

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1994

EQ

COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY



THE THREE ANGELS' MESSAGES

HEAVEN'S LAST CALL

“Please don’t let the sun set.”

Till Morning Breaks

by
Elaine Egbert

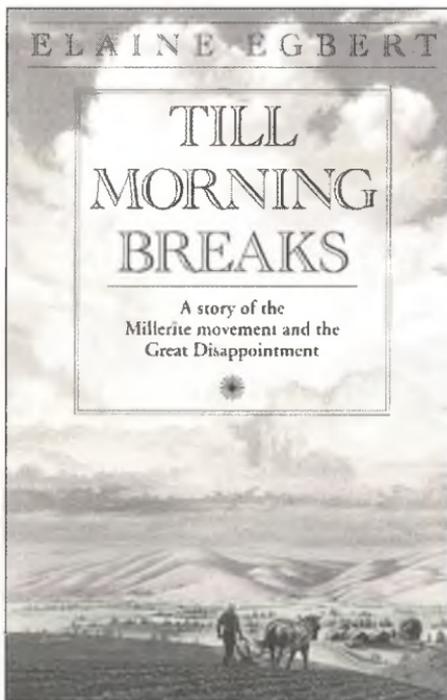
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THE THREE ANGELS' MESSAGES: HEAVEN'S LAST CALL

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 1994

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CQ is written by Seventh-day Adventist young adults and their friends around the world.

Editorial Office: Department of Church Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, U.S.A.

Place orders with: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., P.O. Box 7000, Boise, ID 83707, U.S.A.

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CQ (ISSN 0744-2939). Volume 17, No. 4. Published quarterly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, U.S.A.; and printed by Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1350 North Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83697, U.S.A. Place orders with Pacific Press Pub. Assn., P.O. Box 7000, Boise, ID 83707, U.S.A. One-year subscription in U.S.A., \$11.95; single copy, \$5.75. One-year subscription in countries outside U.S.A., \$14.95; single copy, \$5.75. All prices at U.S.A. exchange. Second-class postage paid at Nampa, ID 83687.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CQ, P.O. Box 7000, Boise, ID 83707, U.S.A. Send editorial inquiries to CQ, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, U.S.A. Send circulation inquiries to Pacific Press Publishing Association, P.O. Box 7000, Boise, ID 83707, U.S.A. When a change of address is desired, please send both old and new addresses.

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This Quarter's Artist



Twenty-one-year-old Jonathan André Galindo, a second-year visual arts and design student at Avondale College, emigrated with his parents and four brothers to Australia from Santiago, Chile, when he was 13 years old. His major high-school certificate art project was a short video production using computer graphics for effects and animation. It was elected for the Art Express Exhibition, a collection of the states' best high-school certificate works. His goal is to become a graphic artist. His favorite hobbies and recreation include computer programming, in-line skating, and weight-lifting.

Getting the Most Out of *CQ*

Facts You Should Know

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

Adventist young-adult groups work together in producing this quarterly. More than 200 individuals contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety—and occasional repetition—of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject.

Circulation of *CQ* is about 39,000.

Pointers for Study

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.

2. The Bible passage on which each week's lesson is based appears in bold type in the "Logos" pages (Monday's portion of the lesson). Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly introduction to give you an overview of the lesson.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

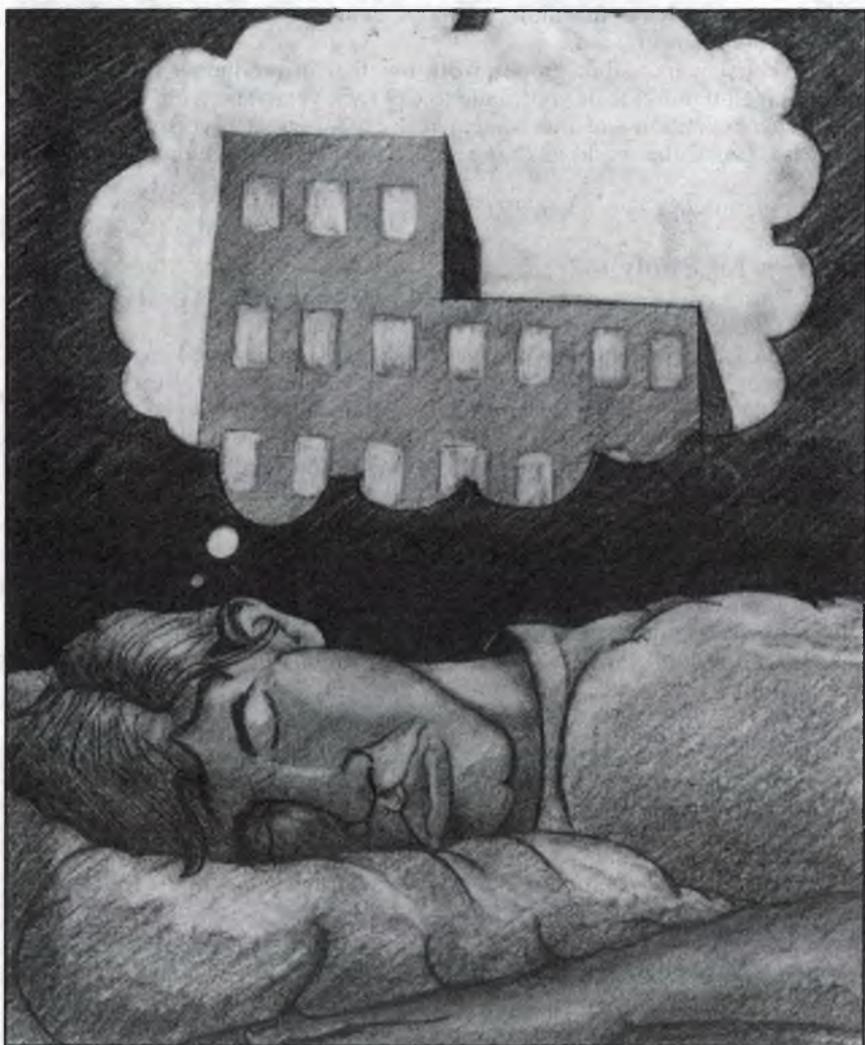
"How-To" (Thursday) discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.

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

CQ and the Church

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

THREE MESSAGES AND MORE



“Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?” (Heb. 1:14, NIV).

The Vision of Another Daniel

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Luke 2:8-18

Daniel lived in the lush highlands of western Tanzania. One night an angel came to Daniel in his mud-and-pole hut with the following message: "Go to the hospital high on the hill. The people there have the truth of God, and it will change your life. After you have learned about God's message, you must take it to the Rundi area." After two years of study in a baptismal class at the Seventh-day Adventist Heri Hospital, Daniel moved to the Rundi area, where, as a result of his preaching, there arose a Seventh-day Adventist congregation to proclaim the three angels' messages.

Phanuel was a shepherd on the arid hills outside Bethlehem in central Judea. One night an angel came to Phanuel and his companions as they were watching their sheep, with the following message: "I bring you good news of great joy that will

One night an angel came to Daniel in his mud-and-pole hut.

be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:10-12, NIV). After Phanuel and his companions had found the promised Child, "they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them" (verses 17, 18).

John was an exile on the rugged island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. One day he saw, in a vision, an angel flying in midair, having the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth. This was the content of his message: "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water" (Rev. 14:7, RSV).

Today angels are just as eager to proclaim the good news from heaven as they were almost two thousand years ago to the shepherds outside Bethlehem. Yet they are frequently prevented from doing so because God's chosen messengers are men and women, not angels.¹ Unless we permit ourselves to be instruments through which the angels can voice their praise and proclaim the love and goodness of God,² in all but very exceptional circumstances the angels are restrained from bearing their testimony.³

1. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 10.

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

3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 391.

By Edwin E. Reynolds, assistant professor of New Testament at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines.

Ancient Message, Modern Messengers

LOGOS

Rev. 14:1-12; Luke 2:13, 14

The Good News of the Eternal Gospel

“Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people” (Rev. 14:6, NIV).

The proclamation of the eternal gospel in Revelation 14:6-12 is unique. It is presented to every human being with three features that focus on why God is worthy of worship, respectively: the announcements of salvation, of victory over sin, and of deliverance from the wicked.

The eternal gospel was first announced in Eden (Gen. 3:15). Gospel, literally “good news,” was early used as a technical term for the good news of God’s victory, deliverance, and salvation (2 Sam. 18:19-32; 2 Kings 7:9; Isa. 52:7; 61:1, 2). Genesis 3:15 implies this concept of good news in the phrase, “he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” Here in the first announcement of the biblical gospel, God prophesies His victory over Satan through the Offspring of the woman and assures a deliverance of His people from the power of Satan. This provides the hope of salvation for the human race.

The book of Revelation pictures the account of Genesis 3:15 distinctly in the conflict between “that ancient serpent, . . . the deceiver of the whole world” (Rev. 12:9, RSV), and the woman and her offspring (verses 4-6, 13-17). Victory is proclaimed (verses 10, 11, NRSV). This passage announces a partial fulfillment of the proclamation of the gospel in Genesis 3:15. God has won the battle through the blood of the Lamb. The power and authority of God have been reestablished. The way of salvation for humanity has been opened. There is still time to repent before the complete destruction of evil.

Does each angel in Revelation 14:6-12 present the eternal gospel? Why has the promise in Genesis 3:15 not yet been fulfilled? (Compare Rom. 16:20.)

Eternal Aspects of the Eternal Gospel

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15, NIV).

For at least three reasons, only in Revelation 14:6 is the gospel called “eternal.” First, the message is enduring and unchanging. It was announced in Eden, has been repeated again and again by God’s messengers through the centuries, and receives renewed emphasis just prior to the establishment of the kingdom of Christ.

Second, the message is eternal because it is genuine, true, and trustworthy. It is genuine because the message comes from the eternal God, the Creator of the universe (see Isa. 55:9-11). The message is true because it was proclaimed throughout history by the people of God who had experienced His overwhelming power over evil in their personal lives (Hebrews 11). The message is trustworthy because Christ completed the victory through His redemptive work on earth (1 Cor. 15:57; Rev. 12:11).

Third, the gospel is called eternal in the book of Revelation because it is an-

nounced in the context of judgment (Rev. 14:6, 7). Before the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 will be fulfilled, a final opportunity will come for the world's inhabitants to take their stand, either on God's side or on Satan's side.

What makes the message of the eternal gospel so urgent now?

Messengers of the Eternal Gospel

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

Revelation 14:6-12 portrays three angels proclaiming God's messages in midheaven. There are at least two understandings for this. First, the proclamation of the three angels corresponds to Christ's pronouncement in Matthew 24:14. The three angels in midheaven signify a rapid fulfillment of the universal spread of the gospel in the last days.

Second, angels of the eternal gospel are symbols of God's people who spread the good news of His kingdom in this world. The Greek word translated "angel" in Revelation 14:6-12, is *angelos*. This word means "messenger," human or otherwise. The angels of the eternal gospel represent God's people in the last days who

The angels of the eternal gospel represent God's people in the last days who bring the heavenly message of salvation to the earth's inhabitants.

bring the heavenly message of salvation to the earth's inhabitants. Ellen White states, "The three angels of Revelation 14 represent the people who accept the light of God's messages and go forth as His agents to sound the warning throughout the length and breadth of the earth."¹ Jesus' instruction in Matthew 28:19, 20 is still valid until His second coming.

Although the picture of the three angels in Revelation 14:6-12 is symbolic, the proclamation of the eternal gospel will not depend on human messengers alone. God has prepared heavenly helpers to aid His people in fulfilling this great responsibility. "Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?" (Heb. 1:14, NRSV). Ellen White notes: "Heavenly intelligences—'ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands' (Revelation 5:11)—are sent as messengers to the world, to unite with human agencies for the salvation of souls."²

In this era of high-tech communication, what are the most effective ways of communicating the message of the eternal gospel? How do we cooperate with heaven's power in proclaiming the good news of salvation on this earth?

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 456.
2. *Counsels on Health*, p. 32.

By E. H. Michael Palar, a New Testament graduate student at Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines.

Laboring With Immortals

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Ps. 103:20

“One part of the ministry of heavenly angels is to visit our world and oversee the work of the Lord in the hands of His stewards.”¹

Angels were instrumental in bringing the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26) and to the family of a Roman centurion (10:1-7, 22). An angel encouraged Paul during a time of uncertainty (27:23). And through an angel God revealed His purposes to John on the isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:1). “In every time of necessity they minister to those who as co-workers with God are striving to carry forward His work in the earth.”²

Although the work of spreading the gospel has been entrusted to humans, mortal men and women would be ineffective without angels. “We are to be laborers

Although the work of spreading the gospel has been entrusted to humans, mortal men and women would be ineffective without angels.

together with the heavenly angels in presenting Jesus to the world. With almost impatient eagerness the angels wait for our cooperation; for man must be the channel to communicate with man. And when we give ourselves to Christ in whole-hearted devotion angels rejoice that they may speak through our voices to reveal God’s love.”³

The angels, the messengers of God between heaven and earth, minister to those engaged in “global mission” in this final stage of earth’s history. From the throne of Jehovah, these angels will bring God’s blessing and will help and strengthen His tempted, tried, and trusting children. “Those who labor for the good of others are working in union with the heavenly angels. They have their constant companionship, their unceasing ministry. Angels of light and power are ever near to protect, to comfort, to heal, to instruct, to inspire.”⁴

REACT

Have I prayed today for the aid of heavenly angels?

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 456.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 297.
4. *Gospel Workers*, p. 515.

By K. L. Gration Perera, graduate student in pastoral theology at Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines.

Last Call

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Josh. 24:14, 15

The three angels' messages of Revelation 14 are God's final call for humanity to worship Him and to take His side in the conflict between good and evil. As Joshua gave an ultimatum to the Israelites to choose Yahweh or the Amorites' gods (Josh. 24:14, 15), so the three angels' messages are God's last appeal to humanity. As God's people turned their backs on the Amorites' gods and renewed their covenant relationship with Him (verses 19-28), God's end-time people will, likewise, turn their backs on the evil one, and will worship Yahweh as their God.

The first angel proclaims an everlasting gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people (Rev. 14:6). The message is universal in scope and redemptive in intent. It invites all to worship God instead of the beast. This suggestion becomes clear when we view this call in light of the great conflict between God and Satan. As God

The third member of the satanic trinity will impose the worship of the beast.

is worshiped (4:1-11), the devil desires to be worshiped. We see the dragon and the beast receiving the homage and worship of humanity (13:4, 18). The time is coming when the third member of the satanic trinity will impose the worship of the beast with threats of economic boycott, persecution, and death (13:12-15).

The second angel alludes to this question of who should be worshiped in his announcement of the fall of mystical Babylon. Elsewhere, "Babylon" is identified as the great harlot (19:2). Her sin consists of "fornication," which on the human level is unfaithfulness to the marriage relationship. The Old Testament, however, uses marriage as a metaphor for the covenant relationship between God and His people. Fornication, then, has become a standard metaphor for Israel's worship of other gods (Hos. 1-3). Thus, the second angel's message also indicates to us that the final conflict between good and evil will center on whom to worship.

The third angel concludes the series of calls to worship God with a warning against those who will worship the beast or its image. They will be tormented with "fire and brimstone" (Rev. 14:10, 11; 19:20). On the other hand, those who choose Yahweh as their God will be sealed in their foreheads (7:2, 3) with the name of God and of the Lamb (14:1; 22:4), and will be numbered among the 144,000 (7:2, 3; 14:1; 22:4). They will reign with Christ (20:4).

Thus, the messages of the three angels of Revelation 14 are a singular call to worship God. They are an invitation to choose God instead of the devil. And, they are the last!

REACT

How can we, as individuals, participate in the work of the three angels?

By Nestor A. Santos, assistant professor of religion at Philippine Union College, Cavite, Philippines.

Angels Incognito

HOW-TO

Key Text: Isa. 60:1-3

How can we cooperate with heavenly agencies to fulfill the global mission committed by God to His church? We know “it is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹ Several ideas are worthy of note.

1. “A Christlike life is the most powerful argument that can be advanced in favor of Christianity.”² God did not direct the people of Israel to preach and hold evangelistic meetings to convert the surrounding nations. Rather, He asked them to let their light shine by practicing the lifestyle He had taught them was best. Then He promised successful results.

2. God’s people were not to be merely passive witnesses for Him. Deeds of

“A Christlike life is the most powerful argument that can be advanced in favor of Christianity.”

love, mercy, and justice were to characterize their relations with others, revealing God through service.

3. There is also a place for active evangelism, teaching, and preaching. Proclamation of the Word played a central role in the early Christian church’s mission to the world.

4. Not only do we have the angels to assist us in our global mission, but also the Holy Spirit has been promised to aid us, giving us the spiritual gifts we need, as well as bringing conviction to the hearts of those with whom we come in contact.

REACT

1. What can I begin doing now to hasten the Lord’s coming? Could I be an angel incognito?

2. What kind of specific expectations does God require of me?

3. What role does proclamation play in the New Testament in accomplishing the mission of the church? What role does it play in my life?

4. If God’s Spirit brings conviction and results, what is my role?

1. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 69.

2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 21.

Bothered by an Angel's Message

OPINION

Key Text: Rev. 14:6, 7

In Revelation 14 the angel commands me to fear, give glory to, and worship God. I have no trouble *fearing* God; that is respecting Him or holding Him in reverence. And *worshipping* Him? Easy. He is the Creator; I am His creature. He is awe-full; I am awful.

But *glorifying* Him is another thing. Praising God is something I feel grossly inadequate to do. That would be like a kindergartner giving Shakespeare a citation for his accomplishment. Would the great writer need, even welcome, my confirmation of him as a wordsmith *par excellence*? Why then the command to extol, honor, and praise God? He doesn't have (or crave) to be told by lowly earthlings that He is good and great and worthy of praise.

In commanding us to glorify God, the angel may be doing what we all do when we speak of what we care deeply about. We stumble, for instance, upon a mouth

Praising God is something like a kindergartner giving Shakespeare a citation for his accomplishment.

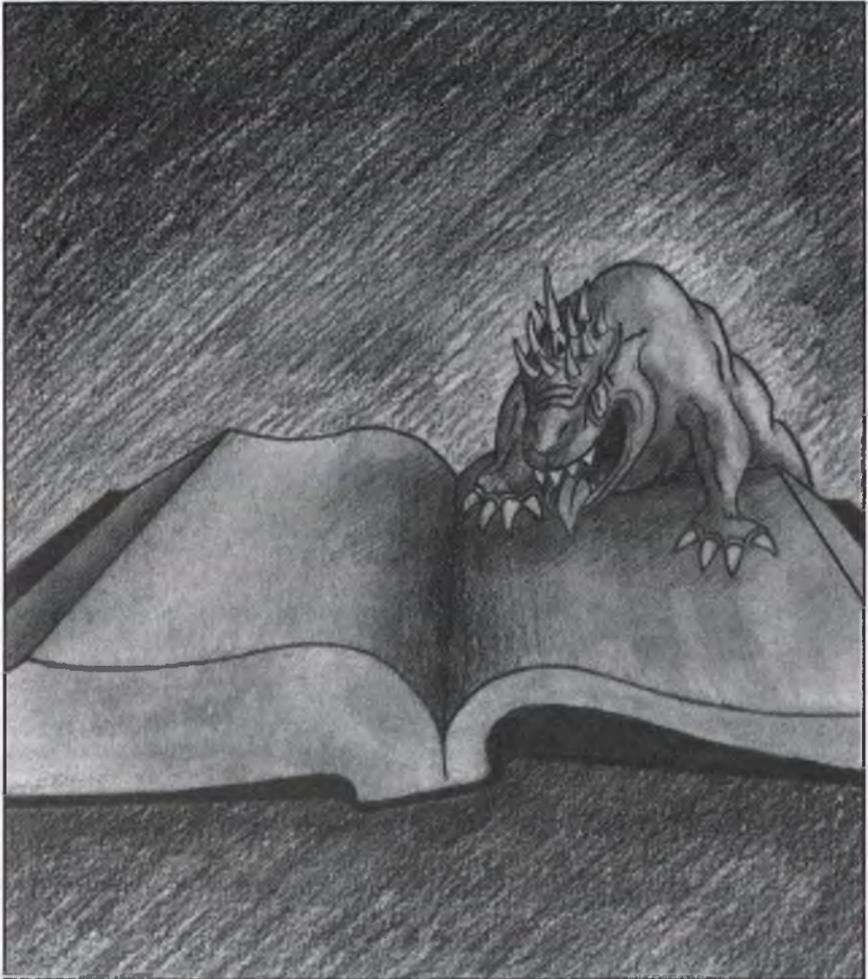
painter from the world of the handicapped, and we tell everyone how creative he or she is; we hear a good joke, and we seek out someone to share it with.

Years back, reading Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, I thought of glorifying or praising someone only in terms of approval, compliment, or giving of honor. We praise—and even urge others to praise—the object of our enjoyment. Giving glory to God must be the mark of one who has caught a glimpse of His glory. The one who enjoys the Lord and cherishes his or her relationship with Him spontaneously bursts into a loud voice of praise.

Another thing that bothers me is that I should give glory to God because judgment has come. Judgment conjures up images of long-faced judges, black robes, and harsh condemnations. Yet I have also discovered that it can mean the everlasting gospel. With God's judgment, we are treated as intelligent beings capable of accepting the fairness of His decisions. After sitting in prison for a long time waiting for our case to come to court, the hearing has finally been set, and our time in custody will finally be over. And, by the way, didn't God commit all judgment to His Son (John 5:22)—a friendly Judge who doubles as our Defense Attorney (1 John 2:1), not to mention the fact that He has also offered Himself as the Accused, our Substitute, who has already paid the penalty for our sins (Rom. 5:8-10; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15; Rev. 5:9)? For us sinners, then, the announcement of judgment is never separated from the proclamation of God's mercy, which vindicates those who have accepted Christ's life and death in place of their own.

By Eleazar M. Famorcan, an associate editor at the Philippine Publishing House, Manila, Philippines.

A POSITIVE ATTITUDE



“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:6).

Fearsome Beasts and Bottomless Pits

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rev. 14:6

Perhaps more than any other book in the Bible, the book of Revelation knows what it means to suffer from rejection. In fact, if some early Christian theologians had had their way, it would not have made it into the Bible at all.

Many of those who approach the book of Revelation feel bombarded with symbol after symbol. When it is not telling us about Babylon, it seems as if we are being invited to travel around in a game park, as millions of tourists love to do here in Kenya. We read about fearsome beasts, flying angels, or bottomless pits. Even too many Seventh-day Adventists associate the book more with the negative than with the positive. For some of us, Revelation is more about judgment than about Jesus.

I have preached on the positive features of the book. I have focused on the seven beautiful beatitudes in the book and have stressed repeatedly that the God who emerges from it all is One who desires us to feel saved, safe, and secure.

In a large New York City church some years ago, I was greeting the members at the door after the service, when one member grabbed my hand, pumped it

If some early Christian theologians had had their way, the book of Revelation would not have made it into the Bible at all.

vigorously, and blurted: “In all my years in the church, I have never heard Revelation preached like that. Thank you, pastor.”

This week, we are writing from Sub-Saharan Africa—the first time this is being done for *CQ*. Perhaps the tendency of some (even here on the continent) would be to play up the less than positive features of the book to make it relevant; to have it speak to the burning issues of the continent. For some, this might mean emphasizing disease, disaster, death—the sort of things the media showcase to the innumerable throng of viewers in the West. The language of the book may make others here on the continent think of African elders, ancestors, colorfully dressed priests and self-styled prophets, and of the need, perhaps, to play down the book for fear of encouraging a syncretistic distortion of the truth as it is in Jesus.

However, like the book of Revelation, Africa and its Diaspora have their positive features too. It is in beautiful Sub-Saharan Africa and among the sons and daughters of the Diaspora that the everlasting gospel is literally taking root in the hearts and lives of every nation, kindred (the Greek says, *tribe*), tongue, and people. For a people whose time has come, we invite you to dialogue with us this week about a book that is near and dear to all of us. May we each contemplate not simply the gory details of the book, but rather the glory of it all. May we hear the everlasting gospel afresh.

By Gosnell L. O. R. Yorke, chairperson of the department of theology and religious studies, University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Eldoret, Kenya.

What Do You Mean by *Saved*?

LOGOS

2 Tim. 1:8-11

Recently someone confronted an Adventist student attending a public university in Nairobi with the question Are you saved? The answer was equally spontaneous—in the Seventh-day Adventist Church we do not get saved; we just keep all the commandments strictly.

The gospel is the good news that Jesus saves us from sin and restores us to fellowship with God. Is this *saving* and *restoring* an experience we may have now, or is it something to be received at some later time?

I am told that early missionaries in Eastern Africa taught that we should *never* say we are saved, because Ellen White made the following statement: “We are never to rest in a satisfied condition, and cease to make advancement, saying, ‘I am saved.’ . . . No sanctified tongue will be found uttering these words till Christ shall come, and we enter in through the gates into the city of God. . . . As long as man is full of weakness—for of himself he cannot save his soul—he should never dare to say, ‘I am saved.’”¹

The apostle Paul stated that God “saved us” (2 Tim. 1:9, RSV). And again, twice in his letter to the Ephesians, he said: “By grace you have been saved” (Eph. 2:8). Is our teaching on the subject of salvation contradictory with the teaching of the apostle Paul?

Justification—You Have Been Saved (Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1, 2)

Whenever Paul refers to salvation in past tense, he is referring to justification. In Pauline theology, to be justified means to be “declared righteous” in heaven, to be delivered from the penalty of sin. That is why we have peace with God—we are justified. This happens the moment we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour. Christ’s perfect righteousness is put to our account immediately. “The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. . . . They are justified by his grace as a gift. . . . He justifies him who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:22-26). If, like Paul, one says we “have been saved” (Eph. 2:8), or “I am saved,” meaning justified, he is biblical and correct. On this the apostle Paul couldn’t be clearer.

Sanctification

The Bible talks about salvation as already accomplished, but we are expected to grow in grace. This is growth and maturity in Christ. We are expected to become more like Jesus from day to day. Do not say you are saved meaning you have attained Christian maturity or perfection. Those who are justified are still full of human weaknesses. Ellen White talks about sanctification as “the work of a lifetime,” and by that she refers to growth and maturity in Christ. Sanctification also means “to set apart for holy use.” This takes place as soon as we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

Glorification

According to Paul we have been justified and we have been sanctified (set apart

for holy use). The Bible also talks about salvation as an event taking place in the future. Jesus Himself said: "He who endures to the end will be saved" (Matt. 10:22). Adventists around the world have majored in two of the fascinating books of the Bible—Daniel and Revelation. In the book of Revelation, the message from Jesus is that only he who conquers will be saved (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). He will receive the "well done, thou good and faithful servant" (KJV) and be changed "in the twinkling of an eye."

Once Saved, Always Saved? (Col. 1:21-23)

In spite of the assurance with which Paul talks about salvation, he never taught the doctrine of "once saved, always saved." In Colossians 1:21-23 he says, "And you, . . . he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him, provided that you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which you heard" (RSV).

"But my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and keep their souls" (Heb. 10:38, 39). Is that what Ellen

The Bible talks about salvation as already accomplished, but we are expected to grow in grace.

White has in mind when she quotes the writer of Hebrews: "It is he that endureth unto the end that shall be saved. The Lord says, 'If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him' (Heb. 10:38). If we do not go forward from victory to victory, the soul will draw back to perdition."²

It is possible to have assurance of salvation now, since we have been justified by faith. We have been set apart for God's use. We have been "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance" (Eph. 1:13, 14). We ought to be able to say with Paul, "for I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me" (2 Tim. 1:12).

The Gospel

In Revelation 14:6 an angel, symbolic of the church today, proclaims the gospel. This gospel is not just good ideas or views to be tried in the hope of achieving a goal. The gospel is the good news of what Christ has accomplished for us. Christ has paid for all our sins on the cross of Calvary two thousand years ago. He has extinguished the guilt incurred by our sins.

If one accepts this by faith and trusts in the power of the Holy Spirit, who indwells all God's children, one can never be lost. We have been justified, sanctified, redeemed, and sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. God is faithful. He will never forsake us.

1. *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 314.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 315.

By Clyde P. Cassimy, assistant professor of theology, University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Eldoret, Kenya.

The Power of the Gospel

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rom. 1:16

The gospel is the proclaimed good news concerning the saving Christ event and entailing His incarnation, death, and resurrection (1 Cor. 1:18). John describes the gospel proclaimed by the heavenly messenger as universal and everlasting (Rev. 14:6).

Paul declares that this gospel “is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith” (Rom. 1:16 RSV). The power of the gospel affects what is of ultimate importance to anyone who receives it and accepts Christ through faith—salvation. Salvation is generally understood to be deliverance from life-threatening danger. When properly received and responded to, the gospel makes it possible for God to save a sinner immediately by grace, and to animate the sinner with life-transforming dynamics that nullify sin. Thus, the gospel power brings about spir-

“The gospel is to be presented . . . as a living force to change the life.”

itual and eternal deliverance and presents the experience of being redeemed from the practice of sin.

Following are some Ellen White statements about the gospel’s power.

“There is nothing that the world needs so much as a knowledge of the gospel’s saving power revealed in Christlike lives.”¹

“The gospel is to be presented, not as a lifeless theory, but as a living force to change the life. God desires that the receivers of His grace shall be witnesses to its power.”²

“When the gospel is received in its purity and power, it is a cure for the maladies that originated in sin.”³

“The gospel of His grace alone can cure the evils that curse society.”⁴

“The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian.”⁵

REACT

How would you answer Friedrich Nietzsche’s challenge: “If these Christians want us to believe in their Redeemer, why don’t they appear more redeemed?”

