





# The Truth as it is in Jesus

Painting by Elfred Lee, commissioned by *Ministry*

*"For were you not told about him, were you not as Christians taught the truth as it is in Jesus?" (Eph. 4:21, REB).*

Truth is not a theory. It's a Person—Jesus Christ. Every doctrine has meaning and value only in the context of Christ and Him crucified.

"The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers" (Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 315).

Honoring this divine mandate, *Ministry* editors commissioned a well-known Adventist artist, Elfred Lee, to portray on canvas *the truth as it is in Jesus*. Lee, who teaches at the School of Art at Montemorelos University in Mexico, already has painted such masterpieces as the huge mural *Christ of the Narrow Way*, showcased by the Ellen G. White Estate at the General Conference headquarters.

Lee's oil painting for *Ministry* measures four by six feet. The style is surrealistic and impressionistic. You see, for example, both a transparency and a perspective that are physically impossible. Impossible—just like salvation itself is impossible for us to attain of ourselves, or even fully comprehend.

With salvation being the central focus of Lee's painting, the cross is its dominant symbol. The Ten Commandments loom majestically in the background. The numbers reflect a Hebrew flavor rather than Roman numerals, since Romans did not yet exist during the time of Moses!

Represented in Lee's painting is each of seven major doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists: 1. *Scripture*, 2. *Sanctuary*, 3. *Salvation through Christ*, 4. *Spiritual gifts*, 5. *Sabbath of Creation*, 6. *State of the dead*, and the 7. *Second Coming*.

To grasp the artist's emphasis, begin at the base. There you see the Bible as the foundation of all doctrine. Surrounding the Scriptures is God's second book, nature. As you move up you see the sanctuary, God's visual teaching tool of salvation. On the mercy seat of the sanctuary, blood drops from Jesus have fallen. The shed blood of Calvary's Lamb shows how type has met antitype, providing complete atonement for the sin of the world.

The risen Lord is represented in glorified form, with the Ten Commandments in the background. Since the violation of the law necessitated the death of Christ, the cross is hewn out of the tables of stone, forming a tomb from which Jesus was resurrected. He ascends victorious and immortal in the robe of His perfect righteousness.

Surrounding Jesus at the top of the commandments are clouds shaped as a heart, representing Him as the heart of our salvation. The purple color of this heart symbolizes the medals that soldiers in some countries receive when wounded in action. Again you are pointed to Jesus, wounded in action as the captain of our salvation.

The artist invested many hours in painstaking research to ensure accuracy in his portrayals. Notice, for example, the location of nailprints. In Bible times the word we translate as "palm" extended into the forearm. Which part of this long "palm" bore the crucifying nails? According to both archaeological evidence and medical testimony, the nails were driven into the part we now call the wrist.

At the top of the painting light streams down from the Father and the dove, figure of the Holy Spirit, to the face of Jesus. This represents the Trinity. All three members of the Godhead are active in our salvation. Through the Holy Spirit come the various spiritual gifts, including the gift of prophecy.

Now, to scan human history, return to the bottom of the painting and look left. In the seven worlds you see the seven literal days of Creation, culminating in the Sabbath. The fourth commandment is illumined as the memorial of Creation.

Moving from left to right toward the end of earthly history, you see toppled tombstones and an empty grave representing the state of the dead and the resurrection. The golden trumpets symbolize Christ's second coming.

The optimal eye level for viewing this painting is the tip of the angels' wings. You attain this vantage point by kneeling at the foot of the cross—a fitting perspective not only for admiring this work of art but also for appreciating the work of Christ as our salvation.

1. **Scripture**
2. **Sanctuary**
3. **Salvation through Christ**
4. **Spiritual gifts**
5. **Sabbath of Creation**
6. **State of the dead**
7. **Second Coming**

This special issue of *Ministry* takes a look at the 27 fundamental doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists, who number more than 8 million adult members. These members live in 209 countries, with 90 percent residing outside of North America.

Adventists are known for their humanitarian work through the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and through local community services. They are known for their educational work, with more than 5,500 primary and secondary schools and 85 colleges and universities. Adventists are known for their health ministry: 148 hospitals, 354 dispensaries and clinics, 70 medical launches and airplanes, with more than 7 million people using these facilities annually.

Adventists are known for their extensive media and publishing ministries: with television and radio programs such as *It Is Written*, *Voice of Prophecy*, *La Voz de la Esperanza*, *Breath of Life*, and *Lifestyle Magazine*. They also operate 56 publishing houses and print in 206 languages.

*Ministry* is the journal of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and we send it to all the English-speaking Adventist ministers worldwide and also to some 55,000 clergy of other faiths. This printing combines the July and August issues, making this the greatest number of pages we have published at one time.

But who exactly are Seventh-day Adventists? This issue looks at us theologically. It is written by the members of the Ministerial Association (including two past leaders of the association) and the Biblical Research Institute. We combined our 27 doctrines into 14 and wrote them as sermons to be preached. Eighty pages cannot do justice to all the various points of doctrine. Space dictated that some areas would receive less coverage than others, but within these pages we give you the essence of Adventism. We asked each writer to speak from his or her heart and show the relevance of the particular doctrine to the great central doctrine of Christianity—the cross of Christ. May every sermon exalt Him alone who is our life, our Saviour—Jesus Christ.

We do not believe that you have to be a Seventh-day Adventist to be saved. Salvation is based on knowing Jesus Christ, not belonging to some denomination. Yet we believe that God calls people and groups at certain times in history to proclaim a special message for a certain time. God called Noah to announce the first ending of the world. He called Abraham out of Ur to propagate a special group that would be witnesses to the world. He called Moses and Aaron to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. He raised up Jeremiah to warn His people of impending tragedy if they did not reform. He summoned John the Baptist to announce the first coming of the Messiah.

Now, at the end of time, God again sends a warning message to the world, a message that Christ is coming soon. We believe that God called the Seventh-day Adventist Church for such a time as this.

It is time for decision. It is time for the wrapping up of the great controversy of the ages. At the cross God revealed Himself, His character of love, in giving His life. So in these last days God is wanting a people that will reveal Him to the world as He revealed

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Cover by: Elfred Lee

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# God's Word for our time

**Herbert Kiesler**

**How trustworthy  
is the Bible and  
its promise to  
transform us?**



*Herbert Kiesler, Ph.D., is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.*

A plastic plumbing fixtures tycoon inherited an antique jeweled diadem of spectacular beauty. Since he did not know anything of its actual value, he considered it "junk." He even abused it by spinning it in the air, showing it off at parties, bending it out of shape, getting laughs. On certain occasions, when in debt, he even dug a jewel out and pawned it.

Little did he realize that there had been a time when thousands of people were willing to fight and die just to touch and look at this diadem. The point is this: What we have received without any cost is of little value to us; what we have to work or even fight for we treasure and appreciate dearly.

This principle applies to our attitude toward the Scriptures. It seems that most Christians do not see its practical value for daily living. Of course, none of us would actually discard the Bible, but for many it is basically a coffee-table souvenir. This might not be so if we had to struggle to own a Bible or pay a high price for it. Reading the stories of martyrs, saints, and prophets of Christian history, willing to risk their lives for the Word of God, might enhance our appreciation for the Scriptures.

## **The Bible and Christianity**

*The need to rediscover.* For Christianity to survive the challenge of growing secularism, it must rediscover the existential meaning of God's Word. No quick fixes exist for social ills, no solution to the human dilemma of sin, except God's special revelation and offer of salvation through Jesus Christ. Therefore, the church must revive both corporate and individual interest in the study of the Word. The Bible has the

power to transform the lives of men, women, and children. It is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword (see Heb. 4:12). As Protestants we have a rich Reformation heritage that we must relate to current issues in the controversy about the Holy Scriptures.

*Reformation heritage.* Almost 500 years ago Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses on the doors of the Wittenberg church. He did not realize that this simple protest would spark one of the biggest explosions in history. The spreading of his 95 theses spawned the Reformation, which focused on two fundamental thoughts: the Bible and the Bible only, and justification by faith alone.

Why did Luther hold such a high view of Scripture? Because he believed that the Bible was the greatest authority in religious matters. As soon as the Bible was rediscovered, the knowledge of God and His saving message spread beyond Germany. Genuine faith was rekindled, rescued from fossilized dogmatism.

*Can we trust the Bible?* Since the Enlightenment, however, liberal Protestantism has abandoned Luther's concept of *sola scriptura*. Schleiermacher, the pioneer of Protestant liberalism, placed more weight on the inward experience of God than on the writings of an ancient Book. His idea and the emergence of "scientific theology," which sought to enhance the awareness and understanding of the human elements in the Bible, caused distrust in its fundamental teachings.

Distrust in the Word of God was nothing new. We find it on the first pages of the Bible. "Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made. He

said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat of any tree of the garden"?'" (Gen. 3:1).<sup>\*</sup> This tempting question from Satan was the first criticism against the Word of God. It led to the first sin, which consisted of human neglect to take God's word seriously. The result? Paradise lost.

Since that first instance criticism against the Bible has taken many forms, but the method has remained the same. Human reason, severed from God's divine revelation, tends to judge the Word and dispute its uniqueness as the inspired word of God. Everything out of harmony with the maxims of human reason is not only questioned but declared to be spurious. This reflects the original question, "Did God say?"

### The Scriptures—human or divine?

The Bible testifies to its divine-human nature (see 2 Peter 1:20, 21). It is the Word inspired. But in spite of the clear self-testimony of Scripture concerning its divine origin, modern biblical scholarship has largely downplayed the divine element of the Bible and has dismissed the miraculous and the transcendent in Scripture. Since miracles supposedly do not happen now, they could not have happened in times past. On this premise the grand accounts of Creation, Adam and Eve, the Exodus, the virgin birth, Christ's divine-human nature, His miracles, His resurrection, are regarded as merely ancient myth or legend.

For many modern Christians, the only valid part of the Scriptures is the ethical teachings of Jesus. Since the rest of it is said to be conditioned by an ancient culture, it is considered out of touch with the needs of people today. Some educators see great value in the study of the Bible and wish they could make it a basic requirement at the university level. After all, Bible study has proven to be an effective method in the shaping of the human mind. However, they believe it was written by humans for humans without any divine intervention.

*Bible's self-testimony.* Contrary to such opinion, the Scriptures themselves testify of their divine origin, character, and authority. Consider the apostle Paul's testimony: "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for train-

ing in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). The Greek word translated "inspired" can also be rendered as "God breathed." It denotes a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God. As the well-known theologian Adolf Schlatter freely translated the passage, "Each Bible reference comes from God's Spirit."

Since all Scripture is God-breathed through the working of the Holy Spirit, the Bible is infallible. Does this mean that we should ignore or be indifferent to the difficulties that arise in connection with apparent discrepancies or alleged contradictions? On the contrary, we must wrestle with them for some satisfactory answers. This may not happen in every case, because the Scriptures do not always provide the data necessary to form a complete picture and draw sound conclusions.

But if the Bible is indeed God-breathed, why does it not generate faith in everyone confronted with it? The apostle Paul provides us an answer: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14, KJV). Only regeneration through the Holy Spirit can produce a genuine response of faith (John 3:3; 1 Cor. 2:14).

*The apostles' testimony.* Bible writers were clear that their writings were of divine origin. In Galatians 1:12 the apostle Paul states, "I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came

through a revelation of Jesus Christ." Peter adds his testimony: "First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:20, 21).

*Christ and the Word.* Our Lord Himself stressed the authority of the Scriptures. When tempted, Jesus used the well-known phrase "It is written" as a defense and an offense (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; Luke 20:17). When asked how one could enter into eternal life, Christ answered, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" (Luke 10:26, NKJV). In debating with the Pharisees, He placed the Scriptures above human tradition (see Mark 7:7-9). Jesus also saw Himself as the fulfillment of prophecy (see Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10, 26).

Jesus referred to the Bible as the Word of God. In His high priestly prayer, He said, "Your word is the truth" (John 17:17, NKJV). To acknowledge with Jesus and His apostles and prophets that the Bible is the Word of God means to assign to it a unique position based on its origin and content. The Bible can be the Word of God only if it has a divine, not a human, origin. If one acknowledges the divine origin of Scripture, though put in words by human beings, then one cannot treat it like any other piece of world literature.

Ellen White considered the Scriptures as the final authority not only in religious matters but also in their report of events. Not to say that she was ignorant of the human imperfections of



## THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.)

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various kinds in the transmission of the text, but she was certain that "all the mistakes will not cause trouble to one soul."<sup>†</sup>

### The role of Scripture

**Standard of character.** When God made His covenant with Israel, His commandments became the standard of their character. By their obedience or disobedience to the covenant they demonstrated the object of their true allegiance. The Lord made it clear that obedience was the basic requirement for a holy nationhood (see Ex. 19:5, 6). Obedience would result in God's blessings, but disobedience in curses or chaos (see Deut. 28:15-68).

That Scripture principle (disobedience = chaos, obedience = blessings of God) remains valid today (see Gal. 6:7). No matter whether it is a person or a whole society, disobedience to divine laws will ultimately result in chaos. It makes no difference whether disobedience manifests itself in idol worship with its varied forms, or in disregard for the Sabbath, or in disrespect for one's parents, or in murder, adultery, or theft. Obedience, on the other hand, will result in the promised blessings of God (see Deut. 28:15-68).

**Record of God's acts in history.** The Old Testament records a number of events in the history of Israel that the New Testament writers saw as preparatory for God's work in Christ. For example, Paul in his address at Antioch (see Acts 13:16ff.) explained from the history of Israel that events from Abraham to David are the most significant history of former times and that Christ is the continuation and fulfillment of God's redemptive purposes.

For the story of the patriarchs, as well as for the Exodus, we have no extrabiblical sources confirming accuracy. Nevertheless, the patriarchs are no longer considered mythical figures, as former scholarship categorized them. Archaeological discoveries confirm that the biblical description of the patriarchs and their era is remarkably accurate—much too accurate to be considered invention. While we may not be able to have extrabiblical evidence in support of the historicity of certain biblical events, sufficient evidence exists to

demonstrate the trustworthiness of the biblical accounts.

**Revealer of doctrines.** Since God is the author of Scripture, it follows that the Bible can be trusted as the authoritative revealer of doctrine. But how, for example, are we to relate to the great salvific events in history? Consider the story of Creation. If science were to confirm the biblical account of a six-day creation, would this be sufficient to persuade an atheist to believe in the Bible? Hardly! It takes faith to grasp the divine realities of Scripture (see Heb. 11:3).

This does not mean that the salvific events of Scripture lack any historical foundation; they were not recorded for historical or scientific purposes. Thus the question whether these great events are literal or figurative is a modern concern and not one of the Bible writers. These events were recorded by faith for faith. Bible writers understood and interpreted all the events of history by recognizing in them the God who formed their community.

### Experiencing its power

The Bible is no ordinary human word. It is God's special revelation to humanity. It has the power to transform lives. Accept it in faith and follow it, and you will experience that change. Come to it with a childlike trust, and discover joy and meaning in life. ■

### God's word for our time Outline

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    1. Purpose of redemptive history
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#### Conclusion

Experience the transforming power of the Bible

\* Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture passages in this article are from the Revised Standard Version.

† Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), book 1, p. 16.

*"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped."*

Isaiah 35:5 RSV

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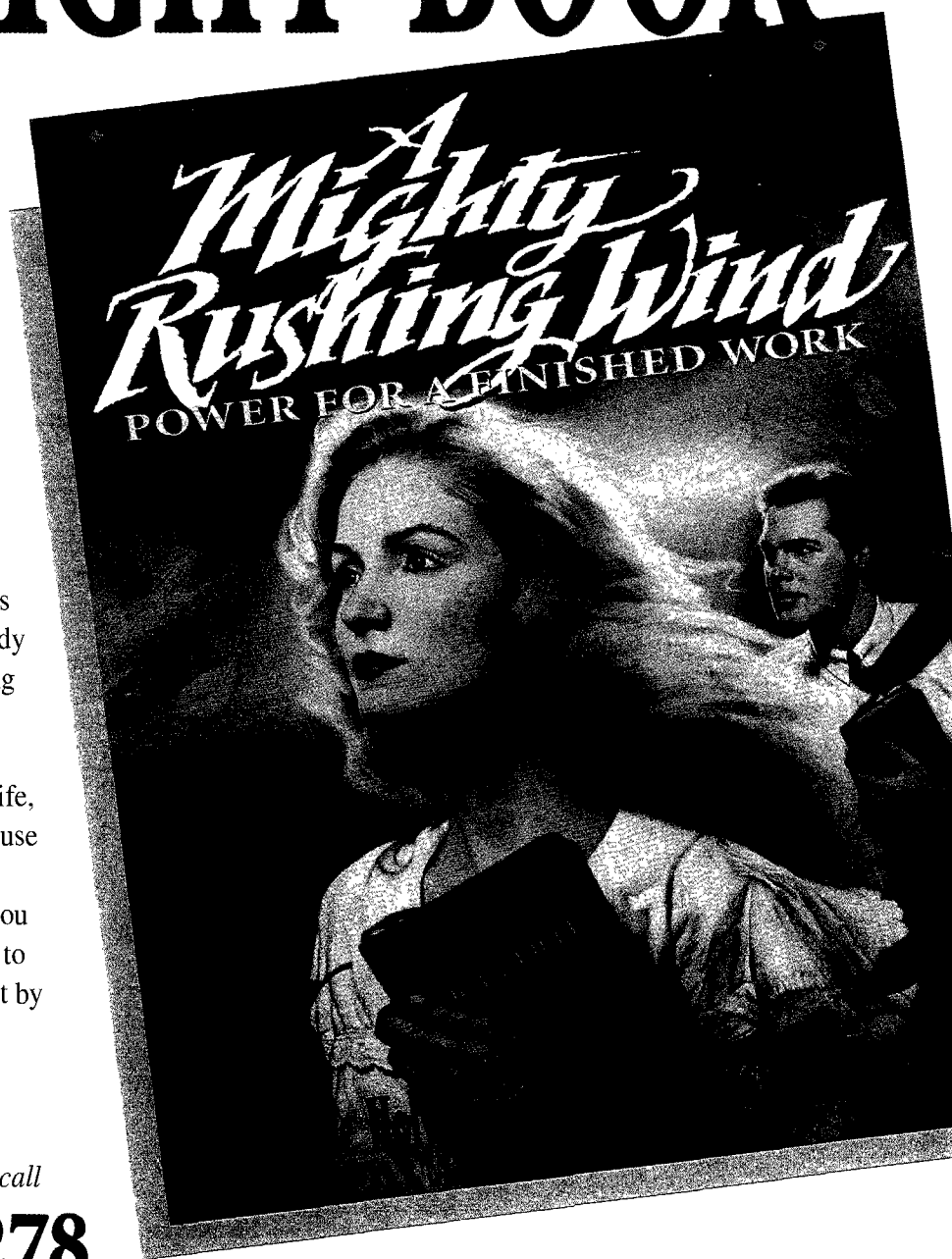
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# God organized for our salvation

## Joel Sarli and Gerald Wheeler

### The cross explains the Trinity, and the Trinity explains the cross.



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Johnnie had enjoyed a long day of play—running and climbing, digging and building. On general principle he protested his upcoming bedtime, but was more than ready to let his mother tuck him into bed.

Mother knelt in the shadowed room with him and heard his prayers. Then he climbed into bed. She adjusted the covers around his shoulders and bent to kiss him good night. Two sturdy arms went around her neck and pulled her close. “Don’t go, Mommy. I want to ask you a question.”

Ah, the question. A trick every child knows to prolong bedtime, to keep a parent a few moments longer. But often it is during this time—the moments between wakefulness and sleep—that the troubling philosophical questions come to mind. Questions that beg answers, questions that probe the universe, and even the mind of God.

“Mommy,” the little boy began, “you and Daddy tell me that God is love. You said that God has loved since before our world began, even before He made the angels.” He sighed and nestled deeper into bed. “But how could that be? How could God love before there were angels or people? He didn’t have anyone to love! He was all by Himself.”

Mother sank to the floor beside his little bed. This answer would take a moment, and she too was tired. “That’s a very good question,” she told him. “It shows me that you have been thinking

about God. But you have forgotten something important. Even before God made the angels, He wasn’t alone. For God was three. There was God the Father, and God the Son, whom we call Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit. Grown-ups call this the Trinity, a word that means three.”

Johnnie yawned. “Does God ever get lonely?”

Mother swallowed hard. *Why do children ask such difficult questions?* she thought to herself. Then she remembered something. “Yes, God can be lonely. Jesus was often lonely for His Father when He was on earth. When He was dying on the cross, He said to His Father in heaven, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ (Matt. 27:46).<sup>\*</sup> And God misses us. That is why He came to save us and is coming back soon to take us home. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit love each other so much that They created us to share that love. Love always wants more love.”

“But what is the Trinity, Mommy?” Johnnie continued between still more yawns.

If you had been Johnnie’s mother, how would you have answered?

Judaism and Islam say that God is one. Most Christians say that He is three persons in one. Other Christians say the whole concept of the Trinity is an error borrowed from the pagans. Many early Adventists believed the doctrine of the Trinity to be a false teaching inspired by Satan. What does the Bible teach?



## Trinity: what the Bible teaches

What we understand about the nature of God will shape every other teaching, including that of the doctrine of salvation, so it is important that we clearly understand what the Bible says about God.

*A biblical teaching.* The term *trinity* does not appear in the Bible. As far as we know, Theophilus of Antioch first used the term during the second century after Christ. He coined the word from the Greek word *trias*, meaning three. But because the Bible does not specifically use *trinity* does not mean that the teaching is unbiblical.

For example, we use the term *millennium*, a word that also does not appear in the Bible. *Millennium* means “a thousand years.” While the Bible does not mention the term *millennium*, it does teach the concept in Revelation 19 and 20. We often refer to doctrines taught in Scripture by using terms that were not in use in Bible times.

When you give a Bible study, have you noticed how you have to skip from book to book to present a particular topic? That is the way we study the Bible. It contains stories and letters and sermons and poetic experiences. Few if any doctrines are presented systematically. Instead, the Holy Spirit lets us find a little bit here and a little bit there. We have to search carefully to find all that the Bible has to say about a specific doctrine. And that includes the teaching about the triune, or three-person, Godhead.

*New Testament speaks of three.* First, let us notice that the New Testament repeatedly mentions the three members of the Godhead together in such passages as Matt. 3:16, 17; John 14:16, 17, 25; 2 Cor. 13:13; Eph. 2:18; 1 Peter 1:2;

and Jude 20, 21. When Christ announced the mission of the church, He told the disciples that they were not to preach in just His name, but in the authority of the threefold name of the entire Godhead. “Go therefore,” He declared, “and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). Notice that “name” is singular and applies to all three names together. Christ thought of Himself, the Father, and the Holy Spirit as one unit. Three persons together form the Godhead.

*Old Testament has plurality.* Deuteronomy 6:4 powerfully declares that God is one. How can three be one? Interestingly, in this important passage the Hebrew word for one, *echad*, often indicates a unity composed of several parts. It appears in Genesis 2:24, where God stated that a man should leave his parents and cling to his wife, becoming “one flesh” with her. Two in one. Numbers 13:23 employs *echad* to refer to the cluster of grapes the Hebrew spies brought back from the land of Canaan. Many in one. In both cases the word shows a composite unity: two separate individuals comprise “one flesh,” and a multitude of grapes form a “single” cluster. Scripture depicts a Godhead of three members in a unity closer than we can ever comprehend.

As we study all that the Bible says about God, we find still more clues that the Godhead consists of more than one person. Genesis 18 and 19 describe how the Lord and two angels walked into Abraham’s camp one day. The patriarch fed them a special meal. Then the angels traveled on to Sodom to warn Abraham’s nephew Lot of the city’s impending destruction. When Abraham learned what was going to happen, he

pleaded with God to spare the city if it contained at least 10 righteous people. Unfortunately, it did not, and “the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven” (Gen. 19:24). The passage seems to speak of at least two individuals (one on earth and one in heaven), both called Lord.

The Lord’s visit to Abraham was one of many in which a member of the Trinity came from heaven to speak to or save His people. These incidents pointed forward to the ultimate visit—Christ’s incarnation and subsequent death on the cross.

In the Old Testament, sometimes God speaks of Himself in the plural (Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7). In fact, of the many Hebrew words the Old Testament writers used to designate God, one, *Elohim*, is a plural noun. But most of the time the Old Testament speaks of God as one. And that is understandable. God’s people lived in a world in which many gods were worshiped, and whose followers were often struggling with each other for supremacy.

The Lord wanted His people to worship Him alone, and thus He did not stress the Trinity lest the concept confuse them. He did not want Israel to think of the Trinity as a group of rival gods like those worshiped by the surrounding nations. It was hard to wean Israel away from polytheism. Archaeologists have found inscriptions about the Lord’s wife, and fertility idols have been dug up even in the ruins around the Temple site in Jerusalem.

But by New Testament times God began to reveal more about the Trinity. The New Testament associates three Beings together in its doxologies of praise to God, and the Old Testament speaks of more than one divine Being. But does that mean that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all members of one Godhead?

## Jesus fully God

The way to answer this question is to see how Scripture consistently endows the Son and the Holy Spirit with the same attributes that the Old Testament applied to the God of Israel. By comparing scripture with scripture we may piece together a more complete picture of the Trinity.

2

### THE TRINITY

FUNDAMENTAL  
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There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 14:7.)

*God's prerogatives as Creator.* Let us look at a series of images or pictures that appear throughout Scripture. Psalm 18 describes the Lord's mighty power (the psalm uses the Hebrew name Yahweh, often translated "the Lord," for God). In verse 15 "the channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bare at your rebuke, O Lord [Yahweh], at the blast of the breath of your nostrils."

Similar imagery appears in Psalm 104. "You [Yahweh] set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken. You cover it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At your rebuke they flee; at the sound of your thunder they take to flight" (verses 5-7).

Psalm 106 recounts the Exodus. Verse 9 states that "He [the Lord, or Yahweh] rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry" (cf. Ex. 15:4-10).

Isaiah 50 tells of the Lord (Yahweh) demanding of His people, "Why was no one there when I came? Why did no one answer when I called? Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? By my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a desert" (verse 2).

The prophet Nahum proclaims that "the Lord [Yahweh] is slow to anger but great in power, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, and he dries up all the rivers" (Nahum 1:3, 4).

Notice that these passages, and many more that we could quote, tell of the Lord rebuking the sea in the context of His creative and redemptive power. Sometimes the passage will personify the sea as an enemy or opponent of God. These few examples we have chosen from among many illustrate how the Bible writers portray Yahweh (the most sacred name of God to the Hebrews) as overpowering and commanding the hostile sea. If you will go through a concordance you will find that only the Lord ever rebukes the sea. Human beings or even angels never rebuke it in the Old Testament. It is God's prerogative alone.

*Jesus exercises the Creator's prerogatives.* Now let us look at a familiar story in the Gospels and see what the fact that only the Lord can rebuke the sea

# 3

## THE FATHER

FUNDAMENTAL  
BELIEFS OF  
SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTISTS

God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also revelations of the Father. (Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11; 1 Cor. 15:28; John 3:16; 1 John 4:8; 1 Tim. 1:17; Ex. 34:6, 7; John 14:9.)

now tells us about Jesus. Matthew 8:23-27 describes how Jesus stilled the sudden storm on the Sea of Galilee by rebuking the wind and the sea (see verse 26). After witnessing Jesus rebuke the storm-tossed sea, they asked each other in amazement, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" (verse 27). They knew their Scripture—that only the Lord Himself had the power and authority to rebuke the sea. In total awe they recognized that Jesus had just done something that only the Lord (Yahweh) Himself ever did in the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus had assumed the prerogatives and authority of the God of Israel. It would be blasphemy unless He was God Himself.

*God rebukes Satan.* In the Old Testament the sea is not the only thing that the Lord, or Yahweh, rebukes. In Zechariah 3:1, 2 He rebukes Satan. Psalm 76:9 and Isaiah 17:13 depict Him as rebuking the enemies of Jerusalem. As you study those scriptural passages in which the Lord rebukes something, you will find that He alone has the authority and power to deal with those forces that seek to block His will, especially on the supernatural or cosmic level.

*Jesus rebukes Satan.* If we keep this fact in mind, we will discover something important that the Gospels are telling us about Jesus. They tell us that He heals a boy after rebuking the demon that possessed the child. Jesus also rebukes demons or supernatural powers in Mark 1:21-28. In Mark 8:33 Jesus specifically rebukes Satan as the one who had instigated Peter's response to His teaching about His coming death. Notice that while the story of Jesus' healing of the demoniacs in Matthew 8:28-9:1 does not specifically employ the verb "rebuke," the incident immediately fol-

lows His rebuke of the sea.

People who treated the subject of God so carefully that they would not even pronounce the sacred name Yahweh (except for the high priest on the Day of Atonement) would not attribute Yahweh's prerogatives to Jesus lightly. The New Testament writers would do so only if powerfully compelled by the Holy Spirit to apply those attributes to Jesus.

*Jesus claims preexistence.* Another evidence that Jesus was God in the same way as the Father appears in John 8. The chapter describes another of Jesus' many encounters with certain Jewish leaders. They had accused Him of demon possession, which He denied. Then He said that anyone who kept His teachings would never see death. Angrily and in rebuttal, the leaders pointed out that even their greatest ancestor, Abraham, had died, along with all the prophets. They demanded to know if Jesus was greater than their beloved Abraham (see verse 53).

Christ replied that Abraham had rejoiced to see Christ's day (see verse 56). The religious leaders interpreted Christ's answer as a claim to having personally seen the patriarch alive. Aghast, they retorted that He was less than 50 years old, meaning that He hadn't even reached the Jewish retirement age (see verse 57). Then Jesus said, "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am" (in Greek, *ego eimi*, verse 58).

The mob immediately rushed to stone Him (see verse 59). Why? Stoning was the Jewish punishment for blasphemy (see Lev. 24:10-23). They saw His reply as applying the divine name "I am" (Deut. 32:39; Isa. 43:11) to Himself. The Greek translation of the Old Testament uses *ego eimi* to render the "I am" of these passages. A similar incident

appears in John 10:33, where some leaders again tried to stone Christ and accused Him of making Himself God.

*Jesus empties Himself.* Most of the time, though, the Gospels depict Jesus not as the second member of the Trinity, but as incarnated into a human being. The Son set aside His divine attributes (see Phil. 2:5-8) to become one with us that He might take up where Adam had failed. That is why the Bible often describes Him in ways that make Him seem less than the Father. Jesus was subservient to the Father and the Holy Spirit during His life on earth. He came as a suffering servant, not as the national redeemer so many expected.

From Scripture we can see that Jesus was a member of the Godhead. He had a right to the attributes and prerogatives of the God of Israel even though He had emptied Himself of them during His life on earth. But what about the Holy Spirit?

### The Holy Spirit fully God

Through the centuries many have regarded the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Godhead, as only a divine "active force" or power that God the Father used to accomplish His will. They did not see the Holy Spirit as a conscious, separate personality. Scripture, however, describes the Holy Spirit in a way that shows He is not mindless divine energy, but a real person, just as the Father and the Son are.

*The gender usage.* First, notice the

gender the New Testament uses to refer to the Spirit. Greek, like many other languages, has masculine, feminine, and neuter forms of words (he, she, it). But passages such as John 14:26 and 16:8, 13-15 employ the masculine form of the pronoun referring to the Holy Spirit—*ekeinos*, instead of the neuter *ekeino*. If the Holy Spirit were only a "force" or "influence," John should have used the neuter gender.

