

Signs

OF THE TIMES

**Judgment Day --
Is It Now?**



In apocalyptic vision John the revelator saw three angels flying through the midst of heaven proclaiming three special messages for earth's closing years. In this issue, **SIGNS** explores the cryptic passage of the first angel: "The hour of his judgment is come." Revelation 14:7.

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, . . . saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come." Revelation 14:6, 7.

Judgment Day--Is It Now?

Lawrence Maxwell

There are strong reasons for believing that the judgment day is not some time far off in the future, but that judgment is going on now.

The great day of God's judgment strikes fear to any heart.

And it may not be far off.

It may actually be transpiring right now!

We at the *Signs of the Times* believe it is, and so do millions of Adventists worldwide.

If the judgment is going on now, everyone—it seems to us—will want to know about it.

This month's *Signs* is devoted almost exclusively to this very important subject.

We are going to tell you—from the Bible and history—why we think the judgment is going on now, and what we all must do to be sure that we come out of the judgment on the right side.

We're going to tell you what happened in America when hundreds of thousands of Americans thought the end of the world was coming in 1844.

We're going to show, too, that it is not only human beings who are on trial. God Himself is on trial, though that may surprise you.

We aren't going to tell you that you have to agree with us. We are going to leave you to draw your own conclusions. But if the final judgment is going on now, we believe you would want us to tell you.

This statement—that the judgment is going on now—comes to us wrapped up in a verse of Scripture that says, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." Daniel 8:14.

At first the statement doesn't seem to say anything about the judgment. Neither do most oil fields have any oil lying on their surface. Technicians may have to drill 25,000 feet or more to

reach the oil. We may have to drill deep into this text.

It is exceptionally well worth drilling into!

This is the text that got America—and much of the rest of the world—so terribly shaken in the early 1840s that scores of thousands of unflappable New Englanders joyfully believed the knell of doom would strike on October 22, 1844—and hundreds of thousands of other Americans sweat out the autumn of that year fearfully hoping that it wouldn't.

There are three major elements in the text: *time*, *place*, and *action*.

The time is 2300 days.

The place is the sanctuary.

The action is *cleansing* the sanctuary.

We'll begin at the sanctuary.

The original sanctuary was the church of the Israelites. They built it in the desert at the foot of Mount Sinai during the first summer after they left Egypt. The date was (approximately) 1445 BC.

Moses was in charge of construction. God had drawn up the blueprint. Exodus 25:9.

The sanctuary consisted of a small two-room building in a courtyard surrounded by a fence.

If in imagination we approach the sanctuary from the outside, we notice at once that the fence is made of cloth supported on poles. The gate is on the east end.

Entering, we see in front of us an altar made of wood and brass. It is the "altar of sacrifice," where the various sacrifices are burned. Walking past the

brass altar and coming closer to the building, we see a large basin full of water for washing. Then on to the building itself.

The tabernacle—that is what the building was often called—was about 17 feet wide, 17 feet high, and 51 feet long. The roof was cloth and skins. And the east wall, facing us now as we approach, was beautifully woven tapestry. We draw it aside at the center and go in.

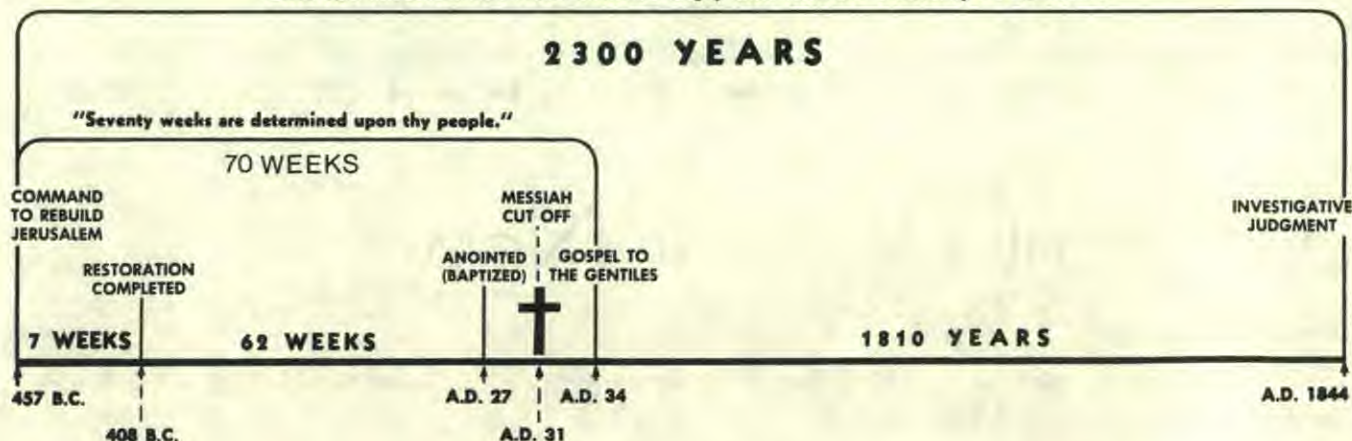
On our left is a seven-branched candlestick, its seven flames reflected repeatedly in the shimmering gold plate that covers the walls. On our right is a table with twelve loaves—one for each of the twelve tribes. And in front of us is a golden altar with the sweet-smelling smoke of incense rising gently above it.

Beyond the golden altar of incense is another curtain, even more beautiful than the first, woven of blue and scarlet and purple thread with angels interwoven in gold.

Beyond this inner veil we must not go. But we have been told that the room is small, a perfect cube. On the floor sits a wooden box plated all over with gold. Inside the box are the Ten Commandments (the covenant) engraved on two tables of stone.

On top of the box—called the ark of the covenant—is a slab of pure gold called the mercy seat. And standing on the mercy seat are two angels carved from one piece of solid gold. Between the angels, above the mercy seat, glows a mysterious light, the Shekinah, the awesome symbol of God's presence. This little room is the most holy place, the holy of holies, and no one may enter on pain of death except the high priest, and he is permitted to go in-

"Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed."



side but one special day in the year.

This then is the sanctuary that the Israelites made in the wilderness and carried with them in their wanderings. Here God dwelt among His people. Exodus 25:8. Here he talked with Moses. Exodus 25:22. And here He offered forgiveness of sin to all who asked for it.

Sanctuary Services

Many different services were conducted in the sanctuary. The most significant were those connected with forgiveness for sin.

A person who felt convicted of his sin would first secure a perfectly healthy animal (sheep, goat, or bull) and bring it to the sanctuary courtyard. He would place his hands on its head, confess his sins, and kill it. A priest would collect the blood in a bowl and, with his finger, put some of it on the corners of the brass altar of sacrifice or on the upper corners of the golden altar of incense, or else sprinkle some in front of the curtain close to the tables of the law the sinner had violated. Then the priest would burn the fat of the animal on the altar of sacrifice. See Leviticus 4:1-35.

In this service the sins committed by the penitent sinner were—symbolically—conveyed to the animal and through its blood became a part of the sanctuary. The blood on the altars and the blood drops on the sanctuary floor were records of sins committed and confessed. Day by day the sanctuary became more and more polluted with these sins.

But the sanctuary was to be a holy place. Sin and holiness cannot dwell together. If the holiness of the sanctuary was to continue, the sin

must be cleaned out. Under God's direction, the ancient sanctuary was cleansed of sin once a year.

Cleansing the Sanctuary

On the morning of the tenth day of the seventh month each year the high priest brought two goats to the door of the tabernacle and presented them before the Lord. He cast lots to determine which goat was to be the Lord's goat and which the scapegoat. (For all the details see Leviticus 16:1-34.)

He killed the Lord's goat as a sin offering for all the people. He took some of its blood in a bowl and entering the first room of the tabernacle carefully took burning coals from the altar of incense and placed them in his censer. He filled his hands with incense and approached the veil that shielded the brilliant glow of the mysterious Shekinah. Slowly drawing aside the curtain he poured incense on his censer so that—in the words of God—"the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not." Leviticus 16:13.

He sprinkled the blood seven times before the ark and the mercy seat and the presence of God. Coming out of the tabernacle he sprinkled blood seven times on the brass altar of sacrifice. Then he took the living goat and confessed on its head all the sins of the people of Israel, whereupon a man specially chosen led the goat into the wilderness and released it there. The goat took with it the sins that had accumulated in the sanctuary during the previous year.

Thus the sanctuary was cleansed year by year.

It was important to cleanse the sanctuary. But the day of cleansing, also known as the Day of Atonement, was important in another way. It was a day of judgment. God commanded everyone to afflict his soul during the day, to be sure that before the day ended every sin had been repented of and confessed. Anyone who failed to seek forgiveness for any heretofore unconfessed sin was cut off from the congregation. It was a penalty worse than excommunication. It is no wonder that ancient Israelites spent the day in anxiety and dread. Many Jews still do. Christians fill their churches at Easter and Christmas. Jews crowd their synagogues on Yom Kippur.

It should be noted that the day of cleansing came at the end of the sanctuary year. And the whole day was a day of judging, of self-examination, of reviewing the records of the year. The sentencing, the decision whether an Israelite should continue as a member of the congregation or be cut off forever, came at the end of the day, when the high priest, having completed his special work, stepped for the last time out of the tabernacle and blessed the penitent and pronounced doom on the impenitent.

The 2300 Days

Our basic text said, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." Daniel 8:14.

To know when a period of time will end, we have to know when it started and how long it lasted. The Bible answers both questions in regard to the 2300 days. The period began at "the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." Daniel

9:25. Daniel wrote this prophecy when Jerusalem lay in ruins. The decree to rebuild Jerusalem went into effect in the autumn of 457 BC. (This has been exhaustively examined by Siegfried H. Horn and Lynn H. Wood in *The Chronology of Ezra 7*. It is one of the most clearly defined dates in history.)

But how long is 2300 days? The basic rule for interpreting the Bible is to consider every statement as historically literal unless there is compelling evidence to interpret it some other way. Two thousand three hundred literal days is about six and a third years. Nothing that could remotely be called cleansing the sanctuary took place six and a third years after the autumn of 457 BC. One year after that date the sanctuary was cleansed, for the day of cleansing always came in the autumn. Six and a third years after the autumn would be December, and there is no record that the sanctuary was ever cleansed in December. Certainly there is no record it was cleansed in the December of 451 BC.

Our basic rule for interpreting the Bible allows a symbolic interpretation if a literal interpretation makes no sense. Other time prophecies become significant when a day is computed as a year. See Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6. If 2300 days are really 2300 years, they reach from the autumn of 457 BC to the autumn of AD 1844. How does this interpretation fit other Bible prophecies and the facts of history?

Daniel 8:17 says the prophecy is "at the time of the end." The year 1844 fits that perfectly.

Revelation 14:6, 7 tells of an angel in the last days who announces: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come." Cleansing the sanctuary was a time of judgment. If a time of judgment began in 1844, it would fit both the prediction in Daniel and the message of the angel of Revelation.

We seem to be on the right track! And there is more evidence. When the angel told Daniel that the 2300 days began with the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, he also told him several events that would occur during the first 70 weeks of those 2300 days. Seventy weeks contain 7 times 70 days; that is, 490 days or 490

years. The angel was very specific that from the commandment to restore Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince would be 69 weeks or 483 years. Daniel 9:25. Jesus the Messiah began His public ministry at His baptism in the autumn of AD 27, exactly 483 years after the autumn of 457 BC. Sixty-nine weeks gone leaves one week or 7 years. "In the midst" of this week, the angel told Daniel, Messiah "shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." Daniel 9:27. The "midst" of the week would be halfway through it, or three-and-a-half years after it began. Three-and-a-half years from the autumn of AD 27 brings us to the spring of AD 31, which is exactly when Jesus died on the cross. The curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom by an unseen hand. Mark 15:38. The sacrifices ceased to be significant from that moment on—exactly when the prophecy predicted!

The full 70 weeks, the angel said, was "determined upon thy people." Daniel 9:24. Daniel's people were the Jews. Three-and-a-half years after the crucifixion, the Jewish people stoned Stephen for preaching Christ. The Jews lost their privileged position in God's plan, and the Christians "went every where" (Acts 8:4) preaching Christ to both Jew and non-Jew alike—in AD 34 exactly 490 years after 457 BC.

