

Adventist Review

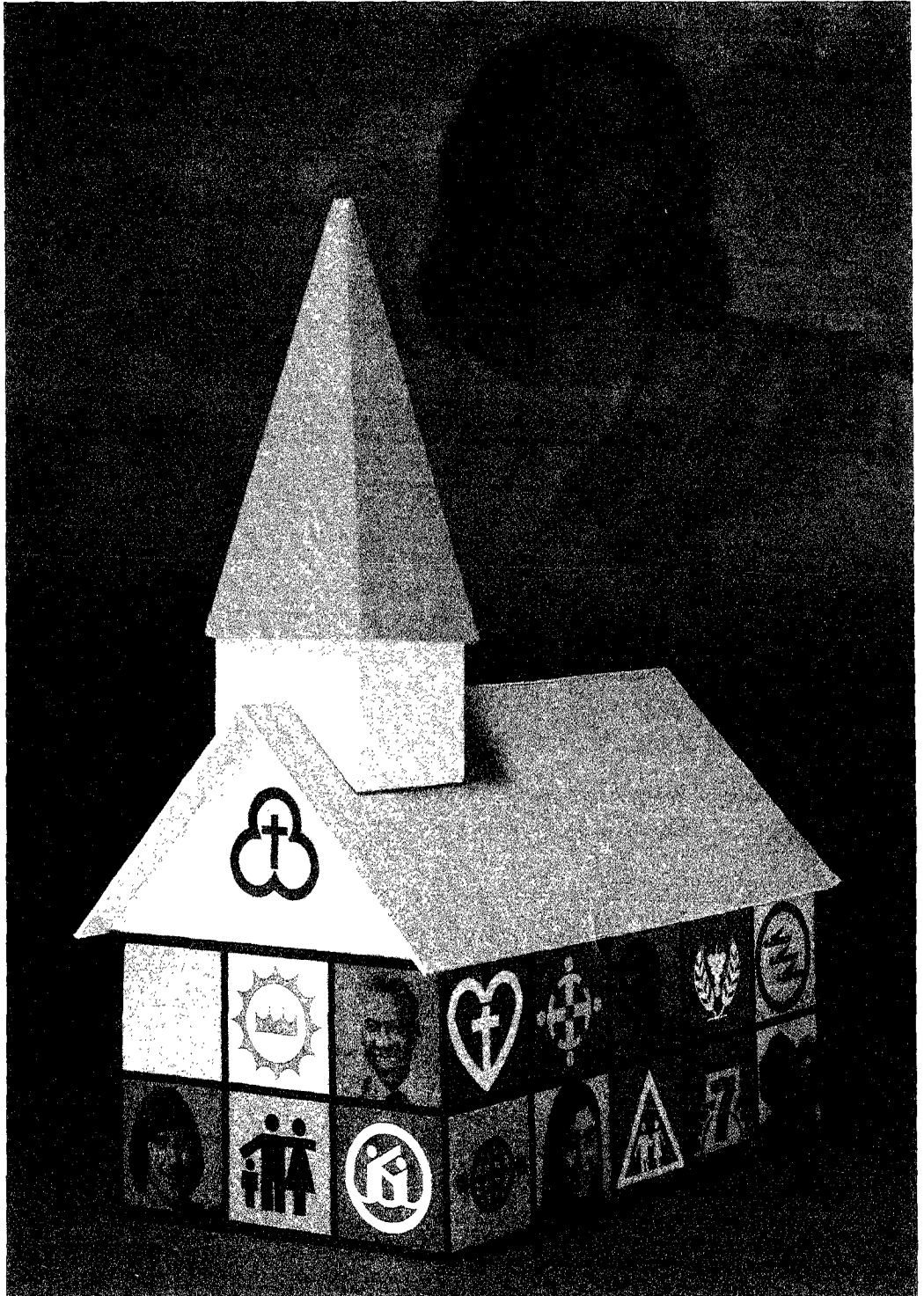
General Organ of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Special Issue on Bible Doctrines

What
Seventh-day
Adventists
Believe



Brief
discussions of
27 fundamental
beliefs



About This Issue

What do Seventh-day Adventists believe? This question has been asked so frequently that the editors of the REVIEW decided to devote an entire issue to providing an answer. The magazine that you hold in your hand is the result.

In a word, Adventists believe the Bible. This answer, though overly brief, is accurate. As early as 1847 James White, one of the founders of the church, declared: "The Bible is a perfect, and complete revelation. It is our only rule of faith and practice."—*A Word to the Little Flock*, p. 13. Two years later *Present Truth*, the earliest Seventh-day Adventist periodical, made a similar statement: "The Bible is our chart—our guide. It is our only rule of faith and practice, to which we would closely adhere."—December, 1849, p. 46.

Unlike many other churches, Adventists have consistently declined to adopt a formal creed, fearing that to do so might have an adverse effect on their continuing quest for truth. But they have formulated a Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. This statement, which sets forth their current understanding of basic Bible doctrines, has been revised from time to time, the most recent revision having been made in 1980 at a quinquennial session of the world church, in Dallas, Texas.

The statement is introduced by this paragraph: "Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church's understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word."

This special issue of the ADVENTIST REVIEW offers a brief but balanced discussion of each of the church's 27 fundamental beliefs. Each discussion is titled and numbered to correspond to the Dallas statement. The staff believes that this issue sets forth accurately the church's present understanding of these 27 doctrines. The official statement of fundamental beliefs, of which this issue is an expansion, is found on pages 5 through 8 of the 1981 *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*.

Adventist Review



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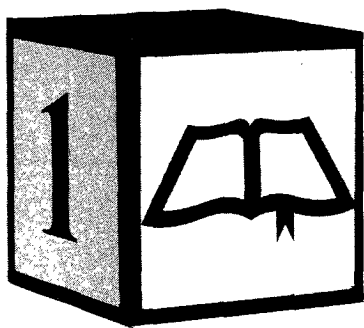
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The Holy Scriptures

The God of the Bible is a God who reveals Himself to us. He does not leave us alone in our state of lostness, alienated from Him because of sin. He comes to us, showing us His character, revealing His will, offering us the salvation He has provided. He is the God who speaks: "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world" (Heb. 1:1, 2, R.S.V.).

The Holy Scriptures, comprising the Old and New Testaments, are the living record of God's speaking. They are more than the history of divine encounters out of the past, more than memorials to the faith of past generations—they are the word of God. It was God the Holy Spirit who first brought them forth, moving upon the minds of the Bible writers (2 Peter 1:20, 21). The same Spirit moves through the Scriptures today, addressing us personally, calling us back to God, convicting us of sin, enlightening our minds, and wooing our hearts: "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Heb. 3:7, 8). Because God is the author of the Scriptures, they are living and unchangeable.

As with Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, the Scriptures are the Word made flesh (John 1:14). They are a unique blending of divinity and humanity. God did not dictate the Scriptures, nor did He give them to us in an other-worldly language. Rather, He moved on people—people with a variety of backgrounds, people who were well educated or

poorly educated, people who were of royal blood or common stock. He moved their minds, inspiring them with His message for humanity; they then expressed the divine ideas in their own words. Thus the Bible is at once fully human, but more than human. Through its human words, thoughts, patterns, and history, God speaks. Although the Bible has many writers, it has but one Author.

The eternal God still speaks through the Holy Scriptures. To everyone who opens them with a seeking heart He reveals Himself as their author.

The Scriptures are able to make us "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). They are infallible in setting out God's plan for the redemption of lost humanity. In both Old and New Testaments, that plan is the same, centering in Jesus Christ. All Scripture, whether prophecy in the Old Testament or fulfillment in the New, testifies of Him (John 5:39; 1 Peter 1:10, 11). He, the Word of God who became incarnate (John 1:1, 2, 14), is the central person of the written Word of God.

Because God changes not, the revelation of His character in the Scriptures is unchangeable. Because His way of saving lost men and

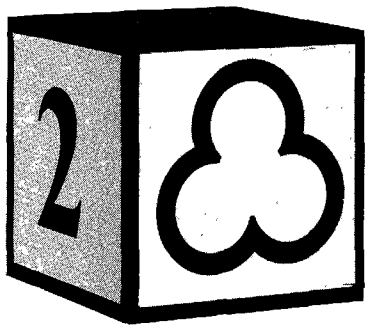
women is one, the Scriptures' portrayal of that way can never be superseded. Because His will is fixed, their teaching function is indispensable. And because they are the word of God, they summon each of us to salvation and obedience. In a world of flux and change, of shifting values and conflicting claims of truth, they remain the one unerring norm. They are a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Ps. 119:105). They test our experience, lest we fall prey to our own feelings. They tell us how to live day by day. They keep us from the quicksands of error. They guide us through the perils of the last times. They remind us that we are sons and daughters of the Living God, made by Him, loved by Him, accepted by Him in Jesus Christ, and intended to live with Him eternally (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). In them we find Jesus, the Word made flesh, our Saviour and Lord. As we feed upon them we are "born again" (1 Peter 1:23) and transformed daily into His image (2 Cor. 3:18).

Thus the Scriptures are our light, our food, our refuge. As they have guided God's people in all ages, they are still "the joy and rejoicing" of our heart (Jer. 15:16), our solace in bereavement, our counsel in prosperity, and our hope of life eternal.

As we approach the study of the Scriptures, we must remember their unique character. Ordinary means of investigation are inadequate; we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:11-14). We must be open to the Scriptures as the word of God, ready to receive the instruction God has for us. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

God's invitation to all men and women is: "O taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8). To everyone who opens the Bible with a seeking heart He reveals Himself as its author. The Holy Scriptures are alive with His life: He, the speaking God, still speaks today.

For further study, see Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 10:35; 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.



The Trinity

Although other religions include a “trinity” in their pantheon, only Christianity is marked by a general belief in one triune God—one true and living God (Deut. 6:4) existing in a unity of three distinct coeternal Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The divine Persons in this triune Godhead are immortal, all-powerful, and all-knowing.

The Godhead is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known to the extent that They have chosen to reveal Themselves. The members of the Godhead have revealed Themselves through the works of Their hands in nature, through providential workings, and in the written Word—the Bible, and in the living Word—Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures teach that the one God exists as three distinct persons, the Trinity:

1. *God the Father*—“To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things” (1 Cor. 8:6). “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:6).

2. *God the Son*—“For in him [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

3. *God the Holy Spirit*—“Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? . . . Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God” (Acts 5:3, 4). “God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit. . . . For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of

God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:10, 11).

The three persons of the Godhead are portrayed in the Bible as interrelating to one another in the way expected among persons. They use personal pronouns when speaking of one another (see Matt. 17:5; John 16:13, 28; 17:1). They love and glorify one another (see John 3:35; 15:10; 16:14). The Father sends the Son (Matt. 10:40), the Son prays to the Father (John 17:18), and the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit as Their agent (John 14:26; 16:7). The persons in the Godhead are so distinct that They can address each other, love each other, and act in relationship to each other. Each of Them also has a particular work to perform even when They are co-operating together in such activities as creation and redemption.

The Biblical statement that “God is love” (1 John 4:8) applies equally well to each person in the Godhead. In fact, for God to be love from eternity presupposes more than one person in the Godhead. If God were only one person in eternity, His love would have been limited to self-love.

While no single scriptural passage states formally the doctrine of the Trinity, it is assumed as a fact by Bible writers and mentioned several times. It is implied in Genesis 1, where God and the Spirit of God are portrayed acting in Creation. The New Testament makes it clear that Christ participated in Creation too, in fact as actual Creator (John 1:3; Col. 1:16, 17; Heb. 1:2). Matthew 28:19 commands baptism “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Here the doctrine of

the Trinity seems to be set forth in such a manner as to give it strong emphasis as a point of faith.

At Christ’s baptism the reality of the triune Godhead was evident in the appearance of all three Persons at one time. Matthew 3:16, 17 describes God the Son—Jesus—being baptized. The Spirit of God was manifested in the form of a dove descending upon Him. At the same time the voice of God the Father was heard proclaiming, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Luke 1:35 includes all three persons of the Godhead in the angel’s announcement to Mary that Heaven had chosen her to be the mother of the Messiah. The Holy Ghost was to come upon her. The power of the Highest was to overshadow her. And the Son of God was to be born to her.

Jesus recognized the distinction among the persons of the Godhead when He stated: “When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me” (John 15:26).

Paul’s so-called “apostolic benediction” also reinforces this teaching. In a prayer addressed to Christ for grace, to the Father for love, and to the Holy Spirit for fellowship the apostle includes the three persons of the Godhead: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen” (2 Cor. 13:14).

Traditional proofs of God

Only by faith can we accept the existence of the Trinity. Nevertheless, reason supplies evidences that support our belief in God. Through the ages theologians have developed what have become known as the traditional proofs of God. They are:

1. *The moral proof.* Each person’s quest for the “highest good” implies the existence of a moral Being. Conscience and morality distinguish humans from animals. There must be an independent coherent source of human morality—God.

2. *The mental proof.* The human

qualities of mind, imagination, and intelligence can be explained only by postulating an all-intelligent Being.

3. *The cosmological proof.* Because each effect must have a cause, an endless chain must proceed back to the great “First Cause” or “Prime Mover.” Something cannot come out of nothing.

4. *The teleological proof.* The intricacies of structure and design found in nature, which range from the butterfly to the human brain, make necessary the existence of an intelligent Designer. It must be difficult for anyone who has ever built a computer to believe that the fabulous computer known as the human brain could develop by chance.

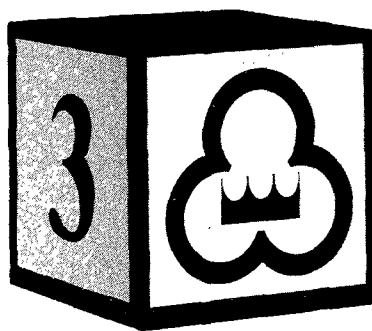
5. *The ontological proof.* The eleventh-century Archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm, defined God as “a Being than which nothing greater can be thought.” He reasoned that since existence would have to be a part of any such perfect and necessary Being, this Being must actually exist. If it is possible that such a conceivable Being exists, then He must exist in actuality.

6. *The experiential proof.* Widespread religious experiences indicate that there must be something or Someone behind them. The fact that so many people everywhere have experienced God makes it likely that there is a God who made and sustains the world.