*A conscious being.* Second, Scripture constantly mentions characteristics of the Holy Spirit that can fit only a conscious being. For example, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit speaks (see Rev. 2:7; Acts 13:2); makes intercession (see Rom. 8:26); calls, oversees, commands (see Acts 16:6, 7; 20:28); teaches (see John 14:26); glorifies Christ (see John 16:14); counsels (see John 14:16); may be grieved (see Eph. 4:30); may be insulted, "outraged" (see Heb. 10:29); can be lied to (see Acts 5:3); and can be blasphemed and sinned against (see Matt. 12:31, 32).

Romans 8:27 talks about "the mind of the Spirit." Do forces or influences have minds? Such biblical description is far more than personification. The Bible writers would hardly equate a personified force with two actual Beings as Matthew did in the baptismal formula (see Matt. 28:19), or as Paul did in the apostolic benediction (see 2 Cor. 13:13).

*Equal with God.* Third, the Bible does more than just link the Spirit with

the Father and the Son in doxologies. For example, Paul, in Acts 28:25, records the Holy Spirit as having said what Isaiah 6:8-10 has the Lord declaring. The Spirit also has such divine attributes as omniscience (see 1 Cor. 2:10) and omnipresence (see Ps. 139:7). Both the Old and the New Testaments describe the Holy Spirit as God's special representative on earth. Most of the time you could substitute Lord or God in each reference to the Holy Spirit, and the passage would still mean the same thing.

### The Trinity and our salvation

Clearly the Bible teaches the concept of the Trinity. Each member of the Godhead is fully God. But what practical importance is the doctrine? Is it more than just something to argue over as Christians have been doing for nearly 2,000 years?

The doctrine of the Trinity answers many questions that trouble us. Some are philosophical; others involve our salvation and practical Christianity.

*Answers our questions.* For example, this doctrine answers the question of where the ability to love, communicate, and relate to others comes from. Some have suggested that before God created other beings, love existed only as an abstract ideal or concept in His mind. But that is a concept borrowed from the Greeks. Abstractions have no real existence. Yet love did exist before God made other beings, because the members of the Godhead could and did love one another. Jesus stated that the Father had loved Him before the foundation of the world (see John 17:24). They loved each other in real, active, concrete ways. God's love is just as real as the love we feel. In fact, it is more real than ours because it is not polluted and warped by sin.

Those who do not believe in a personal God have a hard time explaining how the ability to communicate could evolve in an impersonal universe. God, however, is personal; in fact, God is three persons. And persons can communicate with each other.

Also, the Trinity answers the philosophical problem of how we can find both unity and diversity in the universe. The Godhead created humanity in Their image. There is a unity in humanity. Each individual belongs to and makes

## 4

### THE SON

God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly man, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things. (John 1:1-3, 14; Col. 1:15-19; John 10:30; 14:9; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:17-19; John 5:22; Luke 1:35; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:9-18; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Heb. 8:1, 2; John 14:1-3.)

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up a whole, yet each human being is also an entity uniquely his or her own. That is the way it is with the Trinity.

The Trinity gives clues as to how members of the church should treat and relate with each other.

*Tells us about how the Godhead saves.* But the most important thing we learn from the doctrine of the Trinity is how the whole Godhead works together for our salvation. The Trinity is determined to do everything possible to save us. In the words of Catherine Mowry LaCugna: "It has become clear that the original purpose of the doctrine was to explain the place of Christ in our salvation, the place of the Spirit in our sanctification. . . . The doctrine of the Trinity is . . . the summary of what we believe about God who saves through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit."<sup>1</sup>

We see the Trinity working together at Jesus' baptism (see Matt. 3:13-17; Luke 3:21, 22). And long before that, the prophet Isaiah told how the Lord (the Father) and His Spirit (the Holy Spirit) promised to send the Messiah (the Son of God) to save the whole human race (see Isa. 42:1; 48:16).

Critics have charged that the biblical story of salvation portrays a great injustice. They claim that it states that one Being (God) took the punishment of a guilty being (Adam) and placed it on a third, innocent Being (Christ). But the concept of the Trinity shows the falseness of this claim. The Beings of the Godhead did not dump the punishment of sinful human beings on someone else, but They agreed among Themselves to personally accept that punishment, Christ volunteering as Their representative. The Holy Spirit has been working since Christ returned to heaven to make the salvation Christ gained at the cross effective in each of our lives. Christ intercedes with the Father in the heavenly sanctuary.

The doctrine of the Trinity teaches us that God did not send some underling to save us. Those who believe in a created, inferior Christ may believe that. But the Bible does not teach that. Sin and rebellion were so serious, and God's love so great, that only God Himself could come and die in our place. Just as the Lord came to Abraham to tell him about Lot's danger in Sodom, so the Lord came to Bethlehem to live and die

as the Messiah, our Saviour. God gave the very best—Himself.

The doctrine of the Trinity helps us to understand a little more of what Jesus went through to save us. The misunderstanding of His disciples, the rejection by His people, and the physical pain of the cross were only a tiny part of His suffering. The loneliness of separation from the rest of the Trinity was beyond our comprehension. Even prayer could not restore that closeness He had had with the Father before the Incarnation. It was like missing a loved one we can only talk to on the telephone but never visit in person. But at the cross that loneliness intensified to a horror that we will never understand. As He hung on that instrument of torture, His humanity could not see beyond the grave.<sup>2</sup> He must have wondered if it was worth it all. But His love—a love identical to that of both the Father and the Holy Spirit—had driven Him to take the infinite risk of failure to save us. He could have failed. He put the universe in jeopardy by coming as a human being and dying for us. But the divine love of the Trinity was determined to risk everything to save us.

Far more than an attempt to explain how the members of the Godhead relate to each other, the teaching of the Trinity seeks to put into words and images the inexpressible love of God for each one of us. The cross explains the Trinity, and the Trinity explains the cross. Johnnie's bedtime questions are ones that we must also come to grips with ourselves. God loves and seeks to save us because that is the very nature of the Trinity. ■

## God organized for our salvation Outline

### Introduction

- A. How can God have always been love?
- B. Whom did He love before He created anyone?
- I. The Trinity
  - A. Term not in the Bible, but the concept is
  - B. NT links members of Godhead together (Matt. 3:16, 17; John 14:16, 17, 25; 2 Cor. 13:13; Eph. 2:18; 1 Peter 1:2; Jude 20, 21; Matt. 28:19)
  - C. God is "one" (Deut. 6:4), but multipersons are indicated (Gen. 2:24; Num. 13:23; Gen. 18; 19:24)
  - D. Usage of plural to refer to God (Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7)
- II. Jesus fully God
  - A. Exercises God's prerogatives
    - 1. God rebukes the sea and forces of evil (Ps. 18:15; 104:5-7; 106:9; Ex. 15:4-10; Isa. 50:2; Nahum 1:3, 4)
    - 2. Jesus rebukes the sea (Matt. 8:23-27)
    - 3. God rebukes Satan and enemies of Jerusalem (Zech. 3:1, 2; Ps. 76:9; Isa. 17:3)
    - 4. Jesus rebukes demons and supernatural powers (Mark 1:21-28; 8:33; Matt. 8:28-9:1)
  - B. Claims preexistence (John 8:58, 59)
  - C. Empties Himself in incarnation (Phil. 2:5-8)

# 5

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

FUNDAMENTAL  
BELIEFS OF  
SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTISTS

God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures leads it into all truth. (Gen. 1:1, 2; Luke 1:35; 4:18; Acts 10:38; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:11, 12; Acts 1:8; John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26, 27; 16:7-13.)

- III. The Holy Spirit fully God
- A. Described in masculine gender, not neuter (John 14:26; 16:13-15)
  - B. Has characteristics that fit only a conscious Being
  - C. Equated with the Lord of the OT (Acts 28:25; Isa. 6:8-10)
  - D. Has divine attributes of omniscience (1 Cor. 2:10) and omnipresence (Ps. 139:7)
- IV. The Trinity and our salvation
- A. The Trinity answers questions of
    - 1. Where ability to love

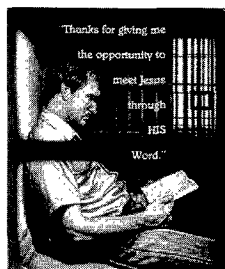
- came from
  - 2. Where ability to communicate came from
  - 3. Why universe has both unity and diversity
  - 4. How members of church should relate to each other
- B. The Trinity shows how Godhead organized our salvation
  - 1. In God taking our punishment upon Himself
  - 2. In showing that God alone is worthy to die in our place

- 3. In opening up a greater understanding of Jesus' suffering
- 4. In revealing the immensity of God's love for us

\*All Scripture passages in this article are from the New Revised Standard Version.

<sup>1</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "The Practical Trinity," *The Christian Century*, July 15-22, 1992, p. 678.

<sup>2</sup> See Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), p. 753.



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# O God, how great are Your works!

William H. Shea

## The psalmist's poetic tribute to God's creative power and His Sabbath



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**T**he Psalms offer more than comfort and inspiration. The 104th, for instance, describes in poetic form God's accomplishments during the Creation week. Commentators note this but commonly overlook references to the meaning of the seventh day. A close look reveals the glories of the Sabbath nestled amid the language of worship and praise.

Not only the Sabbath itself, but the entire Creation account of Genesis 1, is questioned by some who presume to honor biblical authority. It is thus helpful to see the Creation account reaffirmed in other scriptures, such as Psalm 104. Whereas Genesis 1 reports the events of Creation directly and factually, the psalmist uses a different method: poetic imagery. He anticipates the benefits of what would come about from the various successive Creation days. Psalm 104, clothed in majestic poetry, offers even more possibilities than Genesis 1 for praising the Creator.

### God the Creator

*God of light.* A brief tour of Psalm 104 reveals the various days of Creation week one by one. As to the first day of Creation week, a longstanding question is Where did the light come from? Was it direct from God, or was the sun already shining but hidden from the earth by some sort of cloud cover? Psalm 104:2 suggests the answer: the light that surrounded the person of God provided the light for the earth, too. The Creator Himself presented this light; He needed no intermediary.

The second day of Creation in Gene-

sis 1 was time for the firmament, the stretched-out division between the waters above and the waters below. In Psalm 104:2-4 those same elements are portrayed in action. God "stretches out the [atmospheric] heavens like a tent."\* This is anthropomorphic (human) language for an event that would be of overwhelming magnitude for humans, but for God it was as easy as stretching out a tent. Yet that "tent" encompasses all His creatures on earth.

*God in motion.* Psalm 104 pictures God in motion, riding in His cloudy chariot on the wings of the wind. So He not only made the atmosphere in which we live, but He is the driving force that set it in motion. No static God is this; He is dynamically active in His creation and for His creation.

*God rebukes the sea.* The appearance of dry land on the third day of the Creation week in Genesis 1 is described in a rather matter-of-fact way. There God simply spoke and it was so. In contrast Psalm 104:7 says that God rebuked the seas that stood over the land. They fled, terrified at the "thunder" of His voice. There is a beautiful literary arc in the passage of Psalm 104 that covers events of the third day. It starts in verse 6, with the condition of the earth as blanketed with water before God brought that dry land forth, and it ends in verse 9, with the promise that He would not cover the earth with waters as it was before. In between these two pictures we find first the activity of God and then the results that stemmed from it. Verse 7 portrays God's rebuke of thundering voice, resulting, in verse 8, with movement of the

waters in opposite directions. The mountains rose up, and the valleys sank down. This was how God shaped the earth, the dry land, with all of its rich variety of geographical conditions.

*God waters the earth.* While God does not allow the seas to cover the earth again as they did before bringing forth the dry land, He continues to water the earth to maintain life (see Ps. 104:10-13). Instead of an arc describing the shaping of the earth, there is a crescendo here that takes the waters of God higher and higher. They start with the springs in the valley that give drink to the field animals. Higher up come the birds in the trees, also provided with the water they need through God's creative act. Finally even the tops of the lofty mountains are watered in the cycle of nature that God has organized and energized. Up and up and up is drawn our view of the abundant provision for His creatures. Just as the earth moves in response to the word and the touch of God in the previous section of the psalm, so the waters are constantly in motion and action, providing for all of His creatures.

#### God the sustainer

*The divine crescendo.* The next section of Psalm 104 climaxes God's creative actions on the third day. At this time He also brought forth the plants on dry land. Genesis waits until the account of day 6 to tell how these plants provide the food that humans and animals need, but this psalm describes both the creation of that food and its use. We recognize here the same pattern as the waters, a crescendo that moves up and up and up. Thus this drink of His creatures rises up to this climax, and so does their food. The food provided starts down on the plain, where the cattle feed off the pasture and humans labor to raise crops. These all have their purpose, not only for life's necessities but enjoyment as well. So we read about the products of the grapes and the grain and the olives, each with its place in the life of people. Just as humans plant crops and harvest them, so God has planted His crops on a scale that surpasses human comprehension. From this comes the majestic trees, such as the cedars of Lebanon (see verse 16). These serve a purpose too, for the birds build their nests in them. There is even some life beyond the timberline, where mountain goats scamper on the cliffs.

Let us compare those two created elements in Psalm 104:

#### Drink

the valleys (verse 10)  
the animals (verse 11)  
the birds (verse 12)  
in the trees  
the mountains (verse 13)

#### Food

the plains (verses 14, 15)  
the animals (verse 14)  
man (verse 15)  
the birds (verses 16, 17)  
in the trees  
the mountains (verse 18)

All of this comes forth from the dry land formed on the third day, but here the look at the third day is prospective, what it will eventually provide for.

*God's order.* In thinking of a day, we first picture the bright or sunny part, daylight, then the night. Genesis 1 has a different order for the creative days, beginning with evening and then morning. Psalm 104 follows that order for the events of the fourth day of the Creation week. But in contrast to Genesis 1, which mentions first the largest orb and then the smaller light and then the smallest lights of the stars, this psalm begins with the moon as evening comes on and the sun sets. Then it tells of the activities of the animals at night, when the lions come forth from their dens to hunt and eat. But after the hunt of the night is over, they crawl back into those dens to take their rest, and new occupants of the land come forth. People rise and go forth in the

sunshine to work in the fields by that sunlight. So the order of the elements of time here are evening and morning, moon and sun, lions who work at night and people who work in the light. All in its order, as established by God.

*God's wisdom and power.* Before proceeding to the fifth day of Creation week, the psalmist pauses in verse 24 to praise the Creator for His great wisdom and power. Genesis 1 tells us that on day 5 the firmament, previously divided, became populated with birds above and fish below. And in Psalm 104 the sea teems with life, and even the great Leviathan, also mentioned in Genesis. Where are the birds? They already were mentioned in relationship to the trees where they live, which were created on day 3. But something new came along now. Just as the life was made for the seas, a new form of life appeared on those seas: not a new kind of fish, but human life. Specifically, humans traveling along in boats, sailing over the seas rather than swimming in them.

According to Genesis 1, first the animals and then people were created on the sixth day. In Psalm 104, humans are not even mentioned directly in the account of that Creation day. What we do find is God's provision for both humans and animals to sustain life with food. The picture is not that of a Creator who became an absentee landlord, establishing food sources and then leaving them to recycle themselves. Rather, we see a God who has made such detailed provisions for His creatures that He is portrayed as feeding them from His hand like a gentle shepherd or zookeeper would

## 6

### CREATION

FUNDAMENTAL  
BELIEFS OF  
SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTISTS

God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made "the heaven and the earth" and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was "very good," declaring the glory of God. (Gen. 1; 2; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; 104; Heb. 11:3.)



do: "When you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things" (verse 28).

*God of life.* The final act of Creation on the sixth day was the creation of man and woman. God accomplished that by breathing into Adam the breath of life. This climactic act is reflected here in Psalm 104, but in reverse order. Whereas in Genesis 1 and 2 the order was that humans were given the breath of life and became living beings, and then when that breath was withdrawn returned to the dust of the earth, notice what the psalmist says: "When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust" (verse 29). "When you send your Spirit [or breath], they are created, and you renew the face of the earth" (verse 30). So in Psalm 104, that order is reversed. First the fact that humans and animals die when the breath of God goes forth from them. But that is not the end of the race or the species. As God breathes anew, life crops up again in the next generation. The curse of sin and death have come, but the blessing and promise of God go on in spite of them, and they will overcome the enemy.

With these two provisions for life—food and breath—the account of the sixth day of Creation ends, and with it, seemingly, the remarks of the psalm on Creation week. But not really.

### God of the Sabbath

In Genesis the Creation account flows from the sixth day into the seventh day, the Sabbath. Regarding Psalm 104, commentators often miss the fact that the same pattern is followed. The psalm does not say directly that this is the seventh day, but then neither does it say anything directly for any other day of Creation. Instead, the psalm describes the events of those days in terms of their central elements and events and future results. The account of the seventh day does that here as well.

*Worship and praise.* The first thing that we do on the Sabbath day is to recognize that He is our Creator; we honor Him in the commemoration of those events. The glory of the Lord is revealed in those mighty acts, and we worship Him for them. And that is the first thing mentioned in this next section of the psalm. When God finished His Creation, He said that it was "very good."

He says the same thing here in verse 31, where He rejoices in His works. But something more happens: "He looks at the earth, and it trembles; He touches the mountains, and they smoke" (verse 32, NASB).

*Theophany.* This is the picture of a theophany. As the God of heaven draws near, the earth trembles and melts before Him. His personal presence has been made manifest. This is precisely what happens on the Sabbath day. The Lord draws near to His people and makes Himself manifest, and they respond accordingly. Struck with reverential awe, they render Him worship.

That worship is described in the next two verses. When we see the theophanic vision of God, we are struck dumb with awe at His greatness. We cannot resist the impetus to offer worship and honor and glory and praise to Him. According to verse 33, this is not a onetime occurrence. The psalmist promises to praise God continually as long as he lives.

*Meditation.* And there is another part of worship, when the saint is silent in meditation. The psalmist speaks of that, too, praying that such contemplation of the Lord may be pleasing to Him. Just as the smoke that went up from the burnt offering sacrifice was pleasing to God, so also is the meditation of the righteous, which goes up to Him as the central focus of worship. The psalmist's meditations end with rejoicing. Evidently the religion of the ancient Israelites

was not dull—and neither should our worship today be a boring experience.

*Thou-I experience.* There is an I-Thou experience here, but it is given in the other order, the divine order. Thou art the one who speaks first and acts first. On that basis we respond to Thee with all our heart and mind and spirit. Four actions of God are listed in verses 31 and 32, and four actions of humans in response are listed in verses 33 and 34. They are as follows:

God's glory  
God's rejoicing  
God's theophany  
God's theophany

The saint sings  
The saint sings praise  
The saint meditates  
The saint rejoices

*Rejoicing.* Just as God rejoices in His creation, so the saint rejoices in His Creator God. Just as God reveals Himself in theophany, so the saint sings to Him. The earth responds to that theophany, and so do the saints as they see His might and majesty. Here God and His saints meet together.

That is also what happened on the seventh day of the Creation week, when God met for the first Sabbath with Adam and Eve. Now on that same Sabbath day He meets with the descendants of Adam and Eve. The seventh day of the Cre-

## 19

### THE SABBATH

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The beneficent Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. The fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom. The Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people. Joyful observance of this holy time from evening to evening, sunset to sunset, is a celebration of God's creative and redemptive acts. (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; Luke 4:16; Isa. 56:5, 6; 58:13, 14; Matt. 12:1-12; Ex. 31:13-17; Eze. 20:12, 20; Deut. 5:12-15; Heb. 4:1-11; Lev. 23:32; Mark 1:32.)

## Science affirms the Scriptures

Several illustrations from science underscore the greatness of our Creator God. My physics teacher in high school was not a believer. However, he remarked one day in class that if there might be something that suggested to him the existence of God, it was water. The particular property of water that intrigued him was the fact that when water freezes into ice, it expands. This is why the ice forms on top instead of the bottom of rivers and ponds. If nature were the reverse and ice contracted and sank, rivers and lakes and ponds would freeze from the bottom up and, in the opinion of my physics teacher, the earth would become uninhabitable.

Another evidence of a Creator is the eye. Charles Darwin admired the mechanism of the eye and could not explain how it could have evolved. He considered it one of the great mysteries of evolution. This is even more incredible today when we understand the anatomy of the cones and rods inside the eye and their chemical mechanism. Under the electron microscope, we can study their amazing intricacy, which inspires wonder at the creation and its Creator.

Finally, consider the human genome project now under way. It takes the combination of more than 3 billion base pairs in the DNA molecules to make up the genes and chromosomes of human heredity, which forms the building blocks of a human being. Such complicated detail goes far beyond what could have been achieved by chance in some primordial soup or by mutation working up through the tree of life to make a human being. It testifies that we have a Creator, that indeed "we are fearfully and wonderfully made."

ation week is in this psalm too, and it is present where God meets His people. When God comes to them in might, majesty, and glory, they all sing His praises in worship. That is what the original Sabbath was set apart and sanctified for—for human blessing, for God to come to us and meet with us.

### Creation in Genesis and Psalm 104

*Poetry or prose?* Exegetes have debated whether Genesis 1 is prose or poetry. Some elements seem like poet-

ry; there is some parallelism of thought and repetition of themes. But this is not enough to make Hebrew poetry. Meter also is necessary, measuring off the length of line. And here is where Genesis 1 falls short of the standard of poetry. Many of its lines, however parallel, are just too long to make metered poetry. There are, as far as I can find, only two poetic elements in Genesis 1 and 2. They are found at parallel points in their respective narratives. I refer here to Genesis 1:27 and 2:23. They make an interesting couplet, because the first one can be called the Song of the Creation of Man and the second one can be called the Song of the Creation of Woman. God speaks the first one about man; Adam speaks the second one about Eve. Their poetic nature, both in terms of parallelism and meter, can be seen by comparing them.

#### Genesis 1:27

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

#### Genesis 2:23

"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

Except for these two verses, Genesis 1 and 2 are largely prose. Psalm 104, on the other hand, is Hebrew poetry throughout. Some insist that we need not take Genesis 1 and 2 seriously because of alleged poetic expression. But here in Psalm 104 we truly witness a poetic account of Creation. The figurative language and hyperbole of Psalm 104 are lacking in Genesis 1 and 2. Comparing a genuine poetic account of the Creation week shows how different it is from Genesis 1 and 2, which account features the kind of prose reserved for historic accounts. If Psalm 104 were the only account of Creation that we had, one might argue that it is not historic because it is poetic, artistic, and aesthetic. One cannot argue this for Genesis 1 and 2, when comparing Psalm 104 with those accounts. One can disagree with the assertion that Genesis 1 contains a true account of Creation, but *one cannot do it on the basis of the literary style.*

*Sabbath: sign of God's covenant.* Summarizing our review of God's Creation, we come back to its memorial, the Sabbath. In the fourth commandment, as proclaimed at Sinai, the Sabbath is enjoined as the commemoration of Creation. Forty years later God gave the Ten Commandments again on the plains of Moab, as recorded in the book of Deuteronomy. He added another reason for us to observe the Sabbath: the creation of Israel as a nation. Thus the sign of the Mosaic covenant had been added to the sign of the Adamic covenant.

Creation, covenant, and the Sabbath—they all belong together. Creation because we acknowledge God as our Creator; covenant because we have entered into a new covenant relationship with Him; and Sabbath because it is both the sign of the commemoration of the creation of which we are a part and the covenant into which we have entered with our Creator and Redeemer God. ■

## O God, how great are Your works Outline

### Introduction

Creation and Sabbath in Psalm 104

- I. God the Creator
  - A. God of light (Ps. 104:2)
  - B. God in motion (verses 3, 4)
  - C. God rebukes the sea (verses 6-9)
  - D. God waters the earth (verses 10-13)
- II. God the sustainer
  - A. The divine crescendo (verses 10-18)
  - B. God's order (verses 19-23)
  - C. God's wisdom and power (verses 24-28)
  - D. God of life (verses 29, 30)
- III. God of the Sabbath
  - A. Worship and praise (verses 31, 32)
  - B. Theophany (verse 33)
  - C. Meditation (verse 34)
  - D. Thou-I experience (verses 31-34)
  - E. Rejoicing (verse 34)
- IV. Creation in Genesis and Psalm 104
  - A. Poetry or prose?
  - B. Sabbath: sign of God's covenant

*\*Except where noted, Bible texts in this article are from the New International Version.*

# Death, a defeated foe

**John M. Fowler**

**The crucified  
and risen Saviour  
is God's answer to  
the ultimate enemy  
of human life.**



*John M. Fowler,  
Ed.D., is the associate  
editor of Ministry.*

*"Jesus wept" (John 11:35).\**

**T**he Master could control Himself no longer. Days before Lazarus died, Mary and Martha had sent Him the message that their brother was gravely ill, and if He could only come, the curse of lingering death would pass away and the freshness of life would once more smile on Lazarus' face. As part of the emerging community of faith, the valiant three of Bethany believed and affirmed that Jesus is God in flesh, that He held the keys of death and life, and that He was Israel's long-awaited Messiah.

Now death had snatched away one of the three. Jesus stood before the grave, surveyed the grieving and curious crowd, consoled the inconsolable Mary and Martha, and identified Himself with the grief of humanity. He wept.

But after the weeping came the command "Lazarus, come forth" (verse 43). The raising of Lazarus is not just a beautiful story. It is a reality check on human nature and death. It answers the question of what happens after death. It speaks of the hope of resurrection. It presents the One in whom alone is eternal life.

## **Human nature**

"Lazarus is dead," Jesus told His disciples (verse 14). In that statement He recognized that death is the common lot of humanity. When Adam and Eve were placed in the garden of Eden, God gave them a simple command: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Life was conditional upon continual obedience to the Creator.

God did not bestow upon Adam and Eve unconditional immortality. Neither did He create them to die. He created them to live—forever—on the condition that they exercise their free will to cast perpetually their lot on God's side. Had our first parents not sinned, surely the history of the world would have been different. Sin would not have reigned, and death would have had no place. But sin came, and with sin death (see Rom. 5:12). The sequence is inevitable: "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

Thus death is the lot of all humanity. It comes to the rich. It comes to the poor. It comes to the famous. It comes to the lowly. It comes without prejudice. It recognizes no fence. It has one universal message: humanity is mortal, sinful, and subject to the final foe.

The Bible also makes it clear that only God has immortality, original and unconditional (see 1 Tim. 6:16). But thank God the Bible also declares that Jesus Christ "has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10). The biblical position is clear: through Christ alone can we have immortality. Eternal life is not inherent in human beings; indeed, humans have no right to it. The Word of God leaves no room for doubt on this score. Search the 66 books of the Word, and you will not find one verse to support the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. On the other hand, scores of passages speak to the unconscious status of the dead.

## **Nature of death**

But one might ask, "Doesn't the Bible say that at death 'the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it' [Eccl. 12:7]?"

One might also ask, "Is it not true that most Christians believe that upon death the soul goes to heaven or hell or an intermediate state?" The answer to both questions is yes, but that does not make the immortality of the soul a biblical doctrine.

To understand the biblical teaching, we need to address several other basic questions: What is the nature of the soul? What is the status of the dead? and What is the biblical answer to the problem of death?

*The nature of the soul.* The first reference to soul in the Bible is found in Genesis 2:7: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (KJV). The Creator took the dust of the ground, formed it into a particular shape, breathed into it His life-giving power, and there came the human being—the living soul. The divine formula of soul that emerges from Genesis is this: body + the breath of life = living soul. Thus we see that in the act of Creation God did not put an independent entity called "soul" into the body. *The human being is the soul.* In fact, other translations (NASB, NKJV, NIV, for example) render the phrase "living soul" as "living being." Therefore, when the Bible speaks about soul, it speaks not of an independent

entity apart from the body, but the total person.

This is further borne out by the Hebrew word *nephesh*, which is translated "soul." The literal meaning of the word is "that which breathes." *Nephesh* is translated as "person," "mind," "creature," "heart," "will," "life," and in several other ways (see Gen. 14:21; Deut. 18:6; Lev. 11:46; Prov. 23:7; Eze. 16:27; 1 Kings 19:4).

Consider Exodus 1:5, which speaks of about 70 *nephesh* that came out of the loins of Jacob. Surely it cannot mean 70 bodiless, immaterial substances. It simply means 70 persons. Scores of other passages may be cited, but suffice to say, nowhere does the Bible speak about the soul as an entity independent of the human being. The soul does not exist by itself. The soul is the person. The person is the soul.

What, then, happens to the soul at death?

Consider a simple analogy. Several years ago our family moved into a mission house in India. The house was simple and spacious, though not as comfortable as we would have liked. One thing it lacked was built-in wardrobes.

We hired a carpenter to build us a wardrobe, and in a week's time he had it installed, new and shiny. It was a fine piece of handiwork, built of the finest

teak, and it served us well. However, we moved again, and this time to a house that had built-in closets. We decided to dismantle the wardrobe and save the teak boards for some future use. The carpenter did the job again, and he even bundled the screws for us.

A few days after we had torn it down, our 4-year-old daughter asked, "Dad, where is the wardrobe?"

Had I answered that it had gone to the carpenter, that would have made me dishonest. Or had I said that it was in the teak planks or in the bundle of screws, that would have made me look insane or stupid.

Well, I was not insane, I was not stupid, and I did not wish to be dishonest. So I gave my little girl the only answer I could: "The wardrobe is no longer there."

Just that simple. Planks plus screws put together by a wise carpenter according to a wise plan gave us the wardrobe. When the two constituents were separated, what happened? The wardrobe was not in the planks, nor in the screws, nor with the carpenter. But the carpenter had the power to remake it.

The analogy may not be all that brilliant, but doesn't it drive the point home? The body plus the life-giving power of God makes the living soul. At the time of death the power of God is withdrawn. "Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it" (Eccl. 12:7). This spirit that returns to God is not the soul. The spirit is the life-giving power of God, under whose gracious providence "we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

When this spirit is withdrawn, death strikes—and the human being described in Genesis 2:7 as the "living soul" (KJV) no longer exists. The soul simply ceases to be. It is not in the dust. It does not go to God. It does not go to hell. But one thing is certain: God has the power to remake—or, to use the biblical phrase, "resurrect"—the body and bring the dead to life again.

Meanwhile, what is the status of the dead?

*State of the dead.* Let us return to the story of Lazarus. Lazarus was dead, but note how Jesus described that status: "Our friend Lazarus sleeps" (John 11:11). In describing death as sleep, Jesus was not simply waxing poetic. He was echoing the words He had inspired

# 7

## THE NATURE OF MAN

Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position under God. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7; Ps. 8:4-8; Acts 17:24-28; Gen. 3; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12-17; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; Ps. 51:10; 1 John 4:7, 8, 11, 20; Gen. 2:15.)

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the Old Testament writers to record. Wrote the psalmist, "Enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death" (Ps. 13:3). Said Job: "So man lies down and does not rise. Till the heavens are no more, they will not awake nor be roused from their sleep" (Job 14:12). Nearly 66 times in 17 books, the Bible uses sleep as the figure of speech to describe death. And when Jesus authenticated such usage, He established two significant realities: the unconscious state of the dead, and the certainty of their waking up either for judgment or for eternal life.

*State of the dead.* Like sleep, death is the end of all activities: "For there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going" (Eccl. 9:10). Like in sleep, "the dead know nothing" (verse 5). Like sleep, death prevents participation in the activities of those who are awake or living. "For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished. Nevertheless will they have a share in anything done under the sun" (verses 5, 6). The dead are dead. They cannot think; they cannot plan (see Ps. 146:4). They cannot work (see Eccl. 9:10). They cannot remember God (see Ps. 6:5). Nor can they praise Him (see Ps. 115:17), and that means the dead in Christ are not in heaven, for heaven's chief occupation is praise.

Thus death is the antithesis of life. Everything that is present in life is absent in death. Everything that makes people what they are—personality, thought processes, social life, free will, worship, moral obligations—ceases at the moment of death. A person dies wholly and completely.