With so much corroborating evidence, there can be no doubt that the 2300 days are 2300 years that began in the autumn of 457 BC and ended in the autumn of AD 1844.

What Happened in 1844?

What, then, happened in the autumn of 1844? Nothing. That is, nothing that anyone could see. Large numbers of people, believing that "cleansing the sanctuary" meant cleansing the earth, thought Jesus was coming on October 22, the date of the Day of Atonement that year. They got very excited about it. When He didn't come, they were deeply disappointed. (A great many more, we are sure, were enormously relieved.)

Paul Ricchiuti tells about those days in "The End-of-the-World Man" in this issue. And in "Vision in a Cornfield" he shows how through further study of the Bible some came

to see that, after all, cleansing the sanctuary could not possibly mean cleansing the earth. In 1844 there was no sanctuary on earth to be cleansed.

But there was—and is—a sanctuary in heaven. Isaiah saw God in the heavenly temple. See Isaiah 6. John, in Revelation, saw the seven golden candlesticks and the golden altar of incense of the heavenly sanctuary. He saw God seated on His throne surrounded by the angels, just as the Shekinah, the symbol of God's presence, shone above the mercy seat surrounded by angels in the most holy place of the earthly sanctuary. And he saw Christ ministering among the candlesticks in heaven as our High Priest.

The sanctuary to be cleansed was the heavenly sanctuary. As cleansing was a time of judgment, so the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary is a time of judgment, when all who have professed the name of Christ and have confessed their sins to Him are examined to see whether they have been faithful to their Lord. When the judging is over, we may expect Christ our High Priest to leave the sanctuary above and come to earth. Indeed, He Himself said, "Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:12.

Judgment Now!

Here, in a nutshell, is the evidence on which Adventists base their belief that judgment is going on in heaven now. If this conclusion is correct—and the reader must judge for himself the validity of the evidence—if the final judgment is now going on in heaven, we are all living in an hour fraught with the utmost significance for every one of us.

Begun in 1844, the judgment cannot last much longer. When it is finished, as finished it soon must be, Jesus will lay aside his priestly garments and return to earth as King of kings and Lord of lords. Revelation 19:16. The verdict will be pronounced on each of us, final and irrevocable.

These words, spoken by God, apply with special force to our time: "Because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God." Amos 4:12. □

SO MANY ANIMALS!

Ivan Crawford



JOE MARISCALCO, ARTIST, © PPPA

Why did God demand the death of so many top-quality animals?

Why did God require the seemingly useless slaying of so many top-quality animals?

Why the odor of charred flesh and the continual activity of the priests?

Did the ancient sanctuary serve any useful purpose, or was it a stage play? Did it ever make anyone better?

Did the blood of animals forgive sins? Did the air of solemn mystery and the heavy overtones of judgment ever lead anyone to repentance?

Jesus Christ alone answers all these questions. He is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29, RSV. To the ancient worshiper as well as to us Jesus is the Friend and Redeemer. To those who lived before the cross Jesus was discerned through a constant trust in the ultimate meaning of animal sacrifices. Abraham believed the Lord (Genesis 15:6, 9) when he was told to offer blood sacrifices. On the way to sacrifice his son Isaac, he said, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb." Genesis 22:8. Faith is the secret of the entire sacrificial system—not faith in the blood of animals, but faith in Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away all

sins that are confessed in sincerity.

A visitor entering the wilderness sanctuary from the eastern side would notice first in the courtyard an altar, and on that altar a smoldering lamb. This continual burnt offering, placed on the altar twice a day, sent its smoke continually heavenward in full sight of the Israelites living in tents around the sanctuary. Even as a visitor watched, he might see a priest examine a lamb to verify that it was without blemish. Only a perfect symbol could be accepted. The priest killed the lamb that was offered morning and evening for all the people. He caught its blood in a vessel and placed the fat on the glowing coals to burn. He washed his body in preparation for the ministry of blood in the holy place. Other priests offered other sacrifices that might be brought in—for sin offerings, peace offerings, thank offerings. Some offerings were roasted and partially eaten by the priests, and some entirely burned after blood was sprinkled on the altar or in the first room of the tabernacle, transferring the sin to the sanctuary.

The sanctuary had been made

according to minute instructions. God had said to Moses, "See . . . that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount." Hebrews 8:5. Why? Because the tabernacle was a representation of "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched" in heaven. Verse 2. Only by following God's plan for the earthly tabernacle could the heavenly original and its services be understood.

The perfect Messiah, who later was made of flesh and blood (Hebrews 2:14) "in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7), lived in those symbols. His presence was in "the bread of the presence" placed weekly on a table on the north side of the holy place. His intercession with Israel's prayers was seen in the clouds of incense that rose from the small altar in front of the curtain that separated the holy from the most holy place. The searching light of the Holy Spirit was seen in the seven-branched candlestick against the south wall.

The tabernacle and its services were to teach lessons of God's perfection, man's sinful state, and the provision for forgiveness through the divine

Substitute. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after." 1 Timothy 5:24. By bringing a sin offering to the sanctuary, confessing his sin over the head of the animal and cutting its throat, the sinner had a part in transferring his sin to the priest who ate part of the sacrifice, or to the furniture that was sprinkled with blood. According to the Hebrew and Greek words translated "forgive," his sin was "lifted," "transferred," or "sent away." The sin was lifted completely from the sinner, but it was not at that time blotted out from the records.

The most solemn of all services of the sanctuary was that of the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, to Israel a day of judgment. On that day the high priest made "an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of all their sins," Leviticus 16:16. The altar also was cleansed as a part of the ceremony, for it too had been defiled by the transfer of people's sins. Leviticus 16:18, 19. Now a "remembrance" was "again made of sins" (Hebrews 10:3) that had been confessed during the entire year—sins of rulers, sins of priests, sins of the common people, sins of the entire congregation.

The day began with the usual morning sacrifice. Then the high priest bathed carefully and put on special white clothes. He offered a bull for his own sins and then a goat which had been chosen by lot to represent the Lord. The slaying of the Lord's goat and the sprinkling of its blood painted a vivid picture of God's sacrifice in the death of Jesus upon the cross for the sins of men. The waiting worshipers prayed earnestly and afflicted their souls (Leviticus 16:29) as the high priest went "within the vail." He went beyond the second curtain right into the most holy place where were the ark and the mercy seat and the Ten Commandments. The praying people listened for the tinkling of the bells on his garments, anxious to know that he still lived and ministered for them. With joy they watched him emerge, atonement having been made for them and for the priests, the sanctuary, and the entire camp. They watched him

confess sins over the head of Azazel, another goat, and send it away to die far from the camp. Thus Israel was separated from sin, and the sins symbolically blotted out. The impenitent were excommunicated, cut off from Israel entirely. But the penitent were free, judged righteous through faith.

Over many centuries these offerings continued. In the days of King Solomon, 400 years after Moses, the sanctuary was replaced by a magnificent temple and the same services continued. But with the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar some six hundred years before Christ, the golden vessels were confiscated and the temple destroyed. Jewish young men taken captive to Babylon continued in faithful prayer toward the temple's ruins and yearned for the resumption of sacrifices for sin. "How long," came the question, shall the sanctuary "be trodden underfoot?" Daniel 8:13. The answer came to Daniel, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." Verse 14.

One might imagine Daniel dancing for joy in the knowledge that in less than seven years the Jerusalem temple would be ready for the services of cleansing, the solemn Day of Atonement. But no. Daniel received from the angel Gabriel the word, "Shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days." Verse 26. At this revelation Daniel fainted. When he awoke, he was still "astonished at the vision." Verse 27. Daniel well understood that a day in prophecy signifies a year (see Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6) and that he would not live to see the end of the 2300 day-year period.

The time prophecy was to begin with "the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" (Daniel 9:25; see Ezra 6:14), in 457 BC. Sixty-nine weeks (symbolizing 483 years) were to reach to "Messiah the Prince," fulfilled at the anointing of Jesus at His baptism in AD 27. See Matthew 3:16, 17; Acts 10:38. In the midst of the seventieth week—fulfilled in the spring of AD 31—the Messiah was to be "cut off." Daniel 9:26. And in AD 34 would come the end of the seventieth week (490 years) allotted ("determined") upon the Jewish nation as

exclusive keepers of "the oracles of God." Romans 3:2.

This last part of the prophecy was fulfilled by the stoning of Stephen in AD 34. Stephen's death triggered the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. A whole new world outreach followed that included all men—Jew and Greek, bond and free, male and female. See Galatians 3:28, 29; Acts 9:15. Just before Stephen's voice was silenced, he summarized the meaning of the 70-week (490-year) period: "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Acts 7:56. He saw Jesus as Priest-King ministering for mankind in heaven, the center of all meaningful action and ministry.

At the end of the 2300 years, which extended from 457 BC to AD 1844, came not the yearly Day of Atonement, which was a symbol, but the true Day of Atonement in which the ascended Christ, as High Priest in "heaven itself" (Hebrews 9:24), entered the most holy place for the once-for-all cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. Verses 23, 26.

The yearly service in ancient times was to Israel a day of judgment. Leviticus 23:29, 30. How much more solemn is the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary of the accumulated sins of all God's children of all time! What should be our attitude toward Jesus, our High Priest, who at this very moment is ministering His own blood shed on the cross of Calvary?

Solemn indeed is the time to which we have come. A day of judgment! As the sins of all God's children are brought into review, do we have the assurance that our sins are covered by Christ's blood? Is His completed sacrifice efficacious for us? Do we await with joy Christ's coming forth to execute the final elimination of sin from the universe? Are we, while time remains, fitting our lives for eternal fellowship with unfallen beings? Have we "started to make heaven our home"?

We who are associated with Signs feel duty bound to bring our readers face-to-face with these solemn questions. Grace abundant and overflowing is sufficient for all. Reach out now to Jesus and trust your life to Him. □

Can Goats Save Sinners?

Did the ancient Israelites believe that goats and sheep and bulls can save sinners? Or did they see beyond to the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ? We asked LaVonne Neff to put herself back there in the wilderness near Mt. Sinai twenty years after the sanctuary was built and try to relive the thoughts of a devout family as the Day of Atonement approached.



JOHN STEEL, ARTIST. © FPPA

LaVonne Neff

It is the ninth day of the seventh month, toward the end of October by our reckoning. The Israelite camp is again preparing for the most solemn day of the year. For nine days the camp has been involved in soul-searching and putting away of sin. Tonight, the eve of the Day of Atonement, every member of the camp will fast and pray for forgiveness.

Hannah is bringing water so she can finish cleaning her tent before sundown. Her fourteen-year-old son, Joel, is bringing his small flock of sheep back from pasture. Ebenezer, husband and father of the family, is rounding up his much larger flock.

First in their thoughts is the coming Day of Atonement. All week they have been examining their lives, trying to ferret out hidden and forgotten sins.

We enter into their thoughts as they take care of the final preparations for the high holy day.

HANNAH

All that week I was so busy I just didn't care anymore. My three-year-old had the croup every night, and I spent so much time comforting him that I got hardly any sleep at all. This, along with having to care for our new baby, had left me completely exhausted.

I had just swept out the tent floor that Friday morning, getting ready for the Sabbath, when a strong desert wind came up and undid all my work. It blew dust across the floor. It covered the beds and dishes with dust. I had to start all over again. Shake the bedding. Sweep the floor. Draw more water so I could rinse the dishes.

The whole time I was working, my little boy followed me around asking questions and trying to help as only three-year-olds know how. By the middle of the afternoon I was so exhausted I sank onto my bed and cried.

I saw the pile of manna sitting by the fire pit. I knew I should be baking cakes and getting ready for the Sabbath. But I didn't care. Lord, I didn't care about your Sabbath. My bitterness was so great that your command meant nothing to me.

"All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." Exodus 24:7. I was only a young girl when I joined the camp in saying those solemn words. I meant them with all my heart. But, oh, how often I've forgotten them! How often I've disobeyed!

And now a high holy day is coming. I don't feel ready.

JOEL

Lord, how easily one sin leads to another. First I coveted. I saw Eli's newborn twin lambs, and I wanted them.

I have only half a dozen sheep—my father gave me a pair two years ago when I turned twelve. It seems like it takes forever for a flock to grow to any decent size, especially with a ewe who never twins.

