

# Everlasting Covenant



*Collegiate Quarterly*

October-December 1982

A North American Youth Ministries Publication



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Dear Sabbath School Member:

The Special Project Offering of the present quarter is designated for the development of the Adventist University of Central Africa. This institution, located on approximately 200 acres of rich volcanic soil, lies near Gisenyi, Rwanda and about 5 miles from the Zaire border. Within an area of several hundred square miles surrounding the college there are estimated to be 160,000 baptized Seventh-day Adventists.

Some may conceivably question the need of another Adventist University. For those who do, permit me to give the following explanation: Of the 34 countries and islands comprising the Africa-Indian Ocean Division, 26 employ French as their official language. Consequently this Division has the largest French-speaking membership in the Denomination. However, startling as it may be, there is not one Francophone college offering a four-year degree program in the entire Division. Is there a need? YES. And it is urgent even critical!

As conditions now exist our youth are unable to prepare themselves adequately for future leadership roles in the Lord's work. The long term stability, growth, and spiritual vitality of our members depend heavily on well-prepared national pastors, teachers and administrators.

The Scriptures in Romans 10:14 ask: "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?" How shall they hear without a preacher? The question could be paraphrased: "How shall the message be proclaimed in the Francophone areas of Africa without a school to train workers?" The response depends on us.

With great expectation, hundreds of youth and 230,000 Francophone members are seeking your support in the Special Project Offering for this quarter.

What joy it will be to hear multitudes exclaim: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things." This will happen because of your interest, prayers and support.

Most cordially yours,

R. J. Kloosterhuis  
President

RJK/sm

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# Collegiate Quarterly

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The *Collegiate Quarterly* is written by faculty, students and friends of the Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities throughout North America. Organized under the Union College board of trustees, it is coordinated by Campus Ministry and published with the approval of the North American Division Church Ministries Committee.

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# EVERLASTING COVENANT

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. The God-Man Relationship .....   | 8   |
| Bruce Larson begins the quarter by illustrating that everyone, agnostic and atheist as well as the Christian, has a relationship with the God of the universe.  |     |
| 2. God—Constantly Offering His Covenant .....   | 18  |
| 3. Flood, Rainbow, Covenant And Man's Future ....   | 26  |
| We all know that the rainbow represents God's promise never to destroy the earth again with water, but does the rainbow and the covenant of which it is a part have anything to say about the manner in which Christians view nature? Read this week's Evidence article by Francis Schaeffer. |     |
| 4. Design for Salvation .....   | 34  |
| 5. Promises of the Abrahamic Covenant .....   | 42  |
| 6. The Chosen .....   | 50  |
| Ever wonder what a Jeremiah, Jonah or Micah might say if they were to appear in twentieth-century America? Read "Amos and the Chosen," this week's Introduction article for Roy Castelbuono's version of a prophet's message for today.   |     |
| 7. Redemption, Liberation and Covenant .....  | 58  |
| James H. Cone begins this week with an explanation of how the Old Testament and specifically the book of Exodus is a history book of God's acts of liberation.  |     |
| 8. Covenant Faithfulness .....  | 66  |
| 9. Sabbath—Sign of the Covenant .....   | 76  |
| 10. New Beginnings .....  | 86  |
| 11. Priest of the New Covenant .....  | 94  |
| 12. Covenantal Faith that Works .....   | 102 |
| In this week's How To article, Dick Winn illustrates in a refreshing way God's restoration of "antique" individuals under the new covenant.   |     |
| 13. New Covenant Life .....   | 110 |

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# “Where do I go from here?”

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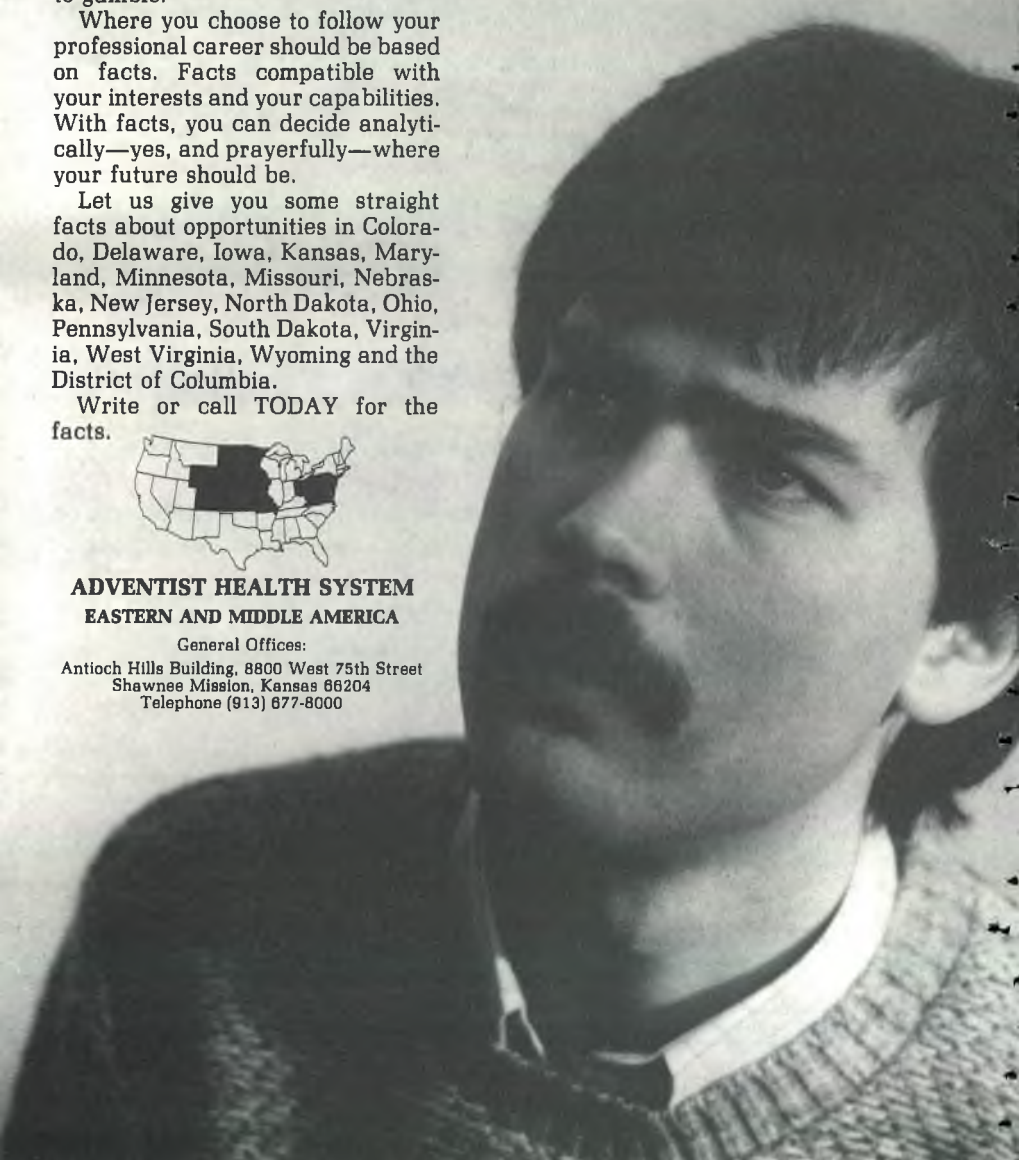
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### Facts About the Collegiate Quarterly

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- Special attention is directed toward the expressions and needs of the college and university person.
- An intercollegiate project of the colleges and universities across North America.
- The international circulation of the *Collegiate Quarterly* for the third quarter of 1982 is nearly 20,000.

### How to Use the Collegiate Quarterly

1. The *Collegiate Quarterly* is not designed to be just a supplementary quarterly. It is the Sabbath School quarterly for the college and university person—though many in other environments and age-brackets are also attracted to its use. Use it as you would any other daily study guide or Sabbath School quarterly.
2. Along with each daily discussion, a reference is given of a biblical passage for further Bible study. We encourage you to read these passages—even though some may be lengthy—since this will greatly enhance your study.
3. Do not accept every concept and emphasis made in the *Collegiate Quarterly* just because it is in the *Collegiate Quarterly*. It can be dangerous to accept anything as truth, without personal investigation, simply because it has an organizational stamp of approval.

One goal of the *Collegiate Quarterly* is to aid in developing “thinkers and not mere reflectors of other men’s thought.” To meet this goal, it is necessary to include within the pages of this quarterly challenging and stimulating material—which inherently may contain something with which you disagree. Challenge the authors. Think. Prayerfully and critically question the material in each day’s lesson to determine the truth in the material for you.

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Scripture quotations used in this quarterly, other than the King James Version, are as follows:

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## An Introduction to the Lesson

# Relevancy of Covenant

When travelling, I expect to find restaurants like McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Arby's waiting to vacuum up the hungry passerby at every other corner in America's major cities. On occasion, though, I'm surprised to run into the identical twin of what I thought was a local restaurant or store, and find out that my local favorite is a member of a not-so-local national chain.

Visiting Minneapolis, Minnesota, for example, after having spent long hours browsing the B. Dalton Bookseller in my hometown, I first eyed its twin across University Avenue from the University of Minnesota.

Then, after a 10 minute drive to a nearby Minneapolis shopping center, it took only 30 seconds of lounging through the malls before my pulse picked up, my pupils expanded, and my mouth salivated at the sight of a second B. Dalton's.

Inside, browsing from title to title, I noted that the mood and character of the country were indicated by the bestsellers resting before me. *Years of Upheaval* by Henry Kissinger reminds one of the Watergate years. *Everything We Had*, an oral history of the Vietnam War by those who fought in it sits on the shelf near *Nam*, each reminding the browser of perhaps America's darkest piece of history. *Iran* raises concerns about future world relations. And *In the Belly of the Beast, Letters from Prison*, gives the sad testimony of what life in America's prisons has come to.

Books about improving one's self-image, keeping marriages together, fixing cars and handling money also fill the shelves.

One work not available at the area B. Dalton's though, is the *Collegiate Quarterly*.

Despite its lack of representation in public bookstores, however, perhaps the *Quarterly* can still lay claim to relevancy. Maybe articles in this issue on God's covenant are still helpful, though life is a potpourri of Watergate, Vietnam, Iran and prison; of psychology, marriage, automobiles and economics.

Perhaps the relevancy of discussion concerning God's covenant can best be shown by another book found in B. Dalton's—*Chariots of Fire*, a true story written by W. J. Weatherby. By now, of course, most know the story of Eric Liddell, one of two main characters in the book. Liddell, a Christian missionary to China before and after the 1924 Olympics in France, won the gold medal in the 400-meter run. Usually a 100-meter dash runner, Liddell refused to run in a heat of that event because it occurred on the day he considered the Sabbath (Sunday). In chapter 10, before the start of the final in the 400, Jackson Scholtz, an American 100-meter star, handed Liddell a folded piece of paper, reading, "In the Old Book, it says 'He that honors me, I will honor.' Good luck! Jackson Scholtz." And though favorite Horatio M. M. Fitch of Chicago had already broken the world record in a preliminary heat, Eric boomed to the front at the start, controlled the lead the entire race, and won in a new world record time.

Liddell once told his sister, "I believe God made me for a purpose. For China. But He also made me fast, and when I run I feel His pleasure. To give it up would be to hold Him in contempt. You were right—" he concluded, "It's not just fun. To win is to honor Him."

Weatherby also writes of a meeting between British dignitaries and Liddell, designed to grant the dignitaries a forum for pressuring Liddell into participating in the 100-meter race on Sunday.

In the middle of the meeting, another member of Britain's Olympic team interrupted to suggest Liddell take his spot in the 400-meter run, since he had already won a medal in the hurdles.

Following the acceptance of his offer and the close of the meeting, Weatherby records these words:

Lord Birkenhead whispered to the Duke of Sutherland, "Thank God for Lindsay, George. I thought the lad had us beaten."

"He did have us beaten," the Duke said quietly, "And thank God he did."

"I don't follow, George."

"The 'lad,' as you call him, is a true man of principle and a true athlete. His speed is a mere extension of his life, its force. We sought to sever his running from himself."

"For his country's sake."

"No sake is worth that," said the Duke, "Least of all a guilty national pride."

Ironically, Eric Liddell's greatest success as a missionary came, perhaps, not in China where he served and died in a Japanese prison camp near the close of World War II, but years after his death, when his Olympic story was made into, not only a book, but more astoundingly, an Academy Award winning movie. As "Best Picture of the Year," "Chariots of Fire" flashed the story of a man with a special relationship, a special covenant, if you will, with His God, before the eyes and minds of millions.

Eric Liddell had an everlasting covenant with His Creator, and it is this covenant that the *Collegiate Quarterly* is about this quarter. It is this covenant and its effect on man that make this issue relevant.

Douglas R. Stuva

Douglas R. Stuva, editor  
*Collegiate Quarterly*

# The God-Man Relationship



"I will be their God, and they will be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33, NIV).

Lesson 1, September 26 - October 2

by Bruce Larson

# You and God

## INTRODUCTION

Whoever you are, wherever you live, whatever your values or philosophy of life, you can't escape the necessity of living in four relationships.

Each person must relate in some way to God (by whatever name He is called); to himself; to the significant others in his life (those with whom he lives and works intimately); and to the world (everyone outside his immediate sphere, whether down the street or halfway around the globe). The quality of these relationships determines whether one truly lives or merely muddles through life. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus Christ can enter into a human life and redeem it in all four of these dimensions or relationships.

The most basic and important relationship is the one which exists between a human being and God. I am convinced that it is impossible to escape this relationship even if one denies the very existence of a Supreme Being. The people I have known who professed not to believe in God have spent a great deal of time denying Him, fighting Him, burying Him, explaining Him away, or attempting to prove others wrong who believe in Him—and this constitutes a relationship. Perhaps there are those who are totally indifferent to God, who never give Him a second thought, but I have never met such an individual.

Built into every human being there seems to be some instinctive sense that there is Someone or Something "out there" that cannot be ig-

nored. To some, God is the great unknown; to others, a tyrannical monster; to still others, a quixotic puppeteer who manipulates the universe by pulling strings at random. . . .

Merely accepting Christian doctrine does not mean that one will enter immediately into a right relationship with God. One can be doctrinally sound and relationally handicapped, crippled, or impotent.

A right relationship means that one has heard the good news that God says to us in Jesus Christ: "I love you. I love you as you are. I love you unconditionally. I have already given myself to you totally, and now all I ask is that you begin to respond to my love and my commitment to you by committing to me all of yourself that you are able to give."

God's love does not depend on any virtue in us or on our achievements. But the nature of His love is such that He does not leave us as He finds us. When someone begins the adventure of faith, God says to him, in effect: "I am going to begin to change you. Programmed into your inner computer, through glands and genes and circumstances and experiences, is an inability to love totally. I love you so much that I want to change all of those intricate wires of experience, sense, and thought that make you an unknowable, unrelatable person. It may take a thousand years of reprogramming to make you a lover of people, of me, and of yourself, but I promise that I will continue relentlessly until you have been totally transformed.

Excerpted from Bruce Larson, *No Longer Strangers*, pp. 69-71. Copyright © 1971, used by permission of Word Books, Publishers, Waco, Texas 78703.

Bruce Larson is a Presbyterian clergyman who holds the B.D. from Princeton and the M.A. in psychology from Boston University.

☐ September 26  
Sunday

# The First Promise

by editors

## LOGOS

In studying the relationship between God and man this week, and the everlasting covenant this quarter, we must first move back to when the relationship between creature and Creator first began. After God made the earth, He looked with satisfaction on the planet and proceeded to make man: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26, 27). This creation of man may have even been preceded by a counsel or committee meeting among the God-head ("Let us make man. . ."), an activity not mentioned anywhere else in the creation account. A recognition of God's creativity in this final act of creation led David to say: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. . ." (Psalm 139:14).

God began direct communion with these beings of His image and likeness and gave them several responsibilities: "And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food'" (Gen. 1:28, 29, RSV).

There was one exception to the statement that "every tree" was to provide them with food, however, and through a ban on the fruit of a particular tree God gave the couple the chance to exhibit the power of choice (Gen.2:17). The wrong exercise of that power, in the form of a violation of God's command to abstain from the fruit of that tree, altered the relationship between man and woman (Gen.3:7), God and man (Gen. 3:8-10), and man and his environment (Gen. 3:16-20).

A short promise, though, had preceded the hurtful results of their decision. God had addressed Satan, the being who had worked through the serpent, saying "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15).

**"The passage suggests far more than a hatred of snakes by women."**

This passage suggests far more than a hatred for snakes by women. It foreshadows an encounter in which offspring of the woman would be slightly wounded, and the opponent, Satan, would be seriously wounded. Since the word "seed" is singular, the injury was not to be inflicted by a group of human descendants, but rather by a single individual.

In Revelation 12, the confrontation between Satan, "the dragon," and a symbolic woman (God's church) is again depicted: "The dragon was furious with the woman and went off to fight against the rest of her descendants, all those who obey God's commandments and are faithful to the truth revealed by Jesus" (Rev. 12:17, TEV). So the enmity, or hostility, pronounced by God, is ultimately between Christ and Satan. It was a controversy that began in heaven (Rev. 12:7-9), and continued when Christ came to earth: "He (Jesus) himself likewise partook of the same (human) nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil . . ." (Heb.2:14, RSV). This controversy will continue to develop until the end of this age, yet God had compressed this entire controversy into the 28 words found in Genesis 3:15. Even before the word "covenant" was spoken, God had made a pledge that gave them hope for their redemption, and for the restoration of the paradise he had created.

T. K. S.

# A Love Stronger Than Death

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Hebrews 13:5

Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character. Christ alone is "the express image" (Heb.1:3) of the Father; but man was formed in the likeness of God. His nature was in harmony with the will of God. His mind was capable of comprehending divine things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason. He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God, and in perfect obedience to his will.<sup>1</sup>

God made man upright; he gave him noble traits of character, with no bias toward evil. He endowed him with high intellectual powers, and presented before him the strongest possible inducements to be true to his allegiance. Obedience, perfect and perpetual, was the condition of eternal happiness. On this condition he was to have access to the tree of life.<sup>2</sup>

After his transgression, Adam at first imagined himself entering upon a higher state of existence. But soon the thought of his sin filled him with terror. The air, which had hitherto been of a mild and uniform temperature, seemed to chill the guilty pair. The love and peace which had been theirs was gone, and in its place they felt a sense of sin, a dread of the future, a nakedness of soul. The robe of light which had enshrouded them, now disappeared, and to supply its place they endeavored to fashion for themselves a covering; for they could not, while unclothed, meet the eye of God and holy angels.<sup>3</sup>

To man the first intimation of redemption was communicated in the sentence pronounced upon Satan in the garden. The Lord declared, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen.3:15). This sentence, uttered in the hearing of our first parents, was to them a promise. While it foretold war between man and Satan, it declared that the power of the great adversary would finally be broken. Adam and Eve stood as criminals before the righteous Judge, awaiting the sentence which transgression had incurred; but before they heard of the life of toil and sorrow which must be their portion, or of the decree that they must return to dust, they listened to words that could not fail to give them hope. Though they must suffer from the power of their mighty foe, they could look forward to final victory.<sup>4</sup>

Will the Lord forget His people in this trying hour? Did He forget faithful Noah when judgments were visited upon the antediluvian world? Did He forget Lot when the fire came down from heaven to consume the cities of the plain? Did He forget Joseph surrounded by idolaters in Egypt? Did He forget Elijah when the oath of Jezebel threatened him with the fate of the prophets of Baal? Did He forget Jeremiah in the dark and dismal pit of his prison house? Did He forget the three worthies in the fiery furnace? or Daniel in the den of lions?<sup>5</sup>

The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. In giving up His Son, He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift. The Saviour's life and death and intercession, the ministry of angels, the pleading of the Spirit, the Father working above and through all, the unceasing interest of heavenly beings,—all are enlisted in behalf of man's redemption.<sup>6</sup>

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 49.

3. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 57.

4. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 65.

5. *The Great Controversy*, p. 626.

6. *Steps to Christ*, p. 21.

# Who's There?

by Helmut Thielicke

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
Genesis 3:8-9

When a soldier on sentry duty hears footsteps approaching in the dark he shouts, "Who goes there?" This picture of a soldier on guard at night reflects our situation with God: in the midst of the enveloping night, in the darkness of this hopeless struggle of nations, in the shadow of our personal predicament and fears, again and again we hear a footstep; someone is passing by in all the thunder and the rain.

We do not know who it is. Is he an enemy or a friend, a power of fate or a Father? That's why we cry out, "Who is there?" We cry out into the night, in prayer as it were, "Who are you; who is passing by out there?"

"Who's there?"  
cries the  
young war  
widow . . ."

"Who's there?" cries the young man who is beginning to look for the meaning of his life. "Who's there?" cries the young war widow who weeps in the depth of her pain and cannot believe that a Father would do such a thing. "Who's there?" cry the thinkers who are searching for the ultimate common denominator to which the mysteries of life and history can be reduced.

They all cry out "Who's there?" for deep down they all sense that they would miss the central thing in life if they did not finally discover who it is that is passing by the sentry box of their lives out there in the darkness.

. . . This whole situation is suddenly transformed, actually reversed, when we look into the eyes of Jesus of Nazareth. There we realize that we ourselves are the ones who are walking about in the vicinity of a sentry box; we are the ones who are suddenly being challenged. But strangely enough, it is not the usual sentry challenge, "Who goes there?" Somebody is calling us by name, as Samuel was called by God. So in this world there is an eye that watches over us, an eye that pierces the night and finds us in the dark. Somebody is there, calling us by name. And now we must answer quite simply: "Here I am, for you called me. How did you know me? What do you want me to do?"

Then our prayer will no longer be an uncertain crying of "Who's there?" It will not be merely an uncertain response to some footstep of God or fate indistinctly heard in the dark of night. No, then our prayer will be a simple response to the call that comes to us.

God is always there first. God has always spoken first; long ago, before our little lives emerged from the deep darkness of our millennium-old chain of ancestors into the light of the world, Jesus Christ walked the earth, died and rose for us, ascended into heaven, and brought us to the Father. God is always there first, and therefore our praying is always only an answer to this simple given fact. Take Bethlehem and Golgotha out of the world, and the cry of God will be silenced and praying becomes meaningless. Then every one of us and our children and children's children are doomed all our lives to be lonely sentries in the lonely night, listening to furtive, disquieting footsteps, and never finding out who it is, and therefore obliged to cry out desperately "Who's there?" but never receiving an answer, finally to grow weary, return to our little sentry-boxes to sleep the rest of our lives the sleep of the hopeless, and drop the whole business of listening and calling.

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□ September 29  
Wednesday

14

Helmut Thielicke is Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at the University of Hamburg, Germany.



by William Barclay

# The Mind of Jesus

So Jesus came to men, and the Christian Church went out to the world, with the message of a self-revealing God, a God who is involved in the human situation, a God who is selfless in His love for men. It is from these great facts about God that everything else follows.

Jesus came to tell men of an inviting God, a God who desires to be approached. One of the great characteristic words of Jesus is the word 'Come!'. He invited men to follow Him in discipleship (Mark 1:17; Matthew 4:19). He invited His own men to share His solitary prayer and communion with God (Mark 6:31). He invited the weary and the heavy-laden to come to Him for rest and help (Matt. 11:28). He likened His own invitation to the invitation to a marriage feast (Matt. 22:4). He told in His parable of how, in the days to come, those who cared as He cared would be invited to share the glory that was prepared for them (Matt. 25:34). Continually on Jesus' lips there was an invitation. . . .

This invitation was not only an invitation to those who, as it were, deserved it, to those who were morally good, spiritually devout, perfectly righteous. It was an invitation to sinners, for Jesus came with the message of a forgiving God. Around Him the taxgatherers and the sinners and the women of the streets gathered (Luke 15:1). He ate with them (Matthew 9:10; Mark 2:15; Luke 5:30), so that the righteous orthodox of His day called Him the friend of the publicans and sinners (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34). He said that He had come to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Matt. 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32), and that He had come to seek and to save that which was lost (Matt. 18:11). He said that there was joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7, 10). . . .

Jesus came with news of God even more startling than that God was an inviting and a forgiving God. The Jew would not have doubted that, if a sinner came creeping back to God in remorse, contrition and repentance, and if he humbly pleaded for forgiveness, he would be forgiven. God would accept the man who came humbly and penitently back to Him. But Jesus came to tell of a seeking God, a God who did not wait for the sinner to come back, but who went out to seek and to search for him, . . .

It would be great if God accepted us back when we came to Him in humble penitence; it would be precious that God should wait for the sinner to come back. But that God should go out and seek the sinner is something sublime, and something new. Here, indeed is good news of God.

This truth of the seeking God has a necessary corollary. God is the God of the individual love. It is not mankind that God loves; it is men. The shepherd cannot be content with ninety-nine sheep while one is lost; the woman cannot be content with nine coins while one is lost; the one, the individual, matters intensely to God.

Paul Tournier is fascinated by what he calls the personalism of the Bible. God says to Moses: "I know you by name" (Exodus 33:17). God says through Isaiah: "It is I, the Lord, who call you by name" (Isaiah 45:3). Paul Tournier tells of a girl who was one of his patients. She was the youngest daughter in a large family, the support of

## HOW TO

Key text:

Matthew 11:28-30

**"Jesus came to tell of a seeking God"**

**"It is not mankind that God loves; it is men"**

☐ September 30  
Thursday

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which was a sore problem to the father. One day she heard him mutter despairingly, referring to her: "We could well have done without that one!" That is precisely what no one will ever hear God say. The love of God is at one and the same time completely universal and completely individual. As Augustine so beautifully expressed it: "God loves each one of us as if there was only one of us to love." With God there is no one who is lost in the crowd.

There is a saying of Jesus which appears in two forms and the variation in it may be the symbol of this individual love of God. Matthew reports Jesus as saying: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father's will" (Matt. 10:29). Luke reports Jesus as saying: "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? And not one of them is forgotten before God" (Luke 12:6). Jesus in all probability used both forms of the saying, and used them both at the same time. If a purchaser was prepared to spend one farthing, he received two sparrows; but, if he was prepared to spend two farthings, he received not four sparrows, but five, for one was thrown into the bargain, as if it was worth nothing at all. Not even the sparrow which in human eyes has no value at all is forgotten by God.

Even the individual who on human valuation is valueless is valuable to God. It is easy to see what such a message must have meant to the slaves of the Empire who were defined by law not as persons but as living tools, with no more right than a tool.

It may be that we dare to go on to something further yet. Other thinkers have called God by various names—The Supreme God, The First Cause, The Creative Energy, The Life Force. All these descriptions of God have one characteristic in common—they are impersonal. But Jesus always spoke and taught of a God who is a person. In all reverence we may draw a certain conclusion from that. No person can exist in isolation; personality and isolation are mutually contradictory. Every person needs other persons to complete himself. It is in communication and fellowship with other persons that personality is fulfilled and realized. We therefore come to the astonishing conclusion that God needs men; that in some mysterious sense creation was for God a necessity; that somehow God needs the world and men to complete himself. That is why God created men and the world; that is why God loves men with an everlasting love; and that is why God would go to any lengths of sacrifice to bring men back to Himself. . . .

. . . God needs man, because God is a person; and from that need there springs the forgiving, seeking, individual love of God. But that is something of which no one had dreamed till Jesus brought to men the good news of God.

**" . . . Jesus  
always spoke  
and taught  
of a God  
who is a  
person"**

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Barclay, *The Mind of  
Jesus*, pp. 107-112. Copy-  
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**REACT**  
**Lesson 1**

1. The story of the creation and fall in Genesis 1-3 is foundational to our understanding of the relationship between God and man. What, to you, are the three most significant things the creation story (Gen. 1-2) tells us about the God-man relationship? Explain why you think they are important.

The story of the fall (Gen. 3) reveals new aspects of the God-man relationship. Discuss the following instances in the story, again with the purpose of understanding how God and man relate:

- a) Adam and Eve's new perception of their nakedness and their hiding from God (3:7-8).
  - b) God's calling out to them (3:9).
  - c) God's pronouncements (3:14-19).
  - d) God's provision of garments (3:21).
2. Compare Genesis 3:15 with Revelation 12, and then discuss the following questions:
- a) How was the crushing of the serpent's head accomplished? When did it take place?
  - b) What is the experiential significance for us of the victory over the dragon/serpent (see especially Rev. 12:11-17).
3. Why doesn't God reveal Himself to us today more tangibly? Do you think the fact that we cannot experience Him with our physical senses diminishes or enhances our relationship with Him? Explain.
4. Do you agree with Barclay's "astonishing conclusion that God needs men" (Opinion)? Why or why not? What about his observation that Jesus' revelation of a God who seeks sinners was something new, never before conceived. Consider Ezekiel 34:11, 12 and Hosea 2:14-23 before answering.
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# God - Constantly Offering His Covenant



**“And I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly” (Genesis 17:2, NASB).**

# Trouble in Sector OR703cw4

by Greg Brothers

## INTRODUCTION

A demiurge<sup>1</sup> and friends are rat-racing around in the celestial equivalent of a '57 Chevy Nomad, throwing empty nectar cans out of the windows. Approximately 1450 B.C. they flick into Earth's space-time continuum, buzz past a rather astonished shepherd and whoop and holler off into the sunset.

"Behold!" quoth Moses (for that was the shepherd's name), "a genuine 'I-Thou' encounter with the divine! How can I best express this to my fellows?"

And Moses, after much thought, picked up a clay tablet and began to write, saying "Thou shalt not . . ."

"Just another bad dream," the alarm clock tells you, "having absolutely no bearing upon God's covenant.

The "attention" bell rings, letting the duty officer know that a message is coming through on the teletype. A few slow flaps of his wings and he's at the printer, confirming, decoding and logging the report. Standard operating procedure has already laid out his next step. All four of his faces ashen, he reaches for the red phone.

"Supreme Galactic Commander here."

"Sir, there's trouble in Sector (green)OR703cw4."

"Earth again, eh?"

"Yes, sir. They're, ah, 'doing their own thing,' sir. Some of them are even enjoying it. Standard procedure, sir?"

"Termination? No, we've too much invested in this lot. Draw up the directives—you know, the "thou shalt not's." If that doesn't work, we'll see about termination. No, on second thought, I'll do this job myself. Time they learned who's boss."

"Another bad dream?" Mom says, "is God a hyper-Calvinistic kill-joy, slapping laws on man to preserve His tyrannical reign? Where do you get such ideas of a covenant?"

Checking to make sure my tie is straight, I glance at the other members of the team. Contract negotiations are always tough, but we're the best that money can buy. Finally, the secretary nods and, clutching our briefcases, we stride into the room and sit down.

"We've studied your proposal carefully," I begin, "and we're prepared to make you a counter-offer. We'll take eight of the commands, with an option to lease on the other two. In return, we're willing to trade the land flowing with milk and honey for . . ."

"You've been watching Perry Mason again—that's where you get these crazy dreams from," says your roommate.

Fireworks are going off, the band is playing "The Washington Post March" full blast and a flight of seraphim are coming in low. The parade is bright, loud and glorious—and it's in your honor.

"You're a lucky man," your guide shouts in your ear. "He doesn't grant a suzerainty treaty to just anyone."

"A what?"

"Suzerainty treaty. That's where a king, of His own free will, grants His protection to a people and takes them under His care. You give Him loyalty, He gives you everything."

The parade stops before Him. Stretching out His right hand to you, He begins: "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel. . . ."

1. A lesser deity which has sometimes been equated with the God of the Old Testament.

Greg Brothers is a Master of Divinity student at Andrews University Theological Seminary.