But the dead will not forever remain dead. In the final events of earth's history, as part of God's process of cleansing the earth of sin and its consequences, and the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth, God will raise the dead. As Jesus said, "the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28, 29). The book of Revelation also

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## DEATH AND RESURRECTION

The wages of sin is death. But God, who alone is immortal, will grant eternal life to His redeemed. Until that day death is an unconscious state for all people. When Christ, who is our life, appears, the resurrected righteous and the living righteous will be glorified and caught up to meet their Lord. The second resurrection, the resurrection of the unrighteous, will take place a thousand years later. (Rom. 6:23; 1 Tim. 6:15, 16; Eccl. 9:5, 6; Ps. 146:3, 4; John 11:11-14; Col. 3:4; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; John 5:28, 29; Rev. 20:1-10.)

speaks of two resurrections: the first involving the righteous, who receive their reward at the second coming of Jesus; the second involving the wicked, who receive their judgment at the end of the millennium, when Jesus returns again with the saints to set up His kingdom on this earth (see Rev. 20:9, 10, 13, 15).

If such is the case, why do most Christians believe in a soul that survives death and goes on to live as an independent entity? Where did this idea of an immortal soul originate?

*Doctrine of immortal soul.* The first discourse on the natural immortality of the soul came, not from a preacher or philosopher or guru, but from Satan himself, the father of lies (see John 8:44). Against the proclaimed word of God, Satan announced in the garden of Eden: "You will not surely die" (Gen. 3:4).

Ever since Adam and Eve gave heed to Satan's first great deception, the immortality of the soul has become the cornerstone of apostasy. Ancient Egyptians built an elaborate system of tombs and pyramids to protect the corpse as securely as possible for the return of the soul. Oriental religions such as Hinduism proclaim the transmigration of the soul, teaching that death is but a door to a new form of life, high or low, depending on how good a life one leads now. Reincarnation has become the mantra of today, from Hollywood fantasy to university research.

But it was the Greeks, under the fertile imagination of Socrates and Plato, who gave systematic form to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The foundation of the Greek teaching is a simple dualism. The Greeks divided the uni-

verse into matter and spirit. Matter is bad. Spirit is good. That which is bad is temporary, and that which is good is eternal. Once this was conceded, it was easy for the Greeks to divide the human being into body and soul. The body is physical and so evil and temporary. The soul is good and therefore eternal. Plato says in his *Phaedo*: "The soul is most like the divine, and the immortal, and the intelligible, and the uniform, and the indissoluble, and the unchangeable."<sup>1</sup>

This belief in the immortality of the soul was not simply a philosophic slogan with the Greeks. It was a way of life, as revealed in the death of the man who embodied the Greek thought in its seminal form. When the Athenian court pronounced that Socrates must die, the old philosopher approached death with complete peace and composure. He considered death as a friend who had come to liberate his soul. Just before drinking the poison, he told his friends, "I am as sure as I can be in such matters that I am going to live with gods who are very good masters. And therefore, I am not so much grieved at death; I am confident that the dead have some kind of existence, and, as has been said of old, an existence that is far better for the good than for the wicked."<sup>2</sup>

What a contrast: human reason and divine revelation! The Greeks thought of death as a friend. But Inspiration regards death as an enemy (see 1 Cor. 15:26), an intruder that has marred the beautiful creation of God. The Greeks considered the physical body to be evil. But the Bible teaches that the body is good. Indeed, the Genesis account considers the whole creation, including

the physical, as "very good" (Gen. 1:31). The Greeks thought of the body as a prison house with no particular value or importance. But the apostle Paul values the body as "the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19). The Greeks taught the immortality of the soul. But the Word of God proclaims the resurrection of the dead (see 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; 1 Cor. 15:51-54). Whom should a Christian believe: Plato or Paul?

*Pagan intrusion.* Unfortunately, the early church did not make a clear distinction, and chose a road of compromise. So long as the apostles lived, the church held firmly to the revealed Word of God, despite the onslaughts of the philosophical systems of the day. But soon after the apostles, Greek thought increasingly infiltrated the church. Some of the leading converts to the Christian faith were nurtured more in the writings of Plato than in the writings of Moses or Isaiah or Solomon.

Is there a better way of describing this pagan intrusion into the Christian church than the words of Ellen White? "Many who professed conversion still clung to the tenets of their pagan philosophy, and not only continued its study themselves, but urged it upon others as a means of extending their influence among the heathen. Serious errors were thus introduced into the Christian faith. Prominent among these was the belief in man's natural immortality and his consciousness in death."<sup>3</sup>

Thus, little by little, pagan thought found its way into the Christian church and through subtle ways became established as Christian precepts. As early as A.D. 150 Justin Martyr spoke of some Christians who claimed that "there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven."<sup>4</sup> By the beginning of the third century, Tertullian, bishop of Carthage, wrote of the "natural immortality of the soul."<sup>5</sup> In his *Treatise on the Soul* he says, "The soul, then, we define to be sprung from the breath of God, immortal, possessing body, having form, simple in its substance, intelligent in its own nature, developing its power in various ways, free in its determinations, subject to be changes of accident, in its faculties mutable, rational, supreme, endued with an instinct of presentiment, evolved out

of one (archetypal soul)."<sup>6</sup>

Upon what did Tertullian base his conclusions? The Old Testament? No. The New Testament? No. Let him say for himself: "I may use . . . the opinion of a Plato, when he declares, 'Every soul is immortal.'"<sup>7</sup>

At least Tertullian is more forthright than most theologians who teach the soul's inherent immortality as a scriptural doctrine. Plato's dogma became authoritative for many of the early Church Fathers. It did not take long for the church to accept what nearly everyone wanted to believe. Finally at the Fifth Lateran Council in 1513, under the direction of Pope Leo X, the Roman Catholic Church officially proclaimed the immortality of the soul as an article of Christian belief.<sup>8</sup>

Such is the tortured route through which the unbiblical teaching of an immortal soul came into the Christian church. But that does not make it right. As Oscar Cullmann, one of the great biblical theologians of this century, wrote, the Christian hope rests on resurrection and not on immortality of the soul. "The *teaching* of the great philosophers Socrates and Plato can in no way be brought into consonance with that of the New Testament."<sup>9</sup> If a Christian wants to be true to the New Testament, the answer to the problem of death is resurrection. Nothing else.

### Resurrection: the biblical answer

Let us return once again to Lazarus. Until Jesus commanded Lazarus to come forth, he remained dead, unconscious, and in the grave. Martha had a problem with obeying the command of Jesus to roll away the stone. She let her fear of the stench rival her faith in the resurrection.

Yes, resurrection is not an easy doctrine to believe. But Jesus was saying to Martha, "Why should you doubt in regard to My power? Why reason in opposition to My requirements? You have My word. If you will believe, you shall see the glory of God. Natural impossibilities cannot prevent the work of the Omnipotent One."<sup>10</sup>

The stone was removed, and Jesus issued the command. The voice of the Life-giver penetrated the tomb. Life reversed the process of decay. The power

of resurrection crushed the power of death. And Lazarus came out, a witness to the authenticity of One who said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26).

Resurrection is God's answer to the problem of death. This hope helped Job face the mystery of life and death. "If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my change comes" (Job 14:14). "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God" (Job 19:25, 26).

The hope that strengthened Job is the same hope that Paul presented to the early Christians as the answer to the puzzle of death. Paul also discloses when this hope will come to fruition. He says: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:16-18).

Mark those words, "Comfort one another." Christians must face death not by deluding themselves with the fictitious doctrine of the immortality of the soul, but by resting in the divine assurance of resurrection. There is no riddle or magic in this message. The Creator who brought the human being into existence can also resurrect that same being. It is as simple as that. No wonder Paul asked King Agrippa, "Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?" (Acts 26:8).

Why indeed?

*The credibility of the resurrection* is founded on the historical truth of Christ's resurrection. Did not our Lord Himself say "Because I live, you will live also" (John 14:19)? And listen to the resounding message of Paul: "The rising of Christ from the dead is the very heart of our message. . . . And if Christ was not raised then neither our preaching nor

*continued on page 23*

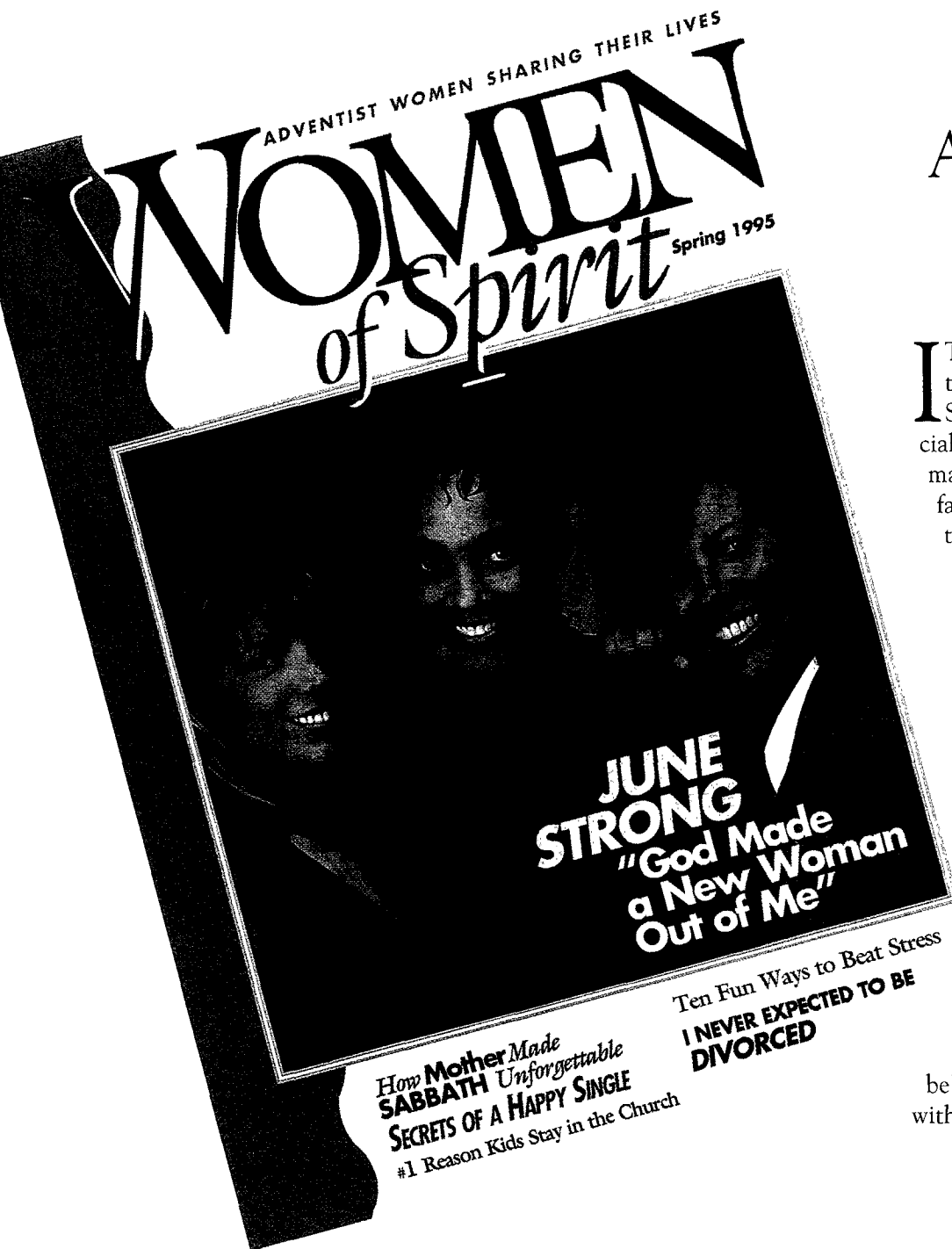
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continued from page 21

your faith has any meaning at all" (1 Cor. 15:12-14, Phillips). "But the glorious fact is that Christ was raised from the dead: he has become the very first to rise of all who sleep the sleep of death. As death entered the world through a man, so has rising from the dead come to us through a man! As members of a sinful race all men die; as members of Christ all men shall be raised to life" (verses 20-22, Phillips).

Note how beautifully the apostle jells the good news of the gospel. By one man, Adam, sin entered the world. Because of sin, death has come upon all the human race. But humanity is not left without hope. Christ died for our sins and rose again for our resurrection. He lives—therefore, we have this hope of rising from the dead. Jesus paid the penalty of sin on the cross, and when He rose from the grave on the third day, the anthem of victory moved from prophetic anticipation to an experiential reality: "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57).

Paul describes this resurrection hope as a "mystery" (verse 51). It is not something that originated out of the fertile imagination of a human being. It is not fiction. It is not myth. It is God's own solution to the problem of death, revealed by His will and guaranteed by the crucified and risen Saviour, to be experienced at the second coming of Jesus. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" (verses 52-55).

Paul is almost ecstatic in the expression of his hope. He began the chapter with "the good news" of "how Christ died for our sins" (verses 1-3). He ends the chapter with this magnificent chorus of victory: death is dead. And John the revelator joins in the chorus: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. . . . And God will wipe away every tear from

their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:1-4).

### What shall we choose?

There we have the biblical answer to the issue of death. It has no room for the false doctrine of a soul surviving death to go to heaven or hell. That false doctrine has its roots in human reason. What shall we as Christians accept? Reason or revelation? Not that reason should necessarily be in conflict with revelation, but unfortunately the doctrine of an immortal soul has its origin not in God's Word, but in human philosophy in variant forms—from the brilliance of Plato to the subtlety of Oriental mysticism to modern spiritualism.

We might admire both views. Both may appear logical. And both may even be defended. But that's not the point. As a Christian, which view should be mine? As a Christian, can I get onto Plato's philosophical boat and sail with him? Or should I accept the Word of God and believe in its declaration that "the soul who sins shall die" (Eze. 18:4)?

Plato had no use for the word *sin*, and so could not think of death as the "wages of sin." To him death was a door to a new life. How can I as a Christian align with Plato when I well know that I am a sinner and that Jesus Christ died for my sins? How can I accept the cross on the one hand and embrace *Phaedo* on the other? The two are exclusive and contradictory. No wonder Paul said that the cross is "foolishness" to the Greeks (1 Cor. 1:23).

Look at the cross again. There you see God's answer to the problem of sin. There you see the ultimate enemy vanquished by the blood of the sinless Son of God. There lies reconciliation and the hope of eternal life. And from there comes the assurance and the challenge: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25, 26).

Do we? Dare we not? ■

### Death, a defeated foe Outline

#### Introduction

Jesus at Lazarus' tomb

A. The agony of death

#### B. The assurance of resurrection

#### I. Human nature

- A. Never unconditionally immortal
- B. Only God has immortality
- C. Sin has brought death
- D. Immortality only through Christ

#### II. Nature of death

- A. The nature of the soul
  - 1. The origin of soul (Gen. 2:7)
  - 2. The meaning of *nephesh*
  - 3. What happens to soul at death?
- B. State of the dead
  - 1. Death as sleep (John 11:1)
  - 2. Death as antithesis of life (Eccl. 9:5, 10; Ps. 146:4; 6:5; 115:7)
- C. Doctrine of an immortal soul
  - 1. Its origin (Gen. 3:4)
  - 2. Its philosophic basis
  - 3. Its intrusion into Christian faith
  - 4. Its dilemma: human reason or divine revelation?

#### III. Resurrection: the biblical answer

- A. Resurrection as the Christian hope
- B. The credibility of the hope
- C. The guarantee of the resurrection: the cross

### Conclusion

What shall we choose?

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\*Except where stated, all Scripture passages in this article are from The New King James Version.

<sup>1</sup> *Plato's Phaedo*, trans. F. J. Church (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1954), p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1950), p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> Justin Martyr *Dialogue* 80. In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1954), vol. 1, p. 239.

<sup>5</sup> Tertullian *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 35. In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, p. 570.

<sup>6</sup> In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, p. 202.

<sup>7</sup> Tertullian *On the Resurrection* 3. In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, p. 547.

<sup>8</sup> See *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1967), Vol. VIII, p. 409.

<sup>9</sup> Oscar Cullmann, "Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead" in Krister Stendahl, ed., *Immortality and Resurrection* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1965), p. 47.

<sup>10</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), p. 535.

# Joy in the judgment

**Martin Weber**

**In God's judgment what matters is whether or not we have Jesus. He is our assurance.**



*Martin Weber is project editor of Ministry and coordinator of the program that provides this magazine to clergy of all denominations.*

**W**ould you mind coming with us to headquarters?" the police officer politely asked the young Christian worker. "We'll only keep you five minutes."

Those five minutes turned out to be 22 years. More than two decades of imprisonment and torture under conditions that cannot be described from this pulpit. The crime? Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

If Noble Alexander had just kept quiet about Jesus and lived his faith silently, his government would have left him alone. But no, the 28-year-old Seventh-day Adventist preacher insisted on traveling around the country leading souls to Jesus.

Noble had been warned, so it came as no surprise when the secret police arrested him. They accused him of subversive activities, labeling him a "plantado"—rebel against the government.

Noble remained confined in a loathsome prison until 1984, when U.S. presidential candidate Jesse Jackson negotiated his release and deportment to America. Newspapers throughout the Eastern states described Noble as a spiritual leader among his fellow prisoners, organizing them into an underground prayer group.

Every day at noon Noble and his friends gathered for spiritual food. It was quite a mixed group worshipping together: Catholics, Baptists, Pentecostals, and Seventh-day Adventists. Noble, an Adventist, led the Protestant services. The next day a Catholic brother would lead out in his services. Always they staked a lookout to protect their privacy.

Noble managed to smuggle a Bible into the prison. They shared the Word from inmate to inmate by tying it to a string and pulling it through cracks in the cells. Several well-chosen hiding places concealed the precious Book from the guards.

Then one day prison authorities got word about Noble's Bible and tried to confiscate it. The inmates quickly hid it in one of their special places. The guards beat and tortured Noble, but all he would tell them was "It's my Bible, and I'm never going to surrender it!"

Well, the guards didn't appreciate such stubborn commitment to Christ. They put Noble in their dungeon, a totally dark cell so narrow he had room only to lie down. A small slit in the door allowed "food" to be slid inside.

Noble spent two years in that dark hole. His only companions were vermin and lice. Imagine his loneliness! He had Jesus with him, however, and that was good enough to carry him through.

Not long after his release I was privileged to meet Noble Alexander. I wondered what he would be like. After all he had suffered, I expected him to wear a halo of somberness. But was I ever surprised! That dear man is one of the most cheerful, delightful people I've ever met. He laughed and laughed about how the prisoners hid the Bible from the guards, and how wonderful it felt while in the dungeon to know his Bible had escaped confiscation.

More could be said about Noble's ordeal for Christ, but much of what he suffered cannot be told from this pulpit. Suffice it to say that he finds living conditions in America more pleasant

and healthful than in that dungeon.

Noble lives in Massachusetts now, serving as an ordained pastor for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. His testimony is recorded in the book *I Will Die Free*, available from Pacific Press at Adventist Book Centers. Noble's thrilling story has drawn thousands into a deeper commitment to Christ. How thankful he is for this land of freedom, where he can share his love for Jesus without fear or threat from government.

Those who live in free societies can thank God for a legal system that requires judges to be fair. If judges harbored a bias against the accused, national law would demand that they be disqualified. Yet, believe it or not, the ancient Hebrew legal code went even further to protect the rights of the accused.

### God is on our side

In Old Testament times the defense of the accused was a duty so sacred the judge refused to delegate that job to an attorney. He himself served as the defender of the accused. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* explains that "attorneys at law are unknown in Jewish law."<sup>1</sup> Their legal code required judges to "lean always to the side of the defendant and give him the advantage of every possible doubt."<sup>2</sup>

Witnesses of the crime pressed charges, while the judge promoted the case of the defendant, biased in favor of acquittal.<sup>3</sup> Only when overwhelmed by evidence would the judge abandon his defense of the accused and reluctantly pronounce condemnation. Interesting system, wouldn't you say?

Lessons from the Hebrew law court abound for us today. A lot of Christians are frightened about facing God as their judge. If they only understood the biblical meaning of judgment, they would realize that He is on our side! He takes upon Himself the job of our defense!

Well, now, if God is defending us in the heavenly judgment, who is accusing us? You guessed it—the devil. The Bible calls him the "accuser of [the] brethren," who accuses us "before our God day and night" (Rev. 12:10).\*

Apparently Satan is jealous about our going to heaven, where he used to live when he was Lucifer, prince of the

angels. And so he accuses God's children of being unfit to pass through the pearly gates.

But we are unworthy, aren't we? How do we counter his accusations?

Notice the next verse there in Revelation 12: "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb" (verse 11).

It's through the blood of Jesus, friend, that you and I overcome the devil's accusations. God can't deny Satan's contention that we are sinful. But in the blood shed on Calvary's cross He finds the evidence He needs to pronounce us innocent. So He dismisses Satan's charges, endorsing the security in Christ we have enjoyed since we accepted Him.

Now, in certain situations the Hebrew judge appointed an advocate to assist him in defending the accused. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* states that the husband could represent his wife and help the judge defend her if the verdict involved his personal rights.<sup>4</sup>

Here we have a glorious parallel with the heavenly judgment. Christ, bridegroom of the church, purchased us with His precious blood. Now He serves as our court-appointed advocate to help the Father defend us from Satan—and to defend His own right to take us up to heaven and share His home forever.

How do you like that? God in the judgment takes our side against Satan. Jesus our advocate assists Him by inter-

ceding for us. God finds in the sacrifice of His Son the legal basis to accept repenting sinners and count us perfect. I like that, don't you? It makes me feel confident in Christ about my salvation!

### Jesus, the basis of our confidence

Let me share an experience from my days as a pastor to illustrate how Christ's sacrifice on Calvary enables us to pass heaven's judgment: One summer day our pastoral staff went out of the office for a special planning session. We boarded the Amtrak train in Santa Ana bound for San Diego, had lunch down there, then came back. Believe it or not, we actually accomplished some work as the train skimmed the beautiful Pacific coastline.

Along the way the conductor came around to see who was worthy to ride his train. While his investigative judgment went on, we felt no threat to secure passage—all of us had tickets. We knew the conductor wouldn't disqualify us because of our failures in life, or accept us because of our successes. His only question was "May I see your ticket?"

Likewise in God's judgment. What matters is whether or not we have Jesus—He is our ticket to heaven: "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

## 8

### THE GREAT CONTROVERSY

FUNDAMENTAL  
BELIEFS OF  
SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTISTS

All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in heaven when a created being, endowed with freedom of choice, in self-exaltation became Satan, God's adversary, and led into rebellion a portion of the angels. He introduced the spirit of rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted in the distortion of the image of God in humanity, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual devastation at the time of the worldwide flood. Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated. To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation. (Rev. 12:4-9; Isa. 14:12-14; Eze. 28:12-18; Gen. 3; Rom. 1:19-32; 5:12-21; 8:19-22; Gen. 6-8; 2 Peter 3:6; 1 Cor. 4:9; Heb. 1:14.)

Our personal worthiness doesn't even deserve consideration in heaven's judgment—all hope of human merit collapsed during the judgment of this world at the cross. (See John 12:31, 32.) Calvary established a new standard of righteousness—salvation in Jesus. Today, when we accept that gift, God accepts us in Christ. We can rejoice because our names are recorded in heaven's book of life.

### Responsibilities follow privileges

This is not once saved, always saved! Amtrak passengers must hold on to their tickets or they disqualify themselves from being judged worthy passengers. Likewise, we must live by faith in Christ as long as life lasts. Jesus becomes our Lord as well as our Saviour. Our characters are by no means perfect, but they do reveal whether we have made Christ the center of our lives.

Back in 1980 the Lord gave me a special lesson to help me understand this good news about the judgment and the sanctuary. It came in the food market, of all places. I was standing in line

with my wife, leaning on our grocery cart. Our children found themselves utterly fascinated by the candy rack, hoping to persuade us to let them have an unscheduled treat. First they wanted a chocolate bar. When that was denied them, they asked for chocolate-covered peanuts. "Peanuts are good, Daddy, aren't they?" When that failed, they reached for the last resort, sugarless chewing gum. You who are parents know this whole routine!

While all this was going on, a wonderful realization suddenly struck me. Here we were, waiting so confidently in the checkout line without any doubts that the groceries were going to be ours—this despite the fact that there was a judgment to pass before we could take the food home.

A judgment? Of course! The clerk had to decide if we were "worthy" of having the groceries. And what was it that qualified us? It was the money we held in our hands. With cash to present to the clerk, the groceries would unquestionably be ours to take home.

Heaven's judgment is something like that. Jesus is the treasure we need to pass the celestial checkout. With Him we can be assured of a favorable verdict, whatever our struggles may be. God isn't threatened by our faults and failures. Just as the food market had decided beforehand that whoever has money qualifies for groceries, God has declared that everyone in Christ qualifies for heaven. So the test of the judgment is not whether we are worthy in ourselves, but whether we live by faith "in Christ."

Let's tie all this together: God our judge wants us to be saved. His judgment is not of our worthiness, since He already knows none of us are worthy. What He must have is evidence that we believe in Jesus, our ticket to heaven. Such faith in Christ works by love (see Gal. 5:6). And "love therefore is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:10). Therefore, *a life of faith in Jesus will operate in harmony with the Ten Commandments.*

So the crucial questions in our judgment are these: Have we chosen the gift of Jesus rather than the devil's counterfeit fulfillments? Do we trust in Christ's merits, not competing with His accomplishments?

It's so easy for sincere Christians to get discouraged when contemplating the judgment. They tend to admire a "super saint" like Noble Alexander, imagining wistfully: "If only I could be like him, I'd feel more confident before a holy God." Well, let's remember that we all stand guilty in ourselves before God. "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way. But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him" (Isa. 53:6).

Yes, Jesus paid it all. On the cross He paid the full price of our sin, so now we can stand clean before God.

### New creation in Christ

But maybe you still feel soiled by sin. Like Sandra, whose boyfriend persuaded her to go too far with him one dark night. She felt terribly guilty. Then came the news that she was pregnant. That made her feel all the more guilty and fearful. Sensing no support at church for those in her situation, she tried to escape by getting an abortion. That left

## 23

### CHRIST'S MINISTRY IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent. (Heb. 8:1-5; 4:14-16; 9:11-28; 10:19-22; 1:3; 2:16, 17; Dan. 7:9-27; 8:13, 14; 9:24-27; Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6; Lev. 16; Rev. 14:6, 7; 20:12; 14:12; 22:12.)

FUNDAMENTAL  
BELIEFS OF  
SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTISTS

her feeling even more guilty. Finally, imagining herself cut off from Christ with no hope, she left the church and plunged into promiscuous living. Years passed. Finally came the day when she ventured back to the Father's house and recommitted her life to Christ. There was no welcome awaiting her, no banquet for her homecoming. She began wondering whether she was too sinful to be saved. Fortunately, she decided to speak to the pastor, expressing her doubt that even if God dared to forgive her, she couldn't forgive herself.

"Wait a minute, Sandra," he responded. "Who gave you the right to either forgive yourself or condemn yourself? This is something only God can do, the judge of all the earth. Dare you put yourself in the place of the Lord?"

Then he read her this passage from the apostle Paul:

"Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand

of God, who also intercedes for us" (Rom. 8:33, 34).

"So, Sandra, God the judge justifies you, forgives you. *Nobody* can condemn you."

Sandra was stunned. She could hardly believe the good news. But more was on the way as the pastor explained what it means for Jesus to intercede for her in the heavenly sanctuary. She always had been fearful of the sanctuary and the judgment, but now she learned that God was on her side; and Christ was His appointed advocate to defend her against the accusations of the enemy. And He's not only *on* our side up there; He's also *at* our side down here. As we give Him our lives day by day, He gives us strength to obey His will and keep His commandments.

Remember, God is the God of new beginnings: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17, NKJV).

If you will open your heart to Him, the Lord will bring harmony out of con-

fusion and lead you in His unique plan for your individual life. In fact, this plan was in place even before you were born, according to the Psalm 139. And no matter what mistakes you have made, God is well able to guide your life now.

And if you will let Him, He will guide you safely in Christ through the judgment now going on in heaven. I confess I used to be reluctant to really rejoice in the Lord in such an awesome time as this. Old covenant shadows darkened my thinking: worshipers convening quietly at the sanctuary as their priest ventured timidly into the Holy of Holies.

Then the light of the gospel dawned on me. Old covenant people *had* to be afraid as they listened quietly for the pomegranate bells, since at any moment their priest could be struck dead. But our Priest is the living Saviour who triumphed over sin, death, and hell! And something wonderful is happening in heaven since the 1844 pre-Advent judgment began. As the enemy raises accusations against us, we triumph over

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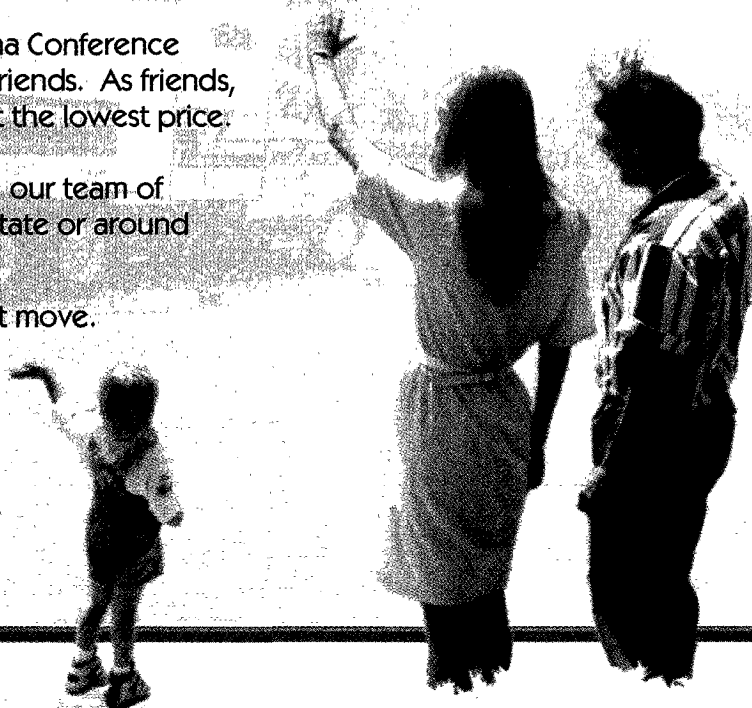
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them through the blood of the Lamb and our joyful testimony (see Rev. 12:10, 11).

Please ask yourself these questions as we bring our study to a close: Are you still listening for the pomegranate bells of the old covenant sanctuary service? Does your worship of God reflect medieval uncertainty masked under the guise of reverence? Then please come out of the shadows to bask in the Sonshine of the cross. Boldly go to heaven's Most Holy Place and rejoice at God's throne of grace, the celestial mercy seat. Let the word go forth in sermon and in song: Worthy is the Lamb!

God help us quit fretting about the time of trouble and start trusting His salvation. No more images of doom-day; our most glorious days are ahead. We can lift up our heads and our hearts, for our redemption is drawing near!

"Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You" (Ps. 84:4, NKJV). An economic boycott? Yes, but *we will still be praising Him*. A death decree? Yes, and *we will still be praising Him*. Next comes a small black cloud in the eastern sky. *We will still be praising Him*. The cloud will get brighter and brighter until the loving face of Jesus appears! *We will still be praising Him*. The trumpet will sound and the dead in Christ will rise. *We will still be praising Him*. We who are alive will be changed and caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. *We will still be praising Him*. Evermore we will be with the Lord, *evermore still praising Him!*

My brother and my sister: If we will be praising the Lord throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity, why not begin here and now? Let's praise Him not just with words and music but with lives of loving gratitude—lives of living sacrifice so that others may praise Him too. ■

## Joy in the judgment Outline

### Introduction

Noble Alexander's story

- I. God is on our side
  - A. Lessons from a Jewish court

1. Judge is also defender
2. Witnesses of the crime pressed charges
3. Judgment, if guilty, reluctantly pronounced
- B. Application for today
  1. Many Adventists frightened about facing God as judge
  2. Peace comes in gospel understanding of judgment
  3. Satan our accuser is jealous and angry (Rev. 12:10)
  4. We are indeed guilty
  5. Overcoming accusations through the blood of Jesus (Rev. 12:11)
  6. Jesus our advocate

- II. Jesus the basis of our confidence
  - A. Illustration: train journey
  - B. Jesus is our ticket (John 3:18)
  - C. Personal worthiness is of no account (John 12:31, 32)
  - D. Calvary established new standard of righteousness: Jesus
- III. Responsibilities follow privileges
  - A. Not once saved, always saved (Gal. 5:6)
  - B. Loving work reveals faith (Rom. 13:10)
  - C. Life of faith is faithful to commandments (Rom. 3:31)
  - D. Illustration: food store
  - E. God wants us to be saved
  - F. Christ alone is our hope: do we have Him?

## Conclusion

New creation in Christ

- A. Story of Sandra
- B. God justifies; we have no right to play God
- C. Jesus is our intercessor in heaven's sanctuary (Rom. 8:33, 34)
- D. God is the God of new beginnings (2 Cor. 5:17)
- E. No more old covenant pomegranate bells
- F. Praise and rejoice in Him throughout the final crisis (Ps. 84:4)

\*Unless noted, Bible texts in this article are from the *New American Standard Bible*.

<sup>1</sup> *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1904), Vol. II, p. 293.

<sup>2</sup> W. M. Chandler, *The Trial of Jesus From a Lawyer's Standpoint* (Buffalo, N.Y.: W. S. Hein, 1983), vol. 1, pp. 153, 154.

<sup>3</sup> See Taylor Bunch, *Behold the Man!* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1946), pp. 64, 66. Now we understand why David longed to be sentenced by divine judgment: "Judge me, O Lord my God, according to Thy righteousness, and do not let them rejoice over me" (Ps. 35:24). Throughout the Old Testament God's people found joy in His judgment: "A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, is God in His holy habitation" (Ps. 68:5).

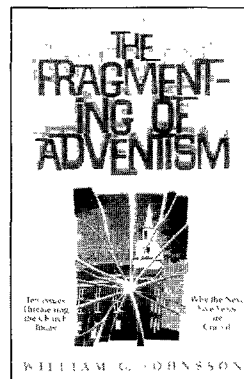
<sup>4</sup> *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, p. 294.

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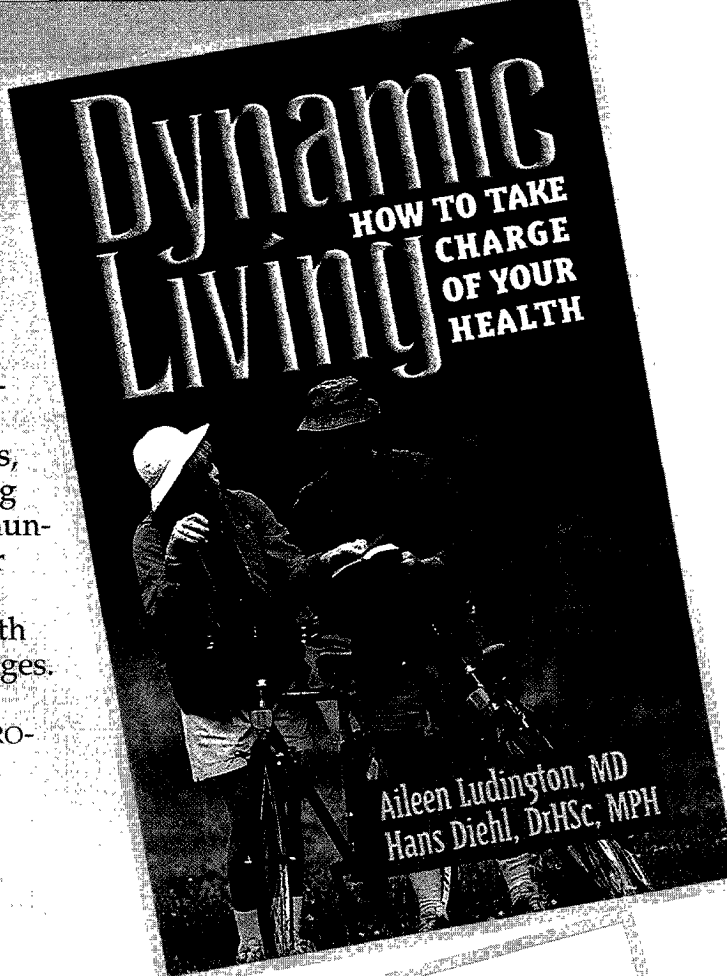


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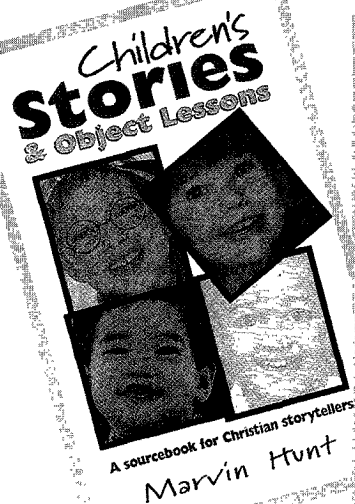
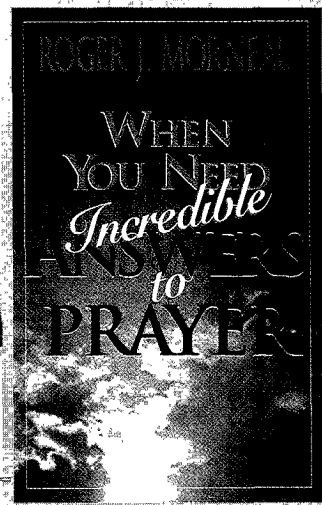
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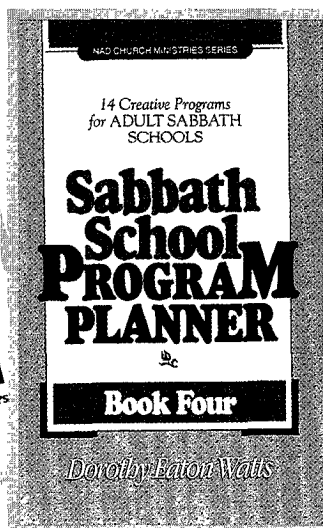
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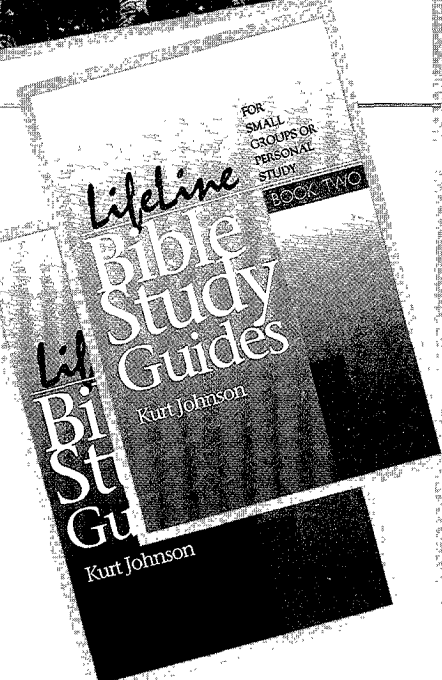
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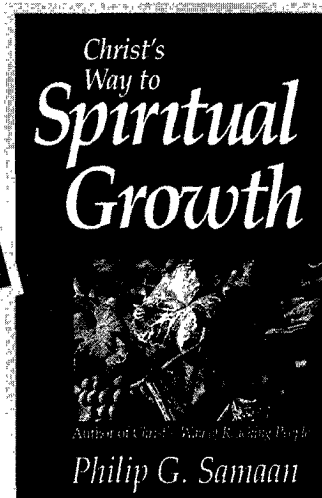
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# The most important question in the world

J. David Newman

**Solving the world's most important question lays the foundation for solving all life's problems.**



J. David Newman, D.Min., is the editor of *Ministry*.

**W**hat is the most important question in the world? Whom should I marry? What career should I pursue? What is the purpose of life? Is there a God? Why evil? Will Jesus come before A.D. 2000? How do I find happiness? How can I live the most productive life? The list is endless. I suggest that the most important question is "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).<sup>\*</sup> Once this question is answered all other questions find their proper perspective.

The Bible gives, seemingly, two very different answers. A rich young man asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17). Jesus directed him to keep the commandments. Years later a Roman jailor asked Paul and Silas, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). They answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household" (verse 31).

Are these two answers contradictory? How could the Bible give two different answers to the same question? Is it true that one has to keep the commandments to get to heaven? Is commandment-keeping or belief, or both, the basis of salvation? Is obedience related to faith?

The answer becomes clear when we look at another incident. In John 6 the Jews asked Jesus a question: "What must we do to do the works God requires?" (verse 28). What does obedience to God involve? Jesus answered them: "The work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent" (verse 29). Jesus thus relates obedience and faith. Seen in that

light, there is no contradiction between obedience to God and believing the One He has sent.

## Meaning of faith

*Flesh and blood analogy.* This becomes even clearer in an analogy Jesus used in verses 53 and 54 to explain what it means to believe in Him. He compared salvation to His body and His blood: "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (verses 53, 54).

When you eat a piece of bread, how much do you place in your mouth? All of it. When you chew it, how much do you swallow? All of it. When you take a drink of water, how much do you swallow? All of it.

Jesus used this analogy of eating and drinking to illustrate what faith is. Faith is taking hold of God 100 percent. Faith is trusting God 100 percent. Faith is depending on God 100 percent. Faith is swallowing all the food in your mouth. Faith is swallowing all the liquid in your mouth. Faith in Jesus must be 100 percent or nothing. Ninety-nine percent won't do.

*Difference between faith and belief.* There is a crucial difference between saving faith and belief as we use the words today. Belief is an intellectual assent that something is true. "Even the demons believe" (James 2:19). Faith is intellectual assent that something is true, plus the willingness to give oneself to

the practice of that truth. The demons are unwilling to do this.

I travel on airplanes frequently. I believe that airplanes take off every day from Washington, D.C., to London. But as long as I do nothing about it, the fact, that airplanes fly from Washington, D.C., to London every day remains just a belief. Faith says, "Get on that plane." Belief says, "I know the pilot is reliable and the plane is safe." Faith says, "Trust that pilot and plane, and board it." Holding on to just belief will do me no good. Belief says, "Keep one foot on the runway just in case the plane is not safe." Faith says, "Put both feet in the plane." That plane cannot take me to London until I am willing to commit myself 100 percent to that plane. If only 1 percent of me is outside that plane, it cannot take off.

Once I am in the plane I must be obedient to the flight attendants and to the pilot. When the sign says "Fasten seat belt," I do. When the sign says "No smoking," I refrain from smoking (of course, I refrain from smoking all the time). During the flight I can move about the plane. If the ride gets choppy, the pilot instructs everyone to return to their seats and put on their seat belts again. Everyone obeys.

Let's say that I become bored with the flight. I get up and knock on the pilot's door and offer to fly the plane. It looks simple. If I insist, there will probably be officers in uniform waiting for me when we land. While on that plane I must trust and depend on that pilot and that plane. There is absolutely nothing I can do to help get to my destination. All I can do is board that plane (my part) and let the pilot get me to my destination.

*Meaning of having faith in Jesus.* This is what Jesus was trying to explain to the Jews about what it means to have faith in Him. We want to help pilot that plane; we want to make our contribution. Jesus says, "No. Trust in Me. There is nothing you can do." But what about the rich young man? Didn't Jesus tell him to keep the commandments if he wanted to get to heaven? Yes, He did. Even though the rich young man said he had kept all the commandments, he suspected that that was not enough. Hard as he had tried, he had not kept them well

enough. He was right. He had not even begun to understand what it means to keep the commandments.

Jesus takes people where they are and then leads them to where the real issues lie. The issue was not commandmentkeeping, but something much deeper, something foundational. Jesus then told the young man that he needed to sell everything that he had, give to the poor, and then come and follow Him. This is where it becomes obvious that commandmentkeeping is not the basis of salvation; if it was, then selling everything and giving to the poor would also be a requirement for heaven.

What did Jesus mean? We need to consider the context. Just prior to this encounter Jesus had blessed the children. "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it" (Mark 10:14, 15).

*A childlike trust.* I believe that the rich young man was standing in the crowd observing Jesus interacting with the children. He must have been puzzled by the statement that no one will enter heaven unless they become like little children. Just as Nicodemus was puzzled about the new birth and wondered how a grown person could reenter the womb (John 3:4), so the rich young man wondered how a grown person could become a little child. Suddenly his

carefully calculated system of salvation began to crumble. Maybe his commandment-keeping was not enough. Maybe he was not going to heaven after all. Obviously a baby could not keep the commandments, so what were the requirements for heaven?

*The essence of salvation.* What is the essential characteristic of a little child? What is different about a small child compared with an adult? Innocence? Trust? Adults may possess these too. The unique characteristic of a little child is dependence. Likewise, the essence of salvation is dependence.

Place a grown man in a wilderness or jungle by himself with a backpack and supplies, and he can live for a long time. Place a little child in the same situation, and the child will not survive long. A little child is totally dependent on adults for existence. That is why Jesus told the rich young man to sell everything and give to the poor. He would then have nothing left. Now he would have to depend on Jesus for everything. If he needed a new roof for his house, he would have to ask Jesus. If he needed a new camel, he would have to ask Jesus. If he wanted to book a trip to Egypt, he would have to ask Jesus. But he was not willing to be totally dependent; that was too much to ask. He turned away in sorrow. Commandmentkeeping (on the outside) is easier than giving oneself unreservedly to Jesus.

Jesus asked the same from the rich young man that He asked from the Jews

## 9

### THE LIFE, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

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In Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering, death, and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may better understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator. This perfect atonement vindicates the righteousness of God's law and the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sin and provides for our forgiveness. The death of Christ is substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling and transforming. The resurrection of Christ proclaims God's triumph over the forces of evil, and for those who accept the atonement assures their final victory over sin and death. It declares the Lordship of Jesus Christ, before whom every knee in heaven and on earth will bow. (John 3:16; Isa. 53; 1 Peter 2:21, 22; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4, 20-22; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 19-21; Rom. 1:4; 3:25; 4:25; 8:3, 4; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Col. 2:15; Phil. 2:6-11.)

in John 6—total dependence. The essence of salvation is dependence on someone else for what you cannot do yourself. The Bible calls this grace what someone else has done. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Eph. 2:8, 9). Grace is unmerited favor. Grace is receiving what you do not deserve. Grace is what God gives to you.

Confusion about the requirements for salvation is common in any denomination with strict rules for admittance, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church is no exception. For example, if it is important that you keep the seventh-day Sabbath (one of the Ten Commandments), then it is easy to slip into the thinking that if you do not keep the seventh day as the Sabbath, you will be lost. If you can be lost by not keeping the seventh day, then logic dictates that the opposite must be true: keeping the seventh day is part of the process of how you are saved. However, the text we have just quoted makes it clear that

salvation is totally from God, totally a gift. My performance has nothing to do with the ground of my acceptance with God. I am accepted by God totally because of the perfection of another Person, the obedience of another Person.

As Paul says, “Just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5:18, 19).

### Elements of salvation

This passage introduces the term *justification*, a favorite word for Paul. We are told that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:23, 24). We are “justified freely by his grace.” In the next chapter Paul makes an astonishing statement: “Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obli-

gation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness” (Rom. 4:4, 5). Here we have God justifying the wicked. Just what does *justify* mean?

The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* defines *justification* as follows: “The divine act by which God declares a penitent sinner righteous, or regards him as righteous. Justification is the opposite of condemnation (Rom. 5:16). Neither term specifies character, but only standing before God. Justification is not a transformation of inherent character; it does not impart righteousness any more than condemnation imparts sinfulness. . . . When God imputes righteousness to a repentant sinner He figuratively places the atonement provided by Christ and the righteousness of Christ to his credit on the books of heaven, and the sinner stands before God as if he had never sinned” (p. 635).

When God justifies you, He declares you righteous because Christ is righteous, not because of any intrinsic goodness you may have. That is why

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Paul can say that God in a sense justifies the wicked. When we accept Jesus we do not become immediately perfect. We still fall. I will say more on that later. Justification does not make you intrinsically righteous (see Rom. 4:5). We need to make a careful distinction between a person's state and a person's standing with God. A person's state is how good he or she is. A person's standing is how God regards him or her. God regards people as either saved or lost; there is no neutral ground. A person is never in the process of being saved. You are saved or you are not.

Sinners enjoy the assurance of salvation, not because their standing rests in what they have done or in what has been done to them. Their assurance rests in what Christ has done for them (verses 9, 10). He accomplished our victory at Calvary once and for all, and now offers that victory to all who believe. You are saved, not because you are righteous or even because you are converted (although there will be no unconverted people in heaven), but because through faith you place your trust, your dependence, in Jesus Christ. God accepts that faith, imputes the righteousness of Christ to you, credits you with the perfect life of Christ, and treats you as if you had never sinned: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

*The cross the beacon.* The basis and assurance of salvation stand rooted in the cross of Christ. It is the great beacon shining across time. In the Old Testament people looked toward the cross. The whole object of the sanctuary service was to point people toward the Lamb of God. Since New Testament times we look back to the cross. "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14). "And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Col. 1:20). "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). "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 Peter 1:18,19). "Grace and peace to you from . . . Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the

dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood" (Rev. 1:5). "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14).

At the moment you place your faith in Jesus, God transforms you through the new birth experience (part of sanctification) so that you possess the will to live a holy life. The growth in Christ that begins here is the work of a lifetime, never fully realized in this life. But throughout the process, always because of the doing and dying of Christ, God treats the believer as perfect and worthy of salvation. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15; see also John 15:10). But the believer keeps God's rules only as a response to having already been justified in Christ, never as the cause or part of the cause of that justification.

*Sanctification.* Sanctification is the process of becoming holy. God says we are also holy in Christ when we believe (justification). Sanctification is becoming what God says we already are in Christ. In Scripture sanctification is both a past and a future reality. Paul addresses the Corinthians who were anything but holy as "sanctified (*hagiazō*) in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:2) and yet "called to be holy" (*hagioi*). Sanctification in the Bible is described as pursuing righteousness" (1 Tim. 6:11), living a "new life" (Rom. 6:4), being "transformed" (Rom. 12:2), "perfecting holiness" (2 Cor. 7:1), growing "up into . . . Christ" (Eph. 4:15), pressing on "toward the goal" (Phil. 3:14), being "built up" in Christ (Col. 2:7), becoming "firm in all the will of God" (Col. 4:12), fighting "the good fight of the faith" (1 Tim. 6:12), partaking of "the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).

At this point we need to define what we mean by sin. Salvation is rescuing people from sin. Do we cease to sin once we have been justified? What happens when we sin after justification? Do we lose our salvation? Every time you utter a critical word, gossip about someone, entertain jealousy, covet someone's possession, participate in discord, get angry or lust after someone, have you lost your

# 10

## THE EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION

In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ, as Substitute and Example. This faith which receives salvation comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment. (2 Cor. 5:17-21; John 3:16; Gal. 1:4; 4:4-7; Titus 3:3-7; John 16:8; Gal. 3:13, 14; 1 Peter 2:21, 22; Rom. 10:17; Luke 17:5; Mark 9:23, 24; Eph. 2:5-10; Rom. 3:21-26; Col. 1:13, 14; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26; John 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:23; Rom. 12:2; Heb. 8:7-12; Eze. 36:25-27; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rom. 8:1-4; 5:6-10.)

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salvation and have to be reconverted? If you were to die during this period, would you still go to heaven?

Sin operates on two levels: behavior and relationship. We know that sin is the breaking of the law (1 John 3:4). But sin is also breaking the law of love. When Jesus was asked which was the greatest commandment, He referred His questioners to a higher law, the law of love—love to God and love to each other (Matt. 22:37-40). Sin can be classified as SIN in capital letters and sin in small letters. God is first concerned with SIN, which is the ruptured relationship you and I have with God from birth (Ps. 51:5). Paul tells us that “everything that does not come from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). Faith is a trusting, dependent relationship with God. It is saying yes to God. It is placing everything in one’s life at God’s feet. It is the willingness to do everything that God asks. Faith is total dependence on God.

The sin of Adam and Eve was not the taking and eating of the forbidden fruit. They had sinned before they took the

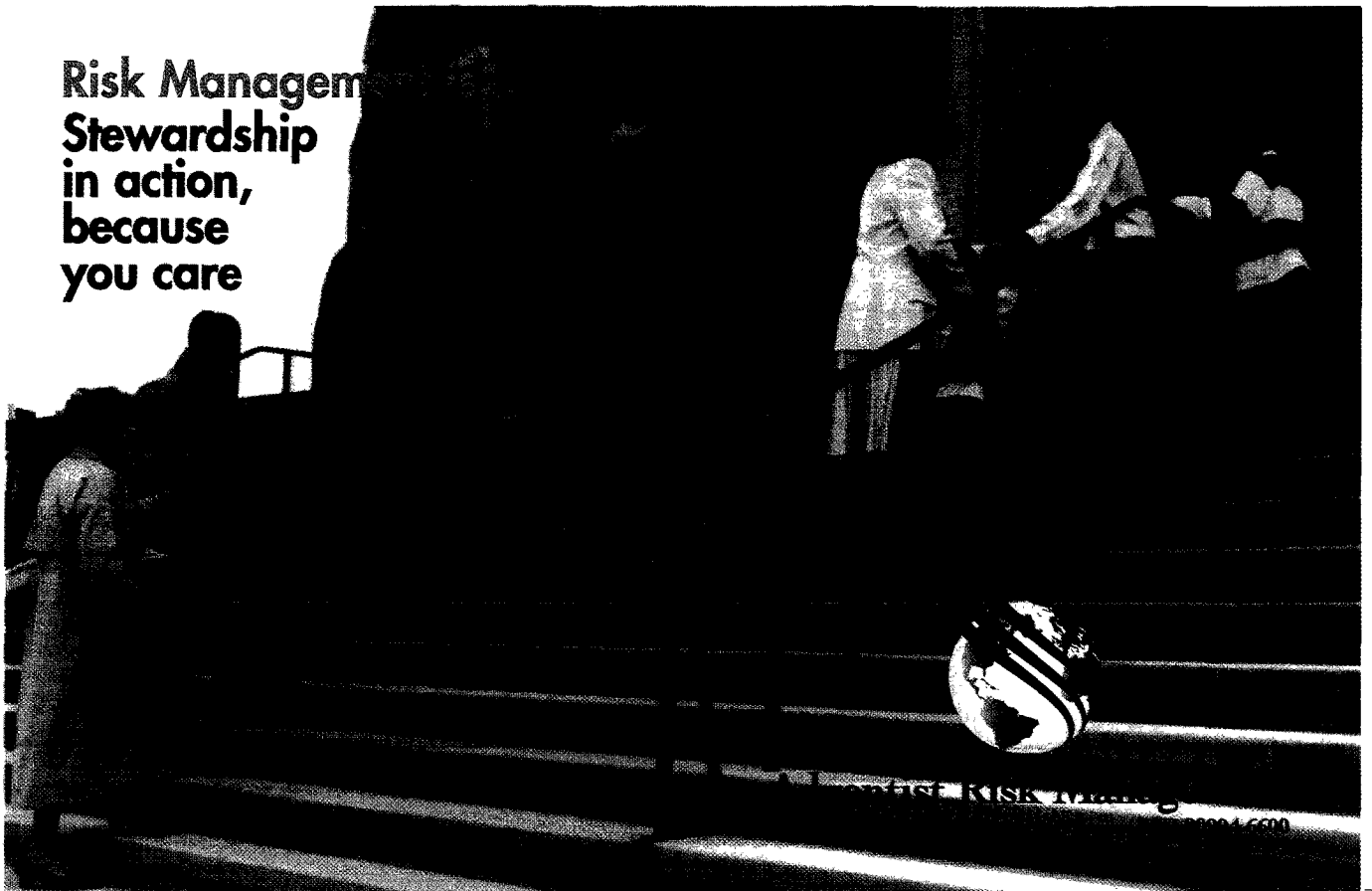
fruit. They sinned when they decided that they would trust the words of the serpent more than God, when they followed their will rather than God’s will. They broke their dependent relationship with God. This was when SIN took place. When SIN happens, it leads to sin, the act of taking the fruit. When we focus on sins we develop a list mentality, the mentality of the Pharisees, of the rich young man. We can avoid every wrong behavior and never make it to heaven. The Pharisee who boasted about how good he was was probably right. He had not committed adultery, he did pay his tithe faithfully, he did provide for his family. He did not commit sins. But he did not possess faith: a trusting, dependent relationship with God. He was still a SINNER (Luke 18:9-14).

Justification takes care of SIN, the relationship problem. Sanctification takes care of the sin, the behavior problem. Justification is the work of a moment, birth. Sanctification is the work of a lifetime, growing up into full maturity. Christians who are justified and

sanctified are eager to overcome sin. But it also means that just like a child stumbles and falls on its way to adulthood, so the Christian will fall and stumble on his or her way to full perfection in Christ. But just as the child is still a daughter or son, so the Christian is still a child of God even when he or she stumbles, sins. God views these sins as part of the maturing process, and the person does not come under condemnation. They are falling, not because they have a broken relationship with God, not because they refuse to be dependent, but because they are immature, ignorant, wrestling with addictions, wanting desperately to grow up into Him. When you fall and recognize it, you immediately ask for forgiveness. You may fail at times, but you are always repentant.

When God looked at the life of David through the eyes of Jesus, He saw only a perfect person. David committed some awful sins. He was an adulterer and a murderer. Yet God records this of him: “I tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you, but

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you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commands and followed me with all his heart, doing only what was right in my eyes" (1 Kings 14:8). I would find little difficulty with this text except for the word "only." Did David do only what was right in God's eyes? No, he did not. Then how could the text say what it says? It makes sense only if you distinguish between SIN (relationship) and sin (behavior). David committed many sins. His behavior was despicable. But he lived a repentant life. He wanted to be always dependent on God. He coveted God's righteousness.

If David had been lost, it would not have been because of his adultery or committing of murder. He would be lost because he did not keep a faith-trust-dependent relationship with God, because he had first committed SIN. The problem with making lists of sins is that we then rank them. This one is a terrible sin; this one is not so bad; this one will definitely keep me out of heaven; this one should not stop me from getting in; and so on. The sin of adultery and the sin of covetousness are both part of the Ten Commandments, yet we rank one much lower than the other as far as eternity is concerned. Cheating in business is no different than murdering someone; both are sins.

### Glorification

Salvation has a third element—glorification. Our salvation will not be complete until the "perishable" is "clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53). Our goal is to live forever with Jesus.

Perhaps an illustration will help clarify what I have been saying. A bicycle is made up of two wheels, front and back. A bicycle has value only when it is moving toward a destination. When I was in school I used to participate in slow bicycle races. The object was to be the last to reach the finish line. If a foot touched the ground, you were automatically disqualified. The problem was that the bicycle was not made for standing still. So also the Christian is not made for standing still. He or she is moving toward living with Jesus for all eternity.

Justification and sanctification, like

the two wheels on the bicycle, must be distinguished but never separated. Eliminate either wheel, and you no longer have a bicycle. But you need to know the function of each wheel. Eliminate either justification or sanctification, and you no longer have salvation. But you need to know the function of each. Justification is what Jesus did *for* me 2,000 years ago. It is complete, perfect, and imputed to me when I place my faith in Him. Sanctification is what Jesus does *in* me day by day, starting with the new birth experience. It is incomplete and is imparted to me as I grow in Him.

Glorification is where I want this bicycle to take me. Like the rich young ruler, like the unbelieving Jews, the only way to salvation is to depend on the life of a substitute, to depend on the merits of another. Jesus, who met all the demands of the law, who gave His life on Calvary's cross, offers to each one His righteousness. The basis of my salvation will always be dependent on the life and death of Jesus (Rom. 3:25; 5:19). This dependence then results in a life seeking to live according to every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God; a life that will bring honor to God; a life that others "may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us" (1 Peter 2:12).

What then is the most important question in the world? How are you saved? And the answer is by living a life of total dependence on Jesus Christ. ■

### The most important question in the world

#### Outline

#### Introduction

What must I do to be saved?

- A. Obey the commandments (Mark 10:18)
- B. Believe in the Lord Jesus (Acts 16:31)
- C. Are these contradictory?

#### I. Meaning of faith

- A. Jesus' analogy of flesh and blood (John 6:53, 54)
- B. The difference between faith and belief

1. Belief: intellectual assent
2. Faith: intellectual assent plus willingness to the practice of that truth
3. Illustration: an airplane and a plane journey
- C. Meaning of having faith in Jesus
  1. Absolute dependence on Him
  2. A childlike trust
- D. The essence of salvation
  1. Not of human works, but God's grace (Eph. 2:8, 9)
  2. God accepts us not because of my behavior, but because of the perfection of Jesus (Rom. 5:18, 19).

### II. Elements of salvation

#### A. Justification

1. Is God's declaration that we are innocent, based on what Jesus has done (Rom. 4:4, 5)
2. Is not based on any of our goodness
3. A person's state versus standing
4. Our standing rests on what Jesus has done
5. Cross: the basis and assurance of our salvation

#### B. Sanctification

1. Is becoming what God says we already are in Jesus
2. Definition of sin: its operation on two levels
  - a. SIN: a rupture in relationship
  - b. Sin: a failure in behavior
3. How justification and sanctification relate to these two levels
4. Illustration: David (1 Kings 14:8)
5. The problem of making a list of sins

#### C. Glorification

1. Is to live with Jesus forever
2. Illustration: two wheels of a bicycle

### Conclusion

Jesus is my salvation

\* All Scripture passages are from the New International Version.

# The church: its nature and design

Rex D. Edwards

It's a family.  
It's a body.  
It's a building.  
It's a bride.  
It's us.



Rex Edwards, D.Min.,  
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Silver Spring, Maryland.

**C**hurch" is a very flexible word. People have different views of what it is. Some see the church as a building with tower and bells. Victor Hugo described it as "God between four walls." Others view the church experientially, "a shrine of worship, a place to pray." Some would consider it a prestigious social club. But what is the biblical view of the church? What is its nature and design?

## The church: its nature

The word "church" appears more than 110 times in the New Testament. Not once does it describe a material building. Nor does it describe a religious organization, an ecclesiastical institution, or even a denomination. These are ways in which the church manifests its life, but they are not the church.

*A called people.* The word "church" is the English rendering of *ekklesia*, made up of two Greek words: *ek* (out from among) and *kaleo* (to call). The literal meaning of church is, therefore, "the called-out assembly." The church is "the people who belong to the Lord." Paul described them as the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15) and the flock of God (Acts 20:28). In other words, church is always people, the people of God (see 1 Peter 2:9). The church is *those* who worship, not *where* they worship. We must not let the outward form of the church disguise its true nature, for it is not a human organization, but a divinely created fellowship of sinners who trust a common Saviour and are one with each other,

because they are all one with Him through the Holy Spirit.

*A fellowshiping people.* God's original purpose for this world was to create an eternal community with whom He could fellowship (Isa. 45:18). This purpose was disrupted by sin, but not abandoned. Sin separated human beings from their Maker and from each other. Until this sin problem was overcome, there could be no restoration. Human failure could be met only by God's faithfulness. Only Jesus could restore the broken fellowship.

