

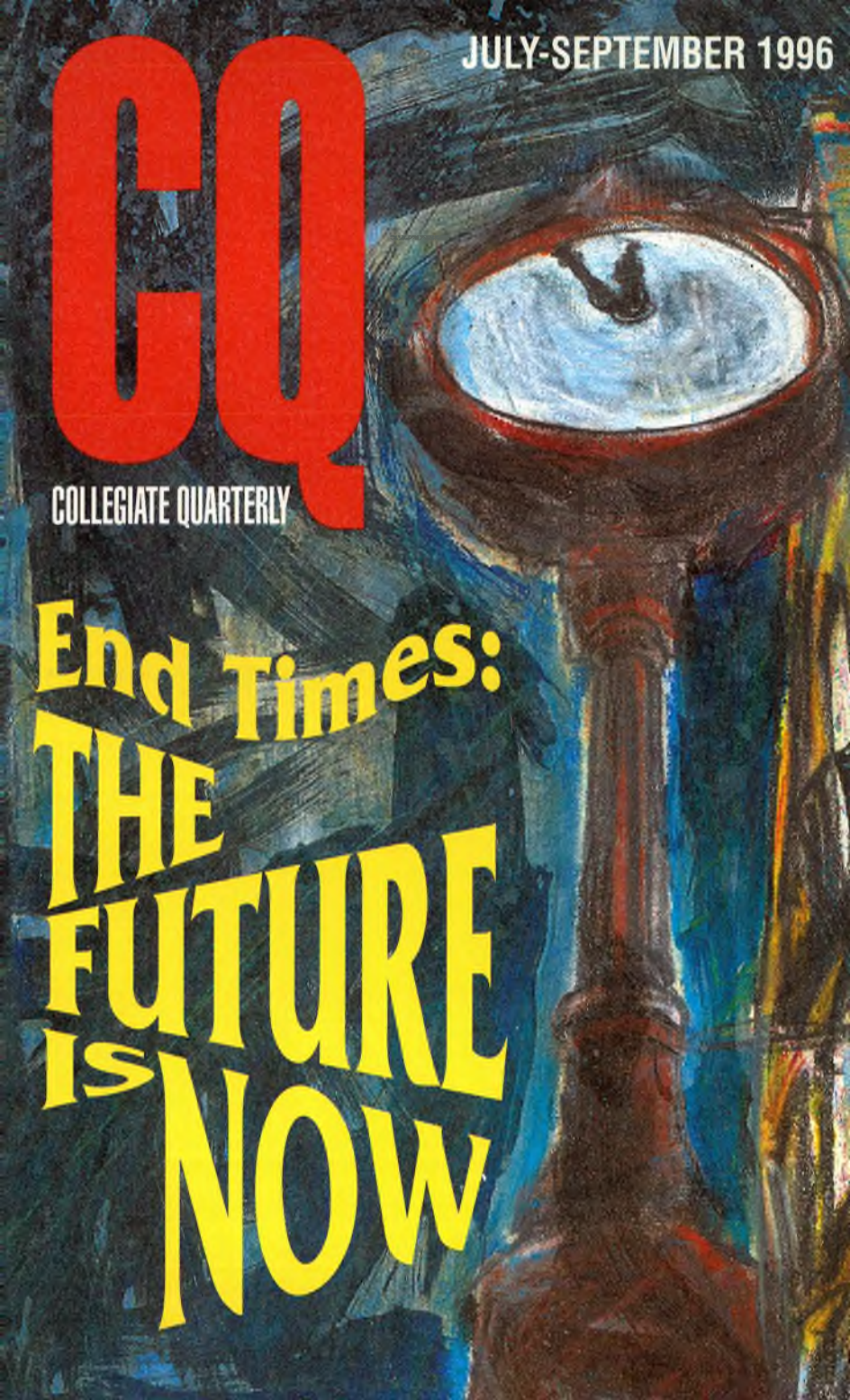
JULY-SEPTEMBER 1996

CQ

COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

End Times:

**THE
FUTURE
IS
NOW**



A PUC This Guy Got Nothing But Pressure



Biology major Shelton Hsu says that when he got to Pacific Union College as a freshman, even though he didn't know anybody, he got peer pressure from the very start—pressure to get involved in the Student Association, to have fun with new friends, to make good grades, and to see God in a new light.

"At PUC I've experienced something we refer to as 'positive peer pressure,'" he says, "where we encourage and challenge each other spiritually and academically."

Last school year, with the help of friends, Shelton organized Lighthouse, a student-run community service network that reaches out to people in need.

"If you're looking for a balanced Christian education, PUC has something to offer you," says Shelton.

That is, if you can stand the pressure.

PUC
the right college
right now

How can you get involved at PUC?

THE HOMELESS PROJECT— feeding the homeless at People's Park
BIG BROTHER/BIG SISTER — "adopting" a child
LIGHTHOUSE— serving in a variety of local community outreach opportunities
PRISON MINISTRIES— providing church services for prison inmates
STUDENT MISSIONS AND TASKFORCE— volunteering a year to serve
STUDENT ASSOCIATION— leading out in social, religious, and philosophical endeavors
STUDENT SENATE— involvement in student government
CROSSWAYS— participating in the student-run church service
PRAYER GROUPS— praying and supporting each other

Pacific Union College
Angwin, California
94508 800-862-7080



END TIMES: THE FUTURE IS NOW

JULY - SEPTEMBER 1996

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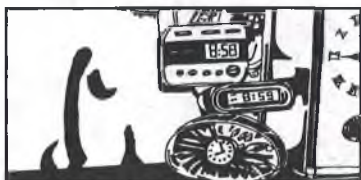
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**Sabbath
School**

END TIMES: THE FUTURE IS NOW



Contents & Contributors

- 1 When All Else Fails . . .** _____ **10**
LaSalle SDA Church, Montreal, Quebec
Editor: Elijah M. James
Contributors:
 Elijah M. James Jennifer Meade Tanya Sinclair
 Donnelyn Julien Carolyn Morgan Richard Thompson
 Jennifer Julien Colin Morgan Daniel Yeboah
 Chermaine McQueen Nicole Scott
- 2 Meeting at Midnight** _____ **18**
Azure Hills SDA Church, Grand Terrace, California
Editor: Arthur F. Blinci
Contributors:
 Arthur F. Blinci Susan Parker Morris L. Venden
 Tami McGrew Sarah Uffindell Scott Winters
- 3 Will He or Won't He?** _____ **26**
Stockholm (Sweden) Central SDA Church
Editor: Joseph Higgins
Contributors:
 Joseph F. Higgins Karin Lunberg Tuss Nyberg
 Henrik Illum
- 4 A Father's Response** _____ **34**
Foster Memorial SDA Church, Asheville, North Carolina
Editor: Erin Tyner Miller
Contributors:
 Alex Bryan John Gilmore Erin Tyner Miller
 Garren Carter Judy Gray Pam Yaccarino
- 5 Knowing What Red Is** _____ **42**
Florida Conference, Miami, Florida
Editor: Sergio Torres
Contributors:
 Johanne Benoit Obed Cruz Christopher Mora
 Dorylyn Cartagena Marlissa I. Ledesma
- 6 The Best Kind of Rest** _____ **50**
Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland
Editor: Ruben Escalante
Contributors:
 Heather E. Butler Brian W. Harper Dixil L. Rodriguez
 Barry L. Casey Brian S. Nelson Roger Williams

- 7 Truth and Time** _____ **58**
Bremerton (Washington) SDA Church
Editor: Eleanore Whitchurch
Contributors:
 Gary Fogelquist Dennis Morgan Heather Reseck
 Mark Jones Brian Nixon Wendy Buhler Rexin
- 8 The Ultimate Thriller** _____ **66**
Brixton (England) SDA Church
Editor: Shanda Phillip
Contributors:
 Dora Boateng Derek Lewis Clinton A. Valley
 Myra Brown HopieAnn Platt Karen Wright
 Marc Hack
- 9 Two Seals; One Choice** _____ **74**
International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines
Editor: Ina Longway
Contributors:
 Paul Kotanko Lameck Miyayo Steven Jonah Rantung
 Melissa Martin Ruth P. Pareño Ferdinand O. Regalado
- 10 Lord of the Signs** _____ **82**
Inca Union University, Lima, Peru
Editor: Wilson P. Arohuanca Lagos
Contributors:
 Danilo Cornejo Cornejo Marbella Díaz Panduro Yasmín Díaz Uriarte
 Wilson Arohuanca Lagos William Díaz Panduro
- 11 Facing Down the Trouble** _____ **90**
Rocky Mountain Conference, Denver, Colorado
Editor: Janya Mekelburg
Contributors:
 Julie Annis Delmer Johnson Garry Sudds
 Michael Hufham Dorothy Opp
- 12 A Matter of Life and Death** _____ **98**
Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists, Collegedale, Tennessee
Editor: Pamela Maize Harris
Contributors:
 Alicia Goree Jeane Hernández Lewis Tessier
 Pamela Maize Harris R. Lynn Sauls Julie Tillman
- 13 Spaceships and Sing-Alongs** _____ **106**
Seventh-day Adventist Churches in Orlando, Florida, area
Editor: Fred Armstrong
Contributors:
 Fred Armstrong Donna Haerich Patti Hansen Tompkins
 Tami Cinquemani Frank McMillan K. Nicole Yarbroggh



Welcome to *CQ*'s World!

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

In producing this unique Sabbath School Bible-study guide, more than 300 individuals contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety—and occasional repetition—of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond individually to the subject under study.

Worldwide circulation of *CQ* is about 59,000. It is published in the English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Finnish languages.

Have you wondered?

■ You've read a lesson that particularly intrigued you. Is there a way to give CQ some direct feedback? ■ You have a particularly fulfilling personal Bible study approach and wonder if others might benefit if it were applied to the CQ lessons. ■ Or maybe you're looking for a way to get your young adults' group more involved in Bible study.

There's a simple answer . . .

. . . write for CQ.

The very best way of sharing your ideas and reactions to our lessons is to tell us. In fact, we couldn't survive without reader input. But an even better way to get involved is to become a contributing writer for CQ. Tell us you're interested by writing to the

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CQ
COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

This Quarter's Artist



The featured illustrator in this quarter's issue of *CQ* is John Ringhofer, an art major at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He has spent 10 months as a student missionary, teaching third-graders on the Pacific island of Pohnpei. John believes in children's ministry, working for four summers at Cohutta Springs Camp in Georgia. He also enjoys performing music.

Getting the Most Out of *CQ*

Facts You Should Know

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

Pointers for Study

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.

2. The Bible passage on which each week's lesson is based appears in bold type in the "Logos" pages (Monday's portion of the lesson). Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly introduction to give yourself an overview of the lesson.

3. The Bible passage for the week is divided into sections on the "Logos" pages (Monday's portion of the lesson). When studying this section, carefully reread Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the heading.

4. Read remaining sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passage.

5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the quarterly:

"**Introduction**" (Sunday) is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.

"**Logos**" (Monday), as described above, is a guide for direct study of the Bible passage for the week.

"**Testimony**" (Tuesday) presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.

"**Evidence**" (Wednesday) approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.

"**How-To**" (Thursday) discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.

"**Opinion**" (Friday), a personal viewpoint on the lesson, is meant to encourage further thought and discussion.

CQ and the Church

CQ is the General Conference-approved Bible-study guide for the collegiate/young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.*

WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS . . .



“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27).

Lost Without Instructions

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Luke 24:27

Tommy had waited for this moment for the longest while. He had saved enough money to buy an EH-750 model helicopter, the top-of-the-line model he had been admiring in *Aircraft Monthly* magazine. On the way home, he couldn't believe that he had actually managed to get this model. The minute he got home, he ripped open the box, ready to put it together. He held in his hand what looked like a rotor, then something that looked like a wing, yet he wasn't quite sure where these parts should go.

I never considered that putting a model together could be this difficult, he thought. *After all, everyone at the hobby store said that it would not take too long to put it together.* Tommy looked outside his basement window and noticed that it was pitch dark outside. He had wasted all day on something that should never have taken this long. As he was just about to give up, he came across a little booklet. It read "EH-750 Model Helicopter Owner's Manual." He turned the page, and it read "Getting Started With Your New EH-750 Model Helicopter."

How many times do we purchase a product and find out that to use it, we must read the manual? When traveling to a long destination, you usually find a map to

He had wasted all day on something that should never have taken this long.

be most helpful, especially if the journey takes you to unfamiliar parts.

In John 19:1-42, we read about the trial of Jesus, His rejection by the religious leaders, and His cruel death on the cross. He made this sacrifice so we might have life—because He loves us. Along with life, He also gave us an instructional manual, the Bible, so that we can achieve the utmost in life.

This manual provides us with many examples of what to do in various situations. We use it throughout our entire lives, and if we follow the instructions carefully and faithfully, then the result is eternal life. Luke 24:27 says, "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." With every question that you have ever wanted answered, any problem that you may face, you can rest assured that the solution is in the Manual that God has given us—the Holy Bible.

Our lesson this week comes from members of the collegiate class at LaSalle Seventh-day Adventist Church in Montreal, Quebec. We invite you to participate in this lively discussion this week as we share with you, from different perspectives, the idea that Christ is the focus of Scripture. We hope that you will be as blessed in studying this lesson as we have been blessed in preparing it.

By Colin Morgan, a computer technician in Montreal; and Daniel Yeboah, a management student at McGill University, Montreal, Quebec.

Becoming Like Jenkins

LOGOS

Luke 24:27, 44; Isa. 7:14; 9:6, 7; Ps. 2:1-12

Eric nervously opened the envelope bearing the return address of the university to which he had applied for admission. After the salutation, the first line of the letter read, "We are pleased to inform you . . ." He was thus assured that his application for admission to his "first choice" university was accepted.

He had chosen that school solely on the basis of the reputation of one man—Professor Jenkins. Eric wanted to be taught by the best, and in his mind, in the field of economics and finance, there was no better professor than Edwin Jenkins.

Eric registered for two courses taught by Professor Jenkins. He carefully studied every word that fell from Jenkins's mouth. He studied his style, his mannerisms, his methods of analysis, his way of thinking. Eric came to the point that he could anticipate Jenkins's words even before they were spoken, and he knew exactly what response Jenkins expected whenever he asked a question. By studying Jenkins, he had become like Jenkins.

To become like Christ, we must study His character. If "the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork," as David declares (Ps. 19:1), then the Holy Scriptures reveal the character of Christ. In the same way that Eric made Jenkins the center of his attention, so, too, we must make Christ the center of our lives. We must emulate His perfect character as revealed in Scripture.

From Genesis to Revelation, the spotlight is on Jesus. He is the focus of Scripture. In this regard, the final chapter of Luke is significant. Jesus' followers did not quite grasp the hidden and deeper meaning of the Old Testament. On the day of the resurrection, as two of His disciples journeyed to the village of Emmaus, Jesus joined them. "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).

Later in the same chapter, He gave special wisdom to the 11 disciples to enable them to discern the hidden truths contained in the Old Testament: that what was "written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms" (verse 44) was about Him. He taught them that the Scriptures recorded the necessity of His suffering, death on the cross, and resurrection from the dead—all part of the great plan of redemption.

Jesus Christ occupies center stage in the Old Testament, as well as in the New Testament. "The Old Testament sets forth the Son of God as the Messiah, the world's Redeemer; the New Testament reveals Him as Jesus Christ, the Saviour. Every page, either through symbol or reality, reveals some phase of His work and character. Jesus' death on the cross is the ultimate revelation of God's character."¹

Theologians have often pointed to several Old Testament passages as historical accounts of Jesus, from His birth in Bethlehem to His death on Calvary, to His ascension from the Mount of Olives. D. Arthur Delafield cites Genesis 3:15; Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Psalm 2:6-12; 22:1-31; Daniel 9:24-27; Micah 4:8; 5:2; Zechariah 9:9; and Malachi 3:1-3 as the history of Jesus Christ told in advance.²

Isaiah 53 is perhaps the summit of Old Testament prophecies regarding Jesus Christ, the Messiah. In the words of Delafield, theologians "have seen in His life

and death and resurrection unquestioned fulfillment—accurate information in prescient form. But not until they come to the Himalayas of Scripture—Isaiah’s grand and glorious description of the suffering Messiah—do they discern the highest, the greatest, the most sublime unfolding of the character and work of the Son of God.”³

The central theme of the Bible is Jesus, His love for humanity, His reconciliation, and His power to save a dying world from sin. This message is best understood in the light of the cross. A sinless Jesus suffered humiliation, shame, and death because of His infinite love for us. And we have the blessed hope of His return. There is no greater love than this.

This is the message that Christians today are commissioned to proclaim to the world. Our mission is to lift up Christ and Him crucified: “Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ ascended into the heavens, Christ coming again, should so soften, gladden, and fill the mind of the minister that he will present these truths to the people in love and deep earnestness. The minister will then be lost sight of, and Jesus will be made manifest. Lift up Jesus, you that teach the people, lift Him up in sermon, in song, in prayer. Let all your powers be directed to pointing souls, confused, bewildered, lost, to ‘the Lamb of God.’ Lift Him up, the risen Saviour, and say to all who hear, Come to Him who ‘hath loved us, and hath given himself

Jesus Christ occupies center stage in the Old Testament.

for us. Let the science of salvation be the burden of every sermon, the theme of every song. Let it be poured forth in every supplication. Bring nothing into your preaching to supplement Christ, the wisdom and power of God.”⁴

This great privilege is ours. The commission is given to us because all believers are ministers. We are called to be witnesses for Christ.

REACT

1. What comfort can you offer to a friend who has difficulties coping with the day-to-day challenges of life?
2. How would you reply to someone who tells you that he or she believes in the loving Jesus Christ of the New Testament but not in the revengeful God of the Old Testament?

1. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 6.

2. D. Arthur Delafield, *Best of the Best* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1994), p. 13.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

4. *Evangelism*, p. 185.

By Elijah M. James, an economics and finance professor at Dawson College and Concordia University, in Montreal, Quebec.

Love Misunderstood

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Isa. 53:5

Looking back on my childhood days, I remember the horrifying impression the story of Christ's crucifixion had on me. Being a curious child, I wondered what it would be like to be crucified. The idea of nails piercing through the hands and feet of Jesus frightened me. In time, however, Christ's crucifixion became less horrific and more like "just a story" I've heard repeatedly. I became numb to it. Fortunately, the more I read about the cruel death of Jesus—a death in our stead, the more I realized that for us, it was simply love misunderstood.

The Jewish leaders denied Him. His disciples doubted Him. People mocked and cursed Him. The price He paid for preaching the good news of a merciful and all-loving God was death on the cross. Because of this merciful act, we can be forgiven of our sins if we sincerely ask our Saviour. This beautiful promise is further explained by Ellen G. White: "They may pierce the holy temples with the crown of thorns. They may strip from Him His raiment, and quarrel over its division. But they cannot rob Him of His power to forgive sins."¹

It has been said that the cross is *I* crossed out. Jesus substituted Himself for our sake; therefore, His death was ours. "The guilt of every descendent of Adam

It has been said that the cross is *I* crossed out.

was pressing upon His heart. . . . Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. . . . The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man."² What a mighty God we serve, One who not only died to save us but also is capable of redeeming us if we only seek Him.

REACT

1. What can you do to prevent the crucifixion of Christ from becoming just another story?
2. What are some of the ways in which we deny, doubt, mock, and curse Christ?
3. How can you reconcile a merciful God and a just God?
4. What are you willing to give up in order to follow the One who has made the supreme sacrifice?
5. What would become of you if Jesus treated you exactly as you deserve?
6. How would you explain the idea that "Jesus is the word of God"?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 751.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 753.

By Carolyn Morgan, a music student at McGill University, Montreal, Quebec; and Nicole Scott, a special-care counseling student at Vanier College, Montreal, Quebec.

Were We Worth the Price?

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Ps. 22:16

Jesus demonstrated great love for us. “For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet” (Ps. 22:16). This passage, like many other Old Testament passages, points presciently to Jesus. Luke 24:27, 44 tells us that Christ is the focus of the Old Testament.

“Adam will tell you, It is the seed of the woman that shall bruise the serpent’s head.

“Ask Abraham, he will tell you, It is ‘Melchizedek King of Salem,’ King of Peace. Gen. 14:18.

“Jacob will tell you, He is Shiloh of the tribe of Judah.

“Isaiah will tell you, ‘Immanuel,’ ‘Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.’ Isa. 7:14; 9:6.

“Jeremiah will tell you, The Branch of David, ‘the Lord our Righteousness.’ Jer. 23:6.

“Daniel will tell you, He is the Messiah.

“Hosea will tell you, He is ‘the Lord God of hosts; the Lord is his memorial.’ Hosea 12:5.”

In the New Testament, Christ occupies center stage. The Gospels tell us of His

He paid the supreme price, not because we are good, but because He is good.

birth, ministry, death, and resurrection. The acts of the apostles proclaim the good news of salvation through Him, “for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Paul considered himself a servant of Jesus Christ. James referred to himself as “a servant . . . of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:1). Peter named himself “an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:1). John said that his responsibility was to declare what he had seen and heard about Jesus. Jude wrote as “the servant of Jesus Christ” (1:1), and Revelation tells of last-day events and the second coming of Christ.

The evidence comes down heavily in proof that all Scripture focuses on Christ. The great plan of salvation is the greatest manifestation of love, and the culmination of that everlasting love is the cross. He paid the supreme price, not because we are good, but because He is good. He treats us, not as we deserve, but according to our needs. Were we worth the price?

* *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 578, 579.

By *Chermaine McQueen*, an accounting student at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec; and *Tanya Sinclair*, a social-science student at Dawson College, Montreal, Quebec.

The Living Word

HOW-TO

Key Text: John 1:1, 14

I remember Sabbath School classes in which we discussed Old Testament stories: killing Philistines, fiery judgment, stonings, harsh punishments. The God of the Old Testament seemed like a chronically angry, vindictive person, quite unlike the kind Jesus of the New Testament. It is easy to see the Bible as a disjointed collection of books with no consistent image of God.

How can we understand the Bible as a description of God's character? How can we relate the God of the Old Testament to the Jesus of the New Testament?

Even Jesus' disciples misunderstood what God is really like. When Philip asked Jesus to show him the Father, Jesus replied, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?' Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?" (John 14:9, 10, NIV).

"Jesus' mission was to come to a world that was in complete misunderstanding of God, to show the world what the Father is really like, what He has always been like, and will always be like. The best way to know God is to learn from Jesus.

The God of the Old Testament seemed like a chronically angry, vindictive person.

Jesus' life and death give the clearest picture to be found anywhere of what God is like. He said: 'If you know me, then you will know my Father also' (John 14:7, NRSV)."

These are several guidelines to keep in mind when you interpret Scripture:

1. Know the Author. To understand the nature of God, we must first build a personal relationship with Him. We must learn His characteristics through personal experience.

2. Jesus Himself is the Word of God. Jesus' life was God's ultimate way of expressing His love to His children. His life represents not only Him, but also the Father and the Holy Spirit.

3. All Scripture must be interpreted with Christ in mind. As the living Word of God, Jesus is the living Bible. Every part of the written Word points to Him. All Scripture must be interpreted through His life.

4. Base doctrines on Christ. Often we focus on obscure single passages as the basis of doctrine. Jesus' life must be the focus of every doctrine or religious belief we have.

* Morris Venden, *To Know God* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983), p. 13.

By Donnelly Julien, a special-care counseling student at Vanier College, Montreal, Quebec; and Richard Thompson, a doctoral student in psychology at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec.

What Manner of Love?

OPINION

Key Text: John 15:13

Remember what it felt like to be in love? Sweaty palms, racing heartbeats, drastically diminished appetite, and tied tongue. These and similar experiences might have occurred every time you felt you were in love. Along with these great feelings and highly charged emotions came heartaches, anger, and an empty feeling, perhaps better characterized as loneliness. How does that kind of love compare with the love of Christ, which is everlasting, a love that can fill a void, a love that no one can ever subdue?

John 15:13 tells of a very special kind of love—that which induces a person to lay down his life for his friends. Christ has demonstrated this kind of love. He has manifest the ultimate measure of love—love that is incapable of adequate human expression. Yet He did not stop there. He has also given us hope, peace, and strength and has promised never to leave us comfortless (John 14:18). Only He is capable of giving us peace unlike any that this world can offer (verse 27).

Just like us, Jesus wants to give the best He can offer to the ones He loves. He has prepared a paradise that is so magnificent that it is beyond anyone's imagination (1 Cor. 2:9).

Knowing all this, why is it that we seem to prefer the love that humanity has

In order to know Christ, we must first understand His love.

to offer? What more will He have to do to convince us of His love for us? In order to know Christ, we must first understand His love. We can accomplish this understanding through the study of His Word. Do not let His love and sacrifice be in vain. Accept His love and claim the peace that He offers. Christ is the focus of Scripture, and Christ is love.

REACT

1. Is there anything that is prohibiting you from realizing the benefits of God's love? What steps can you take to remove the obstacles?
2. Suggest reasons that we so often rely on human love rather than God's love.
3. Compare the excitement you feel about the love of a friend, a fiancé, or a spouse with the excitement you feel about Jesus' love. If there is a difference, how would you explain it?

By Jennifer Julien, a health-and-social-sciences-management student at McGill University, Montreal, Quebec; and Jennifer Meade, a freelance voice trainer in Montreal, Quebec.

MEETING AT MIDNIGHT



“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Incarnation vs. Reincarnation

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: John 3:1-21

Two men faced each other in the still night air. The One knew his visitor's motive and intentions before a word was spoken. The visitor, a highly educated man, could not perceive the thoughts of the One before him. Somehow all the visitor's knowledge, power, prestige, and wealth had left him unsatisfied and had led to this secret meeting in the night.

As Nicodemus prepared to speak, he felt the piercing, yet somehow gentle, pull of the Teacher's eyes. He knew his very soul was being read, and it frightened him. His calm, highly refined composure slipped out of his control under the Teacher's gaze. In a desperate attempt to manipulate the conference back into the logical, emotionally detached format that served as his comfort zone, he frantically blurted out, "Teacher, we know You are sent from God, because no one can do the miracles You do unless God is with him."

