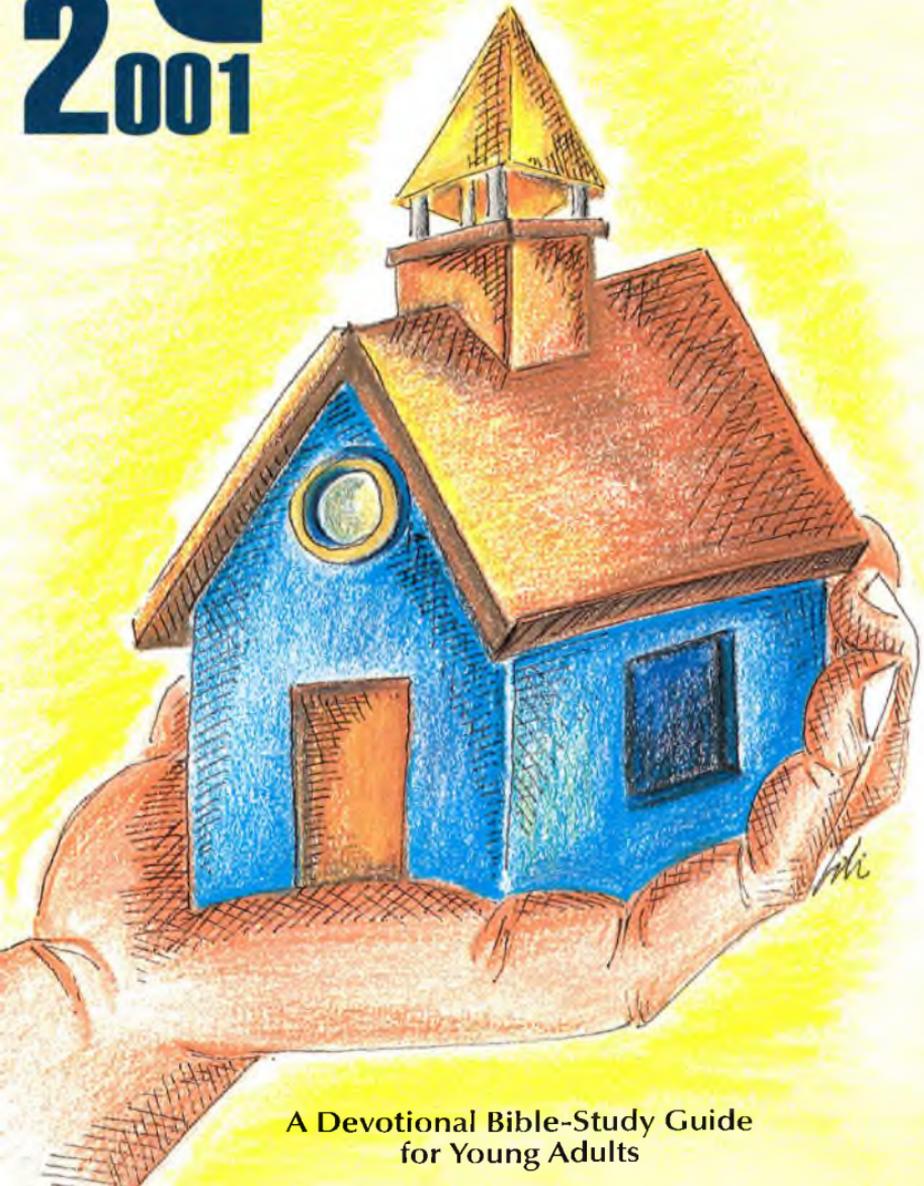


JULY-SEPTEMBER

The End— and the Beginning

Q
2001



A Devotional Bible-Study Guide
for Young Adults



www.cq.youthpages.org

The End—and the Beginning



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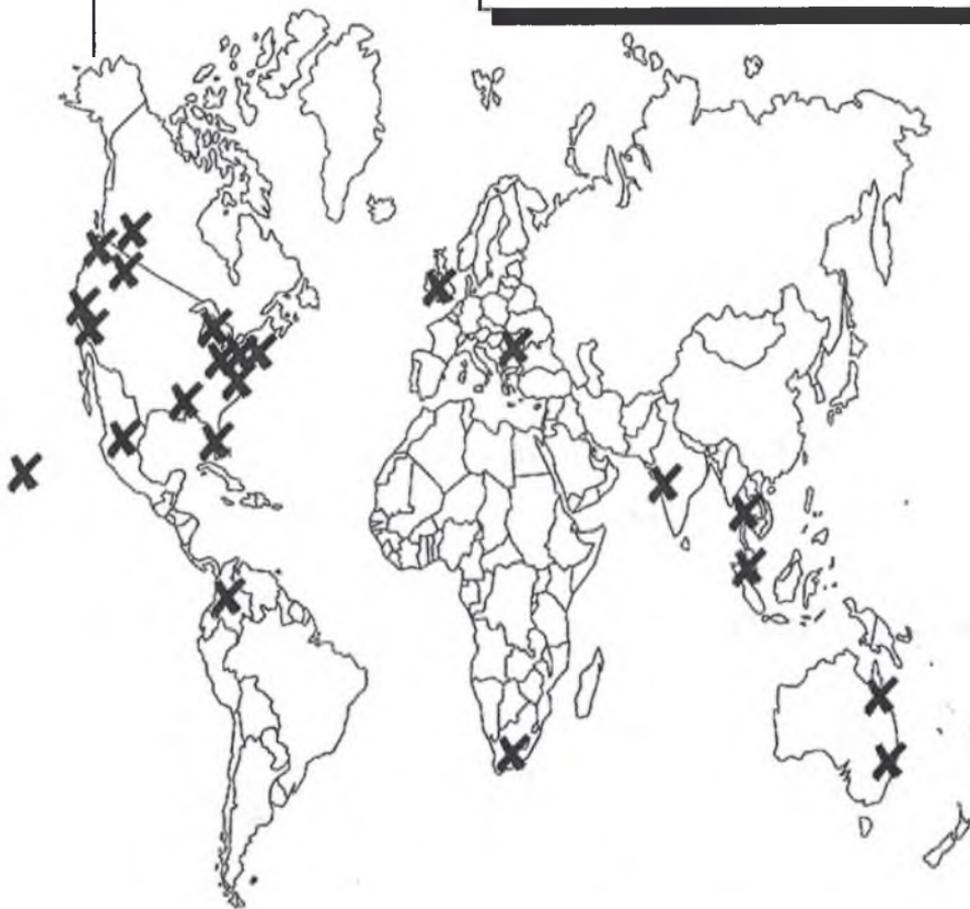
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Welcome to CQ's World



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

In producing this unique Sabbath School Bible study guide, four hundred individuals contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety and occasional repetition of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond individually to the subject under study.

Worldwide circulation of *CQ* is about 65,000. It is published in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, Indonesian, and Finnish.

Writers Wanted

Ever think about writing for *CQ*?

Why not! Each year 400 young adults from around the world participate in the *CQ* writing program. It gives Seventh-day Adventist young people aged 18 to 35 a unique opportunity to grow spiritually, to share the benefits of their Bible study, to exchange ideas, and to contribute to the mission of the church.

You are the most important ingredient in our *CQ* formula because you can be the answer to our greatest need—the need for caring, committed, contributing authors. If you think you'd like to participate in the writing of a lesson, write us today:

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This Quarter's Illustrator



Liliana Andrea Gil-Korzyniowski was born in Bogotá, Colombia, and graduated in 1999 from Southwestern Adventist University (SWAU), Keene, Texas. After doing graduate study at Rollins University, in Orlando, Florida, she is now pursuing an M.B.A. in information technology and software engineering at the University of Colorado. Though she was raised in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, she was re-baptized during her senior year at SWAU.

Getting the Most Out of CQ

FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

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

More than three hundred Adventist young adults 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 65,000.

POINTERS FOR STUDY

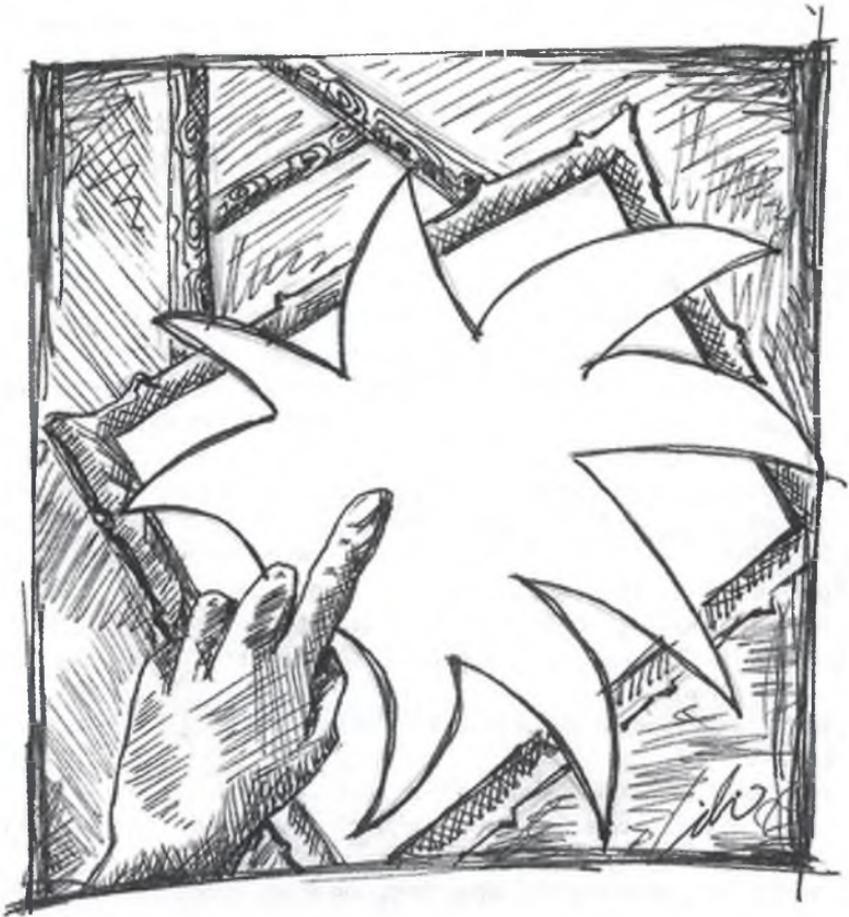
1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.
2. The Bible passage on which each week's lesson is based appears in bold type in the "Logos" portion of the lesson. Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly introduction to give you an overview of the lesson.
3. The Bible passage for the week is divided into sections on the "Logos" pages. When studying this section, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the heading.
4. Read the remainder of the sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passage.
5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the quarterly:
 - "**Introduction**" is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.
 - "**Logos**" as described above, is a guide for direct study of the Bible passage for the week.
 - "**Testimony**" presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.
 - "**Evidence**" approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.
 - "**How-To**" discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.
 - "**Opinion**," a personal viewpoint on the lesson, is meant to encourage further thought and discussion.
 - "**Exploration**" provides the reader with a variety of open-ended, creative ways to explore the topic of the week's lesson.

CQ AND THE CHURCH

CQ is the General Conference-approved Bible Study Guide 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.

Lesson 1
June 30–July 7

The Lord Our righteousness



“In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely;
now this is His name by which He will be called: The Lord
Our Righteousness” (Jer. 23:6, NKJV).

Getting to Know Him

INTRODUCTION

John 14:6

The wealthy English Baron Fitzgerald lost two people who had been the center of his world—his wife and later his only son. After the loss of his wife, he had devoted his whole time and energy to his child who tragically became ill and died in his late teens.

Before he himself became ill and died, the Baron left specific instructions on how his estate and his million-pound art collection would be handled. On the day of the auction, a crowd of eager bidders gathered to take a look at the expensive paintings. They barely noticed one poor-quality painting, which was placed among the otherwise impressive art collection.

**Not a hand went up—
except for one!**

The crowd was called to attention by the auctioneer's gavel, and the attorney read Fitzgerald's will. The first painting to be sold was that of "my beloved son." The humble painting had been done by a local talent.

Not a hand went up—except for one!

The only bidder was an old servant who had known and deeply cared for the son. He bought the painting for less than a pound.

When the attorney read again from Fitzgerald's will, he said, "Whoever buys the painting of my son gets all of my art collection. The auction is over!"

What a difference knowing the Son makes!

Adapted from "The Final Bid," Robert Strand, *More Stories From the Heart* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah Pub., Inc., 1997), pp. 126, 127.

Sunday
July 1

The Lord Our Righteousness

LOGOS

John 14:6; Rom. 1:1-5; 3:24; 4:16; 5:1; Eph. 1:7; 2:8, 9; Heb. 11:1, 6; James 2:14-26

Righteousness is not conformity to a set of rules and regulations, but it is a matter of behavior. It is a matter of a two-way relationship between God and humans.

"The Lord is our righteousness." This is perhaps a play on words. The king imposed on Judah by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was originally called *Mattaniah*, which means *gift of Yahweh*. But Nebuchadnezzar renamed him *Zedekiah*, which literally means *righteousness of Yahweh*. (See 2 Kings 24:17-20.)

The true future king will be Yahweh *tsidkenu*, "the Lord is our righteousness." The Hebrew word YHWH, translated "Lord," means righteousness (*tsidkenu*).

Righteousness refers to right doing, uprightness, or right action. In the Old Testament righteousness is a characteristic demand. The prophets insisted on right doing or fairness between humans: "Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:24, NIV).

The reason for this demand is that God requires righteousness in humans. "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8, NIV).

God requires uprightness in all who choose to follow Him. "He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart" (Ps. 15:2, NKJV).

Greek thinkers saw righteous persons as those whose behavior fitted into the framework of their society and who fulfilled their righteous obligations toward their God and their fellow humans.

Jeremiah was contrasting the corrupt leaders of his day with the coming Messiah, the perfect One, who would come from David's line. Isaiah referred to Jesus as the righteous "Branch" (Isa. 11:1), whom Matthew called Immanuel, which means "God is with us." Righteousness in the Old Testament is not a matter of actions conforming to a given set of absolute legal standards, but of behavior that is in keeping with the two-way relationship between God and man.

When we consider the righteousness of Jesus, we must see it in His Godlike dealings with humans in matters of redemption and salvation. Isaiah declares Him to be a righteous God and Savior (Isa. 45:21; 51:5; 56:1; 62:1).

A Wider Context

Righteousness is to be seen in a wider context of a covenant relationship with God. God makes and keeps a covenant with His people. The Old Testament is replete with accounts of God's righteous acts. He works in favor of the downtrodden and the oppressed. (See Judg. 5:11; 1 Sam. 12:7; Ps. 103:6; Dan. 9:16; Micah 6:5.)

“It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God’s law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness.”¹

“We feel sad to see professed Christians led astray by the false and bewitching theory that they are perfect, because it is so difficult to undeceive them and lead them into the right path. They have sought to make the exterior fair and pleasing, while the inward adorning, the meekness and lowliness of Christ, is wanting.”²

Making the Right Diagnosis

Local doctors in Alberta have been warned to be more careful with their paperwork on patients. In 1999, thirty-seven patients turned up at the Red Deer central laboratory with wrong papers. Twenty-two doctors have been traced as being responsible for those errors.

How ironic that we go to doctors because we have faith in their ability to make us well, only to discover that they have given us the wrong diagnosis, that of another patient. But how reassuring that when we go to Christ, who is our righteousness, we know that He will not make any mistakes. He makes the right diagnosis.

**God requires righteousness
in humans.**

God gives the correct remedy for sin. We “are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24, NIV). It was at the Cross that “Lovingkindness and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Ps. 85:10, NASB). Jesus is our righteousness, and we must hunger and thirst after Him.

All our righteousness is as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). There is no one who is righteous (Rom. 3:10), but God can make us righteous. That is why we need to plead with God like the psalmist, “Rescue me and deliver me in your righteousness; turn your ear to me and save me” (Ps. 71:2, NIV).

God accepts us not because we are obedient, or because we have promised to give up bad habits, but because of the righteousness of Christ (Acts 4:12).

Each day, as I claim the merits of justification and sanctification, I must claim Christ, who has already claimed me.

1. *Steps to Christ*, p. 62.

2. *The Sanctified Life*, p. 12.

Monday
July 2

Who Is Righteousness?

TESTIMONY

Rom. 5:1, 2

"Only those who receive the seal of the living God will have the passport through the gates of the Holy City. But there are many who take upon themselves responsibilities in connection with the work of God who are not wholehearted believers, and while they remain thus cannot receive the seal of the living God. They trust in their own righteousness, which the Lord accounts as foolishness."¹

"We are to live in the warm, genial rays of the Sun of Righteousness."

But "when we look to the cross of Calvary, we see that the highest claims of the law were met in the efficiency of the offering. Hence, Jesus is called 'the Lord our righteousness.' When we lay hold on the merit of Christ, and are able

to say, 'The Lord is my Saviour, my righteousness,' then we are justified by faith, and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."²

"Having made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ, God pronounces us just, and treats us as just. He looks upon us as His dear children. Christ works against the power of sin, and where sin abounded, grace much more abounds. 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' Rom. 5:1, 2."³

"The redemption that was wrought out for us by our Lord on the cross of Calvary was to bring us to obedience to the law of God, making it possible, through His righteousness imputed to us, to keep the law of God."⁴

"We are to live in the warm, genial rays of the Sun of Righteousness. Nothing but His loving compassion, His divine grace, His almighty power, can enable us to baffle the relentless foe and subdue the opposition of the human heart. What is our strength? The joy of the Lord. Let the melting love of Christ fill the heart, and we are softened and subdued, prepared to receive the power that He has for us."⁵

"The name of the Lord is 'merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, . . . forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.' Ex. 34:5-7. Of the church of Christ it is written 'This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.' Jer. 33:16. This name is put upon every follower of Christ."⁶

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 970.

2. *The Signs of the Times*, "Justification by Faith," November 10, 1890.

3. *The Faith I Live By*, p. 112.

4. *The Upward Look*, p. 209.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

6. *The Faith I Live By*, p. 41.

Future Perfect Cabbage Soup

EVIDENCE

Heb. 11:1, 6

"During the first week," the cabbage-soup diet assured me, "the average person loses ten pounds." I announced excitedly to my wife, "By next Sunday *I will have lost* ten pounds. *I will have dropped to 200!*" How can any other English grammatical construction affect our state of mind as positively as the *future perfect tense*? Just using it makes the future seem perfect. During the following week I thought and acted as if I had already lost the weight.

When we use the future perfect tense, we demonstrate our faith in something or someone. We read about it in Hebrews 11:1: "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (NIV). Business consultant, Stanley M. Davis, urges his clients to manage in the "future perfect tense." "In the industrial economy," he states, "our models helped us to manage aftermath, the consequences of events that had already happened." But in the post-industrial economy, "We must learn to manage the *beforemath*, the consequences of events that have not yet occurred."* Christians may ask, "Can we learn to manage our salvation in the future perfect tense?" Can we learn to manage the consequences now of what we *will have become* by the year 2001 N.E. (New Earth)?

Trust is highly valued in
the new information-
based economy.

Rand Corporation's Francis Fukuyama argues that only "high-trust" societies will be able to produce the kind of flexible organizations that can compete in the new global economy. It makes sense. Trust is highly valued in the new information-based economy because without trust it is impossible to share information in a genuine way. Less hierarchical, decentralized structures call for corporate cultures based on trust. And that is the evidence from modern business corporations that supports our text: "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Heb. 11:6, NIV).

REACT

1. How can we "turn up the trust factor" when it comes to trusting God and one another?
2. How can we develop a climate of trust when some people in our group do not appear to be trustworthy?

*Stanley M. Davis, *Future Perfect* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1987), p. 8.

HOW-TO

Col. 4:9

There are two things that everyone is looking for. No matter where you come from or what your background, the search for *love* and *peace* encompasses us all. Because of this intrinsic need, many people spend their whole life seeking out love and peace from the wrong sources, and many times all they end up with are broken hearts and/or broken lives.

Jesus recognizes people's need for love and peace all too well. This is why He made such an effort to reach out to the outcast, the rebel, the Pharisee, the heartbroken. He understood that the way we see God affects the way we live. People in Jesus' day thought of God as rigid and indifferent to their

Are you an Onesimus?

personal struggles, but, "it was to remove this dark shadow, by revealing to the world the infinite love of God, that Jesus came to live among men."*

In the book of Philemon, we have Paul writing a letter on behalf of Onesimus, Philemon's runaway servant. In this touching letter, Paul does four things: First, he praises and thanks God for Philemon. Second, he reminds him that every good thing in his life is from God. Third, Paul intercedes on his behalf, and finally, he asks to be held responsible for any wrongs committed by Onesimus.

In a similar way, to apply Jesus as our righteousness:

1. Praise and thank God for creating us, making us who we are, and using us in His work.

2. Acknowledge that everything good in us comes from Jesus Christ.

3. Ask God to forgive us where we have failed in our work with Him.

4. Accept that Jesus takes on the responsibility for any wrongs we may commit.

One further lesson we can extract from this story is that before Paul wrote his letter to Philemon, there had been a change in Onesimus. He had given his heart to Jesus and accepted Christ's intervention. It is the same with us. We must accept Jesus' gift of righteousness in order for Jesus to take responsibility on our behalf.

The conclusion to this story is that Onesimus found the two things everyone is searching for: love and peace in his new life. We see in Colossians 4:9 that Paul remembers Onesimus in his greetings and commends him for being a "faithful and dear brother, who is one of you" (NIV). Onesimus found his place in life, a purpose and true fulfillment when He found Christ. Are you an Onesimus? Are you running away from God? Then stop and accept the goodness, purity, and sinlessness that you are lacking. Jesus is offering it to you freely.

*Steps to Christ, p. 11.

Our Personal Relation to Christ's Righteousness

OPINION

Eph. 2:8, 9

"The supreme question regarding the righteousness of God, the question of the deepest interest and consequence to us, is our personal relation to that righteousness."

We may have a theoretical knowledge of Christ's righteousness. We may verbalize that our righteousness is as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6), but do we know how to accept Christ's righteousness? This is such a vital concern that the devil works very hard to keep us from truly understanding what it means. First, we think that we must do what is right. We concentrate on the externals.

"God does not adopt us as His children because we are good, but in order that He may make us good."² We finally realize that our behavior, no matter how good it may look, comes from an evil heart. We know we must surrender our hearts, so we start working hard on that. Eventually, we must realize that we can't even surrender our hearts, that even that must come from a power outside of ourselves (Eph. 2:8, 9).

Jesus forgave sinners. Zacchaeus knew he was a sinner. He was so anxious to meet Jesus that he forgot the dignity of his position and climbed into the branches of a sycamore tree. He had come to the end of his rope and knew there was nothing that he could do to turn things around, to get himself out of the pit of intrigue, lying, and cheating that he knew he had fallen into.

Jesus met Zacchaeus where he was. Then He asked to meet with him at his house. He knew Zacchaeus wanted to change, that he wanted peace. Jesus also knew that as He spent time with Zacchaeus, his life would be changed. And it was. Did Zacchaeus have to do anything? No. Morris Venden reminds us that "every gift that God has to give to us, righteousness, peace, faith, victory, eternal life, and even surrender, is available in only one way—by coming into relationship with the Giver, through a personal communication with Him."³

"God does not adopt us as His children because we are good."

REACT

How can one experience the transaction of receiving Christ's righteousness?

1. Arthur G. Daniells, *Christ Our Righteousness* (Washington, D.C.: The Ministerial Assn. of Seventh-day Adventists, 1941), p. 11.
2. E. J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Pub. Assn., 1972), p. 69.
3. Morris L. Venden, *Faith That Works* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1999), p. 63.

EXPLORATION

Rom. 3:19-26

CONCLUDE

Paul's letter to the Romans is his most extensive presentation of how a person becomes righteous. First he says that no one is righteous—not the skid row drunk or streetwalker; not the successful businessperson or cultured aristocrat; not the self-satisfied, religious church member. God, however, has a single plan, offered to all without bias, that enables us to be righteous. The drunk and the church member, alike, become righteous by accepting God's gift of His only Son, who sacrificed His life in payment for our sins. Christ accepts responsibility for the sin that is ours so that we might have the righteousness that is His.

CONSIDER

- Drawing two sketches. The first sketch should represent a righteous person; while the second should represent an unrighteous person. List the characteristics you have drawn into each, that makes you think it represents righteousness or unrighteousness.
- Submitting questions about righteousness to <<http://www.bibleinfo.com>>.
- Composing a song based on the key text with emphasis on how we become righteous.
- Interviewing people in a public setting, e.g., the downtown business district, a park, etc. about being acceptable and being accepting. Ask them about the places where they feel accepted. Ask them about the characteristics of accepting people.
- Viewing the video *Forrest Gump* (1994), and noting the importance of acceptance (both given and received) in the title character's life.
- Taking a walk in nature. Make a mental list of the things you observe that show that God is righteous, i.e., a God of order, a God with compassion, a caring God.
- Keeping a journal that focuses on your own feelings of righteousness or unrighteousness, e.g., feelings of adequacy and inadequacy, of self-worth and doubts about your self-worth, of acceptability, of sinfulness, of success and triumph.

CONNECT

Romans 3:9–5:21; Galatians 5:1-26.

Steps to Christ, chaps. 2-6.

John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity*, chaps. 6, 7.

The Sabbath— God's eternal gift



“On the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made” (Gen. 2:2, 3, NKJV).

Sabbath
July 7

Let's Celebrate

INTRODUCTION

Ezek. 20:12, 20; Rev. 1:10

SABBATH

What does this mean to me?

It's a time to **C E L E B R A T E** and rejoice that Jesus has set me

FREE—INTERNALLY

A sign that I belong to Him

And He belongs to me

That I am blessed, replenished, restored, and revitalized

I am special—created with a **PURPOSE**

That I may **REST** physically and mentally

and think of my

KIND FATHER

JESUS MY FRIEND

and

MY GUIDING HOLY SPIRIT

Who loves me to the end

SABBATH IS A SPECIAL TREAT TO ME

Sabbath Rest?

EVIDENCE

Gen. 2:1-3

Although researchers cannot tell us exactly why or how it works, everyone knows that our bodies need to have rest. Whether on a nightly basis in the form of sleep, relaxation after a stressful day, or after heavy exercise—rest is vital. Some effects of getting inadequate amounts of rest include impaired reflexes, decreased ability to concentrate, and inability to cope with the pressures of life. Those of us who get enough rest enjoy a healthier state of mind.

God knew exactly what He was doing when He gave us the Sabbath. The Sabbath rest is one that directly benefits the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the human being. Physically we cease to do the work that rushes us through our hectic week. Spiritually the Sabbath is a holy 24 hours and a *whole* 24 hours consecrated to God (and not just a devotion we sleepily squeeze in in the morning), which enables our relationship with Him to be strengthened. This spiritual refreshment naturally affects our emotional well-being also.

**The Sabbath is a
holy 24 hours and
a whole 24 hours.**

We should leave the Sabbath hours as new people—restored and replenished—and should enter into another week with our batteries fully recharged. *We should.* But how many of us can honestly say we feel that way at the close of each Sabbath?

We need to be careful not to rob ourselves of our Sabbath blessing. It is all well and good not going to work or university, or doing the shopping. But what about all our church activities? Sabbath is sometimes the *busiest* day of the week. Activeness in church is good. We should not, however, get carried away in being so active on God's Sabbath that we actually crowd out communion with Him and real worship of Him. It is all very well not to watch television or read secular material. But let us also be just as careful not to crowd Jesus out of our minds with burdens of the past or approaching week. After all, whatever the burden is, the Lord of the Sabbath is able to deal with it.

REACT

1. Why does God choose to initiate a relationship with us through the Sabbath?
2. What duty does this put on us regarding others who need to understand this special relationship?
3. How should we relate to those whose standards of Sabbath keeping differ from ours?

Monday
July 9

How to Break the Sabbath Holy!

LOGOS

Exod. 16:4, 5, 13-30; 20:8-11; 31:12-18; Isa. 66:22, 23; Ezek. 20:12, 20; Mark 2:27, 28; Rom. 14:1-6; Col. 2:16, 17; Rev. 1:10; 11:19

A devout Christian welcomed a group of pilgrims into his home until they were strong enough to continue their journey. "Men of God," the Christian enquired, "what is your opinion of the Sabbath day? Is it a holy day or not?"