*A covenantal people.* Upon what basis could such a relationship be realized? A covenant, of course. A covenant is a relationship of promise and commitment that binds the parties concerned to perform whatever duties their relationship may demand. By His covenant God demands acceptance of His rule and promises enjoyment of His blessing. And so He says, "I will . . . be your God, and you will be my people" (Lev. 26:12; cf. Ex. 29:45; 2 Cor. 6:16; Rev. 21:3).<sup>\*</sup> Likewise, when believers say "my God," they claim a relationship and make a commitment.

Two main biblical analogies for God's covenant with sinners are the royal covenant between overlord and vassal and the marriage covenant between husband and wife. The former speaks of God's sovereignty and lordship, the latter of His love and Saviourhood.

Consider the covenant God established with Abraham in Genesis 17, a chapter of crucial importance for the



doctrine of the church. Notice four points. First, the covenant relationship was announced as being *corporate*, extending to Abraham's seed "for the generations to come" (verse 7). Thus the covenant created a permanent community. Second, the relationship was one of *pledged* beneficence on God's part. He undertook to give Abraham's seed the land of Canaan, a type for heaven (verse 8; cf. Heb. 11:8-16). Third, the purpose of the covenant was *fellowship* between God and His people, that they should walk before Him, knowing Him as they were known by Him (verse 1). Fourth, the covenant was *confirmed* by the institution of a token, the rite of circumcision (verse 11).

Later through Moses God gave His people a law to govern their conduct. He also gave them forms of worship. These forms included feasts, exhibiting His fellowship with them, and sacrifices, pointing to the Redeemer, who alone could provide forgiveness and a basis for fellowship. Also, He spoke to them repeatedly through prophets of the glorious hope to be realized when the Messiah came.

A *redeemed people*. Thus emerged the basic biblical concept of the church as the covenant people of God, the redeemed family, worshiping and serving Him according to His revealed will,

fellowshipping with Him and with each other, walking by faith in His promises, and looking for the coming Messianic kingdom.

When Christ came, this Old Testament concept was fulfilled, not destroyed. Christ is the mediator of the covenant. Through His atoning death, believing Jews and Gentiles formed the people of God on earth. Baptism, the New Testament sign corresponding to circumcision, represents the union with Christ in His death and resurrection, which is the sole gateway into the church (see Rom. 6:3ff.; Gal. 3:27ff.; Col. 2:11ff.).

Peter describes the Christian church in thoroughgoing Old Testament fashion as "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God. . . . Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:9, 10). For this people Christ will return and "gather" to Himself an eternal community (see Matt. 24:31).

#### The church: its design

Bible writers used no less than 80 metaphors to convey God's purpose and design for His church. We will focus on four major ones that describe the formation, continuation, and consummation

of Christ's church: a family, a body, a building, and a bride.

*Church is a family.* Jesus told His followers, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matt. 12:49-50; see also Mark 3:34, 35; Luke 8:19-21). In this statement Jesus created a definition of family. The book of Acts sometimes uses the word "brethren" simply to indicate a new spiritual filial status among Christians, a family in which brothers and sisters share a common heritage. Peter also talked of that kind of a spiritual family relationship (1 Peter 2:17). Paul repeatedly referred to this new status in addressing believers in Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Philippi, Colossae, and Thessalonica. To talk of brothers and sisters among believers was to transcend physical relationships and affirm a common family bond, even when people were of different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds, either Jew or Gentile.

How does one become part of this family? By being born into it. The New Testament word for "brethren" is also the root for the word "womb." So "brethren" connotes birth. Those who belong to Christ's church have been "born of the Spirit" (John 3:6, 7). We cannot *join* Christ's church! We must be born into it! Only in this relationship can we experience the fatherhood of God. Just as those in natural birth who come from the same womb are brothers and sisters, so those born of the Spirit are brothers and sisters in the Spirit, members of God's family. "For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters" (Heb. 2:11, NRSV).

The apostle Peter speaks of "those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours" (2 Peter 1:1). *Only these* can unite in saying, "Our Father." We are one in faith, one in inward life, one in Christ Jesus. We worship the same Father, and we trust in the same Saviour. We are drawn to our Lord and to one another. In Christ, and in Him alone, is true familyhood realized. John defines it as a dual fellowship: horizontal and vertical—"fellowship with us" and fellowship

## 11

### THE CHURCH

The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world; and we join together for worship, for fellowship, for instruction in the Word, for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, for service to all mankind, and for the worldwide proclamation of the gospel. The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word, and from the Scriptures, which are the written Word. The church is God's family; adopted by Him as children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant. The church is the body of Christ, a community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head. The church is the bride for whom Christ died that He might sanctify and cleanse her. At His return in triumph, He will present her to Himself a glorious church, the faithful of all the ages, the purchase of His blood, not having spot or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish. (Gen. 12:3; Acts 7:38; Eph. 4:11-15; 3:8-11; Matt. 28:19, 20; 16:13-20; 18:18; Eph. 2:19-22; 1:22, 23; 5:23-27; Col. 1:17, 18.)

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"with the Father and with his Son" (1 John 1:3).

The governing principle of this fellowship is love (see 1 John 3:14). Attitudes and actions of brothers and sisters are not dictated by the prejudices of society or the instincts of fallen nature, but by divinely implanted love that views every other believer in Christ as a brother or a sister in the family of God.

Francis Schaeffer said it perceptively: "There is no such thing as a Christian community unless it is made up of individuals who are already Christians who have come through the work of Christ. One can talk about Christian community till one is green, but there will be no Christian community except on the basis of a personal relationship with the personal God through Christ."<sup>1</sup>

*Church is a body.* Paul describes the church as Christ's body (see Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:23; 4:12; Col. 1:24; 2:19). The metaphor conveys a close and vital relationship that binds the church to Christ. Two primary figures used by Paul bring out this close relationship: "head" and "members" of the body. By using these figures, Paul underscores three significant points.

*First, Christ is the authority over the church.* The church is not autonomous, but subject to Christ as Lord (see Eph. 5:24). The church must obey the voice of the Lord above all other voices; His will must reign. In this sense, the headship of Christ is equivalent to His Lordship over the church. Christ expresses Himself through the church as

His instrument. As Johnston writes, "Christians were the limbs of the Messiah, and therefore his servants, expressing his mind and will (Col. 1:24). It is as if the risen Lord actually lived in the churches to direct, teach, and bless them."<sup>2</sup>

*Second, the church finds its goal in Christ.* Christ, in whom are all the purposes of God for the world, is the ideal toward which the church directs its efforts. That means the church "in all things [will] grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ" (Eph. 4:15). The character of Christ is the goal for the church to reach, and it will eventually achieve this goal eschatologically. Meanwhile, Christ the head is working in and with the church to fulfill His goals. Hence, He "feeds and cares" for her (Eph. 5:29). He gives Himself "to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (verses 26, 27).

*Third, the church experiences unity in Christ.* Paul emphasizes the unity of the church by pointing to the interrelationship existing between the members of the body. In the human body, severance of a limb means crippling for the body, and death for the limb! Unity within the church is so essential that Paul equates any division in the church as equivalent to dividing the body of Christ. "Is Christ divided?" he asks the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 1:13). Be-

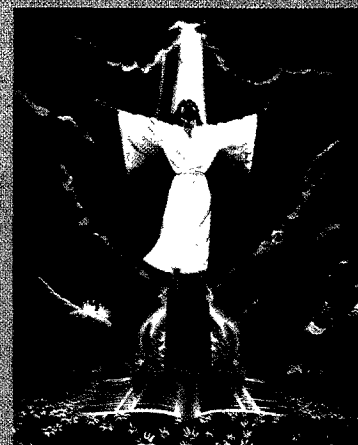
# 12

## THE REMNANT AND ITS MISSION

The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness. (Rev. 12:17; 14:6-12; 18:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:10; Jude 3, 14; 1 Peter 1:16-19; 2 Peter 3:10-14; Rev. 21:1-14.)

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cause we are members of Christ, we are members of one another (see Rom. 12:5). To be in Christ is to be in the church. To be in the church is to be united in Christ and united with each other. As in the words of the song: "We are not divided, all one body we, one in hope and doctrine, one in charity."

The church of Jesus Christ always has been, is now, and always will be one and undivided. In Christ's church there is unity because there is union (see 1 Cor. 12:12). It cannot be classed along with clubs, associations, denominations, or lodges. These are only organizations, but His church is an *organism*, made up of those who are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Eph. 5:30, KJV). We are one *in* Christ and one *with* Christ. This immediately rules out an amalgamation of denominations or churches in order to effect a human-made unity. Those who belong to Christ possess a sevenfold unity—one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God the Father of all (see Eph. 4:4-6).

If Christ is the head of the body, we are the members of that body. By describing us as members of that body (Eph. 5:30), Paul emphasizes certain important points. *First, membership in the body of Christ requires mutual responsibility one for another.* Members ought to "have equal concern for each other" (1 Cor. 12:25), not just in spiritual affairs but also in material necessities. We should care for the poor, the needy, the hungry, and the naked (see James 2:14-17; Rom. 12:20; Matt. 25:34-36). In fact, we should be ready to lay down our lives for the sake of a fellow member (1 John 3:16).

*Second, being members of His body gives us the assurance that Jesus is ever present with us as the church.* When we meet in worship, when we assemble at the Communion table, when we carry out His witness, Christ is with us (see Matt. 18:20). He is our head, we are His body, and we work with Him and for Him.

*Third, being a member also suggests that we want to add "members" to the church; we want to extend Christ's body.* "Whoever is brought under the influences of the truth, and through faith is made partaker of Christ's love, is by that very

fact appointed of God to save others."<sup>3</sup>

Members do what Jesus would be doing if He were present in the flesh. Where the members go, the church goes. The more members there are, the more outlets there are for God's love. In this way, the great objective of the church is fulfilled: to make Jesus omnipresent, to make Him as much present in as many places, through the members of His body.

Thus witness, service, and ministry are not optional to members of the body. They are inevitable! The body has no observers. In fact, witness is so paramount in the life of the church that Jesus included it in His last commission to the church (see Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Obedience to that commandment is the supreme test of loyalty to Him. Peter describes the church as "a people belonging to God" in order that they "may declare praises of him who called you. . . into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9). The church is placed on earth to let people know of the blessings God offers through His Son. "It is dreadful," says George Sweazey, "to think of anyone missing for even a single day

the wonders of the life in Christ."<sup>4</sup>

*Church is a building.* Israel had "the tabernacle of the Testimony" (Acts 7:44) as the house of God. Solomon built the Temple. But "the God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands" (Acts 17:24). Rather, He has us as His dwelling place (see 1 Cor. 3:9). Paul states, "We are the temple of the living God" (2 Cor. 6:16).

What is Paul saying? Not that a building is unnecessary, but that God does not require a building to dwell in or to make His presence known. He lives in human hearts: "And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). Peter calls us the "living stones" that comprise a "spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5). God by His grace has gone into the quarries of humanity and taken those who are "dead in [their] trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1) and has made them alive together in Christ. This is how God fashions and erects the church. Believers are redeemed and fitted by grace to become stones in this habitation of God.

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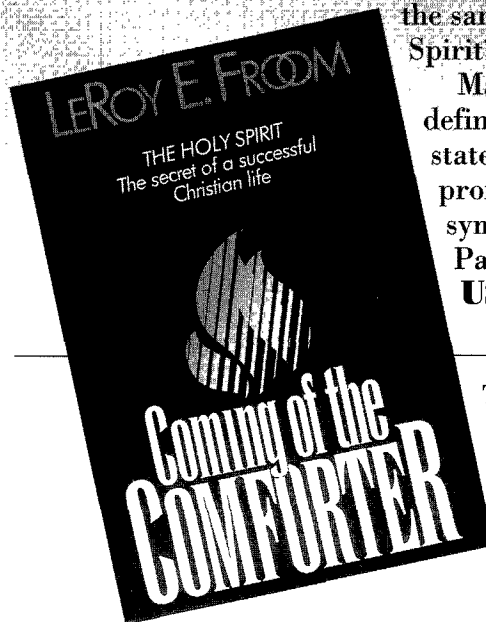
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They are, says Paul, "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (verse 20). The genitive "of" does not mean "consisting of," but means "laid by." The apostles and prophets are the progenitors of our faith. Through their eyes we see Jesus. In their words we read the mind of God. Their lives and deeds have given the church its great historical foundation. But Jesus is the real foundation. As Paul states, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11).

Paul's reference to apostles in no sense means a historical continuity of bishops. It refers only to the faith and ministry of the first apostles. Like them, we too are commissioned to carry Christ's message to the world. "The church is the depository of the wealth of the riches of the grace of Christ, and through the church eventually will be made manifest the final and full display of the love of God to the world that is to be lightened with its glory."<sup>5</sup>

When Solomon's Temple was built, it "was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building" (1 Kings 6:7, KJV). So also in the building of the spiritual house. God has predetermined the size, shape, and placing of the stones. "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world

to be holy and blameless in his sight" (Eph. 1:4; see also 1 Peter 1:2).

The building that the Holy Spirit has built is not a static one. As Paul says: "In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:21). These words anticipate growth toward full maturity, "attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

The goal for the church is clear: in its conduct, individually and corporately, the church must exhibit the life of God. We are called to be a holy people (see 1 Peter 2:9). The adjective "holy" designates a new relationship between believers and their God. It implies an exclusive relationship demanding absolute consecration and conformity to the nature of God. God is a jealous lover who allows no rivals. We are exclusively His people (see verse 10).

In the last days this exclusiveness is seen, on the one hand, in God calling out a remnant people; and on the other, in the remnant obeying His commands, preserving His "faith," and reflecting His character (see Rev. 12:17; 14:12).

*Church is a bride.* When the New Testament uses the image of a bride to describe the church, the connotation is one of a love relationship between Christ and His church. This metaphor has its roots in the Creation story. Paul describes Adam as a figure of Christ, the Second Adam (see Rom. 5:14). The woman God



The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children. (Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; Matt. 28:19, 20; Ps. 133:1; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Acts 17:26, 27; Gal. 3:27, 29; Col. 3:10-15; Eph. 4:14-16; 4:1-6; John 17:20-23.)

gave to Adam typifies the church. The church's relationship to Christ is like that of Eve to the first Adam.

Consider the Genesis story. God put Adam into a "deep sleep" and made a woman from his rib. On Calvary the Second Adam was plunged into the sleep of death. Adam's side was opened by the divine surgeon, and his blood was spilled in order to obtain his bride. As far as Adam was concerned, the procedure was painless. But at the cross the Second Adam enjoyed no protection from agony and pain (see Ps. 22:14, 15). In order to obtain His church He "gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25). He bought the church "with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

What a thrilling moment when the companion ordained of God and provided by Him was presented to Adam, to share his love, to enjoy his fellowship, and to partake of the blessings freely given him by God. Likewise, the Holy Spirit brings us to Christ that we may receive His blessings, enjoy His fellowship, and be workers together with Him. Adam acknowledged the gift of Eve with wonder and awe: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23). She was a part of him! He was a part of her! Adam never thought of refusing her, for she was one with him.

Those who belong to the church, the bride of Christ, may say with assurance

that they are "members of his body" (Eph. 5:30), His flesh and His bones. Jesus assures us, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away" (John 6:37). So completely identified with Christ is His bride, so close is that union, that they two are one flesh.

As a "man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife" (Eph. 5:31), so Christ left all for the sake of His bride. The church too is joined to Christ, as a woman to her husband. This means a separation of the bride from the old family ties that were under condemnation to exist exclusively for the heavenly Bridegroom. Why? So that His bride "may be complete in Him, a continual representation of another, even the eternal world, of laws that are higher than earthly laws."<sup>6</sup>

The union between Christ and the church, existing from the moment of the believer's acceptance of Christ, will be fully consummated when the entire church is "caught up" (1 Thess. 4:17) and the marriage itself is celebrated in heaven. Someday all who are arrayed in the robes of Christ's righteousness shall go on the arm of our Beloved into the bridal halls of glory (see Rev. 19:7-9). Joined in eternal marriage to her heavenly Bridegroom, the church will be united with Christ. The dominion forfeited by our first parents because of sin will be restored fully by the second

Adam, the Lord Jesus, and given to His bride, the church. She shall reign and rule with Him over a restored earth, sharing His throne and the glories of His kingdom (see Rev. 3:21; cf. John 17:22).

The Genesis story informs us that God "closed up the place with flesh" (Gen. 2:21). Did it leave a scar? As Adam looked at that mark on his side, he might have reasoned, *If it were not for that, I would not have Eve; I would be alone.* And when Eve saw that scar, she might have thought, *I would not exist except for that.* In eternity the church triumphant will have an everlasting reminder of the One who will forever bear the scars of Calvary in His hands, His feet, and His side. Were it not for that "shed blood," He would have no bride to share His glory (see Rev. 5:9). Were it not for those wounds, the church would not be in heaven. What holy aspirations and godly motives should possess the life of one redeemed at so great a price!

### Awaiting the Bridegroom

So, then, what is the church? Not some stately building on a street corner, or some expertly run religious organization, or a conglomerate of denominations. It is a "called-out" people, united in life to Jesus Christ, composed of those who have been born of the Spirit and whose faith is based in the Word of God. When persons by faith receive the Lord Jesus, they are placed by the Spirit of God into the body of Christ, the church.

The church is a distinct fellowship of those redeemed by Christ and called by Him to represent God in the world and continue the Messianic ministry. It is also an institution fulfilling its proper function to glorify God, to render the service of love, and to proclaim Christ and His ministry.

The church is a family comprised of children of the same Father. We are sons and daughters, heirs and joint heirs. The church is a living temple in which God takes up His residence and in whom He exhibits His life. The church is a bride awaiting her eternal union with her Bridegroom.

Do you await with joy the coming of the Bridegroom? Can you say today,



"Yes, I have His life dwelling in me; I have been made a partaker of His nature; I am a member of His body and bride"? ■

## The church: its nature and design Outline

### Introduction

"Church" is a flexible word

- I. The church: its nature
  - A. A called people (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Peter 2:9)
  - B. A fellowshiping people (Isa. 45:18)
  - C. A covenantal people (Lev. 26:12; 2 Cor. 6:16)
    1. A corporate relationship (Gen. 17)
    2. A pledged beneficence (Gen. 17:8)
    3. A promised fellowship (Gen. 17:1)
    4. A confirmed sign (Gen. 17:11)
  - D. A redeemed people (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27; 1 Peter 2:9, 10)
- II. The church: its design
  - A. Church is a family
    1. Jesus' definition of family (Matt. 12:49, 50)
    2. Born into the family (John 3:6, 7)
    3. Love as the basis of family (1 John 3:14)
  - B. Church is a body
    1. Christ is the head
      - a. Christ's authority over the church (Eph. 5:24)
      - b. The church's goal in Christ (Eph. 4:15)
      - c. The church's unity in Christ (Rom. 12:5)
    2. We are members of the body
      - a. Mutual responsibility of members (1 Cor. 12:25)
      - b. The assurance that Jesus is with us (Eph. 5:30)
      - c. Witness and service of members (Matt. 28:19; 1 Peter 2:9)
  - C. Church is a building
    1. The human temple (2 Cor. 6:16)
    2. Jesus the foundation (1 Cor. 3:11)

3. The goal for the church (1 Peter 2:9)
- D. Church is a bride
  1. Lessons from Genesis story
  2. Complete oneness of the bride/Bridegroom (Eph. 5:31)
  3. The eschatological waiting (Rev. 3:21)
  4. The cross: price paid for the bride

### Conclusion

Awaiting the Bridegroom!

\*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture passages in this article are from the New International Version.

<sup>1</sup>Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Church at the End of the 20th Century* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>G. Johnston, "The Doctrine of the Church in the New Testament," in *Peake's Commentary on the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1987), p. 722.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1923), p. 293.

<sup>4</sup>George E. Sweazey, *The Church as Evangelist* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 26.

<sup>5</sup>White, p. 50.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 17.

## "Be Strong & of a Good Courage"

Deut. 31:7

E.G. White affirmed:

*We are to repeat the words of the pioneers in our work, who knew what it cost to search for truth as for hidden treasure, and who labored to lay the foundation of our work. . . . The word given me is, Let that which these men have written in the past be reproduced.*

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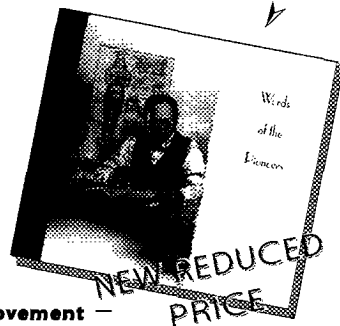
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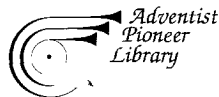
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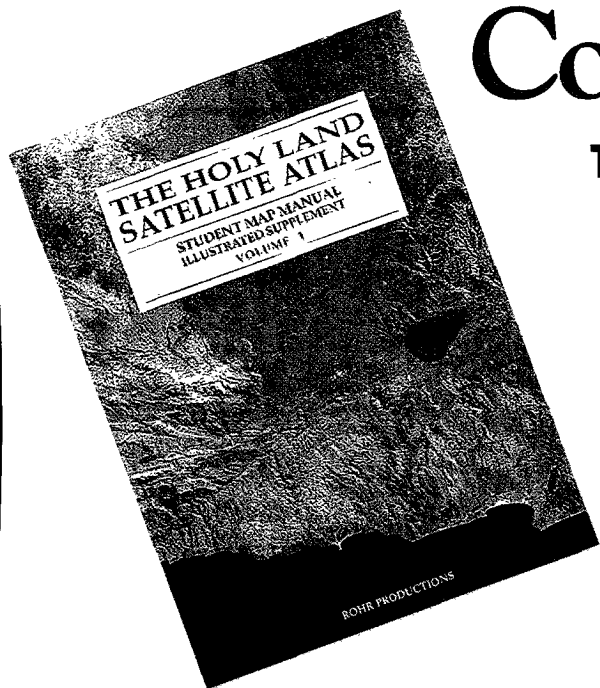
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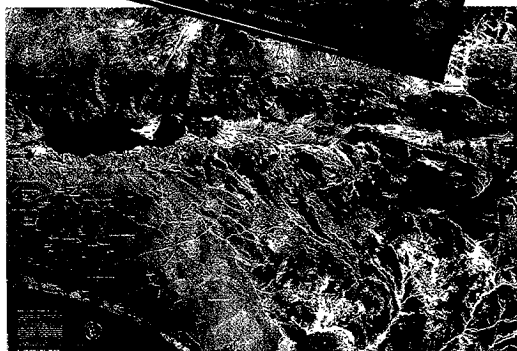
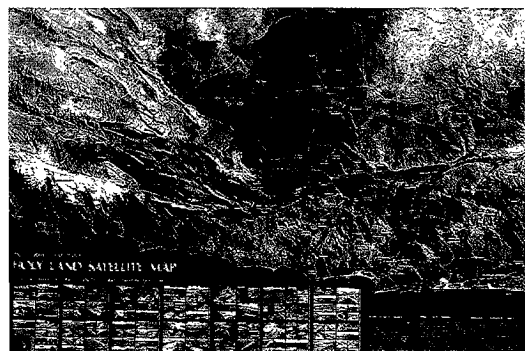
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# New life in Jesus

**James A. Zachary**

**New life in Jesus involves a death, a burial, and a resurrection.**



*James A. Zachary is an associate secretary of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.*

**Y**ears ago a billboard with its pointed message captured my attention. The Ford Motor Company had a doctor pushing his stethoscope on the patient's chest. The caption read "All I can hear is, 'Ford, Ford, Ford.'"

If the heavenly Physician listened to our hearts, what would He hear? Would He hear the pangs of sin (see Gal. 5:19-21) or the heartbeats of righteousness and joy (see verses 22, 23)?

By nature all of us are sinners. The psalmist says, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5). The apostle Paul confirms the universal nature of sin: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

We live in a world of sin. We are sinners. But we need not remain under the power of sin. I recently joined a group of friends on a whale-watching excursion in the North Atlantic Ocean. The sea was rough. We were thrilled to watch the huge creatures gracefully playing in the ocean by the side of our tiny boat. Then a large wave came over the prow of the boat. My friends on the lower deck got drenched. Fortunately, the water rushed over the deck and ran out the back of the ship.

Someone shouted, "It's all right to have the ship in the ocean, but it's not a good thing to have the ocean in the ship."

We do live in an evil world. But it is not God's will that evil continue to rule within our lives. God has made provision to give us victory over sin. He has given us the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). Without Jesus there is no hope, for "neither is there salvation in any

other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Jesus spoke of this salvation as a new-birth experience. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). In His interview with Nicodemus, Jesus repeated thrice this divine imperative of new birth. Paul also emphasized this necessity for new life. Humbled in the dust of the Damascus highway, he saw what the gospel of Jesus is all about. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

This is the good news. In Jesus there is hope for every sinner. Through Him we have forgiveness, reconciliation with God, and peace. Through Him we become sons and daughters of God. Through Him we have new life.

While walking through a coal-mining town I noticed that the coal dust covered everything. Everything in that town seemed darkened by the dust. In the midst of that depressive picture, what joy it was to find a rose, beautiful as ever, without a speck of dust on it. Likewise, even though we may live in the midst of sin, God's grace can enable us to be new persons and live godly lives.

How is this possible? We turn to Paul again. He gives us three simple steps to this new life, and they are found in Romans 6:1-4.

## **Death to old life**

The new life in Christ begins with the death of the old life. Earlier in Romans, Paul describes the entire provision of God for the salvation of humanity through Jesus Christ. We are "justified freely by his grace through the redemp-

tion that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). This justification has brought us "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). Not only that, but also "we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (verse 2). All these are made possible through the free grace of God manifested in Jesus. The end result is the new life: "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (verse 21).

Back in Paul's time some misunderstood the free nature of God's grace. These felt that the more one sinned, the more one could spotlight on the power of God's grace. Paul vehemently opposed such misinterpretations of the gospel. "God forbid," he declared (Rom. 6:1, 2), warning, "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

Christian living begins by dying. There must be a death to the world and sin. We as sinners must believe and accept that Jesus died for our sins on the cross. We must be crucified with Jesus. We must give up the deeds of the flesh (see Gal. 5:19-21).

How do we die to sin? Ellen White answers it well. "You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good plea-

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# 14

## BAPTISM

By baptism we confess our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and testify of our death to sin and of our purpose to walk in newness of life. Thus we acknowledge Christ as Lord and Saviour, become His people, and are received as members by His church. Baptism is a symbol of our union with Christ, the forgiveness of our sins, and our reception of the Holy Spirit. It is by immersion in water and is contingent on an affirmation of faith in Jesus and evidence of repentance of sin. It follows instruction in the Holy Scriptures and acceptance of their teachings. (Rom. 6:1-6; Col. 2:12, 13; Acts 16:30-33; 22:16; 2:38; Matt. 28:19, 20.)

sure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him."<sup>1</sup>

It takes the same resurrection power that brought Lazarus out of his grave to bring righteousness out of the soul enslaved in sin. It takes the same power to give a sinner new life that it took to give life to that clay statue that became Adam. Adam lived because of God's power. The sinner can have new life only through that same power.

If we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts, He brings a conviction of our sins. He leads us to the forgiveness and empowering available in the cross

of Jesus. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:14-16).

### Burial of old life

Paul describes the second step toward new life as a burial: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death" (Rom. 6:4). Death must be followed by burial. Like the little girl who died in a village far away. When she died, the family could not afford the services of an undertaker. They prepared the body as best as they could, constructed a bamboo coffin, and dug the grave. In the hot tropical climate all of this had to be done within 24 hours of death. During the funeral service the father got up four times and placed his hand between the arm and rib cage of his daughter. He was feeling for any sign of life. When he was certain she was dead, the family buried the body. The grave was filled with earth.

The finality of death is followed by the finality of a burial. So is it in the Christian life. Death to sin must be followed by an act of burial. And Paul uses the symbol of baptism to signify this burial. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore

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# 15

## THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is a participation in the emblems of the body and blood of Jesus as an expression of faith in Him, our Lord and Saviour. In this experience of communion Christ is present to meet and strengthen His people. As we partake, we joyfully proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again. Preparation for the Supper includes self-examination, repentance, and confession. The Master ordained the service of foot washing to signify renewed cleansing, to express a willingness to serve one another in Christlike humility, and to unite our hearts in love. The Communion service is open to all believing Christians. (1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 11:23-30; Matt. 26:17-30; Rev. 3:20; John 6:48-63; 13:1-17.)

we are buried with him by baptism into death" (Rom. 6:3, 4).

### Rise to new life

Then comes the third step to new life. We are dead to sin, our sins are buried, and then we rise to live a new life. Paul states, "As Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (verse 4). When we rise out of the waters of baptism, in faith we grasp the power of the resurrection to live a new life.

Paul often uses the death-resurrection motif to illustrate how sinners are saved and how they are equipped to lead a righteous life. To Ephesians he writes: "Even when we were dead in sins, [God] hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:5, 6).

Participation in the power of Christ's resurrection means enjoying the fruits of victory over sin that Jesus offers. He lives, therefore we live. And we mani-

fest the fruits of the Spirit in our lives: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-25).

One thing we can never forget. The victory is always Christ's. When we accept Him, He gives it to us. We don't struggle. We trust in Him. We obey Him. And He becomes the power of the new life for us and in us.

I recall a young Buddhist convert. She was part of a small group study that met in our home. One day she asked for special prayer. "I try and try," she said, "to live a new life, but all I seem to know is failure." Many Christians are like her. They seem to live in the perpetual frustration of defeat when victory is offered by the Lord. In human power we cannot live a new life. Power comes when we make the decision to place our weak hands in the almighty hand of Jesus. He is able to change us. Ellen White states,

"By yielding up your will to Christ, you ally yourself with the power that is above all principalities and powers. You will have strength from above to hold you steadfast, and thus through constant surrender to God you will be enabled to live the new life, even the life of faith."<sup>2</sup>

How do we publicly confess that we have accepted Jesus? How do we tell the world that we have made a decision to follow Jesus? The Bible provides us with just such a symbol in baptism.

### Baptism and the new life

The ceremony of baptism itself does not bring about any miracle. It is only an outward symbol of an inward change. However, it is an important and essential symbol. It is a living testimony of the believer's spiritual death, burial, and resurrection. In baptism, the converted sinner is saying, "I was once a sinner. My old way of living has ended through my being crucified with Christ. As I come out of the water, I know that the Holy Spirit has begun a new life in my heart."

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The coming out of the water emphasizes the mode of baptism. Sprinkling cannot be that mode. Pouring cannot be. Only baptism by immersion remains true to the biblical model. John the Baptist baptized by immersion. Philip baptized the Ethiopian official by immersion (Acts 8:38). Paul in Romans 6 speaks of the same mode. In fact the Greek word *baptizo* means "to dip in or under."

If we are to be baptized, we need to bury our sinful past. That is an act of our will. Only those who have reached the age of accountability can choose to believe in Jesus, accept His provisions, confess their sins, and then be willing to be baptized. So babies cannot be baptized.

There is more to the meaning of baptism. The baptized ones now become "living stones" in the church of God (1 Peter 2:5, NIV). They have fellowship with their new family of believers. They begin a new life of service through the power of the Holy Spirit. They get involved in the mission of Jesus to save sinners.

This new life needs to be renewed

each day. Every morning we must begin our day at the cross and the empty tomb. There must be a daily death to sin and a resurrection with Jesus to a new life of victory. Praise God, Jesus is able to save. He can bring victory out of defeat, life out of death, joy out of sadness.

During an evangelistic meeting in Papua New Guinea, a pastor gave his testimony to the large audience. "You all know me. You know the village in the highlands where I was born. You have heard the stories of my people. I was an evil man. I drank, I smoked, I chewed betel nut, I fought in tribal wars. Then someone told me about Jesus. Look at me now. I am a new man. No more evil habits. Look at my body. It is clean. Jesus has changed my life."