1. *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 132, 133.
2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 826.
3. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 115.
4. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 254.
5. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 470.

By Z. A. Mathema, associate professor of theology and religion, University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Eldoret, Kenya.

The Never-changing Gospel

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rev. 14:6

The paradox of the church is that it is forever changing (*semper reformanda*) while remaining the same. It remains the same basically because it is governed by, and is the custodian of, a never-changing gospel that shares in the immutability of the One who is at the very heart of it, namely, Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, the church is forever changing in that it is best likened to a living being, to the body of Christ. On at least 18 occasions in his letters, the apostle Paul uses "body language" to refer to the on-going life and work of a mission-conscious church.* Like life itself, dynamism and diversity best characterize the church in its missionary march throughout a diverse world.

Perhaps more vividly than any other text in Scripture, Revelation 14:6, as bearer

Embedded in the first angel's message is the paradoxical mandate to the church to promote diversity without degenerating into disharmony.

of the first angel's message, captures this paradox of the church. John the Revelator saw an angel flying in the midst of heaven having an everlasting or never-changing gospel to proclaim. This is the only place where Scripture explicitly describes the gospel as everlasting and unchanging. And the gospel is that precisely because it is the good news of God's unchanging love in Jesus who saves and satisfies, who redeems and restores us to fellowship with the Father. This, Jesus accomplished on the cross at the foot of which we are all made to stand on equal footing.

The latter part of Revelation 14:6, however, directs our attention to the enriching diversity of the human community to which the first angel, with holy boldness, is proclaiming the never-changing gospel to everyone who dwells upon the earth. The Greek makes it crystal clear that the gospel is indeed for the whole world and everyone in it; that no one, no nation-state, no tribe, no language or people group should be deprived of the good news of the gospel. In particular, we are told that the gospel-bearing angel was seen targeting everyone who dwells upon the earth, that is to say every nation, tribe, language, and people.

Embedded in the first angel's message of Revelation 14:6, then, is the paradoxical mandate to the church to promote diversity (because of our valid anthropological differences) without degenerating into disharmony; and to protect its unity (based on the one unchanging gospel) without thereby settling for a comfortable but suffocating form of uniformity.

* G. Yorke, *The Church as the Body of Christ in the Pauline Corpus: A Re-examination* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1991), p. 122.

By Gosnell L. O. R. Yorke, chairperson of the department of theology and religious studies, University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Eldoret, Kenya.

The Workability of the Gospel

HOW-TO

Key Text: Luke 4:18

The everlasting gospel centers on the person Jesus Christ. The Christian's life, therefore, is not an attempt to be like Jesus; rather, it is Jesus being Himself in the Christian. Then and only then can the child of God apply the gospel as the only lasting solution to the Christian's daily struggle with sin. The child of God ought to keep in mind that God doesn't need our help to be God; all He needs is our availability. The Christian life involves Jesus Christ doing His own thing in me.

We do not have to negate our individuality to be a Christian; rather, now that we are committed to Jesus Christ, it is God's desire to live His life through my redeemed uniqueness. We are God's children; we are members of the royal family of God, which puts us in the best family stock there is in all the world. But as children of God, we've got to obey God's word. And the book of Micah says, "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to

The Christian life involves Jesus Christ doing His own thing in me.

walk humbly with your God?" (6:8, RSV).

Many twist the message of the Bible to hold people in captivity and subjugation, but the real message of Jesus Christ—that which speaks of Christ Himself—tells of people who stood firm in their faith, preaching about Him as Lord. As a result, these actions kindled fires of freedom and helped bring about the end of spiritual slavery. Jesus Christ Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6, KJV). If we do not then deal squarely with the truth, personified in Jesus Christ, if we do not follow His way of living for true revolution and radical change that leads to obedience to God, His way to be real men and women, His way to be leaders that the nations of our world are in dire need of—if we throw away His truth, which is in the person Jesus Christ, the gospel then ceases to have its primary thrust and focus and, in effect, will not work.

The everlasting gospel, when properly applied, will result in each of us saying, "Lord, here is my life. I give You the right to do with me whatever You please; I give You the right to run my life, and I'm prepared to cut the umbilical cord to anything, in order to be totally attached to You, to take my order directly from You, so that people might see You in me. I'm prepared to be available to You and to let You be my Lord and Master the balance of my days." This will finally result in my saying, "Here am I, Lord; send me."

REACT

1. In practical terms, how do we make ourselves available to God?
2. How does individuality relate to the Christian life?

By Lester A. Parkinson, chaplain and senior pastor, University Seventh-day Adventist Church, University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Eldoret, Kenya.

Choosing Christ: Greatest Choice Ever

OPINION

Key Text: Rom. 3:21-26

There are many things in life that we do not have control over. A few of these are the color of our skin, our race, our sex, our tribe, our parents, and our mother tongue. I did not choose to be born black. I did not choose my parents. I did not choose to be Kenyan. I did not choose to be born a boy. Given a choice, I might have chosen not to be born at all!

The colonial power in Kenya, and indeed in most African countries, decided which missionary church evangelized which part of the country. My parents (purebred Kissiis), out of no choice of theirs, happened to have settled in an area of Kenya designated for Seventh-day Adventist missionaries to evangelize. My father risked ostracism to embrace Seventh-day Adventist beliefs, and after much struggle with heathen parents, was baptized into the faith, to which all my brothers and sisters were born without their choice.

It may seem that in the matter of salvation, some have an edge over others. Is

Given a choice, I might have chosen not to be born at all!

this fair? I am glad that the “everlasting Good News” is to be preached “to every nation, tribe, language, and people.”

Even then, some of us are born to Catholic, Anglican, Muslim, Hindu, Pentecostal families. How is God fair if He has allowed this kind of fragmentation in the religious world? I wonder whether the non-Christians know that, “There is salvation in no one else! Under all heaven there is no other name for men to call upon to save them” (Acts 4:12, TLB).

At age 12 my greatest fear was that Jesus would come rather too soon. Not enough had been shared with me to make the gospel the good news it ought to be. At university the gospel did not apparently provide all the answers. At times I risked being ashamed of it. I still feel unprepared for heaven, although I recognize that the gospel is meant to be good news.

The good news is inviting everyone to God through Jesus Christ. It is God who makes us ready for heaven. We all can be saved by coming to Christ, no matter who we are or what we have been like. The challenge is inviting all to Christ. The greater challenge is to experience the joy of salvation through complete trust in Jesus. The greatest challenge is to choose Christ.

REACT

1. What role, if any, does chance play in one’s salvation?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of being born in a Christian society?

By George S. Agoki, deputy vice-chancellor, University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Eldoret, Kenya.

THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM



“The Lord confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them” (Ps. 25:14, NIV).

Fear in a Mountain Village

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Exod. 23:27

I had accompanied Peter on a helicopter trip to a remote mountain village. He was contesting a seat in the national Parliament, and I was working as his press secretary. We landed on a small clearing between thatch-roofed houses. The helicopter attracted the villagers from their gardens. They came running from the valleys below and from the ridges high above us. It was amazing that so many people could arrive from all directions in such a short time.

Peter began his campaign speech after I had introduced him. About a minute into his speech, I noticed that the villagers were restless. They were whispering to one another and were pointing in a certain direction. The children and women looked very frightened and were glancing from side to side. Then they began to disappear one by one.

Their behavior made me nervous because we had received so many death threats

Peter continued speaking, but his voice showed that he had detected danger too.

from a particular rival. Such threats were not idle. They were part of Papua New Guinea politics. If we were attacked, it would take us five minutes to warm up the helicopter before we could take off. Those five minutes were more than what the enemies needed. Peter continued speaking, but his voice showed that he had detected danger too.

We heard a loud roar from behind one of the houses. The women and children shrieked and disappeared into their houses. A muscular apelike man appeared, wielding a long machete. Tattered rags hung from his shoulders, matching his flowing beard. He saw us and came at us in rage.

Fear gripped me as never before in my whole life.

By Matupit Darius, a graduate student at Pacific Adventist College, Boroko, Papua New Guinea.

Fearing God

LOGOS

Rev. 14:7; Ps. 19:9; 34:7-22; 85:9, 10; 112:1, 7; 130:4; Heb. 12:28

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, . . . saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God, and give glory to him’ ” (Revelation 14:6, 7).

There are many verses in Scripture that speak about fearing God. What do these verses mean? Are we to be afraid of God, or do we rather have a semantic problem?

In modern English, the word *fear* has the meaning of being afraid of someone or of something. The use of this word in so many of the verses of the Bible, as it appears in the King James and other versions, needs to be understood in their context, and in the light of what the total teaching of the Scripture reveals about the nature and character of God.

Throughout history many rulers have used fear to maintain control over the people they governed. This has been the method of control used by dictators, whether they ruled single-handedly, or through a committee or group of supporters. The more ruthless they were, the more effective was their control. Some years ago the late Communist leader Mao-tse-Tung wrote a small book, which was produced by the millions. It was known as “The Little Red Book,” named after its size and the color of its cover. This little book contained some of Mao-tse-Tung’s personal philosophy and Communist ideas about government. Perhaps the best-known line from this volume is: “Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.” These words illustrate the truth that Mao-tse-Tung was committed to keeping himself and Communism in power by the use of fear. Another more recent example of the use of fear for political purposes is modern Iraq, where anyone who dares to open his or her mouth in criticism of Saddam Hussein is, in effect, asking for a death sentence.

But the Bible tells us clearly that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). He does not maintain His authority by the use of fear. The very fact that He did not destroy Lucifer the moment he stepped out of line is evidence of this fact.

A careful study of scriptures that refer to man’s responsibility to fear God—and a study of the original words used—indicates that the intended meaning is that man should reverence or respect God, that God should be listened to and obeyed.

“The fear of God means that reverence for God which leads to obedience because of one’s realization of His power as well as of His love to man.”*

This thought as it relates to obedience is highlighted for us: “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him” (Ps. 34:7, 8). Note that the verses speak to us of God’s goodness, and therefore we ought not to be afraid of Him.

“O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him” (verse 9).

Then we read about how those who fear the Lord will show it by the changes that are evident in their conduct: “Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it” (verses 13, 14).

However, other verses speak about how God will be against those who practice

evil: "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth" (verse 16).

Thus it is the wicked, and not the righteous, who have reason to be afraid of God, for they will receive their punishment from Him in due time.

Psalms 34 is not the only passage in Scripture that links the idea of fearing the Lord with obedience. "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. . . . He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord" (Ps. 112:1, 7).

Even this week's introductory text, Revelation 14:6, 7, mentions that the hour of God's judgment "is come." The idea of judgment presupposes that conduct is to be examined in some way, hence obedience again is linked with the plan of salvation, with God's love and forgiveness.

"But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Ps. 130:4). "Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear him. . . . Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (85:9, 10).

Surely the more we study God's wonderful plan of salvation, the way Jesus died

Perhaps the best-known line from this volume is: "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun."

on the cross to atone for our sins, revealing this great love for us—the more we will love, respect, and reverence Him.

Because the love of God is infinite—limitless—it will be the theme of our study throughout eternity, and we will never exhaust it. God's love was revealed in a sacrifice so great that it was enough to save every man, woman, and child that has ever lived on this planet, from Adam and Eve right down to the end of time. Every sin any human being has ever committed is provided for in the sacrifice Jesus made. The only thing that can or will limit this infinite sacrifice is the failure of some to accept it as being for them, choosing to die in their own sins rather than to accept God's provision and be saved.

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28, 29).

REACT

1. How would you characterize someone who fears God?
2. "O taste and see . . .": How does the Lord taste to me today? Sweet? Sour? Salty? Bland? How do I explain my answer?
3. How can a person overcome his fear (fright) of God's awesome power and come to love Him?

* *Cruden's Complete Concordance* (Philadelphia: Universal Book and Bible House, 1949), p. 200.

By Leonard P. Tolhurst, chairman of the theology department of Pacific Adventist College, Boroko, Papua New Guinea.

Lay Up Your Hammer

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Ps. 34:7-22

John N. Loughborough was ranked as a captain among the Sabbath forces of his time. In his service as evangelist, administrator, and pioneer, he went forth fearlessly to proclaim the three angels' messages. Because of concern for himself and his family, in the summer of 1856, Loughborough returned to work as a carpenter. Ellen White, when also confronted by similar circumstances said, "In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what God has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as Leader. We have nothing to fear for the future except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us."¹

Fortunately for Loughborough, it was only a few weeks later that Ellen White caught up with him. In a solemn voice she said, "What doest thou here, Elijah?"²

Loughborough said, "I have laid up my hammer and driven the last nail."

She repeated this question three times without saying another word. Later, in response to meetings she conducted, Loughborough said, "I have laid up my hammer and driven the last nail."³

The "fear of the Lord" (Prov. 1:7) means a reverential awe that leads the believer to love and obey God. Thus the phrase "those who fear the Lord" describes righteous people who, although realizing the degeneracy of their own souls, respond to God's infinite love and care with an awe-inspiring reverence. This godly fear motivates love's response by giving glory to God. "To give glory to God is to reveal His character in our own, and thus make Him known. And in whatever way we make known the Father or the Son, we glorify God."⁴ In response to the call to revere and glorify the God of heaven, we also can say with Loughborough, "I have laid up my hammer and driven the last nail."

REACT

1. How can I have a clearer sense of God's infinite greatness?
2. Would the sense of God's presence and power in my life change my direction?

1. *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 31.

2. *Lighter of Gospel Fires*, p. 106.

3. See *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 221.

4. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7A, p. 979.

By Limoni Manu, a graduate student in theology studies at Pacific Adventist College, Boroko, Papua New Guinea.

Have No Fear!

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rev. 14:7

In the beginning, fear describes Adam's feelings toward his broken relationship with God (Gen. 3:10). Throughout history, fear is the response of the heathen toward God's actions. Yet, in the Psalms, the righteous find freedom from fear when they turn confidently to the God who helps and protects them.¹

Similarly in the New Testament, the righteous who know that they are born of God's love no longer know any fear. Instead, God's love frees them for an attitude of unrestricted openness toward God.²

Therefore, the message of the final crisis as presented in the first angel's message is a call to everyone to have a positive relationship with God. True worship is associated with fearing God and giving Him glory. The eternal gospel invites everyone to respond to God's mighty acts of Creation and judgment. When God

To live with fear and not be afraid is the final test of maturity.

and humanity are in a righteous relationship, the judgment makes the good news of the cross the best news of all time. It puts the gospel into eternal context. God administers the benefits of the judgment forever. Mortals will put on immortality.

The Bible defines the fear of God in terms of a relationship. The shades of meaning for *fear* in both English and the biblical languages range from absolute terror and anxiety to honor and respect. Honor and respect "presupposes mastery of the experience through reflection."³ Therefore, the meaning of fear is dependent upon one's relationship with the author of the action.

We perceive the positive attitudes toward "the fear of God" when a sense of God's infinite greatness, holiness, and self-sacrificing love inspires us. On the other hand, we develop negative attitudes when we consider that God's mighty power opposes our human plans.

"To live with fear and not be afraid is the final test of maturity."⁴ So also, to live with God in open communion and not be afraid is the final blessing of the righteous.

REACT

1. What is my view of God?
2. Does God's almighty power give me a sense of threat or of security?

1. Balz, "Phobos" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), vol. 9, p. 200.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 216.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

4. E. Weeks, "Fear" in *Quote Unquote*, ed. Lloyd Cory (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1977), p. 116.

By Steve Currow, theology lecturer at Pacific Adventist College, Boroko, Papua New Guinea.

Redemptive Fear

HOW-TO

Key Text: Prov. 2:1-5

What do you do when you are scared? I mean, really doubled up with fear. Civil unrest and law-and-order problems are fairly universal. Our peace and security can become severely threatened. When danger gets a bit too close for my comfort, I tend to freeze and use a wait-and-see approach.

So far this week, we have seen that our fear of God is quite different. Instead of a frozen, inactive terror, we have seen that the fear of the Lord is a part of the redemptive process that is restoring His image in us.

How is this done?

1. Recognize that we can truly fear God only as we accept His forgiveness (Ps. 130:3, 4).
2. If we are willing to learn more of His Word and will, He will reward our eager search with great treasure (Prov. 2:1-5).
3. Accept the changes He makes in us, and be prepared to grow (2 Cor. 7:1).

When danger gets a bit too close for my comfort, I tend to freeze and use a wait-and-see approach.

4. Actively pursue righteousness and use our words to bless and uplift others (Ps. 34:11-14).

5. Through all this, we need to be aware of our attitude. Humility is often spoken of in connection with the fear of the Lord (Prov. 15:33).

When Solomon addressed the question of how people could get the most from life, he made his well-known conclusion: "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccles. 12:13).

So many stop short with those words, afraid that there is some sort of binding legalism that tends to stifle fun and enjoyment in life. Quite the opposite. To fear God is to accept His values. He valued us highly enough to leave heaven for a time, and to become human for the rest of eternity. If He thought that much of me, why can't I simply accept His forgiveness?

Then I need to know more of Him who sacrificed so much for me. It's insulting to Someone who has done so much, to simply ignore Him and walk away.

Won't that stimulate my growth? It may seem easier to remain as a baby (as one born again) to be cushioned and pampered by a loving parent, but if there is no growth, how fulfilling can my life be now, and what about the future? As one who fears the Lord, am I interested in promoting God's kingdom by nurturing people around me and in combating negative influences that pull people down? The kind of sentiments I express in everyday conversation reveal it.

The fear of the Lord surpasses all earthly fears and provides a quality of life that gives us confidence and stability available from no other source.

By David Tasker, theology lecturer, Pacific Adventist College, Boroko, Papua New Guinea.

No Evil Befall Thee?

OPINION

Key Text: Ps. 91:10, 11

The idea that God protects His children from evil brought me great comfort as a child in Mauritius and Kenya. Fear of the dark (or of cyclones or snakes) stayed in manageable proportions because God had promised to look after those who fear Him.

As I grew up, I found life wasn't quite so simple. I discovered that God-fearing people aren't immune to road accidents or terrorist attacks. I learned that cancer and AIDS can touch us all, regardless of our creed. I found that too many good people die far too early (however you define the word *good*). "There shall no evil befall thee." What exactly does "no evil" mean?

It seems there are no guarantees for anyone, not even those who fear God. This hit home for me when our first child was only three days old. We were celebrating having a son when we heard that Ann and Don, missionary friends of ours, had

I discovered that God-fearing people aren't immune to road accidents or terrorist attacks.

been brutally murdered in Zimbabwe. Suddenly their sons were orphans—two bright, lively boys who had sat in our classrooms less than two years before. More recently, events in Somalia and Eastern Europe have raised similar (but far tougher) questions.

Godly fear, as I understand it, means respect for God's authority and immense power. Personally, I struggle when God seems to limit His power against evil. Talking about freedom of choice—and in the process taking a long-term view spanning thousands of years—can be pretty cold comfort.

Glib assurances of God's protection don't convince or satisfy. The Christians I respect the most are willing to be honest about their questions. One such person is Corrie Ten Boom, a feisty Dutch woman who wrote about her struggle and eventual deliverance from hatred in a Nazi concentration camp.

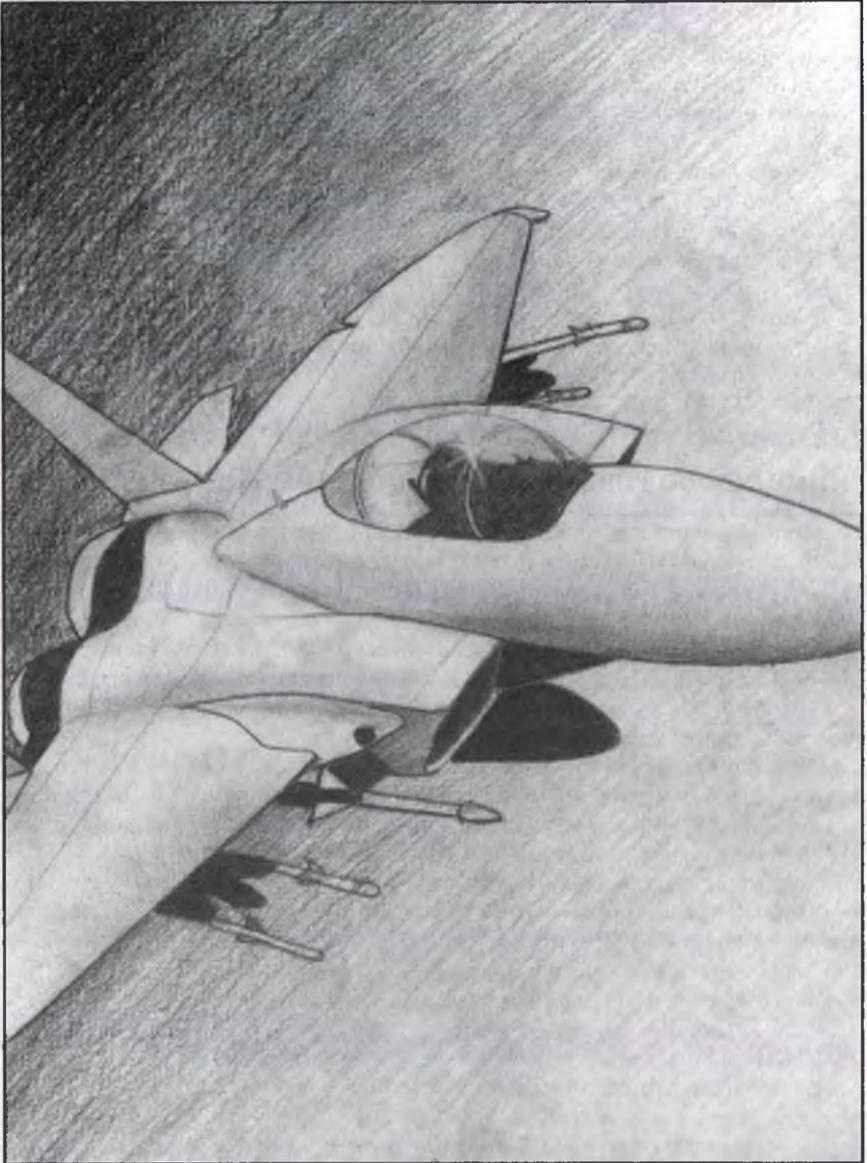
Perhaps the psalmist's phrase "no evil" refers to the ultimate evil: separation from God. Perhaps it means that our fears and broken dreams don't need to be the end of the story. It's only natural to want God to deliver us *now* rather than later. Yet many writers (including the apostle Paul, J. B. Phillips, and C. S. Lewis) affirm that our life here is not the ultimate reality.

REACT

1. Given the indiscriminate nature of so much suffering, what assurance does God give those who fear Him?
2. What exactly does God's protection mean in everyday terms?
3. How should God's protection be described to children?

By Gilian Gorle, English and communication teacher at Pacific Adventist College, Boroko, Papua New Guinea.

NO TURNING BACK



**“Vindicate me in your righteousness, O Lord my God”
(Ps. 35:24, NIV).**

Fail-Safe

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Ps. 35:24

I remember reading a book entitled *Fail-safe* about the Strategic Air Command (SAC). According to the story, one mission of the SAC was to be ready, 24 hours a day, to drop nuclear bombs on the enemy. The system of giving orders to the pilots was an elaborate electronic signal that was supposed to be foolproof, or fail-safe.

Somehow the impossible happened; a false signal was given, and bombers headed for predetermined targets over the Soviet Union. The United States Government did everything it could think of to recall the bombers. Even the president tried to talk to the pilots, but they believed he was an imposter. Finally, the United States government went so far as to help the Soviets shoot the planes down. They succeeded in getting every plane but one. In the conclusion, the U.S. government, to convince the Soviets that this really was an accident, dropped a bomb on New York in exchange for the one dropped on Moscow. The pilot dropped

Even the president tried to talk to the pilots, but they believed he was an imposter.

bombs on Moscow because he had been trained to obey an order given through a signal system that he believed could not fail. Once the pilots received the signal, there was no turning them back. The peace and safety of the world depended on how fail-safe or sure this signaling procedure was.

In this week's lesson we will be studying the investigative, or pre-advent, judgment. At the conclusion of this judgment, probation closes. This event signals that all has been decided; there is no turning back, no second chance. Is it any wonder that Revelation depicts this event with an angel shouting the message that the "hour of his judgment has come" (Rev. 14:7, NIV)? The justice of God and the vindication of His character depend on the pre-advent judgment. If all wickedness is to be destroyed, never to rise again, then the judgment must be fail-safe.

Some might be tempted to believe the investigative/pre-advent judgment is just an odd belief held by old Adventists. If you believe that there will be a point of no return for the earth before Jesus comes and that His coming is soon, then studying this judgment has more relevance for today than at any other time in history.

By Victor F. Brown, enrollment vice-president/chaplain at Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.

How Do You Plead?

LOGOS

Rev. 14:7; Ps. 48:9-11; 96:11-13; Isa. 16:5; Dan. 7:9, 10, 13, 14; 2 Cor. 5:10

“Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come” (Rev. 14:7, NKJV).

In my mind fear has always been associated with judgment. I can't help it! It all goes back to when I was 14 years old. Because of a hardship consideration, I had been granted a special permit to drive by the state of Texas. My older brother always had to be with me in the car. Everything worked well for about a year. When I turned 15 and started dating, I enjoyed the freedom of being able to drive. But having my older brother along would only be a liability, so I left him at home. Being the youngest driver in my class at school put me in an enviable position with the female population. I was driving all over town with increasing bravado to enhance my emerging male ego. Then it happened! One night I was arrested for speeding and abusing my special permit to drive. Was I scared!

My dad and I appeared in traffic court on the date set. I was cold and clammy, but my palms were sweaty. The judge asked, “How do you plead?”

I said, “Guilty, sir—I mean Your Honor, sir.” He looked over his glasses at my frail form and said, “I hope you have learned a lesson from this, young man. I'm going to be easy on you this time.” He suspended my special permit for the remaining six months and said I could apply for my driver's license on my sixteenth birthday. A great sense of relief and release swept over me. The judge was more than fair and kind to me. That which I had been dreading provided me peace afterward. I could begin to feel happiness and joy again.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the investigative phase of the judgment has already begun, because when Jesus comes, His reward is with Him. Of necessity, all cases will have been decided prior to His return. Based on William Miller's calculations of the 2300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14, he and his followers believed Jesus would return in 1844. When the expected date passed without event, the earnest believers went back to the Bible to discover what really did happen in 1844. A man named Hiram Edson received some vital insight from God concerning the event. Instead of Christ's *leaving* the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth at the end of the 2300 days, He actually *entered* the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, where He had a work to do before He comes again.

Although the passing of October 22, 1844, caused great disappointment among believers, this new understanding brought renewed courage and enthusiasm once again to proclaim the gospel in all the world. It also brought renewed hope to know that the Lord had actually prophesied this great disappointment in Revelation 10:8-11. These early believers needed to have their sights raised and their ideas expanded to encompass the whole world. They needed to have a global view, to begin to see the world as God sees it. They now had a work to accomplish with God's help that we have not yet completed.

Set in this prophetic/apocalyptic framework, the judgment-hour message of Revelation 14 took on a whole different character. The investigative phase of judgment vindicates God's truth and His people, and establishes Christ's kingdom on

a morally secure basis. The day Jesus stepped into the Most Holy place in the heavenly sanctuary marked the last phase of His ministry there. At the completion of this work, He will return in power and glory. The end of this world as we know it is in sight.

“Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and all its fullness; let the field be joyful, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the Lord. For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth” (Ps. 96:11-13).

So the judgment is good news! It means that with Jesus we have nothing to fear. He understands us, loves us, and will soon welcome us into His kingdom. We can say with David, “Vindicate me, O Lord my God, according to Your righteousness” (Ps. 35:24). We are not judged according to *our* righteousness but *Christ’s*. When you read a verse like, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10), don’t become discouraged and afraid. Read on: “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (verse 21). So when God looks upon our record

My dad and I appeared in traffic court on the date set.

in judgment, He sees the perfect righteousness of Jesus. The judgment is good news to those who have accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

This week is the 150th anniversary of the beginning of Christ’s judgment in the heavenly sanctuary. As we prepare our hearts for Sabbath, let’s remember the judgment-hour message. It is a message of God’s love and mercy that provides both freedom from guilt and victory over sin.

REACT

1. How would you explain the beauties of the sanctuary truth to a person who asks, “Don’t you live in fear of your name coming up in this investigative judgment?”
2. What significance is there in the fact that the work of judgment is done in a *sanctuary*? What does the word *sanctuary* mean? Consider Exodus 25:8; Psalm 43:1-4; 63:2-5.
3. What feelings do I experience in knowing that this week is the 150th anniversary of the beginning of Christ’s judgment in the heavenly sanctuary?
4. What are my personal feelings about the judgment?

By Larry Moore, senior pastor of the Keene (Texas) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

A Solemn Warning

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rom. 13:11

Who talks about the sanctuary in heaven? I don't hear very much about it at all. I've heard people consider the work God is doing to be light or trivial, not pertinent to today's times. Maybe that's what makes the following such a sobering thought:

"We are now living in the great day of atonement. . . . All who would have their names retained in the book of life should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and [by] true repentance. There must be deep, faithful searching of heart. The light, frivolous spirit indulged by so many professed Christians must be put away. . . . He will examine the case of each individual with as close and searching scrutiny as if there were not another being upon the earth. . . .

"The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. . . . At this time above all

As my lifestyle becomes more spiritual, I get a clearer view of who God is.

others it behooves every soul to heed the Saviour's admonition: 'Watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.' Mark 13:33. 'If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.' Revelation 3:3. . . .