Eli's ewe always has twins. Last spring I was watching his flock the day both ewes gave birth. Twins for Eli, one lamb for me—and a male at that.

"Eli won't know the difference," I thought. "I'll just take one of his twins and give her to my ewe to raise. Then when the baby grows up, maybe she'll have twins herself, and I can repay him. But in the meantime I'll just pretend that for once my ewe had twins and his didn't."

I guess my two years of coveting his flock had me well-prepared. Five minutes after the last lamb was born I made the switch. I think Eli suspected something—his ewe had been larger than mine—but he didn't say a word that evening when I returned his sheep to him.

I felt awful. When I got back to the tent, I found my mother sleeping on her bed. The Sabbath food I had been eagerly anticipating wasn't even begun. My kid brother had spread my clothes all over the floor and was jumping on them. So as if coveting and stealing weren't enough, I added another sin to my list. I yelled at my mother.

"This tent is a mess!" I shouted.

LaVonne Neff is a teacher and the mother of two girls and a trained theologian and the wife of a church pastor—and a very interesting writer.

"The food isn't ready, my brother is ruining my things, and all you do is sleep all day!" I stalked out of the tent to join the men who were gathering outside for the sundown meeting.

Oh, Lord, I gave the lamb back to Eli. I sacrificed my own lamb to pay for my sin. I apologized to my mother. But even yet I guess I'm not always kind to her.

Can you forgive me, Lord?

EBENEZER

Has it been twenty years since we camped at the foot of Mount Sinai and listened to God's voice roaring out of the mountain? We all promised to do His will, and we all forgot. I realize now that I never did take my promise seriously enough.

Oh, I've been reasonably careful. I've never bowed down to an idol. (Lucky for me, I was busy the day they built the golden calf. I might have gone along with my friends then, but I haven't been much tempted along those lines since.)

I've kept Sabbaths pretty well, and I haven't killed anybody. I haven't even committed adultery. But in one area I've really failed. Somehow I haven't raised my children to follow God.

My two oldest boys—the ones born to my first wife—just aren't interested. I guess boys have to sow their wild oats. But I was surprised when they decided to move away from the camp altogether. They liked the heathen women better than the Israelite girls.

And Joel—I'm worried about him. Only fourteen years old, but he doesn't have the respect for his mother that he should have. He ought to see that she's tired, with the little boy and now the new baby. But Joel's rude to her. I don't understand it.

Well, maybe I should understand. Maybe I haven't been so considerate of her myself. But, Lord, what can I do? The Day of Atonement is coming, and I don't feel right about my life. I can't come before the Lord in this state of mind.

The sun is peeking over the eastern hills. The pillar of fire is giving way to the pillar of cloud. All over the Israelite camp, people are stirring.

No breakfast this morning. The prayer season and fast that began last night will continue all day today. This is the Day of Atonement, the most solemn day on the Jewish calendar. Today a blood offering will be made for every member of the camp. All sins will be put away.

Ebenezer's family is dressing. They do not speak. Each member is lost in thoughts about his own standing on this holy day.

HANNAH

The Day of Atonement is here, and I'm a Sabbath breaker. God told Moses to execute a man for gathering sticks on a Sabbath day. I'm still alive. Will I be, after the Day of Atonement is past? Can God forgive me along with the other children of Israel?

I've confessed my sin. I've brought my sin offering to the priest. But I feel so unclean. God gave us the Sabbath so we'd remember His creation, so we'd thank Him for leading us out of Egypt. And I've broken His law. I've worked on the Sabbath.

Or am I looking at this all wrong? Adam and Eve broke God's commandment to them. They ate of the forbidden tree. But God didn't strike them dead. He let an animal die instead. From the animal He made coats for Adam and Eve, to cover their nakedness.

And after God led us out of Egypt, we sinned against Him too. I'll never forget the golden calf, or the many times we've complained against Moses. But God hasn't killed us, at least not those of us who were willing to repent and ask His forgiveness. Once again He has let an animal die for human sins.

I guess I'm safe. An animal will die for my Sabbath breaking today. I feel more at peace now. I don't understand it, but we can't always understand God.

Listen! The trumpets! It's time to go down to the sanctuary.

JOEL

God, I love my mother, yet I speak so harshly to her. Can You forgive me? Can You let an animal take away my guilt? Surely some sins are harder to forgive than others.

It's so hard to believe that my little

lamb can die in place of me. The lamb hadn't done a thing. I coveted, stole, and dishonored my mother. I suppose I broke the Sabbath in a way, too, by not helping her get ready. How could that baby lamb take away my sin? What had it done to deserve to die?

Nothing. That's the point, I guess. The lamb died when I should have. Kind of reminds me of the story Father tells about Abraham and Isaac. God told Abraham to sacrifice his son. Now this is pretty hard to believe, but Isaac went along with the idea. He honored his parents. He wasn't like me.

But there's Isaac, all stretched out on the altar, and Abraham's knife zooming down at him. And suddenly God calls out, "Don't do it! Now I know how much you love Me." Abraham looks in the bushes, and there's a ram he can offer instead.

Maybe I am sort of like Isaac. I ought to be stretched out on that altar. God shouldn't let a sinner like me live. But instead He accepts my little lamb in my place.

I can't understand it. Father says nobody can understand God. But maybe there is hope for me. I guess God will forgive me. He seems to want to.

The trumpets! I'll carry the new baby so Mother can get to the sanctuary on time.

EBENEZER

It is my fault. How can I expect my family to be godly when their father does just enough to get by? How can I demand that Joel respect his mother when I so often forget her needs?

It's the Day of Atonement. My older sons will not meet with the camp. They don't care. But Joel and Benjamin and the new baby girl—they're still here. I still have some time left to be a real father.

Abraham took Hagar to wife against God's wishes. Isaac did not bring up his sons to fear the God of their fathers. Jacob—Israel—told a giant lie and had to run for his life. But God still accepted their prayers and their sacrifices.

He made of Abraham a great nation. Several great nations, in fact. Through Isaac and Jacob the promised Seed will come. And even I am part of God's people. It's hard to understand.

By tonight the whole camp will be clean. Joel will be forgiven for his treatment of his mother. Hannah will be forgiven for her careless Sabbath keeping. And even I, Ebenezer, the greatest sinner of the family, will be as clean and sinless as a baby.

Tonight our sins will be far out in the wilderness. All of them. All the sins of the camp. Tomorrow we start anew.

How animals can bear our sins I'll never understand. What the promised Seed, whoever He may be, will do about us, I can't imagine. But praise the Lord for giving us a clean start!

There are the trumpets. I've got to get the family together.

Together Ebenezer's family walks to the area where the sanctuary tent is pitched. Ebenezer leads the way; Hannah follows with young Benjamin in tow; and Joel, carrying the baby, brings up the rear.

Thousands of Hebrews are already present at the tent of meeting. Thousands more are still on their way. All faces are calm and peaceful. Hundreds of thousands of confessions have been made; hundreds of thousands of decisions have been reached; hundreds of thousands have looked for and received assurance of their forgiveness.

Soon the animals will be presented. The bull that dies for the sins of the priests. The goat that dies for the sins of the people. The goat that carries all the sins—of the priests, of the people, of the sanctuary—into the wilderness to be lost forever.

The trumpets are still sounding, but the people are strangely quiet for so large an assembly. They do not understand everything they will see. They do not see how animal blood will forgive their sins.

But they see their God—"merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Exodus 34:6, 7)—and they trust His method of dealing with sin.

Naked in soul, they stand before the God they adore and wait for Him to cover their guilt. He has promised each one a fresh start. He has promised a Saviour.

They will wait patiently in Him. □

"RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!"

Norman R. Gulley

If the judgment day is now, what should we do?

"Get out! Get out! Run for your life!" The excited man shouted the warning over the loudspeaker as his little truck bumped along the streets of Pleiku, South Vietnam.

President Thieu's announced surrender of all the central highlands to the enemy had sent a shudder of terror through the men and women of Pleiku. Grabbing little more than their children, they rushed as fast as they could onto Route 7, and southward, for their lives. But that road was to become a trail of terror, "a pathway of blood" as *Newsweek* put it. For a few hours later the enemy slaughtered many of those helpless refugees farther down the road.

Judgment Day Now!

Another messenger is shouting out "with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come." Revelation 14:7. The urgent warning is going "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Revelation 14:6. It is a crucial part of the message of the first angel of Revelation 14: Judgment IS come! The message is being sounded abroad while nations still exist—not when they have already come to an end.

Through the centuries most Christians have identified the judgment with the second advent of Jesus Christ. Thus the Apostles' Creed says, "He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." The judgment scene painted in medieval churches is usually the return of Christ.

But the Bible mentions three major judgments, one preadvent (Revelation 14:6, 7) and two postadvent (Revelation 20:4, 5, 9). The first angel's message is clearly of judgment now, in the end-time just before the second ad-

vent, while nations still continue. Nations will have ceased at the time of the second advent and after.

Why Judgment Now?

But why is there a judgment now? Why not wait until the second advent? What is the advantage of having judgment in this final hour before that advent? The answer is simple, yet profound. God is being judged! This may come as a new concept to many Christians. It shatters all false ideas of God as One who is arbitrary. It shows Him to be gracious and reasonable. J. B. Phillips was right when he suggested that, for many, their God is too small. Queen Elizabeth's chaplain in Scotland, Dr. James S. Stewart, says, "Too much there has been lost the sense of a cosmic battle which merges visibly onto the stage of world events." It is precisely this cosmic concept—this pushing of our horizon beyond the borders of this earth to the cosmos of intelligent beings—that is so vital in understanding the present judgment.

The judgment in session is for all intelligent beings in the entire universe to observe. The attention of this group is focused on our little planet's judgment. The justice of God is the central issue before the universe. Population explosion, ecology, and inflation are big issues only on this one tiny planet. In the universe the ultimate issue is the truth about God.

Satan, a fallen creature, has accused God of injustice. His first recorded words in the Garden of Eden conveyed distrust when he said to Eve, "Ye shall

not surely die." Genesis 3:4. The judgment now going on in heaven is to reveal whether God is just or unjust. At the second advent of Jesus Christ, some humans will be saved while others will be destroyed. Matthew 25:31-34. Why the difference? Is God just? God wants everyone to be fully satisfied with His decisions before He implements them, and this is why the present judgment precedes the second advent. See also Daniel 7:9, 10, 26, 27.

This makes sense, for God doesn't need a judgment to find out something for Himself. He knows everything. Isaiah 46:9, 10. The judgment is for others. And what will the result be? The chapter following the first angel's message (Revelation 15) shows the redeemed acclaiming, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." Revelation 15:3, 4. As the psalmist put it, "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth." Psalm 9:16.

What Should We Do?

That God is on trial is the ultimate fact of the present judgment, but not by any means the only fact. You and I are on trial too! This is where the first angel's message becomes an utterly urgent warning to us, just as that Vietnamese man's announcement was to the citizens of Pleiku. The warning of the first angel is for our day.

But if this day of judgment is so vital, would it not have been mentioned long ago? Yes, and it was. The longest time prophecy in the Bible already

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RUN



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spoke of it 2500 years ago! See Daniel 8:14, written in the sixth century BC. But our judgment end-time was even pointed out centuries before that! The Jews had a judgment day every year! It was the last day of the sanctuary year. See Leviticus 16. Just so, the last-time of this Christian era is judgment day for us.

One of the reasons for the Jewish judgment day at the end of each year was to point to our present judgment at the end of the Christian era. Just as the millions of sacrifices in Israel pointed forward to the One sacrifice to come, so each yearly judgment day pointed forward to the one judgment era to come in our "time of the end." That's how important God considers this judgment day to be. So what should we do?

The Jews dropped all work, ate nothing, and gathered around the sanctuary or temple on judgment day. See Leviticus 16. We cannot stop working and eating, and there is no specified sanctuary on earth where we can gather, so what are we supposed to do? The Jews did what they did on judgment day to help them concen-

trate on the most important thing going on during that day. In the universe today, the most important thing going on is the judgment in heaven. Should we not take time to stop, to consider, and to meditate on this fact?