Once again Nicodemus felt his feet firmly planted in the solid ground of logic. And he knew the Teacher must confirm or deny the camouflaged question. Nicodemus savored the pride of his expert ability, and his triumph was as grand as his frantic confusion a moment before.

"I tell you the truth, unless you're born again, you cannot be in God's king-

You claim to be the One, yet you voice a doctrine created in the bed of heathens to the east?

dom." This unforeseen reply sent Nicodemus's mind reeling back, psychologically sprawling on the intellectual soil that had felt so firm only a moment before. Irritation crashed through his consciousness, restrained only by his highly trained intellectual mask, the one the pharisaical school had cultivated so well. He'd been tricked; this simple, uneducated One could spar with the best of them, and Nicodemus knew himself to be one of the best. As his anger whirled up defensively, the idea of heresy flashed through his thoughts.

Born again? Heretic! You claim to be the One, yet you voice a doctrine created in the bed of heathens to the east? You think I can be tricked, that I have not studied the other religions, that I know nothing of the doctrine of reincarnation?

But Nicodemus quickly squelched the angry thoughts in his typical highbrow style. He would entangle the Teacher with questions.

Even before Jesus brought His revolutionary ideas to the Jewish nation, the deceiver had created exact opposites to entrap those he could. One of those, the doctrine of reincarnation, dates as far back as 2000 B.C. It is possible that Nicodemus had studied historical and religious documents from neighboring cultures containing the idea of reincarnation.

Do I at first react with accusation and excuses to Jesus' call to surrender?

By Susan Parker, English teacher and library assistant, Loma Linda Academy, Loma Linda, California.

An Ignorant Intellectual

LOGOS

John 3:1-21

Uncommon Ignorance (John 3:1-10)

Verse 2: One who is impressed by miracles and can discuss great theological teachings.

Verse 3: Can't "see" or understand righteousness by faith (kingdom of God) without spiritual glasses. Jesus gets right to the point concerning the need to be born again.

Verse 4: Nicodemus asks how. Then he demonstrates that the unspiritual can only become literal.

Verses 5, 6: Jesus contrasts the literal and the spiritual and then shows that the new birth is necessary to enter into the experience of righteousness by faith.

Verses 7, 8: The new birth is a *must* even though it is a mystery that we cannot fully explain.

Verse 9: "How can these things be?"

Verse 10: You mean you're a church leader and don't know about these things?

Jumping or Diving (verses 11-13)

If you're not comfortable jumping off the back porch, how can you take up sky diving? If we don't understand something as basic as the new birth, what business have we discussing anything else? If we can't publish books and compilations on conversion and the new birth, what folly to publish other things. If our magazines and forums can't address this subject, what good does it do to try to soar into the heavens? If Nicodemus and the rest of us had experienced the new birth, we would not only understand it ourselves but would be able to speak intelligently of it to others. We discover the secrets of heaven, not by speculating about them, but only by revelation from the One who came down from heaven.

The Heart of the Gospel (verses 14-21)

Verses 14, 15: Jesus is lifted up on the cross so believers should not perish.

Verses 16, 17: God does not condemn (or judge) us for being born on the wrong planet. He is trying to see how many people He can save!

Verse 18: We determine the outcome of our judgment by our belief or unbelief.

Verses 19-21: Here's how to know whether you are evil: if you are *not* coming to the Light (Jesus).

It is not theological discussion that enlightens the soul but the experience of righteousness by faith, which begins with the new birth. However, no one can understand this without the spiritual eyesight brought to the sinner by the Holy Spirit. Conversion is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that produces a change of attitude toward God and creates a new capacity for knowing God that we didn't even have before.

There is no safety in a merely legalistic, do-and-don't religion. The Christian life is a transformation of character. Although we may not know the time or place of its happening, we can know whether or not it has happened. And although we

cannot convert ourselves or anyone else, we can encourage the environment in which it happens.*

Nicodemus discovered a new way to study the Scriptures, not to discuss a theory, but to receive life for the soul by seeking to know God rather than simply religious teachings.

In the genuine spiritual life we experience new thoughts and desires. Thus obedience becomes a delight rather than a duty. And that is the only kind of obedience that is real. Fake obedience is worthless. But if we keep coming to Jesus, the Light, He, through the Holy Spirit, will deal with our evil deeds, create in us a new life altogether, and thus give us the *gift* of genuine obedience.

REACT

1. Do you agree or disagree that conversion is one of the most neglected topics in the Christian church? Why?
2. How can theological discussion be an escape from God?
3. What is the difference between studying the Bible for information and studying it for spiritual enlightenment?
4. Through what avenues can the impressions from the Holy Spirit, which lead

If you're not comfortable jumping off the back porch, how can you take up sky diving?

the soul to Christ, be received?

5. Are conversion and surrender the same? Explain your answer.
6. Do conversion and constant surrender take place at the same time? Explain your answer.
7. How do we, today, behold the uplifted Saviour?

* *The Desire of Ages*, p. 172.

Heaven's Other Gift

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Acts 1:8

From our earliest years, we've committed to memory "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, NIV). This is the gift that makes our salvation possible.

Once we are born again, covered with Christ's robe of righteousness, and begin our new-birth experience with Christ, does God end His gifts to us?

The gift of God's Son, Jesus, prepares us to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). All of heaven is waiting to share God's other gift with us on a personal basis. Just like the gift of His Son, Jesus, the gift of the Holy Spirit is available to *all* who are willing to receive.

"In the great and measureless gift of the Holy Spirit are contained all of heaven's resources. It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men. If all were willing to receive, all would become filled with His Spirit."¹ As we begin our daily walk with Jesus,

"In the great and measureless gift of the Holy Spirit are contained all of heaven's resources."

through the experience of a "new birth," all of the "resources of heaven" are available to assist us in the times of our greatest need.

As we grow daily in our personal relationship with Jesus, our friend and Saviour, we will desire to share His love with others. We will become Christ's witnesses throughout the world. Will we be alone in this task? The promise is given, "All who consecrate soul, body, and spirit to God will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical and mental power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in heart and mind. The grace of God enlarges and multiplies their faculties, and every perfection of the divine nature comes to their assistance in the work of saving souls. Through cooperation with Christ they are complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence."²

Are you willing to choose and make these heavenly gifts a part of your life today?

1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 419.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 827.

By Arthur F. Blinci, associate executive director, Adventist Risk Management, Riverside, California.

Mystery of Life

EVIDENCE

Key Text: John 3:3

You cannot choose to be born. Two haploid cells join, and the chromosomes mingle; you are conceived, unique in the world. But you cannot think or decide. Mitotically you divide into a morula of cells, which becomes implanted in the uterine wall. Maternal secretions nourish you and support your growth and differentiation. By the twenty-third day, your heart starts beating, and at the twentieth week your hearing apparatus is intact. When the time is right, all your organs and systems are mature enough to sustain life, and you are born.

Christ and His church come together in love to conceive new life—yours. All you can do is accept the nourishment provided and grow. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to give you glimpses of God's goodness so that faith may be born in you. The new birth is a mystery. No one knows when the sperm and ovum unite or exactly when the mother's pain and pushing will result in a new child. Likewise, none of us can tell when new spiritual life is conceived or how long until the work of the Spirit will result in a new converted life.

No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. "Everyone who believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:15, NIV). To be born again means to believe. And the word *believe* indicates an ongoing process. When you are

Christ and His church come together in love to conceive new life—yours.

converted, you choose to believe in God's goodness. You believe today, you believe tomorrow, you believe when you feel good, and you choose to believe when you are in pain and it no longer makes sense to believe.

This conversion has brought peace to my life. Having grown up in a Christian family, I can always remember the pull of the Holy Spirit. When things worked out well and it suited my purpose, it was easy to believe. During the times when God provided no way out of my pain, in anger I turned away from Him. My commitment vacillated constantly. But the Holy Spirit still worked in me. Finally, my perspective was changed. I was able to believe in God's goodness and chose to judge my circumstances from that foundation, rather than judging God by my circumstances. Peace came, not as a good feeling, but as a confidence in Someone.

We may be fetal in our walk with Christ, or we may be a newborn converted Christian. In either case, it is the work of Christ to change us. All we can do is accept the nourishment offered. He will bring us to the point of choosing to trust Him as a lifetime commitment, as well as in our daily walk.

REACT

How is human fetal development and birth like the Christian life?

By Sarah Uffindell, a medical student at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

Let's Make a Baby!

HOW-TO

Key Text: John 3:8

Well, my brother was about to find out what life in the real world is all about. No more of this footloose and fancy-free stuff. No more skipping away carelessly for the weekend. No more sleeping in and lazing the day away. It was time for his wife and him to have a baby. I felt a thrill shiver through my body. My joy knew no bounds! Because, you see, misery loves company.

For 13 long years, I have been in the deep and the thick of it. Two beautiful daughters have taught me much, primarily about humility, something I secretly thought my brother could use more of. My joy at the anticipation of watching him be humbled could not be measured.

They are planners. They chose December to conceive this child. I chuckled. Lesson number one: kids never operate on your schedule. This was going to be more fun than I had hoped. January arrived and with it a positive pregnancy test.

Pondering this, I thought of couples who have tried for months or years to conceive a child but with no success, and of the couples who never tried, didn't even desire, and were surprised by the news of a pregnancy. What is this? Who decides

For 13 long years I have been in the deep and the thick of it.

when this works and when it doesn't? Where does this magical spark of life come from?

God is the source of all life, physical, intellectual, and spiritual. To Nicodemus, He compares conversion with the physical birth of a baby. Our spiritual life cannot begin until we have been born again, any more than our physical life can begin before our physical birth. What did you do to become born? Conversion is a miracle of new life, which none of us can create. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit.*

A man once asked me how he could achieve a conversion. He had been attempting to build a spiritual life by church attendance and devotional time. It wasn't happening. "Am I leaving something out?" he asked. There was nothing that I knew of. It seemed up to the Holy Spirit now. He resolved to continue. A year later he was baptized—assured of his conversion.

REACT

Should we baptize those who admit they have not been converted but who wish to obey the Scriptures? Explain your answer.

* *The Desire of Ages*, p. 189.

By Tami McGrew, associate pastor at the Azure Hills SDA Church, Grand Terrace, California.

Blessed Are the Risk Takers

OPINION

Key Text: John 3:4

Risk is a healthy essential to success in life. Without risk, most of us would become complacent, lonely couch potatoes.

Steve is a good example of somebody who loved to challenge the world around him. He loved to study nature, question the Bible to understand why he believed the way he did, strive for self-improvement, and take up a new sport now and then. These risks can be very rewarding and bring us to a deeper understanding of ourselves and God. Soon Steve began to question the negative effects of sin. He began to believe that he could avoid the negative consequences of sin if he could just be logical enough.

Think about the moment when we decide to sin. Each of us, like Steve, can admit that when we sin we believe for a moment we can avoid its negative consequences. When tempted to sin, we know that acting on that temptation would not strengthen our spiritual connection with our heavenly Father. But we choose to indulge anyway, justifying things by creating a new picture of God that gives us the freedom of doing whatever we choose to do.

The desire for happiness, freedom, and love is healthy. However, our relationship with God will lack growth and honesty unless we submit to Him. Many peo-

When we sin, we believe for a moment we can avoid its negative consequences.

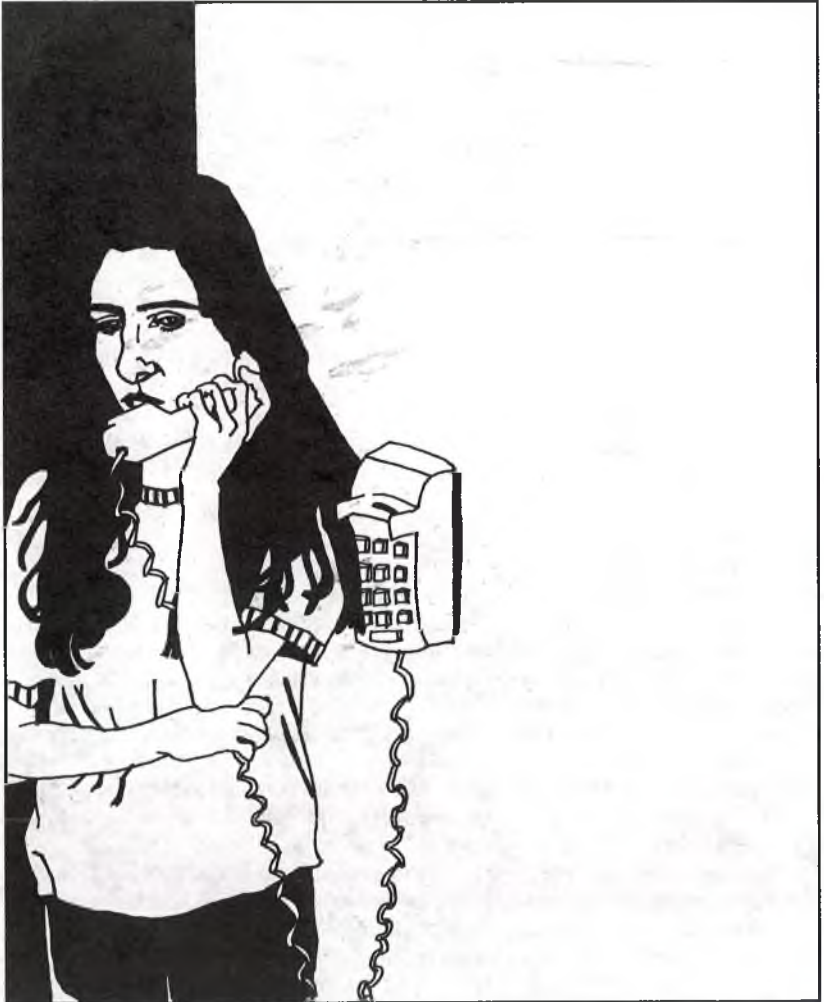
ple define submission as living in a cage, forced to be good because of somebody else's selfish desires. True submission in response to love is key to understanding what it means to be born again.

Nicodemus found it hard to grasp this concept as he thought of works. He wanted to know what he should do to be born again. Striving hard to correct our sinful behavior will not result in righteousness or a closer walk with God. Admitting that our desire to sin is too strong for us to handle is an early step in choosing to be born again. We need to admit that acting alone, we cannot stop our desire to sin; and sin is destructive.

Sin is separation from God. As we learn just how much He loves us and how much He wants to heal us from the painful consequences of being separated from Him, we will begin to understand that submission of our own will to our heavenly Father, somebody who loves us, brings joy, freedom, and fulfillment. Jesus encourages healthy risk taking while in submission to Him. With Jesus as our guide, our risks will lead us to a greater understanding of His will in our lives, as well as provide wisdom for our daily living.

By Scott Winters, development assistant for the advancement office at Loma Linda University Medical Center, Loma Linda, California.

WILL HE OR WON'T HE?



“Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them” (Exod. 25:8).

The Voice on the End of the Line

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rom. 8:34

Oh no, please tell me it isn't true. Tell me it isn't true! Natasha looked around the miserable, cell-like room. Actually it was a cell, and she was behind bars. What happened last night? Why was she in this crowded place? Why was she in jail? She hadn't done anything wrong . . . had she? Then it all came back to her: the party, the drinks, the laughter, her friends, but what happened after that? She just couldn't quite remember, but at some point she did remember vomiting over a couple of police officers and being put in a car.

Her thoughts turned to her father. (Now her head throbbed.) What would he say when he found out—because he would eventually. With some fancy explanation, she would tell him all that had happened, and they would laugh together about how foolishly she had behaved, and all would be forgotten. Then she remembered her father's last warning, not to return home if she ever got in trouble once more.

Natasha's father was stern but just, and he loved her dearly. So why couldn't

What would her father say when he found out—because he would eventually.

he understand that all she wanted to do was have some fun while she was young? Why couldn't he understand that the standards he had set for the family to live by were next to impossible to live up to? Had not she rebelled against those standards many times? How could he even think that it was possible that anyone, much less a young person, could live up to them? And then there was Mama to think of: Dear Mama. Would she again intervene, as she had done countless times before? Could Natasha even be so brazen as to ask her? Had the line been crossed once too often?

After a lot of wrestling with her fear, Natasha finally assembled enough courage to phone home. With trembling fingers, she dialed the number, hoping that Mama would be first to the phone. One ring, two rings, three rings—if it was Father, Natasha was not sure whether she would talk to him; in fact, she knew she wouldn't. Four, five, six. It seemed like an eternity. Natasha removed the receiver from her ear, ready to hang up the phone, when she heard a faint voice. Immediately she raised the receiver and was met with a warm and concerned "Hello." It was Mama. . . .

Mama patiently listened to her daughter's story. She told Natasha that Father had forgiven her. Natasha had only to call. Tears came to Natasha's eyes.

By Tuss Nyberg, a business financial analyst from Stockholm, Sweden.

Shadow of the Future

LOGOS

Lev. 4:1-35; Heb. 9:1-14; 10:1-12; 1 Cor. 10:3, 4

Hebrews is one of my favorite books in the Bible. It comes close to me personally as a Christian. Christ is in the spotlight throughout the entire book, and the result of His mission to this earth is the subject of chapters 9 and 10.

Echo of Past Glory (Heb. 9:1-10)

Do you like history? In the beginning of chapter 9, the author is reviewing a glorious past. I have the same feeling when I think of the time when Sweden was one of the superpowers of Old Europe (that is, after the Vikings), governing much land that now belongs to other countries.

In these verses, the author recounts the beauty of the tabernacle. He is living in a time when the Jews no longer rule themselves, but are suffering under another sovereign power, worshiping in a temple built by a king who has sold out to the enemy (Herod). The old tabernacle was blueprinted by God for the Israelites when God Himself led them out from the clutches of another empire—Egypt.

However many golden furnishings he describes, the activity of the tabernacle is still insufficient to save anyone. As the author continues into the holiest rite of the Jewish worship—the yearly service of atonement by the high priest—it still is not enough. Superficial cleansing and sacrificing are only regulations that cannot be anything but indications of the new order to come. They cannot “clear the conscience of the worshiper” (verse 9, NIV). Neither can our rituals of Adventism. The outside practices are never enough to save.

Blood to Clear a Conscience (verses 11-14)

It is easy to see why the writer of Hebrews has taken the example of the atonement to point to Christ. Two important characteristics of this sacrifice are:

- Only the high priest performed it, going into the Most Holy Place only once a year (I used to wonder who dusted the place, the high priest?).
- Its purpose was to offer sacrifice for the sins of the whole people at one time.

The author prepares the ground properly for naming Jesus the high priest, who goes to sacrifice once and for all for the entire population of earth. But the difference here is that Christ is both sacrifice and high priest at the same time. The author subtly points it out by calling Christ “high priest” in verse 11 and then “sacrifice,” with the symbolic words “offered himself unblemished” (verse 14).

So why does the text mention Christ’s going into the Most Holy Place in heaven? I believe it is because after dying for us, His function is different from what it was before He became human. He is not “only” Creator and God, but He offers the payment for our sins, as well as being the payment Himself.

A Shadow of Good Things (10:1-4)

Hebrews describes the sacrificial system as a shadow of Christ. I see it as a long shadow of a cross lying over the altars of the tabernacle. This symbol of shadows echoes 1 Corinthians 13, where Paul describes our relationship to God as not having the clear sight of perfect understanding and seeing. Barclay expounds on

the difference between the words in Hebrews 10:1.

“It means a pale, nebulous reflection, a mere outline or silhouette, a form without reality and without substance. He says that they do not give a real image . . . a detailed production. It actually does mean . . . a photograph if there had been such a thing in these days.”*

According to Hebrews, the sacrifices can never be more than reminders of imperfection. But Christ’s sacrifice is done once, for all time, with no need for repetition. And although we can see only the shadow of the way He is, we still can approach Him. Even though we should be drawn away like opposing poles on a magnet by the difference between God and us, we have the chance to begin to see God, sometimes to see Him clearer than any photograph.

To Do Your Will (verses 5-12)

The author of Hebrews is now quoting from the Psalms, putting the psalmist’s words into Christ’s mouth. Doing so, he is changing the text somewhat. A body is being prepared in the quotation (verse 5), whereas in the original psalm, it is ears that have been opened by God. The difference results from the author’s quotation from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) instead of

I used to wonder who dusted the place, the high priest?

the Hebrew manuscript. We can give our ears to hear what God says, but Christ’s obedience went farther, including His whole body, His life.

The tabernacle is a symbol, showing us how willing God is to enable us to become closer to Him. He is willing to do everything—including to die—to pay with blood and death the debt we owe. And not only do we receive forgiveness, but also the hope of a clear photograph of pure love, God’s eternal face.

REACT

1. Do you have a “glorious past” that you sometimes look back on with longing, even though it is not sufficient anymore to save you? What are you willing to do to let it go?

2. What do you think of the “cosmic law” of transgression’s being paid for by death, either of the guilty or of someone without blame in their stead? How does it fit your view of yourself and the society around you?

* William Barclay, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh, Scotland: The Saint Andrew Press, 1972), p. 125.

Foreign Exchange

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Eph. 1:7

For any who have experienced the drama of traveling and the trauma of trying to get the best exchange rate, it is an adventure in itself. I hadn't given the issue much thought until I studied in Sweden for a year. Phrases such as "The pound is strong against the krona" didn't figure much until I felt the pinch of my host country's high cost of living. Often I would hold off changing my money, hoping I would gain more for less. Sometimes it was fair; most times unfair. I never, in my own estimation, got a fair exchange.

In forgiving us, Christ was involved in an unfair foreign exchange. Simply, for our sins Christ gives us His righteousness. "Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share."¹ A real *foreign* exchange, totally unfair for Christ.

If we were to contemplate that Christ was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8), perhaps we would really appreciate the cost of forgiveness. "The sins of the people were transferred in figure to the officiating priest, who was a mediator for the people. The priest himself could not become an offering for sin, . . . for he also was a sinner. Therefore . . . he killed a lamb without

Often I would hold off changing my money, hoping I would gain more for less.

blemish; the penalty of sin was transferred to the innocent beast, which thus became his immediate substitute, and typified the perfect offering of Jesus Christ. Through the blood of this victim, man looked forward by faith to the blood of Christ which would atone for the sins of the world."²

"Every dying victim was a type of Christ. . . . Sacrifices were explicitly planned by God Himself to teach this great and momentous truth, that through the blood of Christ alone there is forgiveness of sins. . . . Yet it is with amazement that angels behold the indifference of men to whom these truths mean so much."³

What value, if any, can be found in sin (see Rom. 6:23) in contrast to the gift of God, which can be exchanged freely. Receive more for less. Amaze some angels!

REACT

If you were to sacrifice a lamb today, what would it mean to you? Would Hebrews 6:4-6 make a difference?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

2. *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 230.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

By Joseph F. Higgins, a law student at Stockholm (Sweden) University.

Solution: Jesus Christ

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Jer. 33:8

Forgiveness has been defined as overcoming anger toward one's wrongdoer for moral reasons, those reasons being repentance; good motives; weariness of suffering, or humiliation. However, it is acknowledged that "forgiveness cannot be accounted for in ordinary moral and secular terms—that it takes us beyond morality and into a religious dimension that transcends or suspends the ordinarily ethical."¹

Jean Hampton, a political philosopher, researched some Hebrew words used in the Old Testament in reference to forgiveness and discovered that when a "wrongdoer is forgiven, it is presumed that he has committed an immoral action, but the forgiver nonetheless 'forgets' what the wrongdoer has done to him, not literally, but in the sense that he will not let the wrongdoing continue to intrude into his dealings with the wrongdoer in order that they can reestablish some kind of relationship."² Nevertheless, Hampton believes that the forgiving of an action is preparatory to the forgiveness of the wrongdoer. Is God's forgiveness any different?

A paradoxical problem exists. God hates every sin, yet loves every sinner. Since all are sinners, the whole world stands "guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19) subject to death (6:23). Solution: Jesus Christ, who was offered as a "propitia-

The forgiving of an action is preparatory to the forgiveness of the wrongdoer.

tion" (KJV) or as an "expiation" (RSV) for our sins (1 John 4:10). Other synonyms are "recover, reclaim and restore. Therefore, "Mere forgiveness of sin is not the sole result of the death of Jesus. He made the infinite sacrifice, not only that sin might be removed, but that human nature might be restored, rebeautified, reconstructed."³ "To be pardoned in the way Christ pardons, is not only to be forgiven, but to be renewed in the spirit of our mind."⁴ "It is not only forgiveness *for* sin, but reclaiming *from* sin."⁵

God's forgiveness changes lives. It is not based on a pagan idea of appeasing an angry or arbitrary God, but on an unfathomable love whereby His wrath toward our sin is turned away from us and borne by Himself. This forgiveness deals with the sin and sinner together. It gives true peace of mind and a conscience free from guilt. Any less than this is not to be forgiven.

1. Jeffrie G. Murphy and Jean Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 30.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

3. *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 154.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 190.

5. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114.

By Joseph F. Higgins, a law student at Stockholm (Sweden) University.

Blood and Gore!

HOW-TO

Key Text: Heb. 10:8-10

Sacrificing animals is a bit weird. Imagine what the tabernacle and temple must have looked like, blood splattered all over the altars, the ground, not to mention the priests. It must have stunk too! Personally, I find the smell of lots of blood quite sickening (probably why I am a pastor instead of a doctor).

The sacrifices belong to another world, a rougher, more crude society, compared to our techno-plastic nineties. But sacrifice is always poignant. How would you feel about seeing the sweet, innocent lamb knifed and dying for something you did? I would feel terrible. Yet that is the sacrifice we accept from Christ every time we ask for forgiveness. It is not an animal, but a fellow human being and Creator-God whose death makes our forgiveness possible.

What is a sacrifice, then? Giving something up *painfully*. Jesus willingly gave up being in the form of God and came to live, as a man, for *us*. What can we give in return?

