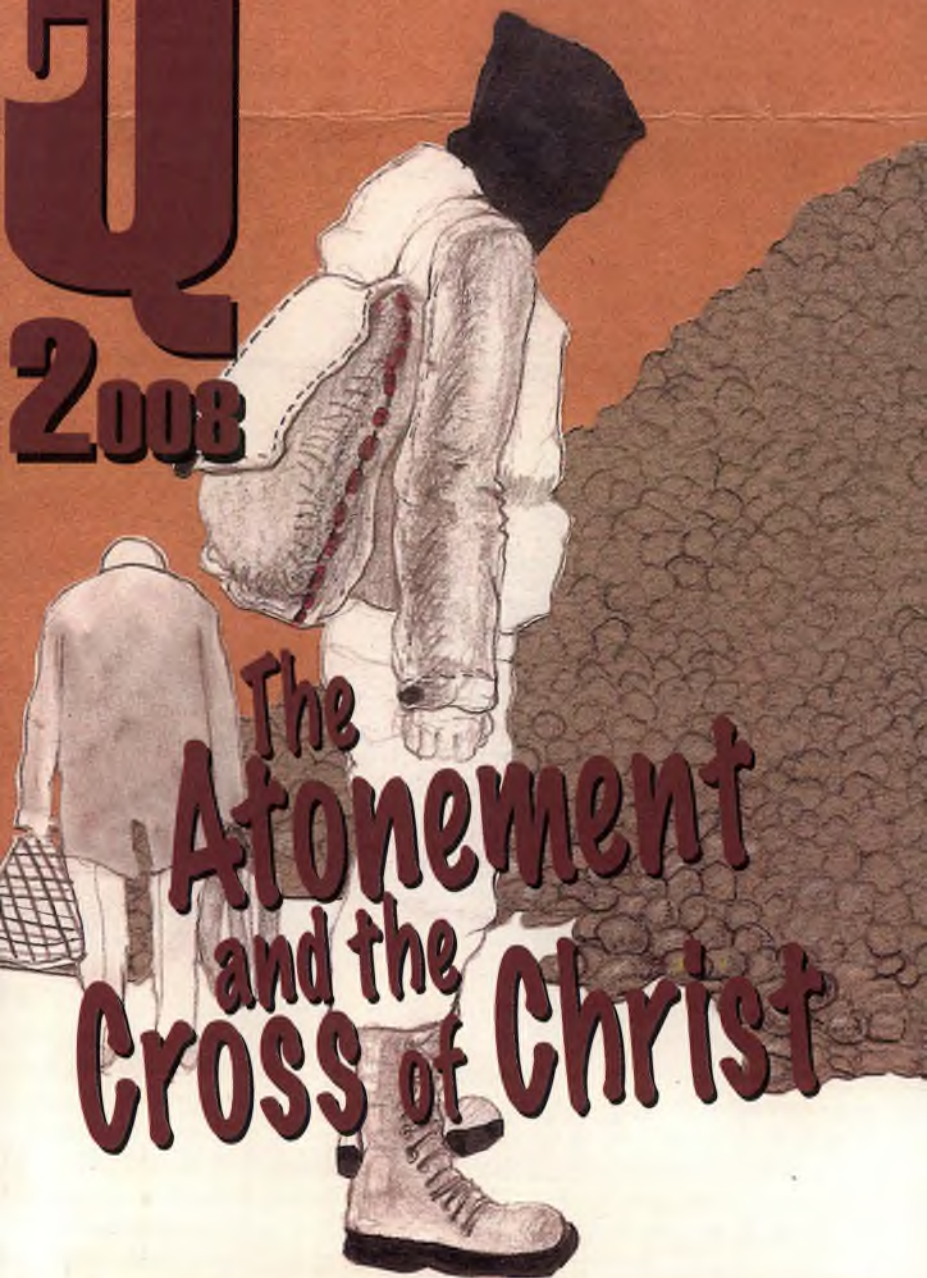


OCTOBER-DECEMBER

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2008



The
Atonement
and the
Cross of Christ

A Devotional Bible-Study Guide
for Young Adults



<http://cqbiblestudy.org>

The Atonement and the Cross of Christ



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This Quarter's Illustrator



Lydmila Stancheva was born in Gabrovo, Bulgaria (a center for the arts and crafts). Her mother is a musician, and her father is a wood-carver. She has two older sisters who also are involved in the arts. Lydmila started painting when she was still young. She pursued her talent by attending a high school for the arts. Currently, she is studying for her Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Graphic Design at the University of Applied Sciences in Düsseldorf, Germany. She has created decors for children rooms in various churches and hopes that in the future she will be able to use her gifts for God's glory.

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.

Four 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 70,000.

POINTERS FOR STUDY

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.
2. The Bible passages on which each week's lesson are based appear in bold type in the "Logos" portion of the lesson. Read these entire passages.
3. The Bible passages for the week are usually divided into sections on the "Logos" pages. When studying these sections, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the headings.
4. Read the other sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passages.
5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the Bible study guide:
 - "**Introduction**" is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.
 - "**Logos**" is a guide for direct study of the Bible passages 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**" is a personal viewpoint on the lesson 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 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.

Atonement and **the Cross** of Christ



“I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand”
(Isa. 46:10, NIV).

Is God Waiting to Forgive?

INTRODUCTION

Ps. 139:1-4

I once read a story about a teacher who told her students to bring a backpack and a bag of potatoes to class. On every potato, they were to write a sin they had committed. Then they were to return that potato to their backpack. Next, they were instructed to carry the backpack with them everywhere for one week. Some of the backpacks were quite heavy. The hassle of lugging the potatoes made it clear how much spiritual baggage they really were carrying. Which poses a question for all of us: how much sin as individuals are we carrying?

This illustration relates well to our relationship with God. Can you count how many times you've sinned? Can you count how many times God has forgiven you? How many potatoes do you think have been in and out of your "spiritual" backpack?

But as Christians, we have the knowledge that God can forgive our sins; and as for the potatoes . . . well, our bags will always be empty because of Christ's atonement. As Psalm 139:1-4 says, God knows every little detail about us, even our sins before we have committed them.

**On every potato, they were
to write a sin they had
committed.**

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8, NIV). The atonement was completed when Christ died on the cross. Sometimes, we complicate the simplest understanding of God's word and eventually lose sight of the original meaning. We must always remember that our God is not a complicated God. He created things so that we, His children, can understand His Word.

By accepting Christ in our lives, and acknowledging His forgiveness of our sins, we know that His atonement is available and that His second coming is drawing nearer and nearer. God loves us even if we sin here and there, and it's peaceful to know that His love is everlasting. We must remember to dedicate our lives to God to make His atonement complete in our lives.

"God, investigate my life; get all the facts firsthand.

I'm an open book to you;

even from a distance, you know what I'm thinking.

You know when I leave and when I get back;

I'm never out of your sight.

You know everything I'm going to say

before I start the first sentence" (Ps. 139:1-4, *The Message*).

Omni . . . Omni . . . Omni . . .

LOGOS

Ps. 139:1–4; Isa. 46:9–11; John 1:4; Rom. 5:8; 8:35–39; 1 John 5:11, 12

Omniscient (all-knowing). *Omnipotent* (all-powerful). *Omnificent* (with unlimited power to create). We ascribe these attributes to God. I've decided to add another one. This word is not found in the dictionary, but it certainly pertains to God: *omnisamor* (omnilove, all-loving). Let's look at these "omniwords" as they depict different aspects of God's nature.

Omniscient (Ps. 139:1–4)

David uses the Hebrew word *udy yāda'*, "to know" 944 times.¹ It means "God's knowledge of man" as "the most intimate acquaintance." God knows everything about me, even what I'm about to say, write, and do. If God has such knowledge, He must have known the future of this planet even before He created it. Knowing what was to come to pass, He anticipated and adequately prepared for it.

It is hard to imagine that
Jesus died for Osama Bin
Laden.

Omnipotent (Isa. 46:9–11)

God knows the end from the beginning, and He shared that knowledge with us in the Bible. As an all-powerful God, He can put that knowledge into practice. Nobody and nothing can stop His purposes from being fulfilled.

Isaiah twice uses the Hebrew word *hcu 'āsāh*, "do, make." God is affirmative in saying that He *will do* all He has purposed to accomplish. He has made known all that still needs to be done, and He will do it. He has shown His might in the past, starting with Creation, continuing on with the Flood, and performing inconceivable signs to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. And He is able to bring the history of this world to the conclusion He envisioned long ago.

Omnificent (John 1:4)

Of all the Greek words in the New Testament describing "life," only *zwh zōē* has the meaning "life as a principle, life in the absolute sense, life as God has it."² It is an everlasting life. John says, "In him life was." The Greek word for *life* in this verse is in the imperfect tense, meaning continuous action in the past, so we can say that in Him, life (in the absolute sense) continued to exist. That attribute, coupled with

omnipotence, gives God unlimited power to create.

God is then the only one who can promise life eternal, as He can continue to create and recreate. He promises that He is creating everything new (Rev. 21:5).

Omnisamor (Rom. 5:8; 8:35–39)

There is no such word in any dictionary. Perhaps we have not been able to find a word that will describe what God's love really is. God shows His love by letting His Son die for the people He created. Not because people asked for it. Not because they wanted it. Not because they deserved it. Not even because they accepted it! Jesus died in spite of total human disinterest and rejection. He died because He loved us. It was the only way of making it possible for people to live endlessly in a world of love. It is hard to imagine that Jesus died for Osama Bin Laden or Adolf Hitler, but He did. He died for all people while they were still sinners. It is this humanly unfathomable love (omnisamor) that did that.

This love keeps those who accept Jesus' death on their behalf in a firm embrace. Nothing can break this "omnisamor power." Paul mentions some powerful forces: death, life, angels, demons, etc. Nobody on this planet is able to conquer death. Yet Paul says that death cannot separate us from God's love. God's love, coupled with His other characteristics, will break all the seemingly impassable barriers.

Eternity (1 John 5:11, 12)

These two verses are pointing to some interesting facts by using specific tenses to describe actions. God *has given* us eternal life is in aorist, which in Greek indicates an action in the past, "often but not always implying a single past action."³ Indeed, God gave eternal life by giving Jesus. Once and for all—a "single past action" that is sufficient for our eternal life. The rest of verses 11 and 12 is present tense, which indicates an action that takes place now. So life is, and continues to be, in His Son. He who continually has the Son, continually has eternal life.

REACT

What other characteristics of God do you see as the basis of atonement?

1. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1980), p. 848.

2. W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), p. 367.

3. Jeremy Duff, *The Elements of New Testament Greek*, 3d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 68. The Greek verb is *edōken* from *didōmi* "give, grant, allow."

Monday
September 29

Real Love

TESTIMONY

1 John 4:10

"Thousands have a false conception of God and His attributes. . . . God is a God of truth. Justice and mercy are the attributes of his throne. He is a God of love, of pity and tender compassion. Thus He is represented in His Son, our Saviour. He is a God of patience and long-suffering. If such is the being whom we adore and to whose character we are seeking to assimilate, we are worshipping the true God."¹

"Whenever one manifests a spirit of mercy and forgiveness, he does it not of himself, but through the influence of the Divine Spirit moving upon his heart. 'We love, because he first loved us.'"²

"There are stormy times before us, but let us not utter one word of unbelief or discouragement. . . . [Christ] knows the needs and the necessities of the feeblest of His flock, and He sends His own message into the highways and the byways. He loves us with an everlasting love."³

We are able to come in confidence to the very throne of God, "calling up to our mind the promises that God has given, contemplating the goodness of God, and offering up thankful praises for His unchangeable love. We are not to trust in our

finite prayers, but in the word of our heavenly Father, in His assurance of His love for us. Believing the promise of His unchanging love, we press our petitions to the throne of grace."⁴

**"There are stormy times
before us."**

REACT

1. Is a God of love, who is also a God of justice, displaying polar opposites on one continuum? How can God be just and loving at the same time?

2. If it is God's nature to love and our nature to sin, how can we respond to God in a meaningful way?

3. If we expect God to be loving to us, what are His expectations of us?

4. As a child, I expressed my love to my father by running into his arms. As an adult, I express my love to him by giving him a warm "man's hug." How can I express my love to God who is spirit?

5. How can you make God's love real in your life?

1. *The Faith I Live By*, p. 59.

2. *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 305.

3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 167.

4. *In Heavenly Places*, p. 125.

The Paradox of Love

EVIDENCE

Eph. 3:14–20

The mystery of God's atonement is founded on His love for us. A classic passage that unpacks His love is Ephesians 3:14–20.* Read these verses now to make sense of the rest of today's study.

Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers starts with the recognition that love is the foundation of the Christian experience. "Rooted in the soil of love" is the idea used here. A germinating seed sends out roots long before the first green shoot appears above the soil. Similarly, we can never be sure how God's love is working on a person within their secret heart.

Then Paul goes on to describe how the Ephesian Christians are "established in love." God's love is not just a feel-good kick start to the Christian life. It is essential for maturity. "Established" Christians without an ongoing sense of God's love for them will tend to be dry and brittle, with little compassion to pass on to others. As Christians, we can't be channels of God's love to a loveless, unlovely world unless we are connected to the Source of love.

In verse 18, Paul is describing just how cosmically huge God's love is. The extremities of the three physical dimensions are well covered here. We could add the dimension of time, and proclaim that God's love runs from infinity to eternity.

Paul goes on to say that the Ephesian believers will be able to "know this love that surpasses knowledge." Perhaps by "know," Paul doesn't mean intellectually comprehended. Instead, he may be referring to intimate experience—in the way that knowing a person is different from knowing trigonometry. And the result of knowing God's love? "That you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." Now that's full.

Sometimes we get a distorted picture of a grudging God doling out bits of mercy to the deserving. But that's not what we see in these verses. What can you do to immerse yourself in God's ungraspable, unknowable, and immeasurable love today?

Knowing a person is
different from knowing
trigonometry.

*Specific words and phrases from the NIV are referred to in this article.

Learning to Be Loved

HOW-TO

1 John 3:1, 16–19; 4:7–17; 5:11, 12

Accepting God's love for me has been difficult. As a teenager, I didn't feel particularly lovable, because I experienced a lot of rejection by my peers. I was a late bloomer, and the girls in my class were focused on image and boys. I was verbally bullied and I believed what they told me.

Now, some years later, I've worked through a lot of these feelings, and I feel far more confident in who I am. Here's how you can do the same:

Accept God's love. If you're like me and have a particular sin that really haunts you, remember that God still loves you. As a parent, I can't imagine ever not loving my daughter. I might be angry with her or embarrassed by her, but I'll always love her. God is the perfect Parent; He accepts and loves you like no earthly parent can.

Live like you are a much-loved child. Hold your head high. God says you are His child, and He loves you as you are. You don't have to meet any criteria or standards for Him to love you. This is where your self-worth should come from. Others may

look at your actions or appearance, but God knows who you really are and loves you just the same.

Reflect God's love to others. This is where obedience comes in. Live as Jesus did. Put others' needs

As a teenager, I didn't feel particularly lovable.

before your own. Rely on God to give you the power to do so. How could you show God's love to someone in need?

The Israelites' sacrificial service was a reminder that God loved them. By contrast, the deities of the surrounding cultures were viewed as angry gods who needed to be given gifts, so they would respond positively to the worshiper. While the sacrifices of the Israelites might have appeared similar, the motive behind these sacrifices was completely different. The Israelites' sacrifices were to remind them of God's great love in sending a Savior.

REACT

1. How would you feel if your understanding of God was that He constantly needed sacrifices in order for Him to treat you positively?
2. Why do some of us still feel we need to do something for God to save us?
3. How would you parent children differently than your own parents raised you in order to show your children that God accepts them for who they are?
4. Explain the role of obedience in light of God's unconditional love for us.

The Depth of My Father's Love

OPINION

Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:8

I've had both positive and negative experiences with love and have learned along the way that love can be conditional or have limitations. The Bible defines God as love itself (1 John 4:8). The depth of His love would be revealed in an atoning act that would change the course of humanity forever.

God created Adam and Eve in His own image and called them His children. He gave them the world and asked only that they remain faithful to Him. But it wasn't long before they disobeyed their Father. This disobedience would impact their intimate relationship with God and change the course of their lives. In His wisdom, God knew of their impending future before He gave them life. But driven by love and compassion, He had already put a plan in place to save His children from the destruction of sin and its ultimate death penalty (1 Cor. 2:7; Rom. 6:23). This plan would reveal the measure of God's love for humanity and His intense desire to reconcile Himself to His estranged children.

Romans 5:8 tells us that God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die while we are still sinners. This Christ is His one and only Son. He would leave His heavenly home and descend to earth in human form to take the sin of humanity on His shoulders. This voluntary act would cost Him His life, demonstrating in a practical way the consequences of sin and God's compassionate disposition to forgive. It would reveal the degree of God's love for humanity. When we accept Jesus' death on our behalf, we are reconnected to God.

Now that's love!

After living as a superficial Christian for many years, I came to know God intimately as I experienced His grace. Before I came into existence, God knew that I would need a Savior. He loves me so much, that He gave His only Son for me so I could have an abundant life (Gal. 2:20; Heb. 2:9; John 10:10). In His death, I came to understand the price that was paid for this privilege. All that was asked of me is to believe in Him. Now that's love!

REACT

When God forgives, He forgives fully. Then why is it hard for many of us to forgive without holding a grudge?

Friday
October 3

Confess, Believe, Receive

EXPLORATION

Eph. 2:8

CONCLUDE

An uncle comes to his nephew who has just graduated and says, "Nephew, I have deposited \$10,000 into a savings account in your name. This money is to assist you with your tuition in your first year of college." The nephew expresses his gratitude, but soon forgets all about the money. After several years, the money is still in the account, but the nephew has never made a withdrawal. This savings account is a very minute representation of the gift of atonement. Through Christ's atoning sacrifice, we have been given the gift of everlasting life. We did nothing to earn it. Jesus *gave* it of His own free will. But many have never claimed this gift. The only way we can have eternal life is to believe it is ours and receive it (Rom. 10:9).

CONSIDER

- Drawing a small circle on a blank sheet of paper. Then draw a large circle around the small one. The small circle represents you. The large circle represents Christ and His atonement. Consider the completeness of Christ's atoning sacrifice for you, just as the circle is complete.
- Calling or e-mailing a friend and discussing the process Jesus went through to atone for our sins and the completeness of His sacrifice.
- Choosing a person to offer a gift of kindness to, such as helping with a job or activity, sharing something tangible, or giving an unexpected gift.
- Going to a quiet place to meditate on Jude 24. Write various versions of it in a journal, then take the journal with you. Write your thoughts about what this verse means to you.
- Taking the time to observe a small child with his or her mother or father. On a notepad, document the dynamics of the parent-child relationship. Compare this relationship to that of the heavenly Father and the believer.

CONNECT

Rom. 3:21–26; 5:9; 8:31–35; 10:5–13; Gal. 2:15, 16, 21; Eph. 2:8, 9; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6; Heb. 7:23–25.

Cosmic Crisis: The **Disruption** of God's Established **Order**



**“He is before all things, and in him all things hold together”
(Col. 1:17, NIV).**

Still Hope in Jesus

INTRODUCTION

Rev. 12:7-9

"John, I am going out of state for the next few weeks; I'm leaving everything in your care because you've proven yourself to all of us."

"Thank you, sir, for your confidence in me. I certainly won't disappoint you!" John looked Mr. Bindy straight into his eyes as he responded.

A few days later, Mr. Bindy left the state as he had indicated. This was exactly what John wanted; he now had the perfect chance to work out his scheme. He wanted Mr. Bindy's position in the organization. He felt he could do a much better job, and he just had to let others know about it. So he started going from one office to the next, talking to the staff about the things that needed to be improved. He even found fault with what was good about Mr. Bindy. He started telling the others that Mr. Bindy thought he knew everything about running a business and wanted to tell everyone how to do their jobs. At first, not every member of the organization supported John; but little by little he began to get people thinking like he was. So, for the next few days, he tried his best to address the problems that Mr. Bindy had not yet been able to address, hoping that at the next general meeting, the workers would vote him in as manager instead of Mr. Bindy.

He wanted Mr. Bindy's position in the organization.

Satan basically did the same thing John did, only better. He worked diligently to win the hearts of the heavenly beings, portraying God as one who made them just to praise and glorify Him. He painted a picture that portrayed God as unjust; and he even tried to call God a slave master. Sadly, he influenced a third of those angels. Today, these angels accompany him in tempting us humans to live against the will of God. In His Word, God has told us how we should live, but Satan tries to convince us that there is a better, easier, and much more enjoyable way of living. Many fall to these temptations, because his schemes are so believable. As the years pass by, his temptations become ever more deceptive.

This week's lesson will tell us more about Satan—what he has done and is still doing. But it will also tell us that there is still hope in Jesus.

From Mr. Good to Mr. Evil

EVIDENCE

Isa. 14:13, 14

Ellen G. White paints a clear picture of what really happened in heaven. "Sin originated in self-seeking. Lucifer, the covering cherub, desired to be first in heaven. He sought to gain control of heavenly beings, to draw them away from their Creator, and to win their homage to himself. Therefore, he misrepresented God, attributing to Him the desire of self-exaltation."¹

Lucifer endeavored to mislead the angels and to misrepresent God in order to take His place. Although he has been thrown out of heaven, Satan still continues to do so. He knows he cannot have heaven since he is no match for God. Still, he continues to fight, not for a physical heaven, but to win our hearts away from God. Peter cautions us of that fact: "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8, NIV).

But Satan is still fighting a losing battle. God tells him, "You are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit" (Isa. 14:15, NIV). Yes, God will have the final say. "So great was His love for the world, that he covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, 'that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'"²

Satan's act of rebellion against God and His perfect plan saddens the entire universe, as he has caused pain and suffering and temptation of all sorts, especially for those who are striving to serve God. But in the end, God shall prevail, and the devil will be "thrown into the lake of burning sulfur" (Rev. 20:10, NIV). Then, once again, good shall reign.

Then, once again, good
shall reign.

REACT

1. Since Satan has so much evil experience, how can we as Christians succeed against him?
2. How does the hope that God gives comfort you?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 21, 22.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

Monday
October 6

Experiencing the Sanctifying Power of Christ

LOGOS

Deut. 7:5, 6; Rom. 8:1, 2; 1 John 1:7

Society is saturated with postmodern ethics which purport that salvation can be obtained through several means. How then can Christians confidently continue to believe in the substitution concept of salvation based on who Christ is, what He did, and what He continues to do?

Salvation Is Personal (1 John 1:7)

Anyone who desires to be saved must be in a committed relationship with Christ. Read 1 John 1:7. The word *if* in this verse establishes a conditional element. John aptly draws the relationship of consequence which exists between walking and not walking in the light. Thus he illustrates that those who live in the light are completely opposite from those who do not. Behavioral psychologists tell us that behavior is determined by experience; and that experiences shape personality.

Therefore, personality is consequent to experience. So then, what we are becoming to a great extent is dependent on our experiences.

Who or what places us in the presence of God?

In 1 John 1:7, the words *we walk* are in the present active tense, and since the subject is doing the action,

the responsibility of walking in the light belongs to the individual. *Walk*, then, is an expression employed by John to signify "the whole round of activities of the individual life." Thus, successful Christian living requires a conscious, determined effort by the Christian. Choice is significant in the realization of the sanctification process. Individuals have the responsibility to choose to continually submit their sinful will to God in order for sanctification to occur. Only then can we return to the type of life God planned for us. "Sanctification is not a matter of course, which will go on whatever we do, or do not do. It requires a direct superintendence and surgery on the one hand, and, on the other hand, a practical hatred of evil on our part that cooperates with the husbandry of God."²

Through Christ, Human Salvation Is Realized (1 John 1:7)

Who or what places us in the presence of God? The answer is found in the phrase "*and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin*" (1 John 1:7, NIV). Thus, significance is placed on the blood, which alludes to the Jewish sacrificial system, and accentuates the significance of Christ's crucifixion in our restoration to God.

Therefore, every aspect of Jewish life was conducted in reference to the sanctuary. It was the center of their lives, and their existence was dependent upon the substitutionary ministry performed there. The ministry of the sanctuary was the type pointing to the antitype: Christ's ministry for fallen humans. Similarly, it's the efficacy of Christ's substitutionary death and shed blood that makes fellowship with God a reality.