"Perilous is the condition of those who, growing weary of their watch, turn to the attractions of the world. While the man of business is absorbed in the pursuit of gain, while the pleasure lover is seeking indulgence, while the daughter of fashion is arranging her adornments—it may be in that hour the Judge of all the earth will pronounce the sentence: 'Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.' Daniel 5:27."*

As my lifestyle becomes more spiritual, I get a clearer view of who God is. I praise Him for His justice as well as His mercy. God wants us to live His love and compassion to show this world that it's really the only way to live with peace of mind. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7, NKJV).

REACT

1. What does living His love and compassion have to do with sorrow for sin?
2. In light of the solemnity of the judgment, why should Christians look forward to it?
3. It is God, not ourselves, who provides salvation. Why, then, is it necessary to involve ourselves in "deep, . . . searching of heart"?

* *The Great Controversy*, pp. 489-491.

By Jerry Richard, a junior communication student at Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.

Images of the Judgment

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rev. 14:7

The Bible is full of images of sight, sound, and even smell so as to impact us with its messages. At the reading of Revelation 14:7 several historical events are referred to. There is the God “who made.” The heart of the Ten Commandments is brought to mind with the phrase “Worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea” (KJV). Even the words “fountains of waters” brings to mind God’s act of judgment in the Flood. God is making it clear that He is a God who has acted in the past and will surely act again.

Noah preached to an unbelieving people that their world was soon to end by a flood of water. Even today the idea of God’s acting in judgment is not functionally clear to us.

We have insulated ourselves from cause and effect, in answering for our actions. If we don’t work, there is always the government; if we don’t take care of our health,

He is a God who has acted in the past and will surely act again.

there is technology; if we don’t budget, there is a credit card.

We understand that even now Christ is investigating all the names written in the book of life. “In the book of God’s remembrance every deed of righteousness is immortalized.”¹ But so are the deeds of sinfulness recorded to see whether one’s faithfulness corresponds with one’s profession as a true follower of Christ.

When Satan accuses the subjects of God’s kingdom, “Jesus does not excuse their sins, but shows their penitence and faith.”² Yet, by words and dark actions, one can be removed from the book of life (Matt. 12:36, 37; 1 Cor. 4:5).

REACT

1. In light of God’s present judgment and soon coming, how should we live our lives?
2. In what ways have I “insulated” myself from cause and effect?
3. What role, if any, should cause and effect take in our telling others of God’s love?

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 481.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 484.

By Wallace C. Sullivan, youth/young adult pastor of the Keene (Texas) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Ultimate Vindication

HOW-TO

Key Text: Ps. 48:11

Judgment! Just the mere mention of the word brings about a sense of insecurity among most Christians. In many Christian denominations the idea of “opening the books,” or “being judged according to what is written in the books,” is too legalistic to be comfortable. Most are content in just believing that there is no need for a judgment at all.

Seventh-day Adventists in particular become excited about the judgment. Instead of being frightened about the judgment, we rejoice in knowing that God will one day make everything right. Instead of trying to ignore the judgment and say that it will never happen, we diligently study it, trying to understand God’s purpose in it. Why are we always talking about the judgment? Is it because of the first angel’s message? I believe it’s because it is a doctrine that is unique to our church. As a church and as individuals, we should make it our job to let others know that God’s

The question is “How do we help others understand the judgment?”

judgment is nigh. God’s judgment should be seen as the ultimate vindication for the Christian and not the ultimate defense of the Christian.

The question is “How do we help others understand the judgment?” First, we must help people realize that there is a need for judgment and vindication. If we can take them through the story of the great controversy and they can see the accusations that have been made by Satan against God and His people, they will realize that there must be an ultimate day of reckoning. Help them see the cruel injustices and falsities that have been spread by Satan, and then they can be excited about the judgment as well. Second, they must see God’s role in the judgment. Christ’s work will be done at that time; therefore, you and I no longer stand as the accused, but now we become the plaintiff demanding vindication against the false charges of Satan. There is no need for us to be afraid when the word *judgment* is mentioned. Now we can long for and welcome the judgment! (Ps. 48:11).

How do you and I stand in light of this judgment hour? We must have a daily renewal of our commitment to God and a daily study of His truth. We also need to look more closely at the characteristics of how God governs His people. By studying this, we will get a glimpse of the character of God and see His beauty and, more important, His love. Love is the key word here. In the end, God’s love will be demonstrated as just and true.

REACT

1. How can a Christian make the judgment seem relevant in a secular world?
2. How can a Christian focus on the positive aspects of judgment?

By Bernie J. Anderson, III, a junior theology major at Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.

Guess What!

OPINION

Key Text: Ps. 48:9-11

October 18, 1844

Hi! I'm writing to see how things are going with you. Everyone here is getting ready for the *big day*. I can't believe it! This is so exciting; Jesus is coming! It is something I have looked for my whole life. I wish we could be together for this blessed event, but I know you will see Him at the same time I will. Isn't life wonderful! I am saddened, though, that Margaret can't seem to understand. She says more people, besides us, would know if Christ were really coming again. I told her that it is our message and we must tell everyone, but she is still skeptical. I hope she can understand soon.

God bless, and come soon.

Word is spreading around the country that Hiram Edson had a vision from God.

October 23, 1844

I don't understand. Jesus should have been here by now! Not that I doubt He is coming, but what went wrong? The leaders calculated and checked everything so carefully. I don't understand. Of course, Margaret hasn't let up since this morning. She keeps asking, "Why are you still here?" I wish I knew the answer. This has taught me something, though. I need to study God's Word more. Maybe you can come to visit, and we can study together. That would relieve some of the disappointment. I just don't understand.

Hope to see you soon. God bless.

November 26, 1844

Guess what! Word is spreading around the country that Hiram Edson had a vision from God (an actual vision!) that what we thought was the second coming was really Jesus entering into the Most Holy Place to cover our sins with His cleanliness! The time of judgment has come, but we are not to be afraid, because Jesus has entered for us and is as pure as snow. Isn't that great? Even Margaret has come to believe. We must study more. Mr. Edson has given us some Bible texts in Daniel, Revelation, and Hebrews that go along with his study. Let's get together soon.

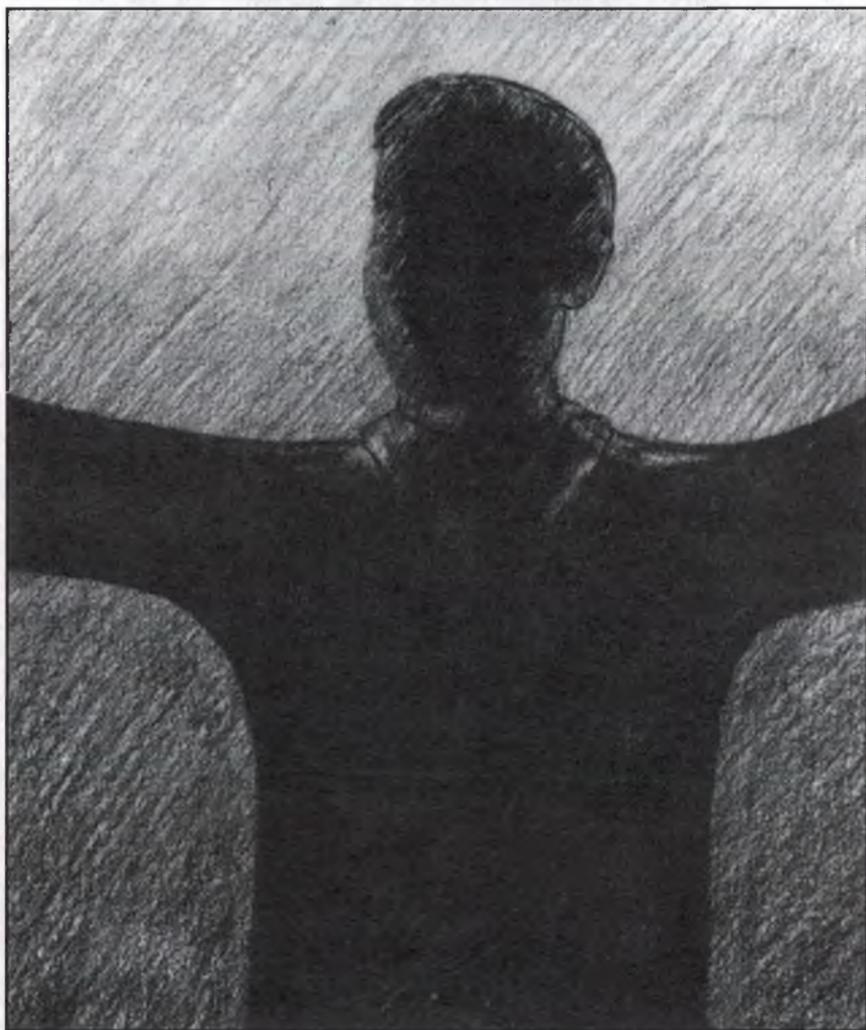
Until then, God continues to bless.

REACT

1. How does disappointment affect you?
2. Do you consider that disappointment is because of a mistake of yours or do you tend to blame God?

By Diana Price, senior elementary education major at Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.

FOR ALL YOU'RE WORTH



“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:20).

Misplaced Glory

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Col. 1:27

It is a momentous day in history! Thousands of people have assembled at the Washington Monument in what happens to be the largest gathering of people in the history of the United States. Yet there is no threat of riots or violence.

The past eight years have been the most prosperous years ever; the nation, as well as every citizen, from the rich to the poor, has flourished beyond expectations. And it is all a result of the genius and administration of one man, the president.

Now Congress has made the necessary amendments to allow his continued leadership for an indefinite period, and a sea of people wait to show their support and to hear his acceptance speech. Suddenly, a giant, holographic image of the president is projected into the air above the people, and he addresses them in an eloquent oration. The majesty of his presence and the compelling nature of his words thrill the assembly with mighty power. Excited by the spirit of celebration

A giant, holographic image of the president is projected into the air above the people.

and passionate with enthusiasm, they shower him with adulation and praise. People begin saying that surely no ordinary person could command such a majestic appearance and overwhelming eloquence. Perhaps this is Christ himself! Some even drop to their knees and bow before him. Slowly, and then with great rapidity, this reaction spreads like a wave as thousands of people fall prostrate and worship him. At first surprise and then a glow of gratified pride sweeps over the face of the president as he sees and understands this demonstration.

Suddenly, a terrible change comes over him. His face becomes deathly white and distorted with agony as he calls for assistance. Secret Service agents speed him to the nearest medical facility, where doctors labor to save him as he dies a horrible death. The report is that his flesh has been infested with a species of worms, which have eaten his flesh . . .

Gruesome and unlikely, isn't it? Yet something similar to this has actually happened to those who refused to give glory to a Ruler who was mightier than themselves. So what lessons are we to learn from the experience of Herod and Nebuchadnezzar? How is God glorified, and how do we avoid the temptation for self-glorification? For weak humanity, one answer has been revealed to us in three powerful-yet-mysterious words whose meaning is so imperative that we understand today: "Christ in you."

By Charles Lewis, student-aid and finance officer, Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.

Twice His

LOGOS

Rev. 14:7; 5:11-14; Ps. 96:6-8; John 17:5, 20-24

Give Glory to Him

“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:20).

It is interesting to note that the verse quoted above, from the King James Version, has more in it than is in the oldest surviving manuscripts of 1 Corinthians 6:20. The New International Version (like most other modern translations) has the original words well translated: “You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” Apparently some copyist in the early Christian church felt that this needed to be expanded, so added “and in your spirit which are God’s.”

The context (verses 12-20) shows that Paul was stressing that adultery and other forms of sexual immorality are contrary to the high calling of any Christian. Our bodies should be recognized as divine gifts and, therefore, dedicated to appropriate uses and activities. Furthermore, it is exciting to note that appropriate uses of the body will actually bring glory to God. On the other hand, it is fearful to realize that to use the body inappropriately is an insult to God. Maybe the additional note in the King James Version is helpful because it emphasizes our responsibility to God. The original statement indicates strong instruction—“be *sure* to glorify God”: or “I urge you to glorify God.”* The whole point at issue in this text is not that we were bought *from* someone, but the fact that *we are not our own*. Thus, we have a sacred obligation to glorify God.

The unknown early church editor really grasped what Paul meant: how can individuals glorify God in their bodies unless they accept His Lordship in heart and mind? The conclusion is that we are *entirely God’s*. We are bought with the price of Christ’s suffering and His life-blood (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19). We belong to God by right of Creation, but because of Christ’s death for us, we are now twice His: redeemed, or bought back!

When we recognize that our bodies are meant to be temples for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), we can reach our true potential as we accept Jesus and make Him our constant life pattern and His guidelines our standards. Perhaps it is hard to think of our lives glorifying God. Yet, according to this passage, that is what He desires and expects. That is the special challenge to the church in the last days. In the first angel’s message there is a call, or demand, that we “Fear [revere] God, *and give glory to him*” (Rev. 14:7, KJV). So how can we glorify God in our body?

Every day we have new demonstrations of the abilities of the human body. Records at athletic events are constantly being broken. Basketball players leap higher and seem to stay longer in the air. Tennis players hit harder and faster than they did ten years ago. Ice skaters skate faster and do ever more artistic feats with this body that God created. Human mental abilities are astounding: the ability to form a sentence, to create a million memories, to figure mathematically, to make split-second decisions when driving. We are indeed fearfully and wonderfully made. The human body is a marvelous creation that, in itself, glorifies God.

Yet, in this last decade of the twentieth century, the human body is glorified and

often the Creator is denied. Isn't it time we thought again of truly glorifying God in our body? TV and movies use the human body to degrade humanity and deny its Creator. New dance forms are created that emphasize the inappropriate sexual use of the body. Young people are confused about the appropriate use of the body.

Today's text is a warning to us and a wonderful guideline. We can rejoice and glory in the wonderful body that God gave us, and we can put it to the most sublime use by recognizing His creatorship, His ownership, and glorify Him by following the guidelines He has given for its use. This consciousness of God's ownership, through creation and redemption, should compel us daily to discover for ourselves, through a study of His Word, the appropriate use of the body. With this positive attitude we can be free to confront the standards that promote bodily abuse that are constantly before us—we can be truly liberated to a new and more active life.

Today we can see what inappropriate use of the body leads to: AIDS, lung cancer, cirrhosis of the liver, high cholesterol.

Then what can we do about glorifying God? First, we can submit our lives to Him, then repeat and renew that commitment daily. Second, we can ask Him to guide in the making of decisions and in the evaluation and setting of standards.

Our Daily Challenge

Facing a daily challenge to glorify God can be either frightening or exciting. See it as a spiritual challenge. It will certainly change your thinking. Think of the

The whole point at issue in this text is not that we were bought *from* someone, but the fact that we are not our own.

potential you have through the Spirit and as Christ sees you. Develop your talents accordingly. Each of us is different, and we can glorify God in different ways. Some can glorify God with our physical bodies, as a witness to a lifestyle that is in accordance with the guidelines God has given in the Bible. Others have talents of dexterity with musical instruments, and the music produced glorifies God. Still others have abilities to speak kind words.

Whatever your talent or interest, it can be used to glorify God. My hobby of stamp collecting has been relaxing, informative, and faith-sharing. Contacts with persons in other countries have been rich, and I have been able to share my beliefs and my God with them through this medium. Your ability to have fun with friends, to include lonely ones in a friendly game, is a talent that can be used to glorify God.

Ultimately, the message of 1 Corinthians 6:20 is that God is the center of my life, and all that I do will be oriented to that center. The continuation of the theme will be in God's kingdom, where we may have the privilege of joining heavenly beings in a chorus of praise (Rev. 5:11-14) that will echo around the universe: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (verse 12, RSV).

* Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *International Critical Commentary for 1 Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1914), p. 129.

By Lloyd Willis, chairman of the religion department at Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.

The Gospel as Mirror

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 2 Cor. 3:18

“We need to understand that the gospel fully reveals the glory of the Lord. It is the mirror that reveals the character of God to the converted soul. The likeness of God is revealed in the perfect character of His Son, that we may understand what it means to be made in the likeness of the image of God, and what we may become if by constantly beholding we allow ourselves to be changed from ‘glory to glory.’”¹

Because of our unique relationship with Christ, we may also reflect God’s character. “None need fail of attaining, in his sphere, to perfection of Christian character. By the sacrifice of Christ, provision has been made for the believer to receive all things that pertain to life and godliness. God calls upon us to reach the standard

“The gospel . . . is the mirror that reveals the character of God to the converted soul.”

of perfection and places before us the example of Christ’s character.”² “He has given to the world a representation of the character of God and the character of a perfect man. He shows us what God is, and what man may become—Godlike in character.”³ “[The Holy Spirit] changes our character into the image of Christ; and when this is accomplished, we reflect, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord. That is, the character of the one who thus beholds Christ is so like His, that one looking at him sees Christ’s own character shining out as from a mirror. Imperceptibly to ourselves we are changed day by day from our own ways and will into the ways and will of Christ, into the loveliness of His character. Thus we grow up into Christ, and unconsciously reflect His image.”⁴

“By beholding Christ men become changed into the same image from glory to glory, from character to character. Good fruit is produced. The character is fashioned after the divine similitude, and integrity, uprightness, and true benevolence are manifested toward the sinful race.”⁵

“Goodness, meekness, gentleness, patience, and love are the attributes of Christ’s character. If you have the spirit of Christ, your character will be molded after His character.”⁶

1. Ellen G. White, “Business Principles of the Christian,” *The Signs of the Times*, 24 February, 1909.

2. *Reflecting Christ*, p. 314.

3. “Christ Our Example,” *The General Conference Bulletin*, 1 October, 1909.

4. *Our High Calling*, p. 58.

5. *My Life Today*, p. 54.

6. *That I May Know Him*, p. 94.

By C. Arlan Monroe, associate chaplain and sophomore nursing student at Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.

Cost Versus Benefit

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Cor. 6:20

The parable of the talents in Matthew 25 presents an interesting contrast in the way the servants waited for the master. Two of the servants lived busy and industrious lives, which yielded a handsome profit that they presented to the owner at his return. The other servant, based on his faulty view of the boss, let his fear of failure keep him from the financial marketplace. He attempted addition to the master's assets by subtraction of all risk and became a symbol of ridicule.

All investment carries risk. The financial world acknowledges this principle of risk by attempting to classify and categorize such risks in a relative way. Government bonds are considered to be relatively safe and have a moderate return. More speculative commercial ventures carry a higher probability of failure, but with the

He attempted addition to the master's assets by subtraction of all risk.

potential for much greater returns. A risk-benefit ratio can be developed with reference to similar investments' historical track record.

The strategy behind successful investment may include protection against risk by diversification, but there is no investment without risk. Spiritual investment is no different. The crucifixion was a tremendous statement of God's regard for humanity, based on the price He was willing to pay. First Corinthians 6:20 intimates that our recognition of God's investment in humanity serves as our incentive for representing Him in all that we do. Daily considering the cost of our redemption and the extravagant confidence that it implies should provide us with the motivation to know and serve God better.

REACT

1. How will the risk of God's investment in humanity be justified eternally?
2. What connection exists between fearing God and giving Him glory?
3. How can you resist the temptation to take credit for the talents God has given you?

By W. G. Nelson, academic vice-president, Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.

Reopened Under New Management

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 Cor. 6:12-20

Paul says we were bought at a price. Whenever property is purchased, the new owner usually remodels or refurbishes the newly acquired property to match the style he or she desires. How much do we allow God, our new owner, to mold us into the temples He desires?

As I leafed through the newspaper, I noticed an advertisement: "Hiring friendly, neat salespeople." Nothing was said of previous experience. Why were these two aspects so important to the employer? My guess is that the employees, through working with the company, are in fact part of the visible business. They are members of the whole. If the company hired cranky, lazy salespeople, then the reputation of the business would plummet accordingly. Paul says we are members of Christ

If the company hired cranky, lazy salespeople, then the reputation of the business would plummet accordingly.

Himself (1 Cor. 6:15). We are the physical advertisement to the world. How does this affect the way you dress, act, and treat others?

It is speculated that the Corinthians had a slogan: "everything is permissible for me" which was used to justify their laid-back behavior. In combating this sentiment, Paul doesn't bother with trying to prove them wrong, but instead he focuses on the ultimate effect of their slackness (1 Cor. 6:12-14). If you were going to begin a maintenance program for your "temple," how would you begin?

We know God is the owner of our bodies, but can people tell who owns us by our appearance and actions? I posed a question to myself once about my body. If I had the chance to make a movie depicting Christ's first appearance to earth, using today's date instead of the time period 2,000 years ago, what would He look like? How would He dress? How would He act? And then I asked myself the tough question: How does my model of Jesus Christ today match the person who I am today? As Christians, we should have the attitude that we want to be imitators of God and not of this world (1 Thess. 1:6-8).

REACT

1. In what areas do I struggle with the tension between the permissible and the beneficial?
2. How would I describe myself as an advertisement of Christ to the world?

By Roy A. Lowe, associate pastor of the Burlison (Texas) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Jesus Knows

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Cor. 6:20

It is said that success has many fathers, but failure is an orphan. Who gets credit has become a very important issue in today's world. American business has given birth to a multimillion-dollar endorsement industry. Celebrities, especially athletes, are paid huge sums to endorse particular products.

The idea behind an endorsement is twofold. First, the company wants you to believe that one reason the celebrity is great is because of their product. Second, they want us to believe that if we buy their product, we could become as great as the celebrity pitching the product.

The lesson this week speaks of giving God glory, and the key text says that because we are bought with a price, we should glorify God in our bodies. I think

Michael Jordan could endorse ice cubes, and they would sell to Eskimos in January!

God is asking us to be an endorsement of His product. The funny thing is that I am at one time both the endorser and the product!

For the past few years, two ad campaigns really stand out in my mind: "Bo knows" and "I want to be like Mike." These campaigns were for Bo Jackson and Michael Jordan. These men, Jackson in football and baseball and Jordan in basketball, have almost mythical status. I get the feeling that Michael Jordan could endorse ice cubes, and they would sell to Eskimos in January!

When I consider whether I am the endorsement or the product in terms of the above two examples, the answer becomes obvious. I am the product and Jesus is the endorser. The ads would read, "Jesus knows" and "I want to be like Jesus." Having Jesus as my spokesman gives me significance. Just as some celebrities lend their names to products, so I've taken Jesus' name.

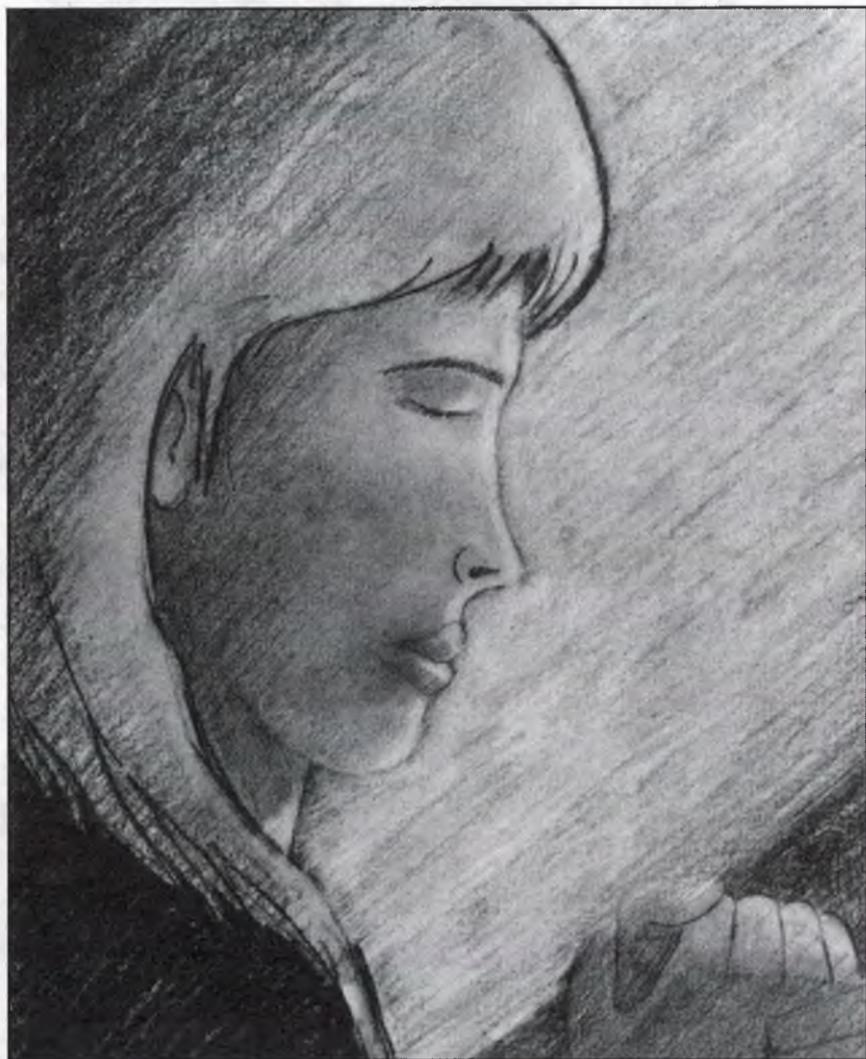
The old gospel tune says, "When by His grace, we shall look on His face, that will be glory—be glory for me." I would feel better if the last line said, "that will be glory—be glory for *Him*." While I'm an endorser for Christianity, I feel far more comfortable giving Jesus the spotlight for this product endorsement.

REACT

1. Which is it for me? Product or Endorser?
2. How does grace relate to the idea of giving glory?
3. Is it possible to have glory of my own?

By Victor F. Brown, enrollment vice-president/chaplain, Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.

WHAT'S WORSHIP ALL ABOUT?



“Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness” (Ps. 29:2, NIV).

The Beauty of Worship

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Ps. 95:6

My friend told me a story I must share with you. She spoke of relaxing in her garden of beautiful flowers and flowering trees. She fell asleep and had a dream: the setting was heaven, and she joined a group she imagined must have been the multitude that no one could number. It was larger than any she had ever seen, and they worshiped around a resplendent throne.

The throne was indescribable in its beauty with rainbows emanating from every angle as light bounced off the diamonds and pearls and other precious stones in prismatic fashion. The light, iridescent waves filled the room. It was awe inspiring. Then there were cherubim and seraphim in dazzling array as they surrounded the throne.

Voices rose in unison as each person uttered words of praise. Everyone knelt in adoration. There was an outpouring of worship. Then beautiful strains of music

Could worship on earth really be like worship in heaven?

were heard; it seemed as though every musical instrument, perfectly tuned, was being directed by a master conductor. Enthralled and enraptured, my friend's heart overflowed with praise.

Then she awoke. It was Sabbath, and she readied for church. After being transported to such a beautiful place, she wondered whether anything on earth could replicate what she had just experienced.

As she walked into the church, the soft organ music in the background with the sunlight streaming through the stained-glass windows made her feel as though she was again being transported heavenward. Bowing her head in prayer, she asked for guidance to ensure the right spirit of worship. She heard children's voices as they praised the Lord in singing, "Jesus wants me for a sunbeam." The Scripture passage for the morning was Psalm 95:1-6. The dream was brought vividly to her mind. Could she really worship as she had dreamed? she wondered. Could worship on earth really be like worship in heaven? She was determined to make it that way to ensure that she did her part and helped others to worship "in spirit and in truth."

By Beverly I. Henry, public relations director of West Indies College, Mandeville, Jamaica.

Worship—Reconciliation and Rest

LOGOS

Rev. 14:7; Ps. 95:1-7; John 4:23, 24

“Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water” (Rev. 14:7, RSV).

The call to worship God is a cosmic call to reconciliation with the Creator. As it appears in Scripture, this call blends the twin themes of creation and redemption. For 120 years Noah called the earth to worship God in view of the impending worldwide flood. That call by Noah, as a type of God’s last call to the earth, finds its final echo in the first angel’s message of Revelation 14:7—to worship the Creator of all things. The call to observance of the Sabbath as a memorial of God’s creatorship is an integral part of this appeal to worship Him.

The Pain of Separation

In Psalm 95:6 the psalmist exhorts Israel to worship God, not only because He is Creator (see also verses 1-6), but because He’s affected by human transgression (verse 10). Thus God is not portrayed as an egotistic being who sits on His throne demanding homage but as a shepherd who cares for His sheep, saving His flock from every danger. Humanity, however, has denied this most natural order by separating ourselves from the source of our being and the rest of creation. Consequently, we have raped the natural environment.

Psalm 95 also points out that human beings find rest in true worship (verse 11). The writer of Hebrews (3:8-11) quotes Psalm 95:8-11 in reference to Israel’s disobedience and consequent failure to enter into God’s rest. He uses his quotation in the context of a comparison between the old-covenant experience of dead traditions and self-effort as a means of salvation and the new-covenant experience, in which obedience in worship becomes an inner experience (Heb. 8:10). The writer sums up Israel’s disobedience in the wilderness as failure to enter into God’s rest (3:8-4:11). This text refers to the Jewish traditional belief that many Israelites did not enter Canaan because of their pollution of the Sabbath (Exod. 20:10, 11; Ps. 95:8-11).

In Hebrews 3:8-4:11, however, both the seventh day and Canaan transcend their literal meanings toward the true essence of the salvation experience—an experience of eternal rest, into which we begin to enter now as we are reconciled to God in true worship.

Sabbath Keeping and True Worship

The Sabbath doctrine is integral to the first angel’s message, because the fourth commandment asserts God’s creatorship. The fourth commandment itself is a call to worship the Creator. In 1845, after investigating the biblical evidence, the early advent movement was convinced that the seventh day was the Sabbath. Thus began the preaching of the first angel’s message.