- The communication and friendship with God, a friendship that Christ died to restore.
- Sacrifices of our own.

It is a fellow human being and Creator-God whose death makes our forgiveness possible.

Barclay says in his commentary on the book of Hebrews that what God wants from us is obedience.* It is a recurring theme in the Bible, God trying to make humanity realize that His way is the best.

But obedience to God is not boring. I hope you don't think of obedience as the boring behavior that our parents insisted on. There is a vast difference. Every time in my life that I have decided to follow God's idea of the right choice, something incredible has happened. I have had more fun and excitement than I could have dreamed.

God's view of me, what I can handle and accomplish, is definitely more advanced than mine. This makes sense; when I have Him as the power pack of my life, I find myself doing things I never would have dared on my own. God's kind of obedience is listening to the Holy Spirit's voice, daring to choose the roads God points out, which often turn out to be much more demanding and innovative than anything we poor lamebrains could figure out.

* William Barclay, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh, Scotland: The Saint Andrew Press, 1972), p. 125.

By Karin Lunberg, pastor of the Stockholm (Sweden) Central SDA Church.

Blurred Vision?

OPINION

Key Text: Heb. 10:1

What does the sanctuary mean for us today? Does the knowledge we have from the Bible about the Israelite tabernacle, the latter temples, and the heavenly sanctuary fill a purpose in our everyday life? One of God's greatest problems with His children seems to relate to their tendency to misunderstand His purpose and as a result fall into habitual formalism. God gave to the Israelites all the regulations of the sacrificial system and ceremonial law to make clear His plan of salvation. It was to be a constant reminder of His love for them in the world.

As years passed on, the people slowly lost sight of the true purpose and meaning of the sanctuary. By the time Jesus arrived on the scene, there were only a few who recognized Him to be the fulfillment of the law. The Jews were proud of the law and the traditions that distinguished them from other nations. They adored the temple, which for them was more a national symbol than a true place of worship. Looking back, it is tragic to notice that as a people they, who had all the Scriptures and had received so much instruction from God, missed the point—totally!

Is there a possibility that Adventists living 2,000 years after the fulfill-

The Jews were proud of the law and the traditions that distinguished them from other nations.

ment of the sacrificial system might repeat the same mistake and lose focus of the central issue—Jesus Christ? Is there a risk of the church's becoming an exclusive club with an extraordinarily large membership that cares primarily about our own organization, how we eat or drink, health, clothes, education, Sabbath observance?

For me, the point of the sanctuary always has been and always will be about turning our eyes upon Jesus as our Redeemer and Friend. I pray that we will not lose sight of Him in the good principles and traditions of the church, but that we try to get to know Him who is the only true source of life.

REACT

1. In what practical ways can we make the sanctuary, and its service, more relevant to us in the 1990s?

2. How does the message of the sanctuary affect us in our everyday lives?

3. How does feeling forgiven affect being forgiven?

4. What can you do to avoid treating Christ's payment for your forgiveness as something automatic, to be received whenever you feel like indulging in your "favorite sins"?

5. Which methods do you use to discern God's will?

By Henrik Illum, a medical student from Stockholm, Sweden.

A FATHER'S RESPONSE



“Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Rev. 14:7).

What Will He Say?

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Matt. 7:11

I was 19 years old, and I felt completely hopeless. I had grown up in a good Christian home and had been told that if I read my Bible and prayed every day I would grow, grow, grow—the only problem was that I had no idea what that meant. Looking for something upon which to base my hopes, I would sometimes go to church, but the more I went, the more I felt I was wasting my time. It was all irrelevant, it didn't apply to my life, and it wasn't helping me with the pain or giving me hope.

I was all alone in a big mean world, and no one really cared. I had tried various drugs to escape reality, but they lasted only a little while, and then the pain would come back twice as strong. I would go out dancing and drinking until 4:00 a.m. every Friday and Saturday night in hopes that this could somehow ease the pain that now seemed too deep to bear.

And now this. I was sitting in a police station waiting for my father to come pick me up. I had just been arrested for shoplifting. As I sat with my hands pressed against my face, I felt numb all over. What would become of me? I wasn't quite sure that it was worth going on.

My father finally arrived, and it took everything I had to look up into his dis-

I had just been arrested for shoplifting.

appointed face. I had no idea how he would react, and, quite frankly, I didn't want to know. He signed some papers, and we walked to the car. Once inside, the silence overcame me. The tension was thick, and I just kept wondering what he was going to say. Finally he pulled off the road, and again our eyes met. "Garren," he said, "I just want you to know a few things. First of all, I want you to know that I'm disappointed in you. The things you're doing are wrong. They can lead only to pain and emptiness. I don't want you to be empty. More than all that, I want you to know I love you and I always will."

Those words and my father's attitude in this situation changed my life. They helped me to understand how God hates sin but, more than anything, loves the sinner. Our reaction to His love will be the only thing that will prepare us for His judgment. Remember, He is our judge, but He is also our advocate.

By Garren Carter, a graduate student in community counseling, Asheville, North Carolina.

Judgment: Fear or Joy

LOGOS

Leviticus 16; Dan. 7:9-14; 8:14; 9:24-27; Rev. 3:5; 6:9-11

Judgment—Terror!

As a child I pondered the great judgment. In an arena of holy angels, one lone person (obviously me) bows before a distant, unapproachable God sitting enthroned above His formidable law. In the foreground, two angels scour the record books for at least one sin I had forgotten to confess so they could keep me from polluting heaven's perfection.

Then came the greatest terror of my life when as a teenager I read the chapter "The Investigative Judgment" in *The Great Controversy*. The horror of eternal damnation overwhelmed me as I realized I could never measure up. But—maybe if I tried harder. . . . This began the vicious trying-failing cycle, the legalism, perfectionism, and despair that lasted nearly three decades. Afraid of other impossible demands in Scripture, my minimal Bible study dwindled further: "Don't tell me more. I can't handle what I already know!" Finally my life fell apart, and I gave up. Maybe this was just what the Lord was waiting for (Rom. 7:14-25; Gal. 3:21-24).

Enter Jesus

In desperation I agreed to attend a Bible study that became the turning point of my life. How I had totally missed God's love, grace, and the gospel after having been a lifelong "Christian," even attending Christian schools for eight years, I don't know. But as I asked the Lord to teach me what the Bible *really* said (Jer. 33:3; John 16:13), the truth gradually began to sink in that God sent His Son to save, not condemn, sinners, that lost sinners cast their own verdict by rejecting Christ (John 3:16-21). Studying extensively in Romans and Galatians, I was amazed to discover that righteousness never could come by human works but by accepting the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ and *His* perfect righteousness in exchange for all my sin (Rom. 3:20-28; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 2:16-21). Because of Jesus, eternal life was a gift that even I, imperfect as I was, could actually receive by faith (Eph. 2:1-9; 1 John 5:10-13).

With undeserved love like this burning into my soul, everything changed. It was no longer *my* burden to fix my life; I gave it totally to the Lord in enthusiastic gratitude, and it was now *His* job to do the transforming I desperately wanted and finally saw as feasible (Phil. 1:6; 2:13; Eph. 2:10). Bible study became exciting. Because of Jesus, my Saviour and High Priest, I could "approach the throne of grace with confidence" and find mercy and help (Heb. 4:14-16, NIV; 10:10-23), exchanging my filthy-rag righteousness for the robe of Christ's perfect righteousness (Isa. 64:6; Rev. 3:5; 7:9-14; 12:11). With Christ as Saviour and Intercessor, I was no longer content with my old life or trapped by sin and death (John 8:31-36; Rom. 6:22, 23; 8:31-39).

Judgment—Good News

The Bible overflows with this good news. Even the formerly terrifying judgment is good news because Christ Himself is our Judge (Acts 10:42, 43). He is not begging an angry, destruction-bent God to spare us. As we receive Him, we are

no longer condemned, but we have “crossed over from death to life” (John 5:22-24). Then we may have “confidence on the day of judgment” while His “perfect love drives out fear” (1 John 4:18, NIV). “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”; instead, we are “set . . . free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:1, 2) and are vindicated and avenged before our accuser as God “[pronounces] judgment in favor of the saints” (Dan. 7:22; Deut. 32:36, 43; Rev. 22:11). As co-heirs with Christ, we anticipate His judgment, joyfully reverencing God, giving Him glory and worshiping our Creator, Redeemer, and Lord (Rev. 14:6-12).

But would this good news, so clear in Scripture, correlate with *The Great Controversy*? To my delight, I discovered that when viewed in the light of the everlasting gospel, even this investigative judgment is good news. Our redemption is drawing near!

But Beware

Receiving Christ is more than saying the sinner’s prayer once and continuing life as usual. Truly knowing Jesus, which comes from firsthand, Spirit-led Bible study and communication with Him, brings transformation from the inside out. Total commitment to the Lord who loves you, saying Yes to the Holy Spirit’s direct

“Don’t tell me more. I can’t handle what I already know!”

daily leading, is not fearful but freeing, not dull, but dynamic, since His plans are much more fun and fulfilling than ours (Jer. 29:11-14; John 10:10; Matt. 16:26). Get ready for the adventure of your life, joy in the judgment, and eternity with your Saviour (John 17:3).

REACT

1. In the depths of your heart, do you approach the judgment with joy or fear? Why?
2. If you detect any fear, what should you do about it?
3. What kind of people should fear the judgment?
4. How can you avoid both the trap of legalism and the false security of “cheap grace”? How can you differentiate between such deceptions and the genuine security that accompanies faith in Christ?
5. How does our acceptance of Christ as Saviour actually change our lives and prepare us for the judgment?
6. How does the sinner-to-saint transformation really work as the Lord accomplishes in us what we are incapable of doing ourselves?
7. How can we hasten this process?

By Judy Gray, a homemaker from Asheville, North Carolina.

Does He or Doesn't He?

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Isa. 44:22

“Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation, and closes with the living. . . . All who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life.”¹

“You confess your sins, and give yourself to God. You will to serve Him. Just as surely as you do this, God will fulfill His word to you. If you believe the promise—believe that you are forgiven and cleansed—God supplies the fact; you are made whole. . . . It is the will of God to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children, and to enable us to live a holy life.”²

Is there a contradiction between these two quotations? In *Steps to Christ* Mrs. White assures me of acceptance and forgiveness by God and of justification when I come to Him. In *The Great Controversy* she seems to put off my justification until

We must always allow Mrs. White to explain herself.

my time in the investigative judgment. There even seems to be a chance to lose my justification when my name comes up. Am I in jeopardy in the judgment?

To resolve this apparent conflict, consider how the theme of each book relates to these questions. *The Great Controversy* reveals the issues confronting the universe. In this context, the judgment and the accuser appear. Indeed, the controversy is not focused on you and me but on God and Satan. *Steps to Christ* deals with our coming to and walking with our Lord. We are assured of our acceptance by God. There is no reference to the controversy or the judgment.

We must always allow Mrs. White to explain herself. The themes of the two books are the judgment in the realm of cosmic issues and the assurance of acceptance through God's grace, respectively. We can see the harmony between the two books and not lose our assurance of salvation in light of the judgment.

REACT

1. Whose character is at stake in the judgment, ours or God's? Explain your answer.
2. Should new Christians be steered away from *The Great Controversy* to *The Desire of Ages*? From the book of James to the book of John?

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 483.
2. *Steps to Christ*, p. 51.

By John Gilmore, a nurse anesthetist in Asheville, North Carolina.

A Cover-up?

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 John 2:1

What is Christ's righteousness? Why is it important to me?

More than once in each person's life, he or she gets in some form of trouble and needs help from someone else. It may be at school with the "bully" or with the teacher for misbehaving, disobeying, or failing to have the homework assignment completed. Maybe it has been at home with Dad for not putting his tools away or not mowing the grass. Or with siblings for barging into their rooms or crashing their computer projects. Maybe it has been in the workplace. The deadline wasn't met, the paperwork was incorrect, or phone contacts weren't made.

Reflecting back, we all remember times when we were in trouble and received the much-needed help, and the problem was resolved. In the early years, Mom was often the key figure who chose to become involved and do whatever possible to ease the situation. If she couldn't physically help us, she at least had lots of support and advice. She was there to intercede for us. Later on, friends or supervisors stepped in to intercede, comfort, or console us.

In the framework of eternity, we have all sinned and cannot make it to heaven

We have all sinned and cannot make it to heaven on our own.

on our own. We have to have someone intercede for us. "My little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1, NKJV).

The word *advocate* in Greek is *parakletos*, which means "intercessor," "consoler," "advocate," "comforter." Hebrews 7:25 says, "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them." We see, then, that by having an advocate, we once again have someone who has willingly stepped in to intercede for us, but now, without an intercessor, the consequences are far greater than standing in the corner, being grounded, or being put on probation!

Yes, it is a cover-up. Without the purity of Christ covering our sinful selves, without His standing up for us and saying the problem has been taken care of, we would never make it to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus Christ covers our mistakes; He intercedes for us to present us perfect before the heavenly Father so we are granted eternal life.

REACT

1. Why is it so difficult to trust Jesus for our salvation while we trust other people with our very lives?
2. In everyday terms, what is Christ's righteousness?
3. Why is it important to me?

By Pam Yaccarino, a physical therapist in Asheville, North Carolina.

How Can We Lose?

HOW-TO

Key Texts: 1 John 4:18; Rom. 8:31, 32

I was late again. Dodging potholes and passing slow drivers, I tried to make up for lost time. The longest red light in town glared at me as I pulled around a big truck, hoping to sneak into the four lanes of busy morning traffic. My car nosed over the white line, but even with my neck craned I could not see around the big truck. Cars whizzed by, the light was still red, and the seconds were ticking away.

“Hey, lady,” the driver of the big truck called down to me from his high perch, “go! It’s clear.” I needed no encouragement. “Thanks.” I waved and pulled out onto the road.

I hadn’t gone very far before I realized what I had done. I had put my life (and my new car) in the hands of a man I didn’t know. He had said it was clear, and I trusted him.

Come to think of it, we blindly trust a lot each day—that the Taco Bell workers won’t poison our food, that cashiers won’t steal our credit card numbers, that the other drivers on the highway will stay in their lanes. But when it comes to trusting God at judgment time, we often are less than confident.

God is our Judge. He is also our Friend, Lord, Saviour, Shepherd, King, and

We blindly trust that the Taco Bell workers won’t poison our food.

Brother. Put together all the stories you know about God. Yes, you see a God who hates sin, but even clearer than that, you see a God who loves sinners.

Look at the way Jesus treated the woman caught in adultery, Simon the leper, the woman at the well, Peter after his denial. *Gentleness, love, grace, forgiveness, and restoration* are the words that jump into my mind. And these are the very attributes that I would hope to find in an earthly judge, to say nothing of a heavenly one. The more we learn about God, the more we fall in love with Him, the less apprehensive we become about judgment. John knew this a couple thousand years ago when he wrote, “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear” (1 John 4:18, NIV).

When O. J. Simpson was accused, he hired a team of experts. Baseball players didn’t want anyone but the best arbitrators for their case. When our spiritual life and eternal standing are threatened by Satan, we should be just as adamant about getting the best legal defense. That is when the good news hits us! Jesus is not only our Judge, but also our Advocate! Listen to what Paul has to say about that: “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31, NIV).

By Erin Tyner Miller, associate and youth pastor, Foster Memorial SDA Church, Asheville, North Carolina.

The Opinion

OPINION

Key Text: Rom. 8:31-39

I have opinions on lots of things. I think Breyers' mint chocolate chip is the king of ice creams. I think we need stricter gun-control laws. I think baseball is the best of all sports. I think contemporary Christian music is pretty good stuff. I think my mom is the greatest. I think bow ties are cool. I have strong opinions about abortion, women's ordination, and Newt Gingrich too.

Opinions are important. Without them, we would be in bad shape. Together, our opinions establish societies, trends, entertainment, and legal precedents. Without them, nothing would be done. Relationships are chosen and developed with thoughts and feelings. "No, dear, I don't care where we go, what we eat, and whether you wear a tie or dirty T-shirt" would get very blah really fast. Religion would be nonexistent without opinions. "Does it matter whether I believe in God or not?" "Does it matter if I swear at you?" "Does it matter if I steal your car?" If you answer, "No, it doesn't matter; I have no opinions," you also have no values.

God even wants you to form opinions about *Him*. The great controversy boils down to your opinion about God. Satan says your opinion should be negative. Jesus says your opinion should be positive. In the judgment, your opinion about

Only one opinion counts in this case—and it ain't mine.

Jesus is the central issue. Is the cross foolishness or an amazing act of God and His word? But *the* judgment is His. We're to keep out of it. Only one opinion counts in this case—and it ain't mine.

The pre-advent judgment conjures scary thoughts for many. Am I good enough? Did I ask forgiveness for *every* sin? There is so much to worry about because my life isn't so wonderful.

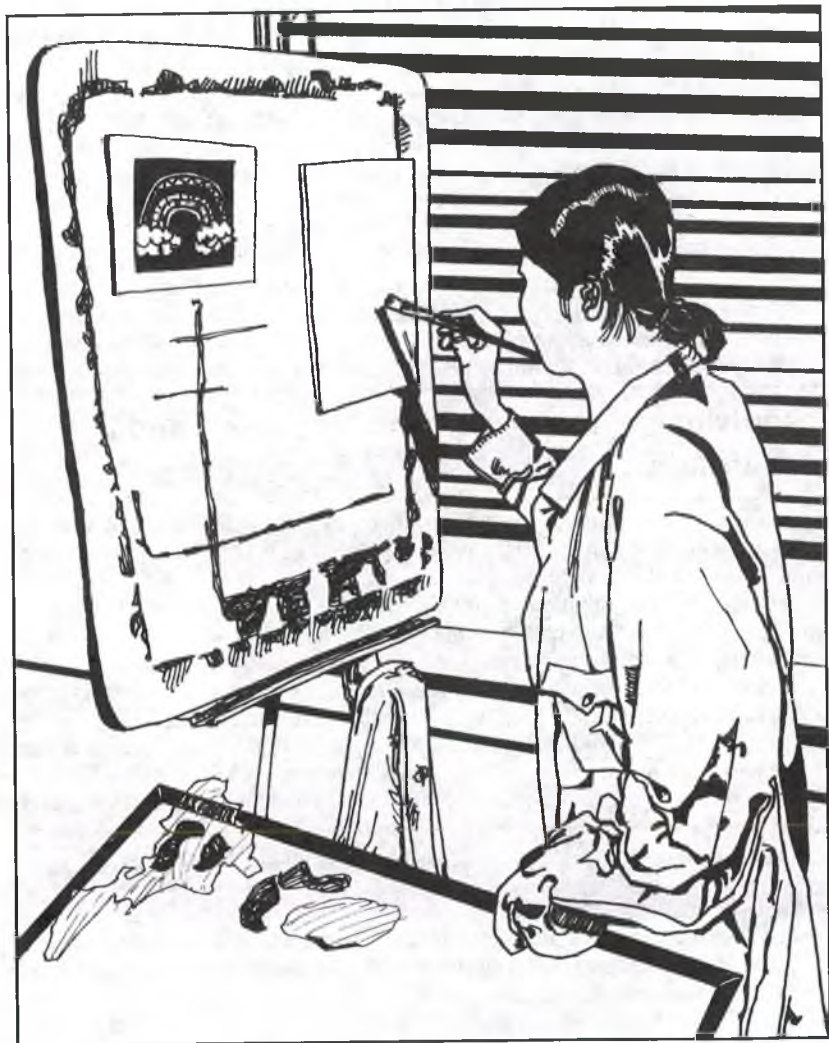
But the pre-advent judgment is *great* news. Christ our Advocate is good enough. He lived a sinless life. He is everything we need to be. And He is our Judge. No one judges us but the One who loves us. No one's belief matters except the One who thinks we're incredible. Jesus' decision is clear. We should spend eternity in heaven. The pre-advent judgment is His alone. It's an event to be loved, not feared. As long as I don't come to the unthinkable conclusion that the cross is foolishness, I'm in—period. That's *His* opinion.

REACT

1. When we come to Christ, are our sins blotted out, or is our guilt removed?
2. What are we saying about our focus when we worry about our assurance of salvation in the time of judgment?
3. Is Isaiah 44:22 referring to a future blotting out or a present result when sin is confessed?

By Alex Bryan, a graduate student at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

KNOWING WHAT RED IS



“If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

The Perfect Guide

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: James 2:12, 13

There are thousands of laws in the world, regulating things from taxes to traffic, from laws protecting the environment to laws controlling food preparation. What would the world be like without them? There would be no funding for new schools or parks. Intersections would be a mass of broken glass, bent steel, and flat tires. Rain forests? What rain forests? These images are not appealing and could be a reality if it were not for laws.

The majority of laws have been created to civilize humanity. They are necessary to preserve order even if they are not as convenient as one might like them to be. "Do I really have to claim this in my tax return?" Some have been made for the sole purpose of hurting other people and races. From the looks of it, there is no perfect legal system. The majority of laws are tedious and difficult to remember, taking up shelves and shelves of books to contain them all.

Nevertheless, one book contains 10 laws that are simple and direct, whose only purpose is to help us to be more like Jesus. The Ten Commandments have transcended centuries and countless civilizations and are as relevant to us as they

How does a painter know what color red is without studying the rainbow first?

were in the time of Moses. The Ten Commandments are perfect, just as God is. They are a guide to living righteously in the light of Jesus. The closer one lives according to the Bible and its teachings, the closer one is to walking with God, the Father. Following and obeying God's laws is not a requirement for salvation; rather, it is the natural outcome of having a close, loving relationship with Jesus Christ.

The commandments are a standard to which we are to compare our lives. How does a painter know what color red is without studying the rainbow first? We have to compare ourselves to Jesus and His laws to see what the consequence of sin has done to us.

If one's love for someone else is strong enough, he will do as much as he can to please that person. The Ten Commandments are not to be looked down upon as rules meant to confine. If the Ten Commandments are seen as a ball and chain, then they are being looked at the wrong way. Pride and selfishness cause some to see God's law as negative rather than as freedom from the worries of sin. Obeying the Ten Commandments should be a way to show one's gratefulness for God's gift of salvation. Didn't Jesus die for us? Shouldn't we thank Him in return?

By Christopher Mora, a computer-engineering major at Florida International University, Miami.

God Will Make a Way

LOGOS

Exod. 19:16-25; 20:1-17; Matt. 5:17-19

Through Thick and Thin!

"Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain" (Exod. 19:17, NIV).

How would you like to have been in God's place dealing with the Israelites, a people rebellious, ungrateful, unfaithful, and disobedient to God? Let's make no mistake about it. God is love; it is the very essence of His character and the complete basis for how He deals with humanity. His love came first. Before I loved Him or even knew of Him, He loved me. He does not leave me, but goes the extra mile to find me, be with me, and protect me.

God came to Israel to dwell with them in the form of a cloud. Imagine in your community, in the local park, a dark cloud resting there, protecting you, being the presence of God. You probably have a hard time imagining it. God goes out of His way to be with His people and does whatever possible to protect them. There is no doubt God's love for us is eternal. He is God, and through the good and the bad, He dwells with us.

What, if anything, can keep us from the love of God? Why do some people think at times that God doesn't love them?

The Law That Brings Freedom

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me" (Exod. 20:2, 3).

God brought His people out of the land of slavery, yet immediately after the word *slavery*, the scripture reads, "You shall have no other" and, later on, "Thou shall not . . ."! Some people would argue that the law is binding, that it is harsh and that we can't keep it, that we are legalistic if we believe that the law is still in effect. God brought His people out of slavery and into freedom and gives them some guidelines basically to keep them out of trouble.

If you own a pet, especially a cat, you know that you have to protect that animal, because cats tend to be hit by cars a lot. Being a cat owner, I've thought about this and have come up with my own reason that cats are hit by cars. You see, especially at night, the cat doesn't get a clear view of the road. It is dark and sometimes wet in catland, so they walk slowly until they have a good view. When do you think they get their best view of the road? When the lights of a car shine on the road!

Jesus sees the whole picture, and we see only what surrounds us at a given moment. Jesus doesn't merely believe that there are no other gods; He knows this for a fact. He doesn't only believe that the Sabbath is holy; He knows it because He is the Creator of the universe and the Sabbath. You see, Jesus sees the whole picture, and when He wrote that law on those tablets of stone, the principles were for the freedom of His people. They were brought out of slavery and given guidelines to freedom.

Jesus gave His life for us. He first loved us, and the Bible says that this is the

greatest evidence of love that we have from God. He sent His Son so whoever believes in Him would have everlasting life. It is not what we do that separates us from God, but *what we don't do, and that is, believe*. James states it plainly: "The law that gives freedom" (2:12).

Jesus=Love; Law=Jesus; Law=Love

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt. 5:17).

The word *fulfill* implies completeness or wholeness, to accomplish or to explain fully. Jesus tells us that He has not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. It appears that the commandments were being misinterpreted. Misunderstood. Jesus (God in human form) came down to demonstrate what was already in the law. The law of God displays His character, and Jesus does the same thing. He displays the character of God. Now consider this: If Jesus had to come down even though the law of God existed, then what is the weakness of the law? What was Jesus able to do that the law was unable to do? Read Romans 8:3.

It seems that the power to save lies in the Son of God, who gave His life for us, who saves us from sin, who desires us to live abundantly, and who promises that He will be with us always, even until the end of the world. Obedience to God's law

Jesus sees the whole picture, and we see only what surrounds us at a given moment.

is not the means of salvation, but the evidence of love for Him who died to save us. Our priority in our walk with God is to fall more deeply in love with His Son and to ask the Holy Spirit to lead us into life everlasting.

Paraphrase the Ten Commandments with the name of Jesus in them somehow. Does it give you a new perspective?

Show; Don't Tell

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 John 5:3

During my sophomore year in high school, my English teacher stressed “show; don’t tell” in our writing assignments. “I want to be able to visualize as I read your papers,” she would say. In essence, she was asking us to draw a picture with words.