Because Jesus condemned sin, His blood is able to break down the power of sin in the life of the Christian. Jesus is the cleansing agent for sinfulness and the only hope of deliverance from the addictive power of sin. After humankind's disobedience in Eden, Christ, the divine High Priest, pronounced them unclean. Consequently, humankind became separated from God and by themselves, could not find a way back. Christ, therefore, took upon Himself the divine prerogative of reaching out to them, and by so doing became a man. Not only does He diagnose the illness of sin, He is also the prescription for its cure—take daily for life.

Physical Evidence (Deut. 7:5, 6; Rom. 8:1, 2)

Evidence of God's sanctification is holy living. Sanctification means "to separate from common use." God endorses this definition through His servant Moses in Deuteronomy 7: 5, 6. Take time to read these verses now.

Only God is innately holy. However, the attribute of holiness was ascribed to Israel after they were called by God and proclaimed sanctified by Him. He held them accountable to live holy lives, as a result of the processes they experienced.

In the New Testament context, believers are called and sanctified by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:1, 2). Consequently, believers are saints. The New Testament writers appealed to believers to live a life of holiness, because God has declared them holy. Read how Peter illustrates this in 1 Peter 2:9, 10.

We must understand, however, that holy living, which manifests human sanctification, is not synonymous with perfection. "Sanctification does not mean perfection reached, but the progress of the divine life towards perfection. Sanctification is the Christianizing of the Christian."³

First John 1:7 illustrates the vertical and horizontal relational structure of Christian living through the upward, inward, and outward connection. Our upward connection with God, which is made possible through the atoning sacrifice of Christ, predisposes us to the redemptive power of God. This, in turn, effects a transformative inward change on the sinful nature of humankind, which produces an outward manifestation of that inward transformation.

1. W. E. Vine et al., *Vine's, Complete Expository Dictionary of the Old and New Testament* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), p. 664.

2. A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology, The Doctrine of Salvation* (Philadelphia: Griffith and Rowland Press, 1909), p. 870.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 869.

Tuesday
October 7

Disorder in Heaven

TESTIMONY

Isa. 14:13, 14

"It is impossible to explain the origin of sin so as to give a reason for its existence. Yet enough may be understood concerning both the origin and final disposition of sin to make fully manifest the justice and benevolence of God in all His dealings with evil. Nothing is more plainly taught in Scripture than that God was in no wise responsible for the entrance of sin; that there was no arbitrary withdrawal of divine grace, no deficiency in the divine government, that gave occasion for the uprising of rebellion. Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given."¹

"Sin originated with him who, next to Christ, had been the most honored of God and who stood highest in power and glory among the inhabitants in heaven. . . . Lucifer might have remained in favor with God, beloved and honored by all the angelic host, exercising his noble powers to bless others and to glorify his Maker"² But Isaiah 14:13, 14 shows how pride and covetousness destroyed Lucifer.

"Satan's rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages, a perpetual testimony to the nature and terrible results of sin. The working out of Satan's rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting

"Sin is an intruder."

aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God's government and His law is bound up the well-being of all the creatures he has made. Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy intelligences, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin and suffering its punishments."³

REACT

Considering the biblical account of Lucifer's fall, how should we view ourselves in relation to God?

1. *The Great Controversy*, pp. 492, 493.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 493, 494.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 499.

How to Overcome the Battle

HOW-TO

Job 1:10, 11

We can learn a lot from Job about the cosmic crisis and how to deal with it. Job had it all, yet he was persecuted mercilessly by the devil. “‘You have always protected him and his home and his property from harm. You have made him prosperous in everything he does. Look how rich he is! But take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!’” (Job 1:10, 11, NLT). Thankfully, Job was faithful to God despite the torture unleashed by Satan. Amidst his material success and the tragedies he faced, Job chose to keep God as the central theme in his life.

How many of us could empathize with Job—faced with the hardships of life yet choosing to praise God? Oftentimes God blesses us with success; but the moment we are faced with some difficulty, we satisfy the devil by complaining and blaming God. It's not that we shouldn't aspire to be successful. Certainly we should, but not at the expense of our soul's salvation. The only way we can truly accept the gift of salvation is if we know this Jesus of whom we speak.

How can we strengthen our relationship with Jesus?

1. Spend time in daily devotion with God, talk to Him in prayer—*Philippians 4: 6*.
2. Listen to His promptings—*Proverbs 3:5*.
3. Commit to following Him—*Proverbs 3:6*.
4. Tell someone about His love—*John 3:16*.

Job had a strong relationship with God; he could overlook Satan's advances regardless of the intensity. Like Job, we need that strong connection with Jesus to overcome the devil's advances. We need to build up our relationship of defense one day at a time. What a disappointment it would be if we lose out on the prize—the prize of salvation.

REACT

1. Are you spending your time trying to be successful by the world's standards?
2. How can you ensure that your ambition does not distract you from God?

Thursday
October 9

Lucifer's Rebellion— Human's Headache

OPINION

Rom. 5:12

A disruption of the heavenly order meant a disruption in the earthly order. Before Lucifer's rebellion, everything in heaven and earth was perfect. In fact, Eden was a heaven on earth. This indeed is true as God walked "in the garden in the cool of the day" (Gen. 3:8, NIV). Everything was perfect! No thorns pierced the skin, no mosquitoes or flies bothered Adam and Eve. If what we call rodents today existed then, they must have had a positive role to play in the whole scheme of things.

It was not until Satan's involvement with humans that women had to suffer so much to bear children (Gen. 3:16). It was only after Adam and Eve allowed Satan to influence their actions against God's will that men must now sweat to feed themselves and their dependents (Gen. 3:19). Another sad result of this was the hatred and jealousy which developed from one brother to the next, resulting in the first murder (Gen. 4:8).

I can't wait for that glorious day to come!

As we examine the Bible and our present day, we must admit that things have gotten progressively worse. Many are living in constant fear, unsure of what ills the next day, hour, or even minute may bring. There was no sickness in Eden, but today we have diseases without cure. Lucifer, through his rebellion, caused war in heaven—the most holy of places. Today, war is almost commonplace. What seems like a small beginning—one simple rebellion—has driven the world into chaos of all sorts.

Can you imagine what it would be like if Lucifer had not interfered with the order of things? Can you imagine our present world without war, sickness, disease, heartache, worry, and stress? Yes, there is hope—blessed hope! Jesus promised in John 14:1–3 that He was going to prepare a place for us. That in itself is already hope, but that hope is further magnified in Revelation 21:4, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (NIV).

Oh, what a blessed hope. I can't wait for that glorious day to come!

REACT

1. Why do you think Adam and Eve chose to allow themselves to be fooled by the devil?
2. What comfort does Jesus' promise of preparing a place for us bring to you as you face the devil's temptations?

War of the Worlds

EXPLORATION

Rev. 12:7-9; Rom. 5:12

CONCLUDE

The moment Lucifer turned his eyes away from God and onto himself, sin began. His goal was to bring glory to himself and away from God. The good news is that Satan and evil will one day be destroyed in the lake of fire. Through the blood of Jesus we are purified from sin. The process of sanctification ensues, with a daily commitment to holy living and embracing Christ's righteousness. Only through the power of Christ can we hope to defeat the devil.

CONSIDER

- Thinking of the images the world has given us of Satan in films, books, etc. How is that picture of Satan different from what the Bible shows us?
- Meditating on the following thoughts and questions: Satan is a master of deception. Despite his losing proposition, one-third of the angels fell with him. How do you think he convinced them to leave with him? How would you convince the other angels to stay?
- Developing a daily plan to strengthen your relationship with Jesus. In this plan, include spending time with Him through the Word, talking with Him in prayer, listening to Him through meditation, committing yourself to Him, and telling one person about Him every day.
- Going to the most beautiful spot of nature that you know. Soak in the beauty of God's creation. Then see where sin has entered this picture, and imagine how the spot would have looked had we not fallen.
- Making a list of five difficult experiences in your life. Then, write down how God saw you through these difficult times.
- Thinking of three "good triumphs over evil" stories in popular culture. How are these struggles different from yours? How are they the same?

CONNECT

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*; C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*;
Mike Tucker, *Every Good Thing: Satisfying Your Hunger for God*.

The Fall Into Sin



“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” (Rom. 7:24, NASB).

Freedom Comes From Obedience

INTRODUCTION

Ps. 84:11

"Ignace Paderewski (1860–1941) was one of the greatest pianists that ever lived. When he came onto the stage, a hush of silence fell over the audience, a hush that lasted until he left. No one hearing one of his performances ever forgot it. When he died, a world mourned."* Paderewski was able to produce music that was as sweet as honey fresh from the honeycomb because he submitted to the laws of melody, harmony, rhythm, tempo, and counterpoint.

Would Paderewski be as obedient to these laws in today's society—a society that generally wants nothing to do with law? Even today, many Christians believe that the laws of God were nailed to the cross and, as a result, we don't need to obey them anymore.

But what does Jesus teach regarding this matter? In Matthew 5:17, He says: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (NIV).

Everyone knows that if there were no traffic laws, the roads would be chaotic and driving would be extremely dangerous. Driving to work would be like committing sui-

**Driving to work would be
like committing suicide.**

cide. Traffic lights and road signs exist to protect both ourselves and other drivers. Traffic lights ensure that traffic moves in an organized and orderly manner. Similarly, God's Ten Commandments are not meant to prevent us from enjoying life; rather they exist to keep us safe and to help us enjoy life to the fullest. They protect us and allow us to live harmoniously with God and our fellow humans. God would not restrict us from anything that is good for us. If we all abided by His laws, this world would be a much safer and happier place to live in.

This week, we'll study what happened and continues to happen as a result of neglecting God's law.

* *Shelter in the Storm*, p. 52.

Humans Fall Into Sin

LOGOS

Genesis 1–3; Rom. 3:9–18; 5:10–21; 6:16; 2 Pet. 2:19

Disconnecting From God (Genesis 1–3)

When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, they fell from their elevated status to one of degradation and corruption. Their disobedience had the same affect as attempting to defy the law of gravity. Any attempt to violate this law by jumping from a tall building is bound to result in severe injury. By sinning, therefore, Adam and Eve severely injured themselves and all of humankind.

As the Creator of life, God has given us laws to regulate that life. These laws, when obeyed, create harmony and well-being. He created humans to have intimate fellowship with Him. Therefore, God is a reality from which life cannot be disconnected.

Sin is all about attempts to disconnect from the reality of God. Sin may be defined in various ways: (1) transgression of God's law or lawlessness (1 John 3:4); (2) missing the mark (Rom. 3:23); and (3) any "deviation from the known will of God, either of neglect to do what He has specifically commanded or of doing what He has specifically forbidden."¹ But regardless of how we define sin, it degrades humans and deprives them of their God-given dignity, freedom, and value. Hence the "fall" into sin. The Bible shows that humans are in a desperate situation and that the only way out of it is Christ's atonement.

Sin is all about attempts to disconnect from the reality of God.

In Genesis 1, we read how God created heaven and earth. It is significant that the Creation account is often punctuated by the modifier *good* (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). This tells us that there was nothing wrong with what God created.

In addition, God crowned His work by creating human beings in His own image (Gen. 1:26, 27). After creating human beings, God declared that everything He made was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Human beings are special because they are created in the image of God. Ellen White describes being created in God's image as having individuality and the "power to think and to do."² Human beings are to reflect that image of God by living in accordance with His law, which is the transcript of His character and "the standard by which the characters and the lives of men will be tested in the judgment."³

In Genesis 2, we learn how God created and provided for human beings. It was

for them that God established the Sabbath (Gen. 2:1–3) and marriage and family (Gen. 2:18–25). The intrusion of sin marred all of this. In more complex ways, sin continues to distort, twist, and warp human life, and not without devastating effects on God's creation as a whole.

Genesis 3 deals with the actual fall into sin and the devastating consequences. The image of God is now distorted and sullied. The broken relationship with God causes broken relationships between humans and between humans and the rest of creation. Everywhere can be seen the havoc and misery that results.

The Power to Heal the Brokenness (Rom. 3:9–18; 5:10–21; 6:16; 2 Pet. 2:19)

Paul makes it clear that Adam's sin is also the sin of his posterity. Thus, we suffer the consequences of Adam's sin and our own sin (Rom. 5:12). No one can escape. No one is free. No one understands. And no one has any trace of being able to do what is right. All are inclined to evil (Rom. 3:9–18).

Furthermore, Paul points out that human beings are quite helpless in liberating themselves from the penalty, power, and presence of sin. They need power from outside themselves. And God has provided this power. This provision is what the gospel is all about. The effects of sin are only reversed by Christ through His suffering (Rom. 5:15–21). This is the genius of the Christian faith: God, against whom all have sinned, takes the initiative to reconcile sinful human beings to Himself at an incredible cost to Himself.

Both Paul and Peter have a way of showing how sin dominates all humans who are not connected to Christ. Humans outside Christ are slaves to sin and totally depraved (Rom. 6:16; 2 Pet. 2:19). In Romans 7:24 Paul asks: "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (NIV). The answer? Christ will. He has suffered to the utmost to effect reconciliation and atonement between God and humans. He loves us enough to be the sacrifice for sin. He works to reverse and finally to eradicate sin not only from those who accept Him, but from the entire universe. The promise initially made in Genesis 3:15 has been fulfilled in Him.

REACT

1. Why do so many people who profess faith in Christ seem addicted to vices that make life difficult for themselves and other people?
2. Do you think you are a free moral agent? Explain your answer.

1. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed. (1979), p. 1042.

2. *Education*, p. 17.

3. *The Great Controversy*, p. 482.

Flee From the Evil One

TESTIMONY

1 Pet. 5:8, 9

"Had Eve refrained from entering into argument with the tempter, she would have been safe; but she ventured to parley with him and fell a victim to his wiles. It is thus that many are still overcome. They doubt and argue concerning the requirements of God; and instead of obeying the divine commands, they accept human theories, which but disguise the devices of Satan. . . .

". . . Eve yielded to temptation; and through her influence, Adam was led into sin. They accepted the words of the serpent, that God did not mean what He said; they distrusted their Creator and imagined that He was restricting their liberty and that they might obtain great wisdom and exaltation by transgressing His law.

"But what did Adam, after his sin, find to be the meaning of the words, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die'? Did he find them to mean, as Satan had led him to believe, that he was to be ushered into a more exalted state of existence? Then indeed there was great good to be gained by transgression, and Satan was proved to be a benefactor of the race. But Adam did not find this to be the

meaning of the divine sentence. God declared that as a penalty for his sin, man should return to the ground whence he was taken."

**"Eve yielded to
temptation."**

"After Adam and Eve had disobeyed God, their eyes were

opened to discern their folly"² but it was too late. Our first parent's choice plunged planet Earth into sin; but "to those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life" (Rom. 2:7, NIV).

"To man, the crowning work of creation, God has given power to understand His requirements, to comprehend the justice and beneficence of His law, and its sacred claims upon him; and of man unswerving obedience is required."³

"In the judgment men will not be condemned because they conscientiously believed a lie, but because they did not believe the truth, because they neglected the opportunity of learning what is truth."⁴

The lessons and warnings found in the Word of God are given to save us from deception and destruction. "The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever" (Ps. 37:29).

1. *The Great Controversy*, pp. 531, 532.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 532.

3. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 52.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Free Life for All

EVIDENCE

John 10:9, 10; Rom. 5:10–21

In his letter to the Romans, Paul addresses himself as an apostle to the Greeks and Gentiles and discusses at length the topic of righteousness by faith. Maybe he was seeking to point out to the Greeks and Gentiles that eternal life was available through Christ not only to the Jews, but to everybody who believed in Him.

Adam's fall marked the beginning of the downward spiral of humanity's moral degeneration. Throughout succeeding generations, human beings seem to invent more ways of rebelling against God and His law. Soon after Adam's fall, his own son committed the first murder (Gen. 4:8). Cain's descendants had complete disregard for the Lord. By Noah's time, wickedness was such that God regretted having created humans and felt compelled to destroy them as a result (Genesis 6, 7). The earth seemed to be cleansed, but only for a while. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction due to their degeneration is proof once again how inclined to sin humans really are.

Today, the results of sin are evident wherever we look. Actual wars and threats of terror abound. People kill each other over drugs, and in some countries, angry drivers shoot at those who get in their way. Hence, Paul's desperate cry for deliverance in Romans 7:24.

The earth seemed to be
cleansed, but only for a
while.

But God has a way out. "Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:25, NIV). Christ is our way out of the sin predicament. Read Romans 5:6, 8, 19. Christ's death solved the sin problem for all time. When He said on the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30, NIV), the victory was won. Now we can be "reconciled to him [God] through the death of his Son" (Rom 5:10, NIV). The gulf between us and God was done away with at Calvary.

REACT

1. What hope do people have who do not believe in Christ? How would you convince somebody who does not believe in Christ that moral degeneration will continue until Christ returns?

2. Christ died that we might have eternal life. He wants us to tell others about His love. How can you share this story of hope in your social circles?

Wednesday
October 15

Living in Love With God

HOW-TO

Jer. 33:8; Matt. 26:28; John 3:16; Titus 3:4-6; Heb. 10:22-24; 1 Pet. 1:3

The Bible is clear about God's disdain of sin and all that it touches. Because of this, it seems easier to either mentally gloss over the sin that is present in our lives or to acknowledge it and let our guilt overwhelm us and separate us from God even further. Something in our heart cries out for reconciliation with God without running from the reality of our sinful condition.

Thankfully, the Bible has the perfect solution to this problem. The plan of salvation embodies both the raw reality of our sins and separation from God and the hope that He has lovingly called us to live through His atonement for that sin. If we truly understand even the basic concepts underlying Christ's sacrifice and applying those concepts to our lives in practical ways, we can actually spend every second in an intimate relationship with God, complete with a solid hope in our ultimate salvation.

Thankfully, the Bible has the perfect solution to this problem.

Here are some practical suggestions on how to make this idea a reality in your life:

Meditate daily on the love God has for you personally "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes

in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, NIV).

Find practical ways to apply the knowledge of that love to your life. Ask yourself questions such as: if God loved me enough to die for me, could this sin that is causing me so much guilt ever possibly be too big to keep Him from loving me intensely?

When you do come to a place where your sins overwhelm you, choose to ask for forgiveness, throw your sin and guilt back to God, and stand firmly on His promises of hope. Allow such a stand to be a constant heart condition. Read Hebrews 10:22-24.

REACT

What areas in your life do not contain hope? How can you apply the concepts in this lesson to those specific areas?

Freedom of Choice Versus Sin

OPINION

Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:4, 5, 19; 4:8; 2 Tim. 3:1-9

"Our first parents were not left without warning of the danger that threatened them. Heavenly messengers opened to them the history of Satan's fall and his plots for their destruction. . . . It was by disobedience to the just commands of God that Satan and his host had fallen. How important, then, that Adam and Eve should honor that law by which alone it was possible for order and equity to be maintained."*

Satan promised that after eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve would not only continue to live, but that they would be as gods. He promised them paradise after sin. Thus, Satan led them to believe that they would have a better life by disobeying God's law. However, he himself was expelled from heaven because he wanted to be like God. We now know that he was a liar from the beginning (John 8:44).

God told Adam that as a result of his disobedience, he would have to work hard just to eat (Gen. 3:19). In a sense, this was a blessing. It would keep his mind and body occupied and out of trouble. In addition to that, death also entered the world. Genesis 4 speaks about the death of Abel, who was killed not by Satan, but by Cain under Satan's influence. A rebellious nation arose from Cain. It was so rebellious that God spoke of destroying His creation with a worldwide flood (Gen. 6:7).

**We now know that he was
a liar from the beginning.**

Because of His great love, God sent a warning through Noah prior to the Flood. Afterward, humans began building the Tower of Babel in order to escape another worldwide flood, even though God had given them the rainbow as a sign that He would not do so again (Gen. 9:11-16). So we can conclude that they were getting ready to sin again.

As generations pass by, humans have become more and more sinful. In 2 Timothy 3:1-9 Paul enlightens us on how the world will be in the last days. So why did God create us with freedom of choice? Why is it important for us to choose Him over Satan? Why wouldn't we be better off just being mere puppets?

REACT

1. How can you help to make this world a better place?
2. The devil claimed that if we sinned we would be like gods. How have humans tried to be like gods?

**Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 52.

Friday
October 17

Self-Disorder

EXPLORATION

Rom. 5:12–18

CONCLUDE

Every society has recognized that something's out of sorts with life on this earth. Despite all we do, we can't help tripping up. As people have struggled to surpass this world's limitations and distortions, two equally false ideas have tried to waylay them: (1) that they don't need a God (or that they can be gods themselves), or (2) that God is too stringent to ever accept them, or that even if He does, they've got to earn His acceptance. Either way, the focus is squarely on ourselves and what we can do.

The amazing truth the Bible reveals is that while there's no divine merit in any of us, God says, "You don't need to try to come all the way up to Me—because I'm coming down to you." Though sin was entirely humanity's fault, Jesus Himself paid the price for our salvation.

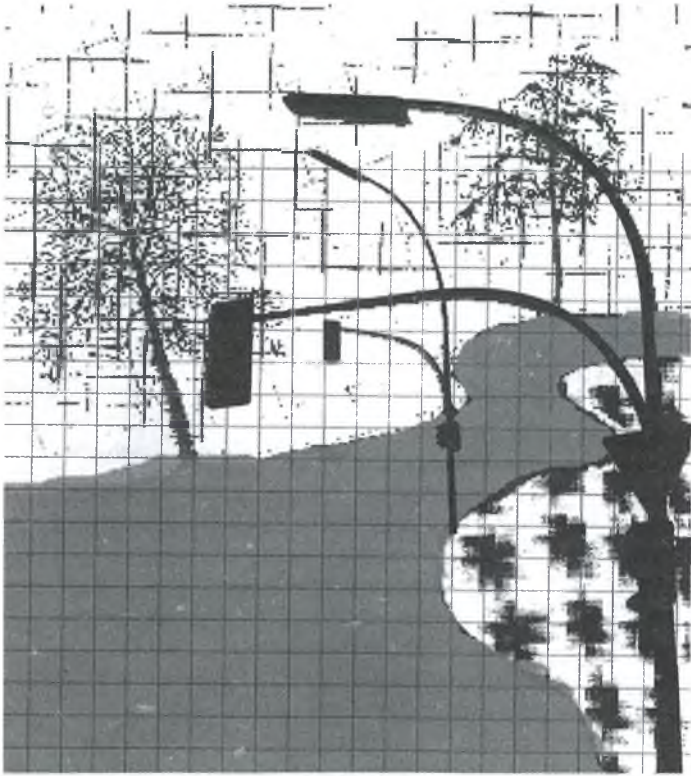
CONSIDER

- Composing an instrumental song illustrating the harmony with which God created the world, only to be shattered by sin, then mended by Jesus' act of sacrifice.
- Making a list of ways people try to fix their own problems apart from God.
- Reading one of the Gospel books (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) and underlining passages that speak to God's solution to our sin problem.
- Pondering how and why Adam and Eve were deceived. What rhetorical tricks did the serpent play on them? What did it appeal to in them, and what truths did it twist?
- Planting new flowers in a barren spot of yard to remind you that God desires to redeem and recreate us.
- Sharing your testimony of how God has blessed you despite everything trying to pull you down.

CONNECT

Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption*, chaps. 4 and 5.
Ty Gibson, *In the Light of God's Love*.

Atonement and the Divine Initiative



“And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ” (Eph. 1:9, 10, NIV).

Dying to Self

INTRODUCTION

Rom. 5:6–8

Christ in His ministry made the ultimate sacrifice. His example was one we should be willing to follow. In the following story, we see a man who chose to demonstrate his love for those around him.

In the 1990s, a Catholic priest moved to a new parish in the southern part of the Philippines. Father Giancarlo Bossi was warned before he arrived that he would be in grave danger, for there were many Muslims there who disapproved of all Christian religions.

Yet the 57-year-old priest did as he felt Jesus would have done. Despite the danger, he moved into the area and shared the hardships of life with his parishioners as well as with his Muslim neighbors.