In the light of Hebrews 3:8-4:11, therefore, the first angel’s message to worship is a call to look beyond a written code toward the true essence of the Sabbath rest—oneness and reconciliation with God and the universe. This reconciliation is out-

wardly manifest as we rest from our striving after power, position, and possession, and let go of our social prejudices, inhibitions, and insecurities.

Divine Condescension and Human Transcendence

Jesus addresses a woman whose experience of worship was the sum total of her tradition of social prejudices. She attempted to bring God down and confine Him to a little mountain. Jesus' answer, "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. . . . God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23, 24, RSV), is pregnant with theological implications.

He asserts that cultural norms and stereotypes may facilitate true worship only as we recognize that God is not limited by them. God does not consider gender, ethnicity, race, class, or historical settings, for He is the source and essence of being. When we confine God to social categories and extend such categories into exclusive and oppressive modes of worship, we inhibit true worship's healing and

Cultural norms and stereotypes may facilitate true worship only as we recognize that God is not limited by them.

reconciling process. This was essentially the experience of Israel. Hence, as a nation, it never entered God's rest.

Although worship is a divine-human interaction in the process of redemption, the purpose is not for God to become human, but for humanity to encounter and be transformed by the divine. As we behold God in His transcendence as spirit, we may receive the full rays of His enabling grace, which alone can lift us out of sin.

The Church's Message to the World

As a church, we can preach the first angel's message with full power only as we embrace the golden rule corporately and individually (Matt. 7:12). We may call the world to worship the Creator, when we accept each person's or group's survival as inseparable from the survival of the whole. Then the world may fully understand the importance of caring for the environment and protecting the rights of all people. The world may be convinced to worship God as we move out of our socio-cultural confinements and celebrate the universal sameness of the human soul in relation to the one God, one Creator.

As the cataracts of sin fall from our own eyes, we can lead the world out of darkness into true worship—reconciliation and rest—not merely a seventh-day-of-the-week experience, but a total surrender of self to the process of God's redemptive action in human history.

REACT

1. How can one be denied the freedom to worship?
 2. If Sabbath keeping is more than just recognizing a day, how can you convince a nominal Christian of its literal importance?
 3. To what extent is the church preaching the first angel's message?
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By Olive Hemmings-Paintsil, assistant professor of religion, West Indies College, Mandeville, Jamaica.

Supreme Adoration

TESTIMONY

Key Text: John 4:23, 24

The first angel called humanity to, “fear God, and give glory to him” as the Creator of the heavens and earth (Rev. 14:7). To do this, humanity must obey God’s law: “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13). Without obedience to His commandments, no worship can be meaningful to humanity or pleasing to God.

The Sabbath was made for man—to be a blessing. It is necessary for God’s people to get together to communicate with Him, to exchange ideas about God’s Word, and to pray with each other. The Sabbath is important as a memorial of Creation because He is the Creator and we are His created beings.

The Christian must focus his thoughts on Christ—the object of Christian worship. It is only through this focus that we can have a correct attitude to worship, and we must be obedient to His wishes.

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, “True worshipers will worship the Father

Without obedience to His commandments, no worship can be pleasing to God.

in spirit and truth” (John 4:23, NIV). This suggests that worship involves focus—active involvement and an attitude that affects thought and action. Ellen White states, “The religion that comes from God is the only religion that will lead to God. In order to serve Him aright, we must be born of the divine Spirit. This will purify the heart and renew the mind, giving us a new capacity for knowing and loving God. It will give us a willing obedience to all His requirements. This is true worship.”¹

God has revealed Himself to us through His created works. “The mysteries of light and sound, of day and night—all were open to the study of our first parents. On every leaf of the forest or stone of the mountains, in every shining star, in earth, and air, and sky, God’s name was written.”²

Let us praise the Lord because He is worthy. Let us, like the psalmist, “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name” (Ps. 100:4, KJV).

REACT

1. How can I improve my worship?
2. In what ways can any false concept of Sabbath observance be corrected?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 189.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 51.

By Patricia Haakmat, coordinator of the medical technology program, West Indies College, Mandeville, Jamaica.

Autocrat or Worthy Lord

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Chron. 16:29

Our notion of worship revolves mainly around religious practices and symbols. The word *worship* comes to us from the Middle English *worschip* and the Anglo-Saxon *worthscipe*. In each instance the word means “honor, worthiness.” It may be used as a verb: to honor, to worship; or as a title of address, as in “Your Honor,” “His Worship,” or “Your Worship.”

There is, however, a principle connecting worship as a notion of social regard and worship as a reverential attitude toward God, who is the ultimate Being.

In 1 Chronicles 16:29 David combines both views, though the latter concept is clearly the focus. With the force of an imperative, he urges us to “give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name” (Ps. 29:2). But what name?

In some cultures a name is more than an appellation; it is often indicative of character or reputation. As it relates to God, certain aspects of character are embodied in the Hebrew word *Shem* (name). God Himself announced the attributes

Our notion of worship revolves mainly around religious practices and symbols.

of His character to Moses when that ancient worthy asked to see Him (Exod. 34:6).

So His name is His character, and as supreme character in the universe, God deserves highest praise and worship from His creatures. God is Creator. The Sabbath commandment reminds us that God is Maker of heaven and earth and all their inhabitants. “But the Sabbath law was given a long time ago, and to the Israelites,” some may argue. “But is this all? How does it apply, if at all, to the rest of us?”

In Revelation an angel flying “in the midst of heaven” (the earth’s firmament) has “the everlasting gospel . . . [for] every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (14:6). The message reaffirms the immutability of the commandments of Exodus 20, the fourth in particular. Clearly the angelic summons is to all and not to a select ethnic minority.

In the call to worship, God justifies Himself and opens up His character to our scrutiny and reasonable judgment. The autocrat demands a relationship of subservience; our Lord invites us into a relationship of freedom with reverent, rewarding worship. This is a relationship not only in recognition of His supreme power but of His impeccable character in which mercy, grace, and goodness are blended.

REACT

1. Since we had no part in our creation, is it reasonable of God to require our worship and to punish us if we do not respond? Explain your answer.
2. What does God receive from our worship? What do we?
3. What, besides God’s creatorship, entitles Him to worship?

By Eric C. Pryce, associate professor of English, West Indies College, Mandeville, Jamaica.

Worship Him Here and Now

HOW-TO

Key Text: John 4:23, 24

A group of visitors came to our island for meetings and had designated a day for sightseeing. I took them along the coast and into the hills. They marveled at how there could be so much beauty in this little spot on earth, this jewel in the Caribbean Sea, Jamaica. God must have had a special hand in placing the silvery, cascading waterfalls amidst the flowering trees and shrubs, between the ferns and the orchids, they said. The golden sunsets were truly a reflection of God's beauty. Certainly God should be worshiped.

How should you worship the Creator? The Bible gives us examples of methods of worship. Moses and Joshua removed their shoes (Exod. 3:5; Josh. 5:15); David suggested that we bow before our Maker (Ps. 95:6); youth are encouraged to worship *now* their Creator (Eccl. 12:1). Confucius, the oft-quoted sage, said, "We should worship as though the deity were present. If my mind is not engaged in worship, it is as though I worshiped not." Man is a religious being with a heart that

How should you worship the Creator? The Bible gives us examples.

instinctively seeks God. The privilege of worship is a divine-human interaction that is a foretaste of the eternal bliss of abiding in His presence.

We human beings have set ourselves on high; we have worshiped gods made with our own hands—money, power, education, success, pleasure. We have worshiped them instead of the God of our fathers, but they have proven to be false gods. God is necessary in our lives for, "in him we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17:28, KJV).

The things of nature—the blue hills, mountains at sunrise, sunsets by the sea, autumn woods, valleys by moonlight, the intricate workings of the human body—bring to us the awe and majesty of God and lead us to recognize in the created order the evidence of a creative force of infinite power. We human beings, the crowning act of Creation, are to worship God with reverence. We need to recognize the frailty and uncertainty of human existence and to treat our fellow human beings with dignity and respect, recognizing that they too are God's creation.

We cannot look at the world around us in all its aspects and not recognize God's great mastermind. Like Shakespeare, humanity "Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones."

REACT

1. Can we worship without going to church? Is this wise?
2. In teaching children about God, what lessons can be drawn from nature?
3. Identify methods of worship and explore their possibilities and meanings.

By Beverly I. Henry, public relations director, West Indies College, Mandeville, Jamaica.

Putting Meaning in Life

OPINION

Key Text: Eccl. 1:2

“ ‘Meaningless! Meaningless!’ says the Teacher. ‘Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.’ What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?” (Eccl. 1:2, 3, NIV). These words from the wisest man who ever lived prompt us to ask ourselves, Is this true? Is life really meaningless, or is Solomon just exaggerating to make a point? Solomon was not only the wisest man who ever walked the face of the earth, he was also the most powerful and wealthy man of his time. He had every resource to indulge his slightest whim, and he did! He says, “I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure” (2:10). But then he goes on to say, “Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind” (verse 11).

So what was Solomon’s point? What conclusions did he reach in his research into the meaning of life? Did God want to make life meaningless for humanity?

If I didn’t know God better, I would think, *What a selfish, vain thing to do!*

In essence, Solomon concludes that God wants to make humanity feel awe in His presence. He writes, “God does it, so men will revere him” (3:14).

The full text reads, “I know that everything God does will endure forever, nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it, so men will revere him.” The previous verse states that man’s satisfaction from eating, drinking, and work are a gift from God. There are things God does that from the human perspective seem to endure forever. It could then be said that He created and sustained the worlds so that men may see His created works, stand in awe, and worship Him.

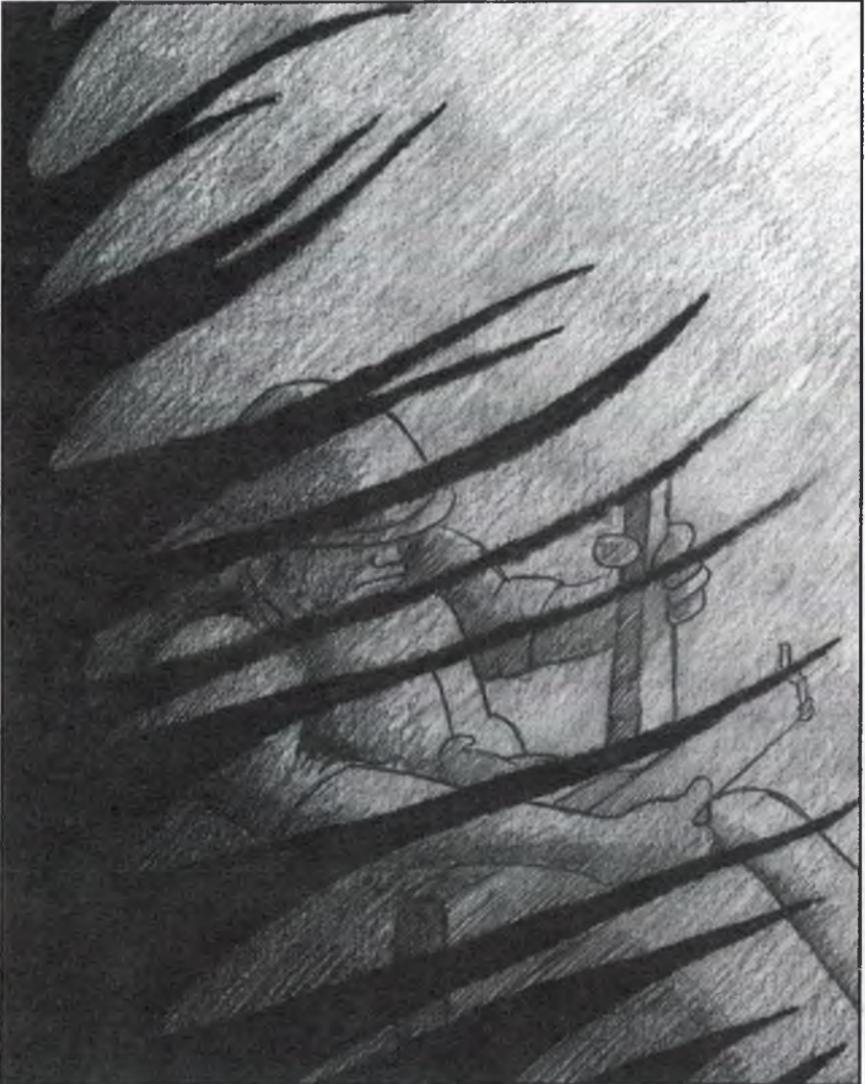
“God does it so that man will revere Him?” If I didn’t know God better I would think, *What a selfish, vain thing to do!* But if God isn’t vain and if He isn’t selfish, then why does He want so badly for humanity to revere Him? St. Augustine sheds some light on this subject when he prays, “God . . . thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless til they find their rest in thee.” God made us to need Him. And in so doing, He bestowed on humanity one of His greatest blessings. For our Creator knows what Solomon only caught a glimpse of: There is only one source of true joy and meaning in this universe. There is only one reason to be. And our restlessness, that seeming meaninglessness in life, drives us to that reason.

REACT

1. How can I create an atmosphere for worship?
 2. Discuss elements of worship that can be performed on a daily basis, not necessarily in church.
-

By Michael Dant, assistant professor of computer science, West Indies College, Mandeville, Jamaica.

THE LOST CAUSE



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

A View From the Island

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rev. 14:8

For Second Lieutenant Hiró Onoda, it was the day that the war finally ended. He had been stationed on the Philippine Island of Lubang, living alone in the jungle. His mission, as a soldier in the Japanese Army, was to hold out against American and British forces. And he had done so, day after day, year after year.

Now, he was being asked to do the impossible: to come out and to surrender. Messages from loudspeaker trucks said that the war was over and that he should go home. Offers of amnesty were attached to balloons and floated over the jungle where he hid. To a Japanese soldier trained in the warrior tradition of the samurai, surrender was unthinkable. A soldier of Japan should either fight to the end or commit ritual suicide rather than accept defeat or surrender. But the fighting was becoming harder and harder as time went on. Perhaps the message was true; perhaps the war *was* over.

Onoda prepared to come out of hiding. He gathered together his rifle, ammunition, and hand grenades, all in like-new condition. He put on his helmet and his

Messages from loudspeaker trucks said that the war was over, and that he should go home.

officer's samurai sword, a reminder of Japan's history and of his duty as a soldier. Thus prepared, he left the jungles of Lubang.

For Hiró Onoda, World War II had finally come to an end—in the year 1974.

He emerged from the Philippine jungle into a shocking world. He had fought to maintain Japanese control of the Pacific, but everything Japan had gained in the war, from China to the Philippines, had been retaken by the Allies. Almost all of the military leaders who had ordered him and millions of young men like him to fight and to die for Japan and for the emperor, had either committed suicide in the face of defeat or had been tried and executed as war criminals. The emperor himself, no longer revered as the direct descendant of Japan's sun goddess, lived an official, ceremonial life as an old man. Hiró Onoda had spent the last 29 years of his life fighting for something that no longer existed.

As we look about the world, we can easily become discouraged. It seems as if everything contrary to God and His laws has a firm footing and will last forever. The words of the hymn, "Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne," would seem to be an apt description of our times.

But the second angel's message is unmistakable: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen" (Rev. 4:8). Even if it's hard to see from our island jungles of work or study or leisure, Babylon's is still a lost cause.

By Daniel J. Drazen, editor of the Seventh-day Adventist Periodical Index, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

It's the Real Thing!

LOGOS

Rev. 14:8; 17:1-6; Isa. 29:9-13; Jer. 50:23-29, 33, 34, 45, 46; 51:5-11

We've Got a Problem! (Matt. 24:24)

Let's just stick with Christianity. We won't bother about all the other religions of the world, all the other philosophies, ideologies beckoning for our attention. We will just focus on Christianity. How many different churches, pastors, organizations are asking for our loyalty, allegiance, financial support? It is clear that there is only one way to God's kingdom, yet Christianity alone offers so many possibilities. *It's the real thing!* Or is it? How can the honest inquirer know? We've got a problem of eternal proportions.

The commercial says, "It's the real thing!"

Commercials and used car salesmen seem to have at least one thing in common. They are not known for monopolizing the truth market. Yet there is one commercial that goes to the heart of human existence. It's the real thing!

Humans are constantly searching for the real thing. As it was for Pilate, the Roman governor, the question is *What is truth?* (John 18:38). When we hear truth, how do we know it's the real thing?

This matter of truth versus error precipitated Satan's expulsion from heaven (Ezekiel 28; Rev. 12:9). The same tension between truth and error triggered Adam and Eve's eviction from their Edenic home (Genesis 3). History reveals life's highway as littered with broken and lost lives caught in this battle between these opposing forces. Powers beckon us down one branch of the "Y" as we stand at the intersection of those two branches. We have a problem.

Error is the greatest of masquerades because it so closely resembles truth. Christ Himself warned that even the elect if possible might be deceived (Matt. 24:24). *We've got a problem.* What is truth? How can I be sure *it's the real thing?*

Deism does not reign here. God has not left us alone to fend for ourselves. He promises to be with us always, even unto the end (Matt. 28:20).

The Solution (Isa. 8:20)

A dispute as to the quantity of a gallon is easily settled by comparison to the federal standard. One must, of course, accept that standard as the ultimate. The same principle applies in the realm of the spiritual. One must accept a standard outside of himself.

Like no other standard, the Bible has proven itself to be utterly trustworthy as a standard of behavior toward God and man.

Principle number one. Make the Word of God the sole standard by which everything else is judged (Isa. 8:20). It's not the real thing until the Bible declares it so. Through the centuries since sin began its masquerade as truth, kings and kingdoms, prophets and principalities, individuals and institutions, have been unmasked by the Word of God.

A prerequisite for knowing truth is a willingness to obey truth when it has been revealed (John 7:17). God is not in the business of satisfying curiosity seekers or providing information for arguments. Looking for God? Looking for truth? They are promised to those willing to look (Jer. 29:13).

Principle number two. Trust and obey. “It’s the real thing” becomes an affirmation of truth.

We can never ignore the package. Truth most often comes in a package: the preacher, a friend, a relative, some individual. The package can and does too often determine our acceptance of truth or error. On the basis of the package, we accept or reject. More often we accept. Recognizing this human foible, Christ left us this warning: “You will know them by their fruits (Matt. 7:16, NKJV). We have the standard, God’s Word. Now if the package alleges to be one thing, while in actuality it is something else, we have a problem. We have a masquerade; we have error.

Principle number three. The theory and practice of the instructor must harmonize with the standard, which is God’s Holy Word. The masquerader can never walk convincingly as Christ walked. Only the genuine can pass the litmus test. Then it’s the real thing!

The Application (Acts 17:11)

God warned Lucifer. Adam and Eve were not ignorant of what they were facing. There is no record of any person being punished because of ignorance of what God required in love. From Genesis to Revelation, God repeatedly makes His will

Commercials and used car salesmen are not known for monopolizing the truth market.

known, warning masqueraders and those deceived about the consequences of their actions.

Close analysis reveals that the problem of truth and error is not so much that we are left without resources to know the difference, as it is that by nature we want our way, which is diametrically opposed to God’s way. Error provides a convenient excuse to have our way. If God is all He claims to be, then unmasking error is not beyond our comprehension. Using the standard, God’s Word, trusting and obeying that Word, and applying it to our daily living will always without a doubt determine whether it’s the real thing. No one can ever say to God, “I did not know the difference between right and wrong, truth and error.” The blueprint is there. One needs only to study it, and live by it. He will know it’s the real thing!

REACT

1. What evidence have I seen in my life that God cares about me personally?
2. How do I personally know the truth when I hear it?
3. How does the phrase “It’s the real thing” relate to the second angel’s message?
4. If error is nothing more than disobedience, what attitude should we have regarding the deception of “the very elect”?
5. To what extent do I evaluate the truth by its packaging?

By D. G. Rand, chaplain, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

A Heavenly Wake-Up Call

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rev. 14:8, 18:4

The second angel's message in Revelation 14:8 is a warning. Ellen White links the second angel's message to the formation of the Adventist Church. Beyond this is what the message itself says. The angel proclaims that Babylon is fallen because "she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (Rev. 14:8). Babylon has led people away from the truth and is now being destroyed.

The first question that came to my mind was, "Who or what is Babylon?" Ellen White refers to Babylon as meaning confusion because it is taken from the word *Babel*. "It is employed in Scripture to designate various forms of false . . . religion."¹ These religions started out by searching for the truth and have grown farther away from it as the years go by.

Hand in hand with Revelation 14:8 is Revelation 18:4. The angel goes into a more detailed warning. He urges the people of God to come out of Babylon.

The whole concept reminds me of the times when I set my alarm clock to wake me up in the morning.

Mrs. White says that "the time will come when those who love God supremely"² will not be able to mix with those who value the world above God.

The second angel's message can be taken on a day-by-day basis. We as Christians start out by walking faithfully with God. However, as time goes by, we lose sight of the main purpose of our relationship with Him. We worry more about ceremony than about loving and serving God. For this reason the second angel's message is our wake-up call.

It may sound simple, but the whole concept reminds me of the times when I set my alarm clock to wake me up in the morning. It goes off, but I keep pressing snooze. Then the phone rings, and a voice on the other end says, "Hello, this is your wake-up call. You have classes in a few minutes." Suddenly I'm awake and functioning because someone on the other end knew what I would be missing if I didn't get up. The second angel's message has called us out of Babylon in the same way. He says, "Jesus is coming, and it's time to get up."

REACT

1. To what or whom today does the term *Babylon* refer?
2. How is the second angel's message a day-by-day warning?
3. In everyday terms, what does it mean to "come out of Babylon"?

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 381.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 390.

By Karon Powell, a junior English major, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

The Wine of Error

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rev. 14:8

Gull Ible sits down in Traveler's Bar. "What would you like?" the pretty girl asks.

"Do you have Work on the Rocks?"

"Yep. It's 5 percent lies. Why don't you try something with, say, 80 percent error, like this?" She held up a bottle. Its label read, "The Wine of Error."

"Well, . . ."

"OK, try this, Hell Lies. It's really great."

Gull staggers out into the street. The street spins in circles. He crumbles into the gutter, groaning, vomiting. He loses consciousness.

A man shakes him. "Hello. My name is Truthful. May I help you up?"

"No, no. I've got the truth." He quotes some texts. "I'm right, I tell you, I . . . um, I . . ." He snores.

Gull staggers out into the street. The street spins in circles.

* * *

Gull drives down a highway, with many cars going the same way. Looking ahead, he sees a tunnel with only one lane. It must be the narrow way. He holds a bottle of Hell Lies. He drinks, driving along, thinking God is a tyrant to let people burn forever. Gull notices a sign. *Share Your Faith*.

He slows, bumping the car next to him. He shouts, "Hey, there! Listen to me! I've got the truth. You're going to hell. You're going to burn forever. God can't stand the sight of you. You'd better repent quick!"

But when he speaks, his words are slurred, and the woman in the next car can't understand him.

Another sign: *Skepticism Way*.

He weaves, turns, misses the ditch. *Where is God?* Neon lights flash the words. Red and blue lights blur. *Oh no, the police*. Gull slows and stops.

"Let me see your license," the officer says. "Give me that bottle too. Oh, I see. Hell Lies too, huh? Get out. Walk down that line."

Gull staggers and falls, tripping on a Lying Boulder.

REACT

1. How is wine like error?
2. How should we treat one in error?
3. What can we do to guard against error?

By Janine Freed, a communication major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

The Heart of a Father

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 John 2:3-6

I still remember how thrilled I felt as a small child when I understood that Jesus wants all of me. He claims me as His own. Someday He is coming to take me home—to be with Him forever.

The cry of the second angel is a cry of pain straight from God's heart. "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (Rev. 14:8, NKJV).

As a minister's daughter, I've seen the pain in countless eyes.

"My wife left me."

"My husband doesn't love me any more."

"My daughter ran away."

It's the pain of rejection, of not being loved back. It's God's pain. As God's church, we bring Him joy by loving Him back.

Love says, "What day each week do You want me to keep for You, Jesus? I can hardly wait for that day to come!"

Love says, "You want 10 percent of my money, Jesus? Why don't You show me how to use all of it?"

Love says, "Jesus, You want me to put You first above books or movies or

"We will not die for something unless it would kill us to give it up."

certain foods? That's easy! Can I give up more for You?"

Love says, "Jesus, so many of Your children don't know or love You. They're hurting inside. Love them through me." And love compassionately reaches out to those in rebellion against God—His Babylon, who is fallen.

The issue in the end is one of love for Jesus, as revealed by our glad obedience. Could it be that we will become so at one with Jesus that to disobey Him would kill us?

Pastor Dwight Nelson, senior pastor of Pioneer Memorial Church here at Andrews University, once said something that still haunts me. "We will not die for something unless it would kill us to give it up."

That was why Jesus died for us. That is why we must be willing to die for Him.

REACT

1. What or whom would I be willing to die for?
2. How is giving up a cherished behavior like dying?
3. Describe "God's pain."

By Anne Carlson, senior physical-therapy major, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

The Babylon Within

OPINION

Key Text: Rev. 14:8

Pretty scary, this Babylon, beast of coercion and impurity! In fact, it is so scary that no one would like to be associated, let alone identified, with it. I believe this is intended: the book of Revelation makes it clear how undesirable and utterly appalling it is to belong to this Babylon. On the other hand, the emphasis on the terrible Babylon out there may blind us to the fact that patterns of Babylon can be found inside ourselves. By being blind toward the Babylon within, we will miss out on the fantastic opportunity to develop into more capable human beings. We may even mistake the call to leave Babylon as a justification to run away from problems.

Jane is a student at Andrews University. She likes the place and she likes her classes. She has just one problem: she is totally overworked. Somehow she cannot stop studying, she always needs to be the best, and she has a hard time accepting that any teacher could give her less than an A. She feels totally exhausted. One day somebody suggests to her, "How about going to England and taking some classes

**She sees clearly the truth of the simple statement:
"Wherever you go, there you are."**

at Newbold College? This will give you a break from your hectic schedule here." Jane thinks this is an excellent idea. She decides to leave everything behind and take a break in England. As it turns out, she falls in love with England the day she steps off the airplane. She feels she has to see every possible landmark. At the same time she is worried about her GPA and decides her stay in England under no circumstances must result in poorer grades. After three months in England, she feels she cannot take it any more. Instead of a break, she finds that her schedule is tighter than ever before. She realizes something has to change. Obviously, the change of place was not enough. She sees clearly the truth of the simple, but profound, statement: "Wherever you go, there you are."

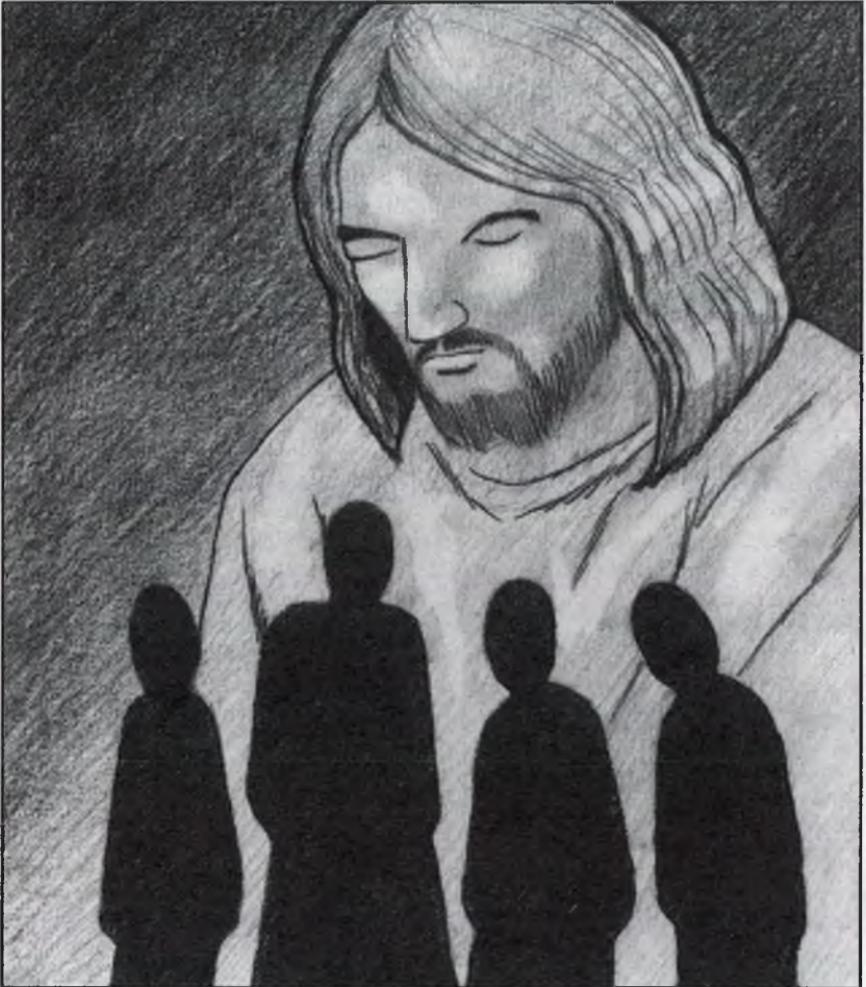
When we realize patterns of dysfunction, or patterns of Babylon, as I have called them, what can we do about them? As long as we see Babylon as a local entity, the answer is easy: "Leave it. Get out of there!" But if Babylon is within us, the answer is more involved. The following suggestions may help: (1) Become aware of your patterns of Babylon through prayer, reflection, or talking with friends. (2) Decide to become more real. (3) Give your life to God to become what He wants you to be. (4) Share your experiences with others.