These “evidences of God” have had their supporters and detractors ever since they were first formulated. In the past century there have been more of the latter than the former. But recently many of the philosophers and theologians who deal with such matters have been taking a new look at these old evidences, taking them more seriously and, in some cases, adapting and updating them to conform to current thinking.

Beyond these rational evidences, however, God invites us to know Him by experience. The triune God promises, “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13).

For further study, see Deut. 29:29; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:17.



The Father

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

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

However, there is much about the essential nature of God that we do not know, because He has not revealed it to us. Among those items that are not revealed are the nature of His essence and how He can be eternal, infinite, and omnipresent. But His nature is understood to some extent through the way that He deals with us, as well as in what He tells us about Himself. Central to God’s self-revelation is His assurance of “steadfast love.”

The New Testament especially portrays God as our loving heavenly Father (Matt. 5:45; 1 John 4:8). Through the adoption by Christ, we become His sons and daughters (John 1:12, 13). God our heavenly Father is not just some sort of impersonal force.

Jesus’ statement to the woman at the well of Sychar that “God is a Spirit” (chap. 4:24) was not intended to indicate that God is without form or center of being or activity. Christ’s statement has to do with power and quality rather than essence of being. The nature of the infinite God is far beyond that of finite humans and not

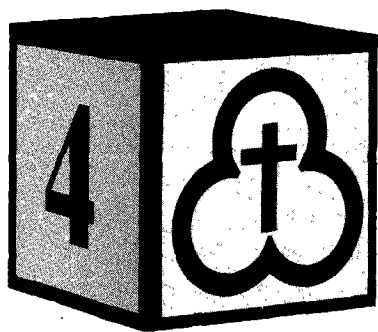
to be confused with our nature. He is supernatural and exalted, beyond our ability to conceive. He exists on a plane, or dimension, that is incomprehensible to us.

Yet the Hebrew concept of spirit is more concrete than abstract. God occupies space even though He is unseeable as far as humans are concerned. We were formed in His image (Gen. 1:27), indicating that He has a specific form. Throughout the Bible God is dealt with as a person. Though doubtless the terms used in Scripture to describe Him are selected because they will be easily comprehended by human beings, they picture Him as a person. He speaks, hears, sees, and writes. He regrets, is grieved, and displays anger and joy. He has a will (2 Cor. 1:1; Ps. 40:8), judges (Rom. 2:16; Ps. 7:11), pardons (Isa. 55:7), and keeps secrets (Deut. 29:29). Yet He is above all, created all, and upholds all. He is omnipotent (Rev. 19:6), high and holy (Isa. 57:15), omniscient (1 John 3:20), has infinite wisdom (Eph. 1:8), is eternal and immortal (1 Tim. 1:17), and omnipresent (Ps. 139:7; Jer. 23:24)—free from all limitations of space in His activities.

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

The qualities and powers exhibited in God the Son and God the Holy Spirit also reveal to us what the Father is like.

For further study, see Rev. 4:11; 1 Cor. 15:28; John 3:16; Ex. 34:6, 7; John 14:9.



The Son

Our hope of salvation centers in Jesus alone. The term by which He is known, the Son of God, reflects His place in the plan of salvation, a role determined before the world was created. He was born into this world in human form (Heb. 1:5, 6). Before His incarnation He existed as God in the fullest and highest sense from eternity. He is God in nature, in power, and in authority (John 1:1, 2; 17:5, 24; Phil. 2:6).

Christ is the Creator of all things (John 1:3; Col. 1:16, 17; Heb. 1:2). After Adam and Eve sinned, Christ had continuing and close contact with the world. He was the member of the Godhead who was to empty Himself, be “made in the likeness of men” and become “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:7, 8). Through Him the character of God is revealed to fallen humans, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is to be judged (John 5:25-29).

Forever truly God, Christ became truly and fully human. Hundreds of years before He was born, the prophets foretold His virgin birth and the place where He was to be born—Bethlehem (Isa. 7:14; Micah 5:2). Conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, He grew up in the Galilean mountain village of Nazareth.

During His life on earth Jesus lived and experienced temptation as a human being but never sinned, perfectly exemplifying the righteousness and love of God and setting a perfect example for us to follow (Heb. 2:16-18; 1 Peter 2:21, 22).

Christ lived simply and unselfishly. As a child, youth, and young

man, He assisted in the carpenter shop in Nazareth, always being pleasant and interested in others. When He was about 30 years old (Luke 3:23), He was baptized by John the Baptist by being immersed in the Jordan River (Matt. 3:13-17). He was not baptized in order to be cleansed of sin, for He had never sinned, but to “fulfil all righteousness” (verse 15). By being baptized He identified Himself with sinners, taking the steps that we are to take and doing what we are to do.

Every teaching of the Seventh-day Adventist Church centers in Jesus Christ.

When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended on Him in visible form as a dove and the voice of God from heaven pronounced the words “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (verse 17). After this event Jesus spent about three years in loving, unselfish ministry, seeking to bring the gospel message to rich and poor, Jew and Gentile.

By means of miracles, including miracles of healing and even the raising of the dead, Jesus manifested God’s power and loving concern and was attested as the promised Messiah.

His teachings were matchless in their simplicity, attractiveness, and power to change hearts and lives. Even the officers sent to arrest Him at one point in His ministry were unable to because they were impressed with

the power and reasonableness of His teachings. When asked to explain why they had not apprehended Him, they could only respond, “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46).

Before the foundation of the world the Godhead had prepared a plan to meet the eventuality of sin arising on earth (Eph. 1:4). Through Christ’s death those who accepted Him would become children of God and be heirs of eternal life (John 3:16; 1 John 5:11, 12). When Jesus was ready to begin His ministry, John the Baptist pointed to Him as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (chap. 1:29). Jesus concluded His selfless ministry by the ultimate sacrifice—laying down His life to provide human beings a way to escape from sin and its consequences.

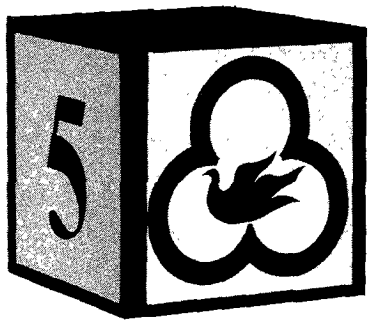
Jesus suffered and died voluntarily on the cross of Calvary for our sins and in our place. But death and the grave could not hold the Creator. He was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven after appearing several times to His disciples and commissioning them to carry forward the gospel work that He had begun during His brief ministry.

He did not forsake or forget His people on earth when He ascended, but took up a new ministry in our behalf in the sanctuary in heaven—a ministry of intercession and preparation of His people for a place in the kingdom He plans to restore on earth.

Christ will come again soon, returning in clouds of glory with His holy angels for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all that has been lost through sin.

The focus of the Bible is Jesus Christ. He is the center of every Seventh-day Adventist point of faith. “In him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28). It is love for Christ that motivates us to obey His commandments, follow His example, and submit our lives to Him so that He can live by His Spirit within us.

For further study, see Luke 1:35; John 1:1-3, 14; 5:22; 10:30; 14:9; Rom. 5:18; 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Heb. 4:15; 7:25; 8:1, 2; 9:28; Rev. 22:20.



The Holy Spirit

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

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

John 14, 15, and 16 record Christ’s description of the work of the Holy Spirit. He is called the Spirit of truth (chap. 14:17), who will be sent in Jesus’ name (verse 26) to dwell with the disciples (verse 17). “He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (verse 26). He was sent to testify of Jesus (chap. 15:26). And because He is not limited by time or space, He could represent Jesus to people everywhere in every age.

Besides working with Christ’s disciples, enabling them to fulfill

their commission, the Holy Spirit would be present among the unconverted, reproving them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (chap. 16:8).

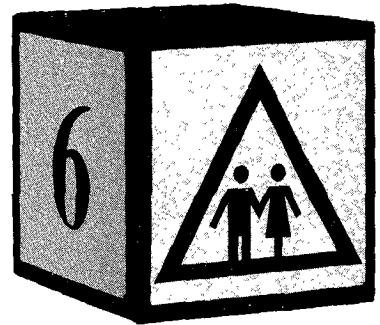
It is possible that the person and work of the Holy Spirit are the least understood of any member of the Godhead. This is because the nature of His work is to present Christ and the Father rather than Himself. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit holy men of God wrote the Scriptures, which testify of Jesus (2 Peter 1:21). He filled Christ’s life with power. Through His ministry the Scriptures come alive for us today, making Christ real, softening our hearts to the Saviour, and enabling us to live for Him.

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

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

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

For further study, see Luke 1:35; 4:18; Acts 10:38; Rom. 1:1-4; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:11, 12.



Creation

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

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1), and He has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. The Bible statement that “the earth was without form, and void” (verse 2) when God brought it

into existence leads us to believe that God created all living things on earth and their supporting environment during six literal consecutive days of Creation (Ex. 20:11).

The genealogical record in the Bible would seem to indicate a short chronology, suggesting that Creation took place not many thousand years ago.

Not only does the Bible point to God as the Creator of all things, but it reveals His continuing personal involvement with His creation on this planet and with human beings in particular. God's purpose to establish and to maintain a personal connection with His creation is clearly set forth by the Creation record itself, by God's initial relationship with human beings, and by His patient dealings with them since the Fall.

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

God created Adam and Eve in His own image with the capability of enjoying fellowship with Him. When the obedience and allegiance that belong to the Creator alone were

yielded to Satan in Eden, the harmonious relationship between God and humans was broken. The first entry of sin, with its degenerative effects upon human beings (Rom. 5:12, 17, 19), has had disastrous effects on all of God's earthly creation. Although the design, order, and beauty in nature still give evidence of a loving hand, the evil one has intruded to warp and debase the once beautiful and perfect creation. Consequently the effects of sin overshadow all. Because of this, it is only through special revelation that human beings, with the help of the Holy Spirit, can interpret correctly nature's message relative to the origin of our world and the character of its Creator.

Outline of six days

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

In the creation of the world God was not dependent upon preexistent matter. By divine fiat the world was created *ex nihilo*—out of nothing. “Things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb. 11:3). The advent of nuclear science has made it possible to

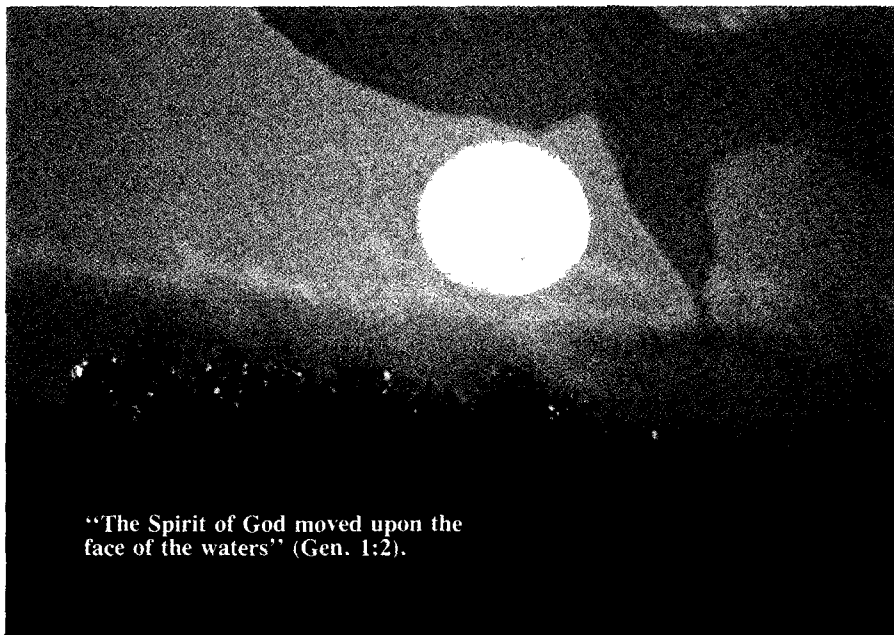
understand to some degree how the power of God could be transformed into matter to bring this world into being.

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

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

The meaning of life, the purpose for human existence, and the ultimate goal of a world restored to its original created beauty can be understood only as they are communicated to us by our benevolent Creator, who placed our first parents in a perfect world. If it were not for Creation, if this world were only the product of blind chance, if there were no God of Creation, there could be no law, order, or harmony in the universe.

One of the strongest evidences for the belief that there is a Creator is the laws that scientists have discovered to be operating in the universe and the tremendous complexity of life itself. Logic and reason protest against the possibility that a complex organism such as the human body with its large number of intricately related systems and functions could have come into existence through the working of blind chance. In spite of the fact that the theory of evolution, which proposes that all complex forms of life developed from simple



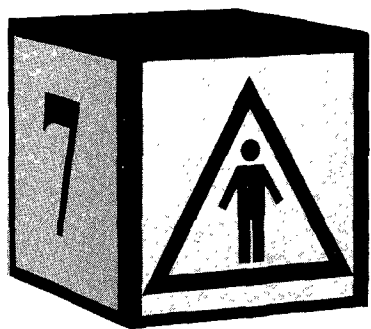
“The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2).

living cells, is accepted almost universally today, it has not been and cannot be scientifically demonstrated or established.

But even more telling is the principle of love and benevolence wrapped up in the Special Creation story—the God of love who not only created but sustains all of creation on a moment-by-moment basis (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). Christ, the Creator

who spoke our world into existence (John 1:1-3, 14), demonstrated His love for this world not only in original Creation but in His willingness to die in our behalf (chap. 3:16), so that this world might be re-created and restored to the perfection that existed before sin marred the work of Creation (Revelation 21, 22).

For further study, see Job 38-41; Ps. 19:1-6, 33:6-9; Isa. 40:25, 26; 45:12; Acts 17:23-28; 1 Cor. 8:5, 6; Eph. 3:9.



The Nature of Man

When God decided to create human beings in His image (Gen. 1:26, 27), He took a portion of the earth He had created and formed it into the shape He wanted. But the form still lacked life. Then God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (chap. 2:7).

By breathing the breath of life into Adam’s nostrils, God gave to the human race the spark of life, or the life principle. It is this that makes humans conscious, intelligent individuals. The dust of the earth, when combined with the breath of life, becomes a living being. Without this combination, there is no life or existence, just as there was no life in the form that became Adam until God put the breath of life in him.

In order for the “soul” to exist, it had to be composed of body (dust) and spirit (breath of life). Only when this combination exists is there a “living soul.” This can be more readily understood if instead of *soul* we used the term *being*, as is done in the Revised Standard Version of Genesis 2:7, which reads, “and man became a living being.”