In that judgment, you are being judged. God wants you to know that Jesus Christ is there at the throne to intercede on your behalf if you ask Him to. Hebrews 8:1, 2; 2:17. He is there ready to do everything for you. Ephesians 3:20; Jude 24. He is willing to be your Advocate. Zechariah 3:1-4; Hebrews 7:25. He understands what you suffer, for He also suffered as a man. Hebrews 4:14-16. He is able to help you in temptation, for He also was tempted. Hebrews 2:18. He is ready to supply your every need. Philippians 4:19. He wants you to know that whatever trouble you are now going through, He is with you always, even unto the end of the world. Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5. But—mark it—there is one thing He cannot do. Even the Great God who runs the universe cannot do this one thing—He cannot get you through the judgment unfairly,



for in doing that very thing He would fail in the judgment of Himself.

Your judgment and His are inseparably linked. God will not only be just in His judgment of you, but will be seen to be just in His decision on your eternal future. You will be given either eternal life or eternal death.

Why will many fail in the judgment? It won't be big crimes only that keep people from eternal life. They won't have to gun someone down or push them out of a plane as some did recently in Vietnam. All they will have to do is to neglect their salvation (Hebrews 2:3)—to go on day by day as if it doesn't matter whether their lives are right with God.

When the frightened jailer at Philippi asked the apostles Paul and Silas what he should do, Paul answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." Acts 16:30, 31, RSV.

When the vast crowds in Jerusalem asked the apostles what they should do, Peter said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." Acts 2:38, RSV.

Jesus Himself said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength," and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Mark 12:30, 31, RSV.

At another time Jesus said to His disciples, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." John 14:15, RSV.

What we must do is very simple and very necessary and demands everything we have. But it's worth it. Believe in Jesus, confess our wrongdoings to Him with true repentance, and let Him take them all away. Then love Him—enough to obey Him in all things—and love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

"The hour of his judgment is come." The villagers of Pleiku dropped everything and ran for their lives. With similar urgency may we run to Jesus and ask Him to plead our case in the great heavenly judgment. Unlike so many Vietnamese who ran only to die later, those who run to Jesus will be safe forever. May we all be among that number. □



PETER BENNINGS, ARTIST, © PPFA

God Will Win

Edward Heppenstall

**Christ's work in heaven
can save your life.**

**All will declare that
God's decisions are true
and right.**

"Then I saw an angel flying in mid-heaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those on earth, to every nation and tribe, language and people. He cried in a loud voice, 'Fear God and pay him homage; for the hour of his judgment has come! Worship him who made heaven and earth.' " Revelation 14:6, 7, NEB.

To every creature throughout the universe and to every nation on earth the Bible has a message of both redemption and judgment. In relation to sinful man, God's purpose is always the same. All men are born in a state of enmity and separation from God. God seeks to reconcile men to Himself by the gospel, by the redemption wrought in and through His Son, Jesus Christ.

In relation to the devil, the flesh, and the world, God's purpose is always the same. The great controversy between Christ and Satan continues until final victory, when sin and Satan are eradicated and God's right to sovereign rule is forever acknowledged.

God speaks His word and moves toward man both in redemption and judgment. It takes both to accomplish His purpose. The gospel saves sinners. The judgment either vindicates or condemns them. At the same time, God gives account of His own character of righteous love to all His creatures throughout the universe.

Men sometimes conceive of a conflict within the heart of God. God's attribute of love and mercy is set over against His attribute of justice and judgment. In all this we lose sight of the true character of God, the one true God in whose heart there never has been anything but inexhaustible love.

To help us understand the working out of God's purpose the Bible centers God's divine program and activity in and from the sanctuary in heaven. The key to God's work of redemption and judgment centers in God's control room. Here divine action is planned and executed. Here judgments are made and carried out. Here all cases are tried, all decisions made, all destinies decided. God's beneficent purpose in dealing with the sin prob-

lem is developed in three stages.

First, in the Old Testament, redemption and judgment are given in promise by means of the typical services of the earthly sanctuary, which is a pattern of the heavenly and its operations. "Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle; for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount." Hebrews 8:5.

In the earthly sanctuary men can see in type God's plan for man's redemption and victory over sin and Satan. The typical services, from the daily sacrifices to the banishing of the scapegoat loaded with the responsibility for sin on the Day of Atonement, pointed to a higher knowledge of Christ's work in the heavenly sanctuary.

Second, with the incarnation of Jesus, God invaded the world and identified Himself with sinners to reconcile them to Himself. Satan the great accuser was exposed and cast down, a defeated foe.

Men tend to think that what Christ did at Calvary is enough. But Satan is still very active in the world. The controversy between Christ and Satan is by no means over. Sin has not yet been eradicated. The sovereign rule of God has not yet been realized. All this waits upon the third phase of God's program: Christ's ministry in and from the heavenly sanctuary.

In this third and final stage, the scene shifts from earth back to the heavenly sanctuary. Nothing remains today of the earthly sanctuary. Only the heavenly sanctuary with Christ's ministry for us there is available to us. What filled Christ's mind at His departure from the earth was that men should not lose sight of Him and His continued work on our behalf. The strongest emphasis should be given to the high-priestly ministry of the living Christ. Both the work of Christ on earth and His ministry in heaven constitute the very heart of the Christian faith. "Christ has entered, not that sanctuary made by men's hands which is only a symbol of the reality, but heaven itself,

to appear now before God on our behalf." Hebrews 9:24, NEB.

We cannot be content with what Christ did 2000 years ago on earth. The continued ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary depends upon the completion of God's program for the final eradication of sin and the acknowledgment of the Father's sovereign rule. God invites us to follow Christ in His divine work that leads to the consummation of all things and the triumphant outcome when God will be vindicated before all the universe. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." 1 Corinthians 15:24, 25.

Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary is as vital and important as His sacrifice on the cross. There the great controversy between Christ and Satan will be directed to ultimate victory, the final overthrow and destruction of sin and Satan. The world tends to think that this Jesus who lived so long ago has been disposed of. He has not been seen since. But we Christians know that He is risen. He is even now the Lamb of God upon the throne, leading His church, mediating the power of God, and saving His children to the uttermost. "This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:24, 25.

Christ's continuing work of redemption and judgment is no dream of a lonely mystic. Rather it is the revelation of God's movements toward the ultimate victory of the kingdom of God. "When all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also

himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." 1 Corinthians 15:28.

Above the din and conflict of our world comes the voice and action of the most high God from His sanctuary. Christ must reign until every creature under heaven will bow the knee to God our Father. We do not see that yet. We do see Jesus, the living Christ, directing, interceding, executing his judgments, leading His people to final victory.

In the Apocalypse the apostle John in vision saw doors opened into God's sanctuary in heaven. In John's book God's throne is opened to our view. Here we may understand and follow the progress of God's sovereign rule. The eye of faith pierces up through the darkness of this world to the very presence of God. Beyond whatever seems darkest in our world, we may possess our souls in patience and allegiance to our God. Christ is our attorney for the defense against all the accusations and workings of Satan.

"I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered for God's word and for the testimony they bore. They gave a great cry: 'How long, sovereign Lord, holy and true, must it be before thou wilt vindicate us and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?' " Revelation 6:9, 10, NEB. The apostle John in vision wrote of the vindicating judgment of God from His sanctuary. The martyred saints are symbolized as being under the altar, having been slain for the word of God and the testimony which they held. They cry to God to be vindicated, which appears to have been long delayed. On earth the evidence has gone against them. Their faithfulness to God has met with martyrdom. The judgments of men have led to their untimely condemnation and death. It is time for God to take action from His sanctuary, reverse the verdict of men, and set the record straight.

"The judgment was set, and the books were opened." Daniel 7:10. Here alone the destinies of men are decided and proclaimed, for neither man,

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priest, nor church on earth can judge rightly. When Christ ends His priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, man's probation will be over. Christ will then march forth with the armies of heaven. He will bring His saints from the grave and take them and the living saints to be with Him forever. Then the saints will praise God for His righteous judgment: "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." Revelation 15:3, 4.

The Vindication of God

"Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed [“emerge victorious,” NEB].” Daniel 8:14. In vision Daniel saw an apostate power led by Satan which had cast down the place of God's sanctuary and sought to discredit His work of redemption and judgment. An important aspect of the great controversy rages around the sanctuary of God. God's character and His right to rule have been put in jeopardy because of the presence of sin and rebellion in the universe. God's creatures feel the need to justify God. This vindication must come from God Himself. The hour of God's judgment will vindicate not only the saints, but God Himself. Satan must lose his suit and God win His. God's sanctuary will “emerge victorious.”

As a result of both redemption and judgment, men and angels will see what God is truly like and will never again rebel against Him. God does not intervene by force to accomplish victory over His opposers. A victory of force would bring God down to the level of earthly conquerors. The conflict is a spiritual and moral one throughout. “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:4, 5.

God's decisive weapons are the

cross, the Lamb of God, and the revelation of His righteous love. God proves His superiority over every foe and method known to man. His kingdom is being restored not by supernatural might or compulsion but by the glad, voluntary acceptance of His rule in the hearts of all His children and created beings in the universe.

There is a tremendous reality in the final outcome when Christ will restore to His Father the scepter of a recovered and obedient universe. This will end all the accusations of Satan and the wicked angels. All the defenses of the ungodly will be utterly broken down, all the charges against God refuted. All the questions raised about the origin of sin and rebellion will be answered. Never again will men or angels desire to depart from the will of God.

The hope of the church finds its ground in Christ's work of redemption that neither man nor devil can discredit. Christ's convincing disclosure of the character of God will banish all doubt and unbelief. Nothing which will transpire in the eternal ages to come will impair the truth of God and the security of the universe.

Christians who follow Christ in His priestly ministry of redemption and judgment possess an inestimable advantage. God's movements from the sanctuary will effect complete salvation and restoration. The redeeming ministry of our Lord does not wait for our fitness or any righteousness that we may attach to ourselves. God has answered the sin problem with the gift of redemption and the revelation of His character. The roots of faith, hope, and love lie in the nature of God and His righteousness. Christ's work of redemption and judgment tries all, proves all, justifies all, even God Himself. The right of God to rule, the total allegiance of all His creatures throughout the universe, will be the outcome. “That hope we hold. It is like an anchor for our lives, an anchor safe and sure. It enters in through the veil, where Jesus has entered on our behalf as forerunner, having become a high priest for ever.” Hebrews 6:19, 20, NEB.

Looking to Jesus

In the midst of prevailing sin and destruction in our world, Christians

are called upon to look to the living Christ. He saves our spiritual lives from degenerating.

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” Hebrews 10:19-22. At the bottom of all man's problems is lack of faith and trust in God, the Father. The vindication of God aims to bring men back to an eternal allegiance and trust in Him. By faith we pass within the veil to the golden altar before the throne, where the incense of Christ's merits and righteousness is offered “with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.” Revelation 8:3. In Christ we are forgiven, accepted, and justified before God the Father. By men we can never be redeemed or justified at last. Complete vindication can be only by a judgment from God's sanctuary. The triumphant destiny of His children is now being effected at this hour of God's judgment in the heavenly sanctuary. “In Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” Ephesians 2:13.

Men are prone to go their own way independently of God. One cannot be a victorious Christian without drawing nigh to God and experiencing His presence. A firm Christian experience is possible only as we depend daily upon Him. Our supreme privilege is that through Christ we have access to our heavenly Father.

Christ's priestly ministry means more than the acknowledgment that Christ died for us on the cross 2000 years ago. It means that we enjoy access to the Father and experience His conquering presence in our lives here and now.

We are to have faith in God's leading to final victory, in Christ's directing all things to the glory of the Father. We can join the hosts of God's people in gratitude and praise to God: “Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments.” Revelation 19:1, 2. □



THE

I

THE FIRST AND SECOND

II

THE THIRD AND FOURTH

III

THE FIFTH AND SIXTH

IV

THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH

LAW

V

THE NINTH AND TENTH

VI

THE ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH

VII

THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH

VIII

THE FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH

IX

THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH

X

THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH



The End-of-the-world

Wm Miller

"Although surrounded with enemies and scoffers, yet my mind is perfectly calm, and my hope in the coming of Christ is as strong as ever."

Thus wrote William Miller on November 10, 1844. He was sixty-two years old. But who was William Miller, and what is the story behind the man whose name became a household word in the 1840s?