In Papua New Guinea Adventists are called the "stout people." Not because of body weight, but because they have a strong heart. They are a people who leave old ways and live a new life through Jesus Christ.

Yes, through Jesus you can have a new life today. ■

## New life in Jesus Outline

### Introduction

- A. We are all under sin
- B. We all can have new life

### I. Death to old life

- A. New life begins with the death of the old
- B. Grace does not mean freedom to sin
- C. How do we die to sin?

### II. Burial of old life

- A. Burial in baptism

### III. Rise to new life

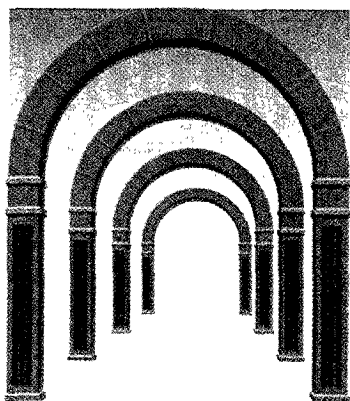
- A. Walking in newness
- B. Victory over sin
- C. Victory is Christ's to give, ours to receive

### IV. Baptism and the new life

- A. Meaning of baptism
- B. Mode of baptism
- C. Entry into the church

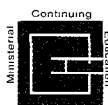
<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.



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# Believe in the Lord, believe in His prophets

**J. R. Spangler**

**Guidance from the  
gift of prophecy has  
brought success to  
the Seventh-day  
Adventist Church.**



*J. R. Spangler is  
editor emeritus of  
Ministry and field  
secretary for the It Is  
Written telecast.*

**H**ow I wish I could have met Ellen Harmon personally. She was born at Gorham, Maine, November 26, 1827. Her deep thirst for full and free salvation caused her to attend the Second Advent meetings in Portland, Maine, where she responded to an invitation by William Miller to come forward for prayer. She fully believed that the Lord was coming soon. Yet she struggled with doubts that Christ had accepted her. She despaired of any hope of salvation.

Her mother urged her to contact a devoted and beloved servant of Christ, Brother Stockman, who was preaching in Portland. He helped her experience an “inexpressible love for Jesus,” making her “willing to confess Jesus everywhere.”

A Methodist, she began testifying in her Sunday school class about the love of Jesus and of the joy she had in believing that He was coming soon. But, she wrote, the class leader interrupted her, “saying, ‘Through Methodism’; but I could not give the glory to Methodism, when it was Christ and the hope of His soon coming that had made me free.”<sup>1</sup>

Her unshakable belief in Christ’s soon coming finally led to disfellowship from the Methodist Church with six other family members.

## **Ellen White: God’s messenger**

Six weeks after the great disappointment of October 22, 1844, when Christ did not return as Millerites predicted, Ellen visited a home with four other

women. Seeking to understand their disappointment, they knelt in prayer. The Spirit of God came upon her mightily. She received the first of an estimated 2,000 visions and prophetic dreams.

*Years of ministry.* Thus began the 70-year ministry of one of the most remarkable people in Christian history. Her exploits are especially remarkable, considering that she was severely injured at age 9, which ended her formal schooling abruptly. But she continued to be educated by other means such as reading, traveling, contacts with others, and visions from the Lord. The amazing record of her accomplishments testifies that she had one of the major gifts of the Spirit—the gift of prophecy.

From her first vision at age 17 until she died 70 years later, she penned, not typed, 25 million words, constituting more than 100,000 manuscript pages. These pages produced 4,600 periodical articles and 26 books during her lifetime. Today, including compilations, there are more than 100 titles of her works printed in English.

One book, *Steps to Christ*, is published in approximately 130 languages. Of the 10 most translated authors of all time, she ranks fourth. The first three are men, which makes her the most translated woman author in the entire history of literature—and also the most translated American author of either gender.

*Influence of her writings.* As an author, editor, and reader, I have been amazed at three major elements of her writings. First, their vast scope. She

expounds on nearly every conceivable topic! From devotional themes to exegesis; from ethics to science; from music to management; from sexual behavior to child-rearing; from public speaking to prophesying; from evangelism to homiletics. The list could be made much longer!

Second, and perhaps more important, the quality and reliability of her works. In the field of health and specifically nutrition, her teachings have stood the test of time. In 1959 Cornell University's renowned nutrition historian, Dr. Clive M. McCay, in a three-part series of articles in the *Review and Herald*, concluded, "In spite of the fact that the works of Mrs. White were written long before the advent of modern scientific nutrition, no better overall guide is available today." Since this comment was written, newspapers, magazines, and television and radio programs have flooded the world with health information Adventists knew all along through the gift of prophecy.

Third, her influence on the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Along with her

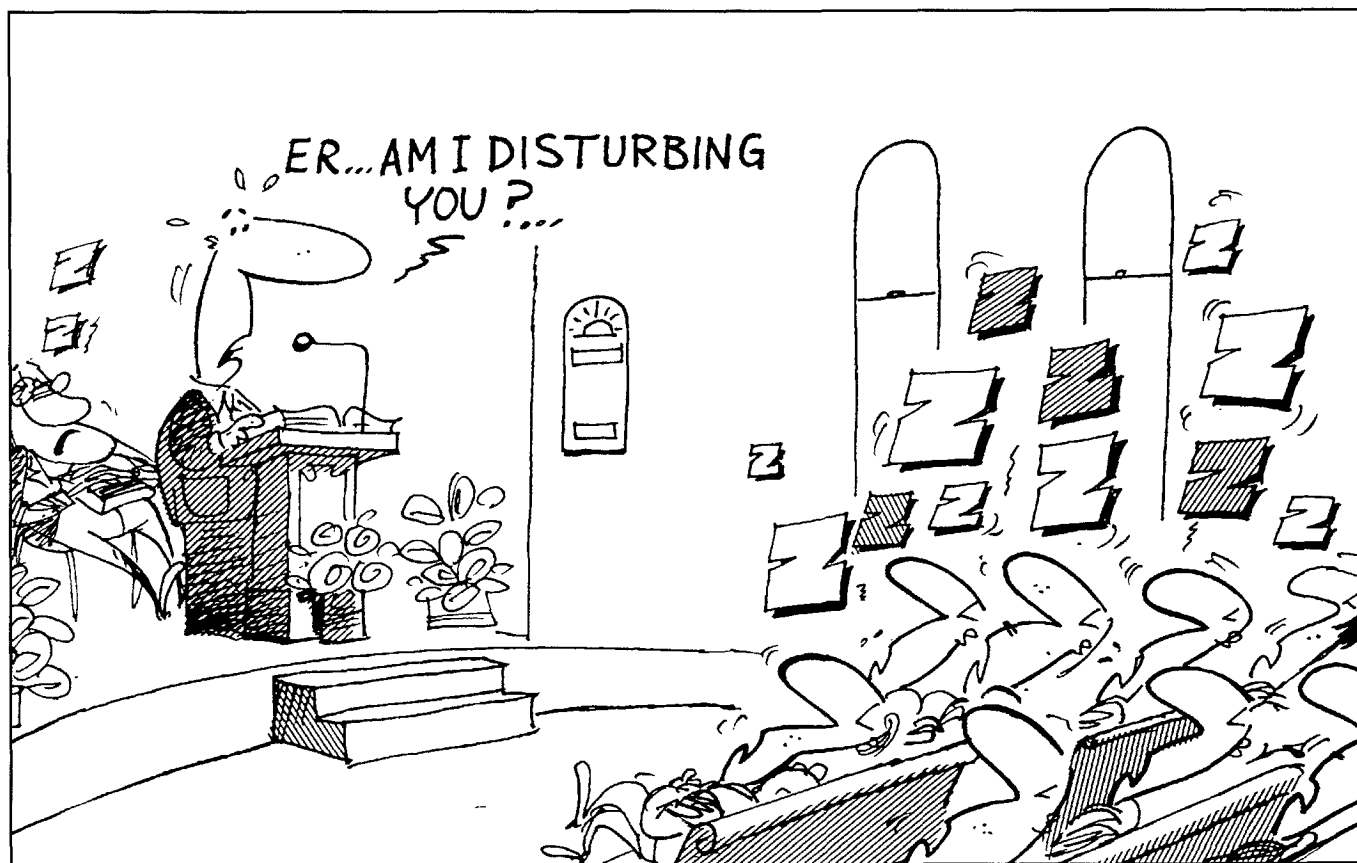
husband, James White, and Joseph Bates, she was one of the founders of the church. Her inspired counsel to church leaders led to a worldwide advance in evangelism, publishing, education, and medical evangelism. The incredible growth of this church from a handful of disappointed Millerite followers in 1844 to a membership of more than eight million in 209 countries, with a network of thousands of churches, schools, publishing houses, clinics and hospitals, is largely, if not entirely, owing to the gift of prophecy!

I wish every member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church would realize the importance of that point. After 50-plus years of ministerial experience involving worldwide travel, I have come to conclude that without the gift of prophecy, we would probably be either nonexistent or a handful of disillusioned people lacking global vision.

This point is undergirded by an experience of F. D. Nichol, a former editor of the *Adventist Review*, in the 1950s. In writing his book *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, he met an aged leader of one of

the other Advent bodies rooted in the Millerite movement. This leader spoke of the expansion of the Seventh-day Adventists, their schools, publishing houses, medical institutions, and then concluded: "Your men were more farsighted than ours and laid better plans." Nichol replied, "No, our men were no wiser than yours, but we had a frail handmaiden of the Lord in our midst who declared that by visions from God she saw what we should do and how we should plan for the future."

*Prophet or messenger?* Ellen White never set herself on a pedestal, acknowledging herself as only a sinful human being like everyone else. She never denied her call to the prophetic office, but made no boastful claims. She simply stated, "To claim to be a prophetess is something that I have never done. If others call me by that name, I have no controversy with them. But my work has covered so many lines that I cannot call myself other than a messenger, sent to bear a message from the Lord to His people, and to take up work in any line that He points out."<sup>2</sup>



Although not claiming to be a prophetess but a messenger of God, she clarified that in her work, "God is either teaching His church, reproofing their wrongs and strengthening their faith, or He is not. This work is of God, or it is not. God does nothing in partnership with Satan. My work for the past thirty years bears the stamp of God or the stamp of the enemy. There is no halfway work in the matter. The *Testimonies* are of the Spirit of God or of the devil."<sup>3</sup>

### The messenger's authenticity

*Impact on lives.* One of the greatest proofs of Ellen White's inspiration is her impact upon her readers. A *Ministry* magazine article, "Who Reads Ellen White?" (October 1982), points out that there is a significant difference in the spiritual life of those church members who regularly read the writings of Ellen White compared to those who seldom do. The Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University surveyed more than 8,200 Seventh-day Adventists who attended 193 different churches throughout the North American Division. One of the survey questions dealt with the degree of involvement in regu-

lar study of Ellen White's books. Nonreaders included those who answered "Never" or "Sometimes." Readers were those who usually or always read the writings of Ellen White. The results indicated that 2,848 were readers and 5,375 were nonreaders.

One of the most significant findings was that there was a striking difference between the readers and nonreaders as to their relationship with Jesus Christ. Eighty-five percent of the readers indicated that their relationship with Jesus was intimate. Only 59 percent of the nonreaders claimed a similar relationship. A difference of 26 percent. Without question, Ellen White's readers saw their relationship with Christ as closer and more intimate than nonreaders.

Numerous other questions made it clear that readers were more faithful to Christ and His church than nonreaders. With regard to daily personal Bible study, it was found that some of the strongest differences existed between readers and nonreaders. Eighty-two percent of the readers usually or always had daily personal Bible study while only 47 percent of nonreaders did. This was a 35 percent difference,

*the strongest of any item in the study.* In other words, readers of the writings of Ellen G. White are much more likely to be Bible students than are nonreaders. This surely refutes the claim that Ellen White's writings take the place of Scripture.

Ellen White stated that her testimonies were necessary because people were not familiar with the Scriptures: "If you had made God's Word your study, with a desire to reach the Bible standard and attain to Christian perfection, you would not have needed the *Testimonies*. It is because you have neglected to acquaint yourself with God's inspired Book that He has sought to reach you by simple, direct testimonies, calling your attention to the words of inspiration which you had neglected to obey, and urging you to fashion your lives in accordance with its pure and elevated teachings."<sup>4</sup>

*Exaltation of Christ.* I know of no writer in history who has exalted the Scriptures as the voice of God and heaven's authority for the lives of people more than Ellen White. None has elevated the person and work of Jesus Christ more than she. She declared Christ to be the center of all true doctrine, the center of all God's promises. He is the center of faith and hope, the great focus of attraction in evangelical preaching. Christ is the alpha and the omega of all truth. She declared that every page in the New Testament shines with His light. She spoke of the glory of the Son of God reflected in all Old Testament scriptures, and of Christ as the treasure of the New Testament. She declared that Jesus Christ is before all things—from everlasting to everlasting as our Redeemer.

Consider her book on Christ's life, *The Desire of Ages*, which I regard to be the greatest book, outside the Bible, on His life. *Christ's Object Lessons*, a commentary on His parables, and *The Ministry of Healing*, which she said contains the wisdom of the Great Physician, also elevate Christ. Anyone who reads her works extensively recognizes her as a Christ-centered messenger of God. She saw the Saviour in vision and she describes His person, His character,

## 16

### SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND MINISTRIES

God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts which each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills, the gifts provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions. According to the Scriptures, these gifts include such ministries as faith, healing, prophecy, proclamation, teaching, administration, reconciliation, compassion, and self-sacrificing service and charity for the help and encouragement of people. Some members are called of God and endowed by the Spirit for functions recognized by the church in pastoral, evangelistic, apostolic, and teaching ministries particularly needed to equip the members for service, to build up the church to spiritual maturity, and to foster unity of the faith and knowledge of God. When members employ these spiritual gifts as faithful stewards of God's varied grace, the church is protected from the destructive influence of false doctrine, grows with a growth that is from God, and is built up in faith and love. (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:9-11, 27, 28; Eph. 4:8, 11-16; Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.)

FUNDAMENTAL  
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*Continued on page 52*



A Chronological Study by  
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# Ellen White on Salvation

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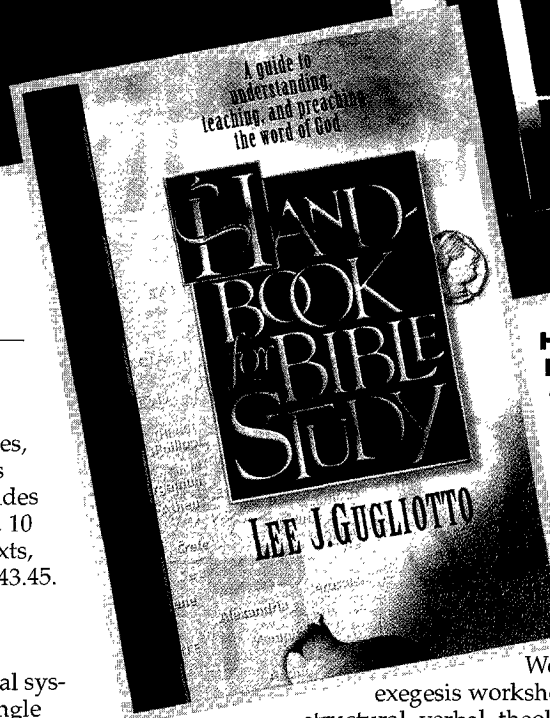
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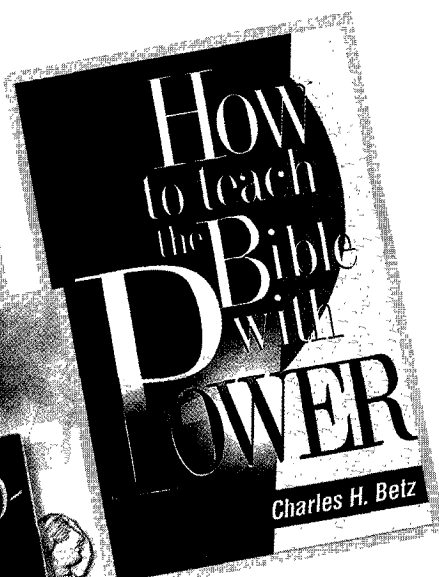
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## 17

### THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

FUNDAMENTAL  
BELIEFS OF  
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One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10.)

and His love. She predicted future events connected with the Second Coming. Her description of the new earth is nothing less than magnificent.

*Focus on the cross.* As to the cross, her commentary is without parallel. While working on the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, one paragraph from her became my guiding light for the project. "The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers."<sup>5</sup> She made Mount Calvary the Mount Everest of all Scripture.

I can testify from personal experience how often I have been driven to my knees surrendering to Jesus because of her testimonies and writings that point to the Saviour.

### Prophecy, a spiritual gift

*Building the body of Christ.* Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12 explain that the purpose of spiritual gifts is to help the church fulfill its God-given mission of "equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowl-

edge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12, 13).\*

Note Paul's emphasis on the spiritual gifts to help us come to a more complete knowledge of Christ and to experience His fullness in our lives. Then He adds that the result of these gifts to the church is that "we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine" (verse 14).

I can think of no other gift in our church today that has been more important in achieving these objectives than the gift of prophecy through the ministry of Ellen G. White.

*Preparing for the struggles ahead.* One Bible passage stands out in my mind as we face earth's final conflict. It is the story of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, who stood before his subjects during a crisis hour when they faced attacks from Moabites and Ammonites. Undoubtedly they were outnumbered, but the Spirit of God came upon Jahaziel, who stood up and exhorted the entire congregation not to fear the great multitude coming against them: "For the battle is not your's, but God's" (2 Chron. 20:15). This noncanonical prophet gave them specific instruction. Early the next morning when they went out to face the enemy, Jehoshaphat stood up and said, "Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper" (verse 20, KJV).

The success of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in establishing educational, publishing, and medical institutions around the world has depended to a large degree upon following counsel from God given through Ellen White. To the degree we have followed His instructions, we have succeeded. To the degree we have deviated from these messages, His church has suffered. Although we do not make the acceptance of the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy a test of fellowship, surely there is a blessing to those who read, study, and follow the principles in these writings.

*An invaluable pilot.* Uriah Smith, one of our pioneers and a talented writer, used an illustration to underscore the relevance of the visions of Ellen White. "Suppose we are about to start upon a voyage. The owner of the vessel gives us a book of directions, telling us that it contains instructions sufficient for our whole journey, and that if we will heed them, we shall reach in safety our port of destination. Setting sail, we open our book to learn its contents. We find that its author lays down general principles to govern us in our voyage, and instructs us as far as practicable, touching the various contingencies that may arise, till the end; but he also tells us that the latter part of our journey will be especially perilous; that the features of the coast are ever changing by reason of quicksands and tempests; 'but for this part of the journey,' says he, 'I have provided you a pilot, who will meet you, and give you such directions as the surrounding circumstances and dangers may require; and to him you must give heed.' With these directions we reach the perilous time specified, and the pilot, according to promise, appears. But some of the crew, as he offers his services, rise up against him. 'We have the original book of directions,' say they, 'and that is enough for us. We stand upon that, and that alone; we want nothing of you.' Who now heed the original book of directions? Those who reject the pilot, or those who receive him, as that book instructs them? Judge ye. . . .

"What we do say is distinctly this: That the gifts of the Spirit are given for our pilot through these perilous times, and wherever and in whomsoever we find genuine manifestations of these, we are bound to respect them, nor can we do otherwise without insofar rejecting the Word of God, which directs us to receive them. Who now stand upon the Bible, and the Bible alone? [It is the one who] . . . will receive the pilot according to its directions. We do not, then, discard, but obey, the Bible by endorsing the visions; while we should just so far reject and disobey it, as we should refuse to receive the provisions it has made for our comfort, edification, and perfection."<sup>6</sup> ■

### **Believe in the Lord, believe in His prophets Outline**

- I. Ellen White: God's messenger
  - A. 70 years of ministry
  - B. Influence of her writings
  - C. Prophet or messenger?
- II. The messenger's authenticity
  - A. Impact on lives
  - B. Exaltation of Christ
  - C. Focus on the cross
- III. Prophecy, a spiritual gift
  - A. Building the body of Christ
  - B. Preparing for the struggles ahead
  - C. Illustration: an invaluable pilot

\*Except where noted, all Scripture passages in this article are from the *New American Standard Bible*.

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1945), pp. 12, 13.

<sup>2</sup>\_\_\_\_\_, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), book 1, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup>\_\_\_\_\_, *Testimonies* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 4, p. 230.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 665.

<sup>5</sup>\_\_\_\_\_, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 315.

<sup>6</sup>Uriah Smith, *Do We Discard the Bible by Endorsing the Visions?* Review and Herald, Jan. 13, 1863, p. 52.



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# Christ and the law

**Angel Manuel Rodríguez**

**To obey the law is to proclaim that Christ is both Saviour and Lord.**



*Angel Manuel Rodríguez, Th.D., is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.*

**Y**ou know the story. Isaac Newton was sitting under his favorite apple tree when an apple landed at his feet. Intrigued by this phenomenon, he concluded that the force that pulled the apple to the ground was strong enough to reach the top of the tree. Then he mused: Would it also reach as far as the moon? So began the formulation of the law of gravity. Newton did not, of course, create this law; he simply discovered it.

Laws that regulate our moral and spiritual lives, however, are not open to human discovery. The Bible declares that these laws find their origin in God, not human ingenuity. God Himself has revealed these laws to us (see Ex. 20:1-23).

The law of God is not just a set of regulations stating the way things ought to function. They are a description of the very essence of our moral fiber of what we were created to be. A rejection of God's law is a self-destructive decision. If the Bible emphasizes the law, it is because we have forgotten who we are and how we are to enjoy life fully. Such emphasis is not involved in defining the law as an instrument of salvation or a means of self-justification before the Lord. The relationship between Christ and the law is clearly stated in the Bible.

## **Christ is the goal of the law**

The law is not an end in itself. Its deepest significance is found beyond itself in its ultimate goal. The meaning of much of what we do or experience is determined to some extent by its basic purpose. God's revelation has always had one central design, namely, to point to His redeeming work in Christ. The law is not an exception. Christ is the goal of the law (see Rom. 10:4), and a proper understanding of the way law and gospel interact will never place the one against the other in an antagonistic or

antithetical relationship.

Christ is the goal of the law in several ways. *First, He revealed in a unique way the true meaning of the law.* He stated, "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" (Matt. 5:17).<sup>\*</sup> Christ fulfilled the law by revealing its true significance, by exemplifying through word and action its full meaning. In His sermon on the mount He raised it above legalistic concerns—from a code governing mere external behavior to new heights of internal principles that rule inner motivations.

In His own life the Saviour revealed the substance of what it means to be willing to submit oneself to God's law (see Ps. 40:8). For Him, obedience to the law meant willingness to sacrifice for others, breaking down social barriers distorting the true meaning of the law, and full commitment to God in love. For Him, the law was much more than a set of rules to protect personal holiness; it was a system of life that opened up the individual to God and to others in true redemptive service. It was a law of freedom to love (James 1:25).

*Second, Christ was the goal of the law in that the types present in the law found their fulfillment in Him.* The prophetic content of the law pointed to Christ as the divine instrument of salvation (Luke 24:44). In a very specific way the Levitical law pointed to Him as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (Isa. 53:10-12; John 1:29). This prophetic dimension of the law was fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ and continues to be fulfilled in His high priestly work in the heavenly sanctuary (1 John 1:7).

*Third, Christ is the goal of the law in that it leads us to Him.* I have always been intrigued by roads. Roads come in

different shapes and sizes, but they all have several elements in common. They all lead somewhere. The very purpose of a road is to lead you to a particular destination. Perhaps the most important part of a road is the signs, informing you where this particular highway is leading. In a sense, the law is like those signs. It reveals whether one is heading in the right direction or whether one is lost.

Paul describes the law not as a road but as a baby-sitter or a nanny (in Greek a *paidagōgos*) under whose control we were and whose God-appointed intention was to take us to Christ (Gal. 3:23, 24). One of the most important functions of the law is to convince us that we are sinners and, therefore, lost in this world (see Rom. 3:20; 7:7, 8). Through the work of the Spirit on the human heart, the law reveals a need for a Saviour, someone through whom God's forgiveness and acceptance become a reality: "The law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24). By awakening our sense of lostness, the law points our need for salvation through faith in Christ. Even in its condemnation of us as sin-

ners, it points to the only source and means of salvation (Rom. 3:21, 22).

#### Christ is the end of the law

There is also an element of discontinuity between Christ and the law. *First, He ended the condemnatory function of the law for those who believe in Him* (Rom. 8:1). Outside Christ the law condemns sinners to death and cannot give life (see Gal. 3:21). Christ came, was born under the law (see Gal. 4:4), and obeyed it perfectly. He chose to redeem us from the curse of the law by becoming Himself a curse for us (see Gal. 3:13). That which was our legal and rightful punishment or condemnation He took upon Himself as our substitute, bringing to an end that aspect of the law in our lives. Since Christ brought to an end the condemnatory aspect of the law, there is absolutely no need to continue to be at war with God.

Shoichi Yokoi was a Japanese army corporal during World War II. When the American troops retook the island of Guam in 1944, Yokoi fled into the jungles of the island and hid out for 28 years. Long after the war ended he was

still at war. When found in 1972 and told that the war ended in 1945, he was baffled and confused. Those who used to be his enemies were now his friends. Likewise, for those who have found peace in Christ the law is no longer the enemy that claims our lives because the Lord took on Himself its condemnation.

*Second, Christ ended any perception that obedience to the law was necessary for acceptance with God.* Human works cannot achieve a righteous status before God. The works of the law have no such merit (see Rom. 3:20). Our human nature is spiritually weak (see Rom. 8:3) and we are in a state of rebellion against God that makes it impossible for us to submit to God's will (see verse 7). As a result, the law cannot be an instrument of justification.

Sadly, human obstinacy and pride seek acceptance before God through human effort. We want full control of our final destiny and our present security. We dislike placing such important issues in the hands of anybody else but ourselves. We want to be instrumental in our own preservation. This explains Paul's constant emphasis that we do not

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# 18

## THE LAW OF GOD

FUNDAMENTAL  
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The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Saviour. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments. This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is an evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow men. The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens Christian witness. (Ex. 20:1-17; Ps. 40:7, 8; Matt. 22:36-40; Deut. 28:1-14; Matt. 5:17-20; Heb. 8:8-10; John 15:7-10; Eph. 2:8-10; 1 John 5:3; Rom. 8:3, 4; Ps. 19:7-14.)

need the law as a means of salvation: "But now a righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known. . . . This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (Rom. 3:21, 22). God never intended that humans should achieve a righteous status before Him by keeping the law. Such misconception has ended forever through our Lord and Saviour.

*Finally, Christ ended the cultic regulations of the Old Testament.* Daniel prophesied that the Messiah would bring "an end to sacrifice and offering" (Dan. 9:27). The symbolic meaning of those services continues to be significant for the Christian because they are part of God's revelation, but we do not need to offer any more sacrifices. Those services were unable to bring final atonement for human sin (see Heb. 9:14; 10:4). All of them were a shadow of the things to come through Jesus (see Heb. 10:1). Neither do we need a human priest. Christ is our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary (see Heb. 7:11, 12). Even the Israelite religious feasts found their fulfillment in Christ, making it unnecessary for believers to celebrate them (e.g., 1 Cor. 5:7; Col. 2:16, 17).

### Christ establishes the law

In 1610 Galileo aimed his looking glass to the heavens. He observed the heavens from a fresh perspective; in fact, from a unique one. He saw the phases of Venus and the orbiting satellites of Jupiter. This established once

and for all the sun-centered theory of our solar system. What he saw changed our understanding of the universe.

How we look at Jesus and the law can change our perspective and our lives. According to Paul, the proper perspective from which we should look at the law is through Christ's redemptive work. If we do this, we would see that obedience to the law is not the center around which our salvation revolves. That center is Christ. Paul told the Corinthians that to understand the proper role of law it was necessary for them to remove the veil of legalism from their faces and to look at the cross through the lenses of Christ (see 2 Cor. 3:7-16).

When we look at the law through Christ, we find there a revelation of the loving character of God who enables us, by the Spirit, to obey "the righteous requirements of the law" (Rom. 8:4). Grace never nullifies the law but rather upholds it (see Rom. 3:31). This is only natural, since the Scriptures describe God's law as "holy, righteous and good" (Rom. 7:12). The psalmist refers to it as "perfect," "pure" (Ps. 19:7, 9), and eternal (Ps. 119:152). Law and grace cannot conflict with each other because both of them find their common origin in a loving God.

Christ is not only Saviour but also Lord over His people (see Rom. 6:15-18). His is not a tyrannical lordship but rather a tender and caring one born and nurtured in sacrificial love. The Lord said to His disciples, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15,

NKJV). This statement is extremely important. It indicates that the motivating force behind obedience to the law is love. Only those who love the Saviour are indeed willing to submit to Him as Lord.

Therefore, obedience is the concrete expression of our genuine love for our Lord. Love is not simply an abstract idea or principle. It has a body that allows it to be what it is. That body could be called obedience. Hence Jesus summarized the essence of the law as love (see Matt. 22:37-40; Gal. 5:14). By saying this we are not taking away the specifics of the commandments. But we are saying that the fulfillment of the specific commandment is possible only because there is love. Paul expressed this thought beautifully: "Love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:10). The law is no longer a letter to be obeyed out of fear. It is a description of God's love seeking to express itself through our lives.

When we look at the law through Christ, we understand that the law is never instrumental in restoring or preserving our relationship with God. Yet obedience to the law provides clear evidence, unquestionable evidence, that

we have chosen Christ as our Lord. Christ the Saviour is to be proclaimed throughout the world as the only hope of salvation. But at the same time we must proclaim Him as our Lord. In this context, the preaching of the law is the proclamation of the lordship of Christ.

### The law and Christ's lordship

The law without Christ serves only to seal our extinction. Biblical law should never be separated from God's forgiving and redeeming grace. Obedience to the law shows that our Saviour is also our Lord. Hence, the law will play a significant role in the closing events of the great controversy when the lordship of Christ will be questioned radically by a rebellious world (see Rev. 12:17). In that setting, obedience to the law will be a clear validation of the fact that Christ is our exclusive Lord, worthy of worship. ■

### Christ and the law

#### Outline

#### Introduction

- A. Biblical law is revealed

#### B. Grace and law not in conflict

- I. Christ is the goal of the law
  - A. Christ reveals the true meaning of the law
  - B. Christ fulfills the types portrayed in the law
  - C. The law points to Christ
- II. Christ is the end of the law
  - A. Christ ends the condemnation of the law
  - B. Christ ends the law as a means of justification
  - C. Christ ends the cultic regulations of the law
- III. Christ establishes the law
  - A. Christ provides a new perspective
  - B. Obedience expresses love
  - C. Obedience proclaims Christ's lordship

#### Conclusion

The law and Christ's lordship

\*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture passages in this article are from the New International Version.

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# How to survive the coming crisis

**James A. Cress**

## Faithful stewardship means survival in the final crisis.



*James A. Cress is the secretary of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.*

**A**dmittedly, preaching on stewardship seems only slightly more exciting than watching grass grow. We pastors too quickly assume that little new light can be brought to a biblical topic that seems so crystal-clear, and we erroneously conclude that we risk offending our hearers when we preach on a topic that is obviously designed to divest them of cash.

Giving goes against the natural bent of fallen humanity—the bent to receive rather than give, to hoard rather than to distribute, to grasp rather than to release. And, in fact, it is this very issue—humanity's inherent selfishness—that makes stewardship significant. First, it helps us model God's initiative of generous giving; and second, it builds a faith relationship that teaches trust and helps mature the faith of our members. Third, it reverses the trend of independence by teaching principles of increasing dependence upon God's providence.