☐ October 3  
Sunday

# The Ultimate Promise

by editors

## LOGOS

Webster defines *covenant* as a "formal, solemn, and binding agreement . . . or promise . . . for the performance of some action." In the Old Testament, the word suggested a similar agreement on the human level, and hinted at serious consequences for anyone violating one. However, the word is rarely used today. Children *promise* to "be good," presidents take a "solemn oath," and court trial participants *swear* to tell the truth. But despite these assurances, little children have misbehaved, presidents have scandalized, and people in court have lied. No human promises are as steadfast and certain as a *covenant* made by God. Throughout the Old Testament God initiated and ordained covenantal relationships, and mankind benefited as God unfailingly fulfilled His obligations.

The Lord first spoke of a formal covenant to Noah: "I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you" (Gen. 6:18, RSV).

Later, God promised to enter into a close and enduring relationship with Abram, who had grown up amid superstition and heathenism. After giving a single command, God committed Himself to bring numerous blessings to Abram and his descendants: "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. (Gen. 12:1-2, RSV).

When the descendants of Jacob were slaves in Egypt, God again offered His covenantal assistance, affirming, "I will take you for my people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians" (Ex. 6:7, RSV; emphasis supplied). It was after this deliverance, at the camp at Mt. Sinai, that God made His glory known and gave them His law. After reminding them of their ransom from slavery, He said, "'Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. . . ." (Ex. 19:5, 6).

But the stop at Sinai turned out to be more than just a display of thunder, lightning, and noises so extraordinary "that all the people who were in the camp trembled" (Ex. 19:16). It was also a chance for God to show the Israelites their need of the Saviour revealed in the Abrahamic covenant.

The story of covenants doesn't stop there, however. Though Israel sinned soon after the revelation at Sinai and repeatedly after, God kept offering Himself. The Old Testament even tells of a new covenant, one not so easily forgotten, in the book of Jeremiah. "'Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, . . . I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people'" (Jer. 31:31-33, RSV).

Throughout history, then, God has provided covenants which would be relevant to and meet the needs of the day. T. K. S.

# The Same in All Time

God's work is the same in all time, although there are different degrees of development, and different manifestations of His power, to meet the wants of men in the different ages. Beginning with the first gospel promise, and coming down through the patriarchal and Jewish ages, and even to the present time, there has been a gradual unfolding of the purposes of God in the plan of redemption. The Saviour typified in the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law is the very same that is revealed in the gospel. The clouds that enveloped His divine form have rolled back; the mists and shades have disappeared; and Jesus, the world's Redeemer, stands revealed. He who proclaimed the law from Sinai, and delivered to Moses the precepts of the ritual law, is the same that spoke the sermon on the mount. The great principles of love to God, which he set forth as the foundation of the law and the prophets, are only a reiteration of what he had spoken through Moses to the Hebrew people: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Deut. 6:4; Lev. 19:18). The teacher is the same in both dispensations. God's claims are the same. The principles of His government are the same. For all proceed from Him "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).<sup>1</sup>

In regard to the personality and prerogatives of God, where He is, and what He is, this is a subject which we are not to dare to touch. On this theme silence is eloquence. It is those who have no experimental knowledge of God who venture to speculate in regard to Him. Did they know more of Him, they would have less to say about what He is. The one who in the daily life holds closest communion with God, and who has the deepest knowledge of Him, realizes most keenly the utter inability of human beings to explain the Creator. . . .

God always has been. He is the great I AM. The psalmist declares, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." He is the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity. "I am the Lord, I change not," He declares.

God will not break His covenant, nor alter the thing that has gone out of His lips. His word will stand fast forever, as unalterable as His throne. At the judgment, this covenant will be brought forth, plainly written with the finger of God; and the world will be arraigned before the bar of Infinite Justice to receive sentence.<sup>2</sup>

Let us be hopeful and courageous. Despondency in God's service is sinful and unreasonable. He knows our every necessity. To the omnipotence of the King of kings our covenant-keeping God unites the gentleness and care of the tender shepherd. His power is absolute, and it is the pledge of the sure fulfillment of His promises to all who trust in Him. He has means for the removal of every difficulty, that those who serve Him and respect the means He employs may be sustained. His love is as far above all other love as the heavens are above the earth. He watches over His children with a love that is measureless and everlasting.<sup>3</sup>

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
James 1:17

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 373.  
2. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 187.  
3. *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 481-482.

# Heroes Always Come Back by editors

## EVIDENCE

**Key text:**  
**Luke 4:16-19**

The people of the world, even those not usually interested in boxing, shook their heads in awe and wonder as the news came across the media that a seemingly too old Muhammad Ali had executed the comeback of a lifetime, decking the "lion," George Foreman in the eighth round in Zaire, Africa, on a blistering Wednesday in a 4 a.m. heavyweight championship bout.

Supposedly old and worn, considered on his way out of boxing by most, Ali fought past the memory of having his heavyweight title stripped from him for his opposition to the Vietnam war, and illustrated his genius and courage, rope-a-doping his way to conquest. Though his jab no longer had the quickness or strength of his younger days, and though he could no longer dance around the ring for 15 rounds, Ali's comeback to boxing was made complete that hot morning when he tamed the thought-to-be-invincible George Foreman. That morning, in the minds of many, Ali's claim to be the greatest boxer of all time was proved a reality.

After losing his title a few years later, Ali again made a comeback, winning the heavyweight championship of the world for an unprecedented third time. Indeed, Ali always seemed to come back.

Another hero of another day seemed to always be making comebacks, too. He once offered the people of his hometown a part in a message designed to bring good news to the poor, freedom to captives, sight to the blind, hope to the depressed, and peace with God to all people; He offered them a part in His covenant. Instead of accepting they tried to throw Him off a cliff.

He walked through the midst of the mob that day, and He kept on walking—from town to town, and rejection to rejection—always offering His message; always offering Himself; always offering His covenant.

He told hungry people that He was the Bread of life and they laughed. He told His friends to love their enemies, yet they asked Him if they could rain fire down from heaven on an entire town. He freed a man from demon possession, and they said He was possessed by a demon. He gave new life to a man sick with disease for 38 years, and they persecuted Him because of the day on which He had done the healing. He gave sight to a blind man, and they kicked the man out of the synagogue.

They cut His cousin's head off, rejected everything He taught, and ripped the flesh off His back with a cat-o-nine-tails.

And, still, He kept coming. Still, He came back for more. Still, He offered Himself. Still He offered His covenant.

Finally, He came back one last time, not for the sake of winning, nor for fame or self-respect, but for the sake of giving—for the sake of offering.

He entered the ring of Golgotha and removed His robe. For introductions, they mockingly labeled Him the king of the Jews. He met the opponent in what, for that day, must have been the center of the universe. And He went 15 rounds with every sin ever committed.

Over and over again He offered Himself. Over and over again, He offered His covenant. Over and over again, He still offers it today.

D. R. S.

**They  
"rejected  
everything  
He taught  
... still  
He offered  
His  
covenant"**



# Tuning Your Toy Trumpet

by John McVay

There is a striking note of irony in a "How to" article on God's acceptance of us, "warts and all." In the face of God's covenantal "I will," our "we will" sounds like the proverbial toy trumpet in the midst of a thunderous orchestra. Had God not desired a human response to His unconditional acceptance though, He would never have asked for it. Remarkably, He bends low to catch the raspy note of our tiny horn. What response does He seek? How can we respond to His covenantal grace?

1. **Reception.** First comes our reception, our acceptance—of God's acceptance (Mark 4:20).

2. **Reflection.** We are then called to reflect daily on His covenantal grace. The world alternately woos us to listen to its applause and confronts us with the harshest of critiques. God's unconditional acceptance must become the ground for the Christian's self-image. This acceptance is the tuning fork by which the Christian modulates the music of his soul. Our lives need no longer depend on the whims of the world's applause or criticism.

3. **Reproduction.** Thirdly, and most deeply, we must reproduce the covenantal relationship of acceptance in our behavior toward others. "Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee" (Matt. 18:33)? In the words of William Barclay: "God's inflow of mercy to us must coincide with our outflow of mercy to others."<sup>1</sup> While always remaining a solo composition, God's unconditional love becomes a duet. This reproduction of God's unconditional love may result in something as notable as leading a friend into a relationship with God, or as seemingly trivial as an added measure of patience for a roommate's midnight antics.

Through reception, reflection, and reproduction, we bring our toy trumpet into tune with the thundering, melodious orchestra of God's love.

## HOW TO

**Key text:**  
**Matthew 18:33;**  
**Mark 4:20**

**"God's unconditional acceptance must become the ground for the Christian's self-image"**

1. William Barclay, *And Jesus Said: A Handbook on the Parables of Jesus* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), p. 89.

John McVay, a pastor in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference, was a Master of Divinity student at Andrews University at the time of this writing.

October 7  
Thursday

# God's Special People Aren't So Special

by Madeline S. Johnston

## OPINION

Key text:  
Hebrews 11

What kind of people does God choose for His special relationships? Noah apparently had a drinking problem—at least once anyway. And, Abraham actually wavered between belief and unbelief quite often. He accepted Hagar when Sarah offered her and even laughed when God told him Sarah, at the age of 99, would yet bear a son. Maybe he found it hard to believe others, because he himself was not too reliable—he had lied (or told a half truth) at least twice concerning his relation to Sarah.

Moses began his glorious career by murdering an Egyptian—after being rescued, adopted, and educated by Egypt's royal family. Later, out of fear, he argued with God and virtually refused to do what God commissioned him to do. And we can't forget the vast amount of impatience he exhibited concerning the thirsty Israelites when he struck the rock.

And David, initially so humble, allowed wealth and prestige to affect him almost as much as his predecessor had. Toward the end of his reign, he willfully insisted on a census for military purposes, merely to gratify his pride and ambition. And we all know of his infamous acquisition of Bathsheba, not to mention his arranging of Uriah's death, merely to satisfy his own lust and keep his reputation.

These were God's special friends of close relationship, covenant, and promise. Let's run by them once more:

Noah—also a "just man," "perfect," doing "exactly as God had commanded him" and "all that the Lord had commanded him" (Gen. 6:9, 22; 7:5, NEB, emphasis supplied). His first recorded act after leaving the ark was to build an altar and worship.

Abraham obeyed God far more readily than most of us would. He left his home and headed into the unknown with his whole entourage, circumcising all his household. Ultimately he was willing even to sacrifice Isaac, the long-awaited son of promise.

And Moses, despite initial resistance, ultimately went before Pharaoh and "did exactly as the Lord commanded" (Ex. 7:6, NEB). He put up with an awful lot from that ornery, uneducated, complaining crowd he led through that desolate countryside, and generally, he was uncommonly patient with them.

Next, David appears in the biblical record early in his life as a youth of fearless faith attacking Goliath. Throughout his life he exhibited this kind of faith against the enemies of God and His people. Yet, for all his valor, he maintained a lack of spite and a respect for authority. He was honorable and just, yet showed kindness far exceeding the norm of his culture (see 2 Sam. 9:1-13). Concerned about the things of God, he arranged for the return of the ark to Jerusalem and longed to build the temple. When he sinned, even grossly, he was truly repentant. In his last words, he reaffirmed his pact with God and rejoiced in God's faithfulness to that covenant (2 Sam. 23:1-7).

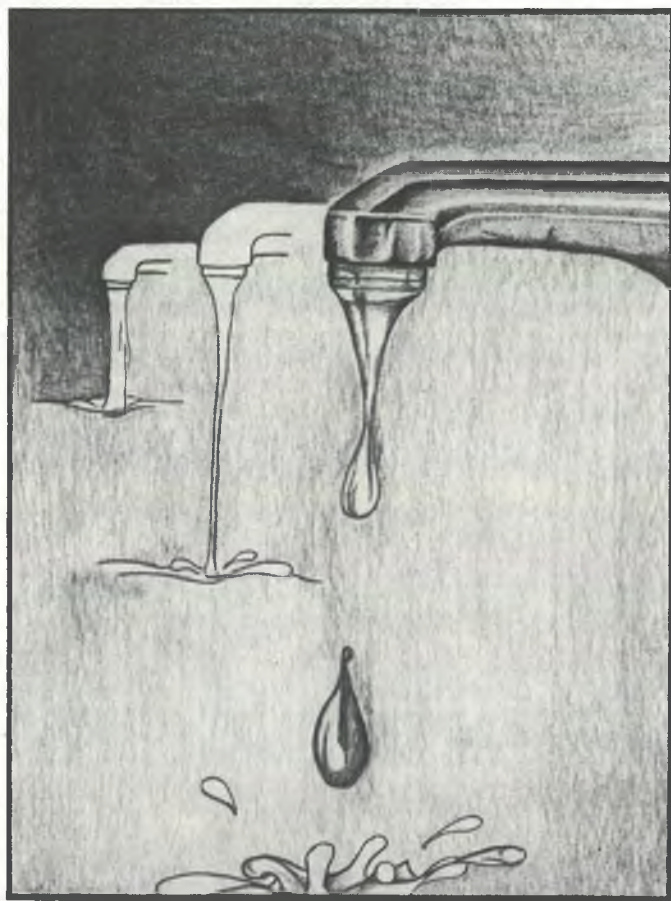
Human weakness is certainly evident in the lives of these biblical heroes. But genuine repentance and obedience is also evident. Most important, the fact that one can choose to accept the covenant relationship offered by God is evident. Herein lies much hope. God offers a special relationship with Him to us, and the offer has no expiration date attached to it, despite all our failures.

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**REACT**  
**Lesson 2**

1. Have you ever had the feeling that God is, indeed, a galactic commander, (see Introduction) overseeing your every move, ever ready to give the "termination" verdict when things have gone too far? Where did this concept originate for you? from the Bible? a pastor? your parents? Explain how this week's lesson affects that concept of God.
  2. In this week's How To, John McVay speaks of God's unconditional acceptance. If God's acceptance is unconditional, though, why does it require a response before one can be saved? Is this a contradiction in terms on God's part? Or was McVay wrong to use the term unconditional acceptance?
  3. Madeline S. Johnston shows in her Opinion article, that at least four of God's chosen men of the Old Testament were not only "sinners" as we all admit we are, but were also men who committed gross, public sins. Today, of course, if a pastor, teacher or church administrator commits these types of public sins, he is almost certain to lose his position and be barred from future denominational employment. Should we be more forgiving of leaders who sin in this way, allowing them to stay in denominational work or at least to return after a period of repentance? Or should a high standard be maintained? Could this high standard possibly be going against the biblical norm?
  4. This week's How To challenges us to reproduce God's unconditional love towards us in our relationship with one another. How can this principle be applied in an academic setting, where teachers have to critically evaluate students and give poor grades to some, and where there is frequently competition between students? Should Christian schools alter the system of competitive, negative assessment grading? Or should Christians operate within the established academic framework, seeking to show as much love as possible within that framework?
  5. Compare and contrast the biblical concept of God's covenant with us with the following:
    - a) a professional athlete's contract.
    - b) a student's signed agreement to abide by the rules of the 'school.
    - c) the NATO alliance.
    - d) a couple's decision to have and raise a child.Can you suggest more appropriate analogies?
-

# Flood, Rainbow, Covenant and Man's Future



"I am putting my bow in the clouds. It will be the sign of my covenant with the world . . . that a flood will never again destroy all living beings" (Genesis 9:13, 15, GNB).

# Color Comes to the Mountain

by Maylan Schurch

Gray.

Gray, gray, *gray*. Dirty, silty, chilly, rock gray.

Father tells us that down the mountain somewhere are green things—vines and ripe olives—but I haven't seen them for myself, yet. Up here, wedged between big slabs of gray stone, the ark behind me juts into the sky. It too is gray—with black pitch-stains mottling its hewn belly.

The sky is also gray, and a large misty cloud breaks into view over the edge of the mountain peak above, rolling down over us.

"Water from the sky!" screams my husband Japheth. He drops the stone he had been carrying for Father's altar and runs toward the ark, trying to wipe waterdrops from his arms. The others, who had encircled the animals to keep them together, hurrying nervously after him.

Then I feel the drops, and I, too, scream a gray, despairing scream.

"Children, take it easy," calls Noah in his deep, coarse voice. "Water is going to fall from the sky a lot from now on. Things are different." He points upward with his tall staff. "See? The water is going. Come, we must build our altar."

Father is right: the gray cloud rolls over us and dips into the misty valley beyond the ridge. But my heart is weary; I ache for color.

At the altar, fire is sparked by

two brown stones, kindled by gray branches from an up-rooted tree. The flames snap excitedly, and the skinned lamb on the stone pile appears to quiver in the orange heat. The fire is filled with color, but it's an angry color: a feverish and wood-wasting color, and I hate it. Its smoke is gray, whipped by the chilly wind.

We draw close to the fire; Ham and his pregnant wife, Shem and my sister, and my own Japheth and I. Mother and Father remain apart, with their backs to the fire.

They begin a song:

**Blessed be God  
Blessed be God  
For keeping us safe  
Through wind and through  
water.**

My lips press tightly together, and will not move. Japheth hugs my shoulders, and shakes me:

**Thanks be to God  
Thanks be to God—**

"Look," calls Father in a voice like Jubal's biggest horn. "The bow!"

*Colors!* Gold, blue, red, green! Three separate magnificent arches of color, soaring high above the gray valley mist!

"Father," Japheth asks, "What is the meaning of these great bows?" He does not answer.

But from just behind our ears, we hear the soft, comfortable, color-filled voice I had almost forgotten, telling us lovingly what the bow means.

## INTRODUCTION

Maylan Schurch was a Master of Divinity student at Andrews University Theological Seminary at the time of this writing.

☐ October 10  
Sunday

# A Covenant With the Earth

by editors

## LOGOS

My sister once helped my mother prepare a tiny cake to celebrate my first birthday. I'm told that when it was set before me, my father had only a few seconds to snap some pictures before I innocently dived in with both hands and thoroughly destroyed it. Though just a copy of a larger, undamaged cake, the replica meant so much to my sister that she cried for half an hour about it.

All of us feel bad, as if a part of ourselves is hurt, when something we create is damaged or destroyed. The book of Genesis tells us how God felt when the beings made in His image became degenerated. "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart" (Gen. 6:5, 6, RSV).

Though the degeneration of His people grieved God, the thought of destroying them must have grieved Him more. But in view of the vastness and intensity of man's sin, God decided to take action: "So the Lord said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man and beast and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.' " "And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. And God said to Noah, 'I have determined to make an end of all flesh; for the earth is filled with violence through them; behold, I will destroy them with the earth'" (Gen. 6:7, 12, 13, RSV).

God was not determined to destroy the entire race, though: . . . "Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord . . . Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:8, 9, RSV). After instructing Noah to build an ark, God made an agreement with this righteous man: "But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you" (Gen. 6:18, RSV). In commanding Noah to enter the ark, God was also assuring salvation for his family, and the continuation of the human race. "It was faith that made Noah hear God's warnings about things in the future that he could not see. . . ." (Heb. 11:7, TEV).

The covenant established after the flood offered protection to both man and animals. "And God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth'" (Gen. 9:12, 13, RSV). The sign was to point to something beyond its own beauty. It was meant to guarantee, to produce faith, to bring God's dealings with mankind to remembrance, and to confirm the faithfulness of God. Each time Noah and his descendants looked to the rainbow, they could remember God's promise: "When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh" (Gen. 9:14, 15, RSV).

The story of Noah is not a happy one in every way. Even though eight people were saved, millions more died. God had been forced to establish that the result of sin is death (Gen. 3:3), yet He proved that in even the worst situations, hope can be restored. T. K. S.

# The Bow as a Token of the Covenant

by Rick Johnson

As we look upon this bow, the seal and sign of God's promise to man, that the tempest of His wrath should no more desolate our world by the waters of a flood, we contemplate that other than finite eyes are looking upon this glorious sight. Angels rejoice as they gaze upon this precious token of God's love to man. The world's Redeemer looks upon it; for it was through His instrumentality that this bow was made to appear in the heavens, as a token or covenant of promise to man. God Himself looks upon the bow in the clouds, and remembers His everlasting covenant between Himself and man.

After the fearful exhibition of God's avenging power, in the destruction of the Old World by a flood, had passed, He knew that those who had been saved from the general ruin would have their fears awakened whenever the clouds should gather, the thunders roll, and the lightnings flash; and that the sound of the tempest and the pouring out of the waters from the heavens would strike terror to their hearts, for fear that another flood was coming upon them. But behold the love of God in the promise: "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud. And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature, of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh."

The family of Noah looked with admiration and reverential awe mingled with joy upon this sign of God's mercy, which spanned the heavens. The bow represents Christ's love which encircles the earth, and reaches unto the highest heavens, connecting men with God, and linking earth with heaven.

As we gaze upon the beautiful sight, we may be joyful in God, assured that He Himself is looking upon this token of His covenant, and that as He looks upon it He remembers the children of the earth, to whom it was given. Their afflictions, perils, and trials are not hidden from Him. We may rejoice in hope, for the bow of God's covenant is over us. He never will forget the children of His care. How difficult for the mind of finite man to take in the peculiar love and tenderness of God, and His matchless condescension when He said, "I will look upon the bow in the cloud, and remember thee."<sup>1</sup>

## TESTIMONY

**Key text:**  
**Genesis 9:12-15**

**"God  
Himself  
looks upon  
the bow  
in the  
clouds, and  
remembers  
His  
everlasting  
covenant"**

1. Review and Herald,  
February 26, 1880.

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Rick Johnson is a Master of Divinity student at Andrews University Theological Seminary, sponsored by the Carolina Conference.

October 12  
Tuesday

# Catastrophe and the Shut Door

by Francis Schaeffer

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
Genesis 7:16

Today, interestingly enough, geologists are finding it necessary to bring catastrophe (though they usually do not use this term) back into the story, for they have not been able to demonstrate that every-thing flows in a simple cause-and-effect line.

We must remember that the Christian position does not deny cause and effect. . . . It is the concept of cause and effect in a closed system which is at issue. God has not made himself a prisoner to the machine of the universe. He can act into it. And consequently, a Christian, whether he is considering a great catastrophe such as a flood or something less dramatic, does not have to choose between a random universe without cause and effect and a universe of cause and effect in a closed system. God is a living God and can work into the machine at any time he wants to.

There are many problems for those who reject the catastrophic. Any events which do not fit the order of events we know today give difficulty. For example, science is wrestling with a great mystery involving a curious event that happened about 10,000 B.C.<sup>1</sup> in what is now the Arctic. I am referring here, of course, to the frozen mammoths and other animals. As far as we can tell, for the past 12,000 years this area has been uniformly cold. But, as is obvious from the study of these great mammoths and the other animals that have been found there, up to that time it had been warm. When the animals froze, they died so quickly that plants of a warmer climate were still in their mouths, neither spit out or swallowed.

Nobody can explain this—nobody. This is a matter of science that has nothing to do with the Bible, and I am not trying to relate it to the flood. I think it probably occurred after the flood. Nevertheless one cannot say that the idea of a great catastrophe is stupid. These great beasts were frozen with such rapidity that the meat was still good to eat when it was found. Scientists who are familiar with deep-freezing have figured out that on the basis of the mass of these huge animals, the temperature would have had to drop within a few hours to -150° F. Nobody knows how or why this happened.

The point is that we can discuss such things as the flood and still be giving honest answers to honest questions. There is no reason for a Christian to be defensive just because he is surrounded by men whose framework is the uniformity of natural causes in a closed system and who have arbitrarily given up the notion of catastrophe.

Genesis 7:16 is a striking verse: "And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the Lord shut him in." This is a hard verse, and I am thankful that Noah did not have to shut the door. Knowing that men would soon be drowning all around him, I don't see how Noah could have done it. But he wasn't asked to. He was asked to be faithful—a preacher of righteousness. He was asked to believe God and God's propositional promise. He was asked to build a boat. But after he built the boat, the time came when God shut the door. That was the end of the time of salvation. It was closed because God had closed it at a point in the flow of history.

God does hate sin and God will judge sin. There comes a day when God shuts the door.

Excerpted from Francis A. Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time*, pp. 138-140. Copyright © by L'Abri Fellowship and used by permission of InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 60515

1. The publishers of the *Collegiate Quarterly* do not necessarily endorse the estimates given by the author for the dating of the events described.



# How to Keep Judgment and Covenant Together

by Bruce Hehn

Rainbows held little meaning for me before I became a Christian. I could see that they possessed a beauty which a lover of rich colors and hues could behold, but there are, of course, other phenomena of color which can equally attract the eye.

But in light of the Bible, a rainbow is something truly to take note of. John Calvin commented that a rainbow "is but a refraction of the sun's rays upon the clouds opposite" and could not be "effective in holding back the waters." Nevertheless, "the rainbow even today is a witness to us. . . . As often as we look upon it, we read this promise of God in it. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Just what is this promise? It is more than the fact that God will not destroy the world with a flood (as important as that is). This promise also means that God's final judgment (see 2 Peter 3:3-9) is now being deferred in mercy. Every rainbow shouts through and beyond its beauty that grace is available! The rainbow witnesses to God's willingness to save man. Here are some suggestions I hope will help you in your study of this topic. Read Genesis 6-9, then consider the following points.

1. **Look behind God's judgment.** What specific sins did the people of Noah's day commit that brought the wrath of God upon them? Why do you suppose their sin was so atrocious in the sight of God?

2. **Look for the redemptive aspects of God's judgment.** The flood is obviously an example of God's judgment. But were there redemptive aspects as well? If so, what were they?

3. **Look for the traits of God's character revealed in the flood story.** What did God demonstrate in His dealing with the men of Noah's day? What does the incident of the flood-rainbow tell us of God's character? Does He seem an arrogant Being who let's things go on only so long as they go His way?

4. **Look for incidents in your own experience which reveal both the judgment and mercy of God.** Do the events of the flood and rainbow covenant parallel or resemble God's dealings with you? Be specific.

**HOW TO**  
**Key text:**  
**2 Peter 3:6, 7**

**"Every  
Rainbow  
shouts through  
and beyond  
its beauty  
that grace  
is available!"**

1. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion IV*, ed. by John T. McNelli, trans. by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), p. 1294.

**Bruce Hehn is a Master of Divinity student at Andrews University Theological Seminary.**

**October 14  
Thursday**

# Respect For Nature and Man

by Jim Miller

## OPINION

Key text:  
Psalm 24:1-2

When God made a covenant with Noah it was actually in two parts: part one was a covenant with the earth; that is to say, all of nature, and part two was a covenant with *all* of Noah's descendants. It was, and still is, a covenant that can teach us to look beyond ourselves and our little cliques, so that we may recognize the extent of God's domain, rule, and love.

After looking at the extent of God's creation and how we have misused it, Francis Schaeffer writes of a philosophy for Christians which is based on respect for the whole of creation.

"I must be clear that I am not loving the tree or whatever is standing in front of me, for a pragmatic reason. It will have a pragmatic result, . . . the very pragmatic results that the men involved in ecology are looking for. But as a Christian I do not do it for the practical or pragmatic results; I do it because it is right and because God is the Maker; and then suddenly things drop into place. . . .

"When we have learned this—the Christian view of nature—then there can be true ecology; beauty will flow, psychological freedom will come, and the world will cease being turned into a desert. Because it is right, on the basis of the whole Christian system . . . because it is true . . . I say, 'Fellow creature . . . I won't walk on you. We are both creatures together.'"<sup>1</sup>

Man tends to be self-centered not only in dealing with nature, however, but also in dealing with other humans, which leads us to part two of the covenant. The people of Israel often forgot the fact that their God was over all and became like other nations in a spirit of nationalism and exclusivism. We too become like the world when we adopt the attitude of self-centeredness. J. A. Motyer writes on what it meant for Israel to have a universal God:

"One divine government rules all, and one moral providence observes all, and judges all. The Lord does not look upon people in the light of their historical past but in the light of their moral present. Every nation is equally under this moral scrutiny. Again there is no difference between Israel and the nations. . . . There is no benefit gained by appeal to the remote and historical past. The Lord says, I am not looking for a lesson in history, I am examining the facts of life and character . . . Israel is in fact worse off than any of the nations, for alone (and thanks to the Exodus, indeed) Israel had been taught how sinners might become aware of their sin, through the law of God, and be cleansed from their sin through the grace of God in the blood sacrifices."<sup>2</sup>

Or as an eighth-century B.C. farmer once said, "He who made the Pleiades and Orion and changes deep darkness into morning, who also darkens day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours earth, the Lord is His name."

"'Are you not as the sons of Ethiopia to Me, O sons of Israel?' declares the Lord. 'Have I not brought up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Capthor and the Arameans from Kir' " (Amos 5:8; 9:7, NASB)?

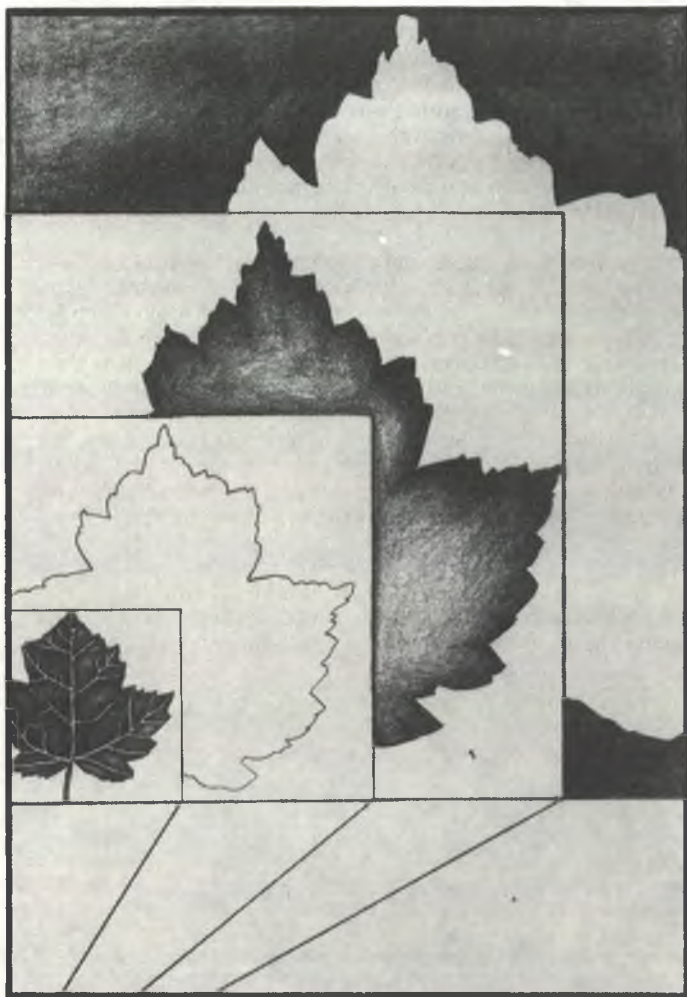
The earth is the Lord's and His covenant with Noah invites us to climb out of our shells, throw off our ingrown attitudes, and see that God has a world out there for us to discover—and respect.

1. Francis A. Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1970), pp. 92, 93.

2. J. A. Motyer, *The Day of the Lion*, pp. 197, 198. Copyright © 1974 by IVP, London, used by permission of InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 60515.

1. Carefully read Genesis 9:8-17. The covenant here obviously involves God's not destroying the earth with another flood. Discuss the ways in which this covenant reveals God's grace (see also 2 Peter 3:7-9).
2. The Opinion article points out that the Noahic covenant included a covenant between God and the earth. This signifies God's respect for His creation, and should therefore move His followers to also respect His creation. Should the Adventist college student or young adult be involved in current ecological issues? Should the church take positions on ecological concerns, or should this be a matter for individuals?
3. The Opinion article also states that the "covenant with Noah invites us to climb out of our shells, throw off our ingrown attitudes, and see that God has a world out there for us to discover—and respect." What specifically can we, particularly those who study or work at Adventist institutions, do to heed this advice? How do we avoid ingrown attitudes and remaining snugly in our shells?
4. Bruce Hehn in this week's How To article infers that even God's judgment manifested by the flood contained elements of God's redemptive purpose. Do you see anything "redemptive" about the flood? Does God ever act from any motive other than redemption?
5. What part does God's judgment play in the life of one who has taken part in God's covenant, and is saved by faith? Is it even worth discussing, if one is already on his way to heaven?