Each looked at the other but said nothing for fear of offending their host. A week later the pilgrims thanked the kindly gentleman and bade him farewell. "Gentlemen," he said, "you chose not to answer my question, but each of you has given me the answer I sought. You, sir, are of the opinion that the church's first day has replaced the holy day, for you rested not on the seventh day but the first. And you, sir, hold no day sacred for you neither rested nor pondered the Word at any time. As for you, sir, you are indeed a keeper of the holy Sabbath for the deeds of your hands have betrayed the thoughts of your heart."

What does your heart hold for the Sabbath? Do you go about the Sabbath day *trying* to keep it holy? Do you find yourself holding negative feelings as the preparation day draws to a close? It is more than likely that you may feel a little guilty because you know you want to do the right thing, but you just don't seem to have the desire to put aside secular things. If this is you, then you are not alone. There are those who try to justify not keeping the Sabbath, and they have Bible texts for it.

Judging Others

Colossians 2:16, 17 states that nobody should judge others. Yet the writer of this passage condemns many in Galatians 4:8-11. Was Paul a hypocrite for himself keeping Jewish customs? (Acts 18:18, 21). Only closer examination reveals the truth. Paul's condemnation of the practice of the Galatians was because their eagerness for Jewish rituals had

Jesus taught His disciples how to keep the Sabbath day properly.

turned them into slaves of tradition. They desired to be ruled by their customs rather than to fix their eyes firmly on Jesus. He reminds them of their former associations with idols and relates it to their present superstitious beliefs. The Father longs to renew the fellowship of the seventh day.

They had become obsessed with becoming circumcised in order to be eligible to keep Jewish customs and laws. They did not realize that in their *uncircumcised* state they had all they needed for salvation. They tried to find salvation through their own strength and works. They thought that by observing days and times they would win God's favor, but God had already said that He hated these things (Isa. 1:14).

Legalism Not the Answer

The Sabbath needs to be kept because of pure motives and a pure heart. There must be no other agenda. A legalistic attitude toward the Sabbath does not please God. Counting down the hours and the minutes of a Sabbath day that the Lord has given us in order that we might come away from our desires and taste His goodness does nothing for our spiritual well being and hurts God. Can He say of us what He said through His prophet of old that “these people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me”? (Matt. 15:8, NKJV).

An attitude of obedience to God is required. Jesus taught His disciples how to keep the Sabbath day properly. He taught them not to be judgmental: (Col. 2:16, NKJV). It is easy to apply a superficial meaning to a Bible text to make it mean what you want it to say. Many texts suffer in such a way, but time and again the seventh-day Sabbath teaching is upheld. This was the essential teaching of Christ about the Sabbath. He alone is Lord of the Sabbath. The Pharisees made all kinds of rules about how to keep the day and thus became Sabbath-worshippers instead of worshippers of the Lord of the Sabbath.

The First and Last Day

Adam and Eve's first full day on this planet was spent in fellowship with God on the Sabbath. Imagine the love and joy shared among them. Imagine the scene as God and humanity fellowshiped and celebrated together for the first time. That was on the day that God set aside to mark the power of the Creation. That was the day God said would be a sign between Him and His people. He wants us to remember that day because He wants to bring us back into perfect fellowship with Him. The long-term goal of every child of God is that Sabbath celebration with God. The gospel is ultimately about the Sabbath. The seventh day points back to Creation and forward to the day of the Lord. It is the symbolic bridge that spans the millennia between Adam's broken fellowship and our future glory. It stretches between the first drop of Abel's blood to the opening of his eyes on that resurrection morning. It spans the full spectrum of all of our pains of yesterday to the welcoming into the new heaven and the new earth of God's children. Let's determine to cross that bridge from Sabbath lethargy toward the heavenly Sabbath (Isa. 66:22, 23).

REACT

1. How is the Sabbath a sign between God and you? Be specific.
2. How can one discern the truth regarding the ways people interpret Sabbath texts?
3. What does it mean to call the Sabbath a “delight”? (Isa. 58:13, 14). Be specific.
4. Which “deeds of your hands” can give glory to God on His holy day?
5. Explain your thinking on whether or not it would be beneficial to Seventh-day Adventists for governments to legislate the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath.
6. What is the spiritual significance of Adam and Eve keeping their first whole day as a Sabbath rest?

Tuesday
July 10

Do Not Adjust for Color!

TESTIMONY

Matt. 12:5, 6; Mark 2:27, 28; Luke 6:1-5

"No other institution which was committed to the Jews tended so fully to distinguish them from surrounding nations as did the Sabbath."¹ No other institution practiced by Seventh-day Adventists today so fully distinguishes them from other religions as does the Sabbath.

"In the days of Christ the Sabbath had become so perverted that its observance reflected the character of selfish and arbitrary men rather than the character of the loving heavenly Father. . . . [The rabbis] led the people to look upon God as a tyrant, and to think that the observance of the Sabbath, as He required it, made men hardhearted and cruel."²

"Upon one Sabbath day, as the Saviour and His disciples returned from the place of worship, they passed through a field of ripening grain. Jesus had continued His work to a late hour, and while passing through the fields, the disciples began to gather the heads of grain, and to eat the kernels after rubbing them in their hands. On any other day this act would have excited

**God has always been
His own interpreter of
His law.**

no comment, for one passing through a field of grain, an orchard, or a vineyard, was at liberty to gather what he desired to eat. See Deut. 23:24, 25. But to do this on the Sabbath was held to be an act of desecration. Not only was the gathering of the grain a kind of reaping, but the rubbing of it in the hands was a kind of threshing. Thus, in the opinion of the rabbis, there was a double offense."³

Because the Son of man is also Lord of the Sabbath, He answered His accusers with authority: "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread he ate'" (Luke 6:3, 4, NIV). God has always been His own interpreter of His law. It is written in black and white. Do not adjust for color!

REACT

1. In what sense, if any, does God need human help to interpret His law?
2. What criteria should govern personal standards for Sabbath keeping?
3. What qualified Jesus to be the Lord of the Sabbath?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 283.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 284.

3. *Ibid.*

The Sabbath and Me

HOW-TO

Exod. 10:8-11; Ezek. 20:12, 20

Humanity and the Sabbath are inseparable. When the two are severed, human identity is distorted. It is through the Sabbath that humanity discovers who God is. This discovery of God through the Sabbath then allows human beings to know who they are. Distorted identity and low self-esteem will disappear when we begin to understand the special relationship between God and the human race made by the Sabbath.

The Sabbath allows us to discover who God is. The fourth commandment is clear in identifying God as Creator of heaven and earth. "In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day" (Exod. 20:11, NKJV). The Sabbath, therefore, is a memorial of the creation of the earth in six literal days, and God has established it as a sign of His creative power. Through the observance of it, God purposed that we should always keep Him in remembrance as the true and only God, the Creator of all things.¹

The Sabbath allows us to discover who we are in relation to God.

Through the Sabbath we are linked with our Creator. The Sabbath allows us to discover who we are in relation to God. The Sabbath is " "a sign between Me and you throughout your generations that you may know that I am the Lord" ' " (Exod. 31:13, NKJV). It signifies a special relationship. Ellen White says, "The Sabbath is a sign of creative and redeeming power; it points to God as the source of life and knowledge; . . . and thus witnesses to God's purpose to re-create us in His own image."²

The Sabbath, therefore, reminds the believer of the creative power of God, who through Christ created all things and redeems the sinner and makes him whole. All human beings then belong to God through Christ both by creation and by redemption. And it is by keeping the Sabbath that human beings are eternally reminded not only of their own creation and the creation of the universe, but also of their redemption.

The Sabbath, which is the sign of our relationship with God, will never cease to exist (Isa. 66:22, 23). Therefore, the fact that God is Creator and Redeemer will always remain on the heart of those saved in the New Jerusalem.

How can we respond to this relationship? First, trust God (Prov. 3:5). Second, be willing and obedient (Rev. 14:12).

1. Carlyle B. Haynes, *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1928), p. 15.

2. *Education*, p. 250.

Thursday
July 12

Why Should We Spoil It?

OPINION

Isa. 58:13

To me Sabbath is special, quality time that God has set aside for rest from worldly constraints and remembrance of our Creator. It is a celebrative gift from our heavenly Father and reminds me of how unselfish He is. He asks for just one full day out of seven for wholehearted fellowship with Him.

The Sabbath has taught me obedience, discipline, respect, and loyalty in the true sense of the words. I have also gained much benefit by having the privilege of quality time and the special feeling I get by knowing that although God is so busy upholding the needs of humankind worldwide, He still has time to keep the invitation for me to celebrate the Sabbath with Him. If I have been feeling weighed down by the world during the week, I know I have the Sabbath to look forward to, to replenish and revive me and give me an extra spiritual boost to take me into the coming week. I am able to give Him more of my time and focus on what pleases Him rather than ponder what God can do for me. It is also a chance to fellowship with brothers and sisters who respect and appreciate God.

The place of worship does not always have to be large or elaborate as long as it is being offered as a place to worship honorably in a way that is pleasing to God.

God doesn't spoil our day—why should we spoil His?

More importantly, we need to show reverence to God on Sabbath. This is so at all times, but to me the difference is that at other times we invite God's presence to be with us, but on the Sabbath God is inviting us to join Him

and present ourselves in a certain manner. This has to be upheld at the highest level if we are not to offend God by what we say or do. We need to increase our awareness of the real meaning of the Sabbath in order to claim the blessings that we are meant to gain from it. As sinful human beings, the most divine thing that we can do is to please God. Although we shouldn't and mustn't just wait for the Sabbath, it is the one day especially consecrated to remind us how life is really meant to be. It's a special day of thanksgiving, meditation, reminiscence, prayer, song, communication, fellowship, and joy.

REACT

1. What is the true meaning of the Sabbath?
2. Explain the difference between keeping the spirit of the Sabbath and obeying the fourth commandment.
3. How is Sabbath keeping linked to the gospel of grace?

The Gift That Keeps on Giving

EXPLORATION

Gen. 2:2, 3

CONCLUDE

It can be easy to view the Sabbath as a day of restrictive “should-not’s.” But when we take a closer look, we see that the Sabbath is like receiving a blank check every week; we can get as much out of it as we want to. God created the Sabbath as a time for us to rest and recharge our spiritual batteries, a chance to learn more about His character and about ourselves in relation to Him. In honoring the Sabbath, we draw closer to Him too. The Sabbath is the gift that keeps on giving.

CONSIDER

- Keeping a Sabbath journal. In each entry record your feelings, experiences, and any lessons you learned about God that Sabbath day.
- Reaching out to at least one person every Sabbath. For example, you might invite someone to eat with you, visit someone who is sick, write a letter to a relative, or call someone who is lonely.
- Taking a walk and collecting small pieces of nature such as leaves, stones, sticks, and flowers. Look at each piece and decide what it illustrates about the Sabbath.
- Sketching or painting the first scene or feeling you think of when you hear the words “rest on the Sabbath day.”
- Comparing your understanding of the Sabbath with the Catholic view by submitting some pertinent questions to the Catholic Q&A Web site at <<http://www.ewtn.com/EWTN/Experts/conference.htm>>.
- Designing invitations that say, “You are invited . . . to join Jesus for refreshment this Sabbath.” Include information about the Sabbath if you wish, such as Bible texts or the time and location of your church service. Give the invitations to other people—or leave a small stack in public locations.
- Visiting a Sabbath School class for children. Share why Sabbath is a special time to spend with Jesus. Explain why you look forward to the special opportunities the Sabbath offers.

CONNECT

Exodus 20:8-11; Isaiah 58:13; Matthew 11:28; Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-5.

The Desire of Ages, pp. 284-289; *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 156; *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, pp. 194-199.

Clifford Goldstein, *A Pause for Peace*.

Lesson 3
July 14-21

The Sabbath Relationship



“ ‘I gave them My sabbaths to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them’ ” (Ezek. 20:12, NASB).

Countdown to Sabbath

INTRODUCTION

Ezek. 20:12

5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1. As a young kid, this was the countdown I would so often count around Sabbath time. I wish I could report that it was my Friday evening countdown. But it was not.

As a child, it was my countdown on Saturday afternoon awaiting the end of the Sabbath. As a kid, there was a point at which I had unfortunately begun to understand—or misunderstand—the Sabbath in terms of what I *couldn't* do on that day. I couldn't play. I couldn't ride my bike. I couldn't play with my Barbie dolls. I couldn't watch television. It was, in short, a boring day.

So I preferred Sundays. On Sundays I not only had no school but I was allowed to play.

My parents saw that somehow I had gotten the wrong message, so they began to schedule family activities—hikes, walks along the beach, family picnics, and the like. The Sabbath was not something they kept in order to merit God's favor or to earn salvation. The Sabbath was not something they observed in order to be loved by God.

Rather, the Sabbath was something they kept and enjoyed as a consequence of already being redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Sabbath observance was not a cause of salvation but an effect of salvation. Sabbath was a joy because it was a special appointment with God.

I gradually came to see that the Sabbath was not a load of burdensome rocks to be carried, but a treasure chest filled with gold and diamonds. Today, as a wife and working mother of three little ones, it is a day I turn off the cell phone and

**Sabbath observance was
an effect of salvation.**

pager, set aside my laptop, and spend time with my husband, kids, and friends. It is a day when I can listen to the singing of the birds, take in beautiful sunsets, and pause to smell the roses. It is a day when I can forget about the world of accomplishments and deadlines and instead rest in the peace, love, and grace of Him Who is Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus Christ.

The Sabbath is a sign between God and me. It is a continual reminder that He created me, because it was instituted at Creation. And it reminds me that He saved and freed me, just as He liberated the enslaved Hebrews from their oppressive Egyptian overseers.

My Sabbath countdown is still 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1. But now it is a countdown that takes place on Friday, for I am eager to welcome the Sabbath hours, my special time with God.

Sunday
July 15

Creator and Redeemer

LOGOS

Gen. 2:2, 3; Exod. 20:8-10; 35:2; Lev. 20:7; Deut. 5:12-15; Heb. 4:4, 9-11;
1 Pet. 1:15, 16; Rev. 14:1-12

The Sabbath—Symbol of Our Lifegiving God

The Sabbath reminds us of our origins and our Originator. It reminds us of the Creator who formed us with His hands, breathed life into us, and made us part of His world. The very first mention of the seventh day of the week occurs in the beginning of Genesis, where the Lord, having created all that is, rested on the seventh day and blessed it and hallowed it.

Passages throughout the Bible, such as those listed above, make clear that the Sabbath was not an afterthought but the climax of Creation week. All the work of Creation led up to that special day—a symbol of communion between Creator and creation, a sign of an intimate relationship between the Maker and all that had been made.

The Sabbath is one of the most profound expressions of our relation to God. It ties the Framer of the universe to that which was formed by His hands. We are more than just creatures. We are creative beings. Having been made in God's image, we have spiritual needs and aspirations.

Theologian Richard Rice touches on this theme, writing that because the Sabbath "elevates us above the daily round of activity that meets our physical needs, the Sabbath calls attention to the needs of the spirit and reminds us that our source and destiny lie beyond the realm of material things."¹

**We are more than
just creatures.**

Truly the Sabbath reminds us that our origin lies in God and that we are more than just corporeal beings. As Abraham Joshua Heschel has written, "The seventh day is a reminder that God is our father, that time is life and the spirit our mate."²

The Sabbath—Symbol of Our Liberating God

While the Exodus account of the Ten Commandments explains that Sabbath keeping memorializes Creation, the account of the Ten Commandments found in Deuteronomy teaches us that Sabbath points to the deliverance of God's people from Egyptian bondage. Sabbath, then, is not just about our coming into existence but is also about our going out of bondage.

The Sabbath reminds twenty-first-century believers of the power over sin and death that is made available to us through God's supreme sacrifice. Liberation from the bondage of sin is realized through what God has already done and what He continues to do.

There are those who see the Sabbath as no more than a legal requirement. It is just another rule to be followed, like other rules governing our lives. But this is a perversion of the gospel. In fact, it is a view antithetical to historic (and contemporary) Adventism, which has a rich appreciation for the justification (freedom from guilt) effected on the cross of Calvary. As Andrews University President Niels-Erik Andreasen has written, "As a sign of the covenant between God and his people, the sabbath has never been a burden, or a nuisance, or an interruption. It is rather like a welcome guest, a time of joy, a goal to be reached."²

Though not everyone may have experienced Sabbath in this liberating fashion, this is clearly what Sabbath was meant to be. This is why Christ asserted that Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

Fundamental Belief 19 in a compact but comprehensive statement articulates the richness and joy of Sabbath: The Sabbath is "a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom."

The Sabbath is no doubt more than a day that we are commanded to observe. It is a day to be experienced, to be entered into. It is more than a reminder of our origins. It enables us to experience the liberation, freedom, and redemption effected by Christ at Calvary and points to an eternity with God. It connects the past with the future—the Creation and the Cross to the Second Advent.

REACT

1. In what ways does the Sabbath remind us that we are dependent upon God for our spiritual as well as our physical necessities? Be specific.
2. What does the Sabbath teach us, if anything, about divine grace?
3. In what ways does the devil seek to neutralize the beneficial effects and importance of the Sabbath experience?
4. How does liberation from Egyptian bondage symbolize our experience in the Lord of the Sabbath?
5. What did Jesus mean when He said that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath?
6. In what way is the Sabbath message the gospel?
7. How can we turn our focus from rules of Sabbath keeping to the real meaning of Sabbath—strengthening our relationship with Jesus?

1. Richard Rice, *Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology From a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University, 1985), p. 371.

2. Niels-Erik Andreasen, *Rest and Redemption* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University, 1978), p. 90.

3. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1975), p. 76.

Monday
July 16

Why Sabbath Is So Special

TESTIMONY

Exod. 31:16, 17

“The great Jehovah had laid the foundations of the earth; He had dressed the whole world in the garb of beauty and had filled it with things useful to man; He had created all the wonders of the land and of the sea. In six days the great work of creation had been accomplished. And God ‘rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.’ God looked with satisfaction upon the work of His hands. All was perfect, worthy of its divine Author, and He rested, not as one weary, but as well pleased with the fruits of His wisdom and goodness and the manifestations of His glory.

“A Sabbath was essential for man, even in Paradise.”

“After resting upon the seventh day, God sanctified it, or set it apart, as a day of rest for man. Following the example of the Creator, man was to rest upon this sacred day, that as he should look upon the heavens and the earth, he might reflect upon God’s great work of creation; and that as he should behold the evidences of God’s wisdom and goodness, his heart might be filled with love and reverence for his Maker. . . .

“God saw that a Sabbath was essential for man, even in Paradise. He needed to lay aside his own interests and pursuits for one day of the seven, that he might more fully contemplate the works of God and meditate upon His power and goodness. He needed a Sabbath to remind him more vividly of God and to awaken gratitude because all that he enjoyed and possessed came from the beneficent hand of the Creator.”¹

“The observance of the Sabbath becomes the characteristic of those who cherish the recollections of the origin of their race, and who worship God not merely as Elohim, the Everlasting Almighty, but as Jehovah, the historical God, the Creator, who has revealed Himself to man from the dawn of his existence as the God of love, and afterwards of mercy and grace, of promise and performance.”²

REACT

What does Exodus 31:14, 15 tell us nowadays about how holy and special this time with God on Sabbath should be?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 47, 48.

2. James G. Murphy, *Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, pp. 143, 144.

"Better Than . . ."

EVIDENCE

Heb. 4:1-11

How often do advertisements on TV and radio tell us about a "new improved . . . with the ingredient . . . added"? Manufacturers want to convince us that they have a superior product that is "better than" the previous one and that we should not hesitate to buy it.

The whole theme of the book of Hebrews is built on this idea of "better than." But better than what? Before we had the law and the way it was portrayed through the Levitical priesthood. Now we have something "better than": revelation through Christ. This does not invalidate the quality and revelation of the law for Hebrews is built on the Old Testament. The new just adds luster to it.

The "better than" in Hebrews 4:1-11 is a better, superior rest. The word rest in this passage occurs frequently. The Greek word for rest, *katapausis*, is used in all the verses except in verse 9 where *sabbatismos* is used and is translated "Sabbath rest" (verse 9, NIV). Both refer to Sabbath rest or Sabbathlike rest, so rest and Sabbath are interchangeable and add more depth to the meaning.

For New Testament Jews, the Sabbath was part of their identity. The day was supposed to be a day of rest, assembly, and while the temple existed, sacrifice. Meals were shared and a special benediction given at the Sabbath evening meal. This deteriorated, however, into many rules described as "mountains hanging by air, for Scripture is scanty and rules many."¹

In the book of Hebrews there is tension between *already* and *not yet*, which is *better than*. What has happened? The gospel has come. But there is also a promise for the future. This is true for the Sabbath rest as well. We can now enter into rest.

**The Sabbath was part
of their identity.**

We are encouraged to enter into a better-than Sabbath rest now, right this minute. The relationship offered is free from the rush, the stress, the anxiety of this life—the rest is being offered now (Matt. 11:28).

Ellen White says, "The rest here spoken of [Heb. 4:9] is the rest of grace. . . . It is the true rest of faith."²

REACT

Why did the Israelites under Joshua's leadership not enter into rest?

1. E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).
2. Francis Nichol, editor, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), p. 423.

Wednesday
July 18

The Artist Shares His Creation

HOW-TO

Gen. 2:2; Exod. 31:12-17; Ps. 19:1-4

Imagine God on that sixth day after He has created our world. He has completed the first human, the height of His creation: "All was perfect, worthy of its divine Author, and He rested, not as One weary, but as well pleased with the fruits of His wisdom and goodness and the manifestations of His glory."¹

God stepped back and admired His work just as any artist would do after creating an unreproducible masterpiece. He examined it from every angle, viewed the balance of colors and admired the textures and fragrances. He listened to the chorus of birds chirping, water rushing and lions roaring. He saw at this last stage that what He had made was indeed good.

**How often do
artists give away
their greatest
work?**

Rather than keep His masterpiece, He gave it away. He gave it to us, the final act of His creation. How often do artists give away their greatest work? Would a painter give up a piece worth a million dollars, even to a friend? Let's suppose one did and that friend was you. What would you do?

1. You would spend time viewing that painting from every angle, studying the artist's style and technique. Having the painting in your own home, you would have plenty of time to form your personal opinion of the work. You would know that piece of art better than any other because you would have had plenty of time alone with it.

2. You would not keep the painting to yourself. You would hang it in a central location in your house. The whole room would be arranged so that the painting would be complimented from every angle. Hours would be spent with friends discussing the details of the painting as well as its theme and impressions. You would learn more of the painting because of sharing it with your friends.

3. You and your friends would learn more about the painting by knowing the artist. You would also know the artist better because you had studied his painting. Possession of the painting signifies your relationship with the artist. Actually introducing your friends to the artist would be a significant event.

We have God's creation, His art, all around us, and we have the privilege of knowing the Artist and introducing Him to our friends. Furthermore, He set aside one special day for us to enjoy His creation. "God designs that the Sabbath shall direct the minds of men to the contemplation of His created works."²

1. *The Faith I Live By*, p. 31.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 48.

Sabbath Is All About Love

OPINION

Gen. 2:3; Exod. 31:12-17

When we celebrate the Sabbath, we celebrate God's love as manifest in His creative and redemptive powers. Because God loved, He prepared a perfect world before He created Adam. God viewed His creation and saw the vibrant colors of sky, grass, flowers, and trees. Whales breached and fish swam in the pristine seas. Birds burst into song. In the heavens the sun blazed, the moon shimmered, and the stars pulsed life. On earth, tame animals roamed. Then, at the end of the sixth day, God created humankind in His image. Humanity was God's—by creation.

God created the seventh-day Sabbath as a love gift for humankind, as a special day to bring delight (Isa. 58:13). He blessed and sanctified the Sabbath (Gen. 2:3). On Sabbath God's people lay aside all earthly cares and draw closer to God as they respond to all God has done for them. Sabbath keepers testify to the world of a loving relationship of a people with their God.

"The Sabbath points . . . to the works of creation as an evidence of His mighty power in redemption."* And because God loved, He provided a plan to redeem us should sin ever arise and separate us from our Creator. That plan cost the life of the Creator Himself. Just before Christ died, in His weakest moments, Satan approached Him, asking why He was going to sacrifice His life. After all, had not Christ's own people rejected Him? The Father felt pain when He heard His only Son plead, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." (Matt. 26:39, NIV). Christ felt the full weight of sin separate Him from His Father and bear down upon Him—physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally.

**Christ felt the full
weight of sin separate
Him from His Father.**

Yet Christ went through Gethsemane by choice. He bore the accusations, tortures, and scorn of His tormentors, the very beings He created. He endured until the very end, even to the most ignominious death on the cross. Christ's resurrection empowered Him to reclaim all who believe and accept Him. Once again we could belong to God—by redemption.

The Sabbath attests to the power of a God who created by His word and who resurrected by His word. More than that, the Sabbath attests to the power of the love of the God who allowed His Son to give up His life to save anyone who accepts Him. The love of God should elicit love, adoration, and awe from His people—in the celebration of the Sabbath.

**The Desire of Ages*, p. 289.

EXPLORATION

Isa. 58:13, 14

CONCLUDE

The Sabbath is God's gift to people of every age and geographical area, the legacy of a loving Creator who wove it into a weekly pattern of work and rest. Sadly, throughout the centuries the Sabbath became less a symbol of the rest we enjoy because of God's love and grace than an example (by some) that a legalistic observance of the Sabbath is one of the primary ways to earn God's favor. In order to truly understand the Sabbath's significance, we must reexamine what God intended when He created it, as well as what it means for those of us who observe it today.

CONSIDER

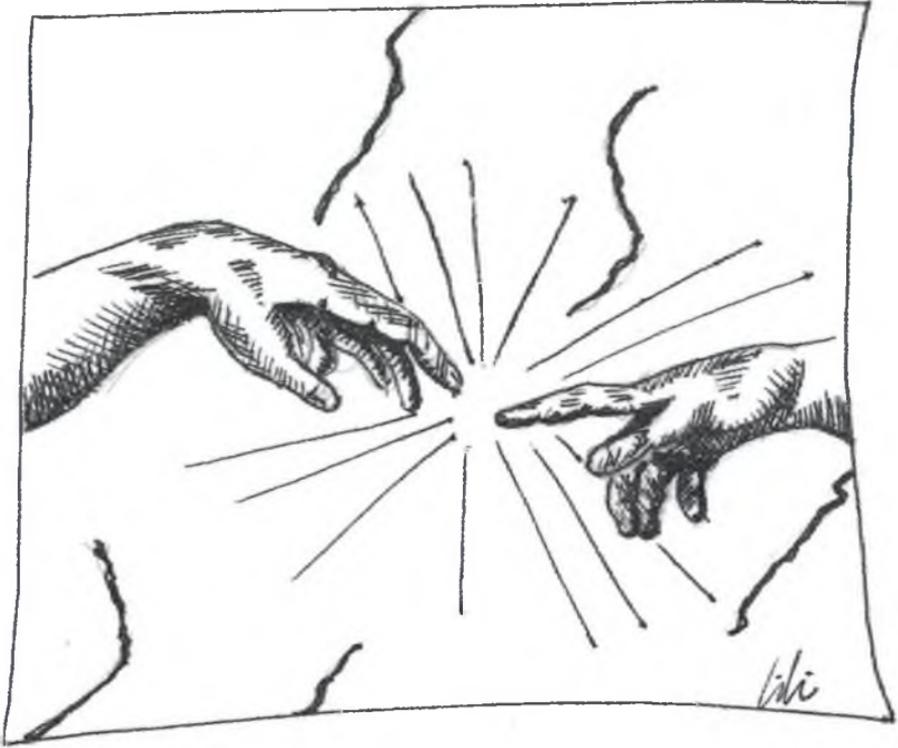
- Thinking about the Sabbath activities you do that most closely reflect God's ideal for Sabbath observance.
- Writing a short story about someone who discovers—by a chain of unusual circumstances—just what the Sabbath is all about.
- Making a list of individuals for whom you could do something to give them a Sabbath blessing. Next to their names write a specific strategy you can use to demonstrate that the Sabbath is a delight.
- Preparing some kind of snack or treat to hand out to a few unsuspecting members of your church congregation.
- Composing a melody that reflects the rest and security you feel on the Sabbath as a child of God.
- Taking a one-day spiritual retreat at a spot as far removed from human influence as possible. Make a list of what you observe and how these things remind you of a loving God.
- Taking a survey. Ask people how the Sabbath keeps them close to God.
- Memorizing one biblical passage that for you encapsulates the essence of Sabbath keeping.