Born on a Massachusetts farm in 1782 and growing up along the frontier in Vermont, William was a typical pioneer boy. He played hard, worked harder, possessed a great passion for book learning, and was filled with fun and humor. Later, as an American army captain in the War of 1812, he proved he could also fight for his country. In a letter to a friend dated September 11, 1814, he wrote, "The small arms now are just coming to action. I have no time to write any more; you must conceive what we feel, for I cannot describe it. I am satisfied that I can fight; I know I am no coward."

When the war was over, he returned to Lucy, his wife, and became a civilian again. He wanted to be a farmer for

the rest of his life. However, he found time on several occasions to become deputy sheriff and justice of the peace. During these years he was a religious skeptic. But something happened to him in 1816, causing him to return to the religion of his boyhood. This made his skeptical friends unhappy, and they challenged him, almost forcing him into a detailed study of the Bible.

Thus begins this almost unreal but true story of a man and his message. William approached the study of the Bible holding the traditional Protestant position that the Bible explains itself. From his diligent searching he emerged with a view on Daniel 8:14 that was to become part of the history of America and change the life and thinking of millions of people.

Daniel 8:14 says: "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." Miller defined the sanctuary as the church, later expanding this view to include the earth itself. The second coming of Christ would be the cleansing of the earth, for Christ's appearing would destroy the wicked with fire on the last day of the earth. Miller agreed

with Bible scholars that the 2300-day prophecy began in 457 BC. The conclusion of this time period, according to Miller, was to be sometime in 1843. This was the logical basis for his thinking that the Lord would appear sometime between the spring of 1843 and the spring of 1844. The end of the world was just around the corner!

But now what was Miller to do with his findings? He was convinced that he must somehow warn the world of its approaching end. But, he argued, he was no public speaker. God would not require him to preach. Still his conscience bothered him. To get some relief, he promised the Lord that if he should receive an invitation to speak on this subject, he would accept it. Then he relaxed with a clear conscience and felt perfectly safe. No one would ever ask him to preach!

Just a few hours later he held such an invitation in his hand, and he was shocked, as we can easily believe!

William Miller preached his first sermon in 1831. Soon he found himself so swamped with invitations to present his views that there was no



Here Miller first preached the second coming.



Interior view of the church.



Where Miller awaits His Lord.

Paul B. Ricchiuti

Man

Excitement mounted in America when ministers preached the world would end in 1844.

possible way for him to fill them all.

He solved most of this problem by publishing his views. He worked hard, long, and always alone. Then quite suddenly, in the year 1840, he found himself surrounded by hundreds of helpers. Preachers from other churches had accepted his beliefs and now came to his aid eager to proclaim the good news. With the ranks swelling by the day, "Father Miller" saw the birth of the Millerite movement. Conventions, camp meetings, and conferences followed. Momentum and excitement quickened. In Europe hundreds of preachers were giving a similar message. Yet, even with all this help, it was William Miller the people wanted to hear. Demands came from everywhere.

March 21, 1844, was chosen by Miller's followers as the great day of the Lord's appearing. Miller himself

never set this date or any other for the second coming of Christ. That day came just like any other day and passed into history. The world continued to function as it always had, and the Lord had not appeared. Nothing had happened that was in any way unusual. There was disappointment among the Millerites, but the movement was not dead. Confused, maybe; but not dead. Many began to restudy, in deep earnest, the beliefs they held. Then they rallied on the grounds that a mistake had been made, a minor one, in chronology. This settled their fears and most of their questions.

With the summer of 1844 fast approaching, camp meetings and large city gatherings increased in number. The Millerite movement came surging back, stronger than before. In Boston literature was passed out in such vast quantities that it almost flooded the city. When this news reached a camp meeting in Ohio, and it was reported that the literature had been financed from ladies' gold rings and other offerings, people arose, one after

another, and dropped rings, brooches, strings of gold beads, earrings, and gold watches into the hands of their ministers. They would not be outdone by Boston! After all, they reasoned, what good were such things to them? In a few weeks they would be walking the streets of gold.

At a five-day camp meeting in Exeter, New Hampshire, a woman interrupted Joseph Bates in the middle of his sermon to tell him that time was being wasted. "The Bridegroom cometh!" she cried. "Go ye out to meet Him!" The worshipers were electrified by a man named Snow. He had new light, he said. The Lord was coming on October 22, 1844, only weeks away. This started a rumbling that grew in volume and speed as it spread from village to town to city. This was the "midnight cry": "The Lord is coming."

The summer and early fall of 1844 were unusual for two reasons: the Millerite movement and a political campaign. 1844 was a presidential election year. Both movements were roaring to a hectic climax side by side. James Polk and the Democratic party

Paul Ricchiuti is an artist who designs the SIGNS—and who loves delving into history.

were pushing for the annexation of Texas and Oregon. The Millerites were warning of the end of the world and the dawn of heaven.

"Spend the little remaining time in hard work among the doubting, the luke-warm, and the open enemy. Forget business—forget everything but your country—till the election is over, and then you will read the result with a clear conscience." So went newspapers talking about politics.

The Millerite tempo was equally hot. Their paper, *The Midnight Cry*, in referring to the present world advised readers, "Run and hasten through it, and let it be known that you leave it with alacrity for something better. Let your actions preach in the clearest tones: 'The Lord is coming'—'The time is short'—'This world passeth away'—'Prepare to meet thy God.'"

Farmers in New England left their fields unplanted. Many never bothered to plow. Those who did were confused. When they went to harvest, they stood silent, unable to work, and then walked away, leaving their crops standing behind them. By their works they felt that they showed their faith. The Lord would come before winter.

Mass meetings and mob scenes increased toward the close of summer. Thousands of Millerites flowed into their houses of worship, and opposition mounted.

In the early days of the Millerite movement people were asked to stay with their chosen churches, even though they accepted the belief of the Lord's return during 1843 or 1844. But as the final day approached, opposition grew so strong from resisting preachers that Millerite leaders urged their followers to leave their churches and join them. "Come out of her, my people," was the cry. And they did come out, clinging to each other in common belief, a Christian brotherhood. This very act set the movement apart as a separate organization, establishing it as a new church.

Violence erupted as October 22 came closer. Mobs determined to destroy Millerite meetings. They built bonfires, yelled, shouted, tormented, ridiculed, and even threatened to tar and feather as worshipers entered or departed from their meeting places. In

one town they fired off a number of Roman candles next to meeting-house windows trying to cause panic within the building. Police restrained mob action in large cities, even closing Millerite buildings for fear of violence. In spite of this protection, some of the unruly still determined to cause trouble. They repeatedly broke into meeting places, even empty ones, destroying whatever they could.

Newspapers jumped into the act with cartoons and editorials poking fun at the Millerites and labeling them as fanatics and a public nuisance. They even tried to prove that it was impossible for the world to be destroyed by fire. But in the end all had to agree, however reluctantly, that these Millerite people were quiet, orderly citizens who went about their business with deep sincerity and peace.

The *Morning News*, a New York newspaper, reported on October 12, 1844, that a mob had gathered outside a Millerite meeting in the Franklin Theater. Thousands of people had swarmed around the front of the building. Alerted to the danger of riot, Mayor Harper arrived with a special police force and closed the meeting. In the old style of newspaper reporting in the mid 1800s, we read what followed the closing of that meeting. "In the afternoon the Mayor resorted to a ruse to draw the crowd from the Franklin Theatre. The crowd was dense in front of the theatre, but as the Millerites retired the multitude opened that they might run the gauntlet of the 'wicked' and receive their farewell benedictions, which were given with scorn or laughter, according to the sex of the departing disciple. Rumblyings were also heard which betokened an ugly feeling towards those who by many are looked upon as the crafty leaders in the delusion of Millerism, but the Mayor's invention was equal to the emergency, and he avoided the commission of an outrage by a 'pious fraud.'"

"Rushing into the theatre with an expression of countenance which gave assurance of the enforcement of rigid justice, the crowd deemed themselves surely avenged; but when the Mayor returned with a 'prisoner' on his arm, who was closely muffled in a capacious cloak, that old Miller himself was the prisoner none doubted, and

with respect to the ministers of justice, they first gave way for an unobstructed passage to the police officer, and then followed, to the number of seven thousands, to see the prophet securely entombed.

"The Mayor safely arrived with his charge, and every eye was strained, and every face of humanity of those untold thousands was elongated to an unnatural extension, to get a glimpse of the author of so much commotion—the cloak was unclasped—its ample folds were outspread, and to the gaze of those o'er-strained eyes was presented Mr. Justice Drinker:—[a police officer]. Some stared with astonishment; others, recovering from their surprise, laughed. 'Capitally done, Mr. Mayor,' exclaimed others, and the whole was terminated by the crowd giving nine hearty cheers for the Mayor who had dispersed them in good humor."

Thus it went, with all classes of people rushing together toward the day of doom. With mixed feelings and rising tension, the tempo increased to the very night of October 21, with only hours remaining before the expected second coming.

Sinners trembled as night drew on. And small groups of people were seen making their way to buildings, wooded areas, or hilltops. Some sang; others prayed. The long wait was almost over. Other Millerites waited until morning to bathe, dress in their finest clothes, and then wait, searching the skies for the first sign of Christ's appearing.

These were people who left everything behind them—home, business, loved ones, possessions, everything. Several classes of persons assembled that day as they waited. There were truth seekers, the true believers, sincere and honest in their convictions. Hangers-on were there too, who longed for an escape from a world crashing around them in a devastating economic depression. Millerism was a way out. So what, they reasoned, if today they walked in poverty; tomorrow they would inherit the glories of heaven. Then there were the curious. And yet another group came, the troublemakers. They laughed, mocked, and made fun while some of their numbers draped themselves in white

cloth and leaped around on rooftops faking ascension.

Long hours finally dragged into dawn as the sun arose on the morning of the twenty-third. There was no roll of thunder, no flash of lightning, no cloud of angels. The Lord delayed.

Where was the "End-of-the-world man," as William Miller was called by some newsmen?

He was home on his farm at Low

Hampton, New York. While friends and neighbors gathered nearby on an outcropping of rock, he sat quietly on his porch waiting, patiently waiting, until the sun went down on the western horizon in a ball of glory.

Thus October 22, 1844, passed into history. With it went the hopes and dreams of a sincere, honest multitude of people. Many never recovered from the shock of disappointment and the

shame of ridicule. But there were some small groups who reacted differently. They took their Bibles and studied them to discover where they had gone wrong, giving rise to a whole new era of Christian thinking. True, the disappointment was still there, but so was the hope—the hope of a soon-coming Lord and Saviour in clouds of glory to take His people home. Of this, they had no doubt, and neither do we.

Vision in a Cornfield



CLYDE PROVENSA, ARTIST, © PPA

The barn in which Edson and friends prayed before Edson received "the vision in a cornfield."

Life was hard for the average U.S. citizen in the 1840s. There were long hours of steady work from sunup to sunset. Chickens had to be fed, cows milked, gardens hoed and weeded. Washing the family clothes took most of a day. Then came canning and the preserving of food. There were the never-ending chores of chopping wood, hauling water, and keeping lamps trimmed. No task was easy. More often than not, while Dad spent most of his day and early evening at his job, Mom was chasing down the kids. They sneaked off as often as they could to the woods, a nearby stream, or just to an old swimming hole somewhere. There were just not enough hours in the day for everything.

This was the golden age of the great Mississippi River. It had hundreds of

Tom Sawyers and Huck Finns watching white water boil behind countless riverboats on their way to Natchez or New Orleans. Slavery and great plantations were at full strength in the South, with slaves singing such songs as "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" in the cool of the evening.

There was also the threat of war with Mexico. And when the war came, it produced Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis, Thomas (Stonewall) Jackson, Ulysses S. Grant, George Custer, and Sam Houston. Britain and the U.S. were shaking their fists at each other too, over the wild territory of Oregon.

Davy Crockett's Almanac, hoop skirts, traveling entertainers, fancy-dress balls, and the small talk of happy people filled the play hours of rich and poor alike.

Along came John Calhoun, the "Cast-iron Man," to become Secretary of State. He reached the height of his sparkling career in 1844 by declaring, in a letter, that Texas must enter the Union as a slave state. This turned the northern states away from him, and his light began to fade.

Off in the Northwest, in the 1840s, General (then Lieutenant) Fremont explored along the Oregon trail, and his findings opened the way for settlers as the "Great Migration" of 1843 took place, led by Marcus Whitman.

