deliverance)." Divine forgiveness includes deliverance from the dominion of sin. In the New Testament, forgiveness is salvation, redemption, purification from sin. "God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin, but reclaiming *from* sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114.

"To be pardoned in the way that Christ pardons, is not only to be forgiven, but to be renewed in the spirit of our mind."—*Review and Herald*, Aug. 19, 1890.

Forgiveness includes (1) Christ's taking away our guilt by virtue of the fact that He bore it on the cross; (2) Christ's transforming our hearts by the Holy Spirit. God's love is unconditional; He loves both sinners and saints and works for the salvation of all. But forgiveness is *never* unconditional. Forgiveness is granted on condition that we accept Christ's sacrifice on the cross and ask for pardon of our sins. (See John 3:18; 1 John 1:9.)

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LIFE IMPUTED TO THE BELIEVER (John 3:14, 15).

What is the significance of the illustration Jesus used in John 3:14? Num. 21:4-9.

As the Israelites were traveling toward the Promised Land, they were attacked by venomous snakes. Many people died, and many more were dying. God commanded Moses to make a snake of bronze and place it on a pole. Whoever looked to the snake was healed, not because there was any virtue in the snake, but because looking to it demonstrated faith in God and in the Messiah, who was to suffer for sin. The snake was a symbol of the sin borne by Christ (1 Peter 2:24).

Life and healing were counted, reckoned, and imputed to those who looked to the uplifted serpent. Life and healing came from God in response to the faith of those who looked. They were healed and reconciled to God by virtue of the merits of Christ, the coming Saviour.

“When we trust God fully, when we rely upon the merits of Jesus as a sin-pardoning Saviour, we shall receive all the help that we can desire. Let none look to self, as though they had power to save themselves. Jesus died for us because we were helpless to do this. In Him is our hope, our justification, our righteousness. When we see our sinfulness, we should not despond, and fear that we have no Saviour, or that He has no thoughts of mercy toward us. At this very time He is inviting us to come to Him in our helplessness, and be saved.”
—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 431.

What relationship is there between the story of the bronze serpent and Paul's message in Romans, chapter 4?

1. Life from God was imputed to the dying Israelites who looked. Life from God (the merits of Christ's righteousness) is imputed to us when we believe (Rom. 4:3-8, 22-25).

2. Life from God had a tangible effect on the Israelites who looked; they were physically and spiritually healed. The imputation of Christ's righteousness to the one who believes is a spiritually transforming experience, not only a legal accounting. This imputation is identified as forgiveness (Rom. 4:7). As we have seen, forgiveness includes transformation.

“Through faith in His name He imputes unto us His righteousness, and it becomes a living principle in our life.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 302.

RIGHTEOUSNESS BESTOWED (John 3:3-8).

In what terms did Jesus explain the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer? John 3:3-8.

As birth is the beginning of life, so rebirth is the beginning of a new life with Christ. Jesus shattered the Pharisee's illusion of personal holiness. Nicodemus needed heart transformation. He needed new life from Christ.

"When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven. No one sees the hand that lifts the burden, or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 173.

What special gift is bestowed upon the believer by the Holy Spirit? Rom. 3:22-24; 8:9, 10; 10:6-10; Gal. 3:6, 14.

The gift of the "righteousness of God" upon the believer (Rom. 3:22) is the gift of "grace" (verse 24). Grace is God's loving favor bestowed upon the unworthy. But it is more. Paul speaks of the "grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:4, RSV) as the source of enrichment in "all speech and all knowledge" (verse 5). The result of receiving God's grace is that "you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 7). Both the individual and the church are enriched by grace.

This gift, righteousness (grace), is bestowed upon the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9, 10). Romans 10:10 translates literally: "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness." As Abraham believed and received the gift of righteousness (Gal. 3:6), so we receive the same gift today by the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. We receive "the blessing of Abraham" (righteousness), "the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:14, RSV).

"In order to meet the requirements of the law, our faith must grasp the righteousness of Christ, accepting it as our righteousness. Through union with Christ, through acceptance of His righteousness by faith, we may be qualified to work the works of God, to be collaborators with Christ."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 374.

WORKS OF FAITH (John 3:20, 21).

Jesus concluded His interview with Nicodemus by contrasting the evil deeds of those who refuse to come to Him with the good deeds of those who accept Him as Saviour and Lord. "For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God" (John 3:20, 21, RSV). "Wrought in God" means that the good works of Christian believers are performed only through the power of Christ. Those whose sins are forgiven and who are experiencing the gift of Christ's righteousness have the power of the Holy Spirit to do works that are acceptable in the sight of God.

Note the contrast in the New Testament Epistles between "works of law" and "works of faith":

Rom. 3:20 _____

James 1:22-25 _____

James 2:14-26 _____

Paul doesn't oppose works of obedience to God's law, and James doesn't oppose the truth of righteousness by faith alone. When Paul speaks of "deeds of the law" (Rom 3:20, KJV) or "works of law" (Rom. 3:20, RSV), he is referring to works performed apart from God to earn His favor. James speaks of works that result from faith, works that have been "done through God" (John 3:21, NIV).

Like James, Paul praises works of faith (Rom. 2:13; 3:31; 8:4). Like Paul, James believes in righteousness and salvation by faith (grace) alone. James's point is not that we earn righteousness by works but that *living faith* always results in works of obedience to God's will. "So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (James 2:17, RSV). Abraham was indeed justified by faith (grace) alone (Rom. 3:21-30; Gal. 2:16), but his faith led him to obedience to God's law (Rom. 3:31; compare Gen. 26:5). James says: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar?" (James 2:21, RSV). James is not contradicting Paul. Abraham's faith, which alone resulted in God's gift of righteousness to him, was living faith because He was willing to obey God's commands. His works demonstrated the faith by which he was justified.

When do our works cease to be works of faith and become works of law? How can we solve the problem?

FURTHER STUDY: Compare Jesus' message to Nicodemus (John 3:1-21) with Paul's teaching regarding righteousness by faith (Romans 3; Galatians 3; Titus 3:5-7). Read "A Truth Bearing the Divine Credentials" and "Christ the Way of Life," *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 359-368.

"Genuine faith appropriates the righteousness of Christ, and the sinner is made an overcomer with Christ; for he is made a partaker of the divine nature, and thus divinity and humanity are combined."
—*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 363, 364.

"In ourselves we are sinners; but in Christ we are righteous. Having made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ, God pronounces us just, and treats us as just. He looks upon us as His dear children. Christ works against the power of sin, and where sin abounded, grace much more abounds. 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'"
—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 394.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. A work associate who is not a believer asks you to explain how you are saved. What would you say?
2. A friend shows you a commentary he is reading that presents Paul's doctrine of righteousness by faith as different from the teachings of Jesus. How would you establish that Jesus and Paul taught the same truth using different language and imagery?
3. A youth in your church shares with you that, despite all his efforts, he finds it impossible to overcome certain sins in his life. How would you help him?

SUMMARY: Jesus presented Nicodemus with five points on righteousness and salvation by faith: (1) the cross makes salvation possible; (2) God forgives the sins of those who accept Jesus and seek pardon; (3) the righteousness of Christ is counted, or reckoned, to those who believe in Christ; (4) the righteousness of Christ is bestowed upon believers by the Holy Spirit; (5) works acceptable to God are the result of faith in Christ and are empowered by the Holy Spirit.



ADRA is Our Mother

James H. Zachary

"ADRA saved us during the famine. During the malaria plague, the people of ADRA came to rescue us. Now ADRA is teaching us how to make a better life for our families and community." Farmers in the Abonsa township of Ethiopia call ADRA their mother, for a mother nurtures, teaches, then sets her child free to become independent.

Samuel Bekalo, ADRA regional director, is the key to ADRA's success in Abonsa. How does Samuel help people make a better life for themselves without making them dependent on ADRA?

Health Services—He has immunized more than 5,000 persons and developed 10 health centers, each with a midwife and a health educator, and each with a supply of basic medicines that are sold to patients. The money charged pays for restocking the clinic.

Grain Mills—Before Bekalo began his work, women had to walk many kilometers to have their grain ground into flour. Eight local grain mills are now operating, and two more are planned. Each mill serves 40 to 50 families. The mills provide work for some village men. The profits from the mills support schools that have been built near the mills.

Cottage Industries—Little income-producing work was available for women in the area. ADRA provided cash loans to 108 women to start small businesses in their homes. As these women repay their loans, other women benefit from the revolving fund.

Bio-Intensive Gardening—Lack of water, insect pests, costly fertilizer, and lack of good seed made farming a challenge in Ethiopia. Bekalo is teaching families how to farm using inexpensive bio-intensive methods. A plot of land only 6 by 16 meters, farmed in this manner, can feed an average family for a year. Rotating crops, using botanical pest control, deep cultivation to conserve water, and developing fertilizers in compost heaps have transformed the community. Bekalo also teaches farmers to harvest seeds locally, eliminating the need to buy expensive seed or rely on subsidies.



Thanks ADRA—The people of Abonsa are grateful, "ADRA is a good friend. ADRA is our mother."

Samuel Bekalo (left). James Zachary recently retired from the Ministerial Association of the General Conference.

For Current Newsbreak, Call 1-800-648-5824.

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Christ's Ministry of Forgiveness



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Lev. 4:1-35; Heb. 9:1-14; 10:1-12; 1 Cor. 10:3, 4.

MEMORY TEXT: "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8).

KEY THOUGHT: The ancient Israelite sanctuary and its services illustrate Christ's sacrificial death, ministry of forgiveness, and ministry of judgment. His death and ministry of forgiveness make our salvation possible.

THE EARTHLY SANCTUARY WAS GOOD NEWS. Today we look back to the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the greatest good news this world has ever received. Because of Calvary and Jesus' ministry as our High Priest, all our sins can be forgiven and our lives transformed.

Because God's people in ancient times were living before the time of Christ, they did not have the historical reality that we have of redemption accomplished at the cross. Yet their sins could be forgiven and their lives changed by virtue of what the Messiah would do in the future. God had Moses build an earthly sanctuary and institute its services as a constant reminder to His people that, because the Messiah was coming to *suffer the penalty* for all human sin, He could *forgive* all their sins and qualify them for eternal life.

In this lesson we will focus on the sacrifice and the ministry of forgiveness taught by the earthly sanctuary services.

THE ANCIENT ISRAELITE SANCTUARY (Exod. 26:30).

What two items of furniture were contained in the court of the sanctuary, and what was their significance? Exod. 27:1-8 (compare Lev. 4:27-31); Exod. 30:17-21.

The altar of burnt offering was an outdoor fireplace or grill on which the remains of animals were burned after being offered as sacrifices. All animal sacrifices were offered near this altar in the court of the sanctuary. Every morning and evening, burnt offerings were offered on the altar of burnt offering (Lev. 6:8-13). Israelite males offered sin-offerings for themselves and their families at the altar of burnt offering at least three times a year (Exod. 23:17; Deut. 16:16, 17).

The laver was a large washbasin at which the priests washed their hands and feet before entering the Holy Place. Physical washing at the laver illustrated the higher spiritual cleansing necessary for one who was about to enter into the presence of God. (See Psalm 51:1, 2.)

Briefly describe the two rooms of the sanctuary. What was the purpose of the three items of furniture in the Holy Place? Exod. 26:31-35; 25:23-32; 30:1-8.

The tabernacle (later Solomon's temple) consisted of two rooms, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The Holy Place was exactly twice the size of the Most Holy Place. The Holy Place contained a seven-branched candlestick (*menorah*), a table on which twelve loaves of bread were placed each Sabbath (Lev. 24:5-9), and an altar of incense. The seven lamps were trimmed morning and evening so that the light never went out (Exod. 27:20, 21). Israel's light for the world, which originated in God, was never to be extinguished. The bread on the table was not food *for* God; it was food *from* God, representing both His physical and spiritual provision for His people. Morning and evening at the altar of incense a priest offered incense (Exod. 30:7, 8). The smoke of the incense ascended over the top of the veil separating the two apartments, entering the very presence of God in the Most Holy Place. The incense represented the daily prayers of God's people (Ps. 141:2).

Before looking at the New Testament, what gospel parallels to the ancient sanctuary can you immediately detect? The three parts of the sanctuary (the court, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place) symbolize the three phases of Christ's ministry: sacrifice, mediation, and judgment. The sanctuary provided a preview of the gospel.

THE MEANING OF THE SANCTUARY SACRIFICES (Heb. 10:1-12).

Whose sacrifice was represented by every animal sacrifice offered in the court of the earthly sanctuary? John 1:29; Heb. 7:27.

The sin offering for the regular Israelite citizen was a female goat or a female lamb (Lev. 4:27, 28, 32). When John the Baptist hailed Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (NIV), he was pointing to the deep spiritual meaning of the sanctuary sacrifices. The same imagery is used elsewhere in the New Testament, most often in the book of Revelation. (Compare Acts 8:32; 1 Peter 1:19; Rev. 5:6.)

The Epistle to the Hebrews consistently treats the earthly sanctuary sacrifices as types or representations of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. "He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did this once for all when he offered up himself" (Heb. 7:27, RSV; compare Heb. 8:3; 9:12-14, 22, 28).

According to Hebrews 10:1-12, what sanctuary sacrifices pointed forward to and typified the sacrifice of Christ?

The entire passage (Heb. 10:1-12) is referring to the sacrificial, ceremonial aspects of the law, which met their fulfillment at Christ's death. In Hebrews 10:1 the word *law* cannot refer to the Ten Commandments. They remain the standard of righteousness for Christians (Rom. 3:31; 7:7, 12, 14; 8:3, 4). "Year by year" translates the Greek phrase *Kat'eniauton*, which does not refer only to the yearly sacrifices. (The same phrase is used in Hebrews 9:25; 10:3.) The sacrifices that were offered "year after year" (Heb. 10:1, RSV) included "burnt offerings and sin offerings" (verse 6), which were offered daily. Verse 11 also refers to the sacrifices offered "year after year": "And every priest stands *daily* at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins" (RSV).

From God's perspective, animal sacrifices lost their significance at the death of Christ; it was never God's intention that sin should be expiated by the blood of animals (Heb. 10:1-4). Daily burnt offerings and sin offerings foreshadowed the one true sacrifice for sin, that of Jesus Christ our Lord (Heb. 10:5-12). Christ offered "for all time a single sacrifice for sins" (verse 12, RSV).

All sanctuary sacrifices, whether offered daily or annually, pointed forward to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

ATONEMENT FOR SIN (Lev. 4:1-35).

What two different processes were followed by the priests in the ancient sanctuary as they provided "atonement" for sin? (1) Lev. 4:5-7, 16-18, 20; (2) Lev. 4:25, 26, 30, 31; 6:24-30.

In the case of sin offerings for a priest and for the whole congregation, the blood of the sacrifices was sprinkled in the Holy Place, before the veil and on the horns of the altar of incense. In the case of the sin offerings for a ruler and a common person, the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on the horns of the altar of burnt offering in the court, and some of the flesh was cooked and eaten in the court of the sanctuary.

The two services symbolized the same spiritual truth; namely, that the sins of repentant sinners were transferred via the priest to the sanctuary. (See Exod. 28:38; Lev. 10:16-18; Num. 18:1, 23.) In both services, the officiating priest carried the iniquity of the penitent sinner into the Holy Place. In the one case, the priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice in the Holy Place. In the other case, the priest ate some of the flesh and later ministered in the Holy Place. Thus, figuratively, the iniquity was transferred through the priest to the sanctuary. The sanctuary was cleansed on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:33).

What three main acts resulted in "atonement" for sinners who brought their sacrifices to the earthly sanctuary? Lev. 4:29, 30, 31.

"And he [the repenting sinner] shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill the sin offering in the place of burnt offering" (Lev. 4:29, RSV). Confession and sacrifice preceded forgiveness. Then the priest sprinkled some of the blood of the sacrifice in the Holy Place or on the horns of the altar of burnt offering (Lev. 4:17, 18, 30). In the latter case, the priest ate some of the flesh of the sacrifice (Lev. 6:26). "And the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven" (Lev. 4:31, RSV). "Atonement," which made forgiveness a reality, was preceded by *confession* and included *sacrifice* and *priestly mediation (sprinkling of blood)*. There was no forgiveness unless these three acts were performed. The offering of the animal sacrifice was not the only event that provided "atonement." "Atonement" was provided by sacrifice and the priest's sprinkling of blood. Thus the Old Testament establishes clearly that "atonement" is more than sacrifice: What Christ accomplishes after the cross is also important to our salvation.

CHRIST'S MINISTRY OF FORGIVENESS (Heb. 9:11-14).

On the basis of what three acts can our sins be forgiven today? (1) 1 John 1:9; (2) 1 Peter 2:24; (3) 1 John 2:1; Heb. 8:11-14; 1 Tim. 2:5.

For God to forgive our sins today, the same three steps are necessary as those followed in the ancient sanctuary: (1) We confess our sins; (2) Christ sacrificed Himself for us; (3) our heavenly High Priest mediates for us, and we are forgiven.

There is no forgiveness without confession. "Those who humble their hearts and confess their sins will be pardoned."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 266. "There needs to be a continual reaching out of the heart after God, a constant, earnest confession of sin and humbling of the soul before Him."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 455. Our sins were not forgiven at the cross; we were not there. Our sins are forgiven today when we confess them by virtue of Christ's provision on the cross.

Christ's sacrifice was perfect for all, for all time. The sacrificial aspect of the "atonement" was provided once for all at the cross (Heb. 7:27; 9:28; 10:12). But, in the Old Testament sense, "atonement" is not complete until our heavenly Mediator has applied the merits of His blood on our behalf. As the priest's sprinkling of blood was necessary in the earthly sanctuary, so Christ's heavenly mediation by virtue of His shed blood is essential for our sins to be forgiven.

"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. . . . Jesus has opened the way to the Father's throne, and through His mediation the sincere desire of all who come to Him in faith may be presented before God."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 489.

What are the counterparts in the Christian era of (1) the shewbread, (2) the seven-branched candlestick, and (3) the altar of incense? (1) John 6:32-40, 48-51, 63; (2) John 8:12; Matt. 5:14; Rev. 1:20; (3) Rev. 8:2-4.

Christ the bread of life, Christ the light of the world, Christ our heavenly high priest and mediator, is the source of our spiritual life, light, and salvation.

CHRIST'S MINISTRY IN THE SANCTUARY (1 Cor. 10:3, 4).

Where was Christ in the ancient Israelite sanctuary? 1 Cor. 10:3, 4; Exod. 25:21, 22.

First Corinthians 10:4 may be translated: "They drank from the spiritual rock that *accompanied* them, and that rock was Christ" (NIV). Christ accompanied the Israelites in their wilderness sojourn. He was present in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. When the cloud stopped, they stopped and erected the tabernacle. Then the cloud descended upon the tabernacle, and Christ's presence was manifested above the mercy seat in the Most Holy Place. "For throughout all their journeys the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel" (Exod. 40:38, RSV).

"Christ was their instructor. As He had been with them in the wilderness, so He was still to be their teacher and guide. In the tabernacle and the temple His glory dwelt in the holy shekinah above the mercy seat. In their behalf He constantly manifested the riches of His love and patience."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 288.

Christ was represented by every priest who ministered in the court and the Holy Place during the daily service (Heb. 10:11, 12). But all throughout the day-by-day services conducted in the court and the Holy Place, Christ Himself was present in the glory above the mercy seat in the Most Holy Place. He was present in the Most Holy Place while His ministry was only in the Holy Place. His Most Holy Place ministry, represented by the work of the earthly high priest, did not take place until the Day of Atonement.

Where did Christ go when He ascended to heaven after His death and resurrection? Mark 16:19; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 8:1; 12:2.

"We have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord" (Heb. 8:1, 2, RSV). The only throne in the wilderness tabernacle and in Solomon's temple was in the Most Holy Place, where Christ dwelt continually. As Christ's ministry was only Holy Place ministry until the Day of Atonement, so His heavenly ministry was only Holy Place ministry until the antitypical Day of Atonement, which began in 1844. Just as Christ was present in the Most Holy Place during the *daily* service in the ancient tabernacle, so He occupies the throne with His Father during His Holy Place ministry prior to 1844.

FURTHER STUDY: In relation to the subject of this lesson, study Hebrews 9:1-14. Read "What Is the Sanctuary?" in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 409-422.