CONNECT

Genesis 2:1, 2; Psalm 92; Mark 2:23-28; Hebrews 4:8-11; Revelation 14:6, 7.
The Desire of Ages, chap. 29.

Glen Robinson, *52 Things to Do on the Sabbath*; Wayne Muller, *Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest*.

Keeping the Sabbath holy



“If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, or speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken’ ” (Isa. 58:13, 14, NKJV).

What Can We Do on Sabbath?

INTRODUCTION

Mark 2:27

As I was growing up in a Seventh-day Adventist family, I was told not to do this or that on the Sabbath day. Sabbath was not a favorite day for me because I could not play with my neighbors, I could not watch television, I could not listen to the radio, read magazines, newspapers, or comic books, etc. All I could do on Sabbath was go to church or read the Bible or Ellen White's books.

Imagine how happy I was when I became a teenager and was sent to a Seventh-day Adventist college, far away from Thailand, far away from my family members, and far away from my church in Bangkok. I thought I was free to do anything I wanted on the Sabbath day. Yes, I was required to attend church services on Sabbath still, since I lived in the college dormitory. My friends and I had a field day going to church, but not because we were interested in the sermon. We were at church to vote for the best dressed girl of the week! After the sermon, we had a fun time critiquing the sermon and the preacher (sarcastically most of the time) during lunch in the cafeteria.

Now that I have moved back to Bangkok, the church service has been pretty much the same, and very little has changed since my childhood days. Rather than going through the motions of attending Sabbath School and the church service, I am trying to find a way to keep the Sabbath holy, and at the same time to find joy in the Lord.

In my line of work as a health professional, I receive many requests from people in business groups who want to learn about the health principles of the Seventh-

**I thought I was free to
do anything I wanted
on the Sabbath day.**

day Adventist Church. Since they are busy during the week, they want to come and spend the weekend at our Mission Health Promotion Center to learn about our healthful lifestyle. I was excited that, after several years, now I

can call the Sabbath a delight because I can share the good news through the health message. But my happiness soon evaporated because a few people, for various reasons, do not want to have the health program conducted on the Sabbath day. So, my question is, besides attending Sabbath School and church service, what can we do on the Sabbath?

Keeping Sabbath Holy With Divine Presence

EVIDENCE

Ps. 46:10

The holiness of the Sabbath consists of the special manifestation of God's presence in the life of His people. Proper Sabbath keeping enables us to experience the awareness of His divine presence. Christ's presence brought stillness to the stormy lake of Galilee (Matt. 8:23-27), and it also brings peace and stillness to troubled lives. The Sabbath is a special weekly encounter with our Creator-Redeemer.

Believers who cultivate Christ's presence during the Sabbath time and activities will experience His rest and peace every day of their lives. This is basically the meaning of the holiness of the Sabbath, which is frequently described in the book of Isaiah.

Every Sabbath keeper must be aware of the divine presence and see God with their spiritual eyes. "True reverence for God is inspired by a sense of His infinite greatness and a realization of His presence."* Believers who on the Sabbath lay aside their secular concerns, who turn off their receivers to the many distracting voices in order to tune in and listen to the voice of God, experience in a real sense the spiritual presence of Christ.

**The assurance of
forgiveness of sins leads
worshippers to serve God.**

Seeing God and feeling the divine presence, Isaiah cried out, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:5, NKJV). Realization of sinfulness and confession of sin are important parts of keeping Sabbath holy.

The angel brings the burning coal from God's presence to prove the assurance of God's forgiveness (verses 6, 7). In this experience, Isaiah has the assurance that his sins are forgiven. Worshipers must feel likewise. The purpose of Sabbath is to sanctify us from our sins. This most important of the days helps worshipers realize the promises of cleansing and receive forgiveness from God.

God asks, "Whom shall I send?" (verse 8, NKJV). Isaiah answered, "Here am I! Send me" (verse 8, NKJV). Total dedication is total surrender and total commitment of ourselves to God. Feeling the divine presence makes Sabbath keepers sense the assurance of forgiveness from God and leads them to dedicate their lives to God.

True Sabbath keeping that cultivates Christ's presence will make our faith stronger, our hope brighter, our love deeper, our sympathy broader, our acts purer, and our will more resolute to do the will of God. If we feel these things in our hearts when we worship God on His holy Sabbath, then we are truly keeping the Sabbath and worshipping God.

* *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 48, 49.

Monday
July 23

The Sabbath, the Holy Day for Wholly Man

LOGOS

Exod. 16:22-30; 20:8-11; Isa. 58:12-14

Many question why some people still keep the Sabbath when the majority keep Sunday. First of all, we need to understand that Christ indicated that the purpose of Sabbath is for humanity, and not that of humanity for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27, 28). Of the seven, it is the only day mentioned in the Bible as blessed and sanctified. God wants to give us the best things, and by giving us the Sabbath He wants us to enjoy the fullness of physical and spiritual refreshment.

We have to keep in mind the great controversy between Christ and Satan. "Satan was seeking to exalt himself and to draw men away from Christ, and he worked to pervert the Sabbath, because it is the sign of the power of Christ."

Should I help her or proceed to church?

Through the establishment of the Sabbath, God set up the memorial of His work of Creation and His divinity. It is to be remembered and observed as His holy day, a great lesson to impress

our minds with its sacredness. God's object lesson of manna helped the Israelites to remember how to keep the Sabbath holy until they arrived at the Promised Land (Josh. 5:12).

In our time we have Christ as our example, "The manna, falling from heaven for the sustenance of Israel, was a type of Him who came from God to give life to the world."² Eternal life will be fully restored when we all arrive at our heavenly home and God will give to "eat of the hidden manna" (Rev. 2:17, KJV).

Keep It Holy (Isa. 58:12-14)

God declared to Israel, " "Those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" ' " (1 Sam. 2:30, NKJV). The Sabbath is God's holy day for us, and Christ announced that " 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath' " (Mark 2:27, NKJV).

In most Buddhist countries in Southeast Asia such as Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Burma, people keep Buddha's Day as the day of worship on the new moon and full moon. This practice has been observed for almost three thousand years. People will stop work in their fields and animals will rest from their duty. It is interesting that there will be no killing of animals for consumption on that day. The day before that day, monks will shave their heads and elbow to prepare both physically and spiritually. People who keep this holy day hope to gain merit added to other merits they have earned for salvation of the soul.

As Christians, we do not believe that keeping the Sabbath provides eternal life, for salvation is not by works. "God ordained that the Sabbath should be a

blessing, not a burden, and it is to man's interest and not his injury to observe it. . . . to think of it in this light is to miss completely the true spirit and objectives of Sabbath observance and to engage in the pursuit of righteousness based on works."³ We are to refrain from work and other daily activities that can be done on other days in order that we may devote our time and energies to understanding God.

Christ is "Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28, NKJV) and is above all question and all law. During the time of Christ, religious leaders made the Sabbath a burden. They made people look at God as a tyrant lawgiver. Christ showed them the right way to observe the Sabbath.

A young boy related this story to his grandfather: "When I was on the way to church, I saw an old woman carrying two heavy baskets. As she was trying to cross the road, she stumbled and fell. As she was trying to stand up, I looked at her with a question in my mind: Should I help her or forget about her and proceed to church? Finally, I decided to help the woman by lifting one of her baskets and carrying it to her house. Did I break the Sabbath?"

The grandfather replied, "What would Jesus do if He were you?"

The young boy said, "I think Jesus would do the same as I did."

"You are right," said his grandfather. "If we look at Christ's keeping of the Sabbath as our example, we will be delighted to do the same."

Jesus asked, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" (Luke 6:9, NIV).

"Sabbathkeeping reveals that we have ceased depending on our own works, that we realize that only Christ the Creator can save us. Indeed, 'the spirit of true Sabbathkeeping reveals a supreme love for Jesus Christ, the Creator and Saviour, who is making us into new persons. It makes the keeping of the right day in the right way a sign of righteousness by faith.'"⁴

We have heard of people who are willing to sacrifice their interests to keep the Sabbath holy. God has challenged us in His Word to "call the Sabbath a delight . . . and . . . honor it by not going your own way" (Isa. 58:13, NIV). "To all who receive the Sabbath as a sign of Christ's creative and redeeming power, it will be a delight. Seeing Christ in it, they delight themselves in Him."⁵

REACT

How can our church become a frontrunner for Sabbath activities in our community? Be specific.

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1. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 283, 284.
 2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 297.
 3. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 588.
 4. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, p. 257.
 5. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 289.

Tuesday
July 24

Right Observance of Sabbath

TESTIMONY

Matt. 12:10-12

To keep the Sabbath holy is to be involved in God's mission. It is not just to come to church and to go back home to sleep. Jesus set an example in doing His mission on the Sabbath. He spent most of His time on the Sabbath healing the sick. In Capernaum, the mother of Peter's wife was sick with a great fever. He touched her hand, and the fever left her. She arose and ministered to the Saviour and His disciples.

"Rapidly the tidings spread. The miracle had been wrought upon the Sabbath, and for fear of the rabbis the people dared not come for healing until the sun was set. . . . Hour after hour they came and went; for none could know whether tomorrow would find the

**To keep the Sabbath holy
is to be involved in God's
mission.**

Healer still among them. Never before had Capernaum witnessed a day like this. The air was filled with the voice of triumph and shouts of deliverance. Not until the last sufferer had been relieved did Jesus cease His work. It was far into the night when the multitude departed and silence settled down upon the home of Simon."¹

"Upon another Sabbath, as Jesus entered a synagogue, He saw there a man who had a withered hand. . . . The Saviour well knew that in healing on the Sabbath He would be regarded as a transgressor, but He did not hesitate to break down the wall of traditional requirements that barricaded the Sabbath. Jesus bade the afflicted man stand forth and then asked, 'Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?' It was a maxim among the Jews that a failure to do good, when one had opportunity, was to do evil; to neglect to save life was to kill. Thus Jesus met the rabbis on their own ground. 'But they held their peace. And when He had looked around about on them with hunger, being grieved for the hardness of their heart He said unto the man, stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.' Mark 3:4, 5."²

God wants us to be involved with church activities on Sabbath. "The Lord calls for young men and women to gird themselves for lifelong, earnest labor in the Sabbath-school work. . . . The Lord would have teachers in the Sabbath-school work who can give whole-hearted service, who will increase their talent by exercise, and make improvement on what has already been attained."³

1. *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 29, 30.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 286.

3. *Messages to Young People*, p. 219.

A Day of Worship for All Christians

HOW-TO

Gen. 2:2, 3; Exod. 31:13; Isa. 66:23; Ezek. 20:12

In 1991 I was pastoring at Chiang Mai Adventist Church, located 700 km north of Bangkok. Three gentlemen came to my office one day and accused me of conducting worship on the wrong day. They reasoned that Christians should worship on Sunday because Christ rose on that day. I requested them to cite texts from the Bible to support this reasoning. As a result, they became interested in pursuing the topic. We studied together for three days. At the end of the third day they were convinced that the seventh day is the true Sabbath.

Later, at their request, a seminar was organized to help their fellow pastors learn the new-found truth. Pastor W. Wilcox, president of Thailand Adventist Mission conducted this seminar. As a result, three pastors, one assistant pastor, and several of their church members were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Genesis 2:2, 3 tells us the reason for Christians to worship on the seventh day. God rested on the Sabbath day, He blessed the Sabbath day, and He sanctified the Sabbath day. Further, it signifies that God is the Creator of the universe. Worshiping God on the Sabbath day is an indication that we accept God's greatness and believe that He is the Creator. Sabbath is also a sign between God and His people (Exod. 1:13; Ezek. 20:12).

It is Satan's master plan to take the minds of people away from keeping the true Sabbath. Thus, they would no longer worship the Creator and would not remember God's power, mercy, and love. As God's people worship Him on the Sabbath day, their thoughts link with nature, bringing it into a sweet communion with the Creator. As the heavens and earth endure, the Sabbath will continue as a sign of the Creator's power.

God's people are to keep the Sabbath holy. It is not merely established for the Jewish nation but for the nations around the globe. As a chosen nation, the Jews were commanded to keep the Sabbath. To this day, Jews as a nation continue to observe the keeping of the Sabbath. God has also chosen spiritual Jews not as a nation alone but as a worldwide church. Spiritual Jews recognize the

**Sabbath is a sign between
God and His people.**

importance of the obedience to God's holy law and keep His commandments. As a perpetual sign between God and His people, the Sabbath is to be observed even in the new earth to come. " 'From one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me' " (Isa. 66:23, NKJV).

Thursday
July 26

Doing Good Things on Sabbath

OPINION

Matt. 25:34-40

Going to church on Sabbath is a weekly activity for me. How can I keep the Sabbath with a joyful heart when going to church is just like a habit? Church service has been pretty much the same through the years. What can I do to be joyful when Sabbath comes? What can we do to make the world know that we are the happiest people on earth because we have fellowship with our Savior on the Sabbath day?

One day, as I was driving to church, I noticed a car broken down. The driver was an elderly woman who did not know what to do. I was thinking that I should not

How can I keep the Sabbath with a joyful heart when going to church is just like a habit?

stop because I would be late for Sabbath School. I also tried to convince myself that someone would help her. Suddenly, I decided to step on the brake and got down to see what I could do to help her. After finding out that

she had called a garage and help was on the way, I went on to church. I was late for Sabbath School that morning, but I was full of joy because I tried to be helpful to someone who was in need.

When Christ was on earth, He did not attend religious services in the synagogue every Sabbath. Most of the time, Jesus traveled to meet with people outside of the synagogue, people who were sick, who were outcasts, who had not met Christ because they would not be allowed in the synagogue. Christ was reaching out to them on the Sabbath and the rest of the week.

I have been going to church every Sabbath for many years, and somehow, it does not bring joy to me as it should. If doing good is allowed on Sabbath, then I should visit prisons, orphanages, people who are afflicted with AIDS, etc. Maybe that would bring joy to my heart and make my Sabbath more meaningful. What do you think?

REACT

1. In what ways is my relationship with Christ strengthened by meeting with fellow believers at church on Sabbath?
2. What other ways could you "meet with Jesus" on Sabbath?
3. If I knew that young people were looking at me as an example of how to spend the Sabbath day, what would they see?
4. What can I do to make Sabbath a day to look forward to for me and my friends?
5. What is the importance of attitude in this matter?

Keeping the Sabbath Wholly

EXPLORATION

Luke 6:9

CONCLUDE

Throughout history the Sabbath has been turned into a time of joyless drudgery. But God did not intend for the Sabbath to be a burden for us. We need to bring joy to the day by finding meaningful ways to observe the Sabbath. These activities do not show God that we are somehow worthy, but they are a method by which to get to know God better. That means that Sabbath activities reflect all of God's attributes: His creativity, His servanthood, His awesomeness, His love, His playfulness, His restfulness, and so on.

CONSIDER

- Writing an itinerary of what you envision a perfect Sabbath day to include.
- Creating a Sabbath activities box for a nephew or niece or a friend's child.
- Taking a walk and planning an interesting Sabbath afternoon hike on which to take your friends. Find things that illustrate biblical truths and end the walk at a strategic prayer spot.
- Compiling a songbook of all the Sabbath songs you know.
- Baking a special Jewish *challah* bread for Friday night. For a long list of possibilities, go to <<http://www.jewish-food.org>> and search for the word *challah*.
- Finding a project to help someone on Sabbath afternoon; feeding the homeless, passing out cards in a nursing home, giving attention to animals in the humane society.

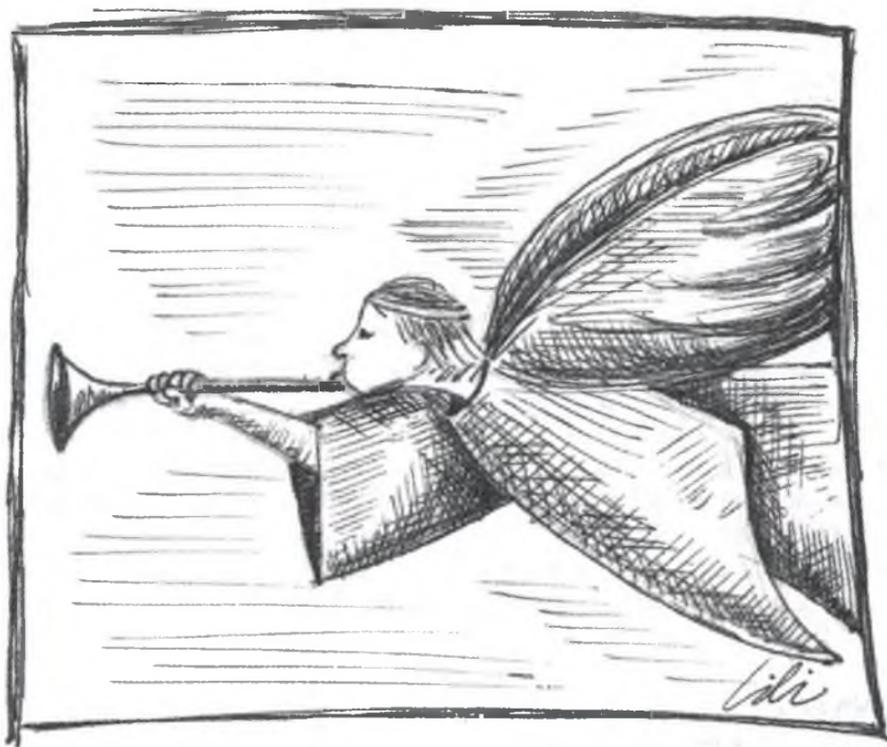
CONNECT

Exodus 20:8-11; Isaiah 58:13, 14; Mark 2:27, 28.

The Desire of Ages, chap. 29.

Don Pate, *52 Sabbath Activities for Teen Groups*; Glen Robinson, *52 Things to Do on Sabbath*; Celeste Perrino Walker, *Making Sabbath Special*; Gregory P. Nelson, *A Touch of Heaven*.

The **First** angel's **Message**



“I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water’ ”
(Rev. 14:6, 7, NKJV).

The Balloon of Human Arrogance

INTRODUCTION

Rev. 14:7

The luxury ocean liner *Titanic* was a living parable of its time—the ultimate product of the Industrial Age, a mammoth tribute to technology, wealth, and power that stood for all that was deemed wonderful in a world that had largely written God off as an unnecessary factor in the equation of success. “Mister,” one observer was heard to say, “God Himself couldn’t sink this ship.” The tragedy of the many deaths associated with the sinking of the *Titanic* can be traced to one thing: human arrogance.

Human arrogance had forgotten to read in Revelation that God is the Maker of salt water (“the sea”) and fresh water (“springs of waters”). As the Maker, He deserves our worship. For the arrogance of those on the *Titanic*, judgment had come! It was the natural consequence that happens when God is discounted, disregarded, and diminished.

**“God Himself couldn’t
sink this ship.”**

Human arrogance is really the opposite of the message of the first angel. Trust humanity and its achievements? No, “Fear God.” Give glory to humankind and its inventions? No, “give Him glory.” Idolize human wealth, power, and technology? No, “worship Him who made the heaven and the earth.” That’s it in a nutshell. The air is taken out of the balloon of human arrogance.

What’s so great about God is that He knows us so well. He knows that our nature is to begin to think that we (just me, myself, and I) are really somethin’. Not because of us—but because of what God made us and does for us. The “eternal gospel” is the good news that says, “I value you and call you precious—you are mine, and I’ve not only *created* you but *also rescued* you and continue to *hold* you tenderly.” That is the focus of the lesson for this week in a nutshell. Enjoy!

Sunday
July 29

The Heart of the Three Angels' Messages

LOGOS

Rev. 14:6, 7

Every time you see a sign for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, what symbol do you see? It is on our church buildings, our stationery, and many of our bulletins. It is the symbol for the three angels' messages. Even though this is the symbol for our Church, do we really know what this means?

Our denomination has long held the importance of the proclamation of the three angels' messages. There is no question that this is a vital message for our generation, but do we really understand the foundation upon which these messages are given? Here is a simple question: What is at the heart of the three angels' messages? Is it "fear God," judgment, worship, "fallen is Babylon," or "come out of Babylon"? What is at the heart of the three angels' messages is found in the prologue to the three messages: the first angel "had the eternal gospel to proclaim" (Rev. 14:6, NIV). There's the answer! It is the *eternal gospel!*

The Implications of the Eternal Gospel

To appreciate fully the eternal gospel, we must first have an understanding of the implications and the meaning of the gospel.

The first implication is that the "everlasting gospel" was around before Creation (John 17:5; Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 1:19, 20; Rev. 13:8). This gospel did not come into existence *after* the fall of Adam and Eve; it was there even before Creation began. Jesus Christ was chosen as our Redeemer before Creation. His love, grace, and mercy toward us have always existed and will never change. There is nothing we can do to make God love us more. There is nothing we can do to make Him love us less. God is love!

The second implication is that this gospel has an eternal effect. We will never forget that we are saved by grace. There is nothing that we can add to what our Savior has already done for us. The closer we get to Jesus, the more we realize our need of a Savior.

The third and final implication is that there is only one gospel, not many. "There is but one gospel to save men. It will continue as long as there are men to be saved. There never will be another gospel."¹ There may be many manifestations of this gospel, but there is only one gospel.

The Elements of the Eternal Gospel

Martin Luther—in his disputation with Johann Eck—forever changed our view of the essence of righteousness by faith. His biblical conclusions can be found in the following Latin terms:

Sola fide (salvation by faith alone)

Sola gratia (salvation through grace alone)

Sola Christo (salvation through Christ alone)

Sola Scriptura (source in the Bible alone)

Sola deo gloria (salvation through the glory of God alone)

R. C. Sproul writes, "Nothing can be added to Christ's atonement or to his righteousness to enhance their value and merit."²

The Content of the First Angel's Message

Russell Burrill states that we must understand the first angel's message in the context of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20. He writes, "The call of the first angel, then, declares that the eternal gospel redeems people to Christ and begins the work of restoration.

It calls for a threefold restoration of the image of God by cleaning up the mind, keeping the body in good health and free from

There is nothing we can do to make Him love us less.

sexual immorality, and taking time for the development of a deep relationship with Christ through Sabbath keeping. Thus the first angel's message is basically the same as Jesus' call for people to enter into discipleship with Him, indicating that He is fully Lord of their lives."³

REACT

1. With the three angels' messages based on the foundation of the eternal gospel and righteousness by faith, how does this impact our view of these messages?

2. What can one do individually to reignite a passion for these messages?

3. What relationship does the Sabbath day have to the first angel's message?

4. If we are now living under the proclamation of the third angel's message, are we still supposed to proclaim the other two messages? Explain your answer.

5. How would you explain the significance of the three angels' messages to a person who is not familiar with the SDA faith? How is this gospel mission important to you?

6. Why did it take three angels to give the message?

7. How can you show Jesus that He is Lord of your life?

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 827.

2. R. C. Sproul, *Faith Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids: Mich.: Baker Books, 1995), p. 144.

3. Russell Burrill, *Radical Disciples in Revolutionary Churches* (Fallbrook, Calif.: Hart Research Center, 1996), p. 100.

Monday
July 30

A Famine You Can Fix

TESTIMONY

Amos 8:11

"The gospel message proclaimed by Christ's disciples was the announcement of His first advent to the world. It bore to men the good tidings of salvation through faith in Him. . . . This message is given to men today, and at this time there is coupled with it the announcement of Christ's second coming as at hand. . . .

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

"The Bible declares that in the last days men will be absorbed in worldly pursuits, in pleasure and money-getting. They will be blind to eternal realities. Christ says, 'As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. . . .' Matt. 24:37-39.

"So it is today. Men are rushing on in the chase for gain and selfish indulgence as if there were no God, no heaven, and no hereafter. In Noah's day the warning of

**"There is a famine for
the word of God."**

the flood was sent to startle men in their wickedness and call them to repentance. So the message of Christ's soon coming is designed to arouse men from their absorption in

worldly things. It is intended to awaken them to a sense of eternal realities, that they may give heed to the invitation to the Lord's table. . . .

"The world is perishing for want of the gospel. There is a famine for the word of God. There are few who preach the word unmixed with human tradition. Though men have the Bible in their hands, they do not receive the blessing that God has placed in it for them. The Lord calls upon His servants to carry His message to the people.

"The word of everlasting life must be given to those who are perishing in their sins."*

REACT

1. What are some parallels in the announcement of Christ's first advent and the first angel's message?

2. In what ways are the lives of "God's people" really different from those "absorbed in worldly pursuits, in pleasure, and money-getting"?

3. How have we mixed preaching the Word with human traditions?

* *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 226-229.

John's (Tele)Vision Experience

EVIDENCE

Rev. 14:6, 7

On Patmos, John was given a vision of the closing work of the gospel: "I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth" (Rev. 14:6, NKJV). This "angel represents God's saints engaged in the task of proclaiming the everlasting gospel."¹

Just as we watch scenes flash across our television screens today, John watched scenes of the future in vision. Our scenes come straight from CNN; John's came straight from heaven. What a difference! "He saw the coming of the hour, the rise of the movement, and its extension into all lands; he heard the message sounding, and saw the kind of people doing the work—a people keeping 'the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.'"²

When was that "rise of the movement"? As Seventh-day Adventists, we know that it was in 1844 in a little New England town that a band of believers began to keep the fourth commandment—along with the other nine. They did not realize they were fulfilling the movement foretold by prophecy. Little did they realize that their small band would grow into a worldwide movement of millions.

Nor did those few believers realize that the judgment mentioned by the first angel in Revelation 14:7 marked the beginning of Christ's ministry for us in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. The word "judgment" in the Greek language is *krisis*, which means "the act of judging," significant because it indicates that the day of salvation has not already passed. The "act of judging" is still ongoing, and you and I may yet partake of Christ's salvation and escape the wrath to come.

**The message proclaimed
by the first angel is the
same declared in Eden.**

The message proclaimed by the first angel is the same declared in Eden (Gen. 3:15). "Here was the first promise of a Saviour who would . . . contest the power of Satan and prevail against him."³ Perhaps best of all "the angel that proclaims the everlasting gospel proclaims the law of God."⁴ For you and me, this means that the gospel brings us to obedience of God's law, thereby transforming our sinful characters into characters similar to God's. Praise Him!

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 827.

2. W. A. Spicer, *Our Day in the Light of Prophecy* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1917), p. 243.

3. *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 106.

4. *Ibid.*

Wednesday
August 1

How to Honor Your Friend

HOW-TO Matthew 24

It was the first Memorial Day parade that I remember. As the men dressed in army uniforms marched by, I looked up and saw my grandfather with watery eyes remove his hat and place it over his chest. Tugging on his shirt sleeve, I asked, "Grandpa, why did you take off your hat?" My grandfather bent down and spoke in low tones, "These are men who risked their lives for us, and they also represent those who were killed in battle for our freedom." Now I looked out with a new understanding—until I noticed that these men looked familiar. These were not unknown soldiers from another far-off land; they were from our town. There was Mr. Jacobs from the drugstore and Mr. Haines from the feed mill. These were my grandpa's friends. Why did he salute them now? Was it the emotion of the moment? Was it the uniforms? Or was it a much more meaningful friendship?

Just as it was strange for me to think of my grandfather in awe of his everyday

I noticed that these men looked familiar.

buddies, so it is difficult for us to think of friendship and judgment in the same context. The cry from the first angel of Revelation 14, however, is proclaiming the hour of judgment with our Friend. This Jesus, now on the

throne, is the same One on the cross, the same One we have said our prayers to, the same One who picked us up when we felt as if it was all over.

Maybe these few steps will help us blend these seemingly dissonant roles in our relationship with Jesus Christ:

1. See ourselves as we are (Prov. 22:4; Rom. 12:1). When we take a close look at ourselves, it becomes quite evident that we are pretty frail and helpless. It is our goal to be a servant to others rather than to rule over them.