In much the same way, Christ wants us to draw a picture with our lives. He left a set of guidelines to help us do this. The Ten Commandments serve as a model of God’s character. Some feel this model doesn’t fit their “writing style.” They view these principles as restrictive and overbearing. Others acknowledge the importance of these laws, but fail to reveal any trace of this in their lives. Fortunately, God provides an answer key for this assignment. It is quite simple: love. If we focus on loving God, love for His Word will inevitably follow. Our lives will, in turn, reflect this.

“God’s great object in the working out of His providences is to try men, to give them opportunity to develop character. Thus He proves whether they are obedient or disobedient to His commands. Good works do not purchase the love of God, but they reveal that we possess that love. If we surrender the will to God, we shall not work in order to earn God’s love. His love as a free gift will be received into

Christ wants us to draw a picture with our lives.

the soul, and from love to Him we shall delight to obey His commandments.”¹

“The character of God is expressed in His law; and in order for you to be in harmony with God, the principles of His law must be the spring of your every action.”²

“The law of God, from its very nature, is unchangeable. It is a revelation of the will and the character of its Author. God is love, and His law is love.”³

“In proportion to the rightfulness of the commandment is the wrongfulness of disobeying it.”⁴

“The followers of Christ are to become like Him—by the grace of God to form characters in harmony with the principles of His holy law.”⁵

1. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 283.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 391.

3. *The Great Controversy*, p. 467.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 465.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 469.

God's Law Eternal, Faith Essential

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Hab. 2:4

Habakkuk, king of Judah, wondered why God apparently left evil unpunished as His people were perishing at the hands of the Chaldeans (Hab. 1:12-17), but then he came to understand the importance of faith (2:4).

Faith comes from the Hebrew word *emuna* and is derived from *aman*, meaning "firmness," "steadiness," "trust." It is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Heb. 11:1). "Faith establishes between our souls and God a link so indestructible that nothing or nobody can break it, except sin. . . . It is an active principle that manifests itself in the life by a voluntary obedience to the commandment of the Lord."¹

God's law is eternal. It was the violation of the law by our first parents that required the establishment of the reign of grace. "One who has broken the law is under its condemnation. When he comes to Christ by faith and asks forgiveness through the merits of the shed blood and promises through the power of God to stop breaking the commandments, grace is imparted to him. He is now under grace. But this granted favor gives him no license to repeat the sin."²

"Love underlies true obedience to the law."³ Satan understands this and is

"Love underlies true obedience to the law."

constantly at work to remove faith and love from the hearts of God's people. "All are engaged in playing the game of life. Satan is well aware that if he can remove love and faith, and supply their place with selfishness and unbelief, all the remaining precious traits will soon be skillfully removed by his deceitful hands, and the game will be lost."⁴ Let us ask God by prayer and supplication to rekindle our faith in Jesus so that we may please Him and be empowered to withstand the coming crisis (Heb. 11:6).

REACT

1. What role does faith play in the keeping of the commandments?
2. How does it lead to obedience to God's law?

1. *Hebrew and Greek Key Study Bible*, King James Version (Nashville, Tenn.: AMG Publishers, 1992).

2. Mary Walsh, *Doctrinal Bible Studies for the Layman* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association), p. 108.

3. Fernando Chaij, *Preparation for the Final Crisis* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1966), pp. 38, 47, 48.

4. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 36, 37.

By Johanne Benoit, a senior fine-arts and biology major at Florida International University, Miami.

Christ in the Law: Day by Day

HOW-TO

Key Text: Eph. 2:10

Our love for the law derives from our love for Christ. When we accept Christ into our lives and completely devote ourselves to loving and trusting Him, then we automatically will want to keep His commandments. We cannot live the Christian life halfway. Our total dependence on God will lead us to keep His law to the fullest.

The law and Christ have everything to do with our daily life. You can show others Christ's love by what you do and what you say. Our goal should be to reflect the character of Christ so that the world will see Jesus in us. Who or what, then, you may ask, is our role model? The law of Christ.

The law is the mirror God places in our hearts to motivate us to follow Him. Every day we must renew our faith in Him by obeying His commandments. Some may argue that Christ's law was nailed to the cross. If that were true, Christ did not need to die for us. When we trust and obey His law out of love for Him, we give evidence to the world and to God that we truly are His children. God doesn't want us to obey the commandments out of a sense of duty or obligation to our

The law is the mirror God places in our hearts to motivate us to follow Him.

religious beliefs or because the church says we must in order to be saved. Keeping the commandments alone does not, in and of itself, guarantee our salvation. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross and our faith and love in Jesus save us. "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16, NIV).

Sometimes we fail to realize that obeying the commandments is the evidence of our love for God. What can we do to experience His love on a daily basis? Love one another, share His Word with others, and have faith in His saving grace and love. We are God's creation. He has prepared the way; we need only to take hold of the opportunity and share with others His merciful greatness. "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:10).

REACT

1. How does our Christian life reflect Christ's law?
2. What role does obeying the law play in my salvation?
3. What would you say to someone who asks why you obey the Ten Commandments?
4. Do you follow these guidelines in your daily life? If you do, what is your motivation for doing so?

By Marilissa I. Ledesma, an executive secretary in the lay activities and global mission offices of the Inter-American Division, Coral Gables, Florida.

To Obey Is to Choose to Love Jesus

OPINION

Key Text: James 2:14-18

Since I can remember, I have been told that I *have* to keep the commandments. Now that I can analyze the Scriptures for myself, I find that this was not Christ's idea for His children. I choose to keep the commandments and the law of God and nature when I accept and choose to have Christ live within me. The Bible says that *if we love God, then we keep His commandments*. Does it mean, then, that if I do not love God, I do not obey Him? Yes and no.

We may profess to keep His law, but for all the wrong reasons, maybe because we want to please our parents, our church, or even because it's the right thing to do. But Jesus wants us to obey His law because we love Him, because we want to show others that we love Christ. The law is our rule or guidebook to the Christian life. How? The law shows us who Jesus was and still is. The commandments are not nailed to the cross of Calvary; they should be nailed in our hearts as a reminder that we are His holy children.

Growing up, I always believed I had to earn God's love by obeying and keeping His commandments. I realized as I studied the Bible that we keep His law because

My love for my family can be compared to my love for Christ.

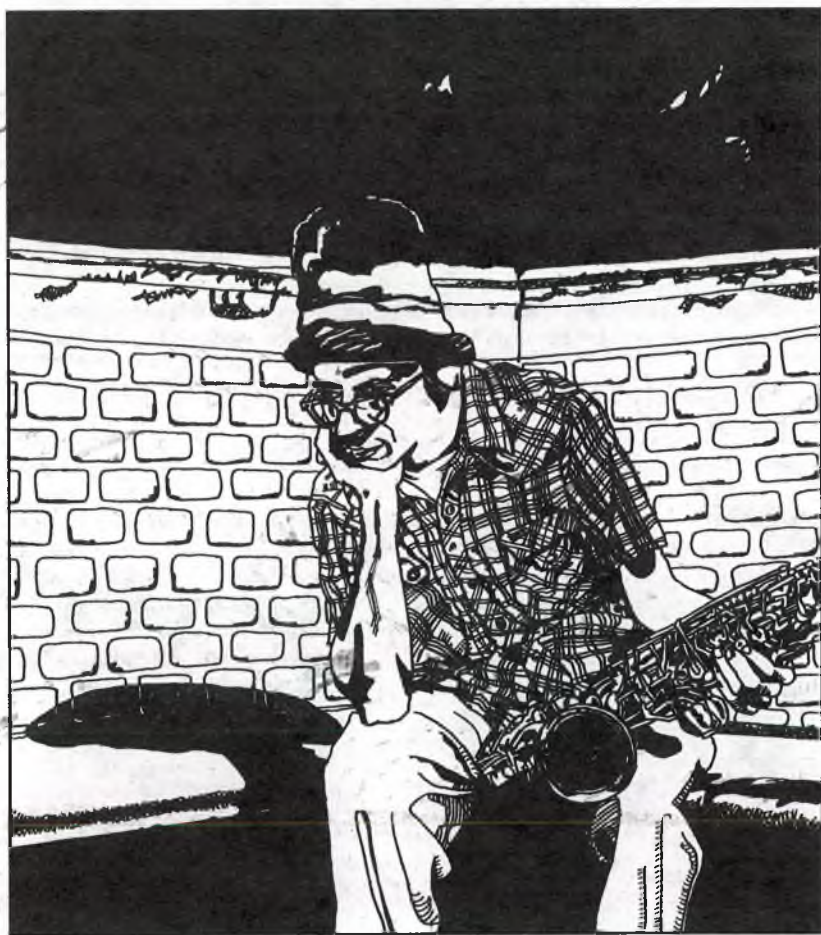
we already have His love and it is a joy to abide by His law. His death on the cross was His gift of saving grace to you and me. My love for my family can be compared to my love for Christ and keeping His law. It is a pleasure to go home for a visit and help out with the cooking, cleaning, and house chores, not because I have to, but because I want to. When we as Christians obey Christ because we have chosen to do so, then our daily lives will be filled with happiness and joy. As a result, then, loving God stops being a burden and begins to be a delightful experience. If we trust in God, He will direct our path. That path will be happiness, love, and eternal life with Jesus.

REACT

1. When does obeying the law become legalistic?
2. Do you believe that it is impossible to keep God's law? Why or why not?

By Marlissa I. Ledesma, an executive secretary in the church-ministries department of the Inter-American Division, Coral Gables, Florida.

THE BEST KIND OF REST



“In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exod. 20:11).

A Day of Rest?

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Exod. 20:11

He wears a long wool coat over what appears to be layers of shirts. His dark polyester pants appear to be too big for him, but the layered appearance disguises it very well. At least three pairs of socks fill his oversized, scuffed brown shoes. These shoes have masking tape holding them together in certain areas. During the week, you can find him standing on the steps of the National Gallery of Art. There he plays his saxophone and accepts offerings from those who stop, listen, and drop coins into his instrument case. Today he sits on a bench at Lafayette Park, waiting for us. He knows we'll bring him lunch and spend the rest of that Sabbath afternoon with him.

At approximately 1:00 p.m., the Loaves and Fishes van arrives at Lafayette Park. The homeless gather around us waiting for their lunch. He is the first in line. "Hey, how you guys doing? Good to see you. Look, I have my sax here with me. Maybe you guys want to have some music afterward?" he suggests.

We spend the afternoon with the homeless of downtown Washington, D.C., sharing our food, listening, singing, and witnessing in our own way to every individual we meet. This is Sabbath worship at its best: my Creator and I working

He plays his saxophone and accepts offerings from those who drop coins into his instrument case.

together. Did I say working? Is not the Sabbath a day of rest? Perhaps true rest is letting God work through us.

Rushing between classes and work, I gradually fail to see Christ in the little things during the day. Yet once a week my Creator gently reminds me that I need to commune with Him. The Sabbath was set aside just for that. In this day of rest, the Lord invites us to do nothing for ourselves, but to allow Him to provide life and sustenance for us. It is a day in which we share in His labor and grace, a day to commune with God by serving others.

It tends to be easier to remember all we cannot do on Sabbath instead of all we can accomplish. It was never suggested to us that to commune with our Creator we should isolate ourselves from our community. We can find Him among all those around us.

Walking through Lafayette Park on Sabbath afternoon, I am reminded of the God who served others on Sabbath, healing and teaching the Word. I realize that He still provides for us and reminds us to provide for one another.

By Dixil L. Rodriguez, junior public-relations and journalism student at Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.

The Sabbath and the Cross

LOGOS

Exod. 20:8-11; Heb. 4:1-11

Adventists believe in the doctrine of the seventh-day Sabbath. Although we find support for this in the Bible, its true meaning for Christians can be understood only as the Sabbath stands in the light of the cross of Jesus.

Biblical evidence for the Sabbath begins in Genesis. The Creation story tells us that God created the heavens and the earth in six days. "On the seventh day," however, "God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation" (Gen. 2:2, 3, RSV).

Further biblical evidence for the Sabbath can be found in Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15. Both texts identify the Sabbath as a part of the Ten Commandments. Interestingly, the reason given for Sabbath observance in the Exodus account resides in the fact that humans ought to remember that God is the Creator and the Sustainer of life. The account in Deuteronomy suggests that the Sabbath ought to be observed to commemorate God's act to save the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

The New Testament also contains some references to the Sabbath (Mark 2:27, 28; Col. 2:16; Heb. 4:1-11; Acts 13:14, 44; 14:1; 17:1, 2). However, none of these references directly command us to keep the Sabbath. Since the audience of the New Testament was largely Jewish and already recognized the Sabbath as a holy day, the writers of the New Testament probably felt it was a superfluous point. There was no reason to try to convince people about the importance of the Sabbath when they already accepted the Sabbath as a holy day. A major factor behind the Adventist view that the Sabbath maintains its significance in the New Testament rests on the fact that Jesus, as a good Jew, kept the Sabbath (Luke 4:16). As disciples of Jesus, we want to follow His example.

The first thing Jesus teaches us about the Sabbath is that it is a time to worship God. According to the Gospel writers, Jesus made it a regular habit to attend synagogue on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1-10; Mark 1:21-25). On at least one occasion, Jesus participated in the worship service by reading the Scripture (Luke 4:16, 17). The importance of worship, however, extends beyond mere participation and attendance. Worship functions as the context for God and His people to relate to each other in a special, intimate way. We meet God in worship as Creator, Healer, Companion, Warrior, Protector, Guide, Sustainer, Redeemer, and Friend. As a result, we should take worship seriously. After all, the Sabbath allows us time to spend with our best Friend.

A second thing Jesus teaches us about the Sabbath is that it is a time for people to serve one another. The majority of Jesus' time on the Sabbath was spent healing the sick and casting out demons. While these activities may seem "out of reach" for the average person, the implication for service is clear. Jesus wants His followers "to do good on the Sabbath" (Matt. 12:12, NIV). Interestingly, Jesus does not explain what He means by "good." He allows us room to interpret what He means. Certainly, good Sabbath actions would include visiting the sick, feeding

the hungry, taking a friend to church, and comforting someone in prison. However, maybe the good can also include planting trees, building homes with Habitat for Humanity, volunteering in a community homeless shelter, helping new neighbors move into their home, or comforting animals at the Humane Society. While some people may see these types of activity as too worldly or too much like work, Jesus reminds us that God desires “mercy, and not sacrifice” (Hos. 6:6) on the Sabbath.

Despite the fact that the doctrine of the Sabbath enjoys biblical support, it means nothing without the cross. The cross illuminates the inner meaning of all Christian doctrine, including the Sabbath. As a result, the importance of the Sabbath does not rest on the fact that we find evidence for it in the Bible. Rather, the importance of the Sabbath should be based on the fact that it can help Christians be more faithful disciples to the God of Jesus.

In light of the cross, the Sabbath becomes a symbol of reconciliation between God and human beings. However, we must not think of the cross or the Sabbath

The importance of worship, however, extends beyond mere participation and attendance.

as mere symbols that point to some truth beyond themselves. The cross also requires action. Christians must pick up their crosses and follow Jesus if they are to be counted as disciples. Therefore, the Sabbath allows us a chance to imitate the actions of Jesus. Like the cross, the Sabbath must also be seen as a “practice,” as something Christians do to be more Jesus-like. The general character of our actions on the Sabbath should follow those of Jesus as they appear in the Gospel narratives. To think of the Sabbath in light of the cross enables us to see that the practice of Sabbath enables us to be more faithful disciples of Jesus as we seek to worship God, serve other people, and rest from the hectic pace of the world.

REACT

1. What does the cross teach about the Sabbath?
2. One of your friends asks how you have enough time to get everything done when you take an entire day off for worship. How would you explain the benefits of the Sabbath?
3. Jesus says that God desires “mercy, and not sacrifice” on the Sabbath. What does this mean? How does it shape our understanding of what is good to do on the Sabbath?

By Brian W. Harper, assistant professor of religion, Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.

The Sabbath High

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Mark 2:27, 28

When I think back on my childhood, some of my fondest memories are the Friday-night fellowship our family shared. It was during those early moments of the Sabbath that one could not help noticing the change in my father. This metamorphosis began during the Friday-afternoon Sabbath preparation. Lots of singing. Lots of praising. All this was done while teaching my younger brother and me the correct way to clean a bathroom thoroughly. I would refer to this affectionately as my father's "Sabbath high." My father is one of the most good-natured people you will ever meet, but the Sabbath seemed to elevate his spirit to a higher level of contentment and peace.

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

When Friday came, so came the opportunity for my father to "lay aside his own

"God saw that a Sabbath was essential for man, even in Paradise."

interests and pursuits . . . that he might more fully contemplate the works of God." As I have become older and begun to assume the responsibilities of adulthood, the Sabbath has taken on a whole new importance in my life. The Sabbath offers me the forum to concentrate my attention on Christ and how much a part of my life He is. It is so unfortunate that during the week the grind of classes, work, and relationships sometimes clouds our image of our Creator. Thank God for the Sabbath, the chance to renew the love affair we have with Jesus Christ. Too often we view the Sabbath as a chance to catch up on the rest (sleep) that we missed during the week. That old saying about "lay activities" is taken far too literally by many of us (me included). The "rest" that the Bible speaks of is more of a spiritual renewal. Although our bodies need rest and relaxation, the Sabbath's purpose is not to provide that extra sleep time, as tempting as the bed seems to be after that Sabbath meal. I am almost sure I heard my bed call my name once. "Roger, Roger! I am so comfortable and you are so-o-o sleepy! Just rest for a while." The truth of the matter is, all of us need to recommit ourselves to making the most of God's wonder gift, the Sabbath. Let's use this precious 24 hours to renew our commitment to Christ.

* *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 48.

By Roger Williams, senior theology/history major, Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.

Our Day of Creation

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Exod. 20:11

How can we move from enduring the Sabbath to really enjoying it? One way is to regard it with new eyes as the doorway into a new understanding of God—and of who we are. We can build on several motifs that appear both in Scripture and in practice over the centuries.

First, the Sabbath as a day of rest gives opportunity to stand back from our work and define ourselves by criteria other than productivity. In this context, to pause on the Sabbath is to resist the tyranny of materialism. Resting on the Sabbath is a revolutionary activity in a world driven by constant acquisition and production.

Second, having a space of time in which we are freed of competition liberates us to enjoy others without envy or fear. When our self-definition is no longer at stake, we can freely give ourselves to others.

Third, the Sabbath rest also brings peace, say the rabbis, to the conflicts between humans and nature. For six days of the week, we toil and spin, overcoming the odds and bringing out of the confusion of life something we can use and benefit from. But on the Sabbath we may enjoy the beauty of nature and the luxuriousness of God's natural order. The Sabbath thus stands as a reminder of our connection to nature, our charge to care for it and preserve it, and the necessity

How can we move from enduring the Sabbath to really enjoying it?

to realize that behind the creation stands the Creator.

Fourth, as a symbol of God's creative power, the Sabbath forms a framework for worship and community building. In our worship of God as Creator, we enjoy the humility (not humiliation) of those for whom dependence on God and gratitude for salvation are not psychologically and spiritually crippling, but liberating.

Finally, as the Sabbath commemorates God's creative work, so it may also commemorate our own creativity. If the Sabbath was made for us instead of our being made for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27, 28), then perhaps we can think of the Sabbath as being made but not finished, as being that portion of holy time given to us to shape as we wish. If the Sabbath is a canvas, we shall paint upon it; if the Sabbath is a block of stone, we shall sculpt it; if the Sabbath is a cathedral of time, we shall worship within it. In our work during the week and in our worship on the Sabbath, we can reveal the divine image of creativity given to humans to enable them in the work of liberation.

REACT

In what ways can the Sabbath be a day to resist materialism, greed, and envy?

By Barry L. Casey, associate professor of communication, journalism, and philosophy, Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.

The Sabbath—Our Day!

HOW-TO

Key Texts: Mark 2:27; Exod. 20:11; Isa. 58:13, 14

As sons and daughters of the heavenly Father, we hold the great responsibility of living up to His high standards and principles as we gradually reach toward and endeavor to mirror His perfect example. Now this kind of lifestyle results only from a close and studious relationship with Him.

This desire that grows within us can be compared to the desire that might bloom within the heart of a millionaire's son. He studies his father's life, observing his interactions with others and following his principles and philosophies. He wants to be just like his father. He wants to grow up to have a life as full and enriching as his father's is.

This similar desire can grow within our hearts as we strive to follow our Father's guidelines. We refer to these guidelines as the Ten Commandments, not the least of which is the fourth commandment. The heavenly Father has left us this Sabbath guideline to help us as we grow in the knowledge of His ways. How can we fully

God has left us this Sabbath guideline to help us as we grow in the knowledge of His ways.

obey the commandment and enjoy the Sabbath day?

1. Realize that this day was made especially for us. Mark 2:27 says, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." God created this day to cater to the need of our soul for complete rest!

2. Understand the lofty example we are following. Although our weeks may be hectic with various work and/or school obligations, recreation, entertainment, etc., they can't possibly be as busy as God's week was after Creation. He was smart. After six days of putting together our world, He took the whole seventh day to rest from the rough work week (Exod. 20:11)!

3. Notice what our heavenly Father has planned for us if we adhere to Sabbath observance. Isaiah 58:13, 14 says that if we stop treading all over God's holy day and just follow it, our lives will be enriched. God promises to give us honor and high positions if we first humbly obey His Sabbath commandment.

By Brian S. Nelson, a junior journalism-publications major at Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.

Quality Time

OPINION

Key Text: Isa. 58:13, 14

It was our first-year anniversary, and I was expecting quality time with my man. Disappointment is not the only emotion I felt as with my anniversary present in hand I found my boyfriend still asleep at four in the afternoon. He had stayed up all night playing “Jeopardy” with his best friend. It was then that he came to a very crucial point in our relationship where he discovered that even an established relationship needs special quality time. Ever since, we have been more conscious of spending that quality time together and have made personal sacrifices to do so. In order for any relationship to survive, it must contain quality time.

At the very beginning, God established a day for quality time with His creation. This quality time didn’t become special to me until I had a personal relationship with God. He feels very personal with us; we are His children. “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1, NIV). Out of His need for men and women, God created us, and Sabbaths are His special anniversary of that most special love.

The most vivid reminder of God’s love is the cross. It is how God came to us

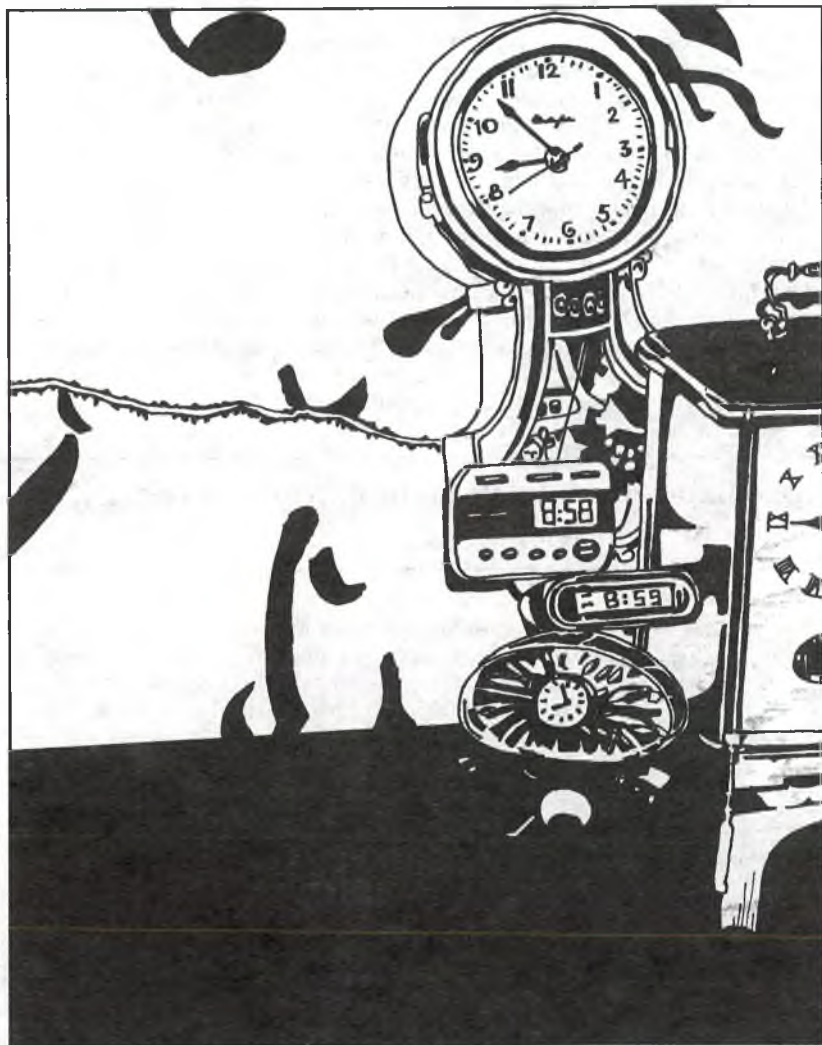
He had stayed up all night playing “Jeopardy” with his best friend.

on our human level to reach out to us. “We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true” (1 John 5:20). After Jesus’ death, the Sabbath became more than just an anniversary of Creation; it became a monument to the cross, a symbol of God’s longing for us. It is a mutual need for God and humankind to have a connection with each other. Imagine the disappointment God has felt as we have forgotten Him time and time again. The majority of His creation has forgotten the day He has set aside for quality time.

As Christians grow closer to God, they share in God’s longing. Just as Jacob held on to the Angel longing for God’s blessing, God invites us to hold on to Him till we are blessed and promises that the Sabbath will be that blessing. “If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day . . . I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father” (Isa. 58:13, 14).

By Heather E. Butler, a sophomore majoring in English education and psychology, Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.

TRUTH AND TIME



“And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (Rev. 14:8).

The Time About Truth

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Ps. 90:12

"Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Ps. 90:12).

Time is the oft-elusive element in our quest for truth.

Time to listen to
good music
children's chatter
silence

Time to hear
what cannot be said

Time to look
at pictures of the past
for reactions
after friendships

Time to see
what needs to be done
what would be better left undone

Time to touch
a dear one
a pet
a lost one

Time to feel
anything!