# Design for Salvation



**“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing” (Genesis 12:2, KJV).**

**Lesson 4, October 17 - 23**

by Sam P. Thomas

# Sacrifice

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## INTRO- DUCTION

From somewhere  
the eerie howl of a lonely desert jackal  
pierces the darkness of that awesome night.  
Is it true? My son! My only son! The promised one!  
How could this be? To be offered as a sacrifice!  
Oh God! Why? Why? Have I brought him up all these years only  
for this end? Oh, God!

An ancient saga, sung in a distant land  
Where all is love and people dance to a  
Rhythm of Divine Ecstasy, - But still, when  
Humanity enters that land, the saga becomes distorted.

From somewhere  
the desert eagle calls out her challenge  
as the two climb that hill in the Arabah.  
He raises his hand. Sweat and tears flow mingled on  
a path uncharted. The glint of steel as the knife arcs down.  
A voice shatters the pregnant silence! Filling the annals of  
history with the majestic vibrations: "Halt!"

In a land of eternal realities  
People seldom cry! Their voice is heard,  
Not in mournings, but in joyful exaltations.  
We enter that land only to find it within us.

From somewhere  
the voice of those steeped in hate  
as the man is led to that gruesome hill.  
The sounds of a hammer! Flesh meets metal! Blood flows freely!  
Time ceases to be! The thud of wood as it slides into the hole.  
Nature veils her face! Heaven refuses to watch! "Eloi Eloi  
Lama Sabachthani," fills the hallway of eternity.

A ballad of the Trinity escapes into time and space.  
Finds its reality in the hearts of men.  
We walk! We sing! In tones that color this ballad.  
For the tone resounds in an unbreakable jar called the covenant.

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Sam P. Thomas is a Master of Divinity/Master of  
Public Health student at Andrews University The-  
ological Seminary.

October 17  
Sunday

# Abram and the Boston Marathon

by editors

## LOGOS

"When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly' "(Gen. 17:1, 2, RSV). And the Lord added, "'... I will give you, and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession' " (verse 8 of RSV).

Imagine visiting your 99-year-old great-grandfather. You discuss the weather, some TV shows he's recently seen, and how school is going for you. He asks what you do in your spare time, and you mention that you enjoy jogging. Suddenly his eyes widen and he begins to talk about something he read about in the newspaper—the Boston Marathon. He slowly limps over to the closet and produces a new pair of athletic shoes, explaining that he's going to start training for the marathon right away.

Today, we think of someone approaching one century in age as old and sometimes senile, and we don't expect people that age to run in a marathon.

Abram, however, was just beginning years of work and travel at age 99.

God had confirmed His promises to Abraham by the making of a covenant in the traditional manner of the day. Following the Lord's instruction, Abram obtained a cow, a goat, and a ram, cut each in half and waited. As night fell, he became tired and slept. When he awoke, he saw "a flaming torch" passing in midair between the animal halves. Though difficult to visualize, this supernatural demonstration sealed the promise. According to custom, the opposite party in the covenant was to walk between the halves of the carcass, and in this case, God was that opposite party. God then again confirmed the covenant by saying, "'Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates' " (Gen. 15:18).

Finally, God promised to make Abram "the father of a multitude of nations," and changed his name to Abraham, a name having that very meaning (Gen. 17:5). In addition, God gave to Abraham the rite of circumcision: "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee. Every man child among you shall be circumcised" (Gen. 17:10).

Scholars have suggested the following as purposes for circumcision as the "sign of the covenant: It was destined (1) to distinguish the seed of Abraham from the Gentiles (Eph. 2:11), (2) to perpetuate the memory of Jehovah's covenant (Genesis 17:11), (3) to foster the cultivation of moral purity (Deut. 10:16), (4) to represent righteousness by faith (Romans 4:11), (5) to symbolize circumcision of the heart (Romans 2:29), and (6) to foreshadow the Christian rite of baptism (Col. 2:11,12)."<sup>1</sup>

God's design in making a covenant of an everlasting nature with Abraham and his offspring was and is "to be God to you." God's will to save stands in the foreground of the Abrahamic covenant. The central fact of that saving intent—and the effect of God's grace—is that the covenant Lord will be the God of Abraham and his seed.

T. K. S.

1. *Seventh Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 322, 323.

selected by Mark Bresee  
and Maylan Schurch

# In the Darkest Days ... Fear Not

## God has Plans for Us

Obstacles to the advancement of the work of God will appear; but fear not. To the omnipotence of the King of kings, our covenant-keeping God unites the gentleness and care of a tender shepherd. Nothing can stand in His way. His power is absolute, and it is the pledge of the sure fulfillment of His promises to His people. He can remove all obstructions to the advancement of His work. He has means for the removal of every difficulty, that those who serve Him and respect the means He employs may be delivered. His goodness and love are infinite, and His covenant is unalterable.

The plans of the enemies of His work may seem to be firm and well established, but He can overthrow the strongest of these plans, and in His own time and way He will do this, when He sees that our faith has been sufficiently tested and that we are drawing near to Him and making Him our counselor.

In the darkest days, when appearances seem so forbidding, fear not. Have faith in God. He is working out His will, doing all things well in behalf of His people. The strength of those who love and serve Him will be renewed day by day. His understanding will be placed at their service, that they may not err in the carrying out of His purposes. . . .

Oh, my brethen, hold the beginning of your confidence firm unto the end. The light of God's truth is not to be dimmed. It is to shine amidst the darkness of error that enshrouds our world. The word of God is to be opened to those in the high places of the earth, as well as to those in the more lowly.<sup>1</sup>

## God's Covenant is Significant for Us

The spirit of bondage is engendered by seeking to live in accordance with legal religion, through striving to fulfill the claims of the law in our own strength. There is hope for us only as we come under the Abrahamic covenant, which is the covenant of grace by faith in Christ Jesus. The gospel preached to Abraham, through which he had hope, was the same gospel that is preached to us today, through which we have hope. Abraham looked unto Jesus, who is also the Author and the Finisher of our faith.<sup>2</sup>

## What If?

If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have kept God's law in mind, and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone. And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses.<sup>3</sup>

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Genesis 15:6

**"The spirit of bondage is engendered by seeking to live in accordance with legal religion"**

1. *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 10-11.

2. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1077.

3. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 364.

Mark Bresee and Maylan Schurch were both seminary students at Andrews University at the time of this compilation.

☐ October 19  
Tuesday

# Four Facts on the Covenant

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
Genesis 15:18

The covenant of God.—Here is the ultimate guarantee of a life that shall be significant. The profound Hebrew understanding knew well the limitations and frailties of man, but it had been gripped by the amazing faith that man in his weakness can yet have behind him the infinite strength of God. A man is not to be made more confident in himself; he can be confident because he has a covenant with Another.

First note how this thought of the covenant runs through all the O.T.<sup>1</sup> Here it begins with Abraham. It comes again with Moses (Exodus 34:27). It echoes in the words of the great prophets. In its whole instinctive recognition the religion of the Hebrew race was objective. The Hebrew mind and heart reached up to a transcendent Reality, and knew that the springs of life were not in the shallowness of human souls but in the illimitableness of God. . . .

**“Religion is not a human notion, a pathetic projection of human wishes which may or may not find a divine response”**

Note a second fact. The covenant with God is initiated by God.<sup>1</sup> Religion is not a human notion, a pathetic projection of human wishes which may or may not find a divine response. On the contrary, it is God moving toward man and giving to the bond between them therefore the eternal assurance of His own purpose. God spoke first to Abraham, not Abraham first to God. . . .

A third fact. As the covenant comes from God, so it must be remembered that it is in Him and not in our unenlightened selves that we must look for its interpretation.<sup>1</sup> Men who started out to be religious can go wrong if they begin to think they know where north is better than the North Star knows; or if they reason that God’s covenant means that He has agreed to be a passenger on the ship of which we are the pilot. Reflect upon how often this distorting pride may take possession of individuals and institutions: the men and women who want God to bless designs which they choose to think are most desirable; the churches which salute God with elaborate aesthetic worship and then expect to be prospered in a narrow parochialism that does not relate religion to the great needs of the general life; the statesmen who invoke God’s name in patriotic eloquence but do not bow before the ultimate question of what His will is for a nation’s highest mission in the world. The true ideal is expressed in the words attributed to Abraham Lincoln when a self-confident delegation waited upon him, presented their case, said they had prayed about it, and felt sure that God was on their side. Said Lincoln: “I am not so much concerned to ask whether God is on my side. What I am concerned with is to try to be sure that I am on God’s side.” . . .

A fourth fact. The covenant with God makes some other covenants unthinkable and all other covenants subordinate.<sup>1</sup> Through O.T. history the people of Israel are revealed as constantly tempted to make degrading covenants—with pagan practices in Canaan, with the gods of Tyre, with the plausible power of Assyria or Egypt. They were always thinking that in a shifting world smart stratagems would most help them to survive, instead of believing that the true necessity was to hold hard to that integrity of life which God had taught them and which could make them deserve survival. “In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength,” said Isaiah (30:15).

Excerpted from *The Interpreter’s Bible* (New York, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952), pp. 609, 610.

1. Emphasis Ours

October 20  
Wednesday



# The Risk of Faith

Have you ever wondered what Abraham's friends and neighbors must have thought of him after he announced he was pulling up stakes and leaving Ur at God's command? I can imagine some reactions like this: "I can't fathom why he is leaving now. Prices for both sheep and cattle have never been better."

"What's really mind-boggling is that he doesn't even know for sure where he is going. What's worse is the way he has convinced an impressionable youth like Lot to go with him."

Obviously, Abraham was making an extraordinary move. But then, God had made him some rather extraordinary promises.

As children of Abraham (Rom. 4:11) we too are recipients of covenant promises which, though different, are no less extraordinary. Here are three suggestions, based on Abraham's experience, on how to respond to God's extraordinary covenant promises:

1) **Let Go.** "The Lord said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household'. . . . So Abram left" (Gen. 12:1, 4, NIV). Faith in God means letting go of everything else. Not accomplishments, possessions, or even relationships can be the foundation upon which the life of faith is built. Bank accounts, homes, good times, and status in the community may be necessary components of our daily existence, but faith means that our ultimate affections are elsewhere. Everything but Christ is expendable. At His word, we must leave our country, we must let go.

2) **Take Risks.** "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called . . . and he went out, not knowing where he was to go" (Heb. 11:8, RSV). After we let go, we are free to take risks in responding to God's call. Because we have not centered our lives on our own reputation we are free to risk being misunderstood for the sake of truth and love. Because wealth is not the basis of our happiness, we are free to take financial risks for those in need. Because God has accepted us fully in Christ, we can risk rejection by friends for standing firm for what is right. Abraham did not know exactly where God would lead him, the future was not mapped out in detail. Faith is a risk. It means staking your life on a future that contains only one certainty—that you will always be in God's hands.

3) **Believe in spite of yourself.** "He (Abraham) did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead because he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb" (Rom. 4:19, NIV). When we look at our own weakness, ineptitude, and repeated failings, God's promises seem about as credible as a century-old couple producing their first child. But Abraham did not lose faith when he considered the feebleness of his aged body, and we should not stop believing when we consider our own lack of ability or erratic spiritual experience. Even the times when Abraham's faith failed him did not cause him to give up in despair and decide that belief was impossible for him. Because his faith was in God and not in his own ability to believe, he could maintain faith, even though he knew that faith to be faulty.

Abraham was "fully persuaded that God had power to do what he promised" (Rom. 4:21, NIV).

D. F. M.

## HOW TO

Key text:

Hebrews 11:8-12

# Our Part in the Covenant

by Ritchie Pruehs

## OPINION

**Key text:**  
**1 Corinthians**  
**6:19, 29**

Ben Franklin once said that "the Lord helps those who help themselves," and theologians have been arguing ever since about whether he was right. Now, my interest is not to evaluate the theology of that wise old maker of proverbs but to highlight an issue—the issue of our part in our covenant relationship with God. Where do our works fit in? What part do they play in the covenant relationship?

As I read the Bible, I am struck by two seemingly contradictory facts. The first is that the covenant is a covenant of grace. It is God's covenant which He established by His mighty works. Our works have nothing to do with initiating or establishing the covenant. The second fact is that from Genesis to Revelation the Bible writers exhort us to be obedient to the covenant. Moses passionately pleads with us to "be careful to obey," Paul writes long chapters about the "obedience of faith."

**"... the whole problem would be much easier if it was more of an either/or situation"**

Now, the whole problem would be much easier if it was more of an either/or situation. If God would simply say, "It's up to you; if you want to be saved, you had better get to working on it," the issue would be clear. Or if God would say, "Just sit back and relax; you can't do a thing to help or hinder your salvation," the issue again would be clear. But what God does say seems to lie somewhere between these two extremes. My question is, Where? Where do our works fit in? What is our part in the covenant?

I think the answer lies in the realm of sequence or timing. It was only *after* God had established and confirmed His covenant with Abraham that He commanded Abraham to "keep" the covenant by circumcising all the males. The covenant was all put together before Abraham had done a thing.

The covenant at Sinai seems to echo this sequence. The people of Israel were first redeemed out of Egyptian bondage. Only then did God give them the Ten Commandments. "I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt . . ."

Paul also echoes this sequence when in 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 he says that "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (emphasis supplied).

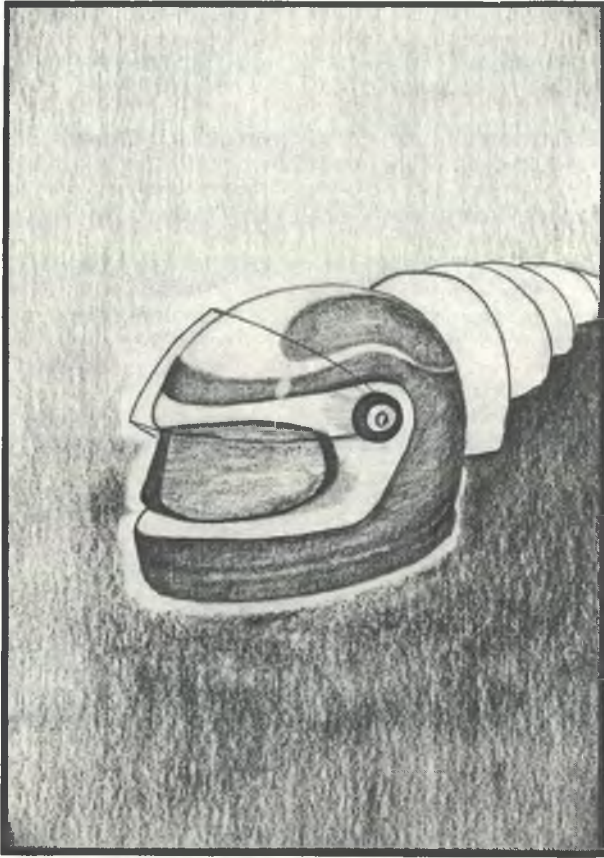
First comes salvation, then God's commands. We do not obey God in order to be saved, *but because we already are!*

So where do our works fit in? They are the only natural and proper response to the salvation already given. God has redeemed us. He owns us, and He has a rightful claim on our lives.

Genesis 17:23 says that Abraham obeyed God on the very day that God had given the commandment of circumcision. His quick obedience exemplifies the kind of response God's gracious covenant deserves.

- 
1. "In a land of eternal realities  
people seldom cry! Their voice is heard,  
Not in mournings, but in joyful exaltations.  
We enter that land only to find it within us,"  
writes Sam P. Thomas in this week's Introduction. What do you  
think he means by the final line, "We enter that land only to find it  
within us"?
  2. This week's Testimony states that a "spirit of bondage is engen-  
dered by seeking to live in accordance with legal religion." How  
do we maintain a proper concern for obedience to the law with-  
out engendering a spirit of bondage?
  3. Read and meditate on the story of Abraham's call in Genesis 12:  
1-5 and Hebrews 11:8-10. Then, briefly rewrite the story in a mod-  
ern setting. Be as specific as possible regarding modern details  
and circumstances. Be prepared to share your "version" with your  
class.
  4. The Evidence article points out that the "covenant with God  
makes some other covenants unthinkable and all other covenants  
subordinate." Do you think the following "covenants" or situa-  
tions which involve entering into an agreement fall into the un-  
thinkable or subordinate category?
    - a) membership in a labor union.
    - b) denominational membership in the National Council of  
Churches.
    - c) participation in the military.
    - d) working in a restaurant where alcoholic drinks are sold.Discuss other potentially problematic modern day covenants that  
occur to you.
  5. In his Opinion piece, Ritchie Pruehs attempts to simplify and sort  
out the process of salvation. He writes that God first saves us,  
then we obey Him because we are saved. Is this a legitimate  
separation or is he oversimplifying salvation? In the light of James'  
"Faith without works is dead" (James 2:26), can we separate faith  
from works? Should we even try?
-

# Promises of the Abrahamic Covenant



"After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, 'Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great' " (Genesis 15:1, RSV).

# by Loren Seibold **A Purposeful Promise**

I've a friend who once developed a desperate desire for a new stereo. He felt this desire so intensely that he signed a contract to purchase one with monthly payments—without bothering to figure out that the interest would, in the end, nearly double the cost. The prospect of the blessing (of owning a stereo) blinded him to the stipulations of the contract.

On five occasions—three times to Abraham, and later to Isaac and Jacob—God reminded the patriarchs of the provisions of the covenant, or contract, that He had made with them. In all five, God reminded the patriarchs that they would be the bearers of a powerful nation. Three times—first to Abraham at the original covenant ceremony, then to Isaac and Jacob—God promised to grant full ownership of the land where they had lived until that time. And to these three He also promised His presence and a special measure of protection.

With such a collection of blessings assured them, we ought not to be too critical of later generations for overlooking, like my friend, one item of the original contract. The overlooked item, however, was not an obligation, like the interest on the stereo payments. God didn't ask Israel to pay for their blessings. But He did wish them to see that the blessings had been given for a purpose. "I have blessed you," said God, "in order that you might be a blessing." "All the people on the earth will be blessed through you," He said to Abraham. And to Isaac

came the additional words that all would be blessed, "through you and your offspring."

The blessings were not given to be hoarded—they were given to be shared. God cannot be accused of creating a privileged class to lord over the other inhabitants of the earth.

What was the blessing Israel should have given to the nations? The Hebrew prophets suggested that the blessing should be the act of bringing the nations to God. The nations were to notice Israel's success, and then wish to know the reason for it. They would have found, of course, that the reason for the success was the blessing of the God whom they followed. Israel, as a result, would have indeed been the vehicle by which the nations would be brought to God. But Israel failed, and the purpose of "being a blessing" was ultimately not achieved through Israel's success, but in spite of Israel's failure. And, as Peter declared to the Jews in Acts 3, Jesus Christ was as much a fulfillment of the promises to Abraham as was the scenario the prophets had sketched. There was, finally, only one Israelite who summed up all that it means to be a blessing to the nations. What many Jews with many blessings had failed to do, one Jew accomplished in His life, death, and resurrection.

Thus, in Jesus, all the stipulations of the contract were finally fulfilled. You might even say He had been written into the fine print from the beginning.

## INTRODUCTION

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Loren Seibold is a Master of Divinity student at Andrews University Theological Seminary.

October 24  
Sunday

# Promises to Live By

by editors

## LOGOS

The Abrahamic covenant is known for its clear statement concerning righteousness by faith, but this covenant also includes promises made by God encompassing several other aspects of a Christian's life. These promises were repeated to Isaac and Jacob and elaborated upon in the New Testament. Let's look at four of them:

1. **Covenant promise of divine presence:** "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, . . . for I will not leave you until I have done that of which I have spoken to you" (Gen. 28:15, RSV). These words of God were spoken in a dream to Jacob as he slept in the country between Beersheba and Haran. When he awoke, ". . . he was afraid, and said, 'How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven'" (28:17). The stones he had used for his pillow were piled to form an altar, and there he anointed the altar and named the place "Bethel (the house of God)." This promise of God's presence, of course, was echoed by Jesus when He promised, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

2. **Covenant promise for all families:** "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;" (Gen. 22:18). This promise was first given to Abraham, and was later repeated to Jacob. The significance of the term "seed," referring to a person's descendants, was clarified in a sermon by Peter: "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away everyone of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:25, 26).

It is in Christ that the covenant promise for all families was fulfilled: "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring . . . which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16, RSV).

3. **Covenant promise of a great nation:** "I will make of you a great nation" (Gen. 12:2, RSV). Abraham was without descendants or even a son, but God promised him that he would be the father of a great nation. Though Abraham "fell upon his face and laughed," Isaac was born to 99-year-old Sarah. Another miracle took place when Isaac's "barren" wife, Rebekah, gave birth to Jacob and Esau. It was Jacob's son (Abraham's great-grandson), Joseph, who prepared the way for Abraham's descendants to become a nation by rising from servitude to the leadership of Egypt (Genesis 39-41). Jacob and his family numbered only 70, but they moved to Egypt and there became a populous nation (Deut. 26:5), and later entered into a covenant with God at Sinai.

4. **Covenant promise of a great name:** "I will bless you, and make your name great" (Gen. 12:2, RSV). The promise of a great name involves more than a family name. The writer of Proverbs used the word "name" to refer to a good reputation, and the builders of the tower of Babel thought to gain a reputation when they said "Let us make a name for ourselves" (Gen. 11:4, RSV), and began to build. Their efforts were without reward, and their only reputation was that of being confused construction workers who couldn't finish a job.

T. K. S.

# The Son "Not Withheld"

God had called Abraham to be the father of the faithful, and his life was to stand as an example of faith to succeeding generations. But his faith had not been perfect. He had shown distrust of God in concealing the fact that Sarah was his wife, and again in his marriage with Hagar. That he might reach the highest standard, God subjected him to another test, the closest which man was ever called to endure. In a vision of the night he was directed to repair to the land of Moriah, and there offer up his son as a burnt-offering upon a mountain that should be shown him.<sup>1</sup>

It was to impress Abraham's mind with the reality of the gospel, as well as to test his faith, that God commanded him to slay his son. The agony which he endured during the dark days of that fearful trial, was permitted that he might understand from his own experience something of the greatness of the sacrifice made by the infinite God for man's redemption. No other test could have caused Abraham such torture of soul as did the offering of his son. God gave his Son to a death of agony and shame. The angels who witnessed the humiliation and soul-anguish of the Son of God were not permitted to interpose, as in the case of Isaac. There was no voice to cry, "It is enough." To save the fallen race, the King of glory yielded up his life. What stronger proof can be given of the infinite compassion and love of God? "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32).

The sacrifice required of Abraham was not alone for his own good, nor solely for the benefit of succeeding generations; but it was also for the instruction of the sinless intelligences of heaven and of other worlds. The field of the controversy between Christ and Satan,—the field on which the plan of redemption is wrought out,—is the lesson-book of the universe. Because Abraham had shown a lack of faith in God's promises, Satan had accused him before the angels and before God of having failed to comply with the conditions of the covenant, and as unworthy of its blessings. God desired to prove the loyalty of his servant before all heaven, to demonstrate that nothing less than perfect obedience can be accepted, and to open more fully before them the plan of salvation.<sup>2</sup>

It had been difficult even for the angels to grasp the mystery of redemption,—to comprehend that the Commander of heaven, the Son of God, must die for guilty man. When the command was given to Abraham to offer up his son, the interest of all heavenly beings was enlisted. With intense earnestness they watched each step in the fulfillment of this command. When to Isaac's question, "Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" Abraham made answer, "God will provide himself a lamb;" and when the father's hand was stayed as he was about to slay his son, and the ram which God had provided was offered in the place of Isaac,—then light was shed upon the mystery of redemption, and even the angels understood more clearly the wonderful provision that God had made for man's salvation (1 Peter 1:12).<sup>3</sup>

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
1 Peter 1:12

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 147.
2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 154, 155.
3. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 155.

☐ October 26  
Tuesday

# Abraham and the Good News

by E. J. Waggoner,  
selected by James Miller

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
Galatians 3:7-9

"The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith preached the Gospel beforehand unto Abraham" (Galatians 3:7-9).

This verse will bear much reading. An understanding of it will guard one against many errors. And it is not difficult to understand; simply hold to what it says, and you have it.

(a) For one thing, the verse shows us that the Gospel was preached at least as early as the days of Abraham.

(b) It was God Himself who preached it; therefore it was the only true Gospel.

(c) It was the same Gospel that Paul preached; so that we have no other Gospel than that which Abraham had.

(d) The Gospel differs in no particular now from what it was in Abraham's day; for his day was the day of Christ (John 8:56).

God requires just the same things now that he required then, and nothing more.

Moreover the Gospel was then preached to the Gentiles, for Abraham was a Gentile, or in other words, a heathen. He was brought up as a heathen, for "Terah, the father of Abraham," "served other Gods" (Joshua 24:2), and was a heathen till the Gospel was preached to him. So the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles was no new thing in the days of Peter and Paul. The Jewish nation was taken out from among the heathen, and it is only by preaching of the Gospel to the heathen that Israel is built up and saved. . . .

Thus we see that the apostle takes the Galatians, and us, back to the fountainhead—to the place where God Himself preaches the Gospel to us Gentiles. No Gentile can hope to be saved in any other way or by any other gospel than that by which Abraham was saved.

. . . Because God preached the Gospel to Abraham, saying, "In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," those who believe are blessed with the faithful Abraham. There is no blessing for any man except the blessing which Abraham received, and the Gospel preached to him is the only Gospel there is for any people under heaven; for besides the name of Jesus, in whom Abraham believed, "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." In Him "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:14). The forgiveness of sins carries with it all blessings.

Excerpted from E. J.  
Waggoner, *The Glad  
Tidings* (Mountain View,  
CA: Pacific Press Pub-  
lishing Association,  
1977), pp. 105-107.  
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October 27  
Wednesday

James Miller is a Master of Divinity student at the  
Theological Seminary, Andrews University.



# How to . . . Bring It up to Date

by Jeff Beasley

A high mountain doesn't seem very large from a distance. In the same manner, when glancing back over one's shoulder at the past, God's promises to Abraham might appear insignificant. After all, it's been 4,000 years since Abraham abandoned Mesopotamia in favor of Palestine. How could a covenant that far back in time possibly affect anyone today?

Tall mountains, however, are still tall even if they don't always appear so. And the Abrahamic covenant, though 4,000 years old, does still affect us today. Here's how:

1. **God's covenant with Abraham holds a blessing for us.** "And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). "All" includes you. The blessing is the gift of redemption through Jesus Christ. And with that gift, a multitude of blessings follow. For example, there's the gift of a Comforter. If you unexpectedly received the "blessing" of an inheritance worth \$1 million, would it change your life? Certainly. Yet, in how many more ways can the blessing of Jesus Christ change your life?

2. **God's promises to Abraham build bridges.** Walls force separation, exclusiveness, and isolation. Bridges allow access, communication, and unity. "All families" (clans, tribes, etc.) were blessed through Abraham. God does not recognize walls built with the substance of ethnic, social, or sexual bigotry. Instead, the covenant blessing of Abraham build bridges between all classes and colors. The blessings you receive in Jesus are given freely to all. So, you really have more in common with that cranky dean (or parent, roommate, white person, black person) than you have differences.

3. **God's promises to Abraham carry a responsibility.** True, all are blessed through Abraham, but not all realize it or believe it's true. The blessing is theirs, but many have not yet received it through faith (Gal. 3:9). Is it possible, then, to speak of one who is not a Christian as an "outsider?" The Abrahamic covenant implies a responsibility to proclaim the good news that *all* fall under the domain of the Abrahamic covenant, and all that is left to do is to accept it.

**HOW TO**  
**Key text:**  
**Galatians 3:9**

**"the  
covenant  
blessings  
of  
Abraham  
build  
bridges  
between  
all classes  
and colors"**

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Jeff Beasley is a pastor in the Northern California Conference.

October 28  
Thursday

# The Genesis Record Reads Righteousness by Faith

by

Henry M. Morris

## OPINION

Key text:  
Romans 4:1-5

"And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou has given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness. And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it" (Gen. 15:2-7).

This was not a dream, but a vision. Abram was awake, and the vision continued all day and into the night as the Word of the Lord appeared to him. Abram expressed to God the reason for his concern, that he still had no seed. Were he and Sarai to die, all his house would go to his steward Eliezer, not even one of his own people. Lot had returned to Sodom, apparently well content there and, so far as the record goes, had not even shown any particular appreciation to Abram for saving his life.

Once again, therefore, the Lord renewed His promise. Before, He had said Abram's seed would be as the dust of the earth. Now, he says they will be as the stars of heaven. Not only does this imply a great number, but perhaps also that the sphere of activity of the promised seed in the eternal ages will be both on earth and in heaven.

Now, once again we have a first mention, this time of the word "believe." Abram "believed God and he counted (or 'imputed') it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). Here is the great principle of true salvation, set forth for the first time in the Bible. Not by works do men attain or manifest righteousness, but by faith. Because they believe in the Word of God, He credits them with perfect righteousness and therefore enables sinful men to be made fit for the fellowship of a holy God. In this verse is also the first occurrence of "imputed" (Hebrew *chashad*) and the first occurrence of "righteousness" (except in the name "Melchizedek"; also, a similar word, though not the same, was applied to Noah, in Genesis 6:9, translated "just"). The whole vocabulary is new, because here is a new covenant. In Noah's case, "grace" comes before "righteousness"; in Abram's case, "faith" comes before "righteousness." The one stresses God's sovereignty, the other man's responsibility. Both are true and necessary. "By grace are ye saved through faith . . . For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. 2:8, 10).

This wonderful verse, Genesis 15:6, is quoted in three epistles of the New Testament (Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23); and in each it is stressed that Abraham was a type of all who would ever be saved, the principle always being that of salvation through faith unto righteousness.

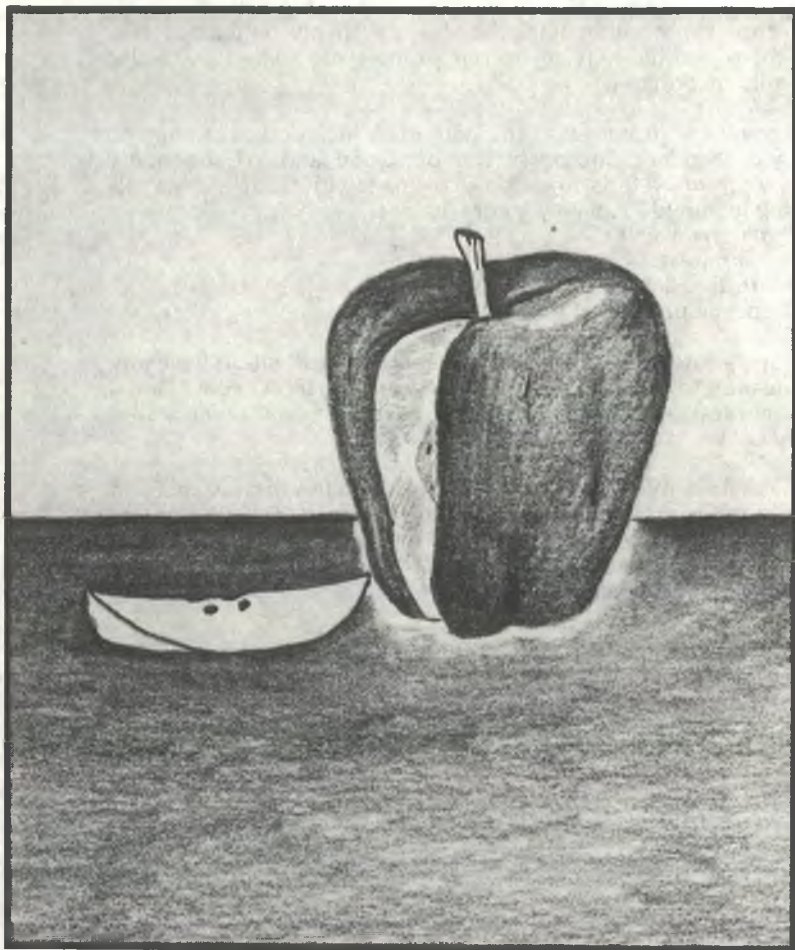
Excerpted from Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, pp. 324, 325. Copyright © 1976 by Henry M. Morris and used by permission of Baker Book House.

