

APRIL-JUNE 2000

**COQ**

COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

The

Second Coming:

A Sure Thing

**FINISH**





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# THE SECOND COMING: A SURE THING!

APRIL – JUNE 2000

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Sabbath  
School

# THE SECOND COMING: A SURE THING!



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## Welcome to *CQ*'s World!

The following pages represent the creative energy of a truly international group of Adventist young adults. The map above indicates the locations of the writers who have participated in *CQ*'s writing program for this quarter.

In producing this unique Sabbath School lesson quarterly, more than 300 individuals contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety—and occasional repetition—of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond individually to the subject under study.

Worldwide circulation of *CQ* is about 59,000. It is published in the English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Finnish languages.

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## This Quarter's Illustrator



Born in Singapore, this quarter's illustrator, Clarinda Wang, grew up in Sydney, Australia. Now a freelance writer and designer, she enjoys teaching kindergarten kids the Bible and how to be artists. She lists some of her favorite things as rabbit fur, clouds, cartooning, banana cactus, holograms, and surprise postcards. "When I was younger," she says, "I used to collect my favorite illustrations from *CQ* like a stamp collector. I never dreamed that one day I'd be illustrating for *CQ*!"

# Getting the Most Out of *CQ*

## Facts You Should Know

*CQ* is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. *CQ*'s purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the adult Bible Study Guide find that because *CQ* deals with the same topics, it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Adventist young-adult groups work together in producing this quarterly. More than three hundred individuals contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety—and occasional repetition—of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject.

Circulation of *CQ* is about fifty-nine thousand.

## Pointers for Study

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.
2. The Bible passage on which each week's lesson is based appears in bold type in the "Logos" (Monday's portion of the lesson). Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly introduction to give you an overview of the lesson.

3. The Bible passage for the week is divided into sections on the "Logos" pages (Monday's portion of the lesson). When studying this section, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the heading.

4. Read the remainder of the sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passage.

5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the quarterly:

**"Introduction"** (Sunday) is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.

**"Logos"** (Monday), as described above, is a guide for direct study of the Bible passage for the week.

**"Testimony"** (Tuesday) presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.

**"Evidence"** (Wednesday) approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.

**"How-To"** (Thursday) discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.

**"Opinion"** (Friday), a personal viewpoint on the lesson, is meant to encourage further thought and discussion.

## *CQ* and the Church

*CQ* is the General Conference-approved quarterly for the collegiate/young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.*

# THE BOTTOM LINE



**“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3, NKJV).**

# The Journey

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: John 3:3; Rom. 6:23**

Have you ever begun a journey and asked yourself, "Did I pack everything? Have I taken the right road? How much farther is my destination?" These same questions may be applied to the Christian journey. My destination is to meet Christ at His second coming and be part of God's kingdom. I'm on a journey, which I pray will take me to my destination. With God's help, I need to prepare myself so that I may draw closer to Him.

Humankind was made in God's image, but when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they were no longer in harmony with Him. He responded by promising to change us spiritually if we choose to restore our relationship with Him.

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## How can we be like God on the inside when we are born into sin?

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The question is: How can we be like God on the inside when we are born into sin? Jesus said that no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. This is the beginning of the Christian journey, which means a spiritual change from our sinful self to being like God.

Sometimes I feel as though I am being pulled in two directions. The choice to follow the Christian journey to the heavenly destination can be difficult. But when I make that choice to stay on God's side, I find that I gain the victory over my temptations and sins. These experiences enable me to build a right relationship with God. It is a relationship that means being faithful and trusting God to lead me in the right direction. It is a relationship that means giving glory and honor to God. It is a relationship that means reading His words and seeking Him in prayer. Most of all, it is a relationship that will allow me to receive God's gift of eternal life. This week, take a closer look at the Christian journey you are traveling.

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*By Laura Fray, a graduate student in legal practice at the University of Westminster, London, England.*

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# Friendship With God Through Christ

## LOGOS

**Gen. 1:26; Eph. 2:8; 3:9; Isa. 59:2; Ezek. 14:7; Hos. 2:19, 20; Rev. 19:7, 9; John 5:39**

How sweet to know that God made us His friends through the death of His Son (see Rom. 5:10). It is in your hands. God has met you halfway, and all you need to do is to accept Christ as your friend.

### Wedding Feast of the Lamb (Rev. 19:5-10)

Everyone is invited to the grand occasion, but the question is: Are you willing to accept the invitation and turn up ready? “The time has come for the wedding of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:7, TEV). In the parable of the 10 virgins found in Matthew 25:1-13, the virgins became weary of waiting for the bridegroom and slept. At that time wedding ceremonies lasted a number of days.

The time is coming for the second coming of Christ. We can learn from this parable today that we must not become discouraged while we wait for the second coming of Christ; we must not end up sleeping and taking our eyes off our Savior. We need to be prepared always, and it is also our role to help others to be prepared.

## God is calling us to accept His forever friendship.

Only five of the virgins were prepared and went into the wedding feast. How happy are those who will sit down at the feast in the kingdom of God (Luke 14:15).

### What to Do to Be Prepared

1. *Have faith.* “And you will acknowledge me as Lord” (Hos. 2:20, TEV). This comes at the end of the verse after God said that He will show you constant love and mercy and make you His forever if you will acknowledge Him. To acknowledge God as Lord is to have faith. “For by grace you have been saved through faith” (Eph. 2:8, NKJV). “If you love someone, you will never do him wrong; to love, then, is to obey the whole Law” (Rom. 13:10, TEV). This confirms the greatest commandment—love. If we love someone, we do want to spend time with him or her. Relating this to Christ, you go through a process of studying the Scriptures because in them you will find eternal life and these very Scriptures speak about God (see John 5:39).

2. *Spend time with God.* We have thanks in our heart because of having a relationship with God and that we can trust Him and not be afraid. “The Lord gives me power and strength” (Isa. 12:2, TEV). It is good to know that we can turn each day over to God and share our thoughts and problems with Him because we know that “He shall direct your paths” (Prov. 3:6, NKJV). This is through a process of praying and talking with God and sharing God with others.

3. *Share God with others.* “All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us the task of making others his friends also. Our message is that God was making all mankind his friends through Christ . . . Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us” (2 Cor. 5:18-20, TEV). Imagine that God loved us when we

were enemies. Imagine how much closer we are to Him now that we have chosen to be His. Part of making Christianity Christian is working for Him. "Each one of us has received a special gift in proportion to what Christ has given" (Eph. 4:7, TEV). Also, we must not forget to tell everyone what He has done for us and how awesome He is, so everyone can share in this thanksgiving that we have experienced (see Isa. 12:4-6).

We all have different gifts, and we need to use them wisely. God gave us different gifts "to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12, TEV). To find out our special gifts that can be used for His service, we need to approach the Lord in prayer. No matter how small we think our gifts are, they are worthwhile. God does not assign a value to your gift as society does on your occupation. In the eyes of God, what you do to make Christianity Christian is worthwhile and very important. We will be reaching for "the very height of Christ's full stature" (verse 13, TEV). By speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ.

God is calling us to accept His forever friendship wrapped up in peace and love. "If you love me you will obey my commandments" (John 14:15, TEV). Do you love Jesus? Knowing your love for Jesus, don't you think it is time you should receive the gift of His forever friendship?

## **REACT**

1. How do you accept Christ as your Savior?
2. Do you think that the five wise virgins may have said to the five foolish virgins that they should have brought extra oil? Explain your answer.

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*By Angelina Mullings, a fourth-year business administration major at the University of Central England, at Birmingham.*

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# The Missing Link

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Eph. 2:8-10**

*"It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8, NIV).*

A bicycle chain with a missing link is no good. The bicycle will still look good from a distance, but if someone tries to use it, they won't get very far. For many of us, a part of our Christianity consists of taking an active part at church and doing our best to help in our community in an effort to act as Christ would. These are all very commendable attributes for the Christian. However, this is not the only way in which we can make Christianity applicable to our lives today. We strive to be Christians, but we must realize that to be more like Christ something has to happen within our hearts that can turn the actions and doing into feeling and loving.

As Ellen White points out, we should dwell upon the character of our dear Redeemer and Intercessor.\* This shows that it is focusing our thoughts on Christ that can strengthen us. Mrs. White also shows that it is as we meditate upon the

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## It is focusing our thoughts on Christ that can strengthen us.

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perfections of the Savior that we shall desire to be wholly transformed and renewed in the image of His purity.

Belief in Christ is not enough. To make the Christian experience real, it should be more than just an awareness that Christ lived and performed miracles and gave wise counsel. In order for our condition to be changed, we need to be alive in God. It is not possible, however, for us to become alive in God by ourselves. We need some help with that one. If we were to obtain a Christlike character through our good works alone, we would have a long way to go. In fact, we would have missed the point completely: "not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:9, NIV). Genuine Christianity can be attained only by accepting Christ into one's life. That is the missing link in the chain between having an experience that may look good and one that not only looks good but really works!

## REACT

1. How can we be sure that we are not just acting like Christians?
2. What benefits can dwelling upon Christ bring to our lives?

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\**Steps to Christ*, p. 67.

# Will the Real Christian Please Stand Up

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Luke 10:27-36**

A young man stood up in Bible class one day and said, "Pastor, you're always going on about being a Christian. Everybody knows how to be a Christian. I personally attend church every Sabbath, I sing in the youth choir, and I attend prayer meeting every Wednesday night without fail. How much of a Christian do I need to be?"

The pastor replied, "You attend church, and that is all good. You sing in the choir and attend prayer meeting. That is all very good, but let me ask you this one question: What does Christianity mean to you?"

The man replied, "All the things I have been doing since being baptized."

The pastor said, "Brother, I need to ask you another question. What would you do if a beggar asked if he could come to your house and use your shower, towel, after-shave, and clothes, and then wanted to have something to eat?"

The man, being honest, openly replied, "I would escort him to the nearest Salvation Army Center. What if he tried to attack me? You can't trust anyone these days!"

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## **"What would you do if a beggar asked if he could come to your house?"**

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According to this man, Christianity was just about taking part in church activities; but when it came to the spiritual test, he failed. Are we like this young man? Would you agree that Christianity is more than words, not just about sharing our faith? It is about helping those who are needy like the beggar. Christianity is about being Christlike, reflecting Christ inside as well as in our actions.

This story reminds me of the good Samaritan. Who are you like: the Levite who walked away, the priest who looked at the man and walked away also, or the good Samaritan who had compassion without a thought for himself and decided to help the man by the wayside?

How much do you love your neighbor? This is the question Jesus is asking you and me today, right this minute.

## **REACT**

1. Is Christianity something that we as Seventh-day Adventists should have automatically or is it something that we need to work at? Explain your answer using biblical examples.
2. Can others see Christ in you? Explain your answer.

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*By Charlene Smith, a student social worker in Birmingham, England.*

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# Christian Virtues

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Job 1:21, 22**

Christians need to be virtuous in character. What is virtue? Virtue is the quality or practice of moral excellence or righteousness. As a student studying away from home, sometimes my Christianity wears thin. Immersed in stress and pressure from the courses I'm studying, I am advised that I will have to move home because my landlord has sold the property where I'm living.

Job lost everything—his cattle, servants, sons, and daughters, all in the same day. But during this period of anguish and despair, he turned to God for guidance. Job did not listen to his wife or his friends, and he refused to sin against the Most High. Below are three steps that may help struggling Christians to attain virtue.

1. Daily prayer and supplication to God is a vehicle of communication. God knows what tests and trials we go through in our lives and is willing to guide us only if we believe in Him. Remember: Seven days without prayer makes one weak!

2. "Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord" (Ps. 27:14, NIV). To wait on the Lord means to be faithful and trust that situations will sort

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## God knows what tests and trials we go through in our lives.

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themselves out. The way in which you react during moments of crisis will be a reflection of where you are spiritually in your Christianity. Does your faith move mountains, or do mountains remove your faith?

3. Studying the Bible strengthens and helps to equip the Christian for spiritual warfare. God speaks to us through the Scriptures we read and makes us more susceptible to the Holy Spirit's call for improvement to our lives.

Being a Christian is not an easy life. We battle daily with obstacles that fill our paths. Before we reach our heavenly goal, we need to exercise these virtuous qualities within our lives, so that others around us will be encouraged and be saved.

---

*By Odelyn Smith, a third-year fashion student at Ravensbourne College of Design and Communications, London, England.*

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# Christianity Is . . .

## OPINION

**Key Text: Rom. 6:23; 1 John 5:12**

“People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care. If you love your opinions more than you love your friends, you’ll defend your opinions and destroy your friends. Step back and look at what’s really important. Paul says love always looks for the best (1 Cor. 13:7). Give others the benefit of the doubt. When working with yourself, use your head; when working with others, use your heart! And learn to be flexible. Be gracious with others—like God is with you.”<sup>1</sup>

Christianity cannot save us, only God can. God wants us all to be saved. In spite of our sinful nature, He died on the cross to rescue us. All we need to do is to accept Him and follow the example He has given us in the Bible of how we should live. He makes it possible for us to receive eternal life in an environment free of pain, sorrow, sadness, and death. The result of our own actions was death (Rom. 6:23), but what amazing love was demonstrated that while we were yet sinners He sent His only Son to take our place (John 3:16; Rom. 6:23). This is the most wonderful news, and even nature declares His

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**“When working with yourself, use your head;  
when working with others, use your heart!”**

---

might and love (Psalm 19). Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self (see 1 Cor. 13:4). Ask God to give you this kind of love today so you can be like Him.

So the essence of being a Christian is to build on a relationship with Christ. I like the way Edward Mote expresses this:

“My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus’ name. On Christ, the solid Rock I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.”<sup>2</sup>

## REACT

1. In your opinion, what makes Christianity Christian?
2. Do you think that there should be a limit in how flexible we are in our relations with others?

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1. Bob Gass, *The Word for Today*, United Christian Broadcasters: Stoke on Trent, England, 1998.

2. Edward Mote, “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less,” Hymn 522, *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1985).

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*By Gail Windrass, a postgraduate student in child development and early childhood education at the Institute of Education, University of London, England.*

---

# CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?



**“Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4, NIV).**

# A Fairy-Tale Ending

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Song of Sol. 3:1-5; 5:7, 8**

At night she tossed and turned; sweaty forehead, troubled mind. Where had love gone? What had happened to sweet garden frolics and crisp mountain dances?

During the day she cleaned the house, washed the clothes, and weeded the garden—anything to keep her mind occupied. But at night, when the moon arose and the wind played at her curtains, she couldn't contain herself. In starlit shadow she'd step onto the porch where she'd listen to the rustling leaves and gaze at the beckoning hills.

One night she could bear it no longer. In passionate abandon she hurried to the bedroom where she reached for her robe. Draping it over her nightgown, she burst out of the house. Where was she going? What would she do? She didn't know. All she could hear was a call burning in her soul. It wasn't a whisper. It wasn't even a voice. Rather, it was the pounding of a drum, the spinning of a dancer's heel, the coo of a nightingale.

Without realizing where she was going, she flew across the meadow, through the silver wood, and into town. Her bare feet pounded the cobbled streets. Her pink cheeks flushed with the dew of night.

The dark figure of a police officer loomed ahead.

"Sir! Have you seen him? The one my heart longs for! The man I love!" Lamplight

## **All she could hear was a call burning in her soul.**

flickered in her searching eyes.

Whirling around, the man betrayed her.

"Here I am, love!" With a toothy smile he yanked off her tear-stained robe and threw her onto the cold pavement. "Is this what you are looking for?"

Suddenly, through spattered tears, came the sound of a Savior's voice; the pound of a victor's fist.

"Are you all right, my love?" Smooth hands traced the tear lines down her cheeks.

"Come, I will never leave you again." Tenderly the one she loved picked her up and carried her toward their mountain home, to a love that would never end (Song of Sol. 3:1-5; 5:7, 8).

Like the woman in this story, have you been waiting a long time for the happy ending to the plan of salvation? How can you have the assurance that Jesus, the love of your life, is coming back?

The Bible is the most credible means through which God has revealed His soon return. Outlined within its pages is a fairy talelike ending that will set your soul on fire. While other writings may present sensational theories, the account in the Bible is the only coherent love story, written with a Hero who is capable of following through on His claim.

*By Jeremy J. Brenja Foss, a senior theology major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.*

# The Authority of the Bible and the Second Coming

## LOGOS

**Deut. 29:29; Ps. 111:10; Isa. 66:2; Jer. 8:9; Matt. 7:24-29; Luke 24:25-27; John 5:39; 1 Cor. 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:15; 2 Pet. 1:19-21**

Most Christians believe that Jesus will return to earth; this is the prophetic doctrine of the Second Coming. Evidence to support the prophetic claim can be found throughout the Bible. Indeed, the fact that the Bible asserts the second coming of Christ is hard to dispute. However, should the fact that the Bible asserts the doctrine of the Second Coming act as sufficient evidence for anyone to believe in the doctrine? How can anyone hang such profound hope on the assertions of a book?

Christians believe that the Bible is authoritative, that it gives evidence of its authority. What is meant by “authoritative”? Christians believe that the Bible is an expression of an actual authority. The Bible must derive its authoritative force from the authority of its author in much the same way that the constitution of a government must derive its authoritative force from the authority of its author. If the author is not a legitimate authority, then the author’s documents cannot be authoritative. So we can immediately distinguish between the claimed authority-source of the Bible and the claimed authority-source of most other documents.

The Bible claims to be the actual Word of God, and this God is asserted to have ultimate authority because He is the Creator of everything. So, the Bible claims

## **The Buddha was a man, who claimed no authority other than that of a man.**

to be ultimately authoritative. We can see the difference between this authority claim and that of, for example, Buddhism. The Buddha was a man, who claimed no authority other than that of a man. Writings derived from his teachings, then, must have only human authority. So, the Bible can be ultimately authoritative, while Buddhism cannot. It does make sense to devote our foremost attention to authoritative texts.

Some other documents claim the same sort of authority as does the Bible. Hinduism points to the Bhagavad-Gita as authoritative, using much the same appeal to an ultimate authority as do Christians when they point to the Bible. Mormons point to the Book of Mormon in the same way that mainstream Christians point to the Bible. It is often asserted that Seventh-day Adventists point to the writings of E. G. White in the same way that they point to the Bible. So we see that various contenders claim the authoritative status of “Word of God.”

How can we determine which, if any, are legitimate claimants? The answer to this question depends upon the answer to another question: What is the role of logical reasoning in determining the truth?

The Bhagavad-Gita is metaphor and symbol, an attempt to express the ineffable. This claim on truth is based on the assumption that ultimate truths defy propositional expression. According to Hinduism, one can only *experience* the

ultimate truth to which the Bhagavad-Gita alludes. So, according to Hinduism, the truth can be grasped only by a nonrational human faculty, and this truth is distorted or lost in any attempt to analyze it by rational means. Thus, Hinduism denies that logical reasoning plays any role in grasping the truth, and, in fact, asserts that logical reasoning can only serve to distance people from it.

Christianity, however, is a propositional religion. Christians regard the Bible as full of claims that can be rationally considered and that the Bible is filled with examples of people reasoning out of the Scriptures. Christians do not believe that the truth is ineffable. This is not to say that Christians believe that humans can rationally grasp all the ultimate truths of the universe. But it is to say that Christians believe that the Bible is an expression of those propositions that God thinks we need to know are true and that we can rationally examine those claims.

What is it, then, to examine a set of propositions rationally? The basic aspect of a rational critique is to examine the set of propositions for contradictions. If some text tells you "The door is open, and the same door is at the same time not open," you can immediately recognize the claim as false; it is false because it asserts contradictory propositions. Surely any actual Word of God does not contradict itself!

A crucial test of a proposed Word of God is to consider whether the God contradicts Himself. Indeed, contemporary philosophy of Christian religion concerns itself with examining whether or not the Bible forms a contradictory set of propositions. The legitimacy of the claimed authority of the Bible does reasonably rest in great measure on the assertion that the Bible is unique among sacred texts in its logical consistency. In John 10:34-36, Jesus explicitly denies that the Scriptures contradict themselves. Christian philosophers claim that other sacred texts form a contradictory set, while the Bible does not.

So, should any consistent set of propositions be considered authoritative? Of course not. Only a set of propositions that appeals to ultimate authority can be ultimately authoritative. The Bible is unique among religious texts in that it appeals to Divine authority with logical consistency. Thus, only the Bible can possibly be authoritative. And the hope of the Second Coming finds its legitimacy in the authority of the Bible's Author.

## **REACT**

1. What is the relation between biblical interpretation and claims that the Bible contradicts itself?
2. If it could be proven to you that the Bible makes contradictory claims, how would that inconsistency affect your faith in the Bible?
3. If the Bible contradicts the claims of science, how does that inconsistency affect your faith in the Bible?
4. What, beyond logical consistency, establishes the authority of the Bible in your mind?
5. How would you respond to an experience you believed was from God yet that contradicted what you had believed from the Bible?
6. How should one evaluate extrabiblical prophecies, signs, and evidences of the Second Coming?

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*By Richard Jensen, assistant professor of philosophy, Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.*

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# Gospel Possible

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Rev. 14:6, 7**

According to Ellen White, the Bible has the Second Coming at its core. “The doctrine of the second advent is the very keynote of the sacred Scriptures. From the day when the first pair turned their sorrowing steps from Eden, the children of faith have waited the coming of the Promised One to break the destroyer’s power and bring them again to the lost Paradise.”<sup>1</sup>

“The Bible unfolds truth with a simplicity and a perfect adaptation to the needs and longings of the human heart, that has astonished and charmed the most highly cultivated minds, while it enables the humblest and uncultured to discern the way of salvation. . . . Thus the plan of redemption is laid open to us, so that every soul may see the steps he is to take in repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, in order to be saved in God’s appointed way.”<sup>2</sup>

As Christians we are to spread this message with a focus on Christ’s soon coming: “So the followers of Christ are to shed light into the darkness of the world. Through the Holy Spirit, God’s word is a light as it becomes a transforming power in the life of the receiver. By implanting in their hearts the principles of His word,

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**“The doctrine of the second advent is the very  
keynote of the sacred Scriptures.”**

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the Holy Spirit develops in men the attributes of God. The light of His glory—His character—is to shine forth in His followers. Thus they are to glorify God, to lighten the path to the Bridegroom’s home, to the city of God, to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”<sup>3</sup>

“John in the Revelation foretells the proclamation of the gospel message just before Christ’s second coming. He beholds an angel flying ‘in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come.’ Rev. 14:6, 7.

“In the prophecy this warning of the judgment, with its connected messages, is followed by the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven. The proclamation of the judgment is an announcement of Christ’s second coming as at hand. And this proclamation is called the everlasting gospel.”<sup>4</sup>

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1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 299.

2. *Steps to Christ*, p. 107.

3. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 414.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

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*By Edwin D. Schwisow, a junior mass communication major at Walla Walla College, College Place Washington.*

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# Our Claim to Scripture

## EVIDENCE

### Key Text: Deut. 29:29

Deuteronomy is a collection of sermons, which, according to tradition, were given by Moses as Israel stood on the brink of the Promised Land. It can be thought of as Moses' *magnum opus*, his parting words to his people.

It begins with a historical narrative of the Israelites' wilderness sojourn (chapters 1–4). The second sermon (chapters 5–28) is a summary of the laws and regulations set forth in the Torah. Deuteronomy 29 falls within the third sermon (chapters 29, 30), an exhortation to remember and respect God's covenant with Israel.\*

It may seem that Deuteronomy has little to do with life today. It speaks of people and places and laws forgotten long ago. Study of the themes of the book, however, brings out two important principles to the modern Christian.

The notion of covenant is central to Deuteronomy. As Seventh-day Adventists today, we are under the new covenant of Jesus Christ. We would do well to remember this covenant and to seek the revelations of God's character in it.

The second principle is found in Deuteronomy 29:29. "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law" (NIV).

## Deuteronomy can be thought of as Moses' *magnum opus*.

Seventh-day Adventists think of the Bible as God's revelation to humanity. The "revealed things" are the words of Scripture, and this text says they "belong to us and to our children" (verse 29). How do we accept this ownership? By listening to God's voice through the Bible writers.

But we must use the Bible as our guide—our answers must come out of the principles outlined in the Word of God. Beyond these, the revealed things that belong to us, lies the realm of the secret things of God. One of the great revealed themes of Scripture is the certainty of our ultimate redemption—the Second Coming. One of the Bible's great secrets is when exactly this will occur. It is our duty as Adventists to search the Scriptures for correct ways of thinking and living in expectation of the Second Coming, while trusting God to rescue us according to His appointed time.