### **A crisis in the past: Elijah and the widow**

In Elijah's day Israel suffered divine judgment for rebellion and disobedience. People followed their leaders into apostasy, with devastating results. "And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, 'As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word'" (1 Kings 17:1).\*

As divine judgment fell on Israel, God moved to preserve the prophet's life. First, Elijah was miraculously fed by ravens at the brook Cherith. When this source of water dried up, God again

spoke to Elijah: "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you" (verse 9).

Now let's go back in time and witness the drama unfold.

*Elijah in crisis.* God's call is testing Elijah's faith. Although divine direction is clear, a crisis of faith immediately confronts the prophet. Logic demands disobedience or at least delay in following God's instruction. Widows, even in Israel, are so low on the socioeconomic scale that the idea of such an individual providing for others is laughable. By human logic, the idea of a widow in a heathen nation being able, much less willing, to support Elijah is patently ridiculous. However, Elijah has learned that God is faithful to His word, and he responds in obedience even when logic indicates otherwise. "So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, 'Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink.' And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, 'Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand'" (verses 10, 11).

*The widow in crisis.* God's call also tests the widow's faith. She knows the full desperation of her plight and is prepared to deal with the consequences. She knows she faces death. "As the Lord your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die" (verse 12).

Obviously the widow has few resources even in the best of times. Now she is down to the bottom of the barrel. Her provisions are so meager that she needs only a couple sticks to kindle the fire to cook this last supper for herself and her son. Understanding a mother's love, I believe this widow probably expects to give the entire cake to her son.

*God's three-facet plan.* But Elijah outlines a different expectation. He offers an alternative course that promises to preserve the life of her family. "Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth'" (verses 13, 14).

In his request, Elijah states three facets of God's plan. First, God has a portion. God's portion is small—"a small cake." It is small but vital. God does not expect all that a person has, but He does require His portion.

Second, God's priority is essential. His portion must come first—"but make me a small cake from it first." God takes priority above all other demands or desires. He will be first or He will be nothing in our lives.

Third, God's promise is great. He promises deliverance—"The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry." But notice the clarity of God's plan. The widow must experiment in faith in order to receive God's promise. She must first trust and obey God's command before she experiences the reality of His promised deliverance.

In this case, the widow chooses to obey and the results are tangible. "So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days. The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke by Elijah" (verses 15, 16).

What a lesson. Experimentation in faith brings dramatic, life-preserving results. This widow woman started out an unbeliever—"As the Lord *your* God lives" (verse 12)—and ended up not only with her life spared from death, but a person of faith who had seen God work in her own household. Physical and spiritu-

al deliverance had come for her family.

The coming crisis:  
what God expects of us

The book of Revelation describes a final crisis when the world, under God's judgment, experiences consequences similar to those Israel experienced in Elijah's day. "And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Rev. 13:16, 17).

When God's people can do nothing to provide for themselves—even to buy or sell goods for their family—they must depend totally upon God. What a faith this will require! Total dependence upon our heavenly Father without doing anything through our own capabilities to provide for ourselves or our families. Perhaps we will learn the lesson that God is all we need only when God is all we have.

But what will enable us to take such a giant step of faith in that final crisis? I believe it will be because our faith has grown through repeated smaller faith steps before the crisis comes.

*Obedience our only choice.* Like the widow of Elijah's day, God's people must obey to survive. And the principles of that obedience are still the same. "*Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove Me now in this, says the Lord of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out*

*for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,' says the Lord of hosts; 'and all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land,' says the Lord of hosts"* (Mal. 3:10-12).

God's portion is small—a tithe, just 10 percent. God's priority is essential—He must be placed first. God's promise is great—deliverance! God will take care of us. But notice, God will take care of us if we permit Him. If we cannot trust God with 10 percent, how will we trust Him when we can do nothing for ourselves and must depend upon His sustenance for 100 percent?

The issue of faith today is the same as it was for the widow. Experimentation. God asks us to put Him to the test. He wants us to determine for ourselves that faith works!

Once I was preaching on Malachi 3, and a concerned church member suggested preaching obedience regardless of the result. He reasoned, "Maybe God wouldn't bless, but people must still return tithe nevertheless." I responded, "But that isn't what the Bible says." God says, "Prove Me now in this!" If God's word is not sufficient to honor His own self-imposed test, it is not good for much at all. God requires obedience, but He does not require blind obedience. He offers to grow our faith through divine experimentation.

This is a biblical principle—"taste

## 20

### STEWARDSHIP

FUNDAMENTAL  
BELIEFS OF  
SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTISTS

We are God's stewards, entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, and the blessings of the earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their proper use. We acknowledge God's ownership by faithful service to Him and our fellow men, and by returning tithes and giving offerings for the proclamation of His gospel and the support and growth of His church. Stewardship is a privilege given to us by God for nurture in love and the victory over selfishness and covetousness. The steward rejoices in the blessings that come to others as a result of his faithfulness. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15; 1 Chron. 29:14; Haggai 1:3-11; Mal. 3:8-12; 1 Cor. 9:9-14; Matt. 23:23; 2 Cor. 8:1-15; Rom. 15:26, 27.)

and see that He is good!" In fact, God delights in experiential and experimental development of faith. "Real experience is a variety of careful experiments made with the mind freed from prejudice and uncontrolled by previously established opinions and habits."<sup>1</sup>

That is what I want—real experience! Notice how it comes—by careful experiments. Scott Peck says, "Learning can be passive or experiential. Experiential learning is more demanding but infinitely more effective. As with other things, the rules of communication and community are best learned experientially."<sup>2</sup>

*Needed: a heart relationship.* For us today, God's commands presuppose a heart relationship. The Creator of this universe is not a pauper who must wait on our 10 percent to operate His kingdom. Scripture declares that He owns the silver and the gold and the cattle on a thousand hills.

So Jesus does not need our money. Jesus needs our heart. But the Saviour knows that He will not have one without the other. He says, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21). Jesus underscores an essential rule of life. We love that to which we give. We love that for which we spend. If we spend only for ourselves, if

we give only to ourselves, we will end up loving only ourselves. If we invest beyond ourselves, if we give to heaven's objectives, if we spend for heaven's priorities, we will end up loving heavenly things. ■

## How to survive the coming crisis Outline

### Introduction

- A. Why we don't preach stewardship
  - 1. Assumption: the topic is boring
  - 2. Perception: nothing new to say
  - 3. Anticipation: audience alienation
- B. Why we must preach stewardship
  - 1. Responsibility: to teach all that God has revealed
  - 2. Privilege: to help faith mature
  - 3. Blessing: to believers when their faith embraces dependence on God.
- I. A crisis in the past: Elijah and the widow
  - A. Israel in crisis as a result of disobedience (1 Kings 17:1-7)

- B. Elijah in crisis when called to obey (1 Kings 17:8-11)
  - 1. God's command promises protection (verses 8, 9)
  - 2. Human response involves obedience (verses 10, 11)
- C. The widow in crisis as a result of hearing God's plan (verses 12-16)
  - 1. She recognizes her tragic plight (verse 12)
  - 2. She recognizes God's three-step plan (verses 13, 14)
    - a. God's portion is small: "a small cake"
    - b. God's priority is essential: "first"
    - c. God's promise is great: "deliverance"
  - 3. She must experiment in faith in order to receive God's promise
  - 4. She obeys; and deliverance is provided
- II. The coming crisis (Rev. 13:15-17)
  - A. Economic and spiritual collapse threatens God's people (verses 15, 16)
  - B. God's people can do nothing to provide for themselves (verse 17)
  - C. God's people must choose obedience in order to survive (Mal. 3:9-12)
    - 1. God's portion is tithe: 10 percent
    - 2. God's priority is essential: "first"
    - 3. God's promise: "deliverance"

### Conclusion

Our crisis today (Matt. 6:19-21)

- A. God's command presupposes a heart relationship
- B. God's people must experiment in faith to taste God's faithfulness
- C. Our confidence in God will enable us to overcome the ultimate crisis

\*All Scripture passages in this article are from The New King James Version.

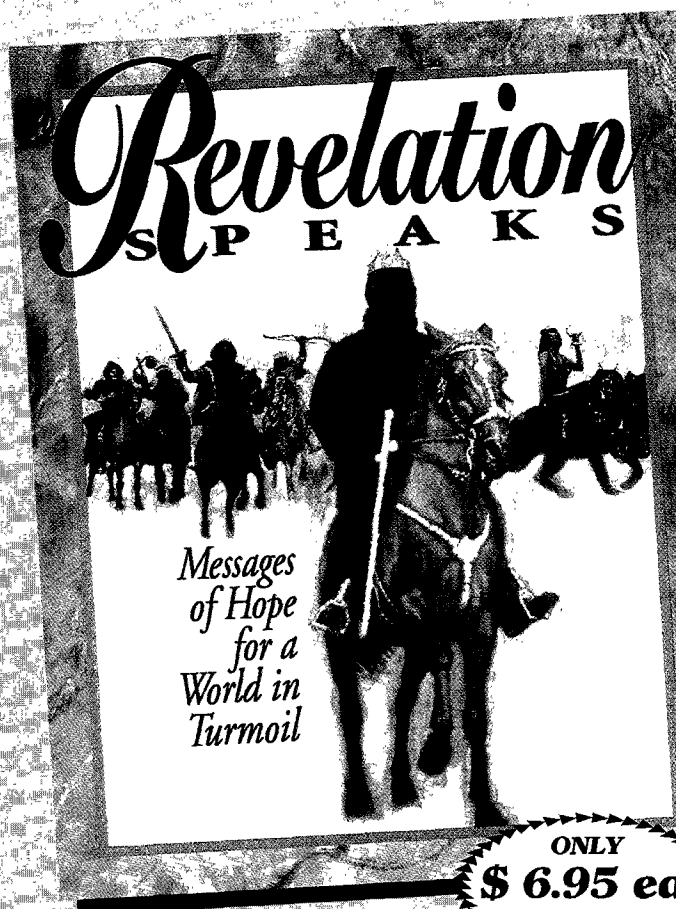
<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 3, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup>M. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 84.

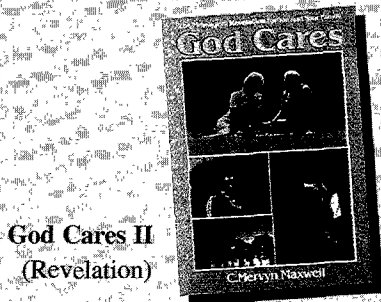


- Your Opportunity to Share -

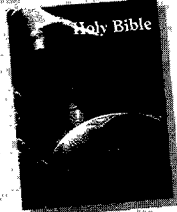
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# Our lives for His glory

**Floyd Bresee**

## Christian lifestyle results from belonging to Christ.



*Floyd Bresee, Ph.D., is a former Ministerial Association secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.*

**I**t was one of my wife's favorite possessions—a cedar chest overlaid with richly grained walnut veneer. I'd given it to her as an engagement present. But time had taken its toll. Thirty years of wax buildup, to say nothing of multiplied moves and the hazards of raising four children, had left it dull, scratched, and scarred. It had lost its luster. But not forever. Finish remover, scraper, sandpaper, and great gobs of applied energy got beneath that buildup of years and made it bright and beautiful again.

A buildup of old rules and meaningless traditions can make Christian lifestyle seem dull and undesirable. Abuse, both by those who think their behavior saves them and by those who think it doesn't matter, makes lifestyle lose its luster. But it need not be forever. Let's dig beneath the rules and traditions and uncover three principles that bring out the beauty of a genuinely Christian lifestyle and apply these principles to three areas of Christian living.

### **Principles for lifestyle**

*Principle 1: Having been justified by faith in Christ, we live to please Him—not ourselves.* Christian lifestyle doesn't save us. It results from our response to having been saved. Christian behavior should not be in hope of what Christ will do, but in appreciation for what He has done. As a Christian you can't buy Christ—He's already yours. "You . . . were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature" (Gal. 5:13, NIV).\*

On the contrary, love-centered acts spring naturally from love-centered attitudes and relationships. I planted a grove of walnut trees. But although I enjoyed them very much, the caterpillars en-

joyed them even more. They munched away on those succulent, green leaves until some trees were stripped almost bare. I was deeply disturbed. How could I get leaves back on my trees? Not to worry. The trees were healthy and still had plenty of energy within. Soon new buds appeared and before long, nature put the leaves back on. And that's the way it is with the Christian lifestyle. Christ within produces Christlike behavior without.

Christ's Spirit within makes the body special. "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; see also Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 9:27; 1 Thess. 5:23).

Christianity means putting Christ before everything. "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above. . . . Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1, 2). "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). To anyone not having that goal, Christian lifestyle makes little sense—and neither does Christianity.

*Principle 2: Loving Christ, we want to model our lives after His.* Everyone needs a hero. Instinctively, we tend to walk, talk, and act as our hero does. The Christian's hero is Christ. "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:6; see also 1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:5; 1 Peter 2:21).

*Principle 3: Christ's way is the happiest way.* Christian lifestyle is not to make life bitter—but better. Christ never takes anything from us, or asks anything of us, but to help us. Unfortu-

nately, some of us want Him to come into our lives, but not all the way in. "Lord, I want You in my home, but not in my kitchen. Kindly skip the rec room. And whatever You do, please stay out of my clothes closet."

We have trouble trusting His promise, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10, NIV; see also Ps. 16:11; Prov. 3:1, 2). Unimpeachable research demonstrates that the Christian lifestyle adds both years to our lives and life to our years.

Now let's apply these principles to three areas of Christian lifestyle.

### Applying lifestyle principles

**Recreation.** Rest is not only acceptable but essential. Since Christians tend to see work as a virtue, some seem to assume that overwork must be doubly virtuous. On the contrary, workaholics may be struggling with the sin of pride, feeling that if they work more than most they must be better than most. Some have feelings of low self-worth and use overwork to prove their value. Workaholics often neglect both their families and their health, and thus cannot be living to please God.

The Creation story says God set an example by resting one day in seven; and He set the day aside for us to rest. Genesis 2:1-3 teaches that rest time is not only acceptable and essential, but sacred!

The purpose of recreation is re-creation; not an escape from life, but a help in coping with life. We were created in God's image (see Gen. 1:27). Any recreation that brings us back to our everyday responsibilities less godlike or less able to cope is not true re-creation.

Overly stimulating entertainment dulls the spiritual senses. We were designed so that emotion is meant to lead to action. Purely passive spectators of highly stimulating entertainment tend to become jaded, requiring higher and higher stimulation to be moved. The volume on their emotional control knob gets turned down so low they cannot hear the still small voice of God's Spirit (1 Kings 19:11, 12). They find Bible reading dull. Some of them fall asleep in church.

Overly stimulating entertainment tends to be followed by depression and boredom. Many students, by the time they graduate from high school, have

spent 10,000-20,000 hours watching TV. No wonder they get depressed and become bored with real life.

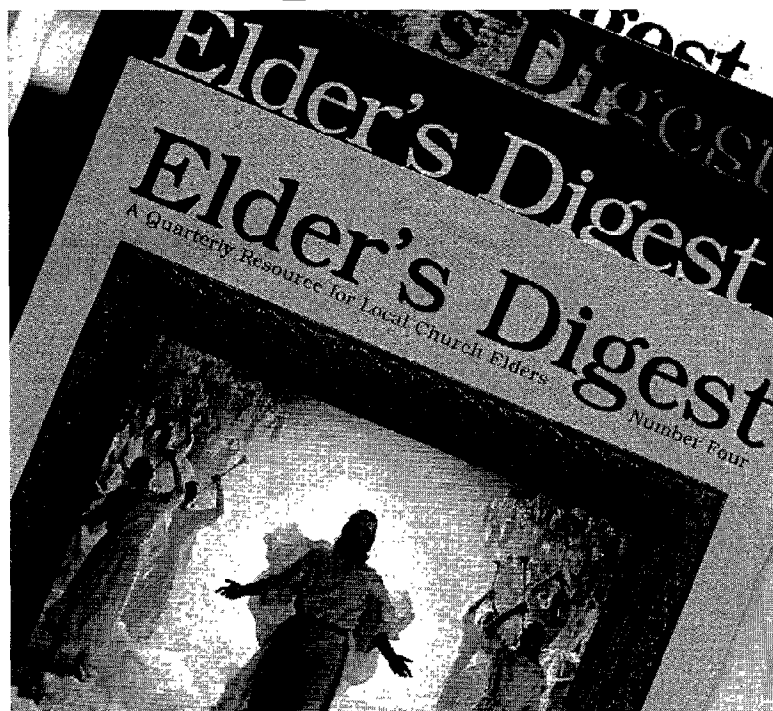
If we love Christ's commandments, we won't want to be entertained by seeing them broken. We won't find adultery, stealing, lying, and killing entertaining. More than one of these is portrayed in a typical hour of prime-time TV network programming, including an average of six violent acts and two deaths.

Paul summarized, "Finally, brethren,

whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Phil. 4:8). We may not be what we think we are, but what we think, we are.

Entertainment must not rob us of time with God. The average family, having access to TV, has the set on about 50 hours a week. By the age of 60, a family

## Stay sharp.



"Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." Proverbs 27:17

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member will have used up nine years of life watching TV, but will likely have felt too busy to spend time with God.

The wisest and most practical time-saving devices are those that accomplish two things at once. That's what happens when we spend recreation time in nature with the mind open toward nature's God. The benefits are both recreational and devotional.

*Appearance.* God loves beauty (Eccl. 3:11). Ours is a practical God, but if He were totally utilitarian, a sunrise would be like turning on a streetlight, flowers would all be tattle-tale gray, and music would sound like foghorns. Love of beauty didn't come from the devil, but from God.

Attract attention to Christ, not yourself. Dress is symbolic language, an outward display of personal priorities. Thus, religious revival leads to changed appearance (see Gen. 35:1-4; Ex. 33:5, 6). Christians "live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:15; see also Col. 3:23, 24). Their prayer is "Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me."

When Jesus came to earth, He shunned all outward display so people would be attracted by His goodness, not His divine glory. Paul applied the same principle to dress: "And the women

should be the same way, quiet and sensible in manner and clothing. Christian women should be noticed for being kind and good, not for the way they fix their hair or because of their jewels or fancy clothes" (1 Tim. 2:9, 10, TLB).

Emphasize nature's beautifiers. Christ has warned us against vanity, but not against grace and natural beauty. The Christian emphasizes nature's beautifiers: habits of cleanliness, plenty of fresh air, ample exercise, a well-balanced diet rich in iron and blood-building foods, temperate living, good taste, and a trust in God that produces a peaceful night's sleep (Matt. 6:25-34). Above all, a love in the heart that puts a smile on the face and a sparkle in the eye.

Only inner beauty lasts. Persons born with exceptional beauty often live their older years in frustration and bitterness, for outward beauty always fades. This is one reason Peter writes: "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight" (1 Peter 3:3, 4, NIV).

The gods we worship eventually write their names on our faces. Meet two 16-year-old girls, one named Plain and

the other named Gorgeous. Gorgeous lives her entire life being totally self-centered, while Plain gives herself wholeheartedly to loving, Christ-centered living. Meet them again at 60, and you'll likely find that Plain has an "unfading beauty" that actually makes her now more attractive than Gorgeous!

*Health.* The Bible views human beings as a single unit. The dichotomy between the spiritual and the material, borrowed from Greek philosophy and adopted by many Christians, is foreign to Scripture. God's call to holiness involves a call to physical as well as spiritual health. "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 1:2; see also Ps. 103:3).

The principal purpose of health reform is better health. It should leave us feeling neither superior nor deprived—but feeling better. Seventh-day Adventists, though they practice health reform only imperfectly, illustrate that it does pay. Research indicates that Adventists have fewer heart attacks and 50 percent less cancer than the general American population. Male Seventh-day Adventists aged 35 to 40 have longer life expectancy on the average than the general population. Health reform pays.

Health is important to Christians, because it was important to Christ. Jesus spent more time healing than preaching (see Matt. 4:23; 9:35). When He sent out His first disciples, He commissioned them to emphasize healing (see Matt. 10:8). If Jesus emphasized health, we should expect His followers to do the same.

Our bodies teach us about God. The body is exhibit A of His creative power. When He converts my breakfast cereal into energy that makes my heart beat and my fingers move, I know not only that God is good, but that He is good to me. After I cut myself and the blood stops flowing and healing begins, I know not only that God can work miracles, but that He works them in me. God is both provider and caretaker of our marvelous human machinery (see Ps. 139:13-15). The least we can do is cooperate with Him.

We show respect for our Creator by respecting His creation. "Do you not know that you are the temple of God

# 21

## CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR

We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with the principles of heaven. For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things which will produce Christlike purity, health, and joy in our lives. This means that our amusement and entertainment should meet the highest standards of Christian taste and beauty. While recognizing cultural differences, our dress is to be simple, modest, and neat, befitting those whose true beauty does not consist of outward adornment but in the imperishable ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit. It also means that because our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, we are to care for them intelligently. Along with adequate exercise and rest, we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures. Since alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the irresponsible use of drugs and narcotics are harmful to our bodies, we are to abstain from them as well. Instead, we are to engage in whatever brings our thoughts and bodies into the discipline of Christ, who desires our wholesomeness, joy, and goodness. (Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 John 2:6; Eph. 5:1-21; Phil. 4:8; 2 Cor. 10:5; 6:14-7:1; 1 Peter 3:1-4; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31; Lev. 11:1-47; 3 John 2.)

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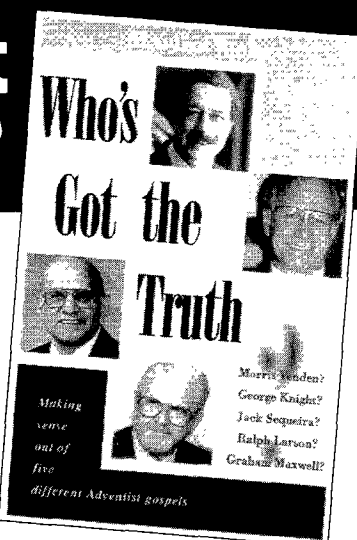
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and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are" (1 Cor. 3:16, 17).

Imagine that I have leased from you a little guest house behind your beautiful, big home. Hearing that you're going on an extended trip, I ask if I might move into your lovely home. If you find that I have stacked garbage in the closet and am raising chickens in the back room of the little house, you will come to two conclusions: I show disrespect for you by disrespecting your property, and you wouldn't dare trust me with a bigger, nicer place. Our bodies, created and maintained by God, are leased to us on trial for these "threescore and ten" years to see if we respect Him and if He dares trust us with even better, permanent ones.

A healthy body produces a clear mind. God has no way of reaching us except through our nervous systems, which are, in turn, dependent upon our overall health. We need look no further than Daniel and his companions for an example of how right habits of diet and living aid the powers of perception (see Dan. 1:8-20).

When we feel good, it's easier to be good. If we feel miserable, it's hard to act sweet. If our stomach is sour, our disposition tends to be sour. If our sys-

tems are upset, we often keep the family upset. It's simply easier to be good if we feel good.

## Maturing in Christ

In conclusion, let's not be Christian lifestyle fanatics. Paul counsels us to be "temperate in all things"—even that which is good (1 Cor. 9:24-27). Let's not be judgmental, but allow each other to mature at different rates (see Rom. 15:1). On the other hand, let's not be afraid to be different for Christ's sake.

An exchange teacher from England was teaching in a French school. She was greatly impressed by the behavior of one of the boys in her class. He always seemed eager to learn and never got into the arguments and fights on the playground. She managed to gain his confidence and learned that his parents had been a prince and princess in an Eastern European country. One day the palace was invaded, and his parents were dragged before a firing squad. The father was allowed just enough time to take his son aside and extract a promise: "Whatever happens to you, promise me that you will always behave like a prince."

The boy had not forgotten. He behaved differently because he was the child of royalty. Every Christian is a child of the King and it ought to affect

our behavior. He died for us. Let's live for Him. ■

## Our lives for His glory Outline

### Introduction

Beneath the dullness of rules, there is beauty

- I. Principles for lifestyle
  - A. We live to please Jesus
    1. Christian lifestyle doesn't save (Gal. 5:13)
    2. New behavior comes out when Christ is within
    3. Christ's Spirit within makes the body special (1 Cor. 6:19, 20)
    4. Putting Christ before everything (Col. 3:1, 2)
  - B. We want to model after Him
  - C. Christ's way is the happiest way
    1. Christian lifestyle makes life better, not bitter
    2. Christ promises to make life full (John 10:10)
- II. Applying lifestyle principles
  - A. In recreation
    1. Rest is essential
    2. Recreation is to re-create
    3. Stimulating entertainment dulls spiritual senses
    4. If we love the law, we won't want to be entertained by seeing it broken
    5. Entertainment must not rob us of time with God
  - B. In appearance
    1. Attract attention to Christ
    2. Emphasize nature's beautifiers
    3. Only inner beauty lasts
  - C. In health
    1. Health is important to Christ
    2. Our bodies teach us about God
    3. We respect our Creator by respecting His creation
    4. A healthy body produces a clear mind
    5. When we feel good, it's easier to be good

### Conclusion

#### Maturing in Christ

\*Unless otherwise noted, Scripture passages are from The New King James Version.

# Maintaining the miracle

**Sharon Cress**

**Keeping the family together requires God's direct and daily guidance and grace.**



*Sharon Cress is the director of Shepherdess International of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.*

**I**t's a miracle. The two become one, a family, and then the one becomes three. God takes the love of a man and a woman and breathes into it the breath of life. And the next thing you know, the family has grown. Father, mother, and baby—a living, loving family.

Yes, it's a miracle the way a family comes into existence. And in this world of alienation and fragmentation, it takes a miracle also to maintain that existence. We're talking about more than just living with the same last name under the same roof.

Webster defines the word "family" as a group of people united by certain convictions or a common affiliation. But God wants more than that in a Christian home. More than mutual affiliation, Christian families share a common faith in Christ reflected in a bond of commitment to each other. This faith and commitment is the heavenly glue that holds the home together. It holds the church together, too, for a church is only as strong as its family units.

Seventh-day Adventists consider a Christian home to be so important to God and vital to this church that one of our 27 fundamental beliefs bears the name "Marriage and the Family." Statement 22 opens with these words: "Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship."

## **It all began in Eden**

Come with me back to the Garden of Eden. It's a beautiful Friday afternoon. Adam, the first man, has been exploring his new Paradise home. He is dazzled by the breathtaking beauty. Miles of

lush green meadows carpeted by wildflowers in rainbow array. Fragrant forests. Gurgling brooks. Clear running rivers tumbling into roaring waterfalls.

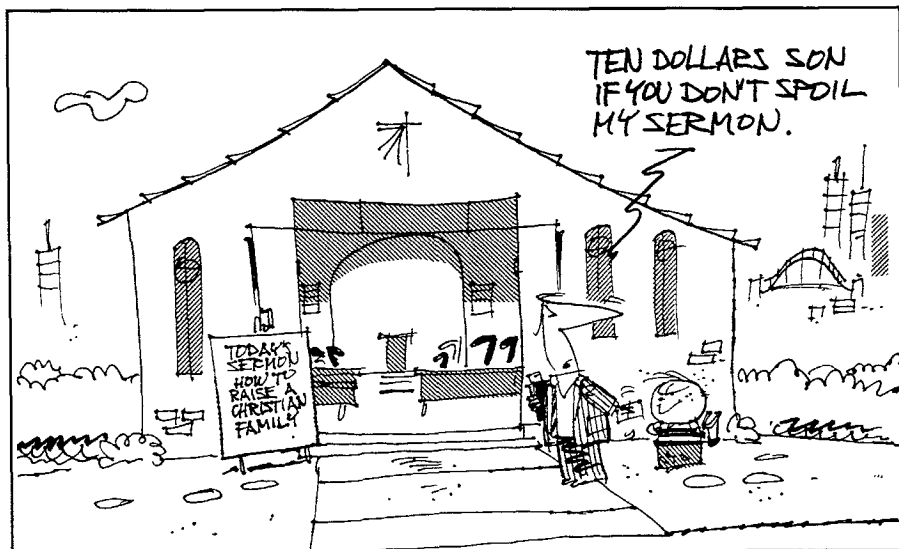
Of all the wonders of Creation, the living creatures intrigue Adam most. Friendly lions that purr when he rubs their necks. Tropical birds singing harmonies of praise. Mighty elephants trumpeting in response. All the animals are his friends, but Adam realizes that he is different—not just that he alone bears the image of God. Adam is different because he alone is alone. All the others have mates.

Adam starts feeling lonely. Though gloriously created, he feels incomplete.

I can see Adam discussing his feelings with God, who assures him that He understands his need for companionship. Suddenly Adam starts feeling sleepy. As he yawns, his eyes gradually close. Then his head slowly settles into the arms of God.

I can picture God smiling with the big surprise He has in mind as He tenderly stretches Adam on the grass and performs the world's first surgical procedure. When Adam wakes up, he sees something lovelier than anything his eyes have yet beheld. God steps back for Adam and Eve to get acquainted. As they are locked in delighted embrace, God gets their attention and pronounces them husband and wife.

That was the beginning of Christian marriage. God knew that it wasn't good to leave Adam alone, so He gave him a wife, and together they became a community of oneness. This unity of fellowship is reflected in the very nature of the Creator, where three separate, eternal Persons make up the corporate unit of the Godhead (see Gen. 1:1-3; Col. 2:9, 10).



## Ruin and restoration

Adam and Eve could have lived happily ever after with each other and with their Lord. But you know the sad story. When sin invaded Paradise, it shattered the family relationship. Husband and wife turned on each other (see Gen. 3:12). They also severed their relationship with God, hiding from His presence (see verse 8). Heartbroken at the alienation caused by sin, God took action to restore the oneness given humanity at Creation. The Word became flesh, to live among us and reestablish community—not just our individual relationship with Him but also with each other in restored family relationships. And beyond, Christ came to form a corporate body of families known as the church.

The night before Jesus died He gathered His band of disciples and washed their feet to create a spirit of community. Then He poured out His heart to His Father on behalf of His people, praying that “they may be one as We are” (John 17:11).<sup>\*</sup> His prayer included His entire church until the end of time: “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (verses 20, 21).

Incredibly, Jesus made the success of His gospel mission dependent upon the spirit of community seen in His follow-

ers, their experience of corporate oneness in Him. He even declared this demonstration as a test of His personal success as the Messiah: “I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me” (verse 23).

Following that intercessory prayer, Jesus descended to the valley and stag-

gered into Gethsemane, where His eternal oneness with the Father was broken apart. As the Representative of fallen humanity He had to take over where Adam failed, experiencing the separation from community with God that resulted from our sin.

Two pieces of wood comprised the cross of our salvation. On the vertical beam the body of Jesus linked heaven above with earth below, restoring fallen humanity’s community with God. On the horizontal beam His arms stretched wide to unite us in community with one another. At the point where those cross beams met, the heart of Jesus broke and He died. In doing that, He “abolished in His flesh the enmity, . . . so as to create in Himself *one new man from the two*, thus making peace” (Eph. 2:15). One redeemed humanity in Christ—this is what the gospel offers us in giving us salvation. And the Christian family unit is exhibit A of what it means to have community restored through Christ.

The word “family” evokes varying images. To some, the word portrays parents and children gathered around a

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### MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between partners who share a common faith. Mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. Regarding divorce, Jesus taught that the person who divorces a spouse, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God. Increasing family closeness is one of the earmarks of the final gospel message. (Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:3-9; John 2:1-11; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:21-33; Matt. 5:31, 32; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11; Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 6:5-9; Prov. 22:6; Mal. 4:5, 6.)