REACT

1. What patterns of Babylon have you noticed in other people or in yourself?
2. What can help you deal with these patterns?
3. Explain the meaning of "the Babylon within."

By Hans-Otto Reling, a graduate student in New Testament religion, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

THE MARK AND THE SEAL



“Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads” (Rev. 14:1, NIV).

The Safe-to-Save Seal

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Heb. 4:9-11

A grand treasure brought to heaven by some will be a rich harvest of Sabbath memories, a lifetime of 24-hour visits with Jesus each week and friendships established with fellow church members. Many professional accomplishments will be meaningless compared to the simple communion with our Maker on His day of choice.

Whether it's shopping for this season's best-looking bargains at the local mall, making energy-sustaining supermarket purchases, dealing with dating and sexuality, or following Bible truths to God's chosen day of worship, our choices, like a change of clothes, quickly define our characters, and to a small or large degree, our eternal outcome.

A Malawian Catholic renter of mine recently tested my persuasive skills for truth with the opportunity to express the theological differences between Catholics and Adventists. Fortunately his best friend in Malawi is an Adventist, and he seems

We now must face a diminishing choice spectrum. Important end-time decisions narrow down.

to be open to biblical truth. Mark Finley's *Studying Together* gave plenty of insights for differences. I hope and pray I can witness effectively to him through simple Bible study and personal witness.

Over the course of last-day events, my renter and millions of other Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, atheists, Buddhists, Jews, etc., will choose for or against Jesus Christ as this world's redeeming Saviour. The result will be the eternal joy of friendships established through deeds of loving kindness and earnest study for biblical truth. Some will refuse Jesus even after many urgent prayers, the most persuasive presentations, and the strongest promptings from the Holy Spirit.

Others who recognize Jesus but don't make efforts to share Bible truth must face the hellish thought of friends screaming, "Why didn't you tell me?" from outside the walls of the New Jerusalem.

We now must face a diminishing-choice spectrum. Important end-time decisions narrow down: Do you love Jesus passionately? Have you accepted His full salvation? Are you open to the Holy Spirit's promptings? Will you receive God's safe-to-save seal? I pray your answers are all an unqualified yes. Now put forth your first and best efforts to secure for Jesus your friends, neighbors, and everyone in your sphere of influence.

By Steve Davis, creative director of A.D. 7000 Advertising, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Signed, Sealed, Delivered

LOGOS

Rev. 7:1-14; 13:11-18; 14:1-5, 9-12; Ezek. 20:12, 20

Marks and Seals (Rev. 14:1; Ezek. 9:4)

God's practice of placing an identifying mark upon His people goes back to the beginning of human history. As far back as Genesis, we find precedent for the Lord's placing His mark on His people to protect them from judgment. Cain is fearful of judgment. "Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. So Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived" (Gen. 4:15, 16, NIV).

The night of the Passover, God delivered from judgment His people whose homes bore the mark of His protection (Exod. 12:7).

In vision Ezekiel witnessed the Lord instructing an angel bearing a writing kit to "Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it" (Ezek. 9:4). Six other angels followed him through the city, mercilessly slaughtering anyone who did not receive the mark.

Likewise, humankind has a long history of marking and sealing people and objects. Ancient documents, after being folded and tied, were sealed with a lump of clay pressed over the knot and imprinted with a signet ring or a cylinder rolled over the hardening clay. Disobedient slaves, soldiers defeated in battle, and livestock were branded. Religious tattooing was widespread in the ancient world.

Whatever the origin of the concept, it is clear that marking or sealing something or someone denotes ownership and authority over that object or person.

Sabbath Seal (Ezek. 20:12, 20)

"Also I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the Lord made them holy. . . . Keep my Sabbaths holy, that they may be a sign between us. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God" (Ezek. 20:12, 20).

The Sabbath is a sign of the covenant between God and His people (Isa. 56:4, 5). The Lord declares that it will be a sign between Him and His people forever (Exod. 31:17)—even in "the new heavens and the new earth" (Isa. 66:22).

For a time the issue of true Sabbath keeping was *how* the day was kept. Now, in the closing days of our pilgrimage on planet Earth, it becomes a matter of *when*.

Satan cleverly convoluted God's plan for Sabbath rest and restoration with rules, regulations, requirements, and restrictions in the form of Jewish tradition. These stipulations made the Sabbath of Jesus' day unenjoyable at best, an unbearable burden at worst.

After Jesus set the record straight on how the day should be kept (Mark 2:23–3:6), Satan resorted to a substitute day, and his Sabbath deception continues 20 centuries later. "The keeping of the Sabbath will thus again become a distinctive test and constitute a sign . . . of true worshippers."¹

While we do observe the proper Sabbath day, do we celebrate it in the spirit in which it was intended?

Will the Sabbath celebration in the new earth differ from the way I observe it now?

The Beast Makes His Mark (Rev. 13:16-18)

As with his substitute sabbath, Satan seeks to supplant God's sign with his own. "Its significance in the present passage is to parody the sealing of the servants of God in [Revelation] chapter 7. As the elect are sealed upon their foreheads to escape the destruction about to fall upon the earth, so followers of the beast are to escape his wrath against the church by bearing his mark."²

"The intention is not so much to impose sanctions on the trading activities of those who reject the worship of the antichrist as to reveal their identity, and so to bring about their downfall."³ "In the final days of antichrist, it will represent the ultimate test of religious loyalty. Only those who would rather die than compromise their faith will resist the mark of antichrist."⁴

When faced with a dilemma, what is my gut reflex, to do the right thing or to take the expedient way out?

Revelator as Riddler (Rev. 13:18)

Although it is unlikely that John intended to pose a riddle to his readers, he has effectively done just that by identifying the beast with the number 666. Perhaps no portion of the Apocalypse has received more attention.

A number of widely divergent and sometimes speculative solutions to the riddle have arisen. They include emperor Nero Caesar and an evil trinity that falls short of the Holy Trinity identified as 777.

"Here is a puzzle that calls for careful thought to solve it. Let those who are able, interpret this code: the numerical values of the letters in his name add to 666!" (Rev. 13:18, TLB).

The *SDA Bible Commentary* establishes that summing the numerical value of the letters of the Latin phrase on the Pope's mitre, *Vicarius Filii Dei* (Vicar of the Son of God) to arrive at 666, is based on the historic Reformation concept of the Pontiff as antichrist.⁵

Whether or not you accept this solution, it is clear that "the nature of the mark is the character of people who are matured in rebelliousness, bent on fighting Christ, disobeying God's commandments, blaspheming the Creator and His heavenly sanctuary, and attempting to coerce God's true people, under pain of death, to disobey God along with them. The specific aspect of commandment breaking particularly to be noted is violation of God's sacred sign and seal, the seventh-day Sabbath."⁶

1. "Ezekiel," *SDA Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953-1957), vol. 4, p. 646.

2. Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), vol. 17, p. 262.

3. George Raymond Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1974), p. 218.

4. Mounce, p. 262.

5. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 823.

6. Frank B. Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Revelation*, book 2, (Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), p. 66.

By Douglas K. Walker, development director for Andrews University radio station WAUS, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Hope for the Hopeless

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rom. 10:12, 13

Remember the story of Elijah in the Old Testament, when he is in utter despair because he believes he's the only remaining servant of God in the land? Perhaps you are in the place in your life at which disillusionment has set in. You may be questioning the reality of Christianity. You may be wondering whether anyone really loves God, whether anybody really loves anybody. TV, magazines, books, orators, music, peers, bombard us daily with messages of despair, and we wonder, Is there any hope?

As the group Truth so aptly sings: "There is a hope, no matter what happens. There is a hope who always remains . . . There is a hope in Jesus." Elijah found it, and so do countless others. Have you found hope in Jesus?

More than anything else, Revelation is a book of hope. More than anything else, Revelation 14:1-5 is a passage of hope for everyone who believes in Jesus. It's the

More than anything else, Revelation is a book of hope.

description of a party. John looks around and sees this throng of people who have come through something that a lot of us can't quite fathom as yet, and they're singing a song, a new song that only those who've known the Master can sing.

"God has a people who will not receive the mark of the beast in their right hand or in their forehead."¹ Guess who they are (see Rom. 10:12, 13). All we have to do to be in that number is to believe with our heart and all that this entails. Sound tough? There's more: He brings the work in you (Phil. 1:6) and is faithful to complete it (Jude 24). "I tell you in the name of the Lord God of Israel that all injurious, discouraging influences are held in control by unseen angel hands, until everyone that works in the fear and love of God is sealed in his forehead."²

Remember that song we talked about. I believe its composition begins here, because the journey, the experience, begins here, now even, if we'll come (2 Cor. 6:1, 2). "God has a place for His people to fill in this world, to reflect light. You are God's sentinels. Christ says of His people, 'Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid' (Matt. 5:14). . . . God made His law for all the universe. He created man, He gives the bounteous provisions of nature, holds our breath and life in His hand. He is to be recognized, His law honored, before all the great men and the highest earthly powers."³

I want to be in that number. How about you?

1. *This Day With God*, p. 114.

2. *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 409.

3. *This Day With God*, *ibid.*

By Maureen Okundi, a senior theology major, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

The Mark Is as Old as the Beast

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Matt. 25:44-46

Evolutionary scientists for some time have been trying to disprove the existence of a Creator. But the fact is that from the loftiest oak tree to the very intimate yet complex protein that makes up our DNA, the mark of the Creator is visible.

Even as far back as in heaven, Satan tried to erase the mark of God and replace it with his own from some of the heavenly host, and this is what he has been doing even up to this day. The proverbial mark of the beast is not something that comes about all of a sudden. And it is more than just Sunday worship. The beast has always been the symbol of self-centeredness, and that's what the mark is all about.

When we fail to live for the true God, and instead make a conscious choice to seek to please ourselves, we are being marked by the beast. As important as not

When we seek to please ourselves, we are being marked by the beast.

receiving the mark of the beast is, God's mark is much more important. And that mark is one of selflessness and sacrifice.

Throughout history some have received the mark of the beast and others the seal of God. Abel received the seal of God; Cain didn't. Lot and his daughters received the seal of God; his wife didn't. The children of Israel received the seal of God; the Egyptians didn't.

In the parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus "tells us that those on the wrong side are more interested in themselves than they are others . . . 'But people who are just a little neglectful of Bible study and prayer, and who gossip and fail to notice another person's needs—do you mean they will get the mark of the beast just for that?' "¹

"If you thought the mark of the beast was a decision people will make by-and-by when the Sunday laws come, please think again. Check your lifestyle. Are you more interested in meeting your deadlines and making money and dressing fashionably and eating out and buying the latest gadget—and on and on—than you are in God? Do you spend so much time on these things that there is little time left each day for Him? *Then you are preparing right now to receive the mark of the beast.*"²

REACT

In practical terms, how I am preparing to receive the seal of God?

1. Marvin Moore, *The Crisis of the End Time*, p. 127.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

By Uohna Antoine, medical-technology major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Share the Sign

HOW-TO

Key Text: Matt. 12:12

I grew up as the only Seventh-day Adventist in my neighborhood. My friends quickly realized what I did and didn't do on Sabbath. They respected this and didn't make fun of me, but when they referred to the Sabbath, it was usually in the context of "Oh, yeah, I forgot you can't do that on your Sabbath." They always said, "Your Sabbath." As I grew older, I learned that the Sabbath was going to be God's seal on His people right before He returned. Again, the Sabbath was going to differentiate me from those who didn't believe in God.

When God closes the judgment and everyone's fate is eternally decided, then, and only then, should the Sabbath be a sign that delineates and separates people. But now the Sabbath should be a sign that attracts people to God's saving message.

Here are a few ideas to help you share the sign:

1. Let the way you spend your Saturdays make your neighbors and co-workers

"Oh, yeah, I forgot you can't do that on your Sabbath."

ask questions. It can give you an opportunity to introduce them to God. The Sabbath is a sign. Let it be a sign not only between you and God but a sign to your friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

2. Lead questions about the Sabbath to issues that will interest those who aren't acquainted with your faith. For example, in this age of stress awareness, the Sabbath as a day of rest makes sense in the area of health. The Sabbath contains many other great truths of God's Word to share, as well. It shows God's character, serves as a reminder of His creative power, and mirrors the plan of salvation (see Heb. 4:1-11).

3. Take advantage of the time the Sabbath gives you to share in ways that you don't have time for during the week. Jesus said, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Matt. 12:12, NIV) and spent His Sabbaths relieving suffering. Think of some ways you can apply Jesus' principle to your talents in modern society.

4. Instead of just getting to know God on Sabbath, get to know God with another person. Share what you know about God—your experience—with someone else. This reinforces your faith. It demands that you articulate exactly what your experience is, which will deepen your understanding of God, also.

5. Invite someone to church.

6. Because Sabbath is celebrated socially, you can invite a friend who is wary of organized religion or Bible study to Sabbath lunch with some other Christian friends, an afternoon sacred concert, or a nature walk.

REACT

Does the way I celebrate the Sabbath attract people to God?

By Sandra Covell, an English major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Life or Death, You Decide

OPINION

Key Text: Deut. 30:19

So many times I've heard people say it doesn't make any difference which day you worship, just as long as you do so. In my own spiritual rebirth and subsequent growth, I've asked myself this question: Does it make any difference what I believe? Through the Scriptures God has convinced me that it does. That difference is a complete confidence in the only and all-wise God of the universe.

I am reminded of several incidents in Scripture in which God gave a command and His servants decided that some variation of the command would be satisfactory, much to His displeasure. Cain's offering wasn't as God instructed. Moses was told to speak to the rock, and he chose to smite it twice instead (Num. 20:8, 11). King Saul brought back spoils after God's command utterly to destroy Amalek (1 Sam. 15:3). Sparing King Agag and the best of the animals was Saul's choice. Verse 23 calls this kind of choice "rebellion . . . and stubbornness." It further

It all boils down to choice, and no one can make it for you.

likens it to witchcraft and idolatry. God's response to such is: "For he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments" (1 Sam. 15:11). Ironically Saul professes to "have performed the commandment of the Lord" (verse 13). The prophet of God assures him he did "not obey the voice of the Lord . . . and didst evil in the sight of the Lord" (verse 19).

It appears to me that God says what He means and He means what He says. And it would behoove us to pay closer attention and to heed His words.

The whole point of this lesson is the whole point of life. The whole issue is one of *choice*. We have seen in Revelation that in the end each of us will bear a sign of our allegiance, either in our hands or our foreheads, either for God or in opposition to Him. Which will it be for you, salvation or death? God's will or self-will? The seal of God or the mark of the beast? Sabbath or Sunday?

You can't have it both ways. Christ Himself says, "No servant can serve two masters (Luke 16:13), and "He that is not with me is against me" (Matt. 12:30). You can't accept one without rejecting the other, and by rejecting one you automatically accept the other—there is simply no middle ground.

I believe it matters much what we believe. And yet, the bottom line really isn't what we believe, but rather whom we believe. God or Satan, God or self, God or the papacy and government legislation.

It all boils down to choice, and no one can make it for you. It's yours and yours alone. Not even God would deprive you of that freedom, although humanity does its best to try! "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15).

By Rosemary L. Brucken, a junior English major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

AN ANGRY GOD?



“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness” (Rom. 1:18, NIV).

How Far Can I Push Him?

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Mal. 4:1

Why am I so smug in believing that the wrath of God will never affect me? How much freedom from sin must I have before Christ can come, or for Him to accept me? How can I make worshiping God a labor of love and not just a means of avoiding His wrath?

When I use the word *wrath*, synonyms like *anger* and *disgust* jump into my mind. But my God is not an angry God, is He? No, surely not. He is a God of love and of all that is fine. One dictionary uses these words to describe wrath: “righteous indignation and condemnation. A strong enraged feeling expressed vehemently and accompanied by bitterness, malignancy, or condemnation.” Another puts it this way: “violent, resentful anger, rage, Divine retribution.” Yes! this last phrase must be it. Sin has finally caused my Father to show the opposite side of His love in an effort to bring peace and order back into His creation.

You see, God created me because He loves me and for His pleasure. He loves me dearly and wants me to be with Him always, but there is just one little problem.

When I use the word *wrath*, synonyms like *anger* and *disgust* jump into my mind.

The world in which I now live is infested with sin. He dearly wants to remove sin from this world so that I, and others like me, can enjoy the beauty that He has long intended for me to enjoy. Until that time comes, I cannot see the full advantage of accepting God as my Saviour. He asks me to accept His grace and sovereignty and to worship Him fully, and He will provide me with the means to keep sin out of my life while living in a world full of sin. That is His way of showing a small portion of his love for me right now. Later I will be able to see just how vast His love really is, when sin is finally removed from this world.

In my parents’ protective watch over me when I was younger, they could see the dangerous consequences of some of my actions before I committed them. Through their love for me, they warned me of the possible outcome. If I took heed, I avoided a lot of discomfort. Just so, He who knows much more than my parents advises me to stay out of the way of sin.

Because sin is so distasteful to God, He has given me a way to avoid the consequences of sin. As intense as is His love for me, His distaste for sin is just as great. He promised that He will destroy sin and all who cling to sin—totally. Sin that can turn such intense love into so strong a wrath will not be allowed to surface again.

A portion of Revelation 14:10 says, “The wrath of God . . . is poured out full strength” (NKJV), *not* diluted. *That is intense*. More qualification on the intensity of God’s wrath can be found elsewhere, but the one found in Malachi 4:1 sounds final to me. It effectively says that the wrath of God will turn sin into ashes.

By Eric Baxter, a staff member in the academic computing department, University of Houston-Downtown, Houston, Texas.

God's Wrath and Love Contrasted

LOGOS

Rev. 14:9-11; 2 Chron. 36:15, 16; Isa. 10:1-4; Zech. 7:12; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 5:1-7; 1 Thess. 5:9

Some believe God's wrath is the withdrawal of His presence or protecting power. Others believe it is God who is actually destroying. Yet there are those who have the idea that in the situation of Job, God allowed Satan to do the dirty work of destroying or hurting people.

When God is angry, what happens? Revelation 14:10 says, "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." Everything that God does is for the benefit of humanity, and that may include God's wrath.

God does not want us to be afraid of Him but to serve Him through love. Yes, God is a loving God, but we as Christians must realize that sin cannot go unpunished. Justice must be rendered.

Often we hear about God's loving mercies and kindness and His forgiving nature but hardly anything about His wrath upon sin and sinner. According to Nahum 1:3, "The Lord is slow to anger and of great might, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty" (RSV). Even Christians forget that the Lord can be angry. Some believe God does not destroy at all. The fact that He is loving, kind, merciful, and just does not mean He will not put this wicked world straight.

"God destroys no man. Everyone who is destroyed will have destroyed himself. Everyone who stifles the admonitions of conscience is sowing the seeds of unbelief, and these will produce a sure harvest." It would be wise to apply the proper meaning to this question. I know we can destroy ourselves in making wrong decisions in our lives. What we sow we will reap. Humanity can definitely destroy himself through sin. Who, then, will destroy sin? Human beings cannot eradicate sin from this earth—only God can.

There are those who believe that sin will destroy itself in the end. I am sure that sin is self-destructive in itself, but the Bible does not say it will destroy itself.

"For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Pet. 2:4-9, KJV). Why do some people still think God is going to give this generation a second chance?

God has no delight in destruction. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" (Ezek. 33:11).

“Throughout the period of probationary time His Spirit is entreating men to accept the gift of life. It is only those who reject His pleading that will be left to perish. God has declared that sin must be destroyed as an evil ruinous to the universe. Those who cling to sin will perish in its destruction.”²

Revelation 14:9, 10 says, “And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, if any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.”

“But not one is made to suffer the wrath of God until the truth has been brought home to his mind and conscience, and has been rejected.”³

I like how J. I. Packer describes God’s wrath: “Wrath is an old English word defined in my dictionary as deep, intense anger and indignation. Anger is defined

“Jesus taught that to God the work of destruction is a strange work.”

as stirring resentful displeasure and strong antagonism, by a sense of injury or insult; indignation as righteous anger aroused by injustice and baseness; such is wrath. And wrath, the Bible tells us, is an attribute of God. . . . The Bible labors the point that just as God is good to those who trust him, He is terrible to those who do not.”⁴

“The time is near when He will say, ‘Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.’ ”⁵

“God will cleanse the earth from its moral corruption, not by a sea of water as in Noah’s day, but by a sea of fire that cannot be quenched by any human devising.”⁶

Isaiah mentioned God’s strange work and brought to pass His act, His strange act, in Isaiah 28:21. “The rabbis had a saying that there is rejoicing in heaven when one who has sinned against God is destroyed; but Jesus taught that to God the work of destruction is a strange work. That in which all heaven delights is the restoration of God’s own image in the souls whom He has made.”⁷

REACT

1. Define God’s anger.
2. In what ways is the destruction of the wicked a “strange work”?

1. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 84.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
3. *The Great Controversy*, p. 605.
4. *Knowing God*, pp. 134, 135.
5. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 178.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 190.

He's Alive!

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Heb. 10:25

“A form of godliness will not save any. All must have a deep and living experience. This alone will save them in the time of trouble before us. Then their work will be tried, of what sort it is. If it is gold, silver, and precious stones, they will be hid as in the secret of the Lord’s pavilion. But if their work is wood, hay, stubble, nothing can shield them from the fierceness of Jehovah’s wrath.”¹

“Christ [on the cross] felt much as sinners will feel when the vials of God’s wrath shall be poured out upon them. Black despair like the pall of death will gather about their guilty souls, and then they will realize to the fullest extent the sinfulness of sin.”²

“Had the law of God been changed in one precept since the expulsion of Satan from heaven, he would have gained on earth after his fall that which he could not gain in heaven before his fall. He would have received all that he asked for. We know that he did not. . . . The law . . . remains unalterable as the throne of God, and the salvation of every soul is determined by obedience or disobedience. . . . Jesus,

“A form of godliness will not save any. All must have a deep and living experience.”

by the law of sympathetic love, bore our sins, took our punishment, and drank the cup of the wrath of God apportioned to the transgressor. . . . He bore the cross of self-denial and self-sacrifice for us, that we might have life, eternal life. Will we bear the cross for Jesus?”³

“In the day of fierce trial He [Christ] will say, ‘Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.’ What are the chambers in which they are to hide? They are the protection of Christ and holy angels. The people of God are not at this time all in one place. They are in different companies, and in all parts of the earth.”⁴

REACT

How am I preparing in my daily experience for the time of trouble?

1. *That I May Know Him*, p. 303.
2. *Maranatha*, p. 271.
3. *That I May Know Him*, p. 289.
4. *Maranatha*, p. 270.

By H. Bellinda Osoria Guizar, a senior in the college of architecture, University of Houston, Houston, Texas.

The Wrath of God

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Gen. 6:3

That voice. It bothers me . . . every once in a while it bothers me . . . oh, yeah, that voice . . . what voice?

All too often we ignore that still, small voice. The first time we do something we know is wrong, our conscience bothers us. Each time we dismiss it and yield to the temptation, its intensity decreases. Soon, we no longer hear it, and we assume complete ignorance toward the negative aspect of our actions.

About 1,600 years after Creation, Noah began preaching about the Flood. Every day for 120 years he called the people to repentance. Think about it; that's more than a century. It redefines the word *patience* for us. For us, that would be more than a lifetime of patience for the highest level of wickedness this world has ever seen (see Rom. 1:24-26). Nonetheless, the allotted time ended, and God gave to each one his or her due. Only eight people, Noah and his family, lived to see the new world.

Similarly, the Holy Spirit calls us. Since Jesus left this earth nearly 2,000 years ago, the Holy Spirit has been calling people to God by means of their conscience.

Every day for 120 years he called the people to repentance.

He makes us aware of "sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8), so that we are without excuse. We cannot claim ignorance. Yet, many today resist the Holy Spirit's pleading and either pretend to be ignorant or dare to defy God despite this well-known generosity. And God will give to each one his or her due. God says, "My spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen. 6:3). God gives enough time and opportunity for every individual to choose Him. "I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong . . . but time and chance happeneth to them all" (Eccl. 9:11).

Throughout history, God has shown His wrath, but it has always been tempered with mercy. However, this time God will not temper His wrath with mercy. It will be poured out without mixture (Rev. 14:10). God will give eternal condemnation to those who finally resist Him and thereby provoke His wrath.

REACT

1. What are the roles of belief and faith in the Christian life? What is the difference between the two?
2. How is the "wrath of God" as a concept received in today's secular society?

By Francée Millington, a sophomore biology major at the University of Houston, Houston, Texas.

Your Last Chance

HOW-TO

Key Text: Rom. 2:5-8

A friend of mine once said that if he didn't make it to heaven, he was going to ask God *why*. My response was to have a few laughs and to refer him to the Scriptures. Christ has established two great alternatives: (1) listen and obey His Word or (2) suffer the consequences upon His return.

Obedience. God's wrath can be avoided if we submit our lives wholeheartedly to Him. Our words and actions will not save us, but if we obey Him, God will keep us from sinning (Prov. 3:6). By disregarding His presence and continuing to break His laws, we will receive the wrath that Christ has prepared for Satan and his angels (Heb. 10:26, 27).

Communication. Christ is the ultimate example of how we should conduct ourselves. Among our peers, we thrive on constant communication, and so it should be in our relationship with God. As Christians we need to walk with our Lord and

God's wrath can be avoided if we submit our lives wholeheartedly to Him.

Saviour daily, which, in turn, builds our character to be like Christ's. Christianity involves having patience, being kind to one another, and truly loving one another as Christ did (Matt. 22:39; John 15:12, 17).

Experience. Learning from experience is all part of the state of growing. We can also learn from our forefathers' examples. Stories from Abraham, Isaac, Moses, Daniel, Enoch, and Job were told to us for our benefit, so that we may learn from their past experiences and receive blessings from them (1 Cor. 10:11).

Confession. We need to confess all our sinful thoughts and actions to God. Furthermore, He initiated the method that enables us to escape His wrath. He has promised not only to forgive but also to cleanse (1 John 1:7, 9).

Denying Self. We are all God's precious pearls. We can escape His wrath by admitting to ourselves that we are sinners. We need to rely on the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures to guide us through these last days.

REACT

1. My probation is at stake! Am I preparing to meet Him?
2. What role, if any, should fear of God's wrath play in a Christian's life?

By Raul Bartholomew, a senior computer information system major at the University of Houston.

Honest With My Conscience

OPINION

Key Text: Heb. 4:14-16; 2 Cor. 3:18

I know when I'm doing something wrong. Something inside keeps nagging me, as though I hadn't heard it the first time. It begins talking as soon as the idea comes to mind, and it doesn't shut up, even while I brainstorm some almost legitimate facts to justify my plan.

Anyway, I go ahead and do it. And what does the voice say now? "That was wrong. You knew when you planned to do it, you knew while you were doing it, and you know now, after you have done it. *I told you you'd feel guilty!*"

No lightning flashes; no thunder rolls. All I hear is the voice, and I know my Father is displeased. I've displeased Him.

I'm uncomfortable because I feel a sense of guilt, but the immediate consequence of my wrongdoing involves more than just an unsettled conscience that passes when I repent; it involves my falling back from my path toward a godly character. By sinning I have stained the perfect garment of love that Christ imparted to me when I became a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17). I have allowed myself to cling

No lightning flashes; no thunder rolls. All I hear is the voice.

to sin and have thereby temporarily departed from the peace and joy that comes from living in harmony with His will. If I cherish my sinful inclinations, my desire for holiness no longer shows. Of course, this prevents me from witnessing as effectively as I might. Recognizing my discomfort, I long for reconciliation with God. I long to regain my foothold on the path of knowing my Saviour and becoming "as He is" (1 John 3:2), and I thank God that, even though I sin, I can repent because not even sin can separate me from His love (Rom. 8:37-39; 5:7-9).

The consequence of private sin is usually no immediate execution of God's wrath, as it was in the Old Testament times with Miriam's leprosy and with the death of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1, 2); it is, instead, separation from the image that we were intended to reflect. God is patient with all of His creatures until the day of judgment: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Pet. 2:9). He knows our sinful nature and has made it possible that any earnest seeker of Him can flee temptation and abandon sin through His grace. He mercifully gives all of humankind a chance to know Him as Saviour and Lord before having to face Him as Judge.

REACT

What is God's intention when He foils your plans to do something sinful?

By Karmaine Millington, a freshman biochemistry major at Rice University, Houston, Texas.

WHEN IT RAINS . . .



“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth” (Hosea 6:3).

The Latter Rain: A Metaphor of Grace

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Hos. 6:3

Scripture abounds in strong imagery. Much was drawn from social life and politics, the trades, and the arts. No source of pictorial effects, however, was more beloved by the ancient Hebrews than the natural created world, which bore innumerable spiritual messages for humanity. These the prophets conveyed their message with striking effect. Instead of presenting detailed landscapes, they painted scenes in the Eastern fashion, with a few bold strokes in strong visual and verbal images. Ministering during the time of the divided kingdom (930-725 B.C.), Hosea spoke for all of his colleagues when he said, "I have . . . used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets" (Hos. 12:10).

As a nation of peasants, the Hebrews delighted in the creative labors of sowing and harvesting, in the pleasures of the vineyards, and in the pastoral peace among the grazing flocks. Our modern stereotype of the Jew as a financial wizard dates

The Hebrews delighted in the creative labors of sowing and harvesting.

only from the Middle Ages in Europe, where Hebrews were not permitted to own land. Of themselves the Hebrews were truly people of the land.