## REACT

1. What are some biblical principles for living in expectation of the Second Coming?
2. How would the principles and revelations of nature (in Adventist tradition, God's "second book") figure in a Bible-study program?

\*Douglas R. Clark, *Introducing the Bible* (New York: University Press of America, 1997), vol. 1, pp. 155-169.

By Kevin R. Kakazu, a senior theology major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

# Hope and a Future

## HOW-TO

### Key Text: Jer. 29:11

Two more months. You flip your calendar to the special date. June 12. On that day your best friend will return from her year overseas as a student missionary. You've spent the year mailing care packages, making sure all your mutual friends know how she is doing, and planning the things you'll do when she finally arrives. You are completely confident that you will see your best friend in a very short time, and your excitement is contagious.

Does this kind of enthusiasm fill your mind when you think about Christ's soon return? It should. The Bible leaves no room for doubt about His second appearance on planet Earth. Jesus Himself leaves no room for you to doubt that He'll take you to heaven with Him. He has plans for you!

Reassuring or not, showing your enthusiasm about the Second Coming can still be a challenge. Here are several practical steps to help you wait wisely for His return.

**1. Pray about it.** In Jeremiah 29 God establishes the first criterion for living a life focused on His return: "You will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you" (verse 12, NIV). Spend a few minutes each morning imagining the glory of the Second Coming. Ask God to help you prepare for His return. Let

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## You are completely confident that you will see your best friend in a very short time.

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Him know that you believe you will see Him soon. Praise Him for promising you such a glorious future. Communicating with God about your future not only pleases Him; it helps your own conviction as well.

**2. Talk about it.** Heaven is a reality! God's Word, a "living and active" testimony, assures you of that (Heb. 4:12). You have every reason to discuss our exciting future with friends, family, and acquaintances! Step outside your comfort zone and bring up the subject during your next conversation. Hint: For a quick jump-start, read the last chapter of the Bible with a friend.

**3. Act on it.** Because you think and pray about Christ's soon return, your actions will begin to mirror your anticipation of the Second Coming. Knowing that your time on earth is limited will make you far less concerned with image and far more eager to do whatever it takes to tell others the good news. Ask yourself the following questions and seriously commit to living a life focused on your reunion with Christ. It is real. It is inevitable. And it is the most reliable future prediction in all eternity.

## REACT

1. If Jesus were coming tomorrow, how would you spend today?
2. What are you willing to do to make your life more like your answer to the previous question?

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*By Sarah E. Coleman, a senior English major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.*

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# Prophets of Old

## OPINION

**Key Text: 2 Pet.1:19-21**

Prophets long before Christ's first coming greatly affected the lives of the Jewish people with the announcement of the Messiah. Because of these prophecies, the attitude of the Jewish people was one of eager expectation of the Messiah's advent.

It is easy for Christians today to believe that the only way to trust a prophecy is simply to wait for hundreds of years to see if it actually comes true. This is not the case, however. Contemporary signs and evidences of the nearness of Christ's coming abound.

In speaking of Bible students looking for signs in previous generations, LeRoy Froom states that, "Always at the time of fulfillment of each major epoch and event of prophecy there have been numerous men of eminence and godliness, widely scattered geographically, who have recognized that a fulfillment was taking place before their very eyes."<sup>1</sup> These thoughtful people were aware of the times they were living in as well as the times to come. They had every reason to believe in the prophecies because events were occurring to validate their faith.

## **Crazy Horse predicted that the Creator would return to earth to cleanse and recreate it.**

Prophets foretelling the second coming weren't only in lands far away in ancient days. Native Americans tell of the legendary prophecy of Crazy Horse, who predicted that the Creator would return to earth to cleanse and recreate it. Many years later his great-grandson had the same vision. In the dream, the sign of the Creator's soon return would be the birth of a white buffalo. Two such creatures have been born in the last few years.<sup>2</sup>

The Bible, as the Word of God, has authority over any noncanonical prophet. Still, it is clear that down through the ages people without the benefit of the Scriptures have been given extra-biblical information about the Second Coming. In addition to their diligent study of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Magi were guided to an encounter with the Messiah by a bright star.

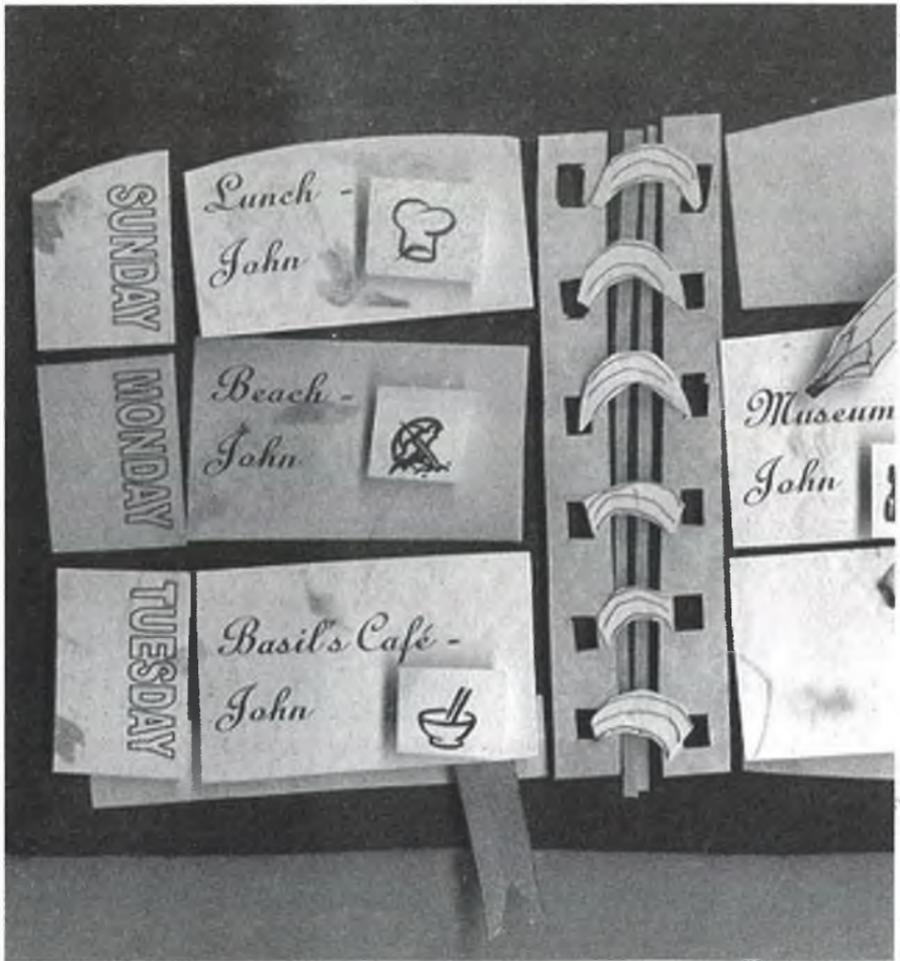
The Bible gives us clear and dramatic understanding about the future. But the evidences for the Second Coming are not limited to a few bound pieces of paper. Take a look around. God is speaking to us of His soon return through many signs and events around us!

1. LeRoy E. Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1950), vol. 1.

2. Monte Church, "A Native Light to the Pilgrims," *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, November 23, 1998, p. 2.

*By Rebecca Griffin, a graduate of Walla Walla College with a B.A. degree in mass communication, College Place, Washington.*

# GOD'S TRANSPARENT TRICK



**“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last” (Rev. 22:13, NKJV).**

# Interpreting Scripture With Your Heart

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: 2 Pet. 3:3-7**

I am about to be married, and now I know from my own experience how a young man will do anything to win the love of his special one.

First, love awakens in the heart, and it seems that no power can resist. Decisions come so quickly, and actions follow with no noticeable effort. It seemed to me that I found myself near her every time it was possible. Somehow my schedule always showed that—what a surprise—I was free just at the time she happened to have some free time too.

I became the best-ever attorney. If I had used my heart-motivated ability of persuasion, I could have convinced a chief public prosecutor to plead himself guilty. I tried everything possible.

One time, just right after hearing a lecture on how nobody would be able to quit any habit (for example smoking) by putting the decision off, I tried to explain to her that if she had wanted to stop our relationship we should—only to help giving up the habit of meeting—meet now and then. What a transparent trick! But it worked. And ever since then I have diligently looked for better and better reasons to meet, all because I decided something in my heart.

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## **Ever since then I have diligently looked for better and better reasons to meet.**

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Making decisions according to one's heart and then finding rational support for those decisions can be funny when we talk about falling in love. But, unfortunately, people also use this process to make decisions about their beliefs. Peter says that having false ideas about the Creation is the same as having false ideas about the Second Coming (2 Pet. 3:5). He adds that those who think this way are "walking after their own lusts" (verse 3, KJV). That is, their apparently biblical argument (verses 4-7) is only the result of their willful ignorance (verse 5) and their corrupted heart.

If you believe in Creation as described in the Bible, you have to believe in the Second Coming of the Lord exactly as it is described in the Bible. If you don't want to believe in the advent in the biblical way, if your heart's desire is something else, you must find a suitable theory for Creation to replace the Bible's account, such as evolution or theistic evolution. Then you can easily put aside the scriptural teaching about the last days.

Throughout this week's lesson you can search your heart by thinking about connections between Creation, evolution, re-creation, and the Second Coming. May God's Word determine your heart's desires and not your heart's desires determine the way in which you interpret God's Word.

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*By Baji Zoltán, an assistant pastor in the Hungarian Union Conference, Raday.*

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# Creation and Second Advent

## LOGOS

**Isa. 65:17; 2 Pet. 3:1-16; Rev. 21:1; 22:1, 2, 13**

The interpreters of the Bible noticed very early the close connection between the beginning and the end of the Bible. On the first pages of the Scriptures we see the Creator God who gifts humankind with the world of Eden. On the last pages we read that although humanity lost this world, God is going to restore it and going to put humankind back into the Edenlike order. The biblical teachings about Creation and re-creation relate directly to each other.

### **Creation and the Second Coming of Christ (2 Pet. 3:1-16)**

The apostle Peter presents how shaken faith in Creation and divine providence undermines the hope in the second coming of Christ. The apostle first encourages us to remember the testimony of the prophets and apostles and points out that last-day scoffers will give a strange interpretation of the laws manifest in the natural world. According to the apostle, laws governing nature are part of the divine providence: our world exists because God has spared and kept it (2 Pet. 3:7). On the contrary, scoffers say that the orderly operation of the world precludes the need for a God.

Modern philosophy claims that the presence of God is demonstrated by

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## **The Lord is not late but is patiently waiting.**

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miracles, and miracles are the suspension of natural laws. This means that we can look for God only where abnormalities appear in the functions of nature. This reasoning is clear: Since there are not many abnormalities in nature, God must not exist, or He must not be present in the world of nature.

The apostle disproves these arguments by saying that God's Word created and God's Word maintains the world. "In the last days," Ellen White writes, "the earth will be almost destitute of true faith. Upon the merest pretense, the Word of God will be considered unreliable, while human reasoning will be received, though it be in opposition to plain Scripture facts. Men will endeavor to explain from natural causes the work of creation, which God has never revealed. But human science cannot search out the secrets of the God of heaven."

### **How to Respond to the Delay of His Coming (2 Pet. 3:9, 10)**

According to scoffers, God—if He ever existed at all—is late in fulfilling His promises. Peter calls attention to the fact that the Lord is not late but is patiently waiting. Our hearts should be softened by the divine characteristic of patience as Inspiration writes about it: "Even Christ, as the Prince of Life, did not seize the scepter of power and enforce His laws of righteousness. Patiently has He waited in the heavenly courts in behalf of His people who have suffered for their loyalty to Him. Patiently has He waited for the Gospel of the kingdom to be preached in all parts of the world, until every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people shall have received the light of God's Word. And man, too, must wait patiently until the time when the work shall be accomplished, and every human being has had

opportunity to decide for himself. Decisions will be made for and against God; and every man will decide his own case by his decision in regard to the law of Jehovah. Then both classes will be developed; the sentiment of every heart will be revealed. Each party will gather under its chosen leader, as loyal to God and His commandments, or as transgressors of the law, with the first great rebel at its head.”<sup>2</sup>

The world is under the time of grace. The Lord causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good; He sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous because His goodness leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

### **God's Eternal Plan for the World (Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1)**

God's desire is to end the world where sin and unrighteousness rules. He could have simply destroyed humanity, but He had prepared a better plan. Repeating the manifestations of His creating power, He is going to create new heavens and new earth and fill the new heavens and new earth with renewed creatures. He is not going to restore the formless and empty world that characterized this earth but gives back to recreated humankind the beauty of Eden, that which, in His own description, “was good” (Gen.1:31).

### **The Foreground of God's Creating and Re-Creating Work (Rev. 22:3, 4)**

The Creation story tells us that the work of all creation focuses on humanity. The fact that the Bible tells the story of humankind in a more detailed way compared to other creatures testifies that God paid special attention to the creation of humanity. We can state boldly that this world received its reason for being when God placed humankind in it. In the same way, the re-created world would have no purpose if God hadn't filled it with His servants who can see His face. God's eternal love is manifest in the fact that He created the world for us and will just as surely re-create it for us.

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1. *Lift Him Up*, p. 59.

2. “The Sign of God's People,” *The Signs of the Times*, November 22, 1899.

# Understandable?

## TESTIMONY

**Key Texts: Ps. 33:9; 2 Pet. 3:10, 13**

It's difficult to understand that God created the earth and everything in it. The creatures of the waters and skies are beautiful. The hand of God made them all. All are praising Him. "In regard to the work of creation itself the divine testimony is, 'He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.' Psalm 33:9. With Him who could thus call into existence unnumbered worlds, how long a time would be required for the evolution of the earth from chaos?"<sup>1</sup>

Some centuries ago, when people read 2 Peter 3:10 they thought there was not enough wood for burning half of the earth. Nowadays nuclear weapons could destroy our globe more than four times. We can see that if we humans are powerful enough to destroy our home, why isn't it possible for God to do it? Or to go further, there are things that we can't do: re-create what we have destroyed. But God will re-create our earth into an even more wonderful home.

"The deepest students of science are constrained to recognize in nature the working of infinite power. . . . Only in the light of revelation can it be read aright. 'Through faith we understand.' Hebrews 11:3."<sup>2</sup>

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## Nuclear weapons could destroy our globe more than four times.

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"There is a constant effort made to explain the work of creation as the result of natural causes; and human reasoning is accepted even by professed Christians, in opposition to plain Scripture facts. There are many who oppose the investigation of the prophecies, especially those of Daniel and the Revelation, declaring them to be so obscure that we cannot understand them; yet these very persons eagerly receive the suppositions of geologists, in contradiction of the Mosaic record. But if that which God has revealed is so difficult to understand, how inconsistent it is to accept mere suppositions in regard to that which He has not revealed!"<sup>3</sup>

"These persons have lost the simplicity of faith. There should be a settled belief in the divine authority of God's Holy Word. . . . Moses wrote under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and a correct theory of geology will never claim discoveries that cannot be reconciled with his statements. All truth, whether in nature or in revelation, is consistent with itself in all its manifestations."<sup>4</sup>

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1. *Education*, p. 129.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

3. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 113.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

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By Peter Fenyvesi, assistant pastor of Debrecen (Hungary) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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# God's New World

## EVIDENCE

### Key Text: Isa. 65:17

“Isaiah describes new heavens and a new earth that would have been brought about should Israel heed the messages of the prophets and fulfill the divine purpose following the restoration from captivity. Israel failed; hence, in secondary application, these verses point forward to the new heavens and the new earth to be ushered in at the close of the millennium.”<sup>1</sup>

These promises will be fulfilled in the future in a form that would leave no room for any of the consequences of sin.

The Hebrew word translated as “creation” deserves attention. “The root *bara* has the basic meaning ‘to create.’ It differs from *yasar* ‘to fashion’ in that the latter primarily emphasizes the shaping of an object while *bara* emphasizes the initiation of the object.”<sup>2</sup>

Our world went wrong. Sin ruined it so that we can't repair it. Although according to evolutionary theory all forms of life are becoming better and better, improving, when we look around we see that ill creatures live on an ill planet. It cannot mend itself. We can only delay the quickly approaching end.

Instead it must be re-created. God needs to do just as difficult a work as He did

## According to evolutionary theory, all forms of life are becoming better.

when He created the world in the beginning. At that time He created it out of nothing. “The worlds are not fashioned from any pre-existing material, but out of nothing, and it proceeded from the activity of the divine Word.”<sup>3</sup> Though the earth is in such poor condition, God will re-create it to its former perfection.

It is going to happen. God will do an enormous work on it. Nothing will be left to remind us of the world corrupted by sin. “‘There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away’” (Rev. 21:4, NIV).

## REACT

How do the new creation and the Second Coming relate to each other? Can one exist without the other? Explain your answer.

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 332.

2. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), vol. 1, p. 127.

3. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: The Zondervan Corporation, 1976), vol. 1, p. 1023.

# Aimless?

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: 2 Pet. 3:10-14**

Evolution has stolen everything from humanity. It has made humankind think that there is no aim in life. There are no moral or immoral acts. Because there is no sin, there is no judgment. Now, only the fittest survive! There is no hope.

Suddenly the sky opens, and from a cloud the Son of God proclaims, "It's done!"

But no one is left on Earth. No one is left to believe in the name of Jesus Christ. The dead righteous arise, but "the earth and everything in it will be laid bare" (2 Pet. 3:10, NIV).

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## Evolution has stolen everything from humanity.

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This, of course, is a nightmare. Thanks to God, we have the hope that the Second Coming of Jesus won't be like this. But how should we act, considering that there will be some faithful remnant?

Creation (with Jesus as the purpose)

- with planning
- with execution
- with significance

Evolution (without any purpose)

- without creator
- without planning
- without significance

We can look forward to a total re-creation of our earth. We shouldn't let our minds be influenced by ideas of aimlessness and insignificance. With assurance that we have a wonderful aim, let God find us spotless and blameless! We must never stop believing and preaching the certainty of the Creation.

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*By Béla Barabás, a college student from Debrecen, Hungary.*

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# Re-Creation

## OPINION

### Key Text: Rev. 21:1

Considering Creation and re-creation, we must recognize the close connection between the two. If there is to be a “new earth,” there must have been a first earth. If we accept that God created the heaven and the earth, it should strengthen our belief that though these have been marred by original sin, God will renew them. This is why Creation and re-creation, with all their aspects, have an essential importance in our lives.

God not only created the world, but from the beginning He has always been taking care of us as well, which shows that we are the children of a loving Father. With the words of the psalmist we can say: “You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing” (145:16, NIV). As the source of life, God supplies all the needs of His creatures, because “from the smallest insect to man, every living creature is daily dependent upon His providence.”<sup>1</sup>

Since our world and our spiritual lives have been hurt and damaged, however, “no intangible principle, no impersonal essence or mere abstraction, can satisfy the needs and longings of human beings in this life of struggle with sin and sorrow and pain. . . . We need to know of an almighty arm that will hold us up, of an infinite

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## If there is to be a “new earth,” there must have been a first earth.

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Friend that pities us.”<sup>2</sup> We should often be reminded that we have such a loving and caring God who wants to be our friend and who supplies all the needs that no one else can.

In light of this, we have the hope that “the dark moments of discouragement, disillusionment, or sorrow in this life’s experience are gloriously compensated for by the Christian’s hope in the second advent.”<sup>3</sup>

Just imagine being a member of those who “sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: ‘Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty!’” (Rev. 15:3, NKJV). Thank God we have the hope that it will come true very soon.

## REACT

1. What does it mean to you that God created you?
2. In what ways do you feel that God keeps you in His care?
3. How would you speak to one of your non-Christian friends about re-creation in connection with Creation?

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1. *Education*, p. 131.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

3. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 366.

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*By Márta Mayor, a college student in Úrhida, Hungary.*

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# KEEPING YOUR DATE WITH GOD



**“As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,’ declares the Lord, ‘so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me’” (Isaiah 66:22, 23, NIV).**

# Out of Love

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Isa. 26:8**

Think for a moment of the time when you first started dating that special someone. Do you remember the excitement you felt when you heard their voice on the phone or the anticipation when you knew you were going to see them?

Yes, love had struck. Suddenly, you always wanted to look your best when that person was around. Did you find yourself fixing your hair or checking the mirror a few more times than normal? You wanted to do everything to please your special friend. You would never dream of standing them up for a date. In fact, you would even prepare ahead of time to make sure you arrived or were ready on time and looking sharp. Nobody made you do these things; you did it all out of a heartfelt desire.

The same should be true in your relationship with the Lord. The Sabbath is your “date” with Him—the special time you’re able to spend with that One you love. You want to do things for Him, not because you have to, not because your teacher back in the primary division of Sabbath School said that those were the rules, but

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### **Did you find yourself checking the mirror a few more times than normal?**

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because you desire to please Him. You want to keep your date with Him out of love.

The Sabbath allows you to step back from the worries of the world and relax with your Best Friend. Pure enjoyment—no rules and regulations—no can’ts or shouldn’ts—but instead an anticipation and excitement for a time just to sit back and talk about your week with Him, an opportunity to spend some time together, just you and the One who will be there for you always. What an awesome gift!

How’s your love life?

How’s your Sabbath?

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*By Iris Yvette Davila, a second-year master of business administration student at Texas A&M University at College Station.*

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## Losing a Treasured Proof Text

### LOGOS

**Gen. 2:3; Exod. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15; Isa. 58:13, 14; Heb. 3:16-4:10; Rev. 14:6, 7, 12; Isa. 66:23**

As we approach the issue of the Sabbath in Isaiah 66, we must be careful how we apply its words to our day and to the future kingdom in heaven. Isaiah 66:23 is often cited as a proof text that the Sabbath will be observed in the heavenly kingdom. At this point, it is argued that since it will be observed forever in heaven, why would we not observe it now?

Keep in mind that this style of reasoning would not merely justify, but essentially demand, new moon festivals to be observed now, as well. (Something we emphatically deny, we are under obligation to do.) Isaiah makes no distinction here, and neither should we.

Also, we must keep in mind that the chapter and verse divisions in our modern Bibles are not the work of Isaiah and were added nearly two thousand years after his writing. This being the case, many times his oracles are broken into superfluous chapters that can destroy the continuity of a theological thought.

Notice that Isaiah 65:17 begins an oracle about the new heavens and new earth that is continued through chapter 66. Here, death is something that Isaiah says will

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### **The chapter and verse divisions in our modern Bibles are not the work of Isaiah.**

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occur in the new heaven and new earth: “He who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed” (verse 20, NIV). Are we to take this as a literal occurrence in heaven? Will people die there? Absolutely not.

In the same way we should not press his comments about the Sabbath or new moons into such a literal mold. Isaiah is speaking from a human perspective about the endurance of the new kingdom and the descendants that inhabit it (66:22).

It is from this frame of reference (the passage of much time) that he mentions new moons (which mark months) and Sabbaths (which mark weeks). Essentially, he is saying that the long-awaited Messianic kingdom will endure month after month and week after week. He is not endeavoring to prove that death, new moons, or the Sabbath actually occur in heaven. This is not to say that one or more of them won't occur, merely that Isaiah is not setting out to make this his point.

All this being stated, we can begin to inquire, why does he even bring up the Sabbath? Isaiah uses the word *Sabbath* only a few times in his entire work (see also 56:2, 6; 58:13). Why again? Why here?

To Jews (and Seventh-day Adventists) the Sabbath is a standard way of measuring and marking off time. To say to the ancient Jew, “From one new moon to another and from one Sabbath to another” (66:23) would immediately turn his mind toward something perpetual—something that would have no end. In the sixth century B.C., with thousands of years having passed since the first promise of a new kingdom (Gen. 3:15) and unknown ages to come before the establishing

of this kingdom, these words would have struck a chord with the average Jew. Hearing that the new kingdom would someday be tangible—as concrete as the passing of Sabbaths and new moons—would be very encouraging to them.

Why? No one can comprehend eternity. What is more concrete for you: a guaranteed \$1 million; 150 years of life with excellent health and a fine home; or streets of gold, eternal life, and rooms in the Father's house? It's tough to grasp the magnificence of the new heaven and earth, because such concepts have never even entered our understanding. To say to the modern Christian that heaven will go on and on is ambiguous, incomprehensible, and hardly tempting. It is for this reason that Isaiah writes as he does.