Hebrews 9:12 says that "he entered in once into the holy place" (KJV). The RSV also translates the Greek by "Holy Place." The NIV translates the same Greek by "the Most Holy Place." The Greek reads *ta hagia* (accusative, plural, neuter of *hagios*, meaning "holy" or "what is holy"). In the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament), when some form of *hagios* is used in reference to the sanctuary, it usually refers to the sanctuary as a whole. Hebrews 9:12 is correctly translated: "He entered once into the holy places," or "He entered once into the sanctuary." It cannot be proved from Hebrews 9 that Christ entered only one apartment of the heavenly sanctuary at His ascension, nor can it be proved that His antitypical Day of Atonement ministry began at that time.

Hebrews 9:1-7 describes the ministries in the two apartments of the earthly sanctuary. Verse 8 begins, "By this the Holy Spirit indicates" (RSV). The antecedent of "this" is all that has gone before. The purpose of the ministries in the two apartments of the earthly sanctuary was to point to the ministries of Christ in the two apartments of the heavenly sanctuary. The way into the heavenly sanctuary was not opened as long as the earthly sanctuary ("first tabernacle") still had significance (verse 8). This earthly sanctuary, "which is symbolic for the present age" (verse 9, RSV), lost its significance when "Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come" (verse 11, RSV). Christ entered "the greater and more perfect tent," the heavenly sanctuary, to be our mediator and purifier (Heb. 9:11-14).

SUMMARY: The heavenly sanctuary is the original, from which the earthly sanctuary was a miniature copy. The vast and glorious heavenly sanctuary is the dwelling place of the Trinity and is the great control center of the universe. It is the place where Christ, as High Priest, conducts His ministry of forgiveness.

Divine Appointment

Beverly Moody

"Do you know where I might deliver a letter addressed to 'Mailing Band, Aleknagik, Alaska?'" the postmaster asked one day. I replied that our church had once had an active mailing band many years earlier, so he handed me the letter.

That letter was the beginning of an amazing story that unfolded in the months to come.

Tim Lims is from Ghana. While standing in a line in Istanbul, Turkey, waiting to get a visa for Greece, he noticed the man in front of him reading a book whose title intrigued him: *Bible Readings for the Home*. Tim asked the man about the book, and the man showed it to him. As Tim thumbed through the book he noticed a stamp in the back that read, "Mailing Band, Aleknagik, Alaska."

The book's owner suggested that Tim could write to that address to request other books if he was interested. He then named several Adventist classics, such as the Conflict series. So now Tim was asking for books.

Campmeeting had just ended, and I had purchased a paperback set of the Conflict series, though at the time I did not know why. I wrapped them and mailed them to Tim in Athens, along with the address of the mission office there in case he had questions.

Soon I received a letter telling that Tim was studying the books with the mission president! Letters crisscrossed the ocean, and we learned that Tim was the son of a heathen and the grandson of a fetish priest. But Tim gave his life to Jesus.

Becoming an Adventist cost Tim his job in Athens, since he refused to work on Sabbath. But this loss gave him more time to study the Bible with those who would listen. This grandson of a fetish priest hopes to become a Gospel minister. And one of his Bible students later visited Pacific Union College, where he met a former member of the Alaskan mailing band!

Only 1,000 copies of *Bible Readings* were sent out with the "Mailing Band, Aleknagik, Alaska" stamp in the back. Surely God guided that book to the divine appointment in a waiting line thousands of miles from its origin.



(Left) Tim Lims testifies wherever he can of how Jesus saved him. Beverly Moody is a member of the Aleknagik, Alaska Church.

Christ Our Judge and Advocate



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Leviticus 16; Dan. 7:9-14; 8:14; 9:24-27; Rev. 3:5; 6:9-11.

MEMORY TEXT: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Rev. 14:7).

KEY THOUGHT: The purpose of the pre-advent judgment is that the heavenly court might verify who among the dead and who among the living are worthy of eternal life because they have willingly received the free gift of Christ's righteousness.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT SYMBOLIZED THE PRE-ADVENT JUDGMENT. The Day of Atonement was a judgment day. It put a seal upon the forgiveness provided throughout the previous year. It also resulted in God's rejection of individuals who had refused to confess their sins.

Since the people's sins had already been forgiven, why was the Day of Atonement judgment necessary? This judgment was God's way of demonstrating that He finally rejects professed believers who refuse to maintain a relationship with Him. He finally provides a seal of approval for those who, by His grace, have forsaken sin and maintained their heart union with Him.

God mercifully gave one final day on which the individual whose heart was not right could come into a covenant relationship with Him. On this day, sinners were given opportunity to be forgiven and to enter into a new and victorious heart union with their Lord.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT MINISTRY (Leviticus 16).

What were the main events of the Day of Atonement? Lev. 16:6-10, 15-22.

Two goats were taken by the high priest on the Day of Atonement. One represented Christ, and the other represented Satan. The one that represented Christ was slain, symbolizing Christ's death on the cross. "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Heb. 9:22, RSV). The high priest sprinkled some of the animal's blood on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat in the Most Holy Place. He also sprinkled the blood in the Holy Place and on the altar of burnt offering in the court (Lev. 16:16, 18, 19, 33). Thus every part of the sanctuary was symbolically cleansed of the record of pardoned sin.

The sins of the people who had brought their sin offerings during the year had been forgiven (Lev. 4:26, 31, 35). By the sprinkling of blood in the daily service, the pardoned record had been symbolically retained in the sanctuary. Because this record defiled the sanctuary, it was necessary to cleanse it on the Day of Atonement.

What was the purpose of the high priest's ministry in the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement? Lev. 16:30, 33.

While the high priest was sprinkling the blood before God in the Most Holy Place, the people were out in the court examining their hearts to be sure that all their sins had been confessed and put away. This was a time of self-examination. They were to "afflict" themselves (Lev. 16:29, RSV; compare Lev. 23:29). While a ministry was going on in the sanctuary, a divine work was taking place in the hearts of the people in the court.

The Day of Atonement was an annual judgment day, on which both the sanctuary and the people were cleansed. "For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before the Lord" (Lev. 16:30, RSV). In lesson 3, we discovered that atonement provided forgiveness (Lev. 4:31). In Leviticus 16:30, atonement is said to provide cleansing. Verse 33 explains that, on the Day of Atonement, atonement (cleansing) was provided for each part of the sanctuary and "for the priests and for all the people of the assembly" (RSV). Those whose sins were not previously forgiven needed cleansing, and those whose sins were previously forgiven needed further cleansing. This was a day of spiritual revival.

THE ANTITYPICAL DAY OF ATONEMENT (Dan. 8:14).

How do we know that the cleansing of the sanctuary spoken of in Daniel 8:14 is the end-time judgment typified by the Day of Atonement?

Daniel 8:14 translates literally from the Hebrew: "For evenings (and) mornings two thousand and three hundred; then the sanctuary will be justified (*nitsdaq*). The Septuagint translators who, before the time of Christ, translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek, translated the last phrase: *kathapisthesetai* ("and the sanctuary shall be cleansed"). "The Standard Jewish Bible for the English-speaking world," *Tanakh-The Holy Scriptures* (1985), translates the Hebrew of Daniel 8:14: "then the sanctuary shall be cleansed."

Why is the Hebrew verb *to justify* translated by the verb "to cleanse"? Because when God justifies, He cleanses. In the Old Testament the verb *to justify* (*tsadaq*) is used synonymously with words meaning "to cleanse." "Can mortal man be righteous [*tsadaq*: justified] before God? Can a man be pure [*taher*: to be clean, pure] before his Maker? (Job 4:17, RSV). *Taher* is the word used in Leviticus 16:30. In the New Testament, justification is identified with forgiveness (Rom. 4:5-8), which involves spiritual cleansing (Col. 1:13, 14). Justification includes the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5-7).

Daniel 8:14 speaks of a place, the sanctuary (*qodesh*: "what is holy," "holy [place]"), being justified or cleansed. So does Leviticus 16:2, 16, 17, 33. And the cleansing of the people is inseparable from the cleansing of the sanctuary. Ever since the cross, Christian believers have been forgiven (cleansed) as were Israelites in the daily service (Lev. 4:31). Daniel 8:14 refers to the final atonement before Jesus comes. As the sanctuary and the people were cleansed on the literal Day of Atonement, so the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 8:1, 2) and God's end-time people are cleansed in the pre-advent judgment.

The cleansing of the sanctuary (Dan. 8:14) is a work of judgment. Daniel 7 and 8 outline the history of the world up to the pre-advent judgment. The prophecies are parallel:

Daniel 7

- V. 5, Bear = Medo-Persia
- V. 6, Leopard = Greece
- V. 7, Beast = Roman Empire
- V. 8, Little horn = Papacy
- Vs. 9-14, Pre-advent judgment

Daniel 8

- V. 3, Ram = Medo-Persia
- V. 5, He-goat = Greece
- V. 9, Little horn = Roman Empire
- Vs. 9-12, Little horn = Papacy
- V. 14, Pre-advent judgment

THE PRE-ADVENT JUDGMENT SCENE (Dan. 7:9-14).

What scene was Daniel shown after the vision of the little-horn power? Dan. 7:8-10, 21, 22, 25, 26.

What kind of session did Daniel say would be conducted in heaven? How many angels would be present? Dan. 7:10.

Who was presented before God the Father as the advocate or attorney in this judgment? What was given to Him in this judgment session? Dan. 7:13, 14.

The period of papal ecclesiastical supremacy (Dan. 7:25) occupied the period A.D. 538 to 1798. Shortly after 1798 the heavenly pre-advent judgment began. What is the nature of this judgment? What kinds of decisions does it make?

1. Verse 9—This judgment is in heaven; God's throne is in heaven.

2. Verse 10—The judgment involves a court session in which books of record are examined or investigated. The Bible teaches that God has records of every human life. The book of life contains the names of those who have at any time accepted Christ (Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23). Sins committed and pardoned are recorded (Eccl. 12:14; Matt. 12:36, 37; Jer. 2:22; Rev. 22:12). Works of faith are also recorded (Mal. 3:16, 17).

3. Verse 13—The "Son of man" is the defense attorney in this judgment. The title *Son of man* was Jesus' favorite name for Himself (Matt. 8:20). The Son of man comes to God the Father in the heavenly judgment.

4. Verse 14—The Son of man, Christ, receives His kingdom in this judgment. He receives the names of those who are His for eternity. The book of life is edited. The names of born-again Christians are always placed in the book of life (Heb. 12:23). But in the pre-advent judgment the decision is made as to whose names can be kept there and whose names should be taken out. The names of those who have lost their born-again relationship with Jesus are removed (Rev. 3:5). The end-time seal of God is placed upon those whose names are retained in the book of life (Rev. 7:1-3; 14:1-5).

5. Verse 22—The pre-advent judgment is not convened merely to condemn the little-horn power; it also vindicates those who have been forgiven and who are living in union with Christ. Daniel 7:22 says that in this judgment God gives "justice," or "vindication," to His people.

THE TIME OF THE JUDGMENT (Dan. 8:14).

Daniel 7:9-14 and 8:14 refer to the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary during the antitypical Day of Atonement. This cleansing of both sanctuary and people is the pre-advent judgment.

After what period of time would the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary begin? Dan. 8:14. What period was cut off from the 2300 days? Dan. 9:24. When did both the 70 weeks and the 2300 days begin in history? Dan. 9:25. How do you know that the 2300 days must represent years? Dan. 8:17, 19.

The phrase translated "days" (KJV) means a 24-hour period. The Hebrew phrase is *ereb boqer*. It means literally "evening-morning." Some form of this phrase is used 22 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. When a 24-hour period is intended, the phrase is always "evening-morning," never "morning-evening." (See Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31.) In Daniel 8:14, 26 the phrase is "evening-morning," a 24-hour period. The reference in Daniel 8:14 is not to the morning and evening sacrifices of the sanctuary, but to 2300 24-hour days that are used as a prophetic symbol.

The 2300 literal days of Daniel 8:14 are symbolic of 2300 years. The prophet was told that the work of the little-horn power would continue till the end of time (Dan. 8:17, 19, 25, 26). Twenty-three hundred literal days (about 6 years and 4 months) would not reach to the end of time.

The relationship between Daniel 8 and 9 reveals that the 2300 days are years and provides us the beginning date for the period. The vision of Daniel 9 was given in 538 B.C., 13 years after the vision of Daniel 8 (551 B.C.). Gabriel told Daniel that "seventy weeks" (Hebrew: "seventy sevens") were to be "cut off" (Hebrew: *hathak*) from the 2300 days. These "seventy sevens" must refer to 490 years, because they were to reach to the time of the Messiah. Because 490 years cannot be cut off from 2300 literal days, the days must be a prophetic symbol of 2300 years.

What was the beginning date for the 2300 years (Dan. 8:14) and the 490 years (Dan. 9:24). Both periods were to begin with the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem (Dan. 9:25). Ezra 6:14 indicates that three human decrees enacted God's decree. The decree of Artaxerxes I was certainly put into operation in 457 B.C. Twenty-three hundred years later, in A.D. 1844, the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, the antitypical Day of Atonement, the pre-advent judgment, began.

WHY IS THE PRE-ADVENT JUDGMENT IMPORTANT TO YOU?
(Rev. 3:5).

According to the following passages, what is the spiritual significance to us of the pre-advent judgment?

Rev. 3:5 _____

Rev. 6:9-11 _____

Rev. 7:1-3 _____

Rev. 14:5 _____

Rev. 19:7, 8 _____

The Lord will not remove the names of overcomers from the book of life (Rev. 3:5). The names of those who do not overcome will be removed. The book of life is edited in the pre-advent judgment (Dan. 7:10; 12:1). During this time of judgment (1844 to the coming of Jesus), the Lord is calling us to depend totally upon Him.

The blood of the martyrs mentioned in Revelation 6:9 is crying out from the ground to God for vindication. This is precisely the work of the pre-advent judgment (Dan. 7:22). Revelation 6:11 may be translated: "And there was given to each of them a white robe, and it was said to them that they should rest a little longer, until their fellow servants and their brethren, who are about to be killed as they were, might be made complete (perfect)." Those who at death were right with Christ are vindicated in the pre-advent judgment. Their living brethren are made complete in Christ prior to receiving the end-time seal of God (Rev. 7:1-3). God's seal is given to those who live in close union with Christ. The seal is "his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1, RSV). Christ's name and the Father's name are symbols of their character. (See *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 330.) Those who are sealed before the second coming of Jesus will be spiritually "spotless" (Rev. 14:5, RSV). They will wear the white robe of Christ's righteousness and will reflect His character in all they do (Rev. 19:7, 8; compare 1 John 2:29; 3:7).

"Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God's presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul. [Rev. 3:18 quoted]. . . . This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us."
—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 311.

FURTHER STUDY: In connection with the topic of the pre-advent judgment, study Matthew 22:11-14; Revelation 8:5; 10:8-11:1; 15:5-8; 19:1-8.

The pre-advent judgment declares irrevocably saved those who have been consistently enjoying present salvation in Christ. The pre-advent judgment eternally vindicates believers whose sins have previously been forgiven. In this judgment, approval is given to those who, by constantly receiving the impartation of Christ's righteousness, are experiencing victory over sin.

"Everything that we of ourselves can do is defiled by sin. But the Son of God 'was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.' Sin is defined to be 'the transgression of the law.' 1 John 3:5, 4. But Christ was obedient to every requirement of the law. . . . By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe or righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 311, 312.

"Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. A friend in your church tells you that the *guilt* of your sins is not blotted out until the pre-advent judgment. What Bible answer can you give?
2. Another friend argues that victory over sin means that everything we do is free from all human imperfection. How would you reply?
3. Yet another friend says that, because all our sins were forgiven at the cross, there is no need for a pre-advent judgment. What answer would you give?

SUMMARY: The pre-advent judgment is the antitypical Day of Atonement, involving the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary of the record of pardoned sin and the spiritual cleansing of God's people on earth.



Many Times a Pastor

Arlene Webb

Tony Ampo lives on the island of Mindanao, in the Philippines. Even as a child he was drawn to God. Although his tribe were animists, Tony responded to the invitation of Protestant missionaries who came to his village when he was just 7 years old. Tony was fascinated by the stories and pictures, and went to church whenever he could. At the age of 10 he joined the Protestant church. His parents were so angry they forced Tony to leave home. He went to live with his uncle in a village 100 miles away. There he could worship God freely. When he was 18, his father sent word that his mother was near death. Tony took a minister with him to his parents' home. The pastor had a Bible study with Tony's parents, then he prayed for Tony's mother to be healed. His mother felt better immediately, and as a result the family agreed to join the church. Tony's father, an influential village leader, gave land for a church. When word spread of the wife's healing, the whole community joined the new church.

After Tony finished high school, he was invited to become a pastor. He attended a field training school and was assigned to his first church. During the next ten years, Tony raised up ten churches, each having from 10 to 30 families.

One day an Adventist pastor gave Tony a copy of *The Great Controversy*. As he read it, he was convicted of the Sabbath truth. Each Sunday he felt guilty knowing that Saturday was the real Sabbath, but for two years he kept this knowledge to himself. Finally he shared his conviction with his wife and challenged her to study some Bible texts on the Sabbath. A week later she agreed to join him in keeping the Sabbath. They knew they would lose their pastoral position, but they prayed that the Lord would provide for them.

Tony resigned his pastorate and in 1993, he and his family were baptized into the Adventist church. In spite of pleas to reconsider, Tony remained steadfast. He became an Adventist lay pastor in the same village, sharing his new beliefs wherever he could. Soon 65 persons joined the Adventist church.

He has just finished the ministerial course at Mountain View College in the Philippines, and now is a full-time pastor. Pray that Tony's zeal will win many more to God's remnant church.

At the time of writing, Arlene Webb was a school teacher at Mountain View College school in South Philippines.

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Christ in the Law



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Exod. 19:16-25; 20:1-17; Matt. 5:17-19.

MEMORY TEXT: "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: God's law of Ten Commandments is an expression of His holy and just character. When we are saved by Christ's grace and filled with His love, we are willing and able to obey His law.

GOD'S LAW OF TEN COMMANDMENTS IS THE STANDARD FOR ALL. Ann Landers once said to a group of college students, "If God had not regarded it as important that we obey Him, He would have given us ten *suggestions*." Many people treat the Ten Commandments as a set of laws that do not have relevance to us today. Some argue that the attempt to obey the Ten Commandments amounts to legalism. They think the law of love demands that we sometimes act contrary to the Ten Commandments.

Some Christians declare that the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross. They assert that the Old Testament ten-commandment law is no longer binding.

Others believe that their works of obedience to the laws of God and the policies of the church will somehow improve their standing with God. They believe that God's grace and our faith are necessary, but that our works are part of the means by which we are saved.

Has God always had a law that He has required His created beings to obey? What is the relationship between the Ten Commandments and salvation by faith in Jesus Christ?

GOD'S LAW BEFORE SIN (Ps. 119:142).

The Scriptures speak of God as perfectly righteous (Ps. 97:2; 119:137; Jer. 23:6). "All unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17). "Sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4, RSV). Because God is perfectly righteous, there is no sin or lawlessness in Him. What is lawlessness? There would be no way to define lawlessness, by contrast with righteousness, if there were no law by which God chooses to live. *Lawfulness is what God is. Anything else is lawlessness.*

Of what relevance is the fact that God's character has never changed? Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8; James 1:17. Have God's righteousness and His law always existed? Will they always exist in the future? Ps. 119:142, 152; 111:7, 8.

God's character has never changed. In the eternal ages before our world was created, God was always perfectly righteous. He was in perfect conformity to the law of life, which He had established. His law defined His way of life and that of the perfect beings He had created. If God's law could be abolished or changed, the standard of His character would change. Under those circumstances, He could not be regarded as unchangeably righteous. God's law is just as immutable (unchanging) as His righteous character.

Lucifer and one-third of the angels sinned against God (2 Peter 2:4; Rev. 12:4, 7-10). "Where there is no law there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15, RSV). Therefore, God's law existed in heaven before our world was created.

What additional evidence do we have that God's law existed before the fall of Adam and Eve? Rom. 5:12; Gal. 3:12; Isa. 43:27.

If no law exists, there is no such thing as sin (Rom. 4:15). Adam and Eve were created subject to the law of God. The fact that they were not given a *written* law in the Garden of Eden does not imply that no law existed. Their lives were in perfect conformity to the principles of life that governed all God's creatures. In their perfect state before the Fall, they lived by sight, not by faith. Their perfect union with God made it possible for them to obey and live. They lost their perfect fellowship with God and righteous lives when they chose to break God's law.