2. Worship (Ps. 95:6, 7). David, who never let go of Christ even after many falls, knew the impact that worship had on his relationship with Christ. That is why he was able to meet with Christ in so many critical times of his life.

3. Know the time (Matthew 24). In Matthew 24 Jesus said that we would know when the time of His coming was near. He also gave us the Holy Spirit to impress our minds with His divine leading. It is imperative that we become attentive to the urgency of this message. Now Satan is more active at forging Christ's character than at any other time in earth's history. It should be our prayer to be His attractive and accurate character witnesses for this appointed time.

4. Hope (Rom. 5:3-5; Titus 2:13). Christ gave us these promises to keep us hoping. It is the hope that we have today that excites our hearts, knowing we will see our Friend, Jesus Christ, on His throne.

Plain as the Freckles on My Nose

OPINION

Rev. 14:6, 7

The first angel's message is a difficult one for me. It is too familiar. Like the freckles on my nose that I never see when I look in the mirror, this oft quoted text is difficult to see with fresh eyes. Familiarity causes me to skim over the text with the assumption that its meaning has already been plumbed.

I remember seeing a picture of the artist Andrew Wyeth climbing in through the second story window of his house in order to see the unexpected in the routine. So it is with the intellectual callous of familiarity. I can't just read this text; I have to study it. I have to climb into the verse from different directions.

**Old-time religion is not
second-hand religion.**

What would it mean to me if I were a first-century Christian? With no chapters and verses, how would I relate this message to its immediate context? Would I still just connect it with the following texts, or is there a relationship with the preceding ones?

Typically, I have looked at this message from the perspective of the angel. But if the message goes to the whole world, am I not also on the receiving end? What does the angel have to say to me?

How do I fit the concepts of fearing God, judgment, and worship under the umbrella of this angel's gospel? Why isn't his message to "love God because Jesus died to save you, worship Him who paid the price for your sins"? Where does the Cross fit into this text? What does using the word *fear* instead of *love* do to the impact and meaning of these verses?

I find the task of breaking free from the typical a daunting one. It forces me to ask the questions: What are the limits of orthodoxy? Do I have the right to arrive at an interpretation different from the traditional one? With all who have studied these texts before, hasn't all the meaning already been found?

No matter how true other's interpretations might be, the text will never change my heart until I comprehend what it means to me. Old-time religion is not second-hand religion. The purpose of my study must not be simply to confirm the old, but to allow God to speak to me anew.

REACT

1. What can I do to look at the three angels' messages in a fresh way? (i.e., try to explain it to someone else).

2. Try to rewrite the three angels' messages using today's language. Don't leave out any of the ideas presented in this important message, and don't forget that the Bible's presentation is the truth.

Friday
August 3

A Message for the Multitudes

EXPLORATION

Rev. 14:6, 7

CONCLUDE

The image of the three angels of Revelation, delivering their messages, is a powerful symbol to Seventh-day Adventists. And the “everlasting gospel” is at the heart of the first angel’s message. Not only are we to heed this message to “Fear God and give glory to Him” now at the hour of judgment and to worship Him, but we are also commissioned to help spread this gospel “to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” on earth. We must stay focused on this objective.

CONSIDER

- Designing a series of postcards that illustrate the key components of the first angel’s message. Then mail the postcards to five or six people with whom you would like to share the message of “the eternal gospel.”
- Listening to a CD or tape of the music piece that you think best characterizes the first angel’s message. As you’re listening, write a personal reflection about how the music is representing the words in Revelation.
- Creating a short play that could be performed for a street audience that illustrates the message of the first angel in Revelation.
- Searching the World Wide Web for sites associated with Revelation and the first angel’s message. Then compile a list of the Web addresses for those that could lead to useful discussion among members of your class.
- Sitting in your yard or on a secluded bench on your campus or at a local park and imagining which animals or plants in nature best represent the key points in the message of the first angel.
- Sending a “message in a bottle.” Paraphrase the first angel’s message yourself, or find your favorite version of the passage; then check Bibles in other languages (available at your college or local library, or online at <<http://bible.gospelcom.net>>). Write the verse out in several languages on a scroll, seal it in a bottle, and drop it in the ocean or a nearby river.

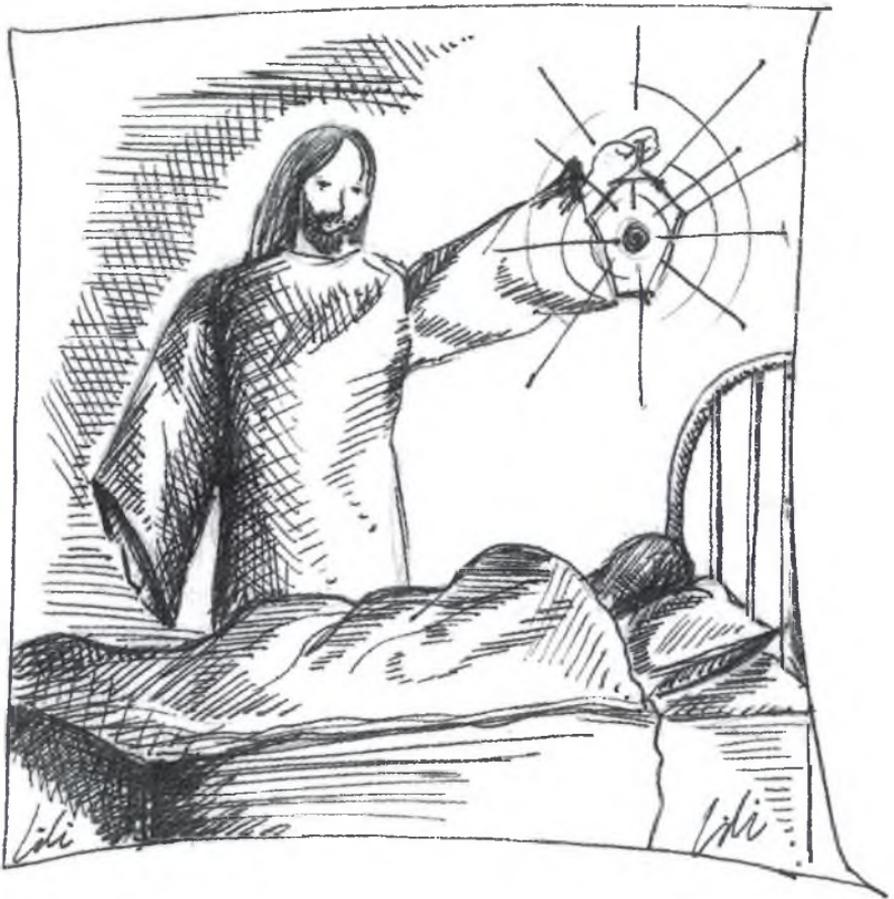
CONNECT

Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10; 1 Corinthians 9:16-18.

Spiritual Gifts, vol. 1, chapters on “The First Angel’s Message” and “The Second Angel’s Message”; *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, pp. 222-229.

“The First Angel’s Message” at <http://www.bibleplus.org/prophecy/visions-gw/great_controversy/3_first_angel.htm>.

Crisis of Loyalty



**“Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the
commandments of God and their faith in Jesus”
(Rev. 14:12, NASB).**

What Are You Loyal To?

INTRODUCTION

Gen. 2:24

This week we will be studying the question of loyalty to Christ at the end of time, but first let's define loyalty. According to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, loyalty is defined as "the quality or state or an instance of being loyal." Take a moment to think about some of the things people are loyal to. In our society today, people may be loyal to their job, their favorite music group, their husband or wife if they are married, their church, or their friends. Though nothing is wrong with loyalty to any of these things, we need to keep our eyes focused in the right direction: on Christ and His soon return.

Even in our sinful world we can still find powerful examples of loyalty. Kim Carpenter and Krisxan Pappas met through a chance business call in the fall of 1992.* Over the next year they dated, became engaged, and were married. Then, ten weeks later they were involved in a tragic car accident that almost took Krisxan's life.

**Krisxan lost all her
memory of the
previous year.**

As a result of the accident, Krisxan lost all her memory of the previous year, including her recent marriage to Kim. This left Kim discouraged and frustrated, but he intended to keep his promise to her at the altar that he would be with her in sickness and in health.

As time went on Krisxan began to question the doctors and her family about the man who loyally visited her all the time. When they told her that it was her husband, she said that she was not married.

After months of therapy Krisxan realized that if she had indeed married Kim—an event she did not remember—she wanted to go through the whole process again. When Kim found out that his wife wanted to begin again, he was happy that she finally recognized his love and loyalty to her through her long, difficult recovery. They began dating again, fell in love, were engaged, and became married for the second time. During the second wedding Krisxan said to Kim, "I thank you for being true to your original vows, and I pray that I might be the wife you fell in love with."

As you study this week's lesson, keep in mind who it is you are being loyal to. Is it Christ or the things of this world?

*Lynnette Baughman, "For Better, For Worse," *Reader's Digest*, December 1996, pp. 121-126.

Babylon Is Fallen!

EVIDENCE

Rev. 14:8

Babylon, "that great city" (Rev. 14:8, KJV), is used in Revelation to symbolize apostasy at the end of time. A biblical study of Babylon helps us to understand this symbolism. Babylon, or Babel (both the same word in Hebrew), means "confusion." Literal and figurative Babylons in God's Word represent the doctrines that Satan has devised to draw us away from truth and opposition to God. Isaiah prophesied the fall of literal Babylon (Isa. 21:9), and the second angel of Revelation 14 announces that figurative Babylon will fall. Throughout history every Babylon is doomed to failure because it is on Satan's side in the great controversy.

The builders of the Tower of Babel moved to the plain of Shinar in rebellion against God (Gen. 11:1-9). They rejected God's command to scatter over the earth and wanted to build a world empire, beginning with the tower. God sent His angels to confuse their language, and the project failed.

When Babylon became a powerful nation in Daniel's time, Nebuchadnezzar wanted his empire to endure as the kingdom of gold. He became proud of his great accomplishments and ignored Daniel's warnings. Nebuchadnezzar lost his personal power because he did not glorify God (Dan. 4:28-33), and Babylon fell in a night of confusion (5:26-31).

Revelation 13; 17 predict a power that would oppose God's people for 1,260 years. This alliance of the Roman Catholic Church and the kingdoms of Europe is symbolized as Babylon and the beast. This Babylon fell in 1798 when the political power of the church was broken.

The Babylon of Revelation 14; 18 will fall at the end of time. It represents the last great deception, in which people worship the beast and its image but think they are worshiping God. But Babylon will fall when Christ returns.

When Jesus returns to earth with His people after a thousand years in heaven, Satan will instigate one last effort to overthrow God. Those who have rejected God will gather in rebellion just as they did at the Tower of Babel. But the wicked will be defeated, and every knee will bow before God and confess Him as Lord. The confusion will be over; those who persist in following Babylon will be destroyed in the second death. Only those who were loyal to God will be left to enjoy eternal life.

Those who persist in following Babylon will be destroyed in the second death.

REACT

What is your personal "Babylon" that could draw you into error and rebellion against God?

Monday
August 6

Whom Will You Worship?

LOGOS

Gen. 11:1-9; Dan. 7:25; Matt. 5:17, 18; Rom. 3:31; Rev. 12:17; 14:6-12

“How long will you falter between two opinions?” cried the prophet. “If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him!” (1 Kings 18:21, NKJV). The battle for Israel's loyalty had reached a climax on Mount Carmel.

At the end of time God's people will face a similar decision. God and Satan will make a final struggle for control of the world, and everyone will have to choose a side. How can we prepare for this crisis of loyalty? The messages of the three angels in Revelation 14 give us clues to the issues at stake and the characteristics of the saints,

**Who will receive your
worship and allegiance?**

those who remain faithful to God through this difficult time.

God or the Beast? (Rev. 14:7, 9-10)

The first angel, who brings the gospel—the good news—outlines the positive side of the debate. He commands, “Worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Rev. 14:7, NKJV). Another angel follows shortly afterward with this dire warning: “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God” (verses 9-10, NKJV).

These messages contain the essence of what is at stake. Who will receive your worship and allegiance? But what does it mean to worship the beast?

A Command Against Adultery (Rev. 14:8)

The beast is already a familiar character in Revelation, a persecuting political force who receives authority straight from the devil (13:2, 7). This power is inextricably linked with another recurring symbol, the wicked city of Babylon, portrayed as a promiscuous woman and representing apostate religion (17:3-5). At the end of time the beast rules the earth, forcing everyone to submit or die.

But what is the real danger in this twofold evil force? The second angel in Revelation 14 gives a hint: “Babylon the Great . . . made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries” (verse 8, NIV).

Throughout Bible prophecy, God uses sexual unfaithfulness as a symbol of spiritual apostasy. The Old Testament prophets repeatedly rebuked the Israelites for their idolatry by comparing the nation to a prostitute or an unfaithful spouse. God even had the prophet Hosea marry an adulterous wife as a representation of His relationship with the idolatrous Israelites (see Jeremiah 10; Hos. 3:1).

Babylon and the beast seek to take our allegiance from God and draw our worship to themselves. That is the reason that such terrible judgments are pronounced on those who follow them. In fact, Revelation 13:4 indicates that those who worship the beast end up worshipping Satan himself!

How to Be a Saint (Rev. 14:12)

The time of the beast's rule will not be pleasant for those loyal to God. John notes that this period "calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus" (14:12, NIV).

Three characteristics of the saints enable them to be victorious:

1. Patient endurance (or perseverance in some translations).

2. Obedience to God's commandments.

3. Faith in Jesus, faithfulness to Jesus, or trust in Jesus' faithfulness (depending on which translation or commentator you consult).

Adventists have often focused on the second characteristic, identifying the Sabbath as the definitive question that will divide the worshipers of God and the worshipers of the beast at the end of time. This is appropriate in light of the first angel's call to worship God as the Creator of "heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" in words that echo the fourth commandment (verse 7, NKJV). Daniel also points out the beast's usurping of divine authority by trying "to change the set times and the laws" (Dan. 7:25, NIV).

However, the three qualities are intertwined throughout Scripture. James notes that "the testing of your faith develops perseverance" (James 1:3, NIV). Paul indicates that faith upholds the law (Rom. 3:31). And elsewhere in Revelation, John says that the beast's persecution will call for "patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints" (Rev. 13:10, NIV).

In order to remain loyal to God, we will need to know God's commands so we can follow them, and we'll need to know Jesus so we can trust in Him. We'll also need a faith that keeps holding on even when the cause looks hopeless. When the end-time crisis comes, these traits will not magically appear in the individuals who follow God. We must begin developing them now.

A Picture of Hope (Rev. 14:1-5; 15:2-4)

The story of God's people at the end of time, as disheartening as it sounds, does not end with persecution and trouble. Immediately before and after the three angels' warnings of terrible crisis for worshipers of God and terrible punishments for those who worship the beast, John views a scene of the redeemed rejoicing in heaven. God reminds us that those who are victorious over the beast will receive a glorious reward.

That's a great encouragement as we face the small crises of faith now and as we prepare, through God's strength, to be able to choose Him no matter what test of loyalty comes.

Tuesday
August 7

Growing Your Loyalty

TESTIMONY

Gen. 39:8, 9; John 15:12-14

If there is one word that sums up the Christian character, it is loyalty—loyalty to God, family, church, friends, and ourselves. However, loyalty is not something that just happens. It is not a characteristic that is produced during a crucial moment or crisis in our life. To enter a crisis without already-existing loyalties would be like a doctoral candidate trying to defend a thesis that has not been written. Obviously, loyalty must be developed.

As Christians, our loyalty to Christ is directly proportional to the amount of time we spend daily in stimulating and intensifying our loyalty to Him, His government, and His extended family as represented by the church. It is the minor choices that we make each day that help prepare us for the important decisions in life. Our response to every experience of life is a continual series of training exercises that strengthen or weaken our loyalty.

“There are few who realize the influence of the little things of life upon the development of character. Nothing with which we have to do is really small.”¹ Every individual who desires to be successful in anything must be constantly improving the little things, or the business will fail, the patient will die, or the game will be lost. The same is true in the Christian life.

As we grow in loyalty, we are entrusted by God with opportunities to show even greater loyalty. “The varied circumstances that we meet day by day are

We should consider experiences of life as a continual series of training exercises.

designed to test our faithfulness [loyalty] and to qualify us for greater trusts. By adherence to principle in the transactions of ordinary life, the mind becomes accustomed to hold the claims of duty above those of pleasure and inclination. Minds thus

disciplined are not wavering between right and wrong, like the reed trembling in the wind; they are loyal to duty because they have trained themselves to habits of fidelity and truth. By faithfulness in that which is least they acquire strength to be faithful in greater matters.”²

The ultimate measure of loyalty was given by Christ when He said, “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15, NIV). Within hours after making that statement, Jesus set the absolute example of loyalty by choosing to die rather than break one of the commands He had asked His friends to obey. That will be the true measure of our loyalty throughout eternity.

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 222.

2. *Ibid.*

Good Things Come to Those Who Wait

HOW-TO

Prov. 3:5; Matt. 7:7; Rev. 14:12

Since we know that Christ's coming is near and unexpected, living a Christlike life is essential for having eternal life with our Creator. But this is difficult living in a secular world in the new millennium.

It is our job as Christians to be good examples. This takes patience, endurance, and trust in God (Rev. 14:12). But how? The following steps I have taken from my own experience:

1. Put it in God's hands. Putting trust in God is sometimes hard for us to do, even as Christians. A lot of us may think, *I can do this*, when in fact the "I" should be turned into "we."

I myself have even thought, *God has too many prayers to answer tonight, so why bother?* Have you ever felt this way? I must admit it was irrational to assume that. I know for a fact He answers prayers. He is the Creator—the Divine! So learn to trust God and know He will follow through with what He says. (Prov. 3:5).

Have you been patient
when you're waiting for
God's answers?

2. Be patient. Though learning to put trust in God can sometimes be difficult, being patient is just as challenging. Many of us want a quick fix to our problems or concerns, but trusting in God takes patience. Remember, good things come to those who wait. Jesus will fulfill our prayers if we ask (Matt. 7:7).

Jesus makes this simple, realistic, and easy to follow. Have you been patient today with the cashier at the grocery store or with the car in front of you? Have you been patient when you're waiting for God's answers? It is much better to wait for God to work than to jump in and do it ourselves, because we seldom stop to think about the consequences.

Living a Christlike life should not be hard, theological, or technical; it should be simple, realistic, and practical. So learn to put your trust in God and wait for His answers.

REACT

1. How is "trusting God with all my heart" different from "letting go and letting God"?
2. Give three reasons that you are reluctant to trust God without reservation.
3. You know two individuals: a millionaire Seventh-day Adventist and an atheist on welfare. Which one would have a harder time accepting the promises of Matthew 7:7? Explain your answer.

OPINION

Rev. 14:12

End-time crisis scenarios are familiar in Adventism, and these hypothetical situations tend to focus on a worldwide Sunday law that forces those who want to keep the Sabbath into hiding in the wilderness. While such stories may be entertaining, they do much to distract us from the real concerns of living a Christian life in today's world as well as from other important points in our doctrine.

The Adventist message is a complete message that encompasses the whole

Attention on the Sabbath presents a perhaps more insidious danger.

Bible and our whole way of life. This is summed up in Revelation 14:12, which tells us that our Christian growth "calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain

faithful to Jesus" (NIV). This text gives great insight into a complete Christian life, which, according to Revelation, will include our faith (we must have a personal relationship with Jesus), our character (God's people are to be patient and forbearing), and our beliefs (the saints will obey God's commandments).

To focus unduly on the Sabbath at the end of time while giving less attention to the importance of a relationship with God and a Christian character does not strengthen our message. Instead, it can lead to legalism, which at its core simply reduces the saving truth of a friendship with Jesus into an esoteric concept outside the practice of everyday experience.

The attention on the Sabbath at the end of time, however, presents a perhaps more insidious danger. Only one generation will live through the time of trouble. Even that generation will spend most of their lives in the "normal" world, not in this most unique of circumstances. Therefore, what is most important is that we focus our message on practical ways to nurture faith, Christian character, and obedience to God's commandments in our everyday lives.

Even if we are the generation who sees Jesus come, we will not make it through the time of trial unless we have built a complete Christian life. This concept was illustrated by Jesus when he said, "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much" (Luke 16:10, NIV).

The Sabbath is an important doctrine, and, for those who face it, the end of time will be a pivotal moment in their lives. However, our concept of the Sabbath at the end of time is best understood, and best applied, within the framework of a healthy, balanced Christian life.

"These Three Things . . ."

EXPLORATION

1 Cor.13:13; Rev.14:12

CONCLUDE

In the great love chapter (1 Corinthians 13), Paul declares that three things last forever: faith, hope, and love. John uses similar terms to describe vital characteristics of God's people as they face earth's final crisis. Faith is loyalty to the God we hope in. Hope is the bright, ideal side of endurance's practical, down-to-earth nature. Love is expressed in obedience to His commands. These three things are interwoven into a forever cord that characterizes our relationship with our Father, our Comforter, and our Redeemer. It is a cord that we are weaving now, daily, in every little thing we do. It is this relationship that will take us through the worst of times and make us worthy for the best of times, in God's hereafter.

CONSIDER

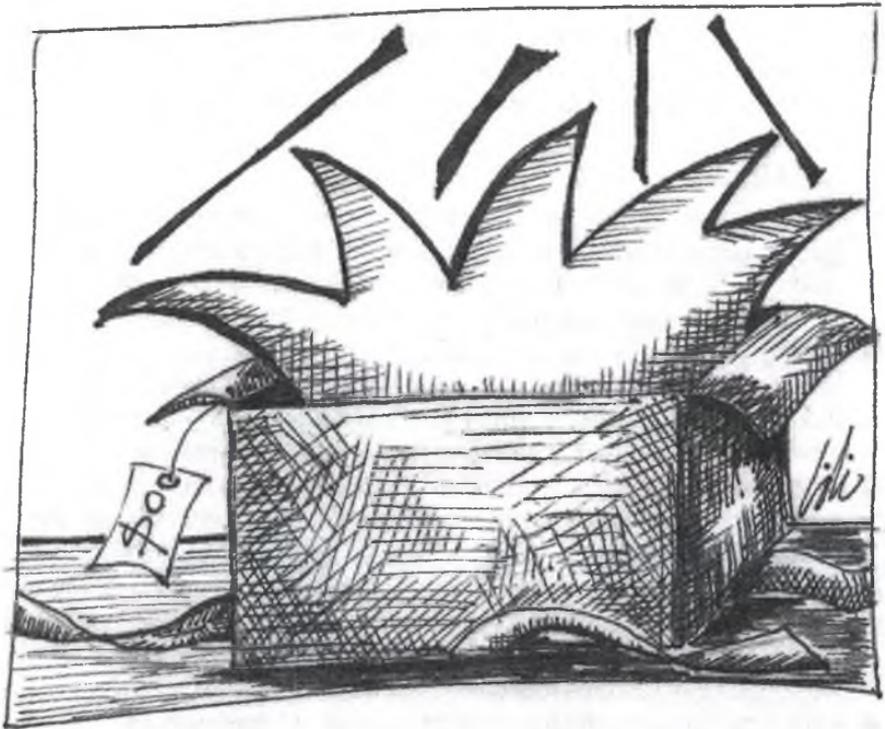
- Braiding three ribbons, yarns, vines, or cords of rope. Mark the top of each component as "Endurance," "Obedience," or "Faith," and the bottom of each cord, "Faith," "Hope," or "Love." Hang your creation where it will help remind you of the interrelationship of these aspects of your relationship to God.
- Writing your own words to the tune of "Amazing Grace," beginning each verse with "Amazing faith . . ." "Amazing hope . . ." and "Amazing love . . ."
- Baking a friendship loaf of bread. (Cut the dough into three strips and braid it before baking.) Share your bread with a new acquaintance.
- Using the three aspects of our relationship with God to analyze and improve your budding relationship with a new friend or some other relationship that needs a fresh, positive outlook.
- Making three columns on a sheet of paper under the titles "Endurance," "Faith," and "Obedience." As you study "The Time of Trouble," (chap. 39 of *The Great Controversy*), make notes under each column as you come across references that relate to these three qualities.
- Paraphrasing 1 Corinthians 13 in the context of Revelation 14.

CONNECT

Ephesians 3:14-21; 4:1-16; Revelation 2; 3.

The Great Controversy, pp. 582-634.

God's Gift of Immortality



"As in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive"
(1 Cor. 15:22, NKJV).

A Gift for My Special One

INTRODUCTION

Rom. 3:23; 6:23

The doorbell rings, and you run downstairs to answer it. You open the door and there He is: the Man you've been waiting for, the Man who is your only hope left. You quickly usher Him in and take Him upstairs to see your mother.

Your mother is seen lying in her bed with hospital tubes running in and out of her body. It's a terrible and painful sight. This wonderful Man who is by your side is her only hope. If only

The Man walks over to your mother's bedside. He looks at her tenderly and lovingly. He strokes her hand and tells her, "It's OK. It will be all right." If only . . .

Then, the moment you've been eagerly waiting for arrives. He extends His hand and holds out a gift. This is a gift like no other, a gift only He possesses. Only He can give it, and it is the most special and wonderful gift anyone could have. You watch as your mother looks at that gift. You wonder if she realizes the value of it. You wait and you watch to see if she accepts it. If only she would!

**You open the door
and there He is.**

The gift in the story above is the gift of immortality; the mother is us, and that wonderful Man is God. Immortality is a gift from God to us, and it is up to us to decide whether we want to accept or reject it. It is a wonderful gift, a really wonderful gift. If only we would accept it. It is that simple. We can have that gift of immortality if we accept Jesus Christ as our beloved and personal Savior. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23, NKJV). "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23, NKJV).

Do you want it? Do you accept it?

Sunday
August 12

Special Gift— Free of Charge!

LOGOS

Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7; 3:4, 5; Matt. 11:25; John 5:29; Rom. 6:23

Who doesn't want to live forever? But is the gift of immortality like a happy-ever-after story, or is it a blissful state that we enter into after death?

Let's begin with what the Bible says immortality is not:

- A life-after-death experience in which the person goes directly to heaven, hell, or purgatory.
- Reincarnation in which the person is born into the world again, either in a higher or lower state as compared with the previous life.
- Spiritualism in which the dead can communicate with the living.

Interestingly, the first promise of immortality recorded in the Bible was a lie spoken by the devil, the old serpent, to Adam and Eve in their Eden home. It ended up with both Adam and Eve losing their immortality. And if God had not in His mercy banished the couple from their Eden home, they would have become immortal sinners instead.

“You will not surely die” (Gen. 3:4, NKJV), uttered more than 6,000 years ago, has become the mother of all lies.

**The resurrection is the
antidote for death.**

At the heart of it is the teaching that the soul exists as a separate entity not subject to death. The Bible, however, is clear that “the soul who sins shall die” (Ezek. 18:4, NKJV). “All have sinned” (Rom. 3:23, NKJV) and “the wages of sin is death” (6:23, NKJV).

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul is the devil's master deception designed with the one purpose of undermining the very foundation upon which the gospel is established—the death, resurrection, and second advent of Jesus Christ.

The resurrection (1 Cor. 15:13, 14, 17, 18). Paul's point is clear: there is no hope of life after death except through the resurrection. If one went to heaven at death, then there is no need of the resurrection.

The second coming of Jesus Christ (John 14:2, 3). If people went to heaven at death, then there would be no need for Christ to return the second time to take them to His Father's house. Why should He come again to take them when they are already there?

The death of Jesus Christ (John 3:16). The death of Christ at Calvary promises immortality. Eternal life will be bestowed to the saints at the second coming of Christ. If a person already possesses it, however, why would Jesus have to die on the cross?

Note how Satan insidiously destroys the Christian faith through the belief in the immortality of the soul. If a person possesses an immortal soul, there is no need for the resurrection, the Second Coming, or the cross of Calvary. With one

sweeping stroke, Satan strikes at the very foundation of Christianity.