The beauty and correlation of the Sabbath with the Second Coming and afterlife is that each is a physical, experiential event. Just as certainly as we physically experience a church service (i.e., how hot or cold the sanctuary is, whether we can hear the speaker, or whether our foot itches), so we will physically experience the Second Coming. That is, we will watch the flashes of lightning, hear the peels of thunder, various trumpets or shouts, and feel the rain and wind against us.

In the next life, we will be able to think back to the physical events that we experienced days or weeks before in the kingdom. Perhaps we will have a conversation much like on earth: "Remember the first time you saw the throne of God?"

"Yeah, I nearly fainted. Do you remember the first time we ran into Elijah? Boy, does he have a long beard or what?"

With each Sabbath that passes, we are given a chance to ponder the reality of the world above, to remember that life with God is not about floating around in a condition like a drug-induced haze. It is about running, jumping, sweating, laughing, eating, singing, swimming, talking, and learning in a three-dimensional universe with a three-dimensional Jesus who loves reality.

The Sabbath reminds us that heavenly existence will have an element of predictability (as opposed to repetition), whereby we can know that there will be dirt and trees and grass and water and everything else that humans must have to live as joyful creatures within God's created universe.

## **REACT**

1. How would you explain eternity to a child?
2. Which is easier to grasp: living forever or living to see our great-great grandchildren? Which sounds more desirable? Explain your answers.
3. How would you personally rate eternal life as an incentive to keeping the commandments?
4. Is the Sabbath essential to being prepared for the Second Coming?
5. What gives meaning to the Sabbath for you?

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*By James M. Hopps, pastor of the Bryan and Waller (Texas) Seventh-day Adventist Churches.*

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# The Sabbath and the Covenant

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Isa. 58:13, 14**

God made many promises to the children of Israel. When speaking of keeping the Sabbath and nurturing the relationship that it signifies, God said, "I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isa. 58:14). As individuals who seek a closer, more intimate relationship with God, we are included in this promise.

"As the Sabbath was the sign that distinguished Israel when they came out of Egypt to enter the earthly Canaan, so it is the sign that *now* distinguishes God's people as they come out from the world to enter the heavenly rest. The Sabbath is a sign of the relationship existing between God and His people"<sup>1</sup> (emphasis supplied).

"To us as to Israel the Sabbath is given 'for a perpetual covenant.' To those who reverence His holy day the Sabbath is a sign that God recognizes them as His chosen people. It is a pledge that He will fulfill to them His covenant. Every soul who accepts the sign of God's government places himself under the divine, everlasting covenant. He fastens himself to the golden chain of obedience, every

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## "The Sabbath was the sign that distinguished Israel when they came out of Egypt."

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link of which is a promise."<sup>2</sup>

"From the pillar of cloud Christ declared concerning the Sabbath: 'Verily, My Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.' Exodus 31:13. . . . To those who keep holy the Sabbath day it is the sign of sanctification. True sanctification is harmony with God, oneness with Him in character. It is received through obedience to those principles that are the transcript of His character. And the Sabbath is the sign of obedience."<sup>3</sup>

## REACT

1. How does God's covenant with the children of Israel provide us with insight regarding the relationship God wishes to have with us through the Sabbath?
2. How does the Sabbath bring us closer to the ideal of sanctification?

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1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 349, 350.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 350.

3. *Ibid.*

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*By Andrea E. C. Griffin, a doctoral student in management at Texas A&M University at College Station.*

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# The Sabbath and the Second Coming

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Isa. 66:22, 23**

Since keeping the Sabbath appears to be an integral part of our relationship with God, and according to this week's Scripture we will keep it with Him in heaven, let us look at the role it will play during the events just before the Second Coming.

Throughout history secular governments have used their seal to show ownership. Revelation 7:2, 3 states that God's people will be given His seal at the end of time. Since an official seal confers ownership, what might be a visible sign of God's seal on His people? (Ezek. 20:12, 20).

A prominent Adventist minister wrote, "God's people will be commandment keepers. The Sabbath is the outward sign, the mark or seal distinguishing them from those who do not obey or recognize the commandments of God."

Will wicked people wear a seal or mark? (Rev. 13:16, 17).

What will be their fate? (Rev. 14:9-11).

Does the Bible clearly show that God's people will be keeping His commandments at the end time? (Rev. 12:17; 14:12). Because we are told to honor the Sabbath by the fourth commandment, it is evident that God's people will be doing

## Keeping the Sabbath will be the prominent definition of God's people at the Second Coming.

just that.

One of the last messages given to earth's inhabitants is stated in Revelation 14:7. "Worship him that made heaven and earth and the sea and the fountains of waters." Since Genesis 2:1-4 says that "the Lord God made the earth and the heavens" and also that He "blessed the seventh day and sanctified it (NKJV)," God must be telling us in Revelation 14:7 to worship Him by honoring His holy Sabbath. Keeping the Sabbath is so important that it will be the prominent definition of God's people at the Second Coming.

Are there special blessings for those who keep God's holy Sabbath? (Jer. 17:21-25; Isa. 58:13, 14).

Should we be fearful when we consider the tremendous conflict over His Sabbath at the end time? Why or why not?

If we are fearful, how can we remove that fear?

## REACT

1. Sabbath keeping is a mark or seal that distinguishes God's people from those belonging to the world. Why are the other commandments considered less of a litmus test of God's people?

2. What would you say is the mark or seal of a godless person? Explain your answer.

*By Rebecca Johnson-Boaz, a homemaker in College Station, Texas.*

# Opportunities by the Week

## HOW-TO

### Key Text: Mark 2:27

The Sabbath is our weekly opportunity to:

**1. Build our relationship with Jesus.** This building process requires a healthful blend of activities, just like courtship or marriage. I include some group activities, starting with Friday evening dinner with our church youth—which is really dinner and worship with our extended family. Sabbath School and church constitute the more formal parts of my weekly worship. These regular and rewarding parts of my Sabbath, however, take all of Friday evening and most of Sabbath morning. I have to plan carefully to include some private time with Jesus—time for prayer, study, meditation. This needs to be time when I do not have a specific objective—to finish reading the Gospel of Mark, prepare my Sabbath School lesson, etc.—so I can really listen to what the Spirit has to say. This means that sometimes I skip a potluck or a visit to the nursing home because if my Sabbath is a continual frenzy of activity, my relationship with Jesus suffers, just as my relationship with Joanne suffers if we spend all of our time together working on the house or yard.

**2. Be an active participant in God's family.** If your Sabbaths have become

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## I have to plan carefully to include some private time with Jesus.

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routine, days of things you should do, what would it take to improve them? Do you need some real quiet time with Jesus? Do you need to be part of a small study group? Something else? Identify the steps really needed to make this a part of your Sabbaths. Then make it happen, whether this means starting a new class, convincing someone else to, or—something which may be more difficult—making a definite weekly appointment with Jesus!

**3. Definitely break away from the everyday demands.** Claims of school, job, or even church often scream that every waking moment belongs to them. Today's society continually pressures us to get the "A," win the game, win the contract. Solomon's admonition "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Eccl. 9:10, NIV) is held before us in church. "All your might" often translates into work, work, work—at the expense of our relationship with God and with family. But the Sabbath is Christ's invitation to ignore the calls of work, school, and yes, even church, to spend some unpressured time with Him.

## REACT

1. How do my Sabbaths strengthen my relationship with Jesus, or do they?
2. What changes in my Sabbaths would add to my growth in Jesus?

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*By David E. Claridge, professor of mechanical engineering and faculty advisor of the Adventist Christian Fellowship (ACF) at Texas A&M University at College Station.*

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# Six Days to Work and Play . . . and Sabbath Too?

## OPINION

**Key Texts: Isa. 58:6-14; Matt. 22:37-40; 25:40**

As a member of Generation X who grew up in a conservative Seventh-day Adventist culture, I have seen the Sabbath kept to the “letter of the law,” with all the do’s and don’ts associated with rigid Sabbath keeping, and I hate it. I hate the rigidity and meaningless legalism this motivation for Sabbath observance involves. So often it seems that relationships with family and neighbors are bruised and broken in the drive to keep the Sabbath properly and earn one’s salvation (and thus be prepared for the Second Coming). Contrary to this works-centered approach to Sabbath keeping, I believe that the Sabbath is meaningful to the Second Coming and Christian living only as it is effective in leading us to closer relationships with God and our fellow human beings.

In Matthew 22:37-40, Christ defines the two greatest commandments as (1) whole-hearted love for God and (2) love for our neighbor. The essence of these commandments is the building and strengthening of relationships with God and the people around us. In light of these commandments, it would seem that God

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## I have seen the Sabbath kept to the “letter of the law.”

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gave us the Sabbath as a day to spend time cultivating relationships and resting in the fullness of the moment rather than experiencing stress over the week ahead, our salvation, or our preparedness for the Second Coming.

I see the Sabbath as a day to look deliberately for ways to see and to love Jesus in those around us and to experience God’s love to us through these same people (Isa. 58:6-14; Matt. 7:22, 23; 25:40). “One of the least of these My brethren” (Matt. 25:40, NKJV) could be a family member whom we think we know well or a neighbor whom we have not taken the time to get to know or the person at church who always seems to rub us wrong. The Sabbath is a day for building up, strengthening, and renewing relationships that may have been bruised or ignored.

This may mean spending Sabbath afternoon really getting to know and understand that irritating person at church, it could mean spending the day with your neighbor on the local Habitat for Humanity project, or it may mean creating memories and building relationships with your kids or the youth in the church as you take a canoe trip down the local river. Whatever the activity, I see the primary reason for Sabbath as a day for getting to know God through our relationships with the people and the world around us, and in building these relationships, to develop a character fit for the kingdom and a desire to see our God.

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*By Rachele Berthelsen Davis, director of the Stephen F. Austin middle school orchestra in Bryan, Texas.*

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# THE TWO COMINGS



**“ ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven’ ” (Acts 1:11, NIV).**

# “Promise That You Will Wait for Me”

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: John 14:3**

A week before their wedding, war broke out. Joan’s fiancée, Joseph, was called up to fight in the war. It was a painful parting. “I don’t know how long I’ll be gone,” Joseph said tearfully, “but I hope to come back some day. Promise that you’ll wait for me till I come back.”

The war dragged on. After six months of fighting, there were no signs that the rebels were losing out. They still controlled vast territory.

Questions began to form in Joan’s mind. Will this war ever end? Will Joseph come from it alive? Will he really ever come back? There also came other men. “Forget about him! He will never come back,” they told her.

But she would not listen to them. *He said he’ll come back some day, and I know he will!* Joan convinced herself.

The war continued, and Joan continued to wait and wait and wait . . .

She needed enough faith to continue believing that Joseph would come back. She needed endless patience to withstand the persuasions of those who would ask her to forget about him; she needed patience to help her accept the uncertainties of the waiting.

This story applies to our experience as we wait for the second coming of Jesus. We need deep faith, endless patience, and burning hope. Jesus said He will come

## **There were no signs that the rebels were losing out.**

again and take us with Him (John 14:3). What Christ accomplished in His first coming, He will crown in His second coming. His first coming dealt sin a death blow. His second coming will complete our salvation (Heb. 9:28). He will come to take us home, and He is coming soon, for we continue to see the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the end of time. No! We won’t be down here too long.

Just a few more morns shall dawn  
 And a few more evens’ dusk;  
 Even a few more seasons come  
 And a few more seasons go;  
 Then shall appear the day  
 The glorious king descending.

It won’t be long  
 No, it won’t be long;  
 Just a few more weary days  
 And a few more fiery days;  
 Then shall appear my Lord  
 Coming to carry me home.

*By Tom Ogal, a senior theology student at the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Kenya.*

## The First Begets the Second

### LOGOS

**Matt. 4:1-11; John 1:1-14; Acts 1:1-11; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:10; 4:15; 9:28; Rev. 3:20, 21**

The everlasting gospel is rooted in the incarnation of Jesus Christ and in the certainty of His imminent second coming. The Scriptures in several places discuss the first coming alongside the second. This indicates that the two are inseparable. The first coming prepared the way for the Second Coming.

After Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God instituted the plan of redemption. The inauguration of this plan is recorded in Genesis 3:15. "From now on you and the woman will be enemies, as will all of your offspring and hers. He will strike you on your head, while you will strike at his heel" (TLB). In this verse, God promises redemption to fallen humanity through the coming of Jesus Christ. The promise is that Christ will ultimately crush the head of Satan and his offspring.

The birth of Jesus marked the beginning of the fulfillment of the plan of redemption. The process of defeating Satan and his offspring was launched. And in executing this plan, Jesus took on human nature so that He might be like one of us. Through the Incarnation, the Word became flesh; God came down and lived among us as a man (John 1:1-14). Divinity and humanity became one.

Christ came as a Mediator to mend the broken relationship between sinful

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### God's concept of time is different from ours.

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humanity and a perfect God. He came to reconcile us back to God, thus reinstating face-to-face communion between humankind and God (Rom. 5:11; Heb. 9:11-15). He came, while we were still sinners, to reveal God's character, which is love, for "God is love" (Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:8). He faced the temptations that we face and sinned not, for He lived in harmony with the will of the Father (Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12, 13; Luke 4:1-13; Heb. 2:10; 4:15). He suffered affliction and death; even death on the cross for our sins (Isaiah 53). By His victorious death on the cross, His triumphant resurrection, and His glorious ascension, we are guaranteed ultimate restoration when He comes the second time. His death made it possible for sinful humanity to be justified by faith (Rom. 3:21).

And when He had accomplished the purpose for His first coming, He went back to heaven where He now intercedes for us. But before He left for heaven, He promised to come again (John 14:3; Acts 1:11). We cannot doubt the certainty of Christ's second coming. To entertain such doubt would be casting aspersions on our belief in the historicity and reality of the first coming. Moreover, it would not make a lot of sense for Christ to have suffered in order to save us from the bondage of sin and then fail to come and crown His redemptive work. Our God does not work that way. He is a God who does not believe in unfinished business. Our God does not make empty promises. He fulfills all the promises He makes. And since He promised to come again, we can be sure He will come.

If we are tempted to think that Christ is being slow about His promised return, we would do well to note this fact about God: His concept of time is different from ours. Concerning God's concept of time, the apostle Peter wrote: "But don't forget

this, dear friends, that a day or a thousand years from now is like tomorrow to the Lord” (2 Pet. 3:8, TLB).

That God’s concept of time is different from our concept of time suggests that He cannot be limited in terms of time to days or weeks or months or years or seasons. God reigns in timelessness, for He is before anything was and shall be unto eternity.

The apostle Paul wrote about the fulfillment of the promise of Christ’s first coming thus: “But when the right time came, the time God decided on, he sent his Son, born of a woman, born as a Jew, to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law so that he could adopt us as his very own sons” (Gal. 4:4, 5, TLB). Elsewhere, in Romans 5:6, he wrote: “When we were utterly helpless with no way of escape, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners who had no use for him” (TLB).

We can thus say that when the right time comes, the time appointed by God, Christ will come the second time to take us home. It is God’s business to determine the right time for the fulfillment of every aspect of the plan of redemption. Ours is to submit to His timing, which is the best for us. Christ is coming soon to consummate our salvation (Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 1:15). His first coming brought us justification. His second coming will bring us glorification. He is coming to destroy the power and the reign of death (1 Cor. 15:25, 26). He is coming to take us home with Him that we may enjoy the full fruits of our inheritance as sons and daughters of God. He is coming soon!

## **REACT**

1. What does the imminent second coming of Christ mean to you?
2. What does the reality of the Incarnation tell you about the certainty of the Second Coming?
3. How are you preparing for the second coming of Christ?
4. Why, in your opinion, is Christ being slow about His promised return?
5. If God were to send an angel to you with the message that Christ is coming tonight, what message would you give the angel to take back to God?
6. Why is it advantageous for a Christian to believe that Jesus is coming soon?
7. Why would a God of love postpone His coming?
8. If it were up to you, would you rather have Jesus come next week or next year? Explain your answer.

# Saved to the Utmost

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: John 1:1, 14**

The Incarnation is central to our salvation, without which there would be no second advent hope. Ellen G. White wrote that “the only hope of redemption for our fallen race is in Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

“Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His.”<sup>2</sup>

“By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan’s purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken.”<sup>3</sup>

“The exaltation of the redeemed will be an eternal testimony to God’s mercy. ‘In the ages to come,’ He will ‘show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.’”<sup>4</sup>

“The work of redemption will be complete . . . The earth itself, the very field

**“Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves.”**

that Satan claims as his, is to be not only ransomed but exalted. . . . Here, where the Son of God tabernacled in humanity; where the King of glory lived and suffered and died,—here, when He shall make all things new, the tabernacle of God shall be with men.”<sup>5</sup>

“As in the typical service the high priest laid aside his pontifical robes and officiated in the white linen dress of an ordinary priest; so Christ laid aside His royal robes and garbed Himself with humanity and offered sacrifice, Himself the priest, Himself the victim. As the high priest, after performing his service in the holy of holies, came forth to the waiting congregation in his pontifical robes; so Christ will come the second time. . . . He will come in His own glory, and in the glory of His Father, and all the angelic host will escort Him on His way.”<sup>6</sup>

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 147.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, p. 26

5. *Ibid.*

6. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 33.

*By Passmore Mulambo, a senior theology student at the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Kenya.*

# Dreaming of a Golden Age

## EVIDENCE

### Key Text: Acts 1:11

There has not been any time in recorded history when humankind has not dreamed of a golden age. The poets and philosophers of the ancient East as well as those of the Western world often spoke of a day that was yet to come. It would be a day when there would be no more wars, and peace would cover the earth. In that day, iniquity would be abolished and righteousness would reign.

The Old Testament prophets in their discourse repeated this refrain. The prophet Micah says, "Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore" (4:3, NIV). The prophet Isaiah predicted that "the wolf will live with the lamb" (11:6, NIV).

The New Testament writers carried that refrain to its ultimate. Matthew wrote: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, 'God with us'" (1:23, NIV). John, the beloved disciple, records the facts of the Incarnation thus: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:1,14, NIV).

The birth of Jesus was marked with rejoicing: "'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests'" (Luke 2:14, NIV). The long

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## The birth of Jesus was marked with rejoicing.

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awaited golden age had finally arrived. The reign of peace was at last here. Jesus had come to preach the gospel to the poor; to heal the brokenhearted; to preach deliverance to the captives; to effect recovering of the sight to the blind; and to set at liberty those who are bruised (4:18).

Jesus came and dwelt among humanity, fulfilling the prophecies concerning Himself. While He was here, He preached the gospel, healed the sick, raised the dead, delivered the captives, and set at liberty those who are bruised (Matt. 13:3; 17:18; Mark 1:30-33; 5:41, 42; 5:29). But the Pharisees and Sadducees were not happy. They crucified Him on the cross of calvary. He was resurrected from death (for there is no power on earth that can tie Him down) and ascended to heaven with a firm promise: "'I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am'" (John 14:3, NIV).

This promise was echoed in Acts 1:11 when the two men dressed in white robes told the disciples: "'This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven'" (NIV).

The promise of Christ's second coming is sure. He will come again to sublimate the golden age He launched at His first coming.

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*By Alex Malayi, a senior theology student at the university of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Kenya.*

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# Planting and Harvesting

## HOW-TO

### Key Text: Mark 4:26-29

There is a time to plant and a time to harvest. In between the planting and harvesting, growth must take place. Growth is aided by sufficient rain and sunshine.

Jesus' first coming to this earth can be likened to a planting mission. Like a seed planted in the soil, Christ planted the Word of God in the soil of our hearts. He is the sower who went out sowing. "As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times" (Mark 4:4-8, NIV). After planting the seed, He sent the Holy Spirit to nurture the plant that it might grow into maturity in readiness for the harvest.

We are likened to that plant. God has sent the Holy Spirit to nurture us in readiness for Christ's second coming when the harvesting will take place. How can

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## We are to keep the commandments because we have been saved.

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we respond to the Holy Spirit's nurture?

**1. Prayer.** Prayer is more than just talking to God. It is a constant reminder to us that we are dependent on Him. Prayer is the key to the storehouse of God's abundance. Without prayer, we are powerless.

**2. Study of the Scriptures.** We must constantly feed on the Word of God through study of the Scriptures. Without feeding, growth stagnates and death results. We would die spiritually without feeding on the Word of God.

**3. Keeping the commandments.** We indicate our appreciation to God for saving us through our obedience to His commandments. Our growth is actually reflected in our being able to keep the commandments. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15, NIV). We are not to keep the commandments in order to be saved. We are to keep the commandments because we have been saved.

**4. Witnessing.** We have been given a commission to "make disciples of Jesus" (Matt. 28:19, 20). We witness by precept and conduct. Others should be drawn to Christ by our holy living. It is only as we witness to others that we affirm what we believe. In this way, our faith gets to grow.

Christ is coming soon. Are you ready to meet Him?

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*By Wycliffe Andama, an accountant at the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Kenya.*

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# Be Prepared

## OPINION

**Key Text: Rev. 22:7**

Amongst the Luo people of western Kenya, the visit of a son-in-law is a great occasion preceded by elaborate preparation. Such visits generate a lot of excitement because of the many gifts a son-in-law is supposed to give out to his in-laws whenever he visits. A feast always accompanies such occasions.

I vividly remember one occasion when a brother-in-law was to visit us. The preparation took nearly a week, with everyone in the family involved. Even my father who rarely touched a tool joined in clearing the bushes around the home. Those of us who were younger were made to rake the compound. The bigger boys trimmed and repaired the fence. The houses were given a facelift by my mum and the older sisters.

There was a lot of excitement and expectation in the air as the appointed date neared. Then the actual date finally arrived. Now our waiting was reduced to the appointed time which was five o'clock in the evening. Disappointment began to set in when one hour after the appointed time, the visitors had not arrived. Then two hours after the appointed time and they had not arrived. It was now eight o'clock in the evening, and there were no signs of the visitors still. *Might we have*

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## Two hours after the appointed time and they had not arrived.

*confused the date?* we wondered.

But just when we were giving up and were getting ready to go to bed, the visitors drove into the compound. In the excitement, we quickly forgot about the anxieties of the waiting. People who a minute before had been grumbling were all smiles. Even at this late hour you could tell that the hosts were very happy to receive their visitors. The attempt by the visitors to explain their lateness was dismissed as unnecessary.

Our waiting for the second coming of Christ can be compared to the waiting for such an important guest as a son-in-law. Just as the waiting for a son-in-law requires preparedness, even so must we be prepared when the Son of man comes. In Revelation 22:7 we are assured that the Lord is coming soon. This is not just a promise but a commitment as well. This knowledge should help inspire us to prepare for the coming of Christ, who is the Groom like no other groom with unequalled zeal.

When Christ comes, we will get more rewards than banknotes or such earthly gifts. He will receive us into the kingdom prepared for us from the beginning. We will sit at the table with Him as we feast and share our experiences. Christ will wipe away all tears from our eyes. We will live with Him in a land where we'll never part again.

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*By Charles Aduda, a graduate in religion from the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Kenya.*

# JUMPING THROUGH THE FLAMES



**“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life’” (John. 3:16, NKJV).**

# Hero Saves No One

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: John 3:16**

“My babies!” the woman screams as the firefighters arrive at her burning home, “my two babies are in there!”

Without hesitation, two firefighters burst through the flames in search of the young victims. Anxious moments pass as the mother cries hysterically. Neighbors hold her back as she lunges toward the burning building. “My babies, my babies!” she screams desperately.

Finally, one of the firefighters jumps through the flames with a small bundle in his arms, turning as he falls to protect the young girl from injury. Rising to his feet, he focuses only on the life of the child in his arms. “Where are the paramedics!” he screams, ignoring the onlookers that surround him. The paramedics have not arrived. The girl is not breathing. There is no time. He crouches on the ground and offers the girl his own breath in order to save her fragile life.

Then the second firefighter emerges. He holds on desperately to a 7-month-old boy. There is still no ambulance on the scene, so he climbs into a police car, baby in arms, and rushes to the nearest hospital.

Because of the self-sacrifice of these men, the children live. The firefighters

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## One of the firefighters jumps through the flames with a small bundle in his arms.

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are awarded their department’s highest honors. They have also earned the mother’s everlasting gratitude. She thinks of the firefighters every day as she watches her two children play together—full of the life that almost left them on that tragic day.