Henry M. Morris is Director of the Institute of Creation Research in San Diego.

October 29  
Friday

1. The Introduction points out that our enthusiasm for the promised blessings of the covenant sometimes blinds us to its responsibilities. Is it proper to enter a covenant relationship with God with the primary motivation being the blessings involved (like buying a stereo) or should service be our primary motivation, with the benefits secondary?
2. The covenant promises to the patriarchs included assurance of many descendants and possession of a good land. What benefits are we promised today through a covenant with God? Are the following included? Explain why or why not.
  - a) material wealth.
  - b) happiness.
  - c) prestige (a great name).
  - d) special protection from God.
3. Do God's promises to make of Abraham a great nation have any application to the United States? Can we as a nation expect God's special blessing if we corporately do His will? Is America a specially chosen nation?
4. Genesis 15:6 refers to Abraham's faith. Discuss the instances in which Abraham demonstrated faith (see Romans 4:18-25 and Hebrews 11:8-12, 17-19 in addition to the Genesis record). List at least three important characteristics of true faith that can be derived from these instances.

# The Chosen



**“But I will leave among you a humble and lowly people, and they will take refuge in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel will do no wrong and tell no lies, nor will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths; for they shall feed and lie down with no one to make them tremble” (Zephaniah 3:12, 13, NASB).**

**Lesson 6, October 31 - November 6**

# Amos and the Chosen<sup>1</sup>

by Roy Castelbuono

## INTRO- DUCTION

The Lord roars out of Zion  
and thunders from Jerusalem.

This is what the Lord says:

For three sins of communism,

Even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.

Because she has built her empires by the blood of millions of men.

Even so, I will consume her until not a sign of her power remains.

This is what the Lord says:

For three sins of materialism,

Even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.

Because she has enslaved the minds of men by what can be seen and touched.

I will cast her from me as a man would a venomous serpent and she will be devoured by her own poison.

This is what the Lord says:

For three sins of the advertising industry,

Even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.

Because she claims to give satisfaction and meaning to life while only creating desires that can't be fulfilled—

I will fill her with her own food until her stomach bursts and the stink of it fills the earth.

This is what the Lord says:

For three sins of racism,

Even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.

Because she has set herself up as better than others, because she has walked and trampled on the souls of many people.

I will throw her down from her highest tower and I will soak her white robe with the blood of her body.

This is what the Lord says:

For three sins of Adventism,

Even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.

Because you claimed to possess the truth but do not practice its love, because you are neither hot nor cold, because you have busied yourselves with the affairs of men instead of with the affairs of God, because your churches are large but your hearts are small. I will sift you as wheat at the harvest.

.....

Amariah: Now, wait just a minute there, preacher. I don't mind you condemning others, but Adventists, we're something special. We are God's chosen people and have nothing to fear from the future. God would not dare destroy the apple of His eye!

Amos: Yes, we are a chosen people, but we were chosen for a purpose. If we neglect this our doom is sealed. God's purpose will be accomplished with or without us. Do not presume to have God in your hip pocket. Having truth means responsibility, not automatic salvation. Beware, Amaziah, for the Day of the Lord is coming. Seek Him while there is still time.

1. An update on Amos 1-2, 7:10-17.

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Roy Castelbuono is a Master of Divinity student at Andrews University Theological Seminary.

October 31  
Sunday

# A Chosen People

by editors

## LOGOS

How could Peter say these "refugees" were a "chosen people"?

"You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:9, 10, NIV).

This is part of a letter written "To God's chosen people who live as refugees scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia" (1 Peter 1:1, TEV). Here we have a paradox: how could Peter's epistle say these "refugees" were "a chosen people, a royal priesthood," and, above all, "a holy nation"? Were they really "a people belonging to God?" Wasn't that Israel's designation?

When the descendants of Abraham were slaves in Egypt, God chose Moses to lead them out of slavery. God's conversation with Moses in Exodus 6 includes assurances that He would soon rescue His people, and in verse 7 He says: "I will make you my own people, and I will be your God. . . ." (TEV). After the departure, or exodus, from Egypt and the death of Moses, God confirmed an earlier promise and gave Joshua the dimensions of the land he and his people were to occupy (Joshua 1:3, 4, TEV).

Without the nation's loyalty to God, this promised land could not be received. The people had spent years wandering through the desert guided by numerous revelations of God's glory and hearing His own voice, yet they had refused to follow Him with their will as they had with their feet. Shortly after the group demanded someone to lead them back to Egypt, God said, ". . . They have seen the dazzling light of my presence and the miracles that I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, but they have tried my patience over and over again and have refused to obey me. They will never enter the land which I promised to their ancestors. None of those who have rejected me will ever enter it" (Num. 14:22, 23). Moses even said God would be certain the group would "be uprooted from the land" they were ready to enter if they were disobedient (Deut. 28:62, 63, TEV).

"But they did not listen or obey. Instead everyone continued to be as stubborn and evil as ever." (Jer. 11:8, TEV).

Although Israel as a nation never became what God had intended, people of faith can be seen in its history. Elijah and 7,000 faithful Israelites, for example, refused to bow to Baal (1 Kings 19:14, 18).

In the third chapter of Galatians Paul stresses that salvation is received by faith, not heredity, and that ". . . it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham." "So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith" (Gal. 3:7, 9, RSV). It is not family name or nationality which is important. Among those outside the nation of Israel and lineage of Abraham are inheritors of the blessings promised Israel (Rom. 8:6, 7): "And if you are Christ's, then, you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:29, RSV). So it is those who have faith, those who have given their lives to Christ, who constitute the true Israel of God. God's choice of Israel "to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth" (Deut. 7:6), is now extended to all who believe. We can have the same close relationship with God Israel was destined to have.

T. K. S.

# The Vineyard Keepers

selected by Russell Jenson

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Mark 12:1-11

Christ would have averted the doom of the Jewish nation if the people had received Him. But envy and jealousy made them implacable. They determined that they would not receive Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. They rejected the Light of the world, and henceforth their lives were surrounded with darkness as the darkness of midnight. The doom foretold came upon the Jewish nation. Their own fierce passions, uncontrolled, wrought their ruin. In their blind rage they destroyed one another. Their rebellious, stubborn pride brought upon them the wrath of their Roman conquerors. Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple laid in ruins, and its site plowed like a field. The children of Judah perished by the most horrible forms of death. Millions were sold, to serve as bondmen in heathen lands.

That which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish through His church on earth today. He has "let out His vineyard unto other husbandmen," even to His covenant-keeping people, who faithfully "render Him the fruits in their seasons." Never has the Lord been without true representatives on this earth who have made His interests their own. These witnesses for God are numbered among the spiritual Israel, and to them will be fulfilled all the covenant promises made by Jehovah to His ancient people.<sup>1</sup>

Of special value to God's church on earth today—the keepers of His vineyard—are the messages of counsel and admonition given through the prophets who have made plain His eternal purpose in behalf of mankind. In the teachings of the prophets, His love for the lost race, and His plan for their salvation, are clearly revealed. The story of Israel's call, of their successes and failures, of their restoration to divine favor, of their rejection of the Master of the vineyard, and of the carrying out of the plan of the ages by a goodly remnant to whom are to be fulfilled all the covenant promises—this has been the theme of God's messengers to His church throughout the centuries that have passed. And today God's message to His church—to those who are occupying His vineyard as faithful husbandmen—is none other than that spoken through the prophet of old: "Sing ye unto her, a vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isa. 27:2, 3).

Let Israel hope in God. The Master of the vineyard is even now gathering from among men of all nations and peoples the precious fruits for which He has long been waiting. Soon He will come unto His own; and in that glad day, His eternal purpose for the house of Israel will finally be fulfilled. "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit" (Verse 6).<sup>2</sup>

1. *Prophets and Kings*,  
p. 712-714.  
2. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

Russell Jenson is a graduate student in the theological seminary at Andrews University.

☐ November 2  
Tuesday

# Israel—Created for a Purpose

by David C. Jarnes

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
Galatians  
6:15, 16

Creation  
implies  
a meaning  
for  
existence

Israel's emergence as a nation was no coincidence or accident of history. Israel was created (Isa. 43:1, 15). In fact, just as the Sabbath memorialized the creation of the world, so the Sabbath memorialized the creation of the nation of Israel by God's deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt (Cf. Ex. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-14). Creation implies a meaning for existence. It implies a purpose and the possibility of the fulfillment of that purpose.

But what has this to do with us? Just this: The New Testament passage that most directly calls God's people today "Israel," does so in the context of a new creation (Gal. 6:15, 16). In his letter to the Galatians Paul makes it clear that being a member of the new Israel is not a matter of circumcision, of being a part of the old ethnic and religious Israel (Gal. 3:28; 6:15). Paul's letter to the Ephesians makes much the same point. In Ephesians 2 Paul notes that the Ephesians were once "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel" (v. 12), but now Christ has ended this distinction by *creating* "in himself one new man in place of the two" (v. 15).

This last passage tells us something of the nature of the new Israel. It is a corporate structure: "One new man" composed of Jews and Gentiles. Verses 19ff of this same chapter speak of it as "the household of God," a structure built up of many individual parts to become a "holy temple in the Lord." And 1 Peter 2:4, 5, using the same imagery, invites individuals to come to Christ to be built into this "spiritual house." Thus, although the new Israel is a corporate structure, belonging to it comes by individual decision.

And how may we be part of this "new creation," the new Israel? 2 Cor. 5:17 says that to be in Christ is to be a "new creation." And Galatians 3:29 says it even more directly: "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring." Verses 25-27 of this same passage speak of faith and baptism into Christ as elements of this relationship.

As we noted above, the fact that Israel was created implies that there was a purpose Israel was meant to fulfill. The passage that speaks of Israel's creation also states God's purpose for Israel, "that they might declare my praise" (Isa. 43:21). The New Testament passages that speak of the creation of the new Israel also speak of God's purpose. Ephesians 2:10 says that we are "created in Christ Jesus for good works" (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21), Ephesians 2:21, 22 that we are to be "a dwelling place of God in the Spirit," and 2 Peter 2:9, paralleling Isaiah 43:21, "that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

Finally, the New Testament uses the expression "this creation" to contrast this world and this age with heaven and the new age (Heb. 9:11). The "new creation," the new Israel, is more closely related to heaven and the new age than it is to this earth and the present age. In a very real sense, to be a part of the new Israel is to have a foretaste of what will be our experience when Jesus makes all things new. "After the entrance of sin the heavenly Husbandman transplanted the tree of life to the Paradise above; but its branches hang over the wall to the lower world. Through the redemption purchased by the blood of Christ, we may still eat of its life-giving fruit."<sup>1</sup>

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 288.



# Integrated Separation

by Jim Miller

I am not going to discuss here how to become part of God's people. This is something between you and God, and it can't be completely encapsulated into a "how to" approach. What I will discuss is how a member of God's people should relate to the world around him, both Christian and non-Christian: how to be in the world, but not of the world.

1. **Realize that neither you nor the church is perfectly faultless, and nor is the world perfectly evil.** In relating to the world in which we live, the first step is straightening out our own attitudes. We cannot expect all Christians to be perfectly faultless. Even the best have their failings. Likewise we cannot expect the non-Christian world to be all evil. Sometimes the self-sacrifice and love exhibited by atheists and agnostics overshadows that shown by Christians.

2. **At the same time, recognize that there is a difference between those who have committed themselves to God, and those who have not.** The difference may not always be clear in everyday affairs, yet an attitude of commitment toward God tends to give the Christian life consistency and purpose. This difference often becomes obvious in times of crisis.

3. **Seek fellowship with other Christians.** Your circle of fellowship should include more than just the Adventist community. But in relating to non-Adventists, avoid coming on too strong. Don't be a scalp hunter. Evangelical fellowships have often been afflicted with cultists coming to spread strange doctrines, so they may be suspicious. Just be yourself, and be sincerely eager to share in Christian fellowship. If you know what and why you believe, the doctrinal problems will take care of themselves.

People who love God, no matter what the denomination, should feel an attraction for each other, and be able to worship together. Within Adventist fellowship, beware of becoming cynical about the attitudes and practices of others. Fellowship is sharing God's goodness in each others' lives, and praying for each other. Fellowship isn't a court of judgment, so don't make it one.

4. **Seek friendship with those in the world.** Although they may not have the same underlying goals and values as you have, remember that we cannot really love our neighbors, if we don't even bother to get to know them. Salt doesn't begin working, until it leaves the saltshaker. Beware of isolating yourself in a strictly Christian community. Ask yourself if you really have any non-Christian friends. A faith that isn't somehow challenging the world around it, is a faith that is dying.

5. **Seek fellowship with God.** This one wasn't listed first, because it is so basic to being a Christian that it is often assumed. Instead, it's last, because it is a reminder of where our fellowship is centered. Remember that it is God who has rescued us from certain destruction and has taken us out of the world. It is also God who sends us back into the world to proclaim His character.

## HOW TO

Key text:

Matthew 5:13-16

**"Fellowship isn't a court of judgment, so don't make it one"**

Jim Miller is a Master of Divinity student at Andrews University Theological Seminary.

☐ November 4  
Thursday

# Us and Them

by Walter Kaufman

## OPINION

**Key text:**  
**Amos 9:7**

. . . (A) perennial attitude is summed up in the words Us-Them. Here the world is divided in two: the children of light and the children of darkness, the sheep and the goats, the elect and the damned.

Every social problem can be analyzed without much study: all one has to look for are the sheep and goats.

There is room for anger and contempt and boundless hope; for the sheep are bound to triumph.

Should a goat have the presumption to address a sheep, the sheep often do not hear it, and they never hear it as another I. For the goat is one of Them, not one of Us.

Righteousness, intelligence, integrity, humanity, and victory are the prerogatives of Us, while wickedness, stupidity, hypocrisy, brutality, and ultimate defeat belong to Them.

Those who have managed to cut through the terrible complexities of life and offer such a scheme as this have been hailed as prophets in all ages.

Excerpted from Walter Kaufman, "I and You: A Prologue," introduction to *I and Thou* by Martin Buber. Translation © 1979 Charles Scribner's Son; introduction © 1970 Walter Kaufman. Reprinted with permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

November 5  
Friday

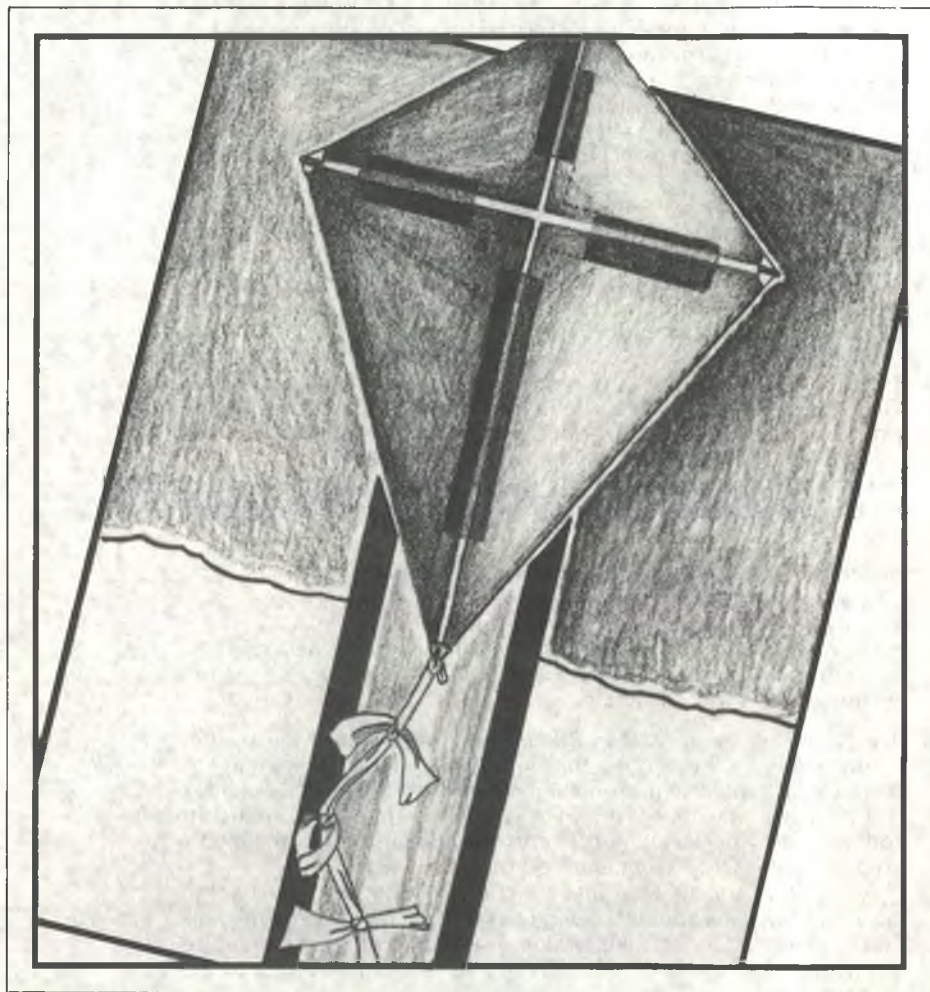
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**REACT**  
**Lesson 6**

1. Read the poetic indictment of Adventism in the Introduction. In your opinion, is the author exaggerating, or presenting a true picture of the Adventist church today? Can you defend your answer with facts? Be specific.
  2. David Jarnes writes in his Evidence article that the new creation, the new Israel, is "more closely related to heaven and the new age than it is to this earth and the present age." Do you agree? Do you see this statement as placing too much emphasis on the otherworldliness of Christianity, and not enough on present experience? Or should we be placing more emphasis on the ultimate goal of Christianity, eternal life?
  3. In light of the How To article, do you feel you are too caught up in church and school activities that you have only a nodding acquaintance with non-Christians? Or, are you so caught up with non-religious matters that you have no time for Christian fellowship? How can you correct these situations? Can you define a proper balance between the two?
  4. 1 Peter 2:9 contains both poles of a tension that comes with being God's people. We are a chosen, special, separated people, yet the purpose of being such is to "declare His praises" to those who are not yet part of the chosen people. How might the following activities be potential ways of sharing God's light with others, but also what potential dangers might be involved in each for losing identity as a chosen people?
    - a) attending a non-Adventist high school or university.
    - b) participating in non-Adventist prayer/fellowship group.
    - c) a career in politics, entertainment or athletics.
    - d) participating in parties, outings, or other recreational activities with non-Christian friends.
    - e) involvement in civic affairs.
  5. The New Testament teaches that all who believe in Christ are the "true Israel." Where does that leave the Jewish race today? A prominent Baptist church leader recently stated that God does not hear the prayers of Jews. Do you agree that Jewish worship today has no special significance to God, even though they worship the same Old Testament God Christians worship?

Most Jews resent attempts to convert them to Christianity. Should Christians attempt to win Jews to Christ, or should they be left to worship God in their own way? If you think Jews should be evangelized, are there special concerns and approaches to be kept in mind?
  6. Discuss your reaction to Walter Kaufman's comments on the "Us-Them" attitude. Do Adventists tend to take this attitude? Isn't it true that the world is divided into two groups, based on their response to God? Is there, then, some validity to the Us-Them concept?
-

# Redemption, Liberation and Covenant



**“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine” (Exodus 19:4, 5, RSV).**

by James H. Cone

# Exodus and Freedom

## INTRODUCTION

The Old Testament is a history book. To understand it and the divine revelation to which it witnesses, we must think of the Old Testament as the drama of God's mighty acts in history. It tells the story of God's acts of grace and of judgment as he calls the people of Israel into a free, liberated existence.

Historically, the story began with the Exodus. The Exodus was the decisive event in Israel's history, because through it Yahweh revealed himself as the Savior of an oppressed people. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt; thus, their future was closed. But Yahweh "heard their groaning, and remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; he saw the plight of Israel, he took heed of it" (Ex. 2:24, 25, NEB). Yahweh, therefore, took Israel's history into his own hands, and gave this people a divine future, thereby doing for Israel what she could not do for herself. "With arm outstretched and with mighty acts of judgments" (Ex. 6:6, NEB), he delivered Israel out of Egypt and across the Red Sea. And "when Israel saw the great power which the Lord had put forth against Egypt, . . . they put their faith in him," responding with a song to the Lord:

I will sing to the Lord, for he has risen up in triumph; the horse and his rider he has hurled into the sea.

Exodus 15:1, NEB

In the Exodus event, God is revealed by means of His acts on behalf of a weak and defenseless people. He is the God of power and of

strength, able to destroy the enslaving power of the mighty Pharaoh.

The Lord is my refuge and my defence,  
he has shown himself my deliverer.

Exodus 15:2, NEB

The centrality of the Exodus for Israel's consciousness, seen first through the people's recognition of deliverance, was further developed at Sinai as the Exodus became the basis for Israel's covenant with Yahweh.

You have seen with your own eyes what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you here to me. If only you will now listen to me and keep my covenant, then out of all peoples you shall become my special possession; for the whole earth is mine. You shall be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation. Exodus 19:4, 5, NEB

This passage connects the Exodus, the revelation of Yahweh through his acts ("You have seen . . . what I did"), with the covenant, which is the foundation of Yahweh's revelation through His Word ("If only you will listen to me and keep my covenant"). The Exodus is the point of departure of Israel's existence, the foundation of her peoplehood established at Sinai. . . .

. . . The Israelites were a weak and defenseless people—a fact that played a crucial role in her election, for Yahweh in his very nature stands against the so called mighty in their oppression of the poor. Only Yahweh is the universal sovereign ruler.

Excerpted from James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 83-85.

☐ November 7  
Sunday

# From Liberation to Covenant

by editors

## LOGOS

At first glance, the covenant made between Israel and God at Sinai (Ex. 19:20, 24) looks like a pretty straightforward deal: Israel keeps the rules, and God provides blessing, protection and victory over enemies. "... If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples" (Ex. 19:5, RSV). There doesn't appear to be much grace involved in this "old covenant"—it seems basically to be a bargain struck between two parties.

A closer examination, however, reveals that the notion that the old covenant is based on works is incorrect. The foundation of the Sinai covenant was not Israel's ability to keep the law of God, but the sheer graciousness and love of God in bringing her into freedom from slavery in Egypt by His mighty acts. "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (Ex. 19:4, NIV).

With the accomplished fact of His act of liberation as the basis, God sought to bring Israel into a formal covenant relationship with Him at the lonely desert mountain called Sinai. The covenant between God and Israel parallels in many respects the suzerainty treaties (treaties between a Great King and his vassals) in the ancient Hittite empire (see Evidence). The treaties begin with identification of the Great King and a review of his benevolent acts which call for perpetual gratitude on the part of the vassal ["I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt" (Ex. 20:2, NIV).] In response, the vassal, among other things, was not to make alliances outside of the empire of the Great King ["You shall have no other Gods before me" (Ex. 20:3, NIV).]<sup>1</sup> The point here is that the Sinai covenant involves the loyalty of a vassal (Israel) to a Great King (Yahweh) who has already redeemed them by His grace.

Keeping this covenant, said God to Israel, means "you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:5, 6, NIV). The Israelites certainly had no power or prestige, and not even much piety that would merit God's selection of them from all the peoples of the world. Yet, if they would adhere to the covenant, they would remain in that uniquely close, privileged relationship to God implied by the term "treasured possession." But this privilege was not for the purpose of self-aggrandizement. Israel was to be a "kingdom of priests," and as such was to mediate the blessings of the covenant to all nations. But in order to be a kingdom of priests, Israel must be a "holy nation"—a people set apart to worship and live in distinct contrast to the nations who do not know God.

Though they were to fail in keeping their promise, the response of the Israelites to the covenant offered seems the only appropriate one in view of the magnitude of the grace they had received (Ex. 19:8).

A solemn ceremony was held to symbolize the ratification of the covenant. Sacrificial blood was sprinkled on an altar and on the assembled people. Moses then said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words" (Ex. 24:8, NIV). Only through the shedding of blood could there be an intimate covenant relationship between a sinful people and a righteous God.

D. F. M.

1. John Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), pp. 146, 147.

# The Covenant of Grace

selected by Larry C. Cottam

As the Bible presents two laws, one changeless and eternal, the other provisional and temporary, so there are two covenants. The covenant of grace was first made with man in Eden, when after the fall, there was given a divine promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. To all men this covenant offered pardon, and the assisting grace of God for future obedience through faith in Christ. It also promised them eternal life on condition of fidelity to God's law. . . .

Though this covenant was made with Adam and renewed to Abraham, it could not be ratified until the death of Christ. It had existed by the promise of God since the first intimation of redemption had been given; it had been accepted by faith; yet when ratified by Christ, it is called a new covenant. . . .

Another compact—called in Scripture the "old" covenant—was formed between God and Israel at Sinai, and was then ratified by the blood of a sacrifice . . .

But if the Abrahamic covenant contained the promise of redemption, why was another covenant formed at Sinai?—In their bondage the people had to a great extent lost the knowledge of God and of the principles of the Abrahamic covenant. In delivering them from Egypt, God sought to reveal to them His power and His mercy, that they might be led to love and trust Him. He brought them down to the Red Sea—where, pursued by the Egyptians, escape seemed impossible—that they might realize their utter helplessness, their need of divine aid; and then He wrought deliverance for them. Thus they were filled with love and gratitude to God, and with confidence in His power to help them. . . .

God brought them to Sinai; He manifested His glory; He gave them His law, with the promise of great blessing on condition of obedience. . . . The people did not realize the sinfulness of their own hearts and that without Christ it was impossible for them to keep God's law; and they readily entered into covenant with God. Feeling that they were able to establish their own righteousness, they declared, "All that the Lord hath said we will do, and be obedient" (Ex. 24:7). They had witnessed the proclamation of the law in awful majesty, and had trembled with terror before the mount, and yet only a few weeks passed before they broke their covenant with God, and bowed down to worship a graven image. They could not hope for the favor of God through a covenant which they had broken; and now, seeing their sinfulness and their need of pardon, they were brought to feel their need of the Saviour revealed in the Abrahamic covenant and shadowed forth in the sacrificial offerings. Now by faith and love they were bound to God as their deliverer from the bondage of sin. Now they were prepared to appreciate the blessings of the new covenant . . .

The same law that was engraved upon the tables of stone is written by the Holy Spirit upon the tables of the heart. Instead of going about to establish our own righteousness, we accept the righteousness of Christ. His blood atones for our sins. His obedience is accepted for us. Then the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit will bring forth the "fruits of the Spirit."<sup>1</sup>

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Isaiah 55:1-3

**"Instead of going about to establish our own righteousness, we accept the righteousness of Christ"**

1. Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 370-72.

Larry C. Cottam is a Master of Divinity student at the Andrews University Theological Seminary.

November 9  
Tuesday

# The Suzerain and Sinai

by Erwin Sicher

## EVIDENCE

Key text:

Deuteronomy 5:6,  
7

“The  
suzerain  
became  
a vassal”

A covenant is a binding promise initiated by an oath or another formal action, such as a common meal between two distinct social or political units.

Covenants appear in a great variety of forms and situations in the ancient world. They regulated behavior by introducing trust and predictability into social and political relations.

Many scholars (though not all) believe that the covenants which most closely resemble the Old Testament covenants between Yahweh and Israel, are the Hittite suzerainty treaties. These treaties delineate the relationship between the Hittite overlord and the vassals which owed allegiance.

Analysis of these treaties has shown that most possess a common structure with the following characteristics:

1. Preamble identifying the suzerain.
2. Historical prologue describing the previous relationships between the two parties, emphasizing the benevolence of the suzerain toward the vassal.
3. Stipulations stating the obligations of the vassal defined by the suzerain.
4. Order for preservation and public reading of the covenant.
5. A list of witnesses, such as gods or nature forces who witness the covenant.
6. A call for blessings or curses brought on by the witnesses for keeping or breaking the covenant.

The history of the Old Testament is to a large extent the history of a series of covenants which frequently follow a similar structure. The Decalogue, for example, opens with a preamble identifying the suzerain: “I am Yahweh, Your God.” The Lord tells Israel His name and His position.

This is followed by a short prologue stating the suzerain’s benevolences, namely that the Lord is He “who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” The Lord is the liberator, the redeemer. He has earned His right as suzerain, though He need not have.

The vassal’s obligations are then stated. We know these obligations as the Ten Commandments. These obligations may entail blessings or curses, as do the commandments, but they may only be implied, as they are in the Exodus.

Man, of course, has not fulfilled his part of the treaty. The vassal has proved unworthy of the suzerain. The covenant has been broken.

Each failure on man’s part, however, was accompanied by new hope. The Messianic hope, springing from the failure of the Davidic monarchy to live up to the covenant, was, of course, the ultimate hope. The suzerain became a vassal, not only perfectly to play the role of the vassal, by fulfilling the obligations, but also to take the place of all other vassals while doing so.

His fulfilling of the obligations and His sacrifice established a lasting covenant of grace representing the final stage of God’s covenant-making with man.



# Meditations on Exodus 19:5, 6

by Herbert J. Roth

One of the most recent and best definitions of the meditative process is found in Louis Martz's *The Poetry of Meditation*: "The central meditative action consists of an interior drama, in which a man projects a self upon a mental stage, and there comes to understand that self in the light of divine presence." Following are some meditative thoughts for consideration concerning the Sinai covenant.

**Meditation I**—"If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant."

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 10:8); "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it*" (Mal. 3:10, emphasis supplied). Can we manipulate God by following these stipulations? What did God really intend these texts to mean? Keeping the seventh-day Sabbath and meeting our financial obligation to a church organization will never be the ultimate means by which we can obtain salvation. The word "if," noticeable in Exodus 19:5, 6, and in Malachi 3:10, 11, reveals God's awareness of the tenuous nature of human commitments. The blessings of the covenant are continually conditional on our inner response. What God desires in response to His covenant are hearts that constantly renew their openness to Him.

**Meditation II**—" . . . then ye shall be a peculiar treasure."

The trait of wanting to be peculiar may lead to the next step of being so preoccupied with our own salvation that we fail to comprehend the sin of all sins—man's inhumanity to man. Howard Burton's description of a Quaker meeting may help us to understand the characteristics of those who are a peculiar treasure in God's eyes:

Worshippers wait in silence, endeavoring to make themselves as open as possible to the inflowings of the Divine life and as sensitive as possible to the whisperings of the still, small voice. They cultivate not only awareness of God, but also awareness of their fellow man. The hard shell of self-centeredness is dissolved and life flows inward and outward, both Godward and manward. Lonely separateness is lost in a greater life which is both personal and more than personal.<sup>1</sup>

**Meditation III**—"And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation."

To become a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation requires more than meeting prescribed obligations as Christian believers. True worship and commitment, like meditation, is a private act. In the final analysis, the Sinai covenant (Exodus 19:5, 6) may become relevant only in the context of admonitions like these:

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2).

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).

**HOW TO**  
**Key text:**  
**Exodus 19:5, 6**

**The blessings of the covenant are continually conditional on our inner response.**

1. Howard Burton, "On the Quaker Meeting for Worship," in *Sixteen Quaker Leaders Speak*, ed. Leonard S. Kenworthy, p. 99.

Herbert J. Roth is the chairman of the Department of English at Southwestern Adventist College.

November 11  
Thursday

# That Ideal Relationship

by H. T. Burr

**OPINION**  
**Key text:**  
**Exodus 6:6-8**

Throughout the Scriptures the ideal relationship that exists between God and His people is a covenant relationship. This relationship carries with it certain obligations on the part of both God and man, the keeping or breaking of which result in either eternal life or eternal death. This covenant relationship is a call to unreserved obedience and surrender on the part of man to God's will and call. It is not an agreement between God and man but an undertaking or obligation on the part of God to provide salvation or redemption for man and is usually expressed in the form of a promise. Man receives this promise by exercising faith. The result will be a loving and harmonious relationship between man and God.