It seemed to the priest that for the most part, the Christians and Muslims in this area seemed to be getting along. Then on June 10, 2007, Father Bossi was kidnapped by some of the extremists. For weeks, no one knew who had captured him. Finally, the militant group MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) released photographs of the missing missionary.

For weeks, no one knew who had captured him.

It was with mixed feelings that parishioners and the rest of the country alike viewed the photos of Bossi in the newspaper. On one hand, the people knew that at least

their priest was still alive. On the other hand, they knew the brutal reputation of the MILF.

Finally, the government decided to send military personnel deep into the jungle to find the captive and release him. So about a month after his kidnapping, Philippine Marines stormed the jungle where they thought he was being held captive. In the altercation that ensued, one MILF rebel was killed. But 14 Marines also were killed, 10 of them beheaded.

What would happen to the priest now? Two weeks passed. Then finally about a month and a half after his abduction, a former mayor of Basilan Province helped in the negotiations with the MILF for the release of their prisoner. The prisoner was released, even without a ransom.

Immediately, personnel from the Italian embassy rushed to the area and took charge of Bossi. The gaunt priest was sick for a week afterward. Shortly after this, Bossi flew back to Italy for some much-needed rest.

How have you died to self?

Christ in You

EVIDENCE

Col. 1:24-27

In the Bible, we learn that we all need to have is Jesus in us. But how do we know we have achieved this?

Some Christians believe that by eating the bread at Communion, they are actually consuming the body of Christ. They also believe that when they drink the wine/grape juice, they are drinking the blood of Christ.

But is that how we get Jesus in us? In Revelation 3:20, Jesus tells us, "Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me" (NRSV).

But once again, how does Jesus get in us?

Some say He's knocking at the door of our heart. When the Bible speaks of the heart, more often than not it's speaking of the seat of our emotions, the mind. And because there is not a literal door into the heart, there must be a way to internalize His thoughts, His wisdom, His truths in order to make them ours. So let us consider some things that we can do to bring this about. First, we need to remember a few words that Jesus told us. In John 14:15-18, He told His disciples (and us), "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (NIV).

Some say He's knocking at the door of our heart.

Basically, that's about all we ourselves can do. The rest is up to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Now as you consider the evidence and surrender to Him, here are some questions to think about:

REACT

1. Are you currently separated from God?
2. What is God's desire for you personally?
3. Why do people wait to accept Jesus into their hearts when He longs to be the solution to sin in our lives? What are you waiting for? You have the evidence. Why not accept Him now?

Monday
October 20

God's Plan for Atonement

LOGOS

Rom. 3:19–22; 5:6–8, 20, 21; Eph. 1:4, 5; Col. 1:25–27; 2 Tim. 1:8–11; Titus 1:1–4

Hope of Eternal Life (2 Tim. 1:8–11; Titus 1:1–4)

There was war in heaven. Lucifer had proclaimed his discontent. When given a choice, a third of heaven's angels sided with him, and they were cast out of heaven. But even before this, God and Christ had prepared a plan to save humanity. This atonement, this bringing humanity back to oneness with God, is also known as the plan of salvation.

Titus tells us that this hope of eternal life was in place before the world began. It was to be a way to give humans a second chance. It is a gift God gave us before we were even born (Titus 1:2).

The Sacrifice (Eph. 1:4, 5)

The plan was that Christ would make an atonement, a sacrifice, if humanity was disloyal. This would unite with God those who believed. Humanity had such a special place in God's heart, and "since the law of Jehovah is the foundation of His government in heaven as well as upon the earth,

**This is what Satan doesn't
want us to understand.**

even the life of an angel could not be accepted as a sacrifice for its transgression."¹ So Christ became that a sacrifice.

Sin Reigned, But Now Grace (Rom. 5:20, 21)

One definition of grace is "undeserved goodwill." It is receiving a kind response when you know you deserve punishment. It is a comforting word when you just received a speeding ticket. Satan has our "speeding ticket" and is holding it as evidence of his hold on us. But Jesus covers that ticket with His atonement and grace so it is as though it never happened. "Grace is a combination of God's love and His power to save."²

Mystery Hidden, Christ in You (Col. 1:25–27)

It is the mystery of God that we can have Christ in us. This is what Satan doesn't want us to understand. This plan of salvation has been revealed progressively so

that now we have a fuller view of it and of God's love for us. This plan, this atonement, is for everyone. It is offered to everyone, no matter their age, socioeconomic status, education, or financial situation.

Sinners Whom Christ Died For (Rom. 5:6–8)

"The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster."³ In the sanctuary, the services, furniture, and offerings pointed to Christ. The bread on the table of showbread represented Christ, the Bread of Life. He fills our hunger, both physically and spiritually. The candlestick represented Christ, the Light of the World. The lamb on the altar of sacrifice represented Christ, the Lamb who was slain.

As the Israelites participated daily in the sanctuary service, they were to learn that Jesus Christ is the center of the plan of salvation. He is to be our example and our reason for change. He is our hope and our comfort. He is our Savior, and He died to save us, even while we were yet sinners.

Righteousness by Faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:19–22)

While many people may get "hung up" on righteousness by faith, we would do well to remember that in order to have real Christlike actions, we must have a real Christlike heart, because out of the heart comes our true thoughts and actions. We must first, by faith, give our heart to God, let God transform it, and He will produce His work in our lives.

"Every human energy must be exerted on the side of doing God's will. There is no salvation in human effort, but every person whose heart has been transformed by the Holy Spirit will enlist all his powers on God's side. He decides to place himself in God's hands for cleansing and victory, and he operates fully with the Spirit to accomplish His purposes."⁴ A perfect Old Testament picture of this is in Deuteronomy 5:15. God pointed out to the Israelites that He saved them first before giving them the law.

As we follow God's steps and become closer to Him, we find that " 'atonement' is God's entire program for meeting our needs and for reconciling us to Himself."⁵

REACT

1. Describe God's love for you.
2. Name ways that God's atonement will show in your life.

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 66.

2. *Christian Beliefs*, p. 231.

3. *Gospel Workers*, p. 315.

4. *Christian Beliefs*, p. 241.

5. *God Cares*, vol. 1, p. 236.

Tuesday
October 21

God's Wonderful Plan

TESTIMONY

Titus 1:1-4

"The plan by which alone man's salvation could be secured, involved all heaven in its infinite sacrifice. The angels could not rejoice as Christ opened before them the plan of redemption, for they saw that man's salvation must cost their loved Commander unutterable woe. In grief and wonder they listened to His words as He told them how He must descend from heaven's purity and peace, its joy and glory and immortal life, and come in contact with the degradation of earth, to endure its sorrow, shame, and death. He was to stand between the sinner and the penalty of sin; yet few would receive Him as the Son of God. . . . When His mission as a teacher should be ended, He must be delivered into the hands of wicked men and be subjected to every insult and torture that Satan could inspire them to inflict. He must die the cruelest of deaths, lifted up between the heavens and the earth as a guilty sinner. . . . He must endure anguish of soul, the hiding of His Father's face, while the guilt of transgression—the weight of the sins of the whole world—should be upon Him.

**"Then joy, inexpressible joy,
filled heaven."**

"The angels prostrated themselves at the feet of their Commander and offered to become a sacrifice for man. But an angel's life could not pay the debt; only He who

created man had power to redeem him. . . .

"Christ assured the angels that by His death He would ransom many, and would destroy him who had the power of death. He would recover the kingdom which man had lost by transgression, and the redeemed were to inherit it with Him, and dwell therein forever. Sin and sinners would be blotted out, nevermore to disturb the peace of heaven or earth. . . .

"Then joy, inexpressible joy, filled heaven. . . . Through the celestial courts echoed the first strains of that song which was to ring out above the hills of Bethlehem—'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' Luke 2:14."*

REACT

Why didn't God kill Lucifer as soon as he had sinned?

**Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 64, 65.

Who's in Charge of Our Salvation?

HOW-TO

Eph. 1:4, 5

The following are some of the ways people believe they are saved.

Works alone. Throughout history, some have chosen to leave God out of the equation. They feel they are in charge of their own destination. There is a works-related religion.

Grace alone. Others believe that once they have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus, the matter is finished. Unfortunately, many of these persons haven't kept up that Jesus connection. Many of them will hear Christ's words, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41, NIV).

Chance alone. Then there are those who have interpreted the Scriptures as saying that God has already chosen who will go to heaven. So they have decided to give up on trying, because either they're in or they're out.

Now let's contemplate each of the above fallacies.

Works alone. If works alone could pay for one's salvation, then why would Christ have been sacrificed?

**Some choose to use grace
like a lucky rabbit's foot.**

Grace alone. Some choose to use grace like a lucky rabbit's foot. They think they can just leave it all to God. But if we really love Him, then the power of His grace will take over our beings. When this happens, the fruit of His grace will naturally present itself in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23).

Chance alone. John Calvin (1509–1564) developed the doctrine of predestination. According to him, some people were meant to be saved and some were meant to be lost. This belief seems to have taken root earlier in the Jewish culture. Generally, the church leaders of Christ's time had the feeling that they were the anointed ones. Christ, however, left this world with the admonition that their house had been left to them desolate (Matt. 23:37, 38). They had severed their ties with true spirituality, and they didn't seem to know it. And if they did, they didn't seem to care.

REACT

Did Christ predestine everyone to be saved? And if so, then why will some be lost?

Nothing Except Grace Counts

OPINION

2 Tim.1:8–11

“So soon as coin in coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs” was the catchy phrase used by friar Johann Tetzel in 1517 as he was selling indulgences to raise money for the Roman Catholic Church.* Tetzel’s sales pitch was just one example of how people in the 1500s thought they could earn salvation. Martin Luther spoke out against this. He began preaching *Sola Gratia*—“by grace alone”—thereby going against what was popular to point people back to the focal point of the gospel: God’s saving grace.

It has been more than 400 years since Luther spoke out against salvation by works and began the Protestant Reformation. Today, nearly all Protestant denominations officially believe that we are saved by the gift of Jesus, not through our works. Yet too many people don’t really practice that belief. Too many people forget on a daily basis that we can never be “good” because of what we do. In fact, Isaiah says that “all our righteous acts are like filthy rags” (64:6, NIV).

**Our good deeds do not
earn us salvation.**

Only by allowing Jesus to stand between us and God, and only by accepting His blood to clean us can we be acceptable to the Most High. We must be careful that we don’t get so caught up in being “good

Christians” and doing the things “good Christians” are supposed to do, that we forget that nothing we do counts but God’s grace and His amazing sacrifice. Our good deeds do not earn us salvation or make us look better to God. Our good deeds should only be done because we have been redeemed and reunited with our Creator, and we want everyone to know and share His love.

REACT

1. Why do Christians sometimes find it easier to try to earn salvation than to accept the grace God has freely given?
2. How does our attitude change when we recognize that works are a result of grace rather than a means to save ourselves? How is this our “holy calling”?

* Peter N. Herdon, “The Ideas and Ideals of Man, From the Renaissance to the Reformation,” Yale-New Haven Teacher’s Institute, <http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1986/3/86.03.04.x.html> (Accessed December 10, 2007).

The Lord of the Mystery

EXPLORATION

Col. 1:24–27

CONCLUDE

God has not only revealed His mystery but has also brought us into it. The mystery isn't just that Jesus came into the world to save the lost. That is certainly great news. This mystery that God has revealed is about Him, not just what He does. The plan of salvation isn't just a predictable cut-and-dried experience. It is an adventure of learning about God and who He is. It is a journey of encountering the unknown about God. It is about enjoying the many surprises we find along the way. It is about the detours we take just when we thought we had it all figured out. It is meeting the Lord of the mystery face to face.

CONSIDER

- Writing a poem about the Lord of the mystery.
- Doing a study of the word *mystery* in the Bible and writing a short essay on it.
- Visiting an art museum and considering the messages behind the artwork there. If you don't live near an art museum, check out some pieces online.
- Sharing your journey with God with someone in the context of a mystery.
- Keeping a journal for 30 days of your detours and God's surprises along the way.
- Visiting with some of the senior citizens of your church and listening to their stories of growth in Christ.
- Stargazing while you contemplate the mysteries of God. How many stars can you actually count? What does your answer tell you about Him?

CONNECT

Eugene H. Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration of Vocational Holiness*; Mike Yaconelli, *Dangerous Wonder: The Adventure of Childlike Faith*.

Atonement Announced



“He was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed” (Isa. 53:5, NIV).

The Modern-Day Peace Child

INTRODUCTION

Rom. 5:7, 8

Don Richardson went to Papua New Guinea to preach Christianity to the Sawi tribe, a cannibalistic group who held deceit in high esteem. When Richardson shared Jesus with them, only one incident sparked their interest: the story of Judas's betrayal! To the Sawi, Judas was the hero.

After witnessing many wars between the Sawi and the Haenam, Richardson was ready to give up. As a final effort to convince the missionary to stay, the two tribes staged an elaborate ceremony. Everyone was silent except for the Sawi chief's wife. She screamed as the chief seized their own 6-month-old son from her arms and handed him to the enemy chief. Someone explained to Richardson that the enemy tribe would rename the baby and raise it as their own.

Richardson knew that no Sawi could be fully trusted. But that memorable day, he learned of one great exception—the peace child, a chief giving his own son to his enemies. That profound, painful act would overcome all suspicion. By mutual agreement, as long as the child lived, no wars would be fought between the tribes.

Richardson had finally found a parallel in the Sawi culture that he could use to convey the message of a forgiving God. He gathered all the people and read to them from the prophet Isaiah: "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. And the

government will rest on his shoulders. These will be his royal titles: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6, NLT).

For the first time, the Sawi people began to understand Christianity.¹ God, too, had sent His Son to live amongst the enemy to make peace and end the war against sin and death.

The Sawi and Haeman tribes needed a peace child to find peace. Like them, our *Peace Child* came to us as a baby and grew up to be the Messiah. He was the Son of Almighty God, who came to offer us peace that surpasses human understanding. That peace can be ours only if we live and love as He called us to. Living and loving Him will not just bring us peace within. It also will bring peace between ourselves and others, within our homes, within our communities, and even among nations. The key is God's *Peace Child*, our Lord Jesus Christ.²

The key is God's *Peace
Child*, our Lord Jesus
Christ.

1. Adapted from "The Peace Child," by Gordon E. Ellis, September 1, 2002. (Retrieved February 28, 2008, from <http://www.firstchurchsouthington.org/sermons/2002SE/090102se.html>.)

2. Ibid.

Sunday
October 26

More Than the Usual Advertisement

LOGOS

Gen. 3:15; 22:1–18; Exodus 32; 34:6–10; Daniel 9

In between the programs on television or radio, a person is bombarded with commercials for various products and services being offered to the public. Large amounts of money are spent in the development of these commercials. These commercials are repeated often in order to condition the minds of the consumers to purchase the product.

God used a unique method to announce Christ's atoning sacrifice and to impress the minds of all who would listen to this announcement. This method involves the telling of the experiences of various Old Testament characters.

The Hopeful Fall (Gen. 3:15)

When Adam and Eve committed sin by eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, God turned to the serpent and said that He would put enmity between the serpent and Eve and between both Adam and Eve's offspring and the serpent's offspring. Adam and Eve's offspring would crush the serpent's head, while the serpent would bruise the heel of Adam and Eve's offspring (Gen. 3:15).

The woman's Seed pertains to Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16, 19). His death on the cross crushed the head of the serpent, although the serpent's seed was successful in inflicting pain to the Son of God. It was not an easy task, for Jesus endured great hardships in winning the battle for us.

The Ultimate Test (Gen. 22:1–18)

For many years, Abraham waited for the promised son. Finally, Isaac was born. But one day, God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. It must have pierced Abraham's heart, but his clear perception of duty and devotion to God prevailed. He did not have an idea that this would be his shining moment, thus earning him the title "Father of the Faithful."

As for Isaac, he easily could have defended himself against his aging father, but he did not do so. His good upbringing is most likely the reason why he willingly

agreed to be the sacrifice. Because Abraham proved his faithfulness through obedience, God intervened before the sacrifice was made.

This scenario is a preview of the divine sacrifice that would later occur. "God instituted the ritual of sacrifice by way of providing man with a visual aid, that he might be led to understand something of the price that must be paid to make atonement for his sin. The innocent lamb had to give its lifeblood for that of man, and its skin to cover the sinner's nakedness, in order that man might thus ever be symbolically reminded of the Son of God, who would have to lay down His life to atone for man's transgression, and whose righteousness alone would be sufficient to cover him."*

The Flagrant Betrayal (Exodus 32; 34:6–10)

Moses spent several weeks on Mount Sinai, communing with God. There, God gave him the two tablets of stone containing the Ten Commandments. Back in the camp, however, the Israelites thought Moses had forsaken them. So they urged Aaron to make a golden calf that would go before them.

As Moses was coming down from the mountain, he saw that the Israelites were worshiping this calf. Out of love, Moses pleaded with God not to destroy these stiff-necked and rebellious people. He knew the gravity of the sin they had committed, and he was more than willing to surrender his life as atonement for those sins. As a leader of Israel, Moses typified the good shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep (John 10:11–15). However, Moses was not qualified to bear the guilt of the people like Jesus was. So God renewed His covenant with Israel, not wanting them to perish (2 Pet. 3:9).

The Perfect Sacrifice (Daniel 9)

The biblical account clearly demonstrates that Daniel lived a godly life. Yet he humbled himself and identified himself with the Israelites' iniquities. He interceded on behalf of his people, not on his personal merit, and knowing full well that they did not deserve mercy and forgiveness.

God's faithfulness to His own people had been revealed by providing them with a 490-year period of grace. Despite Christ's vicarious death, they still rejected His atoning sacrifice. Thus, the Israelites ceased to be the sole instrument of carrying out God's mission to save humanity.

Christ's perfect sacrifice is more than a commercial advertisement that should catch our attention. His death should not be taken lightly, because of the heavy price He has paid for our salvation. All we have to do is accept Him and allow His Holy Spirit to transform our lives according to God's will.

* *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol 1, p. 233.

“ ‘Mine Hour Has Not Yet Come’ ”

TESTIMONY

John 2:4

The good news of salvation through Christ was given to humankind immediately after their fall. “Adam began to realize the extent of his loss, that from ruler over this world he had become a slave of Satan. Nevertheless, before hearing his own sentence pronounced, the healing balm of hope was applied to his shattered soul. To her whom he had blamed for his fall he was now to look for deliverance—for the promised seed, in whom would be power to vanquish the archenemy of God and man.”¹

“Adam saw that the promised Redeemer was the only means by which he could have life. The plan of saving sinners has been the same in every generation. The patriarchs, prophets, and all the holy men of old, looked forward to a coming Saviour, in whom they showed their faith by sacrificial offerings. The blood of animals had shadowed forth the sinless offering made on Calvary; but at the crucifixion type met antitype, and the typical system was done away by the great antitypical offering.”²

“He was guided, step by
step.”

Christ is the center of the great plan of redemption. He is the Redeemer of the fallen sons and daughters of Adam in all the ages of human probation.

“The words ‘Mine hour is not yet come’ point to the fact that every act of Christ’s life on earth was in fulfillment of the plan that had existed from the days of eternity. Before He came to earth, the plan lay out before Him, perfect in all its details. But as He walked among men, He was guided, step by step, by the Father’s will. He did not hesitate to act at the appointed time. With the same submission He waited until the time had come.”³

REACT

1. How does knowing that God has an appointed time for everything, help you in your attitude toward life?
2. How do you show appreciation for God’s plan of salvation?
3. Why isn’t it possible to contemplate atonement without extolling the Savior?

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 233.

2. *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, January 1, 1887.

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

Announcement Born Out of Love

EVIDENCE

1 John 4:8

We can derive two important points when reading God's pronouncement to Adam and Eve and Satan in the Garden of Eden. First is the prophecy that there will be conflict between Satan and the woman, and between Satan's offspring and hers (Gen. 3:15). The second point comes from Genesis 3:15, which says, "He will crush your head / and you will strike his heel" (NIV). This is a declaration that Satan's great power will finally come to an end when Christ offers Himself on the cross as a substitute for our fate. Read Romans 6:23. Christ's great sacrifice is called "atonement." The word *atonement* means "putting back together what has been separated, restoring unity between those who have been estranged."

One of the Bible stories that helps us understand the atonement is the story of Abraham. Through his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, he was able to glimpse "the greatness of the sacrifice made by the infinite God for man's redemption."² This implies that our salvation is God's initiation to save us. He saved us not because of who we are and what we do, but because of who He is. "God is love" (1 John 4:8, NIV).

Christ's great sacrifice is called "atonement."

Furthermore, Abraham was tested "to prove the loyalty of His [God's] servant before all heaven, to demonstrate that nothing less than perfect obedience can be accepted."³ Satan accuses God that His law cannot be kept. But Abraham's faithfulness refutes Satan's claim. Another point to consider is that Abraham's demonstration of obedience validates the sanctity of God's laws. These laws are so sacred that even before humanity became subject to Satan, Christ had decided to die for them, because His law is perfect and just (Rev. 13:8).

REACT

How can the belief of "once saved, always saved" be refuted by a true understanding of atonement?

1. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 154.

3. *Ibid.*

Wednesday
October 29

How to Repay God's Love for Us

HOW-TO

John 3:16; 14:21

God's love for us is always available. It was to redeem us that Jesus lived, suffered, and died. "He became 'a Man of sorrows' that we might be made partakers of everlasting joy. God permitted His beloved Son, full of grace and truth, to come from a world of indescribable glory, to a world marred and blighted with sin, darkened with the shadow of death and the curse." This was the greatest gift that God gave us to prove His love for us. But have you ever thought of the things we can do to share all the love God has showered upon us? Here are a few ideas:

Obey God's commandments. John 14:23 says, "Those who love me will keep my word" (NRSV). John 14:15 also states that "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (NIV). God gave us His commandments for us to follow, and in so doing, we show Him that we love Him. We are to love God with all our heart, mind, and soul.

Remember that Christ died for us. When we internalize this thought into our daily lives, we will be able to do things according to God's will without any hesitation, because we know that He gave His Son for us to save us from our transgressions.

We are to love God with all our heart, mind, and soul.

Love God above all things. Read

Exodus 20:3, 5. As God's children, we should love God above all other people and material possessions. Following Him in everything we do shows that we sincerely love Him.

Confess and repent all of your sins. We should repent from all of our sins—our hatred, our jealousies, our anger, and any evil acts against others. We naturally commit sins, but if we truly love God, the Holy Spirit will help us to have a change of mind and heart. We should look to the cross where Jesus Christ died to save us. "True confession is always of a specific character, and acknowledges particular sins. They may be of such a nature as to be brought before God only; they may be wrongs that should be confessed to individuals who have suffered injury through them; or they may be of a public character, and should then be as publicly confessed. But all confession should be definite and to the point, acknowledging the very sins of which you are guilty."²

1. *Steps to Christ*, youth ed., p. 10.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

Instead of Us

OPINION

Isa. 53:5

When you hear the word *atonement*, what comes to mind? Do you realize its importance in your life? Recently, I went out with my friends. Because I was looking for ideas to help me write this assignment for *CQ*, I asked them what they knew about Christ's atonement. They were quiet for a while, until one of my friends asked me to share something about atonement with them.

It was then that I discovered how very little I actually knew about this subject. It is somehow so common a topic, yet so very rarely discussed to the core. Yes, I know that Jesus died for me because He loves me. I've often heard it discussed during Sabbath School, especially when I was a child. We sing many songs about it, and I have memorized verses that pertain to this wonderful promise of salvation. However, as I was studying to write for this assignment, I was amazed at what I discovered—the love that made God sacrifice Himself to die in our stead is incomprehensible.

"The instant man accepted the temptations of Satan, and did the very things God had said he should not do, Christ, the son of God, stood between the living and the dead,

saying, 'Let the punishment fall on Me. I will stand in man's place. He shall have another chance.'"^{*} Oh, what a wonderful Savior He is! We have everything to gain, and nothing to lose. Jesus did everything out of a love that is beyond measure.

Songs of the promise of salvation have rung throughout the generations that have followed Adam and Eve. These songs began in Eden where the first transgression took place and where God announced His plan to save humanity. He also instituted laws and ceremonies that would remind people of this promise. The sacrifices they offered were innocent, blameless beasts—symbols of Christ's atonement. Today, we no longer offer such sacrifices. Christ's death on Mount Calvary fulfilled their promise. He paid the ransom in full, no less.