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roaring fire, celebrating the love that bonds them together along with grandparents and extended family. To others, the notion of family brings bitter flashbacks, ugly images they have tried for years to forget. What makes the difference?

Let's be practical. How can our marriages and families in this sinful world fulfill God's original purpose for the home and enjoy the benefits He intended?

### Principles for a happy family

*Principle 1: Have a healthy need for each other.* God could have introduced propagation of the human species on earth without creating us male and female. But in His wisdom He knew that ultimate bonding could not occur if we were "self-contained" and independent. We were created to need something the other sex possesses. Equality was not an issue in Eden, because both male and female are essential. Secular society today for the most part has thrown out this first principle. Prejudice, discrimi-

nation, and other evils have left men and women jockeying for superiority over each other. It is a sad fact that the competition that occurs outside the family, from work, sports, or other involvements, boomerangs back into the sacred couple relationship.

*Principle 2: Leaving and cleaving.* The biblical principle is to leave behind all other relationships—be they with parents, other love interests, or any bonds that would hinder a full surrender to each other. The Hebrew word translated "cleave" comes from a word that means "to fasten, join, stick to, or hold on to." After Jesus there should be only one person on earth with whom we have this kind of "Super Glue" relationship—our spouse. Many marital problems are caused because half the marriage relies on someone else to be his or her confidant. The first step toward sharing sexual intimacies with someone outside marriage is to share mental intimacies that should be spoken only between the marriage partners. Sharing intimacies is the

glue that "sticks" the marriage together, and sharing randomly with friends redistributes the glue to different relationships.

*Principle 3: Look relentlessly for every possible way to show each other love.* Each of us differs in how we need love and appreciation demonstrated. In our own individual ways, we all need: spoken love—expressing verbal appreciation; touching love—hugging, holding, and cuddling; time love—spending or investing time in what is important to the partner; and gift love—giving love gifts of something special, but not necessarily expensive.

### Pitfalls to avoid

While implementing those essential principles for a happy home, we must also avoid certain pitfalls.

1. *Avoid overcommitment to other interests*, including physical exhaustion, otherwise known as burnout. Couples who balance two careers, children, night school, etc., will too often see each

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### Keeping it together



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other only at times when they are too tired to enjoy the relationship. They each receive the "leftovers." A time commitment to each other that is not last on the list is essential.

2. *Avoid financial traps.* Keeping up with our neighbors by trying to "have it all" leads us into the same trap as working too hard. Too many couples who try to "have it all" wind up in the end with "having nothing," because in the process they have lost each other.

3. *Remember that in-laws can become outlaws.* Think back to our "leave and cleave" principle here. We must leave our original family behind. It's interesting to note that the Bible specifies that the male should leave his family and cleave to his wife. With the interesting psychological data we have today on the mother-son relationship and bonding, God evidently foresaw the need for sons to sever the bonds with their mothers in favor of their wives!

4. *Watch out for space invaders.* Give each other breathing space. Don't

suffocate your partner through jealousy or low self-esteem. Because of personality differences, we each need a different amount of personal space. Be sure each person is provided enough privacy.

### My testimony

In bringing these thoughts to a close, please permit me a few words of personal testimony about my own marriage. Jim and I are celebrating 25 years together this year. We still remind each other of that old saying that "marriages are made in heaven, but so are thunder and lightning." And that pretty well sums up our silver jubilee. I am not sure what I expected out of this quarter of a century. Reality tells me that we will celebrate our anniversary by preparing for a General Conference session rather than the large white tent and string quartet I had once imagined. My inner "flower child" had pictured us in poet shirt and gauze dress, celebrating over strawberries and ice cream.

In looking at pictures in our union periodicals of couples celebrating 50 and 75 years of marriage, I notice that they actually have grown to look alike. That's right—they have lived together so long that they seem to have grown into the same image. Sometimes they even wear matching glasses.

My ideas and Jim's have blended to such a degree that sometimes we barely know where one of us begins and the other leaves off. I guess we are heading for that "look-alike" stage. This is just amazing, considering our differences when we first got together.

We have suffered through the major withdrawals of 13 moves, yearly Pathfinder campouts, and church members who felt personally called by God to cleanse our pastoral family from all its faults. We have shared debts, closets, relatives, the flu, and cold baths in far-away places. I have folded his underwear 13,492 times, and he has picked up 12,497 of my hairpins from the bathroom sink.

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will humble themselves and pray  
and seek My face and turn  
from their wicked ways,  
then I will hear from heaven  
and will forgive their sin  
and heal their land.*

**Randy Maxwell**

A few nights ago I was hungry for a coconut and chocolate candy bar. Jim got in the car and went out to the store at 11:00 p.m. to get me one. Maybe the glue of appreciation that sticks marriages together is just that simple. At least, that's how I've come to see it.

### Two jewels from Paradise

Marriage and the Sabbath are the two jewels from Eden that remain today for us to enjoy. Both gifts from God have been relentlessly attacked by the enemy, but through Christ we still can experience them in their purest, most delightful form.

We have the Sabbath only one day a week, but our families are with us seven days a week. Keeping the family together—not just living under the same roof, but bonded together in spirit—requires God's direct and daily guidance and grace. May He help us value the family as He does, that we all may be one with Him and one with each other. ■

### Maintaining the miracle Outline

#### Introduction

- A. The miracle: two become one, one becomes three
- B. Importance of a family
- I. Family: origin in Eden
  - A. God creates Adam (Gen. 1:26, 27)
  - B. Adam alone, then God gives him a mate
  - C. Marriage—symbol of Godhead (Gen. 1:1-3; Col. 2:9, 10)
- II. Family: ruin and restoration
  - A. Sin ruins family
  - B. Man and wife turn against each other (Gen. 3:12)
  - C. They also sever their relationship with God (Gen. 3:8)
  - D. The Word becomes flesh to restore relationships
  - E. Night before Jesus died, prayed for unity (John 17:11, 20, 21)
  - F. Jesus made success of gospel mission dependent upon unity
  - G. Restored and reunited at the cross
    - I. Vertical restoration

2. Horizontal restoration
3. Out of two, one humanity, making peace (Eph. 2:15)
4. On the very spot where Jesus' heart broke is bonding place of family
- III. Practical principles for happy homes
  - A. Have a healthy need for each other
  - B. Leave and cleave
  - C. Look for ways to show love to each other

- IV. Pitfalls to avoid
  - A. Burnout
  - B. Financial traps
  - C. In-laws who become outlaws
  - D. Space invaders

#### Conclusion

- A. Personal testimony
- B. Two jewels from Paradise: marriage and Sabbath

\*All Scripture passages in this article are from The New King James Version.

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reason wheels provides food to area shut-ins. Students literally give of themselves to the community during Blood  
 insurance drives. Many children at schools and shelters are cheered by Puppet Ministries volunteers. Students  
 her for a program to close each week and open the Sabbath. Each year, 40 to 60 students volunteer their  
 vices as Student Missionaries overseas. Whether one has a younger sibling or  
 t, a student can be a role model as a Big Brother/  
 ig Sister. Class clowns (and  
 hers!) can join and spread smiles  
 and Schools, children's  
 Sabbath nursing homes. Stu-  
 elters, and staying after vespers  
 ents enjoy music, readings, and  
 r Afterglow singing, sharing,  
 ayers. Volunteers in the Soup Kitchen feed the homeless at the Chattanooga Com-  
 unity Kitchen. Teenage boys at Advent Home are eager for attention from older peers. Spreading smiles at nurs-  
 g homes through songs and personal contact is the goal of Sonshine Bands. Short term mission trips are offered each  
 ar such as Christmas in Another Land which offers refreshments and  
 nristian music after vespers. The entire student body gets Community Service Day off from classes to assist needs  
 the local area. Collegiate Commitment Weekend is held at the year's start to encourage students to get  
 volved in service. The on-campus food bank provides food to help students support each other  
 entally and spiritually. Weekly, Sleep-out Ministries bring students together for encouragement in finishing God's work  
 uring visits to the Chambliss Shelter students spend time talking and playing with children waiting to be placed in  
 ster care. African-Americans involved in Black Christian Union share the gospel together through music and  
 inistry. In addition to 25 area churches, students can walk to the  
 participate in Koinonia Sabbath School/Church run  
 completely for and by students, or attend the Spanish-American Church on  
 e Korean Church located right on campus. reaches academy age



# We have something to do.

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 e Korean Church located right on campus. reaches academy age





# When Jesus comes

**George W. Reid**

**Jesus our Saviour  
and Friend is  
coming soon to  
take us home.**



*George Reid, Th.D., is director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.*

**A**n emergency vehicle arrives at the scene of a car crash. Paramedics extract a body from the mass of twisted steel and shattered glass. The family soon will learn that they have lost a precious youth.

Every day such tragedies happen thousands of times around the world. Tearful families are driven to ask the really important questions. Is this all there is to live for? Why are we here? Why do we have to suffer such terrible experiences if there really is a God? Will it always be this way?

People everywhere wrestle with such questions, but the inescapable fact remains that everyone dies. And what lies beyond death? Some deny the fact of death and call it just a change from one form to another. In their view, all have an essence of everlasting life that recycles itself, so death does not exist. But such explanations offer little comfort.

We need something better than wishful thinking, something solid to trust. We need Jesus Christ. He sweeps away the guesswork, leaving us with a clear, faith-building grasp on the essentials of life and death. The Jesus we see in Scripture is the answer to our problems. He cares. He saves. And He is coming again to take us home.

## **Jesus is the answer**

The book of Genesis introduces us to God. We follow His steps as He puts in place everything that will be needed for an inhabited world. Finally, He forms humans, not just like everything else, but special, "in His image."

According to the Bible, this Creator God is actually Jesus. Paul tells us, "For in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, . . . all things were created through him and for

him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:16, 17).\*

How could Christ, born of a virgin some 4,000 years later, have been the Creator? Because the Babe of Bethlehem is, in fact, the eternal One appearing among us. When Jesus told this to the skeptical Pharisees, they took up stones to kill Him (John 8:58). They knew He was affirming His divinity.

*Jesus the Creator.* So in the Bible the first thing we learn about Jesus is His creatorship of human existence. Next comes His experiences with people in the Old Testament times. We watch Him patiently teaching His ways, trying to generate hope. Often the public turned away, but always a remnant believed and obeyed their Lord. That hasn't changed today. And He remains endlessly patient with His struggling people, always encouraging us to accept Him.

We know the sad story of how sin entered, spoiling God's beautiful creation and leaving us victims of death. Still, the Lord's promises of a better future provided hope. A Messiah would come to challenge Satan. He would take upon Himself the sins of the world, reconciling lost sinners to full harmony with God as in the beginning.

*Jesus the Saviour.* So Jesus came, the gentle teacher of truth. He explained the way of the kingdom, described His plan to make all things new for everyone who would accept Him. Jesus came as our Redeemer, gave His life in our place so that we might be forgiven, lifted the weight of sin and death, and secured our heavenly citizenship.

So Jesus the Creator is Jesus our Saviour. But that is not all. He ascended to the heavens and took His place as our high priest in the presence of the Father.

The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel. The Saviour's coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die. The almost complete fulfillment of most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ's coming is imminent. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted to be ready at all times. (Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:7; Matt. 24:43, 44; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:8; Rev. 14:14-20; 19:11-21; Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 1 Thess. 5:1-6.)

*Jesus the high priest.* In the book of Hebrews we read, "We have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven" (Heb. 8:1). And further: "For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf" (Heb. 9:24).

He who by His blood made possible our salvation now stands as our priest, ministering that sacrificial blood on our behalf. We can be absolutely confident placing our fate in His hands. His sacrifice was powerful in sweeping away sin and death, and His intercession for us brings firm assurance of His continuing care. It is all in His hands. Our task is only to receive the gift with all our hearts.

*Jesus is coming again.* And there is more. Old Testament prophets foresaw the coming "day of the Lord." They described it in two tracks: a day of glory and deliverance, or on the dark side, a day of gloom and dread. Why the dual picture? The difference lies in what we choose to do with God's marvelous grace from Calvary. If we accept Christ wholeheartedly, the day of the Lord will bring us the height of eternal joy, but those who reject or neglect Him will find His appearing a day of dread. So those two options confront us, daily, in fact: accepting Christ and receiving eternity, or turning away to death and destruction.

From the beginning Jesus' disciples looked for a coming kingdom of glory. Clearly, they failed to grasp its meaning. But in time they understood. Jesus told them He would go away but afterward return and usher in His new kingdom of righteousness.

The Bible concludes its message with a panoramic revelation of Jesus coming to establish His eternal kingdom. As the kingdoms of this world fade, all acclaim the returning Lord as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Everywhere in its pages we see the Son of God at work, especially at the three great turning points of human history: Creation, Calvary, and His glorious final return at the end of the age. Given all this special attention to us, could we ever say that He is not really concerned with what happens to us? His provision for life everlasting is evidence in itself

of His care for us, and we daily have ample evidence of His continuing interest in our well-being.

During His earthly ministry Jesus confronted the popular but false idea that God was so great, so distant, that we could never approach Him. While not depreciating God's greatness, Jesus turned this idea on its own head. God takes interest in the smallest details of our lives. So intimate is His care for us that He tells us, "Even the hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matt. 10:30).

*Our task as Adventists.* According to the Bible, human history extends as one great line of events, beginning with Creation, proceeding to Calvary with its resolution of the problem of sin, and concluding with the return of Jesus in power and glory. Through all this time we have had a single assignment: to share with the world the wonders of Jesus, inviting all who will to join us in preparation for His return. Belief in this final event provides an identity for us as Adventists.

His coming is in the near future, according to what He told us: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14). The task of carrying this message throughout the world appears almost hopeless, but through the eye of faith, as Jesus foresaw, the task will be accomplished.

We are ambassadors of the kingdom of Christ, bearers of the best news the world could ever hear. This same Jesus, the One who trudged the steps to Calvary and arose on the third day, will return

The millennium is the thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints in heaven between the first and second resurrections. During this time the wicked dead will be judged; the earth will be utterly desolate, without living human inhabitants, but occupied by Satan and his angels. At its close Christ with His saints and the Holy City will descend from heaven to earth. The unrighteous dead will then be resurrected, and with Satan and his angels will surround the city; but fire from God will consume them and cleanse the earth. The universe will thus be freed of sin and sinners forever. (Rev. 20; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Jer. 4:23-26; Rev. 21:1-5; Mal. 4:1; Eze. 28:18, 19.)

in great power and glory. He comes for His saints, all who accept Him by faith, being thus qualified for the kingdom.

*Our privilege as His family.* In a sense we are already participants in God's kingdom. Not only is the figure that of citizens in a kingdom; we become literally members of His family. As John wrote, "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God" (John 1:12). At the Last Supper Jesus told His disciples, "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:2, 3).

All this means that we do not have to wait to be a part of the family of God. "Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). Dedicated, born-again believers already enjoy belonging to the family of God, and the joy we have here is only a down payment of what He has in mind for our future.

Unfortunately, we humans have short memories. At first we are excited to learn these great truths, but all too often distractions displace the things of God, suffocating our zeal. Excitement diminishes and becomes commonplace. Our interests drift, and for some, faith shrivels to a mere relic of what it once was. We cling to a fossil orthodoxy but deny the power of the gospel. This describes the Laodicean condition, from which Christ calls us to awaken.

Thank God, today we are witnessing new life among His people, with renewed zeal to see the gospel proclaimed in every corner of the earth. Ahead of us lies reunion with our Creator and eternal life with Him. What could be more thrilling?

### Jesus is coming again

Jesus spoke repeatedly of His return at the end of the world and of the things that will take place then. It was a major theme of the apostles as well. Virtually every book of the New Testament speaks of Jesus' return, and the book of Reve-

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## THE NEW EARTH

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ADVENTISTS

On the new earth, in which righteousness dwells, God will provide an eternal home for the redeemed and a perfect environment for everlasting life, love, joy, and learning in His presence. For here God Himself will dwell with His people, and suffering and death will have passed away. The great controversy will be ended, and sin will be no more. All things, animate and inanimate, will declare that God is love; and He shall reign forever. Amen. (2 Peter 3:13; Isa. 35; 65:17-25; Matt. 5:5; Rev. 21:1-7; 22:1-5; 11:15.)

lation describes final events on earth. The entire Bible, from beginning to end, bears testimony to the coming climax of history, the return of Jesus.

*The predictions in Daniel.* One of the grandest places to see this is in the prophecies of Daniel. In four great majestic prophetic sweeps through history, the prophet foresees earthly events, and in every case the prophecy climaxes in the establishment of the kingdom. Through whichever prophetic window we peer, we see Christ.

In Daniel 2 the prophecy moves us through the kingdoms to the feet of iron and clay, when suddenly a great stone falls upon all, and there the stone becomes the mountain that fills the earth. This clearly is Christ's kingdom.

In the second prophecy we find a series of nations portrayed as beasts. Then we come to a great judgment scene in Daniel 7, where the Son of man comes before the Father. "And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:14).

At the moment that dominion passes to Christ, in that same moment God's people come into their inheritance. Listen to the prophet again: "And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them"

(verse 27). To be in Christ's family means eternal glory with Him, which He shares in grace with all who love Him unreservedly. These are the saints, His people, called to everlasting life.

What does the Bible teach will take place in connection with the coming of Jesus? Understanding this will not only protect us from false ideas, but will fill us with anticipation of that glorious event. Repeatedly the prophets of the Old Testament spoke of the coming of the great day of the Lord. At that time everything of earthly importance will be shoved aside, for once more God takes control of His world, to set it aright after 6,000 years of sin.

Again we look at Daniel's description. "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:1, 2).

*The prediction of Jesus.* With this mighty framework in the background, let us notice the predictions of Jesus about this climactic event of the ages. We find His fullest explanation of that Second Coming in Matthew 24, where He answers His disciples' question about what will mark the time of His return. After warning them that there would be a series of unfortunate events—including wars, persecutions, and natural

disasters—He supplied the final sign of His approaching return. “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come” (verse 14).

He explicitly warned against false teachers and prophets who would arise, claiming special knowledge or power. The believers were not to be deceived. In the plainest language He emphasized that the exact time of His coming is not revealed to humans (see verse 36). A series of signs in the heavens would mark the end of a long tribulation and beginning of the time of the end. But it is the finishing of the gospel that would provide the final sign.

Today we are in the last hour of Jesus’ prophecy. The great time prophecies have been fulfilled. We have seen the signs in the heavens. Now the gospel is beginning to penetrate even the farthest corners of the earth. We see all around us Jesus’ portrayal of the final generation: obsessed with material things of life, occupied in secular activities, and little interested in the things of God.

Matthew 24 ends with a series of messages addressed to us, His people in these final days. Be watchful, He warns. Do not be caught up in the mentality that says “My Master is delayed,” with its

temptation to live by the world’s standards.

In the several parables Jesus told about His return, He built in a period of delay. People would need to wait, ready for His coming, and not grow weary in waiting. The parable of the 10 virgins is a classic example. The question for us today is Are we listening to what Jesus said? Or are we growing weary? One evidence of healthy faith is the willingness to wait and work for His return.

Often we ask the question Why did God not reveal the time of Christ’s return? No prophecy gives us this date. In fact, Jesus tells us it is known only by the Father. But we can be certain that when the right time arrives, Jesus will return. It is His solemn promise.

### When Jesus comes

*The first resurrection.* Jesus’ return brings the final answer to the problem of death. Paul assured the Thessalonians, “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

Christians no longer fear death, for Jesus has triumphed over this last enemy. After bearing the sins of the world, He came forth from the tomb into the glory of eternity, and by His resurrection we too have confidence.

What a privilege is ours, to stand on the brink of eternity, knowing what the future will bring. Let’s look at the coming events previewed for us in the book of Revelation. With Jesus’ return in power and majesty, we have seen that the dead in Christ will come to life in the first resurrection, and His waiting people will be changed in a moment from mortal to immortal. Then they are taken from the earth to join Christ in the air (1 Cor. 15:51-54).

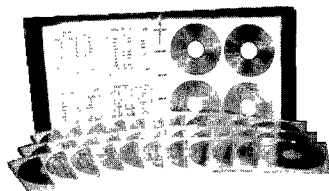
Two thousand years ago the angels who received the ascending Jesus from the Mount of Olives told the amazed disciples, “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). We are the people now looking for that grand second coming.

And what will happen to God’s people when He comes? The Bible says those who are dead will be resurrected and join those who are alive to be caught up to meet Him in the air (see 1 Thess. 4:16-18). This resurrection is explained further: “This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6).

*The millennium.* On the other hand, those who choose to follow Satan are slain at the coming of Jesus, leaving the earth devoid of population. Here Satan is confined: “And he seized the dragon [Satan]. . . and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years were ended. After that he must be loosed for a little while” (Rev. 20:3). So the saints will spend 1,000 years in heaven, where a work of investigation will be theirs (verse 4).

What happens after 1,000 years? “And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations

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which are at the four corners of the earth . . . to gather them for battle" (verse 7).

*The new heavens and the new earth.* Just at that time, the apostle John tells us, "fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur" (verses 9, 10). The apostle Peter picks up the story from here, saying, "And then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. . . . But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:10-13).

On this newly re-created planet Christ will establish His eternal kingdom. The final two chapters of Revelation tantalize our imagination with the wonders of what will be there. Death is gone; eternal life is ours. A glorious capital city, the New Jerusalem, is in the midst of this grand new world, surrounded with all the beauty of the Master Planner. Here at last those who love the Lord will be restored to be with Him.

### Home at last

But even beyond the glories of that new world, the grandest of all realities will be that we are home at last. Hear the words of the apostle: "But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and

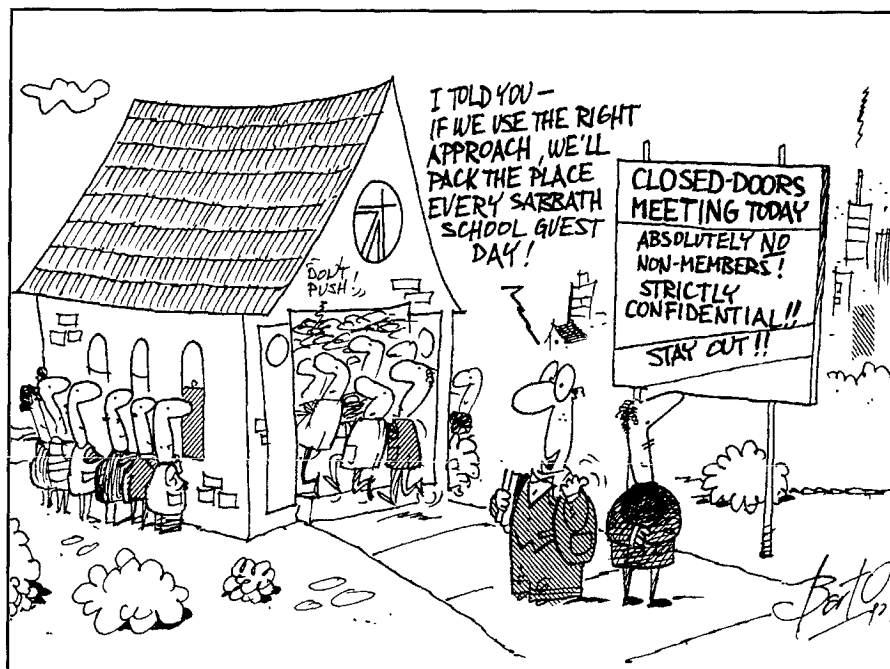
his servants shall worship him; they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads" (Rev. 22:3, 4).

Thus the Word of God traces the story of Christ and His people to their glorious triumph. From the point where He called us into existence, to the cross of Calvary where by His shed blood He restores every believer to harmony with God, to the final glory when we stand at the throne of God. Everywhere we find Jesus: Creator, Saviour, Lord. And this is the destiny of His people.

The beauty of it all is that eternal life is open to every one of us. "Whosoever will," the Spirit calls, "let him take the water of life freely" (verse 17, KJV). Again and again the Saviour extends His invitation, calling us to receive His gift of salvation. Whoever receives Him passes from death to life, from pointless wandering into the fold of God, safe and secure.

And even more, He fills us with the Holy Spirit to transform our whole persons, to give power to stand up against sin, and to remake everything that is important to us.

This is what He wants for you. Will you give Him first place in your life today in preparation to meet Him when He returns? Nothing else can compare to the new life you will have, both here and in God's coming kingdom. Make Him your Lord today. ■



## When Jesus comes

### Outline

#### Introduction

Tragedies raise questions

- A. We are tempted to question God
- B. Secular answers unsatisfying
- C. The Bible alone has reliable answers

#### I. Jesus is the answer

- A. Jesus the Creator: He plans for us
- B. Jesus the Saviour: He died for us
- C. Jesus the high priest: He ministers to us
- D. Jesus is coming again: His dual purpose
- E. Our task as Adventists: to share Jesus
- F. Our privilege: to be His family members

#### II. Jesus is coming again

- A. Predictions in Daniel
  1. Daniel 2: The stone
  2. Daniel 7: The glorious kingdom
  3. Christ shares dominion with saints
  4. Daniel foresees resurrection and judgment
- B. Prediction of Jesus
  1. Social and natural calamities
  2. False teachers
  3. Long period of persecution
  4. A waiting, watchful, and witnessing people
  5. We are not to know the time, but to remain vigilant

#### III. When Jesus comes

- A. The cosmic nature and physical reality
- B. The first resurrection
- C. The millennium
- D. The new heavens and the new earth
  1. Sin and death will end
  2. Our joy: reunion with Jesus

### Conclusion

Home at last

\*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture passages in this article are from the Revised Standard Version.

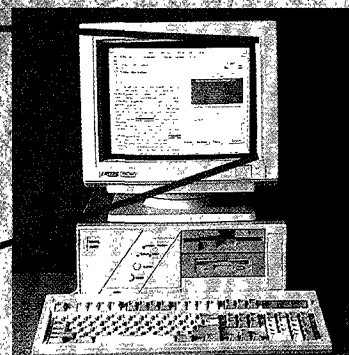
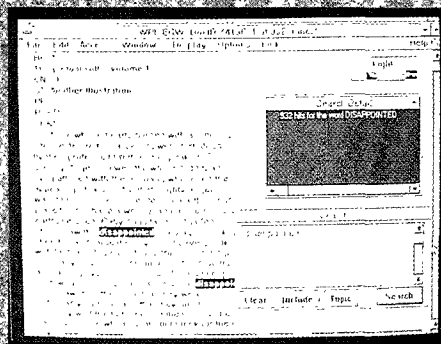


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# First Glance

Continued from page 3

Himself in Jesus. As the battle between God and Satan heats up; as the devil goes around like a roaring lion seeking more and more people to deceive, God is wanting a people to reveal His love, His character. He wants people to "live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us" (1 Peter 2:12, NIV).

This issue owes a great deal to our new designer, Regina Hayden. Ann Taylor, who served us faithfully for many years, has moved to the great state of Washington. I will miss her keen eye, her cooperative spirit, and especially her dedication. But in her place comes an equally dedicated person. Regina has wide experience in desktop publishing.



Before coming to *Ministry* she worked for Americans United for Separation of Church and State. She is an expert on PageMaker and WordPerfect and lots of other soft-

ware as well. She had no time to learn our system, no time to ease gently into the stream of work. Her first issue was this more-than-double-size edition. I welcome her, glad that the Lord provides for our needs.

I want to thank our artist Elfred Lee for the many hours he spent painting our cover, and Timothy and Stephanie Sullivan, who provided funds for the painting. I want to give a special thanks to my associate editor, John M. Fowler, who carried out the major editing on all the articles. Without him this special issue would never have happened. I thank Humberto Valenzuela (Berto to his friends) from Australia for lightening our issue just a little with his cartoons. Above all, I want to thank our God and our Saviour for providing so gracious a salvation and giving us the privilege of sharing this good news with the world.

## Extra Copies

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Lastly, to all the delegates to the 1995 quinquennial General Conference session, may this issue encourage, inspire, and unite us all in proclaiming and living the great truths of the Bible.

*J. David Newman*

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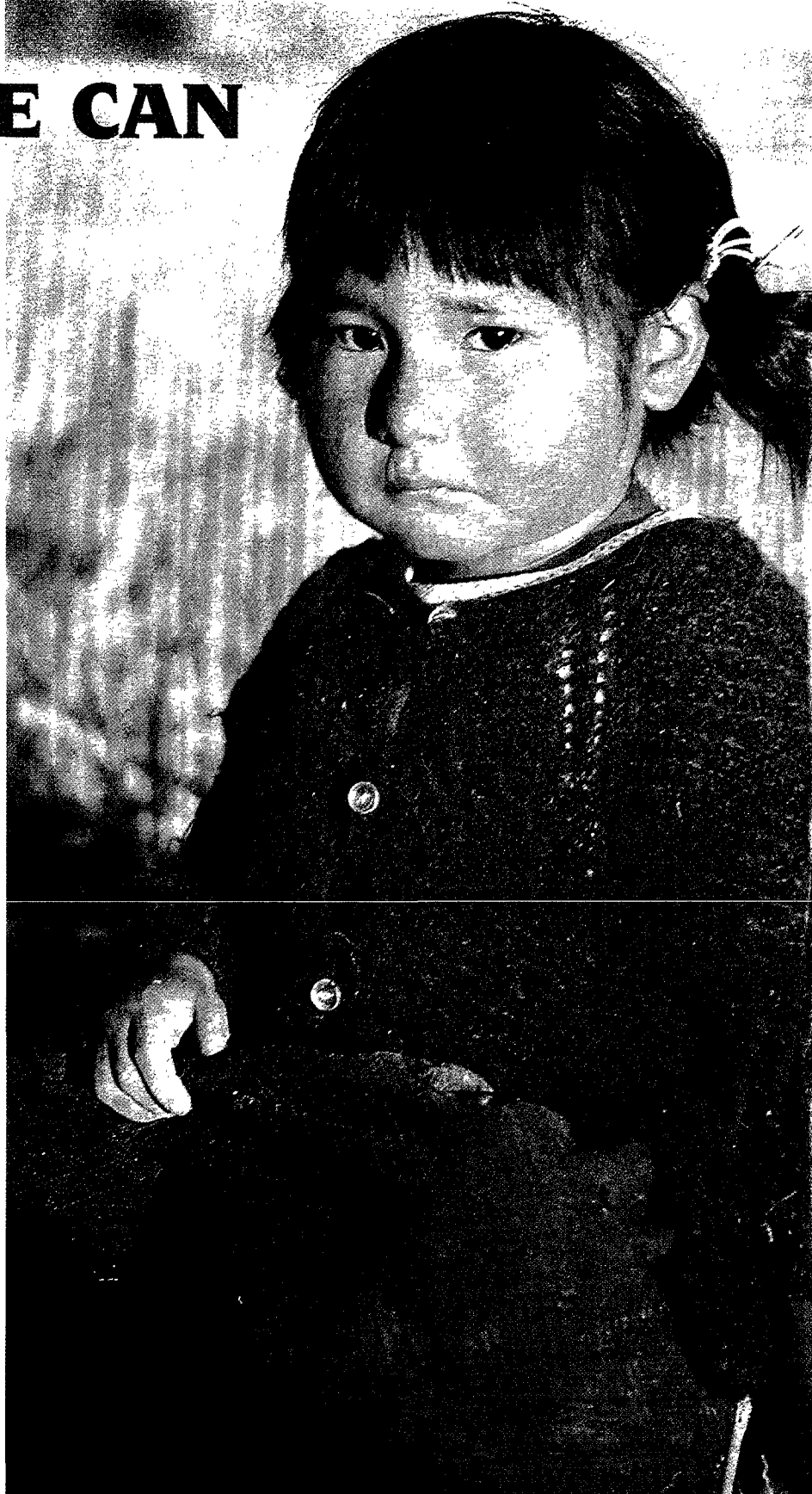
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