As I watch this scene played before me on my television screen, I realize I am watching a true-to-life example of selfless love. But imagine the scene was different. Imagine the firefighters arrive at the scene to find the woman clutching her baby, with the young girl clinging to her skirt. “Is there anyone in there?” a firefighter asks. The woman shakes her head. There is no one in the home, the family has been saved.

“Well, ma’am,” the firefighter clears his throat, “I want you to know that I am a person who loves selflessly, and I would do anything for you and your children.” With that, he runs needlessly into the flames, risking his life in order to illustrate his love.

What would we think? Would we call this man a hero? Doubtful. For someone needlessly to risk his life merely as an illustration of his love is absurd.

Is it any less absurd to say that Christ needn’t have died to save us but did so only as an illustration of His love?

Christ’s death was much more than a needless illustration. It was a necessary ingredient of our salvation. As we study this key ingredient, let us fall in love again with the Man who gave His life to pull us from the deadly flames of sin.

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*By Lori Fletcher, a public relations assistant at the General Conference, Silver Spring, Maryland.*

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# The Problem and the Solution

## LOGOS

**Gen. 3:1-7; Ezek. 18:4; Matt. 27:46; John 11:49-52; Rom. 3:21-26; 5:8-11; 1 John 2:2-6**

### The History of Sin (Gen. 3:1-7)

In Genesis we read about sin coming into the world. Genesis 3:1-7 gives a brief description of this event. Then in Revelation we read of a land, a life, and a time where there will be no sin. Between these two we see the sad story of sin.

Sin is separation from God. There are sins of commission—doing something God strictly forbids. There are also sins of omission—knowing right and not doing it.

The Bible speaks of three aspects of sin: that of the past, present, and future. It shows that we are born in sin, that we continue in sin, and that we are lost in sin. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23, NIV). All are condemned to die. Ezekiel 18:4 says, “‘The soul who sins is the one who will die’” (NIV). This is when the plan of salvation fits. The Son of God emptied Himself of His glory and humbled Himself to become little, weak, and vulnerable. He entered into our pain, our alienation, and our temptations.

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## The church is meant to be the kingdom community.

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Just as the penalty of sin is death for all, so the plan of salvation is for all.

Salvation is a radical transformation in three phases: beginning now, continuing throughout our earthly life, and brought to perfection when Christ comes. The kingdom of God is God’s dynamic rule, breaking into human history through Jesus, confronting, combating, and overcoming evil, spreading the wholeness of personal and communal well-being, taking possession of His people in total blessing and total demand. The church is meant to be the kingdom community, a model of what human community looks like when it comes under the rule of God, and a challenging alternative to secular society.

### The Impact of Edenic Lapse (Gen. 3:1-7)

The history of the world is in reality the history of sin. In Genesis we read about sin coming into the world (3:1-7). It was with the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden that sin and suffering came into the world. But the problem caused by Adam and Eve was bigger than just them, or even human beings as a whole. It required the life of the Son of God Himself. “Since the divine law is as sacred as God Himself, only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression. None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law and bring him again into harmony with Heaven.”<sup>1</sup>

### The Dimensions of Our Sin (Rom. 3:10, 23; Ezek. 18:4)

One does not have to do bad things to be a sinner, and not doing bad things does not make one sinless. In order to be a sinner, all one has to do is to be born. All of us are born with inherent sinful natures.

Humankind is not only born in sin but continues in sin. The Bible tells us that

all unrighteousness is sin (1 John 5:17) and that “there is none righteous, no, not one,” because “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:10, 23). The law of God convicts of our sins and reveals a need for a Savior.

### **Christ—the Solution (Rom. 5:8; John 3:16)**

Sinners enjoy the assurance of salvation in what Christ has done for them. The Son of God emptied Himself of His glory and humbled Himself to become a man. He entered into our pain, our alienation, and our temptations.<sup>2</sup> He accomplished our victory at Calvary once and for all and now offers that victory to all who believe.

### **The Finale (John 14:1-4)**

In John 14:1-4 Jesus tells His children of the truth of His coming again. Analyzing these words of assurance one finds some interesting points. In verse 1 He tells us of a person we must trust; in verse 2 of a place He is going to prepare; in verse 3, a precious promise—He will come again and receive them to Himself so that they will be forever with Him; in verse 4, a path they know, which leads them to His Father. This is the path to salvation.

It is not possible to separate salvation from the kingdom of God. These are virtually synonymous. The kingdom of God is God’s dynamic rule, breaking into human history through Jesus, confronting, combating, and overcoming evil, spreading the wholeness of personal and communal well-being, taking possession of His people in total blessing and total demand. Entering God’s kingdom is also the beginning of God’s new creation.<sup>3</sup>

Christians of all ages have endured because of a hope in Christ’s return and a future life with Him. The work of salvation has begun already in our hearts. But His second coming will consummate the work of redemption in us. Ahead of us is the assurance of reunion with our Savior and eternal life with Him. What could be more thrilling?

## **REACT**

1. What makes the plan of salvation a complete project?
2. In what ways am I involved in the plan of salvation?
3. Which word most fully expresses your idea of sin: (a) pain (b) distrust (c) disorder (d) imperfection? Explain your answer.
4. Which word most fully expresses Eve’s sin: (a) ambition (b) appetite (c) distrust? Why?
5. What was the greatest sacrifice that Christ had to make in the plan of salvation? Explain your answer.
6. To what extent is this statement true: Jesus died to appease His Father’s need for justice.

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63.

2. John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (Bombay: Gospel Literature Service, 1989), p. 21.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 23.

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*By Prema Gaikwad, dean of the school of education and head of the department of elementary education at Spicer Memorial College, Pune, India.*

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# Fitness for Eternal Life

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: John 14:2, 3**

“I’m going home to prepare a place for you . . . You can be sure that I’ll come back to take you home with me” (John 14:2, 3, The Clear Word Bible).

“The future abode of the righteous, and their everlasting reward, are high and ennobling themes. . . . Dwell upon the marvelous plan of salvation, the great sacrifice made by the King of glory that you might be elevated through the merits of His blood, and by obedience finally be exalted to the throne of Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

You know the signs: wars, rumors of wars, stars falling from the sky, famines, floods. Every eye shall see Him. The Second Coming will be glorious. Those who have long awaited Christ’s triumphant return will be caught up to meet Him. There’s a plan prepared for you. “This glorious plan of redemption is ample in its provisions to save the whole world. Sinful and fallen man may be made complete in Jesus through the forgiveness of sin and the imputed righteousness of Christ.”<sup>2</sup> How can you take part in that glorious trip home? You believe in Christ, but how do you make yourself ready and fit for heaven?

You must study God’s Word. It is our duty to search for and follow God’s will as explained in the Bible. This search for truth must be continuous. During this search, you must believe in God, in His existence, His desire for you to follow Him,

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## How can you take part in that glorious trip home?

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and His ability to reward those who diligently seek Him.<sup>3</sup> “God has appointed means, if we will use them diligently and prayerfully. . . . But if we despise and neglect these appointments and privileges, God will not work a miracle to save any of us, and we will be lost as were Judas and Satan.”<sup>4</sup>

Through study and believing in God, there will be manifest a desire to act on God’s will. You must act upon the faith that God has cultivated in you. “Righteousness within is testified to by righteousness without. He who is righteous within is not hard-hearted and unsympathetic, but day by day he grows into the image of Christ, going on from strength to strength. He who is being sanctified by the truth will be self-controlled, and will follow in the footsteps of Christ . . . The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven, the second is our fitness for heaven.”<sup>5</sup>

What can you do to increase your fitness for heaven starting today?

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1. *Messages to Young People*, p. 383.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 260, 261.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

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*By Joycelyn Ingram, network administrator for Adventist Risk Management, Silver Spring, Maryland.*

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# When, Who, and Why?

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Rom. 5:8, 9**

“Your church started with a failed prediction of the second coming?” my friend asked. “So basically your church is founded on a mistake?”

I hadn’t thought of it in those terms before. But great disappointments like that of 1844 are nothing unusual. As one historian points out, “Historically one of the constants of apocalyptic movements [is that] they have all failed.” One possible conclusion is that such movements fail because there isn’t going to be a second coming. But when Christ Himself warned us not to set dates for His return (Matt. 24:46), should we be surprised that date setting fails?

Almost halfway into the once-frightening year 2000, my reading of history makes me skeptical when I hear, “Jesus must be coming soon—look at the state of the world! It’s never been as bad as this!” Consider:

- The apostle Paul wrote about “we who are still alive” at Jesus’ return (1 Thess. 4:17); clearly he expected the coming to occur in his lifetime.
- The average citizen in the year 1000 didn’t own a calendar or worry about whether his computer system was Y1K-compliant, but evidence suggests an

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## The average citizen in the year 1000 didn’t worry about Y1K.

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increase in apocalyptic prophecies and expectations around that date.

- The Black Death epidemic in the 1340s wiped out one-third of Europe’s population. Not surprisingly, people said, “This is the end of the world.”

Our Millerite ancestors were nothing unique, and recent Y2K survivalists are latecomers to the apocalyptic game. We’ve been waiting 2,000 years for this— isn’t that long enough?

It’s easy to grow discouraged if we believe the Second Coming is all about when. But the coming is really about Who and why. The comforting voice echoing in my mind is not that of any historian but of good old Uncle Arthur. As a child I read in *The Bible Story* that Adam and Eve held their firstborn son and wondered if he would be the promised Messiah-Deliverer. Four thousand years of waiting and expectation followed before God—and only God—knew the time was right to step into human history.

Christ’s first coming brought salvation; His second coming will complete that salvation. When doesn’t matter—for my purposes, when could be today, if I get hit by a bus. What counts is Who He is, why He came the first time, and whether I’ve accepted Him. Our faith is founded not on a mistake of prophecy but on a reality of history: Christ died for us, and salvation is not complete until He returns to bring us home.

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\*Robert Landes, *Apocalyptic Expectations Around the Year 1000* (Center for Millennial Studies, 1996).

*By Trudy J. Morgan-Cole, a freelance writer from St. John’s, Newfoundland.*

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# He Died for Me

## HOW-TO

**Key Text:** Isa. 53:5

“I nailed Him there  
With my sins and my transgressions”<sup>1</sup>

I stood on the stage at Camp MiVoden in Idaho, dressed in a robe and sandals, involved in a song-drama acting out the story as the music played. As one of a crowd of fellow camp staff, I faced “Jesus” hanging on a cross.

“I nailed Him there.” Yes, I did, God. Because of my sins, and the sins of this filthy world, Jesus died. Someone had to endure the separation from God that results from sin. The inconceivable part is that one Man, a deity, chose to.

It’s difficult to comprehend what exactly Jesus did for us. The general concept is often summed up in such words as these: “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8, NIV).

As I have struggled to comprehend this awesome sacrifice, it has helped to dwell on a couple of horrors Jesus faced in my place.

1. Physical. The physical aspect is one that mortals can identify with. I myself cannot tolerate much pain—even a sliver can leave me in agony. However, Jesus, with a lacerated back, had to rub against rough wood in order to get a breath for

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## Think about a time when you felt completely isolated from a loved one.

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His tortured lungs. Crucifixion was a torture designed to be agonizing and prolonged. Death, when it came, was welcomed by the sufferer.

2. Separation from God. The cry, issued from a voice hoarse with dehydration and pain, shrieked through the air, “‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” (Mark 15:34, NIV). Such were the crushing emotions that caused such an agonized cry. Jesus could no longer feel the presence, the assurance, of God. Ellen White says, “[Jesus] feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal.”<sup>2</sup>

Think about a time when you felt completely isolated from a loved one or a friend. Or maybe you, too, have felt that God is distant. That is what eternal separation from God means: He is no longer there to shelter us, to comfort us, to help us, to guide us. Such is the result of sin. Jesus felt it, and it was awful.

We conceivably never will fully understand this sacrifice. Fortunately, Jesus did it for us. But we can show our gratitude by accepting it as a gift and looking forward to our Savior’s transport to His home—our home.

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1. Ray Boltz, “The Hammer,” *The Altar*. Shepherd Boy Music/ASCAP, 1989.  
2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.

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*By Lisa M. Blackwelder, a graduate student in English literature at California State University at Hayward.*

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# Facing the Truth

## OPINION

**Key Texts: Matt. 16:27; John 3:16**

Throughout my life I have heard the message that God should be placed on the highest pedestal imaginable; and humans, being corrupt, deserve all hardship and punishment. This implies that salvation is a pure gift from God to an unworthy species. I disagree, at least in part.

The truth is, there is nothing you can do about humanity's sinful nature. From the first breath anyone of us has taken, it has been decided. We are sinners. We walk, talk, eat, and breathe sin. Try as we might, we cannot change that. From the moment Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden and told that this earth would be cursed, we have been doomed to live this way.

Also note that God did not want or dictate sin, but He did not stop it. He did not just let our first parents die without procreating and starting over again. He let this continue, not to benefit humanity in any way but so that His character could be tested and proved. As He stated in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (NKJV).

The state humans live in supports that claim by the method of our getting out of this mess. Isaiah 19:20 (NKJV) says, "For [humans] will cry to the Lord because of the oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Mighty One, and He will

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## We have been doomed to live this way.

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deliver them." God set up a situation in which we did not doom ourselves, and we cannot save ourselves.

The key element is that sin is not our fault—perpetuating and initiating are not the same. And therefore if God is just, then He cannot expect us to create salvation for ourselves. He has to set up salvation in such a way that humans attain it in a similar way as we received our sinful natures.

In fact, as we are predestined to live as sinners, we are also predestined to live eternally without sin. People have to reject salvation, one way or another, in order *not* to have it. And that is what makes our condition acceptable. God has assured that it is not permanent and that we will be rewarded fairly for our faith. That is why He sent His Son. "Christ came to teach the human family the way of salvation, and He made this way so plain that a little child can walk in it."\*

God is a good Guy and does deserve to be looked up to in faith. And although humans have to endure life in a sinful world, it is only temporary. God rightly claims that He is just, and He proves that claim by His method of salvation. That is the best part: the method of salvation is to avoid rejecting it.

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\**Messages to Young People*, p. 15.

# SEEKING SANCTUARY



**“For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed” (Dan. 8:14, NKJV).**

# Jesus Engages in Unjudicial Conduct

## INTRODUCTION

### Scripture: Rev. 3:21

I was guilty. No doubt about it.

I knew it. The court knew it. All the evidence was right there in my record. No need to pretend anything different.

The only thing left was the formality of pronouncing the sentence, and the law made it abundantly clear what that would be. Now the time had come, and there I stood terrified and trembling before the judge.

For a moment there was silence, then, suddenly, a cry of joy. "Loron, I'm so glad to see you!"

I looked up, dumbfounded. As if seeing Him for the first time, I realized that the judge was my dearest friend.

Now I was overcome with embarrassment and started to mumble something about being sorry for what I had done, but He had already jumped up from the bench and was running toward me with His arms outstretched. "Listen," He said, holding me close, "I know all about what you did, but don't worry; I have already taken care of it." I noticed when He said this that there seemed to be something wrong with His hands, but that didn't stop Him from holding me in an embrace

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## **I was guilty. No doubt about it.**

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that was stronger than death.

Then He paused again and smiled. "Say, what are we doing down here, anyway? Come on up. I want you to sit right here beside me on the bench. You know, we've had to deal with some really tough cases in this court, and your opinion is important to me."

At this, we started walking together toward the place where He was sitting. That was when I heard Him say: "'To anyone who is victorious I will grant a place beside me on my throne, as I myself was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne'" (Rev. 3:21, REB).

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*By Loron T. Wade, a religion professor in the school of theology, Universidad de Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, México.*

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# Good News: The Judgment

## LOGOS

**Dan. 7:9, 10; Ezek. 33:11; Zech. 3:1-6; Rom. 8:1-4; Heb. 4:14-16; James 2:22, 23; Rev. 22:14**

*"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10, NIV).*

*"The court was seated, and the books were opened" (Dan. 7:10, NIV).*

Four scenes are recorded in Daniel 7. In the first one, four great beasts came up out of the sea in the prophet's dream. In the second one, a court of judgment appears, presided over by the Ancient of Days. The third presents the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven. And the last one describes the interpretation of the vision in which is emphasized that the judgment is resolved in favor of the saints of the Most High.

Daniel saw in this vision that a persecuting power will abuse and persecute God's people. But time will come in which the divine court will vindicate them and condemn their oppressors. God's judgment is, then, bad news for those who oppose God and good news for His children. In this world, the evil ones frequently triumph and the good ones lose. But time will come when this condition will be

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## God's judgment is bad news for those who oppose God and good news for His children.

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reversed. The divine judgment is the occasion on which God intervenes to establish justice. This justice means exaltation and vindication for His people.

Therefore, what is the reason to fear the divine judgment? Two possible reasons exist: One, if you do not belong to God's people, you have reasons to fear the judgment, because for the enemies of God and His people, the judgment means terror. Two, if there is a misunderstanding, it is possible that a true child of God may have misunderstood the divine judgment. Perhaps, as a child, he was taught that God carries a strict investigation of his acts, even his thoughts, and that one day they will be exposed before the court of heaven. Maybe he was told that the angels of God have as their function to scrutinize every aspect of his life to register his bad behavior. One day these angels will be witnesses of all. This representation of God's character and His judgment brings anxiety and insecurity to the heart of His children.

But for Daniel, the divine judgment meant a different thing. He wrote: "The saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever" (7:18, NIV); "until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom" (verse 22, NIV). And again: "Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him" (verse 27, NIV). Daniel should have longed for that judgment to come, for he knew what that judgment meant—vindication for his people.

Our Lord had the same certainty when He said: “Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. . . . And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man” (John 5:22-27, NIV). For Jesus, all who confess Him as Lord had the assurance of being absolved in the judgment. So firm this seemed to Him that He presented it in the present time as an actual reality. Even though that awaits a final consummation, for those who believe in Him, however, it is sure and steadfast. We will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, but all who believe in Him will be vindicated. What a confidence and assurance for the Christian!

The judgment must be executed. God would not be a righteous God if there were no judgment. If evil and unrighteousness were never condemned, God would not be a God of justice. But God is love as well. God would never be a God of love if the innocents were not vindicated, if His downtrodden children were not exalted. That is the reason “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:10, NIV). As Christians we should know that the divine judgment is not something to be feared but something to be longed for; it is not something that brings terror but something that brings joy. The author of Hebrews expressed it in this way: “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Heb. 4:16, NIV).

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1, NIV).

The main reason the children of God need not fear the judgment is that they are part of the family of God through Christ, and therefore, they have been declared righteous for what Christ has done for them. This belief is transformed into a powerful dynamic that brings confidence. They know beforehand what the verdict of the judgment will be. In the face of this reality they feel liberated from all condemnation. The apostle Paul had this assurance: “What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? . . . Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us” (Rom. 8:31-34, NIV). Therefore, the apostle concluded, we have nothing to fear, because nothing can separate us from God (verses 35-39).

## REACT

1. Has there been any moment in my experience in which I feared the judgment?
2. If I were to stand before the divine judgment today, how would I feel?

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*By Eloy Wade, dean of the school of theology, Universidad de Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, México.*

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# Still Waiting

## TESTIMONY

**Scripture: Zech. 3:1-6**

“The hope of Christ’s return has been a dynamic conviction throughout the history of the Christian church. The fact that He has not come yet, has not destroyed faith.”<sup>1</sup> God’s people are still waiting for Jesus to come. We haven’t lost faith. For over one hundred fifty-five years the Seventh-day Adventist Church has powerfully announced to the world the imminence of our Lord’s return. Nevertheless, He has not come. Why hasn’t He come? How long are we supposed to live in this sick and confused world? These are some of the questions that we as God’s people often ask.

In 1844 more than one hundred thousand Millerites were expecting that Jesus would come on October 22, but He did not come. Confused, disheartened, and sad, they didn’t know what to do. But a small group among them, found in their Bibles precious answers to their questions. The doctrine of the sanctuary was the key to why Jesus had not come. Ellen White says that light from the sanctuary illuminated the past, the present, and the future.<sup>2</sup>

Ellen White adds, “The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ’s work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth. . . . The intercession of Christ in man’s behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as

## “The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ’s work.”

was His death upon the cross.”<sup>3</sup>

Jesus is still doing a special work on behalf of His people. It is described in Malachi 3:2, 3. The prophet says that the Lord is purifying the sons of Levi. What does the word “purifying” mean? “While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God’s people upon earth.”<sup>4</sup> This needs to be done before He appears in glory. “When this work shall have been accomplished, the followers of Christ will be ready for His appearing.”<sup>5</sup>

Yes, we are still waiting, but we are not in despair. We have confidence that Jesus is accomplishing a special task on our behalf in heaven above. We have confidence also that when He shall come, His church will be ready to meet Him in glory. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for all that You have done and for all You are doing for us now.

1. Ralph E. Neall, *How Long O Lord* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1988), p. 79.

2. *The Great Controversy*, p. 423.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 488, 489.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 425.

5. *Ibid.*

*By Francisco Flores Chable, director of the Ellen White Research Center, Universidad de Morelos, Nuevo Leon, México.*

## “Be Quiet, Satan”

### EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Zech. 3:1-7**

Two aspects of the judgment are contrasted in Daniel 7. The focus on the negative, condemnatory side of God’s dealing with sin in the universe (the judgment on the “little horn,” verses 8, 11, 25, 26) is contrasted with the positive side of the judgment (“for the saints,” verses 21, 27). The context, however, focuses on the cause.

Zechariah 3 focuses on the results of the problem: the sinfulness of God’s people and a solution. Satan accuses Joshua before the Lord (verses 1, 2). The high priest represents the people in their sinfulness.<sup>1</sup> It is significant that Satan’s accusation is never negated: It is not the claims of wrongdoing that are false; rather, it is what to do about them.

The Lord, the speaker, uses His own name to show the authority of the rebuke. He rebukes Satan twice: First He addresses him by name (title), then repeating the rebuke, He refers by name to Jerusalem, having been rescued at the last moment. The double rebuke presents a contrast of God’s aim: to condemn Satan for his attitude and to pluck His people from destruction. The three names in the double rebuke present a minifocus on the major players in the great controversy: the Lord,

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### After those initial verses, Satan is completely ignored!

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the adversary, and Jerusalem (the people to be saved). After those initial verses, Satan is completely ignored! God’s focus in the rest of the chapter is on what to do to solve the people’s problem: how to reinstate them into the company of those who know God and love Him.

Twice God gives commands regarding the high priest (verses 4, 5), and those commands were carried out: The man’s dirty clothes were removed and clean clothes put on. The turban, part of the high priest’s clothes, had a gold medallion with the inscription “Holy to the Lord” (Exod. 28:36, NIV). This meant that Joshua and the people had been pardoned and were qualified to serve before the Lord.<sup>2</sup> Twice Joshua is asked to acknowledge what God had done (verses 4, 7-10). These addresses to the human being emphasize the contractual nature of what salvation is about. The importance and unity of verses 7-10 are indicated by the title of authority, “Lord of hosts,” which surrounds the passage (verses 7, 9, 10): God’s redeemed will have authority to govern in the world as they see the wisdom of God’s rules and live by them.

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1. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 583.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 584.

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*By Laren Kurtz, professor of Old Testament in the school of theology, Universidad de Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, México.*

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# The Advocate

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Heb. 4:14-16**

I love my elder brother. When he got his first paying job, I was proud to know that he was going to bring some money home, so I went to see him work. On that particular day I broke several crystal bottles that belonged to his company, and my brother had to pay for the damage I caused. He never denied I was his brother, never yelled at me. Instead, he was willing to pay for my wrongdoing. I was happy to have such a brother. That incident had a tremendous impact on my life. If I had loved my brother before, now I loved him even more! He was tall, strong, intelligent, and kind—someone who knew everything. As I grew up, I came to know Someone bigger, stronger, more intelligent, and infinitely kind, who in spite of the many troubles I caused Him, is not ashamed to call me brother (see Hebrews 2:11-13, NIV).

Our relationship with Jesus Christ is a personal affair. He knocks at the door of your life for the purpose of coming in and sitting down and eating with you.

**1. He is your Big Brother, the Great High Priest.** He knows everything, He is the strongest, wisest, and kindest brother you can have. Don't lose your faith in Him; instead, hold firmly to the faith you profess (Heb. 4:14). How are you going to do that?

- Spend a little time with Him every day. Talk to Him.

## He is the strongest, wisest, and kindest brother you can have.

- Read His letters. He has great news for you every day.
- Sing to Him. He doesn't mind if you can't carry a tune.