On the other hand, if people are mortal and do not have life after death until the resurrection, what happens to them in the interval between death and the resurrection? Only the Bible can accurately answer that question:

- The dead do not know anything (Eccles. 9:5, 6).
- Upon death, the breath of life returns to God, while the body returns to the earth. That very day the thoughts perish (Ps. 146:3, 4).
- The body remains in the grave and does not ascend to heaven (Acts 2:28, 34).
- Death is a sleep (John 11:11-14).
- Jesus comes again to awaken us out of our death sleep (1 Thess. 4:16).

How much better is the biblical hope of resurrection in which we will be real people with real physical bodies, doing real things! Don't let Satan deceive you on this foundational doctrine of Christianity.

God is the origin of immortality. The Bible is dogmatic on this point: immortality is an attribute solely of God, "the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal" (1 Tim. 6:15, 16, NIV).

Death is the enemy of immortality. The serpent said, " 'You will not surely die' " (Gen. 3:4, NKJV). But God says, " 'The soul who sins shall die' " (Ezek. 18:4, NKJV). "All have sinned" (Rom 3:23, KJV), and "the wages of sin is death" (6:23, KJV). Because we have all sinned, we are all subject to death and inherit the enemy of immortality.

The resurrection is the antidote for death. "Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor. 15:20, NKJV). The resurrection of Christ is our guarantee of the antidote for death. Ironically, the days of death are numbered.

The Second Coming is the death of mortality. "Our Savior Jesus Christ, . . . has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10, NKJV). The second coming of Jesus Christ is truly the realization of this blessed hope of immortality. The when has become the now!

The gift of immortality is available only through the Son of God. "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:11, 12, NKJV). Eternal life or the gift of immortality is a package deal: no Son, no deal. You can't have one without the other.

REACT

1. Christ Jesus died, rose, and is coming back again. In what way is the gift of immortality tied up with all three events?
2. Why do you desire eternal life?
3. What does it mean to have the Son (1 John 5:12)?
4. How do you convince someone their loved one is asleep in death without taking away their assurance that the loved one is "safe in the arms of God"? In what ways does Satan's original lie—"You shall not die"—pervert our views about personal relationships, career choices, and ethical decision making?

TESTIMONY

Eccles. 9:5, 6, 10; Rom. 3:23; 6:23

Indeed, who doesn't want to live forever? But every one of us has or will in one way or another lose someone we care for. One day we ourselves will have to leave this world and our loved ones behind. Death is something that no one can run away from, and we are terrified of the thought of leaving everything we have in this world behind. Probably this is why people have always tried to prolong their life span, tried to be immortal.

It was in the Garden of Eden that humankind heard the word *death* for the very first time. A warning was given to Adam and Eve: " 'You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die' " (Gen. 2:17, NIV). Our first parents may not have known what death is, but they knew that to possess endless existence, they must continue to eat from the tree of life.

Satan planned to make Adam and Eve disobey God and continue to eat from the tree of life. Thus he hoped humankind would live a life of sin and misery forever.

The old serpent succeeded in making Adam and Eve lose their immortality, but God mercifully commissioned holy angels to guard the tree of life. Adam and Eve were not permitted to eat the life-giving fruit and therefore there is no immortal sinner. As a consequence of Adam and Eve's fall, sin entered the world, and earth

Humankind heard the word *death* for the very first time.

witnessed the first death when Cain murdered his brother Abel.

Many believe that the body and soul are entirely separate and that after death the soul leaves the body to begin a new life or go to heaven. The

Scriptures clearly state the condition of the dead: "The living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, . . . Their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun. . . . There is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going" (Eccles. 9:5, 6, 10, NKJV).

"As Adam's transgression had brought wretchedness and death, so the sacrifice of Christ would bring life and immortality."^{*}

Satan planned the downfall of humanity, but the Lord planned our redemption. Jesus had offered to sacrifice His own life for humankind. A period of repentance was granted to us, and through repentance and faith in Christ we may become the children of God.

^{*}*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 66, 67.

You Want the Truth?

EVIDENCE

John 11:14, 43-45; Rom. 2:7; 1 Cor. 15:52, 53; Eph. 2:4-6; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 7:14-17; 20:5

When a person dies, he or she has yet to become immortal. Why? (See John 11:14, 43-45.) Lazarus had died and was buried in the grave for four days. After four days Jesus went to Bethany to raise Lazarus to life. If there is immortality right after death, Lazarus would have been enjoying heaven right after he died. If this thing really happens, why would Jesus want to raise Lazarus up in the first place? While Lazarus was enjoying the beauty and goodness in heaven and Jesus had raised him up, wouldn't Jesus be implying that "Lazarus, you'd better come down!" Wouldn't Lazarus be blaming God by saying, "Why did you pull me down to earth again? I'm enjoying life here in heaven!"

Why would Jesus want to raise Lazarus up in the first place?

Does this make sense? Every Christian believes that Jesus is coming to this earth again to raise the saints from the earth. (See Eph. 2:4-6; Rev. 7:14-17; 20:5.)

If there is immortality and the immortal will go to heaven right after death, then who will Jesus raise at His second coming? What is the purpose then?

The Bible says that now only God is immortal. "To the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever" (1 Tim. 1:17, NKJV). After the first resurrection when all the saints are raised, then only we will be immortal and have eternal life. "To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life" (Rom. 2:7, NIV). "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:52, 53, NKJV).

This is proof enough that immortality will exist—only not now.

REACT

1. How would you respond to someone who claims that Luke 23:43 proves that there is immortality after death?
2. How do Elijah and Moses fit into a biblical view of death?
3. How would you persuade a person that our doctrine of soul-sleep goes beyond simply warning people against seeing ghost movies?
4. How does living as a not-yet-immortal Christian distinguish you from persons believing they have immortality now?
5. Define immortality.

HOW-TO

1 Cor. 15:3, 4, 51-54

God hates sin. It brought forth a fatal consequence. Humanity, God's beloved creation, will die because they sinned. In order to prevent the inevitable, God resurrected Jesus after His death. Yes, Jesus, was flesh and blood, like all of us. Therefore, God gives us an assurance: mortality can be overcome.

Does it end there? Paul reassured us that we'd be given an incorruptible body and an immortal life (1 Cor. 15:51-54). We would never die—ever. God wants all of us to be with Him when He comes to take us to heaven. His love is infinite.

Since we know for a fact that God will give us immortal life, troubles of this world are so microscopic that we don't even have to worry much about them. Nothing is too difficult

**What shall I do to
inherit eternal life?
Nothing!**

for God. He controls life. We as Christians do not have to fear anything but God. Therefore nothing will stand in our way as we bring the gospel of salvation to the world.

What shall I do to inherit eternal life? Nothing! You can't do anything to inherit

eternal life. It has been given to you by grace through Jesus. "OK," you ask, "what do I do while Jesus is making His comeback?" This is what you do:

1. Communicate with God. It is important for us all to communicate with God. That's the only way we'll know what He wants us to do. Communication is also essential to maintain a healthy relationship with God. Means of communication are prayer, meditation, and Bible study.

2. Tell others about God. God is so generous to us, and we must be generous to others. Others must be informed of His love so they can have eternal life too. What's the point of having immortality when there's only you alone?

3. Walk with God. Since we're going to spend eternity with God, it is good that we get used to the feel even now. It will not be easy, but the Holy Spirit will tell you what to do. Always ask yourself this question: "What would Jesus do?"

4. Care for your health. We are still on this earth and do not possess an incorruptible body yet. So take care of your body so that you can do what God wants you to do for Him—especially in bringing others to God.

Death has lost its sting (1 Cor. 15:55). Let's live for God until we are united with Him again in heaven, with our body incorruptible and our soul immortal.

REACT

1. Is it possible to have a relationship with God based on prayer alone? What is the practical value of Bible study and meditation?

2. To what extent do we have to care for our health? Cannot God use us, even in ill health?

McImmortality

OPINION

Job 19:25, 26; Eccles. 9:5; Mark 5:39; John 5:11-13; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 John 4:8

Some time ago, I overheard one of my Christian friends say to another, “I wonder what it is like for the person who has died and gone to heaven. And what will it be like when Jesus comes again with all those who have died before.”

My first instinct was to respond, “That’s not how it’s supposed to be!” Thankfully I did not do so, or I would have lost the chance to have a proper study with them. Just for a while though, imagine that this is true: that those who die go to heaven and live forever. What is the use of Christ’s second coming then? Why bother coming at all if the faithful are already in heaven?

And how could those who have ascended to heaven be happy as they see all the suffering, especially of their loved ones, on earth? It would be more of a torment for them to be in heaven. More of a hell. Would God be so cruel as to let this happen?

No, “God is love” (1 John 4:8, KJV). It is not in His character to do this. Instead He tells us that death is like sleeping (Mark 5:39) and that “the dead know nothing” (Eccles. 9:5, NKJV). The good news is that we “shall see God” (Job 19:26, NKJV). Eternal life begins only after Jesus comes again and not when a person dies.

Ever heard of a value meal—\$3.99? \$4.99? This is when foods are offered together as a package at a discounted price. Eternal life is a bit like that: it is part of a package deal, albeit a spiritual one.

You have your burger (main), your fries/dessert (side), and drink. The spiritual package consists of Jesus/God (main), immortality/happiness (spiritual blessings), and heaven (material blessings). The price? Free!

Wait a minute! we think. *There must be a catch somewhere.* In a sense there is. You have to accept this gift by wholly surrendering yourself to God and accepting His will as your own. If you just work at seeking God, the other “perks” will follow—including immortality.

**It would be more of
a torment to them
to be in heaven.**

Most people I know would go for a value meal today. Would you opt for the spiritual equivalent of a value meal and be counted as one of the faithful?

REACT

1. Proponents of the immortality-of-the-soul idea use Luke 16:19-31 and Revelation 14:10, 11 to support their case. How would you respond to these references?
2. How do you explain ghosts and spirits to someone who believes in them?

Friday
August 17

We're Immortal— But Not Now

EXPLORATION

1 Cor. 15:22

CONCLUDE

Paul explains that when Adam sinned, we lost our immortality through him—but that when Christ was resurrected, He restored the gift of immortality to us. Satan's lie, "You shall not die," is an attempt to make the resurrection unnecessary, striking a blow at Christ's sacrifice for us. The Bible teaches that the *soul* who sins will die. Since we have all sinned, we all die; and death, says the Bible, is a sleep. The dead are clearly not in heaven now. Because of Christ's resurrection into eternal life, which He shares with us, we will have immortality when He comes.

CONSIDER

- Debating the issue of immortality with a friend, using Bible texts on death and immortality. Each of you should take one side and defend it as well and fairly as you can. When you finish, don't forget to remind each other of God's love and the wonderful hope of eternal life He gives us.
- Sculpting a clay person lying down and envision yourself breathing the breath of life into this person's body. Did the body live before God breathed the breath of life into it? Did the breath have an independent life of its own before it entered the body?
- Making a chart with two columns. In one column, write down all the texts that say or suggest that we live on in some way when we die. In the other, write down all the texts that say or suggest that we stay in the grave when we die. Compare and evaluate the two columns when finished.
- Meditating on the following question: What would your life be like if death were the end of life forever, and there were no Saviour to give you the gift of immortality? Pour out your gratitude in a free verse poem.
- Reaching out to someone who is grieving over the death of a friend or family member, sharing the hope of seeing the loved one again when Jesus comes.
- Researching and contacting organizations that provide training in grief counseling. Consult with your pastor or church Bible worker for additional advice, information, and references.

CONNECT

John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:52-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

The Desire of Ages, p. 804; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 646, 647.

C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, pp. 73-77; Jack Sequiera, *Beyond Belief*.

The earthly Sanctuary



“ ‘Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them’ ” (Exod. 25:8, NKJV).

The Place in Which You Step Fearfully

INTRODUCTION

Exod. 25:9, 40

Take off your shoes because the place in which you will enter is holy. It is the place where you begin to best feel your meanness or your smallness. All around you, everything is filled with holiness and with the greatness of the things from above, because it is made *exactly* after the likeness of that in heaven. It is about the temple.

Most times we forget that the earthly temple has been made exactly like the one in heaven. Some of us try to skip the passages in which the building of the temple is rendered with so many details. It's almost—boring! This is the case when we do not understand that every detail concerning the temple is closely connected to our lives, yours and mine! Yet we can no longer talk of skipping these passages when we realize that “the reproaches of those who reproach [God] have fallen on [us]” (Ps. 69:9, NKJV). God is also our Friend.

I remember the moment when I, as a little girl, together with my grandmother, stepped hand in hand into a huge Orthodox cathedral, the place where God lives.

**That distant God from the
Orthodox cathedral revealed
Himself to me as an
extraordinary Friend.**

Although I didn't see God, the huge columns and the greatness of the place made me think of the greatness of God, a too great and too holy God, a God too far from me. I became frightened. The fact

that my grandmother was holding my hand was my safety and my peace. Over the years when I began to know the One who lived there much better, that place became dear to me and that distant God from the Orthodox cathedral revealed Himself to me as an extraordinary Friend who came from the skies above to hold my hand and take me inside. From that moment on I have no longer felt that horrible fear, but a holy fear instead. This was not because I felt myself greater, but because the One in the temple was my Friend and was holding my hand. Now I am looking forward to seeing the twin temple, the one in heaven.

Let yourself be caught in the hand of Jesus during this week, and you will discover in all those details the things that are connected to your life!

The Most Important Day of the Year

EVIDENCE

Leviticus 16; Heb. 9:6-8, 11, 12

Amid the many festivals and sacrifices given to the Israelites, the Day of Atonement was the most important day of the year. There are six major festivals of the Jewish calendar as set out in Leviticus 23. Falling between the Festival of Trumpets and the Festival of Shelters, the Day of Atonement took place in late September or early October each year. All these festivals were serious occasions; however, five of them were primarily times of celebration and feasting.

The Day of Atonement was different. In fact, the preparations for, and ceremonies of, the Day of Atonement take up a whole chapter in themselves (Leviticus 16). Rather than a day of feasting, this was to be a day of rest and fasting; the people were to “humble themselves” (Lev. 23:32). Leviticus 16 details an even more rigorous process of washing and sacrifices to prepare the priest and his family for the day. It was the one day of the year when the high priest was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place—the second room of the tabernacle. The detailed preparations and requirements suggest that even then the priest’s life was at risk: “If he follows these instructions, he will not die” (Lev. 16:13). It was a serious occasion.

The high priest would kill a goat and sprinkle its blood on the ark of the covenant—in the Most Holy Place—and the altar on which sacrifices were made. Then the priest would place his hands on a live goat and confess the sins of all the people of Israel. The confession of all the sins of the people was important. Seven times Leviticus 16 emphasizes that this ceremony was for *all* the people’s sins. It included all the unknown sins and accidental sins that may not have been confessed by a specific sin offering through the previous year. The goat would then be led away from the camp, symbolizing the removal of the sins from the people.

**Seven times Leviticus 16
emphasizes that this ceremony
was for *all* the people’s sins.**

The death of Jesus is often associated with the Jewish Passover, and there is significance in that symbolism. However, when the curtain in the temple was torn in two at the moment of Christ’s death (Mark 15:38), the atonement act was specifically linked to Jesus. “Once for all time he took blood into that Most Holy Place. . . . He took his own blood, and with it he secured our salvation forever” (Heb. 9:12, NLT).

REACT

How has Jesus made a difference between God and us?

LOGOS

Exod. 25:9, 40; 29:38-42; 30:1, 6-8; Lev. 1:1-5; 16; 23:4, 5, 26-32; Num. 29:12-34; John 1:36; 1 Cor. 5:7

Dwelling With Us (Exod. 25:8, 9; 29:38-46)

God commanded Moses, " 'Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it' " (Exod 25:8, 9 NKJV). The sanctuary was to be a continual reminder that God dwelt with His people. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14, NKJV). What was it about Himself that God wanted men to see as He dwelt among us?

A Reminder of Heaven (Exod. 25:9, 40)

The sanctuary was to be built according to the pattern shown Moses. It was a representation of God's dwelling in heaven. Great care was undertaken in its construction, and in its services. The priests knew that they were working in God's presence. What they did was to represent what Jesus would do, who "has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24, NKJV).

Sacrifice and Sin (Lev. 1:1-5; 16; 23:26-32; 1 Cor. 5:7)

The system of sacrifices was to convey to His people that God cannot just ignore their sin. The careful choosing of unblemished animals, the solemn reflections while they were slain, the preparation and washing of the sacrifice for burning, were all to bring home the reality of sin's result.

As Paul was later to say, "Sin pays its servants, the wage is death" (Rom. 6:23, J. B. Phillips). Daily God's people were to know that animals died because of their sin. Annually they were to recognize that, despite their sin, God would set them right with Himself if they were willing to open their hearts to Him in consecration. It was not the blood of animals, but God who would change them. As Isaiah recorded, " 'Come now, and let us reason together,' says the Lord, 'though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool' " (Isa. 1:18, NKJV). How was this to be?

Through the sacrifices was symbolized God's own sacrifice that would once and for all deal with sin. The sacrifices pointed to the One true sacrifice, " 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' " (John 1:29, NKJV). Through the life and death of Jesus, the Son of God, the truth about God's character and government were to be revealed. The wrong ideas about Him, and distrust of Him,

were to be removed. "The only way in which he [God] could set and keep men right was to make Himself visible and familiar to their eyes. That men might have salvation, He came directly to man, and became a partaker of his nature."*

This was the purpose of both the sanctuary and its system of sacrifices: to point to the life and death of Jesus.

An End in Themselves?

The history of God's people shows us that they lost sight of the true meaning of sacrifices. Talking to king Saul, Samuel said, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22, NKJV).

Saul thought that he could earn God's favor by offering sacrifice while he did what he wanted. Sacrifice is of use only if it mirrors the desire to live in harmony with God. David understood this. After his great sin, he said, "You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise" (Ps. 51:16,17, NKJV).

Sacrifice is of use only if it mirrors the desire to live in harmony with God.

And Micah, speaking in a time of great apostasy, asked, "With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Mic. 6:6-8, NKJV).

REACT

1. Why don't we have a tabernacle today?
2. What was the purpose of the sanctuary?
3. How did the sanctuary allow God to dwell with His people in a way that He was not able to do prior to its construction?
4. The emphasis in the sanctuary service on death and sacrifice certainly kept the idea of law before the Israelites. What aspects of the sanctuary emphasized grace? Do you feel the two sides of the equation found an adequate balance in the symbolism of the sanctuary? Explain your answer.
5. Do you agree with the statement: "Sacrifice is of use only if it mirrors the desire to live in harmony with God"? Why or why not? Does obedience have any value in and of itself apart from the motive for obedience? Explain your answer.

**Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1890.

Christ and the Sanctuary

TESTIMONY

Lev. 1:1-17

The sanctuary is a fundamental part of Christianity. It has already been the basis of the prophecies on the first coming of Christ and now it is also a fundamental part of the second coming of Christ.

The sanctuary was put on the earth like a loop of union between God and humanity so He could be among us (Exod. 25:8, 9). The sanctuary would be the terrestrial home of God. The sacrifice of the lambs as pardon for sins (Lev. 1:10-13) is the representation of which Isaiah would prophesy: "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth." (Isa. 53:7-9, NKJV). With the death of Christ on Calvary (Matthew 27; 28) came an end to the rituals of the terrestrial sanctuary. With Jesus' outcry, "It is

**The sanctuary would be the
terrestrial home of God.**

finished" (John 19:30, KJV), the earth shook and the inner veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom by an invisible hand.

Everything was terror and confusion. The priest was about to kill the victim, but the lamb escaped.

In the death of the Son of God, reality replaced the symbol. The great sacrifice had been accomplished. A new, living way had been prepared for all. The Son of God had come according to His Word.

REACT

1. In what specific respects, does the terrestrial sanctuary have meaning in your life?

2. Why did the people of Jesus' time, even His disciples, fail to understand the obvious necessity for the Lamb's death? What does this say about the certainty of our religious concepts?

3. How would you answer someone who claims that the tearing of the sanctuary veil at Jesus' death means that both the daily and the yearly sanctuary services were fulfilled at, and by, Jesus' death?

4. The sanctuary and its services were designed to be an illustration, or parable, of Jesus' mission as Savior. To what extent can we use every detail of the illustration to convey spiritual truth?

Making It Easy

HOW-TO

John 1:36

One of the most rewarding teaching experiences I had was teaching mathematics in high school. Mathematics in general is quite abstract, and besides that, certain topics seemed even more difficult to get through. My communicability improved as I used various strategies such as acting out, using models, drawing, and so on. It was a joy to see evidence of understanding on the faces and papers of my students after a particularly challenging lesson.

The concept of an unseen God is abstract. Many have found it difficult to understand. In their wilderness journey, the children of Israel found God very remote,

very abstract. So God saw fit to use a teaching aid—the earthly sanctuary. He said to Moses, “Let them make me a

God saw fit to use a teaching aid—the earthly sanctuary.

sanctuary; that I may dwell among them” (Exod. 25:8, KJV). Perhaps due to its concrete nature, the sanctuary became an effective symbol of God’s presence. Here was something they could see, go to, and be part of. Now they could relate to God.

The main focus of the earthly sanctuary was Christ, “the Lamb of God” (John 1:36, KJV). God was using the sanctuary as a medium to reveal three aspects of Jesus’ life:

1. Jesus’ sacrifice. The sacrifices offered in the sanctuary pointed to Jesus’ death for sinners. The morning and evening sacrifice especially were reminders of a commitment to Jesus, who would shed His life for them one day.

2. Jesus’ priestly mediation. The sanctuary services were conducted by priests. The people approached God through the priests’ ministry. This pointed to the need for a priestly mediation to approach God. Jesus, the Mediator between God and humanity, was never forgotten whenever the people came to the sanctuary. They knew that Christ’s priestly ministry reconciled them to God.

3. The final judgment. All the services that took place on the annual Day of Atonement symbolized God’s final judgment. There were great lessons to be learned by all. It pointed to the time when the good and the wicked will be separated. It affirmed that sin will be banished forever. Thus, the mercy and justice of God was to be reconfirmed one day.

How is the earthly sanctuary, which existed years ago, meaningful to us now? Of course, there is much that we can learn. All three points regarding the ministry of Jesus discussed above are relevant to a modern follower of Jesus. The past, the present, and the future fit together as in a jigsaw puzzle. Study of the sanctuary reminds us of Jesus’ sacrifice (past), His priestly mediation in the heavenly sanctuary (present), and the final judgment when God’s way will be fully revealed (future).

God still teaches through symbols to make it easy for us to understand.

Thursday
August 23

Why Did He Die for Me?

OPINION

Jer. 31:34

"I feel special because Jesus died for *me*," she said earnestly. Liz, a fellow university student was smiling. In my mind her words were like a rock thrown into a pond. *I need to find out what she means.*

Two thousand years ago seems so far away from digital cameras and computers today. Why should God's death touch me when I wasn't *even born* when He died? Trying to muster some feelings of sympathy was like squeezing tears from a rock. My heart is stone. Why don't I feel *anything*? Christians sing about the Cross all the time, but what's the big deal? *I'm not letting You go unless You bless me.*

I dedicated a weekend to studying a sermon* about Jesus' crucifixion. It was then that light broke through the darkness. The way Jesus died shows us what God really thinks about sinners. Peace at last!

How can we tell when God has forgiven us? I "jumped" into the verse as *The Desire of Ages*, page 390, suggested. Waiting for special feelings to come, I recalled the Bible promise in John 1:9 but still felt anxious.

What did Adam and Eve lose? A trusting friendship with their best Friend, God. Six thousand years down the track I believed God was just so scary because of the stories in the Old Testament and my life experience. I heard God would love for us to live with Him forever, but that we must choose to do so.

Watching Jesus forgive His cruel tormentors *before* they asked Him convinced me: God has forgiven *me* for my whole life before I've even lived it! When I saw Jesus dying on the cross for me personally, I believed God looks at me with a forgiving face.

**I dedicated a weekend
to studying a sermon*
about Jesus' crucifixion.**

To me it's comforting that God feels everything we feel! God went through life and death on this earth so we could see that He is not scary and wants us to be His friends again. That's what has helped me to believe that God's deep-sea love included me.

REACT

1. What roles do the heart and head play in the religious life? Is there an ideal balance between the two? If so, is it the same for every person?
2. When does Jesus forgive a person?
3. Is an emotional experience an indication that Jesus loves us and that we have been forgiven? Is the lack of such an experience an indication that we have not been forgiven? Explain your answers.

*"Why Did Jesus Have to Die?" 4-tape series by Graham Maxwell (Pineknoll Publications).

Touched by a Father

EXPLORATION

Heb.10:10-18

CONCLUDE

Two children of the Vietnamese conflict came to study in the United States. Their agenda, however, included more than just university degrees. Each hoped to find the G.I. father he had never known. One said, "For once I want to look into the eyes of someone and say, 'Father.'" When we separated ourselves from our heavenly Father, He came looking for us. He says, "I want to live with you. I want you to be with Me." He could not, however, overlook our sins. Therefore, Jesus paid the penalty for our sins so that we could once again look into God's eyes and say, "Father."

CONSIDER

- Listening to the song, "What Did He Die For?" by Twila Paris from the album, *Where I Stand*. Discuss the lyrics with a friend.
- Constructing a model of the earthly sanctuary or temple. The *SDA Bible Dictionary* includes diagrams under the heading *temple* that may be helpful.
- Taping episodes of television programs that feature real-life reunions of families that have found long-lost relatives. Invite some friends to view them with you and talk about how these earthly reunions mirror the reunion we will have with our heavenly Father.
- Collecting or photographing items in nature that illustrate God's care for His creatures. Think about how this illustrates His love and care for us.
- Writing a poem based on the story of the lost son found in Luke 15.
- Meditating on a future conversation you will have with your heavenly Father when you will see Him face to face. Think of the questions you will ask Him. Guess what kind of questions He will ask you!

CONNECT

John 17:6-26; Hebrews 8:1-10:10.

The Great Controversy, chap. 23.

Helmut Thielicke, *The Waiting Father*, chaps. 1, 2.

Lesson 9
August 25–September 1

The Heavenly sanctuary



“The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord is on his heavenly throne” (Ps. 11:4, NIV).

A Safe Home

INTRODUCTION

Hebrews 6

When I was a child, I really enjoyed visiting my grandparents' home. At their house I felt love, assurance, peace, understanding, and tolerance. Indeed, my grandparents meant a lot to me. Every time the weekend came closer I looked forward to visiting them. My grandma was always ready to serve delicious food to her grandchildren while we heard her interesting stories. As I reflect on those beautiful moments, I realize that knowing you have a home where you may receive gifts of love no matter what you did or how far you went is one of the most valuable treasures one can have.

Our heavenly Father, with His unconditional wisdom, love, and understanding, has also prepared a heavenly home for His children. He also gave detailed instructions to His servant Moses on how to build a home, a sanctuary, where the Hebrews could interact with their God (Heb. 25:8.) This was a place where God promised to dwell among His people, a place of assurance, a place where He provided guidance, a place where He promised to protect His people; just as my grandparents' home was for me.

**The least we can
do is be thankful.**

Our God used the sanctuary as a wonderful way to teach us about Christ's mission to the world. A lamb's sacrifice resembled the expiatory death of Christ on the cross. It represented His death for our sins and symbolized His willingness to take the blame and punishment that we deserved for our sins. Christ became our Advocate, giving us a second chance to live even while deserving death for our transgressions.

Let's assume that we live at our parents' home. Every day we get in trouble with the law and cause our family all kinds of difficulties. Indeed, these wrongful doings demand appropriate punishment. Our father, who also happens to be a jurist for the city, has the obligation to judge and find us guilty—deserving to pay for our mistakes. Being an honest judge, our father's verdict for us is "guilty." Because of his infinite love, however, he is willing to bail us out from jail and pay the price for our freedom. This is what Jesus did for us on the cross so that we may be free from death today. The least we can do is be thankful and gratefully take the free gift of love given by our Father.

Hebrews 6:18 encourages us to "have strong consolation" (NKJV), refuge, and hope in God. It's for us to take up the promise and rely on God's gift of love through His Son's sacrifice.

This week we will study more about the true meaning of one of our greatest pillars of faith: the heavenly sanctuary.