God's purpose at Mt. Sinai was not just to give Israel rules or regulations by which to live. He very deeply desired to enter into a close, personal and saving relationship with them. They were to be His people and He would be their God (see Exodus 6:6-8; 19:1-6). Sinai was a revelation of God's character with the specific object of redemption in mind. Israel was not chosen because it was a large nation, but because it was to become, in God's design, a very special nation. Through Israel God wished to display the fruits of His love, mercy and grace.

Before God spelled out His will in "10 words," He desired to know whether the Israelites would continue to trust Him in view of what He had done for them thus far. Would they be His people and permit Him to be their God? Their answer, of course was "yes." In the setting of this personal relationship, God gave them the commandments. The obedience God called Israel to at Sinai was not new or different from the obedience He asked of Adam or Eve before and after they sinned.

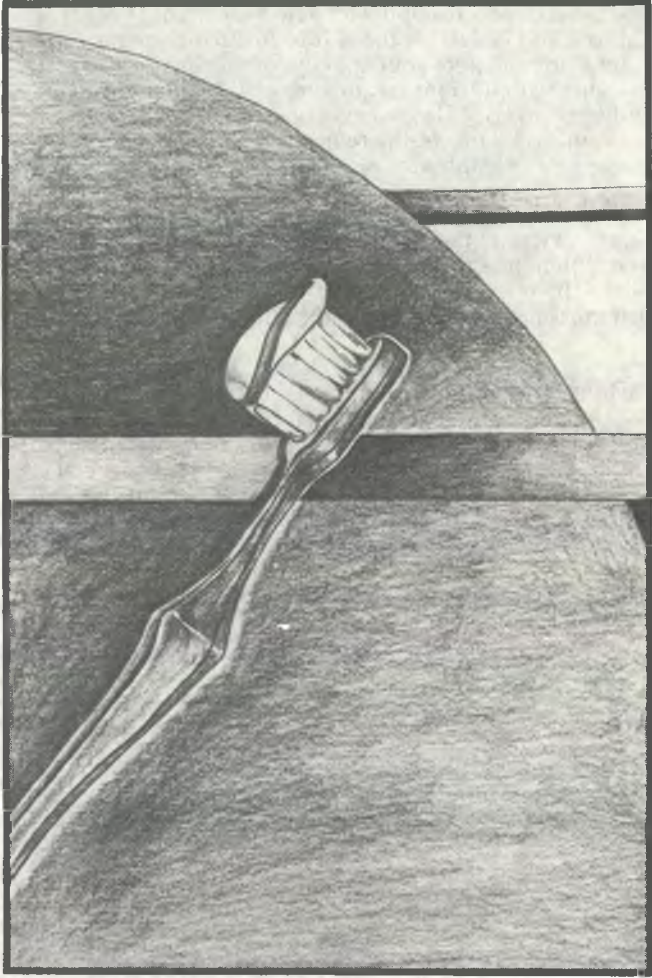
That obedience must be the outworking of the dynamics of God's grace in the life. God's call to Israel at Sinai was that they might become a demonstration of the effects or fruits of such a saving relationship to the whole world. Such obedience would not spring from any thought or reward, nor from a desire to earn merit before God, but from a deep appreciation for God's mercy.

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**REACT**  
**Lesson 7**

1. This week's Logos article states that the notion that the Sinai covenant was based on works is false. Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. The Evidence article states that many scholars believe "the covenants which most closely resemble the Old Testament covenants between Yahweh and Israel, are the Hittite suzerainty treaties." If this is true, how does it affect your concept of the Sinai covenant? Does the parallel with ancient treaties make the Sinai covenant seem less "divine" to you? How can we best translate the ancient covenant's stipulations into terms relevant to today's world? Or should this even be attempted?
3. God prefaced the Ten Commandments by referring to Himself as Israel's liberator. What is the difference between slavery in Egypt and required obedience to the Law? Does God liberate people only to enslave them to a legal code? Is it possible for one to be "free" and at the same time live under the authority of God's law? Explain.
4. For the Israelites, the most fundamental fact about God was that He was their Liberator, His mighty acts in freeing them from Egypt brought them into existence as a nation. How is God's act of liberating Israel relevant to modern Christians? Try to identify specific ways in which God has acted in a liberating way in the history of your own experience and that of your religious community.
5. Does God still act to liberate economically, socially and politically oppressed peoples today? Discuss the following as potential channels for God's liberating today:
  - a) Peace Corps.
  - b) human rights organizations.
  - c) public evangelism.
  - d) personal witnessing.
  - e) labor unions.
  - f) leftist guerilla organizations.What other channels or means can you think of?

# Covenant Faithfulness



**"Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the Lord" (Leviticus 18:5, NIV).**

# Sinai in Awesome Grandeur

by George W. Reid

There it stands in awesome grandeur: Mt. Sinai, now called by local bedouins Ras es-SafSafeh. It soars 6,500 feet into a cloudless sky, and plays general of the host of ragged mountains rimming a sandy, scalded desert plain. Here they camped, and there, atop Sinai's triple-shouldered mass of pink granite, the Majesty of the universe came to set up a special relationship: "I will be their God and they shall be to Me a people."

It is hard to imagine a more stunning backdrop. The penetrating loneliness of this wild, out-of-the-way place guaranteed complete privacy.

Dwarfed into ant-likeness by silent, barren mountains, every Israelite could not but sense that his was but a fleeting moment on the moving stage of eternity. In wonders, eyes glowed and heart paused in expectation as the voice of God thundered and reechoed through stone-walled canyons. The wholly-righteous God reached out to bestow a perma-

nent covenant upon this people—a gift of such magnitude that even the imagination strains to encompass it.

Weary years of faceless toil beside the Nile were ended. From this point, Israel was to rise to a sense of being somebody—a member of the family of God—a special people. But alongside every privilege marches its twin: responsibility. All the promised benefits demanded a people in harmony with the great God who gave them. Participants in His grace face the challenge of obedience to His plan. Moreover, the claims of God will reach into every corner of human experience, precipitating a lifelong struggle against deeply ingrained habits and desires which must be subdued. Although they but dimly perceived it, this challenge called for an unanticipated gesture of Yahweh's grace, which He Himself was prepared to work out within every surrendered heart.

## INTRODUCTION

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George W. Reid is chairman of the Religion department at Southwestern Adventist College.

□ November 14  
Sunday

# Covenant Responsibility

by editors

## LOGOS

Last week's lesson focused on the fact that the Sinai covenant was based on the unmerited kindness of God, expressed in His act of liberation (Deut. 7:7, 8).

Yet though the covenant was based on the mighty acts of God, a covenant relationship could not occur without an appropriate response on the part of Israel. Experiencing the benefits of the covenant was conditional upon observing its stipulations. For example, if a modern government declares amnesty for those who have avoided the draft or deserted from the military, its action is based (ostensibly) on kindness, not the merit of the deserters. But to receive the benefits of amnesty, the deserter must comply with a certain condition—he must return to his home country.

For Israel, the condition of the covenant was observance of the Law (Torah)—the instruction of God. The Torah included a comprehensive set of social, economic, civil, moral and religious laws to guide Israelite life. All these were part of the covenant stipulations. But at the heart of the Torah were the Ten Commandments given at Sinai. Engraved on tablets of stone and placed in the ark of the covenant, the Decalogue stood out among the vast detail of Mosaic legislation. It contained the principles which summarized Israel's part in the covenant. **"He (God) declared to you His covenant, the Ten Commandments, which He commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets"**(Deut. 4:13, NIV).

And, underlying the Ten Commandments were two themes even more basic: fidelity to Yahweh alone in worship and justice and morality in society.

By accepting the responsibility of the covenant, Israel would remain in the path of its benefits. **"Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; He is the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations, and requites to their face those who hate Him, by destroying them"** (Deut. 7:7-9, RSV).

But wait a minute. It would seem from this passage that we are back to the bargain system—Israel earns God's favor by keeping the commandments. Reflection on the fundamental nature of the covenant, however, reminds us that this is not the case. Obedience is simply a reflection of the choice to enter the covenant relationship.

By faithfulness to the law, Israel says, "we choose to stay in covenant with Yahweh, who in His abundant kindness has liberated us from slavery, constituted us as a nation chosen to be His treasured possession, and promised us a rich land to possess." All the benefits flow from God's undeserved kindness, and cannot be earned. However, disregard for the stipulations of the covenant means loss of the covenant benefits, for it signals departure from the covenant relationship.

Fulfillment of covenant responsibility is the fruit of faith in a God who has already acted redemptively on our behalf and whose steadfast love is the factor which enables us to remain in a liberating relationship with Him. **"You shall walk in all the way which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, . . ."** (Deut. 5:33, RSV).

D. F. M.

# Comprehensive Simplicity

The laws which God gave His ancient people were wiser, better, and more humane than those of the most civilized nations of the earth. The laws of the nations bear marks of the infirmities and passions of the unrenewed heart; but God's law bears the stamp of the divine.

Says the psalmist, "The law of the Lord is perfect" (Ps. 19:7). How wonderful in its simplicity, its comprehensiveness and perfection, is the law of Jehovah! It is so brief that we can easily commit every precept to memory, and yet so far-reaching as to express the whole will of God, and to take cognizance not only of the outward actions, but of the thoughts and intents, the desires and emotions, of the heart. Human laws can not do this. They can deal with the outward actions only. A man may be a transgressor, and yet conceal his misdeeds from human eyes; he may be a criminal,—a thief, a murderer, or an adulterer,—but so long as he is not discovered, the law can not condemn him as guilty. . . .

The law of God is simple, and easily understood. If the children of men would, to the best of their ability, obey this law, they would gain strength of mind and power of discernment to comprehend still more of God's purposes and plans. And this advancement would be continued, not only during the present life, but during eternal ages; for however far he may advance in the knowledge of God's wisdom and power, there is always an infinity beyond.

Since "the law of the Lord is perfect," every variation from it must be evil.

Obedience was the only condition upon which ancient Israel was to receive the fulfillment of the promises that made them the highly favored people of God; and obedience to that law will bring as great blessings to individuals and nations now as it would have brought to the Hebrews.<sup>1</sup>

God designed to teach the people that they must approach Him with reverence and awe, and in His own appointed manner. He cannot accept partial obedience. It was not enough that in this solemn season of worship nearly everything was done as He had directed. God has pronounced a curse upon those who depart from his commandments, and put no difference between common and holy things. He declares by the prophet: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness! . . . Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight; . . . which justify the wicked for reward, and take away righteousness of the righteous from him! . . . They have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 5:20-24). Let no one deceive himself with the belief that a part of God's commandments are non-essential, or that He will accept a substitute for that which He has required. Said the prophet Jeremiah, "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" (Lam. 3:37). God has placed in His word no command which men may obey or disobey at will and not suffer the consequences. If men choose any other path than that of strict obedience, they will find that "the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12).<sup>2</sup>

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Psalm 19:7

**Let no one deceive himself with the belief that a part of God's commandments are non-essential**

1. *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 39.  
2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 360-361.

November 16  
Tuesday

# The Necessity of Law

by William Barclay

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
Psalms 1:1-3

If any body of people are going to live together they must make laws and they must agree to stick by them. That's what it's like in a game, for instance. We all know that the person who will not keep its laws simply ruins the game. If we are playing cricket, and a player is out, and refuses to go out, then the whole game is spoiled. A player in a football match who refused to obey the referee would be promptly and rightly sent off the field.

It is exactly the same with a community and with a nation. It is impossible to have a nation or a community without laws and without these laws being kept. To take a simple example, traffic would become chaos unless motorists agreed to keep to the correct side of the road, and unless they obeyed the traffic lights. . . .

The people of Israel were slaves in Egypt for four hundred long and weary years. During that long period they built great buildings for the Egyptians and were never allowed to govern themselves; they had no freedom whatsoever. Then there arose their great deliverer, Moses: and Moses, helped by God, led them out of Egypt into the desert so that they might set out on their long journey to Palestine, the land which God had promised to them. Up to this time they had been slaves and had to do exactly what they were told to do. They had no liberty; they had no freedom; and they had no responsibility. But now they were on their own; they were on their way to become a nation; and the first thing they needed was a set of laws by which they might live and by which they might become not a rabble but a real community.

This is exactly what they got in the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments were the rules of life. By obeying them the people of Israel learned to become a nation. These Ten Commandments are the basis of life not only for the people of Israel; they are the basis by which we still live our lives and by which all life is governed. . . .

When we look at these Ten Commandments we see that they fall into four different groups. The first four Commandments deal with duty to God. The fifth deals with our duty to our parents. The sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth deal with our duty to others. The tenth deals with our duty to ourselves. This is to say that the Ten Commandments set out four areas of life in which we have a special duty.

i. The Commandments begin by laying down our duty to God. This means to say that God has to be given the first place in our duty and in our life. I once knew a man who was the head of a very famous business firm; and when he was interviewing any man with a view to employing him, he did not first of all ask him about his technical qualifications, he did not ask him about his university degrees, he did not ask him about how much he knew or did not know. The first question he asked him was, "Do you believe in God, and do you go to Church?" This employer, and he was a man with a very big business and a very successful business, felt that the most important thing about a man was to know whether or not he believed in God.

And in this, this employer was perfectly right. If a man believes in God he will always feel that God sees him. If a man believes in God he will always ask, "What does God want me to do?" If he believes in God he will work not to earn a wage and not to please a human mas-

**"These Ten Commandments . . . are the basis by which we still live our lives and by which all life is governed."**

Excerpted from William Barclay, *The Old Law and the New Law* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972), pp. 1-5.

November 17  
Wednesday



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ter but to please God. No one is going to argue that a man cannot be a good workman and an honest man unless he believes in God; but it is quite certain that if a man is the kind of workman who always tries to do work in such a way that he can take it and show it to God, then he is the kind of workman that people want. If we put God in the center of life we cannot ever go far wrong.

ii. The second duty which the Ten Commandments lay down is duty to parents. They tell us to honour our father and our mother. The Old Testament is very stern about this; it actually says that a rebellious son can be put to death (Deut. 21:18-21). The ancient Greeks thought so much of a son's duty to his parents that a son who did not support his parents in their old age could be put into prison and very heavily fined.

We ought to honor our parents for two reasons. First, we owe them our very lives. There was a time when we could do nothing for ourselves, when the slightest blow would have killed us and when we would have died if we had just been left to ourselves. Through all that time they cared for us. We ought to show our gratitude to people to whom we owe our lives. Second, if you are journeying along a road which is dangerous, it is only sensible to take the advice of people who have journeyed along that road before. Life is a dangerous road. Older people have journeyed that road before us and they know the pitfalls and dangers, and it is only wise to listen to what they have to say to us. To refuse to take advice from a person who knows the way may be to choose to get lost and run into trouble. It should not be difficult to honour our parents.

iii. The Ten Commandments tell us of our duty to others. They tell us that we must not harm another person's life or personality; and that we must not rob him of his possessions or of his good name. Life could not go on if people killed each other and stole each other's goods and destroyed each other's good name. In regard to other people there is just one rule for life and Jesus laid it down: we must always act towards others as we would have them act toward us. (Matthew 7:12).

iv. The last Commandment tells us that we must not covet. This means that we have a duty to ourselves and that duty is to control our wishes and our desires. You could put this in another way. This Commandment says that we should never want what we have no right to want and that we should be content to have what we possess. We cannot change ourselves into other people nor can we possess what others possess. . . . There is an old fable which tells how a mountain was looking with contempt upon a squirrel. The squirrel looked up at the mountain and said, "I cannot carry forests on my back, but you cannot crack a nut." Each one of us has his own gift and his own talent and we should do the best we can with them and not covet those of other people.

We can never live together without laws and without consenting to keep the laws. The Ten Commandments changed the people of Israel from a crowd into a nation. They tell us of our duty to God, our duty to our parents, our duty to others, and our duty to ourselves, . . .

**The Ten  
Commandments  
changed  
Israel from  
a crowd  
into a  
nation.**

# The Law—Then and Now

**HOW TO**  
**Key text:**  
**Romans 4:3, 6**

**Editor's note:** From the moment one becomes a Christian, he is faced with the challenge of sorting God's grace from God's law. What role do the Ten Commandments play in conversion? If I am free from the law, should I spend much time worrying about what it teaches?

These and other questions boggle the minds of many Christians, young and old. This week's How To is an attempt to sort out the role of the law in the life of a Christian.

We have now reached that great event, one of the most momentous in all history, the giving of the Ten Commandments. And it is necessary to consider what was the meaning of this event, what part were they designed to play in the religious development of mankind.

1. **St. Paul tells us plainly what they did not effect.**<sup>1</sup> By the works of the law could no flesh be justified: to the father of the Hebrew race faith was reckoned instead of righteousness; the first of their royal line coveted the blessedness not of the obedient but of the pardoned; and Habakkuk declared that the just should live by faith, while the law is not of faith, and offers life only to the man that doeth these things (Rom. 4:3, 6; Gal. 3:12). In the doctrinal scheme of St. Paul there was no room for a compromise between salvation by faith and reliance upon our own performance of any works, even those simple and obvious duties which are of world-wide obligation.

2. **But he never meant to teach that a Christian is free from the obligation of the moral law.**<sup>1</sup> If it is not true that we can keep it and so earn heaven, it is equally false that we may break it without penalty or remorse. What he insisted upon was this: that obligation is one thing, and energy is another; the law is good, but it has not the gift of pardon or of inspiration; by itself it will only reveal the feebleness of him who endeavours to perform it, only force into direct contrast the spiritual beauty of the pure ideal and the wretchedness of the sinner, carnal, sold under sin. In this respect, indeed, the law was its own witness. For if, among all the millions of its children, one had lived by obedience, how could he have shared in its elaborate sacrificial apparatus, in the hallowing of the altar from pollution by the national uncleanness, in the sprinkling of the blood of the offering for sin? Take the case of the highest official. A sinless high priest under the law would have been paralysed by his virtue, for his duty on the greatest day of all the year was to make atonement first for his own sins.

3. **The law being an authorised statement of what innocence means, and therefore of the only terms upon which a man might hope to live by works, is an organic whole, and we either keep it as a whole or break it.**<sup>1</sup> Such is the meaning of the words, he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all; because He who gave the seventh commandment gave also the sixth—so that if one commit no adultery, yet kill, he had become a transgressor of the law in its integrity (James 2:11). The challenge of God to human self-righteousness is not one which can be half met. If we have not thoroughly kept it, we have thoroughly failed.

4. **But this failure of man does not involve any failure, in the law, to accomplish its intended work.**<sup>1</sup> It is, as has been said, a challenge. The sense of our inability to meet it is the best introduction to Him Who

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came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance, and thus the law became a tutor to bring men to Christ. It awoke the conscience, brought home the sense of guilt, and entered, that sin might abound in us, whose ignorance had not known sin without it. It was strictly that which Moses most frequently calls it—the Testimony.

5. Finally, however, the teaching of the Scripture is not that Christians are condemned to live always in a condition of baffled striving, hopeless longing, conscious transgression of a code which testifies against them.<sup>1</sup> The old and carnal nature gravitates downward, to selfishness and sin, as surely as by a law of the physical universe. But the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus emancipates us from that law of sin and death—the higher nature doing, by the very quality of its life, what the lower nature cannot be driven to do, by dread of hell or by desire of heaven. The creature of earth becomes a creature of air, and is at home in a new sphere, poised on its wings upon the breeze. Love is the fulfilling of the law. And the Christian is free from its dictation, as affectionate men are free from any control of the laws which command the maintenance of wife and child, not because they may defy the statutes, but because their volition and the statutes coincide. Liberty is not lawlessness—it is the reciprocal harmony of the law and the will.

And thus the grand paradox of Luther is entirely true: "Unless faith be without any, even the smallest works, it does not justify, nay, it is not faith. And yet it is impossible for faith to be without works—earnest, many, and great." We are justified by faith without the works of the law, and yet we do not make void the law by faith—nay, we establish the law.

All this agrees exactly with the contrast, so often urged, between the giving of the Law and the utterance of the Sermon on the Mount. The former echoes across wild heights, and through savage ravines; the latter is heard on the grassy slopes of the hillside which overlooks the smiling Lake of Galilee. The one is spoken in thunder and graven upon stone: the other comes from the lips, into which grace is poured, of Him Who was fairer than the children of men. The former repeats again and again the stern warning, "Thou shalt not!" The latter crowns a sevenfold description of a blessedness, which is deeper than joy, though pensive and even weeping, by adding to these abstract descriptions an eighth, which applies them, and assumes them to be realised in His hearers—"Blessed are ye." If so much as a beast touched the mountain it should be stoned. But Simeon took the Divine Infant in his arms.

Excerpted from *The Expositor's Bible*, vol. 1  
(New York: George H. Doran Company), p. 191.

1. Emphasis supplied

# A Balance for Fire

by Jiggs Gallagher

## OPINION

Key text:  
Psalm 119:29-32

Law and grace, old covenant and new covenant, faith and works. These are the yin and yang of theology, separate elements that seem, like quibbling spouses, not to be able to live *with* or *without* each other. Adventists have historically fallen on the more strict constructionist, perhaps legalist, side of this argument. We have often appealed to James, who wrote that faith without works is dead. We have interpolated that a cheap grace without observance of the Decalogue is similarly dead.

This position has put us into some interesting company: Catholicism, for example, which stresses unquestioning obedience to the hierarchy. Another strange religious bedfellow is the body of fundamentalists who take the Bible to be verbally inspired and literally true in every aspect. (You may recall that Luther lamented that the book of James had even been included in the canon.)

Well, everyone sees things in a particular light. Of course righteousness is a gift from God, unearned and undeserved. Of course there is no way we can merit salvation. But our understanding of God's intent for us is that there is a vital place for response, for some tangible demonstration of our allegiance, our love. This is where the Ten Commandments, the Decalogue, provides such an important vehicle—whether under the old or the new dispensation.

Simple as they are, the commandments, by highlighting the negatives, indicate the positives that we should emphasize in a relationship with God and our fellow man. "Thou shalt not steal" encourages respect for others and their property. "Thou shalt not bear false witness" is pointing us in the direction of a liberating truth. And so on down the line.

The National Council of Catholic Bishops recently commissioned an interesting study of religious attitudes in 10 nations of the Western world. One question was whether the Ten Commandments had any validity in people's lives today. The answer was surprisingly affirmative in the United States, less so in Western Europe and other areas. Then respondents were asked to rank the commandments in descending order as to their importance or relevance. Guess which one came in last: Number 4.

Clearly, as we've always known, there is a tremendous opportunity for us to reveal the character of the Savior through His commandments. The challenge for Adventists is to temper law with grace, justice with mercy. Sometimes we forget that "the Sabbath was made for man," that the law must be seen through the spectacles of God's love.

With that kind of balance, there is no limit to the kind of fire we could light in this world.

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**REACT**  
**Lesson 8**

1. The Logos article states that the covenant is based on grace, but that experiencing the benefits of the covenant is conditional upon obedience. Isn't this double-talk? Or at least a statement that faith plus works equals salvation? If obedience is necessary to receive the covenant benefits, how can we say that works have no part in gaining salvation?
2. Are the Ten Commandments a truly all-inclusive guide for the Christian life? Could not a person be arrogant, irritable, judgmental and materialistic, and still keep the Ten Commandments? What do you think Ellen White means when she writes that the Ten Commandments are "so far reaching as to express the whole will of God?"
3. Do you think the second commandment (Ex. 20:4-6) has any particular relevance for western society today? If so, what is it?

Discuss the significance of the third commandment (Ex. 20:7). Do you think more than swearing is involved here (check various modern translations for possible clues)?

4. The Opinion author suggests that if we learn to balance law with grace, justice with mercy "that there would be no limit to the kind of fire we could light in this world." Do you agree? If so, explain why you think this balance would have such a dramatic effect.
  5. Do you think the recent emphasis on righteousness by faith by many in the church has caused in some instances an improper disregard for the Law? Is our greatest need now for more gospel or more law in our preaching and teaching? How would you define the proper balance?
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# Sabbath- Sign of the Covenant



"Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the sabbath, observing the sabbath throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant" (Exodus 31:16, RSV).

# You are Mine Twice

## INTRODUCTION

A familiar old story relates how a young lad made a beautiful sailboat. He sanded and painted it, carved the masts, and made the sails. At last it was finished, and the child ran happily to the river to enjoy his handiwork. A breeze filled the sails and quickly drifted the boat out of the boy's reach.

A few days later as he passed a toy shop, he saw his boat in the window. Quickly he tried to explain to the shopkeeper that the sailboat in the window was, indeed, the boat which he had made and lost. The shopkeeper, however, was indifferent to his pleas and insisted that the boy would have to purchase the boat before he could claim it. After paying the price and clutching the toy, the boy was heard to remark, "You are mine twice. First I made you, then I bought you back."

Each member of God's family is also His twice. First He created us; second, He bought us back. The Sabbath is an everlasting reminder of this. Furthermore, God has entered into a covenant relationship with His people, and the Sabbath is a sign of that relationship: "Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them" (Ex. 20: 12 emphasis supplied). In the context of the Sabbath, which points at once to our Lord as Creator and Redeemer, it is possible for man to experience sanctification

and find his true identity. Abraham Heschel expressed it well: "What we are depends on what the Sabbath is to us. The law of the Sabbath day is in the life of the spirit what the law of gravitation is in nature"<sup>1</sup>

The Sabbath is not a postscript to creation. It is rather the triumphant climax to a week of creative achievement. Created by a loving God for His human family, the Sabbath delights and refreshes. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27, 28). "The Sabbath is not for the sake of the weekdays; the weekdays are for the sake of the Sabbath. It is not an interlude but the *climax* of living . . . The Sabbath is a day for the sake of life"<sup>2</sup> The Sabbath is, therefore, a day of celebration—a celebration of creation and sanctification.

Yet, for all the value of the Sabbaths, we must remember that "The Sabbath as experienced by man cannot survive in exile, a lonely stranger among days of profanity. It needs the companionship of all other days. All days of the week must be spiritually consistent with the Day of Days. All our life should be a pilgrimage to the seventh day . . . For the Sabbath is the counterpoint of living; the melody sustained throughout all agitations and vicissitudes which menace our conscience; our awareness of God's presence in the world."<sup>3</sup>

1. Abraham Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951), p. 89 (emphasis supplied).  
2. Heschel, p. 14 (emphasis supplied).  
3. Heschel, p. 89.

# The Sabbath— Hallmark of Faith

by James L. Hayward, Jr.

## LOGOS

All Christian doctrine centers on faith in Christ as Creator and Redeemer. The Sabbath serves as the hallmark of this faith, a fitting symbol of our relationship with divinity.

Exodus presents the Sabbath as a sign of Divine creatorship: "But the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; that day you shall not do any work. . . . For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and on the seventh day he rested. Therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and declared it holy" (Ex. 20:10, 11, NEB). Christ's response to His handiwork was a Sabbath rest. By entering this rest we, like no other creatures, share in the experience of the Creator. In so doing we demonstrate our faith in His lordship.

In contrast to the Exodus account, the Sabbath command in Deuteronomy highlights the Lord's power to set the captive free: "But the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; that day you shall not do any work. . . . Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God brought you out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and for that reason the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day" (Deut. 5:14, 15, NEB). Just as Israel was liberated from Egyptian slavery, so we can be freed from the bondage of today's evil by His "strong hand and . . . outstretched arm." By entering the Sabbath rest we exhibit our confidence in Christ's power to deliver and our desire to be delivered. Significantly, it is the Lord who takes the initiative to create and redeem. Likewise it is He who accomplishes these works. Sabbath-keeping is our humble response to that gracious activity. Our rest proclaims the all-sufficiency of His action for us. It stands as a constant reminder of our dependency upon Him.

As a covenant sign the Sabbath is not insignificant and temporary, but eternal and pregnant with meaning: "Above all you shall observe, my sabbaths, for the sabbath is a sign between me and you in every generation that you may know that I am the Lord who hallows you" (Ex. 31:13, NEB). "For, as the new heavens and the new earth which I am making shall endure in my sight, says the Lord, so shall your race and your name endure; and month by month at the new moon, week by week on the sabbath, all mankind shall come to bow down before me, says the Lord" (Isa. 66:22, 23, NEB). The Sabbath stands as a permanent seal of our link with divinity. This permanence pervades our being, not just one day in seven, but infuses all that we do. Each week flows naturally toward a Sabbath climax, the ultimate experience in holy time with Christ as Lord.

"Our rest  
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of His  
action  
for us."



# Observance of the Sabbath

Great blessings are enfolded in the observance of the Sabbath, and God desires that the Sabbath day shall be to us a day of joy. There was joy at the institution of the Sabbath. God looked with satisfaction upon the work of His hands. All things that He had made he pronounced "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Heaven and earth were filled with rejoicing. "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7). Though sin has entered the world to mar His perfect work, God still gives to us the Sabbath as a witness that One omnipotent, infinite in goodness and mercy, created all things. Our heavenly Father desires through the observance of the Sabbath to preserve among men a knowledge of Himself. He desires that the Sabbath shall direct our minds to Him as the true and living God, and that through knowing Him we may have life and peace.

When the Lord delivered His people Israel from Egypt and committed to them His law, He taught them that by the observance of the Sabbath they were to be distinguished from idolaters. It was this that made the distinction between those who acknowledged the sovereignty of God and those who refused to accept Him as their Creator and King. "It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever," the Lord said. "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant" (Ex. 31:17, 16).

As the Sabbath was the sign that distinguished Israel when they came out of Egypt to enter the earthly Canaan, so it is the sign that now distinguishes God's people as they come out from the world to enter the heavenly rest. The Sabbath is a sign of the relationship existing between God and His people, a sign that they honor His law. It distinguishes between His loyal subjects and transgressors.

From the pillar of cloud Christ declared concerning the Sabbath, "Verily My Sabbaths ye shall keep; for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you" (Ex. 31:13). The Sabbath given to the world as the sign of God as the Creator is also the sign of Him as the Sanctifier. The power that created all things is the power that re-creates the soul in His own likeness. To those who keep holy the Sabbath day it is the sign of sanctification. True sanctification is harmony with God, oneness with Him in character. It is received through obedience to those principles that are the transcript of His character. And the Sabbath is the sign of obedience. He who from the heart obeys the fourth commandment will obey the whole law. He is sanctified through obedience.

To us as to Israel the Sabbath is given "for a perpetual covenant." To those who reverence His holy day the Sabbath is a sign that God recognizes them as His chosen people. It is a pledge that He will fulfill to them His covenant. Every soul who accepts the sign of God's government places himself under the divine, everlasting covenant. He fastens himself to the golden chain of obedience, every link of which is a promise.<sup>1</sup>

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Ezekiel 20:12, 20

**The Sabbath is a pledge that he will fulfill His covenant**

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 349, 350.

November 23  
Tuesday

# Does The Day Really Matter?

by editors

## EVIDENCE

Key text:

Romans 8:1-4;

13:8-10;

1 Corinthians

7:19

Robert Brinsmead's arguments against the necessity of seventh-day Sabbath observance in the June, 1981 issue of *Verdict*, "Sabbatarianism Re-examined," must have raised serious questions in the minds of some Seventh-day Adventists regarding the scriptural evidence for our beliefs regarding the Sabbath. For me, reading that issue of *Verdict* and subsequent ones dealing with related topics was a challenging, sometimes disturbing experience.

The benefit of such a challenge, however, is the rethinking it causes one to do. My own re-examination of the Sabbath issue has deepened my conviction that God calls Christians to a rest/celebration on the seventh day of every week, commemorating His creative and redemptive acts on our behalf.

Brinsmead's attack on the Sabbath raises a host of issues, but this article will just deal with one particularly crucial question: Are the Ten Commandments a trustworthy, authoritative guide for Christian behavior?