**2. He knows you very well; your life for Him is an open book.** You waste your time if you try to hide things from Him. He wants the best for you, and because He knows you, He loves you more, because He already traveled the road you are now traveling.

- Develop a personal fellowship and communion with Him, and you will come to know Him as a friend.
- It is through knowing Him that you are ready to meet Him when He comes again.

**3. Approach Him with confidence; He is merciful and very kind.** Don't be afraid, bring Him your messy life. He will help you in your time of need. Christ is the only one who can fulfill the promises for which we are waiting.

- Have faith in Him. "If you consent, He will so identify Himself with your thoughts and aims."
- Blend your heart and mind into conformity to His will.
- If you look to Jesus and keep your eyes fixed upon Him, there's not a chance in the world that you will be afraid of His coming, because He is your Big Brother and He loves you. Be happy in Jesus!

*By Hector E. Ramal, professor of church ministry in the school of theology, Universidad de Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, México.*

# Fear or Celebration?

## OPINION

**Key Text: Heb. 4:14-16**

The second coming of Christ and the investigative judgment in the heavenly sanctuary are interconnected because when Christ comes again He will reward every human being as his or her deeds indicate (Rev. 22:12). Since our eternal destiny is being determined in the judgment going on in heaven, it is of supreme importance for us today to pay attention to Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. It is the final act in the drama of redemption that was prefigured in the earthly sanctuary by the services of the Day of Atonement, a day when the sanctuary was cleansed of all the records of confessed sins and when the penitents were vindicated (cleansed from their sins).

Jesus Christ intercedes for us as our High Priest on the basis of the blood He gave on the cross. His intercession in our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary is as essential as was His death upon the cross. By His priestly ministry He is completing the work He began by His death.

If this is so, why should we be afraid to face God's judgment? There are a few reasons for fear, if we are nominal Christians who identify with Christ only in name and our deeds are against His will, if we are conscious of our sins but we have not confessed them, if we come to judgment displaying our "good" works. But if we have accepted Christ

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## **If we have accepted Christ as our Savior, we have nothing to fear.**

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as our Savior and His blood as the payment of our sins, we have nothing to fear because He has already forgiven and cleansed our sins.

Indeed, if we have Christ's forgiveness and grace, the judgment would not scare us, but it would be a time to celebrate our salvation. Satan has tried to distort the picture of our Judge and His judgment. Some see God as a harsh judge, looking for our faults and sins so that He can punish us. The Bible tells us that God knows not only our weaknesses but also our struggle to be faithful (Rev. 2:2). Above all, it tells us that God gave His only Son to die in order to pay every debt we have ever incurred (John 3:16). In addition, the Bible gives us the good news that Christ is our Judge and Savior (John 5:22). This should be another reason to celebrate for those who have communion with Him.

Since prior to the second coming of Christ each of us will have to face God's judgment, we cannot ignore the work He is doing in our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary. As the Israelites (Lev. 23:27), we are called to afflict our souls and repent while there is still a time of grace.

## **REACT**

If Christ's death and resurrection are enough to save a believer, why is there a necessity for the investigative judgment?

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*By Victor Figueroa, a professor of theology at Universidad de Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, México.*

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# LIFE'S MARATHON EVENT



**“‘And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come’” (Matt. 24:14, NIV).**

# When You “Hit the Wall”

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Heb. 12:1**

*“Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Heb. 12:1, NIV).*

The Olympic stadium is filled to the topmost tier. There are many athletes in the stands. Their race has already been run. Some have run good races; others have just blown it. You are standing in the middle of the arena, and everyone is looking at you. Now it is time for your race.

Strangely, though, there are only two people in this event. There’s you and this other guy. There is something quite sinister about him. He’s actually quite ugly. He always seems to have a sneer on his face. You know his reputation as a cheat. You know he is also a coach and he has been around for a long time. What chance do you have? He must be brilliant at this race. Oddly enough, there is only one person who can beat him. Just one person. That one person is your Coach. With His coaching, you can beat this guy too. The call comes over, “Ready!” You walk to the starting line. It is time for your race. It is time for you to spread the message that God gave you. The message of the Second Coming. “Get set!”

Now, things are different. You don’t look full, healthy, and primed for the race

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## **He always seems to have a sneer on his face.**

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anymore. You are approaching the “pain barrier,” and you will soon “hit the wall.” The high temperature of 32 Celsius and 85 percent humidity makes this marathon all that much harder to endure. At 12 kilometers into the race and 30 left to go, your first thought of “is it worth it?” begins to nag at you. You are just getting to the real hard work of the marathon. This is the time when the distractions hit: the pain telling you to stop, the lack of energy, feeling as though you will faint. The blue line on the highway winds endlessly on ahead of you, up the next hill. You wonder what you will encounter ahead. You click your mind back into neutral, keeping the steady rhythm of your feet. Oh, how they hurt!

Those before you have done it, and you can too. All those great people of the Bible—Abraham, Ruth, Noah, Moses, Rahab, Samson—and others that you have known in your own lifetime. Persevere, keep in touch with the Coach at every opportunity. He will instruct you on strategy and encourage you to keep going.

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*By Jessica Coombs, a student at Lilydale Adventist Academy, Victoria, Australia.*

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# On Fire for God

## LOGOS

**Gen. 6:8-13; Num. 13:27-33; Luke 1:17, 67-79; Acts 1:8-11; 2 Pet. 3:10-13; 1 John 3:1-11**

Catastrophic events, impending disasters, supernatural occurrences. Strange things are happening with remarkable frequency around our planet. Thankfully God has warned us of these, and we can rest assured that He has certainly not abandoned us. In fact, He has promised "Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7, NKJV). In the past, God has always had His special witnesses to give direction to a lost world. So today too, He is calling men and women, and most especially young people, who are willing to stand up for Him and bear witness to His soon coming.

**"Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth" (Jer. 1:6, NKJV).**

Never ever think that as a young person you are not able to witness for your God. In a time of unparalleled apostasy in Judah, God called upon a youth to deliver His message. Like so many others, when the challenge came, Jeremiah had his excuses. However, in Jeremiah God saw a young man who would not buckle under the weight of fearful opposition. Often we also feel a reluctance to share our faith despite our calling to be "'witnesses to Me . . . to the end of the earth'" (Acts 1:8,

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## Strange things are happening with remarkable frequency.

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NKJV). We feel inadequate, overwhelmed, or simply afraid. Rest assured that hand in hand with His commission God grants the ability to fulfill it.

Notice that hard on the heels of His call to Jeremiah God extends a wonderful promise. "'Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you'" (Jer. 1:8, NKJV). Jeremiah still met with hardships, ridicule, and contempt. In fact, he reached a point in his life at which he cried out in anguish, "'I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name. But,'" he states, "'His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not'" (Jer. 20:9, NKJV).

In life we all have times when we feel it is simply too hard to witness, that God expects too much of us. We may feel intimidated, shy, or unwilling to be different. Standing at the crossroads, we may think we are alone, but God's promise still holds. He is right by our side, as Jeremiah discovered. When God's Word becomes a burning passion in our lives, then we will triumph in the difficult times.

**"I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jer. 31:34, NKJV).**

Jeremiah unflinchingly and fearlessly delivered his messages of swift-coming judgments. Yet these warnings of the impending destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians were accompanied by messages of reconciliation and the assurance of forgiveness. Our God is a God of mercy as well as justice. He desires

deliverance, not destruction, reconciliation not retribution, communion not condemnation.

Our message today should be not only of warning; but far more importantly, it should encourage others to find the Savior. When Noah preached of worldwide destruction, he extended God's invitation of salvation in the ark. God has also provided for our eternal salvation through His Son, and He wants the world to know this. No one need be afraid of the Second Coming if they know the King. The challenge for us today is to take the everlasting good news about Jesus to every "nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6).

**"What manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God?" (2 Pet. 3:11, 12, NKJV).**

What a question! A remarkable answer is displayed in the life of John the Baptist. Here was a man called to minister in the spirit and power of Elijah, the prophet of fire. And like Elijah, John was a representative of God's final messengers who are also called "to make ready a people prepared" for the triumphant return of Christ (Luke 1:17, NKJV). Ellen White emphasizes that such messengers "must be holy . . . a temple for the indwelling Spirit of God."<sup>1</sup> As Luke 1:15 records, John was filled with the Spirit of God and Ellen White states that "so far as possible, he closed every avenue by which Satan could enter."<sup>2</sup> He chose to close every avenue he could!

As God's messengers focused on the imminent return of Jesus, should we not act in the same way? When our friends head out drinking, what choice do we make? When images of sex and violence bombard our eyes, how do we react? When the world's music calls the tune, how will we move? I want to encourage you as Paul did long ago, "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19, NKJV). Without the Spirit of God, there is no possibility of living for God.

Today God desires young people, like Jeremiah, who have His Word burning in their hearts. He desires young people, like John the Baptist, who have His Spirit burning in their lives, young people who will carry the final proclamation of salvation and Jesus' soon return to a dying world. Why not choose now to be among God's end-time messengers who in the very near future will stand on the "sea of glass mingled with fire"? (Rev. 15:2, NKJV).

## **REACT**

1. Why is witnessing such an imperative? Consider both those witnessed to and those who witness.

2. Should we be preaching that the world is lost (bad news) or saved (good news)? Explain your answer.

3. Is it more important to close every avenue to Satan or to open every avenue to God? In everyday terms, what is the difference?

4. How do you respond to the images of the Holy Spirit as a cloven tongue of fire and something burning in your bones? Explain your answer.

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1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 100.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

## “Brighten the Corner Where You Are”

### TESTIMONY

**Scripture: Isa. 43:10**

*“You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me” (Isa. 43:10, NIV).*

“In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention.”<sup>1</sup>

“So far as his opportunities extend, everyone who has received the light of truth is under the same responsibility as was the prophet of Israel to whom came the word: ‘Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at My mouth, and warn them from Me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to

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### “Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers.”

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turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.’ Ezekiel 33:7-9.”<sup>2</sup>

“As God called Daniel to witness for Him in Babylon, so He calls us to be His witnesses in the world today. In the smallest as well as the largest affairs of life, He desires us to reveal to men the principles of His kingdom. Many are waiting for some great work to be brought to them, while daily they lose opportunities for revealing faithfulness to God. Daily they fail of discharging with wholeheartedness the little duties of life. While they wait for some large work in which they may exercise supposedly great talents, and thus satisfy their ambitious longings, their days pass away.”<sup>3</sup>

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1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 19.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 20.

3. *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 487, 488.

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*By Loren Engelbrecht, a first-year science/business student at Monash University, Victoria, Australia.*

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# We Are to Be Witnesses

## EVIDENCE

**Key Texts:** Heb. 11:32-40; 12:1, 2

“The people of God are His representatives upon the earth, and He intends that they shall be lights in the moral darkness of this world. Scattered all over the country, in the towns, cities, and villages, they are God’s witnesses, the channels through which He will communicate to an unbelieving world the knowledge of His will and the wonders of His grace.”<sup>1</sup>

God has always had special messengers to proclaim His plan for the future. Noah warned of a worldwide Flood. Moses led the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. Caleb and Joshua were used to lead His people into the Promised Land. John the Baptist announced the coming of Jesus Christ. God is urging us to be the messengers to the world before Jesus returns. There is no time to lose because there is not one person who knows the day or the hour on which the Lord will come. Everybody must be told of the Lord’s return. We are to carry the everlasting gospel to the whole world.

There are many signs that this world is passing away. The “beginning of the birth pangs” are showing, as it says in Matthew 24:8 (NRSV). These birth pangs are the false messiahs, rumors of wars, famines, and earthquakes. These are all

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## God has always had special messengers to proclaim His plan for the future.

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happening in the world today. This is why we must proclaim the message now.

How can we be messengers? First, we must make sure that we accept salvation and are committed to God. Next, we must study the Word of God faithfully and let Christ abide in us. The last thing is probably the most important and that is that we must have complete faith in Christ. “He who would confess Christ must have Christ abiding in Him. He cannot communicate that which he has not received. The disciples might speak fluently on doctrines, they might repeat the words of Christ Himself; but unless they possessed Christlike meekness and love, they were not confessing Him.”<sup>2</sup> It is the same for us; we need to have a genuine relationship with Christ to witness effectively.

The parable of the fig tree is a good example of Jesus’ forgiveness (Luke 13:6-9). The Gardner represents Jesus and the barren fig tree His followers. We are Christians, but we may not be witnessing or confessing Jesus; this is the barrenness of the tree. But even though we are not producing anything, Jesus still gives us a chance to confess Him. These chances will not go on forever, so we must accept them, go on in faith to “run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Heb. 12:1, NIV).

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1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 134.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 357.

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*By Aloma Southern, a student at Lilydale Adventist Academy, Victoria, Australia.*

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# Witnessing for the Second Coming

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: 2 Pet. 3:12, 14**

In Acts 1:8 we are told that we have to witness about Christ's second coming to people all over the world. Yet many people question how we can do this. How can I, a single individual, witness to people all over the world? It is not necessary for us to witness all over the world. All we have to do is witness to those with whom we come in contact, and the Holy Spirit will touch their lives and influence them. Then these people will, in turn, influence others in an ever-expanding circle until the whole world is ready for the Second Coming. So, how can we be witnesses to the Second Coming?

**1. We have to believe what we are witnessing about.** This means that we have to live our lives as though we believe the Second Coming is imminent. We also have to expect people to be watching us all the time. We have to live as though our every movement is under scrutiny and speculation. As Peter says, we have to "live holy and godly lives" and "make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him" (2 Pet. 3:11, 14, NIV).

**2. We have to witness as widely as possible.** Everybody we come into contact with is a person whom we may influence. Thus our every word and action has the

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## We must be prepared to step outside our circle of comfort.

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potential to be a witness to all people. We must also be prepared to step outside our circle of comfort and witness to everybody, not only those whom we are comfortable discussing religious matters with. This can be one of the hardest things to do, as it is much harder to witness to people we don't know than to friends and neighbors.

## REACT

1. How can you witness outside your circle of comfort?
2. Does one's failure to witness affect literally the imminence of Christ's second coming? Explain your answer.
3. If our task is to proclaim the three angels' messages and "to allow nothing else to absorb our attention," then how should we relate to such issues as the environment, cruelty to animals and children, racism, and genocide?
4. How do the biblical characters Daniel and Samson relate to the concept that God gives greater responsibility to those who prove themselves capable of completing things of lesser importance?

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*By Ken and Brad McClintock, students at Lilydale Adventist Academy, Victoria, Australia.*

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# The Way We Act

## OPINION

### Key Text: Acts 1:8

“*You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*” (Acts 1:8, NKJV).

While on holidays at a caravan park, I met some people also camping there. Over the time we were there, we became quite good friends. Being a Christian and a nondrinker, I watched while everyone around me constantly drank alcohol. It was hard to say No continuously to generous offers. However, people soon realized that I was different and began to ask why. I talked to them and explained my religion—expecting them to think I was an utter nut. Instead, they listened intently and asked more questions about my faith.

Other people realize that your actions are different. This opens up new avenues to talk about your faith without seeming to preach to them. We should not hesitate to speak up during a discussion and state our views openly. If you act unashamed about your faith, people will respect your opinions if you can back them up. It is important, therefore, to know exactly what the Bible says and know how Jesus acted.

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## It was hard to say No continuously to generous offers.

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We should make Jesus our example. His actions spoke louder than words. He preached, but often His teaching was prompted by His actions. By performing miracles and helping others, people began to question Him about His faith and realized that He had something to offer.

As Christians we need to witness to others. We must proclaim the message of Christ wholeheartedly. “The world has a right to know just what may be expected from every intelligent human being. He who is a living embodiment of firm, decided, righteous principles, will be a living power upon his associates; and he will influence others by his Christianity.” Even if we are ostracized for our faith, it is a little sacrifice if someone is influenced to take a stand for Christianity.

## REACT

How can I be a better witness for Christ?

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*\*Messages to Young People, p. 29.*

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*By Sonja Ralph, a student at Lilydale Adventist Academy, Victoria, Australia.*

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# REMNANT AND RESPONSIBILITY



**“Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water’” (Rev. 14:6, 7, NIV).**

# He Is Coming Back

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Rom. 12:2; Rev. 22:7**

The shock of the message was indescribable. My father had just e-mailed me to say that my grandmother was ill and had been admitted to the hospital. Two thoughts ran through my mind: Should I interrupt my university courses and board a plane to the West Indies or stay and heed the words of my father that there was no need to panic, that she was going to be all right.

One week passed and then two. No change in the situation. In the back of my mind I knew I should leave now if I wanted to see her alive again. On the other hand, I was wrapped up in my classes and wanted to deny the situation. I told myself that everything would be all right.

Yet, the signs were loud and clear: She was in the hospital, and she was very ill. The third week passed. I could not bear it anymore. It was time to leave for the West Indies. It was Monday and I booked my air ticket to fly a week later. I planned everything just right—enough time to finish my classes and still see my grandmother alive. Well, this is what I thought. On Wednesday I received news that she had passed away.

Why, Lord? This was my first reaction, yet I had had the opportunity for three

## Should I interrupt my university courses and board a plane to the West Indies?

weeks to see her alive if I had really wanted to. The importance of university classes, lectures, and financial matters meant nothing to me when I heard news of her death.

The hustle and bustle of life catches up with me on my daily walk with the Lord. Oh, sure, I attend the occasional midweek prayer meeting and participate in the occasional street-witnessing program. However, the apology “Lord, I’m sorry. When I finish my degree, I’ll have more time for you” is a too frequent cry. Tomorrow it will be something else.

God has promised that in the last days His remnant people will proclaim the everlasting gospel to prepare humankind for His Son’s soon coming. The devil is very good at keeping us away from the simple task of witnessing for our Lord. Whether we face the issue or ignore it, the Lord’s return is imminent and the last days are upon us. Are we too busy taking care of everything else or doing God’s work? The last days are full of deception, loss of time, and a much quickened lifestyle. The Lord’s instructions are clear: “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15, NIV).

The Lord will return, but will you help tell everyone?

*By Lynette Mapp, a final-year business economics student at the University of Leicester, England.*

# True Messengers or Deceived?

## LOGOS

**Exod. 20:11; 31:17; Dan. 7:9, 10; Isa. 13:19-22; 2 Thess. 2:1-17; Rev. 12:17; 14:6-14**

At the time of this writing, the year is 1999. The neon sign sparkling from the top of the Eiffel Tower in Paris flashes the countdown to the millennium across the dark skies. From every side the message is clear. Every day the number of days until the turn of the century is changed to give clear and precise information as to how long we must wait.

Likewise, in capital cities around the world, warnings are being given as to how much time we have left.

To add to the millennium frenzy, Hollywood has churned out film after film about the end of the world by tornado, volcano, meteorite, or by the cunning of some evil force—and only one Man can save us . . .

Computer analysts and programmers are working furiously around the clock to try to combat the “millennium bug,” which threatens to disable computer systems in hospitals, airports, banks, and universities around the globe. Some predict untold chaos.

Meanwhile, an event far bigger and far greater than any dawn of a new millennium is waiting to happen. A message having consequences that reach

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## Warnings are being given as to how much time we have left.

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farther than any other must be proclaimed.

### The Message (Rev. 14:6, 7)

*“I saw another angel flying through the heavens, carrying the everlasting Good News to preach to those on earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. ‘Fear God,’ he shouted, ‘and extol his greatness. For the time has come when he will sit as Judge. Worship him who made the heaven and the earth, the sea and all its sources’ ” (Rev. 14:6, 7, TLB).*

With urgency, Ellen White writes, “We must give this message quickly, line upon line, precept upon precept. Men will soon be forced to great decisions, and it is our duty to see that they are given an opportunity to understand the truth, that they may take their stand intelligently on the right side. The Lord calls upon His people to labor—labor earnestly and wisely—while probation lingers.”<sup>1</sup>

A day has been set when every human will be judged (Acts 17:31). No one will be spared (Rom. 14:10). Christ’s judgment will be passed. Everyone will appear before Christ’s judgment seat to receive what is due for the things done, good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10). The message of Christ’s soon return, the coming judgment, and the provision of salvation for the forgiveness of all sin (Rom. 3:23-26) must be heard.

How will they know?

## The Messengers

“God could have reached His object in saving sinners without our aid; but in order for us to develop a character like Christ’s, we must share in His work.”<sup>2</sup>

The remnant have been selected to proclaim the end-time message. The Lord will work through humble instruments led by the unction of His Spirit. Fearlessly, they will lay open the sins of Babylon (Isa. 13:19-22). The enforcing of observance of the church by civil authority, the deceptive influence of spiritualism, and the rapid progress of papal power will all be unmasked. Thousands and thousands will listen who have never heard words like these (see *The Great Controversy*, page 606.)

With love, Christ gives a special warning to His messengers. Satan is out to deceive all, and he nearly achieves his aim but for the intervention of God (Mark 13:5, 22). False prophets and false christs appear, but God’s plan of salvation is too important for Him to let it be thwarted by the deceived. In order to prepare the remnant for the task of completing the proclamation of the gospel, God has made the order of events clear (Daniel 7), outlined the signs of the end of the age (Matthew 24), exposed the intent of the evil one (2 Thess. 2:1-17), and given us His Holy Spirit to guide us.

## The Scriptures—Our Safeguard

The only way to combat “the influence of false teachers and the delusive power of spirits of darkness”<sup>3</sup> is for God’s people to be directed to Holy Scripture. If the truth is not known thoroughly, detail by detail, it will not be possible to distinguish it from the counterfeit, which the devil is painstakingly constructing. He knows his Scripture—do we?

Not only must the messengers read the message, they must live the message. By doing so, they will show that God’s law can be kept and that His character is pure and above reproach. That is a privilege.

## REACT

1. Jot down three key texts that summarize the judgment-hour message.
2. How will you help a colleague/workmate understand that God’s love will be revealed even through the judgment?
3. Is the remnant synonymous with the Adventist Church? How? Will other faiths be saved? Support with Scripture.
4. How can we safeguard ourselves against the deceptions of Satan? What assurance do we have for the time of trouble?

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1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp.126, 127.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 142.

3. *The Great Controversy*, p. 593.

# Proclaiming the Good News: Telling It Like It Is

## TESTIMONY

### Key Text: Mark 13:5

When we witness, we are giving a testimony of an event. A testimony is a series of factual statements. Don't believe that definition just because it is written in this quarterly (see Mark 13:5). Go and check it out for yourself in a dictionary. Prove it to be a fact! Often our witness is made ineffective because we settle for hearsay instead of finding out for ourselves (Acts 17:11). Always check with the source; it makes your witness that much more effective. Telling the news is more effective if you have read the news for yourself. Witnessing of the everlasting good news is more effective if you've read the Good Newspaper (Bible) for yourself.

Not only are we to read and know the Scriptures, we should also let it change the way we walk and talk in our lives. The witness we then give is not only factual but also evident in our behavior.

Peter puts it this way: "In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Pet. 3:15, NIV).

Ellen White similarly encourages us: "It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the

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## Telling the news is more effective if you have read the news for yourself.

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light and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help we are to form our opinions for ourselves as we are to answer for ourselves before God."<sup>1</sup>

Discovering through study that the return of Christ is imminent changes the way we view things. It is no longer *God's people will proclaim the gospel* but rather *I am proclaiming the gospel*.

"So now, before the coming of the Son of man, the everlasting gospel is to be preached 'to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.' Rev. 14:6, 14. God 'hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world.' Acts 17:31. Christ tells us when that day shall be ushered in. He does not say that all the world will be converted, but that 'this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.' By giving the gospel to the world it is in our power to hasten our Lord's return. We are not only to look for but to hasten the coming of the day of God."<sup>2</sup>

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 598.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 633.

# Called to Be Torchbearers

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: 2 Kings 19:29-31**

The concept of the remnant runs throughout Scripture and the whole of Christian history. It indicates that God has always preserved a people who have rather remained faithful to Him in the face of widespread apostasy. God's remnant people were always endowed with distinctive characteristics. Noah exhibited courage as he and his family stood before the masses condemning their actions by the authority of God's Word. Elijah demonstrated faith as he stood before the prophets of Baal, confident in God's omnipotence. The apostles preached in an age in which corrupt rulers and church leaders had grown neglectful of the ways of righteousness. The Waldenses risked death to deliver the words of truth to a population shrouded in the darkness of ignorance and contempt.

Seventh-day Adventists fit into this pattern of the remnant. We are charged with the mission of proclaiming the three angels' messages, the message of Christ's soon return and of His judgment and mercy in the days of earth's closing drama.