Time to smell
a baby's head
Aunt Dorothy's powder
an old person's home

Time to sense
fear

Time to taste
hot, salty tears
fresh bread
"And see that the Lord is good."

Yet I believe it is Truth we will find as we spend time tasting the Bread of Life, smelling the Rose of Sharon, touching the hem of Jesus' garment, seeing the Sun of Righteousness, hearing the still, small voice, and knowing Truth. We need not be deceived.

By Wendy Buhler Rixin, an amateur musician from Bremerton, Washington.

The Fall and the Call

LOGOS

Gen. 10:8-11; 11:1-9; Rev. 14:8; 17:1-6; 18:1-7, 24

The second angel's message of Revelation 14 is full of biblical imagery and symbolism that leaps out for recognition. Revelation 14 begins with a brief flash to the end to see the 144,000 triumphantly standing on Mt. Zion with Jesus Christ. Revelation 14 ends with a second-coming sequence depicting Christ coming with the clouds to reap the earth. Sandwiched between these two scenes, we find the three angels' messages, three warning messages from a loving and compassionate God to help His people prepare for the harvest. The second angel's message contains both a negative and a positive element. The negative element is the warning of the fall of Babylon. The positive is the call for God's people to come out of Babylon.

The Fall (Rev. 14:8)

The fall of Babylon rushes our minds back to the fall of ancient Babylon and the Tower of Babel experience. Even more so, it brings us to the rich imagery of the Neo-Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar. God's people are held captive in Babylon. Babylon represents the enemy of God's people. This imagery of the fall of literal Babylon is picked up in Revelation to describe the fall of spiritual Babylon. Notice some of the amazing parallels:

Literal Babylon:

1. "She made the whole earth drunk" (Jer. 51:7, NIV).
2. "The nations drank her wine" (verse 7).
3. "Babylon will suddenly fall" (verse 8).
4. "Babylon was a gold cup" (verse 7).
5. "Thou that dwellest upon many waters" (verse 13, KJV).
6. "Her judgment reaches to the skies" (verse 9, NIV).
7. "The eternal queen! . . . I will never be a widow" (Isa. 47:7, 8).
8. "Her high gates set on fire" (Jer. 51:58, NIV).
9. "So will Babylon sink to rise no more" (verse 64).
10. "Come out of her, my people!" (verse 45).

Spiritual Babylon:

1. "Made all nations drink" (Rev. 14:8, KJV).
2. "Nations drink the maddening wine" (verse 8, NIV).
3. "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great" (verse 8).
4. "She held a golden cup in her hand" (17:4).
5. "The great prostitute, who sits on many waters" (verse 1).
6. "Her sins are piled up to heaven" (18:5).
7. "I sit as queen; I am not a widow" (verse 7).
8. "See the smoke of her burning" (verse 9).
9. "Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again" (verse 21).
10. "Come out of her, my people" (verse 4).

Literal Babylon was destroyed, never to be rebuilt or reinhabited (Jer. 50:39). Revelation employs this imagery of literal Babylon to describe a spiritual, end-

time enemy of God's people. Spiritual Babylon is the "mother of harlots" (Rev. 17:5, KJV), a union of false religious groups that are promoting spiritual adultery (i.e., falsehood, error, apostasy, deception, spiritualism, idolatry), which ultimately spread over and influence the entire world. God's Word is clear, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great" (Rev. 14:8, NIV).

The fall of Babylon in Daniel's day meant salvation for God's people. As Cyrus the Great marched into literal Babylon, he was hailed as the great deliverer. Cyrus made the decree, allowing God's people to return to the Promised Land (Ezra 1:1-8). Scripture refers to Cyrus as the "shepherd" and "anointed" (Isa. 44:28-45:1). Cyrus becomes a type of Jesus Christ, who will deliver God's people from spiritual Babylon in the end time. So the fall of Babylon represents deliverance for God's people.

The Call (Rev. 18:4)

In His mercy God wants none of His people to be part of Babylon when it falls. He calls them to come out. This language is reminiscent of that of the Good Shepherd whose sheep know and respond to His voice: "I am the good shepherd. . . I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:11-16).

This is not the first time that we have received the call to come out of Babylon.

Today we are not only called out of Babylon; we are also called *into* something.

In fact, Abraham was called out of Babylon: "*I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it*" (Gen. 15:7.)

Chaldea is used to describe the regional area of Babylon in the time of Daniel, and Chaldeans are often used to describe the Babylonians. So Abraham was called out of Babylon.

Throughout history, God has called His people to come out of apostasy, falsehood, and idolatrous practices. The call to come out of fallen Babylon in Revelation is the culmination of calls to God's people. It is the grand climax, the finale of God's call to come out of Babylon.

Today we are not only called out of Babylon; we are also called *into* something. We are called to take a stand for the truth of Jesus Christ. We are called to stand with those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony and faith of Jesus Christ. We are called to preach the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ. We are called to be the remnant people of God.

REACT

1. What areas of my life are still entangled in the complex web of spiritual Babylon that God is calling me out of?
2. What are some specific areas of falsehood, error, or apostasy that surround the religious movements of today?

By Gary Fogelquist, pastor of the Bremerton (Washington) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Truth or Compromise?

TESTIMONY

Key Text: John 14:6

The time of the end, which is now upon us, is causing people to make a choice: Christ or Babylon? What is Babylon, and how do we ensure that we are not deceived by Satan's deceptions?

"We are not to think that the chosen ones of God who are trying to walk in the light compose Babylon. The fallen denominational churches are Babylon. Babylon has been fostering poisonous doctrines, the wine of error. This wine of error is made up of false doctrines, such as the natural immortality of the soul, the eternal torment of the wicked, the denial of the pre-existence of Christ prior to His birth in Bethlehem, and advocating and exalting the first day of the week above God's holy and sanctified day."¹

"Babylon is the church, fallen because of her errors and sins, because of her rejection of the truth sent to her from heaven."²

The apostolic church fell, not because of persecution, but because of its rejection of truth and because of a compromising attitude. As a denomination, have we accepted false doctrine? "When anyone arises, either among us or outside of us,

As a denomination, have we accepted false doctrine?

who is burdened with a message which declares that the people of God are numbered with Babylon, and claims that the loud cry is a call to come out of her, you may know that he is not bearing the message of truth."³

"Those who assert that the Seventh-day Adventist churches constitute Babylon, or any part of Babylon, might better stay at home. . . . The whole world is to be stirred with enmity against Seventh-day Adventists, because they will not yield homage to the papacy, by honoring Sunday, the institution of this antichristian power."⁴

False doctrine and rejection of truth make up Babylon. To not be partakers of Babylon, we must know the truth.

How are we to know the truth, and what do we gain by it? "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (8:31, 32).

Satan is seeking to deceive even the very elect. Christ refuted Satan's charges with "It is written." We must study and continue in God's Word, so we may know the truth and daily choose the truth that is Christ.

1. *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 61.

2. *The Great Controversy*, p. 607.

3. *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 41.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

By Dennis Morgan, a nuclear engineer at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Bremerton, Washington.

“Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin”

EVIDENCE

Key Texts: Daniel 5; Rev. 14:8

“539 B.C. - The Persians under Cyrus the Great conquer Babylon”¹ boldly states the CD-ROM encyclopedia bundled with my Sound Blaster (TM) multimedia kit. After resolving two coregencies—Belshazzar/Nabonidus² and Darius the Mede/Cyrus the Great³—historians and I can agree upon the answers to the questions “When?” “Who?” “What?” and “Where?” as they relate to this event.

Historians view the fall of Babylon as typical of the regular upheavals in the ancient Middle East. The Chaldean kings (such as Nebuchadnezzar) were merely the latest in a line of rulers and raiders of Babylon who had included the Amorite king Hammurabi, the Hittites, the Kassites, the Elamites, the Assyrians and in addition to the Medes and Persians and who would later include the Greeks, led by Alexander the Great, who died in Babylon in 323 B.C.⁴

In contrast, Daniel shows the hand of our God (literally and figuratively) changing the course of history and explains why God required the fall of historical Babylon. With the answer to this critical question “Why?” we then understand why prophetic Babylon (described in the second angel’s message) must fall and can

Daniel may be able to solve the riddle and calm the king’s knocking knees.

then escape the corrupting influence of her “maddening wine” (Rev. 14:8, NIV).

In Daniel 5, adulterous King Belshazzar orders that sacred goblets taken from God’s temple in Jerusalem be brought to the banquet so he and his wives and concubines can publicly blaspheme what he supposes to be the ineffective god of the conquered Israelites. As they drunkenly praise their false gods, the supernatural finger writes in the plaster: “Two bits, four bits, six bits, a dollar.” Not exactly that, but to those partygoers still sober enough to read, the Aramaic inscription looks like a silly, childhood ditty about coins. The queen remembers that Daniel may be able to solve the riddle and calm the king’s knocking knees. Instead, through Daniel, God pronounces Babylon guilty of a capital crime—proudly exalting false human religion instead of humbly honoring the true God.

REACT

What false religious ideas is Satan trying to introduce into my church?

1. “Timeline” in *The Academic American Encyclopedia* (electronic version) (Danbury, Conn.: Grolier, Inc., 1993).

2. C. Mervyn Maxwell, *The Message of Daniel*, pp. 90-93.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 104, 105.

4. Kate Fielden, “Babylon” in *The Academic American Encyclopedia* (electronic version), (Danbury, Conn.: Grolier, Inc., 1993).

By Brian Nixon, fire-protection engineer, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Poughkeepsie, Washington.

Dare to Be a Daniel!

HOW-TO

Key Texts: 1 Pet. 4:7; Rom. 12:1, 2

We are constantly surrounded by subtle, yet strong influences that seek to seduce us to compromise with Babylon. How can we avoid being deceived? Let's look at how Daniel evaded the seductive influences of Babylon.

1. Careful eating. Daniel's desire to honor God with his body prompted him to refuse the rich royal food and wine. Such cooperation with nature's laws produces a healthy body and a clear mind. Daniel's clear mind discerned deception. Do you want to feel more energetic and think more clearly? Try a Daniel diet! Just 10 days will convince you of the vegetarian advantage. Eat more of the best and less of the rest, plus drink eight glasses of water and exercise regularly.

2. Constant prayer. Daniel's clear mind and self-control facilitated his prayer life (1 Pet. 4:7). He walked with God as Enoch did.¹ His top priority was quality time with God. Three times a day he stopped his activities to focus on talking to his personal Friend while on his knees. Daniel maintained an attitude of prayer constantly so he could hear God's voice.

3. Conscientious study. Although surrounded by falsehood, Daniel was not deceived or confused by Babylonian thinking, because he diligently studied God's

Just ten days will convince you of the vegetarian advantage.

Word. God blessed Daniel with wisdom, and he excelled in his learning. "If . . . students will study the Word of God diligently they will be far better prepared to understand their other studies; for enlightenment always comes from an earnest study of the word of God. Nothing will so help to give a retentive memory as a study of the Scriptures."²

4. Consistent loyalty. The Babylonian king hoped gradually to wedge idolatry's foothold into Daniel's faith. But Daniel's steadfast loyalty to God thwarted the entrance of error. Although surrounded with temptations to conform to the world, he dared to stand up for the truth and refused to compromise, even in the little things. Do you want to be loyal to Christ and not Babylon? Dare to be a Daniel!

REACT

1. If the Sabbath is to be a test of loyalty, what can I do to deepen my bond of loyalty to God?
2. How can I become more clear-minded?
3. In what ways am I conforming to the world?

1. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 486.

2. *Loma Linda Messages*, p. 433.

By Heather Reseck, a consulting dietitian and homemaker from Bremerton, Washington.

A New Way of Looking at Things

OPINION

Key Text: Rev. 17:16, 17

Until preparing for this lesson, I equated Babylon with the beast and world religious power that ruled for 1420 days. Babylon was the world religious union that gave the mark of the beast and ruled until the end of the world. My studies brought a different understanding. I propose a different theory with six elements: (1) Babylon will be a union based on the combined power of the kings of the earth and the beast; (2) this union will be separate and distinct from the beast; and (3) the beast and the kings will do Babylon's will for a while. Then, (4) the beast will become disgruntled with Babylon and (5) will rise up and destroy Babylon. At this time (6) the kings of the earth will give their power to the beast, who will rule until God's second coming.

The first problem with the old theory is Revelation 14:7-12. Babylon is mentioned in verse 8 as fallen. Yet verse 9 gives the warning not to receive the wrong mark. In the time line of the three angels, Babylon could not be the power to give the mark of the beast, since it is destroyed before the mark becomes an issue. Revelation 17:16 provides the second problem: it is very difficult to hate and destroy yourself, yet still remain to rule.

We may unwittingly support Babylon if we are looking for the wrong thing.

Chapters 17 and 18 brought to light the new theory. Briefly, the previous paragraph explains why Babylon must be separate and distinct from the beast; Revelation 17:16 accounts for element 3; Revelation 17:2 indicates element 2; elements 4 and 5 come from verse 17, and element 6 from verse 18.

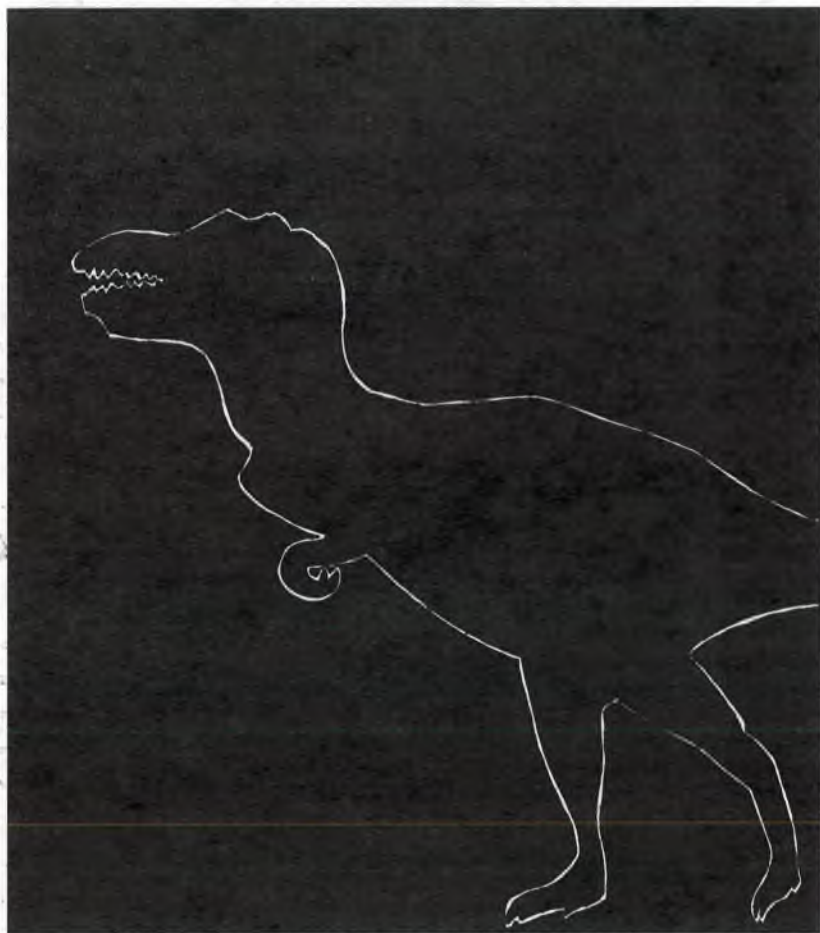
Chapter 18 also presents a new question. Babylon may or may not be a religious union. Revelation says that she will persecute and kill God's people, but chapter 18 seems to indicate that this has more to do with economics than religious belief. The current scholarly thought is that it is a religious union, but I cannot see the proof of this. On the other hand, there is no conclusive proof that it is *not* a religious union.

You may be saying, "So what? This seems to be a purely semantic debate." I bring this out because I was looking for a religious union dominated and controlled by the beast. The new theory tells me that I should be wary of troubles and persecutions before the beast comes to power. We are supposed to oppose Babylon and the beast, but we may unwittingly support Babylon if we are looking for the wrong thing.

Also, the first angel deals with God as Creator, and the third angel deals with God's mark (i.e., the Sabbath), which arises from His act of creation. Given that two of the three deal with the inherent link between Creation and the Sabbath, I suspect that the second angel somehow deals with the same subject.

By Mark Jones, a freelance writer from Silverdale, Washington.

THE ULTIMATE THRILLER



“For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev. 7:17).

Final War

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Revelation 12 and 13

I have read some thrillers in my time, and I have even seen some very good films. This week's study of chapters 12 and 13 is for sure one of the most thrilling sections in Revelation that I have experienced for a very long time. No, it is not fiction, but rather a present and soon-to-come reality! Steven Spielberg could not have written, produced, or directed this scenario any better than the Master—God!

You see, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream he could not remember, and he was reminded of this dream by God through Daniel (Daniel 2). He had dreamed of a magnificent statue made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and iron mixed with clay. The interpretation of this dream revealed to him what was to happen in the near future right through to our present day and all the way to the end time!

Revelation 12 and 13 are compatible with the book of Daniel. However, it is John the revelator who was given a vision by Jesus Christ. In it he saw a woman pursued by a dragon! This woman is clothed with the sun, and under her feet is the moon and on her head a crown of 12 stars (Rev. 12:1). She is pregnant, about to give birth, and pursued by the fiendish dragon with seven heads and 10 horns and

Steven Spielberg could not have written, produced, or directed this scenario any better.

seven crowns on his head. He has a tail long enough to draw a third part of the stars and cast them down to the earth.

This is only part of the big buildup! You see, this creature is helped by a dangerously jealous king, who is bent on destroying the Child as soon as it is delivered (verses 2, 3). Why? Because the Child is claimed to be the Saviour of the world and its people. This Child would break the rule of the dragon and its dark power. The dragon and its cohort, who are able to force rich and poor, great and small, to worship the dragon and receive a mark on their foreheads or on their right hand, have one aim. Their aim is to destroy the Child, and, if not, then at least to destroy the woman and any of her offspring. And there is more!

For every beginning, there must be an ending. How does this “thriller” end? Does the dragon succeed? Are the Child, woman, and offspring destroyed forever? You will just have to read on! I'm not giving you any more information, for my preview is at its end. For more, just turn the page. I dare you!

By Derek Lewis, a trainer-instructor in refrigeration and air conditioning at The Training and Business Factory, Brixton, London, England.

The Choice of the New Generation

LOGOS

Rev. 12:17; 13:1-15

A few years ago, Pepsi-Cola advertised that its brand was the choice of the new generation. From their massive advertising campaign, millions of people turned to Pepsi. Today we are also confronted with a choice: Christ or Satan. Christ offers present salvation and future eternal life. The dragon, Satan, supported by earthly powers that obey him, offers the pleasures of sin and ultimately eternal death. Christ has already won this battle, but the deceiver is not going down without a fight. Revelation 12:17 tells us that he is angry and is attacking Christ's followers living in the last days.

Leopardlike Beast

In Revelation 13, John gives us a picture of how the dragon seeks to deceive God's people. The chapter begins with the words "And I stood upon the sand of the sea" (KJV). The Greek text favors "And he stood . . ." This suggests that the same dragon who is angry with God's people is standing on the seashore awaiting the rise of this wild beast, which the dragon would invest with his own power and authority (verse 2).

Actually, we are introduced to two wild beasts in this chapter—one coming out of the sea and another coming out of the earth. The beast coming out of the sea had seven heads, 10 horns, with 10 crowns on the horns, and a blasphemous name on each head. Sounds pretty confusing, doesn't it?

The head is the controlling part of the body, signifying power or dominion. The number 7 is typical of universality, completeness. Seven heads, therefore, is a symbol of universal dominion. The number 10 signifies completeness as well, not of universality or totality, but of sufficiency for the end in view. The 10 horns with crowns on them symbolize political powers. Thus this beast possesses worldwide dominion and abundant power.

Note how closely this beast resembles the one depicted in Daniel 7. Why not open two Bibles—one to Daniel 7 and the other to Revelation 13—and note the amazing similarities.

"Though primarily representing Satan, the dragon, in a secondary sense, represents the Roman Empire. . . . The power succeeding the Roman Empire, which received from the dragon 'his power, and his seat, and great authority,' is clearly papal Rome. . . . Behind this activity was Satan, seeking to exterminate the church."¹

"This prophecy, which is nearly identical with the description of the little horn of Daniel 7, unquestionably points to the papacy."²

"And All the World Wondered"

Did you know that:

- *Time* magazine named Pope John Paul II 1994's "Man of the Year"?
- In the same article (December 26, 1994), Billy Graham said of the pope: "He is being the strong conscience of the whole Christian world"?
- In Britain, interest in Catholicism has risen with the conversions of prominent personalities like the duchess of Kent and former cabinet secretary John Gummer?

● The December 30, 1994, *Daily Telegraph* in London reported that leading German Lutherans visited the Vatican to ask the pope to “forgive” Martin Luther? They condemned declarations against Rome previously made by Lutherans.

By the sixth century, the papacy was firmly established as a religio-political power. John predicted that it would be dealt a deadly blow but would recover. The pope was taken captive in 1798, but there has since been a resurrection of his power.

There are honest, God-fearing people in every church. We, therefore, do not criticize people, but the issue here is with a religious system that seeks to draw God’s people away from Him. Thank God, *we can choose Jesus* and live eternally!

The Lamblike Beast

The beast in verse 11 works in collaboration with the first but comes up out of the earth. In prophecy a sea represents people and nations. Thus, earth may be assumed to represent a sparsely settled region. Seventh-day Adventist commentators have seen in this second beast a symbol of the United States of America for the following reasons:

● **Timing:** When the first beast was going into captivity in 1798, the USA was growing in prominence and power.

***Time* magazine named Pope John Paul II 1994’s “Man of the Year.”**

● **Location:** This nation arose, not in the Old World, but in the sparsely populated New World.

● **Descriptions:** Two horns may represent the two notable features of the American system of government: civil and religious liberty. The USA may well be regarded as the lamblike beast with its emphasis on being a haven of rest for the oppressed of the nations.

Notice that this second beast also begins to speak as a dragon. Remember who that is—and worse still, it causes people to worship the first beast (Rev. 13:12). The time is coming when the United States will enact legislation to command worship on a day in keeping with the dictates of the papacy. Sabbath observance will then become a pivotal issue. The choice will be loyalty either to the Sabbath seal of God or to the Sunday sign of papal supremacy. We need to be faithful to the Lord now so that by His grace we will be able to stand firm for Him in these testing times. What’s your choice today?

REACT

1. How could I explain Revelation 13 to a Roman Catholic friend without hurting his or her feelings?

2. What do I need to change now to put God first in my life?

1. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 817.

2. *The Great Controversy*, p. 439.

By Clinton A. Valley, principal of the John Loughborough School, London, England.

Trying Times

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Heb. 12:1-3

Satan is increasing his attack on God's people by using the papacy (the beast with 10 horns and seven heads) and the United States (the other beast mentioned) to persecute them. Only if we are rooted in our faith and follow God's Word will we be able to endure Satan's attack. Revelation 13:9, 10 tells us that God's people will be captured and killed with the sword, and the only way to endure this without giving up is to have faith. "To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see" (Heb. 11:1, TEV).

Revelation 13:16, 17 speaks of a time when people will be unable to buy or sell unless they have the mark of the beast. Imagine how difficult it will be to obtain a bar of chocolate! We need to ask ourselves: Are we prepared for the time of trouble? Have we the faith to help us endure these times we *will* face one day? What

Imagine how difficult it will be to obtain a bar of chocolate!

will we receive through it all, the mark of the beast or the seal of God?

The words written by Frederick W. Faber encourage us on:

"Faith of our Fathers! living still
In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword,
O how our hearts beat high with joy
When e'er we hear that glorious word.
Faith of our Fathers! Holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death."¹

We need to pray, not only for one another, but also for those who don't yet know God as their personal Saviour. Ellen G. White states that "only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures, and who have received the love of truth will be shielded from the powerful decision that takes the world captive. . . . To all the testing time will come. By the sifting of temptation the genuine Christian will be revealed. Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses? Would they, in such crisis cling to the Bible and the Bible only? Satan will, if possible, prevent them from obtaining a preparation to stand in that day."² My prayer is that we will stand in that day.

REACT

How do you know whether the faith you profess now is the kind that would enable you to endure the time of trouble?

1. *SDA Hymnal*, no. 304.

2. *The Great Controversy*, p. 625.

By Myra Brown, a social-care student at Woolwich College, Plumstead, London, England.

Retrospective

EVIDENCE

Key Texts: Revelation 13; Daniel 7

“Look what happened last time” is a common warning heard by all who tend to rush into things unprepared. The only way to prepare ourselves as we rush forward to the second coming and the time of trouble is to do exactly as we are warned.

John’s visions on Patmos tell of future and past events. The first beast embraces the four beasts seen in Daniel’s vision.

John talks about the beast recovering from a deadly blow, once again to persecute God’s people. In this resurrection, the beast will not appear as its former self, but instead will resemble a lamb. As a lamb (symbolism of Christlikeness), this superficial righteousness will undergo a change, and the original power exercised by the first beast will reappear. So what can we expect from the new beast by looking at the old?

Read Daniel 7. Like the old beast described by Daniel, the second beast will induce a progressive control of a religious body. This was symbolized by the little

Those who follow the biblical truth will be branded heretics.

horn in Daniel’s vision, symbolizing the Roman Empire turned into a papal state. As state and church become more integrated, we can expect laws and decrees that mirror Daniel 7:5. In that verse, Rome actually moved the holy day to Sunday, and this will be reinforced as the new state will cause “the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast” (Rev. 13:12).

As the horn made war with the saints, we can expect the same persecution experienced by the early Christians, who dared to differ with the Vatican. Economic, and even physical, force will be used to bring dissenters into line; those who follow the biblical truth will be branded heretics. Prior to this time of alienation, many people will look to humans, who claim spiritual power and authority, to save them from sin and to intercede with God, rather than turn directly to Jesus.