Sunday
August 26

Instructions From God

LOGOS

1 Kings 8:27; Heb. 7:24–8:2

God provided Moses with a pattern to build a sanctuary where He could share His presence on earth while guiding and protecting the children of Israel. God wanted to offer trust and assurance to His people (Exod. 25:8).

The book of Exodus outlines a complete list of detailed instructions on how to build the earthly sanctuary. From the building dimensions to the list of furniture to the robe details and colors, God paid special attention to the pattern of the sanctuary. Even having a list of instructions dictated directly from God, the earthly sanctuary was an imperfect place, since it served only as a shadow, or symbol, of God's heavenly temple (Heb. 8:5). We must realize that a shadow is only a reflection of reality.

The question is: Where was the reality? King Solomon clearly understood that God's dwelling place was in heaven; therefore, he was surprised by God's promise to dwell among His people, even to the point he doubted whether He would do it or not (1 Kings 8:27). The apostle Paul, when writing his letter to the Hebrews, emphasized the importance of following God's perfect model. It is fundamental to understand that God's main purpose for building an earthly sanctuary was to prepare and guide the minds of His worshipers to receive the promise of a heavenly Savior.

God revealed important details about the heavenly sanctuary that would assist His people to develop a faith based on His promise of salvation. The sanctuary and its services center on the ministry of Jesus Christ. For example, Jesus is the Bread of Life, Jesus is the Lamb of God, and only His sacrifice can cleanse our iniquities. In addition, the high priest ministered in an especially intercessory way to represent Christ, who was to become our High Priest forever. This order of priesthood was not to pass to another or be superseded by another.

Once a year, on the great Day of Atonement, the priest entered the Most Holy

**The question is: Where
was the reality?**

Place for the cleansing of the sanctuary. The work performed there completed the yearly round of ministrations. The prophet Daniel says that after 2300 days (or years) the sanctuary would be cleansed (Dan. 8:14). This purification process had its starting point in 1844, when Christ moved from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary. Jesus appears in the presence of God just as the high priest entered into the Most Holy Place every year. The apostle Paul, however, mentions that Jesus enters the Most Holy Place once and forever to bear the sins of many (Heb. 9:24-28).

What is the message that various biblical writers give about Christ's mission in the heavenly sanctuary? (Heb. 8:1, 2; 1 John 2:1; 1 Tim. 2:5). There is nothing more comforting for humanity's battle against sin than to know there's someone to trust who is willing to forgive any transgression confessed (Heb. 4:14-16). What a wonderful God we have! He is waiting for you and me with open arms, waiting for a reunion of love. We must first have the wisdom, however, to take the benefits of that price that was already paid for us. We must first be willing to receive what is done for us in the heavenly sanctuary before the opportunity is over and it becomes too late to enjoy God's grace (Isa. 55:6).

REACT

1. How important is it to know that Jesus has entered the final stage of the atonement in the heavenly sanctuary?
2. How do you think Jesus feels when He presents His blood on behalf of a person who is struggling with besetting sin?
3. In what ways does "coming before the throne of grace" help a person prepare for temptation before it strikes?
4. In what ways does the heavenly sanctuary have a special meaning for you? Be specific.

Monday
August 27

A Bridge Between God and Humanity

TESTIMONY

Hebrews 7

A young Christian man told the following story about his marriage: "I met my wife through a common friend," he says. "One person that we both knew helped the circumstances so that we could get to know each other. As a result, our first date was a set-up. When I asked her out, I already knew her positive response since our friend had already helped as a mediator between us."*

Actually, Christ plays the same role for us in the heavenly sanctuary as a mediator between sinners and God. Christ's redemptive mission on the cross bridged the gap that kept us from being accepted and known by the heavenly

**Christ can literally save anyone
who comes to Him with faith.**

Father. It may seem inconceivable for us to realize that an infinite God, who is invisible, almighty,

sublime, and impossible to reach, would give us the privilege to get close to Him, become close friends, and be a loving companion who dwells in our hearts—but He did!

Christ's heavenly ministry as a high priest gives us direct access to the Most Holy Place, the dwelling place of the Father. He gives us assurance of salvation (Heb. 7:25) and guarantees in us a clean conscience. Thanks to His unique intercessory qualities (holy, innocent, and pure), He already paid for our transgressions by taking the responsibility upon Himself. He is indeed our Substitute and key to salvation.

In Christ we have a powerful and merciful priest, whose mission is to redeem sinners instead of punishing them. He sits at the right side of the throne, providing us personal attention and forgiving grace to obtain eternal victory. Christ is always watching. He knows all of our afflictions, dangers, and difficulties. He is always ready to make good arguments on our behalf. He adapts His intercession according to the needs of each soul, just as He did with Peter. He is our private Attorney with valid arguments that teach righteousness. His intercessory arguments help those who are accused, tested, and tempted so that they may be strengthened and protected from Satan's temptations.

For us to have such a magnificent Advocate and Friend before the Father, One who intercedes in a personal way, giving free gifts of salvation, we must be willing to receive Him into our lives. Christ can literally save anyone who comes to Him with faith. If one embraces his sins without resentment, there is almost no option for Christ to cleanse his life, for Christ's justice covers the confessed sins.

*Our Daily Bread, Feb. 18, 2000.

Where Does God Live?

EVIDENCE

Heb. 8:1

When I was a little boy, I used to ask my parents, "Where does God live?" I now realize that God does have a home in this universe and it is called the sanctuary.

David declares that "the Lord is on his heavenly throne" (Ps. 11:4, NIV). John differentiates this temple from any other by saying that "God's temple in heaven was opened" (Rev. 11:19, NIV). Even the angels come to this temple to worship their God (Ps. 103:19, 20).

There is a God-made temple in heaven. Jesus Christ ministers on behalf of believers to provide them with the favors of grace offered by the eternal expiatory sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Jesus Himself was clothed to become our High Priest from the moment of the ascension. He has been our Mediator ever since. It is important to remember that when Moses built the temple, he lifted up a model of the heavenly tabernacle just as He was guided to (Exod. 25:9, 40).

The shadow of a tree or a building gives a vague idea of its main object, but it does not give precise details. In *Patriarchs and Prophets*,* Ellen White observes that no earthly building could represent the glory of the heavenly temple, the dwelling place of the King of kings, where thousands worship Him and millions serve Him (Dan. 7:10). There is no place that could represent that temple enhanced with the glory of the eternal throne where even the angels cover their faces from the splendor of God.

In the tabernacle of Israel, priests performed two types of services representing Christ's redemptive duty. In the earthly tabernacle, the priest served as a mediator between God and the repented sinner, just as Christ intercedes for us today not with a lamb's bloody sacrifice but with His own blood (Heb. 7:25). His death on the cross guarantees salvation for the sinner who repents and receives this wonderful gift. Christ exhausted the penalty and provided a pardon. In addition, the priest performed a special service called the atonement, which was held on a yearly basis. On this Day of Atonement, sins were cleansed from the Israelites' camp. This service represented Christ's purification process of the heavenly sanctuary to cleanse His children's sins, a duty that has already begun in heaven.

**The shadow of a building gives
a vague idea of its main object.**

Once Jesus concludes His duty in heaven, He will descend for a second time to take up His children who have waited for His return and gracefully receive the gift of free salvation (Heb. 9:28).

*Chaps. 32, 33.

HOW-TO

Hebrews 7; Rev. 11:15

Throughout this week's lesson, we have answered our childlike question about where God lives and what His duties in heaven are. But how do we get to be part of God's home, and how do we participate in His holy duties?

1. Understand the reality of a heavenly place. Jesus once told His disciples, "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2, NIV). Somewhere in the universe, God has a heavenly place that He wishes to share. About sixty years after the Ascension, John received a vision of

**The heavenly sanctuary
is more than an
analogy or a parable.**

Christ officiating in the tabernacle: "I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band" (Rev. 1:12, 13, NKJV). John saw a real temple, ministered by Jesus Himself on our behalf. The heavenly sanctuary is more than an analogy or a parable; it is a tangible and valuable heavenly element that we must believe, understand, and appreciate.

2. Understand its value. "God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm" (Rev. 11:19, NIV). This marvelous temple was established so that God may become accessible and reachable to humankind. This is an open place of worship where even the angels share the joy of grace through Jesus Christ. God gave careful building instructions to the children of Israel, and He also gives us instructions today so we may accept His intercessory duty in heaven. He promised He would dwell among us, cleanse our hearts, bail us out of the prison of sin, and give us His Son as an advocate. It is for us to accept this gift as ours.

3. Maintain a daily friendship. The children of Israel had a special Day of Atonement to be purified for a close encounter with God. We, too, must maintain a daily atonement mind-set, allowing Christ to dwell among us and share special time as a friend while accepting His free gift of grace. In ancient times, God maintained a close one-to-one relationship with His children; those who left the camp or ignored the favors of the atonement, however, were left behind. Jesus Christ is now purifying His people and the universe with the blood shed for a sinful world. He wants to be our best Friend, but it takes two to maintain a friendship, and it takes a common agreement to have a lawyer-client relationship as well.

Once this process is completed, Christ will come as the King of kings and Lord of lords. He will come back for His people who have accepted redemption through Christ as their Advocate in the heavenly tabernacle.

Strategic Planning

OPINION

Heb. 4:16

Everything needs a plan. Actually, in today's dynamic world nothing is undertaken or executed prior to developing a business plan. In fact, business managers claim that planning is the key for successfully achieving corporate goals and tangible results.

From the very beginning, our heavenly Father outlined the biggest and most complex strategic plan. This plan is so perfect that it carefully involves every single person in the whole wide world. It involves you who may be in Russia, Spain, Patagonia, or me in my small and warm city in Colombia.

The majesty of this plan reflects itself in the heavenly sanctuary, which began its ministry and services on earth and continues now performing holy services in heaven seeking one main goal: "Save humanity." "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17, NKJV).

This plan is getting to its final stages. Our Advocate, Jesus, desires from the bottom of His heart to include *everyone* in His plan of salvation; however, He cannot force this plan to work without teamwork and cooperation. A plan works when there is a commitment and the sincere belief that the mechanisms to achieve the goal must be implemented to succeed. Jesus wants us to accept His plan, participate and believe by faith that the sanctuary and its promises are a reality. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16, NKJV).

The majesty of this plan
reflects itself in the
heavenly sanctuary.

REACT

1. Why is it so important for God to depend on humans to complete His strategic plan for: the family? a business? one's own national government?
2. How would you write God's mission statement in 21st-century language?
3. What are the three main "to do" items on your list for this week based on your knowledge of God's strategic plan of salvation?

Friday
August 31

Built for You: A Heavenly Home

EXPLORATION

Ps. 11:4

CONCLUDE

Because of God's sacrifice, we are eligible for permanent residence in the heavenly sanctuary. And mercifully for us, the price is free! All we have to do is accept His gift of grace.

Centuries ago, an earthly sanctuary was built according to God's design. It was a place to worship and offer sacrifices. The heavenly sanctuary is a place to worship too, but there abides the One who already offered the ultimate sacrifice for us. Right now, in fact, Jesus is preparing that special place for us and interceding with the Father on our behalf. What boundless love!

CONSIDER

- Sketching on graph paper a scale version of the earthly sanctuary outlined in Exodus 25–30. You may also want to sketch items that were associated with the sanctuary, such as the ark of the covenant, the table of shewbread, and the altar of burnt offering. Then sketch the New Jerusalem as John described it in Revelation 21.
- Making a list of things you are most looking forward to doing, seeing, learning, asking, and being free from in heaven. You might want to invite others to do the same, then compare lists.
- Writing a song or poem based on John 14:1-3.
- Looking at the stars on a clear night and envisioning the heavenly sanctuary beyond. Take the quiet opportunity to recommit your life to Christ and to tell Him you thankfully accept His gifts of grace, intercession, and salvation.
- Cooking or baking your favorite recipe from childhood. Savor the comforting aromas, the delicious tastes, the familiar textures. Reflect on the fact that God knows the perfect recipe to bring us joy, comfort, and peace in heaven and that He is putting those ingredients together for us right now.
- Memorizing Revelation 21:3, 4. Recite these texts when you are feeling sad or lonely and know that God is preparing a heavenly sanctuary where tears will be wiped away and cares will be comforted.

CONNECT

John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; Romans 8:26-34; Revelation 5:13.

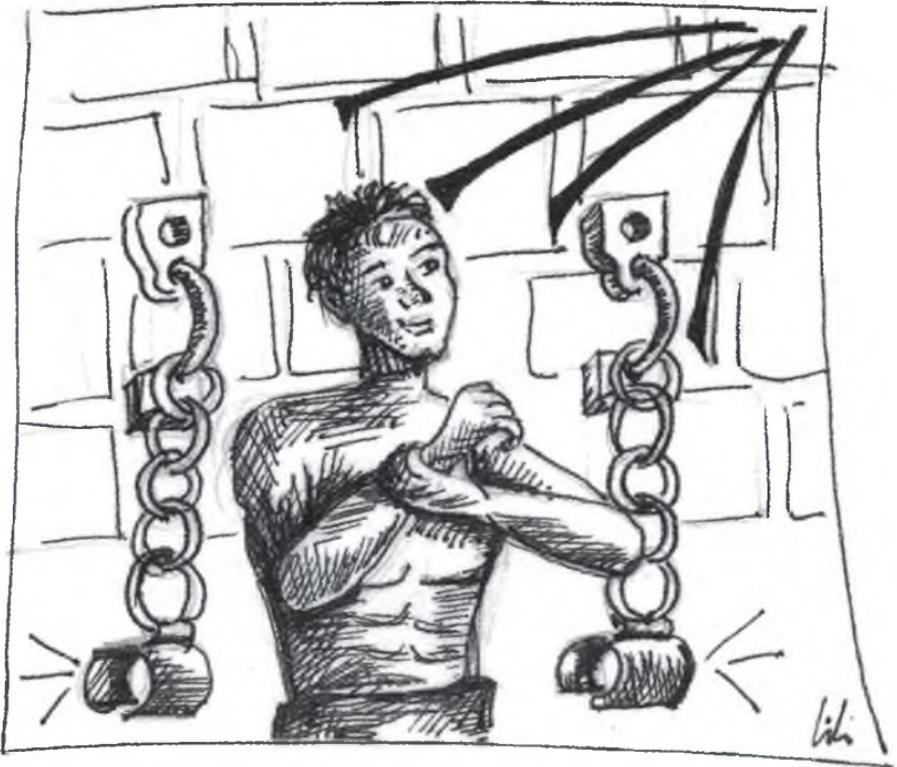
The Faith I Live By, pp. 202-204; *The Story of Jesus*, pp. 167-172.

Dick Winn, *His Healing Love*, p. 57; Dwight L. Moody, *Heaven*, pp. 71-88;

Tony Evans, *Who Is This King of Glory?* pp. 106-118.

Loree Chase, Walla Walla, Washington

The Hour has Come



"He said in a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water'" (Rev. 14:7, NIV).

INTRODUCTION

Dan. 7:22

I sat just out of their sight. Two of my classmates at the University of the Virgin Islands were discussing a movie they had seen that weekend—some flick about the end of the world. After the discussion about special effects and action scenes ended, the discussion paused. Then came this question: “I wonder what will really happen at the end of the world?” Another silence. Finally, the response—unsure, uncertain: “I don’t really know. I guess I’ll just live my life and see what happens.”

I sat there wondering what to do. I knew what was going to happen at the end of the world. Should I share my knowledge with them? Would they think I was some strange “church girl”? Meanwhile, the discussion on the other side of the wall continued. Is there a God? Will there really be a hell? My two friends pondered matters of eternity, as I sat debating how my having a discussion with them would affect what they might think about me.

In the legal system in North America, the prosecution attempts to show that

It’s a clear-cut win for the prosecution; the death sentence stands.

the evidence points to the guilt of the defendant. The defense tries to explain why the defendant behaved the way she did—she acted in a moment of temporary insanity; she was acting in self-defense—or they

may try to show that the evidence is not sufficient to convict. If the prosecution’s evidence is good enough, however, nothing the defense can say can prevent the judgment from going against the defendant.

The evidence against us is indisputable. Romans 3:23 says, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (NKJV). It’s a clear-cut win for the prosecution; the death sentence stands. But this judgment is a little different. The defense, instead of focusing on what caused the defendant to do what she did, focuses on her decision to accept Him as her Savior, and tells the Judge, “This one is Mine. She has accepted Me, and therefore My robe of righteousness covers her sins. She is free to go.” Case closed.

I never did go and talk to my two friends. They never got the chance to know (from me) that there is no need to face the future with uncertainty and trepidation. I didn’t tell them that the outcome of this story has already been decided: “ ‘a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High’ ” (Dan. 7:22, NKJV). If we have accepted Christ’s gift of salvation, the investigative judgment is not something we have to fear. This week’s lesson focuses on how Christ’s life covers our sinfulness and enables us to stand before God when our name comes up.

Only God Can Judge Me

EVIDENCE

Rom. 11:33-36; 2 Tim. 4:1

The United States is perceived worldwide as the prototype for a successful democracy, although not perfect. Some criticize the power of the judicial system to act many times without larger public representation. The Constitution states that "the judicial Power of the United States, shall be vested in one Supreme Court. . . . The Judges, both of the supreme and inferior Courts, shall hold their Offices during good Behavior." As it is, the judge or small jury hold control over the lives of the accused.

In response to a recent controversy concerning the justice system, the Attorney General stated, "The criminal justice system is [fallible] . . . there are cases in which the search for truth took tortuous paths. With the exception of one young man . . . the individuals whose stories are told in the report were convicted after jury trials and were sentenced to long prison terms. They successfully challenged their convictions. . . . They had served, on average, seven years in prison."*

One man was offered \$5,000 from the state as compensation for being wrongly accused. Their offer of \$5,000 was based on a statute that stipulates \$500 per year of wrongful incarceration up to 10 years. Would you take \$500 a year in the name of justice? Solomon says that "evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand all" (Prov. 28:5, NKJV).

The compensation for the righteous, former prisoners of sin will not be money but rather, eternal life. Christ expects us to be ready to face the judgment and prove once and for all that God indeed is fair and capable of being called the Supreme Judge of the universe. Jesus stood before Pilate, and people falsely accused Him of wrongdoing. He is coming again to prove to the universe that Satan was the one that took His church and attempted to destroy her. Let's be part of the democracy that takes a stand for the innocent One, our God.

**"The criminal
justice system is
[fallible]."**

REACT

Webster defines judgment as the final, formal utterance of an authoritative opinion of mankind by God; Divine sentences or decisions.

What are methods we can employ daily to better understand God as our Judge so we can be self-assured that we, when the roll is called up yonder, indeed had a fair trial?

*National Institute of Justice Report, 1996, James Cotton Case.

LOGOS

Gen. 18:25; Lev. 16:29-33; Ps. 17:2; Dan. 7:8-27; 8:14; Heb. 7:25; 9:21-23;
Rev. 14:6, 7

Robert sat in court nervously awaiting the commencement of his trial. Scenes from his life flashed through his mind. He saw his parents diligently trying to enforce sound morals in his character. He saw them trying to show him the importance of obeying God's Word. He also saw his blatant disregard for their admonishment. At that time it seemed so archaic and ridiculous. Now he saw the importance and regretted the pathway he had chosen.

He began to think of techniques he could use to foster sympathy from the jury and the judge. That process did not last for long, for soon after, the judge came in. Upon

**Every guilty person
desires favorable
judgment.**

seeing the judge, Robert smiled. He knew the judge. It was the same man who had saved Robert's life from a vehicular fire earlier in the year. Would the judge remember him? His question was soon

answered.

"Mr. Robert Thomas, I see that we have met once again, but the situation is entirely different. When you first saw me, I was your savior; now I sit before you as your judge. You are going to be judged strictly by your record." His heart sank. Familiarity with the judge was not enough. His record was the deciding factor.

Christ came as our Savior many years ago. When He returns, He is coming as our Judge, and He will be ready to enforce His sentence. By then our cases would have already been eternally decided.

Every guilty person desires favorable judgment. Justice is not the issue here. On the other hand, those who are not guilty want justice to be served. This will not be the issue here. Galatians 6:7 will take full effect. What we sow we shall surely reap.

So if God is judging us in heaven, when did this all begin? When will our name appear before Him? Daniel 7-9 gives us some insight into the historical context of our world and the judgment in relationship to where we are right now.

In 1844, Hiram Edson and many others truly believed that God was returning that year for His chosen people. They read Daniel and believed that the 2300 days (Dan. 8:14) ended then. The 2300-day prophecy did end then, but it signified something else. It began the investigative judgment.

This is the work of the judgment immediately preceding the Second Advent that is announced in the first angel's message of Revelation 14:7. As the disciples were mistaken in regard to the kingdom to be set up after seventy weeks (Dan. 9:24), so Adventists were mistaken in regard to the event to take place at the expiration of the 2300 days. Both classes fulfilled the will of God in delivering the

message that He desired to be given, and both through their own misinterpretation of their message, suffered disappointment.¹

Why is 1844 the pivotal year? “For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed” (Dan. 8:14, NKJV). In prophecy, a day is equivalent to a year (Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:6). So we are speaking of a 2300-year prophecy. When did it begin? Daniel 9:25 gives us more insight. This fascinating period began in the autumn of 457 B.C. when Artaxerxes made his decree to restore the temple.² If this prophecy began in 457 B.C., then it must end in 1844 (remember after 1 B.C. is 1 A.D.; there is no year 0).

What then is the significance of the cleansing of the sanctuary? In the typical system, which was a shadow of the sacrifice and priesthood of Christ, the cleansing of the sanctuary was the last service performed by the high priest in the yearly round of ministration. It was “the closing work in the ministration of our High Priest in heaven, in the removal or blotting out of the sins of His people, which are registered in the heavenly records. This service involves a work of investigation, a work of judgment; and it immediately precedes the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; for when He comes, every case has been decided.”³

When our name appears before Christ, how will it be for us? Will we be like the defendant in our introductory story, or will it be the happiest day of our life? Would Christ say, “He is My child; she is My own”? Will He dismiss all charges levied against us, or will He look at our record and say “guilty as charged”? A guilty verdict automatically carries a death sentence. These last moments in earth’s history are crucial ones for us. Let us approach them prayerfully. Guilty or not guilty, what will your verdict be?

REACT

1. Are you fearful of the investigative judgment? Explain your answer.
2. What is the best way to prepare for this judgment? Be specific.
3. Why is it that the judgment in the courts of heaven is pictured in art and religious literature as similar to the courts here on earth?
4. Does it do one any earthly good to try to imagine what the heavenly judgment will be like? Explain your answer.
5. Under what circumstance might sitting before a judge in a court of law on earth be more anxiety producing than sitting before the Judge in the courts of heaven?
6. You have been asked to help write a children’s book of the 27 fundamental beliefs of the Adventist Church. How would you explain the doctrine of the sanctuary in language a child could comprehend?
7. Compare and contrast your understanding of the work of the “recording angel” with that of your concept of grace.

1. *The Great Controversy*, pp. 353, 354.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 327.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 352.

TESTIMONY

Rev. 14:6, 7

"As a people [God's remnant] we are to prepare the way of the Lord. Every iota of ability God has given us must be put to use in preparing the people after God's fashion, after his spiritual mold, to stand in this great day of God's preparation; and the serious question may be awakened in world-loving hearts, 'What is eternity to us? How will my case stand in the investigative judgement? What will be my lot and place?' Many who suppose they are going to heaven are blindfolded by the world."¹

The somber truth is "there are many who have no intelligent hope, and are running great risk in practicing the very things which Jesus has taught that they should not do, in eating, drinking, and dressing, binding themselves up with the

"Many who suppose they are going to heaven are blindfolded by the world."

world in a variety of ways. They have yet to learn the serious lessons so essential to growth in spirituality, to come out from the world and be separate. The heart

is divided, the carnal mind craves conformity, similarity to the world in so many ways that the mark of distinction from the world is scarcely distinguishable. Money, God's money, is expended in order to make an appearance after the world's customs; the religious experience is contaminated with worldliness, and the evidence of discipleship—Christ's likeness in self-denial and cross-bearing—is not discernible by the world or by the universe of heaven."²

"Let every worker remember that he is under most solemn obligation to labor in accordance with the Lord's plan. Let our brethren and sisters engaged in the Lord's work realize their great accountability to God at this time. . . . Let them consider, and take heed. Let every one engaged in the work examine his individual standing before God."³

"If the believers in the truth are not sustained by their faith in these comparatively peaceful days, what will uphold them when the grand test comes and the decree goes forth against all those who will not worship the image of the beast and receive his mark in their foreheads or in their hands? This solemn period is not far off. Instead of becoming weak and irresolute, the people of God should be gathering strength and courage for the time of trouble."⁴

1. *Special Testimonies on Education*, p. 85.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 85, 86.

3. *Testimonies to the Church Regarding Individual Responsibility and Christian Unity*, p. 8.

4. *Last Day Events*, p. 223.

Prepare for Judgment

HOW-TO

Heb. 7:25

Truly we are living in the last days. As we look around the world, we see prophecy being fulfilled. We know that the minutes are advancing, hastening Christ's return to judge the world.

Some of us who have accepted God's gift of salvation are waiting patiently for the coming of Christ. We see the collapse of society around us and look upon morality declining even lower than it already is.

But what about those among our brethren who have accepted the gift of salvation but have faltered along the way? Now is the time we should reach out to one another, for the Lord wishes that none should perish but that all come to repentance. "We are too indifferent in regard to one another, too often we forget that our fellow laborers are in need of strength and cheer."¹

**Now is the time we should
reach out to one another.**

"If He who reads the heart could bear with him who He knew was to be His betrayer, with what patience should we bear with those at fault."² Judgment is something that no Christian should fear. Why?

- We know that the God we serve is just and fair in every way.
- Throughout the Bible He has called us many times to repentance because He wishes that none should perish but that all should come to repentance.
- If we truly love the Lord, we should want to see Him come—and the sooner the better.

After centuries of pleading, God is giving His "last call." He that hath an ear let him hear. The question is simple: How do we prepare?

1. Begin by asking earnestly for forgiveness.
2. Believe with your whole heart and confess with the mouth that you believe that He came and died for you.
3. Beware of scoffers. Just as it was in the days of Noah (Gen. 6:3), they're only there to break your spirit if you let them.
4. Be humble and kind to all. Remember that salvation is free for all.
5. Be willing to go the extra mile so that when He comes we will be without spot and blameless (2 Pet. 3:11, 12, 14).

As we strive to grow in Christ, let us remember that salvation is free for everyone, so share it!

1. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 492.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 493.

Second Coming or Not?

OPINION

Rev. 14:7

Early Adventists believed they knew that Christ would return to earth in October 1844. They believed the prophecy and just simply waited for the occurrence; but when it did not happen, they were terribly upset.

The early Adventists did not have a clear understanding of the judgment. We are now in the 21st century and should understand what God expects of us in our practical life and His investigative judgment.

We are living in the times when the coming of Jesus is around the corner. We should not be lackadaisical in our beliefs. His apparent coming should be the catalyst for our faith to become stronger, and our understanding of the Word should be broadened for our benefit.

There is no way to predict when God is coming, so we have to be alert for when it happens and not just sit around saying, "Since Jesus' return is soon I will not do anything because He will be here in the next year or so." What makes humans think they can pinpoint the day of Jesus' return? If only the Father Himself knows, should that be enough incentive for us not to try to "guesstimate"? It is best

Early Adventists did not have a clear understanding of the judgment.

just to believe the coming is near and live life according to how Christian Adventists should. James 2:8-12 tells us that we should treat others with respect and also the law according to

Scripture. If we obey all but one of the points of the law, we are guilty of breaking all. But if we keep the entire law, we are destined for happiness. The way we are supposed to show obedience is laid out for us in Micah 6:8. The main point that verse is telling us is to walk humbly and love mercy if we have been shown what is good.

REACT

1. Can we hasten or delay the Second Coming by what we do or don't do? How would you support your answer?

2. Since the Great Disappointment of 1844, phrases similar to that in our lesson, "we are living in the time when the coming of Jesus is around the corner," have been voiced. Do statements such as this encourage faith or flame discouragement when it doesn't happen? Explain your answer.