This era also produced transportation across the Great Lakes for the first time. Newer, bigger, faster ships were demanded. Paddlewheelers were on the way out, losing to the more speedy propeller-driven vessels. They made a

A vision and much Bible study led to the correct understanding of Daniel's prophecy.

regular path across Lake Erie from Buffalo to the ports of Detroit and Monroe, in Michigan. It was exciting travel, for the West was now open to thousands of people, American and foreign alike. This was their great chance for wealth and freedom in the land beyond the small frontier town of Chicago.

Then there was the Erie Canal. It was a great water highway going inland from the Hudson River, through the valley of the Mohawk, on to the inland seas of the Great Lakes. The Big Ditch, as it was called, had been a long time coming. It had been thought of as far back as 1777 in the mind of Gouverneur Morris, a member of the first Continental Congress.

It took Yankee know-how to carve that ribbon of water through the back country of upstate New York. It was over 500 miles long when it opened in 1825. The speed limit on the water was four miles an hour. There was also a ten-dollar speeding fine for all who didn't obey the law. At first the price of passage for through passengers was four cents a mile and included three meals a day. But it was raised when people started boarding vessels at mealtime and then departing a mile or so down the canal having paid only a few cents for their dinner.

The canal was an instant success as thousands of people and tons of freight moved west. There were traffic jams with boats waiting hours at locks. Sleeping was something else! Bunks attached to walls were so close to the one above that it was impossible for anyone to turn in his sleep. And if anyone could sleep, it was a miracle, what with the assorted snores, cries of children, people moving about, talking, laughing, smoking, and the heavy walking on the deck above. Passengers were packed in so solid that they had no room to move around in the cabin. Floors, tables, and every available place was used. Those fortunate enough to find a place under a table were lucky. At least they weren't stepped on.

In spite of all the hardships, the canal was the most popular way to travel cross-country. It was easy and convenient. Sitting on the top deck was the most pleasant part of the journey. People could relax and watch

forests, towns, villages, cattle, people, and farmland pass like a great moving picture. The canal was a sort of Main Street in upstate New York.

Port Gibson was not a large town in 1844. But it had risen to a position of importance in the area since 1825, for it was lucky enough to be situated along the busy Erie Canal.

Pushing out from town were dusty roads leading to forests, orchards, and prosperous farms. One farm was owned by a man named Hiram Edson. He had been a Methodist until he accepted the views of William Miller, and like thousands of others looked for the Lord to appear on October 22, 1844. He held meetings at his farm, where many neighbors accepted this newfound belief. When the great day arrived, he invited fellow believers home to wait for the Lord to come. Some would not come. They did not believe. To these he bade a last goodbye, never expecting to see them again.

"We looked for our coming Lord," he said later, "until the clock tolled twelve at midnight. The day had then passed, and our disappointment became a certainty." He asked his friends, "Is there no God, no heaven, no golden city, no paradise?"

That unhappy group waited until dawn. Then slowly, one by one, they quietly left for their homes. A few remained however. As Hiram looked at them, he suggested, "Let's go to the barn and pray." The granary in the barn was almost empty, so they knelt there. And they did not stop praying until they felt a conviction that their prayers had been heard and accepted and would be answered.

A little later in the day Hiram asked a friend who had stayed, to go with him to cheer up their discouraged neighbors. They decided to cross Edson's cornfield instead of taking the road. This would avoid ridicule from the neighbors. Corn was still in the shock, and pumpkins were still on their vines. Near one of the shocks, Hiram suddenly stopped. It was, he said later, as if someone were holding him in place. His friend walked on. Hiram sensed a glow nearby. It surrounded him. And while in this situation, he seemed to see the figure of Christ leaving the holy part of the heavenly sanctuary and entering the

most holy part. There Jesus was to stay until He finished the work of cleansing the sanctuary. Hiram's mind was directed to the last book of the Bible—Revelation, chapter ten. There was the story of the sweet-then-bitter book. Truly, the days before October 22 had been sweet, but now the bitterness of disappointment was almost too much to take. Hiram felt impressed that he must spread the news again.

As he continued with these thoughts, his friend, who was about to climb a fence at the far side of the field, noticed that Hiram was not with him. Turning, he saw him still standing in the center of the field. He called to him asking what was keeping him.

"The Lord has answered our prayers," said Edson.

Edson couldn't keep still now, not after what he had seen and heard. He and his friend, named Crosier, went to talk about what had happened with another believer by the name of Franklin Hahn, a doctor. The three took up their Bibles and studied in earnest.

"Will the Bible bear it out?" asked Crosier.

Their study stretched into months, then years. Finally, in 1846, they published their findings in a small paper called the *Day Star*. The sanctuary to be cleansed was in heaven. Cleansing the sanctuary was an act of final judgment. They mailed copies to every Adventist address they could lay their hands on. One went to Joseph Bates, another to James White. Many responded to this paper, and a meeting was scheduled to be held in Hiram Edson's home. When at last the small group assembled, James White was not able to come. But Joseph Bates was there, and he brought with him news about the seventh-day Sabbath. Hiram and Hahn accepted the Sabbath right away. Then slowly, very slowly, the points of faith began to take shape that started to form a new church, a new line of thinking, a denomination that today is called the Seventh-day Adventist Church. More things came, much more, but here was the beginning. And the sting of the sweet-then-bitter book of Revelation 10 began to taste sweet once more as the great disappointment of October 22, 1844, slowly faded away. □

Jesus Christ, Our Advocate

Kenneth Harvey Hopp

An advocate writes about the privilege of retaining Jesus Christ as our Advocate in the final judgment.

"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2:1.

I am an advocate. That is, I am a practicing lawyer and people come to me to defend them against some charge.

There are differences between my advocacy before the courts of the state of California and Jesus' advocacy before the Father. I will mention some differences, but both differences and similarities are enlightening.

Most of the time I am called in on a case when a person has been charged with a crime and arrested. Jesus Christ the righteous is called in on a case when someone feels a sense of sin. Here is the first similarity—and the first difference. A person who has been arrested and brought before a magistrate to be charged with a crime knows he is in trouble. He knows he needs an advocate. Not so the sinner. He may stubbornly ignore his guilt. The Holy Spirit pleads with him to recognize his guilt, but he is free to ignore the Spirit's pleading.

When I have been retained to defend someone, my first major step is to interview my new client. Some people think I do this to decide whether or not he is guilty so that I can decide whether to represent him. This is not true. I interview him to get the facts to know how to represent him. I will not turn down someone I consider to be

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guilty just because he is guilty. Here is another similarity with Jesus Christ, our Advocate. He does not turn anyone down simply because he is guilty.

Do I sometimes turn someone down? Yes. I earn my living practicing law. If someone cannot afford to pay me, I suggest to him that the public defender's office has some very good lawyers in it. Jesus Christ, our Advocate, does not have this problem and offers His services without money and without price.

There are two other major reasons why I sometimes refuse a client. Both help illustrate the gospel. I turn down a client who will not level with me. I refuse one who wants to direct the handling of the case himself.

My defense of a client can be no better than my information. If a client lies to me, or conceals from me information I need to know, I cannot do a good job for him. I will be met by surprises that frankness on his part would help me prepare for.

This may appear to be different from Christ's handling of our case. He knows all about our sins. Even so we are told to confess our sins to Him. 1 John 1:9. Only if we do this does He promise to clear us. The purpose of this confession is different. The confession is not to enlighten the Lord, but to make us ready for forgiveness. In a sense this is also true in my office. When an attitude of trust and confidence builds up, a client will tell me things that materially change his attitude toward rehabilitation. As a Christian lawyer I have never felt that my responsibilities ended with simply defending a client. I also try to reorient his thinking. I claim no great success in this, but I have had some.

This trust and confidence I have referred to has its effect also in connection with the second reason I mentioned as grounds for turning a client down. If the client has confidence in me, he will submit to my planning for his defense.

A lady client had had her deposition taken; that is, opposing counsel had questioned her under oath before a court reporter. I was present, of course. A few days later she called me at home very concerned that she had said the wrong things. I attempted to reassure her, but unsuccessfully. Finally I said,

"Mrs. Franklin, why don't you let me worry about this? That's what you're paying me for!"

Later I realized I'd said more than I thought I had. The Lord wants us to let Him worry about our case. It is up to us to bring it to Him and then leave it completely in His hands. He has promised to take care of it for us.

Occasionally a client has some firm convictions as to how his case should be handled. When I see one like this, I decline to take his case. The problem rarely arises in a criminal case, which brings out another aspect of Christianity that is illustrated by the life of Christ. Who were they who thronged Him, listening to Him gladly? Were they the learned theologians of His time, the ministers who might be expected to value the deeper insights He could give? No, indeed. They were the harlots and publicans and sinners. They, not handicapped by any sense of pride, when they felt convicted of sin, were glad to trust Him completely.

The attitude in which a client is thoroughly convinced how his case should be handled sometimes arises in civil matters. When it does, I point out that there are plenty of other lawyers around and suggest that the client find one that suits him better.

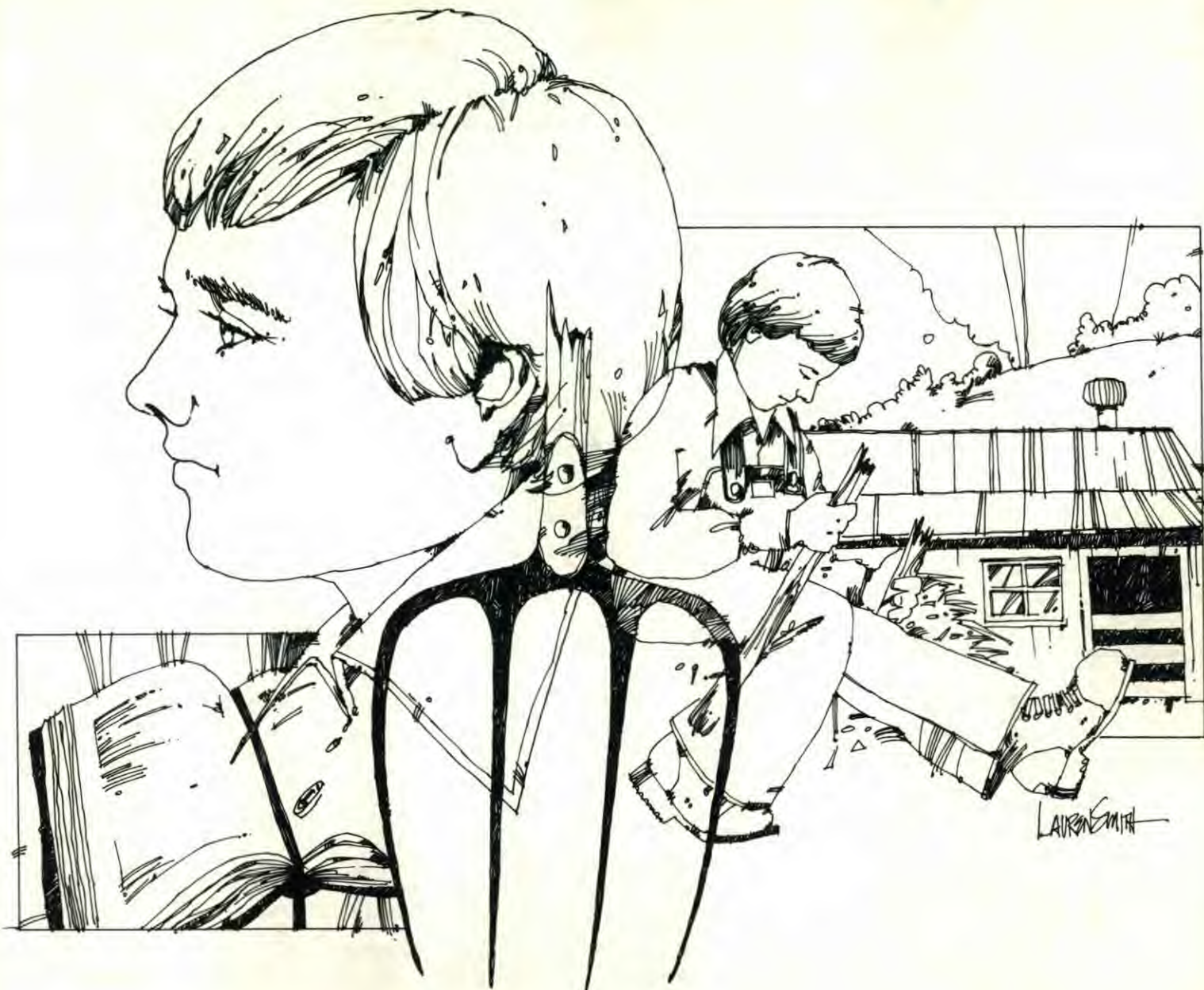
There are people who feel that they know better than Jesus how they should be saved. This is saying, in effect, that they don't really need Him and can, by their own efforts, make up for their sins. The attitude finds theological expression in churches that teach salvation by works. But the attitude is also apt to be found in the experience of some who insist that they believe in salvation by faith. There was a time when I unconsciously believed the same thing. God has opened my eyes to this part of my experience, and it has meant much to me to follow my own advice and let my Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous, worry about handling my case.