By looking at the past, we can see the hard times ahead. We can also learn from which direction these trials will come. Before you resign yourself to gloom, remember that the rule of the beast is to end again (this time permanently) by the second coming of Christ! So let us take some comfort when we “look at what happened last time.”

By Marc Hack, a student of law and social anthropology at the London (England) School of Economics.

On the Side of Christ

HOW-TO

Key Text: Rev. 12:10, 11

Did you know that all our ancestors, from Adam right down to ourselves, were in, and are in, a war zone? This war zone has outlasted Maoism, Hitlerism, World War I, World War II, and many other wars. On the defense is Christ, and on the offense is Satan. We humans are right in the middle. In fact, we are the bull's-eye on the dartboard. From Revelation 12:10-12, it is very clear that we have been and are being constantly accused by the adversary day and night. Knowing this, what can we do to demonstrate our loyalty to Christ?

1. Avoid making the same mistakes that Satan made. Satan became self-righteous and began to worship himself instead of worshiping God. This led to self-reliance, rather than God-reliance. He was physically close to God yet spiritually far away. Could it be that we are physically in church, yet spiritually far from God? We need to make God's commandments personal in our lives and to depend completely on Him for help. Prayer is the key.

2. Be sober; be vigilant (1 Pet. 5:8). Take God's Word seriously, and use it as a shield. God's Word has power to keep us alert. If we daily absorb and appreciate

We are the bull's-eye on the dartboard.

His counsel in the Bible, then we will not be caught off guard by the attacks of the evil one.

3. Be an overcomer (Rom. 8:37). Revelation 12:11 gives us three weapons that we can use to be overcomers:

- "The blood of the Lamb." We frequently sing about the "wonder-working power in the precious blood of the Lamb." Christ's sacrifice on Calvary has automatically empowered us to be overcomers. Let us claim that power as our shield.

- "The word of their testimony." Begin to develop your testimony. Think about the many wonderful things that Christ has accomplished in your life, and be willing to share these. Your testimony is your sword.

- "Loved not their lives unto the death." Read Revelation 12:11 and Matthew 10:39. Daniel and his friends were able to face death without fear because they had confidence in the power of God. Like them, we need to build our confidence in God, who is able to deliver us and, if necessary, prepare us for death. It is God who gives us life (Acts 17:28). Therefore, be not afraid to die for Christ and to make use of the opportunities that come your way to stand for Him. The sacrifice of your life is your bow and arrow.

REACT

Is it easier to be on the side of Christ? Why or why not?

By HopieAnn Platt, a student of psychology and counseling at Roehampton Institute, Surrey University, London, England.

I Wait. . . .

OPINION

Key Text: Revelation 12, 13

John the revelator draws our attention to the evil power of Satan the narcissistic, who came to see himself as more important than Christ Himself. Seeking to be equal with God in the line of heaven's authority, Satan persevered to no avail. You see, he had *no* chance, because there were only two other beings in heaven who stood as equal with the Father—Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Lucifer lured a third of the angels into believing that God was partial, unjust, and unfair. Soon deception ripened into a full-scale revolt! No wonder the devil and the third of the angels who believed him were cast out of heaven. Two opposing groups could not reside in peaceful heaven, where only harmony existed; one group had to go. While equilibrium was restored in heaven, Satan and his crew were cast down. Down where? Well, wasn't the earth created by God prior to their downfall? Human beings were created after God's image. To those good-for-nothings, creation—in fact, anything ordained by God for the good of all, whether it be animal, plant, or human—had to be defaced.

With fury, Satan and his followers endeavored to destroy God's plans. Since

Don't you find a certain vague sadness?

God's plan placed humanity at its center, humankind became their focus too. Their wrath has been felt by the first father, Adam, right down to you and me. Within this selfish, proud, framework, we can have a better view of the world.

Understanding the motives of the evil one makes us realize that the everyday burden of bad news is global. The war started in heaven is now here on earth (see Rev. 12:17). For all the effort we put forth to look on the bright side, don't you find that there is a certain vague sadness, an indefinite fear constantly shadowing us? Have you ever wondered whether there is a cure for this "shadow-tailing"?

There is a solution similar to an antidote to a disease problem. By choosing to serve Christ, we can experience peace that has never been felt before. Our burdens will become light, and our sorrows become joys.

Speaking of joy reminds me of a dream I had of heaven. As I stood at the pearly gates of heaven, I saw a great multitude of people. They were smiling and filled with joy. They looked so happy and at peace, with no care in the world. As they sang praises to lift up the sweet name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I realized a new day had begun. The shadow had been lifted. Free at last! There were no more tears, pain, or sorrow, for Jehovah—God—had wiped them away forever.

My hope and prayer is to see that day when God returns. There will be no more inequalities between black and white, male and female, poor and rich, sick and healthy. Until that day, I wait. . . .

By Dora Boateng, a film and video student at Surrey Institute of Art and Design, Farnham, Surrey, England; and Karen Wright, a footwear technology student at Corwainers College, Hackney, London, England.

TWO SEALS; ONE CHOICE



“And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God” (Rev. 14:5).

Christ's Seal or Satan's Mark

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rev. 14:5

My best friend just went back to Korea. As a sign of her gratitude for our friendship, she gave me a rubber stamp of my name. When I arrived home, the first thing I did was to go around stamping my name on everything that I owned—in ink so red no one could miss it. Now when people borrow my things, they know who is the owner, and they know that as long as my name remains on those things they belong to me.

God wants to do the same for His people (Rev. 7:2, 3); He is longing to seal everyone who is His. Of course, it will not be an arbitrary decision on God's part—the decision is ours.

Unfortunately, Satan wants to do the same. By inducing in us a spirit of disobedience, Satan can identify those who belong to him. The book of Revelation announces a time when every person on this earth will be forced to make a decision for or against God. Those who follow God will receive a seal that will identify them. Satan will also use a mark to identify his followers (13:16, 17). God

The seal on a transcript or on a precious object serves an important purpose.

warns us against receiving this mark (14:9, 10). We should be able to identify Satan's mark and his instruments that will impose it.

A stamp also has another purpose. Important documents and papers have a watermark or an official seal. Some silver and gold articles have a hallmark to indicate their purity. Such marks serve for quality control. God says that He will stamp this seal upon His obedient children "to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them" (Ezek. 20:12). The seal on a transcript or on a precious object serves an important purpose. Without this seal, the document or article would not be recognized as official or genuine. Only those who have the seal of God will be ready to meet Jesus when He returns.

This week, we will study about these two identifying signs of ownership. Whose stamp/mark/seal are you going to choose as your identification? To whom do you want to belong?

Some may not be sure. Some may think that they can be neutral. Not with Christ. You are either for or against (Matt. 12:30). When the door of opportunity is closed, you will be on one of the two sides—Jesus' or Satan's. There will be only two destinies—eternal life or eternal death. Choose now your seal or mark.

By Melissa Martin, a high-school junior who studies through Home Study Institute, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines.

Prepare to Meet Your Saviour

LOGOS

Rev. 6:11-17; 7:1-3; 13:11-18; 14:1-5, 9-11

“Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, and even sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God” (2 Thess. 2:1-4, NIV).

Imagine you have received a letter from someone very special to you. The message of the letter is that this special person is coming to see you in three months. Considering the three-month period, you decide that there is still plenty of time to prepare. So you postpone making the preparation needed to receive this very important visitor.

But, as time goes by, you find yourself busy trying to get an education or earn a living, while still hoping to be ready for the visitor. Then the day comes, and you have not yet begun to get ready! How embarrassed you will be when your guest finds you unprepared! You would feel like hiding yourself, wouldn’t you?

Jesus, a special person to each one of us, has sent us a letter—the Bible. The message of His letter is that He is coming to take us to be with Him in heaven (John 14:1-3). In this letter, Jesus does not mention a specific date for His coming. Rather, He gives signs that let us know that He is near, even at the door (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; Rev. 6:12-14).

Two groups of people are waiting for the coming of Jesus. One consists of those who, regardless of the signs given by Jesus, are not ready to meet Him. The other is those who take the word of Jesus seriously and who begin to prepare immediately. Those in the second group not only prepare themselves but also tell others about the coming of Jesus and urge them to be ready to go with Him. In contrast, the ones in the first group think of persecuting their neighbors, who are preparing to be with Jesus (2 Tim. 3:12). When those in the first group begin persecution, the angels of God hold back the evil forces (Rev. 7:1) until the seal of the living God is put “on the foreheads of the servants of our God” (verse 3).

These servants of God are those who obey the Word of Jesus. They have decided to be servants of obedience rather than servants of sin (Rom. 6:16). Thus they are given a sign of belonging to God—His seal. The seal is not a visible sign on the forehead. It is a sign manifest in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, a sign between God and His people (Exod. 31:16, 17; Ezek. 20:20).

The time will come when God’s angels will remove their restraint over the power of evil. Political and religious powers that have been harmless, gentle, and innocent begin to speak and act contrary to the Word of Jesus. Unlike the servants of God who eagerly witness for the coming of Christ, these powers try to make everyone disobey God. They perform miraculous signs for the purpose of deceiving. They kill those refusing to worship humankind in the place of God. They force everyone “to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one

could buy or sell unless he had the mark" (Rev. 13:16, 17). Just as God gives Sabbath observance to be a sign between Him and those who worship Him, so also opponents of God have Sunday observance to identify those who are loyal to God's enemy.

In the midst of persecution, the witnesses of Jesus long for His soon coming (6:10). But He does not come until all who are going to stand and witness for Him have the chance to do so (verse 11).

At a time when many have forgotten His coming, Jesus will come. Those who chose to obey God rather than humankind are ready to meet Him. They have the seal of the living God. And as they see Jesus coming, they say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation" (Isa. 25:9).

In contrast to those who are prepared, when Jesus appears, the unprepared ones call "to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!'" (Rev. 6:16). The unprepared ones are not happy to see Jesus come. They are embarrassed because they are unprepared! They bear the mark of those who oppose God, instead of bearing

Two groups of people are waiting for the coming of Jesus.

the seal of God. To such, "God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). They cannot be in the presence of God's glory and remain alive.

For what are we preparing? To meet Jesus joyfully when He returns or to hide from His face? To sing "a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders" (Rev. 14:3) or to "be tormented with burning sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb" (verse 10)? Now is the time to commit ourselves completely to God and to be ready to live with Him forever.

REACT

1. Why do the unrighteous persecute the righteous?
2. What does it mean if those who do not share our beliefs are not persecuting us?
3. Is the prophetic message of Revelation 6:12-14 symbolic or literal? Explain your answer.

By Lameck Miyayo, a theology major at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines.

Protection Against Deception

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rev. 13:11-18

Our generation loves to see signs, wonders, and miracles—spectacle religion rather than truth, as given in the Word of God. So, in the last days, Satan will perform miracles to give the sin-loving multitude what they crave to distract their attention from the “Thus saith the Lord.”

“The multitudes do not want Bible truth, because it interferes with the desires of the sinful, world-loving heart; and Satan supplies the deceptions which they love.”¹

“Satan will work in a most subtle manner to introduce human inventions clothed with angel garments. But the light from the Word is shining amid the moral darkness; and the Bible will never be superseded by miraculous manifestations.”²

“Let none cherish the idea that special providences or miraculous manifestations are to be proof of the genuineness of their work or of the ideas they advocate.”³

Unless we are grounded in the Word of God, we will be deceived. Ellen White warns of one of Satan’s greatest deceptions: Satan himself appearing as Christ: “In gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the gracious, heavenly truths

Unless we are grounded in the Word of God, we will be deceived.

which the Saviour uttered; he heals the diseases of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. . . . This the strong, almost overmastering delusion.”⁴

The antichrist would deceive even the elect if it were possible (Matt. 24:24). “So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested.”⁵

REACT

1. If a close friend who has AIDS wants to visit a mystic of an Eastern religion who has been thoroughly documented to have cured some cases of AIDS, what would you counsel your friend?

2. How can one distinguish between miracles of God and miracles of Satan?

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

2. *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 48.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *The Great Controversy*, p. 624.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 593.

By Ferdinand O. Regalado, a religion student at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines.

An Assurance From Judgment

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rev. 6:17

As Seventh-day Adventists, we are familiar with the concept of judgment. Have you considered its full meaning as described in Revelation 6:11-17?

Though the word *judgment* is nowhere to be found in Revelation 6:11-17, one aspect of the concept of judgment appears. This prophetic passage speaks about the manifestation of God's judgment upon natural powers, which many persons through history have regarded as gods. The cataclysm, the cosmic changes, such as the darkening of the sun, the moon turned to red, and the stars in the sky falling to earth (verses 12-14), are manifestations of God's judgment. God's judgment is here symbolized in cosmic changes, implying that God will judge other gods and that only His power will prevail.

Some apocalyptic or prophetic passages in the book of Isaiah may provide a help in understanding judgment in Revelation 6:12-14. Isaiah 24:21, 23, for instance, also speaks about a cataclysm, particularly the fall of starry hosts. Bear in mind that Isaiah lived in the time when many people—even the kings of Israel and Judah—worshipped, not only man-made images, but also natural objects such as

God's judgment is not to be feared, but to be welcomed.

the sun, moon, and stars (2 Kings 17:16; 21:3; 23:5).

The prophet Isaiah, consequently, prophesied that the time will come when "the Lord will punish the powers in the heavens above" (Isa. 24:21, NIV), in which "the moon will be abashed, the sun ashamed; for the Lord Almighty will reign" (verse 23). He warned the people to forsake idols. He warned them that other gods or idols will never be exalted above God, for the day will come when God will shake other gods and "the Lord alone will be exalted" (2:17).

We are exposed to many idols around us. Sometimes we are tempted to think that other gods, such as human ideologies, prevail. On the contrary, God's judgment is working right now. In our day we have begun to see the fulfillment of the prophecy in Revelation 6:12-14. For example, the totalitarian, atheistic Communist ideology has collapsed with the fall of the Soviet Union. The gospel has entered these places that were impossible to penetrate before. Thus, God has begun to judge human ideologies that have become idols. We may still expect to see other changes as a result of the manifestation of God's judgment.

That is good news! God's judgment is not to be feared, but to be welcomed. The concept of judgment gives an assurance that we can trust and depend on God's power. God's judgment will show us that His power prevails. And as a result, the believers who have the seal of God will have confidence in God's power and be ready to meet Jesus when He returns.

By Steven Jonah Rantung, a religion major in systematic theology at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines.

Watch Out That No One Deceives You

HOW-TO

Key Texts: Rev. 13:16; Col. 2:8

Mrs. White warned that spiritualism and mesmerism will fool many as we come near to the end of time. Deception will be combined with persecution for nonconformity (Rev. 13:11-18). America will impose a religion that will directly oppose the Ten Commandments. As tensions increase, she will enact decrees imposing the death penalty on noncompliers.

How can God's young "saints" stand amid deception, persecution, and suffering? These are the characteristics that should be developed, as pointed out by C. Mervyn Maxwell:

1. Power to make choices, to do the right thing at any cost, to love "not their lives even unto death" (see Rev. 12:11).
2. Strength to resist peer pressure even when the whole world follows the beast (see 13:3).
3. Ability to distinguish true from false. The antichrist's deceptions are so persuasive they almost deceive the elect (see Matt. 24:24).

Spiritualism and mesmerism will fool many as we come near to the end of time.

4. Tenacity to the Bible truth.
5. Loyalty to God and His people.
6. Conviction that values service and eternal life ahead of buying and selling (see Rev. 13:17).
7. Ability to express faith in words.

Soon everyone on earth will make a choice. There will be two sides at the end of time. One group will be composed of people who have chosen to believe Satan's falsehoods. In spite of all the loving evidence provided to the contrary, they will continue to insist that God restricts our happiness. This group will have the mark of the beast. The other group will be made up of those who have weighed the evidence carefully and who value deeply the God who suffered for them. Completely rejecting Satan's position, they take Christ's hand by faith and wholeheartedly commit themselves, at any personal cost, to believing, practicing, and teaching the truth about God's character and His laws. These faithful ones will receive the seal of God. They will not be deceived, for they are deeply rooted in Christ.

REACT

1. What deceptions will take place before Jesus comes?
2. How are we deceived by the devil today?

* *God Cares*, vol. 2, pp. 386, 387.

By Ruth P. Pareño, office secretary at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines.

The Attraction of Guilelessness in This Age

OPINION

Key Text: Rev. 14:5

We live in a cynical age. People distrust political leaders, business leaders, and, unfortunately, sometimes church leaders. All around us we see less than pure motives behind people's actions. Ours is the age of "spin doctors" who manufacture motives and reasons, at both the political and personal levels. Sometimes we as Christians are cynical too. All this has made many people wary of anyone who tries to get close to us or to win our trust.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the best kind of friend is one with no guile, the type of person you know is open and is never sly or deceitful. Along with blamelessness, or faultlessness, guilelessness is the other description of the 144,000 in Revelation 14:5. Finding a person who is blameless is an impossibility on this earth. Blessed by God, however, is the person who finds a friend with no guile or deceit in his or her mouth. Jesus was that kind of person (1 Pet. 2:22), and so was one of His disciples, Nathaniel (John 1:47). John could have used any number of

If we could be people with open and pure motives, our message would naturally attract people.

descriptions for the 144,000. The simple absence of guile was what he chose, the kind of people who are as innocent as doves.

Sometimes in our zeal to proclaim God's true Sabbath and His seal, we forget about the kind of character we should be developing. If we could be people with open and pure motives, our message would naturally attract people dying both inside and outside the church. Before listening to our message, the world rightly demands that we be credible Christian witnesses. While expecting perfect Christians in the church is unrealistic, it is not unrealistic to expect people who are not deceitful, but who are pure in motive.

By Paul Kotanko, a graduate student in theology at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines.

LORD OF THE SIGNS



“When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28).

Calming Hearts

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Luke 21:28

Jesus had already returned to Jerusalem with His disciples. The coming days would be very disturbing because of the events that were about to take place in Jesus' life. The multitude was surrounding Jesus. During His talk a few moments before, Jesus had mentioned something about the temple of Jerusalem, and everyone in the crowd commented that the temple was beautiful and luxurious. They were all concerned about the temple of God, but nothing was said about the God of the temple. Jesus had said that it would be destroyed and nothing would be left.

Later on, after the people had left, "Peter, John, James, and Andrew came to Him as He sat upon the Mount of Olives. 'Tell us,' they said, 'when shall these things be?'" Jesus saw each person as a unique, special child. Knowing that the disciples would be unable to handle what He was about to tell them, He merged the story of final events with that of the destruction of Jerusalem, including up to the future day, when the world would observe His justice.

He began by telling them that many would pretend to be Him. Then He spoke

Jesus saw each person as a unique, special child.

about wars, earthquakes, hunger, and sickness. He mentioned that those who believed in Him would be taken to court before judges and civil authorities and that there they would be witnesses of their Master. Their experience of love and trust in Him would make them faithful, and they would be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. He added that their parents, siblings, and friends would betray them, but that they would be cared for and protected by a great Shepherd who would care for them. Then Jesus spoke to them about heavenly signs, about the terrible conditions in which people would live, and about how He would appear in the clouds, coming for a second time—this time forever.

The hearts of Andrew, James, and John were calmed. The loving Master looked at them and said that all these things would come to pass, but for those who live in Jesus, things will be different. They have chosen salvation; redemption is closer than ever before. Jesus advises us to watch for the signs, but above all not to lose sight of the Lord of the signs. Accept God's warnings and follow His advice. Invite Him who reveals the future to us to live within your heart.

* *The Desire of Ages*, p. 628.

Living in the Final Days

LOGOS

Acts 2:14-24; 16:12-16; 18:1-24

A Message for Our Days (Acts 2:14-24)

Peter's sermon has significant meaning for those of us who live in the last days of the history of this world. Many times we have read this portion of the Bible in the context of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that occurred long ago, an event too far removed from our time, a historical incident. However, when we study it in the context of final-day events, this same sermon becomes very pertinent to us.

Those of us who will live during the end time, when the experience of the Pentecost will be repeated and the Spirit of God is poured "on all flesh," must proclaim the heavenly message with clarity and power, with the same fervor as Peter. To accomplish this task, we must allow the Holy Spirit to speak through us. "The apostle was not just 'saying'; he was 'speaking forth' that which the Spirit gave him."¹ The same Peter who denied his Master became the instrument of the Holy Spirit, proclaiming a unique and extraordinary message. We should have the same attitude as the apostle, calling upon his [Jesus'] name with contrition after hearing the rooster crow.

The message of the apostle Peter and of today's "servants" has the same contents: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21). Those who listened were moved, and "the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (verse 41). The same thing is happening today. Amazing things are occurring in countries where we thought it would be impossible to preach the gospel. "Thousands in the eleventh hour will see and acknowledge the truth. . . . These conversions to truth will be made with a rapidity that will surprise the church, and God's name alone will be glorified."²

A Minister's Experiences (16:12-16)

The life of a minister of God is filled with different kinds of experience and emotion. Some are wonderful, like the conversion of those who attend evangelistic meetings. It is a joy to watch visitors sit in the first row as they listen carefully to each word, nod their heads as they comprehend the message, and finally respond positively to the altar call. The feeling is even greater at the time of their baptism.

Paul lived this experience at the time of Lydia's conversion, "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" (verse 14). The conversion of Lydia "and her household" (verse 15) and baptism are experiences that help one forget all the difficulties and sacrifices experienced in order to effect the missionary effort.

On the other hand, the minister must also experience difficult situations, such as dealing with people who have been trapped by drug abuse or other weaknesses. Just talking about these problems will not help; only the power of God can transform and uproot these souls from the enslaving power of sin and vice. The Bible text states that "a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us" (verse 16). Subsequently, Paul, in the name of Jesus Christ, freed her from the evil spirit. The joy these experiences bring cannot be compared to anything else.

We are living at a time when we are constantly facing opportunities to glorify

the Lord and to manifest His power. Although “Satan is marshaling his hosts,”³ and many people are being misled through his deceptions, which are very common in our days. It is our responsibility to neutralize that activity, for we have the following promise: “These signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils” (Mark 16:17).

Appearing in Court (Acts 18:1-24)

“When Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law” (verses 12, 13).

Repression, tribunes, and jail were used to try to silence God’s messengers. Christians were persecuted, and only death could silence their voices. In countries where we enjoy a degree of freedom, these events seem more like stories coming from the other side of the ocean. We feel we will never be participants of such

Just talking about these problems will not help.

events, since civilization, democracy, and modern times would not allow it. However, history will repeat itself.

REACT

1. How can I prepare myself to defend my faith?
2. Which recent actual events are signs that we are living at the doorstep of the end of the time of grace?
3. What evidence in your own life reveals your personal relationship with Christ?

1. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 142.

2. *Last Day Events*, p. 212.

Awakening to the Final Warning

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Luke 21:31-38

“We are now upon the very borders of the eternal world, but it is the purpose of the adversary of souls to lead us to put far off the close of time. Satan will in every conceivable manner assail those who profess to be the commandment-keeping people of God and to be waiting for the second appearing of our Saviour in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He will lead as many as possible to put off the evil day and become in spirit like the world, imitating its customs.”*

For many years we, as a church, have known that Jesus is coming soon, but the feeling is becoming stronger that His coming is far away. Satan takes advantage of this situation to diminish in the hearts of the believers the desire to dwell in the eternal house of God and to make us more comfortable in this earthly home, which we seem to prefer. Jesus invites us to look more to Him. Only in this way we will be able to reflect His perfect image. Satan will try to attack directly those who keep the Ten Commandments (Rev. 14:12)—the people who will live through the moments of the advent—and will try to make them more like him, more interested in staying in this world. Yet Jesus invites us to know Him, to have a lasting daily

The feeling is becoming stronger that Jesus’ coming is far away.

personal experience with Him, which will lead us to a constant dependency on and surrender to Him.

REACT

1. How can I listen to Jesus today?
2. Why does Jesus want so much for me to depend on Him today?
3. In what specific ways would a more complete dependence on Christ affect my own everyday life?

* *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 306.

By Yasmin Díaz Uriarte, a student of nutrition at Inca Union University, Lima, Perú.

Jesus, the Eschatological Prophet

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 2 Pet. 1:19

In an eschatological sermon, Jesus predicts the destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple in A.D. 70. The people had suffered under Roman harassment for five years. In 66 B.C. the Jewish people revolted, and the Roman Empire attacked the city of David. In A.D. 70 the people felt desperate. They were suffering hunger and pestilence. Since many of the faithful had gathered for Passover, these were causes of suffering.

But above all, the word of One who cannot be wrong, the prophetic word of Jesus Christ, who pronounced the destruction of this fabulous temple, God's Word, which is true and infallible, assures us of the fulfillment of the eschatological side of this prophecy for our days. It will be as precise and true as it was in the time of Jesus and is detailed in the book of Revelation.

Jesus is not trying to condemn His people. Instead, He is trying to warn us of that which is to come. He wants us to keep our will under His control, that our lives be occupied and governed by Him, and He has promised that even if we walk through "the valley of the shadow of death" He will be with us. He has promised

God wants us to fix our attention on Him and not on the crisis.

not to abandon us. We will have our Shepherd by our side. God wants us to fix our attention on Him and not on the crisis.

REACT

1. Should I fear the final events? Why?
2. If you could have accompanied Jesus at one event in His life, which would it be? Why?
3. If someone asked you to prove that the Scriptures are God's Word, how would you do so?

Listening by Love

HOW-TO

Key Texts: Rev. 1:3; 22:7

How can I understand Jesus' counsel before the end of the period of grace?

Before the end of the period of grace, people will be sealed on the basis of their choice to depend fully on God or to be completely independent of Him. Only those who depend entirely on Jesus will be able to resist the dark day. Ellen G. White makes a comment concerning this matter: "There is a work to be done for this time in fitting a people to stand in the day of trouble, and all must act their part in this work. They must be clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and be . . . fortified by the truth."¹ God is calling us to do a specific task now, so that when the difficult days come we can be His remnant church.