Our message is no less vital and or powerful than that of the patriarchs of history. We have been entrusted with the mandate of proclaiming Christ's imminent return to an indifferent world (Rev. 14:6-12). What manner of people,

## Seventh-day Adventists fit into this pattern of the remnant.

therefore, ought we to be as God's last day messengers?

The answer to this question can be found in Galatians 3:26-29. As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we must not make the same nearly fatal mistakes as did the children of Israel. We do not hold a monopoly on heaven or enjoy a guarantee of a place in it. We are to be modern-day Noahs and Elijahs, by no means an easy feat. The lives of these men mirrored that of Christ.

The remnant represents the righteousness, purity, and justice of God. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21, NIV). We must have the faith of Abraham, and then we are heirs of God's kingdom. "Let us, then, cheerfully suffer something for Jesus' sake, crucify self daily, and be partakers of Christ's sufferings here, that we may be made partakers with Him of His glory, and be crowned with glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life."

God has given us a wonderful commission of love and hope for a dying world. We are the salt of the earth, the channels through which God desires to pour out His final message of warning and of redemption to a languishing world. Let us hold up the torch high for the world to see.

*\*Early Writings, p. 114.*

*By Karen-Mae C. Hill, a second-year law student, with French law and language emphasis, at the University of Leicester, England.*

# God Needs You!

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Matt. 24:14**

One of the signs Jesus gave in Matthew 24 was that the “gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14, NIV). For this to be accomplished, God needs you! Angels can’t do the job alone—they have never sinned, hence they can’t empathize with humankind. However, “We are to be laborers together with the heavenly angels in presenting Jesus to the world.”<sup>1</sup> Witnessing is a privilege God gives to us. So how does one achieve a successful witnessing life?

**1. Get to know God.** How can you tell others about God if you don’t know Him personally? Spend time daily with God in prayer, Bible study, and meditation. Try to relate the passage to your life. No matter how sinful you are, you can enter into a partnership with God. Just repent, confess, accept forgiveness, and surrender yourself daily.

**2. Determine to witness.** If your heart is not in something, you’ll never be able to do the task as well as it deserves to be done. Therefore you must want to witness. Ask God for opportunities to witness. They will come.

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## “We are to be laborers together with the heavenly angels.”

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**3. Live a transparent life.** When Jesus was on earth, His life was transparent. No fault could be found in Him. His character was love and self-sacrifice continually. The life He lived was the greatest testimony to the Father’s character. To be like Jesus should be our aim. A godly life is the most powerful witness one can give.

**4. Use different methods of witnessing.** There are many ways to witness. You could use prayer and Bible study. Start with simple concepts like “Who is God?” If a person is going through a rough patch, counsel them with the Bible. If a person needs financial assistance, you could buy clothes, shoes, food, books, stationery, etc.

Another good way to witness is to use music. You could buy a CD or record a compilation of songs that tell of God’s love. Give the music to someone along with a note. The note could be a poem or text about God’s love for them. Even if you are shy, you could do this. Another suggestion is to begin a puppet team and go into the neighborhoods. Unlike us, puppets have no barriers to cross. The message gets straight to the heart of the audience.

In all these forms, lift up the name of Jesus. “Whatever one’s calling in life, his first interest should be to win souls for Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

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1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 297.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 822.

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By Kevin A. T. Stuart, a first-year medical student at Leicester University, England.

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# How Will They Know Unless We Tell Them?

## OPINION

**Key Text: Ezek. 33:7-9**

Jesus has finally returned for His children. Houses, buildings, and monuments are toppling around you. You fixed your eyes on Him, but from the corner of your eye you catch sight of a former college mate running to hide. Your eyes meet. Then you hear it, those words that shred your inner being, words that until the New Jerusalem appears will haunt you. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

But, hey, what does it matter? You’re going to heaven. Your faithful life and obedience to God has paid off. Ezekiel 33:7-9 tells us otherwise—quite frightening, isn’t it? Judgment day comes. Your experience could be summarized like this:

The great screen unfolds, at the judgment you behold  
All that your life could have been,  
If you’d kept to the road, let Jesus carry the load  
Instead of walking in sin.

However, you’ve been forgiven, you have a place now in heaven.  
And you learned to live by God’s laws.

But the worst point of all is when you see you could have been like Paul  
Doing a great work for the Lord’s cause

Winning souls left, right, and center, all your friends could have entered  
The paradise that now is yours

if only you had told them when you had the chance  
Maybe they would be there with you.

Remember, you do have the choice to tell them.

It is very much dependent upon you.

It is time for us to stop playing Christian. Let’s walk the walk,  
talk the talk, pray the life, and live it.

Just because you are a member of the remnant church doesn’t exactly constitute you as the remnant! Being part of the remnant means sharing in God’s work which involves the dreaded “W” word—witnessing. It doesn’t have to be standing on a soap box preaching the end of the world. It is by your life, by offering to pray with your brokenhearted friend who is stressed out, by telling others there is a friend who will stick closer than a brother.

“The Lord measures with exactness every possibility for service . . . We shall be judged according to what we ought to have done, but did not accomplish because we did not use our powers to glorify God.”<sup>1</sup> “Even if we do not lose our souls, we shall realize in eternity the result of our unused talents. For all the knowledge and ability that we might have gained and did not, there will be an eternal loss.”<sup>2</sup>

1. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 363.

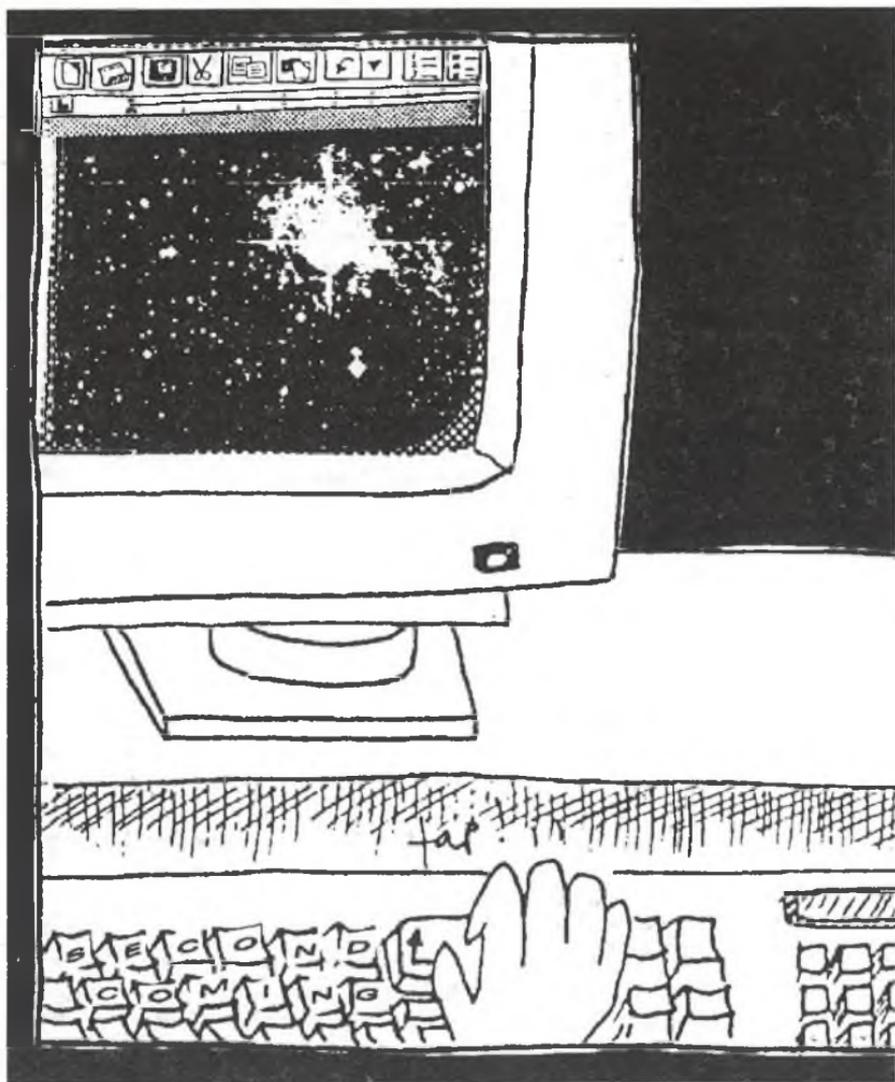
2. *Ibid.*

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*By Aletta Carbone, a pre-medical student from Leicester, England.*

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# EOLAWKI?



“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1, NIV).

# He of the Signs

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: 1 Pet. 3:10, 11**

There is an old adage that says, “A thing is better in anticipation than in culmination.”

In most cases this statement is true. Witness, for instance, the two-week build-up to the Super Bowl, the biggest sporting event in America and, increasingly, in the world. Two whole weeks of player quotes, human interest stories, and endless analysis. The game often fails to live up to the hype.

Perhaps the only event in the history of the world that will surpass its hype is the second coming of Jesus. Jesus’ coming will be a spectacle of gargantuan proportions (Rev. 1:7), and as such men and women are in the throes of anticipation. I recently went on the Internet and typed “second coming” in the search field of the Alta Vista search engine. Immediately more than one hundred four thousand web pages came up—and that’s just interest on the Internet where tech-savvy people hang out.

Luke tells us of a time when “men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken” (Luke 21:26, NIV). Perhaps that time has come. With the dawn of the twenty-first century, our world

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## **More than one hundred four thousand web pages came up!**

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is more unsure about the future than it has ever been. Even more troubling is the fact that those who are supposed to give guidance on the subject—Christians—are exhibiting the same alchemy of fear and paralysis that binds the world. So what should be our response to the uncertainty of the times in which we live and the imminent return of our Savior?

Christian survivalists tell us to buy generators, wood stoves, extra stores of water and food, et cetera. Should we? It is Satan’s goal to get us caught up in physically preparing for what will be a spiritual event. Please don’t get me wrong. It is essential that we get out of the cities, that we learn to live simple lives, that we know how to live off the land. But far more important than this physical preparation will be heart preparation.

The pace of events today should lead the Christian to do two things: (1) develop a closer relationship with God through prayer and Bible study and (2) invite others to experience the peace that comes from accepting Jesus as Savior and Friend. God is not coming for survivalists; He’s coming for a “peculiar people” whose character matches His.

This week we will study God’s time line for the return of His Son and the events that will characterize that return. Even as we do, let us focus on the Christ to whom the signs point.

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*By Dwain Neilson Esmond, associate editor of Message magazine, Hagerstown, Maryland.*

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# What Kind of People

## LOGOS

**Deut. 18:22; Dan. 2:41-45; 8:14; 12:4, 9, 10; 2 Pet. 3:1-18; Revelation 13**

Since the beginning of history, humankind has been fascinated with the future. With the passing of each millennium, excitement, terror, hope, fear, and expectancy build concerning events pertinent to Christ's return. Even now as attention is focused on the commencement of the seventh millennium, the age-old predictions and expectations that Christ must be coming soon have resurfaced with fury. Myriads have even tied the millennium to Christ's coming. But how important is a new millennium in relationship to Christ's coming? Is a new millennium a sign of what the events regarding the coming of Christ look like? Let us see what the Bible says concerning events surrounding the Second Coming.

### **False Prophets (Deut. 18:22)**

Jesus stated that many would come in the last days predicting His return (Luke 21:8). Many predictions have surfaced in the past years with particular emphasis on this millennium. Yet they have all failed. According to our text, when these predictions fail we can rest assured that the prophets are false and therefore reject them without fear. With a proliferation of prophecies concerning Christ's coming,

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## **Myriads have even tied the millennium to Christ's coming.**

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our focus ought not to be on the millennium and predictions. Rather, our text compels us to focus on Christ and His Word in order to avoid the deceptions of false prophets.

### **The Day of the Lord (2 Pet. 3:1-18)**

"Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God" (2 Pet. 3:11, 12, NIV). As we await Christ's coming, we ought not to be concentrating on a change of millennium and expecting it to bring Christ. Rather what should be activating us is the desire to be living holy and godly lives so that when He comes we will be ready, a willingness to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with Him (verse 14). It appears that concentrating on anything else, especially predictions, will result in the Day of the Lord coming upon us like a thief (verse 10).

Peter also cautions us to be careful of scoffers. Because millennium predictions may fail, many will ridicule the teaching concerning the Second Coming. Yet we should not fall away because of that, but rather we should continue to hold on to God's promised return, as our Lord's patience means an opportunity for salvation (verse 15).

We must be very careful that we are not caught off guard when Christ comes. We are standing at the dawn of a great judgment day with the power to choose our own destiny. As we look forward to a new heaven and a new earth (verse 13), we must prepare now!

## **God's Kingdom (Dan. 2:41-45)**

Daniel clearly lets us know that God's enduring kingdom will be set up during the time of the kingdom comprising the toes of the image (Dan. 2:44). As to when that will be, we are not given a date. We do know, however, that Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream is trustworthy (verse 45) and that those kingdoms are the ones existing today. With that in view, we should be waiting and watching in a state of preparedness for that day.

## **Movement of Time (Dan. 8:14; 12:4, 9, 10)**

Daniel gives the longest time prophecy found in Scripture (Dan. 8:14), ending in A.D. 1844. This brings us to the time of the end, at which the sealed book of Daniel is now opened (12:9). Soon the end of time will come. Christ can now come at anytime. Therefore, Daniel says that those who are wise understand (verse 10) and likewise order their lives so they can be prepared for Christ's coming at any moment.

## **False Powers (Revelation 13)**

Revelation 13 warns us that religious and political systems will be activated by Satan that will exercise their power to lead many to deception. Many individuals will wonder about these powers because of their accomplishments and words. Could it be that such powers, as controlled by the devil, can cause such hysteria regarding the millennium and Christ's return to lead many astray? Rest assured that there will be many deceptions about Christ's coming. John notes, however, that those whose names are written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb will not be carried away by the deception (verse 8). Therefore, in the face of all the millennium expectation and predictions concerning the Second Coming, "patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints" (verse 10, NIV) is called for. Rather than the crisis, let us concentrate on Christ and developing a relationship with Him.

In Matthew 24:44 Jesus cautioned us to be ready, for the Son of Man will come at an hour when we do not expect Him. The signs tell us that Jesus is near. Millennium expectation, however, should not lead us to overexcitement concerning date setting in regard to Christ's coming. Neither should it lead us to the opposite extreme of fear. Rather, the expectation surrounding the millennium and its events should stir us into making preparations for that day, by doing now what we might otherwise have put off. It should fill us with hope, realizing that with every passing day we are one day closer to the coming of the Lord.

## **REACT**

1. What does the 2,300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14 have to do with the second coming of Christ?
2. How can we provide a balance in living between the tension of the existent (the kingdom here) and the not-yet (the kingdom still to come)?
3. Can living on time expectation delay the coming of Christ? Why or why not?
4. What should our attitude be concerning the millennium and the Second Coming?
5. Why do you think people attempt to set dates?

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*By Henry R. Moncur, a ministerial intern in the Bahamas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Nassau.*

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# Knowing That We Don't Know

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Matt. 24:36**

The soon return of Jesus is a theme that permeates Ellen White's writings, yet she consistently cautioned against all efforts to calculate when that event will occur. Some well-intentioned persons concede that Matthew 24:36 tells us we are not to know the day or hour but suggest that perhaps we can know the year or the timing of other events closely associated with the end of time. Note how clearly the following messages provide a safeguard against such speculation:

"Anyone who shall start up to proclaim a message to announce the hour, day, or year of Christ's appearing has taken up a yoke and is proclaiming a message that the Lord has never given him."<sup>1</sup>

"Again and again have I been warned in regard to time setting. There will never again be a message for the people of God that will be based on time. We are not to know the definite time either for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or for the coming of Christ."<sup>2</sup>

"Our position has been one of waiting and watching, with no time-proclamation to intervene between the close of the prophetic periods in 1844 and the time of our Lord's coming."<sup>3</sup>

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## **"Again and again have I been warned in regard to time setting."**

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"Let all our brethren and sisters beware of anyone who would set a time for the Lord to fulfill His word in regard to His coming, or in regard to any other promise He has made of special significance. 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power.' False teachers may appear to be very zealous for the work of God, and may expend means to bring their theories before the world and the church; but as they mingle error with truth, their message is one of deception, and will lead souls into false paths. They are to be met and opposed, not because they are bad men, but because they are teachers of falsehood and are endeavoring to put upon falsehood the stamp of truth."<sup>4</sup>

## **REACT**

Who do you think is in a more dangerous position: the one who expects Christ to come three years from now or the one who doesn't think it matters at all? Explain your answer.

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1. *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 61 (emphasis supplied).

2. *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 188.

3. *Last Day Events*, p. 36.

4. *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 55 (emphasis supplied).

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*By Tim Poirier, associate director and archivist for the Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland.*

# Preparation or Panic?

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: 2 Pet. 3:10, 18**

It may seem strange in an age of Day-Timers and electronic pocket organizers to recall that not long ago people didn't measure time so much by seconds as by seasons.

The exception to that comes about every thousand years or so. Just a few months ago a sizable number of people all over the world were poised to witness the "end of life as we know it" (EOLAWKI). Many feared the much-touted meltdown arising from the Y2K computer "bug." Still others were as certain that the world would end on December 31.

Although our days revolve around such closely timed events as class schedules, airline departures, and television programs, when thinking about prophetic time, it's good to see things from the larger perspective. That perspective suggests that though some people—OK, a lot of people—got caught up in the hype surrounding the coming of the year 2000, the real event was no different from that of one day slipping into the next. It was a nonevent.

Truly life-changing events fall into two categories: those we choose (changing majors, choosing a spouse, accepting Christ, etc.) and those we don't choose (natural disasters, auto accidents, terminal illnesses, etc.). We may not always be

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## **Not long ago people didn't measure time so much by seconds as by seasons.**

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able to choose our life-changing events, but we can make prudent choices that will somehow prepare us for those events over which we have no control.

The man who built his house on a rock (Matt. 7:24, 25) did not by his action prevent a flood, but choosing wisely about where to build put him in a better position to survive one.

Preparation is vital to being ready for the real deal and avoiding the hysteria that surrounds the "signs of the times" (so-called). Throughout the New Testament Jesus' followers are warned that His coming will be unpredictable, "like a thief" (Matt. 24:43; Luke 12:39; 1 Thess. 5:2, 4; 1 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3). That doesn't mean that we should be afraid of it, only that we should be prepared for it.

And the best preparation is described briefly in these few words: "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18, NIV). Growing in grace and knowledge means not only that we know who Jesus was, what He did and taught; it means also that guided by the Holy Spirit, we demonstrate His grace to everyone we meet, everywhere we go.

The seeds of faith, love, and obedience, planted in the season of preparation, will yield a rich harvest when Jesus comes again—whenever that is.

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*By Stephen Chavez, assistant editor, Adventist Review, Silver Spring, Maryland.*

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# Practical Living in the Twenty-first Century

## HOW-TO

### Key Text: 2 Pet. 3:1-18

As we embark on the new millennium, Christians are seeking answers to many questions. These questions examine the direction in which we are headed. Many Seventh-day Adventist Christians are caught up with avoiding fanaticism and strains of liberalism. We ought to speak the truth and let the chips fall where they may. Jesus did it. The story told in Matthew of those who wanted to stone Mary makes clear Jesus' methods of dealing with sin. Moreover, it shows His disposition in the way we should stand up for truth in a practical manner. Not merely repetitive words that sound good to please others, but truth, which may even offend family and friends. This call to practicality in living is clear.

God is not slack concerning His promises (2 Pet. 3:9). This can be looked at practically and applied to us. What kind of people are we when it comes to keeping our word? We need to be true to our word in all our dealings, be it professional, personal, spiritual, etc. The second coming of Christ is a date no Christian on earth knows. Therefore, our lives are to be ready at all times.

We must surrender our will to God. The very concept of doing this is a mystery to comprehend, because God alone is good. We must ask God to take control of

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## The second coming of Christ is a date no Christian on earth knows.

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our will. After we have yielded our request to His will to be the controlling factor in our lives, change occurs. This is a practical change that will be seen in our lifestyle. This change is a continuous process in this instance, and we continually grow in His grace under His direction and leadership.

There are three essential elements of the Christian experience: prayer, Bible study, and witnessing. All three are indicators of the experience an individual has after being saved. The Christian today will be constantly praying for God's unending guidance in life's daily struggles. The study of the Word of God is our surety to build up our reserves to do battle with the enemy. Our understanding of the will of God can be seen clearly only when we read His words to us in the Bible. Witnessing is the means by which we communicate with others His goodness to us. By sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, we strengthen our conviction in following and doing His will. Our lives reflect God's love, and the degree to which it is practical effectively communicates to all the world that we are one with Him.

## REACT

1. How can you plan for life today and not conflict with the Christian's outlook of the new heaven and earth?
2. Why do we expect more out of life than the non-Christian?

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*By John G. F. Carey, an oil company area manager in Nassau, the Bahamas.*

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# Mucking Out the Stall

## OPINION

### Key Text: Rev. 3:20

Is your heart a palace or a horse stable? I am not trying to be funny. Consider the thought for a moment. In order to share in the celebration of the second coming of Jesus, we need to experience the first. The Nicodemus in each of us is, no doubt, wrinkling his forehead in perplexed objection, protesting, "How can I time travel back to the past to the stable where the Messiah was born and experience His first coming? It's a violation of the laws of physics!"

But just as Christ told Nicodemus that being born again has nothing to do with becoming a literal fetus in its mother's womb but rather becoming spiritually a new person, reborn in the uterus of faith, so, too, Christ invites us to experience His first coming in the same way in order to prepare us for His return.

God chose a humble building as the birthplace for His glorious Son. A stable, unlike a palace, has no outward glory, no majestic architecture to herald the birth of a king. We, too, were created in Eden from humble materials of the dust of the earth. Just as God placed His divine Son in an ordinary cattle stall at His birth, Jesus sends His divine Spirit to live in the humility of our hearts.

Christ's birth in a stable at His first coming parallels our need to open the doors of our hearts to receive the new birth, much as the stable in Bethlehem received

## Is your heart a palace or a horse stable?

Him as a baby. Indeed, our hearts and minds need to be "mucked out" by the Holy Spirit and washed clean of all the filth inside, but stables also have some wonderful qualities too. They are functional. They serve as shelter and protection for those who dwell in them. And isn't it a shelter that Christ wants to create in these humble human frames we move about in?

In choosing a stall as a birthplace for His Son, perhaps God suggested that the manger is a metaphor for how He wants to occupy our hearts. Just as Jesus came to Bethlehem's stable as a baby, we as newborn Christians must invite Him into the mangers of our hearts to be adored. As the wise men and shepherds came to honor the Baby Jesus at His first coming with gifts and praise, we have the honor of illuminating the world with the gift of His love shining in us, drawing the world to Him.

## REACT

1. How does Christ transform a simple stable of the heart into a palace where He dwells?
2. What other illustrations from Scripture might you use to show how Christ changes hearts?
3. How can living the experience of Christ's first coming prepare you for His second?

*By Soraya Parish, production manager for the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, Silver Spring, Maryland.*

# A SURE THING



“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:1-3, NKJV).

# Be Prepared

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Matt. 25:1-13; John 14:1-3**

All ten waited for the bridegroom.

They were arrayed in white, signifying their purity to the eyes of men.

One virgin said to the rest, "I'm tired; I've been waiting so long.

Still the bridegroom has not arrived."

"Yes," four of her comrades echoed in unison, "Where is He?"

Their lamps set aside, they began to mumble one to another.

"He will return; let's tarry a little longer," the other five offered words of comfort.

"He will return, let's tarry a little longer."

The five would not be consoled. "We could be having fun as we speak.

We could explore the world, have banquets and mingle with plenty of guests.

Life passes us by while we sit here waiting.

Why do we need to wait? It is not our fault that He is late."

"His time is not ours," offered the other five. "He can never be late.

He will return. Just hold on. He will return."

"Well, I'm tired," declared the boldest of the five.

"So are we," the other four cried. "Let's take a nap," they all agreed.

"Then maybe we can dream of the wonderful life we are missing."

"We are going to purchase some oil.

Would you like to come?" the other five offered.

"Our little oil surely won't survive the night."

"No, we'll stay here. We already have oil in our lamps.

Besides, we have time."

The five returned some time later with their lamps trimmed and burning and decided also to take a nap.

The bridegroom arrived at midnight, and the five woke up, alert and ready.

The other five awoke only to find their lights gone out.

They rushed to get their lamps refilled, but it was too late.