Many of the psalms and the book of Job (36-41) give very sensuous views of the weather. While meteorology is a major concern for agriculture worldwide, rainfall is absolutely essential to the agricultural productivity of Palestine. The imagery of rain has an extensive application. Zechariah advises us to request "from the Lord in the season of the spring rain" for He gives to all (10:1, RSV). Luke makes the spiritual connection, for the "heavenly Father [will] give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him" (11:13). James adds that the believer must be patient, like the farmer who waits for "the early and late rain" to bring forth "the precious fruit of the earth" (5:7). The sequence is clear: we ask, God gives, but we must be patient. The withholding of rain was seen as an act of Divine judgment (Deut. 11:17; 28:24).

Our key text is closely connected with Hosea 5:15, in which the prophet calls for unrepentant Israel to return to God. First, there is a human need to pursue God: "Let us press on to acknowledge him" (NIV). Second, there is the Divine provision for that need—God pursuing us—a promise expressed in a double, neatly matched pair of nature images. The outworking of God's grace combines the rain-Holy Spirit analogy with a metaphor of light, of Divine knowledge: "As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth" (Hos. 6:3, NIV).

By Dorothy Minchin-Comm, professor of English, La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

What Does the Latter Rain Mean Today?

LOGOS

Zech. 10:1; Luke 11:13; Hos. 6:3; Joel 2:15-32; James 5:7-10

One of those pieces of Adventist tradition that are confusing to young people and non-Adventists alike is the doctrine of the latter rain. We shouldn't really call it a doctrine, since it is just an analogy to the work of the Holy Spirit, but it is a thought that is vintage Adventist.

This week's lesson focuses on the work of the Holy Spirit in the latter days of human history. And there are some insights that may be helpful as we face our daily opportunities.

Promises of Attainment (Joel 2:15-32)

We will find it constructive to see the work of the Spirit as a work of enabling. God cares about people and their dreams and their hopes. He gives them power through the Spirit to attain those hopes. Much of this power is built into us, and with a little encouragement from each other we can do it. Our life can have structure, focus, and direction. Those things give us security.

Scripture often encourages believers. "The Lord will . . . take pity on his people" (Joel 2:18, NIV). "I am sending you grain, new wine and oil, enough to satisfy you fully; never again will I make you an object of scorn to the nations" (verse 19). Much of the descriptive language seems foreign to us, especially if we are from the cities, because the analogies are made to the growing season and agriculture. But with a little application we can understand these promises in our own setting.

Overarching these promises of attainment is the notion that life is not a product so much as a process. We are growing, thus we need nourishment. We are in process of attaining. We understand progressively. Our understanding of life today will invariably change tomorrow as we gain new insights from the experiences of each day. How we look at life at 20 will be different from how we look at life at 50. Christians have not always allowed for this. We baptize people after they have gone through a set of Bible studies, sometimes leaving the impression that there is nothing important left to learn about God. We accept people on the basis of their behavior and then reject them when they don't live up to their profession, forgetting that change may indicate a further maturity in truth.

The outpouring of the Spirit on receptive ground (hearts) means that some change and depth of growth is inevitable and that a plant that is not watered, or that does not grow, inevitably dies.

Pictures From the Farm (Zech. 10:1; James 5:7-10)

Pictures of rains, pastures, fruit, trees, barren lands, parched fields, storm clouds, abundant showers, and the like fill the pages of Scripture. They are significant illustrations of the life with or without God, and they form wonderful pictures in the windows of our soul. So intimate is this language in our Christian religion that we can scarcely describe our perception of God's activity without them.

The *fruit* of the Spirit is evidence of the power of the gospel. Our souls are *watered* with the sweet *rains* of the Holy Spirit. *Storms* in life drive us back to our

starting point with the Lord. At times we go to church and feel our *parched* souls filled with *the water* of life. These are all expressions we can call pictures from the farm. And though most of us don't live on a farm, few of us misunderstand this picturesque way of describing God's work. Most of us went to summer camp or had to keep up our yards. We understand, to some degree, the pain of thirst and heat. We can relate to the need for food and drink.

When we study the early and latter rain analogy, we should not be dogmatic or arrogant about who is going to receive the Spirit and who is not. We should rather be concerned that the Spirit can find a friendly atmosphere in our hearts and that we are open to the changes of understanding and tolerance He proposed to bring to us. As the seeds are gently awakened by the autumn rain (to use the biblical illustration), so the plants are attractively sprouting with the spring rain. The church could use a crop of tolerant and accepting plants like never before in its history.

Prerogatives of the Spirit (Luke 11:13)

Adventists, from their earliest days, had trouble with the Spirit. For one thing, some of them were not trinitarians. They believed that Christ was a created (or

Life is not a product so much as a process.

We are growing, thus we need nourishment.

begotten) being and that the Spirit was a pervading, impersonal influence of God.

Although the credal position has been shored up, many church members still act as if there were no need for the Spirit. They scurry around as if they have to "finish the work," as if the Holy Spirit does not exist or does not care or is not able. How is the Spirit alive in our experience?

Judging, discriminating, deciding who is real and who is phony is really the work of the Spirit. Giving gifts to individuals is the work of the Spirit. Our task is simply to recognize those gifts in people and honor them. There are prerogatives of the Spirit: watering, nourishing, teaching, giving the gifts, producing the fruit. That doesn't leave us with nothing to do; it just assures us that there are some things for which we are not responsible.

Releasing us from the compulsion to take the place and do the work of the Holy Spirit will bring us more security in our Christianity and set us free to witness to the power of the Spirit in our lives.

By Edwin Zackrison, professor of theology and ministry, School of Religion, La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

Reality Versus the Latter Rain

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Acts 3:19, 20

I've heard it since I was a kid. "The time is coming very soon when God is going to pour out His Spirit on the Adventist Church, and we will be amazed by the miraculous signs and wonders of the latter rain." When you grow up with such a mindset, it is easy to become discouraged, cynical, or blind. Discouraged, if you still believe it is going to happen in Adventism but hasn't. Cynical, if you no longer believe in a world view that allows for the miraculous. And blind, if you equate revivals in Sunday-keeping churches with a false latter rain.

"The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. The prophecies which were fulfilled in the out-pouring of the former rain at the opening of the gospel are again to be fulfilled in

We should not be surprised that extremes accompany modern revivals.

the latter rain at its close. Here are 'the times of refreshing' to which the apostle Peter looked forward when he said: 'Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus.' Acts 3:19, 20.

"Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand.

"The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God."*

We should not be surprised that extremes accompany modern revivals. This has been true in connection with all genuine revivals throughout history. But as Adventists we cannot afford to be so suspicious of false latter rain that we blind ourselves to the real thing. If we think the latter rain is primarily an Adventist phenomenon, it's time for a reality check!

REACT

1. Is it possible that the latter rain has already started?
2. How do I interpret signs and miracles outside the Adventist Church?

* *The Great Controversy*, pp. 611, 612.

The Latter Rain and Unconditional Love

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Hos. 6:3

A colleague recently went through a divorce. He shared some of his pain with me; what hurt him most was a note from his mother-in-law, someone he loved very much. It went like this: “You surely must be miserable today thinking of what you have done to your wife, your family, your friends, your students, and your church members. You have disappointed so many. We will all go on, but what about you? We thought of you as a part of our family—now you have ruined that love and trust. We feel betrayed and rightly so. We pray for you every day.”

He testified to the pain that the note inflicted. I wondered what he expected, yet I saw his point. At times when we need nourishment from other Christians, we often get stepped on. “She treats me as if I am totally responsible for this breakup,” he said. “Doesn’t she understand that it takes two to tangle?” Where was the Holy Spirit in their marriage? Where was the Holy Spirit in her treatment of him?

At another time and another place, another friend and his wife divorced. He

“We feel betrayed and rightly so. We pray for you every day.”

had not lived an exemplary life and had caused great pain in his relationship. His problems went far beyond his home and his wife. Society judged him guilty of crimes, and he ended up in jail. No one came to see him except his father-in-law. Instead of condemning him for the treatment of his daughter or blaming him for the embarrassment he had caused the family, his father-in-law saw him as a pilgrim in this world, struggling to find the answers to life’s questions.

This father-in-law had come to grips with life because he had experienced the work of the Holy Spirit in a special way. He himself had been hurting and made mistakes. Swallowing his own offense at the young man’s craziness, this father reached out to bring a spot of encouragement to his son-in-law.

My colleague is doing fine in spite of the cruel note. My friend in jail got out and continued his crimes. But what of the mother-in-law and the father-in-law? What kind of joy came to these two witnesses for Christ? Reaching out is not always going to bring the closure we would like. Unconditional love does not try to manipulate, control, or create guilt. It simply allows the Spirit to do His softening work. The father made it possible to come back. The mother virtually closed the door.

I remember hearing and reading a lot about the latter rain. Much of it seemed very esoteric. The preaching and the theorizing was lost on me and, if anything, tempted me with arrogance at knowing something others didn’t know. But if we mean by the latter rain that there are people whom God touches in such a way that they swallow their own hurts and reach out when we are hurting to bring us comfort, then I will appreciate this teaching as something every one of us needs.

By Edwin Zackrison, professor of theology and ministry, School of Religion, La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

The Latter Rain and Me

HOW-TO

Key Text: James 5:7-19

James talked a lot about being ready for the early and late rains. Of course, the Holy Spirit is always understood to be the rain. I remember being so scared about the latter rain as a child. I was sure I wasn't going to receive it, because whenever the pastor preached I wasn't interested. I have been taught that once I am not interested in the preaching, I am not receiving the latter rain. I remember becoming bored and feeling so awful after church because I didn't get anything. However, the more I became scared, the more I felt alienated from the church. Fear became the motivating factor for going to church.

Recently, someone talked about the latter rain during a Wednesday-night worship in my school. She was very fired up, and she emphatically encouraged the college students to get on with making the latter rain happen. "We need to get out there and testify," she said. I was cynical. I totally disagreed with her; I just don't feel good when someone talks about the latter rain. If I, a fourth-generation Adventist, felt like this toward the preaching of the latter rain, how would the people

"We need to get out there and testify," she said.

who do not even care to hear about it feel?

It wasn't until I got to college that I found an acceptable explanation for the latter rain. I learned about caring for others. Going back to James, we recognize that he not only talks about being ready, but he also made sure that everyone was taking care of everybody else. If it is true that the Holy Spirit is the greatest unused power, couldn't we use it to its best potential? When Christianity is used to portray the love that Christ bore for us, the Holy Spirit will work in that love and make us ready for the coming kingdom. Making love as the baseline gives the Holy Spirit something to work with. It is when we begin making that kingdom here on earth that we help the kingdom come.

Here are some suggestions for letting the Holy Spirit use us to the full potential:

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to make you open-minded. Think of having the Holy Spirit help you to accept other people who do not believe as you do. Once you open your mind and become tolerant of other beliefs, you will find it easier to win another person, because that person feels accepted and comfortable in your company.

2. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a big heart. Caring for other people or feeling for them is important. Most of the time a person listens to what you have to say only after you listen to him and meet his needs.

3. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you respect yourself. It is not until you start truly caring for yourself that you can care for others. Each of us is precious. To carry out what we aim to achieve, we ought to have proper self-respect first. The Holy Spirit can immensely help you in doing this.

By Dulce Imperio, senior ministerial and nursing major, La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

More Than Little Horns and Flying Monsters

OPINION

Key Text: Rev. 18

We Seventh-day Adventists have a well-developed taste for apocalyptic literature. This is something that helps to set us apart as a church. Often, though, we read the book of Revelation as if it were a complex code to be deciphered text by text, beast by beast. In doing this, I fear, we miss the real beauty and power of John's apocalypse. There is an overarching message in the book of God's final triumph over evil and injustice that has little to do with specific interpretations of strange creatures, little horns, and flying monsters. It is easy when looking at Revelation 18 to miss the stunning forest for all the seemingly indecipherable trees. What does Babylon stand for? Who are the demons? Who are the kings of the earth? All are interesting questions; but none of them gets to the heart of the matter.

In the early centuries of Christianity when the book of Revelation was written, the word *Babylon* was pregnant with meaning. To those who had heard tales of the

Often we read the book of Revelation as if it were a complex code to be deciphered beast by beast.

first Diaspora, it must have been synonymous with pure, unadulterated evil. What could have been more wicked, more worldly, than the Babylonian Empire? Today, however, Babylon has lost some of its ability to impress. We live in an age whose collective memory is full of Hitlers, Stalins, and Pol Pots—people who created evil empires that dwarf the historical Babylon. Try reading Revelation 18 inserting “Nazi Germany” or “Stalinist Russia” in place of Babylon, and you might get some idea of the true power of the chapter.

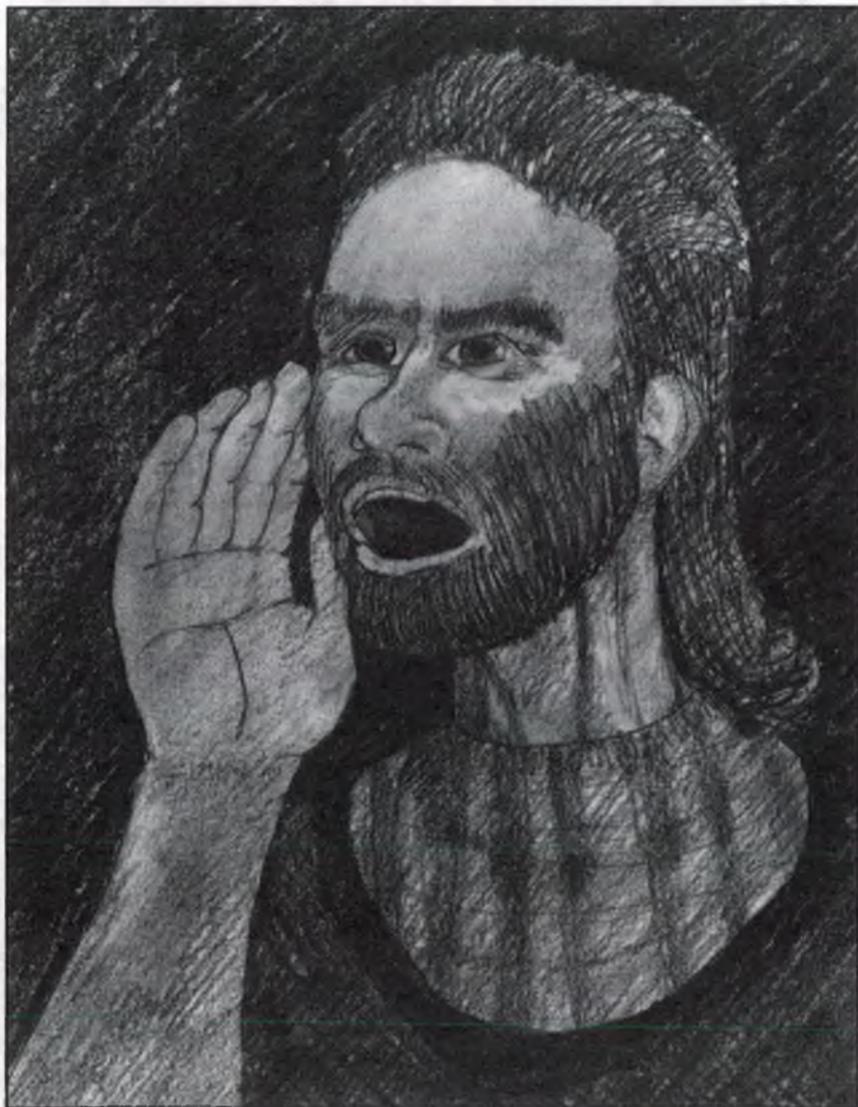
Too often Babylon has been interpreted narrowly—often as nothing more than the Roman Catholic Church. This is unfortunate because Revelation 18 is calling us to do far more than just be wary of the influence of the Vatican. Revelation is an apocalyptic book, not a word-search or a connect-the-dots. Revelation 18 is about resisting evil, about living in the world without being swept up in it. The earth is being set up for a fall. Those who become too attached to evil are destined to fall with it. The question is: Do we as Seventh-day Adventist Christians have the guts to interpret Babylon broadly, to use it as a synonym for worldly corruption and injustice of all kinds? If we do, then do we also have the strength to heed the warning of Revelation 18, to resist evil and refuse to be seduced by Babylon?

REACT

1. What is the effect of apocalyptic literature on me?
2. How can the message of the apocalyptic literature be communicated to others in a positive way?

By Joel Sandefur, senior history major at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

THE LOUD CRY



“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory” (Rev. 18:1).

A Call From the Watchtower

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rev. 18:1, 2

Like me, you may have grown up in church having heard about the “loud cry” and wondered what it was all about. If you had a practical turn of mind, you already knew about several kinds of loud cry. Colicky infants wailing in the night and little girls being chased by little boys with worms, snakes, or frogs—whatever came to hand. Or the neighbors shouting at one another across the backyard fences. But what about that “loud cry” to come at the end of time? Surely it involves more than the oratory of a charismatic preacher in a pulpit.

A literary-cultural reading may clarify the setting. The imagery of the watchman in his tower is deeply embedded in the ancient civilization of the Eastern deserts. Figuratively, the watchman represented Israel’s spiritual and secular leaders. His job description included guarding against thieves and predators. He was also to anticipate the arrival of messengers. He and his companions gave the alarm—with trumpets—to warn of enemy attack. Unfaithfulness in a watchman was punishable by death (Ezek. 33:6), and a “blind watchman” was, to be sure, a contradiction of terms. Isaiah described such inept spiritual leaders in earthy terms: “His watchmen

A “blind watchman” was, to be sure, a contradiction of terms.

are blind, they are all without knowledge; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark” (Isa. 56:10, RSV).

Watchmen stood upon the walls of cities (2 Sam. 18:24; Isa. 62:6) and at the gates. They patrolled the streets (Song of Sol. 3:3; 5:7). They stood high in the wilderness towers shouting messages to all who would hear (Isa. 52:8). Today Islam gives us our best recreation of the ancient functions of the Eastern watchman with the *muezzin* standing in the *minaret* calling the faithful to prayers five times a day.

The watchman’s value resided in his integrity and reliability, his alertness and insight, and, above all, his loud voice.

Within this context we understand that the cries of the angel-messengers of Revelation illuminate the character of God before the whole earth. Christian watchmen have worked their watches, proclaiming the gospel. The faithful prophet-watchman, John, however, leaped to new exultation with the startling appearance of the third and last messenger: “I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority; and the earth was made bright with his splendor. And he called out with a mighty voice, ‘Fallen . . . is Babylon the great!’ ” (Rev. 18:1, 2).

As Christians we are called to be part of the relay team of spiritual watchmen. The loud cry passes from God-to-angel-to-prophet. Then we take up the news and transmit it from soul to soul, home to home, church to church—all with the same clarity and vigor that characterized the ancient watchmen on Israel’s borders.

By Dorothy Minchin-Comm, professor of English, La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

The Loud Cry

LOGOS

Rev. 18:1-5; John 10:16; Isa. 60:1-5

Getting People's Attention (Rev. 18:1-5)

How do you get people's attention? If you become a parent, you will face this dilemma on an almost daily basis. Often we try something dramatic. Too often, parents feel they must raise their voices. We do the same thing with life in general. We shout to get attention, shout to congratulate someone, shout to approve or disapprove of something, and shout to avoid problems or crises.

This text provides one of the best attention-getting devices in the book of Revelation. An angel visits the earth and announces "with a mighty voice" (NIV) the proclamation that Babylon has fallen. The first question this text raises is one of definition. Try to make three applications to this text: one for the apostle John imprisoned on the Island of Patmos, one for the early church, one for contemporary society.

1. What are the Babylons about which we must be warned? (verses 2, 3).
2. What do the symbols "drunk," "adultery," "grew rich," and "excessive luxuries" mean?
3. How does God remember these crimes?

Unifying God's People (John 10:16)

One of the purposes of the end-time message is to unify God's people. This presupposes that not everyone who claims to be one of the chosen will actually *be* one. The concept of election is ancient in its origins, and the New Testament takes this "chosenness" of the people of Israel and applies it to the larger body of believers—even Gentiles. If this is so, the body of Christ, called by His name, are those who hear, heed, and understand the loud cry that comes with the call for unity.

John, the beloved disciple, shows his own compassion for those lost sheep in the world by suggesting that the sheep pen Jesus provides is large enough to include those that some other sheep owners may not claim. This raises the question about who can be included in the kingdom of God. The New Testament suggests that anyone who has faith in the saving action of God in Christ may come with surety to the kingdom.

Does this surety mean there may be people who do not know Jesus? Could there be people who accept the salvation God provides, not fully knowing just how it happens, or even hold a different interpretation? Remember, the Babylon referred to in Revelation 18 includes anyone who claims to be God's but who in reality holds false gods as his or her center.

Three Personal Experiences (Isa. 60:1-5)

What happens when you finally hear the saving message of God? This text identifies three things we can personally experience.

1. God's glory covers the saints of God. Here is a promise of calm in the midst of the chaos. Somehow, when we understand salvation and the gift of grace, we recognize God's covering of peace over us.

2. The gospel message is one that reunites. Any time Christians claim to be following God but fail to bring about reunions of family, friends, sinners, and saints, we fail to understand the nature of the gift of grace.

3. The gospel of Jesus through grace makes us deeply happy. The text says, "Your heart will throb and swell with joy" (verse 5, NIV). We become rich in the deepest symbolic sense. The gospel has personal, experiential application when we finally hear the loud cry in the middle of a world that often chooses not to listen.

REACT

1. What is the best "attention-getting" device you know of, to tell others of

This text provides one of the best attention-getting devices in the book of Revelation.

God's love?

2. How is it possible that there may be people who accept the salvation God provides, without fully knowing just how it happens?

3. In practical terms, how is God's end-time message a unifying factor?

By V. Bailey Gillespie, professor of theology and Christian personality, La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

Four Points

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 2 Tim. 3:12

“Then will the message of the third angel swell to a loud cry, and the whole earth will be lightened with the glory of the Lord.”¹

“The course of God’s commandment-keeping people is onward, ever onward. The message of truth that we bear must go to nations, tongues, and peoples. Soon it will go with a loud voice, and the earth will be lightened with its glory.”²

“But as the question of enforcing Sunday observance is widely agitated, the event so long doubted and disbelieved is seen to be approaching, and the third message will produce an effect which it could not have had before.”³

“The clergy will put forth almost superhuman efforts to shut away the light lest it should shine upon their flocks. . . . The church appeals to the strong arm of civil power, and, in this work, papists and Protestants unite. As the movement for Sunday enforcement becomes more bold and decided, the law will be invoked against commandment keepers.”⁴

“As the defenders of truth refuse to honor the Sunday-sabbath, some of them will be thrust into prison, some will be exiled, some will be treated as slaves. To human wisdom all this now seems impossible; but as the restraining Spirit of God shall be withdrawn from men, and they shall be under the control of Satan, who hates the divine precepts, there will be strange developments. The heart can be very cruel when God’s fear and love are removed.”⁵

There you have it:

1. The loud cry consists of Adventism’s traditional interpretation of the third angel’s message.
2. This interpretation focuses on our commandment keeping and Sabbath observance.
3. Catholics and Sunday-keeping Protestants will be the true villains in earth’s last drama.
4. Seventh-day Adventists (and those who believe and behave like them) will be persecuted as God’s true people, while all others will be lost.

REACT

1. Do these four points accurately represent the writings and thinking of Ellen White? Explain your answer.
2. Do I accept any or all of these points myself? If so, which ones and why?

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 401.

2. *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 383.

3. *The Great Controversy*, pp. 605, 606.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 607.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 608.

How Bad Can Bad Get?

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rev. 18:2

Just how bad can bad get, and just how far can Babylon fall? The kingdom of Babylon with its kings, palaces, temples, and the wonder-of-the-world hanging gardens was the showcase of the ancient world. If the biblical pictures come close to what we imagine the kingdom of Babylon to be—symbolized by a golden lion—we can see it was a nation that took itself *very* seriously. That is one of the problems about sin: often we begin to take ourselves so seriously we replace any crucial perspective we have on what is real with those things we *think* are real.

Babylon had a reputation for being the center of learning. The holy men and women who worked there believed they had life figured out. But just when it least expected it, Babylon was caught by surprise. When it thought it was rich, it was declared empty in no uncertain terms.

How far can we fall? The degree to which we fall has a lot to do with the degree to which we think we are higher than others. Pride is a particularly sneaky enemy to all of us. It begins in the most subtle ways. First, we think we have unusual ability.

The degree to which we fall has a lot to do with the degree to which we think we are higher than others.

We believe we can accomplish things, and we find that we get praise for it, and it feels pretty good. Pride begins to dominate our thoughts, and we often begin to believe we are better than most. Soon the attitude becomes our preoccupation, and we begin to enjoy ourselves, often to the exclusion of love for others. If the fall from this kind of pride comes, it is often a long fall.

Babylon does not know how far its fall will be. What a tragedy if we would be a part of a Babylon-like group, in structure, organization, or attitude. God never leaves anyone without some sort of direction. Pride can be a problem, but God's counsel to us is to "come out" and avoid the fall. This cry from the center of the universe shows the deep compassion of our God. His cry is to come out, to avoid, to run from this corruption.

The proverbial story of the boy who cried wolf flies in direct contrast to the God of the universe, who warns only when impending doom is imminent. This loud cry to think again about who is the center of our lives comes from a God who thought so highly of His creation that He sent His own Son to become like us.

REACT

1. How ready do you think the general Christian population is for the coming of Christ? For the understanding of the gift of grace?
2. What things could I do that would encourage others to understand grace?
3. What needs to happen to my community to encourage the gospel's spread?

By V. Bailey Gillespie, professor of theology and Christian personality, La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

No Bluffing

HOW-TO

Key Texts: Rev. 18:1; 1 Pet. 3:15

Confession time. Few things brought me more satisfaction during my college days than bluffing my way through a test. I had the ability to “wax eloquent” on subjects on which I had very little knowledge. I could pull an A on book reports for which I had read only the table of contents. I helped many a desperate student with a last-minute term paper on topics I had never heard about. I loved essay exams! That is, until I hit the wall, in an Old Testament class with Dr. Vine. I don’t remember what went wrong, but I do remember not being able to address any of the questions he had on the test. I spent the entire test period drawing a very detailed portrayal of a sinking ship on the last page of the test. I didn’t do very well on the test, and Dr. Vine gave me no class credit for my artistic flair.

Although bluffing may be good in certain situations and card games, it has no place in the spiritual realm. Somehow I doubt that the brilliance of the messenger

Few things brought me more satisfaction during my college days than bluffing my way through a test.

of Revelation 18 was just a bluff. Sometimes I wonder how much impact we can have as a church, or as individuals, without knowing clearly what we believe.

Let me share three points I have found in the key texts for the week:

Know the message you proclaim. “I saw another angel [messenger].” A famous writer (mainly me) once said, “Few things can weaken a witness more than a lack of one.” In other words, you can witness only to something that you have seen. You can share only something you know. Take time to read the Scriptures. Rediscover what it means to be an Adventist Christian.

Know the source of the message you proclaim. “I saw another angel come down from heaven.” If the message we have has no greater foundation than that of our own traditions and lifestyle, we are in trouble. Make sure that your spiritual walk is not based on what you have heard from others. Go to the Source directly.

Know the power behind the source of the message you proclaim. “I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power.” Knowing the message will not save you. Knowing about God will not empower you. But when you tap into the power of the Holy Spirit, which Christ promised to all believers (John 14:16; Acts 1:8), you will “light up” your home, your school, your workplace. Only then will you speak with conviction. Ask God to give you the Holy Spirit to make your witness exciting, dynamic, and powerful.

The prophetic picture that the revelator paints leaves no room for uncertainty. We are called to sound a clear note of hope. This is no time for bluffing. “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Pet. 3:15, NIV).

By Ruben Escalante, associate pastor of the La Sierra University Seventh-day Adventist Church, Riverside, California.

A New Look at the “Latter Rain”

OPINION

Key Text: James 5:7-10

According to Adventist tradition, the latter rain is a gift of God’s Spirit just at the end of human history. This special work of the Spirit, in the traditional view, is to empower human beings to share God’s accepting grace with a hurting world. How does the Spirit do this? The traditional answer was a relatively simple one: by moving people to preach in powerful ways. But other means of communicating God’s grace may be more important.

What does it mean to experience God’s grace? Most important, it means adopting a stance marked by what psychologists call “basic trust”—the conviction that the universe is, at root, a friendly place, that one’s life is a valuable gift. We can best understand the significance of our trust when we identify Jesus of Nazareth as God incarnate. But we respond aright to God’s love whenever we opt for basic trust, whether we understand what we’re doing or not.

Whether or not we understand what God is doing in our lives, God is present and

Whether or not we understand what God is doing in our lives, God is present and active in them.

active in them. God undergirds our efforts to share divine grace with others.

Basic trust, the acceptance of one’s life as a gift, is fostered in relationship, in community. It results from God’s work in our lives. But God accomplishes divine purposes in the world by acting in and through the actions of creatures. Our relationships and communities are important means by which God helps each of us to internalize a sense of basic trust.

Not only do our experiences of relationship and community give rise to basic trust; they also, indirectly, make it possible for people to understand God and God’s world more clearly. Again, people can respond in faith to God whether or not they consciously accept Christian convictions. But those convictions matter. They can help to shape healthy, flourishing lives. And people are unlikely to adopt them in the absence of basic trust.