The antichrist will effect his spectacular feats before our eyes. His deception will be so perfectly similar to the truth that it will be impossible to distinguish between them, except for the Holy Scriptures; by this testimony we should test every statement or miracle.²

There is no doubt that Satan will try to do that which was the most normal and similar to what Jesus did in His earthly ministry. He will try to divert the believers' attention from Jesus and to his own incredible signs with the purpose of alienating

“There is a work to be done for this time in fitting a people to stand in the day of trouble.”

them from Christ. The only eternal anchor is the Bible, which shows the will of God and the Holy Spirit, the friend who will lead our minds to a more perfect knowledge of Jesus.

REACT

1. In your own words, explain what is meant by the “period of grace.”
2. To what or to whom should be aimed the work that Ellen White refers to in the quotation above?
3. What is specifically meant by “fitting a people to stand in the day of trouble”? How should we go about doing this?
4. What is the message of God's Word for us today?

1. *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 389.

2. See *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, pp. 443-445.

By Marbella Díaz Panduro, an education student at Inca Union University, Lima, Perú.

Trusting in the God Who Warns

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Cor. 10:13

As a child, every time I heard of the second coming I associated this significant event with destruction, terror, fires, and nightmares. I feared Jesus' coming. I believed my conduct would be known, and because of my long list of sins I would be thrown into the lake of fire after the millennium.

When I was 12 years old, I read *The Great Controversy*. I was fascinated by the details of the events, but later I learned more about Jesus. I understood that God is just and fair and loving. He is an affectionate Father, who understands me. Little by little, I understood that His blood cleanses my sinful stains and that I can observe the Ten Commandments. I can see that God was fair to give them to us, since by His grace we can keep the commandments.

Now when I think of the second coming and His counsel concerning the end of the period of grace, I realize that He is loving and very merciful. Knowing my limits, He does not allow me to be tempted more than I can resist (1 Cor. 10:13). I still have to struggle with sin, but I know that as long as I keep my eyes on Him, He will give me victory. There is nothing in me that will help me triumph over my sin; only God's power in me will help me be victorious. I yearn for Jesus' return.

He does not allow me to be tempted more than I can resist.

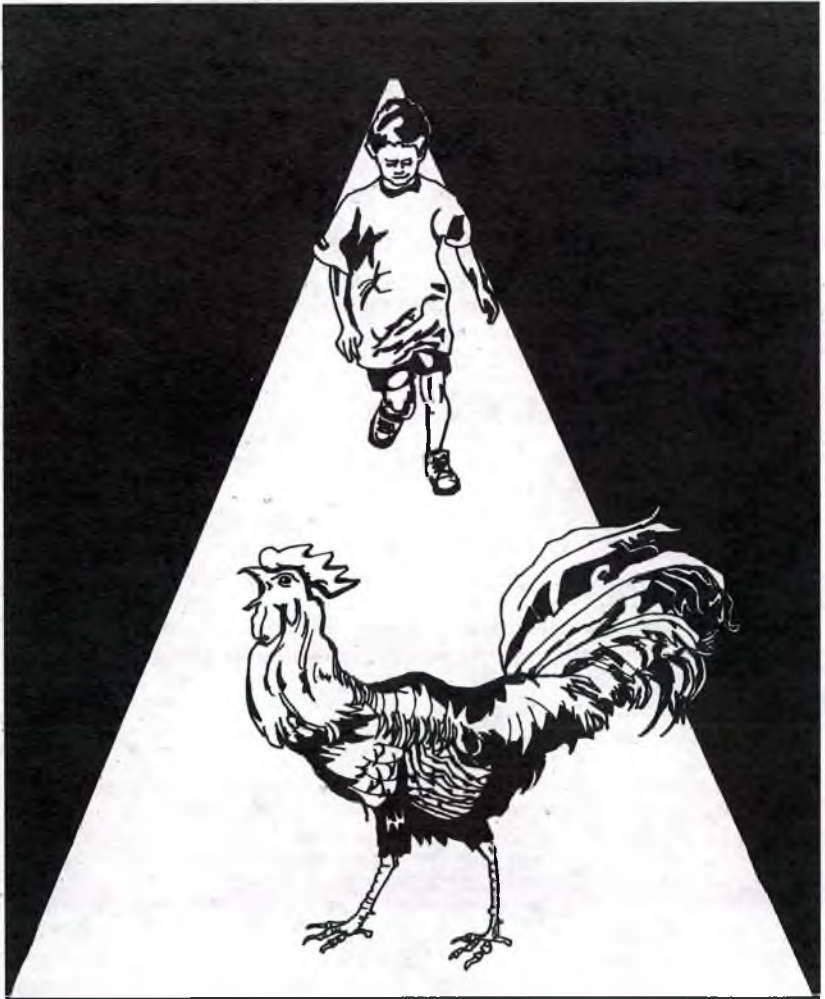
God is really loving, and you are His child, and He loves you much more than you can imagine. Just trust in Him and believe in Him.

REACT

1. Why is God interested in you?
2. If Jesus promises victory now, what should I do at the time of the crisis?

By William Díaz Panduro, an accounting student at Titicaca Adventist Academy, Juliaca, Perú.

FACING DOWN THE TROUBLE



“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Chicken Coop or Chicken Soup

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: John 16:33; Jer. 29:11

The late-afternoon sun beat down even as it began to sink in the sky. I sat in a pile of red dirt, making big figure eights with my yellow Tonka bulldozer. Little rivulets of sweat trickled down my back, and I scratched at them with a grimy hand. Dad was out back trying to finish the raking before dark. The sound of clanking dishes and the aroma of fried green tomatoes floated through the open kitchen window. My mouth watered in anticipation. Suddenly, the sound of Mom's voice startled me from my four-year-old's fantasy world.

"Come in and wash your hands for dinner," Mom called. "And put your toys away. It's going to rain tonight."

Eager to help, I jumped up and collected my trucks. As I started for the house, I noticed that the chickens were still running around the yard. I knew that they couldn't be left out in the rain, so within a few minutes I had all the hens in the coop. All I still had to do was find the rooster. Soon I found him strutting around behind the barn. Carefully I herded him toward the little house. We were almost there when he realized what I planned to do. He raced around the corner of the coop with me

We were almost there when he realized what I planned to do.

close on his tail. Around and around the building we raced. Suddenly he stopped, challenging me. Back around the building and under the clothesline we ran, dodging the trailing sheets. Fear gripped my heart with every stride. Then I tripped on a sheet and fell. He jumped on me and started picking my head with all the fury that an old rooster could muster.

The next thing I knew, Mom was screaming and beating him off with a broom. Gently she picked me up and carried me into the house. As she washed my wounds, I told her what had happened. Mom wasn't angry or hateful to me because of what I'd done; she cared only for my safety.

Immediately following the close of probation, the worst time of trouble ever known will begin. Why would God allow this to happen to His children? Are you afraid of the time of trouble? This week's lesson deals with Christ's care after the close of probation. Revelation 13:15-19 explains exactly what will happen. This week, try to spend just five minutes each day finding out God's plans for you at the end of time.

By Julie Annis, a task-force worker in the youth ministries department of Rocky Mountain Conference, Denver, Colorado.

Continuity

LOGOS

Dan 12:1; Rev. 13:15-19

The close of probation carries with it a sense of finality. No matter what happens after the close of probation, the wicked will still be wicked and the righteous will forever be righteous. When you think about it, does it give you a sense of fear? Do you wonder whether maybe by some accident or oversight you will be condemned with the wicked? I have felt that way before, but not anymore.

Daniel 12:1 and Revelation 13:15 provide a sense of fear for your life, for well-being, for friends and family, and with fear comes dread. But the Lord, who inspired John with the information we find in Revelation 16–19 is the same inspiration for Matthew 5. Included in this chapter is the very essence for those who will stand at the end of time. “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3).

The end of time and the events leading up to the close of probation will be extraordinary, but we are just ordinary people. It is going to be impossible for us to make it through that time. But, then again, the very lives that we live right now are impossible to live without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Both situations are impossible on our own. If we sense our need of the Spirit and our inadequacy to function in this world as God’s representatives, then we are the poor in spirit. The beauty of this is in Luke 11:13, “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (NIV). We live and function as Christians every day because the Spirit lives in us. It is the same relationship that you have now, walking in the Spirit, that will see you through the worst time in earth’s history.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7). This passage is a result of a Spirit-filled life. Look at Jesus’ prayer in Matthew 6:12. He is instructing the disciples to ask the Lord for the same forgiveness that they would give to others. Jesus taught us how to ask for forgiveness. He is telling us that we have nothing to fear before, during, or after the close of probation if we allow God to live through us so we are merciful to those around us. There will be times when we’ll slip because we’re sinful. We will occasionally do a nose dive when it comes to living up to the full potential of a Christian life. The beautiful thing about this is that God already knows we will and is fully prepared for it. He will take care of all the troubles if we give Him one thing.

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). This is one of the most powerful texts in Scripture. In one way it asks the very most; in another it gives us the most freedom. God is looking for people willing to surrender their hearts to Him. He proved this by working with David, who, after sleeping with one of his friend’s wives, murdered the friend. David was not what I would call a nice guy. I’m not sure I’d have wanted him as one of my friends, because I love my wife and my life. But God called David a man after His own heart. This means that God is obviously concerned with the condition of the heart. No matter what your problems are or what you have done in your life, those issues are moot to God. He is not interested in having people who obey what He says only for the purpose of

overcoming sin or for being justified at the end of time. He is looking at your heart. God wants you to give your entire heart to Him. He wants your worries, fears, and joys. He wants you to talk to Him when you're as angry as you feel you can become, and He wants you to tell Him about your dreams. God wants to be in control of your heart.

When I turn on my computer to do work or to play games, there is always the same thing in the background. First MS-Dos loads, and then Windows loads on top of that. Even if I go out of Windows, Dos is still running my system. Jesus Christ wants to be your Dos; and if He has your heart, then He *is* your Dos and will be in the background of everything you do. He will help you with your thoughts, words, and deeds. Regardless of what happens at the end of time, you will see God because He is going to take care of your every need.

If you ever fear the end of time and its multitude of trials, just ask yourself where

Jesus Christ wants to be your Dos, to be in the background of everything you do.

you are today. If you are not living a life surrendered to God, then your fears shouldn't be about the end of time, but rather about living a Christless life.

REACT

1. How do you know you are truly living a life that is surrendered to God?
2. How do you talk to Him about all the details of your life?
3. How does God demonstrate His love to His people after the close of probation?
4. What can you do now to prepare for this time of terrible trouble?
5. How does the expectation of the pre-advent close of probation make a difference in your life?
6. How can we enter the time of probation with assurance?
7. What are two things we can do when we are looking for assurance?
8. Can the idea of being on probation be compatible with salvation by grace? Explain your answer.
9. When Jesus ends His intercessory work in the judgment, how will He still be with us?

By Michael Hufham, youth pastor of the Denver (Colorado) South SDA Church.

Never Forsaken

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Josh. 1:5

“An angel returning from the earth announces that his work is done; the final test has been brought upon the world, and all who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received ‘the seal of the living God.’ Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts His hands and with a loud voice says, ‘It is done.’”¹

“When the work of the investigative judgment closes, the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death.”²

“The people of God have accomplished their work. They have received ‘the latter rain,’ ‘the refreshing from the presence of the Lord,’ and they are prepared for the trying hour before them.”³

“As the decree issued by the various rulers of Christendom against commandment keepers shall withdraw the protection of government, . . . the people of God will flee from the cities and villages and associate together in companies, dwelling in the most desolate and solitary places. Many will find refuge in the strongholds of the mountains. . . . But many . . . will be cast into the most unjust and cruel bon-

Many will find refuge in the strongholds of the mountains.

dage. The beloved of God pass weary days, bound in chains, shut in by prison bars, sentenced to be slain, some apparently left to die of starvation in dark and loathsome dungeons.”⁴

“Will the Lord forget His people in this trying hour? . . . Though enemies may thrust them into prison, yet dungeon walls cannot cut off the communication between their souls and Christ. One who sees their every weakness, who is acquainted with every trial, is above all earthly powers; and angels will come to them in lonely cells, bringing light and peace from heaven.”⁵

“By means of the angels there will be constant communication between heaven and earth. . . . In the midst of the time of trouble that is coming—a time of trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—God’s chosen people will stand unmoved. Satan and his host cannot destroy them, for angels that excel in strength will protect them.”⁶

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 613.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 490.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 613.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 626.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 626, 627.

6. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 16, 17.

By Dorothy Opp, youth-department secretary in the Rocky Mountain Conference, Denver, Colorado.

Probation and the Advent

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Matt. 25:6-12

Seventh-day Adventists alone, among Christian denominations, believe probation will end before Christ's second advent. William Miller originally taught that probation would close *when* Christ returned. It would end during the seventh plague as a voice from God's throne said, "It is done" (Rev. 16:17).¹

The "Midnight Cry" (Matt. 25:6) revitalized Millerite ranks during the summer of 1844. It was the message "Behold the Bridegroom Cometh!" and taught that Christ would return on October 22. As the date approached, Miller speculated that probation would close shortly *before* the second advent. On October 6 he wrote, "I am strong in the opinion that the next will be the last Lord's day sinners will ever have in probation. And within ten or fifteen days from thence, they will see Him whom they have hated and despised, to their shame and everlasting contempt."² Note that Miller considered unrepentant sinners to be on probation.

When Christ did not return on October 22, some of Miller's followers continued to believe that the work of Christ as humans' intercessor before God had ceased, "probation had ended, or, as they expressed it, 'the door of mercy was shut.'" They still believed the advent was near, for "man's probation would close a short time be-

Miller adopted a wait-and-see stance.

fore the actual coming of the Lord in the clouds of heaven."³ Miller adopted a wait-and-see stance. If no more sinners were converted, perhaps probation had closed.

Several future leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were among those who believed that the door of mercy had closed. They believed they were living *after* probation's close. Their experience formed a paradigm of what was to come.

As the months passed, it became clear that sinners were still being converted; therefore, probation could not have closed. In response, these Adventist leaders modified, then abandoned the idea that probation ended in 1844. As they studied the heavenly sanctuary, they learned that Christ's intercession had not ceased, but had entered a new phase. Probation would continue until His ministry in the Most Holy Place ended *before* the outpouring of the seven last plagues.

Probation had not ended as the judgment began, but would continue until its end. For these advent pioneers, sometime during the late 1840s the close of probation moved from the past into the future (Rev. 22:10-12; 15:8; Dan. 12:1, 10; Ezek. 3:27). Noah's experience entering the ark seven days before the Flood (Gen. 7:7-10) is similar.

1. *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p. 205; *Miller's Works* (1843), vol. 2, p. 125.

2. Quoted by James White in *Life Incidents* (1868), p. 185.

3. *The Great Controversy*, p. 429.

By Delmer Johnson, associate pastor of the Denver (Colorado) South SDA Church.

Disconnected? Never!

HOW-TO

Key Text: John 5:30

The icon in the top-right-hand corner of my CompuServe screen fascinates me. The tiny box pictures a broken connection between the prongs and receptor with the word *disconnect* printed below. It is amazing to realize that at the touch of a finger I can totally remove access to hundreds of forums, libraries, and nearly 2,000 fellow CompuServe members. That tiny icon serves as a daily reminder of my choice either to remain “connected” to Christ or to “disconnect” from Him.

For God’s people, after the close of probation, the temptation to disconnect from Christ will be forever gone. In arriving at this state, four major barriers to a life connected to Jesus will be addressed.

Through our connection with Christ:

1. He has given victory over deliberate sin. To know where you stand on this issue, consider praying through each of the Ten Commandments one by one and asking God to reveal to you any area needing victory. As God, through the Holy Spirit, reveals downfalls, pray for forgiveness and His power to overcome.

2. The Holy Spirit has transformed our motives. No longer are we driven by the five “Ps”: position, power, prestige, popularity, and profit. Christ has renewed

That tiny icon serves as a daily reminder of my choice to remain “connected” to Christ.

our minds, set us free from carnal needs, and filled us with a higher motive of service to God.

3. The Holy Spirit has removed the cancer of self-centeredness. “There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God.”*

4. The faithful will have experienced the victory that only someone with a heart surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus can know. It is not enough to claim Jesus as Saviour. We must also invite Him to be Lord over every thought, word, and action. Jesus said, “I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me” (John 6:38, NIV). We must be motivated by the same goal!

For God’s people, the time after the close of probation will be filled with weariness, distress, and anguish; but the little icon marked “disconnect” will have vanished from the computer screen of our minds forever.

* *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 250, 251.

By Garry Sudds, superintendent of education, Rocky Mountain Conference, Denver, Colorado.

Why Worry?

OPINION

Key Texts: Matt. 28:20; John 14:16

Probation *n.* 1. the testing of a person's behavior or abilities, etc.

Do you know anyone who has gotten into trouble with the law and been put on probation? Did that person look forward to, or fear, the day his or her probation would end?

Seventh-day Adventists may well be the only people on earth who worry about the close of their probation. Most people on probation are glad to see it end, provided, of course, they don't wind up in jail. When probation ends, they are not under the microscope anymore. They don't have to worry about someone looking over their shoulder.

Probation is a modern legal concept. A judge may put a person on probation rather than giving jail time. During the period of probation, he or she must report regularly to a probation officer who compares that person's behavior with the requirement of law.

In the day of the apostles, justification was also a real concept. It was the verdict a Greek judge pronounced when a person was found innocent—not guilty. It would make no sense to put a person on probation after that. Human judges put the guilty,

When probation ends, they are not under the microscope anymore.

not the innocent, on probation. Those declared innocent are free.

Probation, then, seems to be a concept that applies to those living under law. For unbelievers, probation ends at the moment of death. After that, they cannot repent or be saved. Could it be that for believers probation ends the moment they accept Christ, by faith, as their Saviour? At that moment, they are covered with Christ's righteousness and declared innocent, justified (Rom. 3:19-24, 28).

The concept of a pre-advent close of probation is often linked with the idea that we will have to stand alone before God, without the aid of Christ or the Holy Spirit. But the Bible makes it clear that neither Christ nor the Holy Spirit will ever abandon us. Shortly before His ascension, Jesus promised, "Surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20, NIV). When is the end? "Then the end will come, when [Jesus] hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power" (1 Cor. 15:24). Hours before His crucifixion, Jesus promised, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever" (John 14:16).

By probation's close, God's people are sealed. The angel's declaration ends with a promise we must not forget: "Let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy" (Rev. 22:11).

By Delmer Johnson, associate pastor of the Denver (Colorado) South SDA Church.

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH



“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25).

Olivia and Kaitlyn, We Hardly Knew You

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Cor. 15:54, 55

When my brother Lonnie phoned from the hospital to tell me about the birth of his and Sherrie's daughter, my niece Olivia, she was wrapping her fingers around his large one in a bonding moment. He was in love with this tiny bundle of new life and followed her throughout the hospital. Just 100 minutes after her birth, Olivia became the world's youngest heart-transplant recipient at Loma Linda University Medical Center.

Hundreds of miles away, her Uncle Allen and I were already in love with Olivia. We tracked her progress via phone calls, e-mail, and faxes and rejoiced when she left the hospital at 13 days.

Lonnie had splurged and bought an exquisite white dress with embroidery. My mother sewed little pink flowers on, and Lonnie bought Olivia a "coming home" baby corsage of pink flowers and ribbons. Balloons and ribbons festooned the homecoming for the beautiful baby with the new heart.

At the same time that our family was celebrating, we were also remembering that Olivia's new heart was a gift of life from two parents deep in grief from the loss

Just 100 minutes after her birth, Olivia became the world's youngest heart-transplant recipient.

of their little girl, Kaitlyn Renee. Through Kaitlyn's untimely death, Olivia had been given the chance to live.

When Olivia suddenly rejected Kaitlyn's heart and passed away at five weeks, our family and even the medical team were caught by surprise. So much hope, so much celebration, had turned to deep grief and sorrow.

In Olivia's and Kaitlyn's brief lives, we had witnessed the most unselfish of gifts of love—giving a new heart to replace a defective one. This is what Christ does for us. Olivia's homecoming from the hospital was a foretaste of our own homecoming to Christ. Dressed in a beautiful white gown that covered the ugly scar on her chest, Olivia was welcomed enthusiastically. We didn't dwell on the scar. We focused on her new life.

Now our family focuses on the heavenly homecoming, a reunion of Olivia and Kaitlyn, running in their white dresses of light, holding hands in fields of flowers. They will grow up together in perfect friendship. We will be reunited with them.

This renewal of life and joyous hope in the future is all possible because of a plan, a strategy that went into effect before Olivia and Kaitlyn were born. Christ's death and resurrection make all this possible. He conquered the first and last enemy—death. "Death, you shall die," we can now whisper because of Christ and the plan of salvation. It is a most priceless gift.

Olivia and Kaitlyn are covered by "The Plan," and so are you and I.

By Pamela Maize Harris, chair of the journalism and communication departments, Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists, Collegedale, Tennessee.

Life-and-Death Matters

LOGOS

Gen. 2:7; John 11:11; Rom. 5:12-18; 1 Cor. 15:12-23

“As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country” (Prov. 25:25). This is the text for journalists—the only text in the Bible with the word *news*. Jesus came from a far country to bring us that good news—the only news that can satisfy the weary soul. Jesus dropped out of eternity to live our life, die our death, and make provision for our resurrection. That’s good news.

Life, a Gift We Could Not Reject (Gen. 2:7)

God molded the elements of earth into a person and gave that person the gift of life. He “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (verse 7). Life came to our first parents through the miracle of Creation. It came to us through the miracle of conception and birth. It continues as God sustains us breath by breath and heartbeat by heartbeat. We have no say in this. The gift comes to us without our requesting it. Life comes to us whether we like it or not.

But we don’t have to keep the gift.

Death, the Penalty We Cannot Avoid (Rom. 5:12-14)

Our first parents rejected the gift of life by rejecting the Source of life. They ate the forbidden fruit. The day they made that choice, they chose evil over good—they chose death over life. They passed on to us sinful natures. And they passed on to us sin’s penalty. Death is our portion, whether we like it or not.

But we won’t have to stay dead.

Eternal Life, the Gift We Can Either Accept or Reject (Rom. 5:15-19; 1 Cor. 15:20-23)

Jesus had the power to raise Lazarus from the sleep of death. With the same miraculous power that He used in Creation, He can restore life to those who die. Because of Jesus’ victory, eternal life is a gift for all. “I am the resurrection, and the life,” said Jesus. “He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25).

Life and the penalty of death have come to us whether we want them or not. But eternal life is our choice. We may choose to accept the gift. We may choose to reject it. God is such a gentleman He will not force it upon us. But He invites: “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life” (Deut. 30:19).

REACT

1. Why are we of all people most miserable if we have hope in Christ only in this life?

2. How can it be said that eternal life is a gift to *all* people, not just to those who believe?

3. The miracle of new life each spring suggests that God is interested in the preservation and continuation of all species of plants and animals. What evidence do we have that He is also interested in eternal life for individual humans?

4. How does knowing there is more to life affect the way we live?
5. How can we encourage others to accept the gift of eternal life?
6. How would your life be different if you were certain that Jesus had not risen?
7. How would you share your hope with someone who does not yet have that hope?

By R. Lynn Sauls, professor of journalism and English, Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists, Collegedale, Tennessee.

More to Life

TESTIMONY

Key Texts: John 11:25; 1 John 5:12

It wasn't only for the scene in front of Jesus that He wept, but for us—for us in the future who would go through painful and sad times and possibly the loss of a loved one. "The fountain of His tears was broken up as He longed to relieve all their distress."¹

I think it also pains Christ when He sees someone who feels this is all there is to life. Jesus gave Martha some words to remember before He raised her brother. He began by saying, "Thy brother shall rise again." Lazarus was "a pledge of the resurrection of all the righteous dead."²

"Still seeking to give a true direction to her faith, Jesus declared, 'I am the resurrection, and the life.' In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. 'He that hath the Son hath life' (1 John 5:12). The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life. 'He that believeth in me,' said Jesus, 'though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?' "³

Living without God is not truly living. The rest of 1 John 5:12 says, "He who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (NIV). I think this is what Jesus

His grace is sufficient both for the now and the later.

was trying to point out to Martha—that He is the source of life! He promises not only life after death, but true living now.

Don't get me wrong, though. He is longing for that day: "The clouds begin to roll back like a scroll, and there is the bright, clear sign of the Son of man. The children of God know what that cloud means. The sound of music is heard, and as it nears, the graves are opened and the dead are raised."⁴

"As the living cloud comes still nearer, every eye beholds the Prince of life. . . . The righteous cry with trembling: 'Who shall be able to stand?' The angels' song is hushed, and there is a period of awful silence. Then the voice of Jesus is heard, saying: 'My grace is sufficient for you.' The faces of the righteous are lighted up, and joy fills every heart."⁵

His grace is sufficient both for the now and the later. Why? Because He is the source of life, and He will live His life through us. He also knows there is more to life than what we see. Do you believe this?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 534.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 530.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Manuscript Releases* (1886), vol. 9, pp. 251, 252.

5. *The Great Controversy*, p. 641.

By Jeane Hernández, a public-relations major and religion minor at Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists, Collegedale, Tennessee.

Gospel Without a Living God

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Cor. 15:13, 14

A story is told of a party of sailors on the shore of an island. While there, the men ate the leaves of a plant that made them fall into a deep sleep. When the group did not return to camp, their companions searched for them and found them lying apparently dead on the shore. Panic seized them, and they tried frantically to wake up the drugged men. When the first awoke, they calmed down, knowing that the others would soon follow. So was the resurrection of Christ the pledge and proof of immortality promised to His followers.¹

Throughout history, many have doubted the Christian belief in an afterlife. Paul's letter, reminding the Corinthians of the resurrection of both Christ and those who believe in Him, showed what a controversial issue it was. Assume, for a moment, that Jesus Christ was never raised from the dead. Without the resurrection, which is the foundation of the Christian church, the man Jesus and His disciples would have been the instigators of the biggest fraud in history! Verses 13 through 19 show how destructive that denial really is. Jesus' resurrection is the only reasonable explanation for the continuing existence of Christianity.²

Because the resurrection of the righteous dead is directly tied to the resurrec-

Assume for a moment that Jesus Christ was never raised from the dead.

tion of Christ (2 Cor. 4:14; Rom. 8:11), it is not possible to deny the literal resurrection of Jesus (John 20:6-9) and hope for a resurrection of His followers.