Redemption is the restoration of the image of God in humanity. What does this imply in regard to obedience to God's law?

THE LAW BETWEEN CREATION AND SINAI (Gen. 26:5).

In what form did sin exist in the centuries after the Fall? Gen. 4:8; 6:5, 17. Why were Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed? Gen. 18:24, 32; 19:24, 25.

The world before the Flood had every opportunity to know God's law. That world was destroyed because people chose to disobey and live in sin. Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because the people rejected the moral stipulations of the divine law. To assert that early humans were so primitive that they could not know the moral imperatives that exist in modern societies is to accuse God of injustice in destroying the antediluvian world and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. When Jesus compared the world immediately before His second coming to the world before the Flood, he offered no excuse for early humans on the grounds of their ignorance of His moral law. (See Matt. 24:37-39.)

How did the Lord preserve knowledge of His standard of righteousness prior to Sinai? Gen. 7:1; 26:5.

The great men and women of faith who lived before the giving of the written law at Sinai were sinners in need of the Saviour. Noah and Abraham had lapses from faith. God focused on their spiritual victories attained by complete dependence upon Him. Not only was Noah a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), he practiced what he preached by allowing the righteousness of God to be demonstrated in his life. God could identify him as "righteous" (Gen. 7:1), because, by faith, he lived by the righteous principles of the divine law. Although Abraham is presented in Scripture as the great example of life by faith, he had serious lapses from obedience by faith in God (Gen. 16:1-4; 20:2; Gal. 4:21-31). Even so, God praised and blessed Abraham's consistent faith and obedience to His law (Gen. 15:6; 26:5).

"Some few in every generation from Adam resisted his [Satan's] every artifice and stood forth as noble representatives of what it was in the power of man to do and to be—Christ working with human efforts, helping man in overcoming the power of Satan. Enoch and Elijah are the correct representatives of what the race might be through faith in Jesus Christ if they chose to be."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, March 3, 1874.

What answer can you give to those today who assert that faith excludes the necessity of obedience?

THE GIVING OF THE LAW AT SINAI (Exod. 19:16-25).

Before Sinai the sacred principles of God's law were handed down from one generation of faithful believers to the next. Israel observed the Sabbath of the fourth commandment *before* God gave the written version of His law to Moses. (See Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 16:4, 5, 23-30.) The principles they were asked to live by prior to their arrival at Sinai were the eternal principles of the Ten Commandments.

As slaves in Egypt the children of Israel had to a considerable degree forgotten the standard of righteousness that the Lord had given to humanity at Creation. To dramatize His love for them, and to teach them the sacredness of His requirements, the Lord proclaimed His law in their hearing from Mt. Sinai.

Briefly describe the circumstances under which the law was proclaimed at Sinai. Exod. 19:16-20; 20:1, 18-21.

The prophets wrote their inspired messages in their own languages and literary styles. But the Ten Commandments were spoken and written by God Himself (Exod. 24:12-14). Unlike the ceremonial laws, the Ten Commandments have timeless application to the human situation. God spoke and wrote this law to dramatize the eternal significance of its principles.

Where were the tables of stone containing the Ten Commandments placed? Exod. 25:16. Why is revival of obedience to this law so important to end-time humanity? Dan. 8:14; Heb. 9:7; Rev. 11:19.

The ark of the covenant was made of acacia wood. It was approximately 4 feet 4 inches long and 2 feet 7 inches wide and high. It was overlaid with gold within and without. The "testimony," which was God's law written on tables of stone, was placed inside the ark. Hence, the ark was called the "ark of the testimony," and the sanctuary was called "the tabernacle of testimony." (See Exod. 38:21.)

On the Day of Atonement blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat that covered the ark of the testimony (Lev. 16:15). Because God's mercy is united with His justice, He is able, by virtue of Christ's sacrifice, to forgive sin and blot out the record of pardoned sin. Adventists have identified the antitypical Day of Atonement in the books of Daniel and Revelation. They have shown from the Bible that God's law contained in the heavenly "ark of his testament" is the standard of the final judgment (Rev. 11:19).

THE TEACHING OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (Exod. 20:1-17).

On the first table of the Ten Commandments are four laws that govern our relationship with God. The second table records six laws that instruct us in our relationships with our fellow human beings.

Briefly summarize the first four commandments. Exod. 20:3-11.

Basic to Bible religion is the simple principle that there is only one God. (See Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:28, 29.) Jesus did not claim to be another god; He claimed to be One with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Our one triune God is Creator and Redeemer. Jesus explained this mysterious truth as simply as possible: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. . . . Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?" (John 14:9, 10, NIV).

The remaining nine commandments emerge logically from the first. Because we are to revere the one true God, idolatry and blasphemy are ruled out. Because we love God, we respond to His appeal for us to remember the Sabbath day as a memorial of His creative and redemptive work.

Briefly summarize the last six commandments. Exod. 20:12-17.

Showing honor for father and mother is a reflection of our honor for God, our heavenly Father. Entering into the spirit of the first commandment enables us to love our earthly parents, unselfishly forgiving their human weaknesses. If we accept Christ, we are delivered from the unholy impulses that result in murder, adultery, theft, lying, and covetousness. Our fellowship with God, in response to the full meaning of the first commandment, directs all our relationships.

"There is not a commandment of the law that is not for the good and happiness of man, both in this life and in the life to come. In obedience to God's law, man is surrounded as with a hedge and kept from the evil. He who breaks down this divinely erected barrier at one point has destroyed its power to protect him; for he has opened a way by which the enemy can enter to waste and ruin."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 52.

Considering your own Christian experience, when your relationship with God changes, do changes occur in your relationship with other people? Explain.

CHRIST AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (Matt. 5:17-19).

If God had intended the Ten Commandments to apply only to Israel before the cross, and not to Christians, we would expect to find some indication of this in the teachings of Jesus. Christians come to Jesus for salvation and for direction in how they should live.

What did Jesus teach about the continuing significance of the Ten Commandments? Matt. 5:17-19.

Jesus did not come to abolish the law of God, but to fill it full of meaning. The word *fulfil* (Matt. 5:17) translates the Greek word that means "to make full," "fill," "complete," "bring to an end." Because the word has a variety of possible meanings, the antinomians (no-law exponents) have assumed that Jesus was teaching that He came to bring the law to an end. Thus they would have Matthew 5:17 read: "I have not come to abolish them but to bring them to an end." The contradiction is glaring.

Jesus' subsequent explanation clarifies His meaning. He came to fill the law full of significance. "Until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matt. 5:18, NIV). A person who breaks a commandment and teaches others to do so will be rejected by God (verse 19). Why? Because our righteousness is to surpass the legalistic conformity of the scribes and Pharisees (verse 20).

Did Jesus weaken the Ten Commandments by giving them a spiritual interpretation? Were His interpretations more or less strict than those given traditionally? Matt. 5:21-30.

The law that Jesus came to fill with meaning (Matt. 5:17) is the law He cites in verses 21-28. Sinful anger breaks the sixth commandment. Lustful thoughts break the seventh commandment. Obeying the spirit of the law does not involve destroying the letter of the law. Obedience in spirit goes beyond a mere literalistic attempt to obey the letter.

When Jesus summarized the two tables of the law as teaching love to God and love to humanity, He did not imply that love destroys the law (Matt. 22:37-40). "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10) in the sense that love enables conformity to the true spirit of the law.

What part does love play in your Sabbath observance?

FURTHER STUDY: Study apostolic teaching regarding the importance of the Ten Commandments for Christians: Rom. 3:31; 7:7, 12, 14; 8:3, 4; James 2:10-18; 1 John 2:3, 4; 5:2-4; Rev. 12:17; 14:12.

The law is never presented either in the Old or in the New Testament as the means of salvation. Salvation is the gift of God's grace to the person who has faith (Eph. 2:8-10; Rom. 1:16, 17; Hab. 2:4). Such faith will always result in obedience to God's law. Works of obedience do not save us or improve our salvation standing with God. But they demonstrate that true faith is in our hearts and that we are enjoying the born-again experience. The standard of righteousness is God's law; the means by which we arrive at the standard is God's grace given to us freely when we believe. For example, a husband who enjoys a loving relationship with his wife does not wash the dishes and help her in other home duties in order to earn her love. He does these things because he already loves her and knows she loves him. We do not earn Christ's love when we keep His commandments. We keep them because we have His love and the gift of His saving grace. Such obedience is a joy and a privilege. We love to do those things that please our heavenly Father. (See John 8:29.)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How would you answer a person who declares that, because of our fallen condition, it is impossible for us to obey God's law?
2. Someone suggests to you that the attempt to obey God's law is legalism. How would you answer? When are our efforts legalism and when are they not?
3. What is meant by Revelation 12:17?
 - God's end-time people keep some of the commandments some of the time.
 - They keep all the commandments some of the time.
 - They keep all the commandments all the time.

SUMMARY: The principles of God's great law of liberty have always existed and will exist eternally. If the law could have been changed, Jesus need not have died for sin. The law of God is the standard of righteousness now as it was before the cross. As salvation was by faith before the cross, so it is now. The cross made possible forgiveness for sin, and it made possible obedience to God's unchanging law.



Tony Wins His Cousin

Arlene Webb

Paul Aninohon is the cousin of Tony Ampo (see last week's story). Although Paul and his mother were members of an indigenous church in the Philippines, they had not been truly converted, and did not even own a Bible. At age 18 he began Bible studies with a Protestant group. He gave his heart and life to the Lord and was baptized. He attended a Bible institute and graduated with a theology degree. He was assigned as pastor. Two years later he became an evangelist, and worked in one area for eight years, conducting crusades and winning hundreds of souls to his church.

He met a young Bible worker, and the two married, but two years later his wife died. Paul became so discouraged that he gave up his faith in God. He joined an armed group of Communists in the Philippines. Three years later he surrendered to police and joined the military. During this time he married again.

Paul's cousin, Tony Ampo, persuaded Paul to return to the Lord and rejoin the Protestant church. Paul agreed, and when he was discharged from the army, he was assigned to pastor a church.

In the meantime, Tony had discovered the Sabbath truth and was studying the Adventist doctrines. He again visited Paul, this time to persuade him to study this new religion. Paul resisted but Tony continued to pray for Paul. Later Paul found some literature on the Sabbath from another group, and he joined them. He resigned from his Protestant church and was assigned to pastor for the Sabbathkeeping church in the same town.

After Tony continued to talk to Paul about the Adventist truths, and after a year of studies, Paul and his family were convicted of the deeper meaning of the Sabbath and the Adventist message.

Paul and three of his daughters joined Tony at a youth congress held at Mountain View College in 1993, where they were baptized. Paul resigned his pastorate and became a lay pastor in the same area! In 1993 Paul and Tony studied theology at Mountain View College. They graduated in 1995, and now are full-time pastors in the Philippines.

At the time of writing, Arlene Webb was a teacher at Mountain View College school in South Philippines.

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Christ in the Sabbath



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exod. 20:8-11; Heb. 4:1-11.

MEMORY TEXT: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:11).

KEY THOUGHT: The Lord gradually unfolded the full meaning of the Sabbath during the centuries before the cross. It is best understood in the light of Calvary.

GOD CREATED THE UNIVERSE (Heb. 1:1, 2). Consequently, there is a "distinction between the Creator and His creatures."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 438. This distinction lies at the very heart of the meaning of the Sabbath. The Sabbath celebrates the difference between God and humanity, calling upon the creature to rest in the Creator. (See Mark 2:27.)

"God saw that a Sabbath was essential for man, even in Paradise. He needed to lay aside his own interests and pursuits for one day of the seven, that he might more fully contemplate the works of God, and meditate upon His power and goodness. He needed a Sabbath, to remind him more vividly of God, and to awaken gratitude because all that he enjoyed and possessed came from the beneficent hand of the Creator."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 48.

"Had the Sabbath been universally kept, man's thoughts and affections would have been led to the Creator as the object of reverence and worship, and there would never have been an idolater, an atheist, or an infidel."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 438.

THE SABBATH AS A CREATION ORDINANCE (Gen. 2:1-3).

How do we know that the Sabbath was instituted for all humanity in every age, not only for the Israelite nation? Gen. 2:1-3.

In his Creation account, Moses mentions that, after concluding His six days of Creation, God rested on the Sabbath (Gen. 2:1-3). The Lord repeats this fact in the fourth commandment (Exod. 20:8-11). Gordon J. Wenham states: "The seventh day is the very first thing to be hallowed in Scripture, to acquire that special status that properly belongs to God alone. In this way Genesis emphasizes the sacredness of the Sabbath. Coupled with the threefold reference to God resting from all his work on that day, these verses give the clearest of hints of how man created in the divine image should conduct himself on the seventh day."—*Word Biblical Commentary*, Gen. 1-15 (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987), p. 36.

What is different about the Genesis reference to the seventh day in Creation and the references to the other six days? Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31; 2:2, 3.

Unlike the other six, the seventh Creation day is not designated by "evening and morning." Some scholars claim that the six days were set periods, whereas the seventh was open-ended. Thus, they suggest the Sabbath was pre-Fall time, to be restored when sin and sinners are no more. This overlooks three important facts: (1) The seventh day is called *a day* (Hebrew *yom*; Gen. 2:2), as are the previous six days (Gen. 1:5-31). (2) The last day of Creation week is called the "seventh." (3) The fourth commandment equates the seven as equal parts of one week (Exod. 20:8-11). Therefore, Creation Sabbath was not an extended period of time anymore than were the previous six Creation days.

The word for day in Hebrew (*yom*) always means a 24-hour period when used with the adjectival numerals "first," "second," "third," etc. Hence, Genesis 1 speaks of Creation in six literal days. The normal linguistic meaning of "seventh day" in Genesis 2:2 is the same as the meaning of the previous six days. Unlike the month and the year, which are marked off respectively by the moon- and sun-rotation cycles, there is no natural phenomenon to mark off the week. The week originates from Creation week.

What is the relevance for the Sabbath doctrine that the weekly cycle has never been changed?

THE SABBATH AT SINAI (Exod. 20:8-11).

What is the significance of the word *remember* in the fourth commandment? Exod. 20:8.

Remember suggests that the Sabbath must have preceded the writing of the Ten Commandments on stone at Sinai. Moreover, before Sinai, God sent a double portion of manna on the sixth day so that Israel could observe the seventh day as a Sabbath (Exod. 16:4, 5, 22-30). As a Creation ordinance, the Sabbath had come down from Paradise. It was observed by Israel in the wilderness during the three months before Sinai (Exod. 19:1).

Who wrote the Sabbath law at Sinai? Exod. 20:1, 2.

“I am the Lord. Literally, ‘I am *Yahweh*,’ a name derived from the verb ‘to be,’ ‘to become’ . . . It means ‘the Existing One,’ ‘the One who causes to be’ . . . When, therefore, Jesus said to the Jews of His day, ‘Before Abraham was, I am’ (John 8:58), they understood that He was claiming to be ‘the Lord’ of the Old Testament. This explains their hostility and their attempt to kill Him (John 8:59). It was Jesus Christ, the second person of the Godhead, who was the ‘God’ of the Israelites throughout their history (Exod. 32:34; John 1:1-3, 14; 6:46, 62; 17:5; 1 Cor. 10:4; Col. 1:13-18; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 1:17, 18; PP [*Patriarchs and Prophets*], p. 366).”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 601.

Is the Sabbath rest spiritual or physical? Or is it both? Why? Exod. 20:11; Gen. 2:2.

The Sabbath is a time for us to come apart from the cares of the week and come to the One who cares. “No unnecessary secular labor is to be performed on that day. It is to be spent in religious reflection, worship, and service for God. It provides, as well, an opportunity for physical rest. This feature of the Sabbath is peculiarly important to man in his sinful state, when he must earn his bread by the sweat of his face (Gen. 3:17-19).”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 604, 605.

What does it mean to us that Christ, who wrote the Sabbath law at Sinai, is also the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28)?

THE EXODUS AND THE SABBATH (Deut. 5:12-15).

Why did the Lord introduce the Ten Commandments as He did? Exod. 20:1, 2; Deut. 5:6.

The one event that overshadows all the history of Israel is the glorious Exodus deliverance. It was as the God of the Exodus, the One who miraculously delivered Israel from slavery and certain death at the hands of the pursuing Egyptian army, that Christ invited His people to rest in Him. Trapped at the Red Sea, they were helplessly unable to escape—for the sea before them seemed uncrossable, the mountain to the side unscalable, and the army behind them unbeatable. All Israel could do was to rest in Christ and see His wonderful salvation. He opened up a way on dry ground for them to cross over, and He destroyed their enemies, as well. Christ had demonstrated that resting in Him brings great blessing. The Exodus, therefore, became a parable for the Sabbath. It illustrates that the Sabbath was made *for* people (Mark 2:27)—for our benefit.

What additional information on the fourth commandment is recorded in Deuteronomy 5:15?

Exodus 20 speaks of keeping the Sabbath in remembrance of Creation. Deuteronomy 5 speaks of keeping the Sabbath in remembrance of the Exodus. Is this a contradiction? Or is a deeper perspective involved? Deuteronomy 5:15 presents a broader meaning of the Sabbath. The Sabbath celebrates Christ's completed deliverance at the Red Sea, as well as His completed Creation in Eden. Both completed works of Christ reveal the distinction between the Creator and His creatures. In both, Christ was the active agent, and people were the recipients. In both, Christ gave, and people received the gift. This opens up the very heart of the Sabbath, which is the very essence of the gospel—that humanity is called to rest in Christ's gift.

It is true that the Sabbath was given to Israel to celebrate the Exodus (Deut. 5:15). But it is also true that the Sabbath preceded Sinai (Exod. 16:22-30), that it is a Creation ordinance (Gen. 2:1, 2), and, as such, was "made for man" (Mark 2:27).

When a non-Christian friend asks you to explain the relevance the Sabbath has in your life, how do you reply? At what point would you begin in giving a Bible study on the Sabbath? How would you avoid giving the impression that you are a legalist?

SABBATH AS A SIGN (Ezek. 20:9-12).

In what way is the Sabbath experience of sanctification comparable to the historical Exodus? Ezek. 20:9-12.

Again the Exodus is in focus in Ezekiel 20. Israelites were enslaved to false idols, as well as to the Egyptians. Christ longed to free them from their spiritual slavery. As the Exodus was a self-revelation of Christ to the freed slaves (verse 9), so He gave them Sabbaths "so they would know that I the Lord made them holy" (Ezek. 20:12, NIV). The word *holy* indicates a deeper meaning of the Sabbath. *Holy* in the Hebrew (*qadosh*) and the Greek (*hagios*) means "set apart." In the Exodus, Christ set His people apart from the Egyptians, with a view to making them a separate nation. The Exodus therefore typified historically what Christ desired for His people experientially—separation from the world to be one with Him. Just as He removed them from slavery in Egypt to bring them into their own Promised Land, so He sought to free them from the deeper slavery within, to bring them to Himself, the Promised Redeemer.

Christ gave Israel the Sabbath as the sign of their freedom. They were set apart to be with Christ. Only in relationship with Him could they be really set apart.

What does it mean that the Sabbath is a sign of sanctification? Ezek. 20:12.

Ezekiel speaks of the re-creative work within that only the Creator can actualize. As Christ created humanity, so only He re-creates. Sanctification is God's work, not people's. The Sabbath is a sign of sanctification, because it focuses on the distinction between the Creator, who alone makes holy, and the creature who receives His sanctification.

What part do God's people have in this sign of sanctification? Exod. 31:13, 16, 17.

"The Sabbath is the sign of obedience. He who from the heart obeys the fourth commandment will obey the whole law. He is sanctified through obedience."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 350.

Why do those who truly keep the Sabbath keep the whole law? Is this why the Sabbath is a test in the end time?

CHRIST AND THE SABBATH (Luke 4:16).

What new Exodus did Christ face in His public ministry as the God-man? Luke 4:18, 19 (compare Isa. 61:1, 2).

Christ said He came to set the prisoners free. Israelites were in worse slavery than that experienced under Egyptian taskmasters. Bound by their traditional chains, they were attempting to work their way to heaven. Two tractates of the Mishnah (which presents the traditional laws of the Jews) are given over to Sabbath rules and regulations.

What was one method Christ used to dramatize the good news about the Sabbath? Luke 13:11-14; John 5:1-15.