That scene on Calvary is the essence of our faith. We need to focus on it so we won't be lost. Christ's death for us teaches us that we can always rely on the promises of God. However, He cannot constrain us to love Him. It is not in His nature to force anyone to do anything. The choice on whether to accept or decline His invitation to eternal happiness lies in our hands.

Jesus did everything out of a love that is beyond measure.

^{*} Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1085.

Friday
October 31

So Glad to Be Saved

EXPLORATION

Gen. 3:15; Isa. 53:5; John 14:23

CONCLUDE

Before the Fall, God made a way to reconcile sinful humanity to Himself. He taught us about the coming of the Messiah in Genesis 3:15, the amazing provision made for Abraham as he prepared to sacrifice his only son, and through Moses' intercession on behalf of a wayward nation. The good news of salvation through Christ gives us hope in the conflict between Satan and the woman—God's church. The atonement challenges us to live lives of obedience to God; but more than that, it reunites us with the Love of our lives, the Sustainer of our souls.

CONSIDER

- Videotaping two friends responding to the following statement: "Tell about a time in your life when you were saved from a difficult predicament." Ask the respondents to share how it felt to be "saved" from their difficulties.
- Analyzing how people atone for their sins in the following religions: Islam, Secular/Nonreligious/Agnostic/Atheists, and Hinduism.
- Memorizing Ephesians 2:8, 9. Share this verse with a non-Christian friend or coworker and tell them why it is special to you.
- Organizing a prayer walk around your neighborhood or community. Pray specifically for power and know-how to share the great news of salvation through Christ.
- Updating the status line on your Facebook page with a message sharing how thankful you are for the gift of Jesus.
- Writing a journal entry about an area of your life that you have not fully submitted to God, and how you plan to give it over to Him.

CONNECT

Romans 5 and 6.

The Desire of Ages, chaps. 3 and 4.

Roy Gane, *Altar Call*, chaps. 1–4.

Atonement in Symbols— Part One



“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Pet. 1:18, 19, NIV).

Sacrifice and Redemption

INTRODUCTION

1 John 2:2

The Old Testament sacrificial system was not meant to desensitize people to the act of killing. There was no sport involved. There wasn't a hunting season specified as "sacrificial hunting." There were no arrows, guns, or tracking. An innocent lamb would be taken from its home, bound with ropes, and then killed. This wasn't an act that was watched from a faraway safe place. People didn't sit in front of their television sets with the ability to change the channel if the spilling of blood became too much to tolerate. This was an act that each individual had to take part in in one way or another. The Old Testament sacrificial system was a constant reminder that Christ would be coming to die so that they could have redemption.

Cruelty to animals is considered one of the worst crimes a person can commit. I know many people who have to change the television channel if they're watching a show where a dog is hurt. Pets look to their owners for protection. Sheep have to be protected from predators, as do dogs and cats. The death of a person is even more painful.

**There was thought put into
His death.**

Christ was not only sacrificed, He was executed by the capital punishment of His day. There was thought put into His death. The phrase "led like a lamb to the slaughter" (Isa.

53:7, NIV) is a fitting symbol for the atonement Christ made on our behalf. Christ was as innocent as a lamb. He had never sinned. He was God on earth. Yet He was taken away from His friends and His disciples. He was led to His death. Human hands nailed Him to the cross, just as human hands shed the blood of the sacrificial animals.

This death penalty was meant for each of us. As sinners, we deserve to die. But Heaven gave us a Substitute. The Old Testament sacrificial system points toward His death and helps the world understand why Jesus came to earth. By taking our death penalty upon Himself, He made it possible for all of us to have eternal life. Through His death, Christ redeemed us.

REACT

1. How would you feel if the Old Testament sacrificial system were still in place?
2. What light, if any, does Christ's sacrifice shed on the death penalty for a crime?

Searching for the Meaning of Sacrifice

Sunday
November 2

EVIDENCE

Gen. 22:2; Rom. 3:25

When searching on the Internet for information regarding the Old Testament and sacrifice, I was struck by the types of sites brought up. These sites covered everything from the Old Testament and Judaism to Christ as a sacrifice to current animal sacrifice and its negative use. I expected to find references to Christ's gift of forgiveness, but I didn't expect to see references to animal sacrifice still taking place. It's shocking to think of sacrifice occurring today for any reason. Most animal sacrifices taking place today are negative. I bring this up to point out that after Christ gave His life, and sacrifices were no longer needed, it was possible for their meaning to be changed from a positive to a negative.

The taking of life has changed dramatically since Christ died on the cross. In the Old Testament, the sacrificial system pointed to Christ's sacrifice on the cross for sin. Thus, the sacrifices were symbols of faith and obedience. They were both symbols of obedience and faith. By these sacrifices, one was showing repentance and asking for forgiveness. God did not ask people to sacrifice to be cruel. Sacrifice had great meaning. Sacrifice was not a hidden or secret endeavor where people would commit the act while hiding behind trees. It was a public display.

**We have all sinned. We all
sin many times a day.**

Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son points specifically to God letting His Son, Jesus Christ, be sacrificed. Without this incredible sacrifice, it would be impossible for us to be forgiven and saved. We have all sinned. We all sin many times a day. Taking refuge in Christ's blood washes this sin away.

REACT

1. How has the treatment of animals and people changed from the Old Testament to today?
2. What has God asked you to sacrifice for Him, and how did you react when He asked you to do it?

The Spilling of Blood

LOGOS

Gen 3:21; 4:3-5; Lev. 17:11; Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:11-13; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19

The Sign of Sin (Gen. 3:21)

The Garden of Eden was originally created as a place of peace and tranquility. Man and woman were clothed in light alone. They were not afraid of their nakedness, of their flesh. In today's society, nakedness is considered a sign of vulnerability. After sin entered both the Garden and the world, an understanding of the purpose of clothing was introduced. Henry David Thoreau was correct when he said, "Beware of all enterprises that require new clothes." For Adam and Eve, this new enterprise was a life with sin. It is interesting that by wearing clothes, they were now covering the most important aspect of sacrifice, one's flesh and blood. After entering into sin and wearing clothes, Adam and Eve were required to begin the sacrificial system which would lead to the final sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. The act of killing something similar to humans, as animals are, showed

in part how immense the final sacrifice made by Christ actually would be.

The blood of Christ is more powerful than earthly belongings.

Flesh, Not Fruit (Gen. 4:3-5)

Cain, Adam and Eve's son, chose not to spill the blood of animals. It is unclear as to whether or not he understood the complete implication of his actions. Cain brought fruit as his sacrifice. Fruit is one of the elements needed to sustain life. Yet this food was not enough for the sacrifice. Ironically, Cain would make a sacrifice of flesh when killing his brother, Abel. Fruit does not think for itself. There is no pain when it is picked or when it falls from the tree. It does not know the difference. Pets and livestock require attention and care. They are innocent. By sacrificing a breathing, innocent animal, one was in fact snuffing out breath for the sole purpose of staying alive.

The Lifeblood (Lev. 17:11)

When animals were sacrificed, their blood was taken. Without blood, life dies. " "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life" " (Lev. 17:11, NIV). The blood which was to be sacrificed was provided by God. The ability to commit the sacrifice was provided by God. The meaning

behind the sacrifice was provided by God. We can only be saved through the shedding of sacred blood.

All Bear the Sign (Rom. 3:23)

We have all sinned. The Bible is clear about this. No one is perfect. Because we have all sinned, we all must die. When we say something unkind, when we think impure thoughts, when we show anger, we are sinning. Sin is part of our lives since conception. Sin began with Adam and Eve and continued with their children, Cain and Abel. There will always be strife in the world and the need for atonement. Sacrifice has been a much-needed symbol of atonement—a symbol showing that all is not lost, that God thought of a way in which we could each be saved. Because of Christ's sacrifice, we need not die.

Parting With the Flesh (Eph. 2:11–13)

Another way used to set God's people apart through sacrifice was the act of male circumcision. Through this sacrifice of flesh, men were given to God. This was a mark of distinction which separated God's believers from unbelievers. This was a mark that also reminded each individual of Christ's death on the cross. Unlike animal sacrifice, circumcision is an act that is still done today.

The Final Act (1 Pet. 1:18, 19)

As the first people on earth, Adam and Eve had the chance to live a perfect life in the Garden of Eden. However, they chose to sin, to let temptation sway them, and so they were cast out of the Garden as sinners. It is said that the sins of the fathers will be passed down to their sons. We can see this to be true. We are each sinners in need of forgiveness. We need to be humble when we come to Christ to ask for forgiveness, and we can only gain forgiveness through His blood. Before Christ came down and died on the cross, people had to sacrifice pure and unblemished animals as a reminder of what was to come. Christ had to sacrifice Himself and die in a painful way. His blood was shed when it dripped from His hands and feet as He hung nailed to a cross. Because Christ is the unblemished lamb sacrificed to save us, we no longer need to sacrifice animals. The blood of Christ is more powerful than earthly belongings, money, silver, or gold. We can have eternal life because of Christ; all we have to do is come to Him and ask.

REACT

1. How do you feel about killing animals?
2. Why was Cain wrong for trying to sacrifice the produce that he grew? How does this relate to one's need for forgiveness?
3. How often should you come to Christ for forgiveness and atonement? Explain your answer.

It's All About the Blood

TESTIMONY

Gen. 4:3-5; Lev. 17:11

Cain and Abel "were tested, as Adam had been tested before them, to prove whether they would believe and obey the word of God. They were acquainted with the provision made for the salvation of man, and understood the system of offerings which God had ordained. They knew that in these offerings they were to express faith in the Saviour whom the offerings typified, and at the same time to acknowledge their total dependence on Him for pardon; and they knew that by thus conforming to the divine plan for their redemption, they were giving proof of their obedience to the will of God. Without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin; and they were to show their faith in the blood of Christ as the promised atonement by offering the firstlings of the flock in sacrifice. Besides this, the first fruits of the earth were to be presented before the Lord as a thank offering."

**"We are to give the Lord
our own individual lives."**

"Cain and Abel represent two classes that will exist in the world till the close of time. One class avail themselves of the appointed sacrifice for sin; the other venture to

depend upon their own merits; theirs is a sacrifice without the virtue of divine mediation, and thus it is not able to bring man into favor with God. It is only through the merits of Jesus that our transgressions can be pardoned. Those who feel no need of the blood of Christ, who feel that without divine grace they can by their own works secure the approval of God, are making the same mistake as did Cain. If they do not accept the cleansing blood, they are under condemnation. There is no other provision made whereby they can be released from the thralldom of sin."²

"In every offering to God we are to acknowledge the one great Gift; that alone can make our service acceptable to Him. When Abel offered the firstling of the flock, he acknowledged God, not only as the Giver of his temporal blessings, but also as the Giver of the Saviour. Abel's gift was the very choicest he could bring; for it was the Lord's specified claim. But Cain brought only of the fruit of the ground, and his offering was not accepted by the Lord. It did not express faith in Christ. All our offerings must be sprinkled with the blood of the atonement. As the purchased possession of the Son of God, we are to give the Lord our own individual lives."³

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 71.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 72, 73.

3. Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1086.

Sinful by Nature

HOW-TO

Rom. 6:19

Ever since the Fall of Adam and Eve, humankind has been sinful by nature. Before Christ came to die for our sins, He required His people to offer sacrifices that pointed to His atonement.

It is important for us to realize that although Christ has since come and shed His blood for our sins, we are still sinful by nature. Christ still wants us to recognize that we still have a sinful nature and that He alone can save us. We need to take the steps to redemption still, though not by physically sacrificing animals. By coming to Christ, we are letting nothing else absorb our attention that could cause us to forget His sacrifice for us.

Acknowledge that you have sinned. Christ wants us all to acknowledge the fact that we are sinners and that the wages of sin is death. But there is hope. During Old Testament times, God's people were reminded daily of their sin and the hope of salvation through the sacrifices of the sanctuary services. What daily reminders do we have of sin and the hope of salvation?

Confess your sins. Once we have acknowledged that we have sinned, we must take those sins to Christ. Christ doesn't want us to bring our sins to Him so that we'll feel ashamed or guilty, but so that we may be free of the burden they cast over our lives in order live an abundant life. Through prayer, Bible study, and other spiritual disciplines, we can take to Him the sins we have committed and grow in His grace.

Take responsibility and repent. This step is very important. Christ knows our hearts. He hears more than just our words. This means that it takes more than just saying, "Please forgive me." It means recognizing that we have sinned and honestly wanting Christ to forgive us.

Let God handle the rest. Once we acknowledge our sins, take responsibility, and confess them to Christ, we must let Him be Lord of our lives. We must let Him release us from carrying the burden and trust Him to take care of us. With the Holy Spirit's help, we can live a Christian life, knowing that God has washed away our sins and that we are saved.

**Christ knows our hearts.
He hears more than just
our words.**

Thursday
November 6

The Perfect Transfusion

OPINION

Eph. 1:7

"Give life" is a phrase we hear a lot when the blood bank comes to town, although it is not often connected with the Old Testament sacrificial system. There are key differences, of course, such as the "sacrificial donor" staying alive when donating to the Red Cross. But the idea of giving our blood to a blood bank is, if weak and human, a symbol of both the sacrificial system and Christ's sacrifice. Though our own transfusions are imperfect, they can still help save lives.

Blood banks are always looking for compatible blood. For example, they will never take my blood. I have a minor disorder that makes the iron in my hemoglobin consistently low. I've tried to give many times.

There is another worry with blood besides incompatibility. Blood also can carry toxins. Look at dirty needle scares, for example. The worst thing that can happen when someone is pricked with an infected needle is that the toxins will get into the bloodstream.

In the Old Testament sacrificial system, there was a double meaning in the sac-

He is the perfect transfusion.

rifice. The petitioners acknowledged that they were sinful and deserved to die. Their sacrifices also showed their faith in God's ability to save them. In the same way, the blood flowing through our veins is the vehicle

that declares us mortal and carries the life that Christ bought for us with His blood.

Christ's blood is the perfect match for all of us. His blood is always compatible with ours in different ways, according to each of our needs. He can meet each of us exactly where we are. He is the perfect transfusion. And we know that He's not infected with sin the way we are. He is perfect.

REACT

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of comparing the donating of blood to the sacrifices of the sanctuary services instituted by God?
2. Does giving blood to blood banks fulfill a Christian duty? Explain.

What It Was All For

EXPLORATION

1 Pet. 1:18, 19

CONCLUDE

When Adam and Eve sinned, it was as if they had inflicted a gaping wound on creation itself. Everything living they saw around them began to die. Eventually they themselves would die. The strong would prey on the weak. Men would lord it over women. The rich would oppress the poor. The sacrificial system makes it clear that sin was not a little thing. May we never stop trying to root sin out of our own lives, and may we also encourage one another to become better people by following Christ's example of self-sacrificing love.

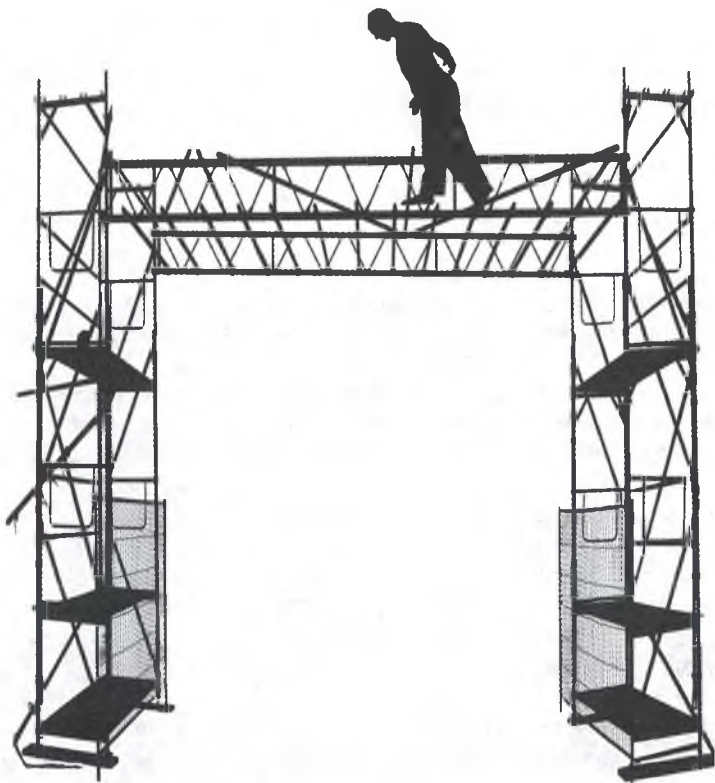
CONSIDER

- Drawing, painting, or photographing any material thing you value highly. Imagine you have to give it up. Perhaps even destroy the representation to add realism to the experience. How does this make you feel?
- Monitoring your thoughts and actions. You may be prone to anger, for example. How many times in a given period do you have angry, vengeful, or unkind thoughts? How many times do these thoughts lead to acting or speaking out? Like all of us, you have "issues." But God wants to help you overcome them.
- Singing or listening to Michael Card's song "God Will Provide a Lamb." Think about how God not only sacrificed, but became a sacrifice for our sakes.
- Preparing a meal for someone who may need the help. Make it a meal you would like to eat. Use the best ingredients, etc. Sacrifice means giving God our best, and sometimes giving to God means giving to other people.
- Making the first move to reconcile with someone you may have an outstanding conflict with. Put your pride on the altar.
- Studying a given animal, plant, or natural phenomenon. How does it show God's creatorship? Conversely, how does it show that sin has become part of the very fabric of nature?

CONNECT

Patriarchs and Prophets, "The Plan of Redemption."
Roy Adams, *The Sanctuary*, chaps. 1, 2.

Atonement in Symbols— Part Two



**“Let us go to his dwelling place;
let us worship at his footstool” (Ps. 132:7, NIV).**

Send to/Erase!

INTRODUCTION

Lev. 16:21

Cell phones and salvation! Can you see any connection? Abhilasha, a young Indian college girl, did. In the past, she scoffed when people told her that even a whispered prayer can reach God in an instant. She dismissed prayer as a psychological tool meant to soothe frayed and uneducated nerves. Then the cell phone came to India, and she saw how easy it was for her to talk to her sister in the United States with the mere click of a few buttons. This set her wondering. If a mobile phone can be so effective, what about the technology of God? After all, the cell works on the radio energy created by God. *If God alters the laws of radio energy, all cells would go dead*, she thought.

Do you think it's easier today to understand the atonement than ever before? Or harder? God has a wonderful technology to transfer our sinfulness to the heavenly sanctuary. This can be done only by the merits of Jesus' shed blood. For centuries God has been transferring people's sins to the heavenly sanctuary. The sanctuary is fully loaded!

However, God has a wonderful way by which, on the day of atonement, He will empty the sanctuary of all sins and put them on the devil, the originator of sin. In other words, God will erase the sin problem altogether. Mind you, computer generation, this is not merely the record of sin (or what we call folders or zip files) being transferred. What is being taken away, or transferred, is the actual sinfulness, the disease that caused the sin or the root.

In simple terms, *atonement* means "at-one-ment." The sin problem caused a division between God and humans. So they become incompatible. Bringing them together again is the basic purpose of the atonement. God stated this idea by saying, "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Exod. 25:8, NKJV).

In the Old Testament, God gave us various symbols to help us understand the atonement. Those symbols have passed away. But their educational value remains. Sin is a very complex, deeply rooted problem, for which humans cannot devise a solution. Only God can. The sanctuary symbolizes His way of putting an end to the sin problem. The Old Testament sanctuary service pointed to the real sanctuary in heaven where Jesus is pleading on our behalf to get our sin problem erased. The price paid for erasing our sins was the Crucifixion, the blood, the life of Jesus Christ, the only Son of God.

God has a wonderful technology to transfer our sinfulness to the heavenly sanctuary.

Sunday
November 9

Day of At-One-Ment

LOGOS

Leviticus 16; Num. 18:1-8; Ps. 28:2; 132:7; 138:2

The High Priest's Preparation (Lev. 16:1-4; Num. 18:1-8)

The preparation by the high priest for the Day of Atonement was intense. He had to wash not merely his hands and feet, but his entire body in order to be personally pure while interceding for the people (Lev. 16:4). In addition, he was to wear specific clothing made of plain white linen. "As in the typical service the high priest laid aside his pontifical robes and officiated in the white linen dress of an ordinary priest; so Christ laid aside His royal robes and garbed Himself with humanity and offered sacrifice, Himself the priest, Himself the victim. As the high priest, after performing his service in the holy of holies, came forth to the waiting congregation in his pontifical robes; so Christ will come the second time, clothed in garments of whitest white, 'so as no fuller on earth can white them.' Mark 9:3."

The Order of Service (Lev. 16:5-22)

Two young goats were brought to the entrance of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. Lots were cast. See Leviticus 16:8. The goat chosen as the Lord's was slain as a sin offering. After that, and to make the atonement complete, its blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat of the Most Holy Place, the altar of incense in the Holy Place, and in the court.

The second goat was called the scapegoat, and was brought into the service after the atonement for the sanctuary was finished. The high priest then put his hands on the head of this goat and confessed the sins of all Israel, thus " 'putting them on the head of the goat' " (Lev. 16:21, NKJV). Thereafter, the goat was led into the wilderness, where it was released (verses 21, 22).

The Meaning of the Scapegoat (Lev. 16:10)

There is no unanimity among theologians regarding the meaning of the scapegoat, mainly because "most versions leave the Hebrew word for scapegoat, 'azazel, untranslated. . . . Many modern scholars hold, with the Jews, that Azazel denotes a personal, wicked, superhuman spirit, and nearly all agree that its root

The Day of Atonement represented the three phases of the final judgment.

meaning is 'one who removes,' 'a remover,' specifically, one who removes 'by a series of acts.'²

"The [scape] goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness" (Lev. 16:22, NKJV). "Now as they watched the scapegoat depart they witnessed the last act in the drama—Satan, with all the sins he had instigated returned 'upon his own head' (Ps. 7:16), going off to his doom."³

The Symbolism of the Day of Atonement (Ps. 28:2; 132:7; 138:2)

On the first day of the seventh month came the blowing of trumpets, which was to call Israel to the Day of Atonement ten days later (Num. 29:1). The intervening nine days became days of heart searching.

"The Day of Atonement portrayed the three phases of the final judgment:

"a. The removal of sins from the sanctuary relates to the first, or pre-Advent, investigative phase of the judgment. It 'focuses on the names recorded in the Book of Life just as the Day of Atonement focused on the removal of the confessed sins' of the penitent from the sanctuary. False believers will be sifted out; the faith of true believers and their union with Christ will be reaffirmed before the loyal universe, and the records of their sins will be blotted out.'"

"b. The banishment of the scapegoat to the wilderness symbolizes Satan's millennial imprisonment on this desolated earth, which begins at the Second Advent and coincides with the second phase of the final judgment, which takes place in heaven (Rev. 20:4; 1 Cor. 6:1–3). . . .

"c. The clean camp symbolizes the results of the third, or executive, phase of the judgment, when fire destroys the wicked and cleanses the earth (Rev. 20:11–15; Matt. 25:31–46; 2 Pet. 3:7–13.)"⁴

After the judgment is finalized, God's name, His loving-kindness, and His truth (Ps. 138:2) will be revealed in its full form.

REACT

How might you use the services of the sanctuary system, especially the Day of Atonement, as a starting point to share the plan of salvation with a non-Adventist?

1. *The Acts of Apostles*, p. 33.

2. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 775.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 778.

4. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, 1988 edition, p. 319.

Trinity in Atonement

TESTIMONY

Ps. 138:2

If Christ is a true revelation of God's character, and if God's plan of redemption in Christ truly consists of our salvation, then we must address the question: Who are God and Christ? How are they able to achieve salvation for sinful humans?

The following points help us in understanding atonement:

First, we must realize the identity of the incarnate, crucified, and risen Lord Jesus Christ as the second person of the Trinity.

Second, Jesus' crucifixion is not primarily the punishment of sin, but the removal of sin. Similarly, Jesus' resurrection and ascension are essential to atonement because it is God's intention in Christ to transform and recreate our fallen human nature, thereby allowing us to participate in the resurrected life of His Son.