Throughout His ministry on earth Jesus constantly informed His followers of His second coming. Although the second coming of Jesus has been preached for hundreds of years, many people have become callous and desensitized. Many question whether the Second Coming is true. Jesus tells us that He will return again to receive us to Himself. This promise made to the disciples thousands of years ago still holds true today. We have to accept the Word of God; otherwise, we will be just like our predecessors—the five foolish virgins.

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*By Tracey-Ann Bingham, a psychology major at Oakwood College, Huntsville, Alabama.*

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# Yes, Jesus Is Coming Soon!

## LOGOS

**Acts 1:9-11; 1 Cor. 15:51-53; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; Titus 2:11-13; 2 Pet. 3:9-12; Rev. 22:12**

Close your eyes and imagine this scene:

You are going about your normal day, when something catches your eye at the window. As you look out the window, you see a light brighter than any you have ever seen before. As you continue to look, the light becomes brighter and brighter. It is also getting closer and closer to earth. You find this hard to believe, so you open your door and go outside. The light is so bright now that you can't understand why you are so drawn to this light. No, this is not a dream, and it is not merely something out of one of those alien movies. Soon you see a host of angels, with a creature more beautiful than any you have ever seen, sitting on a throne in the midst of them. As they come closer, you feel yourself being raised up in the air.

This is the day you have been preparing and waiting for all your life.

There are many verses in the Bible that tell us about the second coming of Jesus. They also tell us what to expect when He returns. These texts tell us what will happen to those who followed Jesus and those who rejected His teachings. Second Thessalonians 1:7-10 says that we should stay focused on Jesus, because He will

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## **This is not merely something out of one of those alien movies.**

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give us the endurance we need in this life. When He returns, He will be bringing all His angels and a fire hotter than we can ever imagine. This fire is for those who did not follow Him. They will also miss going to heaven with Him. All we have to do to get to heaven is believe the wonderful things the Bible has to say about Jesus.

Second Peter 3:9-12 lets us know that God is not slow in keeping His promises: He wants all of His children to go to heaven. It is because of His patience and kindness that He allows us to continue, so that we all have a chance to hear about Him. When the Lord does come back, however, He will return like a thief in the night, but the sky will be rolled back with a clamor, and everything will be set on fire. Everything will melt under this intense heat. This is why we need to live every day as if it were our last.

God is in heaven pleading on our behalf. He is giving us ample time to get our lives in order. He has even given us signs to let us know that His coming is near. We need to get our lives in order so that we can go to heaven with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

## **REACT**

1. What are some of the signs that let us know that Jesus' coming is near? Be specific.
2. In 2 Peter 3:10 it says that Jesus will come back as a thief in the night. Why do you think such a negative image is used here to depict a positive event?

3. How can I prepare for Jesus' second coming?
4. What can I do to help others understand that Jesus is coming back?

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*By Vanessa A. Henry, an English major at Oakwood College, Huntsville, Alabama.*

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# The Son of Man Cometh

## TESTIMONY

**Key Texts:** Matt. 24:38; 2 Tim. 3:4; Heb. 10:23; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 1:9

As earth's history approaches its climax, people are "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4, NIV). Refusing His precious gift of everlasting life, they damn God's name in exchange for the world's instant gratification. Consequently, today's society parallels the antediluvian world (Matt. 24:38). When the windows of heaven were opened, the earth and all its inhabitants, except those in the ark, were lost. At the second advent of Jesus Christ, all who refuse to enter the ark of safety shall surely be destroyed.

But how can we be so certain of Jesus' second coming? All things have continued since the beginning of time: the sun shining brightly day after day, the flowers blooming then withering away. So where is the proof of His soon appearing?

Christ's coming is as certain as the day following the night. For it is He, the Word, that made the heaven, the earth, and the sea. He uttered His voice, and the earth immediately brought forth fruit-yielding trees. Therefore, Creation is not only a testimony of Christ Jesus' omnipotence and glory, but it also bears witness to the fact that the Lord is not slack concerning His promise to redeem all who

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## Christ's coming is as certain as the day following the night.

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believe. Read 1 John 1:9; 2 Peter 3:9; Hebrews 10:23; James 1:17. What do these verses say about the faithfulness of God's promise?

Additionally, the pages of history verify the validity of Jesus' second advent. The omniscient Creator has orchestrated the events of time to foreshadow His return. Read Matthew 24:4-30. What are 10 signs of Christ's coming?

Furthermore, through the Spirit of Prophecy Christ has revealed unto His children the final chapter of earth's history. While exiled on the isle of Patmos, John was caught up in the Spirit and saw seven angels standing before God, "and to them were given seven trumpets" (Rev. 8:2, NIV). These trumpets represent the events leading up to the establishment of His kingdom. When the first four trumpets were blown, the mighty Roman Empire was destroyed. At the sounding of the fifth and sixth, the Muslim Empire rose then fell. Hence, time testifies that the prophecy of the seven trumpets is being fulfilled. The only trumpet yet to be blown is the seventh. According to Revelation 11:15; 1 Corinthians 15:52; and 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17, what event marks the sounding of this last trump? Is this event the same as in Daniel 2:44, 45? Why or why not?

Jesus is coming very soon. Therefore, the impetus is for us to be ready "because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him" (Matt. 24:44, NIV).

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*By Gregory Dawkins, a freelance writer from Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.*

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## The *Parousia*

### EVIDENCE

**Key Texts: John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:50-58**

Many individuals have lost faith in the second coming of Christ. However, His coming will certainly be a reality. The Bible tells us, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am’” (John 14:1-3, NIV).

Isn’t this a wonderful message from our Lord? He promises us that He will return to this earth to take His chosen people to their home.

The Greek word *parousia* is used to describe the coming of the Lord. It means the personal appearance or coming of the Lord. It is so good to know that the Lord will appear personally. He will not send a similar person or a look alike. But the same Jesus who left this earth over two thousand years ago will return for His faithful people.

Our Lord Jesus in His unconditional love promises grace for those who live godly lives. When He returns, we will be changed “in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye”(1 Cor. 15:52, NIV). Our mortal bodies shall become immortal. Mothers

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### **The Greek word *parousia* is used to describe the coming of the Lord.**

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will be reunited with children whom death tore from their bosom.

The coming of the Lord is certain, thus it is every Christian’s duty to prepare for His coming. Nothing else should mean more to God’s people than standing with Jesus and singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

# No Doubt

## HOW-TO

**Key Texts: Acts 1:10, 11; John 14:1-3**

“The coming of the Lord has been in all ages the hope of His true followers. . . . The Saviour’s parting promise upon Olivet, that He would come again, lighted up the future for His disciples, filling their hearts with joy and hope that sorrow could not quench nor trials dim.”

According to the good news recorded in John 14:1-3, Jesus promises His followers that He will return again so that we can dwell with Him. This promise is just as accurate now as it was in the days of the disciples, for the Bible tells us that “‘God is not a man, that he should lie’” (Num. 23:19, NIV). It is not the Lord’s intention that we should live our lives in vain; thus He will certainly return to take His faithful children home to glory.

The Lord knew that many would doubt His return to earth; thus, in His infinite wisdom Jesus told us of events that would precede His coming. These signs include:

**1. The appearance of false prophets (Matt. 24:11).** Many false prophets are leading people away from God. They admit that Jesus is Lord; however, they neglect to follow His words. Because of this Jesus tells us not to allow people to

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## The Lord knew that many would doubt His return to earth.

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deceive us.

**2. The state of people’s hearts (Matt. 24:9; Mark 13:12).** Before the Lord’s return, the hearts of many people will become cold. There will be betrayal and even murder committed by those we least expect to do so. This is definitely occurring in our time.

**3. The state of the world (Matt. 24:7).** Frequent earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods are taking place on earth. In addition, certain diseases invade the bodies of humans. The Lord told us that this would take place before His coming, and these signs are being fulfilled rapidly.

Certainly the Lord is returning to this earth once more, and these signs testify of His soon return. It is the responsibility of each of us, however, to accept this wonderful fact. My desire is that each of us will live our lives in such a manner that we will be able to stand in that great day when our Lord returns in all His glory.

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*\*The Faith I Live By, p. 348.*

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*By Shelly-Ann Walker, a nursing student at Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, Florida.*

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# Surely, Jesus Shall Return!

## OPINION

**Key Texts:** Num. 23:19, 20; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Cor. 15:51-53; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9-12; Rev. 22:12

Angela told her mother's nurse that her mother's best friend, Beatrice, had died. Angela was surprised because she was convinced her mother would die first because of her health problems with cancer and multiple brain tumors. Beatrice and her mother had been friends for more than twenty-five years. Angela decided not to tell her mother of Beatrice's death, because she wanted her mother to have a pleasant surprise when she met Beatrice among those welcoming her into heaven. In short, Angela believes that upon death a person goes immediately to heaven. How do you tell someone that their belief is unbiblical?

Angela is not alone. Unbiblical beliefs such as hers have existed for centuries. If people go to heaven immediately after death, there would be no reason for Jesus to return. The only way to distinguish between truth and error is to know what is written in the Bible. In fact, Timothy informs us that we have to study to show ourselves approved. In addition, he reminds us that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16, NKJV).

God's words which He magnifies above His name inform us that He has gone

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## **Angela believes that upon death a person goes immediately to heaven.**

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to prepare a place for us and will come again (John 14:1-3). He did not stop there. He informs us that some people will be alive when He returns (1 Cor. 15:51-58). Why would Jesus inform us of the transformation that will take place in our appearances if He does not intend to return for us? Almost all who profess to be Christians claim to believe the Word of God; therefore, there should be no doubt in believing Jesus when He says, "I come quickly" (Rev. 22:12).

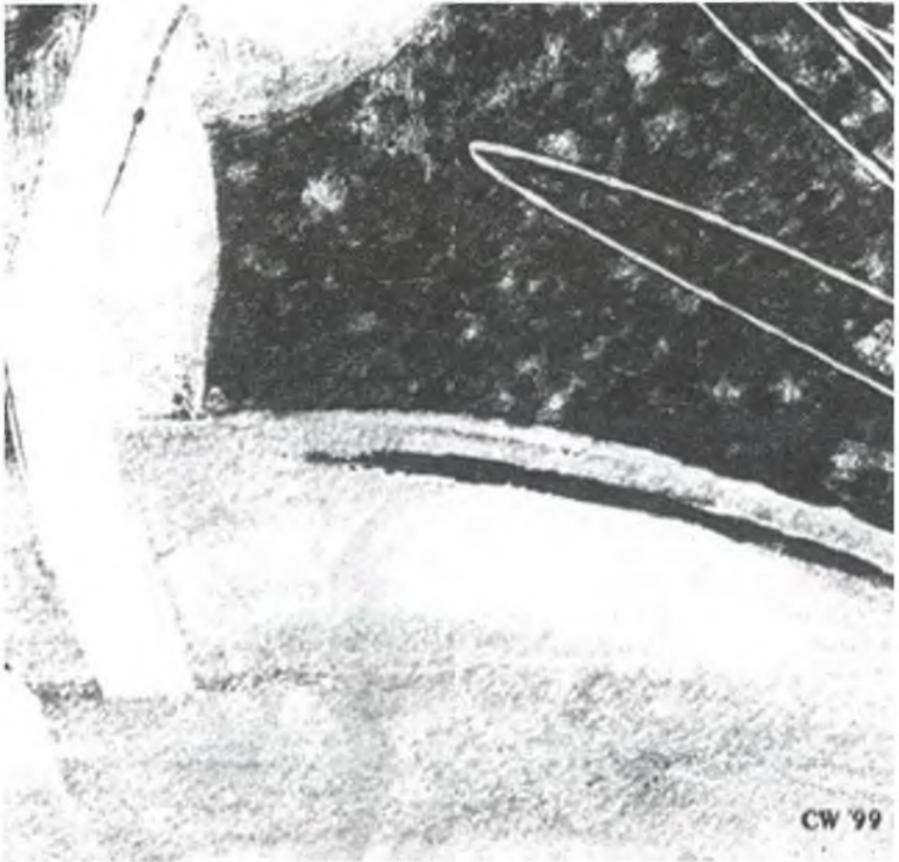
Someone once said that the Bible is an acronym: **B**asic **I**nstructions **B**efore **L**eaving **E**arth. It presents a preponderance of evidence that reveals that Jesus shall return. I feel it is my duty to witness to others if His return is soon. I cannot wait for Jesus to return. Can you?

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*By Fayon Walker, a student at Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, Florida.*

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# THE THOUSAND-YEAR CELEBRATION



**“I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away’” (Rev. 21:3, 4, NIV).**

# The Real Millennium

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Rev. 20:6**

The new millennium that millions of people stayed up late to celebrate this past New Year's Eve has nothing to do with the millennium spoken about in the Bible. Purists, of course, will tell you that the third millennium actually begins January 1, 2001 (not 2000), because the year 2000 is really the last year of the second millennium. It's no accident that Stanley Kubrick named his film *2001: A Space Odyssey* rather than *2000: A Space Odyssey*, because the twenty-first century doesn't begin until 2001. Yet we have a fascination with round numbers and can't help stopping to take note. Admit it—you've carefully watched the odometer in your car when it rolled around to exactly 100,000. But it's just a number, and it seems special only because we use the base-10 numbering system.

The millennium discussed in the Bible does have meaning, however. It's the real millennium. Not only will it be a time of cleansing and harmony, a time of rest and relief from evil, but it's also a time of beginning—the beginning of the new earth and an everlasting life of perfection promised to those who accept God's call.

However much of the earth's population may be fascinated by the beginning of the new millennium, and will surely celebrate it again the night before January 1, 2001,

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### **It's no accident that Stanley Kubrick named his film *2001: A Space Odyssey*.**

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the Bible's millennium is worth celebrating much, much more. The beauty of God's celebration is that we can celebrate with Him not just for one night but for a thousand years.

This week we'll be studying the promises of God's millennium-long celebration of His righteousness and His eternal promise of salvation. The millennium is a celebration of the second coming of Jesus. Don't miss it!

# Fork in the Road

## LOGOS

**Isa. 65:21-25; John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 19:11-16; 20:6-15; 21:2, 8**

Don't you just love it when, while driving cross-country, you get the uneasy feeling that you're not exactly one-hundred percent sure of your precise location at that very moment?

OK. You're lost.

Nothing seems to be where it should be according to the maps jammed in the glove compartment. So what if those torn and tattered guides were printed before your grandfather was born? Rivers and mountains don't move. But, according to the squiggly, fading notations unfolding in your lap, they most certainly have.

If you're a male like me, you keep pressing on, knowing that if you follow the sun long enough you'll eventually run into a well-defined and clearly labeled ocean. If you're a female like my wife, you stop and ask for help. Of course, we males know that everyone else on earth is as blissfully lost as we are, so we bypass this futile exercise.

Suddenly, you arrive at a fork in the road. Nestled in the fork, rising majestically out of the weeds, is a billboard-size collection of road signs, pointing in every imaginable direction. You haven't seen this many numbers in one place since you

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## **We males know that everyone else on earth is as blissfully lost as we are.**

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stopped playing the lottery. To add to your confusion, the signs indicating highways that should take you to the east are all pointing directly at the setting sun.

You sit in your car, motor idling, watching in silent fascination as seemingly other drivers whiz by you, not confused by the signs, totally in charge of their destiny.

### **Decisions, Decisions**

This week's lesson places you at a fork in the road. You see signs. You wonder. And you sit.

One road leads to a place where "no longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat" (Isa. 65:22, NIV), a destination where there are many "rooms" and where hearts need not be "troubled" (John 14:1-3). If you follow those arrows, at journey's end you will "judge" the world, instead of the other way around (1 Cor. 6:2).

The other road takes travelers to a day that will be as a "thief," when the "heavens will disappear with a roar" and all will be destroyed by fire (2 Pet. 3:10, NIV). This destination boasts a terrible judge dressed in a "robe dipped in blood" and who speaks with a "sharp sword" (Rev. 19:11-16), and where an army will sweep across a charred land in an all-out attempt to "gather . . . for battle" and surround "the camp of God's people" (Rev. 20:6-15).

Two roads. Two destinations. And the map you're trying to read was printed before your grandfather was born.

## The Stranger

Out of the corner of your eye, you see a traveler approaching. He's on foot, an old backpack hanging loosely from tired shoulders. "Hey," you yell. "You with the red coat. Which way should I go?"

The gentleman walks over to your car. It's easy to see that he has journeyed many, many miles. "Where you headin'?" he asks, eyeing the tangle of maps in your lap.

"I want to go home," you say, trying not to let frustration affect your words.

The man smiles, lifts his hand, and points to the right. "That way," he says. "Just follow the signs."

"But," you protest, "there are so many signs."

"Yes," the stranger nods. "But there's only one road."

Not satisfied, you lean forward a bit. "But, what if I went that way?" you ask, indicating the road to the left.

The stranger shakes his head as a sudden frown creases his brow. "No. You don't want to go there."

"How do you know?" you ask with a hint of skepticism.

"Because I've traveled portions of that road," the man says. "Trust me. Home is that way. That way." He points again with an almost pleading look in his eyes. This guy really wants you to go to the right. You can see it in his expression.

"OK, OK," you call with a sigh and jam the car into gear. "Right it is."

As you hurry away, you watch in the rearview mirror as the stranger drops his backpack at his feet and settles down to rest among the road signs.

## Lost and Found

Getting lost seems to be a very human trait. Send any average *Homo sapiens* into any unfamiliar location and chances are very good that he or she will be hopelessly, directionally challenged faster than you can say "global positioning system."

Hikers along the Appalachian Trail in the eastern United States have become totally confused even while carrying the latest high-tech navigation gear. These battery-operated, satellite-connected gizmos can show you in vivid detail exactly where you are down to 30 feet. They indicate instant longitude and latitude information as well as altitude and speed of movement. But that information means nothing unless you know how to interpret the data in terms of rocks, trees, rivers, and mountaintops.

This is why Jesus was born, lived, and died on this earth. He wanted us to understand the road signs, not to be confused by conflicting directions and false information mounted at every turn. Now He waits at the forks in the road, ready to point out which way to go for anyone who bothers to ask.

We humans get lost . . . a lot. With Jesus, we get found.

## REACT

1. How do we know when we're lost spiritually?
2. How do we know when we're found spiritually?
3. Why is heaven worth the journey?
4. Name several of the "road signs" you've discovered posted along the way to heaven.

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By Charles Mills, a freelance writer from Berkeley Springs, West Virginia.

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## “The Science and the Song”

### TESTIMONY

**Key Text: 1 Cor. 2:2**

For 150 days Noah could smell the gopherwood, feel the wind burn his face and raindrops sting his cheeks. He could taste the salt in the sea spray. He thought back to those hundred years of teaching and preaching he did while building the ark. The carpenter fanatic may even have shed a few tears thinking about those who had chosen not to enter the ark. While on that ark—surrounded by thousands of miles of water—he saw the concrete form of his salvation, which God had explained to him a hundred years before.

The millennium will be our concrete salvation. We will walk in the paths of heaven that Jesus and Lucifer walked on before the Fall. We will amble through the Garden of Eden. We will taste of the fruit of the tree of life. We will see the throne of God that Jesus left behind, to save us.

We will touch the nail scars in the hands of Jesus. The smile of God the Father and Jesus His Son will reflect the reason for our salvation.

God the Father instructed Noah exactly how to build the ark, including the gopherwood, the pitch, and the windows. Yet until the water lapped on the gopherwood sides of the ship, Noah could not even begin to understand his

### **We will have a thousand years to search for the why behind the Who.**

salvation. Likewise, we will be unable truly to understand our salvation story until we are enveloped by it in heaven. Noah and the rest of us will have a millennium to see, hear, smell, and touch our salvation story. The gospel story that was told to the children of Israel, and was completed at Calvary, will be flesh and blood in heaven.

“The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In Christ glorified they will behold Christ crucified.”

The questions we ask Jesus and God the Father will be difficult: Why did God have to die to destroy death? Could not there have been other ways to save us? Did our friends have to be lost? What kept us from being lost? We will have a thousand years to search for the why behind the Who.

Will it be enough time for you?

### **REACT**

1. How well do we understand our salvation now? What more is there to know?
2. Besides the questions that will help satisfy our curiosity, what questions may there be that we will *need* answers to when we get to heaven?
3. Will we be students or teachers in heaven? Explain your answer.

*\*The Great Controversy, p. 651.*

*By John Thygeson, a medical student at Loma Linda (California) University.*

# The Judge on Trial

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: 2 Pet. 3:9, 10**

One cold New Year's afternoon, I found myself sitting in a hospital waiting room beside a distraught husband whose wife had attempted to commit suicide that morning. He looked at me and choked out between sobs, "Does this mean she can't go to heaven?"

The Bible has always said "God is love" (1 John 4:16). But the deceiver has tried to paint God in a completely different light. Christ, as He sought to counteract the false ideas about His new kingdom, pointed out: "'My kingdom is not of this world'" (John 18:36). John defined how that kingdom would be set up in Revelation 20. It begins with the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of those who died loving Jesus, the translation of the righteous living, and the binding of Satan (verses 1-4).

During the interim of the millennium, God allows the saints to do more than enjoy a shining paradise. It is at this time that the Judge goes on trial. The record books of heaven can be carefully reviewed for the beautiful words "Accepted Jesus and covered by the blood" to explain why a formerly wretched sinner made it home. The chilling words "Refused God's mercy" will explain why people we

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## **Should there be any question, God will let us look over His shoulder.**

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expected to see are missing (verses 5, 6). It is this part of the millennium that gives powerful evidence of God's open fairness to everyone.

At the end of the millennium the New Jerusalem—accompanied by Christ and the saints from heaven—will descend, the wicked dead will be raised, and Satan will be loosed to continue His destruction (verses 7-9). Before the fire, all the wicked will acknowledge that God was just and right and gave them every chance to repent (Phil. 2:10, 11). Sin will be burned up once and for all. A new day will dawn for this planet. Never again will the shadow of sin, sorrow, or death cross the path of those who have been redeemed by Christ.

Once more God proves His love by preserving those children who are totally committed to Him. And He mercifully removes all who cherish sin, since living eternally in a perfect earth-made-new would be pure torture to them. That's why the millennium is all the evidence I need to tell a grieving husband that God loves his wife more than anyone and everyone and that God will do what is best for her happiness. And, should there be any question, God will let us look over His shoulder during the millennium.

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*By Ross Harris, pastor of the Benton, Pine Bluff, and Monticello (Arkansas) Seventh-day Adventist Churches.*

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# At the Airport

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: John 16:22**

My youngest sister married a week ago and will live in Hong Kong. She is beginning a new life, and I need to let her go. I miss her already; she's my closest friend.

Airports are places where people race to meet loved ones with warm hugs and kisses, places of tearful goodbyes until you've saved up enough to hop on another plane.

Imagine the first millennium day as a huge airport reunion. God's friends surround Him with a group hug—thanking Him for making it possible for us to want to be there. We bump into long-lost friends and meet new ones. We just want to hang around each other forever! What makes heaven so much fun is the people there. Everyone just like Jesus—compassionate and easy to live with (Rev. 22:4).

There are surprises everywhere. The director running the show is the creative God whom His people admire so much. "No mere man has ever seen, heard or even imagined what wonderful things God has ready for those who love the Lord" (1 Cor. 2:9, TLB).

Some will look for missing loved ones. The second resurrection will answer anyone longing for the people outside the walls to change their minds about not living with God.

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## We just want to hang around each other forever!

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**Checkup.** Many faxes and phone calls fly frequently between my sister and me as we keep up-to-date on each other's lives. Millennium day—the moment God's people see Him for the first time, but they're certainly not strangers! How is your friendship with God going?

**Communicate.** Keep your relationship with God alive. Sort out your gripes with God. Ask Him why things happened in your life—all that's really bugging you: What does Your wrath mean? Are You ever angry with us? Peace comes when the truth about what God thinks about us sets us free. Write down your questions and watch for His amazing responses. Listen to your Bible as though Jesus were on the phone with you. See *The Desire of Ages*, page 390.

**New Creation.** Do you wish you could be the masterpiece you were meant to be? God put that desire in you. He's waiting for your call. Have you received the gift of the Holy Spirit? Read Proverbs 1:23. Have you reached the end of your rope but realize everything is possible with Him? Pray to be forever changed like Peter after he saw the way Jesus looked at him. Read *The Desire of Ages*, page 713.