Let Jesus worry about your case. The trust reposed in me must be less than perfect. Not so with the Lord. He is the Advocate who has never lost a case. But He can win His cases only if He has the complete trust of His clients. Let us repose this complete trust in Him, ready to be saved by Him in the way He sees best. □

Case of the Broken Pitchfork

T. R. Torkelson

Young Raymond started clowning one morning instead of tending to business as he helped his older brother clean the cow barn. And in one of his crazy antics he broke the handle of his pitchfork. Sobered now, he began to wonder what his dad would say. Hoping to forestall disaster, he hid the thing. But predictably, Dad found it and asked Raymond how it got broken. Raymond's dreaded moment of truth had come.



Can an unconfessed lie keep a person out of heaven?

Ted Torkelson is associate editor of the SIGNS.

"I tried to lift too heavy a load of manure," he blurted out. A barefaced lie, just like that.

Amazingly, Dad accepted the explanation, and the case was dismissed. But Raymond couldn't forget it. Several years afterward he ran across the text in the Bible that says, "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Ecclesiastes 12:14. It might as

well have mentioned the pitchfork handle, for that is what the text said to him.

Actually, though Raymond did not understand what was happening, the Holy Spirit was bringing conviction to his heart. That is part of what the Holy Spirit does as He draws us to Christ. See John 16:8.

He does more than convict however. He helps the one who accepts Jesus as his Saviour to confess. He doesn't

burden us with a load of guilt and leave us to the psychiatrists to help us get rid of it. He gives us capability beyond our own to repent and make things right.

He did that for Raymond. By then the youth had left home, so he made his confession by letter. And Dad quickly wrote back: "I certainly do forgive you for this and for any other thing wherein you have wronged me. And you must do me the same."

What was going on here in terms of the bigger picture of the great controversy between good and evil, between God and Satan? How does confession relate to forgiveness in the dynamics of salvation? And how does all this relate to the judgment and to an individual's final destiny? Why should God care about a broken pitchfork? Or does He?

The Bible says, "The judgment was set, and the books were opened." Daniel 7:10. "The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books." Revelation 20:12.

Was the pitchfork incident written in the books of heaven? Yes, everything, good or bad, is recorded there. Our words are mentioned as being particularly significant in the heavenly judgment. By them, said the Saviour, "thou shalt be justified... [or] condemned." See Matthew 12:36, 37.

All this troubled Raymond. "I will never feel at ease," he wrote his father, "until I get your forgiveness, because if my name was to be called in heaven and my record examined by the angels, there would be that lie to keep me out of heaven."

How right was Raymond on the theology of forgiveness? Would an unconfessed lie keep a person out of heaven?

A close look reveals that we are not dealing with inconsequential here. The subject of the judgment gets us into the subject of sin. Not just one little unconfessed lie, but the whole problem of sin and of God's justice in dealing with it. This is the issue that climaxes in the heavenly judgment immediately prior to the second coming of Christ.

Sin cannot be taken lightly. It's like cancer. It must be eradicated or it will eventually destroy the whole organism. Not just because someone arbitrarily said so, but because it is so intrinsically. Sin carries within itself the seeds of destruction, because it violates the very laws of being. When God says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4), He is not announcing a punitive decision. He is declaring a fact—a law of cause and effect.

Ever since sin entered God's perfect universe, God's redemptive acts have

been focused on the final and complete eradication of this terrible plague and on the salvation of all who accept His solution to the problem. Annihilation of the rebels on the spot would not have accomplished this result. Why?

Because of the pending judgment, as we shall see. From the beginning of Lucifer's insurrection in Paradise, the issue had been, Who's right—God or Lucifer? Lucifer had charged God with injustice in His way of governing the universe, and he succeeded in getting a third of the angels to agree with him. This sizable minority started a revolution to overthrow the government of God and to set up a new one, which they declared would liberate them from God's tyrannical law and bring greater happiness to all created beings.

So the situation as it developed amounted to a hearing in court—a vast celestial tribunal. Lucifer had filed suit against God on trumped-up charges, demanding from the universe a vote of no confidence in God's government. God Himself was thus put on trial. He was to be judged by the universe. See Romans 3:4.

Was His strictness against sin justified, or did it reveal the whimsical attitude of a dictatorial monarch? Was His government the benevolent administration of a loving God, based upon wise and unchangeable laws, or was it, as Lucifer charged, a harsh, self-serving despotism?

Now, suppose God had destroyed Lucifer and the insurgent angels. Can you not see how such reprisal would have substantiated in many minds the charges Lucifer had made against Him?

Sin would not have been eradicated, but perpetuated. In the minds of even the loyal angels the issue would have remained unresolved. Questions about a possible cover-up would have nurtured doubts about God's trustworthiness and kept the probability open for another uprising later on. The stability and well-being of the universe would have remained in jeopardy. The plague would not have been cured.

Now, what has all this got to do with Raymond and his pitchfork?

God's law, the Ten Commandments—the standard in the judgment—categorizes lying as sin. The

Bible seems to single out lying as a particularly detestable sin, one that will certainly keep a person out of heaven. See Revelation 21:8, 27; 22:15. But sin of any kind—any willful violation of the rules of God's government—God has declared incompatible with citizenship in His kingdom of life and love. He has declared further that any created being—angel or man—who sins must die. This punishment is not punitive (as we have noted), but simply descriptive of the inevitable results of cause and effect.

Lucifer in his suit had said, "God is arbitrary in His demands. Therefore His government is unjust."

Who was right? This is the great issue in the judgment.

God made it His business from the beginning to win, not merely a skirmish with Lucifer, but the whole war against evil. He knew that the happiness and well-being of His creatures depend on allegiance to Him and His unchangeable law, and He desired in love that His whole creation should eventually emerge free from the thralldom of sin. Therefore He knew that rebellion would have to be given time to demonstrate its true character. All free moral beings would have to see its end results, judge it as truly abhorrent, and repudiate it.

But in the cross fire that would inevitably ensue, God didn't want the human beings on planet Earth to become hopeless hostages. He initiated a plan whereby they too, if they chose, could eventually be declared fit subjects for His kingdom even though they had sinned.

Here is where forgiveness comes in. Heavenly wisdom and love devised a plan whereby the death that is the result of sin would be borne by God Himself. Provision would be made in Heaven's jurisprudence for any sinner who repented and turned to God in faith and submission to be declared righteous. In the great celestial tribunal repentant sinners would be acquitted on the merits of what God had done for them.

But this does not and cannot mean cheap grace. Not in the way the corner newsboy had distorted things. For him the world was admirably arranged. He said, "God likes to forgive sins, and I

like to commit them." Forgiveness God does grant, gladly, freely. He delights in mercy. See Micah 7:8. In compassion for the lost, He says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Isaiah 43:25.

But He can grant forgiveness only on the terms of the court-ordered procedure. "If we confess our sins," He assures us, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," 1 John 1:9. "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh them [his sins] shall have mercy." Proverbs 28:13. This means confession directly to God, and to God only (see 1 John 2:1), except in some cases where we need to make things right with another human being, as Raymond did with his father.

In all this let us keep in mind the bigger picture as we proceed. God and His justice are on trial, remember. Some questions are going to be asked about sinners admitted to heaven. "How come?" the plaintiffs will demand. "How did they get there with all those sins registered against them when we were put out of heaven because of our sins?"

The death of Christ silences all these charges. God has gained the right to justify any repentant sinner who accepts Christ as his Saviour, and yet be declared just Himself. See Romans 3:25, 26.

Now let's look at Raymond as a witness on the stand testifying for God and the justice of His government. He is part of God's exhibit A that human beings through a living relationship with Christ can obey the law of God and that such obedience adds up for them to a life of joy and fulfillment.

Of course, Raymond is not there in person. The record of his life is there, including that lie about the pitchfork. And Christ is there as his Advocate. 1 John 2:1.

What can Jesus say? Does Raymond's record as a witness embarrass Him.

No, Raymond's sins are all marked "Forgiven." Raymond accepted Christ as his Saviour and Lord; and Christ fulfilled His promise and forgave him.

Satan cries, "Foul play."

"No," says Christ. "It's all according

to the terms. You charged that no created being could obey divine law. I came to earth as a man and showed that it could be done with divine help, which is all God ever demanded or expects. I thereby earned the right to place My perfect obedience to the credit of any sinner who accepts Me as Saviour. Raymond has done that. He has accepted Me. And I have forgiven him.

"Further, Satan, you charged God with unfairness in saving an earth person who sinned. You said the sinner ought to suffer the death penalty, even as God declared he should. But I have taken care of that too. I died the death a sinner was condemned to die. You know I did. You were there at Calvary. You know from all that happened and from My cry of agony at being forsaken by God that I suffered the supreme and ultimate penalty of the broken law—not for any sin of my own, but for the sins of repentant sinners. You know that.

"And Raymond accepted that sacrifice of Mine. It's here on the record. I died for that lie he told about the pitchfork. So he's all clear on that sin and on all others for the same reason."

And thus case after case is tried. In some the verdict has to be "Found Wanting." The record does not show that the sinner repented and obtained forgiveness. It does not show him in a saved relationship with Jesus, covered by His righteousness.

For such, according to the terms laid down for fair conduct of the trial, God cannot intervene to save. If He did, the plaintiffs, ready to pounce on any smidgen of evidence to substantiate their charges, would cry, "Unfair." And they would be right.

At last the hearing will be over. God will be vindicated, as will also repentant sinners covered by the righteousness of Christ. The verdict will be declared in God's favor, and a vast host will sing, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." Revelation 15:3.

Somewhere in the throng a lone boy's voice will phrase the refrain in his own way: "Thank You, dear Lord, for what You did about that pitchfork handle."



**Can God
forgive
some sinners
and condemn
others and
still be just?**

The Pilgrims' Thanksgiving

Russell H. Argent

The truth that has encouraged God's pilgrims through the centuries.



Dark unknown forests before them, lead-gray Atlantic waves behind them, the Pilgrims knelt and gave thanks to God. The most imaginative of the Mayflower crew could not foresee a nation of over 200 millions pausing to remember their actions. They knew only that they were pilgrims and strangers who had turned their backs on an obdurate king and a hostile church to brave unknown perils in order to worship God as they thought right.

Never again would they see the bluebells nodding in the breeze in an English woodland or walk along the country lanes of their island home. They faced a harsh climate, an alien

people, and the loneliness of exile. Yet, wrote William Bradford, their leader, they remembered "that they were pilgrims and looked not much on those things, but lifted up their eyes to the heavens, their dearest country, and quieted their spirits."¹

As Bradford later looked upon the perils surmounted and the colony securely established, he wrote: "May not and ought not the children of these fathers rightly say, 'Our fathers were Englishmen which came over this great ocean, and were ready to perish in this wilderness; but they cried unto the Lord, and he heard their voices, and looked on their adversity. Let them therefore praise the Lord, be-

cause he is good and his mercies endure forever.'"²

The Pilgrims, like the early Christians, followed the counsel of the apostle Paul to "give thanks every day for everything."³ Yet these are not easy words. Is it possible to be thankful when anxiety clouds the mind, when shadows of grief darken the landscape, when the foundations of life seem to crumble?

An answer lies in the triumphant cry of John Wesley on his deathbed: "The best of all is God is with us." That knowledge has comforted and inspired God's people in every generation. Condemned and tortured, alone and weary, puzzled and discouraged,

Russell Argent is himself a pilgrim from England to America where for many years he has made the great works of literature fascinating to thousands of students.