Christ often healed on the Sabbath to illustrate His desire to set people free. He linked healing ministry with Sabbath observance. He attempted to show that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). The man at the pool of Bethesda had been a captive there for thirty-eight years (John 5:5). Christ knew that this man would ever afterward associate the Sabbath with the restorative presence of the Saviour. To be what God intended it to be, the Sabbath must open up to us how the presence of Christ makes a radical difference in our lives. If we lack the divine presence in our lives, the "Sabbath experience" remains incomplete, even if we are attempting to observe the seventh day.

Why did Christ die on a Friday? Luke 23:54-24:1.

Two beginnings for the race took place on Creation and crucifixion Fridays. These days also marked two ends—the end of Creation week and of the re-creation sacrifice. The first full day following both Fridays was a Sabbath celebration. At crucifixion weekend, the Sabbath took on additional meaning. Christ's death constituted the greatest exodus ever. He died so that humanity could go free. Calvary is the ultimate revelation that there is a radical distinction between the Creator and the creature. He did for us that which we could never do for ourselves. Crucifixion Sabbath celebrates ultimate spiritual freedom.

How can we as a church more effectively celebrate on the Sabbath this greatest exodus?

FURTHER STUDY: Study the relationship of the following texts to the Sabbath message: Rev. 1:10; 7:1-3; 9:4; 11:19; 14:7; 15:2; compare Isa. 66:22, 23.

"It is Satan's constant effort to misrepresent the character of God, the nature of sin, and the real issues at stake in the great controversy."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 569.

"From the opening of the great controversy it has been Satan's purpose to misrepresent God's character, and to excite rebellion against His law."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 338.

Because God's law is a transcript of His character, any attempt to change the law is tantamount to an attempt to change Him. Therefore, in heaven, Satan "denounced the divine statutes as a restriction of their liberty and declared that it was his purpose to secure the abolition of law; that, freed from this restraint, the hosts of heaven might enter upon a more exalted, more glorious state of existence."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 499.

In the end time, Satan will use the same strategy that was so successful in heaven and in Eden. "Through spiritualism, Satan appears as a benefactor of the race, healing the diseases of the people, and professing to present a new and more exalted system of religious faith; but at the same time he works as a destroyer."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 589.

Though the discovery of God's law came to the angels as a surprise (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 109), they reverence the law (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 349). It is as unchangeable as God (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 46) and His throne (E. G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1166). Christ came to earth to exalt the law (E. G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1097), and on the cross He demonstrated its immutability to the entire universe (*The Great Controversy*, p. 503). It will be kept forever (Isa. 66:22, 23).

DISCUSSION QUESTION: One of your friends asks how you have enough time to get everything done when you take an entire day off for worship. How would you explain the benefits of the Sabbath?

SUMMARY: The Sabbath, as a part of God's eternal law, involves a relationship between both God and humanity (Exod. 20:8-11). The Sabbath declares the two principles of love for God and love for humanity (Matt. 22:37-40). It reveals God's character of love. Both the cross and the Sabbath are eternal gifts for humanity.



Women Lead Out in Western Pacific

Carole Ferch-Johnson

In the islands of the South Pacific, the culture dictates that men carry leadership and power, and women follow and obey. But the culture is changing, and the church is changing as well. Ministers often have up to 15 churches in their district, and must rely on local leadership to carry on the church's outreach. At the same time, financial constraints have forced many men to leave their villages and seek work in the cities. They may be gone for months at a time. In some areas the church has been left with only a few men but many capable women to look after its affairs. Adventist women are assuming leadership roles in these churches to fill the vacuum.

In the village of Sofura, Adventist women began learning church leadership and witnessing techniques by practicing with members of their own church. They learned to pray with people in their own homes, and decided to visit non-Adventists as well. The women began making social calls, and always tried to conclude their visit with prayer.

Two women visited an elderly couple and noticed that their house needed repair. The women discussed the problem and decided to help fix the house. They went into the bush, cut sago palm leaves for thatch, then dried it in the sun. They asked some Adventist men to help them repair the house for the elderly couple. The two old people were overjoyed, and said, "You Seven Day people are very good fella!"

In another village a group of women walked several hours to visit a village where an Adventist teacher worked. There they taught the villagers hygiene and health principles. On another visit they taught the people how to prepare food that will not spoil quickly in the tropical heat. They took needed clothes to the people, and ministered to them.

The women decided it was time to hold meetings. They asked the village elders for land for a church. Because of the women's kindness to the villagers, and the good services of the Adventist school teacher, the elders gave them land, and even cleared it for a church. Although the pastor for this district has 13 churches, the women's witnessing in this one village has enabled membership in this village to continue to grow.

Carole Ferch-Johnson is Women's Ministries Director for the Asia Pacific Division.

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Christ or Babylon?



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 10:8-11; 11:1-9; Rev. 14:8; 17:1-6; 18:1-7, 24.

MEMORY TEXT: "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (Revelation 14:8).

KEY THOUGHT: Modern "Babylon" consists of the false religious union that opposes God's truth and people. Because the characteristics of Babylon are outlined in God's Word, we need not be deceived.

ANCIENT BABYLON TYPIFIES MODERN "BABYLON." At the various stages of its existence, ancient Babylon was characterized by religious confusion. One would think that after the Flood humankind would have wished to remain in the closest fellowship with the true God and to avoid the kind of apostasy that led to the ruin of the antediluvian world. But it was not so. Instead of learning from the precedents of history, postdiluvian humanity sought to exalt human achievement. By choosing their own gods and implementing their own religious fantasies, they withdrew from the orbit of Jehovah's love and protection. The result was the fragmentation of human society and the abandonment of the patriarchs' spiritual ideals.

Modern "Babylon" also involves a confusion of religious ideas and spiritual commitments. Unity of religion on any other basis than Bible truth constitutes Babylon. The issue confronting every human being on earth will soon be, To whom should I give my loyalty, to Christ or to Babylon?

ANCIENT BABYLON (Gen. 10:8-11).

When was the city of Babylon first built? Who was the builder? Gen. 10:8-11. What motivated the efforts of the earliest inhabitants of ancient Babylon? Gen. 11:1-9.

"*Babel*. . . . According to Gen. 11:9, the name means 'confusion,' based, evidently, on the fact that the Hebrew verb *balal* means 'to confuse.' . . . The temple tower of Babylon, mentioned in historical records from the beginning of the 2d millennium B.C., which was the highest and largest of all such structures which stood in historical times in Mesopotamia, has completely vanished. Excavators found no more of it than its foundations and a few steps of its stairway. However, an ancient cuneiform tablet describes this tower, and Herodotus mentions it; hence it is possible to get a fairly accurate picture of this famous structure. We know that it was about 300 ft. (c. 91 m.) square at its base, and more than 300 ft. (c. 91 m.) high, and that it was built in 7 stages, having on top as its 7th stage a shrine dedicated to the god Marduk.

"The tower was repaired from time to time, the last time by Nebuchadnezzar, who said that he received a command from his god Marduk to build it so that 'its top might rival heaven.' . . . It was destroyed by Xerxes."—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (revised edition), pp. 108, 109.

Nimrod and his successors fostered false religion, spiritual confusion, moral and ethical decline.

To what period of Babylon's history does the book of Revelation allude in predicting the events of the last days? Rev. 7:2; 16:12, 19; 17:3-6; 18:1-4.

The sealing angel mentioned in Revelation 7:2 and the kings who destroy modern Babylon (Rev. 16:12) come from "the east" (KJV), from "the rising of the sun" (Isa. 41:25, RSV; Greek *anatoes heliou*). The background to this is that Cyrus, who destroyed ancient Babylon, came from the east. The Lord said through Isaiah: "I stirred up one from the north, and he has come, from the rising of the sun, and he shall call on my name" (Isa. 41:25, RSV; compare Isa. 44:28-45:6). Cyrus, who came from Persia, east of Babylon, entered Palestine from the north, near Carchemish, at the bend of the Euphrates. As he and his army destroyed ancient Babylon, making possible the return of God's people to their own land, so Christ will destroy modern "Babylon" and take His people to the heavenly Promised Land (John 14:1-3).

WHAT IS ANTITYPICAL BABYLON? (1 Peter 5:13).

To what place was Peter referring when he wrote in 1 Peter 5:13 of "Babylon"?

"There is no evidence to support the idea that Peter ever labored in literal Babylon. On the other hand, tradition locates his closing labors and violent death at Rome. . . . It is known that early Christians often used the cryptic title 'Babylon' when speaking of the Roman capital, to avoid political reprisals. . . . There is general agreement among commentators that Peter here uses the term Babylon for a veiled reference to Rome."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 589.

Significantly, the little horn of Daniel 7 grew on the head of the fourth beast. That is, papal Rome grew out of the pagan Roman Empire. The little-horn power of Daniel 8 is Rome in both its ancient and medieval aspects.

What power is represented by the woman named "Babylon" depicted in Revelation 17:1-6?

As the dragon with seven heads and ten horns (Rev. 12:3) "gave his power and his throne and great authority" (Rev. 13:2, RSV) to the leopardlike beast of Revelation 13, so the scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns of Revelation 17:3 provided support for the woman Babylon (verses 4-6). The Roman Empire was succeeded by the papal empire of the Middle Ages. The nations that succeeded the Roman Empire gave secular support to the established church. In the early Christian centuries, nonbiblical teachings were accepted by the church until its theology became confused. This was the foundation of modern "Babylon." From the second century through the Middle Ages, errors crept into the Christian church. Paul speaks of the gradual emergence of modern Babylon in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-7. (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 49, 50.)

Some errors accepted by the established church in the Middle Ages were Sunday sacredness, the doctrines of the immortality of the soul and eternal torment, the teaching that tradition and the authority of the church are above the Bible, infant baptism, the worship of Mary and the saints, the doctrine of transubstantiation, the confession of sins to a priest, penance, purgatory, the infallibility of the pope, and salvation by faith plus works.

The sixteenth-century Reformers—Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Latimer, and many others—rejected some aspects of papal teaching and returned to the Bible.

HOW TO IDENTIFY MODERN "BABYLON"—Part 1 (Rev. 18:2, 3, 5-7, 24).

In rejecting many of the teachings of the medieval established church, the sixteenth-century Reformers accepted the Bible only as the rule of their faith and practice. The church, they said, is not superior to the Bible. Tradition is not authoritative in matters of doctrine. Salvation is by grace alone, not by grace plus works. Good works and obedience to God's law are the *result* of His saving grace in the life. Confession of sin should be made to God, not to people. The doctrine of transubstantiation is unbiblical. Penance, purgatory, the worship of Mary and the saints, and the infallibility of the pope are unscriptural teachings.

The two main teachings of the medieval church that the Reformers and their followers did *not* reject are the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness.

Since modern "Babylon" began with the false teachings that came into the early Christian church and into the medieval church, why do we believe that Revelation 14:8 applies especially to our day? Wasn't Babylon spiritually fallen in the Middle Ages? Rev. 17:5, 15-18.

Revelation 17 does not apply only to the medieval period. Babylon has daughters. She is the "mother of harlots and of earth's abominations" (Rev. 17:5, RSV). The daughters of the medieval established church are those modern churches that identify themselves with aspects of its teaching. Near the end of time, the powers represented by the beast and its ten horns will hate Babylon and destroy her (Rev. 17:16, RSV). Babylon "is the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth" (verse 18, RSV). Babylon is destroyed at the end of time along with her supporters (Rev. 18:21; 19:20).

Any church is part of modern Babylon when it allies itself with churches teaching nonbiblical doctrines.

What are some of the unbiblical teachings of modern Babylon? What positive truths does this religious union oppose? Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:16, 17 (compare 7:3); 1 Tim. 6:16; Mal. 4:1-3; Rom. 3:21.

By contrast with Babylon, Christ offers the true Sabbath (Matt. 24:20), the sleep of death followed by the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:51-54), the final destruction of the wicked (Rev. 20:9), and salvation by faith/grace alone (Gal. 2:20).

HOW TO IDENTIFY MODERN "BABYLON"—PART 2 (Matt. 16:18, 19).

What unbiblical doctrines are the counterpart to the teachings of the following passages?

Matt. 16:18, 19 _____

1 John 1:9 _____

James 2:10-12 _____

Col. 2:9 _____

1 Thess. 4:16-18 _____

Jesus did not teach that the church is built on Peter and the bishops of Rome through the centuries. Matthew 16:18 contrasts Peter (Greek: *petros*), a movable stone, with the immovable Rock (Greek: *petra*), Christ, upon whom the church is established. "For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11, RSV). Peter himself taught that Christ is the foundation of the church (1 Peter 2:6-8; compare Eph. 2:20). Moreover, He alone is the Head of the church. No human bishop can usurp His divine authority. (See Eph. 1:22, 23; 5:23.)

There is no Bible support for confession of sins to a priest. Only Christ is our Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 2:1; Heb. 9:15).

Some churches have gone beyond the sixteenth-century reformers, teaching that the doctrine of salvation by faith/grace alone releases believers from the requirement of obeying God's law of Ten Commandments. By contrast, the Bible teaching of obedient works of faith is unmistakable. The Ten Commandments remain God's great standard of righteousness to which He asks us to conform by dependence upon Christ (Rom. 3:31; 7:7, 12, 14; 8:3, 4; Rev. 12:17).

Other churches deny the full deity of Jesus Christ, asserting that He is either an inferior deity or merely a human being. The Bible teaches that Christ is God, equal in authority and power with the Father and the Holy Spirit (Col. 1:19; John 5:18; 8:58 [compare Exod. 3:14]).

Yet other churches teach that the saints are secretly raptured to heaven before Jesus comes. The Bible teaches that not until Jesus appears with His angels are the saints taken to heaven (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54).

Because of their acceptance of the natural immortality of the soul, many churches today are open to the influence of spiritism. (See Rev. 16:13, 14; 2 Thess. 2:8-12.)

CHRIST'S FINAL CALL (Rev. 18:1-5).

Study Revelation 18:1-5, and answer these questions:

1. How widespread is Christ's final message?
2. How will the earth be "lightened with his glory" (Rev. 18:1)?
3. Why is the message of Revelation 14:8 repeated?
4. How is Revelation 18:3 being fulfilled?
5. Who are God's people in Babylon (verse 4)? When will they come out of Babylon?

"The Bible declares that before the coming of the Lord, Satan will work 'with *all* power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness;' and they that 'received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,' will be left to receive 'strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.' 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11. Not until this condition shall be reached, and the union of the church with the world shall be fully accomplished throughout Christendom, will the fall of Babylon be complete. The change is a progressive one, and the perfect fulfillment of Revelation 14:8 is yet future.

"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. There are many of these who have never seen the special truths for this time. Not a few are dissatisfied with their present condition and are longing for clearer light. They look in vain for the image of Christ in the churches with which they are connected. As these bodies depart further and further from the truth, and ally themselves more closely with the world, the difference between the two classes will widen, and it will finally result in separation. The time will come when those who love God supremely can no longer remain in connection with such as are 'lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.'

"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. This message is the last that will ever be given to the world; and it will accomplish its work."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 389, 390.

FURTHER STUDY: Study the passages in the book of Revelation that point to the existence of a powerful anti-Christian religious union in the last days: Rev. 13:11-17; 14:8-10; 15:2; 16:13, 14; 17:5, 6, 15-18; 18:1-10; 19:20.

“It is one of Satan’s devices to combine with falsehood just enough truth to give it plausibility. The leaders of the Sunday movement may advocate reforms which the people need, principles which are in harmony with the Bible; yet while there is with these a requirement which is contrary to God’s law, His servants cannot unite with them. Nothing can justify them in setting aside the commandments of God for the precepts of men.

“Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome. The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 587, 588.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Your next-door neighbor is critical of the Adventist church because our literature speaks of Sunday-keeping churches as part of Babylon. What explanations can you give to allay the criticism?
2. Is it possible to present the second angel’s message (Rev. 14:8) without being critical of other religious denominations? If so, how?
3. Because “the great body of Christ’s true followers are still to be found” “in the churches which constitute Babylon,” what great responsibility rests upon every Seventh-day Adventist?

SUMMARY: The book of Revelation employs the historical scenario surrounding the ascendancy and fall of ancient Babylon to illustrate the rise and fall of an end-time religious union that will oppose Bible truth and the people who accept it. Only by knowing and accepting Bible teaching and remaining in constant fellowship with Christ can we be assured of His blessing now and eternal life at His coming.



Praise God, We Are Free

J. H. Zachary

A large crowd gathered on the edge of the community swimming pool in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to witness a baptism of nearly 300 new Adventists. Pastor Truneh Wolde-Selassie, Ethiopian Union president, with eyes shining with tears, whispered an emotional, "It is wonderful, wonderful!"

This baptism signaled a new day for the work in Ethiopia. It was the first public baptism held in the 86-year history of the Adventist church there. Opposition from the national church and the communist government prevented public meetings and baptisms.

Pastor Truneh told how his village had been destroyed by a religious mob when he was 12 years old. He watched as two church leaders were shot; then the gun was pointed at his father. Suddenly a man leaped forward and pushed the gun aside shouting, "Two deaths are enough." Several months before, Truneh's father had saved this man's life when he was seriously ill.

The mob set fire to the village, and the group of terrified Adventists fled to the mission office with only the clothes they wore. The fire lighted their path as they walked into the night.

Restrictions and persecution made evangelism difficult. Baptisms were held secretly at night. A group of communists discovered one secret baptism and tried to "baptize" the pastor. But God protected him, and he escaped their plan to drown him.

God richly blessed the Addis Ababa public meeting. Seventeen cottage meetings have been held under the direction of Filipino Pastor Edwin Gulfan, a Bible teacher at the Ethiopian Adventist College. The crowd in the open-air stadium grew each night from 1,500 to 3,000. As the meeting closed, 596 persons were baptized and more than 700 joined the baptismal classes.

Pastor Truneh commented, "At last we are free. We must work while we have the opportunity." Hundreds of small groups are preparing the way for a great harvest of souls in a nationwide evangelistic effort in 1996. Pray for Ethiopia, the faithful workers, and the new believers there.



Pastor Truneh Wolde-Selassie (left). Until his recent retirement, James Zachary was associate director of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference.

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Christ or the Dragon?



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 12:17; 13:1-15.

MEMORY TEXT: "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Revelation 7:17).

KEY THOUGHT: Christ the Lamb offers present salvation and future eternal life. The dragon, Satan, supported by earthly powers that obey him, offers the pleasures of sin and eternal death.

THE LAMB AND THE DRAGON. Chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation describe the symbolic vision John received of the heavenly throne room. He saw God upon the throne (Rev. 4:2-4) and before Him the heavenly court. "And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain" (Rev. 5:6, RSV). The Lamb represents Christ, who by His shed blood "ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation" (verse 9, NRSV). All heaven rang with a mighty chorus of praise: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (verse 12, NRSV).

What a contrast is John's depiction of Satan as "a great red dragon" (Rev. 12:3, RSV; compare verse 9). This demonic creature not only caused the fall of one third of the angels (verses 4, 9), he tried to destroy the infant Jesus and persecuted God's faithful people for centuries (verses 6, 14). The same dragon will pursue end-time believers who follow the Lamb (Rev. 12:17).

Whom will you serve, the dragon or the Lamb?

THE DRAGON OPPOSES THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (Rev. 12:17).

Why does the dragon make war on those who “keep the commandments of God” (Rev. 12:17)? Isa. 14:12-20; Ezek. 28:11-17.

Isaiah 14 identifies the king of Babylon with his master, Lucifer, or Satan, who was cast out of heaven because he coveted the authority and power of God. Ezekiel 28 identifies the king of Tyre with the same master, Satan, who was a perfect and blameless angel until iniquity was found in him (verse 15). By cherishing pride of position, pride of beauty, and covetousness of God's power, this prince of demons forfeited his role in heaven. His desire to be “like the most High” (Isa. 14:14) resulted in tragedy for himself and for one-third of heaven's angels.

Satan tries to usurp God's authority by destroying the very basis of His government—the divine law of love. Hence his bitter antipathy to those who love God, cherish His law, and depend upon Christ to reflect His character.

What did Jesus teach regarding the Ten Commandments? Matt. 5:17-19. What did Paul teach? Rom. 3:31; 7:7, 12, 14; 8:3, 4. What did John teach? 1 John 2:4; 5:2-5.