Third, grace is mediated to redeemed human beings in a Trinitarian manner, from God the Father, through the intercession of the risen Christ, and by the agency of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit who makes the humanity of the risen Christ

present to us remakes our humanity in the divine image.

**"Let not a semblance of
pride or self-importance be
cherished."**

"Those who have Christ abiding in the heart will work the works of Christ. Such are entitled to all the promises of His Word. Becoming one with Christ, they do the will of

God, and exhibit the riches of His grace. . . . The servants of God will sing: 'I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. . . .' Then let not a semblance of pride or self-importance be cherished, for it will crowd Jesus out of the heart, and the vacuum will be filled with the attributes of Satan."*

REACT

1. God can literally put a full stop to sin within a fraction of a second. Why then does He allow sin to continue? Why should the role of atonement be included in your answer?

2. Why do pride and self-importance "crowd Jesus out of the heart"?

*"The True Church," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 1, 1913.

An All-inclusive "Holy" and "Royal" Priesthood

Tuesday
November 11

EVIDENCE

1 Pet. 2:9, 10

If you happen to visit an Adventist church in an Indian village, you probably would find people's footwear placed outside the entrance of the church. However, you may not see a similar sight in a city church in India. The difference is mainly due to varying concepts involving the "holiness" of a church building. Read Matthew 18:20. Because the Lord is in the midst of them, people living in rural India remove their shoes before they enter church as a sign of respect for God.

There was a unique expectation connected to any priest who entered the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement. This was where God placed a special holiness, and people were concerned that nothing should go amiss whenever a priest entered it. On this most holy day, the high priest, after offering incense in the Holy of Holies, paused for a moment to say a short prayer before returning to the courtyard, where the people were waiting. The Mishnah states, "He did not make the prayer long so as not to frighten Israel" (Yoma 5:1).

The sanctuary was considered holy because of God's presence in it and because it represented Christ and His salvation. Likewise, Jesus came to dwell amongst us. "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23).

This was where God placed
a special holiness.

As believers, we often doubt the faithfulness of the people participating in worship services. This is because we expect them to be holy. Due to this thinking, many church members around the world are in dispute with one another. We must remember, however, that we "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

But the good news is that we "are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that [we] may proclaim the praises of Him who called [us] out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9, NKJV).

REACT

If God's presence makes a place holy, and if we invite God to be with our families, with our school, or with our place of work, then does that make these places holy? Explain. What implications does our answer have to how we treat our families, schools, and work?

Making Atonement Work for You

HOW-TO

Ps. 85:10; Heb. 10:19–22

How can we experience a Day of Atonement thousands of years after the ancient Hebrews lived it? Here are some suggestions:

Set Time for Introspection. Just before the Day of Atonement, the Jews had ten days for intense self-examination and repentance, beginning with the Feast of Trumpets. These days were known as “Days of Awe,” or “Days of Repentance.” These holy days were a time for people to carefully evaluate their lives, to verify if the sins which had been confessed and atoned for during the previous year had also been forsaken. If not, God granted these ten days as a last opportunity to confess and forsake any remaining sin. Similarly, we also need to examine our lives before probation closes.

Plead mercy by Jesus' blood. Sin disqualified the congregation to approach the Holy of Holies, except through a go-between, the high priest, who typified Jesus Christ our High Priest. The high priest's only claim to holiness was the innocent victims' blood which was to be applied to the mercy seat. Likewise, Jesus' blood is our only claim to forgiveness (Heb. 9:22). Centuries later, we can still experience the cleansing power of

**Centuries later, we can still
experience the cleansing
power of His blood and
mercy.**

His blood and mercy.

Stay constantly warned of the evil one. Our High Priest Jesus is also the sacrificial victim, slain since the foundation of the world, and who offered up Himself for our sins once and for all (Heb. 4:14; 7:27; 8:1; 9:12–15, 25, 26, 28; 10:10), thereby making obsolete the shadow—the annual, ceremonial sacrifice—and giving us “confidence to enter the Most Holy Place . . . through the curtain, . . . his body” (Heb. 10:19, 20).

One of the most interesting features of Yom Kippur was the lottery that selected two goats—one symbolizing the Lord and the other symbolizing Satan, who because he is the root of all evil, owns all of the people's guilt. This goat was led to the wilderness, where it was abandoned. Likewise, we must stay constantly warned of the evil one, shun him, and abandon him completely.

Recognizing the Immense Power of the Blood

OPINION

Ps. 132:7

Satan may whisper, "You are too great a sinner for Christ to save." While you acknowledge that you are indeed sinful and unworthy, you may meet the tempter with the cry, "By virtue of the atonement, I claim Christ as my Savior. I trust not to my own merits, but to the precious blood of Jesus, which cleanses me."¹ "Christ's atonement includes the whole human family. No one, high or low, rich or poor, free or bond, has been left out of the plan of redemption. 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. . . .' This is the great practical lesson which is to be thoroughly and intelligently learned."²

Jesus was made a sin offering for us. How beautifully this was illustrated in the ancient sanctuary service! The victim was brought to be slain. Then the blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat. This mercy seat was none other than the sacred cover or lid of the ark which contained the tables of the law and other sacred memorials of God's ancient mercies. There they were, in that Most Holy Place, where no one but the high priest was allowed. And he entered only once a year, on the great Day of Atonement. On this eventful day, the sacred rites of the sanctuary culminated in highest solemnity. By sacrificing a young bullock for his own sins, the high priest initiated the services. Two goats were brought forward. One goat was driven into the wilderness to signify how God removes our sins as far as the east is from the west. The other goat was slain, and its blood borne by the high priest into the Most Holy Place to be sprinkled upon the mercy seat. Meanwhile, the vast congregation stood outside expecting forgiveness through the shed blood, which symbolized the shed blood of the coming Redeemer.

**It was as if the whole world
had been standing around
the base of Calvary.**

It was as if the whole world had been standing around the base of Calvary, confessing their sins, while Jesus bore His cross to the summit, to hang thereon, and bleed and die for our sins.

1. *The Sanctified Life*, p. 90.

2. *Battle Creek Letters*, p. 39.

Christ Our Salvation

EXPLORATION

Ps. 132:7

CONCLUDE

Sin caused a rift between God and humanity. The Day of Atonement shows us God's plan to eradicate sin forever by creating a bridge over that rift. Atonement, then and now, begins with a time for introspection, an evaluation of our sinfulness and our need for Christ. It continues with our acceptance of cleansing through Christ's blood and His promise of protection from the evil one. Christ took the sins of the world on His shoulders so we all can have salvation. Even more than that hope, He invites us to open our hearts now to His life-changing power.

CONSIDER

- Making a model of the sanctuary as described in the Old Testament, along with the special elements involved in the Day of Atonement sanctuary service.
- Setting aside a time for introspection and heart searching, just like the Israelites did before the Day of Atonement (Num. 29:1–7). Ask God for forgiveness from your sins and for life transformation.
- Memorizing a scriptural reference from this lesson that was particularly meaningful to you.
- Composing song lyrics that express God's atonement power at work in our world right now.
- Observing goats on a farm or at a zoo to try to help you better visualize the two goats on the Day of Atonement service and what they represent (Leviticus 9). If you do not live near a farm or a zoo, study about goats at the library on the Internet. What are their unique characteristics, etc?

CONNECT

The Desire of Ages, pp. 19–26.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, Leviticus, chap. 16, pp. 770–780.

Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, pp. 61–69.

Atonement and the Incarnation



**“But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin”
(1 John 3:5, NIV).**

Sabbath
November 15

At-One-Ment

INTRODUCTION

John 1:14; Heb. 2:17, 18

A touching e-mail story has crossed my desktop a few times, but it never fails to stir me. A man who didn't believe in God was home alone on Christmas Eve. His family was attending church. He didn't see the sense in a God who would lower Himself to come to earth as a man, so he refused to participate in the celebration. As he sat alone, a blizzard started to blow. Before long, he heard thumps at the glass window. It was a flock of small birds, looking for warmth and safety.

In compassion, he longed to help them. He went outside during a lull in the storm and opened the barn doors wide. He tried to usher them into the shelter, but they only got alarmed and confused. He tried tactic after tactic and suddenly thought, *If I were only a bird myself, they would understand and follow me.* As he pondered this thought, the reality of the necessity of the Incarnation sank in.

Human beings have been wandering in the storm of sin for thousands of years, blind, confused, and frustrated. What we needed was One like us who knew the way, to show us where to go for safety, Someone of whom we would not be afraid.

Christ was that One. He came to earth in humility as a human to identify with us.

"It's obvious, of course, that he didn't go to all this trouble for angels.

It was for people like us, children of Abraham. That's why he had to enter into every detail of human life. Then, when he came before God as high priest to get rid of the people's sins, he would have already experienced it all himself—all the pain, all the testing—and would be able to help where help was needed" (Heb. 2:16–18, *The Message*).

Christ came so that we could be "at one" with God. It is through His life and death that we have the path to enter into eternal communion with the Divine. We are assured through Christ's example that developing a Christlike character is possible when we stay connected to God.

This week we are going to explore the implications of Christ's incarnation. We will look at His miraculous conception, His life, His testing and ministry, and His sacrifice for our sakes. I pray that your heart will be open to this powerful message. It could change your life!

A Great Mystery

EVIDENCE

Matt. 1:18–25; John 1:1, 2, 14

As incredible and far-fetched as the idea of a virgin birth may sound, the Bible unmistakably states that Jesus Christ was the son of Mary and the Holy Spirit. In marked contrast to this extraordinary biblical phenomenon, we learn from our biology classes that a female ovum must be fertilized by a male sperm in order for conception to occur.* Modern-day biology has ruled out the possibility of virgin birth, so it is up to the Word of God to prove how valid this theory is. John 1:1, 14 summarizes that “in the beginning was the Word . . . the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us”; and Matthew 1:18 brings us to a concept we must accept on faith and biblical evidence alone. This is the concept that Jesus was born sinless, into a sinful world of Mary through perfect union with the Holy Spirit.

But why was Christ’s birth so different? His incarnation is what gave rise to His unique nature of being fully human, yet fully divine at the same time. Jesus’ mission on earth was to redeem and save humankind, a feat that could not be accomplished through His divinity alone. His special nature also allowed Him to be identified as one of us. This enabled Him to be our example. He lived among humans, was baptized, was tempted just as we are, and died on the cross for our sins. Through His divine nature, He arose after his crucifixion and ascended to heaven to continue His ministry on our behalf (Mark 16:19).

**But why was Christ’s birth
so different?**

So while the intricate details of Jesus’ birth remain a great mystery, we must accept by faith His coming and the manner in which He did so—as a sinless human being who can identify with us and all the joys and sorrows we go through and at the same time as our divine Savior.

REACT

Think about and explain some of the implications there would be if Jesus had come to this world with His divinity alone or His humanity alone.

*Neil A. Campbell, Jane B. Reece, Lawrence G. Mitchell, *Biology*, 5th ed. (Redwood City, Calif.: Benjamin Cummings Pub., 1999), pp. 919–932.

Monday
November 17

Jesus' Life: The Blueprint of Salvation

LOGOS

Matt. 1:18–25; 3:13–17; 4:1–11; 9:35; Mark 1:12, 13; John 1:1, 2, 14;
Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:3

Jesus' Birth (Matt. 1:18–25; John 1:1, 2, 14; Col. 2:9)

Jesus' birth is proof enough that He is God. John makes two statements in the first chapter of his Gospel that allow us to make this conclusion. Verse 1 states that "the Word was God" and then in verse 14 that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." When you read Matthew's account of Jesus' birth, it becomes unmistakable that Jesus' birth was the incarnation of the Son of God. Now it is scientifically impossible for a virgin to bear a child. The fact that Mary, while being a virgin, gave birth to Jesus is not only a fulfillment of prophecy but an obvious sign that Jesus is truly God. The adverse circumstances surrounding His birth dictated that it should have failed. Matthew 1:18 says that "before they came together, she was

Mary could have been stoned to death when the people learned that she was pregnant out of wedlock.

found with child of the Holy Ghost," meaning that Mary was pregnant even before she married Joseph. After finding this out, Joseph decided he would not follow through with the wedding. Had he done this, Mary could have been stoned to death when the people learned that she was pregnant out of wedlock. But

God intervened and sent an angel to Joseph to confirm that Mary's story was true, thus thwarting Satan's attempt to derail the plan of salvation.

Baptism (Matt. 3:13–17)

Jesus' baptism marked the starting point of His earthly ministry; it indicated that His work of making atonement on our behalf had begun. Christianity is about following Christ. And by following His example of baptism, we make the necessary statement to everyone around us that we have allowed Jesus to begin the process of atonement in our lives. Jesus was perfect and consequently had no need to be cleansed of any sin, yet He was still baptized. John recognized the divinity of Christ and said to Him, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" (Matt. 3:14, NKJV). But Jesus insisted that He had to be baptized (verse 15). The purpose of baptism wasn't to cleanse Him from any sin, but rather to "fulfill all righteousness." Similarly, when we get baptized, we don't suddenly become perfect.

Rather, we are saying to the world that we have started a journey with Christ with the assurance that one day we, too, can become perfect.

Temptation (Mark 1:12, 13; Matt. 4:1–11)

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where He prayed and fasted for 40 days and nights and was then tempted by the devil. It may seem strange that Jesus was *led* to the wilderness to be tempted. After all, we are taught to pray, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matt. 6:13). However, when we examine this event in the context of the atonement, we realize that Jesus’ subjection to this experience was by divine design. Jesus was trying to show us that it *is* possible to resist temptation and overcome sin—even in our weakest moments. After 40 days without food, He was physically weak and longing for a meal, yet he managed to resist Satan’s temptation to turn stones into bread. Pay close attention to the fact that Jesus’ only source of strength came from praying to God—something all of us can do. He specifically chose to lay aside His power, and to exercise only the means available to us in order to prove that we, too, can live sinless lives. When we sin, it is not because God has refused to help us, but rather because we have failed to use all of the resources made available to us by Him, in order to avoid falling into the trap of sin. It is only through following Christ’s example of staying in constant communion with God, that we can conquer temptation.

Ministry (Matt. 9:35)

Jesus went about teaching, preaching, and healing people. The main purpose of Jesus’ ministry was to show us that God is real, that He cares about our well-being, and that He wants more than anything else to be able to save us. Jesus’ ministry allows us to relate to God as a true and caring Father.

It Is Finished (Heb. 1:3)

Having completed His ministry, Jesus returned to heaven and sat down at the right hand of His Father knowing that the most critical part of the plan of salvation had just been completed—that atonement was now made possible for every man, woman, boy, and girl. At this point, the only thing left to be done is for us to recognize the sacrifice He has made, to accept His gift of salvation, and to surrender our lives to Him so He can begin the work of atonement in us.

REACT

If salvation is really this simple, why does it seem so hard to be saved?

Tuesday
November 18

The P.L.A.N. (Personal Liberator for All Nations)

TESTIMONY

2 Cor. 12:9

“The angels could not rejoice as Christ opened before them the plan of redemption; for man’s salvation must cost their loved Commander unutterable woe. With what wonder and grief did they listen to His words as He told them how He must descend from heaven’s purity and peace, its joy and glory and immortal life, and come in contact with the degradation of earth, to endure its sorrow, shame, and death. He would appear upon earth and humble Himself as a man, and by his own experience become acquainted with the sorrows and temptations which man would have to endure. All this would be necessary in order that He might succor those who should be tempted. He must be delivered into the hands of wicked men, and be subjected to every insult and torture that Satan could inspire them to inflict. He must die the cruelest of deaths, lifted up between the heavens and the earth as a guilty sinner. He must endure anguish of soul, the hiding of His Father’s face,

while the guilt of transgression—the weight of the sins of the whole world—should be upon Him.”¹

“When the great clock of time pointed to that hour, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. . . . Providence had directed the movements of nations

and the tide of human impulse and influence, until the world was ripe for the coming of the Deliverer. . . . With longing eyes they looked for the coming of the Deliverer, when the darkness should be dispelled and the mystery of the future should be made plain.”²

“Christ came to the earth, taking humanity, and standing as man’s representative, to show in the controversy with Satan that man, as God created him, connected with the Father and the Son, could obey every divine requirement.”³

REACT

Where do you see yourself right now in the great controversy? Think about the implications of your answer.

1. *Signs of the Times*®, November 4, 1908.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 32, 33.

3. *Signs of the Times*®, June 9, 1898.

How to Be United With God

HOW-TO

Matt. 4:1–11; John 1:14

Everybody knows that oil and water don't mix—but do they? In many recipes, water-based and oil-based liquids do mix by forming an emulsion using egg yolks. So why are we talking about cooking?

On the surface, we cannot “mix” with God because of our sin (Rom. 3:23), but God has made a way for a perfect union with Him by providing the secret ingredient—His Son (1 Pet. 3:18). So how does this recipe work? How can we be part of God's plan to be restored to Him through the incarnation of Jesus and through the sanctifying of our nature?¹ Let us take a look at the formation of emulsion using a hollandaise sauce recipe to illustrate how:²

Put the egg yolk in the pan and beat with a whisk. The only way for Christ to be in your life is for Him to be a part of your life. If you don't put Him in the “pan” by including Him in your daily activities, the process cannot begin (Rom. 10:9). That can be done through prayer, Bible study, worship, and any other spiritual discipline.

Beat in the lemon juice (water-based) and melted butter (oil-based) with the egg yolk until they are well combined. The egg yolk must be well mixed with the other ingredients. In the same way, we must mix Jesus into every aspect of our lives (Prov. 3:6).

**Put the egg yolk in the pan
and beat with a whisk.**

Place the pan over low heat. Then stir the mixture until it becomes smooth, creamy, and thicker to create the emulsion. Sometimes the “heat” of life, in the form of a time of trouble, is needed to ensure the formation of the emulsion that represents our union with God (Rom. 8:28, 29; 1 Pet. 4:12). All problems are significant in God's process for us to draw us nearer to Him.³

1. *Messages to Young People*, p. 88.

2. *The Accidental Scientist: The Science of Cooking*, “Hollandaise Sauce,” Exploratorium, <http://www.exploratorium.edu/cooking/eggs/recipe-hollandaise.html> (retrieved February 28, 2008).

3. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*® (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), p. 193.

He'll Stand for You. Will You Stand for Him?

OPINION

Matt. 4:1–11

The *Oxford Dictionary* defines temptation as: “The act of tempting or the condition of being tempted, something tempting or enticing.”

Today we are faced with all kinds of temptations. These temptations especially tackle our walk with the Lord. But it is for us to stand firm, pray, feed on His Holy Word, and be ready when the devil tries to attack us. As Scripture tells us, the battle is not natural but spiritual: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12, NIV).

As an example to us, Jesus used the Word of God to resist temptations (Matt. 4:1–11). Even though Satan tried to quote Scripture to Jesus to convince Him to sin, it was obvious that Jesus knew the Word well.

Many times we are tempted to lie, to steal, to be jealous or angry; but then we hear that still small Voice, Jesus, telling us not to yield to the devil's temptations or his evil tricks. “Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him” (James 1:12, NRSV).

Being tempted is not wrong—it's the decision to do wrong and the corresponding action that counts. With the Holy Spirit's help, it is for us to stand up, to be sober, to be vigilant, to be ready to resist the devil. Then he will flee. Jesus sacrificed everything to come to earth and give us an example of how to live a pure life. He could have stayed in heaven and avoided all the drama that His time on earth held, but He chose to come and be tempted because of His love for you and me. So no matter what the circumstances may be, once you stand up, stand your ground for the Lord. Stand for what is right. There is no doubt that He'll stand for you.

REACT

1. What Bible texts can you memorize that will help you when you are tempted?
2. Search your life to see if there is anything keeping you from having a full relationship with God. Give that item over to Him, trusting that He understands your struggles.

Jesus—Son of God, Son of Man

EXPLORATION

John 1:14

CONCLUDE

How and why did the Son of God come to be both divine and human? And what does it mean for people who are lost in sin? Let's go back to the beginning to find the answers—back to Genesis. Read Genesis 3:8, 9. Because of sin, human beings lost the privilege of being in the presence of God. But in His mercy, God searched for man and woman and called them back into His presence. The Lord promised that day to send His "seed" (Gen. 3:15) to save human beings from their sins, and to reunite Himself with His lost children.

CONSIDER

- Reviewing Wednesday's lesson study. Put a few drops of oil into a small cup of water, and observe what happens. Then try the egg yolk experiment in Wednesday's lesson. Evaluate the following verses, and make a comparison between the water, oil, and egg yolk mixture and Christ's incarnation experience: John 1:1, 14; Galatians 4:7.
- Reading John 3:17 in different versions. Then look up the word *condemn* in a Bible concordance. If you don't have one, you can find one in your local library. Now look up the word *condemn* in a dictionary and also in a thesaurus to get a complete understanding of what the word means. Consider John 3:17 and the definitions you read, then write what you believe is the true purpose of Christ's coming into the world.
- Singing the following verse a few times: *Just as I am, without one plea, / But that Thy blood was shed for me, / And that Thou bidst me come to Thee, / O Lamb of God, I come, I come.* Consider this song in light of Romans 5:9, 10. Do you get the same mental picture from these verses as you do when singing this song?
- Role-playing John 10:9 with a family member or friend. Walk through the doorway of your favorite room or place. Imagine that the doorway is Jesus, and the room or place is heaven, the New Jerusalem, or eternal life. What would happen if there was no door or gate? Could you enter the room?

CONNECT

John 1:14; 10:9; Rom. 5:9, 10; 10:9.

Metaphors of Salvation



“God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished” (Rom. 3:25, NIV).

Sharing With a Friend

INTRODUCTION

Romans 5; Matt. 20:28; Isa. 1:18; 58:12

You've just been asked a question by a friend: What does the Bible say about salvation? You start to recall what you learned from your Bible classes, or what you have read recently from your daily Bible reading and morning devotional. You begin by telling that friend that all of us have sinned in some way, but still God loves us, and "gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16, NKJV). You also explain that sin separates us from God, erecting a barrier only Jesus Christ can remove.

You know that every person who has heard about salvation may have different notions of it, and it is because Christ's death on the cross is so important that the Bible likens salvation to several practical things to help us better understand how valuable it is and how desperately we need it. You may have even encountered some of these metaphors that describe Christ's death on the cross:

- A gift freely given; all we can do is receive it by believing in Christ (Romans 5)
- A ransom paid to free us from the bondage of sin (Matt. 20:28)
- A restoration of our former union with God (Isa. 58:12)
- A cleansing of clothes from scarlet red to white as snow (Isa. 1:18)

God's love and faithfulness to sinful humans are amazing.

I believe that salvation is something we must know by heart. We must know it because once we understand it, we will have a clearer picture of how God loves us and how He kindles our relationship with Christ as our personal Savior. Knowing that Jesus died in our place, we will never have second thoughts about His love for us. We will trust Him fully, and our hearts will incline toward obedience. Every time our desires cause us to sin, we know that our response must be to repent, make amends, ask God to forgive us, and with the Holy Spirit's help, live like a person who has been forgiven.

Indeed, God's love and faithfulness to sinful humans are amazing. And He continues to show it to us everyday in our daily living. My prayer is that as you continue to read this week's lesson, you may have peace of mind and find more valuable metaphors about God's love to share with your friends.

Sunday
November 23

All That It Takes

LOGOS

Rom. 2:1–29; 3:19–26; 2 Cor. 5:18–21; 1 John 4:7–11

Would you be a filthy cockroach if that's what was needed to save the species? That's a rather gross metaphor, yet Christ stooped way lower in proportion to His stature and divinity to save us. In heaven, He governed the universe. On earth, He worked for thirty years as a carpenter in the notorious city of Nazareth before He began His ministry. From king to carpenter! Angels covered their faces in adoration of Him, yet on the road to Calvary, His face sweat from the agony of whips and the cross. And the most mind-boggling of all, He didn't have to do it.

The Godhead could easily have produced another set of humanity, totally wiping out the fallen ones. However, doing such a thing would be incongruent with God's character of love. And it took Him the whole Bible to explain and to bring to our hearts just how much we mean to Him.

The Law's Teeth (Rom. 2:1–29)

Who isn't cautious of law? You mess with it, and you find yourself paying the price.