What kind of living being did humans become? Animals share with humans the ingredients in the recipe of life—the dust of the earth and the breath of life (chap. 7:21, 22; see margin also). But humans are in a class by themselves because they alone were created in the image of God. They have been given a special kind of intelligence, a kind that animals do not have. Physically, mentally, and spiritually humans reflect the image of God. Theirs is an individuality that has power to think, act, and respond to the love of God as no animal can.

Human nature is holistic. Though we were created free beings, each one of us is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and soul, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. But God gave the perfect beings He had created the greatest gift of all—the power of choice. Without opportunity to make choices, humans could never develop moral character or serve God because they loved Him. In giving created beings this gift, God took the risk that they might misuse this power and bring the results of sin upon themselves.

When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him. In doing so, they lost their God-given capacity to live physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually as He had intended them to live. Because of sin the laws of heredity, intended originally to be a blessing to the human race, became a mechanism by which sinful tendencies are passed from one generation to another.

The image of God in which humans were created has been marred by sin. All of us share a fallen, sinful nature and its degenerative consequences. In our own strength it is impossible for us to deny the clamors of our fallen nature. Born into a sinful human family, we possess inherited tendencies toward sin.

Our hearts are “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9). On top of that, each of us has committed sin himself. “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (verse 23). In addition, Satan takes advantage of our hereditary weaknesses and sinful tendencies to entrap us in sin. With all this working against us, it would seem that we cannot avoid following the ways of sin.

But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Creator. He forgives our sins, freeing us from the burden of guilt and shame and restoring us to His fellowship (Luke 4:18; 1 John 1:9; 3:1, 2). In order to deal with the problem of our sinful natures, He transforms our natures (Rom. 12:2), makes us new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17), and changes our way of doing things. This change in our natures is so dramatic that the Bible terms it a new birth (John 1:12, 13; 3:3).

One of the consequences of sin to humanity was that, as God had forewarned (Gen. 3:3), death came into the world—human beings became mortal, subject to death. Romans 6:23 indicates that “the wages of sin is death” but hastens to

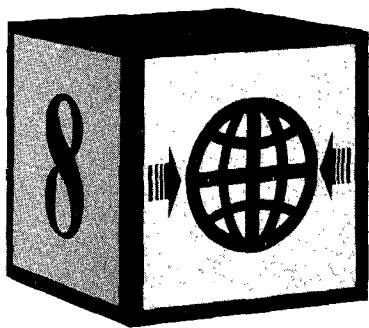
add that "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Because of sin, all who are born into this world are subject to the first death, but this is not the ultimate "wages of sin." The real wages of sin is the second death that results in eternal oblivion. It is the opposite of eternal life. But only those who choose to continue to live sinful lives have to suffer the second, or eternal, death. God has provided a plan—the plan of salvation—by which mortal, sinful beings can escape the "wages of sin." When we accept Christ as our Saviour, we accept the life that was His because He took the death that was ours. Consequently, those who have accepted Christ may die, but after that comes the resurrection

when they will be given immortality (1 Cor. 15:51-57; Rev. 21:4).

Adam and Eve's fall into sin also affected their freedom of choice and that of their descendants. In Romans 6:12 Paul speaks of sin reigning in our mortal bodies. By nature we are servants, or slaves, of sin (verse 17). We are under the dominion of sin and death. We have no choice, no power to resist. But when Christ comes into our lives, He frees us from the dominance of sin and death and gives us power once again to choose freedom from the reign of sin. In its place we have the promise of everlasting life (verses 7-23).

For further study, see Genesis 3; Ps. 8:4-8; 51:5; Eccl. 12:14; Ezekiel 18; Rom. 5:12-17; 7; 1 Cor. 15:22; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; Eph. 2:2-5.



The Great Controversy

For thousands of years philosophers and other thinkers have tried to offer a satisfactory explanation for the bewildering mixture of good and evil that prevails in the world. Why do rosebuds exist side by side with thorns? Why do animals kill and eat one another? Why do people in some parts of the world have too much food while people in other parts are starving? Why does an innocent child die in an automobile accident while the guilty, drunken driver escapes unharmed? Why do ruthless people become rich while self-effacing people too often mire ever deeper in poverty?

Philosophers have offered a variety of answers. Atheists, who hold that the world and all forms of life started by chance, suggest that good and evil are in a kind of "survival of

the fittest" competition; eventually only one will survive. Others have suggested that at least two gods govern the world; one is good, the other, evil. Still others have suggested that God is powerful but not powerful enough to eradicate evil, hence good and evil are in a kind of stalemate.

The true explanation, however, is found in God's Word.

According to the Holy Scriptures, many thousands of years ago, before this world was created, evil originated mysteriously in the heart of Lucifer, the most exalted of the angels in heaven. The fault was not God's, for Lucifer was created perfect (Eze. 28:15). But apparently Lucifer was dissatisfied with his status. He felt that he should be given honor equal to God, particularly the

Son (Isa. 14:12-14). He permitted envious, jealous thoughts to control him.

He should have dismissed these thoughts. He should have recognized that as a created being he had no right to the homage accorded deity. But he did not. Instead he harbored his evil thoughts and confided them to his angel companions. Obviously he did not say flatly, "I'm jealous of Christ." More likely he asked questions designed to sow seeds of dissatisfaction and of disaffection. "Don't you think that heaven is too tightly structured? Why does God's government need laws? I don't see why holy beings need laws. I don't think God loves us as He claims; He gets satisfaction out of issuing commands. He's unjust and unfair."

This kind of suggestion and innuendo continued until one third of the angels were solidly committed to Lucifer. Misled by his siren song, they felt that he could set up a government superior to God's.

With infinite patience God endeavored to explain His actions and persuade Lucifer and his sympathizers to abandon the disastrous course they were following. He endeavored to make clear that heaven's laws are grounded in love and are essential to happiness. But Lucifer and his fellow rebels were intransigent; they refused to accept God's explanations or respond to His entreaties.

Scripture says the crisis continued until "there was war in heaven" (Rev. 12:7-9). Lucifer and his sympathizers fought against Christ and the loyal angels, attempting to capture God's throne. But he was defeated and expelled from heaven.

God gave Lucifer time

God did not at once destroy Lucifer and his followers, but gave them time and opportunity to show whether their charges against His character and law were justified. On earth God had placed Adam and Eve, the first human pair, in the Garden of Eden, and had set up a test of character so they could demonstrate their loyalty to Him. The test was simple: God set apart one tree in the

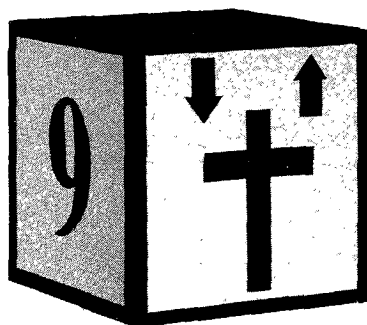
garden and told Adam and Eve not to eat of it (Gen. 2:16, 17); disobedience would bring death. Lucifer (now renamed Satan) saw this as an opportunity to tempt the holy pair to eat the fruit and thus join him in rebellion.

Tragically and incredibly, Adam and Eve yielded to Satan's temptation. In mercy God spared their lives so that they might have opportunity to repent, but the penalty for breaking God's law had to be met. Thus God offered His own Son to come to this earth and die as a divine substitute, taking the place of sinners. He also promised a continuing conflict between good and evil (chap. 3:15).

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

Today the conflict is nearing its close. With great urgency the Holy Spirit and angels are seeking to help people choose God's side and put loyalty to God, righteousness, and truth above life itself. Scripture makes clear that the ultimate outcome will be complete victory for God and vindication of His character and law. But until that day—the day when God destroys Satan and his followers and purifies the world by fire—good and evil will continue side by side, a powerful testimony that supernatural forces are continuing their deadly warfare begun long ago in heaven.

For further study, see Genesis 6-8; Rom. 1:18-32; 5:12-21; 8:19-22; 1 Cor. 4:9; Heb. 1:4-14; 2 Peter 3:6.



The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ

God was not taken by surprise at the entry of sin in the universe. Before sin ever arose, He had foreseen it and made provision to meet it. Christ is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). To counter the mystery of evil God would provide the mystery of the cross. God Himself would furnish the answer to the problem of sin by sending His Son to be Emmanuel, God with us (Matt. 1:23).

Although fully human, Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience to the divine will. "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart," the Scriptures had predicted of Him (Ps. 40:8). He was assailed by the tempter, suffering unto death, and was tested "in all points . . . like as we are," but He was victorious in every trial (Heb. 2:18; 4:15). "Which of you convicts me of sin?" He challenged His accusers (John 8:46, R.S.V.). By His life of submission and perfect obedience to the divine will, Christ disarmed Satan's attacks against the law. He fulfilled the law (Matt. 5:17-19), demonstrating by precept and example the richness and depths of the divine standard. Thus, by His life among us as a man Christ showed what true humanity—humanity obedient to God—is like.

Yet to solve the problem of sin it was not enough that Jesus should live a perfect life. Under the provisions of the everlasting covenant (Heb. 13:20), He was to be "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the

world" (John 1:29). Since "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23), demanded by the claims of the broken law, God's plan to save us pointed inevitably to the cross. "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21). He took upon Himself our sin, dying the death that was ours, so that we might receive the righteousness that was His and live His life. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). In the light of the cross we see the enormity of sin and catch our breath at the measure of God's love for us. With Paul we exclaim: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14).

And the grave could not hold Him! Crucified on Friday morning, dead and buried by evening, He broke the bands of death on Sunday morning. He arose as a conqueror over death as well as over sin. By entering the realm of death, He destroyed "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14) and became "the first begotten of the dead" (Rev. 1:5), He who holds "the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:18). His victory over death assures our victory over death. He promises us, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19). His victory likewise guarantees the final outcome of the

great controversy between good and evil. Although we still await the consummation of all things, Satan is a defeated foe, his ultimate destruction sure.

Thus, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has accomplished His plan to save lost humanity. When God forgives, He does not lightly put away sin; it is because of the cross “that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:21-26). In Christ God has shown His hatred of sin and yet made possible to the sinner a way of escape. At the same time He has exalted His law, broken by man and attacked by Satan, and has brought life out of death.

The coming of sin into a perfect universe brought pain, sorrow, and death. Yet the marvelous wisdom of God, His infinite resourcefulness manifested in the plan of salvation, proved more than equal to the terrible emergency. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as

sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 5:20, 21). Because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus we understand more of God’s character than ever before possible, and the entire unfallen universe is drawn closer to Him in wonder at His compassion for sinners.

Christ is Lord! King of life, Conqueror of death, Victor over sin and Satan, “God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11). That is why the redeemed of all ages will sing around the throne of God: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!” (Rev. 5:12).

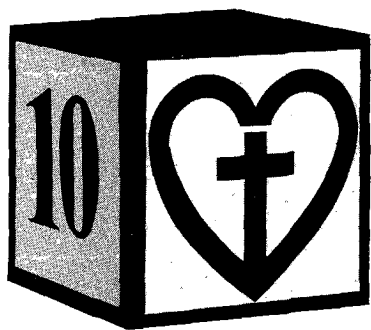
For further study, see John 3:16; Rom. 1:4; 4:25; 8:3, 4; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15; Col. 2:15; 1 John 2:2; 4:10.

10:17). Thus, instead of rebelling against God or fleeing from Him, we turn toward Him to accept His gift of salvation. Salvation, then, is all of God: “By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). Our part is in placing our will on the side of God, in being willing to be made willing, in allowing the Holy Spirit to woo us back to God. Even in offering His inestimable gift God honors our freedom of choice.

As we by faith turn from self-righteousness and accept God’s righteousness in Christ, we have a new standing with Him. We are now justified, acquitted from the sentence of guilt and the death that we deserve because of our transgression of God’s law (Rom. 3:19-26). This new status is commonly termed “justification by faith.” We are forgiven (1 John 1:9), reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:17-21), redeemed from the bondage of sin (1 Peter 1:18, 19), adopted as sons and daughters of the living God (Rom. 8:14-17), and set apart for His use in the midst of a world in rebellion (Phil. 2:15).

No longer do we live under the lordship of sin. “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Rom. 6:17, 18). The Holy Spirit, who first draws us to Christ and who (if we are willing) brings about a new birth (John 3:3-8), empowers our daily living. He dwells in us, giving us power for victory in temptation, instructing us in the decisions we face and revealing more and more of God’s love to us in Christ (Rom. 5:5, Eph. 1:13, 14).

Thus from first to last the experience of salvation is “by grace . . . through faith” (Eph. 2:8). The way we come to Christ is the way we live in Christ: “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” (Col. 2:6). Daily we are to give all and take all—yielding ourselves wholly to God and receiving His new life and righteousness. Jesus said, “If any man will come



The Experience of Salvation

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

We accept by faith God’s gift of salvation. “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of

things not seen” (Heb. 11:1, R.S.V.). Faith is trusting God, taking Him at His word. It is turning from our self-sufficiency to His sufficiency in Jesus Christ.

Yet, faith itself comes from God. Our wills are corrupted by evil, bent toward the path of wrongdoing. But the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and reorients our thinking (John 16:8-11). He awakens within us a desire for God and His righteousness and empowers our wills to choose the good. He especially impresses us through the Word of God (Rom.

after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). We abide in Christ when we unite with Him in a relationship that strengthens and deepens each day. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches" (John 15:4, 5).

United with Christ, we are being transformed into the divine likeness (2 Cor. 3:18). The image of God, defaced and well-nigh obliterated by the Fall, is being progressively restored (Col. 3:10). We no longer defy His law and seek to evade its demands; now it is written within (Heb. 8:10, 11). We know that as long as we choose to abide in Him, He will hold us by a hand that will never let go: "No man is able to pluck [us] out of . . . [His] Father's hand" (John 10:29).

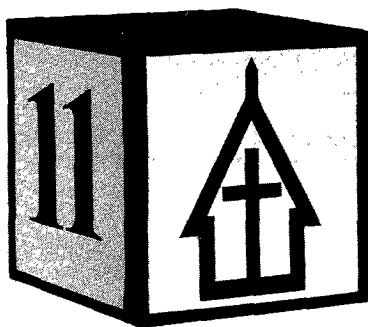
God's salvation in Jesus Christ gives us strength for today and hope

From first to last the experience of salvation is "by grace . . . through faith."

for tomorrow. Our life is now filled with meaning and significance: We belong to God. And we face the future with confidence, knowing that as long as we abide in Him we need fear no evil. We know that in the judgment we have an Advocate, One who pleads on our behalf, even "Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). For the day of His return we wait with eager longing.