Brinsmead's answer is "no." He does not teach that Christians are free from any moral and ethical principles and may simply act on intuition or impulse. But he argues that, while the Ten Commandments contain some eternal moral principles, they are not in themselves an eternal, comprehensive guide for Christian behavior. Like the rest of the Mosaic law, the Ten Commandments contain features applicable only to the Old Testament era. Citing, among other things, the promise of long life in Palestine promised in the fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12) as an obvious Jewish element in the law not literally applicable to modern times, Brinsmead asks, "If we reinterpret one part of the law, might it not be possible (in fact, necessary) to reinterpret other parts of the law?"<sup>1</sup> He then suggests that we should look to the New Testament for guidance on how the Ten Commandments are to be applied for Christians. Since didactic statements regarding which day to keep are not to be found, he concludes that this aspect of the Sabbath commandment is a Judaistic feature which is nonessential for Christians.

Another argument is that the Ten Commandments are tied specifically to God's redemptive act in freeing the Israelites from Egypt. The law of Moses was the old covenant formed in response to the Exodus (see Exodus 20:2; Deut. 11:7-8; 6:20-24; 7:7-11; 10:17-19; 27:9-10). The Exodus was the historical reference point for an Old Testament ethic of gratitude and faith summarized by the Decalogue. There is continuity between the ethics of the Old and New Testament, but, says Brinsmead, there is also discontinuity because there is a new historical reference point for New Testament ethics. "Just as the law of Moses contained the moral imperatives which flow out of the Exodus-Sinai event, so the law of Christ embodies the moral imperatives which flow out of the death-resurrection event."<sup>2</sup> Thus, the new covenant brings with it a new law—Christ's "new commandment" to love others as he has loved us. Love is now "defined by the cross of Christ. Moses could not command this kind of love, and therefore his law is totally inadequate now that the new (and final) manifestation of love has been given in the Christ event."<sup>3</sup> The Ten Commandments still have value, to be sure, because they do contain some

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timeless ethical principles, but "we cannot say that a thing is right or wrong just because it is in the law of Moses—and that includes the Ten Commandments. As a 'covenant' (Deut. 4:13), the Ten Commandments have become obsolete (Heb. 8:13)—for that covenant has been superseded by the superior ministry of the Spirit. (2 Cor. 3:4-11)."<sup>4</sup> Thus, the Ten Commandments, for Brinsmead, are not an authoritative code for Christian behavior.

Brinsmead effectively states a crucial concept when he says that the starting point for New Testament ethics was not a written code, but "God's act of righteousness in the death and resurrection of Christ. . . . Since God has forgiven us, we ought to forgive one another (Col. 3:13). Since He was generous, we ought to reflect His generosity (2 Cor. 8:9). We ought not to be selfishly ambitious, because Christ humbled Himself to the death of the cross (Phil. 2:3-8). Since God has graciously included us in the death of Christ, we ought to put to death all sinful deeds (Col. 3:3-5)."<sup>5</sup> What I dispute is his claim that because the new covenant transcends the old, the Ten Commandments are no longer authoritative. Study of the New Testament passages discussed below indicates that the Ten Commandments remain as valid principles giving the Christian specific guidance on what it means to love even though the basis for Christian behavior goes much deeper than a list of rules. Thus, there is no New Testament warrant for setting aside the commandment to observe the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath.

1) "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, **in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit**" (Rom. 8:3-4, RSV emphasis supplied).

The centrality of the law here is clear—the Spirit does not abrogate the law, but enables fulfillment. To exclude the Sabbath commandment from "the just requirements of the law" would be totally arbitrary. F. F. Bruce comments that "for Paul there was no substantial difference in content between the 'just requirement of the law' which cannot be kept by those who live 'according to the flesh' and the just requirement fulfilled in those who live 'according to the Spirit.' The difference lay in the fact that a new inward power was now imparted, enabling the believer to fulfill what he could not fulfill before. The will of God had not changed; but whereas formerly it was recorded on tablets of stone it was now engraved on human hearts, and inward impulsion accomplished what external compulsion could not."<sup>6</sup>

2) "For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God" (1 Cor. 7:19, RSV). The contrast between the law of circumcision which is no longer relevant and the commandments of God which are, strongly implies a contrast between rules for the Israelite religious ceremonies and commandments which are moral principles. From the human perspective the Sabbath may appear simply to be a rule regarding the timing of worship. However, its inclusion in the Decalogue clearly distinguishes it from the ceremonial rules. If the Sabbath was crucial

**The will of God had not changed; but whereas formerly it was recorded on tablets of stone it was now engraved on human hearts**

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enough to God that He placed it in the "ten words" which are the heart of the covenant, then surely it must be included in the commandments of God which Paul says are what really counts.

Commenting on 1 Corinthians 7:19, George Eldon Ladd says that "the permanent aspect of the Law is the ethical and not the ceremonial. . . . Most of the studies on Paul emphasize the fact that Paul does not explicitly distinguish between the ethical and ceremonial aspects of the Law. This is of course true; but the implicit distinction is unavoidable and should be stressed. Although circumcision is a command of God and a part of the Law, Paul sets circumcision in contrast to the commandments, and in doing so separates the ethical from the ceremonial—the permanent from the temporal."<sup>7</sup>

3) "The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:9-10, RSV). Here Paul refers to particular commandments of the Decalogue as providing the specific content for what it means to love. The new commandment of the new covenant is indeed to love one another as Christ loved us. But Paul refers us back to the Ten Commandments for explication of the commandment to love that remains valid for the Christian. The New Testament never chops up the Decalogue into commandments which still express God's will and those which are outdated. The natural assumption is that if a few of the commandments are cited as relevant examples for Christian living, then the entire unit must be relevant.

4) "After this I looked and in heaven the temple, that is the tabernacle of Testimony, was opened" (Rev. 15:5, NIV). The term "Testimony" in the first five books of the Bible always refers specifically to the Ten Commandments. That the Revelator would draw attention to these commandments by use of this term indicates their continued importance in the Christian era. Since "Testimony" refers to the Ten Commandments as a unit, the Sabbath commandment must therefore be included.

Two passages in Revelation further highlight the centrality of the Decalogue to faithful Christian living. John writes "Within his [God's] temple was seen the ark of his covenant" (Rev. 11:19, NIV). This passage also directs the minds of readers to the Ten Commandments, for the tablets of stone on which the commandments were written was enshrined in the ark of the earthly sanctuary. Finally, Revelation 12:17 and 14:12 describe the faithful as those who "keep the commandments of God." The witness of Scripture's last book confirms the enduring significance of all ten "words" of the "Testimony."<sup>8</sup>

These NT passages are among the most important in showing the continuing significance of the Sabbath for Christians today. The Sabbath rest remains for God's people (Heb. 4:9). Because it is a rest from the brokenness and deficiency of human striving and a rest in the completeness and sufficiency of Christ's redemptive power, we "call the Sabbath a delight, the Lord's holy day honorable" (Is. 58:13, NIV).

D. F. M.

**Paul refers us back to the Ten Commandments for explication of the commandment to love that remains valid**

1. Robert D. Brinsmead, "What About the Ten Commandments," *Verdict* (June 1981), p. 41.

2. Brinsmead, "The Basis of New Testament Ethics," *Verdict* (October 1981), p. 18.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

5. Brinsmead, "New Testament Ethics," *Verdict* (June 1981), p. 64.

6. F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 199-200.

7. George Eldon Ladd, *The New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), p. 510.

8. For a more thorough discussion of this point see Desmond Ford, *The Forgotten Day* (Newcastle, CA: Desmond Ford Publications, 1981) pp. 292-299.

# From Goof-Off to Qualms and Queezes

by editors

After becoming an Adventist in July of 1977, I moved back into my dorm room at the state college I was attending in August. Suddenly, dinner on Friday nights, instead of being a weekly feast for celebrating the conclusion of another week of classes, became an occasion for qualms and queezes. No matter what was on the menu, the thought that sunset was drawing near always made me feel the same when I walked away from the table—like I had eaten two dozen jalapeno peppers and washed them down with grapefruit juice.

Saturday night through Thursday night I was one of the chief goof-offs on the floor.

But Friday nights that year, I locked myself in my room, pulled out my Bible, and hoped no one would come in to say "hi." I became tense like a cat braced for a fight everytime I heard footsteps outside my door, scared that another person would come in and see me just sitting there reading on a Friday night.

I made it through that year and several since—some at this state college and some at a denominational college—and I picked up a few ideas along the way for making the hours from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday full of stimulation, fun, rest and communication with God. Here are a few of them.

1. **Be creative in your Sabbath keeping.** Be careful not to let everything you do and think about on Sabbath be decided for you by other's opinions or customs. Both of these change from city to city, region to region and country to country. Don't let outward commands dictate your Sabbath experience. Instead, be honest with yourself and with God, and fill the hours with activities that will bring you closer to Him and to others. I've found having a spaghetti feed at my apartment sometimes helps make my Sabbath special. I sometimes take unusual walks on Sabbaths, too. Instead of just walking, I walk purposely looking for a child I can say "hi" to, or someone sitting on a bench I might stop and talk to. These activities will be different for everyone, but don't let being different stop you.

2. **Remember that people are what the Sabbath is all about.** True, the Sabbath should point to God and be a day to worship Him, but anything that points to God, of necessity points back to people. If your religion does not involve people and does nothing for people, it is doing nothing at all. And if your Sabbath-keeping does not involve people and does nothing for people, it is not Sabbath-keeping at all. Helping someone in a practical way, physically or spiritually, as Jesus showed us, is not only our mission, but can be our first love. Why not let people infiltrate the barricades we tend to build around the Sabbath?

3. **Remember that to a large extent, the Sabbath is a state of mind.** You can enjoy and keep the Sabbath special whether stuck in a one-room cabin with your non-Adventist family and the TV set, or stuck in a Sabbath School class where the teacher and all the members are older than your father. Rest and peace can be found no matter what outside circumstances surround an individual. Keeping your thoughts turned toward God, people and their needs, ways you can help others, directions your life might be going, etc., can be accomplished under any circumstances.

D. R. S.

**HOW TO**  
Key text:  
Luke 6:23

**If your Sabbath keeping . . . does nothing for people, it is not Sabbath keeping at all**

November 25  
Thursday

# Enjoy, Remember, and Look Forward

by Renard and Cheryl Doneskey

## OPINION

Key text:  
Hebrews 4:9

The Sabbath is an anniversary of commitment between God and His people.

Young lovers often have a way of celebrating monthly or even weekly anniversaries for each new commitment they make to each other—the first date, the first decision to date no one else, the engagement, and then the marriage. When they finally have that wedding date to celebrate, all of the other happy times are often remembered on that single special date each year. And those anniversaries become more and more meaningful as the marriage grows. Layers of shared experiences and deepened trust strengthen the commitment that the two have to each other, and their memories of life together bring them joy and a warm anticipation of the future.

In a similar way, the Sabbath is an anniversary of commitment between God and His people. The first commitment was in our Creator's heart—His desire to form and love creatures who would love Him of their own will. The seventh day is a celebration of that powerful love in creation, and our gratitude for the gift of life from the only One who can give it.

When man became sinful, the Sabbath became a sign of God's commitment to be Redeemer as well as Creator. Israel learned the importance of the seventh day in the wilderness—it was to them a reminder of their deliverance from Egypt (Deut. 5:15), and was a part of the law which they were unable to keep under the old covenant. Also, the Sabbath was, and still is, a sign of the new saving covenant of grace. The same power that created men (creation commitment), can create a new sanctified heart in them (redemption commitment) (Psalm 51:10, Ezek. 20:12).

"There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God" (Heb. 4:9, NIV). Paul uses the Sabbath to say that those who accept through faith the salvation Christ offers can enter into God's rest, the rest which the rebellious Hebrews missed. Christians today who know the spiritual peace and comfort that the Sabbath brings, can well understand the rest. For those still committed to God in this modern world, the Sabbath has more meaning than ever as an oasis of tranquility in the midst of chaos. Family togetherness, Christian fellowship, time for appreciating the blessings and creative power of God, and the unique opportunity to stand out as God's own, all set the Sabbath hours apart as something different, something more like heaven than earth.

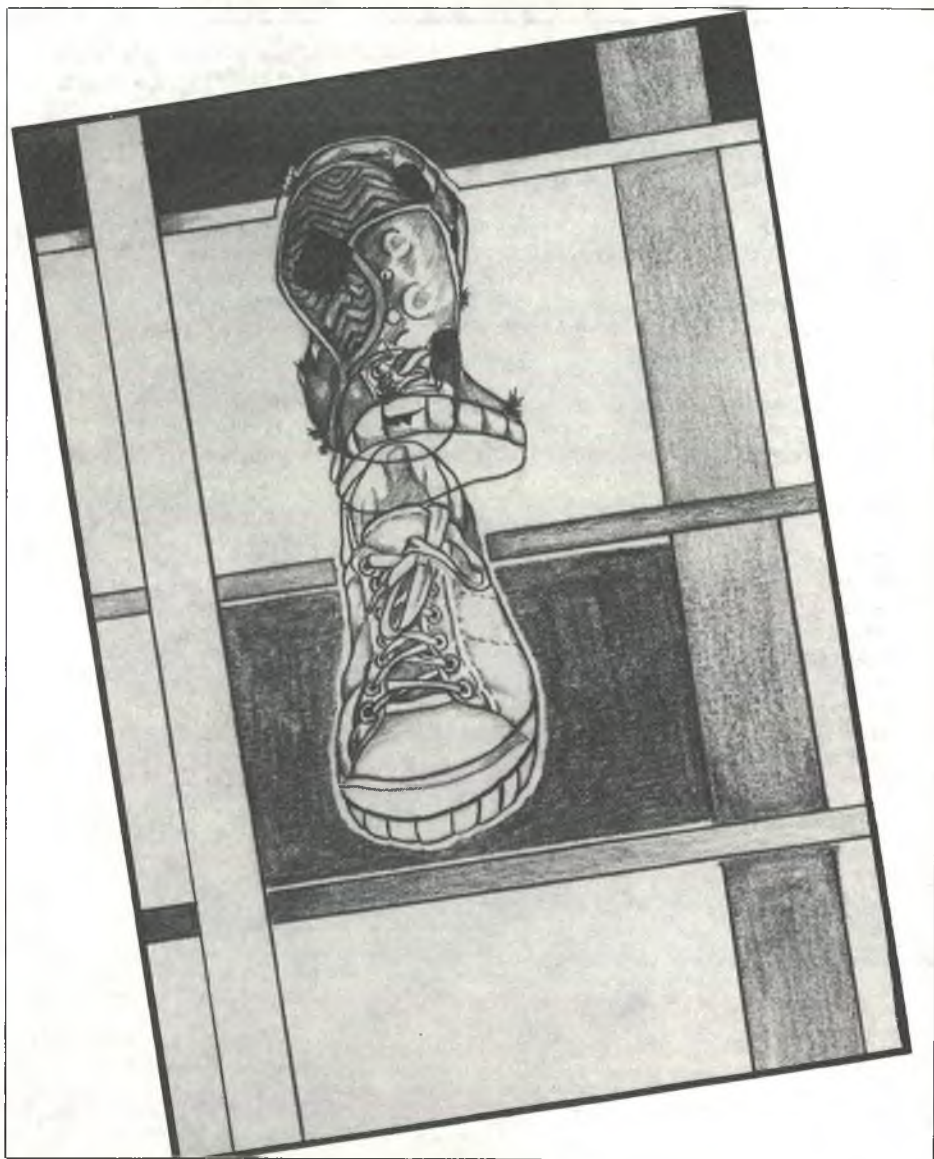
The weekly Sabbath anniversary, like the annual wedding anniversary, is a time for immediate joy, for remembering, and for looking forward. On the seventh day we remember God's special dealings with the creation He loves so dearly—especially the covenant which cost Him His Son—and we find a protected envelope of time in which to anticipate the pleasures of an eternal future spent with Him.

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**REACT**  
**Lesson 9**

1. Do you agree with the Introduction writer's statement, that the Sabbath is "the triumphant climax to a week of creative achievement?" If so, why do we so often refer to the Sabbath as a day of rest, which implies that we relax on the Sabbath, to gain strength for our work on the other six days? Is the main function of the Sabbath to rest, to help others, or to worship God?
2. The Sabbath was a symbol of redemption for the Israelites because it pointed to the exodus from Egypt. Is the Sabbath a symbol of redemption for you? If so, in what sense (see Opinion article and Hebrews 4:1-12 for some ideas). What are some contemporary forms of bondage, freedom from which is symbolized by celebrating the Sabbath?
3. If the Sabbath is an anniversary of the mutual commitment between us and God, how can we creatively celebrate this weekly "anniversary?" Suggest some specific ways in which you, your family, your group, or your church can make this day of celebration a "delight."
4. The How To article suggests "Why not let people infiltrate the barricades we tend to build around the Sabbath?" What specific steps can you take to achieve this goal? Suggest two or three basic guiding principles for Sabbath keeping, and some creative ways these might be applied.
5. If a non-Sabbath-keeper were to ask you for the three most important reasons why the Sabbath should be observed, what would your answer be?

# New Beginnings



“ ‘The time is coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Judah’ ” (Jeremiah 31:31, NIV).

**Lesson 10, November 28 - December 4**



# The "New" Kingdom of God

by John Bright

## INTRODUCTION

... Jeremiah could never believe that the national ruin was the end. True, he could see no cause to hope; but he never lost hope, because he never lost God. This faith overriding hopelessness is dramatically illustrated by Jeremiah's conduct in the last year of Jerusalem's life, while he himself was locked up in jail (32:1-15). With the land clearly doomed, with the Chaldean army battering at the walls, Jeremiah invested in—of all things—real estate! And this was not done because he wanted the land, or because of bullish optimism, but to symbolize his faith that the land had a future (vs. 15). Yet it was not that Jeremiah really dared believe such a thing. For his part the action seemed utterly foolish, and done against all his better judgment (32:24-25) only because he felt that God wanted him to. In short, hope was for Jeremiah impossible, but faith in God (vs. 27) made him act in hope nonetheless. Jeremiah, what you do not believe in, what you dare not even hope for, what all the current scene denies—that is possible with God!

But that hope is shaped as Jeremiah would shape it. It is not linked to the Israelite state, for Israel has broken the covenant. It is too late to speak of a Remnant of the nation which will be spared—although the idea is exactly the same. Here we hear of a new Israel, a spiritual Israel to which God will one day accord a New Covenant and a new start. It will be an Israel wholly obedient to God's law, not because she has reformed (Jeremiah

knew how little an external reform could do), but because the law is within. Here is a New Covenant which no external obedience can secure, but which is given to a people who have surrendered their hearts to God and received his forgiving grace:

Behold the days are coming, saith Yahweh, that I will make with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah a new covenant. . . . I will put my law within them, and on their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people (31:31-34). . . . The state and its policies, its wealth and its prosperity, even its religion and its noblest efforts at reform—these cannot produce the Kingdom of God, cannot create the people over which he will rule. The earthly order is at its best a pale approximation of God's order, at its worst a travesty of it. In no case can it be that order or create it. On the contrary, it lives, now as then, under history's judgment. But here also we learn of the true hope. It lies in the grace of God, who accords to men a New Covenant—its law written on human hearts. The people of this covenant are the people of God's Kingdom, for they are the pure in heart who have been, as it were, born again.

Guard these words of Jeremiah well! You will hear them again. You will hear them in a little upper room; you will hear them when next you sit about the Lord's table: "This cup is the New Covenant in my blood" (1 Cor. 11:25; Luke 22:20). And again: "Drink ye, all, of it" (Matt. 26:27).

Excerpted from John Bright, *The Kingdom of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), pp. 124-126.

John Bright is Cyrus McCormick Professor of Hebrew and the Interpretation of the Old Testament, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia.

□ November 28  
Sunday

## LOGOS

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer. 31:31-33, RSV).

After reading this verse, one could easily think God is about to add something new to His covenant, or perhaps even discard the old and entirely replace it with the new. But the “new covenant” is not something completely different from the “old covenant” made with Israel on Mount Sinai. According to Jeremiah 31:31-34, some characteristics are shared by both covenants:

1. The same covenanting God (“I will make”).
2. The same moral law (“my law”).
3. The same promise of divine fellowship [“(I) will be (your) God”].
4. The same promise of making a covenanted people [“(you) shall be my people”].
5. The same forgiveness of sins (“I will forgive their iniquity”).

Thus, the new covenant Jeremiah writes about, is not new with regard to the manner in which we are to be saved, but new regarding the perspective from which we view the assurance of salvation. “But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises” (Heb. 8:6, RSV).

The argument of the author of Hebrews is that the ceremonies and symbols of the old covenant were in themselves ineffectual in bringing individuals to salvation (9:9, 10). The old covenant was to point individuals in faith to the greater realities represented by its regulations and ceremonies. The new covenant ministry of Christ is “more excellent,” not because He brings a new method of salvation, but because his death/resurrection/intercession is the saving reality to which the old covenant pointed. The old covenant looked forward with eager anticipation to the coming of the Messiah, while the new rests in the assurance of His victory.

“But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying “Abba! Father!” (Gal. 4:4-6, RSV). The new covenant also focuses on the exciting possibility of no longer being condemned by the law, but being freed to become sons and daughters of God, ushering us into a closer relationship with God. “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” (Heb. 7:25).

The biblical message, then, is not a discussion of “new” versus “old,” but the heralding of a glorious promise, repeated throughout the ages to the people of God. It is the promise of new birth, new life, and re-creation in Christ Jesus the Messiah.

# Experiencing the New Covenant

by Roy Robinson

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
1 Peter 2:9, 10

As long as the New Covenant experience remains untouched on the shelf, its value is only measured in its antiquity. When dusted off, studied and applied, its value becomes measured in the changed lives of men and women. By grace, they "participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires" (2 Peter 1:4, NIV). This agreement between God and man contains four important principles listed below.

1) Jesus' blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28), allows us to stand before God clothed with Christ's righteousness. We stand free from guilt and past sins. "He (Christ) died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned."<sup>1</sup>

2) The Holy Spirit, as the anointing we receive from Christ, teaches us about all things that are essential for Christian living (1 John 2:27). "We do not go deep enough in our search for truth . . . God can teach you more in one moment by His Holy Spirit than you could learn from the great men of the earth. The universe is looking upon the controversy that is going on upon the earth. At an infinite cost, God has provided for every man an opportunity to know that which will make him wise unto salvation."<sup>2</sup>

3) God will put His law in our minds and write them on our hearts (Jer. 31:33). Our life of willing obedience and loving service will then glorify God: "The great law of love revealed in Eden, proclaimed upon Sinai, and in the new covenant written in the heart, is that which binds the human worker to the will of God. If we were left to follow our own inclinations, to go just where our will would lead us, we should fall into Satan's ranks and become possessors of his attributes. Therefore God confines us to His will, which is high, and noble, and elevating. He desires that we shall patiently and wisely take up the duties of service."<sup>3</sup>

4) Now, as chosen people, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a people belonging to God, we declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9). Every area of our life will feel this challenge: "Words alone cannot tell it. Let it be reflected in the character and manifested in the life. Christ is sitting for His portrait in every disciple. Every one God has predestinated to be 'conformed to the image of His Son' (Rom. 8:29). In everyone Christ's long-suffering love, His holiness, meekness, mercy, and truth, are to be manifested to the world."<sup>4</sup>

**"Christ is sitting for His portrait in every disciple"**

1. *Steps to Christ*, p. 62.
2. *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 119.
3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 329.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 827.

Roy Robinson is a sophomore theology student at Southwestern Adventist College.

November 30  
Tuesday

# Heart Incriptions

by Douglas R. Clark

## EVIDENCE

Key text:

Hebrews 8:8-13

An outward command can compel only outward obedience. We obey simply because the lawgiver is stronger than we are. We dread what he will do to us if we disobey, for he has power over us. But sheer power can never command the consent of the mind nor win the affections of the heart. Being made in the image of God, we are bound to ask the reason for the commandment. Why is it so? Until the commandment is written into our minds, until it wins the consent of reason, it is something foreign, therefore hostile and a thing to be secretly hated.

Robert Browning has drawn a faithful portrait of the worship of a god of sheer power in his sketch, "Caliban upon Setebos." Caliban is a dull, sensuous fellow who lives on a tropical island. His chief pleasure is to lie stretched out on the sand by the sea. There is one cloud on his horizon—his god, Setebos. Setebos has power and Caliban is afraid of him. So when Caliban thinks Setebos is watching, he tries to pretend that he is a very unhappy man, in the hope that his god will not be jealous of his happiness and will thus let him alone. As Caliban lies on the sand, he watches a procession of crabs moving past him to the sea. As he, a willful human being, treats these crabs, so he imagines God deals with human beings:

**"The law of justice must be written in his mind. Only then will he recognize what is just in the varied new occasions where no ancient pattern will quite fit."**

He is strong and Lord.

'Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs

That march now from the mountain to the sea;

'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,

Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.

'Say, the first straggler that boasts purple spots

Shall join the file, one pincer twisted off;

'Say, this bruised fellow shall receive a worm,

And two worms he whose nippers end in red;

As it likes me each time, I do: so He.

To obey the decrees of mere force is to settle for formal obedience in merely external matters. But no law could possibly prescribe for every human situation. No man can be just by following a code. The law of justice must be written in his mind. Only then will he recognize what is just in the varied new occasions where no ancient pattern will quite fit. No man can love by outward regulation. For love that is outward only is hypocrisy of a vile sort. Love's delight is to discover new modes of expression, new forms of showing itself to surprise and delight the loved one. No code can create an honest man. No man is really honest until integrity is written in his mind.

**And write them on their hearts.** Even the sinner sees the difference when goodness is "from the heart." We have known courteous folk whose pleasure was in courtesy. It has always seemed hard to imagine them being discourteous, even under the most trying circumstance. We have known men whose honesty sprang from a strong integrity that had become a part of the very fabric of their souls. We have known generosity that was glad, kindness that quickened other hearts with its joy. Perhaps the worst exhibition of Christian faith is the grim and joyless goodness that wears the look of strained effort. The law of God is not obeyed until we can sing with the psalmist, "O how love I the law" (Ps. 119:97)!<sup>1</sup>

1. J. H. Cotton, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Exposition in The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 11, Buttrick, G. A., (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1955), pp. 681, 682.

Douglas R. Clark is an assistant professor of religion at Southwestern Adventist College.

December 1  
Wednesday

# Sorting Out the Covenants

by Frank B. Holbrook

**HOW TO**  
**Key text:**  
**Isaiah 42:1, 6**

A study of the Biblical covenants appears complex and confusing to many because, as moderns, we are not familiar with the thought patterns and customs of the ancient Hebrews nor with their manner of writing. Here are some points that may help you in sorting out the covenant concept:

1. **Data on the covenants is brief and scattered.** While there are scores of references to covenant making between human beings and between God and man, there is no one passage in which all the facets of the covenant-making process and the covenant relationship is clearly spelled out. The Bible writers did not record that which was assumed to be well known. Consequently, a true understanding of the nature and function of Biblical covenants must be formulated from the data scattered throughout Scripture, and not from one or two references.

2. **Illustrations of Biblical covenants are limited.** Although Bible writers compare the fullest expression of the covenant relationship between God and His people to the marriage bond, the parallel is not exact (See Eze. 16:8; Hosea 6:7; 5:5, etc.). The marriage covenant at its best illustrates two equal parties living continuously together in a loving, committed relationship. But God's covenant is established between a superior and an inferior, that is, between God the Creator and man the creature.

3. **There is essentially one Biblical covenant.** Since God does not change (Mal. 3:6) and is the Initiator of the various covenants He has made, it follows that the various formulations are really an unfolding in different circumstances of the same covenant relationship He desires to establish between Himself and His people.

"The concept of covenant is basic to the biblical revelation. God loves covenants. He has already made covenant with all mankind, Gen. 9:8, and with each of the Patriarchs in turn. Yet each new covenant is essentially a development of the one preceding it, and expresses ever more clearly the basic biblical reality of the sovereignty of God. In other words, there is only one covenant between God and man. . . . Thus if the NT writers declare that this Jeremianic hope (a new covenant still to come, Jer. 31:31-34) became history when Christ called the one and only Covenant *his* Covenant . . . this new covenant cannot in any sense supersede the old; rather it is the flowering and confirmation of the ancient covenant made at Sinai."<sup>1</sup>

4. **The provisions of the Biblical covenant.** In its most complete expression the Biblical covenant as an *arrangement* contains three fundamental articles: (1) The covenant *promises*, affirmed by God's oath (Gal. 3:16, 17; Heb. 6:13, 17). (2) The covenant *obligations*: obedience to God's will as expressed in the moral law of the Ten Commandments (Deut. 4:13). (3) The covenant *means* to meet the obligations or conditions: Christ, through the plan of salvation (Isa. 42:1, 6. Cf. Heb. 9:1).

"The covenant between God and his people being in Christ, it is quite consistent with Hebrew usage to transfer the term to Christ himself, in whom the covenant was, as it were, embodied. So Christ is called 'our Redemption' and 'our Life.' "<sup>2</sup>

1. George A. F. Knight, *Theology as Narration* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), pp. 130, 131.

2. Exposition of Isaiah 42:6, *Pulpit Commentary*.

Frank B. Holbrook is associate director of the Biblical Research Institute in Washington, D.C.

December 2  
Thursday

# Root-Beer-to-go

by Max Phillips

## OPINION

**Editor's note:** In this week's Opinion article, the author shows how an academy dean deals with a "problem" student. This incident, perhaps, gives us an example of how God, under the new covenant, relates with men.

The new academy dean looked at the new boy, sizing him up mentally. He was huge (much larger than the dean), muscular, and sullen. "Why, on a hot fall evening, did they send you to me?" he thought. "If I tell you to stand up, you'll sit down. If I tell you to sit down, you'll stand up. You're just plain defiant. You want to be kicked out of school."

"The bell's rung," he said aloud. "You're supposed to be in your room."

"I am in my room," the boy said, leaning against the door jamb, half in, half out of his room, his large feet sprawling out on the hallway floor.

"I could have you dismissed from school for that," the dean thought. But he didn't want to think about it. The night was too hot. It wasn't worth it—fighting with this belligerent boy. He would leave a monitor in charge while he drove down to the root beer stand.

"A 25-cent root beer," he told the girl. "No—make it two—one to go."

Back at the dorm the boy was still outside his room. He was in the lobby thumbing restlessly through a magazine.

"I told him several times to get to his room," the monitor said, eyeing the dean's root-beer-to-go. "He just swore at me under his breath."

"Let me take care of it," the dean said.

He walked down the hall, stepped inside the boy's room, set the root beer on his desk, and then walked back to the lobby where the boy was still sitting with the magazine.

"I'd like for you to go to your room," he said. "I've got something there waiting for you."

"Probably an irregularity slip," the boy mumbled. He raised his voice. "Look, dean, you don't have to monkey around like that with me. Why don't you quit pestering me? Go ahead and kick me out of here. That's what you want anyhow."

The dean said nothing, just turned and walked back to his office. He sat down, trying to go over some worship absences; but it was impossible to concentrate. Maybe it was just too hot.

There was a knock on the door.

"Come in." It was the boy, an odd look on his face.

"Dean, did you leave that root beer on my desk?"

"Well, uh, yes—I thought— It's a hot night, and I thought you might like something cold."

"Can't pay you for it. Don't have a dime on me."

"You don't have to pay for it. It's on me."

"Thanks, dean. Nobody ever does anything for me. Dad kicked me around until I got big enough to whip him. Mom cries all the time. Can't stand it at home. They don't want me. Dad'll pay all my bills here at the academy just to keep me away. Don't know where I'm going if you kick me out. Sure not going home."

1. Max Phillips, *Inscriptions* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1970), pp. 15-17.

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"I'm not going to kick you out," the dean said, noting with surprise that he had just then made his decision. "Incidentally," he continued, changing the subject, "the fellows say you're the best weight lifter in the school. Maybe you could help coach a physical fitness club."