The atonement is a love story like no other.

God created the earth, and even salvation, according to law. Because He is a God of order, He harmoniously designed the universe. And He wants to harmoniously straighten

things up in the way we should regard Him and treat each other. That is why He gave us the Ten Commandments to fix in our hearts. Without them, we are victims of abuse, confusion, and chaos.

Next, He is a God of justice. He squarely gives according to what we deserve. The law does more than guide our conduct; it is our measuring stick! Why? Because the law reflects God's holy loving and perfect character.

The Big However (Rom. 3:19–26)

Yes, we are to keep God's law. However, keeping the law cannot not save a single soul. "To help people see their true condition, the law functions like a mirror." The law merely makes us conscious of sin. A mirror shows the dirt on our face, but the mirror can't clean it up. Likewise, the law cannot purify us of sin and make us acceptable to God. Only the atonement Jesus set for us can do that. He who was perfect bore all our sins and died in our behalf. Not wanting anyone to perish, He gave His Son as the only fitting sacrifice. Jesus was made our substitute unto

death so that we might claim His merits—through faith—as our substitute unto life.

The Central I (2 Cor. 5:18–21)

The atonement is how God brings us back to Himself. He wants to live eternally with us, face to face once more. He foresaw Herod's threat, the Pharisee's defiance, and the Hebrews' eventual rejection. But that didn't stop Him from making salvation possible even if only one person accepted His gift of life. For metaphors involving this concept, read Luke 15.

"The problem of sin is a broken relationship between God and man. The goal of salvation is to restore the relationship between God and man."²

God didn't just send Christ to accomplish the task. He was in Him. He suffered with Him and wept with Him. And He would do the same even if only one person had sinned.

The Heart of It All (1 John 4:7–11)

God is love. That simply, but sufficiently, explains the atonement. Satan has successfully misrepresented God as stern, exacting, and possessive. But God's love as revealed in Christ's life and sacrifice dispels the enemy's lies. We see Him now as a Father ever longing and eager for His wayward children's affection. We now know the extremes He went to, to win us back. And we finally discover that every blessing is but His initiative, His gift, and His shower of undeserved grace.

Why should we understand these metaphors of the atonement? So that we may accept the atonement Christ so graciously made on our behalf and, in turn, extend Christ's grace to others in our word and deeds. The atonement is a love story like no other. Yes, it took Him the whole Bible to tell us.

REACT

1. How does the knowledge of God's overflowing love change us?
2. What wrong conceptions of God have you had? How did today's lesson help you understand the atonement better?
3. Has Christ's atonement lost its zest in your life? What are some activities you can engage in that might refresh the essence of what Jesus accomplished for you on Calvary?

1. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, 1988 ed., p. 268.

2. Morris L. Venden, *95 Theses*, p. 303.

God's Entrusted Gifts

TESTIMONY

Luke 15

Metaphors that help us understand what Christ did for us are prevalent in Scripture. Luke 15 includes three of them. Here is what Ellen G. White had to say about the first two.

"In the parable the shepherd goes out to search for one sheep—the very least that can be numbered. So if there had been but one lost soul, Christ would have died for that one.

"The sheep that has strayed from the fold is the most helpless of all creatures. It must be sought for by the shepherd, for it cannot find its way back. So with the soul that has wandered away from God; he is as helpless as the lost sheep, and unless divine love had come to his rescue he could never find his way to God.

"The shepherd who discovers that one of his sheep is missing does not look carelessly upon the flock that is safely housed, and say, 'I have ninety and nine, and it will cost me too much trouble to go in search of the straying one. . . .' No; no

sooner does the sheep go astray than the shepherd is filled with grief and anxiety. He counts and recounts the flock. When he is sure that one sheep is lost, he slumbers not. He leaves the ninety and nine within the

**"This parable has a lesson
to families."**

fold, and goes in search of the straying sheep." The joy the shepherd experiences when he finds the sheep is like the joy heaven feels when just one sinner repents.

While the lamb knows it is lost, and therefore represents people who know they are separated from God, the coin in the second parable "represents those who are lost in trespasses and sins, but who have no sense of their condition. They are estranged from God, but they know it not. Their souls are in peril, but they are unconscious and unconcerned. In this parable Christ teaches that even those who are indifferent to the claims of God are the objects of His pitying love. They are to be sought for that they may be brought back to God. . . .

"This parable has a lesson to families. In the household there is often great carelessness concerning the souls of its members. Among their number may be one who is estranged from God; but how little anxiety is felt lest in the family relationship there be lost one of God's entrusted gifts. . . .

"Wherever we may be, there the lost piece of silver awaits our search. Are we seeking for it?"

1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 187, 188.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 193, 194, 196.

Atonement: An Uncontainable Concept

Tuesday
November 25

EVIDENCE

2 Cor. 5:18

In the beginning, humans had an intimate relationship with God. But because of sin, this close relationship was broken, estranging them from God. Read Isaiah 59:2. Since the Fall, God has endeavored to break down this “middle wall of division” through the atonement of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:14, NKJV). William Tyndale recognized that this concept of remission for past sins and reconciliation did not have a direct translation in the English language. Therefore, while he was translating the 1526 English Bible, he thought of the word *atonement*.¹

The key word for the first part of this concept (expiation for sin) is the Hebrew word *kapper* which means “to cover.” It suggests the idea of covering and taking away the object (sin) that is obstructing the reconciliation between two parties (God and humans).²

The second part of this concept (reconciliation of humans with God) is related to the Greek words *hilaskesthai*, *hilasmos*, and *hilasterion*, which are literally translated as “to reconcile,” “reconciliation,” and “I.” Jesus Christ became human in order to *hilaskesthai* us to God (Heb. 2:17). He became the *hilasmos* for our sins (1 John 2:2; 4:10) and God set Him as *hilasterion* to Himself (Rom. 3:25).³

It is not possible to contain the concept of Christ's sacrifice in just one word.

Although Tyndale tried, it is not possible to contain the concept of Christ's sacrifice in just one word. That is why the metaphors we have been discussing this week also help us to understand more about the atonement Jesus made for the expiation of our sins and for the reconciliation of humans with God. God provided a means through which we can obtain His forgiveness, and it is up to us to take advantage of this avenue that has been unselfishly supplied.

REACT

1. What does the doctrine of atonement mean to you personally?
2. What other ideas or images could you think of that capture the meaning of Christ's death and make it easier for an unbeliever to understand?

1. William Tyndale; *Reformer and Rebel*. The Archbishop of Canterbury, 5th October, 1994.

<http://www.tyndale.org/TSJ/2/carey/html> (retrieved February 28, 2008).

2. John McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (Milwaukee, Wis.: Bruce Publishing, 1965), p. 69.

3. *Ibid.*

Wednesday
November 26

How to Make Your Life Count

HOW-TO

Rom. 3:1-26

We do a lot of counting in our lives. We buy commodities and subtract the cost from our savings. We add up traffic time to avoid being late for our next class, and we do incredible calculations to fly to the moon and build superstructures.

However, there is another form of counting, as seen in Romans 3:1-26. God has given us the perfect gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. He wants us to make use of our lives, to find fulfillment in Him, and to be with Him in heaven forever. Because of His atonement, Jesus wants us to make our lives count. How exactly can we do that? Here are a few steps:

C – Come to Christ. We cannot run the race ahead if we are entangled in sin. Seek Christ and repent, and He will free you no matter how tight the hold. Pray for forgiveness, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you avoid doing the sinful things you are repenting of.

O – Offer your life to Him. To be fully used by God, you must allow Him to work through you. Surrender your life to Him, and He will guide you in the way you should go. Commit each day of your life to Him in prayer, and ask that He reveal ways for you to serve Him.

U – Understand His will for your life. God's will is for us to have the best in life. Know that He wants more for you than you could ever imagine. Read the Bible daily, and God will uncover His plans for you.

N – Never stray from His Word. Our difficulty is not that we don't know God's will. Our difficulty comes from not doing His will.¹ Learn obedience, even if it hurts!²

T – Tell others about His love. " 'Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks' " (Matt. 12:34, NKJV). Therefore, when we know God, we can tell others about Him and His love.

We can count on Jesus to lead us to life everlasting. Let's pray that He can count on us to share His love with others and to bring glory to Him in countless ways.

*T—Tell others about His
love.*

1. Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Experiencing God Day-By-Day: A Devotional and Journal* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman Publishing, 1998), p. 141.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Light in the Darkness

OPINION

John 1:1, 4, 5

The yearning of our God to reconcile us to Himself started when our first parents had their own yearning to separate from Him. It was their choice to set aside the Word that promised eternal life and pursue the more temporal objects that to them seemed right. In the end, they hid in the dark. It is this same darkness that veils many people today, sometimes even Christians, as they hide from the One who came as the Light. Many choose to hide simply because it has become conventional no matter how foolish it seems. Is there hope for such a choice? The Word answers, "Have I not chosen you?" (John 6:70, NIV).

And how did the Light shine to pull us back from our hiding? He who knew no sin came into this dark world to be sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). By doing so, He is able to hold our hand, to reconcile us to God, to recreate us in His image as He had originally created us in the beginning (Gen. 1:26). Some comply and let Him become their Guide. Others choose to let His hand slip once more from theirs.

What was Jesus, the Word, really trying to accomplish? "Jesus introduced profound changes in how we view God. Mainly, [H]e brought God near. . . . Jesus brought the message that God cares for the grass of the field, feeds the sparrows, numbers the hairs on a person's head."*

In the end, they hid in the
dark.

All the Word wanted was to reestablish the connection that was lost during the initial fall to temptation, to prove how much He loves us and desires to be with us. No other truth can be brighter than that.

REACT

1. Christ has chosen you. Have you chosen Him? How do your daily choices answer this question?
2. How has Jesus' atonement made your life worth living?

*Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Sydney, Australia: Strang Publishing, 1995), p. 266.

Friday
November 28

Counting Sheep

EXPLORATION

Luke 15

CONCLUDE

Our understanding of salvation needs to be at the tip of our tongue. How can we doubt God's love, knowing He died in our place? He is a God of order, and His law is a reflection of His character. Like the shepherd with the lost sheep, God is desperate to reconcile His relationship with each and every sinner.

Make your life *count*. Unite with Christ. Get to know Him and His will for your life; cling to His Word, and share it with everybody you know!

Jesus came into the darkness to bring us into the light.

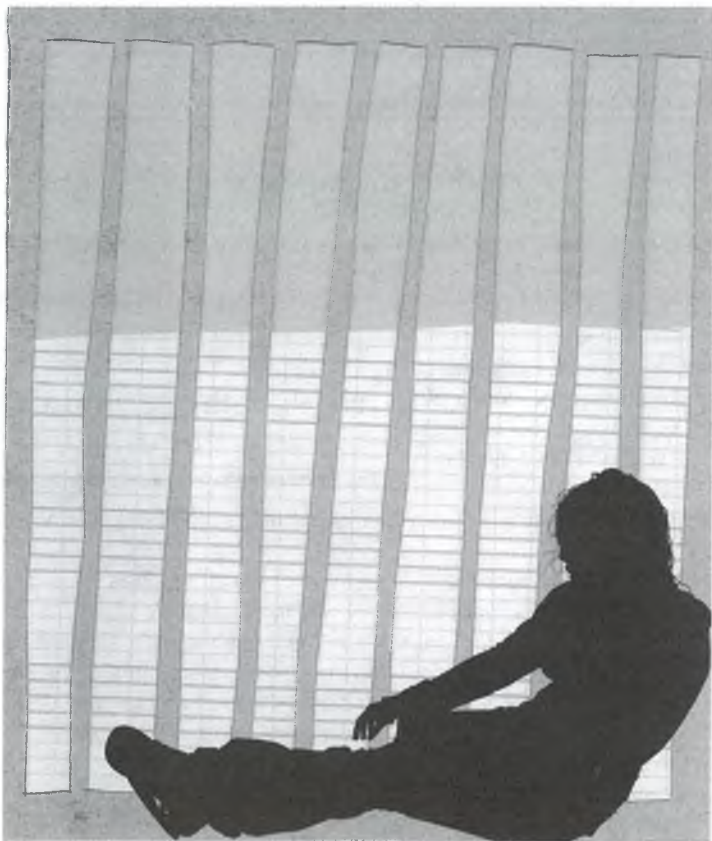
CONSIDER

- Thinking of a person you would be willing to die for. Then, think of the last person you would ever want to do that for. Challenge yourself to see that person how God sees them, and say a prayer for them.
- Taking another look at the Fanny Crosby hymn, "To God Be the Glory." Personalize it to tell the story of what Jesus has done for you.
- Telling yourself about the plan of salvation every time you are tempted to complain about something. With "salvation"-colored glasses, challenge yourself to live a more positive and abundant life.
- Writing out an argument for the benefits of following the law of God without salvation in the picture. Is the Christian life still the best life to live here on earth? Make a case for it.
- Giving away some of your favorite books or CDs.
- Writing a letter to God, thanking Him for the gift of His Son and telling Him the impact Jesus has had on your life.

CONNECT

Elisabeth Elliot, *Through Gates of Splendor*; Doug Batchelor, *Seven Steps to Salvation: Practical Ideas for Making Christ a Permanent Part of Your Life*.

Atonement at the Cross



“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:13, 14, NIV).

Atonement-at- the-Cross Acrostic

INTRODUCTION

Col. 1:13, 14

This week we will delve into the nature of the atonement as it relates to the cross. May the acrostics below help us understand the remaining lessons of this quarter:

A – *Acceptance*. Read 1 Timothy 1:15. The truth that Jesus came to die on the cross for our sins is worthy of belief.

T – *Trust*. Read Proverbs 3:5. We should trust Jesus to accomplish in us what He has done on the cross.

O – *Obedience*. Read Psalm 119:33. We need to obey His will to be able to return our praises and gratitude to Him for His death on the cross.

N – *Nurture*. Read Psalm 144:11. God's guidance and care will give us the opportunity to grow and expand our horizons.

E – *Exchange*. Read 1 Corinthians 15:3. Christ's death is a substitution. He died the second death for us.

M – *Mend*. Read Ecclesiastes 3:7. Christ's atonement mends our brokenness and binds our wounds.

E – *Expiate*. Read Leviticus 16:15, 16. The high priest sacrificed

the goat and sprinkled its blood as a symbol of Christ's blood which removes whatever sins we have committed

N – *Navigate*. Read John 5:39. To learn what the cross does for us by way of atonement, we must continually study our way through God's Word.

T – *To reconcile*. Read Romans 5:8–11. The cross reconciles us to God.

God's love is absolutely amazing! It is through His atonement at the cross that we are truly blessed and saved from our sins. With this in mind, may you still find time to explore your Bible and look for the real meaning of the cross:

C – *Conciliate*. Read Romans 3:25, 26.

R – *Redemption*. Read Galatians 3:10–14.

O – *Offer Ransom*. Read Mark 10:45.

S – *Sacrifice*. Read Hebrews 9:26.

S – *Savior*. Read 2 Samuel 22:3.

He died the second death
for us.

A Torture Chamber of Death

EVIDENCE

Mark 14:32–42; John 19

Dr. Keith Maxwell, a trauma physician, examined the evidence of the crucifixion from a medical standpoint. As Christ was in the Garden of Gethsemane, His body began to experience a rare phenomenon called hemathidrosis. This is when the small capillaries that surround the sweat glands burst. As these burst, the person actually bleeds into the sweat glands. The sweat is then mixed with the blood and the person literally sweats blood. Christ didn't bleed to death during this process, because the cool night air helped to coagulate His blood. However, the evidence of the blood would have been on His skin.

Maxwell also examined the historical method of scourging. A scourging victim would be stripped of his clothing, his hands tied on a pike above his head. As the lash struck the back, the damage was inflicted across the arms, down the shoulders and back, across the bare buttocks, down the back of the legs and calves, all the way to the heels. A scourging was typically 39 lashes with a whip that had nine leather thongs with a piece of lead and bone attached to the end. The bone would cut into the skin and then dig into the muscle as it was lashed across the victim's back. Maxwell estimates that Jesus would have needed about 2,000 stitches to close the wounds that were opened during the lashing He received.

**He was probably in a state
of shock.**

By the time Christ was on the way to Golgotha, He was probably in a state of shock. At the cross He was forced to put His shredded back against a splinter-filled beam. In order to keep breathing, He had to scrape His back up that beam to be in a position to take in air. Each movement like this brought more agony. The dehydration, insects, and heat of the day made things even more miserable.

The physical torture was more than what can be described in this short section. However, as we think about the physical agony Jesus bore for us, the atonement should become even more precious to us.

REACT

1. After reading some of the evidence of what Christ suffered physically, how does it affect your view of the atonement He made for your sins?
2. In a society that is becoming hardened to the violence we see on the news, etc., how can we keep our hearts softened toward what Christ did for us?

Backdrop of Christ's Sacrifice

LOGOS

Matt. 26:37, 38; 27:45–55; Luke 22:39–46; John 19:28–30

When I was in college a theology professor explained the meaning of atonement as “at-one-ment”—a state of being “at one,” or in agreement. This definition denotes harmony in relationships that result in reconciliation. And reconciliation is what the cross of Christ is all about. The cross provided a way by which we could be restored to God. In order for us to better understand the meaning of Christ's atonement, we will reflect today on the experience of Jesus in Gethsemane and during His crucifixion.

Longing for Companionship and Sympathy (Matt. 26:37, 38; Luke 22:39–46; John 19:28–30)

Proceeding His crucifixion, Jesus invited the disciples to an olive grove, called Gethsemane, which means “oil press.” Throughout His ministry, Jesus had frequently resorted to such places for meditation, prayer, and rest. Now, just before His death, He longed for human companionship and sympathy to accompany Him in such activities. Entering the garden, He asked Peter, James, and John to go with Him a bit farther.

He was dehydrated; but might He also have been thirsting for righteousness to be accomplished through His suffering?

These three disciples enjoyed a more intimate association with Him than the other disciples did. They were with Him when He raised Jairus's daughter (Luke 8:51) and at His transfiguration (Matt. 17:1, 2)—the time of special revelation of His divinity.

The Cup and Cause of Jesus' Heavy Grief (Luke 22:39–46)

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus begged, “Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine” (Luke 22:42, NLT). This prayer teaches us that it is never wrong to express our true feelings to God.

The cup Jesus spoke of referred to the terrible physical agony He knew He would endure and to the mental and spiritual anguish He would suffer as He faced the prospect of eternal separation from His Father as He took upon Himself the penalty for humanity's sin. No wonder He needed to pray!

Jesus' physical suffering was the visible reflection of the spiritual suffering He was experiencing—spiritual suffering brought upon by bearing the sins of all humanity. He seemed to be shut out from the light of God's presence and His Father's love. And now He was numbered with the transgressors and the guilt of fallen humanity.

Being the Penalty for Humanity's Sins (Matt. 27:45–55; John 19:28–30)

From nine in the morning till noon, Jesus hung on the cross. At midday, darkness fell across the land until the ninth hour—three o'clock in the afternoon. At that time, nature testified to the gravity of Jesus' death. The darkness on that Friday afternoon was both physical and spiritual. While Jesus' friends and enemies alike fell silent in the encircling gloom, He cried, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Matt. 27:46, NLT). Jesus was not questioning God, but was quoting the first line of Psalm 22, a deep expression of anguish He felt as He took on the sins of the world, causing Him to believe He would be eternally separated from His Father.

After this, and knowing that all things were now accomplished that the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I thirst." He was dehydrated; but might He also have been thirsting for righteousness to be accomplished through His suffering?

Thus, the soldiers soaked a sponge in a jar of vinegar and touched the sponge to His lips. When Jesus received the sour wine, He declared, "It is finished." Then He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. The plan of redemption, which was laid before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:20), was completed according to schedule. Despite his many and varied attempts, Satan could not stop the plan. Christ's victory assures salvation for any man, woman, and child who accepts it. Jesus came to finish God's work of atonement. He came to pay in full the penalty for our sins. Now those who believe in His death and resurrection can fully approach God and live eternally with Him.

REACT

Find time each day for the rest of this week to meditate on Christ's suffering upon the cross. As you do, remember that He was willing to suffer so horrendously because He loves you so graciously.

Tuesday
December 2

The Illumination of Christ's Character

TESTIMONY

Matt. 16:24

"Let the cross of Christ be made the science of all education, the center of all teaching and all study. Let it be brought into the daily experience in practical life. . . . Every thought will be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. With the apostle Paul they will be able to say:

"'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' Galatians 6:14."¹

"The more we study the divine character in the light of the cross, the more we see mercy, tenderness, and forgiveness blended with equity and justice, and the more clearly we discern innumerable evidences of a love that is infinite and a tender pity surpassing a mother's yearning sympathy for her wayward child."²

"Love for souls for whom Christ died means crucifixion of self. He who is a child of God should henceforth look upon himself as a link in the chain let down to save the world, one with Christ in His plan of mercy, going forth with Him to seek and save the lost. The Christian is ever to realize that he has consecrated himself to God, and

that in character he is to reveal Christ to the world. The self-sacrifice, the sympathy, the love, manifested in the life of Christ are to reappear in the life of the worker for God."³

"Christ, after having redeemed man from the condemnation of the law, could impart divine power to unite with human effort."⁴

"Through the cross we learn that the heavenly Father loves us with a love that is infinite. . . . It is our privilege also to glory in the cross, our privilege to give ourselves wholly to Him who gave Himself for us. Then, with the light that streams from Calvary shining in our faces, we may go forth to reveal this light to those in darkness."⁵

REACT

1. How can we illuminate those in darkness with the light "that streams from Calvary"?

2. Where would humanity be today without the cross? Why can there be no solution to the world's serious problems without Jesus' sacrifice on the cross?

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 320.

2. *Steps to Christ*, p. 15.

3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 417.

4. *Patriarch and Prophets*, p. 64.

5. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 210.

Staying Close to God

HOW-TO

Matt. 26:37, 38; Luke 22:39–46; John 19:28–30

She clutched the Bible with her hands, unsure of what lay inside it. She felt nobody loved her or could give her the hope she needed. She closed her eyes and fought the doubts that began to surface. Had God forgotten her? To let the devil win would mean defeat. So she began to pray, escaping from the doubts and clinging to her faith. God was not leaving her now or ever. How does a person succeed in atonement or reconciliation with God? Here are a few steps:

Arm yourself with faith. Read Matthew 26:37, 38. These verses remind us to overcome the sorrows, doubts, and obstacles that threaten to separate us from God by watching and praying and accepting God's will, even when we don't understand it.

Spend time in prayer with friends. In times of trouble it helps to know that someone is there to listen and give us hope. Christ experienced unbelievable sorrow because many of those He loved were preparing to betray Him. God heard His Son's cry and gave Him strength because of Christ's faith. Praying with friends strengthens our faith and allows our hearts to be in connection with Him. The devil is eagerly waiting for us to give up our faith. He smells the stench of doubt and preys on people's minds to lure

them away from their Father. We can be strengthened in whatever struggles we may be facing through prayer. It says in the Bible that when we are weak He is strong. God offers us that gift which leads to victory. Read Mark 14:33, 34.

Run from temptation. Getting away from temptations requires prayer. As we pray, God is able to impart strength to us when we need it. Read Luke 22:40–44.

Remove all barriers. Atonement through God is accomplished by getting rid of anything that prevents us from having a connection with Him. When we submit our lives to God, He is able to lead us to true happiness and victory over the struggles we face. By submitting our lives to God, we are lead to true happiness and victory over the struggles we face. We may not know or understand the reason for our struggles, but He is always there. Read Matthew 28:20.

Had God forgotten her?

REACT

1. How does accepting Christ's salvation for our lives lead to atonement with God?
2. The word *atonement* means at-one-ment with Jesus. What does being at-one-ment with Jesus mean to you?

Thursday
December 4

Accepting His Victorious Tragedy

OPINION

Luke 15:11–32

What do you see in your mind when you encounter the word *atonement*? I see a son wasting his life on worldly pleasures, turning his back on the values his parents taught him and breaking their hearts. I also see that in spite of everything, his parents are willing to do whatever it takes to save him from doom.