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

For further study, see Ps. 27:1; Isa. 12:2; Jonah 2:9; Matt. 18:3; John 3:16; Rom. 4:25; 5:6-10; 8:1-4; 1 Cor. 2:5; 15:3, 4; Gal. 1:4; 2:19, 20; 3:13; 4:4-7; Eph. 2:5-10; 3:16-19; 1 Peter 1:23; 2:21.



The Church

Although we must accept personally God's salvation in Christ, when we become Christians we no longer stand alone or act alone. As members of His body, the church (Eph. 1:23), we now have a corporate identity as well as an individual identity. As once we were "in Adam," condemned to death, now we are "in Christ," sharing His life (1 Cor. 15:22).

God has always had His people whom He has called out from a world in rebellion. Anciently the children of Israel were the community through whom His grace was manifested (Acts 7:38). In New Testament times the church serves this purpose. The church is a community, a family, and a fellowship. Its head is Christ and its members are men and women who have accepted Him as their Saviour and Lord. "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (chap. 2:47). "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:19, 20).

While membership in the church is important and inseparable from our confession of Christ as Saviour and Lord, membership in itself does not ensure that we belong to God. He searches the intents of the heart and knows those who are truly His and who do not merely profess His name. True believers are part of "the whole family in heaven and earth" (chap. 3:15)—the universal church, which is invisible as well as visible (Heb. 12:18-24).

The church of God has many functions. It is, first of all, a worshiping community. It bows to acknowledge the Lord of heaven and earth, our Creator, our Sustainer, our Salvation. It gathers to feed on God's Word, sharing with one another, seeking to build one another "unto love and to good works" (Heb. 10:23-25). It assembles to celebrate the Lord's Supper, the memorial of Christ's death for us and the anticipation of His return. It exists to serve the world: to go to earth's farthest bounds with the good news of salvation in Christ, making disciples of all peoples (Matt. 28:18-20); and to continue the loving, healing, saving ministry that Christ began.

Because Christ is the head of the church, His body, the church is given solemn authority (chap. 16:13-20; John 20:21, 22). The church speaks in the name of Christ, setting forth His will to the world, challenging humanity, and reasoning with them of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" (Acts 24:25). Although ecclesiastical authority has been abused in past centuries, today it is just as much an error to cast aside all respect for the authority of the church. Back of the church stands Christ and the authority of the Scriptures, which He has given for the edification of the church. God has left us the example of people such as Ananias and Sapphira lest we treat His church lightly (chap. 5:1-11).

Thus, church membership is both a high privilege and a solemn responsibility. The church is our place of belonging—a place to sing our Lord's praises, to be admonished from His Word, to renew our sense of

identity by fellowship with His people, to gather around His table, and to go forth to share His good news to a dying world. The church is a banquet; the world is starving.

Because membership in the church of the Living God is precious, it is not to be treated casually. The church is not a club that we join merely for fellowship; it is the body of Christ. Membership calls for joyful, active support and participation. We are warned against spurning the salvation that we once gladly accepted (Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 12:15-17).

Membership in the church brings us the joy of fellowship and service now and the hope of a glorious future. "Christ also loved the

church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27). The church is the bride of Christ, precious in His sight, His fortress in a rebellious world, the object of His supreme regard. Patiently He is perfecting His work in the church on earth because He has an eternal destiny for it—the members of His church are to dwell with Him forever.

For further study, see Gen. 12:3; Matt. 16:13-20; 21:43; John 20:21, 22; Acts 1:8; Rom. 8:15-17; 1 Cor. 12:13-27; Eph. 1:15; 2:12, 13; 3:8-11, 15; 4:11-15.

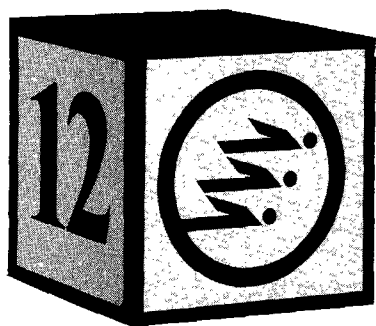
calls attention to the arrival of the hour of God's judgment—God is intervening in the course of human history to bring to a close the great controversy between good and evil. It is a call to separate from all systems of error, giving God alone true worship.

At the heart of the remnant message, however, is "the everlasting gospel." God always has had but one way of saving men and women—by faith in His gift provided through Christ. The remnant people are to lift high the cross of Christ that all may look and live (John 3:14-18). It is the special setting of the remnant message—the widespread apostasy from God's law, the arrival of the judgment, and the imminent end—that gives this proclamation of the everlasting gospel its unique thrust and power.

The remnant people function as a prophetic gathering movement. God has true believers scattered throughout the world, members of many denominations and religions. Under the pressure of last-day events, however, as the issues in the conflict between Christ and Satan emerge more clearly and the lines between the followers of each side become drawn more sharply, the remnant becomes the nucleus around which cluster the genuine people of God in all lands (Rev. 18:1-4). Thus, at the Second Coming the world will have been clearly delineated into two camps.

Every believer in these last days is called to be a part of the remnant people of God—called to the privileges and responsibilities that befit the final church of God on earth. First of all, the remnant are to uplift Christ and His saving work, demonstrating by a living faith that they are indeed His. The remnant are to set before the world the binding claims of God's law, so often flouted in modern society; to witness, by word and deed, of the impending close of human history—warning all, inviting all, beseeching all.

For further study, see Matt. 24:14; 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 5:22-27; Rev. 12:17; 21:1-14.



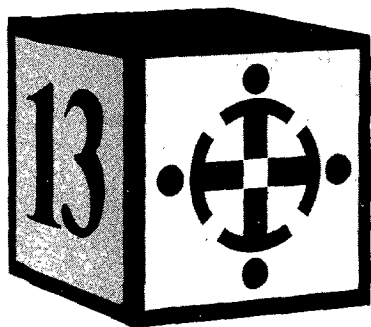
The Remnant and Its Mission

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

In these days that immediately precede the second coming of Christ, God again calls out a remnant people. Disobedience of the divine law is rampant; the majority flout God's will and spurn His offer of salvation; evil and evil people "wax worse and worse" (2 Tim. 3:13). At such a time the remnant people of God are called to be "blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse

generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15, R.S.V.). In the midst of a world in rebellion, they keep God's commandments; in an age of unbelief, they have the faith of Jesus (Rev. 14:12). As the events of earth hasten to their grand finale, the contrast between the remnant and unbelievers will become ever more marked.

The remnant people have been raised up by God to give a final message as well as to demonstrate loyalty to Him. Because God always gives humanity warning before He brings destruction, He commissions the remnant to announce to the world the imminent end of all things. The remnant's mission is portrayed by the three angels of Revelation 14:6-12. Theirs is a worldwide task, embracing "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Their message



Unity in the Body of Christ

The conductor raises his baton, the audience settles back with anticipation, then shivers at the cacophony of sound that ensues. Startled, in pain from the dissonance, they begin plugging their ears and fleeing the auditorium. However, the conductor seems pleased by the concert; he smiles with delight at the horrible sounds. Here and there a choir member tries to get the others in his vicinity to sing the same song in the same key. For a time they are successful, but cooperation is fitful at best, and the overall effect of the concert remains unchanged.

The trouble is that the choir is following instructions from the wrong conductor. As long as this conductor is in charge, harmony of action is impossible.

This parable need not be pushed much farther to make the point that on every side in today's world the fruits of this conductor's leadership are evident. Chaos between nations, races, brothers and sisters, parents and children, and husbands and wives has resulted. Those who are concerned seek for human solutions and for a while appear successful, but the concert will never really change until Christ, instead of Satan, is chosen to be the conductor.

The apostle Paul uses the metaphor of the body to illustrate unity. Christ

"is the head, and on him the whole body depends. Bonded and knit together by every constituent joint, the whole frame grows through the due activity of each part, and builds itself up in love" (Eph. 4:16, N.E.B.). The aptness of this figure of speech becomes apparent as we consider our own bodies.

Let us imagine that a mechanic wishes to pick up a wrench to begin repairs on a car. If the index finger on his right hand were to say suddenly, "I'm not going to cooperate. I think you need to use a screwdriver instead of a wrench, so I'm not going to pick up anything," the mechanic's ability to work will be curtailed. Without the index finger he cannot pick up the wrench unless he uses both hands or substitutes another finger. It is only when the index finger obeys the impulses sent to it by the brain (the head) that the mechanic can get on with his work efficiently.

So it is in the spiritual body, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12. If one member decides not to work as directed by Christ, the head, action is impaired or halted until that member decides to cooperate. And if the author of chaos, Satan, rather than Christ controls some members of the body, there is no chance that the body can work as a cohesive unit unless it be toward an evil end.

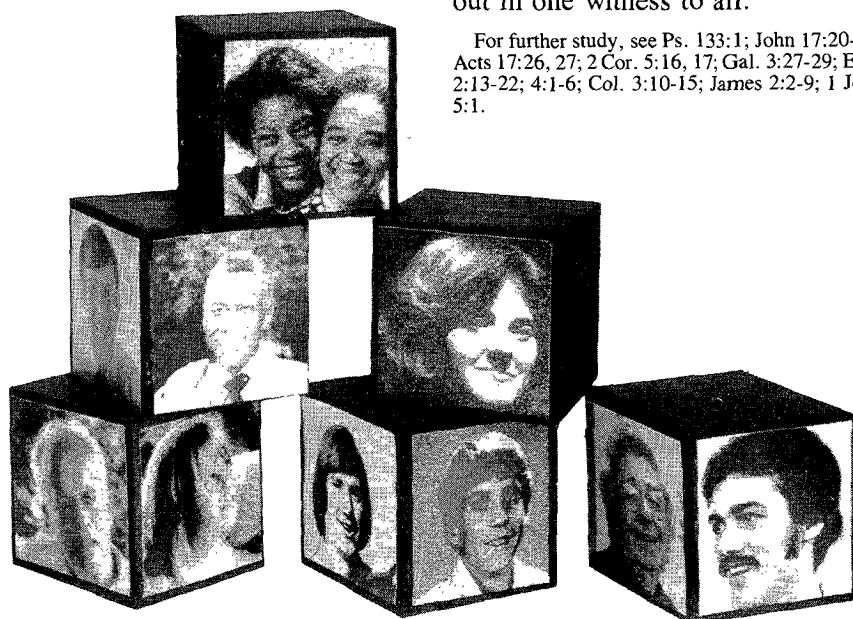
In speaking of unity, the Bible writers indicate that distinctions such

as sex, race, wealth, or intelligence will not inhibit the body's ability to function as long as it functions in Christ. Of course these distinctions continue to exist, but the person putting on Christ becomes a new creature. Christ breaks down the barriers that divide humanity (Eph. 2:14). Thus, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28, R.S.V.). In other words, instead of differences producing disharmony, to change the metaphor used above, they add to the richness of the concert.

Just before His agony in Gethsemane Jesus prayed for the unity of the disciples, asking the Father to make them (and those they converted) one, just as He and the Father are one (John 17:20-23). The oneness that comes to us as His modern-day disciples in answer to the same prayer will enable us to fulfill His purpose, which is to tell the world that the Father sent Christ to the world, and demonstrate that His coming has made a difference in how we act, live, and treat one another.

As one body with many members, the church is called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Yet through the revelation of Jesus Christ (through whom we are a new creation) in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all.

For further study, see Ps. 133:1; John 17:20-23; Acts 17:26, 27; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Gal. 3:27-29; Eph. 2:13-22; 4:1-6; Col. 3:10-15; James 2:2-9; 1 John 5:1.





Baptism

Baptism as Christians know it today derives from John the Baptist, who was sent to prepare the way for the Saviour.

“John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

“And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins” (Mark 1:4, 5).

Although there were Old Testament antecedents that John the Baptist would have known about—ritual washings and cleansings, and the story of Naaman—he taught that the rite would bring spiritual cleansing, more than a mere ritual or physical cleansing. He asked the people to show by their baptism that they had recognized their sinfulness and had repented. The step he asked them to take was a dramatic one, and those he baptized undoubtedly did not take the step lightly. John’s call to baptism indicated that a drastic change was necessary to prepare people for Jesus’ coming.

When Jesus walked down to the Jordan River and asked John to baptize Him (Matt. 3:13-15), He put His stamp of approval on the mission of John the Baptist and marked the beginning of His own mission to save humanity. Although not in need of being cleansed from sin, as others were, Jesus demonstrated that He understood the feelings of uncleanness and inadequacy common to human beings. By His baptism He identified Himself with the sinner in his need of God’s righteousness and set an example for those becoming Christians to follow.

The repentant sinner identifies himself with Jesus through the rite of baptism. By the sinless life He lived, and by His death on behalf of sinners, Jesus made His righteousness available to all, and by going through a symbolic death to sin, burial in the baptismal waters, and resurrection to new life in Jesus, a believer demonstrates his acceptance of that righteousness.

To the Christian today, baptism is



“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4).

a public confession of faith in God and acceptance of Jesus as a personal Saviour (Acts 16:30-33; Rom. 10:9). Candidates for baptism should be thoroughly instructed in the Christian faith and should have both a theoretical and practical understanding of it. For that reason, infant baptism is not appropriate. Young people are to be baptized only when they are mature enough to understand the significance of the step they are taking.

The Bible teaches baptism by immersion, and one of the reasons for this belief is that in Romans and Colossians Paul compares the rite to Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-6; Col. 2:12, 13). This symbolism would have had no significance if the apostolic church had practiced a mode of baptism other than immersion.

New Testament incidents that support baptism by immersion include Jesus’ baptism and Philip’s baptism of the Ethiopian, which describe going into and coming up out of the water (Matt. 3:16; Acts 8:38, 39). The word *baptism* itself comes from the Greek word *baptisma*, which means to dip or immerse.

Baptism follows being sorry for sin, confessing it, and turning away from it. It involves believing that Christ has forgiven us and that a new life in Christ, through the power of the Spirit, is a better way to live.

In addition to bringing the Christian into a richer and closer relationship with God, baptism brings him into a new relationship with Christ’s church on earth, a group of believers known for their love of God and each other. It is the door to church fellowship, as well as the door to discipleship.