"Yeah, I'd like that," said the boy just before he turned and walked quickly toward the door, but not too quickly for the dean to notice a slight glistening in his eyes.

The monitor grumbled something to his roommate about the dean giving a root beer to one of the school rebels when even his own monitors had to go without. At first his roommate agreed, but later said he wasn't sure.

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1. John Bright writes that Jeremiah never lost hope, because he never lost God (Introduction). Can you point out a time in your life when you could have lost hope, but did not, because of your relationship with God? Can you think of times when you should not have lost hope, but did?
2. Jeremiah 31:34 states that "No longer will a man teach his neighbor . . . saying 'Know the Lord; because they will all know me.'" Obviously, teaching of religion has not ceased in the new covenant era. What, then, do you think this passage means?
3. Douglas R. Clark (Evidence) writes that prescribed goodness and obedience is inadequate for the Christian. Do you agree? Why? Isn't even the command to love a prescription for the Christian life? What should you do if there is a conflict between what God commands and what your inner desire is? Do you try to force yourself to obey or do you wait for God to change your heart so that obedience is spontaneous?
4. Compare your perceptions of God with Caliban's thoughts about his god Setebos (Evidence). Are there not times when the demands of God's law seem an imposition on our happiness, and God seems somewhat like Setebos? Compare and contrast this concept with the biblical understanding of God's call to obedience.
5. The new covenant emphasized God's action of writing His laws on human hearts (Jeremiah 31:33). How does this internalization process take place in practical terms? Does God really do all the work? If not, what is our part?

## **REACT**

### **Lesson 10**

# Priest of the New Covenant



**"Jesus, then, is the High Priest, that meets our needs" (Hebrews 7:26, GNB).**



# Pauper, Prince and Priest

by Beverly Matiko Tetz

When I was very young, one of my favorite games was "dress-up." With a plastic stethoscope around my neck and popsicle stick tongue depressors in hand, I would heal every doll in sight.

Other times, costumed in dad's royal blue bathrobe, auntie's costume jewelry, and a lopsided tinfoil crown, I would play queen and command many imaginary subjects.

Sometimes the teacher in me surfaced. With a portable blackboard, lenseless spectacles, and a very large ruler, I would teach the neighborhood children their numbers and ABCs—or else!

Even at a very early age I learned there were many roles one could play. I sensed that many different types of people were required to make my world work. And as I got older, I learned this applied to my spiritual world as well.

In Sabbath school, I learned about Someone who could fill many roles. He wasn't playing, however. And He could perform each of these duties simultaneously.

One week the memory verse roll showed me He was the Friend of little children. Several

sat on His lap listening to stories of when He was young. Others sat at His feet tracing finger paths in the grass.

The next week the picture roll showed me a king in the clouds. He had a gold crown on His head. He seemed bigger than everyone around Him. He had shiny clothes and was the center of attention.

Another Sabbath this same king was dressed as a shepherd. He wasn't surrounded by trumpeting angels this time, but rather by soft, shy lambs. They crowded close to Him. He held a particularly little one in one arm and stooped down and patted another one with His other hand.

This multi-faceted person I knew, of course, was Jesus. I never questioned that He could be so many different figures. He could be a baby in a manger one week, a child teacher another, and a navigator in a storm a third.

This week we will focus on another of Jesus' roles—that of High Priest. It is an essential role of Jesus and yet, together with His others, it assures us of one of the most exciting truths about our Lord—our Friend Jesus is able to be all that we need, all of the time.

## INTRO- DUCTION

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Beverly Matiko Tetz is an assistant professor of English and speech at Canadian Union College.

December 5  
Sunday

# A Ministry More Excellent

by editors

## LOGOS

One fact about sin that is immediately apparent from the Scriptures is that it separates human beings from God (see Gen. 3:24). But God took the initiative in bridging the chasm between Himself and man. Accommodating the sinfulness of humanity, He offered His presence in veiled form. In the old covenant, the focal point of this presence was the sanctuary. "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst" (Ex. 25:8, RSV). God did not overlook sin in condescending to dwell among a sinful people, but He used the sanctuary to portray His manner of overcoming the breach between humanity and Himself.

The sanctuary services, however, could not in themselves restore fellowship between man and God. They were prophetic symbols of the ultimate sacrifice, the One who would be "wounded for our transgressions" and upon whom "the Lord has laid . . . the iniquities of us all" (Isa. 53:5, 6, RSV).

The New Testament reveals that all the symbols of the sanctuary service find their fulfillment in Christ. "Jesus understands Himself as giving His life as 'a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45; Matt. 20:28), that is, sacrificing His body and blood (Mark 14:22-24; Matt. 26:26-28). In the Johannine literature, Jesus is introduced as the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36), and then symbolized apocalyptically as a lamb that has been sacrificed but is now triumphant. The Pauline literature often refers to His death in terms of sanctuary symbolism: He is the Paschal Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7); and redemption comes through His blood (Eph. 1:7), which is an expiation (Rom. 3:25)."<sup>1</sup>

The great theme of the letter to the Hebrews is that "Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises" (Heb. 8:6, RSV). Here are three of the many aspects of Christ's "more excellent ministry" as our High Priest in heaven.

1) Objectivity. "We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man" (Heb. 8:1, 2, NIV). "The basis of Christian confidence. . . is not vulnerable to the empiric observations and rationalizations of psychologists. . . . Jesus as High Priest is fixed, immovable datum. No matter what we may *feel* or opponents of our religion may assert, He remains High Priest in heaven for us."<sup>2</sup>

2) Permanence. ". . . He (Christ) holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:23-25, RSV).

3) Relevance. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb. 4:15, 16, NIV).

As our high priest, then, Christ Himself bridges the chasm between us and God. He graciously urges us to step on to the bridge "with confidence."

D. F. M./T. K. S.

**"No matter what we may feel . . . He remains High Priest in heaven for us."**

1. Fritz Guy, "Confidence in Salvation: The Meaning of the Sanctuary," *Spectrum* (November 1980, Vol. 11, No. 2), pp. 50, 51.

2. William Johnson, *Absolute Confidence* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1979), pp. 94, 95.

# As Essential as the Cross

by Denis Fortin

Out of His great love for fallen humanity God designed a plan for man to escape the death penalty brought upon him by breaking his relationship with the Life-Giver. Each aspect of this plan requires Christ's participation. At present, Jesus is fulfilling another facet of this plan which gives us pardon for sins and hope for a better future.

"The intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death on the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven."<sup>1</sup>

"God is approached through Jesus Christ, the Mediator, the only way through which He forgives sins. God cannot forgive sins at the expense of His justice, His holiness, and His truth. But He does forgive sins and that fully. There are no sins He will not forgive in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the sinner's only hope, and if he rests here in sincere faith, he is sure of pardon and that full and free. There is only one channel and that accessible to all, and through that channel a rich and abundant forgiveness awaits the penitent, contrite soul and the darkest sins are forgiven."<sup>2</sup>

"Our great High Priest completed the sacrificial offering of Himself when He suffered without the gate. Then a perfect atonement was made for the sins of the people. Jesus is our advocate, our High Priest, our Intercessor. Our present position therefore is like that of the Israelites, standing in the outer court, waiting and looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. . . . Type met antitype in the death of Christ, the Lamb slain for the sins of the world. The great High Priest has made the only sacrifice that will be of any value."<sup>3</sup>

"Christ offered up His broken body to purchase back God's heritage, to give man another trial. 'Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.' Heb. 7:25. By His spotless life, His obedience, His death on the cross of Calvary, Christ interceded for the lost race. And now, not as a mere petitioner does the Captain of our salvation intercede for us, but as a Conqueror claiming His victory. His offering is complete, and as our Intercessor He executes His self-appointed work, holding before God the censor containing His own spotless merits and the prayers, confessions, and thanksgiving of His people. Perfumed with the fragrance of His righteousness, these ascend to God as a sweet savor. The offering is wholly acceptable, and pardon covers all transgression."<sup>4</sup>

"Shall not our hearts swell with gratitude to Him who gave Jesus to be the propitiation for our sins? Think deeply upon the love the Father has manifested in our behalf, the love that He has expressed for us. We cannot measure this love. Measurement there is none. We can only point to Calvary, to the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. It is an infinite sacrifice. Can we comprehend and measure infinity?"<sup>5</sup>

## TESTIMONY

Key text:

1 Timothy 2:5

**"not as a mere petitioner does the Captain of our salvation intercede for us, but as a Conqueror claiming His victory."**

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 489.
2. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 912, 913. (Letter 12, 1892)
3. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 913. (MS 128, 1897)
4. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 156.
5. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 914. (MS 128, 1897)

Denis Fortin was Student Association president and a theology student at Canadian Union College at the time of this writing.

□ December 7  
Tuesday

# Jesus and the Order of Melchizedek

by Warren C. Trenchard

## EVIDENCE

**Key text:**  
**Psalms 110:4**

The Epistle to the Hebrews explores the absolute superiority of Jesus Christ in relationship to angels, Old Testament leaders like Moses and Joshua, and priests like Aaron and his descendants. In filling this exalted position Jesus occupies a double role—Priest and King. In our lesson this week we are especially concerned with His priestly function. But the two cannot really be separated. The author of Hebrews is so convinced of this fact that he chose an ancient priest-king to serve as the model of Jesus' dual function. Enter Melchizedek. Jesus is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. This mysterious contemporary of Abraham was not only a priest of the Most High God but was also the king of a Jebusite city, which later came to be known as Jerusalem.

No biblical character has generated more speculation than the priest-king, Melchizedek. His description in Hebrews has fueled, rather than dampened, this mystery. How can he be without parents or genealogy? How can he have no beginning or end? We are still not able to provide absolute answers to these questions. But we now know that, in time of Jesus, Melchizedek was the focus of widespread discussion, much of which parallels the material in Hebrews.

The most important of these extra-biblical treatments of Melchizedek is contained in a fragmentary document found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Some scholars consider this to be the notes for a sermon concerning the arrival of salvation at the end of the soon-to-be-completed 490 year period of Daniel 9. Our unknown author describes this anticipated time as "the acceptable year of Melchizedek," whom he pictures as "the Heavenly One standing in the congregation of God." As the divinely commissioned king, Melchizedek "will exact the vengeance of the judgments of God." As the interceding priest, he "will rescue all the Children of Light." This will occur on the great cosmic Day of Atonement.

We see, then, that Hebrews is not especially unique in its reflection on the ancient figure, Melchizedek, as a type of Messiah. Such thinking was common at the time. Many were looking for the return of Melchizedek. In fact, the readers of the Epistle would certainly not have found the comparison unusual. The writer seems to suggest that the expected messianic figure, Melchizedek, who would function as priest and king, had in fact appeared in the person of Jesus. However, Hebrews does not declare that Jesus was actually Melchizedek, but states that his office was according to the order of Melchizedek. That which Melchizedek represented finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus. Thus, the writer proclaims that Jesus not only fills a role in the line of the ancient priest-king, according to popular expectation, but, more importantly, fills that role as one who is superior even to the exalted Melchizedek.

# Divine Intercessor— Divine Friend

by Jim Ryan

We have all heard it said that it is good to have friends in high places. They can get things done for you. They can help you solve your problems. They can put you in touch with other important people.

Jesus is our Friend and He is in the highest place in the universe. The book of Hebrews describes Him as our high priest—"our man in heaven," as one writer has put it.

Hebrews 7:25 - Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost . . . *seeing He liveth to make intercession for them* (emphasis supplied).

Hebrews 9:24 - Jesus entered into Heaven itself, now *to appear in the presence of God for us* (emphasis supplied).

But what does this Friend in this high place really do for us? Following are some suggestions toward helping us understand what Jesus Christ is accomplishing now in our behalf:

1. **Jesus prayed for His disciples that they would be faithful and of one accord** (John 17). If He prayed for His church then can we not believe He is doing the same today?

2. **Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would not fail him** (Luke 22:31, 32). If Jesus prayed for an individual then can we not believe He is doing the same today?

3. **Stephen's vision of Jesus at the right hand of God gave him assurance during a time of trial**. If Jesus gave such assurance then, can we not believe He is doing the same today?

Jesus is still at the right hand of the Father, providing help and comfort for us. The question is, however, are we accepting the benefits offered by our Friend in the highest place?

We have heard much about the generation gap recently. Perhaps we have even been tempted to think of it in terms of Jesus and us. Somehow we may think that He cannot relate to the temptations of the drug scene, social drinking, cheating on exams, pre-marital sex, or the complex issues of divorce and remarriage.

Yet we are assured that our Friend does relate to us and every facet of our experience (Hebrews 4:15, 16). He makes Himself available moment by moment to provide all our needs. Our Priest can and does relate to us. While He may not have had to face temptations identical to ours, He was tempted to do His own thing, to trust Himself for security. And isn't this the basis of all our temptations?

Realizing this, we should have a more active and warm friendship with this High Priest. What Jesus did on the cross may seem so long ago that we may be tempted to greedily ask, "What have you done for me lately?"

In A.D. 31 Jesus died to save us; in 1982 He is ministering to keep us saved.

## HOW TO

Key text:  
Hebrews 7:25

# Like Aaron and Rabbi Saunders

by Beverly Matiko Tetz

## OPINION

The concept of high priest is somewhat difficult for many of us to understand, because it is not immediately found in our cultural and religious background. Other roles of Jesus, such as King, Brother, and Teacher are easier for us to grasp, because we see them operating around us on the human level. At times we even fill some of those roles ourselves.

But the concept of high priest is foreign to many of us. I am indebted to the brilliant writer, Chaim Potok, for helping me to understand this role more clearly. Potok was born and raised in New York City and, not surprisingly, his writing reflects much of his Jewish background. Most of his characters are Jews. Many are Hasidic Jews, who are among the most strictly orthodox Jews today.

**"The Rabbi is a 'messenger of God,' a bridge between His followers and God."**

To people of this background, the concept of high priest would undoubtedly be more clear than it is to most of us. Potok describes one such spiritual leader in his book *The Chosen*. Though his title is different, the role is largely the same.

Rabbi Saunders is a *tzaddik*, a righteous one. His position is an inherited one which has come down to him through six generations. Rabbi Saunders' son describes him as "a kind of messenger of God, a bridge between his followers and God."<sup>1</sup>

Rabbi Saunders is a powerful man. His voice sometimes "stormed the silence."<sup>2</sup> Other times it is "gentle, almost a caress."<sup>3</sup> Once we hear him uttering "a deep, trembling sigh that filled the silence of the room like a wind."<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the story, Rabbi Saunders teaches his people. "This world is like a vestibule before the world-to-come," he tells them. He quotes holy writings and tells them they are to prepare themselves "in the vestibule," in order to be able to "enter into the hall."<sup>5</sup>

As well as instructing his people, Rabbi Saunders bears much of their suffering. He describes his role as a *tzaddik* as being one who knows "how to suffer for his people . . . He must take their pain from them and carry it on his own shoulders. He must carry it always."<sup>6</sup>

Acquainting myself with this character formed by Potok has helped me more clearly understand the concept of the high priest. From the time of Aaron to the present, the priesthood has operated in Jewish history. There have been changes over the centuries, no doubt, but many of the basic characteristics remain unaltered.

The role of the high priest is an inherited one. The high priest's function is to serve as a mediator between God and man. The roles of teaching and serving (or ministering) are contained within this role. The high priest must also bear the sins and sorrows of the people. This is seen most vividly in Old Testament times when the high priest entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement.

As we ponder this role of Jesus, we see once again that Jesus is pictured to us as one whose main duty involves serving others. Whether we see Him as the pauper baby in the stable, the regal Monarch of the universe, the Miracle Worker in Cana, or the High Priest of Heaven, His role is still the same—to seek, to serve, and to save. Many priests can perform two of those duties. There is only One who can perform all three. He is our High Priest.

1. Chaim Potok, *The Chosen* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1967), p. 114.  
2. *Ibid.*, p. 127.  
3. *Ibid.*, p. 135.  
4. *Ibid.*, p. 262.  
5. *Ibid.*, p. 127.  
6. *Ibid.*, p. 265.

1. The Logos article suggests three aspects of Christ's ministry as high priest in heaven. Are these aspects personally significant to you? If so, explain why.

Read Hebrews 7-10, and then try to identify aspects of Christ's high priestly work not mentioned in the Logos article.

2. The Bible offers many different roles or vocations as descriptions of Jesus. What are some twentieth-century roles or vocations, which the Bible writers were not aware of, which may describe aspects of His work on our behalf today? In what ways are the following roles appropriate and/or inappropriate in describing Jesus' present activity for us:

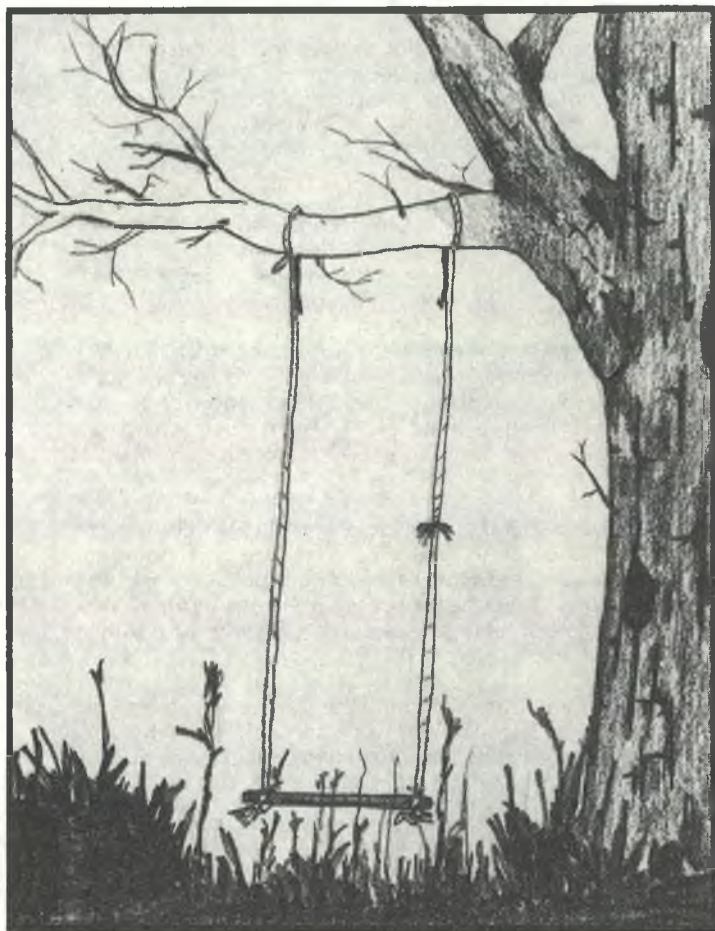
- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| a) United Nations<br>secretary general. | e) chairman of the board. |
| b) consultant.                          | f) president.             |
| c) ombudsman.                           | g) garbage collector.     |
| d) counselor.                           | h) coach.                 |

3. What is the possible relationship between the popular first century belief that Melchizedek was a heavenly figure and the statements in Hebrews that Melchizedek was timeless and without parents? Does the Evidence article clarify in your mind the significance of this enigmatic figure? What questions remain in your mind?

4. Jim Ryan writes (How To) that if Jesus prayed for His church and Peter while He lived on earth, that we can be sure He is doing the same today. Do you agree? How can you harmonize the fact that He is a member of the Godhead, yet He prays for people? Who does God pray to? Wasn't He just as much God when He prayed for others while on earth as He is now?

5. Why do we need a high priest to mediate between God and us? Does God need to be persuaded to love and help us? Why does He require priestly mediation between Himself and man, or does He?

# Covenantal Faith That Works



**“So it is with faith: if it is alone and includes no actions, then it is dead” (James 2:17, GNB).**



## Two Poems

### INTRO- DUCTION

The relationship between grace, faith, and righteousness in the light of God's covenant with man is one of the wonderful mysteries of Christianity.

John Donne, after leading a reckless early life, became the dean of St. Paul's and perhaps the most famous preacher in early 17th century England. Donne sought to explore and explain the trials of what it means to come to terms with sin, guilt, and the saving grace of God. He wrote and preached from his own personal struggles. His poem "Batter My Heart, Three-Personed God" is an eloquent plea—if not a prayer—for the grace of God to set him free.

Batter my heart, three-personed God; for You  
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;  
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend  
Your force, to break, blow, burn and make me new.  
I, like an usurped town, to another due,  
Labor to admit You, but oh, to no end!  
Reason, Your viceroy in me, me should defend,  
But is captured, and proves weak or untrue.  
Yet dearly I love You, and would be loved fain,  
But am betrothed unto Your enemy:  
Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,  
Take me to You, imprison me, for I  
Except You enthrall me, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chaste, except You ravish me.

Through language made rich by the use of paradox, alliteration, and images one has a vivid sense of the sinner's struggle to surrender to Christ.

The following poem is by George Herbert, who gave up a promising career to become a pastor of a small church at Bemerton in England. While there in service to his small parish, he became known as "Holy Mr. Herbert." In his sonnet, "Redemption" ("Redemption" here means literally "buying back"), Herbert expresses the relationship between God and man in terms of real estate—God being the landlord and man the tenant. The lease—or life—before Christ's redemption is hard.

Having been tenant long to a rich Lord,  
Not thriving, I resolved to be bold,  
And make a suit unto Him, to afford  
A new small-rented lease, and cancel the old.  
In heaven at his manor I him sought:  
They told me there, that he was lately gone  
About some land, which he had dearly bought  
Long since on earth, to take possession.  
I straight returned, and knowing his great birth,  
Sought him accordingly in great resorts;  
In cities, theatres, gardens, parks, and courts:  
At length I heard a ragged noise and mirth  
Of thieves and murderers: there I him espied,  
Who straight, "Your suit is granted," said, and died.

With the suit granted, grace becomes a reality and the way is opened for the reestablishment of the union between God and man.

# A Working Faith

by editors

## LOGOS

It seemed almost too good to be possible: Abram, then without descendants, was to become the father of God's great nation (Genesis 15). He had no reason to believe, but the faith he demonstrated gave him the status of righteousness (cleanness or rightness in the Hebrew language) which he did not naturally possess. Though God requested sacrifices since the time of Adam (Genesis 4:3, 4), it was not an animal sacrifice which justified Abram.

"It is this passage that lies back of one of the great proclamations of the N.T.—the infinite power of faith: 'By faith Abram, when he was called . . . went out' (Heb. 11:8). We must 'walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham,' wrote Paul (Rom. 4:12). The heart of the whole gospel that Paul preached is beating here, the gospel that it is not what a man is but what a man trusts God to do that saves him."<sup>1</sup>

"It is a gospel that begins in humility. The first necessity for any soul's progress is to see how far it is from where it wants to go."<sup>2</sup>

"It is a gospel of hope. As long as man relies upon himself he is doomed to bitter moral disappointment. Read in Romans Paul's self-disclosure of his own unavailing struggle to win a sense of righteousness. Ponder what he meant by the impossibility of being saved by works or by any mechanical process of the law. Read also the passionate confession of Martin Luther concerning the early period of his personal efforts and his impotence and near despair. But hope comes when the man turns from looking in to looking up. 'That I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended,' cried Paul (Phil. 3:12). 'A mighty fortress is our God,' sang Luther when his soul caught the eternal truth that he did not stand alone unaided."<sup>3</sup>

But can faith alone save us? The book of James tells us "So faith by itself, if it has not works, is dead" (James 2:17, RSV). Just after this verse, James gives an example of ineffective faith: "If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit" (James 2:15, 16, RSV)?

"The . . . perversion of Christian teaching which James attacks is the notion that a confession of faith guarantees salvation regardless of the conduct of the believer; in other words, that the recital of a creed makes a man acceptable to God despite his behavior toward his fellows. Antinomianism (view of faith without obedience) is an aberration that has plagued the churches from James's time to this. But the N.T. as a whole certainly gives no leeway for such an interpretation. There is only one answer to James's question, *Can his faith save him?*—if his faith does not issue in deed consonant therewith."<sup>4</sup>

" . . . Observe how the men whose virtue has been that they had great beliefs and were brave enough to follow them have been radiant men—not always, it is true, for no earthly experience is perfect, but prevailingly . . . That sort of faith can wipe out many human failings. It is not only reckoned as righteousness; more than anything else it can bring righteousness to pass in an unrighteous world."<sup>5</sup>

T. K. S.

1. *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1, p. 600.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.* vol. 1, p. 601.

4. *Ibid.* vol. 12, pp.

41, 42.

5. *Ibid.* vol. 1, p. 601 (emphasis supplied).

# Our Part of the Bargain

by Ron Sydenham

While the immediate objective of God's covenant may have been the formation of the Hebrew nation, the ultimate objective was the evangelization of the world (Deut. 4:5-8; 7:7-14; Isaiah 42:6, 7; 49:3-8). Christ ratified God's part of the "bargain," and asks His followers to do their part (Matthew 28:19, 20; 24:14).

"In these final hours of probation for the sons of men, when the fate of every soul is soon to be decided forever, the Lord of heaven and earth expects His church to arouse to action as never before."<sup>1</sup>

Even after doing His part, though, God doesn't just turn the work over to us, but provides the means for us to do ours: "Receiving the truth, men become also recipients of the Grace of Christ, and devote their sanctified human ability to the work in which Christ was engaged—men become laborers together with God."<sup>2</sup>

The righteousness of Christ will become evident as the follower accepts God's grace: "It is the purpose of God that His people shall be a sanctified, purified, holy people, communicating light to all around them. But only as they keep the standard uplifted, only as they reveal that the truth they profess to believe is able to influence them for righteousness and to sustain their spiritual life; only as they make the principles of truth a part of their daily lives, can they be a praise and honor to God in the earth. It is the privilege of every Christian to receive Grace to enable him to stand firmly for the principles of righteousness in the Service of God."<sup>3</sup>

We cannot rely on this firm stand alone to be effective. The call to labor involves more than listing beliefs, laws, and rules: "The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.' . . . If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

While maintaining this sense of mission, the follower of Jesus must always remember the source of his righteousness to avoid the error of Israel: "'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God' (Eph. 2:8). 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling' (Phil. 2:12). What does this mean? Is it a contradiction? Let us see what the last of it says. 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do His good pleasures' (verses 12, 13). Praise God. Now who will be discouraged? Who is going to faint? It is not committed to us, weak, feeble mortals to work out our own salvation in our own line. It is Christ that worketh in you. And this is the privilege of every son and daughter of Adam. But we are not to be idle. We are put here in this world to work. We are not to fold our arms."<sup>5</sup>

"There is to every man assigned his particular sphere, place and work, and God asks no more and no less from the lowliest as well as the greatest, than that they fulfill their calling. We are not our own property. We have become servants of Christ by grace."<sup>6</sup>

## TESTIMONY

Key text:  
Isaiah 61:10, 11

**"If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen"**

1. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 716.

2. *Review and Herald*, February 12, 1895.

3. Letter 8, February 14, 1912, to S. N. Haskell.

4. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143.

5. Manuscript 18, March 4, 1894, "Laborers together with God."

6. Letter 16, June 6, 1875, to Elder G. I. Butler.

Ron Sydenham is a junior theology major at Canadian Union College.

☐ December 14  
Tuesday

# Diathēkē: Its Significance in Relation to Jesus

by Gosnell L. Yorke

## EVIDENCE

Key text:

Hebrews 13:20, 21

Samuel Rutherford drafted his own catechism and in it he both inquired and declared:

What moved God to make the covenant of Grace? His own free mercy and grace, for when He made it we were like forlorn bastards and half-dead foundlings that were cast out in the open field to die in their own blood.<sup>1</sup>

Rutherford's figurative language vividly describes the bankrupt human condition apart from grace. With this description in mind, let us briefly consider the significance of the word, *diathēkē* (covenant) as it relates to the work and worth of Jesus within the framework of the New Testament thought.

In the New Testament, *diathēkē* is used to affirm the establishment of that new relationship between man and God, made possible by the life and death of Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25). It is employed by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews to indicate the new and superior covenant-relationship that God has entered into with us by virtue of the self-donation of His Son (Heb. 7:22; 8:6-13; 12:24; 13:20).

**"Diathēkē . . . points to the unilateral and unalterable action and initiative of God."**

This true and lasting theological significance of *diathēkē* can be better appreciated in the light of the conspicuous absence of another Greek word, *sunthēkē* (covenant). In normal usage *sunthēkē* always describes an agreement made on equal terms between persons or states—an agreement which either party could choose to alter. The theology behind *diathēkē*, on the other hand, points to the unilateral and unalterable action and initiative of God supremely mediated through Jesus Christ. It signifies that God of His own choice and in His abundant grace, has made available to us a saving relationship with Him which we can only submissively receive through faith or stubbornly refuse through folly. Leon Morris sums it up well:

The New Testament is just as firm as the Old in its insistence that any covenant with God is one in which God is supreme and man merely the consenting recipient of God's favours and directions.<sup>2</sup>

This *diathēkē* decision of God, involves an obligation for us, as Morris' last word above implies. That obligation is faith—responsive faith that accepts His love, and responsible faith that manifests itself in obedience and service to Him and others (James 2:14-18).

So then, "May the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, . . . by the blood of the eternal covenant (*diathēkē*), equip you with everything good that you may do His will, working in you that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Heb. 13:20, 21, RSV).

1. Quoted by William Barclay, *New Testament Words* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), p. 66.

2. Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preachings of the Cross* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1960), p. 92.

# God's Way to A New You

by Dick Winn

**Editor's note:** In his *God's Way to A New You*, Dick Winn illustrates God's way of restoring individuals under the new covenant, by describing lessons he has learned of the process used to restore antique automobiles. He doesn't apply the lessons he has learned to God's actions under the covenant, but we think the comparison will become evident as you read.

Lesson 1: Restorers purchase their cars, not because they are already restored, but in order to restore them. I've seen experienced veterans at a swapmeet pass by shining specimens fresh from another restorer's shop, only to huddle in absorbed fascination around the rusty hulk just discovered in some old barn. They get a special sense of satisfaction in watching crumpled metal and tattered upholstery give way to smooth lines and polished leather.

Lesson 2: Proper restoration involves vastly more than a shiny paint job. Journals of the hobby speak of a "ground-up" restoration, meaning that virtually everything on the car, from where it touches the ground and upward, is renewed to its original condition. Even tiny nuts and bolts in places where no other eye will ever look (such as inside a door panel) are removed, cleaned and repainted or replated, then reassembled with great care.

Lesson 3: Restorers see potential in old cars that nonrestorers don't see. They will often pay prices for "damaged merchandise" that others would consider grossly excessive. One man was determined to restore a Doble Steamer, a well-engineered steam car made in California for a short time in the 1920s. Less than a dozen were known to exist—all of them already in the hands of restorers. When he heard of one in a wrecking yard in England, he immediately flew there, cash in hand equal to the cost of several new cars. Although what he brought home looked like boxes of junk, he was proud of his purchase. . . .

Lesson 4: Old cars of value are kept in the owner's protected garage while being restored, not just after the job is completed. That's the best environment for doing the kind of work required.

Lesson 5: I learned this one the hard way. I was admiring the fine handiwork of an immaculately restored Lozier—a car so rare that replacement parts are next to impossible to find. Yet this car was complete in every way. Thinking to compliment the proud restorer standing next to it, I said, "This car must have been in great shape when you found it!" The hurt written across his eyes let me know at once I had said the wrong thing.

Patently, he took me around to the back of the car where, mounted on an easel, was a picture of the car as he had found it. It was running-board-deep in weeds, its cloth top was lying in shreds across the rusted body—it was a car that only a restorer could love. With obvious pride, he told me of the years he had spent machining new mechanical parts, fabricating new body panels, replacing all the wood parts with exact replicas. Without actually saying so, he was telling me that the more damaged the car before the restorer begins, the more clearly is the restorer's art displayed and the greater his joy and satisfaction in the result.