Those who tell you that any one of the Ten Commandments need not be kept have identified themselves with the dragon. Anyone who asserts that it is not possible, *by God's grace*, to obey the Ten Commandments is proclaiming the message of the dragon. The Bible presents Christ's true servants as “having been set free from sin” and as “slaves of righteousness” (Rom. 6:18, RSV). Such spiritual victory is consistent only with obedience to God's commandments.

“Jesus, looking down to the last generation, saw the world involved in a deception similar to that which caused the destruction of Jerusalem. The great sin of the Jews was their rejection of Christ; the great sin of the Christian world would be their rejection of the law of God, the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. The precepts of Jehovah would be despised and set at naught. Millions in bondage to sin, slaves of Satan, doomed to suffer the second death, would refuse to listen to the words of truth in their day of visitation. Terrible blindness! strange infatuation!”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 22, 23.

“As the work of Sabbath reform extends, this rejection of the divine law to avoid the claims of the fourth commandment will become well-nigh universal.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 587.

THE DRAGON OPPOSES THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS (Rev. 12:17).

What is the "testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 12:17) that the dragon opposes? Rev. 19:10; 22:8, 9.

The dragon makes war with those who "have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17). The phrase is translated in various ways: "bear testimony to Jesus" (RSV); "hold the testimony of Jesus" (NRSV). The verb *to have* (Greek: *echo*) means "to have," "hold," "keep," "preserve," "possess," "have at one's disposal," "hold in one's charge or keeping," "have something in one's heart." The remnant have the testimony of Jesus as their possession.

For the meaning of the phrase "testimony of Jesus," study Revelation 19:10. John was about to worship the angel who had been sent to give him Jesus' testimony about Himself (Rev. 1:1, 2). The angel identified himself with those who, like John, had received Jesus' testimony. Who were these? The angel explained: "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10). Just as John and his fellow prophets received Christ's testimony regarding Himself, so did the angel. Because Christ was the source of the message, only He should be worshiped.

Revelation 22:8, 9 records that again John fell down to worship the angel. The angel's response was: "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and *your brethren the prophets*" (Rev. 22:9, RSV). Those who "have" [Greek: *echo*] the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 19:10) are "the prophets" (Rev. 22:9). The "spirit of prophecy," possessed by the angel, John, and his fellow prophets, is Jesus' testimony to them about Himself. "The testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 12:17) is both the prophetic gift and the messages that come from the prophets.

The dragon tries to turn people away from the messages of the prophets and from the truth that the prophetic gift has been manifested in the last days. (See Joel 2:28-32; Eph. 4:11-14; Matt. 24:24.)

Speaking of her gift, Ellen White wrote: "There will be a hatred kindled against the testimonies which is satanic. The workings of Satan will be to unsettle the faith of the churches in them, for this reason: Satan cannot have so clear a track to bring in his deceptions and bind up souls in his delusions if the warnings and reproofs and counsels of the Spirit of God are heeded."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 48.

"Those Seventh-day Adventists who take their stand under Satan's banner will first give up their faith in the warnings and reproofs contained in the Testimonies of God's Spirit."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 84.

THE DRAGON PROMOTES BLASPHEMY (Rev. 13:1-10).

The first beast of Revelation 13 represents an earthly power that is motivated, controlled, and directed by Satan, the dragon. "And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority" (Rev. 13:2, RSV).

What is involved in the sin of blasphemy of which this power is guilty? Rev. 13:1, 5, 6; John 10:33; Luke 5:21.

Jesus was accused of blasphemy because He claimed to be Deity (John 10:33). Paul spoke of the rise of a "man of sin" some time after Christ's death (2 Thess. 2:3, 4). This blasphemous power would oppose and exalt itself "above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (verse 4). This power will not be destroyed until the coming of Jesus (verse 8).

The first beast of Revelation 13 represents the same power of which Paul wrote. It "was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months" (Rev. 13:5, RSV), 1260 days, or years (A.D. 538-1798)—the same period during which the little horn of Daniel 7 would rule (Dan. 7:25).

The medieval state church claimed for its human head the position and prerogatives of Christ. These claims have been promoted in modern times. Pope Leo XIII wrote: "But the supreme teacher in the Church is the Roman Pontiff. Union of minds, therefore, requires, together with a perfect accord in the one faith, complete submission and obedience of will to the Church and to the Roman Pontiff, as to God Himself."—Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter, "On the Chief Duties of Christians as Citizens," Jan. 10, 1890, quoted in *SDA Bible Students' Source Book*, 1962, pp. 683, 684. Leo also wrote: "We [the pope] hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty."—Encyclical Letter, "The Reunion of Christendom," June 20, 1894, quoted in *SDA Bible Students' Source Book*, p. 684.

The beast offers false gods. (See Matt. 24:26, 27; 2 Cor. 11:14, 15.) Christ, the Lamb, offers the one true God. (See Mark 12:28-34.)

Jesus was accused of blasphemy because He forgave sins. (See Luke 5:18-21.) The beast power (Rev. 13:1-10) claims the right to forgive sins. Canon IX of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) ruled that the sacramental absolution by the priest is a judicial statement of forgiveness. (See *SDA Bible Students' Source Book*, 1962, p. 214.)

The beast cannot forgive. Christ offers true forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9; Ps. 103:3, 12; Eph. 1:7).

THE DRAGON INCITES THE BEAST TO PERSECUTE (Rev. 13:7).

Revelation 12, verses 6 and 14, mentions the efforts of the dragon to destroy God's true church for a period of 1260 years (represented by 1260 prophetic days), A.D. 538-1798. This is the same period spoken of in Revelation 13:5. Forty-two prophetic months of 30 days each is 1260 days, representing years. During this period the dragon, Satan, incited the established church of Western Europe to persecute those who insisted on living by the Bible rather than by tradition.

How widespread will be the authority of the beast and its power to persecute? Rev. 13:7, 8.

The prophecy is not referring only to the authority of the beast power during the Middle Ages. John was shown its power "over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" so that "all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life" (Rev. 13:7, 8).

Describe the intense struggle through which God's faithful people must pass shortly before the coming of Jesus. Dan. 11:44; 12:1; Matt. 24:9, 10, 21, 22.

Any church that practices or advocates intolerance toward those who reject its teachings identifies itself with the beast power. The medieval established church of Western Europe persecuted those who chose to follow the Bible rather than the dictates of the church enforced by the state. Revelation 13 points to the revival of this kind of intolerance. The teachings of the thirteenth-century theologian Thomas Aquinas on this question have never been repudiated:

"With regard to heretics two points must be observed: one, on their own side, the other, on the side of the Church. On their own side there is the sin, by which they deserve not only to be separated from the Church by excommunication, but also to be severed from the world by death. . . . Therefore if forgers of money and other evil-doers are condemned to death at once by the secular authority, much more reason is there for heretics, as soon as they are convicted of heresy, to be not only excommunicated but even put to death."—Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part 2 of the 2nd Part, Question XI, Article 3.

That is the voice of the dragon! You will hear that voice very loudly proclaiming the same intolerant ideas in the days ahead. (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 605-608.)

THE DRAGON'S VOICE IN THE LAST DAYS (Rev. 13:11-18).

What is meant by the lamblike beast arising "out of the earth" (Rev. 13:11, RSV)? Rev. 12:16.

The first beast rose out of the "sea" (Rev. 13:1). The sea represents the mass of humanity out of which the nations have emerged. (See Rev. 17:15; compare Dan. 7:2, 3.) The earth represents a region relatively free from human population. In the Middle Ages and the early modern period, the "woman," Christ's faithful believers, fled to previously uninhabited territories to escape persecution (Rev. 12:14, 16). Thus the early American colonies were established.

"It had two horns like a lamb" (Rev. 13:11, RSV). The Lamb represents Christ (Rev. 5:6, 9). Because of their adherence to the gospel, the early American colonists to some extent reflected the purity of Christ. Roger Williams' "little state, Rhode Island, became the asylum of the oppressed, and it increased and prospered until its foundation principles—civil and religious liberty—became the cornerstones of the American Republic."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 295.

In what anti-Christian work will this second beast ultimately engage? Rev. 13:11-18.

The prophecy predicts that the United States will ultimately emulate and cooperate with the first beast power (Rev. 13:1) in establishing a church-state union and in enforcing the kind of worship that characterized the medieval church of Western Europe. The last phrase of Revelation 13:12 ("whose mortal wound was healed," RSV) establishes that this second beast functions after 1798 when the first beast received its deadly wound. The healing of the wound occurs when papal religion is restored and the church-state union is again set up. We can expect that this second beast will perform its prophetic role at that time. In speaking "like a dragon" (Rev. 13:11, RSV), the once-lamblike beast enforces apostate worship, performing deceptive miracles to persuade everyone to support and "worship the image of the beast" (verse 15). Apostate churches will persuade the government to pass laws supporting an unbiblical kind of worship. "Satan determines to unite them in one body and thus strengthen his cause by sweeping all into the ranks of spiritualism."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 588. The second beast power of Revelation 13 is the "false prophet" (Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10); it represents the perversion of true Protestantism.

FURTHER STUDY: In the book of Revelation, along with the beast itself, the "image of the beast" is portrayed as the great end-time enemy of the people of God. Study: Rev. 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4.

Note how the "dragon" (Revelation 12), the "beast" (Rev. 13:1), and the "false prophet" (Rev. 16:13) are the three great powers that prepare the world for destruction at the second coming of Jesus. The dragon, Satan, and his "demonic spirits" (Rev. 16:14, RSV) are the evil forces inciting the "beast" and the "false prophet."

"You know that Satan will come in to deceive if possible the very elect. He claims to be Christ, and he is coming in, pretending to be the great medical missionary. He will cause fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men to prove that he is God. We must stand barricaded by the truths of the Bible."—*Medical Ministry*, pp. 87, 88.

"By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 612.

"The time is coming when Satan will work miracles right in your sight, claiming that he is Christ; and if your feet are not firmly established upon the truth of God, then you will be led away from your foundation. The only safety for you is to search for truth as for hid treasures."—E. G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 911.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What evidences of the influence of spiritism do you see in our world today?
2. There is increasing pressure from some sources in the United States to lessen the separation between church and state. How do you react to this attempt?

SUMMARY: The dragon and his agents oppose God's law and offer false prophets, a substitute god, human priests who claim to forgive sins, and persecution for those who reject a church-state union. By contrast, Christ offers the power to keep His law, true prophets who teach His truth, worship of the only true God, a heavenly High Priest and Mediator, and eternal life in His kingdom for those who trust Him.



Before You Pray I Will Answer

Beatrice Buku

I live in Kinshasa, the capital city of Zaire. I was not satisfied with the church I had grown up in, but I did not know which of the many churches to attend. Yet my heart was hungry to know God better. One Saturday morning I prayed, "God, there are so many churches, please choose the church that is best for me."

I finished praying, and wondered how God would answer this prayer. Soon after, a messenger came to tell me that my sister had just given birth. I prepared some food to take to her and set off to see her.

When I was on my way, I saw a group of people worshipping inside a tent. I stopped. These people were worshipping quietly, without beating drums or dancing as is common in many African churches. I stepped closer to the tent and listened. A pastor was preaching, telling the people how much Jesus loves us. I placed my package of food down by the door and went in and sat down to listen. I stayed for the entire worship service. I watched as the pastor walked out and began shaking everyone's hand. The members shook one another's hands too. When I reached the back, I asked someone which church this was. That person took me to the pastor and introduced me to him. He shook my hand and greeted me.

I told him I liked the way he conducted his worship—quietly, without drums and dancing. I asked him if I could join his group. The pastor told me that we meet here every Sabbath morning, and again on Wednesday and Friday evenings.

After I visited my sister, I returned home and told my husband about my prayer that morning, and how within an hour God had showed me the Adventist church. I said I wanted to return each week. My husband had never heard of the Adventists, but did not object to my attending. My husband is so good! He allows me to bring the children to the Adventist church and has not objected to the change in our family diet.



I encourage others to pray, and be ready for God to answer, even as he answered my prayer.

Beatrice Buku is a homemaker living in Kinshasa, Zaire.

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Christ's Seal or Satan's Mark?



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 6:11-17; 7:1-3; 13:11-18; 14:1-5, 9-11.

MEMORY TEXT: "And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God" (Revelation 14:5).

KEY THOUGHT: At the end of time are two classes of people: those who have the seal of God and those who have the mark of the beast. Only those who have the seal of God will be ready to meet Jesus.

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY between Christ and Satan culminates in the final separation of lost and saved at Jesus' second advent (Matt. 25:31-46). God's decision regarding who belongs in which category is based on whether people have responded to the voice of His Spirit or to the goading of evil spirits. The conflict between the Holy Spirit and evil demons in the lives of human beings becomes more intense as the end of time draws near. While "the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come' " (Rev. 22:17, RSV), "demonic spirits, performing signs [miracles]" (Rev. 16:14, RSV) incite everyone to reject the conviction of sin and to rebel against God.

Those who respond to the Spirit's voice, accepting Christ as Saviour and Lord and doing His will as revealed in Scripture, receive the end-time seal of God. Those who accept the control of demons turn away from Christ, reject His law, and receive the mark of the beast.

Whom will we serve, Christ or Satan? Our response to the Sabbath/Sunday issue will determine how we answer that question.

THE BEAST'S POWER WILL BE ACKNOWLEDGED (Rev. 13:16-18).

In our previous lesson we identified three great powers working at the end of time to subvert God's truth and to destroy His people. They are the dragon (Revelation 12), the leopardlike beast (Rev. 13:1-10), and the lamblike beast (Rev. 13:11-18). Elsewhere in Revelation they are called "the dragon," "the beast," and "the false prophet" (Rev. 16:13). The dragon is Satan (Rev. 12:9), who used the Roman Empire (verse 4) and the medieval church (verses 6, 14, 15) in an attempt to destroy Christ and His people. The leopardlike beast of Revelation 13:1-10 represents the papacy in both its medieval and end-time roles. The lamblike beast (Rev. 13:11-18) represents apostate Protestantism, which, in cooperation with the papacy, will provoke the government of the United States to pass religious laws that undermine Bible truth.

As you study Revelation 13:16-18, consider the following questions:

How many of earth's inhabitants are obliged to receive the mark of the beast?

Why is there an alternative place for the mark ("on the right hand or the forehead" [verse 16, RSV])?

What is the mark of the beast?

It is clear from Revelation 13:14 that the work of the lamblike beast is worldwide: "it deceives those who dwell on earth" (RSV). All classes of humanity around the world are confronted by the demand to receive the mark of the beast (verse 16).

The alternative to the mark of the beast is the seal of God (Rev. 7:1-8; 14:1-5). The seal of God is placed only in the foreheads of committed believers. The "hand" by contrast with the "forehead" (Rev. 13:16) implies that some people will be mentally committed to the legislation enforcing the mark of the beast and some will not. Some will accept the demands made upon them because they will fear reprisals if they do not.

In identifying the mark of the beast, we are looking for the mark or sign of papal authority. We can expect this mark of religious power to be accepted by other churches and enforced by government laws.

What current trends do you see pointing to the fulfillment of this prophecy? Do you see any special significance in the movement in the United States to abolish the wall of separation between church and state?

WHAT IS THE MARK OF THE BEAST? (Rev. 13:16, 17).

What is the sign or seal of God's creative and redemptive power? Exod. 31:13-17; Ezek. 20:12, 20; Matt. 24:20; Rev. 14:7.

In Scripture the words *sign* and *seal* are sometimes used synonymously. For example, speaking of Abraham, Paul wrote: "He received circumcision as a sign or seal of the righteousness which he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised" (Rom. 4:11, RSV). Abraham was not saved by circumcision; he was saved by grace, which he accepted by faith. But circumcision was the sign, or seal, of the saving experience. Of course, since the cross, circumcision as a religious rite is no longer necessary (Rom. 2:28, 29).

God's sign, or seal, of His creative and redemptive work is the seventh-day Sabbath. The Sabbath is a sign that He is the Creator (Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 20:8-11).

The Sabbath is also a sign of sanctification or holiness (Exod. 31:13; Ezek. 20:12). The gift of holiness was made possible by Christ's death and His gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:2). Thus the Sabbath is a sign or seal of the righteousness- and salvation-by-faith experience.

What sign or mark of its authority does the papacy claim?

Satan chose a counterfeit day of worship as the sign, or mark, of his authority. Sunday observance is claimed by the papacy as the mark of its religious authority.

"Roman Catholics acknowledge that the change of the Sabbath was made by their church, and declare that Protestants by observing the Sunday are recognizing her power. In the *Catholic Catechism of Christian Religion*, in answer to a question as to the day to be observed in obedience to the fourth commandment, this statement is made: 'During the old law, Saturday was the day sanctified; but *the church*, instructed by Jesus Christ, and directed by the Spirit of God, has substituted Sunday for Saturday; so now we sanctify the first, not the seventh day. Sunday means, and now is, the day of the Lord.'

"As the sign of the authority of the Catholic Church, papist writers cite 'the very act of changing the Sabbath into Sunday, which Protestants allow of. . . .'—Henry Tuberville, *An Abridgment of the Christian Doctrine*, page 58. What then is the change of the Sabbath, but the sign, or mark, of the authority of the Roman Church—'the mark of the beast'?"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 447, 448.

**WHEN DO PEOPLE RECEIVE THE MARK OF THE BEAST?
(Rev. 13:12-17).**

The answer is found in Revelation 13:12-17:

Has the lamblike beast as yet exercised “all the authority of the first beast in its presence” (verse 12, RSV)?

Has the lamblike beast as yet “[made] the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed” (verse 12)?

Has the lamblike beast yet deceived the whole world “bidding them make an image for the beast which was wounded by the sword and yet lived” (verse 14)?

Has the lamblike beast yet caused all to obey secular laws enforcing a decree of the church (verse 16)?

Has the lamblike beast applied an economic boycott to those who refuse the mark of the beast (verse 17)?

“Christians of past generations observed the Sunday, supposing that in so doing they were keeping the Bible Sabbath; and there are now true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman Catholic communion, who honestly believe that Sunday is the Sabbath of divine appointment. God accepts their sincerity of purpose and their integrity before Him. But when Sunday observance shall be enforced by law, and the world shall be enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath, then whoever shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher authority than that of Rome, will thereby honor popery above God. He is paying homage to Rome and to the power which enforces the institution ordained by Rome. He is worshiping the beast and his image. As men then reject the institution which God has declared to be the sign of His authority, and honor in its stead that which Rome has chosen as the token of her supremacy, they will thereby accept the sign of allegiance to Rome—‘the mark of the beast.’ And it is not until the issue is thus plainly set before the people, and they are brought to choose between the commandments of God and the commandments of men, that those who continue in transgression will receive ‘the mark of the beast.’ ”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 449.

What fearful punishment will those receive who worship the beast and its image and receive its mark? Rev. 14:9-11.

SEALED BY CHRIST'S CHARACTER (Rev. 14:1).

What is the seal in the foreheads of God's end-time people? Rev. 7:1-3; Rev. 14:1.

The Greek of Revelation 14:1 translates: "having His name and His Father's name written upon their foreheads." (Compare Rev. 3:12; 22:4.) The Father's name and Christ's name are symbols of their character.

The psalmist wrote: "I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High" (Ps. 7:17, RSV). The Lord's name is the symbol of His righteousness. When we praise the name of the Lord, we praise His holy character. The psalmist also wrote: "Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name" (Ps. 29:2, RSV). The Lord's glory is His infinitely perfect character.

How does Christ give us His character? Eph. 1:13, 14; Rev. 3:5; 6:11; 19:7, 8.

The Holy Spirit brings Christ's righteousness to the heart of every true Christian (Rom. 8:9, 10). Enjoying the new-birth experience (John 3:1-16), we have the *initial seal* of the Spirit, the "guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it" (Eph. 1:14, RSV).

The presence of the Spirit in our hearts enables spiritual growth toward complete victory over sin, which is the prerequisite to reception of God's *end-time seal*. Those whose names are retained in the book of life are overcomers through Christ's power (Rev. 3:5). Revelation 6:11 translates literally: "And there was given to each of them [the righteous dead] a white robe, and it was said to them that they should rest a little longer, until their fellow servants and their brethren, who are about to be killed as they were, *might be made complete*." By the power of the Holy Spirit, God's end-time people are made completely victorious in Christ during the "marriage of the Lamb," the pre-advent judgment (Rev. 19:2, 7, 8). Then they are sealed in their foreheads. Their names are eternally retained in the book of life, and Satan has no more power over them. (See *Early Writings*, pp. 270, 271.)