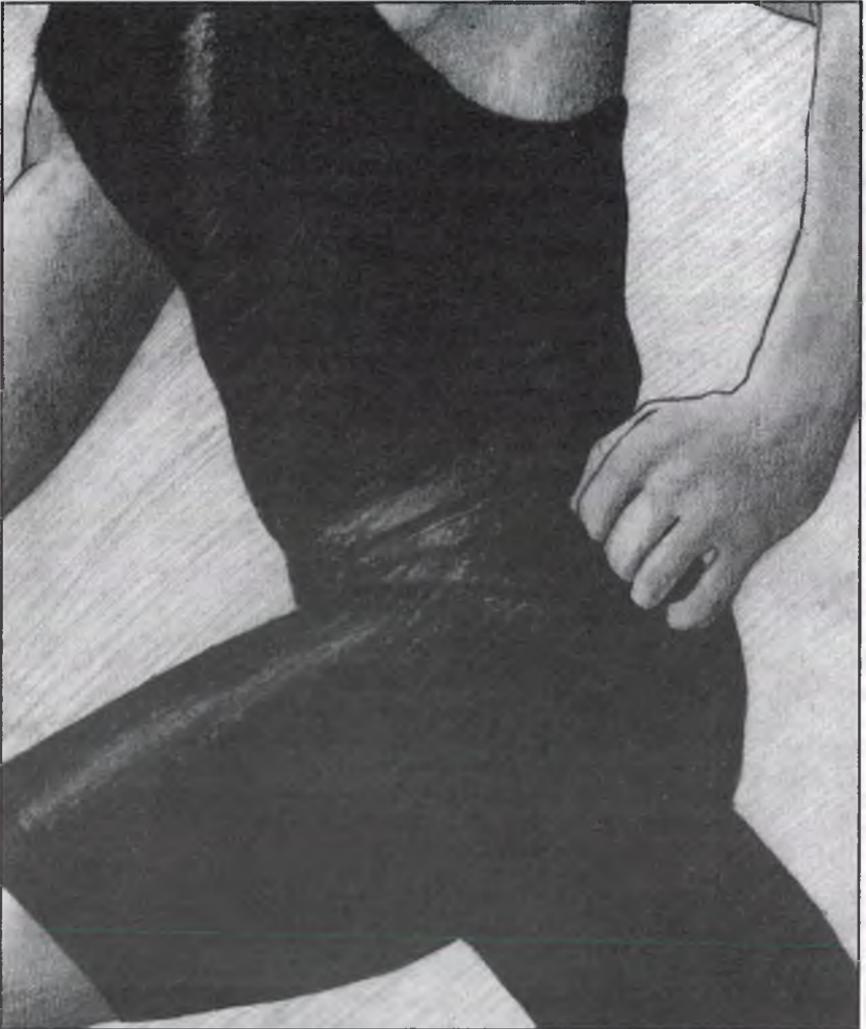
If the universe doesn’t seem like a friendly place, no amount of persuading on a purely intellectual level is going to convince anyone to believe in a God of love. Individually and collectively, we can help people experience God’s grace by touching them with our love. Not only that, but through our love we can prepare the way for them to understand the meaning of that grace more fully.

REACT

1. What is the difference between pantheism and God’s omnipresence?
 2. How does God’s grace square with the view that what God can accomplish is dependent on us?
-

By Gary Chartier, a staff member and contract teacher for La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

WINNING THE MARATHON



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

The Race

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Heb. 12:1-3

It was the Paris Marathon, April 24, 1993. Runners from several countries had congregated to participate in the 26-mile race. They had spent months—some even years—training for this one event. Early mornings, late nights, sultry afternoons, or frigid winters had witnessed the devotion these athletes had to their goal of competing in the Paris Marathon.

A particular runner from Ethiopia came and nearly proved to be the champion. He led the pack for most of the race, and according to observers, he was the fastest contestant. But toward the end of the course, when victory was nearly its sweetest, he lost sight of the markers, causing him to veer off course. A Polish runner came up from behind and passed him, causing him to finish second.

We are, in a sense, participating in a spiritual marathon. The goal of our course is heaven. The markers are God's Word and His promises. And our fitness for

He led the pack for most of the race, and according to observers, he was the fastest contestant.

heaven is our faith in Christ's substitutional death on the cross. By taking our eyes off the markers, we lose sight of the goal. We become distracted and succumb to the temptations along the course—the temptation to try a shorter and quicker course, or the temptation to quit altogether. By keeping our eyes on the markers (God's Word), and running with perseverance (faith), we will taste the sweet victory of our goal (heaven).

This week, as we study the correlation of a faith that will see us through the end time and God's faithfulness to us, let us also consider the joy of a living faith here and now.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Heb. 12:1-3, NIV).

By Jackie Ordelheide Smith, editorial assistant, The Adventist Review, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Faithfulness in the Face of the Dragon

LOGOS

Rev. 14:12; 1 John 5:2-5; Heb. 11:33-40; Luke 18:1-8

To get some idea of the setting for our text, let's take a quick look at the flow of events in the preceding chapters. Beginning with Revelation 12, the "great red dragon" tries to conquer Michael and His angels but gets thrown out of heaven. Then he pursues the woman (God's church) and makes war with her offspring—but he can't conquer them because they steadfastly "keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus" (Rev. 12:17, RSV).

Frustrated, the great red dragon gives his power, throne, and great authority to a ruthless, leopardlike beast, who blasphemes God and makes war on His people (13:1-10). The beast is allowed to kill God's people, but even impending death can't compel them to give up their faith in Jesus ("Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints" [verse 10]).

Frustrated again, the dragon tries still another tactic to destroy those who won't join his rebellion. A second beast, one with lamblike horns and speaking like a dragon, arises with great signs and wonders and tries to force worship of the first beast (verses 11-18). This beast will even prevent buying or selling without his mark and will eventually slay those who refuse to worship the image to the beast (verse 15).

This is *our* time frame, where *we* fit into this swirling great controversy. And it is here that God sends three angels with three messages: worship God, beware of corrupt religion, and avoid God's coming wrath on the worshipers of the beast.

Then comes the climax of the three angels' messages, and, in reality, the crux of the whole great controversy: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (14:12, KJV).

The dragon couldn't overcome Michael and His angels. The ruthless beast couldn't conquer the saints, and the second beast can't either. Why? Because God's people cling to their faith in Jesus, which compels them to keep God's commandments and to have patience. Nothing Satan does can lead God's people to abandon faith in Jesus and commitment to His law.

God's people have patience. The Greek word *hupomone* means "endurance" or "steadfastness." "Here is a call for the endurance of the saints" (verse 12, RSV). This version makes it sound like a summons, as though God is calling out to His people, "Hang in there. Hold on. Don't give up your faith in Me. Trust in My power to give you the victory over evil."

Both James and Paul suggest that this kind of patience or endurance is the Christian's response to trial and persecution. Says James, "Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness" (1:2-3). And Paul tells us that "suffering produces endurance" (Rom. 5:3). What comes to mind are the incredible stories of Christian martyrs during the Middle Ages. Those people suffered horrendous persecutions. Yet, the trials failed to bring about the response desired by the persecutors. The persecutions served only to strengthen the Christian's faith in Jesus and their resolve to endure patiently.

The "faith chapter" of Hebrews 11 is filled with what faith has motivated people

to do, from Abel's perfect offering and Abraham's journey into the unknown, to people being stoned, sawn in two, or killed with the sword.

What, then, is this "faith in Jesus" that our study text declares to be such an awesome motivator and also one of the three marks of God's remnant people? Our usual retreat is to run to Revelation 19:10 and conclude that the faith, or testimony, of Jesus, is the Spirit of Prophecy and then point to all the little red books by Ellen G. White on our shelves that we call the Spirit of Prophecy books.

But we need to be very clear here. The "*spirit* of prophecy" spoken about in Revelation 19:10 is the Holy Spirit. It is this Spirit who has been sent to testify of Jesus (John 15:26), a witness so complete that it is as if Jesus Himself were here. It cannot be confined simply to a set of books, for it is the power behind the gifts of the Spirit (including the gift of prophecy) and the power and steadfastness behind one's faith in Jesus. Faith in Jesus isn't something we develop on our own, but something grown within us by the Holy Spirit as we come to comprehend the life and death of Jesus and confess Him as our Saviour (1 John 4:13-15).

Besides patience and faith in Jesus, a third mark of God's remnant people is their keeping of God's commandments. Which commandments? We can include the

This is *our* time frame, where *we* fit into this swirling great controversy.

Ten Commandments for sure, and also Jesus' higher standards in Matthew 5 that go beyond outward actions, to thoughts. We should probably also include the two great summarizing statements, Love God and "Love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

We should keep His commandments as a response to His love and salvation—not as a method of salvation. How can we keep them? Through the power of the Holy Spirit.

"We are not to trust in our faith, but in the promises of God. When we repent of our past transgressions of His law, and resolve to render obedience in the future, we should believe that God for Christ's sake accepts us, and forgives our sins. Darkness and discouragement will sometimes come upon the soul, and threaten to overwhelm us; but we should not cast away our confidence. We must keep the eye fixed on Jesus, feeling or no feeling. We should seek to faithfully perform every known duty, and then calmly rest in the promises of God."*

REACT

1. What difference does it make whether we read Revelation 14:12 as a statement of triumph (patience) of God's saints or as God's *call* for them to be patient?
2. What effect will having the "faith of Jesus" have on commandment keeping?
3. What is the relationship between having the "faith of Jesus" and Jesus calling Himself "the faithful witness" in Revelation 1:5?

* *Messages to Young People*, p. 111.

Unmarring the Message

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rev. 14:12

Until recently Seventh-day Adventists have never had a voted mission statement for the world church. In the newly adopted statement our mission is defined in the context of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12.¹ This week's key text, Revelation 14:12, summarizes in a single verse the essence of the third angel's message. We have sometimes placed too much emphasis on one part of the verse.

In the following passages, Ellen White reminds the church that "it has been necessary to exalt the great standard of righteousness [the commandments], but in doing this, many have neglected to preach the faith of Jesus. If we would have the spirit and power of the third angel's message, we must present the law and the gospel together, for they go hand in hand."²

"The soul-saving message, the third angel's message, is the message to be given to the world. The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus are *both* important,

Revelation 14:12 summarizes in a single verse the essence of the third angel's message.

immensely important, and must be given with *equal* force and power. The first part of the message has been dwelt upon mostly, the last part casually."³

"The faith of Jesus.' It is talked of, but not understood. What constitutes the faith of Jesus, that belongs to the third angel's message? Jesus becomes our sin-bearer that He might become our sin-pardoning Saviour. He was treated as we deserve to be treated. He came to our world and took our sins that we might take His righteousness. And faith in the ability of Christ to save us amply and fully and entirely is the faith of Jesus."⁴

Speaking of a Week of Prayer series that was held in Battle Creek only a few weeks after the historic 1888 General Conference Session, Ellen White was pleased to report that, "the message that was given to the people in these meetings presented in clear lines not alone the commandments of God—a part of the third angel's message—but the faith of Jesus, which comprehends more than is generally supposed." She continued, "It will be well for the third angel's message to be proclaimed in *all* its parts, for the people need every jot and tittle of it. If we proclaim the commandments of God and leave the other half scarcely touched, the message is marred in our hands."⁵

1. See the complete statement in the *Adventist Review*, vol. 170, no. 16, 22 April, 1993, p. 7.

2. *Review and Herald*, 3 Sept., 1889.

3. *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 8, p. 271 (italics supplied).

4. *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 172.

5. *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 16, p. 227 (italics supplied).

By Tim Poirier, archivist and researcher in the White Estate, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

The Greenhouse Effect

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 John 3:22, 23

Just what are the commandments of God? This discussion has been going on for centuries. The Pharisees, those law experts, put Jesus to the test. One asked Him which was the greatest commandment. Jesus replied that to love the Lord with all your heart and soul and might was the greatest, but that it was linked with the command to love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:29-31).

The law professor agreed, "Well said, teacher. To love God with all your heart is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." Jesus answered, "You are not far from the kingdom of God" (verse 34, NIV). And no one dared ask Jesus any more questions. The law professor caught the concept that relationships are more important than behavior. He understood that his motive for worshiping God was based on responding to God's mercy and undeserving love, rather than performing

Doing good only to please a God—if there is one— is based on behavior.

the rituals of sacrificial behavior or tallying how many times a commandment is not broken.

The motivation for doing good only to please a God—if there is one—or to gain approval of other people is based on behavior. The motivation for doing good for the Christian is based on a relationship to God. C. S. Lewis put it this way: "The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us; just as the roof of a greenhouse does not attract the sun because it is bright, but becomes bright because the sun shines on it."¹

Loving God springs from the realization that our acceptance with Him is rooted in Jesus Christ. When we believe in His desire to save us, we want to live for Him because He died for us. When we accept His grace and bow down to Him, we begin to live by His commandments: (a) to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and (b) to love one another as He commanded us (1 John 3:23). "This is love for God: to obey his commands" (5:3). Loving others does not happen without first loving God. Loving others is the blossoming of the Son's grace shining on our greenhouse lives.

"When self is merged in Christ, love springs forth spontaneously. The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within—when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance."²

1. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1943), p. 64.

2. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 384.

By Becki Joiner Timon, who is working on a B.A. in theology from Griggs University (Home Study International), Silver Spring, Maryland.

As Easy as 1, 2, 3

HOW-TO

Key Text: Rev. 14:12

Is hanging on to faith easy? Is believing in what you cannot see possible in a secular society—a society that places stock only in what the senses tell it? Is it a small matter to believe in Jesus and His promised return in such a way that Christianity becomes an atmosphere we live in constantly?

I believe that keeping faith is not simple. But it is possible. Following are three vital aspects involved in answering the question “How to?” All three are based on a simple analogy my father has used for years—health. To have a healthy body, you need food, breath, and exercise. To keep the faith, you need:

1. Food. Spiritual food is the key to having spiritual strength. An athlete—or anybody—who doesn’t eat, will cease to perform.

2. Breath. That may seem obvious, especially in the physical realm. Why, you don’t even think of breathing, do you? It’s natural! Prayer being the “breath of the soul,” it becomes natural to a person intent on keeping the faith to pray—

Eating and breathing take on a new enjoyment and a greater necessity when we’re engaged in active exercise.

sometimes without even thinking about it. Knowing we can breathe up prayers to God anytime, anywhere, is as comforting as knowing that our bodies will continue breathing.

Food and breathing are great. But look around you. Isn’t it sad to see people who eat and breathe, but who aren’t happy? If you just eat and breathe, your eating becomes detrimental, and your breathing becomes a chore.

3. Exercise. “Beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news” (Rom. 10:15, NIV). The reason we eat and breathe is to give us energy and enthusiasm to share this wonderful food and this wonderful fresh air with others. Isn’t it just like us to recommend our favorite restaurant to a friend? Isn’t it normal to be excited about the chance to get out of the smog and dust of the city, go to the country, and breathe in that good air?

Yes. Eating and breathing take on a new enjoyment and a greater necessity when we’re engaged in active exercise—sharing Jesus with others. You and I—through God’s grace—can keep the faith. It’s as easy as 1, 2, 3.

REACT

1. Does keeping the faith seem easy to me personally? Why or why not?
2. How does one embrace the eating-breathing-exercise analogy to spiritual life without it’s becoming salvation by works?

By Darcy Smith, who works in global missions at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Your Faith and Your Obedience

OPINION

Key Text: Rom. 3:22

The idea that faith and obedience work together seems at first contradictory. We equate faith with a release from the emphasis on works and obedience to the law. The concept of obedience, on the other hand, brings images of parental authority and conformity as a result of fear of consequences. For those brought up in religious families, many of the rules were biblically based. This only reinforces the impression of obedience as something to be accomplished to avoid the consequences.

The connection between faith and obedience is not immediately obvious. My faith tells me that Christ will accomplish what He has said He would in my life. Thus, I may, in faith, surrender my will to Him and believe that He will accomplish what He has said He would.

In reality, faith is the only way to practice obedience. Many times our humanity seems incapable of doing anything good. Evidence points to a lack of willingness

In reality, faith is the only way to practice obedience.

to obey God's commands. Yet John states, "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands" (1 John 2:3, NIV).

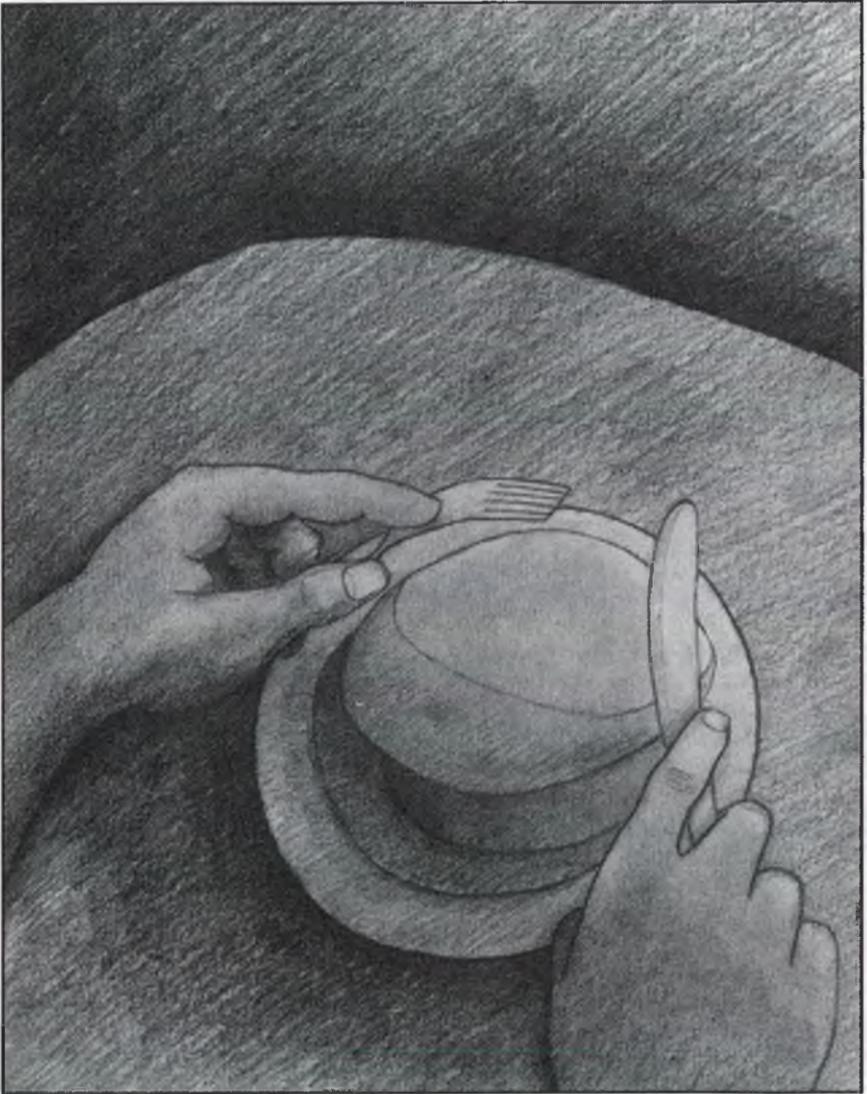
Thus, the faith-and-obedience relationship becomes a question of how to conduct one's daily life. A seventeenth-century monk named Brother Lawrence wrote a book entitled *The Practice of the Presence of God*. The book describes how Brother Lawrence achieved his blissful relationship with God. Summarizing Brother Lawrence's life, his friend writes of him, "Brother Lawrence's principal virtue was his faith. As the just man lives by faith, so it was the life and nourishment of his soul. His spiritual life progressed visibly because of the way his faith quickened his soul."* Brother Lawrence writes of the joy of being constantly in contact with God. His belief in, and his love for, God were enhanced as he practiced the art of maintaining constant contact with God. His life became ever more filled with joy, and ever more Christlike as he maintained his faith and his contact with God.

Faith is the crucial point in the Christian experience. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God. . . . And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:5, 4, KJV). This explains the direct connection between faith, obedience, and our salvation. To become Christians, we must accept and believe in Christ. We must then have faith that He will do as He has promised in our lives.

* Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God* (Pittsburgh: Whitaker House, 1982), p. 87.

By Amy Willsey, technical assistant, planning, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Silver Spring, Maryland.

HEAVENLY DAYS



“And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle” (Rev. 14:14).

Looking Forward to *Proja*

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Matt. 24:14

Proja (PRO-yah): a cornbreadlike food typical to Yugoslavia. I heard my aunts and uncles talk about it. I heard my parents speak about it. Finally, I would have the opportunity to taste it. It was described to me on numerous occasions. I would listen carefully. In my mind, it was the most delicious, tastiest food item ever. It was a taste of heaven.

Finally, I was watching my grandmother preparing it. I remember thinking she must have found the recipe in the Bible. I even helped set the table. The anticipation was more than I could bear. I waited patiently as the aroma filled the kitchen. I tried to take my mind off it by going to another part of the house, but the haunting scent followed me.

My aunts and uncles were beginning to gather. We all sat around the kitchen table. After prayer, my grandmother brought this heavenly treat and placed it on the table.

It was . . . it was . . . well, . . . it was . . . so yellow. What made it so yellow? No

No one ever told me it would be yellow. I never pictured it to be yellow.

one ever told me it would be yellow. I never pictured it to be yellow. Was heavenly manna supposed to be yellow?

Now, steam was rising from this yellow *proja*. I could hardly wait for each person to have a piece placed on his plate. I stuffed my mouth with as much *proja* as I could and started to savor.

It tasted . . . it tasted . . . well, . . . it tasted so bland. And it was so dry. I never imagined *proja* to be so dry and bland. I thought it would be much richer and moister. I was utterly disappointed. Needless to say, I did not have seconds. As a matter of fact, I have never had *proja* since.

Heaven (HEV-n): the dwelling place of God and His angels. I heard my aunts and uncles talk about it. I heard my parents speak about it. Finally, I would have the opportunity to taste it. It was described to me on numerous occasions. I would listen carefully. In my mind, it was the most harmonious, most satisfying place ever. It was, well, . . . *heaven*.

When you think of heaven, what image is formed in your mind? Will you be disappointed? What seeds will you sow in those who seek a description of heaven from you—bitterness, hope, emptiness, fulfillment?

By Michael R. Samardzija, a graduate student at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

The End Is in Sight (Maybe)

LOGOS

Matt. 13:36-43; 24:14; Rev. 14:12-20; 15:2-4; 17:14-18; 19:1-21

As I write this article today, David Koresh and his followers have been dead for about two weeks from a tragic fire at their cult compound. Now pundits, politicians, theologians, and curious people are trying to understand what made such a terrible tragedy occur. Some say an undue emphasis on the soon return of Jesus Christ to earth makes people unbearable to live with on this earth. Some say Christians who emphasize the soon return of Christ are so “heavenly-minded, they are no earthly good.” Some say David Koresh’s fascination with end times made him the fanatic he was.

What does the Bible have to tell us about the return of Jesus to earth and how that will affect the way we live our lives before He returns?

We Need an Escape (Matt. 24:14-21)

Jesus was well received on this earth because, when He spoke, people listened. They listened because He talked about real-life issues. And one of those issues that often recurs in the Bible is the need for something better than what we have today.

We know sin causes terrible suffering and pain. We know most people have circumstances affecting their lives that are not what they would choose for a meaningful life. And Jesus recognized it. He talks in these verses about distress and what it looks like in a sinful world. He talks about the current state of affairs being less than ideal. And He tells us that He will bring about that escape we so desperately need. His plan is to rescue us from a planet that is knee-deep in despair. And His plan of rescue involves Him returning to the earth someday.

Soon (Matt. 24:22)

This verse has often been read by Christians eager to point out the timing of Christ’s return to rescue us. And who can blame people under siege for focusing on the soon return of Jesus? But I note throughout the rest of this chapter that the primary emphasis is on something other than the timing of the rescue.

Get Ready (Matt. 24:4-8)

I find throughout this chapter on end times that the writer is most interested in helping his readers understand what to do about the events he is chronicling, and much less interested in pinpointing the date. In fact, in verse 36 he makes the specific point that we cannot know the day or hour of the rescue.

If the major point of this chapter is to understand how to prepare to be rescued, I wonder whether those who persist in time-setting and predicting the nearness of the rescue—to frighten people into getting ready—are not really defeating their own purposes by scaring people away from the words about how to get ready.

I sense that this is where David Koresh and his followers had trouble. They were so eager to be a remnant who could predict what no one else could that they forgot about the preparation and focused on the rescue event. They were unbalanced in

their views because they focused only on the rescue and failed to think about the preparation for that rescue. I know, because I personally knew 14 of the people who followed Koresh to Texas and gave their lives for his tunnel vision.

Beware (Matt. 24:23-27)

Here now is the key to understanding appropriate versus inappropriate ways of talking about the second coming of Jesus to rescue us from ourselves. If we are interested only in knowing about the rescue—its timing, its process, its time table—we will ultimately be unprepared for the event itself. We'll most likely waste our time chasing after the latest tabloid-style event that may or may not have a bearing on the rescue.

However, if we seek to know the rescuer and prepare for rescue by cementing

**I personally knew 14 of the people who followed
Koresh to Texas and gave their lives for his tunnel
vision.**

our relationship with Him, then we will be ready. We will recognize Him when He appears, and we will believe He wants us to go home with Him.

REACT

1. What are the right ways to talk about Jesus' second coming?
2. How can you rightly emphasize the second coming so people of rational minds can understand that it means both living meaningful lives here and now and preparing for rescue from a sinful world?

Three Angels Speak Today

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rev. 14:6-9

The work of the three angels in Revelation 14 will precede Jesus' coming. What is the work of the three angels?

"All heaven watched with the deepest interest the reception of the first angel's message. But many who professed to love Jesus, and who shed tears as they read the story of the cross, derided the good news of His coming. . . . They hated those who loved His appearing and [they] shut them out of the churches. Those who rejected the first message could not be benefited by the second; neither were they benefited by the midnight cry, which was to prepare them to enter with Jesus by faith into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary."¹

"God has called His church in this day, as he called ancient Israel, to stand as a light in the earth. By the mighty cleaver of truth, the messages of the first,

"Many who professed to love Jesus . . . hated those who loved His appearing."

second, and third angels, He has separated them from the churches and from the world to bring them into a sacred nearness to Himself. He has made them the depositories of His law, and has committed to them the great truths of prophecy for this time. . . . The three angels of Revelation 14 represent the people who accept the light of God's messages and go forth as His agents to sound the warning throughout the length and breadth of the earth. . . . But very few of those who have received the light are doing the work entrusted to their hands. There are a few men of unswerving fidelity who do not study ease, convenience, or life itself, who push their way wherever they can find an opening to press the light of truth and vindicate the holy law of God."²

The three angels represent people sounding God's warning to the world. Angels are involved with this work: "We need to arouse to earnest effort now, while the angels of God are waiting to give their wonderful aid to all who will labor to arouse the consciences of men and women regarding righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come."³

REACT

1. In practical terms how do we cooperate with God in warning the world?
2. What do righteousness, temperance, and judgment have to do with the three angels' messages?

1. *Early Writings*, p. 260.

2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 455, 456.

3. *Evangelism*, p. 33.

By Beverly Whittaker, a graduate student in nutrition and health promotion at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

The Hour of God's Judgment

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rev. 14:6, 7

Three angels proclaim their messages in quick succession, preparing the world for the second coming of Jesus Christ. The first angel's announcement, that "the hour of his judgment is come" (Rev. 14:7), is the basis for a universal call to fear God, give Him glory, and worship Him as Creator. What is meant by "judgment"?

The Greek word for *judgment* (*kriseos*) is used four times in Revelation (14:7; 16:7; 18:10; and 19:2), always in context of God's action against Babylon. The related noun (*krima*), meaning "judgment" and its results, is used in connection with Babylon (17:1; 18:20). In Revelation 20:4, judgment is given to those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God, again illustrating retribution. The verb to *judge* (*krino*) likewise carries the same connotation of God's punishing those who persecute His people (6:10; 11:18; 16:5; 18:8; 19:2, 11)

The judgment is good news for Christians because it prepares the way for the establishment of God's eternal kingdom.

and, at the end of the thousand years, God's judgment upon those who are lost (20:12, 13).

The judgment is good news for Christians because it prepares the way for the establishment of God's eternal kingdom by overthrowing forces hostile to them. The three times John uses words related to good news are found in the book of Revelation in connection with the final judgment. Revelation 10:7 uses the verb "to herald good news" (*euaggelisen*) related to the message of the seventh trumpet angel and the judgment (11:18, 19). Revelation 14:6 contains two references to good news, both as a verb, "to preach good news" (*euaggelisai*), and as a noun, "gospel" (*euaggelion*), in the context referring to the judgment, the fall of Babylon, and the curses that fall upon those who choose to worship the creature rather than the Creator (verses 6-11).

That judgment should denote the punishment of the enemies of God's people agrees with the two pictures of the second coming of Christ mentioned above. According to the Old Testament background for the wheat harvest (with "one 'like a son of man' with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand" [14:14, NIV]), the little horn that had oppressed God's people is thrown into the flames (Dan. 7:13, 14, 21-27). According to the Old Testament background for the grape harvest (Rev. 14:17-20), God enters into judgment with the nations who have oppressed His people (Joel 3:1, 2), and their destruction is likened to a grape harvest (verse 13).

By Larry Christoffel, associate pastor, Campus Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church, Loma Linda, California.

Love Is . . .

HOW-TO

Key Text: Rev. 17:14

Edwin Markham wrote a poem entitled "How the Great Guest Came," which tells the story of a cobbler named Conrad. Conrad was known in his village as a righteous and kindhearted man. One night, Conrad dreamed that Jesus Christ was going to visit him the very next day. The dream was so vivid that Conrad prepared for the visit of the Great Guest. He decorated his shop and bought the most delicious foods he could buy in the market. It would be the greatest day in Conrad's life!