3. The author states, "If we obey all but one of the points of the law, we are guilty of breaking all." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

It's Only the Judgment

EXPLORATION

Rom. 5:1; 8:1

CONCLUDE

The word *judgment* means different things at different times. Judgment means one thing when you read about a bystander being killed in a drive-by shooting. When you see the flashing lights of a law enforcement officer's car in your rearview mirror, judgment means something else.

The testimony of the Bible is that we're all subject to the judgment, and that by nature we all deserve a death sentence. But the Bible also promises that when our lives are "hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3, NKJV), we can survive the judgment and anticipate meeting our Savior at the Second Coming.

CONSIDER

- Writing a letter to someone who has offended you physically, emotionally, or spiritually. Describe how you've been wounded, express your willingness to forgive, then destroy the letter.
- Creating a one-act play about condemnation and reconciliation.
- Watching the video *The Elephant Man* (1980). Look for themes of judgment and redemption.
- Writing Thank-you notes to a handful of people whom you consider to be good role models. Somewhere in your note use the words "I see Jesus in you."
- Taking a look around your home, school, church, or community. Identify something that needs to be fixed and fix it. Don't tell anyone about it.
- Spending an hour in a posture of humility (bowing, kneeling, lying prostrate). Repeat the prayer of the tax collector: "'God, have mercy on me, a sinner' " (Luke 18:13, NIV).
- Examining a religious/political/social upheaval in a news magazine or television program. Imagine how the principles of the judgment can be used before Jesus returns to solve some of these problems.

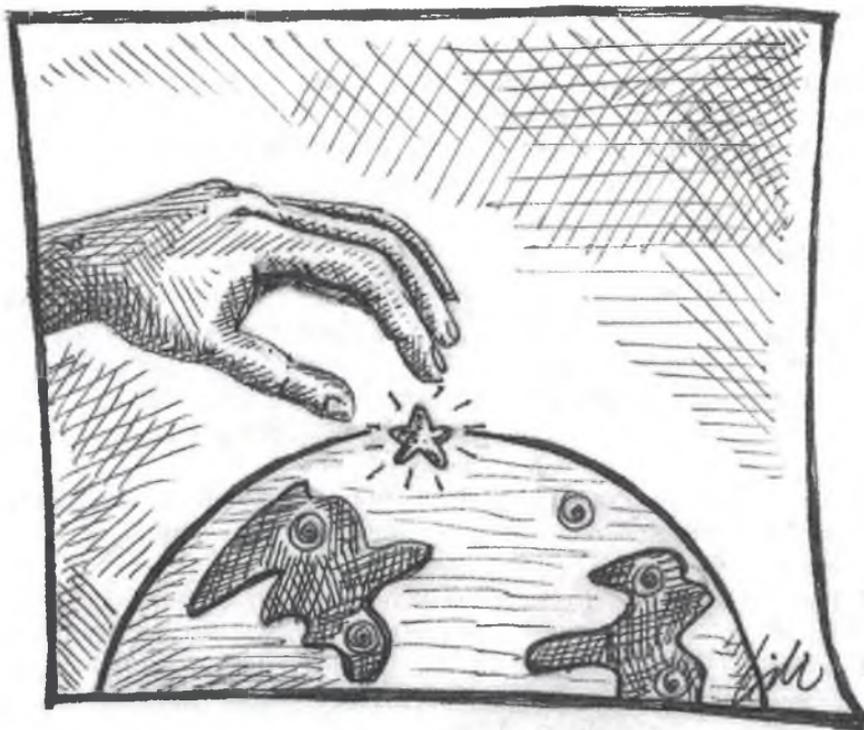
CONNECT

Exodus 6:2-8; John 12:31, 32; 16:7-11; Romans 2:1-4; Revelation 14:6, 7.

The Great Controversy, chap. 28; *Steps to Christ*, chap. 7.

Clifford Goldstein, *1844 Made Simple*, chaps. 10, 11.

The Remnant



"The dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17, NKJV).

God's Official Fan Club

INTRODUCTION

1 Cor. 6:20

Take this quiz to see if you qualify:

1. Do you feel alienated? Here's why: John 15:18,19.

2. Do you want increased strength and wisdom? Here's how: Philippians 4:13; James 1:5.

3. Would you like your job to be more adventurous, challenging, and purposeful? See how: John 16:15, 16.

If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions, the remnant is something you'll definitely want to be part of! The remnant are God's chosen people, those who keep His commandments and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 12:17).

Still interested? Well then, have I got the perfect solution for you! Yes, you've guessed it: The Remnant—God's only official fan club!

Now accepting all obedient souls! You can join for the amazing low price of \$00.00! You pay no money—ever. In fact, you could never buy what this special group offers. That's right, membership is priceless!

Here's how to join: All you need to do is give your heart to Jesus and accept His "proof-of-purchase" [Jesus' ultimate sacrifice] (1 Cor. 6:20).

If you do this, obeying His commandments will become surprisingly rewarding, and your love and appreciation will grow as well. After all, obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship. Thus, Scripture says, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 John 5:3, NKJV).

**Is this a sweet deal or
what?**

But don't take my word for it (or Ellen's). Read on in this week's exclusive study lesson on "The Remnant" and you'll be fascinated as you discover other truths and benefits of this special group.

Remember, this is a limited-time offer. You must act *now!*

But wait, there's more! If you join, you can be assured you'll receive a free gift: salvation. "We do not earn salvation by our obedience, for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith. But obedience is the fruit of faith."*

Is this a sweet deal or what? Praise the Lord! This heavenly offer cannot be topped—and that's a promise (2 Pet. 3:13).

*Steps to Christ, p. 61.

Sunday
September 9

Remnants Past and Future

LOGOS

Gen. 7:1, 23; 9:21, 22; Isa. 11:11; Jer. 23:3; Rom. 11:1-6; Gal. 3:29; 1 Pet. 2:9; Revelation 12

The word *remnant* has its origin in the Hebrew word *shá'ar*, which means to remain, be left over, and be left behind. It is used 130 times in the Old Testament, not including the Pentateuch, to indicate the action of surviving after an elimination process. Two nouns are derived from *shá'ar*: *she'éret*, which indicates the remaining portion and *she'ar*, translated as rest, remnant, and residual. *She'ar* refers to that which has survived after an elimination, judgment, or catastrophe. With this in mind, let's look at three cases—two in the past and one in the future—where we can see a perfect application of *she'ar*.

Genesis 6:4-6

The first judgment with a process of elimination and catastrophe can be found in Noah's story, when the sons of God became involved with the daughters of men and adopted their unholy ways. "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the Lord said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them'" (Gen. 6:5-7, NKJV). The judgment of God came upon the earth and its inhabitants. During the 120 years of grace, God used Noah, the righteous, blameless man who had learned to walk with the Lord. He was used to preach the gospel of salvation and announce the judgment of God. Noah and his family had to use all of their strength and resources to accomplish their mission, but their contemporaries did not repent. At the end just those who gave all that they had, including their lives, were the ones who survived. These were the *remnant*.

1 Kings 19:15-18

Another example of the remnant is found in the story of Israel. During the reign of Ahab, God's people were driven to idolatry, and the prophets of the Lord were persecuted and killed. After the great encounter between Elijah and the prophets of Baal, where God proved to be the Almighty and only God, Satan and his followers continued the persecution of God's loyal prophets. Elijah escaped to the desert—a day's journey. When he was weary and willing to give up, God sent an angel to strengthen him with food to continue the 40-day journey to Mount Horeb. There he encountered the Lord who comforted him, letting him know that he was not the only faithful one left, but that 7,000 remained in Israel who were still loyal to God.

As in Noah's time, God assured Elijah that the wicked would be destroyed, again leaving behind a *remnant*, those who remained faithful to God.

Revelation 12:17

Today, as in the past, God still has a *remnant* with special characteristics. The first characteristic that identifies the remnant is that they obey God's commandments. They don't obey from mere legalism but because they have learned to love and walk with the Lord. This is beautifully described by the prophet who says, "These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless" (Rev. 14:4, 5, NIV). These men and women are the

God still has a *remnant* with special characteristics.

ones God is using to proclaim the gospel to those who live in the earth today. They are reaching every person to tell them about the great love provided by God to save the world and at the same time announcing the judgment and condemnation to those who refuse Him and prefer to give their lives to the pleasures of this world. The second main characteristic of the remnant in the end of time is that they hold to the testimony of Jesus, which is the Spirit of prophecy. As a church, we have been blessed not only by the Spirit of prophecy found in the Bible but also with the writings of Ellen White.

By looking at the two examples of remnants in the Old Testament, we can learn about the struggles they encountered to remain loyal. We also see the kind of God we have who provides food and comfort for the faithful few during their most difficult times. The remnant today can be assured that God will intervene for us as He did in the past.

REACT

1. What role do humans have in becoming part of the remnant? What role does God play?
2. How has looking at remnants from the Old Testament helped in understanding about the remnant?
3. How do the remnants in the Old Testament fit the characteristics for the remnant at the end of time (Rev. 12:17)?
4. How would you explain "Who did not defile themselves with women"? Does this mean the remnant are to be celibate?
5. What are the responsibilities of being part of the remnant today? Am I being sincerely responsible?
6. Were the characteristics of the remnant, as outlined in Revelation, specific to a time period? If so, what would be the characteristics of the remnant today? If not, how can we become like them?
7. Does the term *remnant* refer to a group or to me?

TESTIMONY

Zech. 3:2

"The remnant church will be brought into great trial and distress. Those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus will feel the ire of the dragon and his hosts. Satan numbers the world as his subjects; he has gained control of the apostate churches, but here is a little company that are resisting his supremacy. If he could blot them from the earth, his triumph would be complete. As he influenced the

If he could blot them from the earth, his triumph would be complete.

heathen nations to destroy Israel, so in the near future he will stir up the wicked powers of earth to destroy the people of God. All will be required to render obedience to human edicts in violation of the

divine law. Those who will be true to God and to duty will be menaced, denounced, and proscribed. They will 'be betrayed both by parents, and brethern, kinfolks, and friends.'"¹

"But while the followers of Christ have sinned, they have not given themselves to the control of evil. They have put away their sins, and have sought the Lord in humility and contrition, and the divine Advocate pleads in their behalf. . . . The people of God are sighing and crying for the abominations done in the land. With tears they warn the wicked of their danger in trampling upon the divine law, and with unutterable sorrow they humble themselves before the Lord on account of their own transgressions. The wicked mock their sorrow, ridicule their solemn appeals, and sneer at what they term their weakness. But the anguish and humiliation of God's people is unmistakable evidence that they are regaining the strength and nobility of character lost in consequence of sin."²

"While Satan was urging his accusations . . . holy angels, unseen, were passing to and fro, placing upon them [the remnant] the seal of the living God."³

REACT

1. Why is prayer the remnant's only defense?
2. What does personal humility have to do with the power of the remnant?
3. How do we identify a "heathen" nation?
4. How can one plan for the betrayal of one's loved ones?

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 472, 473.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 474.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 475.

What Are You a Remnant Of?

EVIDENCE

Isa. 11:16; 37:4; Jer. 23:3; 31:7; Ezek. 14:22; Rom. 9:27; 11:5

The word *remnant* means “the small remainder of something larger that has disappeared or has been destroyed” (*Essential Dictionary*, Collins Cobuild). When the Bible mentions the remnant, it is telling us about a remainder of something that was there before. Revelation 12:1-17 gives a general glimpse of earth’s history, where the dragon (Satan) attacks God’s people and His descendants (the remnant). The book of Revelation describes God’s people as a virgin who has remained faithful to her groom and is waiting for his return to celebrate the wedding of the Lamb.

Although in the Bible, God’s people, His remnant, are not identified by the name of a church or an institution, Revelation 12:17 mentions two essential characteristics of the descendants of the woman: they keep God’s commandments and have the testimony of Jesus. God’s commandments did not originate in Sinai, but the commandments given at Sinai were a reflection of the lifestyle of God’s children since the beginning of time. Not

all Christian churches keep all ten commandments; in fact, the fourth has been altered. The fourth commandment, which recognizes God as Creator, will be one of the distinctions between the remnant and those who say they keep the commandments.

**The commandments at Sinai
were a reflection of the
lifestyle of God’s children.**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been one of the few churches that has maintained the keeping of the Sabbath, which is often forgotten in the observance of the Ten Commandments, and also has the testimony of Jesus through the Spirit of Prophecy. We believe that the Sabbath will be a lasting sign of love between God and His people, between Creator and created being (Ezek. 20:20). We don’t believe we are God’s people exclusively. We know that others from different religions and faiths, when they hear God’s voice, will follow Him. They will join those of us who have remained faithful (John 10:16) to remain loyal until He returns.

REACT

1. Why do you think God chose the two characteristics in Revelation 12:17 to identify the remnant?
2. What does it mean to me that the remnant includes people of other faiths?
3. What is the testimony of Jesus and how does it affect my daily life?
4. Why is the keeping of the Sabbath such a defining point of the Redeemer? Why the Sabbath and not any other commandment?

Wednesday
September 12

Ready or Not, Here I Come!

HOW-TO Revelation 18

"Do you accept and believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy and that people of every nation, race, and language are invited and accepted into its fellowship?"*

If you have been baptized or have been a witness of this ceremony, you should remember that the above statement is one of the vows you took in church before your baptism. How blessed are we to be part of the remnant church our final moments here on earth. Remember the promise: "Your sons and daughters

Pray in your car, at your home, at your job, at church, while you shop.

will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions" (Joel 2:28, NIV).

Having been raised in a Seventh-day Adventist home and church, I have been a personal witness to how church members come and go. Satan is working overtime at this moment. "The dragon was enraged at the woman [church] and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (Rev.12:17, NIV).

Let us not be discouraged in these final days. Let us be happy and feel blessed that we are the remnant church. Consider the following points for encouragement:

1. Be aware of false prophets. "By their fruits you will know them" (Matt. 7:20, NKJV).
2. Come out of Babylon. Take time to analyze your personal life. What worldly things are preventing you from getting closer to Jesus?
3. Read. Take time to read your Bible as well as Ellen White's books.
4. Pray. Pray in your car, at your home, at your job, at church, while you shop. Pray everywhere. Spend quality time on your knees.

REACT

1. With thousands having life-changing experiences and joining other Christian churches, how would you define false prophets?
2. What is Babylon today? A mental state, a belief system, or something else?
3. Why should we be happy even if most of our friends, and some family, aren't going to be part of the remnant?
4. How can I take the blessing of being a part of the remnant and share it with others without seeming condescending?

*SDA Church Manual, 1995.

Follow God's Lead

OPINION

Isa. 37:32

Because I am involved in a puppet ministry, I was recently invited to join an Andrews University recruiting team to Wisconsin Academy. After our performance in the morning, I was asked to help the recruiters with an illustration during which the following occurred.

I participated in what is called Good angel / Bad angel. The adults were divided into good angels (of which I was one) and bad angels; participating students (pilgrims) were blindfolded. All the angels, good and bad, were instructed to lead the blindfolded pilgrims to heaven if they were good angels, or hell if they were bad angels. Being the good angel that I was, I took two blindfolded pilgrims with me and began to lead them around the Wisconsin Academy campus.

Amazingly, my pilgrims were very trusting and didn't ask many questions. I constantly reassured them that they had made the right choice in following my lead. As time went by, however, and bad angels began to lose their pilgrims, they found time to try to steal the pilgrims I was leading. One bad angel tempted one of my pilgrims and he followed without questioning. I called after the pilgrim and told him he had made a bad choice. On the other hand, the other pilgrim I was leading would not be led astray. As time went by, her questions began to take shape and her faith in me grew.

My pilgrims were very trusting and didn't ask many questions.

As we approached the area on campus designated as heaven, the conflict between good and evil intensified. Bad angels would throw themselves in front of my pilgrim. They used soft, attractive voices to confuse her. They even went to such extent as to try to pull her away from me. Her faith increased as she noticed that their tactics varied so greatly. This pilgrim remained by my side until we reached heaven.

I was amazed at the message in this simple, yet powerful illustration. The differences in my two pilgrims were alarming. The first was led astray so easily at the first hint of temptation. The second remained strong and faithful by my side until the end.

We are pilgrims in this world, and our goal is to remain as part of the remnant. We also have good and evil forces trying to lead us in opposite directions. The remnant is strong and faithful and recognizes God's voice even in difficult times. Only constant communication with God will allow us to become part of this remnant.

"'Out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and those who escape from Mount Zion. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this'" (Isa. 37:32, NKJV).

REACT

What are some ways that I am led astray from the path that leads me to heaven?

Friday
September 14

Are You Part of the Leftovers?

EXPLORATION

Rom. 11:5

CONCLUDE

The remnant is what is left when the rest has fallen, been shaken, or drifted away. The Bible talks about a remnant of people who remain at the end of time. This remnant have two criteria. They keep God's commandments completely, and they have the testimony of Jesus, which is the Spirit of prophecy. There are examples of remnant people in the Old Testament as seen in the story of Noah and the Flood and also with Elijah and the prophets of Baal. This is a tough time for those who are part of the remnant, because the process of determining who is left over is a purifying process. The remnant emerge washed clean and sparkling like pure gold.

CONSIDER

- Panning for gold. Visit a nearby stream and see if you can find a true gold remnant!
- Performing a play with a couple of friends. Use the story of the remnant in Matthew 24:37-44. Be careful. Who is truly the remnant in this story? Check the previous verses for clues.
- Making a recipe for "Remnant Stew." What good leftovers might spice up a normal pot of soup? How could this metaphor enrich your understanding of God's remnant?
- Watching a video that portrays an apocalyptic theme. Compare its depiction of the end of the world with the biblical description.
- Interviewing three people about what it means to them to be part of the remnant.
- Creating a collage using magazine pictures of those characteristics the remnant might exhibit.
- Writing your own description of God's official fan club. Design a club mascot or symbol.

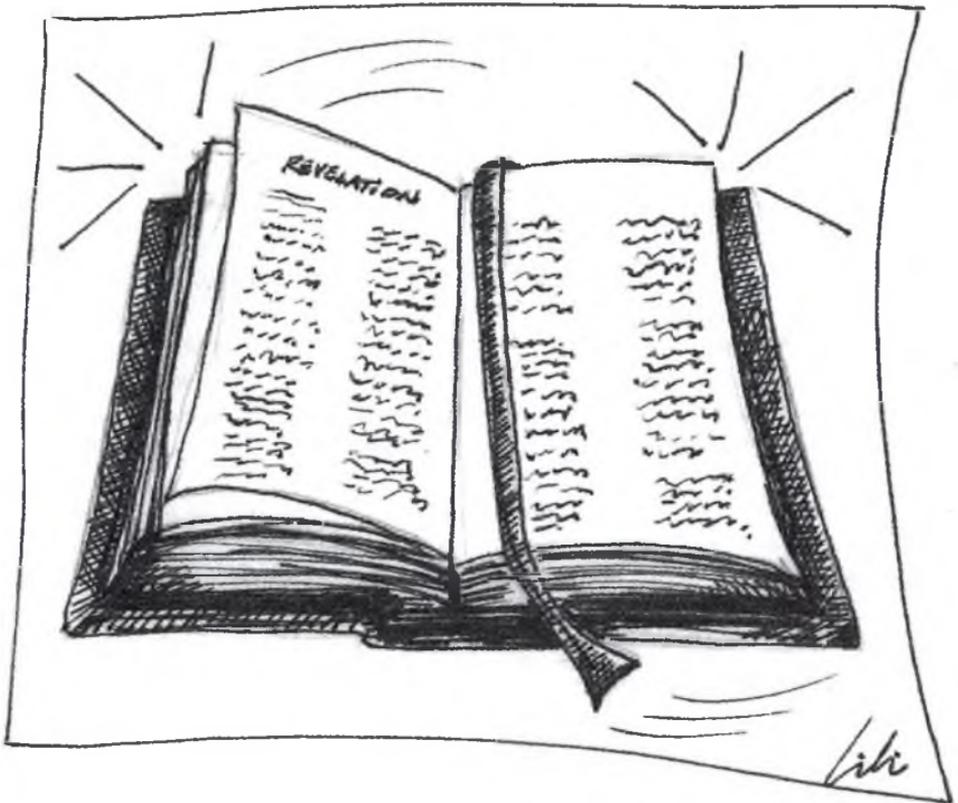
CONNECT

Romans 9:25-29; Revelation 12:13-17; 19:7-9.

The Great Controversy, chap. 38.

Marvin Moore, *The Crisis of the End Time*, chap. 17; Edward Zinke and Roland R. Hegstad, *The Certainty of the Second Coming*, chap. 9; Morris Venden, *The Last Trolley Out*, chap. 7.

The Days of the End



“Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase” (Dan. 12:4, NKJV).

INTRODUCTION

Rev. 21:3, 4

It was a beautiful Sabbath afternoon. Desperate for an afternoon nap, I entered the family room to relax. Just then the phone rang. I debated whether I should pick it up or let the machine take a message. Then I thought I had better get it. I mustered up my most cheerful “hello” and answered it.

April: Hello? (*I knew right away that something was wrong. There was weeping on the other end. It was a woman's voice, but I couldn't place it.*)

Mrs. Steel: April . . . April . . . (*she called*)

April: Yes!

Mrs. Steel: This is Sasha's mother.

April: Are you OK, Mrs. Steel? What's wrong?

Mrs. Steel: Well (*in a shaky voice*), I am calling to let you know that Sasha was in an accident this afternoon.

April: What kind of an accident?

Mrs. Steel: Well, she was in a motorcycle accident.

April: (*My heart sank.*) Is she OK?

Mrs. Steel: I don't know how to tell you this.

April: Tell me what? Mrs. Steel, please just tell me. I can handle it. (*Tears welled up in my eyes.*)

Mrs. Steel: Sasha was killed this afternoon. The bike that she was on was rear-ended. I am really sorry to inform you this way, but I don't know how else to do it. You were one of my daughter's best friends, and she was very grateful to you for helping her turn her life around.

For one brief moment, I was stunned. My best friend was no longer with us. Only 28 years old—absolutely too young to die. Losing her made me realize the importance of salvation and the wonderful promise God has given to us for heaven

She was very grateful to you for helping her turn her life around.

and eternal life. Now I look forward to Christ's second coming when we will be united with Him and those who rest in the grave. “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” (1 Cor. 15:55, NKJV).

Proclaiming the Promise

EVIDENCE

Titus 2:13

Dr. Joseph Wolff, “the missionary to the world,” began to proclaim the second coming of Jesus. Wolff was born in Germany to Hebrew parents. When he was young, he was eager to find out more about religion, the coming of the Messiah, and the restoration of Israel. As a child, he believed Jesus of Nazareth was “a Jew of the greatest talent, but one who pretended to be the Messiah.”

When he was 7 years old, he was boasting to a Christian neighbor how Israel will triumph at the advent of the Messiah. The old man replied that Jesus of Nazareth was the real Messiah. The neighbor said for him to go home and read the Scriptures again.

Wolff went home and decided to study the Scriptures. At the age of 11, he chose to leave his father's house to study religion.

He went from one home to another while studying diligently and teaching himself Hebrew. As he studied more, he realized Jesus' first coming was made for the sacrifice of sins of humanity. He also

realized Jesus' second coming was to deliver us and make Him the King of the universe.

Wolff believed the coming of the Lord was at hand. His interpretation of the prophetic periods were within a few years of the time pointed out by William Miller. Miller himself—being a scholar—studied and believed in the second coming of Christ and predicted Christ's return would be in October 1844—the period of the Great Disappointment. We know this was not the Second Coming, however, but the beginning of the Advent movement. Our belief in the Second Coming is evident in our denominational name. As Seventh-day Adventists, we must look forward to the time of His coming.

At the age of 11, he chose to leave his father's house.

REACT

1. Why is it essential for Seventh-day Adventists to tell others about their beliefs?
2. How can we be sure we won't miss the Second Coming—or maybe already have?
3. Episcopalians (and other denominations) verbally profess “Christ will come again” during every church service. Why don't we consider these denominations part of the Advent movement?
4. How do our lives (and maybe even church services) show that we are justified in our claim to be unique believers in the Second Advent?

*Adapted from *The Great Controversy*, pp. 316-319.

Monday
September 17

The Second Coming of Christ

LOGOS

Isa. 8:20; Zeph. 1:14; Matt. 16:28; 24:32, 33; Luke 21:10, 28; Heb. 10:35-39; 2 Pet. 1:19, 20; 3:9; Rev. 10:10, 11

"I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water'" (Rev. 14:6, 7, NKJV). There is urgency for the gospel to be preached to all people, before God's hour of judgment.

Daniel 12:4 informs us that at the time of the end, prophecies would be unsealed.

**Out of the Reformation
sprang the Advent
movement.**

"The unsealing took place as the 1260-year period of papal dominance came to its end with the captivity of the pope in 1798. The combination of the exile of the pope and the signs in the natural

world led many Christians to study the prophecies about the events leading to the second advent, which resulted in a new depth of understanding of these prophecies."*

There was a great reformation following this period. Out of the Reformation sprang the Advent movement, which brought much-needed light to the world with modern technologies (satellite, radio, television). New vehicles can be utilized to spread the gospel further than ever imagined. We must be like a modern-day John the Baptist—fearless in preparing the way for Christ's second coming.

Moral and Religious Decline

"In the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power" (2 Tim. 3:1-5, NKJV). In regard to this Bible text, we should focus our attention on the last phrase: "Having a form of godliness but denying its power." Sadly Paul is referring to professed Christians who have lost sight of their first love (God) and have embraced the world. Are you guilty of such un-Christlike characteristics? Maybe now is a good time to take inventory.

Resurgence of Papacy

Biblical prophecy informs us that at the end of the 1260 years the papacy would receive a deadly wound. But this wound would heal. Oddly enough, not only

would this wound heal, but the papacy would be restored to its former glory and panoply. "All the world marveled and followed the beast" (Rev. 13:3, NKJV). We see this happening today. The pope is a well-admired figurehead and is actively involved in political, social, and religious affairs worldwide. At the very end there will be only two groups of people:

1. Those who follow the beast and worship his image.
2. A faithful few who "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (14:12, NKJV).

Decline of Religious Freedom

With the increase of papal power, religious freedom will suffer. Religious freedom obtained by the lives of selfless pioneers and now taken for granted will erode and finally be abolished. Pressure to conform will come from all sides. "No one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (13:17, NKJV). Family and friends may turn against us. "Brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved" (Matt. 10:21, 22, NKJV). But God will not forget his faithful children. He will intervene for His people and deliver them. "Can a woman forget her nursing child? . . . I will not forget you" (Isa. 49:15, 16, NKJV).

REACT

1. What do you know about other denominations that came from the Reformation movement in the late 1700s? What parallels do they have with Seventh-day Adventists?

2. What does "resurgent papacy" mean? How is your daily life, work, study, or play affected by what takes place in the Vatican City?

3. How have you personally been threatened because of your religious choices?

4. What is the difference between a religious and a cultural disagreement?

**Seventh-day Adventists Believe* . . . (Washington, D.C.: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), p. 341.

Butterflies in My Stomach

TESTIMONY

Luke 21:28

Every time I think about the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation a catastrophic picture comes to mind. “There will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven” (Luke 21:11, NKJV). I get butterflies in my stomach.

We should be ecstatic with the idea that Jesus is coming soon.

I know that Jesus is coming soon because the signs mentioned above have already occurred. Thinking about the soon return of Jesus makes me anxious and tense because I am not sure of my salvation. These feelings get me thinking that I do not have a close enough relationship with God. This seemingly would make me sure of my salvation.

Since “the great day of the Lord is near; it is near and hastens quickly” (Zeph. 1:14, NKJV)—we should instead “‘look up and lift up [our] heads, because [our] redemption draws near’” (Luke 21:28, NKJV).

We should not be getting those butterflies in our stomachs; we should be ecstatic with the idea that Jesus is coming soon—very soon. We should have confidence in our relationship with God to be able to stand up to the coming persecution and take comfort in the fact that we can persevere in doing the will of God.

My feeling is that we will be richly rewarded.