God's name, His character, is revealed by His creative and redemptive work, of which the Sabbath is the sign (Exod. 20:8-11; Exod. 31:13). Those who receive the bestowal of Christ's character by the gift of the Holy Spirit observe the seventh-day Sabbath as the great memorial of, and aid to, their spiritual victory in Christ.

WHEN DO CHRIST'S LAST-DAY PEOPLE RECEIVE THE END-TIME SEAL? (Rev. 6:14-17; 7:1-3).

What answer to this question can you draw from Revelation 6:11-7:3?

Revelation 6:11 is fulfilled when the fifth seal is broken on the little scroll that Christ has taken from the hand of the Father (Rev. 5:6, 7; 6:9). The dead are vindicated in the pre-advent judgment (Rev. 6:11). Their living brethren are made "complete," "perfect," in the sense of victorious over sin, during the same pre-advent judgment. Then Christ comes (Rev. 6:12-17). The question asked in verse 17 is answered in Revelation 7:1-8. Those who are able to stand without fear as Jesus comes in the clouds are those who are sealed in their foreheads *before the winds of strife are let loose*, before the close of probation.

"Reference to our published works will show our belief that the living righteous will receive the seal of God prior to the close of probation."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 66.

"The only hope for any man lies through Jesus Christ. . . . The pure and holy garments are not prepared to be put on by any one *after* he has entered the gate of the city. All who enter will have on the robe of Christ's righteousness, and the name of God will be seen in their foreheads. This name is the symbol which the apostle saw in vision, and signifies the yielding of the mind to intelligent and loyal obedience to all of God's commandments."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 370.

"Just before we entered it [the time of trouble], we all received the seal of the living God. Then I saw the four angels cease to hold the four winds. And I saw famine, pestilence and sword, nation rose against nation, and the whole world was in confusion."—Ellen White *Comments*, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 968.

What are the spiritual characteristics of living believers when Christ comes? Rev. 14:4, 5; 15:2-4.

Those who receive the end-time seal of God are the righteous living on the earth when Jesus comes. They stand unafraid as Jesus appears in the heavens (Rev. 6:17; 7:1-3). They are "redeemed from the earth" (Rev. 14:3, RSV), "from mankind" (verse 4, RSV). "These, having been translated from the earth, from among the living, are counted as 'the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.'"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 649. (Compare *Early Writings*, p. 15.)

FURTHER STUDY: Revelation 14:5 may be translated: "And in their mouth no lie was found, for they are spotless" (RSV). The word translated "spotless" or "without fault" (KJV) is used in the following texts. How does the teaching of these passages support that of Revelation 14:5? Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Col. 1:22; Jude 24.

"None but those who have been overcoming by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony will be found with the loyal and true, without spot or stain of sin, without guile in their mouths. We must be divested of our self-righteousness and arrayed in the righteousness of Christ. . . .

"That which God required of Adam before his fall was perfect obedience to His law. God requires now what He required of Adam, perfect obedience, righteousness without a flaw, without shortcoming in His sight. God help us to render to Him all His law requires. We cannot do this without that faith that brings Christ's righteousness into daily practice."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, pp. 380, 381.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why is it vitally important that we do not assume that Sunday keepers at the present time have the mark of the beast?
2. Because the sealing of believers is the work of the Holy Spirit, what part should we play in seeking the Spirit's outpouring upon the church and upon ourselves individually?
3. Why is it dangerous to postpone total commitment to Christ until the image to the beast is set up?
4. How would you explain to a questioner the spiritual meaning of the Sabbath for you?

SUMMARY: The seal of God is the gift of the character of Christ to thoroughly committed believers. Because the Sabbath is the sign, or seal, of God's creative and redemptive authority, those who are sealed are faithful Sabbath keepers. They will be the righteous living on the earth when Jesus comes. The mark of the beast is the sign of papal authority, the counterfeit Sabbath, Sunday observance. Those who accept the image to the beast, obeying the government's decree enforcing Sunday keeping, will receive the mark of the beast.

Bayanihan

J. H. Zachary

My wife and I bumped along the narrow path in our jeep as we headed into the rugged highland of central Mindanao, Philippines, to visit a primitive tribe. Tall grasses grew along the trail, blocking our view of the road ahead. As we rounded a sharp turn, I hit the brakes and stared, amazed at the sight ahead of us. We watched, transfixed, as a house crossed the road in front of us.

As we waited for this unusual parade, we learned the story behind the "walking house." A man had built his family a home beside a nearby river. During the rainy season the river rose and flooded the home. The unhappy wife scolded her husband. "You must move this house," she demanded.

The man visited the village chief, who summoned all available villagers to help. Men and boys cut long, sturdy bamboo poles and placed them in even rows under the house. Then every able-bodied person placed a shoulder under one of the bamboo poles. When the chief gave the command, "Stand up," the house rose into the air. With the command to march, the house began to walk.

We waited as the little house crossed the road and climbed the hill to higher ground, where it was set in its new location.

The owner could not move the house by himself. It took every village member working together to move the house.

As we waited that day I thought how a pastor or an evangelist cannot reach a city by himself. It takes every member working together to get the job done. All the Adventist pastors in the world cannot reach the more than 5 billion people on this planet. It will take every member, filled with the Holy Spirit, to move the world for God.

The people of the Philippines have a word to describe moving a house, *bayanihan* [ba-yah-NEE-han], which means "we all work together." If we all work together, we will get the job done.



James H. Zachary recently retired from the Ministerial Association of the General Conference.

Christ's Counsel Before the Close of Probation



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Acts 2:14-24; 16:12-16; 18:1-24.

MEMORY TEXT: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

KEY THOUGHT: As we consider the final events on Planet Earth, we must focus on *Who* is coming, not merely on *what* is coming. The final events are Christ-centered rather than crisis-centered.

FINAL EVENTS ON PLANET EARTH WILL TAKE PLACE RAPIDLY. Concerning the effect of Sunday laws, we read: "This national apostasy will speedily be followed by national ruin."—*Last Day Events*, p. 134.

"The agencies of evil are combining their forces and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 11.

"Thousands in the eleventh hour will see and acknowledge the truth. . . . These conversions to truth will be made with a rapidity that will surprise the church, and God's name alone will be glorified."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 16.

"When probation ends, it will come suddenly, unexpectedly—at a time when we are least expecting it. But we can have a clean record in heaven today, and know that God accepts us."—*Last Day Events*, p. 230.

FOCUS ON CHRIST, NOT THE CRISIS (Ps. 16:8).

In what way is Enoch a type of those to be translated at the second coming? Gen. 5:22.

“We can have what Enoch had. We can have Christ as our constant companion. Enoch walked with God, and when assailed by the tempter, he could talk with God about it. He had no ‘It is written’ as we have, but he had a knowledge of his heavenly Companion. He made God his Counsellor, and was closely bound up with Jesus. And Enoch was honored in this course. He was translated to heaven without seeing death. And those who will be translated at the close of time, will be those who commune with God on earth.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1087.

After his son’s birth, “the infinite, unfathomable love of God through Christ became the subject of his meditations day and night. With all the fervor of his soul he sought to reveal that love to the people among whom he dwelt.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 329.

In what way is the experience of Moses instructive for the end-time remnant? Heb. 11:27.

The Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, led by Moses, is a type of our final exodus from this world to the heavenly Canaan. “He looked to God and trusted in Him for strength to carry him uncorrupted through every form of temptation. He knew that a special work had been assigned to him, and he desired as far as possible to make that work thoroughly successful. But he knew that he could not do this without divine aid, for he had a perverse people to deal with. The presence of God carried him through the most trying situations.

“Moses did not merely think of God; he saw Him. God was the constant vision before him; he never lost sight of His face. He saw Jesus as his Saviour, and he believed that the Saviour’s merits would be imputed to him. This faith was to Moses no guesswork; it was a reality. This is the kind of faith we need, faith that will endure the test. Oh, how often we yield to temptation because we do not keep our eye upon Jesus!”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 652. (See Ps. 16:8; 25:15; Acts 2:25.)

From Ellen White’s first vision in *Early Writings*, pages 13 to 20, (1) in what way alone are God’s people safe? and (2) what is the fundamental difference between those who arrive safely to heaven and those who do not?

THE CROSS AS CENTRAL TO FINAL EVENTS (Acts 2:14-24).

What days did the first coming of Christ inaugurate? 1 Cor. 10:11; Heb. 1:2; 1 John 2:18.

In the New Testament the final events of this earth's history are presented in three dimensions—past, present, and future. The term *last day* or *last days* has reference to past, present, and future time. Christ launched the last days by His first advent (Heb. 1:2; 1 John 2:18). Those last days are present and about to culminate in the “last day” (John 6:39, 40). Christ came as the “last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45), providing a new beginning for the race and launching the gospel age that culminates in the new earth (Revelation 21).

What does prophecy tell us will come in the last days? Acts 2:17-21; compare Joel 2:28-32.

The Holy Spirit was bestowed at Pentecost (Acts 2). But the signs in the sun, moon, and stars did not take place then. The signs in the natural world were fulfilled for the first time in the past two centuries (Matt. 24:29). These signs will be repeated just before Christ comes (Joel 3:15; Isa. 13:9, 10; Rev. 6:12, 13; Ezek. 32:7, 8).

The events of Pentecost and the end time, separated from each other by nearly two millennia, are referred to as the “last days.” Thus, the “last days” are synonymous with the Christian Era, or the time of the new covenant (Jer. 31:31; Heb. 8:8; 12:24).

Why is this age called the “last days”? John 19:30. (See *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 974.)

Christ's victorious cry, “It is finished,” made eternally sure Satan's ultimate destruction. Calvary means Satan, sin, and sinners are finished. Time lingers longer so the onlooking universe can understand issues involved in the great controversy and so that others on earth can come to Christ (2 Peter 3:9). But at the cross the decisive battle took place. Events in the world, particularly final events, unmask the fury of the defeated foe. He is causing havoc. But he has lost! “Finished!” is written over all his evil schemes. They cause damage but cannot change the outcome. As we look at final events, we must do so in the light of *the* final event—Calvary.

Describe the importance of Calvary for your spiritual life.

SPIRITUALISM (Rev. 16:12-16).

Besides the Sunday law, what other avenue will Satan use to take the world captive? Rev. 16:13, 14.

Three "evil spirits," a triumvirate counterfeit of the three angels of Revelation 14:6-13, work through three avenues to capture the world. Those three avenues are (1) the dragon (paganism; note that the dragon in Revelation 12 is primarily Satan [verse 9] and secondarily pagan Rome [verse 4]), (2) the beast (Catholicism), and (3) the false prophet (apostate Protestantism; see *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 844). These three "spirits of demons" work "miraculous signs" to deceive the world and to lead it into the final battle of Armageddon. Here is presented a prophecy about the impact of spiritualism in the end time. "Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 588.

How does the New Age movement fulfill Revelation 16:12-16?

The New Age movement is a spiritistic phenomenon. Channeled bibles, such as *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* (1907), *The Urantia Book* (1955), and *A Course in Miracles* (1975) claim to fill in the lost years of Christ, from age 12 to 30, with new revelations from heaven. They present Jesus as a mere man who became a god; all humans can become gods. They deny the need of the cross.

The New Age movement calls for a global consciousness, involving all humans' thinking alike, and preparing for the coming of Christ, who will teach a new, exalted religion. (Compare *The Great Controversy*, pp. 499, 589; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 56.) It is alleged that He has developed beyond His teachings of two thousand years ago. This idea denies the eternal validity of the Bible. Spiritualism appeals to the miraculous just as Satan did in Eden. The philosophy is "seeing is believing." Satan appeals to the senses to deny God's Word. (See Gen. 3:2-6.)

How does the charismatic movement fulfill Revelation 16:12-16? Can tongues speakers focus on a phenomenon instead of upon God's Word? (See *Last Day Events*, pp. 159, 160.)

How will miracles be a test to Adventists? 1 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 13:14. (See *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 53.)

THE COUNTERFEIT PRECEDES THE GENUINE (Rev. 13:11-15).

How will Satan's counterfeit religion even duplicate biblical events in order to claim authenticity? Rev. 13:13; compare 1 Kings 18:24.

The Mount Carmel test will be counterfeited. Satan will make it appear that a biblical test establishes his deity.

"Satan will come in to deceive if possible the very elect. He claims to be Christ, and he is coming in, pretending to be the great medical missionary. He will cause fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men to prove that he is God."—*Medical Ministry*, pp. 87, 88.

"It is impossible to give any idea of the experience of the people of God who will be alive on the earth when past woes and celestial glory will be blended. They will walk in the light proceeding from the throne of God. By the means of the angels there will be constant communication between heaven and earth. And Satan, surrounded by evil angels, and claiming to be God, will work miracles of all kinds to deceive, if possible, the very elect. God's people will not find their safety in working miracles, for Satan would counterfeit any miracle that might be worked."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, pp. 54, 55.

What will precede the loud cry of Revelation 18:1-4? Matt. 24:11-14.

"I saw that God has honest children among the nominal Adventists and the fallen churches, and before the plagues shall be poured out, ministers and people will be called out from these churches and will gladly receive the truth. Satan knows this; and before the loud cry of the third angel is given, he raises an excitement in these religious bodies, that those who have rejected the truth may think that God is with them."—*Early Writings*, p. 261.

"Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. . . . The enemy of souls desires to hinder this work; and before the time for such a movement shall come, he will endeavor to prevent it by introducing a counterfeit. In those churches which he can bring under his deceptive power he will make it appear that God's special blessing is poured out; there will be manifest what is thought to be great religious interest."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 464.

THE FINAL INVITATION TO THE WORLD (Rev. 18:1-24).

How do the three angels' messages relate to God's final appeal to the world? Rev. 14:6-13; 18:1-4.

The three angels' messages (Rev. 14:6-13) will climax in the "loud cry," the final call for all humanity to come to Christ (Rev. 18:1-4). This is the final invitation to come out of Babylon before the plagues (Rev. 18:4, 8; compare 16:1-21). Just as Satan's counterfeit "three evil spirits" go to the whole world (Rev. 16:12-16, NIV), so the three angels' messages will reach their finale in the loud cry.

Study the third angel's message, and give evidence for its particular relevance to the time after the Sunday law. Rev. 14:9 (compare Rev. 13:12-15).

How will the Sunday law, to which the loud cry responds, be a sign to us, indicating our method of giving the final message? Luke 21:20, 21; Rev. 13:14-16.

"The time is not far distant, when, like the early disciples, we shall be forced to seek a refuge in desolate and solitary places. As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us. It will then be time to leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 464, 465. (Compare *The Great Controversy*, pp. 30, 31.)

"As God's commandment-keeping people, we must leave the cities. As did Enoch, we must work in the cities but not dwell in them."—*Evangelism*, pp. 77, 78.

"Study carefully in the book of Acts the experiences of Paul and the other apostles, for God's people in our day must pass through similar experiences."—*Last Day Events*, p. 148.

Remind yourself of the wonderful assurances of Christ's presence with His faithful people in the difficult experiences they must face before He comes. Matt. 10:19, 20; John 16:33; Rom. 8:38, 39; Rev. 7:14-17. "The true Christian will stand firm as a rock, his faith stronger, his hope brighter, than in days of prosperity."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 602.

FURTHER STUDY: Read Rev. 18:1-4; "The Loud Cry," "The Close of Probation," *Last Day Events*, pp. 197-214; 227-230; "The Final Warning," *The Great Controversy*, pp. 603-612; "The Seal of God," "The Impending Conflict," *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 207-216; 711-718.

There is a double worldwide gathering under way. "Satan is marshaling his hosts."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 186. He seeks to become the leader of the world (Rev. 16:12-16). His "agents still claim to cure disease. They attribute their power to electricity, magnetism, or the so-called 'sympathetic remedies.' In truth they are but channels for Satan's electric currents. By this means he casts his spell over the bodies and souls of men."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 193. Significantly, the New Age movement speaks of people's aligning themselves with the cosmic energy flow for healing. "It is the lying wonders of the devil that will take the world captive."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 51.

At the same time, through meditation techniques, people are being trained to open their minds to receive whatever comes. Evil spirits enter and take over, bypassing the conscious mind. A generation is being prepared to participate in this kind of mindless global consciousness. Such routines are common in different parts of the world, even in some grade schools. It is Satan's studied strategy to prepare the world for his coming as the assumed Christ.

Ellen G. White was given a vision of the modern development of spiritualism. Read *Early Writings*, p. 263.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What encouraging events in the future will strengthen us to withstand the almost overwhelming deceptions of Satan? (See Joel 2:28, 29; Rev. 3:8-13.)
2. What steps can we take to protect our children and youth from the insidious evils that are influencing their minds: morally degraded television programs, toys and games invented by demons, the influence of highly emotional, charismatic-style religious services.

SUMMARY: To cope successfully with the challenges of the future, we must focus daily on Christ. By constant communion with Him, we can be overcomers as was Enoch and can reflect His love to all around us. When political and religious forces threaten to destroy us, we have the wonderful assurance that nothing can separate us from Christ. His love and companionship are ours for eternity.

Jeffry's Answered Prayer—Part 1

Joko Soewarso

Twelve-year-old Jeffry Leo and his family moved to Pangkalang (PAHN-kah-lahng) Bum, a small city on the southern coast of Borneo, where Jeffry's parents managed a restaurant. Jeffry liked his new home, and was eager to make some Adventist friends, but his family could not find the church. In fact, no one they talked to knew of Adventists.

Jeffry felt lonely. He missed worshipping in his former church. He and his sister prayed that God would help them meet some Adventists, so they could worship together on Sabbath.

Jeffry kept asking his friends at school if they knew anyone who kept the Sabbath, but no one knew. One day a classmate told him of a family that lived across the river who worshiped on Saturday instead of Sunday. He did not know the family's name or exactly where they lived.

Jeffry was so excited that as soon as school ended that day he hurried down to the river, hired a boat, and crossed to the other part of town. He did not know what he would find, if he could even find anything, but he was determined to look.

When Jeffry reached the riverbank, he began asking people if they knew someone who kept the Sabbath. Finally he met someone who remembered a family who worshiped on Sabbath. The man directed Jeffry to a furniture company. Jeffry hurried in the direction the man pointed. The furniture company was closed, but the manager was still there. Jeffry asked the man if he knew of any Sabbathkeepers in the area. The manager looked at Jeffry a long time, then directed him to the home of Mr. Fang.

Jeffry almost ran to the Fangs' home. A Chinese man answered his knock and looked out at this young boy standing there. "Please, sir, are you Adventists?" Jeffry asked hopefully.

(continued next week)



Jeffry Leo (left) lives in Southern Kalimantan, Indonesia. Joko Soewarso is president of the Kalimantan Mission of Seventh-day Adventists.

Christ's Care After Probation's Close



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Dan 12:1; Rev. 13:15, 16-19.

MEMORY TEXT: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

KEY THOUGHT: Events after the close of probation demonstrate the wickedness of Satan and the love and justice of God.

THE PRE-ADVENT CLIMAX TO THE GREAT CONTROVERSY COMES AFTER PROBATION'S CLOSE. "Just before we entered it [the time of trouble], we all received the seal of the living God. Then I saw the four angels cease to hold the four winds. And I saw famine, pestilence and sword, nation rose against nation, and the whole world was in confusion."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 968.

"An angel returning from the earth announces that his work is done; the final test has been brought upon the world, and all who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received 'the seal of the living God.' Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts His hands and with a loud voice says, 'It is done.' "

—*The Great Controversy*, p. 613.

When probation closes, God's remnant on earth will have been sealed (Rev. 7:1-4); they have given the final message (Rev. 18:1-4) and are almost ready for translation (1 Thess. 4:16-18). Then the great time of trouble begins (Dan. 12:1). There will be trouble for both the saved and the unsaved. What is that trouble, and what is its cause?

SATAN HAS ENTIRE CONTROL OF THE IMPENITENT (Dan. 12:1).

What is the difference between the time of trouble after probation's close and the time of trouble during the period of papal supremacy (A.D. 538-1798)? Compare Dan. 12:1 with Matt. 24:21, 22.

The "great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21) of which Jesus spoke is the same "time of trouble" (Dan. 12:1) of which Daniel wrote. The difference in the two passages is that Jesus was using historical events as types of the ultimate end-time tribulation. Matthew 24:21, 22, in its context, may refer to (1) the tribulation associated with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70; (2) the tribulation during the period of papal supremacy; (3) the ultimate tribulation just before Jesus comes, of which the previous two times of trouble were types. (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 25, 36, 39, 266, 267.)