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By Clarinda Wang, a secretary at Greater Sydney (Australia) Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

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# Heaven Is for Kids

## OPINION

### Key Text: John 14:1-3

Remember primary Sabbath School? Singing and prayers and singing and stories . . . and Bible verses. I loved memorizing the verses during the week and repeating them together in class on Sabbath morning. I don't remember all the verses we memorized, but I do remember John 14:1-3. I couldn't wait to see Jesus in heaven and ask Him the millions of questions I had. I wanted to travel to all the planets with Jesus and visit everyone. My idea of heaven was fun, fun, fun. I knew that Jesus was a good laugh and that He and I would share our dreams of forever. I had seen Jesus keep all His promises to me and had no reason to doubt Him. I always saw Jesus as a big brother, someone I could confide in, someone who loved me unconditionally. I know that I am very lucky to have this childlike trust in Him.

I have a friend who is Muslim. We have had many spiritual talks about faith and about our religions. When she was planning to be married, she asked me to give the prayer for the meal on her wedding day. She asked me to be aware of all religions present; Jewish, Muslim, Protestant, Catholic, and more. I wanted to share my hope in Jesus Christ with everyone there and prayed for God's words, not mine, to be heard. As usual, God blessed, and at the end of the prayer, Meltem and

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## She explained that her religion has no such promises after death.

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I both had tears in our eyes.

Since then, she has asked me to pray for her in several difficult situations. We have talked about heaven and the promise that Jesus is coming again to take home His children. She explained that her religion has no such promises after death. "What will you do in heaven?" she asked. "Is there room for everyone?" I pray that I may have more opportunities to tell her of Jesus' love. Isn't that the reason He wants us home with Him in heaven?

## REACT

1. How does a person begin to trust Jesus and His promises? Be specific.
2. What role does the Holy Spirit play in this process?
3. What do you look forward to doing in heaven? What questions will you ask your big brother Jesus?
4. Is the destruction of the wicked punishment or consequence for a lifetime of running from God? Explain your answer.
5. How do you explain the eternal fire to someone afraid to meet God? Read Revelation 19:12 and *The Desire of Ages*, page 591.

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By Stephanie Yamniuk, a freelance writer from Winnipeg, Manitoba.

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# GOD INTRODUCES HIMSELF



**“Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed” (Rev. 15:3, 4, NIV).**

# Where Is Justice?

## INTRODUCTION

### Scripture: Rev. 15:34

The sound of shattering glass, buckling metal, and skidding tires rang out as two lives ended. Drunk and out of control, the driver had rammed into the van, killing two of the three people in it. Marisa had been driving to the store with her mother and daughter. Why was she spared? Why not at least let her young daughter live? Where is the justice in allowing the drunk driver to live?

Who lives? Who dies? How does this process come into play with God's plan? How can we explain that when we ask for protection we may or may not receive intervention in a particular situation? What is God revealing to us about His character, and does it make any sense?

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## **There are some things that do not make sense.**

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The drunk driver is spared and perhaps pays no consequence for his actions. Where is the justice? Who may live and die appears to be a random consideration.

How can we explain the God of Daniel, who has the power to shut the lions' mouths to the God of the present-day camper who dies at the wrath of a hungry bear? It cannot be explained. There are some things that do not make sense. We are taught in the Scriptures that we should not pass judgment on God and His righteousness. Maybe we are to trust in the concept of His love and the comfort and empowerment we have in feeling His presence in our lives and knowing His righteousness will be revealed to us. The answers lie in His love for us as we continue to search for the answers of this millennium.

# Judging Righteously

## LOGOS

**Gen. 3:1-8; Exod. 3:4; Job 1:8-12; 4:20; Ps. 98:2-9; Isa. 45:22-24; John 14:6; Rev. 19:11**

Many verses talk about God judging righteousness: "I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war" (Rev. 19:11, NKJV) and "He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world, and the peoples with equity" (Ps. 98:9, NKJV). It would follow, then, that there has to be a standard for this righteousness. Someone had to come up with what righteousness is and isn't. This would seem to indicate that some things are right and some things are wrong.

There is a verse in the Bible that has always intrigued me: "Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever'" (Gen. 3:22, NKJV). It would seem from this that Adam and Eve in some ways were not like God when they were made. They lacked the knowledge of good and evil. Thus, before they ate of the forbidden tree, they could not really understand what righteous judgment was. They knew only good. They had no evil experience, thus no standard by which to judge what was good.

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## God's likeness is not egocentric, but human-centric.

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But after eating the fruit from the tree, they were now at a different level. They had a different frame of reference. They were now more "Godlike." It is interesting to note that sin made God say about Adam and Eve that "man has become like one of Us." I won't bother getting into the part in Genesis 3:22 where God insinuates that unless they prevent Adam and Eve from eating the fruit of the tree of life they would live forever. Where is judgment in that case? What relationship is there between sin and the tree of life? Oh, well, more to think on.

My point in all of this is that once humanity had sinned and had a frame of reference in which to judge between good and evil, God had to begin dealing with humankind in those terms. That is why God has to deal with humanity, not in an arbitrary fashion that changes with His moods but in accordance with right doing. That is why I feel that there is so much emphasis in the Bible on God dealing with us fairly.

Consider, for example a sport: let's say ice hockey, a game played mainly in parts of the world where it gets cold. (Why Florida and California have hockey teams puzzles me.) To any true-blooded Canadian male (and female, for that matter), the rules of hockey are obvious. We have a knowledge of good and evil about the game. However, people from an island in the tropics who never heard of hockey would have no idea about the good and evil of the game. Through the marvels of satellite broadcast, however, they could pick up several games a week and watch them with interest. As a result, they would come to know hockey good and evil. Upon setting foot (or should I say skate) on a hockey rink, he or she would experience first-hand, the good and evil. Bumps and bruises and aching muscles would be known first hand as well as the joy of scoring goals and the thrill of

winning. They would also learn that referees are there to give “righteous” judgment in accordance with the knowledge of good and evil.

Thus it was with Adam and Eve. When they ate of the fruit, they gained a knowledge of good and evil. They had plugged their TV into the satellite. But when they were cast out of the garden, then they experienced the real meaning of good and evil. Now God, the referee, could really deal with Adam and Eve in a righteous manner. They not only had the knowledge of good and evil but the experience as well.

Throughout the Bible God seems to want to make clear that He does things for a good reason. He judges by a righteous standard and sticks to His decisions. From wiping out Sodom and Gomorrah to not humiliating the scribes and the Pharisees when they brought a prostitute for judgment, God acts according to a standard of right doing.

What’s the lesson for us? It is this: If we are to become more Godlike, to be more like Jesus, then we have to be more righteous in our judgment. We have to treat others as we would like to be treated. We have to do something positive for our fellow humanity. Becoming more like Jesus is not how health conscious we can become or how carefully we can guard the edges of the Sabbath or how much sin we can overcome. God’s likeness is not egocentric but human-centric. Consider the judgment scene in Matthew 25. The sheep are on God’s right because they helped their fellow sheep. They went out of their way to help others. The goats, on the other hand, knew God but failed to see beyond themselves in some pseudo-relationship with God.

Adam and Eve sinned and as a result became more like God, knowing good and evil. Let us take that knowledge and begin to judge righteously, not only by words but by action.

## **REACT**

1. Are there groups of people whom you tend to judge unrighteously?
2. Name some kinds of people who are often judged by Christians. Are we correct in our assessment of them? Explain your answer.
3. How much righteous judgment can we produce by our own determination? What part, if any, does our choice play?
4. What does it mean in everyday terms to trust completely God’s judgment?
5. Is discontent a sin?
6. At what point does questioning God’s authority and justice become a sin?
7. Why did God allow Satan and this world to continue after the death of Christ?
8. If you encounter someone whose belief in God is an amalgamation of truth and falsehood, how do you present the Bible truth to him or her?
9. How much room is there for personal opinion about who God is and what His character is like? Is it wrong to speculate at all? Explain your answer.
10. Some view God through a lens of pain and tragedy, others through a lens of harsh requirements and fearful consequences. In everyday terms, how can a person help someone achieve a more balanced and comforting view? Be specific.

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*By Larry Murrin, a computer consultant with Microsoft Systems, Calgary, Alberta.*

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# Justice and Revelation

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Gen. 3:1-8**

Ellen G. White has some interesting insights as to how fair and just God has been with Satan: "God in His great mercy bore long with Lucifer. He was not immediately degraded from his exalted station when he first indulged the spirit of discontent, nor even when he began to present his false claims before the loyal angels. Long was he retained in heaven. Again and again he was offered pardon on condition of repentance and submission. Such efforts as only infinite love and wisdom could devise were made to convince him of his error. The spirit of discontent had never before been known in heaven. Lucifer himself did not at first see whither he was drifting; he did not understand the real nature of his feelings. But as his dissatisfaction was proved to be without cause, Lucifer was convinced that he was in the wrong, that the divine claims were just, and that he ought to acknowledge them as such before all heaven. Had he done this, he might have saved himself and many angels."<sup>1</sup>

Even when Lucifer committed himself to deception and subversion against God, he was not cast out of heaven. God allowed him to try to convince other angels of how poorly and unfairly judged he was. Only when Satan reverted to open rebellion was he cast out.<sup>2</sup> "Satan had been so highly honored . . . that it was

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## Satan has claimed that "angels needed no control."

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difficult to disclose to the angels the true nature of his work. Until fully developed, sin would not appear the evil thing it was."<sup>3</sup>

"Had [Satan] been immediately blotted from existence, [the unfallen] would have served God from fear rather than from love. The influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed . . . Evil must be permitted to come to maturity. For the good of the entire universe . . . Satan must more fully develop his principles, . . . that the justice and mercy of God . . . might forever be placed beyond all question."<sup>4</sup>

Satan has claimed that "angels needed no control, but should be left to follow their own will, which would ever guide them right. He 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."<sup>5</sup>

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1. *The Great Controversy*, pp. 495, 496.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 496, 497.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 497.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 499.

5. *Ibid.*

# On the Way to the Forum

## EVIDENCE

### Key Text: Rev. 5:9

Justice. We want it, we think. We complain about the lack of it. More and more, our legal system is under attack.

As a lawyer who works on an everyday basis with our legal system, I cannot relate any part of our judicial process to the picture of a loving God. It just does not fit. And the more I think about my own failure to live a perfect life, the less I seek justice, the less I want to have judgment. Yet, in the New Testament we read repeatedly about justice, justification, sanctification, condemnation, and righteousness.

I did not know what to do with these concepts until I met a class of students from a Christian academy on a study tour in the Roman ruins. I became enthralled with the in-depth tour being led by one of the teachers and stopped to listen for a while. That day I learned a lesson in Roman history that helped me place the New Testament judicial model of salvation in context. The teacher highlighted two points that have completely changed my understanding of salvation.

First, he noted that Paul chose the legal concepts of sanctification and justification as useful analogies because they formed the basis of everyday thought and governmental interaction in the Roman Empire of the time. In fact,

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## **The more I think about my own failure to live a perfect life, the less I seek justice.**

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they were chiseled into the architecture and art of the era. Paul used concepts that pagans and believers alike could understand.

Second, the teacher highlighted the fact that the redemption model was much closer to the biblical model outlined elsewhere in Scripture.

Today I can relate to the need for a redeemer a great deal easier than the need for a defense attorney or judge. A ransom is not paid because the victim deserves the payment or is entitled to it as a matter of justice. Instead, the ransom is paid because someone cares for or loves the victim.

The justice spoken of in Revelation 15:3, 4 cannot be based on the actions of the individual sinner. If that were the case, then Revelation 16:5, 6 would give Paul no hope. It is more likely based upon the actions of God as referred to in Romans 3:4.

The victory of Christ, however, was not the result of some judicial process in a heavenly courthouse. Instead, the victory was related to the right Christ gained through Calvary to redeem every person from death. The new song recorded in Revelation 5:9 (NIV) provides a better description of the purpose for Christ's death: "With your blood you purchased men for God."

This redemption was not provided through a judicial process. Quite the opposite is true. Revelation 21:6 makes it clear that redemption is a gift. Revelation 22:17 reemphasizes this truth: "Whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (NIV).

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*By Gerald Chipeur, who practices law in Calgary, Alberta.*

# God's Righteous Judgment

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Matt. 25:34-40**

I like to think of God's judgment in light of the cross.

Man sinned; the law said man had to die.

God loved; He died in man's place.

That was God's judgment call: paying the sin price for all humankind (John 3:16). What a concept that love and judgment could be packaged as a single, incredible gift—the gift of redemption!

Understanding what this gift of infinite love truly means will have a profound impact on our entire lives. Our view of God and His righteousness will be viewed through this sacrifice of love. The natural result: fulfillment of Christ's mandate to "love each other just as much as I love you" (John 13:34, TLB).

We will love God with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves. According to Matthew 25:35, 36, our lives will reveal God's love by:

**1. Feeding the hungry.** Who are they? People in a foreign land? Perhaps. Or maybe it's the scruffy kid down the street who would love a home-cooked meal.

**2. Welcoming a stranger.** How about the student needing a place to stay until a residence is found? Or the desperate woman seeking refuge from an abusive

## What a concept that love and judgment could be packaged as a single, incredible gift.

husband?

**3. Clothing the naked.** Secondhand clothes will never be turned down by the naked or the family who can't quite make ends meet. And what about the neighbors who were burned out last week?

**4. Caring for the sick.** Does anyone have an aged parent, aunt, or uncle who needs care?

**5. Visiting those in prison.** We would rather forget, wouldn't we? Yet they are *someone's* son or daughter, father or mother. Do you know of anyone imprisoned?

When we have seen God's righteousness revealed and His judgment exercised through the gift of His Son, who paid the sin debt in our place, how can we not reveal His righteousness in a tangible way to those around us? We don't have to go far to find those who need God's righteous judgment revealed to them.

Some of us are like Thomas. We need to see and touch the scars in order to believe God is who He says He is. We need tangible evidence that God is righteous and His judgments fair. So do others.

## REACT

1. What is God's righteous judgment?
2. How does God reveal His righteousness to us?
3. How can we reveal Him to others?

*By April Gustavsen, a homemaker from Calgary, Alberta.*

# Whose God Is Real?

## OPINION

**Key Text: Job 42:7**

Many verses in the book of Job you wouldn't want to use as key texts. They are simply a record of Job's friends' theological views. When Job's misery was over, the Lord said to Eliphaz, first in Job 42:7 and again in verse 8, that he and his friends had not spoken the truth concerning God. If the Lord was correct in His evaluation, then there were some basic flaws in their views of God and truth.

In his first dialogue, Eliphaz tells of a spirit that had appeared to him in his sleep. The spirit had a message (4:17-21). Eliphaz took for granted that the message it gave was from God (the message fit in with his own theological views), and he then related it to Job as if it was gospel truth. It could easily have been an evil spirit. Parts of the message sounded like something from Satan's original speech of deception. Satan's lies seem to be mixed with truth to the point at which it is hard to extricate the lie. He is good at what he does. He was able to convince a third of the highly intelligent angels to believe his lies about God.

Satan's lies have been taught and even cherished by many religious people throughout earth's history. Job's friends thought it was Job's performance that was in question. They were continually trying to convince Job of this. In order to do

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## **Though they both believed in one God, Eliphaz and Job worshiped different gods.**

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this, they used their theological arguments, and they said some things about God that Job could not accept. Though they both believed in one God and even had the same name for him, Eliphaz and Job in essence worshiped different gods. Eliphaz was willing to attribute some of Satan's characteristics to God's character. He wanted Job to believe that good things were arbitrary blessings from God, based on personal performance, and that bad things were arbitrary punishments.

In the end, God's first concern wasn't about Job's personal righteousness. He seemed more concerned that Job still understood His character correctly (Job 42:7). There are many people today who tell us that they know who God is. We can respectfully listen to them and try to understand what they have to say, but I think we have to realize that some of what they say about God could be wrong. We need to study for ourselves like the Bereans, to find the truth about God. Maybe God's first concern about us isn't our personal performance. Maybe He is primarily interested in who we think God really is and in what we think He stands for. God's character and truth have been misrepresented. How willing are you to unknowingly misrepresent God to others? Is your God real?

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*By Kevin Akre, a dentist from Cochrane, Alberta.*

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## Next Quarter's Lessons

# WITNESSING: TURNING THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

If you have not received a copy of *CQ* for third quarter 2000, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

### **Lesson 1: Witnessing: A Christian Fundamental**

*Scriptures:* Daniel 1; Matthew 5-7; 28:18-20; Acts 5:17-42; 8:26-31; 9:1-22; 18:4; 22:15, 16, 20; 2 Cor. 5:14; 2 Pet. 3:9

*Theme:* Defining a witness, the goal of witnessing, reasons for witnessing, three basic approaches to witnessing, and witnessing as a matter of obedience.

### **Lesson 2: The Power and the Joy of Witnessing**

*Scriptures:* Acts 1:5, 8, 14; 2:1, 14-21; 4:23, 31; 6:1-5; 7:54-56; 9:7-9, 18, 19; 11:22-24; 13:1-3; 14:21-23.

*Theme:* Searching within, conditions for enabling baptism, filled with the Spirit, the latter rain, and fasting.

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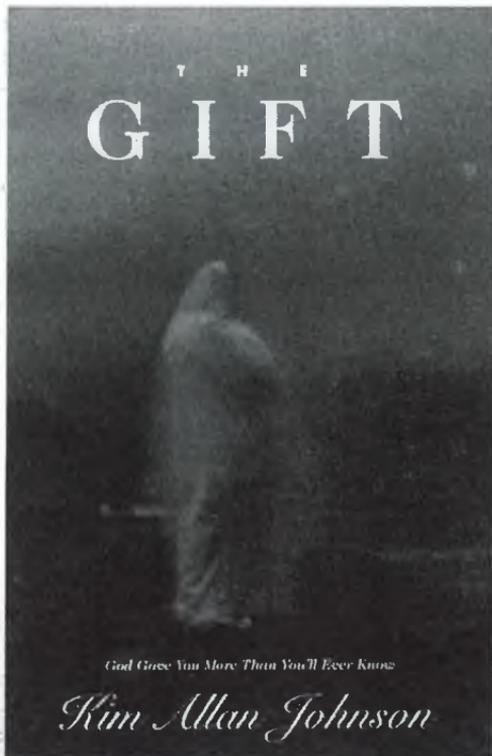
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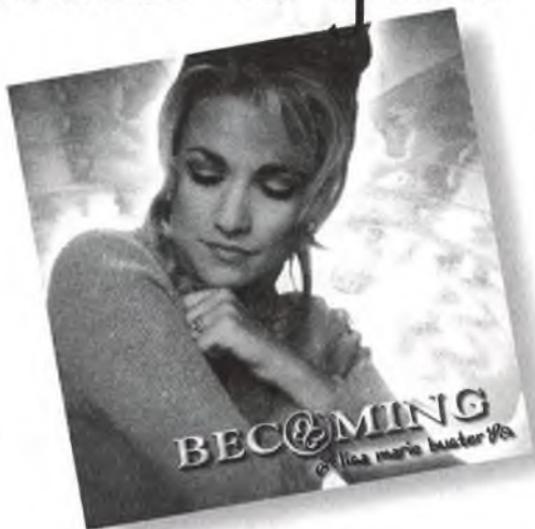
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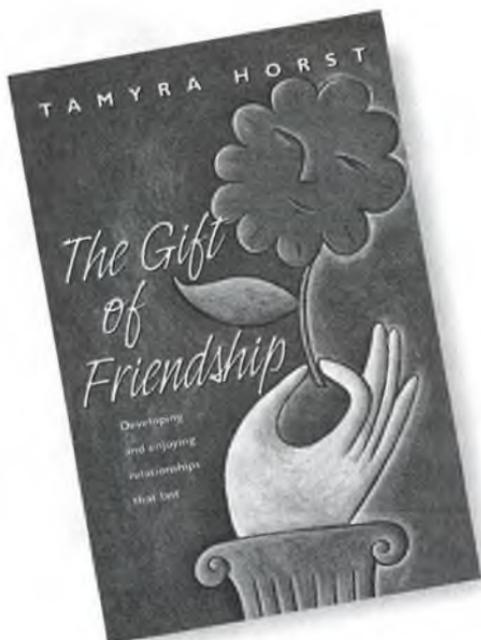
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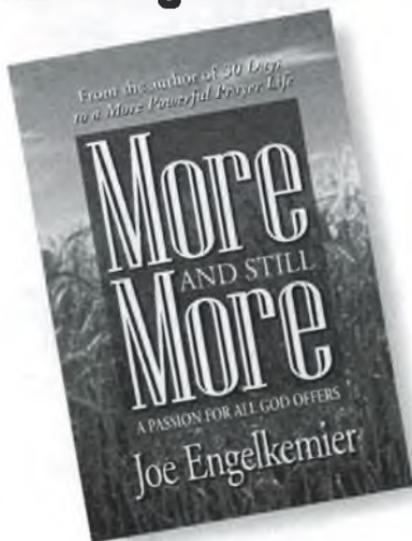
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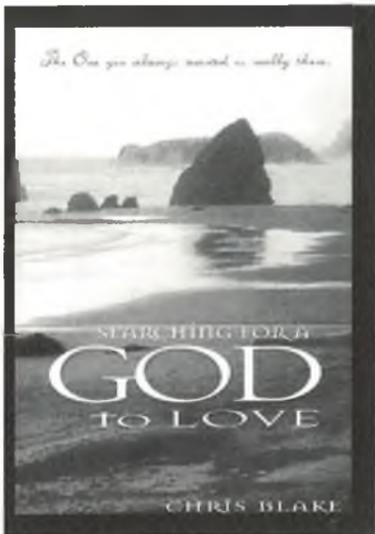
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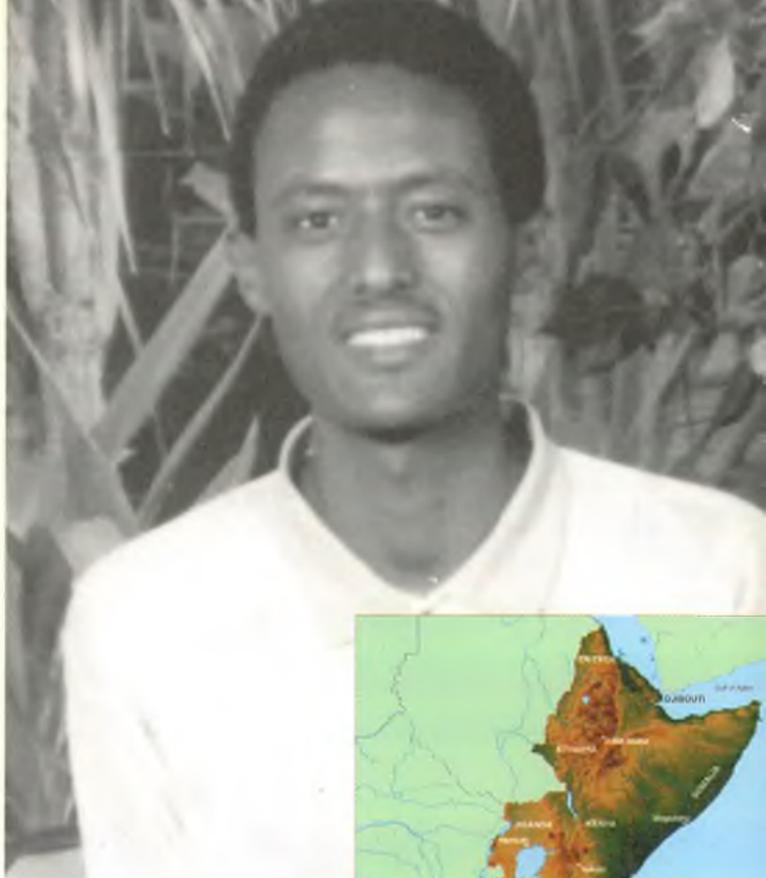


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# MISSION PROFILE



**NAME:**

Essayas, age 22

**COUNTRY:**

Ethiopia

**BACKGROUND:**

In Ethiopia most Christians are members of the Orthodox church.

Eastern African

The traditions are very strong, and often only young people have the courage to step out and embrace new truths. Essayas is one of those young people. He became curious about the Adventist church and began to attend. His uncle, with whom he lived, learned about his interest in the Adventist church and told Essayas he had three days to make a decision. To find out what happened, read Essayas' story in this quarter's issue of Mission.

**THIRTEENTH SABBATH OFFERING:**

Part of the Thirteenth Sabbath offering will help the growing work in Ethiopia and Botswana.