In the parable of the prodigal son, a father had a young adult son who asked for his inheritance, left home with it, and squandered it away on frivolous living. But when his funds ran out, he was reduced to feeding pigs for a living. Then one day, he thought of being reunited with his father. So he left the pigpen and began the journey home. When he arrived, the first thing he saw was his father running toward him with open arms. Read what happens next in Luke 15:21–24.

Just like the prodigal's story, the son I see in my mind, also shall have a celebration when he decides to heed the call of God and his parents to return to the fold. It's so amazing to know just how much our parents can love us.

What's more amazing, however, is that God, our heavenly Father, loves us even more than our earthly parents. He sent His only begotten Son to suffer and to die on the cross to redeem us from eternal death.

Atonement is not merely understanding its meaning.

What an incredible gift this is. And just as the prodigal son accepted it, why should we not accept it, for the gift leads to reconciliation with God.

Understanding atonement as the incarnation, life, suffering, and death of Jesus Christ, or as the duty and death of Christ on behalf of sinners, or as the sacrificial works of Jesus for sinners, or in whatever way we define it, will not matter at all. The power of His atoning death will make sense only as we hold it dear in our hearts, only as it bears fruit in our lives.

Therefore, atonement is not merely understanding its meaning. It must also be about applying it to our lives, living it without doubt.

REACT

1. To save us from our sins, why did God choose such a gruesome death for His Son?
2. How does one properly show that he or she has accepted Christ's atonement?
3. How far will this acceptance lead you in terms of your spiritual journey?

The Ultimate Paradox

EXPLORATION

Rom. 5:9–11; 1 Cor. 15:17–21

CONCLUDE

In countless small and large ways, sin separates us from God—and ultimately from each other. It robs us of the divine image God created us to reflect. It warps and distorts our relationships. And if it weren't for the cross, we'd simply get what we deserve.

The cross was God's solution to sin. Jesus endured the agony of utter severance from God so that no one would ever need to. In the ultimate paradox, Jesus' temporary separation from God brings us all together forever. When the beauty of the cross lives within us, it transforms us from the inside out and inspires us to reach out to others. We are a new creation called to spread the good news and share the ministry of reconciliation.

Jesus was willing to bear the cross because He couldn't bear to live without us.

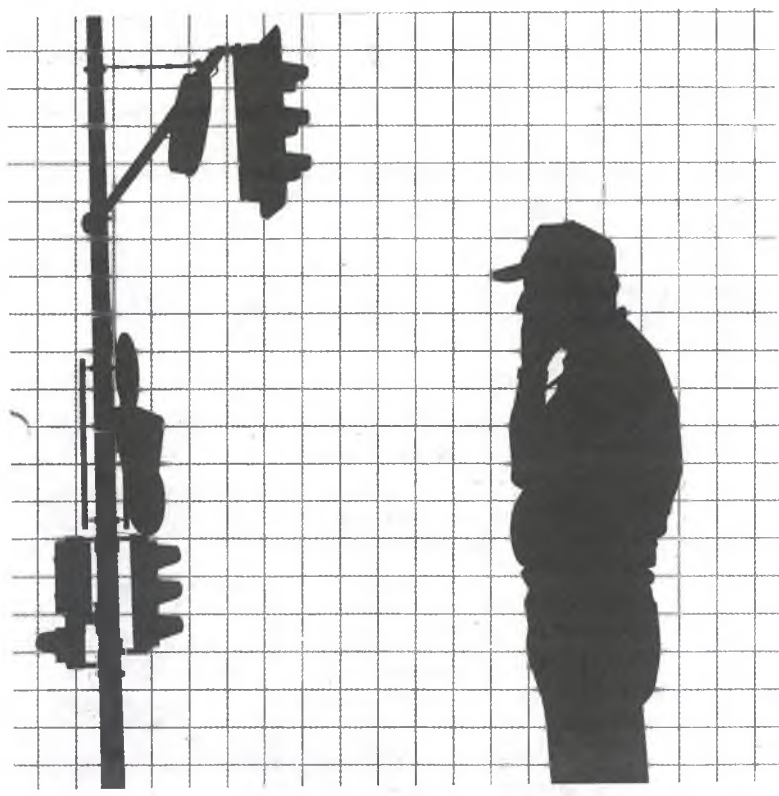
CONSIDER

- Painting or sketching an artwork illustrating the concept of a new creation.
- Researching the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of people in your church and broader community. What are some ways you can practice a ministry of reconciliation that would actually make a difference?
- Writing a letter to God, telling Him how the power of the cross has affected your life and laying out any questions you still struggle with.
- Creating a daily prayer list of people to intercede for (perhaps especially those with whom you have the greatest barriers) that they may experience the cross's atoning power for themselves.
- Discussing what the cross means to someone who's been a positive spiritual influence in your life.
- Hiking to a quiet place to reflect and pray, as Jesus did to fortify Himself spiritually in the years before the cross.

CONNECT

Rev. 14:1–3 and 15:1–4.

Benefits of Christ's Atoning Sacrifice



“Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (Heb. 7:25, NIV).

The Other Side of World Disasters

INTRODUCTION

2 Cor. 8:9

On March 21, 2000, a tragedy hit Kenya in which 68 male students lost their lives in a hostel blaze. Three years later, a similar disaster occurred in which dignitaries, including six members of parliament, lost their lives in a plane crash in northern Kenya. Today, as I write this article, Kenya is full of grief, mourning the death of nine crew members and more than a hundred passengers aboard a Kenya Airways plane, which crashed just three days ago in Douwalla, Cameroon.

Whatever we do, wherever we are, there is nothing that claims our attention more than disasters. The daily stuff that comes with TV and newspapers is full of tragedies, sorrow, and hopelessness. We all know what sin has done to our lives, because in one way or another, we have come into direct contact with its effects. We sometimes fear for our own lives, knowing that however hard we try, life on this earth will culminate in death. Neither our education, wealth, social position, nor our best possessions can assure us of eternity.

However, as Christians, we know that there is hope beyond the grave, that there is Someone constantly pleading with God on our behalf. As

you go about your day, do you ever stop to think that amidst the sin that continues to spot our lives, Christ is always asking God to forgive you and to help you become more like Him? How often do you pause during the week to remember that He does not want anyone on this earth to perish, but to be reconciled to Him?

Christ's atoning sacrifice serves to bring us back to our Creator, however sinful we are. Our daily prayers are presented to God by the voice of His only Son. It is for this reason that we are given the opportunity to live today and tomorrow—and for eternity when Christ returns. Our study this week will shed more light into our understanding of Christ's atoning sacrifice, so that we might be better able to avail ourselves of its benefits.

**There is nothing that claims
our attention more than
disasters.**

The Benefits of His Priestly Work

LOGOS

Rom. 8:34–39; 1 Cor. 15:16–18; Eph. 1:3; Col. 1:16, 17; Heb. 7:25; 1 Pet. 3:21, 22; 1 John 1:9

Assurance (Rom. 8:34–39; 1 John 1:9)

We may not know what actually inspired the mind of Fanny J. Crosby to write the lyrics to the song "Blessed Assurance." However, in my own opinion, I strongly feel that she might have been thinking about what Christ does on our behalf as a result of His atonement for our sins. In Romans 8:34–39, Paul sets forth this assurance to the Romans, to instill in their minds the awareness that we enjoy the love of God through the intercession of Christ on our behalf. Through Christ's priestly work, the bridge is mended between us and our Creator; and though sinful as we are, His love redeems us. This assurance is ours as long as we accept Christ as our Savior and our life reflects His example. We get this assurance of God's love through His only Son (John 3:16), who is the bridge between us and our heavenly Father (John 14:6).

There is one God, and one Mediator between God and humankind, the God-man, Christ Jesus.

"Far from robbing the believer of his assurance with Christ, the doctrine of the sanctuary sustains it. It illustrates and clarifies to his mind the plan of salvation. His penitent heart rejoices to grasp the reality of

Christ's substitutionary death for his sins as prefigured in its sacrifices. Furthermore, his faith reaches upward to find its meaning in a *living* Christ, his priestly Advocate in the very presence of the holy God!"¹

Salvation (Heb. 7:25; 1 Pet. 3:21, 22)

The work of mediation, which Christ does on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary, means that our salvation is guaranteed as long as we choose to lean on Him. The power of His intercession assists in cleansing us of our sins. Before His return in the clouds of heaven, our Savior is busy working out our salvation one individual at a time. "We are now living in the great day of atonement. . . . All who would have their names retained in the book of life should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance."²

Belonging and Destiny (Col. 1:16, 17)

From the beginning, our heavenly Father has always vested power on His only Son to rule the universe. Shall we not be happy to know that Christ, through whom God created the whole universe, and the One who sets everything in their proper place, is also our personal Intercessor before the Father? As we pray every day, He presents our petitions before God with His own voice, to ask on our behalf. This gives us a deep sense of belonging and destiny. Since we are both the subjects and the objects of sin before God, this mediatory function of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary places can have great impact on our spiritual life—He is both our Advocate and our Judge. What do we lack if the Commander of heaven and the angels, the Judge of all the earth, the Majesty of heaven, and the King of glory is also our Intercessor? “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9, NIV).

Resurrection and New Life (1 Cor. 15:16–18; Eph. 1:3)

Our union with Christ gives us the opportunity to attain a new life. His resurrection assures us that we also will be raised from the dead when He comes again. His work as our Intercessor lifts us from the depths of sin, to the greatest heights of Christian living. By God’s grace, Christ arose to return to heaven to be the bridge between us and God. And with Christ as our Mediator in the heavenly sanctuary, we will feel the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit guiding our lives according to His principles and freeing us from condemnation. Christ’s mediation shows that He “is the connecting link between God and man. He has promised His personal intercession. He places the whole virtue of His righteousness on the side of the suppliant. . . . He promises to hear and answer our supplications.”¹³

REACT

1. What benefits do you personally derive from Christ’s atoning sacrifice?
2. What do you think you need to do on a personal basis to enjoy the benefits of Christ’s atonement?
3. The introduction to this week’s lesson talks about the disasters that occur in the world on a daily basis. How can the benefits of Christ’s work in the heavenly sanctuary ease the pain of those affected by such disasters?

1. Frank Holbrook, “Light in the Shadows,” *Journal of Adventist Education*, October–November 1983, p. 35; as quoted in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (1988 edition), p. 327.

2. *The Great Controversy*, pp. 489, 490.

3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 178.

Monday
December 8

Personalizing the Benefits of Christ's Work as High Priest

TESTIMONY

Heb. 11:1

"The intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was his death upon the cross. By his death he began that work which after his resurrection he ascended to complete in heaven. We must by faith enter within the veil, 'whither the forerunner is for us entered.' Hebrews 6:20. There the light from the cross of Calvary is reflected. There we may gain a clearer insight into the mysteries of redemption. The salvation of man is accomplished at an infinite expense to heaven; the sacrifice made is equal to the broadest demands of the broken law of God. Jesus has opened the way to the Father's throne, and through his mediation the sincere desire of all who come to him in faith may be presented before God."¹

The day of the Lord is drawing nearer and nearer, calling for spiritual vigilance at all times. As we recount the blessings God has bestowed upon us, it is important to know that "all who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life."²

**"We must by faith enter
within the veil."**

REACT

1. If Christ is already our Mediator in the heavenly sanctuary, why must we continue praying to claim the benefits of His work on our behalf?
2. Reflect upon your acts, your words, and even your secret motives. Based on what you discover during your moments of reflection, do you think you are worthy of Christ's atoning sacrifice? Why or why not? How can you become worthy?

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 489.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 483.

The Type and the Antitype of Atonement

EVIDENCE

Heb. 9:22, 23

For more than 150 years now, the subject of atonement has been perceived by Adventists as the process of remission or putting away of sins. The ordinances pertaining to this work were performed in the earth's sanctuary, which was a symbolic service of the "example and shadow of heavenly things" (Heb. 8:5). It is clear from the Bible how the ministration of the earth's sanctuary was conducted. Involved in this service and sacrifice were priests ministering daily in the holy place of the sanctuary. Then, there was the special work of atonement, done by the high priest, once every year. This service was done in the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary. On this special occasion, two tender unblemished kid goats and a high priest were involved. One kid was chosen to be slain for the Lord as a sin offering and "the other lot for the scapegoat" (Lev. 16:8). Read Leviticus 16:21, 22.

We can learn several truths from the atonement service. "The whole ceremony was designed to impress the Israelites with the holiness of God and his abhorrence of sin; and, further, to show them that they could not come in contact with sin without becoming polluted."¹

We also learn that as much as there was a substitute for the sinner, the sin was not canceled by the blood of the victim. The high priest as the mediator therefore bore the sins to himself, and by placing his hands upon the head of the live goat, transferred them to the goat. The disappearance of the goat with the sins of the people to an uninhabited land was the ultimate relief and cleansing of the tabernacle from the weight of human sins. Now in the real sanctuary in heaven, it is the work of atonement, preparatory to His second coming, that Christ has been doing for more than a century. He entered into the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary with His own blood, to perform His work as a High Priest, interceding for every sinful individual. By virtue of His own blood, Christ will remove all the sins of His people from the sanctuary in heaven at the close of His atonement work. The sins will then be placed upon Satan, the author of sin, to bear the final penalty. Just as "the scapegoat was sent away into a land not inhabited, never to come again into the congregation of Israel, so will Satan be forever banished from the presence of God and His people, and he will be blotted from existence in the final destruction of sin and sinners."²

**We can learn several truths
from the atonement service.**

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 419.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 422.

The Road to Obtain the Benefits

HOW-TO

Heb. 7:25

By His death on the cross, Christ made adequate provision for every individual of the human race. He took our sins upon Himself and suffered the consequences on our behalf. Now He intercedes for us in the heavenly courts. This intercession will end at the final judgment, when Christ will pronounce a verdict upon every person. Therefore, our present life must reflect what we want to achieve in our walk with Christ. That is why through His work as our High Priest, Jesus has made it possible for us to choose now, because "when the work of the investigative judgment closes, the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death."* Following are steps you can take to help you make the right choice:

Humiliation before God. "Those who are humble are happy. The earth will belong to them" (Matt. 5:5, NCV). We cannot obtain the promises of our Father if we are not humble before Him. Humility walks hand in hand with self-dedication and patience.

Prayer and fasting. Nothing else will do so much for us as an experience of deep devotion and prayer. Christ is doing His part for us now. We must reciprocate with activities that will keep us in His presence and help us to know God's will in our lives.

**For us our Lord ascended,
and for us He lives.**

Deep soul searching. As Christ pleads His blood before the Father on our behalf, we should search our hearts. The cleansing activity that occurs in the heavenly sanctuary is a reflection of what should take place in our own hearts.

Behold the promise. From that scene of heavenly joy, there comes back to earth the echo of Christ's own words. Read these words in John 20:17. The family of heaven and the family of earth are one. For us our Lord ascended, and for us He lives. "Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them" (Heb. 7:25, NIV).

REACT

What would you add to this list that suits your talents and abilities to help you decide for life or death?

*The Great Controversy, p. 490.

A Personal Meaning Behind Christ's Intercession

OPINION

Rom. 8:35

This week's lesson revealed to me the wonderful work Christ has been doing on my behalf since His ascension. I now agree with Paul that there is actually nothing that can separate us from Christ's love (Rom. 8:35–39). Surely, I cannot even remember the number of times I have sinned against God, but Christ knows, having placed an equal number of pardon pleas before God on my behalf. Christ's atoning sacrifice draws us closer to God. Read Hebrews 4:15, 16.

This is why I am confident that the assurance we have in Christ's atoning sacrifice will help us prevail against Satan. Our warfare against him is lifelong. "We have before us a warfare,—a lifelong conflict with Satan and his seductive temptations. The enemy will use every argument, every deception, to entangle the soul; and in order to win the crown of life, we must put forth earnest, persevering effort."

Thank God He has made every provision for me, so that I can be victorious. However, even if I choose to or accidentally sin, I have an Advocate with the Father, pleading on my behalf for cleansing and forgiveness. In any possible temptation, I believe God will send His holy angels and the power of His Holy Spirit to assist me in my struggles against my cultivated or inherited tendencies to sin.

**His love and mercy reach to
the lowest level.**

This shows that there is no temptation too powerful for God to handle, and it is wonderful that when we do sin, He still accepts us if we return to Him in genuine faith. I praise God for His unfathomable mercy and love, which He has provided through His Son. His heart of compassionate love is always ready to cleanse and forgive. Because of his atoning sacrifice, His love and mercy reach to the lowest level, picks us up from there, and returns us to His side.

"Behold the life and character of Christ, and study His mediatorial work. Here is infinite wisdom, infinite love, infinite justice, infinite mercy."²

1. *Messages to Young People*, p. 104.

2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 59.

Friday
December 12

The Benefactors and the Beneficiaries

EXPLORATION

Heb. 7:25

CONCLUDE

God is good all the time. Jesus is good all the time. Sometimes we think that God is angry enough with us that we need Jesus to appease Him, so He intercedes on our behalf before God. However, the Bible clearly teaches that both the Father (God) and the Son (Jesus) are on the same team. They are both on our side, defending us against Satan's lies and accusations. They live to intercede for us. They're rich benefactors of grace, and we're blessed beneficiaries of their grace. Enjoy it!

CONSIDER

- Looking up the story behind the hymn "Amazing Grace."
- Singing "Amazing Grace" in a small group and discussing the message it has.
- Choosing a problem facing your community and starting an intercessory prayer chain. But don't stop there. Make plans to help alleviate or solve the problem, and carry out those plans.
- Learning about using the sanctuary model of prayer.
- Reading and discussing the book *Left to Tell* by Immaculee Ilibagiza.
- Starting a Bible study on the book of Hebrews.

CONNECT

Chuck Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening*.

Video: *The Diary of Immaculee*.

Film: *Beyond the Gates of Splendor*.

United to Christ



“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Cor. 5:17, NRSV).

He Loves Us Dearly

INTRODUCTION

Isa. 53:10; John 19:30

Magnificent beauty filled the entire universe when God created it. No blemish of sin was found. Humanity, the personal expression of God's love, was precious in His sight. But heaven was filled with great sorrow when the world that once was perfect became lost.

Once, there was a story of a brave young man. He was the only child of his parents and the only heir to their riches, yet he chose to go to battle for the sake of serving his country. This young man was committed to sacrificing his life, never thinking how dangerous and dreadful the war would be. Filled with courage in his heart, all he thought about was how to save his nation.

Before he left his parents behind, his father talked to him, gave him words of wisdom, inspiration, encouragement, and love. With tear-filled eyes, his parents embraced him for the last time, for they knew that the war would possibly take their beloved son's life. The young man felt a slight ache in his heart upon leaving them, but he was determined to go.

He died with gladness.

On the afternoon of March 3, 1945, the battle in Manila ceased. Smoke filled the air, and there in the street lay thousands of lifeless

Filipinos who had fought for their country. Among them was the body of the young man whom the parents loved. He died with gladness, for he knew that he had fought with a purpose.

Jesus did the same. He gave His own life for our sake in the war between good and evil.

John 3:16 gives us the picture of how the Father offered His only begotten Son for the salvation of the world. Jesus, the Lamb of God, took away our sins (John 1:29). Have you imagined how great His love is? He would have died even if there was only one person on earth! He endured intense agony and poured out the last drop of His blood at the cross. The sight of it broke His Father's heart. But the suffering of God the Son was the ransom He paid for our sins.

Jesus made atonement for our sins. He also has gone to heaven to prepare a place for us. Even now, up to the last days of earth's history, He stands for you and for me because of one great reason—He loves us dearly.

A Master or the Master?

EVIDENCE

Rom. 6:6

Paul uses the “in Christ” motif throughout all of his writings. “In Christ” is an expression of belonging, bearing soteriological meaning that Christ saves us and puts a claim on us. This motif sheds meaning on how we view ourselves in Christ. Notice that Romans 6:6 presents the reality that we all were “slaves to sin” in the past, which means that sin had been our master. This slavery ended when we were crucified with Christ. To be crucified with Him is to die to our old master—ourselves. Now, sin no longer reigns; but Jesus does. We are in Him, and He is our new Master.

This change of allegiance is important to the discussion of atonement, because atonement is really “at-one-ment”^{*} with God. This “at-one-ment” involves a forever friendship with God, a relationship that was broken by sin. Atonement is reconciliation. To be crucified with Christ is to be in union with Him, to experience justification and reconciliation with God, because we are “no longer slaves to sin.” It is for this reason that Paul takes pride in calling himself a slave of Christ (Rom. 1:1). What a change of allegiance!

What a change of allegiance!

Having Christ as our Master brings us the assurance of salvation. “Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1, NIV). The Scripture further states: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1, NASB). Atonement is now a reality.

Now that we are servants of Christ, a new union emerges—a union consisting of a forever friendship with God, illustrating atonement at its best. Sin has no mastery over us now. Now we have a reason to rejoice (Rom. 5:11), for we belong to and are united in Jesus Christ.

REACT

As a friend to God and other people, what responsibilities do you have to keep both friendships alive and growing?

^{*}George R. Knight, *My Gripe With God: A Study of Divine Justice and the Problem of the Cross* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald® Publishing Assn., 1990), p. 74.

LOGOS

Rom. 5:19; 6:3–6; 8:9; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 4:4–7; 5:1; Eph. 4:17–24; Col. 3:5–11

Results of Disobedience

Adam and Eve became slaves to sin. Reasons why they chose to disobey God were not enough to plead their case, since they committed a direct violation of God's command. If not for Eve's curiosity and Adam's negligence, we could all be enjoying the vitality of life on an earth free of pollution, crime, and dismay. We are now suffering the consequences of sin and are receiving the worst effect of it, which is death. Death comes to every home, and as the result of the deliberate disobedience of Adam and Eve, all of us will suffer. Sin is rampant everywhere, all the time.

Universal condemnation was another result of our first parents' disobedience. Even though God planned to redeem humankind when they sinned (1 Pet. 1:20), it was painful for the Father to offer His Son to be the sacrificial offering for the remission of sin. Furthermore, the physical, emotional, and spiritual agony the Son would suffer on the cross on our behalf is incomprehensible.

Despite our "noble" intentions, sin often gets the upper hand.

Ransom for Disobedience

God loved Adam, Eve, and generations yet to be born so much that a plan had been laid in order to make redemption successful. "There seemed to be no place of rest or safety for the infant Redeemer. God could not trust His beloved Son with men, even while carrying forward His work for their salvation. He commissioned angels to attend Jesus and protect Him till He should accomplish His mission on earth, and die by the hands of those whom He came to save."

From the womb to the tomb, Jesus had experienced great distress at the hand of Satan. But Satan did not win the war. Jesus' selfless life and death put Satan to shame; and when Jesus rose from the dead, humans were given a way to be reconciled to God. "All that had been lost by yielding to Satan could be regained through Christ."² Our being united with God is possible because of Jesus' obedience to the will of His Father. Yes, Jesus Christ became the great force to bring back the glory of God in humans.

The expression "in Christ" in 2 Corinthians 5:17 expresses briefly, but profoundly, the significance of our redemption. It speaks of security in the One who

bears God's judgment for our sins, of acceptance in the One with whom God is well-pleased, and of the assurance of a present and future glory in Him that is beyond our ability to comprehend.

Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, humans are privileged to have a chance to be reunited with Christ, who alone is the ladder connecting humans to God.

Paul compares Adam and Christ, emphasizing Christ's vast superiority. Adam is the head of the old age, but Christ is the head of the new age. His gift of grace is far more powerful than the "gift of sin" that Adam gave to humanity. When Jesus gave His life, that sacrifice was enough to pay for the sins of every human being. The power of that one life and one redemptive act triumphed over the power of the first sinful act.

Obedience Over Disobedience

There is no getting around the fact that humans are sinful. However, there is a part of our inner selves that desires the things of God and longs to be in agreement with His good and perfect will. Despite our "noble" intentions, sin often gets the upper hand. What possible recourse do we have against sin that is stronger than our will? In our own strength, none!

If we choose sin, we choose a road that leads to death. The willful trespass of God's command will make one's life hard, problematic, and depressing. Why would we want that kind of life? The choice is ours. As a famous maxim says, "To obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:22).

God, who created humans in His image, is greatly delighted when any one of us accepts and experiences the joy of being united with Christ. Dying to Christ means dying to sin, for Christ died for sinners who were separated from Him. Our sins came through Adam, but praise God, our salvation comes through Christ.