Why will the end-time trouble be the worst ever? Rev. 7:1-3; 13:15.

Revelation 7:1-3 indicates that the angels hold the winds of strife only as long as the sealing of the saints is in process. Once the sealing is completed, the angels loose the winds of strife. "Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 614.

Satan and his angels are powerful (Eph. 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8). "The same destructive power exercised by holy angels when God commands, will be exercised by evil angels when He permits. There are forces now ready, and only waiting the divine permission, to spread desolation everywhere."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 614.

"Satan has entire control of the finally impenitent."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 614. (See Rev. 22:11.)

Satan says, " 'Our principal concern is to silence this sect of Sabbathkeepers. . . . We will finally have a law to exterminate all who will not submit to our authority.' "—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 472, 473. "It is the purpose of Satan to cause them to be blotted from the earth in order that his supremacy of the world may not be disputed."—*Last Day Events*, p. 255.

THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES (Rev. 16:1-21).

Why was John given the vision of the saved in heaven (Rev. 15:2-4) after he was shown "seven angels with the seven last plagues" (verse 1, NIV) and before the actual beginning of the plagues (Rev. 15:5-16:1)?

The vision of Revelation 15:2-4 was *not* given to demonstrate that the saved will be in heaven during the pouring out of the plagues on earth. The righteous living on the earth when Jesus comes in glory "have come out of the great tribulation" (Rev. 7:14, RSV). The vision of Revelation 15:2-4 depicts those upon whom the plagues did not fall because, while on earth, they gained the victory over the beast, its image, and its mark (verse 2). These victorious ones are presented in shining contrast to unbelievers, who will suffer the plagues.

"While the wicked are dying from hunger and pestilence, angels will shield the righteous and supply their wants. To him that 'walketh righteously' is the promise: 'Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.' . . . Isaiah 33:15, 16, 41:17."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 629.

Will God send the plagues? Rev. 16:1, 5, 7, 19 (compare Exod. 7:1-5, 17; 8:2, 19, 21; 2 Peter 2:4-6, 9).

God sent the plagues on Egypt, just before He delivered His people. These plagues were a type of the final plagues God sends on the world before He delivers His people to take them to the heavenly Canaan.

"God's love is represented in our day as being of such a character as would forbid His destroying the sinner. Men reason from their own low standard of right and justice. . . . God is a moral governor as well as a Father. He is the Lawgiver. He makes and executes His laws. Law that has no penalty is of no force."

"The plea may be made that a loving Father would not see His children suffering the punishment of God by fire while He had the power to relieve them. But God would, for the good of His subjects and for their safety, punish the transgressor. God does not work on the plan of man. He can do infinite justice that man has no right to do before his fellow man. Noah would have displeased God to have drowned one of the scoffers and mockers that harassed him, but God drowned the vast world. Lot would have had no right to inflict punishment on his sons-in-law, but God would do it in strict justice."—*Last Day Events*, pp. 240, 241.

SATAN IMPERSONATES CHRIST (2 Cor. 11:14).

What was Satan's original quest in heaven? Ezek. 28:11-17; Isa. 14:12-14.

"Little by little Lucifer came to indulge the desire for self-exaltation. . . . Not content with his position, though honored above the heavenly host, he ventured to covet homage due alone to the Creator. . . . And coveting the glory with which the infinite Father had invested His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power that was the prerogative of Christ alone."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 35.

Who are the central figures in the great controversy? Rev. 12:7-11. What will Satan dare to do in the end time? 2 Cor. 11:14.

Michael is the name given to Christ. (Compare Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9.) Revelation 12 gives a brief overview of the great controversy in four different battles, in which Christ and Satan are the principal contestants.

"As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Saviour's advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. Revelation 1:13-15. The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out upon the air: 'Christ has come! Christ has come!' The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him, while he lifts up his hands and pronounces a blessing upon them, as Christ blessed His disciples when He was upon the earth. His voice is soft and subdued, yet full of melody. In gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the same gracious, heavenly truths which the Saviour uttered; he heals the diseases of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. He declares that those who persist in keeping holy the seventh day are blaspheming his name by refusing to listen to his angels sent to them with light and truth. This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 624.

NO MEDIATOR (Rev. 8:2-5).

What is meant by John's vision of Christ's casting the censer into the earth? Rev. 8:2-5 (compare Rev. 22:11; 7:3; 15:5, 8).

"I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven. An angel with a writer's inkhorn by his side returned from the earth and reported to Jesus that his work was done, and the saints were numbered and sealed. Then I saw Jesus, who had been ministering before the ark containing the ten commandments, throw down the censer. He raised His hands, and with a loud voice said, 'It is done.' And all the angelic host laid off their crowns as Jesus made the solemn declaration, [Revelation 22:11 quoted]."—*Early Writings*, pp. 279, 280.

Even though Christ's heavenly intercession for sinners will cease at the close of probation, His sealed people will be kept from sin by the indwelling Holy Spirit. "It is the latter rain which revives and strengthens them to pass through the time of trouble."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 353. "Evil angels still pressed around them, but could have no power over them."—*Early Writings*, p. 271.

What trouble did Jeremiah prophesy for Israel at the time of the Babylonian invasion? Jer. 30:5-7. Apart from his fear of physical harm, how is Jacob's night of wrestling a type of the trouble that God's people will face after the close of probation? Gen. 32:24-26.

"The people of God will then be plunged into those scenes of affliction and distress described by the prophet as the time of Jacob's trouble. . . . [Jer. 30:5-7 quoted]."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 616.

"As Satan accuses the people of God on account of their sins, the Lord permits him to try them to the uttermost. Their confidence in God, their faith and firmness, will be severely tested. As they review the past, their hopes sink; for in their whole lives they can see little good. They are fully conscious of their weakness and unworthiness. Satan endeavors to terrify them with the thought that their cases are hopeless, that the stain of their defilement will never be washed away. He hopes so to destroy their faith that they will yield to his temptations and turn from their allegiance to God. . . . But while they have a deep sense of their unworthiness, they have no concealed wrongs to reveal. Their sins have gone beforehand to judgment and have been blotted out, and they cannot bring them to remembrance."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 618-620.

**HOW DO WE PREPARE FOR THE CLOSE OF PROBATION?
(2 Peter 3:8-18).**

As you study 2 Peter 3:8-18, ask yourself these questions:

Why did Jesus not come as soon as some thought He would?
(verses 8, 9).

In what sense will Jesus come "like a thief" (verse 10, NIV)?

What biblical definitions can you give for "holiness" (verse 11, RSV), "godliness" (verse 11), "righteousness" (verse 13)?

How can we be "without spot, and blameless" (verse 14)?

How can we avoid "the error of lawless men" that causes us to lose our spiritual "stability" (verse 17, RSV)?

Many passages in Scripture indicate that the Lord wishes His people to be spiritually blameless. (See 1 Cor. 1:8; Phil. 2:15; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Peter 3:14.)

"God requires the homage of a sanctified soul, which has prepared itself, by the exercise of the faith that works by love, to serve Him. He holds up before us the highest ideal, even perfection. He asks us to be absolutely and completely for Him in this world as He is for us in the presence of God.

"'This is the will of God' concerning you, 'even your sanctification.' 1 Thessalonians 4:3. Is it your will also? Your sins may be as mountains before you; but if you humble your heart, and confess your sins, trusting in the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour, He will forgive, and will cleanse you from all unrighteousness. God demands of you entire conformity to His law. This law is the echo of His voice saying to you, Holier, yes, holier still. Desire the fullness of the grace of Christ. Let your heart be filled with an intense longing for His righteousness, the work of which God's word declares is peace, and its effect quietness and assurance forever.

"As your soul yearns after God, you will find more and still more of the unsearchable riches of His grace. As you contemplate these riches, you will come into possession of them, and will reveal the merits of the Saviour's sacrifice, the protection of his righteousness, the fullness of His wisdom, and His power to present you before the Father 'without spot, and blameless.' 2 Peter 3:14."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 566, 567.

FURTHER STUDY: The message to Sardis has vital counsel for those preparing for the seal of God and for the close of probation. Study Revelation 3:1-6. Read "The Time of Trouble," *The Great Controversy*, pp. 613-634.

"The injunction to be blameless and harmless [Phil. 2:15] does not teach that we may remain in a passive state. If Christians aspire no higher than a mere negative virtue, we may well anxiously inquire, what is to become of those who know not Christ nor the truth? Who will reach out their hands to save them? 'Blameless' here means unadulterated, sincere; it expresses an active piety. We are to let our light shine upon others, that its bright beams may reflect glory to the great Source of light. Our Heavenly Father is not a hard master; he requires of no man more or less than he gives him ability to do. 'Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.' Every one has earnest work to do for God. Every one upon whom God has bestowed the gift of reason has some influence over others. By the blessing of God, that influence can be used to save souls. We shall individually be held responsible for doing an iota less than God has given us ability to do. He measures our strength; he gives us work which we can do, and which we must do if we ever hear from his lips the heavenly benediction, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' "

—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, April 24, 1883.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of material preparation can we make for the time of trouble after the close of probation?
2. Why does the Lord allow His people to suffer the "time of Jacob's trouble" after the close of probation? (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 621, 622.)
3. What negative results can there be in allowing our minds to dwell too much on the time of trouble ahead for the people of God?

SUMMARY: The wicked suffer the seven last plagues after the close of probation because they have finally rejected the loving appeals of the Holy Spirit. The righteous suffer during the time of Jacob's trouble because Satan is permitted to afflict them; even though, by the power of the Holy Spirit, they are being kept from sinning, their characters need further positive refinement before Jesus comes. Daily communion with Christ through prayer and through study of His Word, along with willingness to share His love with others, is the means by which we prepare for the close of probation.

Jeffry's Answered Prayer—Part 2

Joko Soewarso

Twelve-year-old Jeffry stood expectantly at the door of the Fang home. "Please, sir, are you Adventists?" he asked the man who answered his knock.

"Yes, we are," the man answered. "Why do you ask?"

"Our family is Adventist too!" Jeffry answered excitedly. The man invited Jeffry in to talk. Jeffry was disappointed to learn that there was no Adventist church in their town.

"Please come and visit us this Sabbath," Jeffry pleaded. Mr. Fang promised to visit Jeffry's family as soon as possible. Jeffry was so happy! Now the family would not have to worship alone on Sabbath. It was getting dark as he hurried home.

"Where have you been?" Jeffry's mother asked him sternly.

"Oh, Mother! I found an Adventist family today!" Quickly Jeffry told his parents about his afternoon's adventure and the Fang family's promise to visit them. How could Jeffry's parents be angry when their son was so eager to worship with Adventists?

Jeffry's father had good news, too. He had met a woman, Mrs. Napit, who sold Adventist books. She stayed with the Irwan family, whom she had met earlier. They wanted to study the Bible.

"Maybe we can study together this week," Mrs. Napit said. The two arranged to meet at the Irwan's home that week.

Jeffry's family invited the Fang family to join them. The group enjoyed visiting and studying the Bible together. The Fang family had a daughter, and the Irwan family had several children. God had sent many new friends!

The group worshiped together regularly. The Irwan family decided to become Adventists. A pastor came to study with the small group of believers, then they held evangelistic meetings in the Irwans' home. About 20 people came. Eight people wanted to become Adventists. The Irwan family and some of their relatives already have been baptized.



Jeffry's prayer has been answered. God sent him a special friend and a whole new church family. Now his prayer is that they can have a church to worship in.

Jeffry Leo (left) is 12 years old and lives in south central Kalimantan. Joko Soewarso is president of the Kalimantan Mission in Indonesia.

Christ the Resurrection and the Life



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 2:7; John 11:11; Rom. 5:12-18; 1 Cor. 15:12-23.

MEMORY TEXT: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

KEY THOUGHT: Christ's death and resurrection make possible the resurrection of all the dead. Some will be raised for eternal life and some for eternal death.

SATAN COUCHED HIS LIE IN A VISUAL AID. (See Gen. 3:1-4). The first surprise to Eve was to hear a serpent talking in human language. The second surprise was to see the serpent eating of the forbidden fruit. The serpent said in effect: "Look, Eve, I am eating the fruit. Am I dead? Look what the fruit has done for me. If this fruit did so much for me, you as a human may become like God."

The whole thrust of Satan's speech through the mouth of the serpent was: "Look how much you could improve yourself if you were to eat the fruit. God is keeping back marvelous advancement from you. This is why He said you will die. He is a liar. Eat, and you will become truly liberated and exalted." To Eve, seeing was believing. She believed her senses, made the decision, and ate. Ever since that fatal temptation in Eden, Satan has promoted his first lie ("you shall not die") by appealing to the senses.

What is death? What hope is there beyond the grave? How does the Bible unmask Satan's deceptions?

WHAT IS DEATH? (John 11:11).

What did Christ's great miracle, the raising of Lazarus, reveal about the state of man in death? To what did Jesus liken death? John 11:6, 7, 11-14.

Throughout Scripture death is represented as an unconscious state. Consistently, death is compared to sleep. (See Deut. 31:16; Job 14:10-12; Dan. 12:2; Matt. 27:52; Mark 5:39; Acts 7:60.) There is no indication in Scripture that part of a person sleeps in death while another part remains alive and conscious.

What do the following passages teach regarding the degree of knowledge possessed by the dead?

Eccl. 9:5, 6, 10 _____

Job. 14:21 _____

Ps. 6:5 _____

Ps. 115:17 _____

How does the Bible answer the question Where are the dead? Isa. 26:19; Job 14:14; 17:13-16.

The dead are not in heaven or hell in spirit form. They are resting in their graves, waiting for the resurrection morning.

The sleep of death is a blessing. If the dead were in heaven seeing the struggles and suffering of their living loved ones, how could they ever be happy? If the dead were in hell suffering the torture that popular belief depicts for those who have not served Christ, how could we ever accept the Bible message regarding the love of God?

The concept of life immediately after death is never taught in the Hebrew or Greek Scriptures. It originated with Greek philosophy and came into Jewish thought in the Hellenistic period (the fourth through the first centuries B.C.). The Pharisees borrowed the doctrine of the immortality of the soul from Greek sources. This doctrine came into the Christian church largely through the influence of the Jewish author Philo and the Alexandrian Christian theologians Clement (c. 150-c. 215) and Origen (c. 185-c. 254). The doctrine of the immortality of the soul is the basis of modern spiritism, including the New Age philosophy.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH REGARDING THE SOUL?
(Gen. 2:7).

Describe the process by which God created humanity? Gen. 2:7. Describe what happens when a person dies. Ps. 146:3, 4.

The Bible does not teach that God created an immortal soul for humans. A *living* soul consists of a *body* plus the *breath of life*. The obvious implication is that, if the breath of life is withdrawn, the individual would be a dead soul. If souls can die, they are not immortal. Immortality is the capacity never to die.

What do the following passages teach regarding the soul?

Ezek. 18:4 _____

Rev. 16:3 _____

Num. 6:6 _____

Matt. 10:28 _____

Gen. 1:20, 21, 30; 2:19 _____

"The soul that sins shall die" (Ezek. 18:4, RSV). "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23, RSV). Therefore, every human soul is a sinner subject to death. Human souls can die; they are not immortal. Revelation 16:3 uses the Greek word for "soul" (*psuche*). The word *body* in the King James Version of Numbers 6:6 translates the Hebrew word for "soul" (*nephesh*). The word *creature* is used to translate the Hebrew word for "soul" in the King James Version of Genesis 1:20, 21, 30; 2:19. In these texts animals are spoken of as souls. God made animals living souls just as He made Adam a living soul. Like humans, when animals die, they become dead souls. (See Eccl. 3:19-21.)

The breath of life within humans and animals is never referred to in the Bible as an immortal, conscious entity that survives the death of the body. Ecclesiastes 12:7 teaches that the life principle God has given to a person is taken back by God when the individual dies. If the "spirit" (Eccl. 12:7, RSV) that returns to God is the immortal part of humankind, all people, good and bad, would go to heaven at death.

Only God has immortality (1 Tim. 6:15, 16).

HOW DID DEATH COME INTO OUR WORLD? (Rom. 5:12).

What event introduced sin and death into our world? Rom. 5:12.

The result of Adam's sin was death. Romans 5:12 has been interpreted in various ways:

1. Augustine (A.D. 354-430) interpreted the verse to mean that, because all humanity sinned in Adam, all share in Adam's guilt and are, therefore, subject to death.
2. All die because, like Adam, they choose to sin. All become sinners at the point at which they choose to sin.
3. Sinfulness and mortality are the results of Adam's sin, shared by every human being.

The first view, the doctrine of original sin, runs counter to the justice of God spelled out in Scripture. "The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself" (Ezek. 18:20, RSV). We were not in Adam when he sinned; we do not share in his guilt. Mortality for the entire race is a *result* of Adam's fall, not a punishment for his guilt.

The second view fails to recognize that all human beings are born with fallen natures having tendencies to sin. The psalmist wrote, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5, RSV). He was a sinful human being at the moment of conception.

"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. Cooperation with that power is man's greatest need."—*Education*, p. 29.

The third view is the scriptural position. The result of Adam's sin is that every human being is born sinful, in the sense that all are born with fallen natures and propensities to sin. Moreover, all are born mortal. "The living know that they will die" (Eccl. 9:5, RSV).

In the light of the above, how can we explain Romans 5:18? Condemnation to death for all was the *result* of Adam's sin, not the punishment for it. Because the fallen Adam was mortal, he could only transmit mortality to his children. Thus, "death spread to all men" (Rom. 5:12, RSV). "All men sinned" when Adam sinned, but only in the sense that the *results* of his sin are suffered by all.

WHAT DID CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION ACCOMPLISH? (Rom. 5:17).

Just as we were not in Adam when he sinned, so we were not in Christ when He died. Christ died *for* us. His death was on our behalf. We did not die when Christ died; we die to sin when we accept His suffering and death as the punishment for our sins.

What results of the cross are available to every human being? 1 Peter 2:24, 25; Rom. 5:17.

It is when, in response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, we return "to the Shepherd and Guardian" of our souls (1 Peter 2:25, RSV) that we "die to sin and live to righteousness" (verse 24, RSV). The cross is absolutely central to our salvation, but we must accept Christ *now* to experience the salvation made possible *then*.

Romans 5:18 must be considered in relation to verse 17. Christ's death makes "acquittal and life" available for all (verse 18, RSV). But only "those who *receive* the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness" will "reign in life through one man Jesus Christ" (verse 17, RSV).

"It is peace that you need—Heaven's forgiveness and peace and love in the soul. . . . It is yours if you will but reach out your hand and grasp it. . . ."

"In like manner you are a sinner. You cannot atone for your past sins, you cannot change your heart, and make yourself holy. But God promises to do all this for you through Christ. You *believe* that promise. You confess your sins, and give yourself to God. You *will* to serve Him. Just as surely as you do this, God will fulfill His word to you. If you believe the promise—believe that you are forgiven and cleansed—God supplies the fact; you are made whole, just as Christ gave the paralytic power to walk when the man believed that he was healed. It *is* so if you believe it."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 49-51.

"If through faith man becomes one with Christ, he can win life everlasting."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 300.

When does Christ bestow everlasting life? John 3:36; 5:24; 1 John 5:11-13. When does He bestow immortality? 1 Cor. 15:51-54.

What does acceptance of the gift of eternal life do for your sense of security?

WHO WILL TRIUMPH OVER DEATH? (1 Cor. 15:23).

What great event makes it certain that those who accept Christ will triumph over death? 1 Cor. 15:12-22. Who at Christ's coming will triumph over death? 1 Cor. 15:23.

Christ's resurrection makes possible the resurrection of the righteous dead. If He had not risen from the dead, "those also who have fallen asleep in Christ [would] have perished" (1 Cor. 15:18, RSV). Believers before and after the cross would have no hope of life after death if Jesus had not risen from the grave.

Who are the ones "who belong to Christ" (1 Cor. 15:23, RSV)? Rom. 8:9-17.

The first seventeen verses in Romans 8 are alive with the love and power of Christ—love and power bestowed upon every willing believer by the indwelling Holy Spirit. "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (verse 1, NIV). The righteous requirements of the law can be "fully met" in those "who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit" (verse 4, NIV). Life and peace are experienced by those who are "controlled by the Spirit" (verse 6, NIV). Only those belong to Christ in whose hearts the Holy Spirit is living (Rom. 8:9, 10). If the Spirit is living in us, "he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you" (verse 11, NIV). The gift of the Spirit brings the gift of eternal life now and the gift of immortality at Jesus' coming.