REVIEW PICTURES



they have looked by faith to the reality of a living God—not to an abstract theory or to a metaphysical conundrum, but to the living Christ, who ministers in the heavenly sanctuary and is concerned for His children.

They can say, "Hard-pressed on every side, we are never hemmed in; bewildered, we are never at our wits' end; hunted, we are never abandoned to our fate; struck down, we are not left to die."⁴ Fearlessly they proclaim the wondrous news that the Christ who died is alive and through the Holy Spirit is with them. Of what need they be afraid? However dark the present, however forbidding the future, the Mighty One of Israel, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, is in control of the majestic sweep of time. Nothing can separate them from His love.

Christians are always pilgrims and strangers in this world. In the second century one of them wrote that they were "distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. . . . They dwell . . . simply as sojourners. . . . They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. . . . They are poor, yet make many rich."⁵

The first Christian pilgrims were undismayed by the power of the Roman Empire or the ridicule of pagan intellectuals. Bruised and battered, tormented and enslaved, they gave thanks for the "inexpressible gift"⁶ of Jesus. The joyful fact of a risen Saviour changed a whimpering band of frightened men into stout evangelists who conquered the world for Christ. They looked "for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."⁷ Songs of happiness and prayers of thanksgiving ascended to

heaven in place of doubt and despair, because they knew that God was with them.

Always it has been so. The power of the Infinite One allied to humanity has gained victory. Moses, told by God, "Come . . . , and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring my people the children of Israel out of Egypt," was timid and frightened. "Who am I," he asked, "that I should go unto Pharaoh?" The answer was direct and simple, "I will be with thee."⁸ At once everything was different. Dauntless and unafraid, Moses could face the mightiest monarch of the world at that time. And the time would come when he would watch the sea embrace the armed might of the enemies of Jehovah.

"Lord God!" cried Jeremiah, "behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child." But God replied, "Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee."⁹ Kings and courtiers paled and trembled at the power of Jeremiah's testimony.

At Thanksgiving time Christians give thanks to God for cheerful homes, good food, loving friends. And this is right. Yet these things pale, like stars before the sunrise, as we think of the "inexpressible gift" of His Son. Now, we know that "the best of all is God is with us." He reigns. He cares. He is coming again. This knowledge is a halo, surrounding every dark experience of life. Beds of suffering are made hopeful by His presence to comfort and sustain. Even beside the open grave the Christian gives thanks, for he knows that death itself is a defeated foe. He remembers a Roman cross and a patient sufferer on a hill called Calvary and gives thanks, knowing that "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."¹⁰

Amid the clamor of many tongues, old landmarks totter and fall; security seems a thing of the past. Yet the

Christian pilgrim stands firm, for he knows that the destiny of the world is in God's hands. The storm-tossed clouds of a turbulent century cannot hide His presence. Like John amid the wasteland of Patmos, the modern pilgrim sees a vision of the daybreak.

What did John see? Oh, he saw "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. . . . Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things have passed away."¹¹

Life is no longer pointless but radiant with meaning. The Christian pilgrim does not pass, hopeless and despairing, into the darkness. He shares the hope of Victor Hugo, who wrote: "For half a century I have been writing my thoughts in prose and in verse. But I feel I have not said the thousandth part of what is in me. When I go down to the grave I can say, like many others, I have finished my life. . . . The tomb is not a blind alley, it is a thoroughfare. It closes on the twilight, it opens on the dawn."¹²

What a difference this makes to the here and now! Life today, full and joyous! Tomorrow the promise of a new earth, righteousness, and peace! "The best of all is God is with us." Let us take courage and hope in the momentous truth this Thanksgiving season as we gladly echo the words of the apostle: "Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!"¹³

FOOTNOTES

1. William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Ephesians 5:20, NEB.
4. 2 Corinthians 4:8, 9, NEB.
5. "The Epistle to Diognetes," (c. AD 150) chap. 5.
6. 2 Corinthians 9:15, RSV.
7. Hebrews 11:10.
8. Exodus 3:10-12.
9. Jeremiah 1:6-8.
10. Psalm 23:4.
11. Revelation 21:2-4.
12. Quoted in *Best Sermons*, G. Paul Butler, ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1955), p. 341.
13. 2 Corinthians 9:15, RSV.



JOAN'S SPOTS

A story
for children

Joan woke up early one morning. It was her birthday, and she said to herself, "This year I'm going to keep the record of my life absolutely spotless."

But before the day was even half over, little brother did something she didn't like. She snapped at him angrily, and the little fellow went off to cry.

She ran after him and told him she was sorry, but she knew the heavenly record was spoiled.

"Dear Jesus," she prayed that night, "please forgive me."

Not long after that she caught herself grumbling at something Mother had asked her to do. She was even rude to her dad.

A few days later she made some unkind remarks about one of the girls at school.

And soon after that she told a lie.

She asked Jesus to forgive her, but she still felt bad.

Her birthday came round again, except now she was a year older. On the evening before her birthday she looked back sadly over the last twelve months. She had spotted the record so many times.

"Dear Jesus," she prayed as she knelt by her bed, "I'm so sorry. I wish I could live the year over again and do it right."

She seemed to feel someone tapping

her on the shoulder and looked up. Jesus was standing there!

He sat down on the edge of the bed and invited her to sit beside Him. Wondering at the mystery of it all, she got up from her knees and sat on the bed too.

"I brought your record for the year, so you could see it," Jesus said.

"Oh, no!" Joan exclaimed. "I don't want to look at it. It's too horrible! I'd much rather You wouldn't show it to me."

"Please," Jesus said. "I'd like you to look at it."

Joan looked, and her eyes opened in amazement.

"Why—why, that record is too good to be mine! I did all sorts of sinful things this year, and there isn't a one of them written there. I'm sure this isn't my record. There are no ugly spots on it."

"It is your record, Joan," Jesus said kindly. "You asked Me to forgive all the bad things you did, didn't you?"

"Well, yes, but—" Joan faltered.

"So I washed them all away. Didn't you believe I would?"

"I—I knew You promised to do that for some people, but—" Joan hesitated. "I didn't really think You would do it for me."

Jesus put His arm around her. "It's people like you that I like to forgive most of all."

He paused.

"Tomorrow morning begins another year for you, Joan. If you'll let Me, I'll help you keep it spotless all year long."

Joan put her head on Jesus' shoulder. "You're so kind, dear Jesus," she whispered.

What Jesus did for Joan He will do for you, too, whoever you are, if you will let Him. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9.

Your friend,

Uncle Spencer

I Have a Problem

DEPRESSING DEPRESSION

I've lately been going through a period of severe depression. It seems as though my family is against me. I'm always going on walks just to get out of people's way. I try to be a good help around the house, but it just causes more grumbling and griping. I'm almost ready to give up. (Boy, age 16.)

This depression could be caused by any number of factors, and the solution would have to fit the cause. Perhaps the best I can do is to suggest some

possible causes and let you take it from there.

Due to the growth changes that happen in a young person's body, it is not uncommon for youth your age to experience a wide range of emotions at a more intense level than any they have previously experienced. I realize that telling you this may not make your depression go away, but I hope it keeps you from thinking that it's all your fault and from making your problem worse by self-blame.

You are at an age when it is normal

to be very concerned about adult approval. You want very much for adults to see you as mature and capable, and this matters more to you now than it ever has before. Yet the adults in your life may simply be missing the signals and relating to you in the same ways as before. And you may be prone to interpret this as a sudden bout of criticism and disinterest. Have things really changed? Are they really picking on you?

Let's not rule out the possibility that your parents may be more critical of you than is fair and necessary. Possibly your complaint against them is justified. But you must avoid using this as an excuse to drop into a deep cycle of self-pity. I am not being unsympathetic by pointing out that everyone has problems. There are no perfect homes on this earth. Every youth has some trials with his parents. Your own may even get worse before they get better. You can choose either to rise above these problems or to let them break you down in self-pity. You cannot choose to be free from all problems, but in God's strength you can choose to rise above them.

You have one strong thing going for you. You have sought to do your best in your home. You have tried to avoid contributing to the problem in any way. A clear conscience is always good company and a strong force in fighting depression. If your parents' criticisms have even a partial basis in fact, then you have some things that need changing first. But if you are content that you are doing your best, you need not bow down in despair when the criticisms come your way.

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IN THE NEWS

Jan Bristol

RISING SCHOOL CRIME

The level of violence and vandalism in the nation's public elementary and secondary schools has reached the level where it now interferes with the school's primary function of educating.

The statistics for the school crime rate between the years 1970 and 1973 go like this: homicides, up 19 percent; rape and attempted rape, 40 percent; assaults on teachers, 77 percent; assaults on students, 85 percent; weapons confiscated, 54 percent; drug and alcohol offenses on premises, 38 percent.

While most sociologists acknowledge the "substantial effect general societal conditions have on the conduct of behavior," no one knows for sure who or what is responsible for this mounting wave of violence. Some authorities attribute it to frustration, unwarranted suspensions, truancy, gangs, drugs, and personal hopelessness.

OLD REMEDY—NEW APPLICATION

A plant remedy used by ancient Egyptian skin sufferers has been

discovered by an Egyptian chemical company to have a more modern use—relief for psoriasis. The drug is called methoxsaalem and is derived from the *ammi visnaga* plant.

For relief, the patient first swallows the drug. Then he basks for 30 minutes under banks of special high-intensity lamps emitting ultraviolet rays. The patient collects a suntan—and relief from his psoriasis, so the manufacturer claims. This treatment differs little from its ancient counterpart—except that one called for basking on the banks of the Nile.

METROPOLITAN GROWTH RATE DROPS

The eight major U.S. metropolitan areas—New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Detroit, Washington, DC, Los Angeles, San Francisco—have shown sharp declines in their growth rates from 1970 through 1973, according to the latest Census Bureau studies.

This dramatic phenomenon, some demographers feel, is without precedent since 1790.



These miners typify the widespread unrest among American workers which has developed into numerous strikes in recent months. James points out that the last days will have violent business-labor confrontations. (See James 5.) His counsel? "Be ye . . . patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Verse 8.

THE JUDGMENT HAS BEGUN

Why devote almost a whole issue of the SIGNS to discussing an event that happened 130 years ago? Surely "cleansing the sanctuary" is a topic more appropriate for a scouring powder company than for a religious journal.

Some readers may think we should devote more space to the future prospects of the Oakland A's baseball team, or to the frightening power of the jaws of a fictitious fish. Major news magazines devoted cover stories to these two subjects recently.

But SIGNS ignored them altogether. We haven't been telling Kissinger how to straighten out the Near East. Nor President Ford how to solve the energy crisis. Nor Ronald Reagan whether he ought to run for the presidency.

We believe that "cleansing the sanctuary" refers to a period of judgment which began in heaven in 1844.

It's not that we don't think these other topics important. They are. But it's like the airliner that was flying on a collision course with a mountain peak. Dinner was being served. Some passengers were happily eating while others were grumbling that they hadn't been served yet. For those passengers that night it didn't really matter whether they ate or not. In a few moments they were all dead. Their great, desperate need had not been food, but someone to put their plane on the right course.

Judgment is going on in heaven. We have tried to explain why we believe this is so. Verdicts are being decided and sentences pronounced that will affect your future and mine through all eternity. We will either live forever or be dead forever. And the decisions are being made now.

So while it is very interesting whether the A's win the World Series again or whether Ronald Reagan runs for office, when the judgment ends and the sentences are carried out, it won't really matter who won what.

All that will really matter then will be the decision God made about us. And He is making those decisions now.

What the world desperately needs is not a better sportscaster or a new political analyst—though there may be room for both.

What the world needs far more is someone to proclaim, "The hour of God's judgment has come." See Revelation 14:7.

We believe that when God gave John the revelator the vision of an angel flying through the midst of heaven, announcing with a loud voice to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, . . . Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come," that God intended that His people would announce that message to the world when the time came.

The time has come, but who is making the announcement? We search the non-Christian world in vain. Even among the Christian denominations only the Seventh-day Adventists take a clear and definite position that the hour of God's judgment has arrived.

That's why we devoted so much space to the subject.

Are you right with God? If not, write us and let us help you. For the hour is late. The sanctuary in heaven is being cleansed. The hour of God's judgment is now.

L. M.

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