REACT

1. What word would you use to describe your relationship with God?
2. Is this generation truly experiencing the signs of the Second Coming, or do we just hear about such events more easily? Explain your answer.
3. How is the fear of the Second Coming different from the fear of death?
4. What would you say to an early Adventist if you had to explain why we are still here on this earth?
5. In our certainty of what the Second Coming will be like, how can we avoid the pitfalls of the religious leaders of Jesus' day, who thought they knew what to be looking for?
6. What part of the Second Coming do you look forward to?
7. How do the details you imagine of Christ's second coming differ from those your friends picture in their minds? Who is right? If it matters, why is that? If it doesn't matter, then what does?

No Secrecy Here

HOW-TO

Acts 1:11

I love Thanksgiving get-togethers. It is a time for family to meet and for a brief period to forget the troubles of the world. As I walk in the front door, I am greeted by open arms and kind words. The aroma of fresh baked bread and other goodies fills the air. We all await and anticipate the moment of this wonderful event. This is the time to be grateful to God for all His wonderful blessings.

The Thanksgiving holiday reminds me of Christ's coming:

Visible return. Christ will physically return as King of kings and Lord of lords. All eyes shall see Him. "Christ's coming will not be an inward, invisible experience but a real meeting with a visible Person. Leaving no room whatsoever for doubt as to the visibility of His return, Jesus warned His disciples against being taken in by a secret second coming by comparing His return to the brilliance of lightning (Matt. 24:27)."¹

The Thanksgiving holiday
reminds me of Christ's
coming.

Audible return. In addition to Christ's very visible return, it will be audible as well. Imagine many trumpets being blown by the heavenly host. The angels singing "holy, holy, holy is the Lamb" and the remnant here on earth shouting with praise. It will be one glorious harmony of praise (1 Thess. 4:16).

A glorious return. Christ's return will be more spectacular than any fireworks imaginable. "When Christ returns, He comes as a conqueror, with power. . . . John the revelator portrays the glory of Christ's return in a most dramatic way. He pictures Christ riding on a white horse and leading the innumerable armies of heaven. The supernatural splendor of the glorified Christ is apparent (Rev. 19:11-16)."²

REACT

1. Are there any differences that set Adventists apart from other Christians who also believe in the second coming of Christ? If so, what are they?

2. Why do the physical elements (sight, sound, glory) of the Second Coming feel so important to us?

3. Are the physical elements of the Second Coming absolutely necessary to keep *you* from being deceived by someone claiming to be the Christ? Explain your answer.

1. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .* (Washington, D.C.: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), p. 336.

2. *Ibid.*

OPINION

Rev. 21:1-3

I have always imagined Christ's second coming to be an awesome event. In my mind's eye, I can see it as a final act in an opera or a Broadway play. When this event occurs, just as in a live play, all eyes will be fixed on the main Character (Christ). No camera, video tape, CD, or DVD recorders can fully capture the awesomeness of His return. Hard to imagine?

Here's how I imagine it would play out. You know that old church hymn "We Shall Behold Him"?

Act I: *The sky shall unfold, preparing His entrance.* Imagine the stirring of storm clouds—moving in a great hurry—suddenly coming to a halt. This observation still

**No camera, video tape,
CD, or DVD recorders!**

captures the attention of everyone all around the universe. The free-flowing white clouds separate at an instant resembling a large stage curtain in an opera house. Now,

what appears to be solid blue skies—the kind of blue that resembles the ocean—is all that is in sight. Suddenly, an intense light splits the panoramic sky in half. Rays of light pour out from the heavens causing the sky to appear almost white.

Act II: *The stars shall applaud Him with thunders of praise.* Now stars both great and small appear in the night sky. They perform their dazzling light show that no one could ever choreograph with such complexity and depth. Thunder claps in praise for the Almighty God.

Act III: *The sweet light in His eyes shall enhance those awaiting.* The light of His eyes shine like a jasper stone—crystal clear. All those who walked in His righteousness shall walk in this light.

Act IV: *The angel shall sound with the shout of His coming.* The sleeping shall rise from their slumbering place, and those who remain shall be changed in a moment in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (1 Cor. 15:51).

Act V: *Then we shall behold Him face to face.* "Every eye in that vast multitude will turn to behold the glory of the Son of God."¹ "We behold the image of God . . . face to face, without a dimming veil between. We shall stand in His presence and behold the glory of His countenance."² "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one."³

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 662.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 677.

3. Zechariah 14:9, KJV quoted in *The Great Controversy*, p. 663.

The Ending That Is Really a Beginning

EXPLORATION

Rev. 21:1-7

CONCLUDE

The book of 2 Timothy tells us that in the end “perilous times will come” (3:1, NKJV). Indeed, we are all witness to the perilous times in which we live in this new millennium. But rather than getting caught up in these events and having merely the form of godliness, we must have the true godliness, which is founded on a personal and sustaining relationship with Christ. Only that can see us through these final days so that we may behold Him in His glory at His promised second coming. Let’s return God’s promise and declare “I will not forget You.”

CONSIDER

- Writing a poem that describes your view of heaven. Use the reporter’s questions (Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How?) to give a complete word-picture of what heaven will be for you.
- Contacting a well-known scholar of biblical prophecy (through email or by correspondence or telephone) and asking for her or his personal reflection on the meaning of the final judgment and Second Coming as described in Revelation.
- Writing and acting out with another member of your class a dialogue of your first exchange with Jesus when you arrive in heaven.
- Reviewing the interpretations of prophecy that are key to a Seventh-day Adventist’s understanding of earth’s final days and Christ’s second coming. Reflect on insights you gain from this study and share them.
- Creating a 3-D representation of heaven. Will heaven be spherical, like our planet, or hollow with a world inside, or amorphous? Use paper sculpture or origami, balloons or styrofoam balls, natural or household objects to convey your idea of heaven. Then present it and your comments to your family, roommate, or Sabbath School class.
- Making a tape of the songs, hymns, or classical pieces you find most “heavenly.” Then write liner notes, telling why you chose each piece to represent your idea of eternal life and the promised paradise.

CONNECT

Matthew 10: 21, 22; Luke 21:25-28, 34-36; 2 Timothy 3:1-5;
Revelation 22:13, 14.

Last Day Events, chapter on “The Inheritance of the Saints.”

<[Http://www.hsma.net/heaven.htm](http://www.hsma.net/heaven.htm)>.

Behold, He Comes!



“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done”
(Rev. 22:12, NIV).

No More Sleeps

INTRODUCTION

Rev. 22:7, 12

I am a daddy's girl. I have always been a daddy's girl, and since childhood I have treasured my time with my father whether he was just holding my hand while walking down the street, singing to me in the car, or teaching me how to split wood. I adore him.

When I accepted a job that moved me across the country from Daddy, he was devastated, but still encouraged me as I ventured into the world of independent adults. I made plans to fly home two months later for Thanksgiving, and Daddy and I started a daily telephone countdown. We counted by "sleeps." "Only 11 more sleeps until you come home!" And finally, "Only one more sleep until I'll be there!" Our excitement was almost tangible, and as my plane landed at LAX, my stomach fluttered with anticipation of being home. With Daddy.

Early Adventists felt this way about the second coming of Christ. Their excitement about seeing their Lord, their Father, was the overriding emotion of their lives and their sole hope. At one point they thought they had the date pinned down! Perhaps some of them counted the "sleeps" until October 22, 1844.

**I stepped impatiently off the plane
and elbowed my way through the
departing passengers.**

My grandmother was convinced that Christ would return before she died. My mother was sure that He would return before she married, and I thought He would come before my college graduation. It is tempting to view the Second Coming as a far-away event, yet we have even more reason than our Church's founding fathers did to be excited about Christ's soon return. We are closer now than ever before! Current events point toward an impending conclusion to earth's history, but this conclusion will be our beginning.

I stepped off the plane and impatiently elbowed my way through the crowded jetway of departing passengers. My heart was racing as I searched the crowd of faces waiting to meet the flight. "Where is Daddy? In baggage claim? There!" At the front of the crowd, with his arms held open and a smile a mile wide. I ran into his embrace, and he said to me, "I've waited so long for this. I've missed you, and I'm so glad you're home. It's just not the same without you here. Welcome home. No more sleeps."

The Bridegroom says, "I am coming quickly" (Rev. 22:12, NKJV).

We will greet Him with the joy of our fulfilled expectation and realization of our life's hope. We'll begin our eternity together and hear our Father say, "I've waited so long for this. I've missed you, and I'm so glad you're home. It's just not the same without you here. Welcome home. No more sleeps."

Sunday
September 23

What Shall We Do While We Wait?

LOGOS

Ps. 50:1-4; Mal. 4:1-3; Matt. 26:64; John 14:1-3; Col. 3:2-4; 1 Thess. 4:16, 18; 2 Thess. 1:7-12; Jude 14; Rev. 1:7; 14:6-12

In John 14:1-3, Jesus tells us in clear language that He will come back and take us with Him that we might be where He is. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 18, He describes His coming in picturesque detail. How are we to deal with the uncertainty of exactly when that might be? What are we to do in the meantime?

I am fascinated with how people deal differently with the second coming of Jesus. The differences frequently correlate with age. Older people seem to be comfortable with the idea that Jesus might come soon—meaning, before they die. We have all heard them state their fervent conviction that the Lord is coming very soon. A little arithmetic relative to their life expectancy yields a rather definitive answer as to just how many years from now the speaker has in mind. This seems to be an accepted practice of time-setting. Younger people frequently talk about wanting to be married and have a family and career before Jesus' return. One cannot help wondering whether people of all ages might be having a problem with the thought of dying. This is curious, because if we die before Jesus comes, the next thing we will be aware of is Him taking us to heaven. But we are talking about feelings here; logical reasoning does not necessarily apply.

Perhaps it relates to the question of how we deal with feelings of uncertainty, hope, and anticipation. My 91-year-old mother lives in a nursing home a long

**God is pleading for all
humanity to acknowledge
Him as our Creator.**

distance from where my three brothers and I live, so a visit from one or more of us is for her a very special event. She has told us many times that the anticipation of an upcoming visit

is almost as sweet as the visit itself. She says adding the time of anticipation to the actual visit gives her a longer total time of happiness to enjoy. How can you and I turn the time between now and when we die or when Jesus comes, whichever comes first, into a time of happy anticipation?

Relative to this question, the Bible gives us counsel on both personal and corporate levels. In Titus 2:11-13, God first reminds us that it is His grace that has brought us salvation. Then He urges us to resist ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives as we wait for His return, and to become eager to do good. When life on earth is over, wouldn't we all like to be described as self-controlled, upright, godly, eager to do good, and totally dependent on God's grace for salvation? As if to underscore the point, God counsels us in

Colossians 3:1-4 to set our minds on things above, not on earthly things. This is so hard to do when we are surrounded by so many neat earthly things.

How about our assignment as a religious movement? Interestingly, between the 1844 Disappointment and the 1848 Sabbath conferences, our pioneers had developed an exposition on the meaning of the three angels of Revelation 14:6-12 that remains intact to this day.* These three angels symbolize the message that we believe God has asked to share with all who will listen.

A few years ago, leaders and board members of the hospital where I worked held a strategic planning retreat during which some Adventist board members referred to the three angels' messages. A few days later in a meeting of the hospital managers (most of whom were not Adventists), someone asked me what was this business about the three angels, was it a secret thing among Adventists or something I could talk about in public. Not being a theologian, and being someone who likes to consider religion from a practical everyday viewpoint, here's what I found myself saying:

The first angel tells us that God is pleading for all humanity to acknowledge Him as our Creator and to notice all He has created for our benefit. This angel further sounds a note of urgency, noting that a time of resolution to the great battle between good and evil is coming. Time as we know it will not last indefinitely. It is the message of the first angel that imparts to the Adventist movement a sense of urgency.

The second angel implores humanity to avoid Babylon, the symbol of religious confusion. God is reminding us that it is extremely important for me to discover the truth about Him and not to be led astray by the subtle lies that Satan has promulgated about God.

The strong apocalyptic language in the message of the third angel tells me that sorting through the confusion about God and making my decision whether or not to trust Him has eternal consequences for me, so I best not wait to settle the matter.

REACT

1. How do you deal with the uncertainty about the timing of Christ's coming? Be specific.

2. How do you see your role in the context of our God-given assignment as described by the three angels of Revelation 14?

3. The theme for the General Conference session in Toronto was "Almost Home." Previous General Conference sessions have used the theme, "We Have This Hope." What message do these themes send to you? to the unchurched citizens of the cities where a General Conference session is held?

4. What advantages might there be, if any, in our having to wait for Jesus to come?

5. How would your life be different if you could know the exact date that Jesus would return?

*LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1971).

TESTIMONY

Matt. 26:64

"Lord haste the day when my faith shall be sight."¹ So begins the last verse of a familiar hymn. Now we walk believing, but without seeing. One day our faith will be sight. While reading these quotations, enter the experience of faith becoming sight by noting the words related to sight (e.g., "behold," "look," "appear," "gaze," etc.).

"By the people of God a voice, clear and melodious, is heard, saying, 'Look up,' and lifting their eyes to the heavens, they behold the bow of promise. The black, angry clouds that covered the firmament are parted, and like Stephen they look up steadfastly into heaven and see the glory of God and the Son of man seated upon His throne."²

"Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man's hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Saviour and which seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness. The people of God know this to be the sign of the Son of man. In solemn silence they gaze upon it as it draws nearer the earth, becoming

**"Like Stephen they
look up steadfastly
into heaven."**

lighter and more glorious, until it is a great white cloud, its base a glory like consuming fire, and above it the rainbow of the covenant. Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror."³

"As the living cloud comes still nearer, every eye beholds the Prince of life. . . . His countenance outshines the dazzling brightness of the noonday sun."⁴

"Before the ransomed throng is the Holy City. Jesus opens wide the pearly gates. . . . Now is fulfilled the Savior's prayer for His disciples: 'I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.' 'Faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy' (Jude 24), Christ presents to the Father the purchase of His blood."⁵

"Oh, the wonders of redeeming love! the rapture of that hour when the infinite Father, looking upon the ransomed, shall behold His image, sin's discord banished, its blight removed, and the human once more in harmony with the divine!"⁶

"Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12, NKJV). You will see!

REACT

1. How can I fix my eyes on Jesus today?
2. How is seeing Him now connected with seeing Him face to face?

1. "It Is Well With My Soul," by Horatio Spafford/Philip Bliss, *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, No. 530.

2. *The Great Controversy*, p. 636.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 640, 641.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*, p. 646

6. *Ibid.*

The *Didache*

EVIDENCE

Luke 21:34-36

The *Didache* is a piece of ancient literature dating back to the second century. In the text of the document, the author makes an appeal to maintain hope and watch even unto the end of this world.

“Watch over your life; let your lamps be not quenched and your loins be not ungirded, but be ready, for you know not the hour in which your Lord cometh.”

My father-in-law tells the story of how during World War II he had to keep guard over some dead soldiers and maintain his watch throughout the night. The deep darkness in the woods with the howling wind across the gigantic trees in Germany made the watch difficult and scary. He would never think of falling asleep, because other American soldiers had napped during their watch only to encounter enemy bayonets across their throats.

Anticipating the arduous future and challenges for His church, Jesus declared: “ ‘Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man’ ” (Luke 21:34-36, NIV).

The church is being lulled to sleep with lethargy, indifference, and attraction to materialism, drugs, sex, and power. Our Blessed Hope is being obfuscated and lost sight of when we must be telling others by our example that we are getting ready for the *parousia*, the coming, the arrival of our Lord and Savior (1 Thess. 4:15-17). Our hope is based on anticipation of the Apocalypse, the revelation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:7).

The church is being lulled to sleep.

We hope that, as Paul, we will be in such communion and harmony with the Lord that we can justifiably declare, “There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8, NKJV).

REACT

1. Compare and contrast a church that is asleep and dying with a church that is alive and thriving.
2. Which of the two types better describes your local congregation?
3. What do you believe it takes to awaken a sleepy church?

HOW-TO

Col. 3:1, 2; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Titus 2:13

When my father died, my 81-year-old mother was incensed at the cemetery plot salesman who kept trying to sell her two plots. "Why does he keep quoting me prices for two?" she muttered as soon as he was out of earshot.

"Mama, he's thinking you might want to be buried with Daddy someday," my sister tried to explain as gently as possible.

"I'm not going to need that plot!" my mother exclaimed with righteous indignation. "Jesus will come long before then!"

Hope. The dictionary defines it as looking forward to something with confidence or expectation. No wonder Titus refers to the glorious appearing of Jesus as "the blessed hope" (2:13, KJV).

How is such hope possible?

1. Look up. Paul tells us to set our hearts and minds on things above (Col. 3:1, 2). Just think about heaven—no friends or relatives with cancer, no planes plunging into the ocean, no school shootings, no terrorists. Spending a few moments each day

"Mama, he's thinking you might want to be buried with Daddy someday."

contemplating the glories of heaven should be enough to make you wish you were there and should help crank the hope meter up to high.

2. Talk big. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is a paragraph about the resurrection of those who have died in Jesus and concludes by saying, "Encourage each other with these words" (NIV). My mother knew how to do this even on the afternoon of her husband's death. Her words were an encouragement to the entire family. Talk about heaven often. Share your hope with your friends and family. Not only will it strengthen your own hope, it will build their confidence as well.

3. Practice peace. Jesus told us not to worry about His return but to trust in God (John 14:1-4). It's a promise that gives peace.

REACT

1. What feelings come to the surface when you think about Jesus coming very soon? Or not for a long time?

2. Do you think the earliest Christians looked forward to the Second Coming more eagerly than you do? More eagerly than the earliest Seventh-day Adventists? Why or why not?

3. The passage in Luke 21:34-36 suggests that one is not to worry but will need to be strong to escape the things that will take place just before Jesus comes. What types of things will such strength help us escape?

4. What practical things are you doing to prepare for Jesus to come?

Discussion and Debate

OPINION

Titus 2:13

I have learned that a discussion about the Second Coming is not something to enter into without serious thought and consideration. This type of discussion often erodes into a debate. These discussions can go wrong in one of four ways.

First, some feel the need to provide a stern warning about the perils of predictions. Our Adventist pioneers' efforts to predict Jesus' return may be the single most significant event in our organizational history. I doubt we will ever see a band of Adventist believers picking a date, liquidating their assets, and heading for an open field to await the return.

Second, the role of prophecy and the use of prophetic information require clarification. Tracking time lines and looking for historically significant events is generally regarded as worthwhile; however, one must be careful to avoid drawing specific conclusions about the timing of the Second Coming based on acquired prophetic knowledge.

Third, the role of enthusiasm often requires debate. Though it is important to be sincerely optimistic that Jesus' return is imminent, focus on the realities of this life must not be blurred. I can recall as a boy in church hearing the older members of my church emphatically stating that Jesus would certainly return within their lifetime. They reasoned that the world was too evil for this world to turn much longer. With each passing member we tempered our enthusiasm.

**With each passing
member we learned to
temper our enthusiasm.**

Fourth, heaven is no closer for those who die. I have attended funerals where mourners were corrected by well-meaning believers that their dear Uncle Joe was not on his way to heaven but slowly decaying in the ground. The mourners were also instructed that Uncle Joe would be in the ground for a very long time.

As you can see, Second Coming discussions can easily go wrong.

Here is a different approach. The average human will live to an age of 75, give or take a decade. You can gain an idea about when you will be facing Jesus simply by subtracting your current age from 75. Once you die, Jesus will be your next encounter. The real decision facing all of us is how we will use the days, months, or years left in our lives to prepare for Jesus' return.

The real joy of the Second Coming is the fact that it is a promise given by Jesus. To focus on the time or events surrounding the return is to lose sight of the great Gift that was given on Calvary. Are you ready? You may be seeing Jesus sooner than you think!

Friday
September 28

Look! Jesus Comes!

EXPLORATION

Rev. 22:12

CONCLUDE

Christians have been waiting a long time for Jesus to come again. Early Christians thought He would come in their lifetime. Others down through the centuries have all thought the same thing. We live our lives today with the thought always in the back of our minds: any time now. As we live with this constant expectancy, however, we don't always manage to stay hopeful and excited. We don't mean to, perhaps, but we get a little tired and bored and fall sleep.

How do we keep hope awake? We need to keep looking up! A daily relationship with Jesus keeps the longing for His imminent return alive and wide awake in our hearts.

CONSIDER

- Using clay, paper maché, or another medium to sculpt a figure expressing fervent expectancy and longing for Christ's return.
- Designing a board game around the theme of Christian life lived with expectation of Jesus' very soon second coming. Plan for an afternoon or evening when you will invite your friends to try out your game.
- Writing sticky note reminders about how Jesus' soon return affects your daily life. Put them up in different parts of your room, car, or other living and work places.
- Keeping an account of events that remind you of Jesus' soon return as you listen to or watch the news. You may want to post your ongoing list near the radio or TV.
- Memorizing the lyrics and/or music to a new song about Christ's second coming.
- Meditating on the connection between Matthew 22:1-14; Revelation 21:1-8. Picture yourself at the events described.

CONNECT

Daniel 12:1-4; Matthew 24; 25; Revelation 21; 22.

The Great Controversy, pp. 635-678.

Next Quarter's Lessons

"A HIGHER VIEW OF THINGS" The Book of Amos

If you have not received a copy of CQ for fourth quarter 2001, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1: The Non-Prophet Prophet

Logos: 1 Kings 12:25-33; Amos 1:1; 2:7; 3:7; 7:14; 8:1

Key Thought: Who was Amos? What was his training? What gave him, this "layman," the right to rebuke the nation's spiritual and political leadership? What were the times like in which he worked? What kind of leadership did he face? How did he preach? Why did God give him a message?

Lesson 2: Sins of the Neighbors

Logos: Amos 1:3-2:16

Key Thought: Why did Amos begin by warning about the judgments that would fall upon Israel's neighbors? How were the warnings delivered? Why were some sins denounced in some lands and not in others? How can heathen nations be condemned for sin if they don't have the written law? Do different nations face different standards of judgment? This week touches on all these questions—and more.

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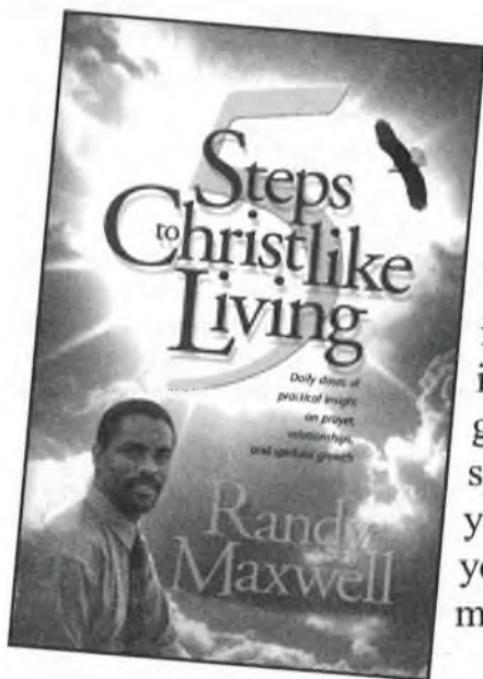
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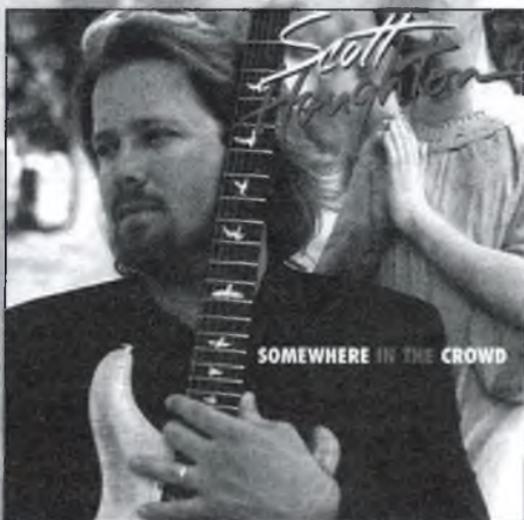
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Somewhere in the Crowd, by newcomer Scott Houghton, is a joyful collection of 12 new songs that put a serious message in a memorable contemporary package. The project is rich in positive lyrics, Scott's "radio-ready" vocals, catchy guitar licks, upbeat rhythms, and harmonies all wrapped up in producer Tomie Reeves's skillful arrangements. The pace of the project ranges from the pure joy of "Child of the King," (with its infectious back-beat that keeps bouncing around in your head) to the contemplative spirit of "Give Me a Sign," "Somewhere in the Crowd," and "Worth It All."

The quality musicianship evident on this debut album makes for a soul-satisfying listening experience—an experience you'll be anxious to repeat.

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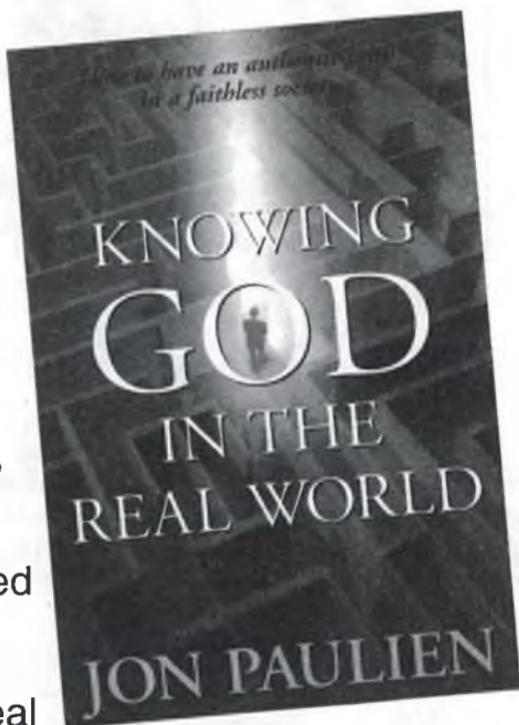
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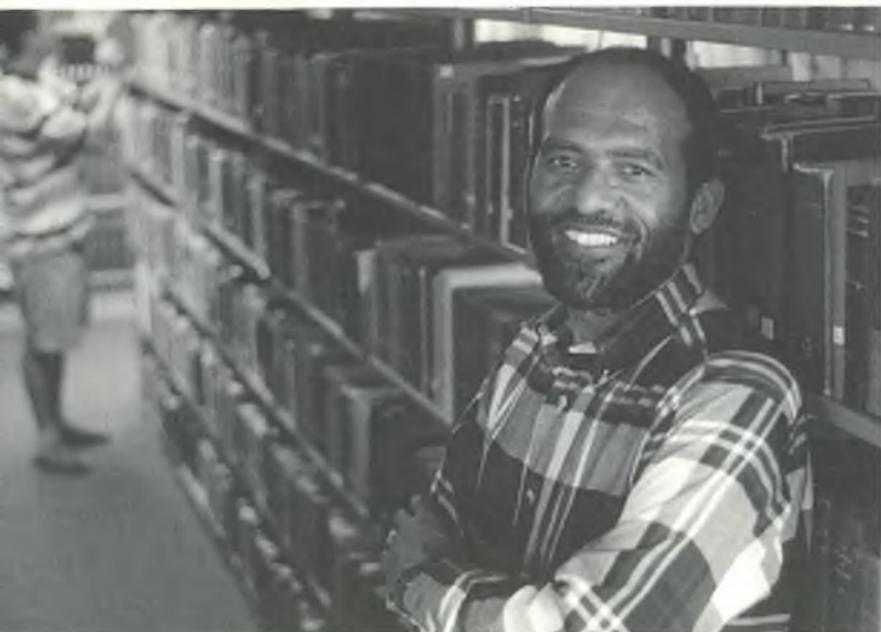
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M I S S I O N



Euro-Asia Division



Catherine Antonyuk, a world-class skier, began competing at age 11. At 15 she was the youngest member of her championship cross-country team, and she set her sights on the Olympics. One day Catherine met Ira, a shy girl who sat reading. "What are you reading?" Catherine asked. Ira showed Catherine her Bible and offered her a Christian book, but Catherine refused, feeling no need for God. Then she began to lose races and soon was out of Olympic competition. The next time she met Ira, she listened as Ira shared her faith. Catherine opened her heart to God, and her life began to change. Her skiing improved, and again she was offered a chance to prepare for the Olympics. Now she faced a choice: a promising career in sports or her newfound faith. To learn how God worked through Catherine's life, read her story in *Mission*.

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help provide a multipurpose hall and gymnasium at Zaosky Theological Seminary in the Russian Federation.



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