Of what two resurrections does the Bible speak? John 5:29; Acts 24:15 (compare 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 20:4-6).

"Amid the reeling of the earth, the flash of lightning, and the roar of thunder, the voice of the Son of God calls forth the sleeping saints. He looks upon the graves of the righteous, then, raising His hands to heaven, He cries: 'Awake, awake, awake, ye that sleep in the dust, and arise!' Throughout the length and breadth of the earth the dead shall hear that voice, and they that hear shall live. And the whole earth shall ring with the tread of the exceeding great army of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. From the prison house of death they come, clothed with immortal glory."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 644.

FURTHER STUDY: What did Paul mean when he longed “to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8)? Compare Phil. 1:23.

“From a superficial reading of vs. 6-8 some have concluded that at death the soul of the Christian goes immediately to be ‘present with the Lord,’ and that Paul, ardently desiring to be with the Lord (v. 2), welcomed death. But in vs. 3, 4 Paul describes death as a state of being ‘naked,’ or ‘unclothed.’ He hopes, if at all possible, to avoid this intermediate state, and ardently desires to be ‘clothed’ with his ‘house . . . from heaven.’ In other words, he hopes to be translated without seeing death. . . . Elsewhere (see on 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:15-17; 2 Tim. 4:6-8, etc.) Paul makes it certain that men are not ‘clothed’ with immortality individually at death, but simultaneously at the resurrection of the just.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 863.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The mother of a friend who believes in the natural immortality of the soul passes away. At the funeral your friend approaches you weeping and exclaims, “I know she is in heaven now!” In those particular circumstances, how would you respond?
2. Why is it vital in these last days that everyone understands the Bible teaching on the state of the dead? What can the results be for those who do not understand the Bible truth?
3. How could you use this week’s lesson to comfort a person who is terminally ill?

SUMMARY: Death is a sleep, a state of unconsciousness. The Bible teaches that a living person is a mortal soul; a dead person is a dead soul. The soul is not immortal. Even though Adam’s sin introduced sin and death into our world, Christ’s sacrificial death earned eternal life for all. By accepting Him as Saviour and Lord, eternal life is ours now and immortality at His second coming.



The Deadly Serpent

James Bahr

This is war!

When we arrived in Rupim*, India, to work among the Hindu people as tentmaker missionaries, we prayed earnestly that God would lead us to honest souls who were searching for truth. The city's mayor and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Pol*, had encouraged us to come to help the people there, and opened their home to us until our apartment would be ready. While living with them we learned valuable lessons that helped us adapt to our new home.

Mrs. Pol is a Christian, and we enjoy studying the Bible and *The Great Controversy* together. She expressed an eagerness to translate the book so she could share it with others! We praised God for this news!

We talked as we walked across her veranda toward the dimly-lit doorway of the house. Suddenly Mrs. Pol jerked her foot up with a startled look. I swung my flashlight around and spotted a snake slithering away. She held the flashlight on the snake while I ran to get something to kill it.

After killing the deadly viper, I put its still-writhing body in a bag for identification while my wife, Carol, applied a charcoal poultice to the wound. Then we raced toward the hospital, first on bicycle, then rickshaw, then car. Every minute was precious!

I stayed with Mrs. Pol while she was treated and then admitted, praying and reading Scripture to comfort her. It was long after midnight when I returned home, and I awakened often throughout the night to pray for our dear friend.

Doctors expected Mrs. Pol to die from the deadly venom, but the next day she met them with a smile on her face, praising God for delivering her from the serpent. Further blood tests revealed no trace of venom in her bloodstream.

Pray for Mr. and Mrs. Pol and the Hindus who are beginning to come to our small group studies. The serpent, the devil has many in his grasp, but Christ can save them from the venom of Satan, for he is a defeated foe!

***James and Carol Bahr are working as tentmaker missionaries in a large city in India. Because their work is sensitive, they have asked that we not use the real names of people or places.**

For Current Newsbreak, Call 1-800-648-5824.

Christ's Second Coming



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Dan. 12:2; Matt. 24:31; Rev. 1:7; 13:11-14; 14:1-5.

MEMORY TEXT: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

KEY THOUGHT: The second coming of Jesus with all the holy angels will be a glorious event witnessed by every person on earth. At that time, believers will be translated to heaven, and unbelievers will be put to death.

COMPASSION FOR UNBELIEVERS should characterize God's people as Jesus' second coming draws near. Two young men were walking along a busy sidewalk in a large city. They stopped at an intersection to wait for the red light to turn green. One of the young men stepped off the sidewalk just as a car traveling quite rapidly came around the corner. The other young man grabbed his friend and dragged him back to safety. The whole crowd waiting there for the lights to change gasped in relief as the young man narrowly missed being killed. Suppose his friend had not been willing to act promptly. The result would have been tragic.

The Bible teaches that Jesus' coming is near. For us to remain silent while people rush on heedless of the danger right ahead would be unforgivable disregard for human life. Warning people of Jesus' coming is a life-and-death issue.

What kind of event is Jesus' second coming? What will Jesus do when He comes? What happens after His coming? When will He come? How do we prepare for this great event?

EVERYONE ON EARTH WILL WITNESS JESUS' SECOND ADVENT (Rev. 1:7).

**What kind of event is Jesus' second coming, secret or public?
1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54.**

Some influential contemporary Bible interpreters teach that believers will be taken to heaven in a "secret rapture" seven years before the glorious appearing of Christ. The only rapture of the saved mentioned in Scripture occurs at the glorious appearing of Christ and the holy angels. First Thessalonians 4:14 does not mean that God brings the righteous from heaven with Him when He comes. It means that He brings the righteous from the grave as He brought Jesus from the grave after His crucifixion. The "dead in Christ" rise from the grave when the Lord descends "from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (verse 16). The righteous do not come down with Christ in this great public coming. They rise to be with Him for eternity.

**What will happen in the world of nature as Jesus is coming?
2 Peter 3:10; Rev. 16:18-21.**

At Jesus' coming, the upheaval in nature will be the most devastating worldwide cataclysm in history. There will occur the most terrible universal earthquake, accompanied by the fiercest hurricane and hail-storm our world has ever seen.

"There is a mighty earthquake, 'such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.' Verses 17, 18. The firmament appears to open and shut. The glory from the throne of God seems flashing through. The mountains shake like a reed in the wind, and ragged rocks are scattered on every side. There is a roar as of a coming tempest. The sea is lashed into fury. There is heard the shriek of a hurricane like the voice of demons upon a mission of destruction. The whole earth heaves and swells like the waves of the sea. . . . The proudest cities of the earth are laid low. The lordly palaces, upon which the world's great men have lavished their wealth in order to glorify themselves, are crumbling to ruin before their eyes."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 636, 637.

**How many people on earth will see Jesus come? Rev. 1:7;
Matt. 24:27, 29-31.**

THE PARTIAL RESURRECTION (Dan. 12:2).

At His trial, what did Jesus predict would eventually happen to the high priest and the members of the council? Matt. 26:63, 64; compare Rev. 1:7.

Who are raised in this partial resurrection? Dan. 12:2.

Jesus assured Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin that they would be raised from the dead to see His coming in the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26:63, 64). All those who took part in His unjust trial and crucifixion will be raised from the dead to witness this glorious event.

Daniel 12:1 indicates that some righteous people, some who died with faith in Jesus, will also be raised to witness the advent. This is a wonderfully kind act on God's part. He wants to give a special reward to some of the faithful saints because they believed and taught the Bible truth about His advent. He wants them to see the fulfillment of their hopes.

"Graves are opened, and 'many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth . . . awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.' Daniel 12:2. All who have died in the faith of the third angel's message come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God's covenant of peace with those who have kept His law. 'They also which pierced him' (Revelation 1:7), those that mocked and derided Christ's dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people, are raised to behold Him in His glory and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient. . . .

"Those who derided His claim to be the Son of God are speechless now. There is the haughty Herod who jeered at His royal title and bade the mocking soldiers crown Him king. There are the very men who with impious hands placed upon His form the purple robe, upon His sacred brow the thorny crown, and in His unresisting hand the mimic scepter, and bowed before Him in blasphemous mockery. The men who smote and spit upon the Prince of life now turn from His piercing gaze and seek to flee from the overpowering glory of His presence. Those who drove the nails through His hands and feet, the soldier who pierced His side, behold these marks with terror and remorse. With awful distinctness do priests and rulers recall the events of Calvary."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 637, 643.

Why do you think God has a partial resurrection before the main resurrection?

WHAT DOES JESUS DO WHEN HE COMES? (Matt. 24:31).

What happens to the living unbelievers, including those who will be raised in the partial resurrection? Rev. 6:14-17; 14:19, 20; 19:19, 20; 2 Thess. 1:7-10.

What happens to those who died as unbelievers before Jesus' second advent? Rev. 20:5.

What happens to the millions who died as believers? Matt. 24:31; 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

What happens to the living believers, including those who have just been raised in the partial resurrection? 1 Thess. 4:16-18.

What happens to Satan and his demons? Rev. 20:1-3.

When Jesus arrives with the hosts of His angels, He remains in the sky above the earth. The saved will "meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17). Jesus does not come down and walk on earth as He did when He came the first time. This is why Satan's impersonation of Christ before the advent will not deceive God's people. (See Matt. 24:23, 24; 2 Thess. 2:8-12.)

Those who have neither believed in Jesus nor followed His truth as it is taught in Scripture will be destroyed by the glory of His presence. Those who crucified Him, who were raised shortly before His appearing, will be put to death again with the hosts of the lost who have received the mark of the beast. Those who had previously died in sin will remain in their graves for another 1,000 years.

When the heavenly trumpet sounds, the many who through the ages of human history died believing in Jesus Christ are raised from their graves and caught up into the sky to meet Jesus. Then the living believers are caught up to be with them. They are not brought back to this earth again. They are taken to heaven to be with Christ and the angels for 1,000 years. (See John 14:1-3; Rev. 7:13-17; 20:4-6.)

Satan and his demons are bound to this desolate earth ("the bottomless pit"—Rev. 20:1). The earth will be divested of its inhabitants. All the saved will be in heaven; all the lost in their graves.

PROPHETIC SIGNS THAT JESUS' COMING IS NEAR (Rev. 13:11-14).

The books Daniel and Revelation, along with such chapters as Matthew 24, focus on the second coming of Jesus. The prophets predicted the sweep of human history culminating in Christ's establishment of His kingdom.

According to the book of Daniel, where are we in the stream of time? Dan. 2:44, 45; 7:24-27; 8:25; 11:44, 45; 12:1.

What developing religious union points to the nearness of the end? Rev. 13:11-14.

Toward the end, what efforts will evil spirits make to deceive and destroy humanity? Rev. 16:13, 14.

The prophetic messages of the book of Daniel establish without doubt that we are living in the time of the heavenly pre-advent judgment (Dan. 7:9-14; 8:14). Daniel predicted that this judgment would take place a short time before the second advent of Jesus.

During this same time, according to the book of Revelation, there will develop a union between apostate Protestantism and the papacy. This religious union will eventually link up with pagan spiritist forces and work miracles as a means of deceiving earth's inhabitants. The image to the beast (Protestantism emulating the medieval papacy) will pressure the governments of the United States and other countries to pass laws that are acceptable to papal religion.

Are we seeing any movements in the U.S. and other countries to bring Protestant churches closer to the Roman Catholic church? Are we seeing any attempts on the part of Protestantism to pressure the government to pass laws favorable to religion? In fact, the religious movements within America and some other countries are a remarkable development toward the fulfillment of the prophecies of Revelation.

The nearness of Jesus' coming simply emphasizes the need for us to look into our hearts to be sure that we are ready to meet Him. Is He living within us by the Holy Spirit? Are we studying the Bible and praying daily? Are we growing in grace (2 Peter 3:18)? Are we keeping holy His seventh-day Sabbath? (See Matt. 24:20.)

ARE YOU READY FOR JESUS TO COME? (Rev. 14:1, 5).

This is the most important question. Let us briefly remind ourselves why it is so vital.

What essential qualification for heaven does God provide believers in the last days? Rev. 7:3; Rev. 14:1, 5.

The book of Revelation teaches that we are living in the sealing time, during which the Lord wishes to place His last-day seal upon those who are receiving His character by the Holy Spirit and keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. If we wish to be among the righteous living when Jesus comes, we must receive His divine seal. This is the sign that, because His character has been given to us, we have victory over sin and are loyal to all His commandments. (See Rev. 12:17.)

What kind of victory must last-day believers receive? Rev. 15:2. How only can we have this victory? 1 John 5:4; Matt. 24:42; 1 Thess. 5:1-11.

If they seek Him, God will give His last-day people victory over the beast, its image, and its mark (Rev. 15:2). We will not be deceived by false religious movements. By faith in Jesus and conformity to His Word, we will be able to discern error when we see it and hear it. By watching unto prayer and earnest Bible study, we will always be in a state of readiness to meet our Lord.

How important is worship with fellow believers as we come near to the end? Heb. 10:25.

A very important part of getting ready to meet Jesus is fellowship with other Christians who believe as we do. The Bible urges that we meet together for worship and sharing. We are to support one another's faith, to encourage one another, and bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2). Jesus wants His followers to be loving, caring people. Their love for other believers, as well as for those who do not believe, is to demonstrate the value of their faith. When we are bound together in the love of Christ, then we are ready for heaven (John 17:21-23).

Are you making ready to meet the Lord? Jesus gently pleads that you open your heart's door and let Him rule in your life (Rev. 3:20).

FURTHER STUDY: Read Revelation 21, 22; "God's People Delivered," "The Controversy Ended," *The Great Controversy*, pp. 635-652, 674-678.

The end is near, even at the door. It is time to lift up our eyes, for our redemption draws near (Luke 21:28). We prepare for heaven by focusing on Christ and on the homeland He is preparing for us. What will heaven be like? As our minds attempt to take in the reality, our affections will be set on things above instead of on things of earth.

Ellen White described what heaven is like. "I seemed to be there where all was peace, where no stormy conflicts of earth could ever come—heaven, a kingdom of righteousness where all the holy and pure and blest are congregated, ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, living and walking in happy, pure intimacy, praising God and the Lamb who sitteth on the throne.

"Their voices were in perfect harmony. They never do each other wrong. Princes of heaven, the potentates of this mighty realm, are rivals only in good, seeking the happiness and joy of each other. The greatest there is least in self-esteem, and the least is greatest in his gratitude and wealth of love.

"There are no dark errors to cloud the intellect. Truth and knowledge, clear, strong, and perfect, have chased every doubt away, and no gloom of doubt casts its baleful shadow upon its happy inhabitants. No voices of contention mar the sweet and perfect peace of heaven. Its inhabitants know no sorrow, no grief, no tears. All is in perfect harmony, in perfect order and perfect bliss."—*Last Day Events*, p. 296.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you answer a person who asks, How can you believe that a God of love will destroy people?
2. Because making ready to meet Jesus at His coming involves receiving the gift of His character, what daily adjustments in our lifestyles may be necessary?

SUMMARY: The coming of Jesus is the glorious hope of His church. When Jesus comes the second time, He will resurrect the righteous dead, translate all the righteous to heaven, and make an end of sin and sinners. With His coming so near, we need the constant presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. We must be ready to see Jesus.



Do Thirteenth Sabbath Offerings Make a Difference?

Sammy Lee

The school already was filled to overflowing; it simply could not accommodate any more students, the registrar explained. But Sammy, son of a Pentecostal minister, wanted to attend Indonesian Union College Academy.

Disappointment was etched on his face as he left the registrar's office. As he walked out, he met the dean of men, who came from the same town as Sammy. The dean knew Sammy was not an Adventist, but when he learned of Sammy's desire to attend the Adventist school, he found a way to "squeeze one more sardine into an already fully packed tin of sardines," and Sammy was accepted into the school.

The dean knew that soon a portion of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering would help Indonesian Union College Academy enlarge its boys' dormitory, and he hoped that would allow many other young men such as Sammy to attend school.

The dean's decision did change Sammy's life, and over the intervening years, has influenced the lives of hundreds of others along the way. Instead of bitterness over being rejected by the Adventist school, Sammy Lee became an Adventist. Then he became a minister and an evangelist in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Nearly 1,000 people have been baptized into the Adventist church during evangelistic meetings Sammy Lee has conducted. Currently he pastors an English-speaking congregation in Macao, on China's border. On Sundays he often speaks at two Protestant churches in Macao. "Thousands of English-speaking people from Indonesia and Philippines live in Macao," he says with zeal. "The potential for evangelism is great."

"I am an Adventist as a direct result of a Thirteenth Sabbath offering," he smiles. "If I had not been accepted into that school, I would have felt rejected and bitter. I certainly would not have considered becoming an Adventist. Our offerings do make a difference—a *big* difference."

Besides pastoring the English congregation in Macao, Sammy Lee is chaplain at the Sam Yuk Adventist School, where an evangelistic center is planned because of a Thirteenth Sabbath Offering earlier this year.

For Current Newsbreak, Call 1-800-648-5824.

Lessons for Fourth Quarter, 1996

The fourth quarter Sabbath School lessons, entitled "*God's Family, the Church*," focus on the gifts and duties of the church.

Lesson 1: God's People, the Church.

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 12:1-6; 15:18; 1 Cor. 3:9-17; 12:12-17; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 3:14, 15.

MEMORY TEXT: Colossians 1:17, 18.

KEY QUESTION: What is the church?

OUTLINE:

- We Are His People, Part 1 (Gen. 12:1-6).
- We Are His People, Part 2 (Gen. 12:1-3).
- Promised to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2).
- Many Parts, One Body (1 Cor. 12:12-27).
- Where People Are Loved (Eph. 3:14, 15).

Lesson 2: God's Called-Out People.

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 12:1-6; Acts 7:1-8; Gal. 3:6-9, 29; Heb. 11:9-12.

MEMORY TEXT: Genesis 12:2.

KEY QUESTIONS: How did the church begin?

OUTLINE:

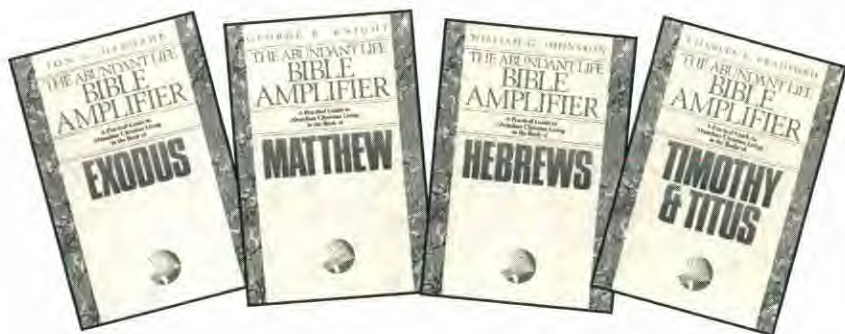
- The Call of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-5).
- God's Covenant With Abraham (Gen. 15:1-18; 17:1-14).
- The Faith of Abraham (Heb. 11:8-10).
- The Obedience of Abraham (James 2:14-26).
- The Descendants of Abraham (Gal. 3:7-9).

Lessons in Braille

The regular adult Sabbath School lessons are available free each month in Braille and 16 2/3 rpm records to blind and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact the Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506.

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North Atlantic Ocean



Mission Projects:

- Plant churches in 10 cities in Brazil.
- Establish a Better Living Center near Brasilia Adventist Hospital to reach the higher-class citizens of Brazil.
- Build a boarding academy in the Maranhao Mission in northern Brazil.

Unions	Churches	Membership	Population
Austral Union Conference	402	80,908	42,061,111
Central Brazil Union Conference	671	168,522	44,259,294
Chile Union Mission	420	83,825	13,813,239
East Brazil Union Conference	1,019	218,519	63,269,314
Inca Union Mission	1,213	414,457	31,104,002
North Brazil Union Mission	444	216,076	24,331,770
South Brazil Union Conference	459	103,174	23,948,282
North Ecuador Attached Mission	27	10,941	4,327,760
South Ecuador Attached Mission	29	11,198	6,272,230
Totals March 31, 1995	4,684	1,307,620	253,387,002