REACT

1. Does our deliberate disobedience lessen our worth to our Maker? Why or why not?
2. Obedience is a result of God's grace saving us. How does obedience maintain our relationship with God?
3. Explain when obedience becomes legalism.
4. What else about the Christian life is a result of being "in Christ"? What about our life in particular is a result of dying to self and being in Him?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 67.

2. *Education*, p. 27.

Coming to the Mind of God

TESTIMONY

Rom. 8:5-8

The mind is an important faculty of the human body. It also is a powerful tool for good or for evil. As Ellen White says, "Men are to become the subjects of Christ's kingdom. By laws and resources God has ordained a heavenly communication with man's spiritual life that in its action is as mysterious as the science and operation of the wind (John 3:7, 8). . . . So spiritual is the character of God's work upon the human heart that receives it that it makes every one a new creature."

"The mind is to be disciplined, educated, trained; for men are to do service for God in ways that are not in harmony with inborn inclination. Often the training and education of a lifetime must be discarded that one may become a learner in the school of Christ. The heart must be educated to become steadfast in God. Old and young are to form habits of thought that will enable them to resist temptation. They must learn to look upward. The principles of the Word of God—principles that are as high as heaven and that compass eternity—are to be understood in their bearing on the daily life. Every act, every word, every thought, is to be in accord with these principles."²

"The heart must be educated to become steadfast in God."

"If we improve our minds to the utmost of our ability we shall through the eternal ages continue to study

the ways and works of God and to know more and more of Him"³ "All who are under the training of God need the quiet hour for communication with their own hearts, with nature, and with God. . . . We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God, He bids us, 'Be still, and know that I am God.'"⁴

REACT

1. Is it easier to do the will of God or our own will? Why did you answer as you did?
2. Read Philippians 4:8. In what practical ways can you apply this verse to your daily living?

1. *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, pp. 14, 15.

2. *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 20.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

4. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 58.

Becoming Jesus' Reflection

HOW-TO

Rom. 3:21–26; 1 John 3:5, 6

God warned our first parents of the danger that threatened them in Eden, but still Satan was able to deceive them. Thus, a barrier between God and humans was erected. However, even before Satan's great deception, the Godhead had devised the plan of salvation (1 Pet. 1:20). Atonement was made through Jesus Christ's ultimate sacrifice at Calvary. Because His blood was shed, we can be reconciled with God once again.

By being united with Him, we all become members of the community of true believers. Being a true believer means that we reflect Jesus' character. Let us keep these simple reminders in mind to help us obtain this goal:

Follow Jesus' lead. A good shepherd will never lead his flock astray (John 10:4). Do not wander along the way, but keep your eyes focused on our Master alone. Never think you can do better on your own.

Listen to our Leader. Any sports team has a leader, and usually that leader is the person who initiates the drive for success. He or she fires up the team, sets an example on and off the playing field or court, and makes good decisions that lead to victory after victory. A team becomes a winning team because of its leader. In life, how can we lose if Jesus is our leader? (1 John 5:4).

A team becomes a winning team because of its leader.

Attach yourself to Jesus. Our relationship with Christ is exemplified by the vine and branches. He is the vine, and we are the branches. Being attached to Him is the only way for us to bear fruit; without Him we can do nothing (John 15:1–11; Gal. 5:22, 23).

Share your spiritual gifts. As the body consists of various parts that have different functions, we all have our own spiritual gifts with which to serve God (1 Cor. 12:12, 27). Using our spiritual gifts will not only bless the church and other people, but ourselves as well.

REACT

1. Can someone not belonging to His church be united with Christ? Why or why not?
2. Does being a member of God's church guarantee our salvation? Why or why not?

We Can Do Nothing

OPINION

John 15:5

There are Christians who believe in the doctrine of eternal security, more commonly known as the “once saved, always saved” principle. Some make this principle an excuse to live the life they please, wrongly believing that their actions do not matter as long as they profess faith in Christ.

However, John 15:5 teaches us otherwise. “There are many of us who have a nominal faith but we do not bring that faith into our characters. . . . We must have that faith which works by love and purifies the soul, that this belief in Christ will lead us to put away everything that is offensive in His sight.”¹ “Those who receive Christ by faith become one with Him in principle and action. They are united to Him, and the life they live is the life of the Son of God.”²

However, Satan and his angels are working overtime to tempt and deceive all those who are striving to follow Christ. He continually seeks to draw us away from our allegiance. Let us remember that Christ, being an overcomer Himself, has given us the advantage of His victory. Thus, we may draw power from Him so that

we can overcome just as He did. We may at times fail, but we should not be discouraged, for Christ also has promised that if “we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us

**He wants us to lean wholly
upon Him.**

from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9, NIV). Jesus is not a stern God who expects His followers to become perfect in an instant. Rather, we are to cooperate with Him, striving in His strength to make ourselves what He wants us to be. He wants us to lean wholly upon Him.

At this moment, let us examine ourselves and commit our lives to Him. We may feel unworthy, but Christ wants us just as we are. He knows our weaknesses and limitations. All we have to do is to accept His invitation and entrust our will to Him with complete confidence that He knows what’s best for us. Let us stay connected to Him. As the branches wither and die apart from the vine, so we will die without Christ—for without Him, we can do nothing.

1. *In Heavenly Places*, p. 118.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

To Be One

EXPLORATION

2 Cor. 5:17

CONCLUDE

Salvation from sin is not the same as union with Christ. The justifying power of Christ's sacrifice gives way to the sanctifying power of Christ's resurrection and life. When God sent His only begotten Son (John 3:16), it was an act of love designed to make us one with Him again. Through this process we become brand-new creatures, complete with a new life hidden with Christ in God. But we have a part to play in becoming one with God. We have to choose to obey God moment by moment, day by day. We have to die daily to live eternally.

CONSIDER

- Creating a collage of photos from magazines and/or newspapers on the theme of unity or oneness. How does unity with Christ surpass the unity of the collage?
- Examining John 17 to find out the number of times Jesus mentioned His desire that the disciples become one with Him and God the Father.
- Writing a one-page defense to those who claim that having been saved—united with Christ and forgiven from sin—they are now free to live as they choose.
- Researching the story behind the hymn "Blest Be the Tie" at <http://www.cyberhymnal.org>. Unity with Christ also makes His followers one.
- Creating a short humorous skit based on the story of the request made to Jesus by the mother of James and John found in Matthew 20:20–28. How does understanding our role as children of God help to unify Christ's body?
- Finding a friend who is struggling to overcome a sin or challenge and encouraging him or her with the promise found in 2 Corinthians 5:17.
- Picturing your first face-to-face conversation with Jesus. What will you say to Him? Will there even be words? What will you thank Him for most?

CONNECT

John 15:1–17.

Christ's Object Lessons, "This Man Receiveth Sinners," pp. 185–197.

Jim Hohnberger, *Escape to God*, chaps. 8, 9.

Atonement and Universal Harmony



“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away’ ” (Rev. 21:3, 4, NRSV).

The Receipt for Eternal Life

INTRODUCTION

Rev. 20:12

There was a man who went to a rabbi to ask what he should do to make repentance. The rabbi told him to pay all his bills, liquidate his assets, and then return. After the man did all this, he returned to the rabbi and asked if that was all he had to do. The rabbi replied, "Now write all your sins and evil doings on paper and give it to me." After the man did this, the rabbi began to read the man's sins aloud. The man was overcome by shame and guilt. The rabbi exclaimed, "How could one do such things?"

The man fainted, but the rabbi revived him and continued reading. Seven times this happened, until finally the rabbi finished. He shook his head and said, "For sins as great as these there can only be one atonement: Death!" But the man was so repentant, he said, "I will do whatever must be done."

The rabbi explained how the man would have to die by ancient tradition. He would have to swallow a mixture of molten lead and tin. The man agreed to this, and even obtained the items he needed and assisted in melting the lead. But when the time came for him to swallow it, he tasted instead warm marmalade. He opened his eyes in surprise, only to hear the rabbi say, "Now get up, and serve the one who is blessed, for you are another being. Take this money on the table and live like a righteous man."*

He tasted instead warm marmalade.

We are the man in this story. We are sinful, and we know it. We also know we deserve to die for our sins. But would we be as willing as this man to suffer such a penalty for our wrong doing? While Christ took that penalty upon Himself so we could be reconciled to God, we still must make a sacrifice if we want to be saved. We must sacrifice our will, our desire to be in control. As we do so, like the man in the story, we might expect to die some type of horrible death. Instead, however, we will discover that what we receive in return is far better than anything we could produce. That discovery involves being recreated in the image of God, being able to live righteously with the help of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of the earth made new (Rev. 21:3, 4). As you study this week's lesson, may the thought of that new earth and universal harmony inspire you anew to taste the sweet life only Christ can offer through His atoning sacrifice.

*Adapted from Lawrence Kushner, *The Atonement*.

Sunday
December 21

Return of the King or the Promise Fulfilled

LOGOS

Dan. 8:13, 14; 1 Cor. 4:5; 15:51–54; Heb. 9:23; Rev. 20:1–4, 11–15; 22:3–6

Before Jesus went to the cross to purchase our salvation, He promised His disciples (and by extension us) that He was going “to prepare a place” for them and that when He had everything ready, He would return to take us home with Him. This was the whole reason for His first coming—to unite us to Himself—and to the God who loves us. His resurrection and ascension and their consequences for humans were the themes of every sermon written in Acts. Because Christ died, was resurrected, and ascended into heaven, we have the promise of resurrection and of a new creation. The transformation of the heart and mind of a person is only the beginning of what will be the ultimate result of His atonement—cosmic redemption. This is not only a New Testament concept, but a promise prophesied and hoped for by God’s people from Adam down to this very age.

Looking for Assurance; Waiting for Salvation (Dan. 8:13, 14; Heb. 9:23)

The ceremonies and holy days of the sanctuary were interwoven into the very existence of the early Hebrews.

This is what Christianity is about.

Through all of the events revolving around the sanctuary, God revealed Himself and defined His relationship with them. The sanctuary and its ceremonies foreshadowed Christ

and the cosmic redemption that would unite a sinful, prodigal planet with the rest of His creation.

This is what Daniel and his fellow exiles considered as they lived in a pagan land with no sanctuary, no holy days, and no culture that reflected God’s daily presence or promises. God’s temple was a heap of rubble. The city of Jerusalem and its walls were destroyed. The people of Judah were dispersed throughout the Babylonian Empire, and the Babylonians claimed to have captured their God and replaced Him with their gods.

As Daniel continues to worship the Lord who is in His heavenly sanctuary, he has a vision that gives him assurance that God is still in control of what is happening, and that His promises are not forgotten. Daniel’s vision isn’t limited to the time when his people will be allowed to return to their own land and rebuild their homes and the temple. It spans all of earth’s history. As the vision unfolds, he becomes aware of the cosmic conflict that is not waged or won by human kings.

He hears judgment and vindication as a holy one asks the question “How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled?” and he hears another holy one answer with the number “2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated” (Dan. 8:13, 14, NIV). The sanctuary refers not to a physical one on this earth, but to God’s sanctuary which is cleansed when evil is finally expelled from His creation and universal harmony is restored. Then all that separates us from Him will be removed, and we will be one with Him forever!

The Day of Reckoning (Rev. 20:1–4, 11–15)

The Day of Atonement is not the time for forgiveness of individual sins, but for the banishment of sin, from the encampment of God’s people—chasing Azazel, the incarnation of sin, into the desert. These verses from Revelation 20 echo back to the vision Daniel saw and the judgment he heard (Dan. 8:13, 14). They are the cosmic realization of all that was represented in the Jewish Yom Kippur ceremony, when the temple is cleansed and the high priest banished Azazel to the desert.

When our King returns, He will vindicate Himself and His people who have suffered and died for their faith. He will claim those who faithfully endured, anticipating His return. He will face down Satan and have him chained to a planet that is returned to its precreated state of nothingness, and that is where Satan will be cast.

The Groom and His Bride (Rev. 19:7–9)

As the “bride of Christ,” we, the church, are united with our Groom, to live eternally in His presence. As He unites us to Himself, we are also united to all the unfallen beings in His universe—we who have been exiled from the rest of creation because of sin, are now made one with them in a great wedding feast in heaven where Christ presents us as His bride. There is no longer any need for symbols and rituals or a temple, because we will be in the direct presence of our Redeemer King. This is what Christianity is about. It is not cold, religious ceremony and legalism, but intimate relationship with a gracious King who is the lover of our souls and who lives to unite us to Himself, and to restore universal harmony to all of creation!

“There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain,” we read in Revelation 21:4, and happier words are hard to find. Anyone who’s lived enough years on this earth—and, sadly, some who’ve only lived a very few—can understand the meaning of death, sorrow, and certainly, crying, and pain. The victory of God in the great controversy between Christ and Satan means an end to all these bad things, and an eternity—forever—where we will be happy and free, finally free, of the curse of sin.

This hope in Christ feeds our faith so that it burns passionately within us.

Monday
December 22

“Before the Ransomed Throng”

TESTIMONY

Rev. 22:3–6

“Before entering the city of God, the Saviour bestows upon His followers the emblems of victory and invests them with the insignia of their royal state. The glittering ranks are drawn up in the form of a hollow square about their King, whose form rises in majesty high above saint and angel, whose countenance beams upon them full of benignant love. Throughout the unnumbered host of the redeemed, every glance is fixed upon him, every eye beholds His glory whose ‘visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.’ Upon the heads of the overcomers, Jesus with His own right hand places the crown of glory. For each there is a crown, bearing his own ‘new name,’ (Revelation 2:17.), and the inscription, ‘Holiness to the Lord.’ In every hand are placed the victor’s palm and the shining harp. Then, as the commanding angels strike the note, every hand sweeps the harp strings with skillful touch, awaking sweet music in rich, melodious strains.

“Oh, the wonders of
redeeming love!”

Rapture unutterable thrills every heart, and each voice is raised in grateful praise: ‘Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His

Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever.’ Revelation 1:5, 6.

“Before the ransomed throng is the Holy City. Jesus opens wide the pearly gates, and the nations that have kept the truth enter in. There they behold the Paradise of God, the home of Adam in his innocency. Then that voice, richer than any music that ever fell on mortal ear, is heard, saying ‘Your conflict is ended.’ ‘Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’

“Now is fulfilled the Saviour’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, declaring, ‘Here am I, and the children whom Thou hast given Me.’ ‘Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept.’ 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!”*

**The Great Controversy*, pp. 645, 646.

Win-Win Contract

EVIDENCE

Deut. 10:12, 13

Much of Deuteronomy reiterates the covenant between God and Israel: the law of God and His promises for obedience and disobedience. Deuteronomy gives an example of how God desires to relate to His people. While God commands a total commitment of love toward Him and the loving of a person's neighbor as themselves (Matt. 22:34–40), He in turn promises to bless us. However, not only are there blessings in store. The keeping of His commands are, in themselves, for the general, overall good of His followers (Deut. 10:13).

Deuteronomy's summary of the law can be viewed as a legal contract. However, many examples of Israel not honoring this contract are apparent. Nevertheless, God remained faithful. May we learn from Israel's mistakes!

Although we are under a New Covenant, we can learn from the Old Covenant, because it shows God's desires in terms of how His people are to behave. The laws in Deuteronomy often have the commandment of "love thy neighbor as thyself" at its center. For example, read Deuteronomy 5:20.

Nevertheless, the New Covenant has Christ's death and resurrection at the center, enabling the fulfillment of the principles which the Old

Nevertheless, God remained faithful.

Covenant aimed to impart (Rom. 8:3, 4). Through Christ's atoning sacrifice we can be transformed so that we can have the type of relationship God desired to have with Israel. Moreover, we can use the historical example of Israel to make successful our personal covenant with God. We are able to see God's faithfulness and, in turn, embark on a humble and faithful walk with Him. Let us "walk worthy" of the covenant, which Christ has made possible, using the message of Deuteronomy and the history of Israel to live according to God's will.

REACT

1. In what ways has God remained faithful in your covenant with Him?
2. What lessons can we learn from Israel's failure to successfully honor their covenant with God?
3. Does Christ's command to love your neighbor as yourself preclude loving ourselves? Why or why not?
4. How much easier would it be to remain in covenant with God if we loved our neighbors as ourselves? Describe such a world that followed this command.

Wednesday
December 24

How to Prepare for the Happy- Ever-After

HOW-TO

Rev. 21:3, 4; 22:3-6

Imagine, if you will, celebrating the birth of Christ when we get to heaven. Celebrating the First Advent in light of having just experienced the Second Advent will take on a whole new meaning. Faith will take on sight. And the concept of a praise service will rise to a whole new level!

But it's not that Christmas Eve. Not yet. We're still earthbound. Where faith is still faith. And "whole new levels" yet await us.

So how can we prepare for "there"? Here are some points to ponder. Prepare for reentry. The human race hasn't lived on the other side of sin since Eden. Life will be different in a sin-free society. Brace yourself. It's going to be much better! We need to let Jesus fill us so that sin is pushed out of our lives even while we're here on earth (1 John 1:7; 2:1, 10). Here we go then:

Practice living in the presence of God (Psalm 139). There are areas of our lives that obviously include God. But there are probably areas we deem "secular" in which we aren't as inclined to include Him. Perhaps we should consciously include Him in all areas and live as though He's right there all the time—because He really is!

**Brace yourself. It's going to
be much better!**

Imagine the unimaginable! (1 Cor. 2:9). A sinless environment. No heart-breaking stories on the evening news. No relationship problems. No problems at all! Peace. Contentment. Purpose. Joy that permeates every cell in our bodies. "I can only imagine." (Ever heard Chris Rice's song "Deep Enough to Dream"? Give it a listen!)

Prepare to party! (Rev. 5:12; 19:9). Most of us have no clue how much the weight of sin bears down on us. So to have it lifted because of what Jesus did for us long before we were even born is something we relate to only theoretically. A friend of mine gets it. He lost a young daughter to a freak accident and then his wife to cancer several years later. He knows about grief like few people I've ever met. The weight is painfully obvious. He can't wait to have it lifted. And he can't wait to party in thankfulness to a God who will soon make everything right.

What Jesus did on the cross is mind-blowing in its simplicity and in its complexity. Soon it will culminate like nothing has ever culminated before! And all will be right with the world.

Sanctimonious Yet Harmonious

OPINION

John 3:16, 17

Sometimes we find it difficult to understand how God could have come to live among us and die for our sins. Many of us often question the reasoning of an all-powerful being coming to experience the torment that characterizes this sinful world. Many people even consider it a form of madness that God would think He would need to come to this world to demonstrate His love and justice. That, however, is exactly the point—the only point and the crucial fulcrum upon which Christ's atonement centers. That although we must be judged by how we live the life granted to us by our Creator, He is qualified to be our judge because He experienced first hand what it is to live in a world of sin, torment, pain, and ultimately death. This makes me smile, even though many questions race through my mind that no one, no matter how thoroughly theologically versed they may be, can answer.

The atonement demonstrates the greatest form of investigative journalism and detective work the world has ever known.

1. The thought that God, in Christ, would come down to experience firsthand what it is to be a human being demonstrates that He is prepared to judge us, not as a bystander, but as an actual participant in our life of sin on earth. What human judge, before sentencing a defendant, would embark upon a quest to experience firsthand the social deprivation that the defendant may have experienced?

This makes me smile.

2. The thought that Christ would then demonstrate to us the ultimate way to triumph, despite being shackled by sin, is perhaps the greatest wonder the world has known.

3. The investigative journalism which abounds throughout Scripture shows not only the diligence God has taken to teach us about the problems sin causes, but also how to reconcile these problems through our dependence upon Him and the atonement He made for us on the cross.

REACT

This is the end of our study on the atonement Christ made for us. Reflect upon what these lessons have taught you about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and your relationship to them.

Friday
December 26

Home at Last

EXPLORATION

Rev. 21:3, 4

CONCLUDE

When God created us, He intended for us to live in His presence forever. Satan had other plans, and our first parents allowed his plans to influence theirs. Where God intended for us to be co-creators with Him, we became co-destroyers with God's—and ultimately our own—enemy. God would have had every right and reason to vaporize our world and start over. But instead, He insisted on trying to restore us. We need to remind ourselves every day how important and wonderful this is, and to try to live and think like people who have been redeemed.

CONSIDER

- Looking at photographs from celebrations you may have attended. After all, in the Bible, Christ's second coming is often visualized as a feast or a wedding. What do the people in the photos appear to be feeling? How do you think this will compare to Christ's return?
- Researching what people groups need to be reached with the gospel before Christ returns and exploring what you can do to support efforts to reach them.
- Thinking about the vision of the world to come presented in Revelation 22:1–3. Write a brief paragraph about what this means in your own life.
- Listening to, singing, or playing a song that you would like to sing for Christ when you get to heaven that expresses your joy at being with Him face to face.
- Holding an agape feast at your home. Invite your friends, or people you'd like to be your friends or to be on better terms with. The agape feasts of the early Christians were meant to be a foretaste of heaven.

CONNECT

The Great Controversy, chap. 40, "God's People Delivered."

Clifford Goldstein, *The Day Evil Dies*, chap. 8.

Marvin Moore, *How to Think About the End Time*, pp. 202–223.

Next Quarter's Lessons

The Prophetic Gift

If you have not received a copy of *CQ* for first quarter 2009, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1: Heaven's Means of Communication

Logos: Gen. 18:1–15; 32:30; Exod. 4:10–17; Ps. 19:1–6; John 1:14; 3:16; Col. 2:9

Memory Text: “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds” (Heb. 1:1, 2, NKJV).

The Week at a Glance: What is general and what is special revelation? What can nature teach us about God? What can it not teach us? How does the revelation through Jesus Christ differ from God's other revelations?

Lesson 2: The Prophetic Gift

Logos: Gen. 20:7; Exod. 15:20; Deut. 18:15; Matt. 11:11; John 6:14; Heb. 11:24–26

Memory Text: “Then He said, ‘Hear now My words: / If there is a prophet among you, / I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; / I speak to him in a dream’ ” (Num. 12:6, NKJV).

The Week at a Glance: Were the Old and New Testament prophets saints or just ordinary men and women? What role did women prophets play in Israel? What were the differences between apostles and prophets in the New Testament?

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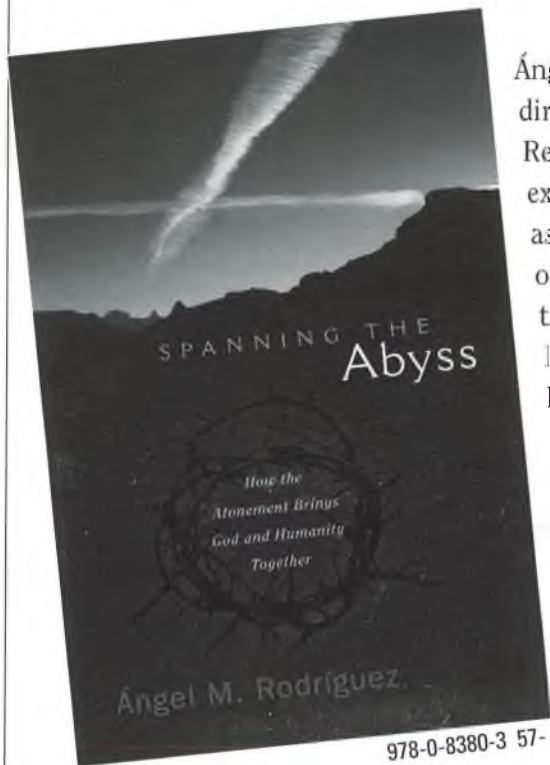
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Just 15 years ago the Adventist Church in Mongolia reorganized after many years of oppression. Today the majority of believers are under the age of 35.

Some 250 of these young believers study at state universities in Ulaanbaatar, the capital city. Most live in government-run dormitories. Living and studying in a secular environment makes it tough for them to maintain their faith. Because of this, many students' spiritual lives erode during their university years.

The Adventist Church wants to change that. A dormitory for Adventist students will provide a safe environment for them to live and study, an environment that will strengthen their faith instead of destroy it.

Part of my Thirteenth Sabbath offering this quarter will help this project and strengthen the future Church leaders in Mongolia. I'm glad that I can help my church care for its youth. For me, it's personal.



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