Baptism is a step that is not to be taken lightly, a step indicating a dramatic change in the direction of a person’s life. Just as baptism by water in the days of John the Baptist prepared people for Jesus’ coming, baptism by water and the Spirit, today, helps prepare Jesus’ loved ones for His second coming.

For further study, see Acts 22:16; 2:38; Matt. 28:19, 20; Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:13; 1 Peter 3:21.



The Lord's Supper

Similar to the way in which the Old Testament sanctuary services and sacrifices pointed forward to the coming Messiah, His ministry, and His death, the Lord's Supper commemorates Jesus' death and focuses the believer's attention on His promised second coming. This ordinance does more than simply symbolize blanket forgiveness for whatever sins one might have committed in the past; it is a service that involves confessing failures to God and to one another, and asking for God's help in changing, overcoming, and becoming more Christlike. It is a service rich with symbolism, which through the ages has been an invaluable vehicle for transmitting essential spiritual truths.

While some churches have interpreted literally Jesus' statements "This is my body" and "This is my blood," we Adventists interpret them figuratively, as we do other of Jesus' statements, such as "I am the door" (John 10:7). The bread and unfermented wine are regarded as symbols of Christ's broken body and spilled blood. Partaking of them is an expression of faith in Him as the Saviour from sins, and of making His life one with ours.

Ever since the late 1840s, we Seventh-day Adventists have observed the Lord's Supper four times a year, at the close of each 13-week "quarter." A typical service is as follows:

After a short sermon by the pastor, men and women separate to different sections of the church for the foot-washing ceremony. This, we believe, symbolizes cleansing from sin (see John 13:1-17). Although

there is no particular merit in the act of foot washing itself, the act becomes meaningful to participants who before or during this service correct their misunderstandings and confess their faults to one another. It symbolizes washing away the sins committed during the Christian walk.

Foot washing also symbolizes a renewed consecration to serving the Master. One must put away pride in order to stoop and wash the foot of a fellow church member, just as he or she must overcome it in order to serve Jesus wholeheartedly. Because the foot washing emphasizes the spirit of Christian fellowship, it is a fitting preparation for participating in the Lord's Supper.

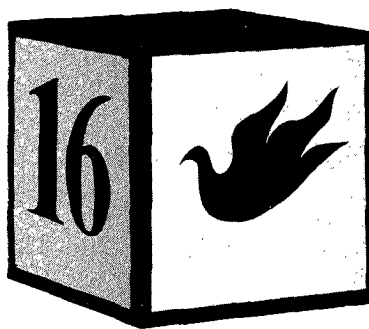
After the foot washing, members

reassemble in the church. The pastor and elders go to the communion table, where they uncover the bread, read 1 Corinthians 11:23, 24 (or other appropriate passages), and offer a prayer of blessing. After the elders break the unleavened bread, deacons distribute it to the congregation.

The minister, elders, and deacons follow a similar procedure with the unfermented wine, after 1 Corinthians 11:25, 26 has been read. In each instance the congregation waits until all have been served in order to partake of the emblem together. A hymn—and sometimes prayer and an offering for the poor—complete the service.

In one sense the Lord's Supper is a solemn occasion, a time believers are reminded that Jesus bore our guilt and died for our sins (see Isa. 53:5). Yet in another sense the service is joyful. It looks forward to the day when God will make all things new (see Rev. 21:1-5). It anticipates the day when God will re-create the human beings He created (see 1 Cor. 15:52) to join with Jesus, their Redeemer, in the marriage supper of the Lamb (see Rev. 19:9).

For further study, see Matt. 26:17-30; John 6:48-63; 1 Cor. 10:16, 17; Rev. 3:20.



Spiritual Gifts and Ministries

Circumstances sometimes make it necessary for families to be separated for long periods. Often the separation is occasioned by the necessity for the husband and father to travel in the interests of his profession, even being overseas for many months. If he is a responsible person, he will make certain that his family is well

cared for during his absence. In the final moments at the airport before takeoff, he is likely to say, "If you need more money than is in the checking account, be sure to take some out of savings." He also may review briefly some of the other provisions he has made for the family's welfare. "I put new tires on

the car.” “I mailed two payments on the mortgage.” “I ordered enough heating oil to last until I get back.”

Nineteen centuries ago, after establishing His church on earth, Jesus returned to heaven. With anxious hearts the disciples watched Him ascend (Luke 24:50; Acts 1:9). Would they be able to represent Him adequately? Would they be able to carry forward successfully the work He had assigned them? Would they have the talents needed to carry the gospel to all the world?

With the same kind of compassion and consideration that had characterized His entire life Jesus, of course, had foreseen their needs, and had made full provision for them. Just before He ascended He said, “Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). Through the Holy Spirit Jesus would provide every gift and talent needed by the disciples for their ministry.

And He fulfilled His promise. Writing of this, the apostle Paul said: “When he [Jesus] ascended up on high, he . . . gave gifts unto men. . . . He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:8-12).

In his letter to the church at Corinth, Paul discussed the matter further. “Concerning spiritual gifts,” he said, “I would not have you ignorant. . . . There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. . . . The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every

man severally as he will” (1 Cor. 12:1-11).

Two facts are worth noting: (1) The Spirit decides which gifts to bestow. He takes this responsibility because He alone knows which gifts are needed by the church; He alone knows which gifts each Christian will utilize. (2) Not everyone receives the same gift, nor are all the gifts available to everyone. Thus, for example, no one has the right to insist that the Spirit give him the gift of prophecy, the gift of healing, or the gift of tongues. The true Christian will surrender fully to Christ, lay his natural talents on the altar, and ask God to give him the specific gifts of the Spirit as He deems best (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Peter 4:10, 11).

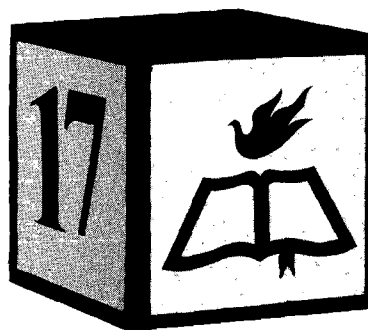
How long will the gifts remain in the church? The New Testament teaches that they will remain until Jesus returns. Writing to the church at Ephesus, the apostle Paul said that the gifts are “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry,

for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4:12, 13).

In similar vein he wrote to the church at Corinth: “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:4-7).

Thus through spiritual gifts God has made full provision for His church—His family on earth—to maintain itself and carry forward successfully its physical, intellectual, and spiritual ministry until the day when God’s family on earth is united with His family in heaven.

For further study, see Matt. 25:31-36; 1 Cor. 12:27, 28; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-3; Col. 2:19.



The Gift of Prophecy

In the beginning, before sin entered our world, God talked face to face with Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:26-31), imparting wisdom and communicating His will. But after sin entered, open communication no longer was possible. Adam and Eve would have been destroyed by God’s holy presence. But God continued to communicate in a general way with the human family. Among the media used were nature, interpersonal relationships, providences, and His Spirit.

More direct and specific communication was needed, however, especially to enlarge humanity’s understanding of God’s character and the plan of salvation. Hence God selected consecrated people on whose minds the Holy Spirit could work in a special way to receive truth and convey it to others. In both Old and New Testament times the prophetic gift was bestowed on both men and women. Among the women were Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Anna, and the four daughters of Philip (Ex.

15:20; Judges 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Luke 2:36; Acts 21:8, 9).

Scripture says: "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). At times these "holy men," or prophets, as they usually were called, delivered God's messages orally. At times the messages were written out, thus strengthening their impact and giving them wider circulation.

Through divine providence these written messages were preserved as the Holy Scriptures, and throughout the centuries they have been used of God to speak to human hearts and lead them to follow His will. As men and women have studied the Word, they have recognized its divine credentials and have accepted its testimony. And the same Spirit that inspired the Bible prophets as they wrote has moved upon the hearts of readers to convict them of sin and transform their lives.

Of the role of the Scriptures the apostle Paul wrote to his young friend in the faith, Timothy: "From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:15, 16). It is clear from this text that the Bible contains all the knowledge and counsel that people need to help them find the path of salvation and walk in it. The Bible offers an infallible revelation of God's will.

But the necessity for God to communicate with the human family did not end when the Canon was closed. In his letters to the churches at Corinth and Ephesus the apostle Paul listed "prophets" as one of the important gifts of the Spirit. He placed them near the top of his list, second only to "apostles" (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). The current belief of some Christians that the work of prophets ended with New Testament times is without Biblical foundation. As the end of human history approaches and the great controversy between Christ and Satan intensifies,

Satan's attacks against God's people become more severe (Rev. 12:17), his deceptions more bewildering (Matt. 24:24), hence the gifts of the Spirit, including the prophetic gift, become ever more essential.

The Bible makes clear that the prophetic gift will be present in God's true church in the last days. John the revelator declares that the remnant church will "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17). The "testimony of Jesus" is defined in Revelation 19:10 as "the spirit of prophecy." Jesus witnesses to the church through the medium of prophecy.

The Bible makes clear that the prophetic gift will be present in God's true church in the last days.

Early in the life of the great Second Advent Movement during the middle of the past century, God bestowed the gift of prophecy on Ellen G. Harmon (later White), a consecrated young woman living in Portland, Maine. Her ministry continued for approximately 70 years, until her death in 1915. Under inspiration she wrote some 4,600 articles for church magazines, and about 50 books, including her *magnum opus*, the five-volume Conflict of the Ages Series, which traced the great controversy from the inception of sin in Lucifer's heart to the time when the earth is purified by fire at the close of the millennium.

Mrs. White's writings are not an addition to the Bible, nor are they to take the place of the Bible. "In accord with the historic Protestant position, SDAs accept the Bible and the Bible only as the Christian's rule of faith and practice, and believe it to be in its entirety the true, reliable, and authoritative word of God in the language of men. . . . SDAs acknowledge the prophetic gift apart from the Sacred Canon as having operated prior to, during, and since

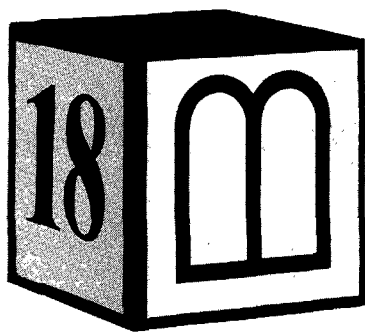
the composition of the Bible, but affirm that the canonical Scriptures constitute the norm by which all other prophetic messages are to be tested. They believe that this gift has never been permanently withdrawn, but has been manifested now and again throughout history, and belongs to the church today. The canon of Scripture is God's message to all men of all ages; extracanonical revelation belongs to those to whom it is originally addressed. SDAs accept Ellen G. White's writings as representing the work of the prophetic gift, but not as taking the place of the Bible or constituting an addition to it."—*Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, p. 1413.

Ellen White herself took this view. Throughout her life she exalted the Bible as the infallible revelation of God's will and the standard of character (*The Great Controversy*, p. vii). Repeatedly she urged people to study the Word. She wrote that "the Bible, and the Bible only" is to be "the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. . . . Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support."—*Ibid.*, p. 595.

When one of the believers suggested that Ellen White's writings were an addition to the Bible, she protested, saying that "he presents the matter in a false light. God has seen fit in this manner to bring the minds of His people to His word, to give them a clearer understanding of it."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 246. She said that her testimonies "are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed."—*Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 605.

Today, as in past times, every communication from God is precious. The Biblical message is still timely: "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings" (1 Thess. 5:19, 20). "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper" (2 Chron. 20:20).

For further study, see Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:1-3.



The Law of God

We live in a universe characterized by law and order. Not only did the Creator set in operation the laws that govern the clockworklike movements of the heavenly bodies, but He instituted laws that regulate the life and health of the human beings He placed on this planet. These laws are intended to enhance rather than inhibit life. The “more abundant” life Jesus promised in John 10:10 to those who follow Him comes as a result of our cooperating with God’s laws of life and health. These laws hold before us an ideal and imply a promise that, by God’s grace, we can measure up to the ideal.

Jesus came to this world not only to show us how to live according to the laws of God but to provide the transforming grace that alone can enable us to surrender fully to God’s will for us as it is expressed in His laws. Rather than being requirements for getting into heaven, God’s laws become to the consecrated Christian the measure or yardstick of his growing experience with Him and the challenge to keep on growing in grace.

In our time of worldwide energy crisis it is obvious that laws that limit speed on the highways and regulate flow of traffic, business transactions, and even international relationships are essential to the preservation of society and individual lives. In much the same way guidelines and regulations in the moral and social relationships of person to person and of people to God are essential.

The great principles of God’s moral law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and were exemplified in the life of Christ. Satan has

tried from the time of the inception of sin to convince the entire universe that it is impossible to live according to God’s law. But Christ came to prove that Satan is wrong. He demonstrated through His perfect example what it means to fulfill the law. He said, “Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them” (Matt. 5:17, R.S.V.). *Fulfill* means to live them and put them in their proper perspective. Jesus came to give us a new perspective of the purpose, power, and promise of God’s law.

Salvation is by grace through faith and not of works, but the fruit of the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives is obedience to the commandments.

The Ten Commandments express God’s love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and are just as binding and meaningful to people today as they were when they were first given. Although most are expressed in negative “Thou shalt nots,” they are not restrictions so much as they are word pictures of the kind of character God’s children will reflect when they choose to live as He would have them live. They can be expressed in the positive sense as follows:

1. **LOYALTY**—God must be first. If we are Christ’s, our thoughts

are of Him. We will seek the spiritual, not the material. We will long to bear His image, breathe His Spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things.

2. **WORSHIP**—We worship the unseen, not the seen. The things we once hated we now love, and the things we once loved we now hate. The soul is cleansed from vanity and pride, and we have regular seasons of deep and earnest devotions.

3. **REVERENCE**—This forbids not only swearing and the secularization of the sacred, but also a false profession. The vain customs and fashions of the world are laid aside. Our conversation, affections, and sympathies are in heaven. Our hearts are kept tender and subdued by the Spirit of Christ.

4. **SANCTIFICATION**—Christ is recognized as Creator and Re-Creator, not only in the keeping of the seventh part of time but in our full acceptance of the rest of redemption. His holiness is evidenced in our lives, and the works of holiness, which previously seemed dull, uninteresting, and wearisome, are now our delight.

5. **RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY**—This begins in the home between parents and children, but extends to all relationships, with both God and man. Disobedience and rebellion are replaced by obedience and cooperation.