Paul says Christian teaching and faith would be in vain without a resurrected Christ. The Greek *kerugma* means "the thing preached," referring to the content of the Christian message. Together with *kenos*, meaning "devoid of truth" and "without meaning," Christians would be robbed of hope for eternal life.³

First Corinthians 15 pulls together the pieces of the puzzle and shows the hopeful Christian a picture of life after death. Verse 54 refutes the Corinthians' belief that death is an end. "When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory'" (NIV). Because God keeps His promises, death is not the end, but rather it is just the beginning.

1. Elon Foster, *6000 Classic Sermon Illustrations* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House Company, 1993), p. 670.

2. *The Expositors Dictionary of Texts* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), p. 570.

3. Francis D. Nichol, ed., *SDA Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), vol. 6, pp. 799-803.

By Alicia Goree, a junior journalism major at Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists, Collegedale, Tennessee.

A Reason for Living

HOW-TO

Key Text: Matt. 10:28

Death is not a pleasant subject. However, to Adventists, death shouldn't be such a worrisome subject. Christ died so we can live again after death! This belief is such a blessing.

1. It removes fear. If we truly believe that God is the Master of the universe, and if we believe He rose again, then what is there to be frightened of? Our God is powerful. Death may seem so final, but God is in control. He conquered death and rose from the grave. There isn't anything God can't handle.

Sometimes I may become nervous about something such as flying on a plane. I may think, *Oh, what am I doing on this plane? It could crash, and I could die.* I have to make myself relax. After all, if it's not in God's plan for me to die right now, then I'm not going to die.

2. It gives hope. If you've ever lost someone close to you, you will probably appreciate this belief more than someone who hasn't suffered such a loss. The despair and depression of losing someone you love may seem like a deep, unending black pit. But Jesus gives us hope. He says, "The hour is coming, in the which all

Through Jesus' death on the cross, we have been given a very special gift.

that are in the graves shall hear his voice" (John 5:28). We will see those we love again! They are just taking a little nap until Christ returns to wake them.

3. It gives a new meaning to our present life. Christ says we will die, but we will be raised—both those who are good and those who are bad. So instead of trying to amass a fortune and to squeeze every selfish drop of enjoyment out of our present life, we realize that there is more after death. When we die, we cannot take anything with us. However, we can make two eternal changes by the way we live our present life. We can live for Jesus' sake so that we may spend eternity with Him. We can also influence another person to live for Christ so he or she, too, can spend eternity in heaven. Those are the only two permanent accomplishments available to us.

Through Jesus' death on the cross, we have been given a very special gift—eternal life. Without it, we have nothing to look forward to and nothing to live for. Our God is an awesome God.

REACT

1. What is something that really frightens you?
2. How could you use these principles in conquering that fear?
3. How can you share this belief with others?

By Julie Tillman, a senior public-relations major at Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists, Collegedale, Tennessee.

Heavenly Reunion

OPINION

Key Text: John 5:28

I knew something was wrong when I walked into the dean's office, because my sister was already sitting there, as well as the pastor. They gave me the most life-changing news I have ever had. My mother. Dead. My father was barely alive himself. They had had a car accident, just yards from our driveway. The dean told me that he was going to take me to see my father.

I had many questions, but there was no time for answers. I pushed the questions to the back of my mind. I had to be strong for my family. At the hospital the next morning, my father lay in a bed with tubes running everywhere. When he saw me, he began to cry. It was hard on me to see my father cry.

Questions could no longer be pushed away. I wondered why this had happened to me. I asked God. "Why, God? Why?" I thought of all the things that were coming up in my life. Mother had wanted to see me graduate. She would have—if she could have lived for only one more month. She wanted to meet my new girlfriend. She wanted to help me pack for college.

When the tears finally came, I began to pray. I asked God to help my family through this crisis. With tears streaming down my face, I watched my mother being put into the ground. I said goodbye. I told her that I loved her. And still, I asked the

I wondered why this had happened to me.

question "Why?"

Losing someone you love affects you for the rest of your life. I will never get over the feeling that something is missing in my life. It has been a long and painful journey to find the answers I was looking for. I discovered that the Bible had the answers. The realization that I would see my mother again lifted a heavy burden from my shoulders. My mother made her decision before she died. Now I want to accept the gift of eternal life so that I can join her in heaven. I can't wait to feel the warm embrace of her arms again and hear her telling me how much she loves me. I'm eager to see my mother again in the glorious resurrection.

I also realized that it was not God's fault that my mom had died. I understand that death is the result of sin. It was not my stumbling ways that brought me through this crisis, but God's help. Through Him, I am working toward the future that He has for me—and a reunion with my mother.

REACT

1. Whom do you look forward to seeing in heaven? What will you talk to them about?

2. How can one live his or her life now so that the resurrection will be something to look forward to and not to dread?

By Lewis Tessier, a freshman nursing major, and Julie Tillman, a senior public-relations major, Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists, Collegedale, Tennessee.

SPACESHIPS AND SING-ALONGS



“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

A Promise Is a Promise

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: John 14:3

Children see the second coming in their own unique ways. My son describes Jesus descending to earth with a trillion (the biggest number he can imagine) angels in little spaceships. My daughter envisions a gigantic sing-along during the trip to heaven. Within the frame of reference of their own reality, children see Christ's coming as an exciting, noisy, totally awesome event.

Yet when adults talk about the second coming, the descriptives turn to vivid scenes of wars, evil angels, earthquakes, raging fires, and dead people rising from their graves. Our adult frame of reference includes a lot of pretty scary stuff based on the images in Revelation and terrifying descriptions by Ellen White.

The Bible gives us lots of information that has been interpreted in many ways by many people. Christian and secular bookstore shelves are lined with volume after volume of these eschatological interpretations. Every religious group seems to have its own spin on the second coming.

But this focus on political and potential Armageddons can fill us with an unhealthy fear. In fact, the focus of the Christian religion—and the Christian life—

Every religious group seems to have its own spin on the second coming.

should be on our relationship with our Creator-Redeemer. In that frame of reference, we can cherish the second-advent hope on which our theology and distinctive Adventist identity are based.

Yes, we've been waiting a long time. Generations before us believed the Lord would come in their lifetimes. Yet we continue to watch the evening news in amazement, wondering, "How much worse can things become?"

Because we long for the world to be changed, we can wait in continued anticipation of being with Jesus in the earth made new. Because we long for ourselves to be changed, we can look forward to the second coming as an event that will transform us into the creatures we were meant to be—trusting and without fear.

We don't know whether the second-coming scenario includes spaceships and sing-alongs. We don't know what part modern technology may play. We don't know whether all our interpretations are correct or not. But we do know some things for certain. We know that God's imagination and power far surpass our own. We know that His return to earth will be the most frightening and most joyful thing that's ever happened. The details don't really matter. What really matters is that God will keep the promise He made: "When everything is ready, then I will come and get you, so that you can always be with me where I am" (John 14:3, TLB). And that's a promise if there ever was one.

By Patti Hansen Tompkins, an editor and writer from Longwood, Florida.

The Final Manifestation

LOGOS

Dan. 12:2; Matt. 24:31; Rev. 1:7; 13:11-14; 14:1-5.

Our texts this week paint a glorious picture of the exciting events that will take place at the close of this earth's history. Exciting and horrific, they are to be the culmination of God's plan for the salvation of humanity. What part does the second coming play in that redemptive process? What do we even mean by the term *the redemptive process* as it relates to the second coming?

We almost always speak of Christ's return as the reuniting of God with humanity. Certainly it is literally the "putting back" of this world to God's original intent. But if this is a reuniting of creation with Creator, where has the Creator been? Juxtapose this line of thinking onto the consideration of our responsibility of sharing with our fellow humanity the great news of God's grace, and it raises some interesting questions.

We need to realize that God never left humanity at all. Humankind was turned out of the garden because of a choice that rendered us unable to stand the direct presence of God (Gen. 2:15; 3:24). At that point, God had to resort to manifestations of Himself that were nonthreatening to humans. Before the time of Moses, God personally appeared to individuals for a particular purpose (Gen. 5:22; 6:9).

God's first corporate manifestation was a pillar of fire and a column of smoke hovering above the mercy seat of the ark (Exod. 40:34-38).¹ As an immense visual energy, He began to lead His people directly. It was not until God's second manifestation, the revelation of His character and kingdom through Christ, that we again were able to have a personal relationship with our God (Luke 2:8-12).² Here He became a God who hit His thumb with a hammer and bled from boyhood's scraped knees, a Lord who struggled through mental and physical pain. Just like us? No, like most of us could never imagine (Matt. 26:36-56).

The third manifestation began when Christ left this earth to finish His perfect work.³ He promised that He would send us the Comforter (the Holy Spirit) until the end of the age (Matt. 28:20; John 16:7). This is the phase of redemption we now enjoy.

Each phase of God's manifestation has its merits and its limitations. The direct leading of God, as demonstrated in the Old Testament, was not very personable, but at least you knew where you stood. In contrast, the direct revelation of God through Jesus Christ was incredibly intimate. It revealed God's intent to save more than just the Hebrew nation, but His intimacy was available only to a few people at a time. The omnipresent manifestation of the Holy Spirit is par for the genius of our Creator. But we long for the personal, intimate touch of Jesus, and our lack of faith often leaves us feeling confused as to the course we should pursue. We forget who we are. We are humans, not humanoids. We are intended to emulate the personality who formed us (Gen. 1:26-30). Anything less is both unthinkable and impossible in the realm of eternity.

"Ye shalt not surely die" (Gen. 3:4) was the original misconception of the human design. Oh yes, thou shalt (verse 19). That was really the only reply that was left for our God. Humankind had just chosen to walk away from the Source of life. Our only hope from that point on was the reconnection made possible by the

complete and final manifestation. Without our returning to life with the Life Giver, we have been saved from nothing. His life for our eternal life: that's the deal. Humanity—despite our egotistical, atheistic, satanically suggested idea that we have the choice to live without Him—must live, walk, talk, worship, study, love, and be loved by God, or we will cease to be.

You see, somehow we have gotten the impression that life is a simple affair of getting up in the morning and tripping through the day, needing only to do whatever our society has taught us. We tell ourselves that our struggles with life, our hurts, and the disillusionment of un-Christian behavior by our supposedly Christian brothers and sisters will be turned around by the next self-help book or by some new theological thought.

We were not designed for self-help books, or self-help of any kind, for that matter. We were designed to function in the joy of direct relationship with the God of the universe. We cannot do anything evil, much less righteous (Ps. 143:2; Phil. 4:13), or even exist outside of that reality.

This is the relevance of the second coming. A relevance of re-creation. A relevance of reunification with the Source of power and love that I was never designed

He became a God who hit His thumb with a hammer and bled from boyhood's scraped knees.

to do without. A relevance that causes me to pray every day that my life and witness will help hasten God's coming and that these words will never need to be printed.

Go ye therefore and teach.

REACT

1. How does the "imminent" second coming affect the essence of the gospel?
2. Do you see the second coming as an end or a beginning? Explain your answer.
3. What aspect of the second coming is most important to share with others?
4. Why will God not inflict pain and suffering on the wicked at His coming?
5. How can you effectively bring people to God without the fear of "or else" being a motivating factor?

1. *Magnificent Disappointment*, p. 63.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 23, 24.

3. *The Great Controversy*, p. 489; *Signs of the Times*, 16 Aug. 1899, "A Crucified and Risen Saviour": "Having magnified the law and made it honorable, by accepting its condition, He hastened to heaven to perfect His work and accomplish His mission by sending the Holy Spirit to His disciples."

Confidence in the Day of Judgment

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 John 4:16-18

At His coming, "God will vindicate His law and deliver His people. Satan and all who have joined him in rebellion will be cut off. Sin and sinners will perish."¹ God must destroy the wicked to preserve His government, but does He use fear of judgment, the tortures of hell, and the destruction of sinners to motivate us?

At the creation of our first parents, God limited His own power by allowing His creatures freedom of choice. Since God "desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority,"² "the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard."³ "The working out of Satan's rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority."³

At His coming, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess (Phil. 2:10) that God has solved the sin problem the right way. He does not use force because "the exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government."⁴

The destruction of the wicked, or the second death, is separation from God, the source of life. "God destroys no man."⁵ All "receive the results of their own choice."⁶

God limited His own power by allowing His creatures freedom of choice.

Those who have not chosen God have placed "themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them."⁷

The righteous will live forever in His presence, whom to know is life eternal (John 17:3). The wicked will not suffer eternal torments, but in mercy they experience eternal death and nonexistence. "God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life."⁸

The destruction of the wicked "is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God."⁹ It is sin that destroys and is to be feared. God only loves, and "perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18).

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 763.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

3. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 43.

4. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 764.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, p. 759.

By K. Nicole Yarbroggh, English major at the University of Central Florida, Altamonte Springs, Florida.

Maranatha

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rev. 22:20

“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:20, RSV).

Maranatha is an ancient Aramaic phrase meaning “Come, our Lord.” It was the response used by the early Christian believers to express their strong desire for Christ’s soon return. The apostle Paul closes his first letter to the Corinthians with these words (1 Cor. 16:22).

While originally the use of the phrase was eschatological—that is, it expressed the hope of the church for the *parousia* (Greek for “the second coming”)—the phrase very early found its way into the Communion liturgy and served as a prayer at the close of that service.¹

In Revelation 22:20, John uses the Greek equivalent of *Maranatha*, “Erchou, Kurie Iesou,” in response to Christ’s proclamation “Surely I come quickly.” It is as if the seer could no longer endure the graphic, dramatic portrayal of earth’s final events, and he exclaims, “Even so, let it be, Amen, Lord Jesus.”

Found here at the close of the Scriptures, this phrase is our own personal re-

We may join our voices with the saints and cry out, “*Maranatha!*”

sponse to the horrible depictions of violence, warfare, and disaster found both in Revelation and in our daily news. When our faith is strained to the breaking point, when we feel we cannot endure pain any longer, when we believe our world is falling apart, we may join our voices with the saints throughout the ages and cry out, “*Maranatha!* Come, Lord Jesus!”

REACT

1. Why should we as Christians be concerned with finding answers to society’s problems—such as homelessness, child abuse, or drug addiction—if Christ’s coming is imminent?
2. How, if at all, should Christ’s soon return affect our personal decisions as to marriage and career choices?
3. How, if at all, does the imminence of Christ’s coming motivate you in your Christian life? Should it?

¹ *Didache* 10.6.

By Donna Haerich, a training manager for the State Department of Corrections, Altamonte Springs, Florida.

To Flee or Not to Flee

HOW-TO

Key Text: Matt. 28:19, 20

My neighbor Sue and I were enjoying a rare moment of uninterrupted conversation while our children were having a picnic lunch in the backyard. We were discussing the challenges of parenting, and the conversation took a natural turn toward the condition of the world at the end of time.

“When you see and hear all that’s going on in the world now,” she said, “there’s no doubt that the end is coming soon.”

“You’re right,” I agreed.

“We’re told in Sister White’s writings,” she continued, “that a time will come when we will have to flee to the mountains. Doug and I found a piece of property up in Tennessee. Do you and Jeff have a place to go?”

As someone who was not raised an Adventist, and as someone who is certainly no theologian, I’ve been curious about this mind-set. I wonder whether we should spend our time, money, and thoughts on finding a place to which to run. Whatever happened to not fearing “them which kill the body” (Matt. 10:28)? All the issues that will make it necessary to hide or flee relate to trust. If we are still trying to direct our lives by planning our own protection, then whom are we trusting?

Christ commissioned us to go into all the world. How can this commission be

All the issues that will make it necessary to hide or flee relate to trust.

fulfilled from a mountain hideaway? Can we leave simply for the sake of personal security when the need for truth and light is the greatest in earth’s history?

Our responsibility to help fulfill the gospel commission of Matthew 2 is very clear. We are to:

1. Reach out to others. Build relationships of integrity with nonbelievers. Staying in an exclusive circle of Adventists or even other Christians is just another way of hiding.

2. Teach these new disciples. Once you have established personal relationships based on mutual trust and respect, you are ready to present Christ in a clear, simple, and genuine manner.

3. Claim His promise. Begin each day with a prayer, inviting Christ to be with you and to use you wherever you are. This is the real beauty of the whole plan. It’s not you; it’s Christ in you.

REACT

1. How can we know when it is an appropriate time to flee to the mountains?
2. How do you know when the time is right to discuss Christianity with someone who is not a Christian? Is there ever a wrong time?

By Tami Cinquemani, an aerobics instructor and dramatist from Apopka, Florida.

What About This “Imminence”?

OPINION

Key Text: Rev. 22:20

At a professional luncheon some 20 years ago, a fellow attendee asked me to explain the distinguishing beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. Part of my traditional SDA response was to tell her that I believed in the imminent return of Christ. Her follow-up question, “What do you mean by ‘imminent’?” has haunted me ever since.

I was baptized into the SDA Church exactly one year before Pearl Harbor. In my lifetime, I have seen “The Big War,” the arrival of the nuclear age, space exploration, Sunday laws upheld, a Catholic President, papal visits to the United States, the Religious Right, increasing natural disasters, and other so-called signs too numerous to mention.

My church’s exposition of 27 doctrines proclaims “Christ’s coming is imminent,”* even at the door. More than half a century of paradigms, proof texts, and potentially fulfilling signs tell me to agree. But somehow, my enthusiasm for that statement has diminished. For me to proclaim “imminence” is to be less than authentic. Certainly I can agree that Christ’s return is closer now than when we first made that statement.

But I am also apprehensive about being in the camp of those scoffers who say,

For me to proclaim “imminence” is to be less than authentic.

“Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? . . . everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation” (2 Pet. 3:4, NIV). With that thought, I recoil. I do not want to be a scoffer!

Then I relax when I realize that Peter’s cynics may be *irreligious*, because they forget that “by God’s word . . . the earth was formed” (verse 5). So there is hope! I can distinguish myself from them because I believe in the Creator God, who said, “I will come again” (John 14:3, KJV).

So how would I respond today to the questions regarding imminence? I could respond, “If we are wearing Christ’s robe, who cares when He comes!” Yet because I don’t wish that statement to be misunderstood, I might also add, “I do not know about the imminence of His coming, but I am absolutely assured of the reality of His coming!” My Christian life is not motivated by the imminent appearing of my Maker, but by the One who said, “I am coming very soon.” I am anxious to respond, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

* *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 332.

By Frank McMillan, attorney for the Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Winter Park, Florida.

Next Quarter's Lessons

God's Family, the Church

If you have not yet received a copy of *CQ* for fourth quarter 1996, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1: God's People, the Church

Scripture: Gen. 12:1-6; 15:18; 2 Cor. 11:2; 1 Cor. 3:9-17; 12:12-17; Eph. 3:14, 15.

Theme: What is the church?

Lesson 2: God's Called-Out People

Scripture: Gen. 12:1-6; Acts 7:1-8; Gal. 3:6-9, 29; Heb. 11:9-12.

Theme: How did the church begin?

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At PUC This Guy Got Nothing But Pressure



Biology major Shelton Hsu says that when he got to Pacific Union College as a freshman, even though he didn't know anybody, he got peer pressure from the very start—pressure to get involved in the Student Association, to have fun with new friends, to make good grades, and to see God in a new light.

"At PUC I've experienced something we refer to as 'positive peer pressure,'" he says, "where we encourage and challenge each other spiritually and academically."

Last school year, with the help of friends, Shelton organized LIGHTHOUSE, a student-run community service network that reaches out to people in need.

"If you're looking for a balanced Christian education, PUC has something to offer you," says Shelton.

That is, if you can stand the pressure.



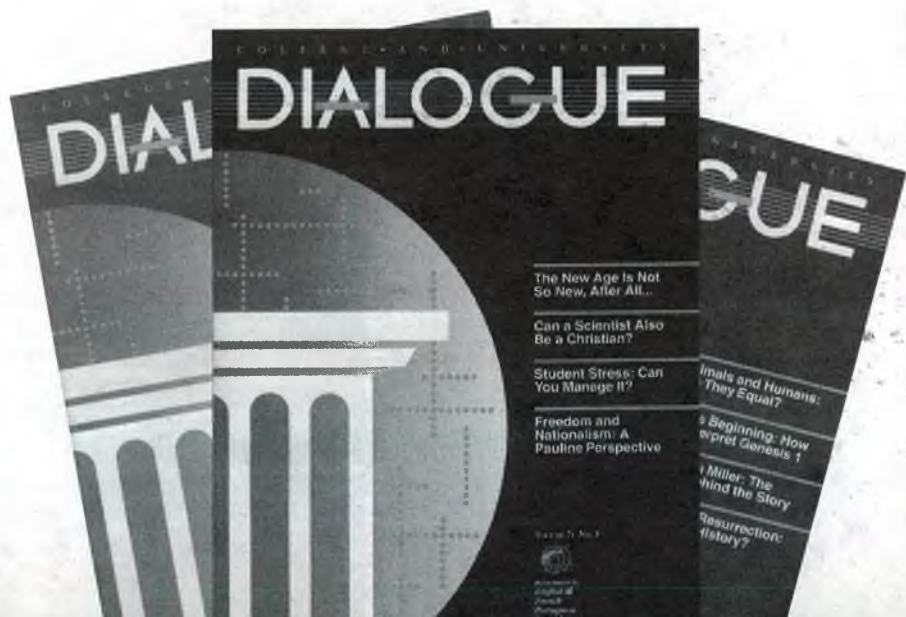
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THE HOMELESS PROJECT—feeding the homeless at People's Park
BIG BROTHER/BIG SISTER—“adopting” a child
LIGHTHOUSE—serving in a variety of local community outreach opportunities
PRISON MINISTRIES—providing church services for prison inmates
STUDENT MISSIONS AND TASKFORCE—volunteering a year to serve
STUDENT ASSOCIATION—leading out in social, religious, and philosophical endeavors
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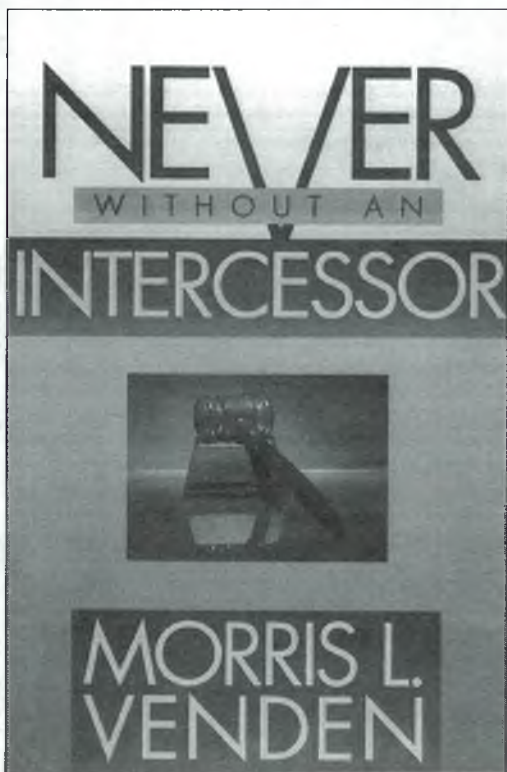


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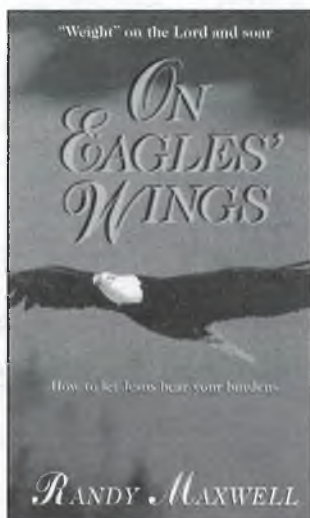
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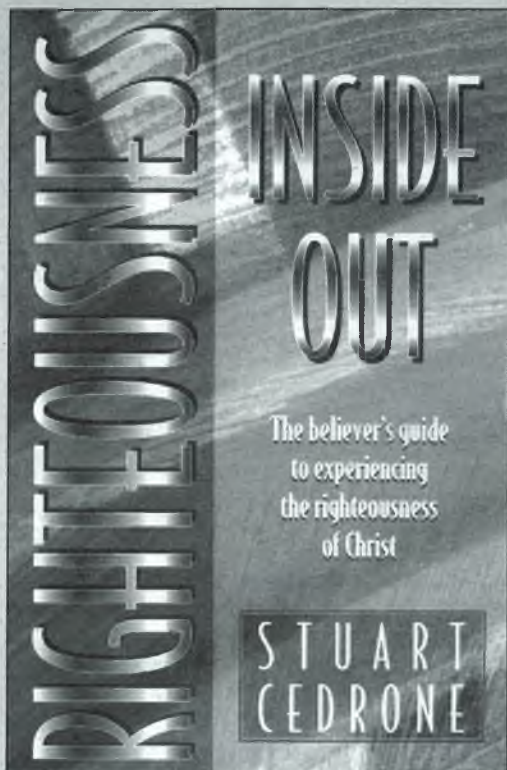
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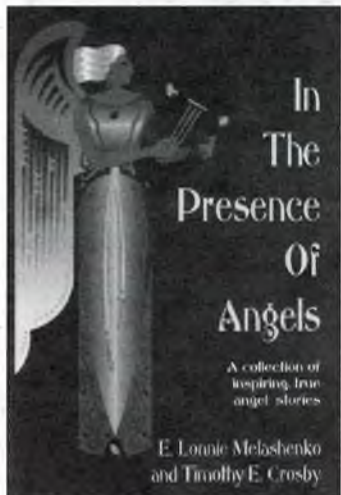
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