**HOW TO**  
**Key text:**  
**2 Corinthians 5:1;**

Excerpted from Dick Winn, *God's Way to A New You* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1978), pp. 11-13. Used by permission.

☐ **December 16**  
**Thursday**

# Life More Abundant

by John McDowell

## OPINION

Key text:  
John 10:10

Often when listening to discussions in which questions and ideas are tossed around dealing with faith and righteousness, I hear that the purpose for faith, grace, and God's covenant is to provide for our salvation. This salvation is to be realized by the second coming of Christ and our reward in heaven. When asked what is the most important goal in their lives many Adventists no doubt reply, "to go to heaven." During weeks of prayer much discussion, prayer and soul searching is often given to the question "Am I ready? Will I be saved?" Such questioning may be good at times, but in thinking over this week's lesson, I am beginning to wonder if in our preoccupation with being "saved" for some future event, we miss the wider application and significance of God's covenant. The covenant God wishes to make with us provides us with a viable, working faith—and thus speaks to the way we daily live our lives. Salvation, the out-working of the covenant, is not just some future event that we hope we will be ready for, but also, it gives strength and quality to the fibers that weave in and out our lives minute by minute, day by day.

"Sin sends plastic roses instead of real ones to say 'I love you!'"

Let's review for a moment. In the covenant God makes with Abraham (Gen. 15:18-21) He promises him land. In this land Abraham's descendants were to live well, be blessed by God, and be examples to the nations around that God is interested in the quality of men's lives. Christ's mission on earth was to take away sin (John 1:29), because sin distorts and eventually breaks the relationship between God and man. Sin provides an imitation of the reality. Sin sends plastic red roses instead of real ones to say "I love you."

In this week's "Testimony" Ellen White stresses that everyone has a "calling," a "work." My work or calling involves the way I spend my time *now*—the way I teach, study, play racketball, date—the way I spend my time minute by minute and day by day.

The covenant also speaks to the quality of my life. Looking again at Hebrews 13:20, 21, I am reminded that "the God of Peace" wants to equip me "with everything good" so that I may "do His will." "Everything good" means that through a relationship with Christ all sorts of resources to enhance education, witness and enjoyment, will always be available. And I can say with Paul that, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

Christ came not only to take away sin but to give life. And as John 10:10 makes clear, not only to give life, but to give it abundantly. To me this is a mandate to enjoy life, to exercise the blessing of time, to grapple with the challenges of talent, and to—in short—do whatever enhances life. And whatever is life-enhancing is part, parcel, string, and wrapper to making Christ manifest in my life. But for all of God's grace, I realize I am handicapped by a weak faith and a sinful nature, and thus reminded I realize my need to pray with John Donne, "Batter my heart, three-personed God."

1. What is your reaction to the line from the John Donne poem (Introduction), "imprison me, for I except you enthrall me, never shall be free, . . ." How is it that for Christ to control us, is to be set free? A human government, for instance, that controlled every aspect of its citizens lives, would be welcome by no one, even though it might be a good, beneficent government. Why, then, do we wish to be controlled by Christ?

Can you identify with the overall sentiments of Donne's poem? Do you feel a need to have your heart "battered" in order to have a productive Christian life? Or is faith for you more of a rational choice to believe and do what is right?

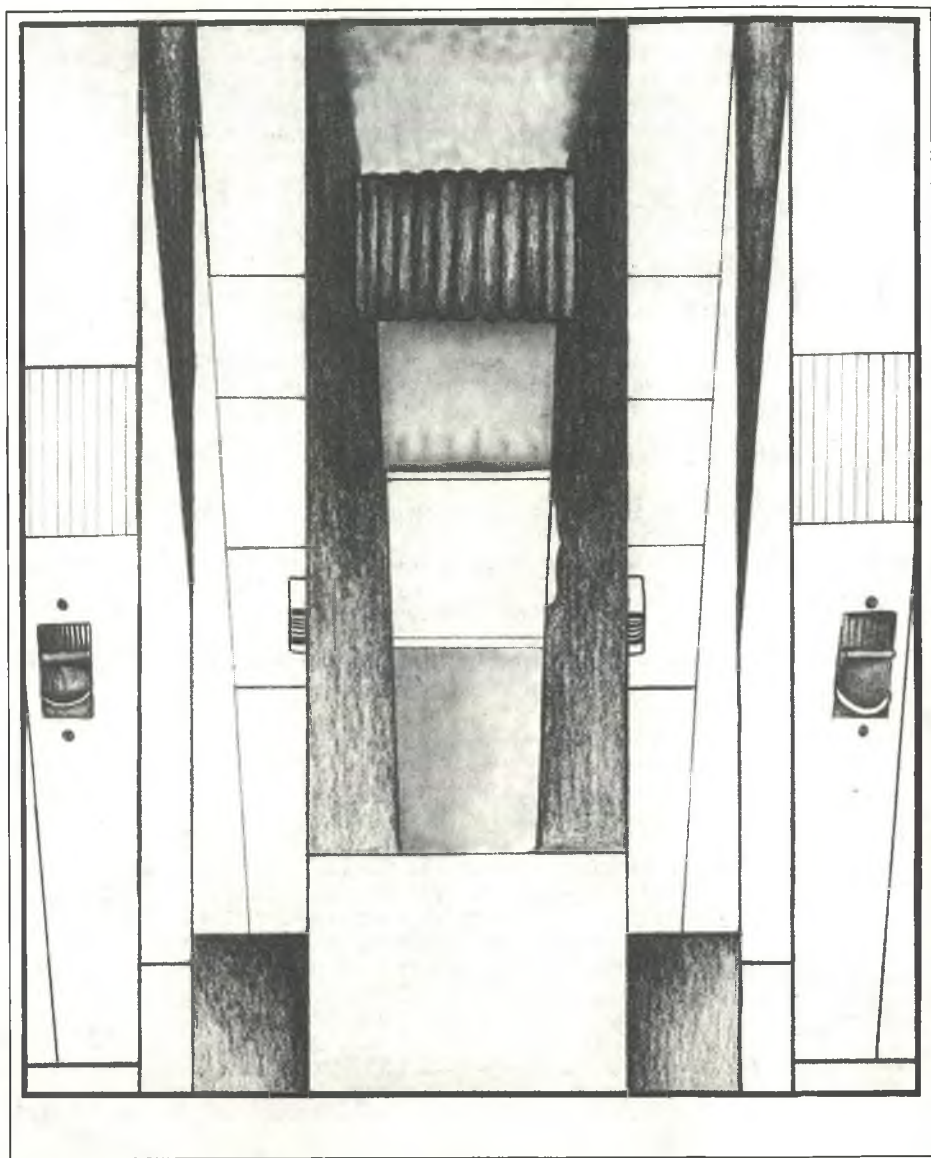
2. The Evidence article, quoting Leon Morris, states that "any covenant with God is one in which God is supreme and man is merely the consenting recipient of God's favours and directions." Do you agree? If so, how would you respond to the charge that God is "un-democratic" in dealing with people?
3. The apostle James points out that true, living faith is accompanied by works. What are the intrinsic differences between true faith which produces works and the "so-called" faith that does not?
4. Suggest specific ways in which a practical, working faith in God, such as Abraham had, can be cultivated.

Suggest hypothetical situations in the following contexts and discuss how faith in Christ might work itself out in these situations:

- steady dating relationship
- the selection of a career
- choosing Saturday night entertainment
- parent/child relationships

5. We hear much about the church's failure to spread the message like it should (Testimony). How can one keep from becoming discouraged if he has failed to be the type of an ambassador Christ asks us to be? With the advice in the Testimony article in mind suggest at least two specific ways you, your church or group can work more effectively for Christ.
-

# New Covenant Life



**"The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness" (John 10:10, GNB).**

**Lesson 13, December 19-25**



# A Tin Soldier Comes to Life

by C. S. Lewis

## INTRODUCTION

Did you ever think, when you were a child, what fun it would be if your toys could come to life? . . . Imagine turning a tin soldier into a real little man. It would involve turning the tin into flesh. And suppose the tin soldier did not like it. He is not interested in flesh; all he sees is that the tin is being spoilt. He thinks you are killing him. He will do everything he can to prevent you. He will not be made into a man if he can help it.

What you would have done about that tin soldier I do not know. But what God did about us was this. The Second Person in God, the Son, became human Himself: was born into the world as an actual man—a real man of a particular height, with hair of a particular colour, speaking a particular language, weighing so many stone. The Eternal Being, who knows everything and who created the whole universe, became not only a man but (before that) a baby, and before that a fetus inside a Woman's body. If you want to get the hang of it, think how you would like to become a slug or a crab.

The result of this was that you now had one man who really was what all men were intended to be: one man in whom the created life, derived from his Mother, allowed itself to be completely and perfectly turned into the begotten life. The natural human creature in Him was taken up fully into the divine Son. Thus in one instance humanity had, so to speak, arrived: had passed into the life of Christ. And because the whole diffi-

culty for us is that the natural life has to be, in a sense, "killed," He chose an earthly career which involved the killing of His human desires at every turn—poverty, misunderstanding from His own family, betrayal by one of His intimate friends, being jeered at and manhandled by the Police, and execution by torture. And then, after being thus killed—killed every day in a sense—the human creature in Him, because it was united to the divine Son, came to life again. The Man in Christ rose again: not only the God. That is the whole point. For the first time we saw a real man. One tin soldier—real tin, just like the rest—had come fully and splendidly alive.

What, then, is the difference which He has made to the whole human mass? It is just this; that the business of becoming a son of God, of being turned from a created thing into a begotten thing, of passing over from the temporary biological life into timeless "spiritual" life, has been done for us. Humanity is already "saved" in principle. We individuals have to appropriate that salvation. But the really tough work—the bit we could not have done for ourselves—has been done for us. We have not got to try to climb up into spiritual life by our own efforts; it has already come down into the human race. If we will only lay ourselves open to the one Man in whom it was fully present, and who, in spite of being God, is also a real man, He will do it in us and for us.

Excerpted from C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1943), pp. 154-156.

**C. S. Lewis was a professor of Medieval and Renaissance literature at Cambridge University.**

**□ December 19  
Sunday**

# New Heart, Resurrection, and Eternity

by editors

"I came that they may have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10, RSV). In this verse, Jesus expresses a desire for His presence to enable His followers to find maximum fulfillment not only in the life to come, but in this present life, also. We do not need to make long pilgrimages or punish ourselves, to gain happiness in this life, and we do not need to sell flowers in airports to gain a future eternal life, either. Through the new covenant of Jesus we can gain benefits for both the present and the future. These benefits interrelate between life now and life later, and combine to enable the Christian to live the abundant life Jesus had in mind when he echoed this promise.

1. Benefit of a New Heart. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33, RSV). The term *heart* refers to our character, composed of our innermost feelings and inclinations. It is the heart that is in need of renewing and cleansing through a change of its intents and motives. The life of Paul is an example of an extremely dramatic change (1 Tim. 1:15), demonstrating the visible results of the new heart Jesus can give. While we may not be former persecutors of Christians (or its modern equivalent), we can each daily claim the promise that ". . . if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

2. Benefit of the return of Jesus. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28). We can be certain that those who have accepted Christ before they died will rise from their graves to meet Him (1 Thess. 4:16), and those who are alive when Christ returns will recognize Him, join Him, and live forever with Him (1 Thess. 4:16-18). Whether alive or resurrected, we will be "changed, in a moment" as our weak, vulnerable bodies take on a new, immortal nature (1 Cor. 15:51-55). The emotional separation we feel with those who have died and the physical hardships we now experience are only temporary.

3. Benefit of Eternal life. We do not need to fear temporary death: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even as he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26, NASB). With the memory of this statement in their minds, even the martyrs of the early church could face certain death without fear.

Knowledge of these benefits sustains us through the suffering that life inevitably brings. Paul says, "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. 4:8-11, RSV).

The abundant life Jesus spoke of helps us face Dan Rather and the news of terror, disaster, and suffering each evening, and cope with our own afflictions, perplexities, and persecutions.

T. K. S.

# The Fruits of Conversion

Through Jesus the fallen sons of Adam become "sons of God." "Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." The Christian's life should be one of faith, of victory, and joy in God. . . .

Such are the fruits of Bible conversion and sanctification.

His (the truly righteous man's) nature is so thoroughly imbued with love for God and his fellow men that he works the works of Christ with a willing heart.

All who come within the sphere of his influence perceive the beauty and fragrance of his Christian life, while he himself is unconscious of it, for it is in harmony with his habits and inclinations. He prays for divine light, and loves to walk in that light. It is his meat and drink to do the will of his heavenly Father. His life is hid with Christ in God; yet he does not boast of this, nor seem conscious of it. God smiles upon the humble and lowly ones who follow closely in the footsteps of the Master. Angels are attracted to them and love to linger about their path. They may be passed by as unworthy of notice by those who claim exalted attainments and who delight in making prominent their good works; but heavenly angels bend lovingly over them and are as a wall of fire round about them. . . . To man is granted the privilege of becoming an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ.<sup>1</sup>

To the believer, Christ is the resurrection and the life. In our Saviour the life that was lost through sin is restored; for He has life in Himself to quicken whom He will. He is invested with the right to give immortality. The life that He laid down in humanity, He takes up again, and gives to humanity. "I am come," he said, "that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly. Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." "Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 10:10; 4:14; 6:54).

To the believer, death is but a small matter. Christ speaks of it as if it were of little moment. "If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death," "he shall never taste of death." To the Christian, death is but a sleep, a moment of silence and darkness. The life is hid with Christ in God, and "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (John 8:51, 52; Col. 3:4).

The voice that cried from the cross, "It is finished," was heard among the dead. It pierced the walls of sepulchers and summoned the sleepers to arise. Thus will it be when the voice of Christ shall be heard from heaven. That voice will penetrate the graves and unbar the tombs, and the dead in Christ shall arise. At the Saviour's resurrection a few graves were opened, but at His second coming all the precious dead shall hear His voice, and shall come forth to glorious, immortal life. The same power that raised Christ from the dead will raise His church, and glorify it with Him, above all principalities, above all powers, above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in the world to come.<sup>2</sup>

## TESTIMONY

**Key text:**  
**Nehemiah 8:10**

**To the  
believer,  
death  
is but  
a small  
matter.**

1. *My Life Today*, p. 251.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 786-787.

**December 21  
Tuesday**

# The Freedom of a Christian

by Martin Luther

## EVIDENCE

Key text:  
John 1:12

Editor's note: Luther's essay "The Freedom of a Christian" was published in 1520 and sent with an open letter to Pope Leo X as one of Luther's final efforts to achieve reconciliation with Rome. The following excerpts discuss the crucial elements of the new covenant life and the relationship of these elements.

One thing, and only one thing, is necessary for Christian life, righteousness, and freedom. That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ, as Christ says, John 11 (:25), "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live"; and John 8 (:36), . . . Matt. 4 (:4), "Man shall not live be bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Let us then consider it certain and firmly established that the soul can do without anything except the Word of God and that where the Word of God is missing there is no help at all for the soul. If it has the Word of God it is rich and lacks nothing since it is the Word of life, truth, light, peace, righteousness, salvation, joy, liberty, wisdom, power, grace, glory, and of every incalculable blessing. . . .

You may ask, "What then is the Word of God, and how shall it be used, since there are so many words of God?" I answer: The Apostle explains this in Romans 1. The Word is the gospel of God concerning his Son, who was made flesh, suffered, rose from the dead, and was glorified through the Spirit who sanctifies. To preach Christ means to feed the soul, make it righteous, set it free, and save it, provided it believes the preaching. Faith alone is the saving and efficacious use of the Word of God, according to Rom. 10 (:9): "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Furthermore, "Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified" (Rom. 10:4). Again in Rom. 1 (:17), "He who through faith is righteous shall live." The Word of God cannot be received and cherished by any works whatever but only by faith. Therefore it is clear that, as the soul needs only the Word of God for its life and righteousness, so it is justified by faith alone and not any works; for if it could be justified by anything else, it would not need the Word, and consequently it would not need faith.

"The soul needs only the Word of God for its life"

This faith cannot exist in connection with works—that is to say, if you at the same time claim to be justified by works, whatever their character—for that would be the same as "limping with two different opinions" (1 Kings 18:21), as worshiping Baal and kissing one's own hand (Job 31:27-28), which, as Job says, is a very great iniquity. Therefore the moment you begin to have faith you learn that all things in you are altogether blameworthy, sinful, and damnable, as the Apostle says in Rom. 3 (:23), "Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," and, "None is righteous, no, not one; . . . all have turned aside, together they have gone wrong" (Rom. 3:10-12). When you have learned this you will know that you need Christ, who suffered and rose again for you so that, if you believe in him, you may through this faith become a new man in so far as your sins are forgiven and you are justified by the merits of another, namely, of Christ alone. . . .

Now when a man has learned through the commandments to rec-

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ognize his helplessness and is distressed about how he might satisfy the law—since the law must be fulfilled so that not a jot or tittle shall be lost, otherwise man will be condemned without hope—then, being truly humbled and reduced to nothing in his own eyes, he finds in himself nothing whereby he may be justified and saved. Here the second part of Scripture comes to our aid, namely, the promises of God which declare the glory of God, saying, “If you wish to fulfill the law and not covet, as the law demands, come, believe in Christ in whom grace, righteousness, peace, liberty, and all things are promised you. If you believe, you shall have all things; if you do not believe, you shall lack all things.” That which is impossible for you to accomplish by trying to fulfill all the works of the law—many and useless as they all are—you will accomplish quickly and easily through faith. God our Father has made all things depend on faith so that whoever has faith will have everything, and whoever does not have faith will have nothing.

“For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all,” as it is stated in Rom. 11 (:32). Thus the promises of God give what the commandments of God demand and fulfill what the law prescribes so that all things may be God’s alone, both the commandments and the fulfilling of the commandments. He alone commands, he alone fulfills. Therefore the promises of God belong to the New Testament. Indeed, they are the New Testament.

Since these promises of God are holy, true, righteous, free, and peaceful words, full of goodness, the soul which clings to them with a firm faith will be so closely united with them and altogether absorbed by them that it not only will share in all their power but will be saturated and intoxicated by them. If a touch of Christ healed, how much more will this most tender spiritual touch, this absorbing of the Word, communicate to the soul all things that belong to the Word.

This, then, is how through faith alone without works the soul is justified by the Word of God, sanctified, made true, peaceful, and free, filled with every blessing and truly made a child of God, as John 1 (:12) says: “But to all who . . . believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God. . . .”

Although, as I have said, a man is abundantly and sufficiently justified by faith inwardly, in his spirit, and so has all that he needs, except insofar as this faith and these riches must grow from day to day even to the future life; yet he remains in this mortal life on earth. In this life he must control his own body and have dealings with men. Here the works begin; here a man cannot enjoy leisure; here he must indeed take care to discipline his body by fastings, watchings, labors, and other reasonable discipline and to subject it to the Spirit so that it will obey and conform to the inner man and faith and not revolt against faith and hinder the inner man, as it is the nature of the body to do if it is not held in check. The inner man, who by faith is created in the image of God, is both joyful and happy because of Christ in whom so many benefits are conferred upon him; and therefore it is his one occupation to serve God joyfully and without thought of gain, in love that is not constrained.

**“That which is impossible for you to accomplish by trying to fulfill all the works of the law . . . you will accomplish quickly and easily through faith.”**

**“The soul which clings to the promises not only will share in all their power but will be saturated and intoxicated by them”**

Excerpted from  
*Luther's Works*, vol. 31  
(Philadelphia:  
Muhlenberg Press), pp.  
333-377.

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**Martin Luther was the great German reformer.**

# E. T.'s Away from Home

by editors

## HOW TO

Key text:  
Luke 22:27

I was flipping from station to station on my radio when the dial came to an advertisement which caught my attention. It contained a sympathetic voice telling about someone homeless, friendless and lonely.

This lonely figure, the voice next said, had just landed on earth and was 3000 light years from home. It turns out that this unearthly creature is the "star" of a current movie—*E.T.*, standing for extra terrestrial.

Maybe creatures do exist on other planets with developed emotions and personalities, I don't know about that, but I do know there are people on this planet facing loneliness and alienation, as well as countless other problems.

Like the creature in the movie who wasn't quite whole without like creatures to relate with, we also are not quite whole, unless we have other people to relate with.

In fact, to have Christ's promise of an abundant life fulfilled in us, we must not only relate to others, we must also make others the focusing point of our abundant life. Here are a few ways one can accomplish this.

An  
others-  
centered  
Christian  
must know  
what's  
going on,  
and . . .  
must care  
about  
what's  
going on.

1. **Read.** A person must have his own stuff together, before he can really think about someone else. Begin with the Bible. Jesus is the most others-centered person you'll find (after all, that's what being God is all about), so study Him, imitate Him, live Him. Next, move on to good Christian books. Devour them, digest them, sort them out in your mind. Then move on to secular materials. Information about people and what's happening in the world can be lifted out of the classics, some novels, books on science, psychology and history, news and sports magazines, and so on. An others-centered Christian must know what's going on, and more importantly, he must care about what's going on.

2. **Pray.** After you read about Moses, Jesus, or Paul struggling over people before their Father, do the same. Pour your feelings for others out to Him, and you will not only receive assurance that He cares for those others, too, but you will find your feelings for them develop also.

3. **Listen.** If you really want to help others, be willing to listen to them. Today, possessing a low self-image is one of the major emotional problems in America. Listening to others lets them know they are important enough to merit your attention.

4. **Communicate.** Develop the knack of being friendly. Share yourself with others. Talk to them—talk to anybody who wants to talk. Use the knowledge you have gained from reading, praying, observing and listening, whether you use it by telling a friend he gave a good speech in class, or whether you use it by writing your congressman and telling him you want something done about the human rights violations happening around the world, or other social issues.

And remember, when others are at the center of your abundant life, you not only may help them to have an abundant life, but you will have a more abundant life too.

D. R. S.

# A Covenant for Cleanness

by editors

Tide vs. Oxydol. Head and Shoulders vs. Vidal Sassoon. Ultra-Brite vs. Close-Up. Ivory vs. Palmolive. The media arguments over what cleans best goes on *ad nauseam*. We all want to be clean. It's a desire so basic that millions of advertising dollars are spent every year trying to convince us which products will cleanse the whitest and brightest.

For the writer of Hebrews, the discussion over what cleanses most effectively was a very crucial one. Like modern advertisers, he appeals to our desire to be clean, but on a much more profound level than tooth enamel or silverware. "The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" (Heb. 9:13-14, NIV). The Jewish ceremonies accomplished outward cleansing, but the blood of Christ is superior because it accomplishes inward cleansing.

Anyone at all sensitive to the voice of conscience at least sometimes feels indelibly stained in his innermost being. Our thoughts and deeds of violence, exploitation, dishonesty and perversity are "dirty" because they soil our very personhood.

The difficult thing is that the filth we feel inside seems to defy cleansing. The words of the Shakespearean character, Lady MacBeth, seem strikingly appropriate for the human psyche in general:

"Yet here's a spot . . .

Out, damned spot! out, I say! . . .

What, will these hands ne'er be clean? . . .

Here's the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand."<sup>1</sup>

The good news about the new covenant life is that it is lived in the presence of a cleansing agent with sufficient potency to purify our innermost selves. The ceremonies of the old covenant were inadequate in themselves to cleanse the soiled soul. But the blood of Christ can bring the cleansing for which the conscience so desperately longs. Based on Hebrews 9, I want to suggest five reasons why the blood of Christ cleanses so effectively.

1) **It is certain.** Our own attempts to remove inward contamination are about as effective as dirty dishwasher applied to a t-shirt with washed-in motor oil stains. But Christ has entered heaven "having obtained eternal redemption (vs. 12)." The certainty of the cleansing power of Christ's blood is based on the historical reality of the cross. Nothing in the entire cosmos can alter the significance of that redemptive act.

Because Christ has already "obtained eternal redemption," we can be certain that His blood gives us complete cleansing before God today. Thus, we are clean before God, not on the basis of an internal change but on the basis of what Christ has accomplished on our behalf.

William Johnsson comments that "the Act *has been done* that solves the sin problem. They (Christians) don't have to strive and stretch, to hunger and thirst, to press and prevail, in the frantic, fren-

## OPINION

Key text:  
Hebrews 9:13,14

**we are  
clean . . .  
not on  
the basis  
of an  
internal  
change  
but on  
the basis  
of what  
Christ has  
accomplished**

☐ December 24  
Friday

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zied—and futile—effort to find cleansing from their sins. By one sacrifice for all time God has utterly dealt with sin. Nothing we might do can add to that or diminish from it: Calvary gives us absolute confidence of the putting away of sins."<sup>2</sup>

2) **It is practical.** We accept the redemption blood that Christ has obtained for us by faith. We experience it in the realm of our spirit and will. It has nothing to do with our level of performance. But the blood of Christ is also practical, because having cleansed our consciences, it enables us to live in harmony with the living God (vs. 14), which is the only way we can experience what life was meant to be. Because the blood of Christ gives our consciences perfect cleansing from the stain of guilt, we are freed experientially from those deeds which lead inevitably to death. Because we are confident in the cleansing from guilt that the blood of Christ provides, sin no longer has entrapping power over us.

**The  
oppressive  
cycle  
of sin and  
death is  
broken in  
the new  
covenant  
life**

The oppressive cycle of sin-death is broken in the new covenant life by the new pattern of redemption-life.

3) **It is cosmic in scope.** If we are reflective, we realize that our personal impurity has ramifications beyond ourselves. Our misdeeds have caused others hurt and suffering, and have thus contributed to the fundamental disordering of the cosmos.

We thus need more than individual cleansing in order to be assured that our guilt has been effectively dealt with.

The blood of Christ, says Hebrews 9:23, brings purification to the heavenly sanctuary. This powerful assertion assures us that the problem of sin and contamination is being dealt with in heaven—at the heart of the universe. Thus the whole cosmos is included in the broad sweep of this heavenly resolution of guilt.

The blood of Christ is effective because its cleansing power is cosmic in scope. The new covenant life is lived in confidence that Christ's activity in the heavenly sanctuary deals on a universal scale with the sin problem which we have all exacerbated by our personal existence.

4) **It is continually available.** There is nothing inadequate about the cleansing we receive when we accept Christ's redemption by faith. Yet, like the kids frequently portrayed in laundry soap commercials, most of us somehow manage to become grimy not long after putting on clean clothes. Our salvation is not suddenly revoked by our every failing. Yet a believer's sin has no less a staining effect than a non-believers. We need to know that the blood of Christ, with its cleansing power is continually available. That is why the fact that Christ has entered "heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence" (Heb. 9:24, NIV) is so assuring. He's always there. Continually available, *for us.*

5) **It assures a meaningful future.** ". . . Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him" (Heb. 9:28, NIV).

Christ issues an open invitation to all desiring covenant cleansing: "This is my blood of the covenant . . . Drink of it, all of you" (see Matt. 26:27, 28).

D. F. M.

1. *Macbeth*, Act 5, Scene 1, quoted in William Johnson, *In Absolute Confidence* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1979), p. 98.  
2. Johnson, p. 118.



1. Explain how the following words fit or do not fit into your concept of the abundant life Christ brings:

happiness	sorrow
peace	trial
joy	suffering
pleasure	hardship
success	sacrifice
security	anxiety
prosperity	deprivation

2. What does Luther mean by saying (Evidence) that the "soul needs only the word of God for its life?" Do you agree with this—Why or why not?


Discuss Luther's statement "That which is impossible for you to accomplish by trying to fulfill all the works of the law . . . you will accomplish quickly and easily through faith." Do you think he means that faith enables us to quickly and easily overcome sin in our lives, or is he referring to the justification which we cannot achieve through striving, but which comes by faith?

3. Think of ways you might personally implement the suggestions for others-centeredness in the How To article. Are there ways your Sabbath School group or local church might collectively implement these suggestions?
4. Summarize your concept of the everlasting covenant. What, to you, are the two or three most crucial points involved?





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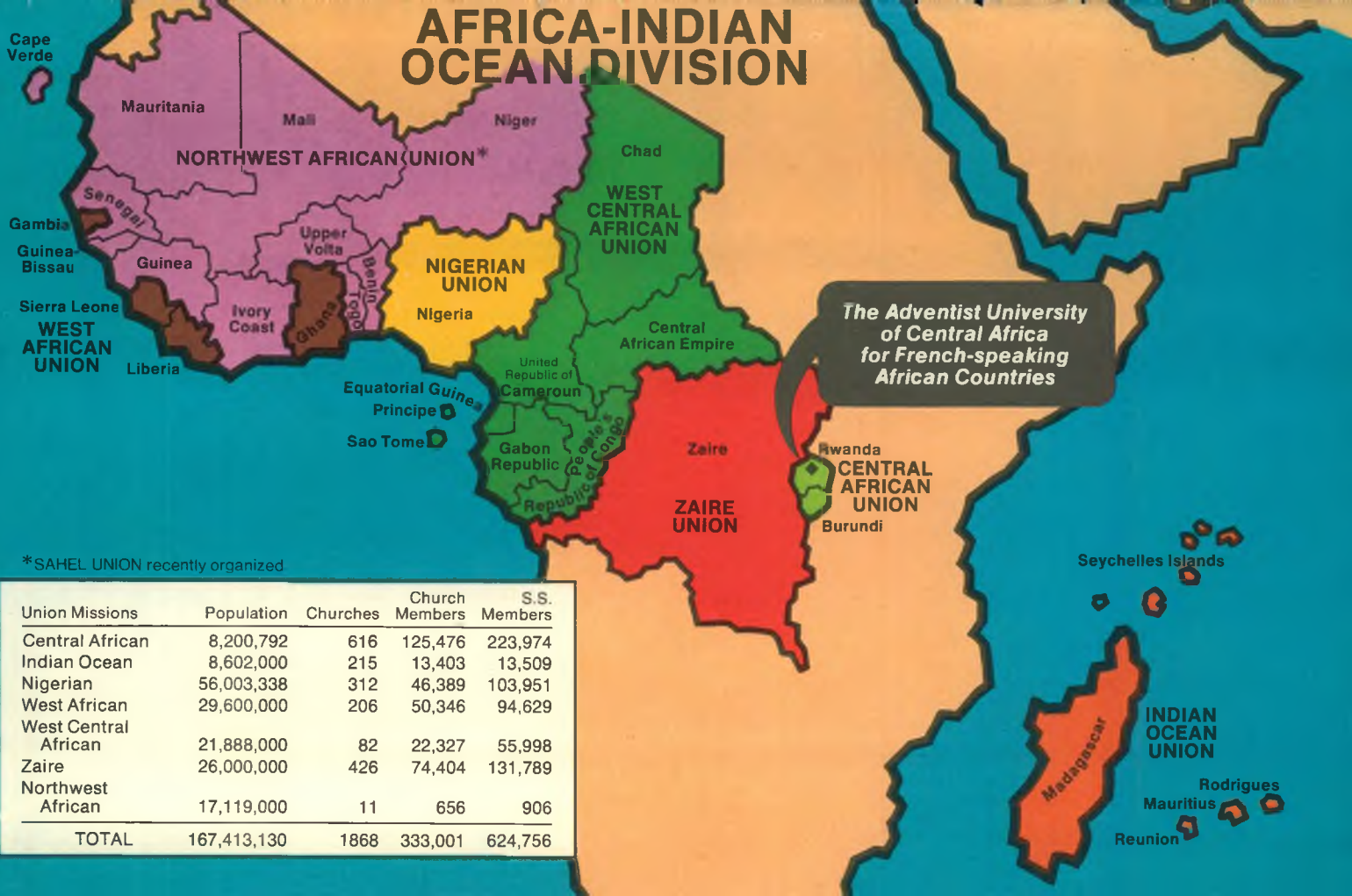
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Nigerian	56,003,338	312	46,389	103,951
West African	29,600,000	206	50,346	94,629
West Central African	21,888,000	82	22,327	55,998
Zaire	26,000,000	426	74,404	131,789
Northwest African	17,119,000	11	656	906
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