6. **LOVE**—Even hate and anger violate this commandment, but in truly converted persons love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Our souls are imbued with divine love and captivated with the heavenly mysteries. The fruit of the Spirit—love—is evidenced in the life.

7. **PURITY**—There is a complete transformation—passion, appetites, and will are brought into perfect submission to God. The former life appears disgusting and sinful. Sinful thoughts are put away and evil deeds are renounced. Piety is evidenced at home and abroad.

8. **HONESTY**—This involves our relationship not only with our fellow humans but with God. Instead

of robbing God of such things as our health, time, tithe, and offerings, we gladly dedicate all we have to Him. Duty becomes a delight and sacrifice a pleasure.

9. TRUTHFULNESS—By our words we shall be justified or condemned. When the heart is right, our words and deeds will be right, and we shall become men and women of strict integrity. Self is subdued, and evil speaking is overcome.

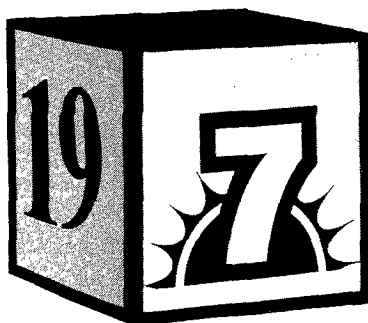
10. CONTENTMENT—No longer will we be jealous or discontented, because our lives are not centered on the material. The practice of holiness will be pleasant when there is perfect surrender to God. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the peace and happiness of heaven.

Although God's law is not to be confused with His covenants, the Ten Commandments are the basis for both the old covenant (Ex. 24:3-8) and the new covenant (Heb. 8:10). As the standard of human conduct and relationships, God's law also becomes the standard of judgment (Eccl. 12:13, 14; James 2:8-12).

Through the agency of the Holy Spirit, the commandments point out sin (1 John 3:4) and awaken our sense of need for a Saviour. When we turn to Christ, the Holy Spirit continues to work His transforming power in our lives. Salvation is by grace through faith and not of works, but the fruit of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives is obedience to the commandments.

This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of rightdoing and well-being. It is the evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow humans. As the obedience of faith is seen in us, those about us recognize the power of God to transform lives and desire to experience the same power. In that way keeping God's commandments strengthens our Christian witness. God points to those who keep His commandments in the last days as a special vindication of His character and of the fairness of His precepts (Rev. 14:12).

For further study, see Ex. 20:1-17; Matt. 5:17; Deut. 28:1-14; Ps. 19:7-13; 119; Matt. 22:36-40; John 14:15; Rom. 8:1-4; Eph. 2:8; 1 John 5:3.



The Sabbath

Saturday, the seventh day of each week, is the Biblical Sabbath. It is the memorial of God's creative activity, when a loving Creator made the world in six days and rested on the seventh (Gen. 2:1-3). It also is the sign of our redemption in Christ Jesus (Heb. 4:9), reminding us that He who first made all things and pronounced them very good (Gen. 1:31) has brought us out of the reign of sin into His own kingdom (Col. 1:13) and will one day make all things new (Rev. 21:5).

The fourth commandment of the Decalogue enjoins us to "remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates" (Ex. 20:8-10). This divine law is unchangeable in its requirements. The Sabbath was instituted before the Fall; it will continue in the new earth (Isa. 66:23).

When we follow Christ and earnestly seek to obey His will, the Sabbath command is not burdensome. Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27, 28), dwells within us by His Holy Spirit, writing the requirements of the eternal law on the fleshy tables of the heart (Eze. 36:26; Heb. 8:10, 11). Rather than being a day of gloom or restriction, the Sabbath is a "delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable" (Isa. 58:13). It is a symbol of our freedom in Christ. As He has liberated us from the dominion of self and evil, gladly do we enter into His day of rest.

The Sabbath is a hallowed day. God's blessing rests on it in a way that sets it apart from the other six days. It is a day when we turn aside from work, cares, and common pursuits to devote ourselves to the spiritual feast God has spread for us. We rest in Him, gathering for worship (Heb. 10:25), building up one another in fellowship (verse 24), and ministering to those in need according to the example of Jesus (John 5:1-17). Thus, on the Sabbath God gives us a foretaste of our eternal abode with Him. We catch the spirit of the redeemed of all ages when we shall gather around the heavenly throne and sing His praises for His salvation in Jesus Christ (Heb. 12:18-24).

Blessing for all nations

Although the Sabbath was reiterated to Israel in the Ten Commandments given from Sinai, it was intended by God to be a blessing for all nations. Even "the sons of the stranger" might observe it and find its joy (Isa. 56:4-7). And so, in God's last warning message to humanity, symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14:6-12, men and women again are called to acknowledge God as Creator of all and to keep His commandments. Thus, at the time of the end the Sabbath emerges with added significance as it becomes a specific test of loyalty to God in an age of widespread apostasy (see Rev. 13:8-14:15).

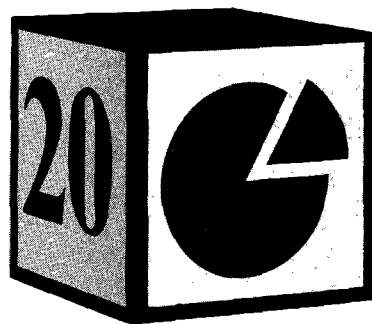
As the course of the sun through the heavens marks off the days of the week and designates every seventh day the Sabbath, God's appointed day of rest and worship, so the setting

of the sun points to the boundaries of the Sabbath: "From even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath" (Lev. 23:32; see also Mark 1:32).

At the Creation God set apart the Sabbath and blessed it (Gen. 2:1-3). Now He sets us apart as His people—and blesses us (1 Peter 2:9, 10).

Week by week as we celebrate the Sabbath we are assured that the holy day is a sign between Him and us, that we may know that He is "the Lord that doth sanctify" us (Ex. 31:13).

For further study, see Deut. 5:12-15; Eze. 20:20; Luke 4:15; Acts 17:2.



Stewardship

Once there was a man who had nothing, and God gave him ten apples. He gave him the first three apples to eat. He gave him the second three apples to trade for a shelter from the sun and rain. He gave him the third three apples to trade for clothing to wear. He gave him the last apple so that he might have something to give back to God to show his gratitude for the other nine.

The man ate the first three apples. He traded the second three for a shelter from the sun and rain. He traded the third three for clothing to wear. Then he looked at the tenth apple, and it seemed bigger and juicier than the rest. He knew that God had given him the tenth apple so that he might return it to Him out of gratitude for the other nine. But he reasoned that God did not need it, for He had all the other apples in the world. So the man ate the tenth apple, and gave back to God the core.

This simple parable illustrates the principles involved in stewardship. God is the Creator of this world and therefore the owner of everything in it. All that we have has been given to us by Him (Gen. 1:26-28).

Back of the loaf is the snowy flour,

And back of the flour, the mill,

And back of the mill, the wheat and shower,

And the sun and the Father's will.

We are stewards, caretakers of the Lord's property, who owe our very life and breath to His sustaining power (Gen. 2:15; Acts 17:24-28).

In return for His abundant gifts, the Creator requires that we care for this wonderful world He has made to be our home. Its resources are to be used wisely and unselfishly. Because we are indebted to our Lord for the gift of life, He has a right to expect that we shall dedicate to Him and others our time, talents, and energy in loving service.

In recognition of His ownership and our dependence upon Him, God asks that we return one tenth, the tithe, of our "increase" to the church for the support of the ministry (Ps. 24:1; Deut. 14:22; Num. 18:21; 1 Cor. 9:9-14). This money He claims as His, so in returning it we are really not *giving* anything; we are simply paying a debt. To withhold this tithe is to be guilty of robbing God (Mal. 3:8, 9). Offerings contributed in addition to the tenth show our love and reveal the extent of our generosity (Deut. 16:17; 2 Cor. 9:7). Like the Sabbath (one day in seven of our time), the tithe (one dollar in ten of

our wealth) acknowledges God's Creatorship and ownership.

Ancient Israel was required to give a second tithe; in fact, their contributions for religious and charitable purposes totaled at least one fourth of their income. Some of the more conscientious gave as much as one third. Does the task of sending the gospel to the whole world in this generation require any less of us? Shall Christians be less generous with their Redeemer than were the Jews?

The appalling fact is that Christians as a whole have been far less generous. To demonstrate this, let us imagine that every church member in an affluent Western country suddenly lost all income and property and went on welfare. If on this meager subsistence allowance each one should pay tithe, the income of that country's churches would be about one-third greater than it is now. Tithing has been sadly neglected by Christians. In its place churches have been supported by raffles, bazaars, suppers, pew rentals, and bingo—anything to avoid the plan of systematic giving as outlined in the Bible. Small wonder that the work of the gospel is far behind schedule!

Starves selfishness

The plan of tithe and offerings has been given to us by an all-wise Creator with the purpose of starving our innate selfishness. Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke 12:34). Systematic benevolence allows us to take our eyes off the transient treasures of earth and to lay up treasure in heaven.

All of God's requirements are accompanied by a promised blessing for the obedient. "'Bring the full tithes into the storehouse . . . ; and thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil'" (Mal. 3:10, 11, R.S.V.).

Evidence that God fulfills His

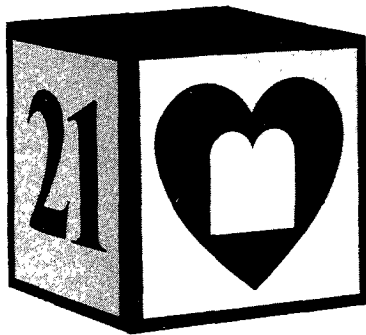
promise is not difficult to find. In the fertile province of Mendoza, Argentina, a heavy frost was forecast during the usually warm summer. The Soriano brothers, members of the local Seventh-day Adventist church and faithful tithepayers, were alarmed for their 200 acres of tomatoes almost ready to harvest. Realizing that the frost might destroy the entire crop, they held a special prayer meeting at the church that night. Imagine their joy the next morning when they discovered that while all crops on surrounding farms had been ruined, not one tomato on their property had been damaged.

Soon after a family in Missouri began paying tithe, they received a gift of \$100. Much as they needed all of it for other things, they set aside ten dollars for tithe, whereupon they promptly received an additional gift of ten dollars. When that was tithed, a letter from a friend came containing one dollar. The tithe on the dollar was paid. Almost immediately they found a dime. There was no doubt in this family's mind that God was trying to impress upon them the fact that we never lose anything when we return to Him what is His.

It has been said that six surprises come to one who begins to tithe his income: the amount of money he has for the Lord's work; the deepening of his spiritual life; his ease in meeting his own obligations with the nine tenths; the ease of going from one tenth to larger giving; the preparation this gives to be a faithful, wise steward of the nine tenths that remain; and surprise at himself for not adopting the plan sooner.

God has given us enough apples to supply our needs, plus one with which to show our gratitude to Him. If we truly love Him, we will cheerfully return to Him the largest and juiciest of our apples.

Stewardship is a privilege given to us by God to increase our love for Him. Faithful stewards rejoice in the blessings that come to others as a result of their faithfulness.



Christian Behavior

Although written in the days of the Roman circus, the counsel of the beloved disciple John is as meaningful in the twentieth century as it was in the first. To all who have heard God's call to a better life he writes, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides for ever" (1 John 2:15-17, R.S.V.). True religion is far more than a once-a-week experience. It embraces all our activities, including recreation, music, reading, dress, and diet (Eph. 5:1-3, 19; 2 Cor. 10:5; Leviticus 11).



In the area of amusement or entertainment a sincere Christian will ask, Can I pray for God's blessing upon this use of my time? Does this strengthen me physically, mentally, socially, or spiritually? Is it pure, noble, and elevating; or does it excite passion, glorify vice, and weaken noble principles? Does this activity lead me to forget God or neglect His Word, prayer, and eternal interests? Does it feed my spiritual nature or strengthen my sinful tendencies, weakening my resistance to temptation? Do I enter a dream world that unfits me for the realities of life? Could I calmly meet death or Christ at His second coming while engaged in this activity?

Such questions answered honestly will result in the avoidance of most theatrical productions (whether on stage, screen, or television), dancing, novels, cards, gambling, and the blues-jazz-rock type of music. These negative influences will be replaced with "those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable" (Phil. 4:8, T.E.V.). Physical and spiritual health, as well as an abiding joy and peace, will be promoted by wholesome outdoor recreation, nature-centered activities, educational and inspirational programs and reading, in addition to the best in uplifting music. By accepting Heaven's challenge, "Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind," one may claim the fulfillment of His promise, "Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is

For further study, see Gen. 28:20-22; Lev. 27:30; Num. 18:21; Deut. 8:18; Prov. 3:9; Matt. 23:23.

pleasing to him and is perfect” (Rom. 12:2, T.E.V.).

The Lord’s will for us includes not only our pastimes but our appearance as well. He intends that we shall be beautiful, and so cautions against artificiality that would mask true beauty. Women are to “be modest and sensible about their clothes and . . . dress properly; not with fancy hair styles or with gold ornaments or pearls or expensive dresses” (1 Tim. 2:9, T.E.V.). Application of these principles will lead men as well as women to avoid clothes that are designed to attract attention or excite admiration, that go beyond our needs and cost more than should be spent in keeping up with the latest fashions. Christians will find greater satisfaction in wearing clothing that is becoming, well made, conservative, and appropriate.

While recognizing cultural differences, we are to keep our dress simple, modest, and neat. Beauty, quality, order, and humility are principles of God’s kingdom. “You should not use outward aids to make yourselves beautiful, such as the way you fix your hair, or the jewelry you put on, or the dresses you wear. Instead, your beauty should consist of your true inner self, the ageless beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of the greatest value in God’s sight” (1 Peter 3:3, 4, T.E.V.).

Health aids appearance

One of the principal aids to good appearance is good health. The divine will for us is also “that you may . . . be in health, just as your soul prospers” (3 John 2, N.K.J.B.). Among Christians, Seventh-day Adventists are noted for their emphasis on health. One extensive study showed that they suffer only 20 percent as much lung cancer related to smoking, 13 percent as many deaths from cirrhosis of the liver, which is related to drinking, and 48.6 percent as many deaths from all leading causes as the general public. As a result Adventist women were found to live three years longer and Adventist men six years longer than

non-Adventists. Their complete abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, and harmful drugs, their emphasis on healthful diet (vegetarian where possible), avoidance of coffee and tea, promotion of exercise, adequate rest, and trust in God doubtless account for what has become known as “the Adventist advantage.”