At noontime Conrad saw an old beggar, whose feet were bruised and bloody because his shoes were already worn out. Being a compassionate person, Conrad gave the beggar a pair of shoes. A little while later, an old woman came by, tired and hungry. Conrad fed the hungry stranger and gave her a loaf of bread to take home. At dusk, a little boy came to his door, lost and afraid. Conrad took the crying child in his arms and gave him milk to drink. He asked the boy where he lived

He decorated his shop and bought the most delicious foods he could buy.

and took him home to the anxious mother. It was dark when Conrad got home. Suddenly, he felt sad that the Great Guest had not come. The poem continues:

Why is it, Lord, that your feet delay?
 Did you forget that this was the day?"
 Then, soft in the silence a voice was heard:
 "Lift up your heart, for I kept My word.
 Three times I came to your friendly door,
 Three times My shadow was on your floor;
 I was the beggar with bruised feet;
 I was the woman you gave to eat;
 I was the child of the homeless street."

What could be a better expression of the true meaning of Christmas? For the "chosen and faithful followers of the Lamb," love is not just a pious and sentimental feeling. It is a way of life. What is love to you?

"If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. . . . And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:2, 13, NIV).

REACT

1. What are the dangers we face in waiting for Jesus' second coming?
2. How can I personally know that I am ready for the second coming?

By Vichuda Lousuebsakul, a graduate student in epidemiology at the School of Public Health, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

OPINION

Key Text: Matt. 13:36-43

In 1986, Major General Chamlong Srimuang abruptly resigned from the military commission of the Thai army, to run for the governorship of Bangkok. With his basic promise of honest, efficient government and just \$240 from his own pocket, he launched an unorthodox campaign with no party backing. Though inexperienced in politics, he shocked the political establishment by winning overwhelming majority votes. Chamlong Srimuang became a symbol of honest, uncorrupted, and high morals in Thai politics.

In the middle of his second term as governor, Chamlong Srimuang resigned, to run for a less influential position as a member of the parliament. The result was an unprecedented landslide victory for him and his Plang Dharma (“Power of Virtue”) Party.

I had opportunities to attend his political rallies in March 1992. I heard a lot about him, but to meet Chamlong—the man, the myth, and the legend in his own

Dubbed “Citizen Clean” by *Time* magazine, Chamlong Srimuang lives a very simple life.

time—was quite an experience. Dubbed “Citizen Clean” by *Time* magazine, Chamlong Srimuang lives a very simple life. He always wears a simple farmer’s shirt and sandals made from old tires. He gets up at 4:00 a.m. and eats a single vegetarian meal each day. He meditates morning and evening for as long as an hour at a time. When asked by journalists as to why he ate only one meal a day, Chamlong replied that he ate less so there would be more to share with other people. He also added that by eating less he would want less for himself and be more generous toward others.

His entrance into politics was an act of one man trying to make a difference. During his term as governor, vegetarian restaurants mushroomed in Bangkok. He used his governor’s salary to set up welfare funds for street sweepers in Bangkok. He used half of his military retirement benefits for his life’s necessities and donated the other half to various charities.

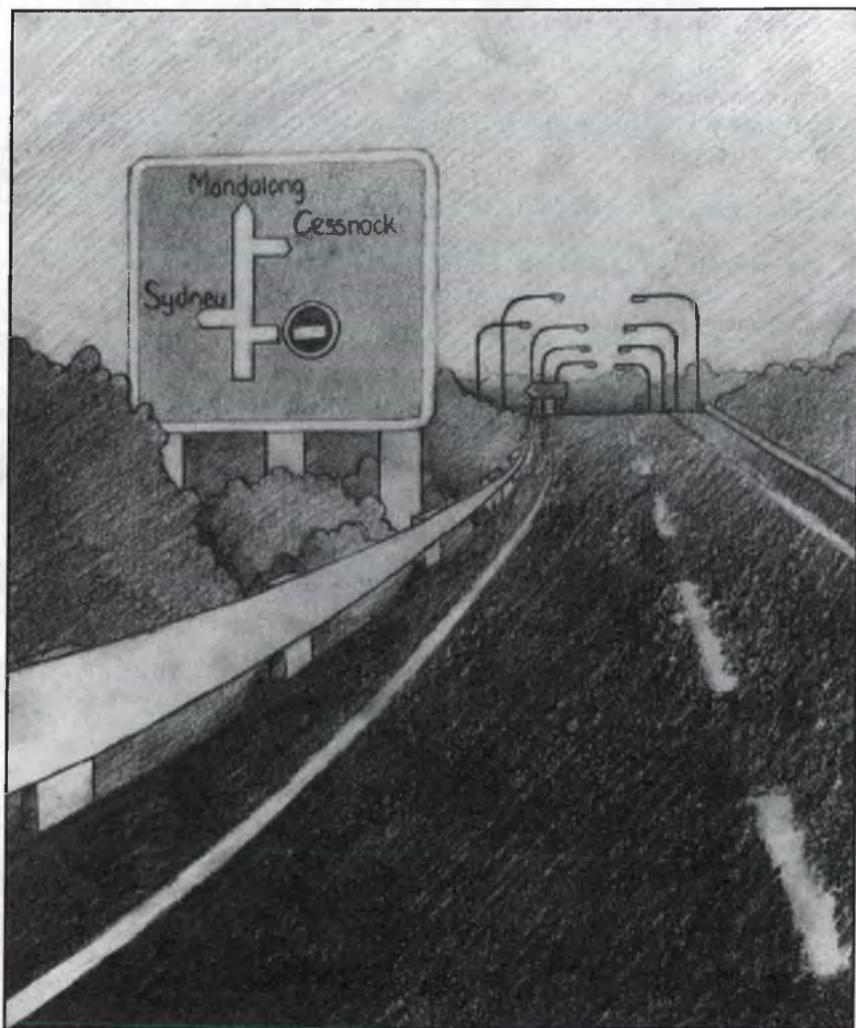
Since actions speak louder than words, what can we—Seventh-day Adventist Christians—learn from Chamlong Srimuang? Since religion is a practical, everyday thing, not just the knowledge in theology and prophecy, will Chamlong Srimuang be included among the righteous?

REACT

1. To what extent is sacrifice an integral part of the Christian life?
2. On what standard should a Christian base his or her sacrifice?

By Nithat Sirichotiratana, a graduate student in the School of Public Health, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

ROAD SIGNS



“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:13, 14).

What Would We Do Without Them?

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rev. 14:6-12

One day when I was driving home from school, I noticed one of the road signs had been knocked over. I thought to myself how terrible it would be if someone really needed to read that road sign. As I continued to drive on the freeway, I began to notice all the different road signs. There are signs that tell us the name of the town we are in, how many people live in that town, how many more miles to drive to the next town, speed limit signs to inform us as to how fast we are allowed to drive, and signs to direct us to the nearest place for food, gas, and a place to rest. There is an endless amount of information that can be obtained on the roadway. How often do we pay attention to all these road signs? I find myself often looking only at the information needed to direct me to my destination. The road signs are placed on the road to direct us and to help keep us safe.

What would it be like without any road signs to direct us? Would we still arrive

What would it be like without any road signs to direct us? Would we still arrive at our chosen destination?

at our chosen destination? What if we took the time to read the road signs instead of maybe looking over them, under them, but never directly at them? Would we still arrive at our chosen destination?

The Bible gives us plenty of road signs to help direct us on the right path. Jesus came down to make sure that the road was clear for us to travel. Revelation 14: 6-12 gives us three important messages. These messages are the final warnings to the world—a clear road sign to Jesus and salvation.

“The last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for man.”*

We as Christians can be like a road sign; we can share the message of salvation with others. It is important for us to look directly at the messages that are given to us in the Bible instead of looking over or under them. The three angels' messages are given to us to direct us on the right path. If we read the road signs carefully, we will make it to our chosen destination.

* *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 415, 416.

By Debbie Ann Gevirtz-Kane, a junior occupational-therapy major at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

The Three Angels' Messages and Your Life

LOGOS

Rom. 1:16, 17; 16:25-27; 1 Thess. 2:13; Rev. 19:6-10

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

Without the gospel of Jesus, we have no hope of triumph over sin. It is the power of God unto salvation, not just a form of godliness (2 Tim. 3:5). It assures our proper response to the rest of the messages. This gospel is to be shared. Only those who have experienced this gospel will have something worth sharing. It has often been said, "You can't lead others where you aren't yourself." Is the gospel in your life equal to the challenge?

Righteousness by Faith

The beauty of the gospel is that it promises hope to the disheartened, relapse-prone sinner. The gospel is founded upon "better promises" (Heb. 8:6) to work a change from within, "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). The gospel's power purifies the heart and writes on it the law of righteousness (Heb. 8:10). The desire to have the works that glorify God then springs from within (see Rev. 14:7; John 15:8), testifying to the work of God (Matt. 5:16). We are led to cultivate fruit that brings God honor. "The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity. The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people."*

The Judgment

The judgment seems to be shrouded in a baffling paradox. If salvation is a gift of God received through faith (Rom. 3:28; Titus 3:5; John 3:16), why then is the judgment concerned with our works? (Rev. 2:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 1:17; Matt. 16:27; John 5:29). Here again we see the true beauty and power of the gospel. It saves us not only from death and condemnation, but lifts us from the bondage of sinning to a new life of good works that glorify our Saviour (Titus 2:14; 3:8; Matt. 5:14-16; Eph. 2:10). In the judgment our works are the only proof, to the accuser and the universe, of Christ's right to save us in His kingdom. They testify to the efficacy of our faith (James 2:14-20).

When God resorts to His creatorship as evidence of authority, His message is unquestionably important. The call to worship God in Revelation 14:7 shares this distinction with none other than the Sabbath commandment, the day set aside to celebrate the power of God in our salvation (Exod. 20:8-11; Isa. 58:13, 14; Ezek. 20:12). By observance of the beast's false sabbath, many will be turned from the worship of God (Rev. 14:9-11).

Wine Menu

Babylonian wine tasters will testify to the exhaustiveness of their repertoire. Christ spoke of putting the new *wine of His teachings* into the old bottles of the Pharisaical traditions (Luke 5:37-39). Traditions often mix or adulterate God's teachings with the ideas and philosophies of men (Ezek. 23:37; James 4:4; Matt. 15:3, 9). The forte of Babylon is confusing ("fornicating") the pure teachings of the gospel with the sentiments of error. What are the popular "wines" of Babylon today, and what are their scriptural refutations?

1. It is God's glory to justify repentant sinners while winking at their continued sinning (Rom. 2:13; Prov. 28:13; Ezek. 33:13).

2. The longer and better I keep God's law holy, the more honored He is, and the more sure I can be of salvation (Eph. 2:8-10; 1 John 5:10-13; Jude 20, 21).

3. Honoring God does not require decisive effort on your part; once you're converted it's all automatic (Col. 1:29; Heb. 12:3, 4; Isa. 50:7; Rom. 6:16; Phil. 1:27).

4. Sincerity is the gospel's only requirement for salvation (Rom. 10:2, 3; Prov. 14:12; Hos. 4:6; Josh. 24:14).

5. Our lives can never glorify God, for all our doings are as filthy rags (Isa. 45:24, 25; Gal. 2:19, 20; Rom. 1:16, 17; 1 Cor. 6:20).

6. The grace of the gospel covers sin in our lives (1 John 3:7-10; Eph. 3:14-21; Jude 24; Phil. 4:13).

7. Having a meaningful relationship with God transcends the importance of glorifying Him (1 John 1:5-7).

8. Sin does not separate the soul from God in the judgment (Isa. 59:1, 2; Ps. 66:18; Josh. 7:11, 12).

9. Christ had advantages in keeping the law that the gospel is powerless to

When God resorts to His creatorship as evidence of authority, His message is unquestionably important.

offer us (Rom. 8:1-4; John 14:12; Rev. 3:21).

10. The law of our Creator has been abolished (Isa. 42:21; Matt. 5:17, 18; Rev. 14:12; 22:14; James 2:8; 1:25).

The Mark of the Beast

The hallmark of every false system of worship is its reliance upon man for salvation. Either man devises a scheme by which he is saved without renouncing sin, or his salvation is predicated solely upon his performance. Those who receive the mark of the beast or the number of his name receive "the number of a man" (Rev. 13:18, KJV). Six is man's designated number, in contrast to God's perfectly complete seven. The mark of the beast is placed upon all who seek salvation apart from the true gospel, and they will suffer the same eternal fire that consumed Sodom and Gomorrah (Jude 7). Is your religion marked by the works or devisings of men?

The conclusion of the three angels' messages is: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12). Only the faith of Jesus can justify us and produce in us the fruit of commandment keeping—of ourselves we can do nothing (Gal. 2:16; John 15:5, 10). Christ did nothing of Himself, but in faith turned His will completely over to His Father (John 5:19, 20, 30). His faith enabled Him to endure the cross (Heb. 12:2; Luke 22:42; John 8:28, 29). We, too, must have the faith of Jesus, be crucified with Him, and live a life like His (Gal. 2:20).

* *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

Our Blessed Hope

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Titus 2:13, 14

At first glance it may not be obvious just how the three angels' messages correlate to the "blessed hope and glorious appearing of . . . Jesus" mentioned in the key text for today. After some contemplation, though, the three angels' messages make us aware of God's overwhelming love for humankind. They remind us of His wish to have humanity's original relationship with Him restored.

"The coming of the Lord has been in all ages the hope of His true followers. The Saviour's parting promise upon Olivet, that He would come again, lighted up the future for His disciples, filling their hearts with joy and hope. . . . Amid suffering and persecution, 'the appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ' was the 'blessed hope.'"¹ This blessed hope was not just for Christ's disciples; it applies equally to us today.

The day of His return should be viewed with eager anticipation and not feared,

Three angels' messages make us aware of God's overwhelming love for humankind.

being thought of as one of certain damnation and doom. "One of the most . . . glorious truths revealed in the Bible is that of Christ's second coming, to complete the great work of redemption. . . . The doctrine of the second advent is the very keynote of the Sacred Scriptures."² Matthew describes the event when he says, "The Son of man will come in the glory of his Father with his angels" (16:27, NKJV). Then John further continues to tell us what heaven will be like when he says he saw the "New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. . . . The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it, and the Lamb is its light. . . . Its gates shall not be shut at all by day [there shall be no night there]" (Rev. 21:2, 23-25, NKJV).

Isn't it incredible that God would go to such great lengths to express His love for us? I can't help being ecstatic as I look for "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:13, 14, KJV).

REACT

What sentiments does the blessed hope, viewed in light of the three angels' messages, create for me?

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 302.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 299.

By M. Michelle Webster, a medical student at Loma Linda University School of Medicine, Loma Linda, California.

True Worship

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Thess. 2:13

As we write today's lesson, federal agents are sifting through the charred rubble of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas. Members of this religious cult had given all they had to David Koresh, who claimed to be Christ. Koresh had absolute control over his followers, to the point of death for many. How does a tragedy like this happen? How could intelligent human beings, most of them from very religious backgrounds, choose to trust a man whose life so completely contradicted Christ's example? The apostle Paul gives some insight on the topic. "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Rom. 1:21, NIV). Those who choose not to devote their lives to God, or to follow

How could intelligent human beings choose to trust a man whose life so completely contradicted Christ's example?

His principles, are easily deceived. Because their minds are not open to God's guidance, they rely on their own faulty reasoning.

The three angels' messages contrast this reliance on self (creation-worship) with reliance on God (Creator-worship). The first angel calls us to worship the all-powerful God, who created everything. The third angel warns about the results of worshipping the "beast and his image." The "beast" is anything that is contrary to God. In choosing to follow the beast, a person gives up reliance on God and places some other authority in God's place (e.g., another human, one's own will power, or wealth). Reliance on something or someone other than God is ultimately reliance on self—thinking I know better than God.

The three angels' messages call the world to worship Christ, the Saviour. In every believer who accepts the three angels' messages, there is a desire to follow Christ and become more like Him. True worship is not simply passive acknowledgement of God's power. True worship is actively accepting God as the only way to salvation and allowing His transforming power to work in my life.

REACT

1. How do I respond to God's call to true worship?
2. In what ways could I learn to rely more on God than on my own abilities?
3. How do the three angels' messages relate to the issue of religious cults?

By Stephen Cooper and Aloma Hughes, brother and sister, a graduate student in international health and health administration at Loma Linda University and a graduate in public relations from Pacific Union College, respectively.

Worship and the Three Angels' Messages

HOW-TO

Key Text: Rev. 14:6-12

Worship is a recurring theme throughout the three angels' messages, but this worship is of the one true God who "made heaven and earth, . . . and rested the seventh day" (Exod. 20:11). Before we can worship this God, we must know Him.

Let me suggest that there are three steps to knowing Him.

First, we must become acquainted with Him. This is possible by reading about Him in His own authorized biography, the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16) and taking note of His character (Deut. 32:4; Job 36:5; Ps. 145:17).

Second, we must observe Him in different contexts. As we become better acquainted with Him, it will be easier to recognize Him and His handiwork (Ps. 19:1). Identified in nature, He is observed to be consistent, orderly, and appreciative

Before we can worship this God, we must know Him.

of beauty. In the context of His relationship with those who know Him, He is seen as loyal, loving, caring, and sensitive to their humanity.

Third, we must seek intimacy with Him. Our approach is shy and calculated at first, for we are overcome by awe, and so we pray superficial prayers at expected times. As we are drawn closer by His unconditional acceptance and love, we feel freer to talk *to* Him, and eventually, *with* Him. The final stage toward intimacy is the essence of true knowing, that is, communion. This is the bridging of mortality with Immortality, humanity with Divinity, the human will with omnipotent omniscience.

It is at this point that we acknowledge just how worthy He is to be praised.

Worship then becomes His prescription, a natural outflowing of our communion, rather than a form of our own choosing. While each new step can naturally lead to the next, the choice as to how far we go remains ours. Each step requires greater personal involvement, commitment, and vulnerability; yet He assures us that to know Him is life eternal!

REACT

1. At what stage of knowing God am I, and how does that manifest itself in the way I worship Him?
2. What are the constraints that may prevent me from choosing and/or maintaining a communion relationship with God?

By Lois Ryan, a marriage-and-family-therapy major at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

A Gospel Message

OPINION

Key Text: Matt. 24:14

Is Adventism relevant anymore? If any passage in the Bible affirms our relevance as a church, it must be that of the three angels. Coming down from the heavens, they proclaim victory in the midst of seeming defeat. Yes, it is true that their messages also warn of doom, but the first angel comes bearing the everlasting gospel, and isn't the gospel a message of power and of hope? The first angel doesn't come down just to remind the chosen few who are saved and then go on to talk about the doom that the unchosen will face. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and it is God's desire that all experience the thrill of His renewing grace.

As Adventists, we have the privilege of proclaiming to the world that, even though time is short, God is still striving to reach all of humankind. God wants to reveal to the whole world His everlasting gospel, a gospel that pierces through our agony of self-centeredness and fear, a gospel that motivates us to express from our

If any passage in the Bible affirms our relevance as a church, it must be that of the three angels.

hearts a love revealed to us upon the cross by the Son of God. His love draws us to Him with the knowledge that He died for us while we hated Him (Rom. 5:8).

As the angel speaks, he proclaims the hour of God's judgment. Perhaps instead of looking to this as a reference to the coming of our judgment, we might see it as referring to the judgment of God. Isn't it truly He who is on trial? Didn't Satan imply in the story of Job that God's people serve Him only because He provides for them or because they are afraid of Him? Who really is on trial here? As Adventists, we have the honor of testifying before the world, the universe, and even the fallen angels, that God is truly the originator of selfless, pursuing love and that those who serve Him do so because He first loved them (1 John 4:19).

It is in this context that we can move on to the second and third angels. We realize now that their messages are given in the context of a love that will do anything to save the lost—including making it painfully obvious how lost they truly are. The fall of Babylon, the mark of the beast, the wine of the wrath of God, these are messages designed to lay hold of the aimless hearts of all passion seekers and to cause them to stop and ponder their lives, to stop them long enough so that the power of God's love can gently or forcefully tug at them and draw them away from this world. Just like the Gospels, the intent of the three angels is the salvation of the lost.

REACT

1. What specific changes in my life do the three angels' messages imply?
2. What can I do during the next week to share the positive aspects of the three angels' messages with others?

By Jason Vance, a medical student at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

Next Quarter's Lessons

Great Chapters of the Bible

If you have not yet received a copy of *CQ* for first quarter 1995, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1: The Great Lyric on Love

Scripture: 1 Cor. 12:4-11, 27-31; 13:1-13; 14:1.

Theme: Paul, the author of 1 and 2 Corinthians, accents the exquisitely beautiful element in Christian life: love, the precious and indispensable love of God pervading human lives and portrayed in behavior.

Lesson 2: The Suffering Son of God

Scripture: Isa. 52:13, 14; 53:1-12.

Theme: The sacrificial death of the Servant-Messiah has atoned for the sins of all human beings, rendering it possible for them to be made right with God.

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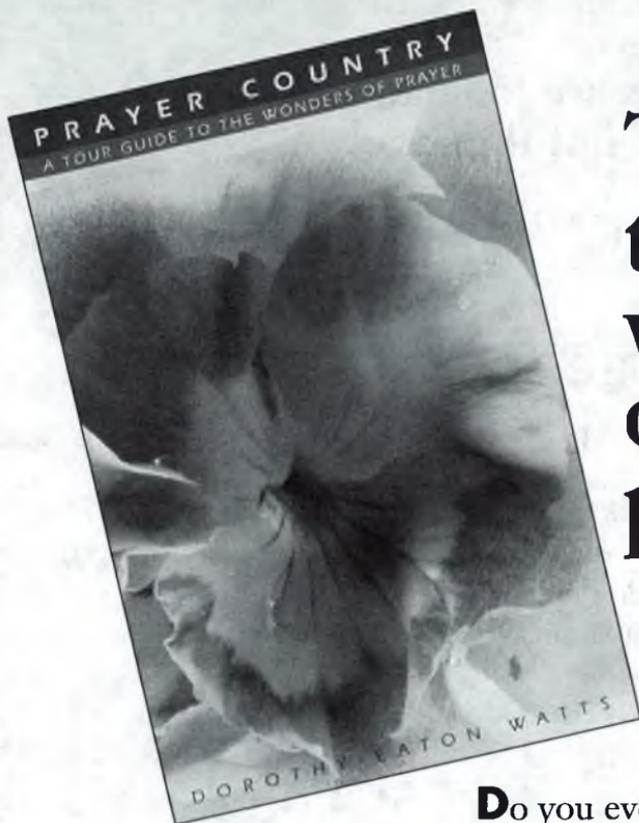
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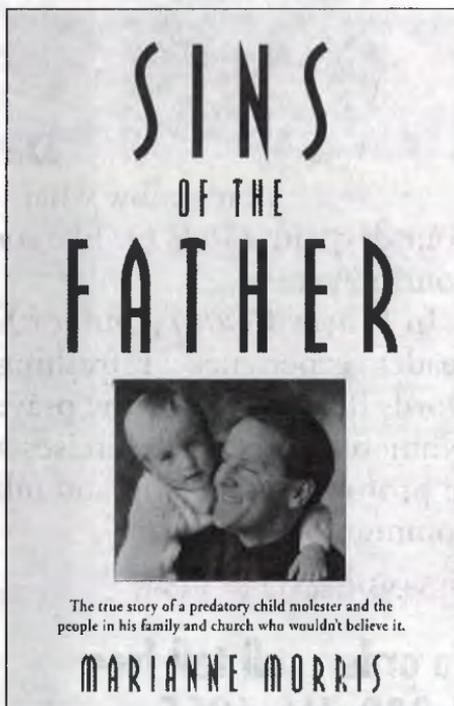
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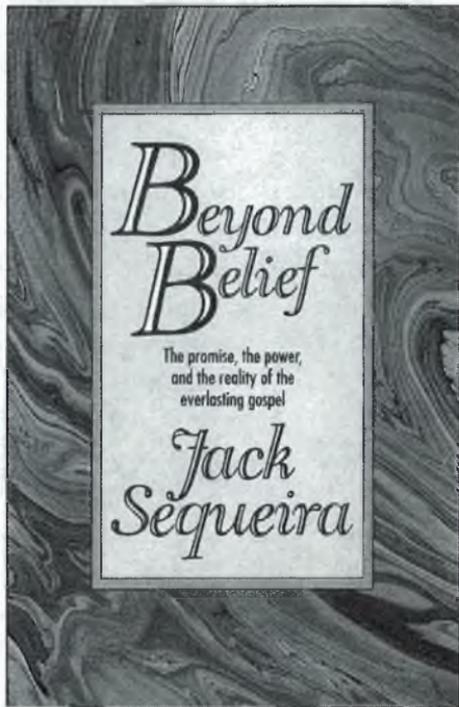
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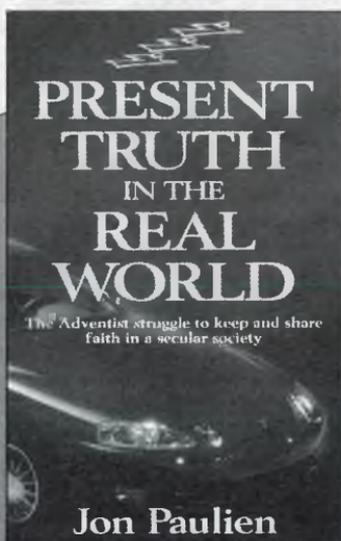
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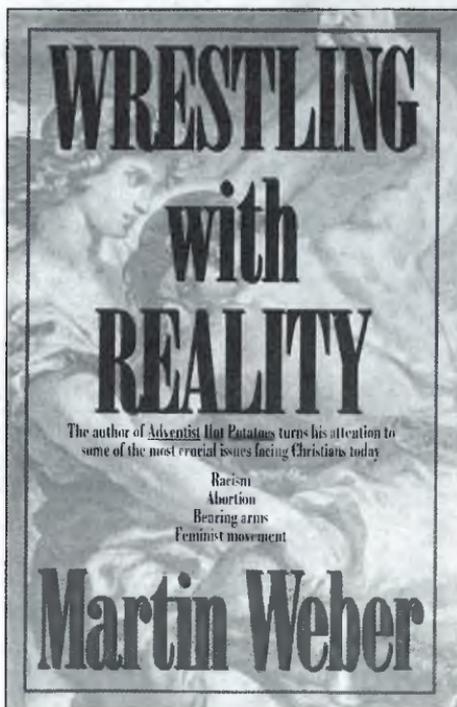
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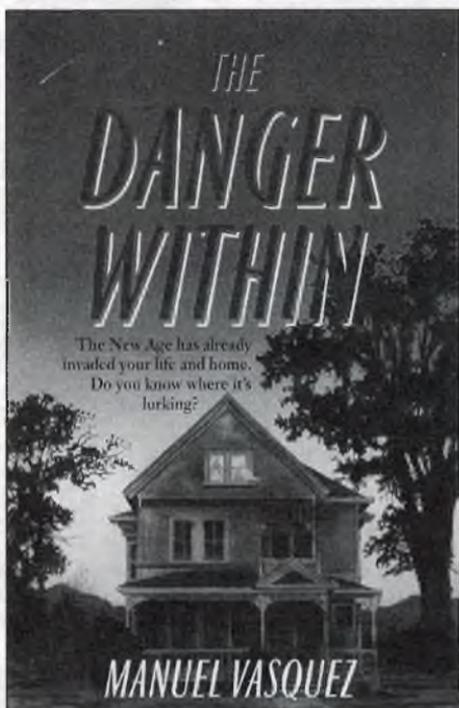
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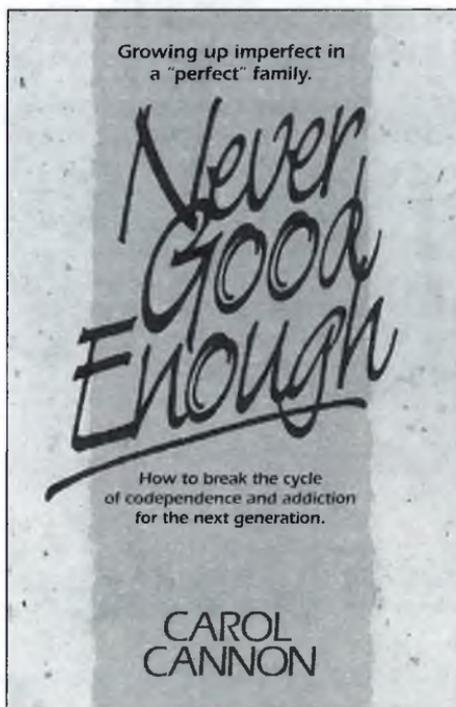
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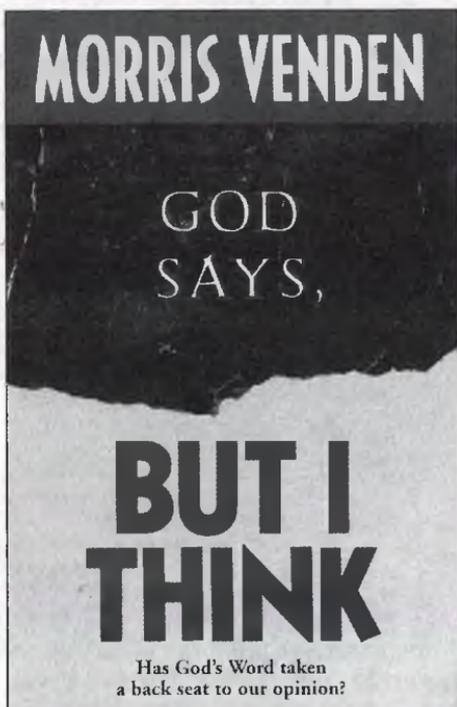
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