This advantage is available to everyone who will accept the divine invitation: “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31, R.S.V.). For example, Trappist monks, who eat no meat, have about one fifth as much heart disease as Benedictines, who eat an average American diet. Research indicated that a vegetarian diet may prevent 97 percent of coronary heart attacks. The World Health Organization estimates that up to 85 percent of all cancer is a result of poor health habits.

Lack of exercise is probably reducing the American male’s life expectancy by as much as five years. The United States Surgeon General concludes that a diet containing less meat, saturated fat, sugar, and salt, and more fruits, vegetables, cereals, and whole grains is the diet that promotes optimum health. This is essentially the diet Adventists have followed for 100 years.

Most people know they should live better, but lack the inner strength to make needed changes. What better motivation could they have than the realization that their “body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. . . . You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (chap. 6:19, 20, R.S.V.).

Jesus declared, “I am come that they might have life . . . more abundantly” (John 10:10). Reform without Christ is legalism. But Christ without reform is mere sentimentalism. Divine Wisdom says, “By me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased” (Prov. 9:11). Here is both the promise and the power for a happier, healthier life.

For further study, see 2 Cor. 7:1; Col. 3:1-3; 1 Thess. 5:22; Titus 2:11-14; 2 Peter 3:11; 1 John 2:6.



Marriage and the Family

In spite of the fact that most couples on their wedding day intend to have a lasting marriage, divorce is on the increase, and some marriages fail before the wedding is paid for, or soon thereafter. And in spite of the hopes and dreams shared by parents as they bring their precious bundles home from the hospital, 70 percent indicate that they would not have children if they had to do it over again (based on answers by 10,000 parents who responded to a question by columnist Ann Landers).

While we always are shocked by the breakup of homes, by evidences of abuse or neglect of children by parents, by disrespect of children for parents, and by the breakdown of communication between members of a family, we hardly are surprised anymore. We are well aware of the fact that the family as an institution is in serious trouble.

Marriage counselors, ministers, educators, psychologists, and others seek to provide helpful solutions to home problems, but their best advice is based on principles regarding marriage and the family established by God in His Holy Word. After all, every principle of human relationships mentioned in the Bible (for example, the golden rule), whether or not it is addressed specifically to the family, can be applied there.

The first marriage, celebrated by God in Eden, was to be a model for marriages in succeeding generations. Because of Adam's need for companionship, God created Eve (Gen. 2:18). When Adam saw her, he recognized that she would meet his needs and he felt a deep responsibility to meet hers. "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," he said. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (verses 23, 24).

This idea of oneness is reiterated by the apostle Paul in Ephesians, where he emphasizes that the love, care, and concern between husbands and wives should be patterned after that of Christ for His church (chap. 5:21-33).

In 2 Corinthians 6 Paul mentions an important marriage principle. Believers should not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (verse 14); in other words, marriage partners should share a common faith. Experience has shown that this principle is valid, for marriages between believers and nonbelievers almost always result in added stress, misery on the part of both partners, compromise of standards, and confused children.

In God's plan the home is to be one of the most permanent, stable elements of society. To underscore this, several times in His ministry Jesus affirmed that the only valid reason for divorce is infidelity, that a person who divorces for other reasons and then remarries is guilty of adultery (Luke 16:18; Mark 10:11, 12; Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:1-9).

What then are people to do who do not have Biblical grounds for divorce, yet do divorce? Paul counsels: "Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife" (1 Cor. 7:10, 11).

By inviting Christ to be the third member of the marriage partnership, husbands and wives will be enabled to make their lives together smoother and more rewarding. A wedding prayer, written by a husband, beautifully illustrates this point: "That I may come near to her, draw me nearer to Thee than to her; that I might know her, make me to know Thee more than her; that I may love her with the perfect love of a perfectly whole heart, cause me to love Thee more than her and most of all. Amen. Amen. That nothing may

be between me and her, be Thou between us every moment. That we may be constantly together, draw us into separate loneliness with Thyself. And when we meet breast to breast, my God, let it be on Thine own. Amen. Amen."

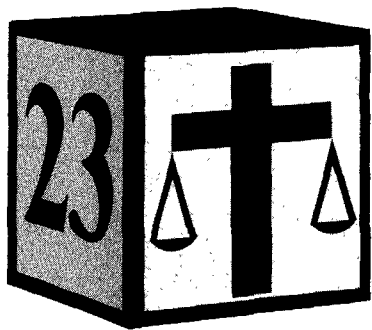
The Bible emphasizes the responsibility of parents to train their children to know the Lord and understand His commandments (Deut. 6:5-9). They are commanded to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). By coming to trust and love their parents as their understanding, tender guardians, children can learn to love and trust God as their Father in heaven.

Children are admonished to obey their parents who obey the Lord (verse 1) and to honor them (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:2, 3).

As parents and children open their hearts to the influences of the Holy Spirit, harmony and love will prevail in the home. This increasing closeness to one another and to God will testify to the power of the final gospel message to create the kind of unity for which Christ prayed (Mal. 4:5, 6; John 17:23).

For further study, see John 2:1-11; Eph. 5:21-23; Prov. 22:6.





Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary

In both the Old Testament and in the New, the sanctuary is represented as the place where God dwells. At times the earthly sanctuary is mentioned; at times, the heavenly. The psalmist wrote: "He [the Lord] hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth" (Ps. 102:19). Habakkuk added: "The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (chap. 2:20).

In the New Testament repeated references are made to the temple in heaven. The book of Hebrews refers to it as "the true tabernacle" (chap. 8:2) and "a greater and more perfect tabernacle" (chap. 9:11). Jesus is pictured as serving in it as a high priest (chap. 8:1, 2). In vision John the Beloved saw the ark and the golden altar and censer in the heavenly temple (Rev. 11:19; 8:3-5). He also saw beings serving God in the temple (chap. 7:15), angels coming out of the temple, and smoke filling the temple (chaps. 14:15; 15:5-8). In a later scene he heard "a great voice out of the temple" (chap. 16:1, 17).

To obtain some understanding of the heavenly sanctuary and the work that Jesus carries forward in it as our high priest, we do well to consider the earthly sanctuary, which Moses made according to a pattern shown him by God (Ex. 25:8, 9, 40). The heavenly sanctuary is, of course, superior in every way to the one on earth; it is a "greater and more perfect tabernacle" (Heb. 9:8-11). Likewise, the ministry of Christ is superior in every way to that of the earthly priests. The book of Hebrews

emphasizes this repeatedly. But it seems clear that the general design of the two sanctuaries is similar, and the services of the earthly sanctuary were to reveal essential truths about the heavenly sanctuary.

Anciently, the priests carried forward their intercessory work in the holy place daily throughout the year, but at the end of the year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place to perform the final phase of the yearly round of services (Leviticus 16). By a careful study of Daniel 8 and 9, it seems clear that in 1844 Christ began the final phase of His ministry in the heavenly temple—the phase that corresponds to the earthly Day of Atonement. In vision a heavenly being said to Daniel, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Dan. 8:14). Assuming that the 2300-day period began simultaneously with the start of the 70-week prophecy of chapter 9 (and the word *determined* in verse 24 suggests that the 70 weeks were to be "cut off" from the longer time period) the starting point would be "the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" (verse 25). The date for this decree, which was issued by King Artaxerxes, is well established as 457 B.C. Using the year-day principle of prophetic interpretation, 2300 day-years would extend to A.D. 1844.

The Scriptures do not offer a detailed explanation of the work that was to begin in heaven in 1844, but by studying the cleansing of the

earthly sanctuary, we know that the purpose of the cleansing was to restore the sanctuary to its rightful state (cf. Dan. 8:14, R.S.V.)—in other words, to remove from it the record of sins that had accumulated throughout the year as the priests sprinkled blood on the veil. The rightful state of the sanctuary was sin-free and pure, hence on the Day of Atonement the sanctuary was cleansed by removing the record of sins. Using Day of Atonement symbolism, the author of Hebrews states that while it was necessary for "the patterns of things in the heavens," i.e., the earthly sanctuary, to be purified with the blood of animal sacrifices, "the heavenly things themselves" are purified with "better sacrifices than these" (chap. 9:23), an obvious reference to Jesus' death on the cross.

The ancient Day of Atonement, the day on which the sanctuary was cleansed, was the most solemn day of the year, for to the Jews it was a day of judgment. On that day the people were to refrain from work and to afflict their souls. Those who did not were cut off from the congregation of Israel (Lev. 23:27-32).

The doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary, when rightly understood, is a cornerstone of the Christian faith. It exalts the living Christ as our high priest and advocate.

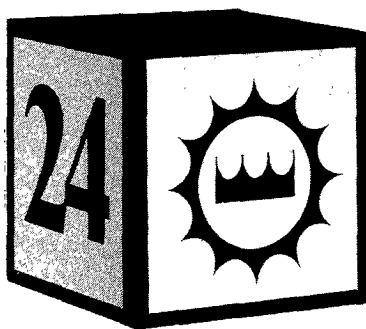
Inasmuch as the earthly priests carried on their work as an "example and shadow of heavenly things" (Heb. 8:5), it is reasonable to assume that before Jesus, the true High Priest, completes His work in heaven on behalf of repentant sinners and comes at the Second Advent to take His people to heaven, He "cleanses" the heavenly sanctuary, removing from the books of heaven the record of their sins. This work, which involves separating His true fol-

lowers from those who merely make a profession of Christianity, is sometimes called the investigative judgment. The term *investigative judgment* is not found in the Bible, but all the elements of a judgment are mentioned—names of defendants, books of record, a Judge, angel assistants, a verdict, et cetera (see Dan. 7:9, 10; Ex. 32:32, 33; Rev. 3:5; 20:12, 15; 22:19, 11, 12; Phil. 4:3). This work of judgment must be completed before Jesus returns to earth, for when He comes He distributes His rewards (Rev. 22:12; cf. Rom. 2:5-11).

Inasmuch as the “cleansing” of the heavenly sanctuary involves a work of judgment, and according to Daniel 8:14 the cleansing was to begin at the end of the 2300 years, the message proclaimed by the first angel in Revelation 14 has special significance and relevance today: “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come” (verse 7). The solemnity of this judgment time cannot be exaggerated, for when the heavenly tribunal completes its work Jesus will come and take with Him to heaven those who “keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (verse 12).

The doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary, when rightly understood, is a cornerstone of the Christian faith. It exalts the living Christ as our great high priest and advocate. It makes clear that God’s ten-commandment law is the standard by which character will be judged. It reveals that the present period of history is solemn and unique. It shows that God is both just and merciful in the way He deals with created beings and disposes of the sin problem. Because of the work carried forward in the heavenly sanctuary, every question, doubt, and reservation about God and His dealings with Satan will be removed, and the redeemed will join in singing the glorious anthem, “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints” (chap. 15:3).

For further study, see Heb. 1:3; 4:14-16; 9:11-28; Dan. 7:9-27; 8:13, 14; 9:24-27; Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6; Mal. 3:1.



The Second Coming of Christ

From the earliest days of our existence as a people, we Seventh-day Adventists have sung songs about the “blessed hope” in the second coming of Christ (Titus 2:13). As half of our denominational name indicates, we expect a literal Second Coming. Not only will Christ return but He will return soon, although He has not revealed the specific time for this event. Because we believe that one day we will see Jesus coming in triumph, surrounded by His holy angels, we are happy people, and our songs reflect this joy.

The reason for Jesus’ second coming is that He loves His human brothers and sisters and wants them to be with Him. “I go to prepare a place for you,” He told the first disciples. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2, 3). Jesus will take His beloved—those who are alive at His coming and those who have died and are resurrected when He comes—to heaven with Him (see 1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

Although no one but God knows the exact time of the Second Coming, it is possible to know by studying the prophecies and signs that it is near, “even at the doors” (Matt. 24:33). The Second Coming will bring the earthly kingdoms of the present age to an end and will establish God’s kingdom, the last of the kingdoms predicted in Daniel 2. Because history records that the other portions of the Daniel 2 prophecy have been fulfilled, there is no doubt that God’s kingdom will be established as predicted.

In talking with His disciples on the

Mount of Olives not long before His crucifixion, Jesus enumerated a series of signs by which His followers could tell when His coming was near (see Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21). There would be signs in the heavens and on earth, and the gospel would be preached in all the world. The apostle Paul predicted the rise of the antichrist, the man of lawlessness, before the Second Coming (2 Thess. 2:1-9), and James described social unrest and economic injustice (chap. 5:1-7). Peter wrote of skepticism toward “the promise of his coming” (2 Peter 3:1-6) and explained why the Coming has been delayed.

Counterfeit “christs”

Besides watching carefully the signs of Jesus’ coming, we are to learn all we can about the manner of His coming, for counterfeit “christs” will appear in the last days and will deceive many (Matt. 24:4, 5).

Christ’s return will be personal and literal. As the angels foretold, “this same Jesus” will return to earth in the same manner as He ascended (Acts 1:11). His second coming is not to be confused with the spiritual presence of Christ with believers since His ascension, with the descent of the Holy Spirit as Christ’s representative, or with death.

Christ’s second coming will be not only literal but visible (Rev. 1:7; Matt. 24:26, 27). Multitudes will see Jesus and His angels come to earth, believers and nonbelievers alike. There will be nothing secret about Jesus’ arrival. With the sight will be sound. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16 Paul

describes the Second Coming as accompanied by “a shout,” with “the voice of the archangel,” and with the sounding trumpet.

Jesus’ coming will be glorious—it is compared to the grandeur of a great flash of lightning that illuminates the entire heavens (Matt. 24:27, 30). And it will be accompanied by the resurrection of the righteous dead (1 Thess. 4:16).

While we wait for Christ’s return, we feel we must do what we can to make the world a better place, always keeping in mind that our ultimate

goal is to prepare ourselves and others for the world to come.

A favorite song of many, and the theme song of the church’s worldwide radiobroadcast *The Voice of Prophecy*, aptly describes our anticipation of the Second Coming:

“Lift up the trumpet, and loud let it ring: Jesus is coming again!

Cheer up, ye pilgrims, be joyful and sing; Jesus is coming again!

Coming again, coming again, Jesus is coming again!”

For further study, see 1 Cor. 15:51-54; Joel 3:9-16; Heb. 9:28.

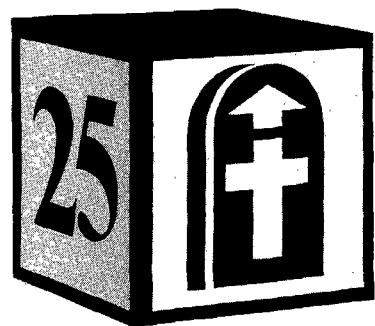
each (John 5:28, 29). After resting in the dust until the resurrection, the dead will live again to meet the consequences of their lifetime choices: those who have accepted Christ’s offer of eternal life (chap. 3:16) will receive immortality; those who have rejected the offer leave God no other choice but to give them up to eternal separation from Him. They can receive life from no other source, nor can they continue to receive it from God, who because of His love for His redeemed children cannot allow selfishness and sin to coexist with them in His perfect universe.

At the Second Advent the saints of all ages will receive their inheritance simultaneously (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). On that day of resurrection, each person will be a new creation and will be given a new body, and yet each will recognize friends and be recognized by them. Those who walk heaven’s streets will be the very same people who lived on earth and passed through the experiences that made them unique. It is comforting to know that God will preserve people’s characters and personalities and on the resurrection day will restore them to their own special personhood.

Seventh-day Adventists consider death an enemy, as do others, but we are not terrified by it. We can face it confidently, trusting in the loving Father and in Jesus, our Elder Brother, whose victory over the grave can be our victory too, through faith.

An Adventist who had just discovered that he was the victim of terminal disease illustrated this kind of confidence when he wrote to a close family friend:

“On Tuesday afternoon . . . the original diagnosis . . . was confirmed. That was hard to take, as you can imagine, but everything is going to be all right, I know. God can still work miracles. That night my wife and I had a long talk together and really faced this whole thing for the first time together. Sometimes I believe God tests the fervency of our prayers and delays answering in order for our faith to be tested. No



Death and Resurrection

The Biblical teaching concerning the resurrection and the condition of men and women in death is full of comfort and courage. In times of sorrow we need not give ourselves up to uncontrolled grief, “even as others which have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13). Our reason for hope is Christ, who said, “Because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19).

In our understanding of what happens to a person at death, during the intermediate state, and at the resurrection, we Adventists differ from most Christians. We speak of the resurrection of a *person*, believing in the unity of the person and in the impossibility of conscious existence apart from the body. There is no Biblical support for the concept that at the resurrection there is a reuniting of the body with a soul from which, in death, it had been separated. The Hebrew and Greek words translated “soul” in the Bible basically represent the person himself, not a conscious, ever-living part of him that is

capable of existing without the body.

At death, a person loses all consciousness (Ps. 146:4). The body disintegrates and becomes like the dust of the earth (Eccl. 3:20). The dead do not exist consciously in heaven or hell. Metaphorically, they sleep (John 11:11; 1 Thess. 4:14). They will be called to the resurrection from their graves, where, without being conscious of time, their wait will seem as though it had been but a moment.

This is another example of God’s love and mercy, for if people were taken to heaven at death, how could they fully enjoy heaven’s bliss as they watched the sorrow and pain their loved ones were suffering on earth?

Although the Bible teaches nothing about the conscious soul or spirit surviving the death of the body, it has much to say about life after death. It makes clear that death comes to all, the righteous and the wicked, but pictures a vastly different future for

matter what happens, time is very short as far as this earth is concerned. We got to thinking about how it might be like a father telling his little boy that it was time to go to bed. The boy might argue and say he wanted to stay up a little longer, but the father would be apt to say, 'Son, there's a

better day tomorrow, a new day in which to do the things you want so much to do.'

"If that's what God is telling me, why should I question His wisdom?"

For further study, see 1 Tim. 6:15, 16; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; Eccl. 9:5, 6; Rom. 8:35-39; Rev. 20:1-10; John 5:24.



The Millennium and the End of Sin

The book of Revelation describes a period of 1,000 years known to Bible students as "the millennium." The term *millennium* is not in the Bible, but is derived from two Latin words—*mille*, meaning 1,000, and *annum*, meaning year. In discussions of the prophecies, Bible students use the term to refer exclusively to the 1,000-year period set forth in Revelation 20.

Of all the time prophecies in the Bible, perhaps the starting and ending points of the millennium are the easiest to establish, for the millennium will begin with a resurrection and will end with a resurrection.

The resurrection with which it will begin is called the "first resurrection" and will affect only the righteous dead, for Scripture says: "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection" (Rev. 20:6). The resurrection at the end of the millennium is called the "second resurrection" and will affect only the wicked, for the Bible says, "The rest of the dead [those not raised in the resurrection of the righteous] lived not again until the thousand years were finished" (verse 5).

These are the resurrections to which Jesus referred when He said, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his [the Son of man's] voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28, 29).

Because the Bible states clearly that the resurrection of the righteous will take place at Christ's second advent, we know when the millennium will begin. The apostle Paul states: "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:15-17).

Clearly, then, the millennium will begin at the second coming of Christ, for that is when the righteous dead will be resurrected. Then they, with the living righteous, will be taken with Christ to heaven, as He promised (see John 14:1-3). John the

Beloved says: "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4). During this period they will be engaged in a work of judgment. This judgment involves examining the cases of the lost and is part of the divine plan for demonstrating to the entire universe that God is both just and merciful. The saved, having chosen God's way, receiving both title and fitness for heaven by accepting Christ's righteousness, will be acquitted and taken to heaven when Jesus comes.

Where will the wicked be while their cases are examined? Here on earth, dead. Only the righteous will be raised at Christ's coming, hence it is plain that the millions of unsaved people who died throughout past ages will remain in their graves until the resurrection at the end of the millennium. And the wicked who are alive at the Second Advent will be slain (2 Thess. 1:7-10; Jer. 25:33; Rev. 19:11-21). Thus, during the millennium the countless millions of the unsaved will be dead.

This helps explain why Scripture says that Satan will be "bound" during the thousand years. Ever since he first tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, Satan has occupied himself with trying to deceive people and lead them into sin. But with the righteous in heaven and the wicked in their graves, he will have nothing to do. The Bible pictures him as being bound with a chain (Rev. 20:1, 2). The chain is symbolic, not literal, just as we sometimes say that we would like to go somewhere or do something but we can't because "our hands are tied." The translation of the righteous and the death of the wicked are links in the chain that will bind Satan.

The Bible says that the place in which Satan will be "bound" is "the bottomless pit" (verses 1, 3). This "bottomless pit" is our earth. At Christ's coming, through earthquakes, storms, and human violence, this earth will be reduced to chaos (see Rev. 16:18-20; Isa. 6:11; 24:1; Jer. 4:23-27). So devastating will be the destruction that pre-Creation-week conditions will prevail. In the

Greek translation of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint, the same word is used in Genesis 1:2 to mean "without form and void" as is translated "bottomless pit" in the King James Version of Revelation 20:1. Thus, for 1,000 years Satan will be bound by circumstances in this devastated world, able only to contemplate the ruin he has wrought in human lives and nature.

At the end of the millennium, however, he will be "loosed" or become active once more, when the countless millions of the wicked are raised to hear sentence pronounced and to receive their punishment. Scripture says: "When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations . . . to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" (Rev. 20:7, 8).

Why will Satan gather the people for battle? Because he intends to

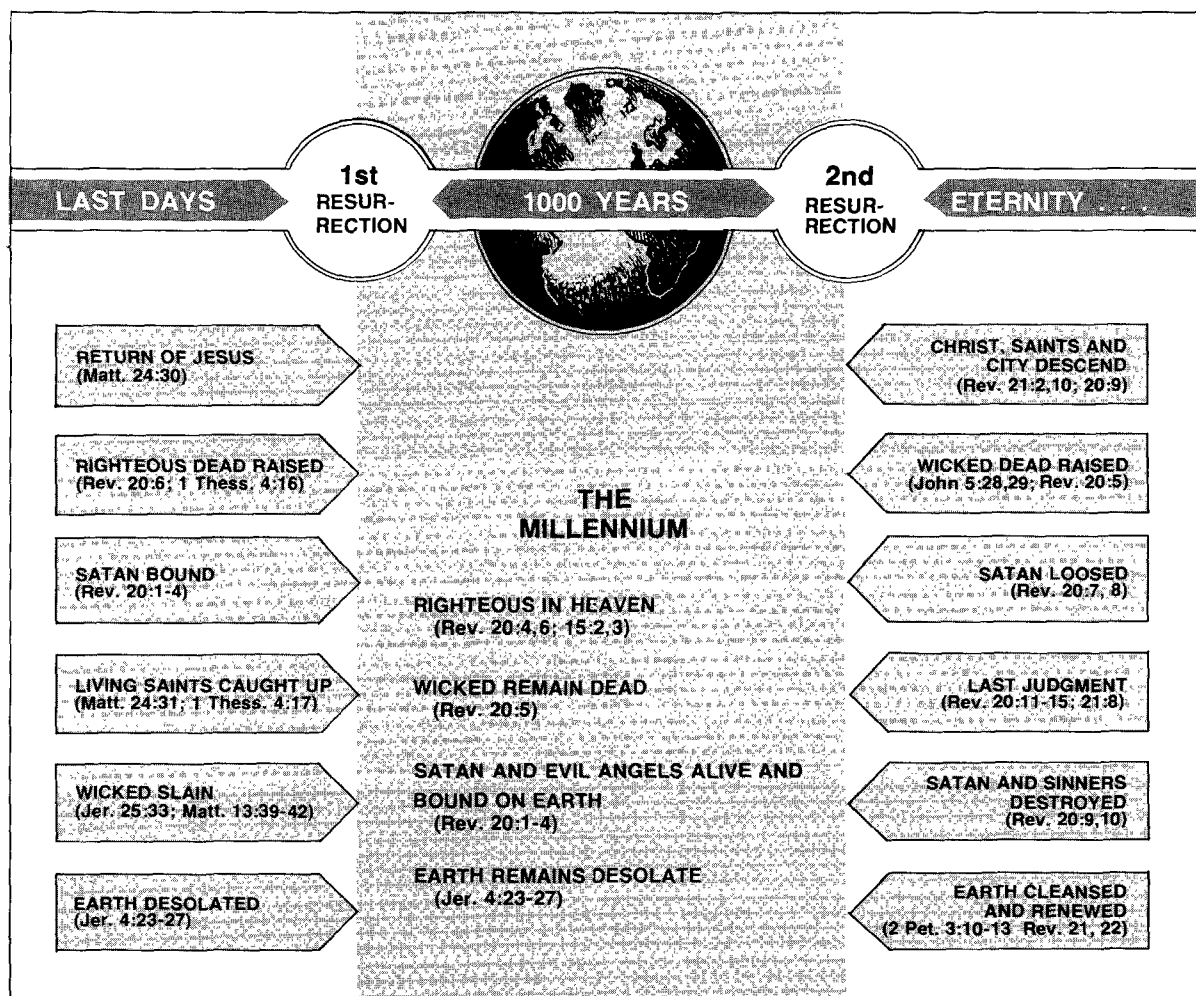
make a final effort to be victorious in his rebellion against God. The Holy City, the home of the redeemed, having descended to earth (see Jude 14, 15), Satan prepares to attack. The prophet John sketches the scenario in these words: "I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven" (Rev. 21:2), and the armies of the wicked "went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city" (chap. 20:9).

But the attack will fail. Fire from God will consume Satan and his hosts (verse 9). The whole earth will be turned into a lake of fire, a fire that will destroy every vestige of sin, and will purify the earth. The apostle Peter describes it in these words: "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10).

Thus at the end of the millennium, Satan and those who have followed him in rebellion will be destroyed. The universe will be free from sin. And then God will re-create this earth as the eternal home of the saved. Wrote Peter: "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (verse 13; see also Rev. 21:5).

"The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all flow life and light and gladness throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 678.

For further study, see Zech. 14:1-4; Mal. 4:1; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 19:17, 18, 21.





The New Earth

When sin and sinners are finally destroyed, at the close of the millennium, the fire that consumes them also will consume the ugliness of sin from this earth. Then God will make all things new, make them as He intended them to be when He first created this earth (2 Peter 3:10-13; Rev. 21:5).

The new earth will contain many delights for God's children, delights so far beyond our present comprehension that "men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, . . . what he [God] hath prepared for him that waiteth for him" (Isa. 64:4).

While we cannot imagine even the minutest fraction of the glories in store for the redeemed, the Bible still shares a surprising amount of information.

We will have places prepared for us by Jesus in His Father's house (John 14:1-3). We also will build homes for ourselves and inhabit them (Isa. 65:17, 21). We will till the soil and eat the fruit of our labor (verses 21, 22). With minds no longer hampered by sin or limited by time, we will be able to learn the wisdom of the undefiled universe.

The pain and sorrow that have dogged our lives will be no more. John the revelator shares this promise with us in ringing words: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4). Imagine, never again

having to fear that time with a friend or loved one will be cut short by death. Imagine having all the time in eternity to develop new friendships, to keep those friendships active and growing. As one person put it, "We will be able to hold all those we love close, forever."

The changes wrought by sin in nature will disappear. People's bodies will be strong and youthful forever. Leaves no longer will fall in death. Animals will be gentle once again. "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord" (Isa. 65:25).

The new earth will contain many delights for God's children.

The New Jerusalem, having come down to earth out of heaven at the end of the millennium, will be the capital of God's universe. There in the midst of the city will flow a "pure river of water of life" (Rev. 22:1). On either side of the river will stand the tree of life, "which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (verse 2). There will be no night in the city; it will not need light of the sun or moon because the glory of God will

illumine it (chap. 21:23). Since God's people will not grow weary, they will not need the rest provided by the night.

But far beyond any material thing that we will receive as inheritors of this country will be the reward of open, unrestricted communication with God and Christ. While "now we see through a glass, darkly," then we will see Him "face to face: . . . then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. 13:12).

"And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 678.

"The work of redemption will be complete. In the place where sin abounded, God's grace much more abounds. The earth itself, the very field that Satan claims as his, is to be not only ransomed but exalted. Our little world, under the curse of sin the one dark blot in His glorious creation, will be honored above all other worlds in the universe of God. 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, 'and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.' And through endless ages as the redeemed walk in the light of the Lord, they will praise Him for His unspeakable Gift—*Immanuel*, 'God with us.'"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 26.

For further study, see 2 Peter 3:13; Gen. 17:1-8; Matt. 5:5; Rev. 11:15.



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